

The Maghrib and the Mediterranean in the Early Middle Ages

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For some three thousand years the political, social, and economic relationships of the Maghrib have depended largely on the Mediterranean,¹ on whether the sea was friendly or hostile, whether it might at any given moment bring friends or enemies, traders or raiders. Phoenicians sailing via Cyprus founded Carthage at the end of the ninth century B.C.,² and the earliest treaties between Carthage and Rome, conventionally dated to 509 and 348 B.C., envisage Carthaginian raids by sea on central Italy as a normal event.³ Raiding and trading reinforced each other. Archeological evidence shows Carthage importing pottery and luxury goods from Greece and exporting her own manufactures and agricultural surpluses, particularly to Spain and southern Italy.⁴ Punic vessels sailed out through the Straits of Gibraltar to travel north and south along the Atlantic coasts.⁵ The sea routes throughout Antiquity far outweighed in commercial importance the land routes along the coast or into and across the Sahara, and when Carthage fell to the Vandals in A.D. 439, it was the first but not the last time that it succumbed to an army unsupported by a fleet.

After the Third Punic War destroyed Punic Carthage in 146 B.C., for nearly six centuries Africa was part of Rome's unified Mediterranean empire, and a resurrected Carthage became the second city of the Latin-speaking West. Even when the western provinces began to fall apart under the pressure of German tribes in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, the province of Africa still seemed stable and secure, until in

A.D. 429 the Vandals crossed the Straits of Gibraltar in requisitioned transport, probably no more than small fishing boats, meeting no opposition, and advanced eastwards along the coast, taking Carthage in 439.⁶ Now once more, as in Punic days, a fleet from Carthage might threaten Italy, and still more urgently Sicily, and the Vandal king Geiseric showed that this was no empty threat by attacking Sicily the following year. He failed to take Panormus (Palermo), but succeeded in capturing Lilybaeum (Marsala). The panic that ensued in Rome proved justified when Geiseric invaded Italy and sacked the city in 455, carrying off to Africa numerous high-ranking officials and the spoils of the Temple of Jerusalem, which had been in Rome for nearly four centuries. At all times, a power which holds North Africa and has bases in Sicily must be considered a potential threat to central Italy, not only in 509 B.C. or in A.D. 455, but still in 1943—witness the Allied invasion.

Imperial power had already shifted from Rome to Constantinople (Byzantium), but it took until 533 for the Byzantines to reconquer Africa, and even then they were content to occupy an area only one-tenth of what Rome had once held, leaving the rest to tribal confederations which in many ways did not differ significantly from those that had existed in this area before Rome came.⁷ The strength of the tie now established between Carthage and Constantinople is clearly demonstrated by the events of 608-610, when it was Carthage that hatched the plot to depose the usurper Phocas. Heraclius, exarch of Africa, first of all moved to cut off supplies of African wheat and oil from the capital in 608, and the troops at his disposal were reinforced by expensively recruited Berber volunteers to form an army with which Heraclius' nephew Nicetas invaded Egypt and took Alexandria in 609. Then, in 610, the merchant fleets of Africa and Egypt were pressed into service to carry troops against Constantinople itself, Phocas was abandoned by his ministers and dismembered by the populace, and the exarch of Africa's son, the younger Heraclius, was crowned emperor, one of the greatest rulers in Byzantine history, destined to triumph over the Persian Empire and to be eternally remembered, as by the Turkish lover in Flecker's poem:

Banish then, O Grecian eyes, the passion of the waiting West!
 Shall God's holy monks not enter on a day God knoweth best
 To crown the Roman king again and hang a cross upon his breast?
 And a thousand swinging steeples shall begin as they began
 When Heraclius rode home from the wrack of Ispahan...

His long reign of over thirty years was a turning point of history: "It was now that the Roman period ended and Byzantine history properly speaking began. Emphasis on the Greek element and the strength of ecclesiastical influence combined to give the Empire a new appearance...Greek, the medium of the people and the Church, became the official language of the Byzantine Empire...and by the next generation a knowledge of Latin was rare, even in educated circles."⁸ This alone could not have failed to alienate Africa from the eastern Empire, since there the cultural and linguistic tide had set in the opposite direction, and already in St Augustine's day, some two centuries before, the knowledge of Greek was dying out, even among the educated classes. The linguistic division was mirrored also in theological disputes. But there was a new factor to be considered: by one of the supreme ironies of history, the same year which saw the opening of the Byzantine victories over the Persians also marked the start of the Muslim era, the year of the Hijra or Hegira, with consequences infinitely more far-reaching for the Maghrib than a mere change in the official language of the Byzantine Empire.

The story of the first wave of Muslim expansion is soon told. The great campaigns of Heraclius had broken Sassanid power and left the Persian Empire in chaos, but the Byzantines had spent their resources without stint and needed a period of recuperation, which they were denied. By 634 the Arabs were advancing through Byzantine territory, and two years later they routed the Byzantine army at Jarmuk. Syria and its capital Antioch surrendered without a fight, then the Persian Empire collapsed and with it went Byzantine Mesopotamia, the Arabs attacked Egypt, and on 29 September 642, after a negotiated Byzantine evacuation, the Arab general 'Amr b. Al-'As entered Alexandria in triumph. He then pushed on westwards along the coast, reaching and sacking the Tripolitanian cities of Oea and Sabratha (642/3), although this headlong and seemingly irresistible advance was delayed, first by 'Amr's recall, and then after his reinstatement by the need to recapture Alexandria which a Byzantine expedition had retaken. Alexandria was once again in Muslim hands by the summer of 646, never to be relinquished thereafter, and the way to Africa lay wide open. Africa was already on the verge of schism from Constantinople, and it would be hard to say whether military, political, or theological considerations, or just personal ambition, played the greater part in persuading the current exarch of Africa, Gregory, late in 646 or early in 647, to proclaim himself emperor.

Carthage and its hinterland, cut off by Gregory's proclamation from hope of friendly succour by sea, were again, just two centuries later, facing an invader coming in along the coast, though now from the east, rather than the west. Gregory moved his army down to Sbeitla (Sufetula) to meet the threat, but an Arab force estimated at twenty thousand men first of all raided northwards into the steppeland where later the Arab capital of Kairouan was to be built, and then on its way back into Tripolitania encountered Gregory's forces, defeated them, and slew Gregory (647). Sbeitla was sacked, but the Arabs accepted a bribe, or tribute, to persuade them to withdraw to Cyrenaica without establishing a base in Africa itself.

The ensuing years saw further raids, but not until 669 was an attempt made to conquer Africa for good, leading in 670 to the foundation of Kairouan as a permanent base. Its site, says Ibn Khaldūn, was chosen simply with a view to "pasturage for their camels and nearness to the desert and the caravan routes,"⁹ and its location suggests that the Arabs had in mind as potential enemies not so much the Byzantines as the Berbers, who loom large in the history of the next thirty years or so. The Byzantines for a time held onto their coastal possessions, but no more. 'Amr had disapproved of naval activity, describing the sea as "a great creature upon which weak creatures ride, like worms on a piece of wood,"¹⁰ and although the Arabs since his day had acquired a fleet, they concentrated their naval efforts on Constantinople itself, rather than on the coasts of Africa. But when the Arabs took Carthage in 695 and the Byzantine fleet appeared to recapture it, Arab reinforcements arrived by sea and by land, and Carthage again fell, finally, in 698. Constantinople made no further effort to intervene, and, in 711, the last Byzantine outpost in the Maghrib—Septem (Ceuta) on the Straits of Gibraltar—opened its gates.

In studying the succeeding period, we have two problems. The first is "the fact that the earliest extant works in Arabic date from the end of the eighth century A.D., and that the written tradition to which they belong cannot be considered to be much earlier than the middle of that century,"¹¹ and the second, as I myself am all too acutely aware, that scholars who know Greek and Latin, and who can thus cope with the Byzantine sources, rarely know Arabic, and vice versa, except for those lucky enough to combine Arabic as the mother tongue with a classical education.¹² The result is to accentuate the discontinuity that the Arab invasion brought about. The following comment on the Arab conquest of Spain is equally applicable to North Africa:

The nature of the linguistic divide between periods in which Latin and then Arabic constitute the dominant languages of the sources of historical evidence is so great that the Islamic conquest marks as much a caesura in modern scholarship as it did in the development of society in the peninsula in the eighth century. To put it simply, historians of Visigothic Spain do not study Arab Spain, and the orientalist who have worked on the history of *Al-Andalus* have not ventured into the previous period. The consequence has been that for the relatively few who have worked on Spain in the period of Islamic domination their views on the preceding Visigothic kingdom have come at second hand...and if in consequence their views on that society have been scarcely more sophisticated than those of St Boniface, who is to blame them...? One major casualty of this misleading historiographical perspective has been any sense of continuity across the period of the Arab and Berber invasion.¹³

The Arab invasions did not in fact mark as abrupt a break between Africa and Europe as the now almost classical Pirenne thesis suggests. Hodges and Whitehouse have concluded in their recent confrontation of the thesis with the archeological evidence that not only western Europe, but the Mediterranean world as well, began to experience severe economic decline even before the Arab invasions, and that “the creation of an Islamic empire in the later seventh and early eighth centuries was partly a product, not a cause, of the economic transformations detected by Pirenne.”¹⁴ For the Maghrib, the Arab conquest caused the east-west links along the coast to become more important, politically, militarily, and commercially, than those across the Mediterranean. Carthage was virtually abandoned, to the profit of Tunis, because its coastal position left it too exposed.¹⁵

Quite simply, the shape of the world has changed, and it is in this reshaping of the mental map, of the intellectual and imaginative perception of the geography of the whole Mediterranean world, and of the Middle East and of western Europe as well, that the rise of Islam has its greatest and most lasting impact. For the Roman poet Horace towards the end of the last century B.C., the Parthian Empire was exotic, and central Asia the stuff of vague poetic evocation; for Ibn Khaldûn, on the other hand, in the fourteenth century Khurâsân and Transoxania are an integral part of his own scientific and intellectual world.¹⁶ From what perspective does each of us look at the map of the world today? And to what extent is our geographical and historical

orientation still influenced by the great medieval division between Christendom and Islam? For most of us, I suspect, the influence is greater than we realise.

My own experience is not perhaps untypical. The map of the pre-Reformation world to which I was exposed some fifty years ago as a schoolboy in England was one which Charlemagne would have been at home with: after the “Decline and Fall” and the “Dark Ages” which followed, the centre of civilisation shifted to northwest Europe and the only history of the next few centuries that counted was that of the wars between England and France. Of course there was a Pope, but he only existed in order to lay England under an interdict from time to time or to squabble over who got the right to appoint the Archbishop of Canterbury. Byzantium was a faraway place of which we knew nothing, and Saracens were there to occupy the Holy Sepulchre so that Crusaders might go out rather splendidly to try to get it back. The Saracens were pretty much the same as the Moors, against whom Roland had died so nobly, sounding his horn, like Robin Hood, and they were in Spain until chased out by Ferdinand and Isabella. Admittedly this version owes something to Osbert Lancaster’s *The Saracen’s Head* and to *1066 and All That*, but this only reinforces my point. Perhaps I was abnormally retarded in my intellectual development, but it was not until I read Hugh Trevor-Roper’s *The Rise of Christian Europe* that I realised just how distorted this eurocentric version was,¹⁷ and began to understand that in many ways the Arab world, not medieval Europe, was the heir of Greece and Rome, and that it was the Crusaders who were the barbarians.¹⁸

And yet, if we return to the eighth and ninth centuries, though the mental focus has shifted and the nexus between Carthage or Tunis and anywhere in Europe has been broken, we see the old geopolitical imperatives gradually reasserting themselves. It was in 827 that the Aghlabid amir Ziyadat Allah I invaded Sicily, and the island once again became a base for raids on the Italian mainland, including one in which Rome was attacked and St Peter’s sacked (846), although it took three-quarters of a century before the Muslim conquest of Sicily was complete (902). Its importance to the Arabs was made all the clearer in the course of the eleventh century, when they lost it to the Normans, who by 1091 controlled the whole island, from which they in their turn attacked Africa, until by 1148 they had taken Tripoli, Djerba, Gabès, Mahdia, and Sfax, until an Almohad army from Morocco invaded Tunisia and expelled the Normans, whose last stronghold, Mahdia, fell in January 1160.¹⁹

After the disruption caused by the Arab invasions and their need to consolidate their hold upon the Maghrib, it took some time before trade across the Mediterranean gradually picked up again, and it remains uncertain how much North African trade reached Europe via Muslim Spain and how much across the Mediterranean seaways. In the ninth and tenth centuries, however, Duby points out that the evidence for the south of France indicates “la permanence d’un commerce à longue distance d’objets précieux,” alongside that of “un cabotage le long des côtes, même aux pires moments de la menace sarrasine.”²⁰ Trading and raiding in fact went hand-in-hand, as they were to do for centuries, from ports on both sides of the Mediterranean, and as they had done since Homer’s day. The crew that peacefully unloaded its cargo in one port to exchange it by way of trade was not normally averse to turning a little extra profit by landing and looting the undefended settlement or farmhouse round the next headland, if occasion offered. One man’s pirate is another’s peaceful trader.²¹ What is difficult is to estimate the volume of trade and its relationship to other forms of exchange: “L’important serait surtout de repérer les variations de rythme de l’activité marchande, de les situer exactement par rapport aux soubresauts de la vie militaire. Ce qui, dans l’état de la documentation, n’est pas possible.”²² Raiders coming from Spain even established a Muslim enclave at Fraxinetum in the territory of Fréjus, possibly towards the end of the ninth century, from which raids devastated the countryside throughout the next century.²³ We should not forget that piracy, raiding, and trade are all exchange mechanisms tending to the redistribution of wealth.²⁴

Among the goods which North Africa had to offer were those imported from beyond the Sahara, from regions with which trade had never before been so important, despite the wealth that Lepcis Maior and the other Tripolitanian cities derived from it in the Roman period.²⁵ From the second half of the ninth century to the end of the fifteenth, the Maghrib had a monopoly of this trade, to the point where it has been claimed, with only slight exaggeration, that among the North African states of this period “the heart—the ‘core’—of each state was a great commercial city which was a terminus for the Saharan caravans and a place where Christian and Middle Eastern merchants congregated.”²⁶ The tenth century in particular appears to have been a period of great prosperity:

Large areas which had fallen derelict were, thanks to the introduction of elaborate systems of irrigation, once more under cultivation. The olive was

again cultivated on a very large scale. Kairwan was producing sugar, Msila cotton, Sebab indigo, Gabes silk. The manufacture of cotton and woollen cloths and pottery was restoring to Tripoli, Sfax, and Tunis their former prosperity. In the west the coral fisheries of Ceuta and Tenes were again active. But probably the most profitable trade was that which the Maghrib was carrying on with the Sudan, whence slaves, ivory, ebony, and gold dust were imported.²⁷

Whether the fourteenth-century Muslim historians who blamed the Banu Hilâl for the destruction of this prosperity were right is not something which I propose to discuss here. Ibn Khaldûn, of course, has no doubts: Africa, he says, in the days of the Aghlabids “had some sedentary culture as the result of the luxury and prosperity of the royal authority and the large civilisation of al-Qayrawân...(but) the Hilâl, who were Arab Bedouins, gained power over the country and ruined it.”²⁸ We must here allow for the age-old prejudice against the nomad, of which Ibn Khaldûn has a full share.²⁹ Poncet, however, argued that economic decline had already set in, and that the worst of the devastation was caused, not by the tribesmen, but by “marauding bands not related to them...as well as by the rulers in the course of chastising rebellious groups.”³⁰ There is at least evidence to suggest that Ibn Khaldûn may have exaggerated the completeness of the destruction, although the dependence of agriculture in many parts of the Maghrib on irrigation, or at least on measures designed to ensure the maximum conservation of the scanty and seasonally ill-distributed rainfall, makes the region singularly vulnerable.

It is hard to assess what life in the countryside was like, and how much continuity there was, over this period. Modern scholars once gave the Romans all the credit for the visible extant remains of hydraulic engineering in the region, but Shaw, although he focuses more on pre-Roman developments than post-Roman, nonetheless cites al-Bakri to show that “neither the retreat of Roman authority nor the arrival of Arab invaders changed local patterns of life,” and concludes that “whatever the fate of individual isolated communities after the end of the Roman period, Arabic sources from the Middle Ages attest the continued existence and success of these (irrigation) systems in general all along the length of the ‘frontier’ regions south of the Saharan Atlas.”³¹ Nor was it only a question of “continued existence,” since new irrigation systems were developed to facilitate the cultivation of the new sugar cane crop, which

was the Arabs' major contribution to Mediterranean agriculture.³² Even for the Roman period, however, the archeology of the countryside has been virtually ignored,³³ while archeological evidence for the early Islamic period is still more conspicuously lacking, even since independence. The French colonial attitudes whereby they identified themselves with the Romans in the Maghrib and dismissed the whole Muslim period as “des siècles de barbarie” unworthy of study still cast a nefarious shadow.³⁴

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Notes

1 This is a drastically shortened version of a paper given to a conference on “The Maghrib in World History,” organised by the American Institute for Maghribi Studies at Sidi bou Saïd in May 1998. I am delighted to have this opportunity to offer it to my old friend Doug Wurtele in memory of many social occasions shared during my years at the University of Ottawa.

2 The German excavations at Carthage have found evidence of Punic occupation going back to the second quarter of the eighth century B.C., only a generation after the traditional date of the foundation of the city by Queen Dido; see F. Rakob, “L’habitat ancien et le système urbanistique,” in A. Ennabli, ed. *Pour sauver Carthage: exploration et conservation de la cité punique, romaine et byzantine* (Paris: UNESCO; Tunis: Institut National d’Archéologie et d’Art, 1992), pp. 29-37, esp. 31, “la datation de la plus ancienne céramique importée...remonte au deuxième quart du VIII^e siècle avant J.-C.,” with further references to more detailed discussion. Maria Eugenia Aubet discusses the literary tradition and emphasises the Cypriot connection in *The Phoenicians and the West: Politics, Colonies and Trade*, trans. Mary Turton (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 187-96.

3 Serge Lancel, *Carthage: a History*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 86-88.

4 Jean-Paul Morel, “Nouvelles données sur le commerce de Carthage punique entre le VII^e et le II^e siècle avant J.-C.,” in *Histoire et archéologie de l’Afrique du Nord I: Carthage et son territoire dans l’Antiquité* (Paris: Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques, 1990), pp. 67-100.

5 How far they reached is a matter of dispute: references in Lancel, *Carthage*, pp. 100-109.

6 The standard account of the Vandal period in Africa is Christian Courtois, *Les*

Vandales et l'Afrique (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1955).

7 See the evidence assembled and evaluated by Courtois, *Les Vandales*, pp. 333-52, followed by Denys Pringle, *The Defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest* BAR International Series 99(i) and (ii), part 1 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1981), pp. 13-16, going on to discuss the new Byzantine defensive measures, pp. 16-29.

8 George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers, 1969), p. 106.

9 Ibn Khaldûn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Frank Rosenthal, ed. and abridged N.J. Dawood (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989), p. 272.

10 Khaldûn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 209.

11 Michael Brett, "The Arab conquest and the rise of Islam in North Africa," in J.D. Fage and Roland Oliver, *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), p. 491.

12 I should make clear that in what follows I am heavily dependent on secondary works and modern translations, admitting frankly my inability to read Ibn Khaldûn and other Arabic writers in the original. Nobody regrets this more than I.

13 Roger Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain 710-797* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 8.

14 Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe* (London: Duckworth, 1983), p. 170.

15 Cf. Khaldûn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 269.

16 Khaldûn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 341.

17 Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Rise of Christian Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965).

18 This version of "what every schoolboy knows" may be true only for Britain, and for my generation, but in that context it holds true.

19 Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), p. 92.

20 Georges Duby, *Seigneurs et paysans Hommes et structures du Moyen Age 2* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), p. 65. Cf. Philippe S  nac, *Provence et piraterie sarrasine*

(Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1982), pp. 51-61, analysing “les activités,” insisting, however, “et ceci ne fait aucun doute,” that “la guerre reste l’activité la plus fréquente” (p. 51).

21 It should not be supposed that the “Saracens” were the only raiders; Greeks sacked Marseilles, and Danes killed the Archbishop of Arles, forcing his flock to buy back the corpse and the archiepiscopal regalia in which it was dressed. See M. Fixot, “Le royaume de Provence,” in Paul-Albert Février et al., eds, *La Provence des origines à l’an mil* (Editions Ouest-France, 1989), p. 488.

22 Duby, *Seigneurs*, p. 66.

23 Extensively discussed in Sénac, *Provence*, with sources; cf. Fixot, *Provence des origines*, pp. 488-91.

24 A Tunisian colleague once objected to my use of the word “piracy” in this context, and I realise that it has a much stronger and more pejorative connotation than “la course” in French, but although English has the word “corsair,” with its aura of Byronic glamour, I can find no corresponding abstract noun. The *OED* defines “piracy” as “the practice or crime of robbery and depredation on the sea or navigable rivers, etc., or by descent from the sea upon the coast, by persons not holding a commission from an established civilised state.” Under “corsair” we find “the name in the languages of the Mediterranean for a privateer; chiefly applied to the cruisers of Barbary...In English often treated as identical with pirate.” Some of the ninth- and tenth-century raiders may qualify as “privateers,” but, even in French, Duby and Sénac refer to “les pirates sarrasins,” and I think that “piracy” is justified, as a purely descriptive term—not necessarily pejorative.

25 David J. Mattingly, *Tripolitania* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1994), esp. pp. 155-7.

26 Yves Lacoste, “General characteristics and fundamental structures of medieval North African society,” *Economy and Society* 3 (1974), p. 4; Abun-Nasr, *History*, p. 19.

27 E.W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, 2nd ed., rev. Robin Hallett (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 101 but without detailed references. Andrew M. Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World: The Diffusion of Crops and Farming Techniques, 700-1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), p. 28, suggests that the first references to the cultivation of sugar in the Maghrib date from the tenth century.

28 Khaldûn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 284.

29 Cf. Brent D. Shaw, "Fear and loathing: the nomad menace and Roman Africa," in C.M. Wells, ed. *L'Afrique romaine: les Conférences Vanier 1980/Roman Africa: the Vanier Lectures 1980* (Ottawa: Univ. of Ottawa Press, 1982), pp. 29-50.

30 J.P. Poncet, "Le mythe de la 'catastrophe' hilarienne," *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations* 22 (1967), pp. 1107-20; cf. Abun-Nasr, *History*, p. 70.

31 Brent D. Shaw, "Water and society in the ancient Maghrib: technology, property and development," *Antiquités Africaines* 20 (1984), pp. 121-173, esp. 163, 167, and further, his "Eaters of flesh, drinkers of milk: the ancient Mediterranean ideology of the pastoral nomad," *Ancient Society* 13/14 (1982/83), pp.1-31.

32 See especially Watson, *Agricultural Innovation*, pp. 24-30, 103-111. In the later Middle Ages, sugar became a staple of the Moroccan economy; see P. Berthier, *Les anciennes sucreries du Maroc et leurs réseaux hydrauliques* 2 vols (Rabat, 1966), but the Mediterranean sugar industry was devastated by competition from the New World; see Marie-Louise von Wartburg, "The medieval cane sugar industry in Cyprus: results of recent excavation," *Antiquaries Journal* 63 (1983), pp. 298-314. The general histories of the Arab world or of the Maghrib in this period, e.g. Abun-Nasr, *History*, simply ignore the impact of new crops and agricultural techniques.

33 We need more surveys like those of the Cherchel and Kasserine regions, and the Libyan Valleys Survey. See Philippe Leveau, *Caesarea de Maurétanie: une ville romaine et ses campagnes* Collection de l'école française de Rome 70 (Rome, 1984); R. Bruce Hitchner, "The Kasserine Archaeological Survey, 1982-1986 (University of Virginia, USA – Institut National d'Archéologie et d'Art de Tunisie)" *Antiquités Africaines* 24 (1988), pp. 7-41; references to the Libyan Valleys Survey and conclusions therefrom in D.J. Mattingly, "Libyans and the 'limes': culture and society in Roman Tripolitania," *Antiquités Africaines* 23 (1987), pp. 71-94; also, Mattingly, "Farmers and frontiers: exploiting and defending the countryside of Roman Tripolitania," *Libyan Studies* 20 (1989), pp. 135-53. For an overall survey of recent work and changing ideas, see Mattingly and Hitchner, "Roman Africa: an archaeological review," *Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995), pp. 165-213. For the Islamic period, Berthier, *Les anciennes sucreries*, shines like a beacon in the dark.

34 Mattingly and Hitchner, "Roman Africa," pp. 169-70. Examples could be multiplied, e.g. René Cagnat, the greatest French historian of Roman North Africa in his generation, *Lambèse (Guides en Algérie à l'usage des touristes et des archéologues)* (Paris, 1893), pp. 14-15: "Rome avait réussi à répandre dans tout le pays les bienfaits

de sa puissante civilisation, l'islamisme le replongea dans la barbarie pour plusieurs siècles." And he continues, "Si nous avons conquis l'Algérie et la Tunisie, c'est pour les arracher à la stérilité, pour y renouer les chaînons de la tradition romaine." Note also Jean Baradez, dedicating his great work, *Fossatum Africae: recherches aériennes sur l'organisation des confins sahariens à l'époque romaine* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1949), not to the advance of scholarship, but to "l'œuvre civilisatrice de la France" (p. 362).