

**Concepts, Conquests, and Contexts:
Portrayals of the Seventh-Century Islamic Conquests in
Modern Histories of Morocco**

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes instances of historical writing that have contributed to a nationalist discourse about Morocco and its history. I explore how modern historians, writing in both Arabic and French, construct and define their historical objects of analysis, and how these historical objects are rendered in chronological and narrative form. In order to compare these historiographical elements in different texts, I examine the construction of historical narratives about one particular historical event: the Islamic conquests of the Maghrib in the seventh century.

Chapter One is a study of the “first national history” of Morocco, *Kitāb al-Istiḳṣā*, written by Aḥmad ibn Khālīd al-Nāṣirī (1835-97). Al-Nāṣirī’s primary historical object is the “Maghrib al-Aqṣā,” a spatial concept associated with the territory of the royal ‘Alawī sultanate. The seventh-century conquests of the Maghrib serve as a critical narrative juncture in al-Nāṣirī’s text because they connect Arabian Islamic dynastic history to the space of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā. In this way, al-Nāṣirī’s conquest narrative weaves together the ideas of territorial sovereignty and dynastic continuity, both of which were central to the discourse of the ‘Alawī sultanate at the end of the nineteenth century.

In Chapter Two, I explore how French colonial scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries employed different historical objects to tell the history of the seventh-century conquests. The historical writings of Ernest Mercier (1840-1907) and Émile-Félix Gautier (1864-1940) are narratives about the region of “North Africa” (in French, *l’Afrique septentrionale* and *L’Afrique du Nord*) and its inhabitants, the Arab and Berber races. By examining Mercier’s and Gautier’s definition and usage of these concepts, I show that they understood the region and its

inhabitants as unchanging. Due to this underlying assumption, the arguments that these authors make about the *past* of North Africa are directly linked to their understandings of the colonial *present*. Indeed, my analysis demonstrates how these authors' historical writings about the Islamic conquest of North Africa reflected their political opinions on modalities of French colonization of the region.

Chapter Three focuses on the 1948 history *al-Ḥarakāt al-istiqlāliyya fī al-Maghrib al-‘arabī* penned by the Moroccan nationalist ‘Allal al-Fāsī (1910-1974). In this text, al-Fāsī asserts the historical existence of a Maghribī patriotism, carried by all Maghribians, in the region of the “Arab Maghrib.” Al-Fāsī does not treat the coming of Islam in the seventh century as a conquest. Rather, it was a moment of transformation which affirmed and strengthened the patriotic spirit of the Maghrib. I argue that, on the one hand, this conception of Maghribī history refuted the claims made by colonial scholars. Whereas scholars like Gautier argued that North Africa congenitally lacked political consciousness, al-Fāsī renders political consciousness the central focus of his history. On the other hand, al-Fāsī’s nationalist conception of an everlasting country and region, with a homogeneous and enduring people, mirrors the conceptual framing of French colonial authors. To conclude, I examine how al-Fāsī’s narrative locates Moroccan religiopolitical authority among *all* Maghribians, rather than in the figure of the sultan. This perspective contrasts with that of al-Nāṣirī, who bolstered the exclusive authority of the royal ‘Alawī sultanate through his historical narrative.

Notes on Usage

Transliteration of Arabic words follows the standards of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES). For the sake of clarity and consistency, I use comprehensive diacritics (with initial *hamza* omitted) every time that an Arabic word is used. However, words which are commonly used in English, such as Maghrib and Islam are left with their conventional spelling in English and are without italics. For proper names of persons, I use Arabic transliterations for individuals who wrote primarily in Arabic and established French forms for people who predominantly wrote in French. When I use place names, I provide the most familiar form. However, when I am citing or paraphrasing writing in Arabic or French, I provide the Arabic transliteration or French form. I also provide the most familiar form in parentheses.

All translations of Arabic and French citations are my own, unless otherwise indicated. I have also chosen to include the original French citations in the body of the text, and I have provided the English translation of all French citations as footnotes.

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Introduction

1. Aim of the Study

Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Moroccan sultanate underwent significant structural transformations. From the modernizing reforms implemented by nineteenth-century sultans to the establishment of the French protectorate in the country in 1912 to the mobilization of the nationalist independence movement, major changes to political and cultural systems took place in the modern period of Moroccan history. Living through these turbulent times, Moroccan historians wrote narratives that connected their present to the past. Needless to say, “the past” is a broad and abstract concept, and my statement that historians connected present to past is generic. However, I use the concept of “the past” here, without further specification, precisely because the issue of specifying *what kind* of pasts historians conceived of will be the subject of the present text.

The following questions provide the basis of my inquiry: What forms did historical writing about Morocco take in the modern period? How did historians, both Moroccan and French, frame their historical writings? What did they choose as their central historical object? For example, did authors think that they were narrating the past of a people, a territory, a dynasty, or a religion? How did these historical objects become rendered in chronological and narrative form? What was the temporal scope of these histories? How were distinct historical events linked to one another? More broadly, how did different forms of historical writing, arising from different discursive traditions, relate to one another?

With these questions guiding my research, my thesis examines works of historical writing about Morocco penned by four different authors. I begin with an analysis of a nineteenth-century text written by the Moroccan bureaucrat, legislator, and amateur historian Aḥmad ibn Khālīd al-Nāṣirī (1835-97). I then explore two cases of French colonial historical writing. I discuss the conception of history developed by the Orientalist scholar Ernest Mercier (1840-1907), as well as the geographer Émile-Félix Gautier (1864-1940). In the final chapter, I examine the historical writing of the Moroccan nationalist leader par excellence, ‘Allal al-Fāṣī (1910-1974).

Considering these varied works of historical writing has led me to ask another set of questions about the contexts in which these narratives were written. Whether consciously or not, these historians’ interpretations of the past were interpretations of the present that they faced, as well as their visions of the future. I argue that the choices made by each author in their historical writing reflect the historical present in which they were living, and the political aims they envisioned for the future. In the words of the Moroccan historian Abdallah Laroui (b. 1933), “The structure and logic of the present become means of ordering the facts of the past, so providing a ready-made system of interpretation.”¹ The tendency to interpret the past in terms of the present will be evident in my analysis, wherein I consider the historical context of each of these authors, and the contemporary political implications of their approach to historical writing.

The works of historical writing that I examine here offer a sampling of perspectives from different periods of time and historiographical traditions. Each text presents a history that features a distinct approach to writing about the past. By comparing these works of historical writing, I am able to highlight the rich diversity of conceptualizations and interpretations of

¹Abdallah Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay, L'histoire du Maghreb*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 51.

Morocco's history. At the same time, in order to give emphasis to the nuance and specificities of certain works of historical writing, I chose to exclude other perspectives from my present analysis. Although the sources that I analyze presently have been deeply influential on different discursive traditions, both in Morocco and internationally, there are many other major works of historical writing that were excluded from my present study that deserve equal attention.

2. Method of Analysis

I analyze these works of historical writing by focusing on two key elements. The first is the central historical objects in each text. By historical objects, I mean the set of concepts that guide the structure of the work of historical writing. For example, in the case of al-Nāṣirī, the “Maghrib al-Aqṣā” is the central spatial concept and the main focus of his study. On the other hand, the French colonial historians that I discuss use the concept of “North Africa” as the central historical object of their studies. These historical objects, which I will examine in detail below, provide the scaffold on which the historical narrative of each text is built. Although these concepts often appear to be conventional, and at times even natural, my examination of their use in works of historical writing reveals how they serve political aims in specific moments in history.

It will become evident below that, in each text analyzed, the primary historical objects are either spatial concepts, or they are directly related to spatial concepts. By highlighting the definition and usage of territorial frames and related concepts, I am able to explore the significance of conceptualizations of Northwestern African space for Moroccan and French state discourses. In my analysis of al-Nāṣirī's text, for example, I explore how his emphasis on the spatial concept the Maghrib al-Aqṣā reflected the sultanate's efforts to assert its territorial

sovereignty at the end of the nineteenth century. Simply by calling attention to his choice of terminology, I demonstrate how al-Nāṣirī's text is a discursive articulation which bolsters the authority of the sultanate. In this way, my thesis contributes to the growing body of work which historicizes spatial concepts which often appear natural.² It is my aim, in the following pages, to highlight how a diverse sample of historians articulated competing historical claims to the space within which the country of Morocco, as we know it today, exists. In fact, Laroui envisioned a similar project when he wrote in his own history of the Maghrib: "The ideal, of course, would be to start with a history of historiography; to trace the genesis of the concept of the Maghrib and discover how it ultimately took on an objective definition."³

After clarifying the major historical objects featured in each text, I analyze a second element: the historical narrative proper. Of course, these two elements, the historical object and the historical narrative, are entwined; the historical object is rendered through the historical narrative. Thus, in my analysis I show how certain concepts function in the historical narrative of each work of historical writing. For example, I ask what role does the concept of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā play in the narrative told by al-Nāṣirī? In short, when examining the historical narrative, I ask how a given author puts his historical objects into use. What story is told through the use of his historical objects?

A comprehensive analysis of the complete historical narratives of all four historians that I have chosen to study is well beyond the purview of the present thesis. Indeed, in some cases, these histories span from the ninth century BCE to the twentieth century CE. Thus, in order to systematically analyze and draw conclusions from this extensive area of study, I have chosen to

² Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Inventions of TimeSpace Realities: Towards an Understanding of Our Historical Systems," *Geography* 73, no. 4 (1988): 289–97.

³ Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib*, 8.

limit my area of focus to one part of these authors' historical narratives. Across all of the texts that I examine, the conquests of the Northwestern part of Africa in the seventh century by Muslim conquerors is a central narrative element. However, not all authors share the same perspective on what actually happened, how it happened, and its impact on the subsequent historical narrative that they tell.

The historian and anthropologist Abdelmajid Hannoum has analyzed a wide range of literature to show that the seventh-century conquests of the Maghrib have been portrayed differently in a variety of genres and traditions including classical Islamic chronicles, oral traditions, French colonial scholarship, and modern Arabic and French novels.⁴ He shows that there are major discrepancies among conquest narratives, both regarding what can be considered factual events, as well as the author's interpretations of these events. While I study a narrower selection of sources than does Hannoum, the diversity of portrayals of the conquests is still evident in the narratives that I discuss. While some authors treat the conquests as a constructive moment, crucial for the historical formation of the country or region, others construe it as having a damaging impact on the region. As we will see, differences among the portrayals of the conquests will reflect the authors' different understandings of the country and region, and their understanding of the nature of the people who have inhabited this space.

My thesis takes into consideration both the central historical objects of each work of historical writing and how these objects are rendered in what is considered a key moment in the text's historical narrative. From a close examination and comparison of these elements in the historical writing of four different sources, I elucidate: (1) Different conceptions of the space of

⁴ Abdelmajid Hannoum, *Colonial Histories, Post-Colonial Memories: The Legend of the Kahina, a North African Heroine* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001).

Northwestern Africa and what defined it. (2) Different conceptions of how this space existed *historically*, that is to say, what defined it, not only in the present, but also in the past. (3) How this definition of space influenced the historical claims made by each author, and, conversely, how historical claims made by each author influenced how he defined his historical objects.

More broadly, I also discuss how these instantiations of historical writing were connected to the contemporary ideological stances of the author. Throughout, I ask how present-day conceptions of political power and the body politic may have influenced the elements of historical writing that I discuss. Moreover, I ask how these works of historical writing functioned as discursive articulations in the historical moment in which they were written. Indeed, when considered together, these elements of historical writing shed light on key pillars of different and sometimes oppositional discourses about the country of Morocco.

3. Previous Scholarship on the Theme

Scholarship of the past twenty years has made impressive strides in re-conceptualizing Arab intellectual history.⁵ Youssef Choueiri's 2003 *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation-State*,⁶ for example, offers a useful study of modern developments within Arab historiography. Choueiri traces major trends and transformations in modern Arab historical writing, while also detailing the historical specificities of particular texts and authors. In this way, he is able to draw conclusions about the modern transformations of Arab historiography without relying on a model that assumes the of passive absorption of western

⁵ For a detailed discussion of recent developments in the field of Arab intellectual history, see Omnia El Shakry, "Rethinking Arab Intellectual History: Epistemology, Historicism, Secularism," *Modern Intellectual History* 18, no. 2 (2021): 547-72.

⁶ Youssef M Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation-State*, 2nd ed., (New York: Routledge, 2003).

European liberal thought. My research, which chronologically examines shifts in Moroccan and French historical writing, aligns with research projects like that of Choueiri.⁷ However, my research takes a much more narrow focus on one country and the narration of a single historical event.

Another area of research that has informed my present discussion focuses on the field of Orientalism and French colonial scholarship. Historian Aziz al-Azmeh's seminal study of Orientalist historical writing⁸ provides a theoretical roadmap for French colonial historical writing and its use of Arabic historical sources. In addition, other critical studies of French colonialism in North Africa have focused on the influence of the colonial fields of ethnology and geography on colonial scholarship and policy.⁹ Of course, more recent critical inquiries into colonial and Orientalist intellectual history stand on the shoulders of earlier, seminal critiques of Orientalism and efforts to decolonize history.¹⁰ All of these studies have contributed to my understanding and analysis of French colonial conceptual frameworks.

My research also draws on the findings of the historian Ramzi Rouighi, who has shed light on the major conceptual frameworks used in historical writing about the Maghrib and the people

⁷ For additional examples of recent studies of Arab historical writing, see also Yoav Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past: Historians and History Writing in Twentieth-Century Egypt*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁸ Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn in Modern Scholarship: A Study in Orientalism*, (London: Third World Centre, 1981).

⁹ For more on colonial ethnography in French North Africa, Edmund Burke III, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam*, Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2014; Abdelmajid Hannoum, "Colonialism and Knowledge in Algeria: The Archives of the Arab Bureau," *History and Anthropology* 12, no. 4 (2001). For more on colonial geography, see Florence Deprest, *Géographes en Algérie (1880-1950). Savoirs universitaires en situation coloniale*, (Belin, 2009); Alain Messaoudi, *Les arabisants et la France coloniale: Savants, conseillers, méditateurs (1780-1930)*, (Paris: ENS Éditions, 2015).

¹⁰ See, for example, Mohamed-Chérif Sahli, *Décoloniser l'histoire*, (Paris: Maspero, 1965); Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

who inhabit the region. Rouighi's 2018 study¹¹ provides a guide to understanding the history of foundational concepts which appear in Arabic and French literature about the Maghrib. He shows that the concepts of Berbers, Berbérie, North Africa, and the Maghrib itself are key notions, and their use as historical objects has been connected to contemporary ideological currents, both in modern and the medieval literature. Rouighi argues that the historical processes by which these concepts are put to use and rendered conventional are often "hidden in plain sight."¹² This perspective also informs my own research, wherein I take a closer look at concepts and narratives that appear conventional and natural.

¹¹ Ramzi Rouighi, *Inventing the Berbers: History and Ideology in the Maghrib*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2019).

¹² Rouighi, *Inventing the Berbers*, 192.

Chapter 1: Al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā and the Conquest Narrative of Aḥmad ibn Khālīd al-Nāṣirī

1. Introduction

The historical text *Kitāb al-istiḡṣā li-akhbār duwal al-maghrib al-aqṣā* (The Book of Investigation into the Events of the Dynasties of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā; hereafter, *Kitāb al-Istiḡṣā*),¹³ written by Aḥmad ibn Khālīd al-Nāṣirī (1835-97), has become a mainstay of the Moroccan national literary canon. Since 1894, when it was printed on mechanical press in Cairo, the text has gone through three printed editions.¹⁴ In 2001, the most recent edition was published in Casablanca with a preface written by Muhammad al-Ash‘arī, then the Minister of Culture in Morocco. Al-Ash‘arī’s laudatory introduction emphasizes the national significance of the text: He writes that it “forms the base of our national memory [*dhākiratīnā al-waṭaniyya*] and the defining characteristics [*ma‘ālim*] of our culture that has its sources in the manifestations of Moroccan identity [*al-huwiyya al-maghribiyya*] through time and space.”¹⁵

Born and educated in the city of Salé, al-Nāṣirī served as a legist and bureaucrat to the *makhzan* (the sultanate’s state apparatus). While occupying different posts for offices of the sultanate’s bureaucracy, he was obliged to travel to different parts of the country. While working as a bureaucrat, al-Nāṣirī remained an active and relatively prolific scholar. It was while he was working in the city of El Jadida that he finished writing *Kitāb al-Istiḡṣā* in the early 1880’s.

¹³ Aḥmad b. Khalid al-Nāṣirī al-Salawī, *Kitāb al-istiḡṣā li-akhbār duwal al-maghrib al-aqṣā*, ed. Aḥmad al-Nāṣirī (Casablanca: Manshūrāt Wīzārat al-Thaqāfa wa al-Ittiṣāl, 1954-56).

¹⁴ Biographical information about al-Nāṣirī and bibliographical information about the editions of his text has been compiled by the author’s sons, Ja‘afar and Muḥammad. They explain that the text was first printed in Cairo because there were limited printing capacities available in Morocco at the time. See al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiḡṣā*, 1: VII-XXXVII.

¹⁵ Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiḡṣā*, 1: I.

Subsequently, he continued working as a bureaucrat and occasionally he taught courses in jurisprudence at the prestigious Qarawiyyin University in Fez.

A major reason that al-Nāṣirī's historical writing has come to be understood as a monument of Moroccan national identity is due to his pathbreaking use of a new historical object. *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā* was not a universal history, nor was it a history of a single dynasty or city. Instead, al-Nāṣirī used a new paradigm. He told the story of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā, that is, the “Far Maghrib,” which is commonly associated with present day Morocco (in contemporary Arabic, *al-Maghrib*) and its contemporary territorial boundaries. This is why *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā* is today known as “the first national history of Morocco.”¹⁶

In what follows in this chapter, I examine this distinctive element of al-Nāṣirī's text. How did al-Nāṣirī define and employ the term Maghrib al-Aqṣā? What role does it play in his historical narrative? What was the ideological importance of the concept of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā at the end of the nineteenth century? My analysis shows that, through al-Nāṣirī's use of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā as a historical unit of analysis, he asserts the enduring territorial integrity of the sultanate. At the same time, his narrative also gives emphasis to the Islamic origins of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā. Paradoxically, this means that his narrative scheme originates *outside* of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā, both geographically and temporally. His narrative begins in Arabia, and it follows the histories of Muslim conquerors into the Maghrib al-Aqṣā. In this way, al-Nāṣirī's

¹⁶ Susan Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 86. This aspect of the text was highlighted by the French Orientalist Évariste Lévi-Provençal in 1922, and has been repeated by historians of Morocco and the Maghrib. Évariste Lévi-Provençal, *Les Historiens des Chorfa, Essai sur la littérature historique et biographique au Maroc du XVIe au XXe siècle* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1922), 350-368. For example, in a recent study, historian Eric Calderwood, maintains that the text is a monument of Moroccan national identity because “al-Nāṣirī set out to do what no one had done before: write a comprehensive history of Morocco as an independent political entity... [he] treated Moroccan history as a unique and independent discipline.” Eric Calderwood, “The Beginning (or End) of Moroccan History: Historiography, Translation, and Modernity in Ahmad b. Khalid al-Nasiri and Clemente Cerdeira,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44 (2012): 399.

history integrates two ideas that were crucial to the political discourse of the Moroccan sultanate; the contemporary sultanate's territorial integrity is woven into a dynastic history that gives emphasis to the Arabian Islamic origins of the 'Alawī sultanate.

2. The Sultanate at the End of the Nineteenth Century

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Moroccan sultanate faced unprecedented threats to its authority. Firstly, challenges derived from the growth of a new global economic system. Around the world, through processes of economic integration and peripheralization, economies of non-European states became dependent upon Europe as the core of the capitalist world economy.¹⁷ Whereas Istanbul, Cairo, and Tunis were yoked to the world system and owed debts to European capitalist interests by the nineteenth century, the Moroccan sultanate became financially attached to this system only after the turn of the nineteenth century.

The French conquest of Algiers in 1830 brought the sultanate into a tempestuous international arrangement. France, Britain, and to a lesser extent Spain and Germany sought to pursue their geo-political and commercial interests in Morocco. They competed against each other for influence in the internal affairs of the *makhzan*, and they wielded their influence by force.¹⁸ In order to cope with new financial and military pressures, a succession of sultans

¹⁷ Beginning in the sixteenth century, western European financial and commercial activities sowed the seeds of an international economic system which would come to transform the entire world by the nineteenth century. The world systems theory has been elaborated in detail by Immanuel Wallerstein. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Essential Wallerstein*, (New York: The New Press, 2000), 71-102. Eric Wolf also examines the growth of the capitalist world economy, and sets his focus on the history of peripheralized subaltern polities and populations. Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*. Rev ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

¹⁸ Two major military defeats, by France (1844) and Spain (1860), betrayed the Moroccan sultanate's military weakness *vis-à-vis* European powers. Moreover, the latter defeat led to a treaty with Spain that put significant strain on the sultanate's finances. It drained the Moroccan treasury and the *makhzan* was compelled to raise its first international loan, from London, in order to pay for the settlement. This marked a major turning point for the sultanate, after which it became deeply indebted—like many neighboring states—to European financial centers. Germain Ayache provides further details on the financial and administrative impact of the 1860 Teutuan War in "Aspects de la crise financière au Maroc après l'expédition espagnole de 1860," *Revue Historique* 220, no. 2 (1958): 271-310.

implemented a series of reforms (*iṣlāḥ*) to shore up Moroccan power. Defeats on the battlefield prompted the sultan Sīdī Muḥammad's (r. 1859-1873) project to reform the military and he established a new standing army, the '*askar niẓāmī*'.¹⁹ Subsequently, sultan Mawlāy al-Ḥasan (r. 1873-94) intensified the reform actions of the state. In addition to sourcing weapons and training for the *niẓāmī* corps from Europe, he also attempted to stabilize the currency and implement a uniform system of taxation. Through the development of an ordered administration and a *dirigiste* political culture, the sultanate sought to fend off European encroachment.

At the same time that the sultanate attempted to fortify itself against international threats, resistance movements within the sultanate's realm constituted yet another threat to the authority of the sultanate. Indeed, a number of domestic challengers were opposed to the *makhzan*'s top-down program of reforms, especially when it compromised their own authority. Ultimately, by the end of the nineteenth century, the sultanate found itself in a precarious situation. State consolidation and reform seemed to be the only way to cope with the ineluctable pressures of the capitalist world system. At the same time, the *makhzan*'s reform measures disrupted the preexisting balances of power in the country.

As the 'Alawī sultanate faced both external pressures and internal provocations, a patriotic discourse started to take root that buttressed the authority of the sultanate. An emergent class of *makhzan* employees played a key role in the enunciation of 'Alawī power vis-à-vis challengers, both internal and external.²⁰ A major contribution to the articulation of the

¹⁹ The term *niẓāmī* (regular) derives from the first corps of this type, the *nizam-i cedit* which was founded by Ottoman Sultan Selim III in the 1790's. Similar projects, led by Muhammad 'Ali Pasha in Egypt, Ahmad Bey in Tunis, and 'Abd al-Qādir in Algeria also preceded the Moroccan sultanate's efforts at reform. Bennison shows that all of these models contributed to the development of the Moroccan "new order" reform project. Amira K. Bennison, "The 'New Order' and Islamic Order: The Introduction of the Nizāmī Army in the Western Maghrib and Its Legitimation, 1830–1873," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004): 591–612.

²⁰ Sahar Bazzaz, *Forgotten Saints: History, Power and Politics in the Making of Modern Morocco*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 39. Mohamed Tozy, *Monarchie et Islam politique au Maroc*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1999), 25-74.

makhzan's discourse was the historical writing of Aḥmad ibn Khālīd al-Nāṣirī. As a bureaucrat and legist, al-Nāṣirī was not only a witness to the transformations of the nineteenth century; he himself was a product of them. Indeed, his work of historical writing, *Kitāb al-Istiṣṣā*, was both about and for the Moroccan sultanate.²¹

3. Writing a History of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā

When looking at a text that is titled “The Book of Investigation into the Events of the Dynasties of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā,” it is evident that the Maghrib al-Aqṣā is the central historical object in the text. One might assume the meaning of the concept of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā should be obvious. However, the term, which can be translated as “the Far Maghrib” or “the Extreme Maghrib,” had been in use since at least the twelfth century,²² and it had been defined in numerous ways since that time.

For al-Nāṣirī, the *contemporary* Maghrib al-Aqṣā is the sultanate of which he was a subject. It is thus ruled by the ‘Alawī dynasty, with its territory in the westernmost part of northern Africa. In terms of its political, dynastic, and territorial features, it is what we would today call Morocco (*al-Maghrib*, in Arabic) and the term Maghrib al-Aqṣā is now often translated into English as such. However, al-Nāṣirī did not only use the term Maghrib al-Aqṣā to describe his *present* time; the aim of the text is to narrate the history of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā in the *past*. Indeed, *Kitāb al-Istiṣṣā* is a dynastic chronicle that extends from the emergence of

²¹ This text was not immediately given the approval of the *makhzan* under sultan Mawlāy al-Ḥasan. According to historian Abdallah Laroui, the initial rejection of *Kitāb al-Istiṣṣā* was probably due to the positive portrayal of the Algerian anticolonial resistance leader ‘Abd al-Qādir, which seemed to undermine the Moroccan sultanate’s authority and military efficacy. Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual*, trans. Diarmid Cammell (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1976), 22. For more on the reception and publication of *Kitāb al-Istiṣṣā*, see Levi Provençal, Lévi-Provençal, *Les Historiens des Chorfā*, 358-360.

²² The tripartite division of the Maghrib is used as early as the eleventh century by the geographer Muḥammad al-Idrīsī (1100-1165) in his 1154 *Kitāb nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq*. Georges Yver, “al-Maghrib,” In *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1960-2005).

Islam in the seventh century to the history of the ‘Alawī dynasty into the nineteenth century. Originally published in four volumes, the first part covers the history of the prophet, the Medinan caliphate, the conquests of the Maghrib and al-Andalus, the establishment of the Idrīsīd rule at the end of the eighth century, up until the al-Murābiṭūn (Almoravids) and the al-Muwahḥidūn (Almohads) dynasties who reigned from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. The next volume continues the chronology, focusing on the history of the Marīnids and the Waṭṭāsids. The third volume covers the history of the Sa’adian dynasty, which ruled in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The fourth and final volume brings the historical narrative into al-Nāṣirī’s present, giving the history of the ‘Alawī dynasty, who took power in the seventeenth century. Al-Nāṣirī placed all of these dynastic histories under the label of “*akhbār duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā*.” How, then, does al-Nāṣirī define the Maghrib al-Aqṣā as an entity that exists over the long course of history? That is to say, how does the Maghrib al-Aqṣā function as a historical object which is then rendered in chronological and narrative form?

In a prefatory section to his text, al-Nāṣirī defines the Maghrib al-Aqṣā and explains its role in his historical narrative. According to this definition, the Maghrib al-Aqṣā is one of three kingdoms (*mamālik*) in the Maghrib.²³ The Maghrib, he explains, is a land (*bilād*) which extends from the Atlantic Ocean to “the land of Barqa,”²⁴ latitudinally, and the Mediterranean to the “sand dunes between the land of Sudan and the land of the Berbers,”²⁵ longitudinally. He then defines three kingdoms within this space. First, he describes:

²³ The Maghrib is a key spatial category in great deal of scholarship. Naturally, the category has been used and defined in different ways. My present analysis will remain limited to examining the usage of the term in the texts that I have chosen to analyze. Thus, I will focus here on the definition provided by al-Nāṣirī. In subsequent chapters, I will examine how other works of history-writing use the term differently.

²⁴ Often called Cyrenaica in European languages, Barqa here refers to a region located in modern day Libya.

²⁵ Al-Nāṣirī’s usage of the social categories such as Arab and Berber in his conquest narrative deserve further attention, and they are related to the definition of spatial concepts as well. However, this topic is beyond the purview of my present research.

The kingdom of Ifrīqiya, that is the Maghrib al-Adnā [in English, the Near Maghrib]. In the early days of Islam (*fi ṣadr al-islām*), the seat of the kingdom was the city of Qayrawān, and today it is the city of Tunis. It is called al-Adnā because it is closest to the land (*bilād*) of the Arabs and the house of the Caliphs (*dār al-khulāfa*) in the Hijaz.

After Ifrīqiya, there is the kingdom of the Maghrib al-Awsat [in English, the Central Maghrib], the seat of the kingdom is Tilimsān (Tlemcen) and Jazā'ir (Algiers) of the Banī Mazghana. This kingdom today is in the hands of the *Franj* of France, they have ruled it since 1830, and its people (*ahl*) are Muslim.

After that there is the kingdom of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā, and it is called al-Aqṣā because it is the furthest of the three kingdoms from the house of the Caliphs in the early days of Islam. The western border of this Aqṣā is the Atlantic Ocean, the eastern border is Moulouya River and the Tāzā mountain, the northern border is the Roman sea, and the southern border is the Drin Mountain [in the Atlas Range]. This what Ibn Khaldūn said.²⁶

This passage presents a clear tripartite division of the land of the Maghrib. Each of the three units (kingdoms) is associated with a discrete territory, and the names of the kingdoms derive from their relative distance from the caliphate in the East in the beginning of Islam.

While al-Nāṣirī provides a clear spatial definition, the temporal element remains ambiguous. On the one hand, the definition indicates that these kingdoms are contemporary because he identifies the present capital of the Maghrib al-Adnā and the recent French takeover of the Maghrib al-Awsat. At the same time, he uses the beginnings of Islam (*ṣadr al-islām*) as a reference point, but he does not explain whether the tripartite division existed at the beginning of Islam. Additionally, he ends this definition by stating that it derives from the fourteenth-century source, Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406).²⁷ By combining references to the seventh century, the fourteenth century, and the nineteenth century in a single definition of territorial limits, al-

²⁶ Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā*, 1:77.

²⁷ The fact that Ibn Khaldūn, writing in the fourteenth century, had a different vision of the Maghrib, and its spatial and political boundaries, was not acknowledged by al-Nāṣirī.

Nāṣirī's writing gives the impression that these three spatial units have a permanent existence.

However, shortly thereafter, he sets forth the historically accurate limits for usage of these terms.

In the following passage, al-Nāṣirī delineates temporal boundaries for the applicability of the concept of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā as a historical object. I quote this excerpt at length, as it provides an outline of the early parts of the historical narrative in *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā*:

We have said that the main aim in this book is the study of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā. However, we will first discuss the history (*akhbār*) of the entire Maghrib. We will now discuss in detail the emirs (*umarā'*) of it [the Maghrib] sent by the caliphs of the Mashriq, when their gaze and shadow extended to it [the Maghrib]. The caliphate, in the early period of Islam, was united and was ruled collectively, effectively encompassing all the kingdoms (*mamālik*) of Islam from East to West, so that no district or city separated (*yakhruj*) from the gaze of the great caliphate. This was observed religiously, and it was a form of rule towards which all gravitated, and no emirate (*imāra*) or province (*wilāya*) was true/valid (*taṣiḥh*) unless it was dependent on it [i.e. the caliphate]. Eventually, the caliphate weakened and its shadow receded, the kingdoms of Islam that were far from their home (*dār*) and separated from it. The caliphate was broken up by revolutionaries that were from the descendants of Hāshim and others. Displaced emirs imposed their rule wherever they could, and the single, unified order became multiple and divided. For this reason, we are now discussing the history of the entire Maghrib, and we discuss the governors directed by caliphs, one after the other, until the time of Idrīs bin 'Abdallāh, the sole ruler (*al-mustabidd bi-mulk*) over the kingdom of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā. He separated it [the Maghrib al-Aqṣā] from the Islamic kingdoms, and only then will we discuss it [the Maghrib al-Aqṣā] in particular, as we had planned. As for now, it is not possible to speak only of it [the Maghrib al-Aqṣā], because it is part of the kingdoms (*mamālik*) of the Maghrib. In the early days of Islam, the ruler (*wālī*), directed by the caliph, ruled over Ifrīqiya and all that is beyond it, from the lands of Maghrib to the Atlantic ocean (*min al-bilād al-maghrib ilā baḥr al-muḥīṭ*)."²⁸

In this passage, al-Nāṣirī recognizes that the tripartite division of the Maghrib was not, in fact, relevant at the time of the conquests in the seventh century. According to our author, the

²⁸ Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā*, 1:78.

Maghrib al-Aqṣā did not exist independently until Idrīs bin ‘Abdallah established his rule in 788. Prior to the rule of the Idrīsīd dynasty, the “shadow” of the caliphate extended across the entire Maghrib; in other words, it was unified under caliphal rule. For this reason, he tells us, he examines the history of the Maghrib, in general, in the period prior to the establishment of the Idrīsīd emirate.²⁹ In this way, al-Nāṣirī attempts to historicize the Maghrib al-Aqṣā as a spatial unit. He does not project the concept into some abstract conception of the beginning of time, although this would be a characteristic of both French colonial works of historical writing and Moroccan nationalist historical writing in the first half of the twentieth century. Romantic chronological schemes of this type will be discussed further in Chapters Two and Three. Instead, al-Nāṣirī gives the spatial unit an exact date of emergence in the eighth century, when Idrīs bin ‘Abdallah established a distinct Maghrib al-Aqṣā.³⁰

4. External Origins

According to al-Nāṣirī’s prefatory explanations, the Maghrib al-Aqṣā is both a spatially and temporally defined unit of analysis. It is the westernmost zone in the land of the Maghrib, and it emerged at the end of the eighth century. Interestingly, al-Nāṣirī begins his historical narrative well outside the boundaries, both spatial and temporal, that he sets up for the concept of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā. His first chapter gives a history of the early period of Islam, focusing on the prophet Muhammad and the Medinan caliphs. Accordingly, the narrative begins in Arabia, and

²⁹ The beginning of Idrīsīd rule is commonly taken to be the moment when Morocco was founded.

³⁰ While this moment is commonly associated with the beginning of Moroccan history, the concept of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā was not in use at this time. See Yver, “al-Maghrib.” For example, Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam (803-870), who wrote the earliest extant historical source on the conquests, uses city names like Ṭarablus (Tripoli) and Qayrawān, as well as topographical features such as mountain ranges and rivers, as geographical markers. Additionally, the Maghrib and Ifrīqiya orient ‘Abd al-Hakam’s narrative because these spatial units were associated with contemporary or historical polities. He does not use the terms Maghrib al-Adnā, Awsaṭ, or Aqṣā, since they had not yet been conceptualized as part of the geography of the Maghrib. Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt, North Africa, and Spain*, ed. Charles Torrey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), 192-204.

the geographical orientation of this first chapter remains centered around Medina, from where the first caliphs ruled. Al-Nāṣirī does incorporate sections about the military expansion of Islam, which includes Maghribī locations such as Ifrīqiya, but the Maghrib is in no way the central geographical focus of this early chapter.

Why, in a text with explicit focus on the Maghrib al-Aqṣā, does our author begin his history in the Arabian Peninsula of the seventh-century? One possible reason that al-Nāṣirī chose to begin with the history of the prophet and the Medinan caliphate might be that this framing echoes traditional Arabic history-writing about the territorial expansion of the Islamic caliphate.³¹ However, it was likely not merely for the sake of a literary tradition that al-Nāṣirī chose to begin his historical narrative with the beginnings of Islam. Rather, the traveling course of al-Nāṣirī's narrative allows him to discuss historical events that were ideologically important for the contemporary 'Alawī sultanate.

The prophet and the emergence of Islam were key symbols in the ideology supporting the 'Alawī sultanate in the nineteenth century. Indeed, historian Amira Bennison has shown that, beginning in the 1840's, a spate of literature, written by state employees and provincial 'ulama', couched their defense of the *makhzan*'s modernizing reforms in relevant religio-political language, and construed these transformations as religious imperatives.³² Specifically, the authors of these texts wrote about the importance of the *niẓāmī* military corps as an instrument of "jihad" against foreign, "infidel" pressure. The patriotic discourse elaborated by makhzan officials like al-Nāṣirī, construed political loyalty to the sultanate as a form of religious devotion.

³¹ According to Laroui, the prophetic period is the "nucleus" of history in the Arabic "classical vision of history." Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual*, 19-24.

³² Bennison, "The 'New Order' and Islamic Order," 602-608.

Thus, al-Nāṣirī's decision to locate the origins of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā *outside* of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā reflects his faithfulness to a patriotic, pro-*makhzan*, vision of history. By constructing a narrative that connects the history of Islam to the history of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā, al-Nāṣirī fuses together key components of 'Alawī ideology into a single historical narrative. In this way, al-Nāṣirī's narrative provided a crucial function in discursively legitimating 'Alawī territorial sovereignty in his contemporary era. This was especially important at a time when the sultanate was facing threats both from European encroachment and internal challengers.

5. The Islamic Conquests as a Crucial Juncture

The Islamic conquests of the Maghrib constitute a crucial historical juncture in the narrative of *Kitāb al-Istiṣḥā*. They provide the narrative bridge between the history of early Islam and the history of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā. Thus far, the passages that I have excerpted from *Kitāb al-Istiṣḥā* come from a section that prefaces the chapters about the conquests of the Maghrib. They are meant to orient the reader before al-Nāṣirī delves into the historical narrative proper. I will now turn to examine how al-Nāṣirī implements these prefatory remarks in his narration of the seventh-century conquests.

The first notable element in al-Nāṣirī's historical narrative is its form. The elementary units that structure *Kitāb al-Istiṣḥā* are *akhbār* (sg. *khbar*). *Akhbār* are distinct narratives, each relating a single event or part of an event.³³ For example, the history of the Medinan caliphate is composed of a series of *akhbār* which, for the most part, narrate the reign of particular caliphs. The next set of *akhbār* focus on the conquest (*futuḥ*) of the Maghrib. The *akhbār* in this portion

³³ *Khbar* is the building-block of the classical genres of Arabic history-writing including annals, chronicles, examples, and prophetic *ḥadīth*. See Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn: An Essay in Reinterpretation*, (New York: Central European University Press, 2003), 107-119.; Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Al-kitāba al-tārīkhiya wa-l-ma'arifa al-tārīkhiya: muqaddima fī uṣūl ṣinā'at al-tārīkh al-'arabī*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī'a, 1990), 11-40.

of the text narrate distinct military campaigns, led by Muslim commanders. This then leads into the *akhbār* of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā, each of which narrates the history of a particular state (*dawla*), each led by a different ruler. By presenting a sequence of chronologically-ordered narrative elements, *akhbār*, al-Nāṣirī constructs a continuous, linear, historical narrative. This formal element thus serves to seamlessly connect a narrative that might otherwise appear to be cobbled together.

Taking into account the fact that “it is not possible to speak only of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā”³⁴ in the seventh century, al-Nāṣirī’s chapters on the conquests focus on narrating the conquests of the Maghrib, broadly conceived. The first *khbar* is about ‘Amr ibn al-Āṣ, who led a campaign from Egypt to Tripoli. According to al-Nāṣirī, he “was the first emir of the Muslims to set foot on the land of Maghrib, but he did not reach Ifrīqiya, nor was there Islam among the Berbers.”³⁵ He continues chronologically, narrating Muslim expeditions, both short-term raids and long-term conquests, further westward. The geographic trajectory of these campaigns often transcended the three spatial divisions of the Maghrib defined by al-Nāṣirī in his prefatory remarks. Despite this, he often uses these spatial units as geographical markers throughout his conquest narrative.

Al-Nāṣirī consistently makes reference to Ifrīqiya, the Maghrib al-Awsaṭ, and the Maghrib al-Aqṣā, as discrete entities. This is clear in his narration of the campaigns of Umayyad (661-750) military commanders. According to al-Nāṣirī’s account, the military commander ‘Uqba b. Nāfi’ (d.683) led a military campaign into the Maghrib in 666 and by 670 had founded the military city Qayrawān (which was located in modern day Tunisia). After this initial campaign, ‘Uqba was temporarily removed from his position and replaced by Abū al-Muhājir

³⁴ Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā*, 1:78.

³⁵ Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā*, 1:81.

Dīnār (d. 683). Abū al-Muhājir continued the military mission westwards, reaching areas in present day Algeria, but local resistance to the conquests emerged during Abū al-Muhājir's campaign. According to the sources cited by al-Nāṣirī, Abū al-Muhājir defeated a local force of Berbers and Byzantines, led by Kusayla, a Christian. The Muslim commander later concluded a peace treaty with Kusayla. In 682, 'Uqba was again reappointed and would become one of the most successful conquerors of territory west of Egypt. From Qayrawān, he oversaw attacks of cities across the southern coast of the Mediterranean, such as Baghya, Tlemcen and Tangiers, and he reached as far as the Atlantic ocean. Kusayla, who 'Uqba had, in al-Nāṣirī's account, mistreated after being reappointed as military commander, killed 'Uqba during the Muslim military commander's return journey near Tahūda in present day Algeria.³⁶

These campaigns, as described by al-Nāṣirī in his text, covered vast territories that went beyond the confines of tripartite geographical categories. Nonetheless, al-Nāṣirī categorizes his narrative using the terms Ifrīqiya, the Maghrib al-Awsaṭ, and the Maghrib al-Aqṣā. This is especially clear in his labeling of *akhbār*. For example, his account of Abū al-Muhājir's victory over Kusayla is in the *khbar* about the conquest of the Maghrib al-Awsaṭ. Subsequently, al-Nāṣirī calls 'Uqba's second campaign from Qayrawān to Ṭanja (Tangier) a conquest of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā'. In this way, al-Nāṣirī inserts his vision of a tripartite Maghrib into the history of the conquests, even though these spatial categories developed centuries after the conquests. I argue that this contradiction in his historical writing was ideologically useful. By grafting the Maghrib al-Aqṣā' onto the seventh century conquests, al-Nāṣirī was able to write a history that is defined both by the idea of Moroccan unity with Islamic history, and the territorial integrity of the country.

³⁶ Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā*, 1:83-97.

6. Conclusion

Al-Nāṣirī's historical writing can be understood as an example of a broader transformation in Arabic historical writing in the nineteenth century. Indeed, intellectual historian Youssef Choueiri has described how the territorialization of the modern state affected how historians framed their history. In this context, "[t]he new territory, designated as a fatherland or a nation-state, ceases to be an accidental theatre of a cyclical recurrence of events echoing the laws of the universe. It becomes in its own right the subject of historical treatment, lending its name to whichever dynasties are deemed worthy of the characteristics of its national identity."³⁷ Al-Nāṣirī's *Kitāb al-Istiṣṣā* was the first attempt to treat Maghrib al-Aqṣā as a historical object, in its own right.

At the same time, the importance al-Nāṣirī gives to Islamic history and dynastic history takes his narrative to places far beyond the territory of the sultanate. In this way, he brought together ideas that were symbolically important to the 'Alawī sultanate. As I have described above, a discourse of patriotic loyalty, couched in religious language, was taking root in the Moroccan sultanate in the nineteenth century. This was especially due to the contributions of *makhzan* bureaucrats like Al-Nāṣirī. *Kitāb al-Istiṣṣā* was, indeed, a major contribution to the growing discourse which encouraged loyalty to the sultanate and supported the sultan's *dirigiste* reforms. This was of crucial importance at a time when the authority of the sultanate was under threat and the *makhzan* needed to reassert its sovereignty.

In the following chapters, I explore how other traditions of historical writing conceptualized the past of Morocco, especially as it relates to the conquests of the seventh

³⁷ Youssef M. Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation-State*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003) 7.

century. As we will see in the next chapter, French colonial authors had a different political agenda, and this was reflected in their approach to writing history. Their conceptual framework and narration of the conquests offers a stark contrast to the mode of historical writing that I have analyzed here.

Chapter 2: French North Africa and the Conquest Narratives of Ernest Mercier and Émile-Félix Gautier

1. Introduction

Not long after its publication in Arabic in 1894, Aḥmad ibn Khālīd al-Nāṣirī's *Kitāb al-Istiṣā* garnered the attention of French colonial scholars. In 1907, the first French translation of a portion of al-Nāṣirī's text had already appeared in *Archives Marocaines*, a journal published by the French research institution, *Mission scientifique du Maroc*. However, this translation included only the fourth volume of *Kitāb al-Istiṣā*, which focused on the 'Alawī dynasty. With the establishment of the French protectorate in Morocco in 1912, French colonial research institutions sought to pursue a more comprehensive historical and ethnological study of the country. With this aim, the journal published partial translations of the preceding volumes of *Kitāb al-Istiṣā* in 1923 and 1925.³⁸

In the 1923 publication, the editor of *Archives Marocaines* Édouard Michaux-Bellaire wrote a preface to the French translation of *Kitāb al-Istiṣā* in which he emphasizes the importance of translating this Arabic source material. Michaux-Bellaire was a scholar who was invested in the French colonial project to gather and systematize information on territories of colonial interest. The excerpting, editing, and translation of Arabic texts had been an essential part of the French colonial reconnaissance mission ever since the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt in 1798. With the conquest of Algiers in 1830, the project to process Arabic texts via French academic institutions gained momentum. Many French colonial scholars directed their

³⁸ This translation project was ultimately unfinished, as the translator, André Graulle, became occupied with his duties as *Vice-Consul* in Mersin.

attention towards studies about “North Africa” and its constituent countries, including Morocco.

For Michaux-Bellaire, it was necessary that al-Nāṣirī’s complete text be added to the body

scholarship about North Africa. He explains:

Le Kitab El-Istiqṣa sera indispensable à ceux qui voudront écrire l’histoire du Maroc: son auteur a lui-même tiré sa documentation de tous les ouvrages historiques arabes traitant du Maroc: ce gros travail de groupement et de classification méthodique est donc déjà fait; il s’agissait de le mettre à la portée de tous en le traduisant en français.³⁹

In this way, Al-Nāṣirī’s text was understood by French colonial scholars as a useful source on the history of Morocco, a territory that was, by 1923, under the “protection” of the French Residency.

While Michaux-Bellaire claims that the only task required of French researchers was to translate al-Nāṣirī’s *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā* into French, the act of translation is never a simple one. The trajectory of the fourteenth-century Maghribī scholar Ibn Khaldūn’s work in the modern colonial period serves as an illustrative example of the complications that emerge in the process of translation. While Baron William McGuckin de Slane’s 1852-56 *Histoire des Berbères* remains the most accurate translation of Ibn Khaldūn’s *Kitāb al-‘ibar* (Book of Examples), it is also written with racialized concepts which had taken root in the eighteenth century. Indeed, de Slane uses the single term “race” in French to translate a variety of separate Arabic concepts including *jīl*, *umma*, and *ṭabaqa*. Needless to say, the modern notion of *race* in French did not do justice to the Arabic terms, each of which carried distinct meanings that, when used in *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, were specific to Ibn Khaldūn’s fourteenth-century context. De Slane flattens the semantic depth of the

³⁹ “The Kitāb al-Istiqṣā will be indispensable to those who will want to write the history of Morocco: its author drew his documentation from all the Arabic historical works that deal with Morocco: this large work of grouping and methodical classification is thus already done; it was a question of making it available to all by translating it into French.” M.A. Graulle, trans., “Kitab el-istiṣṣa li akhbar doual el-maghrib el-aḡṣa (Histoire du Maroc),” ed. Édouard Michaux-Bellaire, pt. 1, *Archives marocaines* 30 (1923): VI.

original text by erasing the nuances of these terms. At the same time, he adds layers of new meaning by inserting modern concepts into the text. Nonetheless, once *Kitāb al-ʿIbar* was translated, it became a key reference in any French work of scholarship about North Africa.⁴⁰ The popularity of de Slane’s translation is a testament to the influential role colonial translations played in French understandings of North African society and history. In fact, both of the authors that I will be discussing in the present chapter applaud de Slane for his translation of *Kitāb al-ʿIbar* and use it as a source in their own research.

In the case of translating al-Nāṣirī’s text, the 1923 translator André Graulle also made significant modifications to the original text by way of his semantic choices as well as the addition of paratext including footnotes and prefaces.⁴¹ Importantly for the present discussion, he included a paratextual chapter which provides a cursory overview of the history of Morocco prior to the Arab conquests of the seventh century. For Graulle, this was necessary because “L’auteur de l’*Istiḳṣā* commence l’histoire du Maroc à l’époque de la conquête arabe, c’est-à-dire au VIII^e siècle de notre ère; il ne donne que des renseignements vagues et très incomplets sur les temps antérieurs. Le traducteur a cru devoir combler cette lacune en mettant à contribution les données de la documentation la plus récente.”⁴² According to Graulle, *Kitāb al-Istiḳṣā* was lacking because it only began in the seventh century. Like many contemporary colonial scholars, Graulle thought that a complete history of Morocco, in particular, and North Africa, in general,

⁴⁰ See Abdelmajid Hannoum, “Translation and the Colonial Imaginary: Ibn Khaldūn Orientalist,” *History and Theory* 42, no. 1 (2003): 61–81.

⁴¹ Though it is beyond the purview of the present study, a more detailed examination of Graulle’s French translation of al-Nāṣirī would certainly reveal a great deal about the relations between French colonial scholarship and the its use of Arabic sources. For example, it is notable that Graulle inserts the notions of “North Africa” and “Arab invasions” where there is nothing in the original Arabic. Graulle, “*Kitāb el-istiḳṣā*,” pt. 1, *Archives marocaines* 30 (1923): 171.

⁴² “The author of *al-Istiḳṣā* begins the history of Morocco at the time of the Arab conquest, that is to say in the eighth century of our era; he gives only vague and very incomplete information on earlier times. The translator thought it necessary to fill this gap by using the most recent documentation.” Graulle, “*Kitāb el-istiḳṣā*,” pt. 1, *Archives marocaines* 30 (1923): 27.

should span from the earliest times to the present. While Arabic works of historical writing like that of al-Nāṣirī were considered instrumental sources in this research project, they were also thought of as incomplete perspectives on the region's past.

How French colonial historians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries conceptualized an *histoire complète* of the region of North Africa, and how the seventh-century conquests figured in this vision of history, will be the subject of the present chapter. Given the breadth of the French colonial scholarship about North Africa that was produced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I have limited my focus in order to carry out a detailed textual analysis. From among the many works of historical writing penned by French historians, archaeologists, ethnographers, military officers, and politicians, I selected two cases of historical writing that were especially influential in their use of spatial and geographic concepts. Through an examination of Ernest Mercier's (1840-1907) and Émile-Félix Gautier's (1864-1940) colonial historical writing, the present chapter will examine how French scholars framed and reframed the history of North Africa and its conquest in the seventh century. Moreover, I explore how the arguments made in these works of historical writing corresponded to colonial strategies of exploitation and domination in the region.

While I focus on conceptualizations of space and geography in historical writing throughout this thesis, geographical thought was particularly important to French colonial discourses about the past. In fact, the French geographer and scholar of Oriental studies Florence Deprest explains why geography, in particular, is the discipline of French imperialism *par excellence*:

Du XIX^e au XX^e siècle, les géographes ont notamment contribué à la domination coloniale à travers des processus de catégorisation des populations et des territoires. Ainsi, la subdivision des espaces colonisés en régions auxquelles ont été attribuées des

caractéristiques intemporelles et réifiantes est souvent assimilée à une application pure et simple du principe « diviser pour régner ». De même, le déterminisme environnemental au cœur de l'explication géographique a pu être considéré comme l'une des contributions de la géographie à l'idéologie impériale, en permettant de légitimer la domination européenne.⁴³

In this sense, the discursive work of defining and dividing space in Northwestern Africa was a key instrument for colonial domination.

I examine Mercier's and Gautier's historical writing because both authors made significant scholarly contributions to French colonial discourse about North Africa as a spatial unit and a historical object of analysis. As I will discuss in detail below, Mercier was one of the first scholars to sanction the use of the term *Berbérie* to label the North African region. This term blended the territorial conception of North Africa with the ethnological conception of an indigenous Berber race. Gautier is a particularly significant author because he introduced a geohistorical approach to narrating the history of the region. Indeed, he placed unprecedented emphasis on geographic elements to explain events in history.

My choice to focus on spatial concepts in the work of Mercier and Gautier comes at the expense of leaving other sources and topics untreated. For example, the role of archaeology is also a key part of the matrix of colonial scholarship and French reconnaissance efforts in the North African region, although I do not deal with the field of archaeology presently. Moreover, many other French colonial authors who were writing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Count Louis de Mas Latrie (1815-1897), Henri Fournel (1799-1876), George Marçais

⁴³ "From the nineteenth to the twentieth century, geographers contributed to colonial domination through processes of categorization of populations and territories. Thus, the subdivision of colonized spaces into regions to which timeless and reifying characteristics were attributed is commonly accepted as a pure and simple application of the principle of "divide and rule." In the same way, the environmental determinism at the heart of the geographical explanation could be considered as one of the contributions of geography to imperial ideology, by allowing the legitimization of European domination." Deprest, *Géographes*, 11.

(1876-1962), Robert Montagne (1893-1954), and Robert Brunschvig (1901-1990) were major figures who contributed to the French colonial discourse on North Africa during their lifetimes. Especially notable, in this respect, is Robert Montagne, an ethnologist who would have a major impact on the development of French colonial discourse about Morocco, in particular.⁴⁴ However, while Montagne's work was certainly an influential text in French colonial scholarship, I analyze the works of Mercier and Gautier specifically because I aim to shed light on the mechanisms by which historical objects of especially spatial and geographic nature have been rendered in historical narratives.

Mercier and Gautier were both highly influential writers and contributors to French scholarship about the history of North Africa. As I will discuss below, these two scholars were positioned at the heart of French colonial academic and political institutions. Correspondingly, their contributions would have an impact on scholars like Montagne.⁴⁵ Indeed, French scholars, including Montagne, developed the academic habit of borrowing Mercier and Gautier's arguments. Even Charles-André Julien (1891-1991)—one of the most well-known French anticolonial scholars of the period of French colonial rule—often cited and praised Gautier's conclusions.⁴⁶ With this in mind, the conclusions that I set forth have the potential to inform how we understand how other French colonial scholars defined and used their historical objects. Moreover, Moroccan nationalist historians in the twentieth century were also influenced by these authors. During the protectorate period, Moroccan nationalists engaged directly with their works

⁴⁴ Henry Laurens, "L'orientalisme français : un parcours historique," in *Penser l'Orient : Traditions et actualité des orientalismes français et allemande*, ed. Youssef Courbage and Manfred Kropp (Beirut: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2004), 103-128.

⁴⁵ Robert Montagne, *Les Berbères et le makhzen dans le sud du Maroc: essai sur la transformation politique des Berbères sédentaires (groupe chleuh)*, (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1930), 26.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Charles-André Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord: Tunisie – Algérie – Maroc de la conquête arabe à 1830*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Payot, 1952).

of historical writing, especially Gautier. I will discuss the relationship between French and Moroccan nationalist historical writing in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Finally, these two particular cases offer a useful illustration of perspectives because they *contrast* with one another. Whereas Mercier was a traditionally trained Orientalist scholar, Gautier was a colonial geographer and did not share Mercier's linguistic training. Moreover, the texts I focus on were published in 1875 and 1927, over a half-century apart. Major transformations to the colonial landscape had taken place in this period and my selection of these two cases allows me to explore consistencies and divergences in the practice of French colonial historical writing about North Africa over time. In order to compare and contrast the historical writing of these authors in detail, I have decided to include my analysis of both authors' works in a single chapter. As a result, the present chapter is considerably longer than Chapter One and Three.

2. The Historical Writing of Ernest Mercier (1840-1907)

The French orientalist scholar Ernest Mercier was one of the most influential nineteenth-century figures to contribute to the French colonial ideological apparatus. He was a prominent politician in Algeria; he was elected as the mayor of Constantine in 1883 and 1896; and he was appointed as the *conseiller général* of Constantine in 1898. At the same time, he was an authoritative scholar and an active member of several institutions of colonial science, including *la Société archéologique de Constantine* and *Société asiatique de Paris*.⁴⁷

Like the aforementioned scholar Michaux-Bellaire, Mercier was a staunch supporter of the French colonial project to research and demystify lands of colonial interest. For him, ever since

⁴⁷ Jacques Zeiller, "Un historien de l'Afrique du nord; Ernest Mercier," *Journal des Savants* 3, no. 1 (1945): 166-70.

the conquest of Algiers in 1830, Frenchmen have made great contributions to the scientific discovery of Africa. Indeed, the beginning of his 1875 text *Histoire de l'établissement des Arabes dans l'Afrique septentrionale* (hereafter, *Histoire de l'établissement*)⁴⁸ begins with a sense of “patriotique satisfaction” towards the role of France in the deciphering the secrets of “le vieux continent africain, qui s’offrait à nos pères comme un sphinx impenetrable.” The French conquest of Algeria was not only a successful military takeover, it also “a ouvert l’Afrique septentrionale à la science. La géographie, l’histoire, l’ethnographie du pays, jusqu’alors ignorées, vagues, ou enveloppées de voiles trompeurs de la tradition, n’ont cessé, depuis cette époque, d’acquérir une forme précise et toute nouvelle, car l’édifice entier était à reconstruire.”⁴⁹ French colonial scholarship did indeed formulate the history of the region differently from Arabic scholars, and Mercier’s historical writing offers an example of how exactly French researchers conceptualized the history of the land and the people that lived there.

At the same time, Mercier makes clear that his historical writing is based on the accounts of Arabic sources. Most important, in his view, is the work of Ibn Khaldūn, who provided “a veritable and precious mine of information.”⁵⁰ References to Ibn Khaldūn were highly valuable in the historical writing of French colonial scholars because he was considered a key historical source, and, by the end of the nineteenth century, source criticism was at the foundation of the French craft of history-writing.⁵¹ However, citing Ibn Khaldūn became a common academic habit only after the French translation of his work was published by de Slane. Indeed, Mercier

⁴⁸ Ernest Mercier, *Histoire de l'établissement des Arabes dans l'Afrique Septentrionale* (Constantine: L. Marle, 1875).

⁴⁹ “Opened North Africa to science. The geography, history, ethnography of the country, until then ignored, vague, or enshrouded by false veils of tradition, has not ceased, since that time, in taking a precise and entirely new form, because the entire edifice was to be reconstructed.” Mercier, *Histoire de l'établissement*, I.

⁵⁰ Mercier, *Histoire de l'établissement*, V.

⁵¹ Indeed, source criticism was the foremost preoccupation in Orientalist philological historical writing. For a detailed inquiry into the impact of the practice of source criticism on Orientalist interpretations of Ibn Khaldūn, see Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn in Modern Scholarship*, 199-209.

was one of many prominent Orientalist scholars who viewed the publication of de Slane's *Histoire des Berbères*, in particular, as a crucial step in the development of history-writing about North Africa. Mercier wanted to continue the project of “extracting the treasures”⁵² of Ibn Khaldūn by compiling a comprehensive French colonial history of the region. Relying on de Slane's translation and interpretation of Ibn Khaldūn, Mercier instrumentalized Ibn Khaldūn's historical writing in a way that suited his French colonial interests. In fact, Mercier led the way for many French scholars who would repurpose Ibn Khaldūn's writing for the French colonial project. They cited his fourteenth-century text to support historical writing that was framed by new colonial terms and concepts.⁵³

In what follows, I focus my analysis on Mercier's historical writing, especially *Histoire de l'établissement*. The main focus of this work of historical writing, as the title indicates, is the establishment of Arabs in the region both through their conquests in the seventh century and the Hilālī migrations in the eleventh century. Written relatively early on in his career as a historian, *Histoire de l'établissement* features concepts that would continue to shape his later works, as well as of French colonial thought more broadly throughout the following century. Mercier's text is an example of how French ethnological ideas became embedded in the seemingly neutral geographical historical objects that he employs in his writing. In particular he championed the use of the concept of *Berbérie*, which would become a crucial concept in French colonial discourse. My analysis will show how the concepts used by Mercier as historical objects were connected to the contemporary colonial political situation at the end of the nineteenth century.

⁵² Mercier, *Histoire de l'établissement*, VI.

⁵³ Abdelmajid Hannoum's and Ramzi Rouighi's research into the translation of Ibn Khaldūn has brought to light many of the mechanisms by which *Histoire des Berbères* suited the ideological needs of the modern French colonial apparatus. In particular, the colonial project to racialize the Berbers, which will be discussed further below, was advanced by de Slane's colonial semantics. Hannoum, “Translation and the Colonial Imaginary”; Rouighi, *Inventing the Berbers*, 138.

2.1. Mercier's Historical Objects

2.1.1. North Africa

Mercier's historical writing centers on the geographical region itself as the subject of his study. Most often, he calls this region *l'Afrique septentrionale* and *L'Afrique du Nord*, both of which can be translated as North Africa in English. The concept of North Africa functions as the primary spatial frame for Mercier's historical narrative. Use of this frame allows him to string together the events of history in a way that includes not only the Arab conquests, but also the conquests and rule of earlier ruling states in the region.

For Mercier, studying the complete history of North Africa meant studying the history of the geographical region from the earliest possible time up until the present. Indeed, in the preface to his early historical study of North Africa, *Histoire de l'établissement*, he envisions “une histoire complète de l'Afrique septentrionale.” According to him, once sufficient sources are collected, French scholars—who have been the major contributors to a comprehensive scientific analysis of North Africa—will be capable of writing a history of the region from start to finish, that is, from the Phoenician period to French rule. While this was his vision for a comprehensive history, he explains in his 1875 study that, at present, such a complete historical analysis was not realizable. He could only provide a historical inquiry into medieval North Africa when he wrote this text, due to the limited state of collected and translated documents on the region. Over a decade later, in his *Histoire de l'Afrique septentrionale (Berbérie) depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à la conquête française (1830)*,⁵⁴ he was better equipped to realize an *histoire complète* of the region. In this later text, the historical narrative begins with the Phoenicians, and

⁵⁴ Ernest Mercier, *Histoire de l'Afrique septentrionale (Berbérie) depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à la conquête française (1830)*, 3 vols., (Paris: Leroux, 1888-1891).

provides a chronological account of different dynasties that took power in the region, ending with the 1830 French conquest of Algiers. In all of Mercier's texts, the concept of an abiding North Africa functions to keep his historical narrative limited in geographical scope, yet broad in its chronological scheme.

This historical object exhibits important differences from the one used by al-Nāṣirī. In the preceding chapter, I showed that al-Nāṣirī writes his history as a narrative about the spread of Islamic rule from the Arabian Peninsula into the territory of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā. In contrast, Mercier's historical analysis does not include events which exceed the boundaries of his geographical North Africa. In addition, al-Nāṣirī's narrative, beginning in the seventh century, has a shorter chronological scheme. This frame for his historical writing emphasizes the historic importance of the Islamic caliphate in the East for the creation of the Moroccan sultanate in the West. Mercier's historical writing, in contrast, treats the seventh-century conquests as the detrimental *transformation* of a preexisting historical unit, rather than the victorious *creation* of one. Mercier's chronological scheme deemphasizes the historical impact of Islamic history in the region. His vision of history, framed by the concept of an ever-present North Africa, dissociates the history of the region from the history of the caliphate in the East.

Mercier actually defines the region (*le pays*) by focusing on its distinction from the Orient. The region is

la partie du continent africain qui s'étend depuis la limite occidentale de l'Egypte jusqu'à l'Océan ; cette vaste contrée a reçu généralement le nom de l'Afrique septentrionale, et cela, à l'exclusion de l'Egypte, qui, par sa situation et son histoire, s'est toujours rattachée à l'Orient. Les Arabes, l'appréciant de la même manière, l'ont appelée Mag'reb, c'est-à-dire Occident, désignation que nous emploierons souvent dans le cours de cet ouvrage.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ "The part of the African continent that extends from the western limit of Egypt to the Ocean; this vast country generally received the name of *l'Afrique septentrionale*, to the exclusion of Egypt, which, by its situation and

For Mercier, North Africa's separateness from the Orient is one of the region's defining features. According to him, North Africa belongs to the Occident, and this fact is even evinced in the Arabs' use of the term Maghrib, which he translates as Occident. In this way, his definition places North Africa in the same Occidental category as France, effectively separating it from the Arabs' Orient.

This vision of a geographically delimited, timeless, Occidental North Africa was a legitimization French colonial presence in the region. If the region of colonial interest was dissociated from the Arabs, Islam, and Oriental civilization, then North Africa could be understood as having a shared destiny with France. The anthropologist and historian Abdelmajid Hannoum, in his analysis of Mercier's work, explains that Mercier's history of North Africa "is presented not only in relation to European history, but as European history. This is not because of the French presence in Algeria; this presence itself is justified because the history of North Africa is a European one, and, more specifically, a French one. Indeed, this history is not only that of the Romans, the Vandals, the Greeks, and the Berbers, but it is also the history of Spain and France."⁵⁶ The colonial occupation of North African lands was construed as a benevolent project to rescue Occidental North Africa from foreign--that is, Arab and Islamic--hegemony. Writers used this conceptualization of North African space in order to support contemporary French colonial aspirations, but this partiality was veiled under the notion of an *histoire complète*.

history, has always been attached to the Orient. The Arabs, appreciating it in the same way, called it Mag'reb, that is, Occident, a designation that we will often use in the course of this work." Mercier, *Histoire de l'établissement*, 11-12.

⁵⁶ Abdelmajid Hannoum, "The Historiographic State: How Algeria Once Became French," *History and Anthropology* 19, no. 2 (2008): 98.

Moreover, the conceptualization of a bounded geographical territory accorded with French colonial strategies to occupy the region. Through the establishment of colonies and protectorates, the polities of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia came under French control. Concomitantly, the French colonial regimes took steps to assert the territorial sovereignty of the colonial state. Indeed, the French colonial state employed unprecedented political, legal, and military tools in order to “pacify” the countryside and gain control of a bounded territory in North Africa. French colonial scholars conceptualized the region in a way that reflected this aim towards territorial sovereignty in the region.

2.1.2. Ethnological Historical Objects

For Mercier, the arrival of the Arabs was only one fragment of a much broader history, but, as we will see, it was a fragment that would eventually lead to the civilizational decline of the entire region. *Histoire de l'établissement* is a work of historical writing about this seventh-century transformation in North African history. He identifies several benefits of studying “les événements du moyen-âge” in North Africa, explaining that: “il est un point bien important à tous égards, que nos données actuelles permettent d'éclaircir, c'est la transformation de l'Afrique berbère en Afrique arabe.”⁵⁷ Here, we see Mercier articulate the concept of *transformation* of a preexisting entity. The history of North Africa in the “middle ages”—which, in his narrative, begins with the seventh-century conquests—is the history of the Arabization of North Africa. The terms of this transformation, that is “Berber Africa” and “Arab Africa,” are connected to French colonial ethnological concepts. I will now turn to Mercier’s use of timeless ethnological

⁵⁷ “A very important point, in all respects, which our current data allows us to clarify, is the transformation of Berber Africa into Arab Africa (*l'Afrique berbère en Afrique arabe*).” Mercier, *Histoire de l'établissement*, III.

concepts in his historical writing, which are inextricably linked to his geographical concept of a timeless North Africa.

Mercier's usage of ethnological concepts is revealed in his definition of his project to study Arabization:

[I]l faut préciser l'époque ou les époques auxquelles l'élément arabe s'est introduit dans le pays, suivre la marche des envahisseurs, indiquer la résistance qu'ils ont rencontrée de la part des autochthones, et, enfin, reconnaître de quelle façon ils se sont plus particulièrement groupés, dans quelles proportions ils se sont mêlés aux indigènes et quelles sont les places qu'ils occupent aujourd'hui. Ce programme est entièrement réalisable maintenant, et il n'est pas nécessaire de faire ressortir le double avantage scientifique et pratique qui doit en résulter pour nous.⁵⁸

It is clear that Mercier's vision of North Africa and its history is entangled with concepts of race and indigeneity. He maintains that Arabs and Berbers are two distinct races inhabiting North Africa. For him, the historical study of North Africa necessitates the study of its Berber natives (in French, *autochthones* and *indigènes*) and the ethnological impact of foreign conquerors, the Arabs, on those people.

These racialized sociological categories were a central part of the French colonial vocabulary, both before and after Mercier. The idea that Arabs and Berbers are two discrete races with distinct characteristics was common sense among French colonialists at the time.⁵⁹ Importantly, colonial conceptualizations of Berber and Arab races rendered the categories

⁵⁸ "It is necessary to specify the period or periods in which the Arab element (*l'élément arabe*) was introduced in the country, trace the path of the invaders, indicate the resistance on the part of the autochthones that they faced, and finally, to identify the particular ways in which they are grouped, in what proportions they are mixed with the natives (*indigènes*), and what positions they occupy today. This agenda is now totally realizable, and we need not emphasize the double advantage, both scientific and practical, that will result from it for us. This is the main point of the modern history of North Africa." Mercier, *Histoire de l'établissement*, III.

⁵⁹ Edmund Burke III, "The Image of Morocco in French Colonial Scholarship," in *Arabs and Berbers: From Tribe to Nation in North Africa*, ed. Ernest Gellner and Charles Antoine Micaud (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1972); Patricia Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Race in Colonial Algeria*, (London: Tauris, 1995); Rouighi, *Inventing the Berbers*.

timeless by definition. Indeed, there was a general consensus among scholars in the fields of anthropology, history, and geography that the Berber race exhibits the same nature in both the seventh and twentieth century. With this understanding of timeless Arabs and Berbers, any historical narrative can be understood as, at once, a record of what has happened in the past, and an example of what happens consistently, timelessly, in North Africa.

As I will demonstrate below, the enunciation of ahistorical notions within colonial historical writing reflected political positions in the colonial present. Mercier's *Histoire de l'établissement* was a source of information that shaped and was shaped by contemporary debates on modalities of colonization in North Africa. There was, indeed, a “double advantage, both scientific and practical,” as Mercier put it, to be gained from his historical writing on North Africa and its ethnological transformation.

2.2. Mercier's Seventh-Century Conquests

Mercier's historical narrative accorded with a Berberophile stream of thought in colonial scholarship wherein Berbers were construed as indigenous, sedentary, and malleable. Viewed as the indigenous inhabitants of North Africa—that is, an *Occidental* region—they had the potential to become civilized. Arabs, arriving for the first time in the seventh century, were eternally foreign, nomadic, and uncivilizable. Importantly, this image of Arabs rendered them a lost cause for the contemporary French *mission civilisatrice*. In contrast, Mercier was hopeful about civilizing “the Berber element” in the region.

In Mercier's text, the seventh-century conquests, carried out by the Arabs, constitute the first moment when these two distinct races came into contact. However, Mercier also argues that the initial effect of the Arabs on Berbers and their land was not greatly significant. Rather, he

writes about the seventh-century conquests, in particular, as a relatively unimpactful period within the broader process of Arabization of North Africa:

Or, l'arabisation de l'Afrique a eu deux phases bien distinctes : la première est la conquête du VII^e siècle, conquête et non invasion, suivie d'une occupation restreinte de cette lointaine colonie du khalifat, conquête brillante mais précaire, car, après avoir perdu successivement l'Espagne et l'ouest de l'Afrique, les Arabes durent abandonner définitivement le pays, où ils ne s'étaient maintenus pendant deux siècles qu'au prix des plus grands sacrifices. Alors, l'Afrique septentrionale, la Berbérie, qui n'avait cessé de rester berbère, n'ayant adopté de ses dominateurs que leur religion, recouvra son autonomie et la conserva jusqu'à ce que le pays, déchiré par l'anarchie, devint la proie d'une poignée de Turcs audacieux, c'est-à-dire jusqu'au XVI^e siècle.⁶⁰

The Arabs came in the seventh century, but their conquest was not an enduring one and eventually they retreated. They didn't make a significant impact on the Berbers in the seventh century. Even though this moment did mark the introduction of Islam in the region, the imposition of a foreign religion had little impact on the Berbers' autonomy. Here, again, Mercier diminishes the importance of the seventh-century conquests. He argues that the introduction of Islam into the country happened in this period, but it did not have a major effect on the people or the land. *Berbérie*, he argues, never stopped being Berber in the seventh century.

For Mercier, it was only in the eleventh century, with the Hilālī invasions, that Arabization would lastingly influence North Africa and the Berbers. The waves of migration that took place in the eleventh century would lead to civilizational decline in the country, as Arabs corrupted the region and its history. Even after the eleventh century, when Berber dynasties

⁶⁰ “The Arabization of Africa had two distinct phases: the first was the conquest of the seventh century, a conquest and not an invasion, followed by a limited occupation of this distant colony of the Khalifate, a brilliant but precarious conquest, because, after having successively lost Spain and the west of Africa, the Arabs had to definitively abandon the country, where they had maintained themselves for two centuries only at the price of the greatest sacrifice. Then, northern Africa, *Berbérie*, which had never ceased to be Berber, having adopted only their religion from their dominators, recovered its autonomy and retained it until the country, torn by anarchy, fell prey to a handful of audacious Turks, that is, until the 16th century.” Mercier, *Histoire de l'établissement*, IV.

ruled in the region, political arrangements continued to be negatively influenced by the region's "Arab element." The Arabs, according to Mercier,

se sont insinués au milieu de la race autochtone, en servant tour à tour les dynasties rivales qui se partageaient le peuple du Mag'reb. Les souverains berbères, pour combattre leurs voisins ou les populations de leur race, emploient les Arabes, toujours disposés à la guerre ; puis, pour les récompenser de leurs services, ou s'assurer leur fidélité, ils leur concèdent les terres des vaincus, s'attachant sans cesse à abaisser le peuple aborigène, dont le caractère indépendant sert mal les gouvernements autocratiques. Mais bientôt, les Arabes, devenus la seule force de ces dynasties, imposent leurs volontés aux rois berbères, et, par leurs trahisons ou leurs révoltes, contribuent à rompre, à tout jamais, l'unité du peuple indigène...⁶¹

Although the Arabs made a relatively unimportant first attempt at conquest in the seventh century, their invasion in the eleventh century led to civilizational decline in North Africa. In short, the foreign Arabs caused political chaos, and the indigenous Berbers were incapable of defending themselves.

The above descriptions of Arabization demonstrate a pertinent theme in Mercier's work which would be rearticulated in later scholarship. He claims that Berbers have been the "prey" of foreign invaders many times over. The implication here is that the Berber natives are doomed to unending foreign invasion. This, again, deemphasizes the significance of the Arab conquests, rendering them only one instance in a long history of conquest in North Africa.

This depiction of Berbers and their perpetually conquered land is yet another justification for French intervention in North Africa. By rendering North Africa a land which is inhabited by Berbers who are preyed upon by others, he effectively legitimizes the modern French *mission*

⁶¹ "Crept into the middle of the *race autochtone*, by serving, in turn, the rival dynasties which shared the people of the Maghrib. The Berber sovereigns, to fight their neighbors or the populations of their race, employed the Arabs, always ready for war; then, to reward them for their services, or to ensure their fidelity, they conceded to them the lands of the defeated, constantly committing to pushing down the aboriginal people, whose independent character did not serve autocratic governments well. But soon, the Arabs, who had become the only force of these dynasties, imposed their will on the Berber kings and, through their treachery or their revolts, contributed to breaking, forever, the unity of the indigenous people..." Mercier, *Histoire de l'établissement*, 313-314.

civilisatrice to rescue the indigenous Berbers from their own vulnerability. Of course, this vision of French colonization of North Africa was dependent on the idea that the Berber race was civilizable. However, a romantic understanding of the Berbers as a malleable and civilizable race was not shared by all colonial scholars, as we will see below in my analysis of Gautier.

2.2.1. Mercier's *Berbérie*

Mercier's understanding of North African space and race constitute imagined geographies which he reifies in his historical writing. As these two imagined geographies are elaborated in his text, his ethnological scheme informs and interacts with his geographical one. This is observable in his use of concept *Berbérie*, which he employs in the above excerpt. This term is at once a geographical and ethnological concept. It served to delineate a geographical space, North Africa. Simultaneously it served to connect this space to the Berbers, an ethnological racial category. Indeed, Mercier often equates *l'Afrique septentrionale* with *Berbérie*, as evinced by his formulation "*Histoire de l'Afrique septentrionale (Berbérie)*" which appears in the title of his later, broader history of the region. While other French colonial scholars used the term *Berbérie Orientale* to refer to the region associated with contemporary Tunisia, it is clear that Mercier's *Berbérie* was, for him, equivalent with the region of North Africa.

In addition to the concepts of North Africa, Arab, and Berber, *Berbérie* provides another useful historical object. These terms are the intellectual equipment by which Mercier can write a historical narrative which legitimizes French rule. Simply by calling the region *Berbérie*, Mercier makes a historical argument. He renders the Berber race as natives, *autochtones*, of North Africa. In contrast, he construes the Arabs as conquering intruders who struggled to impose a foreign

religion on the Berbers. His use of the concept *Berbérie* serves to accentuate and formalize the point he makes explicit in his historical narrative: the Berbers are the natives of North Africa; the Arabs are foreign dominators. In this way, Mercier reified the timeless Arab-Berber dichotomy in his conceptualization of space.

My analysis thus far has outlined foundational concepts that were articulated by Mercier in his historical writing on North Africa. His narrative frames the events of the Arab conquest within the temporally broader history of both North Africa and *Berbérie*. By using the concept of North Africa, he places emphasis on the longstanding history of a delimited region. By using the concepts of the Berber and Arab races, and *Berbérie*, he places emphasis on the Berbers as the indigenous inhabitants of this region. Mercier treats the conquests of the seventh century as relatively unimportant for the history of the North Africa. As one period of conquest, among many, the seventh century events merely demonstrate that Arab rule was ineffective, and that the fate of Berber inhabitants remained relatively unchanged by this moment.

Ultimately, Mercier's historical writing about the conquests provided answers to questions posed by scholars, pundits, and policy-makers about the French colonial present. Was France justified in its ongoing takeover of Algeria? Naturally, as the region of North Africa had been colonized many times over. Moreover, the Berbers, Occidental natives, were being oppressed by foreign Arab and Muslim rule. In this way the French civilizing mission was necessary to save the Berbers from the Arabs, but also from their own history as an eternally-conquered people.

3. Berberophile Politics in France and Morocco

Mercier's Berberophilia would become a major part of his legacy.⁶² A 1945 obituary praised his attitude towards the natives of North Africa: "[Il] n'avait pas seulement la curiosité du milieu indigène, il éprouvait pour lui de la sympathie. Il ne désirait pas seulement le connaître et le faire connaître, il l'aimait et souhaitait le faire aimer."⁶³ The obituary also maintains that his love for the *indigène* translated into a berberophilic political stance: "Il a préconisé en faveur du relèvement de la condition de l'indigène des réformes, dont l'idée a pu alors être taxée de téméraire, mais qui paraissent naturelles et heureuses aujourd'hui [1945], et ce, dans l'intérêt même de l'œuvre française en territoire africain, dont Ernest Mercier avait la passion."⁶⁴ As is indicated by this laudatory text, Mercier's support for pro-Berber colonial policy was not, at all times, the dominant position among colonial scholars and administrators. Gautier's historical writing, discussed below, will provide an example of an alternative vision of Arabs and Berbers in North Africa. Nevertheless, indigenophile and berberophile tendencies in historical scholarship undoubtedly constituted a stream of thought that was influential in French colonization strategies in North Africa throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, albeit to varying degrees in different times and locations.

French colonial berberophile positions, which were first articulated in scholarship that focused on Algeria, would also shape policy in Morocco.⁶⁵ In particular, berberophile attitudes

⁶² Though my present discussion focuses on how this Berberophilia was articulated in one of Mercier's early works, it would remain a central theme in his later texts, including his 1905 study "La race berbère, véritable population de l'Afrique septentrionale."

⁶³ "[He] was not only curious about the indigenous milieu, he felt sympathy for it. He not only wanted to know it and for it to know him, he loved it and wanted it to love him." Zeiller, "Un historien," 169.

⁶⁴ "He advocated reforms favoring the improvement of the condition of the native. The idea of this could have been seen as reckless as the time, but seems natural and favorable today. And it was about this [idea], in the very interest of the French work in African territory, that Ernest Mercier was passionate." Zeiller, "Un historien," 169.

⁶⁵ Scholarship on the French Berber policy in Morocco is vast. See, for example, Gilles Lafuente, *La Politique Berbère de La France et Le Nationalisme Marocain* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999); William Hoisington Jr., "Cities in

would manifest in the policy of the French Residency in the early years of the Moroccan protectorate.⁶⁶ General Hubert Lyautey (1854-1934) adopted a Berberophile perspective when he designed the protectorate strategy for Morocco in 1912.⁶⁷ “The secret of my conquest,” he wrote in 1918, “was to protect the Berbers against all intrusion into their private lives, their customs, their traditions... In this way I have always supported the Berber element against the degenerate effects of Arab-Muslim culture.”⁶⁸ Thus, like Mercier, Lyautey also assumed that the Berbers were civilizable inhabitants of the land and should be the target of the colonial project. The Arabs, alternatively, were a negative, corrupting force.

Lyautey’s first efforts to “preserve” and “protect” the Moroccan Berbers came in the form of reforms to Moroccan judicial systems. In 1914, the French Residency began a gradual process of restructuring legal systems in order to divide local so-called Berber legal systems and Berber custom (*orf/izref*) from the jurisdiction of *makhzan* courts and *shari’a*.⁶⁹ However, these attempts to install newly invented Berber institutions led to many failures. As historian Adam Guerin explains, “the convoluted system met considerable procedural difficulties in the forms of overlapping jurisdictions, non-compliance of ‘foreign’ litigants (Moroccans from out of the region or Europeans) and non-recognition of judgements by the *makhzan* courts.”⁷⁰ The

Revolt: The Berber Dahir (1930) and France's Urban Strategy in Morocco,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 13, no. 3 (July 1978): 433-448.; Adam Guerin, “Racial Myth, Colonial Reform, and the Invention of Customary Law in Morocco, 1912–1930,” *The Journal of North African Studies* 16, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 361–80.

⁶⁶ Historian of the Moroccan protectorate, Edmund Burke III, explains that “The Berber Myth” about Morocco “which crystallized between 1912 and 1919 derived its principal features from the romantic stereotype of Berbers which had been developed earlier in Algeria by French observers who were convinced that the Kabyles were not Muslims in any real sense.” Burke, “The Image of Morocco,” 198.

⁶⁷ Lyautey had adopted a less favorable stance towards Moroccan Berbers in the years prior to the establishment of the protectorate. See Burke, “The Image of Morocco,” 187.

⁶⁸ Cited in Guerin, “Racial Myth,” 362.

⁶⁹ Lafuente, *La Politique Berbère*, 63-80, 141-187; Charles-Robert Ageron, “La politique berbère du protectorat marocain de 1913 à 1934,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 18, no. 1 (January-March 1971): 50-90.; Burke, *The Ethnographic State*, 136-145. For more on Maghribi legal institutions, see Jacques Berque, “Problèmes initiaux de la sociologie juridique en Afrique du Nord,” *Studia Islamica*, no. 1 (1953): 137-162.

⁷⁰ Guerin, “Racial Myth,” 369. Guerin’s article provides a detailed study of the legal reforms implemented by the protectorate regime, and the debates among colonial officers about these reforms.

inefficiencies of this approach led to a transformation of colonial opinion about Berber legal systems. “Unwilling or unable to admit failure in design or to see beyond their own ethnocentric prejudices, the reformers turned against Berber custom and denounced its inherently violent, corrupt nature as the root cause of the problems. As the archetype of the ‘noble, secular Berber’ dissipated in the minds of French reformers, the only logical solution, in their view, was to scrap the invented system in favour of direct colonial rule through European-style tribunals and Napoleonic code.”⁷¹ By the 1920s, the idea that the Berber (and his legal institutions) could not, in fact, be assimilated into French civilization became dominant among colonial administrators in Morocco.⁷²

This shift in opinion was reflected in new legal reforms that put Berber courts under the direct control of the French residency. At the same time that French administrators attempted to impose direct rule, they still claimed to be respecting indigenous custom. “The final goal of assimilation [of Moroccan Berbers into French civilization] gradually faded away when it was discovered that the Moroccan Berbers were in fact as Muslim as the Arabs were, but the policy of shielding the Berbers from inevitable incorporation into the mainstream of Arabic civilization continued.”⁷³ The decisive instantiation of these developments in colonial policy-making in Morocco was the promulgation of France’s Berber *dhahīr* (decree) on May 16, 1930. The decree, under the alleged purpose of prioritizing Berber customary law, implicitly channeled legal cases

⁷¹ Guerin, “Racial Myth,” 377.

⁷² This new attitude was championed by colonial administrators and lawyers at the 1927 Committee of Legislative Studies, held by the *Direction des affaires indigènes* (in English the Directorate of Indigenous Affairs). At the committee, one member of the *Direction des affaires indigènes* argued that “Indigenous justice is venal; a type of venality so frightening that a Frenchman could never comprehend it. There are magistrates who render a judgment condemning a litigant after having been paid by the other; fifteen days later the judge renders the opposite decision after the first litigant has sufficiently paid [for his release]... The qadis drag out the most minor of cases indefinitely in order to increase the gifts that a son or a nephew of the accused will offer until all parties are out of breath – that is to say, out of money. Eventually the trial ceases to interest the judge – who then either ends it or not. Only French justice can put an end to this horrifying situation.” Cited in Guerin, “Racial Myth,” 373.

⁷³ Burke, “The Image of Morocco,” 198.

in Berber-designated zones into the jurisdiction of French courts. In this way, the 1930 decree legally divided the country, significantly decreasing the territory under the jurisdiction of Islamic law and increasing France's direct involvement in governing Moroccan territories.

The change of tides in the Residency's attitude towards indigenous Moroccan custom was justified with a growing body of colonial expertise, and the publication of Émile-Félix Gautier's (1864-1940) study of North Africa in 1927 coincided with the new colonial policy towards Moroccan *indigènes*. The next section will examine Gautier's approach to historical writing on the seventh century conquests in *L'Islamisation de l'Afrique du Nord: Les siècles obscures du Maghreb* (hereafter, *Les siècles obscures*).⁷⁴

4. Geography in History, the Scholarship of Émile-Félix Gautier

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Gautier gained influence at the University of Algiers, which was quickly becoming a central node in the network of French colonial knowledge production, especially about the history and geography of colonial North Africa.⁷⁵ However, Gautier was a relatively unconventional scholar in the field of French colonial history. He was not trained as an Arabist, and he only knew Arabic sources through French translations. At the same time, Gautier wore many hats during his life. Not only was he a historian, he was also a scholar of colonial geography, another burgeoning science of the day. Moreover, living in Algiers as a *colon*, he was an active participant in debates about colonial policy. Altogether, it is

⁷⁴ Émile-Félix Gautier, *L'Islamisation de l'Afrique du Nord: Les siècles obscures du Maghreb*, (Paris: Payot, 1927).

⁷⁵ Pierre Singaravélou, "Le moment « impérial » de l'histoire des sciences sociales (1880-1910)," *Mil neuf cent. Revue d'histoire intellectuelle* 27, no. 1 (2009): 87-102.

clear that Gautier boasted an influential position in the contemporary matrix of French colonial rule in North Africa.⁷⁶

The variegated roles and specializations taken up by Gautier during his life were a direct reflection of the historical and intellectual moment in which was living. He was a specialist of multiple disciplines, at a time when the colonial sciences were developing as discrete but interacting disciplines. That is to say, while practitioners of colonial economy, law, and geography sought disciplinary autonomy, the colonial sciences were necessarily unified because they were all oriented towards the *fait colonial*. Accordingly, Gautier's interdisciplinary orientations were academically well suited to the period in which he was writing.

Advocating the importance of interdisciplinarity, rather than specialization, in *Les siècles obscures*, Gautier criticizes authoritative Arabist scholars for remaining limited to their own field (to which Mercier had belonged). He then proposes a solution to this issue. Arabists, their “hermetic character” notwithstanding, have accumulated a “respectable heap” of scholarly material, especially in their translations. According to Gautier, a non-specialist, with access to these publications, is less disoriented in the colonial field than he would have been half a century before. Because of these developments, “The moment has perhaps come where one could try to build”⁷⁷ from the accumulated knowledge of Arabists. Gautier argues that researchers from a variety of disciplines should analyze information collected by specialized Arabists. Although earlier generations of colonial scholars were diligent researchers, they lacked the time for and the pretension to historical interpretation. This is how Gautier frames his own intervention in *Les siècles obscures*. He claims that his own historical and geographical orientations allow him to

⁷⁶ Florence Deprest, “Gautier, Émile-Félix,” in *Dictionnaire des orientalistes*, ed. by François Pouillon (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2008), 456-57.

⁷⁷ Gautier, *L'Islamisation*, 36.

analyze the supposedly raw material that has been gathered by Arabists. His aim in *Les siècles obscures* is to utilize his own analytic skillset as a geographer to bring a new perspective to the preexisting research on North Africa.

The resultant text is a study of North Africa in what he calls the high middle ages (*haut moyen-âge*), beginning with the Arab conquests in the seventh century, and ending in the thirteenth century. In this respect both Mercier and Gautier narrow their focus to the same period in North African history which, according to Gautier, is both obscure and important. However, as we will see immanently, there are also major differences in the two scholars' approaches to narrating this history.

4.1. Gautier's Concept of North Africa and Geographical Determinism

Above, I showed that Mercier uses the timeless spatial concept of North Africa to delimit the historical narrative in his writing. Similarly, the idea of a geographically bounded space is a crucial part of Gautier's interpretation of North African history. Employing his training in geography, he renders geographical regions (*pays*) the primary units of analysis in his text.

For Gautier, a region's essential characteristics are defined by "le milieu physique," such as landscape, soil, climate, and natural resources. He explains why the geographical region of North Africa or the Maghrib⁷⁸ is a fruitful source of information to be studied:

Le pays n'a pas changé, il est toujours là sous nos yeux, et il commence à être bien connu. La géographie du Maghreb a fait bien plus de progrès que son histoire. Des faits, incohérents aussi longtemps qu'on se borne à les considérer en eux-mêmes,

⁷⁸ Maghrib, North Africa, and *Berbérie*, are employed interchangeably by Gautier.

apparaîtront, je crois logiquement liés dès qu'on les placera dans leur cadre.⁷⁹

Since North Africa, as a geographical region, has always been there, it offers a consistent source of information for the researcher. This conceptualization of North Africa as a timeless geographical region and a frame (*cadre*) of analysis is shared between both Mercier and Gautier.

In addition, Gautier's conceptual scheme resembles that of Mercier because he systematically binds the geographical to the ethnographical. Like Mercier, Gautier equates North Africa with *Berbérie*. They both identify the Berbers as a timeless race which belongs to the timeless North African region.⁸⁰ In *Les siècles obscures*, Gautier emphasizes the *determining* role of geography in ethnographical (as well as historical) phenomena. For him, the essential nature of the Berbers can only be truly understood by reference to geography. Indeed, to explain the “sober and enduring”⁸¹ qualities of the Berbers, Gautier refers to geographical causes, writing “C’est le pays de sel qui veut ça: la dureté de la vie élimine les faibles, et le soleil, tuer de germes, dans l’air sec et sur la terre nue, est un excellent désinfectant.”⁸² This is one example of Gautier's geographical determinist approach.

In general, for Gautier, all matters of geography have “human consequences.”⁸³ He uses the concept of *genre de vie*—which he takes from the scholarship of Paul Vidal de la Blache

⁷⁹ “The country has not changed, it is always there for our eyes to see, and it begins to be well known. The geography of the Maghrib has progressed much more than its history. Facts, which seem incoherent when one insists on considering them in isolation, will appear, I believe, logically connected when placed in their frame.” Gautier, *L’Islamisation*, 31.

⁸⁰ “L’homme n’a pas plus changé que le pays.” (“Like the country, man has not changed”) Gautier, *L’Islamisation*, 31.

⁸¹ Gautier, *L’Islamisation*, 21.

⁸² “It’s the *pays* of salt that wills this : the difficulty of life eliminates weaknesses, and the sun, which kills germs in the air and in the bare earth, is an excellent disinfectant.” Gautier, *L’Islamisation*, 21.

⁸³ Émile-Félix Gautier, *Mœurs et coutumes des musulmans*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Payot, 1949), 96.

(1845-1918)⁸⁴ — to support this geographical determinist conception of the world. For him, dichotomous climatic differences between Orient and Occident correspond to an unbreachable difference in the “genres de vies” of the inhabitants of these distinct regions.⁸⁵ In the last analysis, any question of ethnology could be answered through this Manichaeian understanding of geography.

In her study of the French colonial uses of the term *genre de vie*,⁸⁶ geographer Florence Deprest shows that the concept was used in many different ways by colonial scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Gautier preferred a conception of *genre de vie* that pitted the sedentary against the nomadic, East against West, and, by extension, Christianity against Islam.⁸⁷ As we will see below, this geographical determinism would materialize in Gautier’s narrative of North African history. It should also be noted that not all of Gautier’s contemporaries agreed with his understanding of *genre de vie*. Other colonial scholars, like Augustin Bernard (1865-1947), argued that *genres de vies* were often blended in certain regions. Indeed, Deprest provides many examples of scholars who opposed the division of mankind into two dichotomous groups and preferred to uphold the foundational unity of all people.

Thus far, it is clear that North Africa is the central historical object in the work of both Mercier and Gautier. They conceptualize North Africa as a discrete, timeless geographical region. They also contend that the Berbers are a timeless race which belongs to the region. However, there is a major difference between the North African region and, by extension, the

⁸⁴ See, for example, “Les genres de vie dans la géographie humaine,” *Annales de Géographie* 20, no. 112 (1911): 193-212 and 289-304. Al-Azmeh aptly summarizes the genealogy of this determinism: “Gautier takes over the very descriptive and guarded notion of Vidal de la Blanche and constructs from it a *homo geographicus* which he then uses to establish impressionistic causalities between geography and history in such a way that the result is ecological determinism.” Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn*, 212.

⁸⁵ Gautier, *Mœurs*, 96.

⁸⁶ Florence Deprest, “Using the concept of genre de vie: French geographers and colonial Algeria, c. 1880–1949,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 37, no. 2 (2011): 158-166.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Gautier, *Mœurs*.

North African Berber of Mercier and Gautier. Mercier, as I described above, treats North Africa as a part of the *Occident*. Gautier's North Africa, on the other hand, is defined in *opposition* to the Occident. Gautier does not explicitly categorize the North African region as an Oriental one. Rather, he treats it as a zone of struggle between Oriental and Occidental influences. The “*duel passionnant entre les influences orientales et occidentales*” constitutes “*le fond de l’histoire maugrebine*.” However, he also generalizes that “*dans une partie considérable du Maghreb, les gens, avec qui la France est aujourd’hui en contact, parlent un langage sémitique voisin de l’arabe, s’habillent, se coiffent, pensent et sentent à l’orientale*.” This has been the case “*depuis près de trois millénaires*.” Given this extended period of Oriental influence, the Oriental character of the region is a “*poids terrible à soulever*.”⁸⁸

Gautier's conceptualization of a non-Occidental North Africa is most evident in the comparisons he draws between this region and the Occident. *Berbérie* has a “*caractère de reflet éternel*.”⁸⁹ North Africa is the inversion of all the qualities that the Occident, Europe, and particularly France possess. For example, “*le problème qui domine toute l’histoire maugrebine*,” is described in the following manner: “*Dans nos histoires nationales européennes l’idée centrale est toujours la même : par quelles étapes successives s’est constitué l’état, la nation. Au Maghreb, inversement, l’idée centrale est celle-ci : par quel enchainement de fiascos particulier s’est affirmé le fiasco total*.”⁹⁰ In this way, he assumes North Africa, the Berbers, to be non-Occidental—that is, not a part of “us” or “our histories”—throughout his writing. As an *eternal* characteristic of the region, this applies to the past as well as the present.

⁸⁸ Gautier, *L’Islamisation*, 130-132.

⁸⁹ Gautier, *L’Islamisation*, 26. Emphasis his.

⁹⁰ “Here is the problem that dominates all Maghribī history, which one finds on every page. In our European national histories, the central idea is always the same: by which successive stages did the state, the nation, constitute itself. In the Maghrib, it is the inverse. The central idea is the following: by what series of particular fiascos was the total fiasco affirmed.” Gautier, *L’islamisation*, 27.

For both Mercier and Gautier, North Africa is timeless, the Berbers have not changed, and North African history is the story of unending conquest and chaos. However, Gautier treats this situation as endemic to the region. Mercier, as we have seen above, preferred to blame the foreign Arab race for what he had identified as the failures of the region. Gautier maintains that the anti-Occidental character of the inhabitants of the Maghrib—both Arabs and Berbers—is eternal. This is the conception of North Africa that Gautier employs as the basis of his historical writing about the “obscure centuries” of the region. As I show in the next section, this conception of North Africa and its inhabitants allows him to do away with the Berberophilia of some Orientalists, like Mercier, and instead argue that North Africa’s native race is incapable of becoming a nation.

4.2. Conquests in the Seventh Century, As told by Gautier

For Gautier, the history of the North Africa is “une cascade ininterrompue de *dominations étrangères*. Les Français ont succédé aux Turcs, qui avaient succédé aux Arabes, qui avaient succédé aux Byzantins, qui avaient succédé aux Romains, qui avaient succédé aux Carthaginois.”⁹¹ Again, this story of unending conquest echoes the historical narrative given by Mercier.

However, the difference between Mercier and Gautier’s historical narrative comes into sharper relief in the excerpt that follows this statement. For Mercier, the unending history of conquest in the region can be blamed on the nature of the Berber race (and, by extension, North African geography). He writes:

Ils ne sont plus un race malléable, accueillante pour l’étranger, prête a se fondre en lui. Tout au contraire. La conquête étrangère joue un

⁹¹ Gautier, *L’islamisation*, 24. Emphasis his.

rôle important dans toutes les histoires. Mais, ailleurs, le conquérant étranger devient plus ou moins vite un chef national. Ici jamais.

Gautier argues that the inhabitants of *Berbérie* were consistently hostile towards foreign conquest and the possibility of national unity as part of their nature. This can be observed throughout their long history of conquest:

Les Turcs, en 1830, après plusieurs siècles d'occupation, restaient aussi distincts des indigènes qu'au premier jour. La première invasion arabe est de 641 après J.-C. et aujourd'hui encore, en Algérie, au Maroc, les Berbères et les Arabes n'ont toujours pas fusionné; le bloc berbère demeure énorme et irréductible. Et cette Berbérie indéracinable, qui dure depuis 3.000 ans, n'a jamais été un peuple ; c'est trop peu dire : elle n'a jamais senti le besoin d'en être un. A nous autres Européens ça paraît fantastique.

Il y a mieux : la Berbérie non seulement n'a jamais été une nation, mais elle n'a jamais été un État autonome. Elle a toujours fait partie d'un empire dont elle était une province ; comme elle est colonie française, elle a été province de l'empire musulman, de l'empire byzantin, de l'empire romain.”⁹²

On the one hand, Gautier echoes Mercier’s argument that the Berber element has always remained distinct, over the course of many conquests. However, whereas Mercier construes the resistance of the Berbers as one of their positive qualities, Gautier views Berber resistance to foreign domination as a deficiency in the race. Conquest, according to Gautier, presents an

⁹² “They are no longer a malleable race, welcoming to the foreigner, ready to fuse with him. Quite to the contrary. Foreign conquest plays an important role in all histories. However, elsewhere, the foreign conqueror becomes, more or less quickly, a national leader. Here, never.

The Turks, in 1839, after several centuries of occupation, remained just as distinct from the *indigènes* as they had been at the beginning. The first Arab invasion was in 641 A.D., and still, today in Algeria and in Morocco, Berbers and Arabs have not fused together ; the Berber group (*bloc*) remains enormous and irreducible. And this ineradicable Berbérie, which has persisted for 3,000 years, never was a people. That even says too little. It never felt the need to be one. To us, Europeans, this appears amazing.

It gets better: not only was Berbérie never a nation, it was never autonomous. It always was a part of an empire, as a province; as it is a French colony, it was a province of the Muslim empire, the Byzantine empire, and the Roman empire.” Gautier, *L'Islamisation*, 25.

opportunity to achieve nationhood, and the Berber stubbornly refuses these opportunities, time and time again. This, for Gautier, is their ethnological nature.

Gautier's depiction of the Berber race is a far cry from Mercier's Berberophilia. Rather than glorifying Berber custom and tradition, Gautier finds nothing to praise in the barbaric *eternels conquis* of a barren North Africa. Gautier's Berbers are congenitally bellicose,⁹³ yet their aggression amounts to nothing useful. Indeed, "cette race, qui a une vitalité irréductible, n'a aucune *individualité* positive."⁹⁴ For Gautier, European nations-states, like France, were in possession of a centralized political unity. The Maghrib lacks — and, as his history shows, has always lacked — what Europe has. It is nothing but political chaos. Here, again, we see how Gautier characterizes the North African region through absence. Ultimately, whereas Mercier implies that the Berber is malleable and civilizable, Gautier's geographical determinism renders the Berber fixed, stubborn, unchanging, and *unchangeable*.

It is clear that Gautier's historical writing about the past is concomitantly about the present. This is how Gautier comfortably jumps between the contemporary and the medieval. For example, he contends that "le Berbère, *au XX^e siècle, comme au VII^e*, n'a aucune idée de la patrie ; il ne conçoit même pas le Maghreb considéré comme un ensemble, envers qui il aurait des devoirs."⁹⁵ Again, employing timeless conceptions of space and race, the subjects of his history are the same in both the present and the past. For Gautier, the Berbers are a race that eternally lacks what Europe has. They never were a nation, and they will never become one.

⁹³ Gautier, *L'Islamisation*, 24-25.

⁹⁴ Gautier, *L'Islamisation*, 25. Emphasis his.

⁹⁵ "It is sufficient to remember that the Berber in the twentieth century, as in the seventh century, has no idea of a nation. He does not even conceive the Maghrib as a whole towards which he has obligations." Gautier, *L'Islamisation*, 253. Emphasis mine.

In this way, his historical narrative also informs contemporary political debates about North African colonization. Gautier's depiction of Berbers and their land harmonized with the attitudes of a broad stratum of colonial policy makers. Florence Deprest has shown that that Gautier's writings contributed to a national debate on modalities of colonization.⁹⁶ Gautier's geohistorical visions of the Maghrib coincided well with his opposition to the legal naturalization of indigenous Algerians. Indeed, if French geographical science came to a consensus that the barbaric nature of the indigenous North African populations was unchanging, as Gautier contended, legal naturalization into the French civilized nation was not a feasible option for the colonial state.⁹⁷ Moreover, Gautier's arguments supported French administrators in the Moroccan protectorate who were dispirited by the bureaucratic challenges of "protecting" Berber customs and institutions. Arguments like that of Gautier provided the expertise that justified a more direct form of influence over the administrative structures of the country.

With this in mind, it is clear that Gautier's argument about the Berber's eternal lack of national consciousness is one of the most important parts of his work as a political statement. If the Berber is understood as eternally passive, the French colonialist can be active. Indeed, he begins *Les siècles obscures* with this insinuation. Without any "distinct political existence," he explains, the Maghrib was never given a universally accepted name. It is thus necessary for *us* to give it one. The inhabitant of the Maghribian never wrote the history of the land. It is thus necessary for *us* to write it for him. The Maghrib never gained political control of the region. It is

⁹⁶ Florence Deprest, "Découper le Maghreb: deux géographies coloniales antagonistes (1902-1937)," *M@ppemonde* 91 (2008): 1-13.; Florence Deprest, "Fernand Braudel et la géographie « algérienne » : aux sources coloniales de l'histoire immobile de la Méditerranée ?," *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 99, no. 3 (2010): 28-35; Florence Deprest, *Géographes en Algérie (1880-1950): Savoirs universitaires en situation coloniale*, (Paris: Belin, 2009).

⁹⁷ On the other side of the debate, a different theory of geography and history claimed that indigenous populations were not fixed in their lifestyles. However, Gautier's theory was well acclaimed and won the support of many (among them, the famous Annales school.) Deprest, "Fernand Braudel," 28-35.

thus necessary *us* to establish political sovereignty for him. Throughout the text, he renders Berbers a passive race that does not even “feel the need” to unify themselves. It is only the *homo Europaeus* who feels this need, due to his civilized nature, and it is his duty to act upon this national feeling. This is the teleology underlying Gautier’s historical writing. The past of the Maghrib is directed towards an end, its conquest by France, the carriers of nationhood and civilization.

In Gautier’s depiction of North Africa, its historical problem of unending conquest, and its solution in France’s takeover, the Arab conquests of the seventh century are relatively insignificant. They are, like in Mercier, just one conquest in a long series of conquests. Moreover, as Orientals, Arabs never would have been able to develop a nation or a civilization in North Africa. This is the case, despite their success in conquering the North African region. He explains their crude approach to conquest in the following manner:

Sorti des déserts se la Mecque et de Médine, l’Arabe ne s’est pas soucié un instant d’organiser son pays natal. Il ne s’est établi que dans les vieux centres millénaires de la civilisation orientale, la Syrie, la Mésopotamie, l’Égypte. Hors du domaine religieux (et encore ne faudrait-il pas y regarder de trop près), c’est un prédateur incapable de créer. Il lui faut quelque chose de tout prêt, une organisation créée par d’autres. Cet animal ne construit pas sa coquille, il se loge dans celle d’autrui. Ce nomade essentiel n’a jamais eu de maison que celle des autres.⁹⁸

The disdain Gautier holds for these Arab, nomadic “animals” is palpable. For Mercier, the end the eternal conquest of the Maghrib cannot be carried out by just *any* conqueror who may have appeared in the country. The conquest needs to be carried out by the *homo Europaeus*. Only the

⁹⁸ “Having left Mecca and Medina, the Arab did not care a bit to organize his native country. He settled only in the thousand-years-old centers of Oriental civilization—Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. Aside from the religious domain (and even here not much should be expected), he is a predator incapable of creating. He needs something already made, an organization created by others. This animal does not construct his shell, he lives in those of others. This essential nomad never had a home of his own except that of others.” Gautier, *L’Islamisation*, 257-258.

Occidental man, with the proper “genre de vie,” knows how to establish and extend his nation and civilization.⁹⁹

While some of the conceptual frames that were articulated by Mercier are further solidified in Gautier’s approach to historical writing, Gautier is able to use the North African geographical frame for considerably different political purposes. Whereas Mercier sought to protect Berber custom, Gautier’s historical writing justifies the imposition of direct French rule in the region. Gautier’s conception of the history of the Maghrib was the story of an ecologically-determined, non-Occidental zone containing an indigenous race and a foreign one. Both were unwilling to evolve out of chaos, and lacked the capacity to build a nation. This depiction of French North Africa and its inhabitants justified a colonial policy of direct rule over the natives.

5. Conclusion

The historical writing of Mercier and Gautier provide examples of French scholarship produced when the French colonial system was reaching its apogee. Both of these authors framed their historical narrative through the historical object of North Africa. This notion served to structure the historical narrative both spatially and temporally. Both envision the history of North Africa as geographically delimited and temporally unlimited.

At the same time, these scholars held distinct intellectual and political positions, and they operated at different periods and stages of colonial power. Their distinct views on contemporary French colonial politics and policy, specifically their opinions on the role of France in colonizing

⁹⁹ This is a Vidalian conception of civilization: “[L]es conditions d'existence, contractées en certains milieux, acquièrent assez de consistance et de fixité pour devenir des formes de civilisation.” (“[T]he conditions of existence, born in specific quarters, acquire sufficient consistency and fixity to become set forms of civilization”). Paul Vidal de la Blache, “Les genres de vie dans la géographie humaine,” *Annales de Géographie* 20, no. 112 (1911): 22.

the inhabitants of North Africa, influenced the concepts and ideas in their historical narratives. Mercier's narrative about the Arab invasion of *Berbérie* betrays his preference to protect the indigenous race from the foreign Arabs. Gautier, who supported the direct imposition of French political institutions in North Africa, developed a historical narrative wherein both Berbers and Arabs were proven to be non-Occidental, and thus incapable of nation-building, by nature.

In both cases, Arabs and Berbers were treated as races with pre-determined characteristics, even if those characteristics differed according to each author. All tacitly agreed that the qualities and potentialities of the Arab and Berber race can be gleaned from historical precedent. The seventh-century conquests, in particular, offer a historical example from which they could make their claims about the present. For Mercier, the conquests are a temporary, incomplete effort by the Arabs at dominating a weak Berber race. For Gautier, the conquests are yet another example of the stubbornness and resistance of the Berbers. In the following chapter, I will explore how Moroccan nationalist authors articulated historical narratives which were connected to the precedents set by Arabic texts like that of al-Nāṣirī, as well as the historical writings of French colonial authors that I have discussed here.

Chapter 3: The Arab Maghrib and the Conquest Narrative of ‘Allal al-Fāsī

1. Introduction

The 1930 Berber *dhahīr* led to a vigorous backlash against the French colonial administration for several reasons. Many Moroccans opposed the *dhahīr* because it was understood as a religious issue. Moroccans blamed the French for attempting to Christianize Berbers, and de-Islamicize Morocco.¹⁰⁰ What is more, many in the country were concerned with the political implications of the decree; the French attempt to exempt Berber zones from the jurisdiction of *makhzan* courts and *shari’a* made it clear that the French Residency was no longer interested in protecting or preserving the old *makhzan*’s forms of rule. Laroui, in his analysis of Moroccan nationalism, explains that “l’ancien Makhzen comprit que le pacte du protectorat avait été rompu, que le dahir du 16 mai 1930 sonnait le glas de son autorité et peut-être même de son droit à l’existence.”¹⁰¹ Outrage over the French encroachment on Moroccan political and religious norms led to the development of an irreversible anticolonial nationalist movement in the country. At the same time, this movement had many component parts, and not all nationalists agreed on strategies to oppose French intrusions. While some nationalists were only interested in reestablishing the authority of the Sultan, others focused on making administrative and political reforms to the *makhzan*.

‘Allal al-Fāsī (1910-1974) was a figure who could appeal to the different aims of galvanized Moroccans. His family background was especially suited to accord with many different nationalist interests:

¹⁰⁰ For more on the impact of the 1930 *dhahīr* on the Moroccan nationalist movement, see Ageron, “La politique berbère du protectorat marocain.”; Abdallah Laroui, *Les origines sociales et culturelles du nationalisme marocain: 1830-1912*, (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1977), 421-437.

¹⁰¹ “[T]he old Makhzan understood that the pact of the protectorate had been broken, that the *dhahīr* of May 16, 1930 sounded the death knell of its authority and perhaps even of its right to exist.” Laroui, *Les origines*, 431.

‘Allal al-Fāsī malgré son jeune âge, son évidente impréparation s’imposa néanmoins comme le chef du nouveau mouvement. Appartenant à une famille qui depuis le XVII^e siècle avait secondé le trône marocain, qui avait fondé une influente zaouia urbaine et qui, au cours du XIX^e siècle avait peu à peu investi la bureaucratie, il sut au surplus saisir une chance historique: le rôle de *‘ālim* contestataire était vacant depuis la mort tragique de Muḥ. al-Kattānī. Dans la personne du jeune ‘Allal se conjuguèrent toutes les continuités, se recoupaient les grandes institutions traditionnelles du pays.¹⁰²

He was indeed a figure that appealed to a broad set of nationalist groups. Educated at the prestigious Qarawiyyin University in Fez, al-Fāsī was involved in most of the historic events that are considered landmark manifestations of Moroccan nationalism from the 1920s onwards. Early nationalist journals, petitions, delegations, secret societies, official organizations, and urban protests bear traces of al-Fāsī’s involvement.¹⁰³

In the 1930s and 1940s Moroccan resistance to French rule moved away from strategies that accepted the presence of the Residency and which attempted to achieve a suitable form of French rule. Instead, nationalists turned towards rejecting French rule outright, and advocated national independence from French domination. Fittingly, the name of what would become the most prominent nationalist political party in the late protectorate period, led by al-Fāsī, was the *Istaqlāl* (meaning independence). As a consequence of his prominent role in this growing opposition movement in Morocco, the Residency exiled al-Fāsī to Gabon for nearly a decade. It

¹⁰²“‘Allal al-Fasi, despite his young age and obvious unpreparedness, nevertheless established himself as the leader of the new movement. Belonging to a family that since the seventeenth century had supported the Moroccan throne, had founded an influential urban *zāwiyya* and had during the nineteenth century gradually invested the bureaucracy, he knew how to seize a historical opportunity: the role of dissenting *‘ālim* had been vacant since the tragic death of Muḥ. al-Kattānī. In the person of the young ‘Allal were combined all the continuities, intersected the great traditional institutions of the country.” Laroui, *Les origines*, 433. Here Laroui references the influential *‘ālim* (pl. *‘ulama*) Muḥammad al-Kattānī (1873-1909) who had been a vocal critic of French colonialism as well as the Sultan ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r.1894-1908).

¹⁰³ For more on al-Fāsī’s involvement in the Moroccan nationalist movement, see John P. Halstead, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Origins and Rise of Moroccan Nationalism, 1912-1944*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).

was shortly after al-Fāsī's return, in 1948, that he published *al-Ḥarakāt al-istiqlāliyya fī al-maghrib al-‘arabī* (The Independence Movements in the Arab Maghrib, henceforth *al-Ḥarakāt*),¹⁰⁴ a text which describes the development of the independence movements of the “Arab Maghrib,” especially focusing on the period after the French invasion of Algeria in 1830.

This chapter will analyze historiographical elements in al-Fāsī's *al-Ḥarakāt*. After briefly situating al-Fāsī's text in its historical and political context, I will explore how al-Fāsī developed historical objects and a narrative that opposed French colonial claims to the region and its history. I then discuss how his historical writing served nationalist aims particular to his time of writing, and how this approach contrasted with the historical text written by al-Nāṣirī in the nineteenth century.

2. The Aims of al-Fāsī's *al-Ḥarakāt*

Al-Fāsī wrote that his target readership was threefold. First, the new generation of Arab youths, especially those of the Maghrib, needed to be informed of the history of the independence movement that they would continue. Second, he sought to tell his history to Arabs outside of the Maghribī zone. Indeed, al-Fāsī's work was an effort to bridge the gaps in consciousness within the far-spread Arab world. While the 1930s witnessed the creation of a slew of pan-Arab societies, parties, and gatherings, led by a younger generation of Arab nationalists,¹⁰⁵ Arab nationalists in Mashriqī countries were not particularly concerned with movements taking shape in the Maghrib. Al-Fāsī's book, which was part of “a program sponsored by the Cultural Bureau of the League of Arab States for a study and depiction of

¹⁰⁴ ‘Allāl al-Fāsī, *al-Ḥarakāt al-istiqlāliyya fī al-maghrib al-‘arabī*, (Cairo, 1948).

¹⁰⁵ Youssef M. Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: A History Nation and State in the Arab World*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) 56-101.

contemporary problems in the Arab world,” was an effort to address this lack of awareness.¹⁰⁶

Al-Fāsī’s third target audience was the “international public,” whom he sought to educate on the matters of Maghribī nationalism and the inevitability of the fall of colonial rule in the region.¹⁰⁷

In sum, his aims were to galvanize a younger generation of Moroccans, to link the Moroccan independence struggle with other independence movements in the Arab world, and inform the international public about this struggle.

Like in the other cases that I have described in this thesis, Al-Fāsī’s historical writing reflected and supported his political goals. It is important to consider that al-Fāsī was not only a historian or scholar, he was a redoubtable public leader, seeking to lead the struggle against French and, more generally, “Western” tyranny. As Laroui has described, al-Fāsī’s major concern “fut toujours de nier certaines déterminations historiques. L’Occident positif, le travail, la liberté ne découlent pas du Christianisme qui, en histoire, fut toujours synonyme d’oppression et d’exploitation. De même, la décadence, la servitude, la passivité ne viennent pas de l’Islam, mais d’éléments qui lui sont étrangers.”¹⁰⁸ His history was meant to counter and negate historical claims made by French colonial scholars. I will discuss this aspect of his text in greater detail below. Subsequently, I will discuss how his history supported his aims to reforming the existing *makhzan*.

¹⁰⁶ At the same time, the Moroccan independence struggle was brought to the attention of the Arab world through the writings of the Geneva-based Arab nationalist Shakib Arslan (1869-1946), especially his coverage of the 1930 Berber *dhahīr* and subsequent nationalist resistance.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Fāsī, *al-Harakāt*. This explanation appears in the preface to the first edition. The page number is not indicated. Later citations indicate the Arabic letters used in pagination.

¹⁰⁸ “was always to deny certain historical determinations. The positive Occident, work and freedom, do not come from Christianity, which in history has always been synonymous with oppression and exploitation. Similarly, decadence, servitude, and passivity do not come from Islam, but from elements that are foreign to it.” Abdallah Laroui, *L’idéologie arabe contemporaine*, (Paris: Maspéro, 1967), 43.

3. Central Concepts in *al-Ḥarakāt*

3.1. A History of Everlasting Patriotism

The central leitmotif of al-Fāsī's historical text is the enduring presence of a Maghribī unity (*wahda*) and patriotism (*wataniyya*). He opens his text with the following statement: "If we study the history of the Arab Maghrib, we find that patriotism, in the sense of self-defense and love of freedom for both the individual and the social group, is one of the strongest and most prevalent attributes of Maghribians."¹⁰⁹ Maghribī patriotism, as it is used by al-Fāsī throughout his writing, is a spiritual phenomenon. It is not defined by geography or other material conditions. Rather, it is an attribute carried by some people in history, while others lack it. Patriotism has always existed among Maghribians, a key ethnological concept that I will return to below.

This conception of patriotism is a direct challenge to the dominant French colonial perspective on the history of North Africa. He refutes the assumption, dominant in French scholarship,¹¹⁰ that the region is doomed to political chaos without foreign rule. Indeed, in the opening pages of *al-Ḥarakāt*, al-Fāsī explains that his work is a response to and correction of the interpretation of the Maghrib enunciated by Western researchers. Accusing these scholars of being "ruled by their colonial orientation and prejudices," al-Fāsī argues that they

misinterpreted the perpetual struggle for self-defense and freedom as a manifestation of extreme individualism, love of anarchy, and internecine warfare. This led them to conclude that the Maghrib was incapable of forming a national unity in the true sense of the term; they further contended that the countries of this region had never known complete independence in their history.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Al-Fāsī, *al-Ḥarakāt*, ٣.

¹¹⁰ Although some French scholars were articulating opposition to this dominant colonial perspective in their historical writing as early as the 1930s. The historian Charles-André Julien (1891-1991) is well known as an anticolonial French historian, although he also praises and adopts many of the racist arguments of E.F. Gautier.

¹¹¹ Al-Fāsī, *al-Ḥarakāt*, ٣.

Al-Fāsī identifies Gautier, whom I discussed above in detail, as a typical example of this prejudiced Western research.

In order to counter the French claim that North Africa *always* lacked political coherence, al-Fāsī develops the idea that Maghribī patriotism *always* existed. “We the people of the Maghrib,” he writes “derive from our present unflinching resistance to colonial domination a sense of communion with the spirit that permeated our forefathers from the oldest times up until today.”¹¹² He situates the beginnings of this patriotism in a time long “before the Franks were even heard of,” before the coming of Islam in the seventh century, the “Latin conquest,” and the arrival of the Phoenicians in Carthage in the ninth century BCE. Indeed, al-Fāsī’s Maghribī patriotism precedes the history of political rule in the Maghrib, be it French, Muslim, Latin, or Greek. Al-Fāsī’s historical narrative follows Maghribī patriotism over the course of millennia. “From the oldest times up until today” the patriotism of the Maghrib existed and persisted. Its existence is traceable to the present moment, and it would continue into the future as well.¹¹³ This conception of a timeless national essence is a common trope among romantic nationalist writings around the world.¹¹⁴ Al-Fāsī’s writing offers an example of how this trope figured in historical writing about Morocco and the Maghrib.

In this way, al-Fāsī constructs a historical argument about the abiding existence of Maghribī patriotism, *in opposition* to the dominant French colonial narrative. At the same time, he adopts the broad chronological scheme enunciated by French colonial historians in their attempts to

¹¹² Al-Fāsī, *al-Harakāt*, ٥.

¹¹³ Al-Fāsī, *al-Harakāt*, ٥.

¹¹⁴ For another typical case of romantic Arab nationalism, Al-Azmeh has discussed the Syrian nationalist Michel Aflaq’s “Platonic Theory of Nationalism as a form of collective remembrance” in “History, Arab Nationalism and Secularism: Constantine Zurayk in Counterpoint,” in *Configuring Identity in the Arab East*, ed. Samir Seikali (Beirut, American University of Beirut, 2009), 121–137.

compose an *histoire complète*. By presenting the primordial existence of Maghribī patriotism, he frames his narrative in a way that *mirrors* the French chronological scheme. Al-Fāsī employs the mold used by French colonial scholars' historical writings, and he fills it with his conception of Maghribī nationalist spirit.

This is one example, among many, of how colonial and nationalist historical writing mirrored one another. While there is often an explicit refutation of French colonial thought in the work of nationalist historians like al-Fāsī, conceptual and formal resemblances subtend these articulations of opposition. In this way, al-Fāsī's text exemplifies the challenge faced by Maghribī nationalist historians, who sought to write histories of autonomy and independence, but who were compelled to reflect the conceptual frameworks articulated by their French intellectual opponents. As historian Youssef Choueiri has observed, Tunisian, Algerian, and Moroccan historians "used the structure of French scholarship and turned its prototypes upside down."¹¹⁵ As we will see, this mutual mirroring of intellectual equipment emerges repeatedly between the examples of French colonial and Maghribī nationalist historical writing discussed here.

3.2. The Arab Maghrib

Al-Fāsī's spatial conceptualization of the region provides another example of this opposition and mirroring. The "Arab Maghrib" is al-Fāsī's primary spatial unit. It comprises the modern territories of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. This geographical frame reflected his political ambitions at the time. Even while he was a major political player in the Moroccan nationalist movement and he appreciated the specificities of the anticolonial struggle in Morocco (what he

¹¹⁵ Youssef M. Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation-State*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 71-72.

refers to as *marrāḳush*¹¹⁶), his broad vision for independence extended beyond the borders of the Moroccan territory. As he explains in his introduction: “The reality is that the movements in the Maghrib, although under different names and labels, are but one movement seeking liberty, unity, and rejuvenation.”¹¹⁷ The concept of the Arab Maghrib gathers the anticolonial movements in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco under one unifying spatial concept.

As a historical object, al-Fāsī’s Arab Maghrib functions in much the same way as does the concept of North Africa in the examples of French historical writing that I have discussed. There was a general, if implicit, consensus among colonial and nationalist scholars of the region that distinct spatial borders ought to frame the historical narrative. Indeed, the spatial boundaries of al-Fāsī’s Arab Maghrib delimit the scope of his historical narrative. In this sense, al-Fāsī’s conceptualization of Maghribī history resembles the spatial as well as temporal frames employed by Mercier and Gautier in their “complete histories” of the region. In short, al-Fāsī’s history of the Maghrib is a historical narrative limited in geographical scope, yet broad in its chronological scheme. However, while there is a tacit agreement among al-Fāsī and colonial authors about the framing of their historical writing, they oppose one another regarding what content should be included within this frame. Al-Fāsī’s text vests the geographic concept of the Arab Maghrib with patriotic spirit. In this way, his Arab Maghrib reflects his vision of a Maghribī region, independent of European rule. This is the case, even while the concept of “Arab Maghrib” frames al-Fāsī’s narrative in a manner similar to the concept of “North Africa” in French colonial historical writing.

Another key difference between Al-Fāsī’s conceptualization of this region, vis-à-vis the dominant French conceptualization, is his emphasis on the *Arab* quality of the Arab Maghrib. By

¹¹⁶ This was a relatively common toponym for Morocco in the Arab World at the time.

¹¹⁷ Al-Fāsī, *al-Ḥarakāt*, ۳.

making the Maghrib an Arab one, al-Fāsī indicates that the anticolonial struggle of the Maghrib is connected to Arab liberation struggles further east.¹¹⁸ In addition, this terminology opposed the French conceptualization of the region. As I have discussed, among French colonial scholars, there was a general consensus that North Africa is synonymous with *Berbérie*. The Arabs were foreign invaders in the home of the Berbers. Al-Fāsī's conceptualization of the Arab Maghrib counters the French tendency to exclude Arabs from the definition of North Africa. This is another strategic benefit of the term, in addition to linking the Maghrib to Arab liberation movements in Mashriq.

While some of al-Fāsī's motives for using the label Arab Maghrib might be clear, the question does arise: By making the Maghrib an *Arab* one, was he denying the existence of Berbers in the land? The politics of the Arab-Berber dichotomy were of crucial importance for the Moroccan nationalist movement. Indeed, Moroccan nationalists viewed the promulgation of the 1930 Berber *dhahīr* as an attempt to break apart a unified nation. This is why it became one of the most important triggers for the mobilization of the country's nationalist movement.

In the face of colonizers' divide and rule tactics, a Moroccan nationalist strategy that gained traction over this period was to assert the *unity* of the colonized.¹¹⁹ Al-Fāsī emphasizes the concept of unity in his articulation of the Arab Maghrib. On the one hand, he explicitly states that unity, oneness, and solidarity are characteristics of the history of the region. At the same

¹¹⁸ To support his claim that the Mashriq and the Maghrib were equal members in the Arab liberation movement, al-Fāsī cites the Egyptian writer, Taha Hussein: "It is the duty of those who are organizing close cooperation between the Arab countries to remember always that there is an Arab Maghrib." Al-Fāsī, *al-Ḥarakāt*, 493.

¹¹⁹ For example, after the announcement of the 1930 *dhahīr*, a traditional prayer recited in times of calamity was repurposed by nationalist leaders as a form of political resistance. The improvised nationalist refrain was: "Oh God, the Benevolent, we ask of You benevolence in whatever fate brings . . . and do not separate us from our brothers, the Berbers!" This became a unifying political statement, recited after Friday noon prayer and at demonstrations across the country. For more on the Latif prayer as an instrument of nationalist resistance, see Lafuente, *La Politique Berbère*, 187-195; Jonathan Wirtzen, *Making Morocco: Colonial Intervention and the Politics of Identity*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 143.

time, it is woven into his conceptual framework through the notion of *maghariba* (hereafter translated as Maghribians).

3.3. Maghribians

Maghribian is the primary ethnological concept used by al-Fāsī. The Maghribians are the inhabitants of the Arab Maghrib, and they are the carriers of Maghribī patriotism. They constitute a homogenous unit, unified by their patriotic feeling. Indeed, al-Fāsī gives a historical example from the twelfth century which illustrates the interchangeability of one Maghribian for another: “A Maghribī national spirit [*rūh qawmīya maghribīya*] became so articulate and widespread that when the *Mahdi* Ibn Tumart of southern Morocco and founder of the Almohad dynasty died, he named ‘Abd al-Mu’min al-Jumi of the country of Algeria to succeed him as caliph.”¹²⁰ This anecdote is meant to illustrate that smaller geographical divisions, between Morocco and Algeria, for example, were insignificant for a homogenous people, so unified by a patriotic spirit. For al-Fāsī, the patriotic spirit of Maghribians transcends all other internal boundaries.

Al-Fāsī’s example also demonstrates that the unity and homogeneity of Maghribians is everlasting. A unifying national spirit existed at the time of the Almohad dynasty in the twelfth century and it continues to exist today. For al-Fāsī, this spirit continually developed throughout history, eventually leading to the present, wherein Maghribians were fighting for their independence against European colonial rule. This conceptualization of Maghribians supported a nationalist teleology; Maghribians, by their primordial patriotic nature, would inevitably realize their goal of freedom and independence for the entire Maghrib.

¹²⁰ Al-Fāsī, *al-Harakāt*, ٥.

Again, al-Fāsī's concept of Maghribians betrays the phenomenon of mutual-mirroring discussed above. His conception of an immutable and homogenous sociological entity resembles the racialized intellectual equipment employed by Gautier and other champions of the French domination in the region. This type of concept, be it Berbers or Maghribians, allowed historians to make ahistorical generalizations about the region and its inhabitants. For a colonial historian like Gautier, the concepts of homogenous and unchanging Berber and Arab races supported his idea that the region was eternally doomed to conquest and needed French domination to guide it out of political chaos. In contrast, al-Fāsī employs the homogenous and unchanging concept of Maghribians in order to posit the abiding nature of the region and people as both freedom-loving and politically unified.

Another similarity between these two conceptual frameworks is the fusion of geographical and ethnological concepts. In the previous chapter, I showed that, for Mercier and Gautier, ethnological and geographical characteristics of North Africa are inextricably linked. This is best exemplified in the use of the notion of *Berbérie*. When we look at how al-Fāsī uses the notions of the Arab Maghrib and Maghribians in his writing, we see that it is nearly impossible to define or distinguish one of these three concepts without reference to the others. His definition of the region is connected to his definition of the people who inhabit this region and their patriotic nature. Correspondingly, he often conflates spatial and ethnological concepts. Sometimes it is Maghribians who are the actors in al-Fāsī's historical writing, resisting and asserting their independence. At other times, it is the Maghrib itself which is the patriotic actor. In this sense, region, people, and national spirit, are overlapping and intertwining concepts in al-Fāsī's work.

Maghribī patriotism, the Arab Maghrib, and the Maghribians are central notions in al-Fāsī's narrative. They provide the conceptual building blocks for a nationalist narrative about the

unified liberation of his country and region against French hegemony. Even though his concepts share many of the same formal elements as colonial historiography, his historical objects served the aim of evincing the continued existence of a patriotic spirit in the region. The concept of the Arab Maghrib opposes the French conceptualization of North Africa as *Berbérie* and connects the region to nationalist movements further east. The conceptualization of homogeneous Maghribians sublates the colonial Arab-Berber dichotomy. The concept of an enduring, unified Maghribī patriotism implies one unified history of the region, independent of foreign conquests.

4. Al-Fāsī's Historical Narrative

4.1. A Perpetual Struggle Between East and West

When we turn to look at the structure of al-Fāsī's historical narrative, we can again see the mirroring between colonial and nationalist historical writing. In his introductory chapter, al-Fāsī presents the “the history of the old Maghrib” (*tārīkh al-maghrib al-qadīm*). Much like Gautier, the past of the region is construed as a conflict between the Arab East and Latin West. In the last analysis:

there is a perpetual struggle for influence between the Latin family on the one hand, and on the other, the family that is known in the contemporary period as Arab, and whose mentality [*dhihnīa*] consists of influences from Maghribī, Greek, and Semitic civilization.¹²¹

This is the conflict which emerges as the central plot of al-Fāsī's history. The struggle is perpetual, observable in the past, the present, and it is shaping the future. Indeed, “the struggle

¹²¹ Al-Fāsī, *al-Harakāt*, ۶.

today in the Maghrib is between the influence of the Arab East [*al-sharq al-‘arabī*] and the influence of the Latin West [*al-gharb al-lātīnī*].”¹²²

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Gautier articulated a similar conception of a perpetual struggle for influence between Occident and Orient. However, for Gautier, the *telos* of the historical narrative is Occidental hegemony in the region. Al-Fāsī’s historical writing mirrors this conception of a clash of civilizations but argues that the Eastern influence will inevitably be the victor in this struggle. The hero and anti-hero are reversed in al-Fāsī’s narrative.¹²³ This is evident in the way he narrates major historical events in the history of the Maghrib.

4.2. Encounters and Conquests in the History of the Arab Maghrib

Al-Fāsī construes Maghribī history as a series of encounters between the local inhabitants of the region and foreign political and cultural forces. He begins by discussing the arrival of the Phoenicians to the region, then goes on to discuss the “Latin conquest,” and then the coming of Islam in the seventh century. As a narrative that strings together different conquests in a geographically bounded space and discusses the *transformation* (rather than creation) of the region, this narrative again mirrors the form of the French “complete histories” that I have discussed above. However, unlike the dominant colonial narrative, this was not a story about the unending conquest of an ununified land. Instead, each subsequent event in al-Fāsī’s narrative is important because it reveals more about the history of an everlasting Maghribī patriotism.

The Phoenician takeover of Carthage is the first key event in his narrative of the Arab Maghrib. According to al-Fāsī, Carthage was originally a Berber-controlled city. The state of

¹²² Al-Fāsī, *al-Harakāt*, ص.

¹²³ Abdelmajid Hannoum, *Colonial Histories, Post-Colonial Memories: The Legend of the Kahina, a North African Heroine*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001), 122.

Carthage “succeeded in effecting a fusion of Semitic and Berber civilizations which gave to the lands of the Maghrib a unified national existence embracing language, religion, and aspirations.”¹²⁴ According to al-Fāsī, the Phoenicians were already “integrated into the life of the country” prior to their conquest of Carthage. For this reason, they did not constitute an alien dominion in the Maghrib. In fact, al-Fāsī suggests that the Phoenicians “were not conquerors [*fātiḥīn*]” rather they joined the “Maghribī family” (*al-‘ā’ila al-maghribiyya*). Due to the spiritual harmony between Berbers and Phoenicians, unity in Carthage was able to endure for a long period of time. Phoenician presence had a long and positive impact on the Maghrib, according to al-Fāsī’s narrative.

This depiction of the Phoenician takeover establishes several important features of al-Fāsī’s narrative. First, al-Fāsī maintains that, prior to any foreign conquest, the Berbers were the original inhabitants of the Maghrib. Their anterior position is not given emphasis, it is taken for granted as a known fact. The Berbers were thus the original inhabitants of the Maghrib, and the original carriers of Maghribī patriotism. However, the arrival of the Phoenicians *transformed* this patriotic spirit. The Phoenicians’ arrival was not the domination or conquest of one civilization over a people without civilization. It was the *synthesis* of civilizations.

Importantly, this story of the arrival of the Phoenicians demonstrates the Maghribians’ ability to transform and adapt themselves. The Berbers, who were already inhabiting the land, were able to fuse with Phoenician newcomers. This newly synthesized people constituted the new Maghribians. Thus, Maghribī patriotism was not carried exclusively in the Berbers as the indigenous inhabitants, nor the Phoenicians as civilized conquerors. Once they had fused together, patriotic unity was a characteristic of all those in the “Maghribī family.” In this way,

¹²⁴ Al-Fāsī, *al-Harakāt*, ٢.

adaptability and the capacity for *integration* are key ideas in al-Fāsī's conceptualization of the Arab Maghrib's history. They allow for the various conquests to impact the Arab Maghrib, without any loss of its essence, namely, its patriotism and disposition towards freedom. Moreover, this depiction of adaptability counters the colonial idea, espoused by Gautier, that the indigenous Berbers are a stubborn race that is incapable of transforming itself.

Al-Fāsī's characterization of Phoenician rule contrasts starkly with the one he paints of the "Latin conquest" (*al-fath al-latini*):

Though it lasted five centuries, [Latin conquest] left no trace of influence on the land and the spirits of the Maghribians [*nufūs al-maghariba*]. This is not explainable by reference to the East or West, but rather the cause is the Roman use of enslavement, the exploitation of the inhabitants [*muwatinin*, literally, citizens], and extortion of their fortune. They took from the conquered lands without giving anything. The reasons for failure lie in the enslaving nature of the Romans, which, no matter how great their power, was unable to disable the moral power [*al-quwwa al-ma'nawiyya*] of those who believe in themselves and will sacrifice themselves for the sake of freedom and unity."¹²⁵

Here, al-Fāsī portrays Latin rule as tyrannical. This depiction provides a historical example that speaks to the negative impact of Western conquerors in the contemporary moment. The challenge to the French notion of the "civilizing mission" is obvious.

Moreover, the above excerpt asserts that the exploitative practices of the Romans were rejected outright by Maghribians. This point places emphasis on the capacity of Maghribians to consciously *choose* their political situation. If rule was just and compatible with Maghribī patriotism, the Maghribians accepted it, like in the Phoenician case. If rule was oppressive and exploitative, Maghribians chose to reject the influence of the conqueror. Whereas colonial historians like Gautier contended that the natives of North Africa could never understand their

¹²⁵ Al-Fāsī, ك.

history or gain consciousness of their political existence, al-Fāsī maintains that self-consciousness, proper judgement, and self-defense are defining characteristics of the Arab Maghrib. It is this self-consciousness that determines whether attempt at conquest in the region is or is not successful.

4.3. The Arrival of Islam

The third major event in al-Fāsī's pre-modern historical narrative is the arrival of Islam and the Arabs. Al-Fāsī wrote the history of the Islamic conquests with particularly ardent enthusiasm. Whereas "the Maghribians have consistently rejected any link with the Romans," they embraced Islam:

their hearts opened for Islam and the Islamic call shone. In it, they saw the avenue to freedom and national independence, in addition to intellectual and spiritual enhancement. The Islamic call did not enter into their view until the expansion [*imtidād*¹²⁶] of the tenets of the divine oneness that were harmonious with the nature of oneness that they desire and tend towards.¹²⁷

For al-Fāsī, the quality of oneness binds together Islam with Maghribī patriotism. He contends that there is a harmony between the unity of the people and the unity of the Islamic call. This renders the arrival of the Arabs and Islam a special event in the history of the Maghrib. It is the moment when the Maghrib gains and reaffirms an essential part of its spirit. Henceforth, the Maghrib is an Arab Maghrib.

¹²⁶ Interestingly, the word *imtidād* appears one other time in al-Fāsī's introduction, and that is as the title to the chapter. This is a relatively unconventional title for an introductory section of an Arabic work of history. It would seem that he, perhaps, he used this word because he was "extending" the recent history of Maghribī national spirit into the more distant past in this introductory chapter.

¹²⁷ Al-Fāsī, *al-Harakāt*, ۶.

This depiction of the seventh-century history of the Maghrib is very different from the French colonial portrayal of the Arab conquests. In fact, al-Fāsī did not consider the coming of Islam to be a conquest. Rather, it was a moment of transformation which affirmed and strengthened the patriotic spirit of the Maghrib. In contrast, French colonial historians' narratives about the seventh century tended to demonstrate just the opposite. They argued that the seventh-century conquests were an imposition of foreign rule on the region, and they did not have an immense impact on the essential nature of the Berber inhabitants of the land. Al-Fāsī, on the other hand, gives the arrival of Islam a great deal of emphasis. It is the *Latin* conquest that he treats as merely "a passing phase that left no lasting marks or impact."¹²⁸

4.4. Considering Ideological Shifts from al-Nāṣirī to al-Fāsī

The seventh-century arrival of Islam was an event that carried a great deal of historical significance for al-Fāsī in his historical writing. It allowed him to link his political and nationalist vision of history to a religious vision that that was already an established part of Moroccan proto-nationalist discursive articulations. Indeed, Laroui has shown that specifically Salafist language provided a "continuity of ideological inspiration"¹²⁹ for Moroccan discourses from the nineteenth into the twentieth centuries. Even though twentieth-century nationalist thought differed in many respects from the aims of dominant proto-nationalist discourses, all "devaient nécessairement adopter le langage salafiste, quitte réinterpréter à sa lumière les nouvelles idées et les nouveaux modes d'organisation."¹³⁰ Using different means, in different situations, both nineteenth-century

¹²⁸ Al-Fāsī, *al-Harakāt*, 3.

¹²⁹ Laroui, *Les origines*, 424.

¹³⁰ "had to adopt Salafist language, even if it meant reinterpreting new ideas and new modes of organization in its light." Laroui, *Les origines*, 424.

proto-nationalist and twentieth-century nationalist discourses employed Salafist ideology to defend “un seul et même objet : la norme islamique actualisée par le système makhzénien.”¹³¹

This ideological continuity is evident in the nineteenth and twentieth century Moroccan works of historical writing that I have discussed in this thesis. Both al-Fāsī and the nineteenth century Moroccan historian al-Nāṣirī share the objective to make the seventh-century conquests an important moment in the historical narrative about the Maghrib and Morocco. Indeed, the notion of an unbreakable continuity between the Islamic past and the Maghrib was of tremendous symbolic importance for both authors.

Moreover, it was important for al-Fāsī to place an emphasis on the foundational importance of Islam in his history because Islam functions as a binding agent between the independence movements in the Maghrib and the Mashriq. This was an important idea at a time when al-Fāsī envisioned independence as a pan-Arab trend. In general, Arabist discourses in the Maghrib relied on the notion of Islamic heritage to connect their struggle to independence movements in the Maghrib. In contrast, Arabism in the Mashriq has historically had a different temper. With few exceptions, Mashriqī pan-Arabists were considerably less concerned with Mashriqī-Maghribī relations. Correspondingly, it would seem, religion played a more subordinate role in Mashriqī iterations of Arabism, at least until the Islamization of Arabism Egypt in the 1980s.¹³²

At the same time, there are significant differences between al-Fāsī’s historical narrative and the one told by his predecessor, al-Nāṣirī. As I discussed in Chapter One, al-Nāṣirī begins *Kitāb al-Istiṣṣā* with the early history of Islam. Narrating a series of events in the form of a dynastic history, he treats the seventh century as an inaugural moment wherein both Islam and the

¹³¹ “to defend one and the same object: the Islamic norm actualized by the makhzanian system.” Laroui, *Les origines*, 424.

¹³² Arabism in Egypt became relatively Islamized through Sadat’s efforts to overturn Nasserist policies in the country.

Maghrib itself come into existence. The Islamic conquests mark the beginning of history in the Maghrib al-Aqṣā. In this way, al-Nāṣirī gives emphasis to the Islamic dynasties leading to the contemporary sultanate. At the end of the nineteenth century, this was a patriotic depiction of the history of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā which, in the last analysis, bolstered the authority of the sultan.

Al-Fāṣī places the seventh-century arrival of the Arabs and Islam within a vastly different historical scheme than that of al-Nāṣirī. Since al-Fāṣī frames Maghribī history within a much broader chronological scheme, the seventh century is not the central wellspring of the historical narrative. Instead, al-Fāṣī's conceptions of Maghribī patriotism, the Arab Maghrib, and the Maghribians were the major historical objects which structure his history. His idea of the Maghrib as a land and a people *precedes* the coming of Islam in the seventh century. While the arrival of the "Islamic call" was an important re-affirmation of Maghribī patriotism, ultimately Al-Fāṣī's Maghribī patriotism "existed before Islam as well as after it."¹³³

Al-Nāṣirī's narrative was structured around the idea of dynastic history, and grafted the spatial concept of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā onto that narrative. In contrast, al-Fāṣī treats the Maghrib as a distinct spatial unit that has existed since time immemorial. Thus, the events associated with the foundation and spread of Islam are peripheralized. Therefore, the importance of Islam is stated explicitly in al-Fāṣī's text, but it does not shape the al-Fāṣī's narrative structure in *al-Ḥarakāt*. Indeed, the narrative structure of his work is pre-determined by the concepts of a timeless Maghribī space, people, and national spirit.¹³⁴

¹³³ Al-Fāṣī, *al-Ḥarakāt*, ٥.

¹³⁴ Choueiri identifies this phenomenon as part of a broader trend in Arabic nationalist historical writing: The "shift from a religious or dynastic narrative to one built around a territory and its people denoted a secular dimension that was later incorporated by political Arabism. In this sense, religion became a dependent variable that had to be explained within the wider context of history itself." Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism*, 71.

This shift in emphasis from al-Nāṣirī to al-Fāsī, which comes to light when we examine their conceptual frameworks and historical narratives, reflects the respective political intentions of each author. Al-Nāṣirī aimed to bolster the authority of the royal ‘Alawī dynasty and the ruling sultan. Al-Fāsī was not only interested in restoring the authority of the sultan through his historical writing. He also had ambitions to reform the *makhzan* and to do so, he wanted to carve out ideological space that was independent of the sultan’s authority. His nationalist historical writing tells the story of a resilient, everlasting Maghribī patriotism, which is carried by *all* Maghribians.

5. Other Nationalist Visions of the Past

Thus far, I have analyzed how al-Fāsī narrated the history of the region that he calls the Arab Maghrib. It is also worth noting that frames for historical writing varied among contemporary Moroccan nationalist authors, and other nationalist visions of the past used different spatial and temporal frames. For example, the *Istaqlāl*—that is, the party which al-Fāsī would eventually lead—presented a manifesto to the French Résident Général and Moroccan Sultan in 1944, when al-Fāsī was exiled in Gabon. The party’s demand for independence from France began with list of justifications, the first of which reads:

Considérant que le Maroc a toujours constitué un Etat libre et souverain et qu’il a conservé son indépendance pendant treize siècles jusqu’au moment où, dans des circonstances particulières, un régime de protectorat lui a été imposé.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ “Considering that Morocco has always constituted a free and sovereign state, and that it has conserved its independence over thirteen centuries, up until the moment where, in particular circumstances, a protectorate regime was imposed on it.” The full text of the Manifesto can be found in Halstead, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 281-285.

In this statement, the authors use Morocco, rather than the Maghrib, as the primary historical object. This may have been due to the fact that the authors were presenting their manifesto to the French Residency in Morocco, specifically. In addition, the manifesto uses a different chronological scheme for the notion of independence. They claim that independence was established thirteen centuries prior, that is to say, with the arrival of Islam in the seventh century. In this way, the authors choose to make a different compromise than that of al-Fāsī. They pinpoint the seventh century as a generative moment, but in this way they put a temporal limit on the history of an independent Maghrib. In contrast, al-Fāsī extends his conception of Maghribī patriotism to construe it as timeless. For al-Fāsī, the spirit of independence itself, rather than the Islamic religion, is the wellspring of Maghribī civilization.

Nonetheless, in both of these enunciations of independence, a nationalist vision of the past was crucial to justifying the authors' contemporary political claims. Moroccan nationalist authors sought to prove the legitimacy of present-day independence movements by reference to a historical narrative about the past. This was the case, regardless of whether the movement for independence was construed as Maghribī or Moroccan, or if it began in the ancient or medieval period.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined al-Fāsī's historical writing as a discursive articulation of Moroccan nationalism in the twentieth century. For al-Fāsī, Maghribī patriotism is his central historical object. Employing many of the formal elements that appear in French colonial scholarship, al-Fāsī develops a vision of the Arab Maghrib that directly opposes the dominant French discourse. By treating the Arab Maghrib and Maghribians as historical units with

enduring, positive traits, al-Fāsī counters the French claims about North African history. At the same time, in employing this romantic conception of the everlasting nation, certain foundational characteristics of the nation actually become deemphasized. The role of the seventh-century Islamic conquests, while still important in al-Fāsī's *al-Ḥarakāt*, no longer shapes the structure of the historical narrative, as it had al-Nāṣirī's 1894 *Kitāb al-Istiṣā*. The emphasis given to an everlasting Maghribī patriotism and Maghribians in al-Fāsī's historical writing reflects his political aims. Rather than dedicate his historical narrative to the aims of the royal 'Alawī sultanate, al-Fāsī's narrative provides a historical narrative that offers different possibilities for locating authority in the country. In this way, the changing role of the seventh century conquests, as a historical event in Moroccan historical writing, reflects the changing political aims of the authors that I have discussed. Al-Fāsī's vision of the past was not universally accepted among nationalists in the first half of the twentieth century. However, it betrays some of the challenges and ambitions inherent in the work of historical writing during the period.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ One generation after al-Fāsī, the Moroccan historian Abdallah Laroui would develop a new approach to historical writing, again resetting the foundational framework for writing a history of the country and the region. A complete analysis of the contributions of Abdallah Laroui to the field of Moroccan history writing is not within the purview of the present thesis, and remains a promising area for further study. See Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib*.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined different forms of historical writing about Morocco in the modern period. My first chapter analyzed the 1894 *Kitāb al-Istiḳṣā* written by Aḥmad ibn Khālīd al-Nāṣirī. This was the first Arabic work of historical writing to focus on the *Maghrib al-Aqṣā* as its central historical object. For this reason, *Kitāb al-Istiḳṣā* is often considered the first national history of Morocco. My analysis examined how this historical object was defined, how it was rendered in narrative form, and how this work of historical writing reflected the contemporary interests of the *makhzan* (Moroccan royal state apparatus) at the end of the nineteenth century.

I began my exploration with a discussion of the state policy and discourse of the Moroccan sultanate in the nineteenth century. In the face of global and local threats to the stability of the sultanate, the *makhzan* introduced modernizing reforms aimed at consolidating territorial control in the hands of the state. Additionally, this period witnessed the emergence of a patriotic discourse, often couched in religious language, that buttressed state centralization policies. At this historical moment, al-Nāṣirī wrote a work of historical writing that suited the needs of the sultanate and would become one of the most prominent texts in the canon of Moroccan nationalist historical writing.

In the remainder of the chapter, I showed how al-Nāṣirī's historical objects and historical narrative contributed to the pro-*makhzan* discourse that was emerging in the nineteenth century. I argued that al-Nāṣirī illustrates the enduring territorial integrity of the sultanate through his use of the concept "Maghrib al-Aqṣā" as a historical unit of analysis. At the same time, his historical narrative also gives emphasis to the Islamic origins of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā. Paradoxically, this means that his narrative scheme originates *outside* of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā, both geographically

and temporally. His narrative begins in the Arabian Peninsula and it follows the trajectories of Muslim conquerors into the Maghrib al-Aqṣā.

By constructing a narrative that connects the history of Islam to the history of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā', al-Nāṣirī fuses together key components of royal 'Alawī ideology into a single historical narrative. The contemporary sultanate's territorial integrity is woven into a dynastic history that gives emphasis to the Arabian Islamic origins of the 'Alawī sultanate. Al-Nāṣirī's decision to locate the origins of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā outside of the country reflects his faithfulness to a patriotic, pro-*makhzan*, vision of history.

In the second chapter, I shifted focus to examine the perspectives of French colonial authors writing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the first part, I examined the historical writing of Ernest Mercier, which offers a nineteenth-century example of how French colonial historians framed the history of the region through the concept of North Africa. For Mercier, North Africa was a geographic region which corresponded to territories of contemporary French colonial interest. An ideal history of North Africa, according to Mercier, should narrate events that took place within the bounds of this territory, exclusively. Moreover, the chronological scheme of a complete history ought to extend from the earliest documented times to the present. I showed that this historical frame, what Mercier called an *histoire complète*, implies that North Africa is a timeless spatial entity, originally and essentially separate from the Arabs, Islam, and the Orient.

Mercier construes the history of the conquests in the seventh century as a story of foreign invasion in a pre-existing region called North Africa. This story of conquest is buttressed by racialized ethnological concepts; the race of Berbers were the indigenous inhabitants of North Africa and the race of Arabs attempted to take over the land and establish foreign religion and

rule. This conceptualization of North African races influences Mercier's conceptualization of the North African region itself. The connection between race and region is exemplified in his use of the term *Berbérie*. For Mercier, the seventh-century Arab conquests had only superficial effects on *Berbérie*, which never lost its essentially Occidental character. Importantly, Mercier was one of the first French scholars to sanction the use of the term *Berbérie* to label the North African region.

Mercier's historical writing, both in its historical objects and its narrative about the seventh-century conquests, betrays a Berberophilic perspective that supported French colonial policy in the beginning of the twentieth century. The Moroccan protectorate strategy in France from 1912-1919 relied on the idea that the Berber race should be protected and its customs preserved against Arab influence. However, this policy became less popular as the French witnessed the failures of their protectorate strategy in the country. By the 1920s, administrators and scholars were turning away from policies inspired by Berberophilic perspectives. Instead, they supported more direct forms of French rule over both Arabs and Berbers, even though Arabs and Berbers were subject to two separate legal regimes.

Émile-Félix Gautier's 1927 *L'Islamisation de l'Afrique du Nord* is a text that supports and reflects this turn in colonial politics. In the second part of Chapter Two, I analyzed Gautier's historical objects as well as his historical narrative about the seventh-century conquests. Gautier, like Mercier, uses the geographical region as a foundational object for his historical narrative. Moreover, his vision of North Africa accords with that of Mercier because he conceptualizes the region as a *Berbérie*. For both scholars, the geographical and the ethnological overlap. Furthermore, in Gautier's view, the impoverished geographical characteristics of North Africa *determine* the nature of ethnological and historical phenomena in the region. He viewed the

region as essentially lacking, and, in his view, the inhabitants of this land were lacking characteristics which defined Europeans. This geographical determinism is one of the distinctive features of Gautier's text. Gautier's conception of a geographically-determined history was, at the time, a pathbreaking conceptualization of North African history. However, this approach to history would soon become accepted into dominant French colonial understandings of the region.

Gautier's conception of North African history differs from that of Mercier because he views North Africa as *opposed* to the Occident. By extension, the Berber inhabitants of the region *lack* what defines the *homo Europaeus*, namely national consciousness, political coherence, and civilization. In this way, he elaborates a strikingly negative depiction of Berbers, in addition to Arabs. His racializing geohistorical outlook informs his understanding of history in the region. Gautier's historical narrative about North Africa depicts an "eternally-conquered"¹³⁷ race that is entirely unwilling to evolve out of chaos and develop a national unity. He supports this claim by reference to the series of conquests in the region, including what he regarded as the superficial Arab conquest in the seventh century. Gautier's portrayal of the unending, unsuccessful conquests of North Africa and the Berbers supported the attitudes in debates about modalities of colonization. His historical writing supported the idea that the French would have greater success in colonization by imposing French forms of rule directly, rather than attempting to "protect" local customs and institutions.

These two examples of colonial historical writing demonstrated how French historians differed in their opinions about French colonization and, in parallel, wrote contrasting portrayals of North Africa, its inhabitants, and the conquests of the seventh century. At the same time, I

¹³⁷ Gautier, *L'Islamisation*, 24.

argue that they framed their historical writing in a way that placed emphasis on a defined, ever-present geographical region. This spatial conceptualization allowed these authors to make arguments that supported the aims of the French civilizing mission in their respective times, and it would have a lasting influence on French as well as Arabic scholarship about Morocco.

In Chapter Three, I examined Moroccan nationalist historical writing during the protectorate period by examining the scholarship of the nationalist leader ‘Allal al-Fāsī, and his 1948 *al-Ḥarakāt*. Maghribī patriotism, the Arab Maghrib, and the Maghribians are the central notions in al-Fāsī’s narrative. They provide the conceptual building blocks for a nationalist narrative about the unified liberation of his country and region against French hegemony.

In my analysis of al-Fāsī’s central framing concepts, I highlighted how his concepts in fact mirror those of French colonial authors. Indeed, his conception of an immutable and homogenous sociological entity resembles the racialized intellectual equipment employed by Gautier and other champions of the French domination in the region. In this way, while there is often an explicit refutation of French colonial thought in the work of nationalist historians like al-Fāsī, conceptual and formal resemblances subtend these articulations of opposition.

After having compared al-Fāsī’s historical writing with the characteristic elements of French historical writing that I discussed in Chapter Two, I concluded Chapter Three by considering the differences between al-Fāsī’s historical writing and that of al-Nāṣirī. Al-Nāṣirī’s narrative was structured around the idea of dynastic history, and he grafted the spatial concept of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā onto that narrative. In contrast, the central focus of al-Fāsī’s narrative is not Islamic dynastic history. His narrative does not string together significant moments in Islamic history in a continuous narrative in order to arrive at the history of the contemporary sultanate. Rather, al-Fāsī’s historical writing narrates the history of a patriotic spirit which exists among all

“Maghribians” since time immemorial. For al-Fāsī, the arrival of Islam in the seventh century harmonized with this patriotic spirit, but the history of Maghribī patriotic spirit definitely preceded this event. Indeed, while the seventh-century arrival of Islam is praised by al-Fāsī, this event does not shape the narrative structure of *al-Ḥarakāt*. The narrative structure of his work is defined, instead, by the concept of a timeless Maghribī space, people, and national spirit. I suggested that, by emphasizing these elements in his conceptual frame and historical narrative, al-Fāsī carves out ideological space which is independent of the authority of the Moroccan sultan.

This thesis has taken a closer look at elements of historical writing which are often hidden in plain sight. Historical objects often appear self-evident; concepts like Morocco, North Africa, and the Maghrib have historically been taken for granted as natural geographic units. One of my central aims in this thesis has been to deconstruct the usage of these seemingly conventional or natural concepts. In so doing, I have attempted to reorient how we understand modern works of historical writing, and the concepts that are made to appear conventional in and through historical narratives. In each case studied above, an author’s choice of historical objects and the ways that he renders them in chronological and narrative form is informed by his present historical moment. Indeed, each historical narrative about the seventh-century conquests sheds light on the authors’ different conceptions of political power, and different conceptions of the body politic.

However, it is not only *difference* which characterizes the relations between these four instantiations of historical writing. Alongside differences, there are also continuities and likenesses among these approaches to historical writing. By taking a closer look at the

foundational conceptual frameworks of these texts, the seemingly apparent relations of opposition between different works of historical writing become complicated. Indeed, as I have detailed in Chapter Three, French colonial authors and Moroccan nationalist historians were historically and apparently intellectual opponents. Concomitantly, their texts share commonalities in the conceptual framing of the historical narratives. The historical writing of al-Fāsī offers a clear example of this phenomenon. He employs a geographically bounded and temporally unbounded frame for his historical narrative, much like French colonial historians before him.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that the historical writing of al-Fāsī, or any other author discussed here, is simply a derivative version of some earlier tradition of historical writing. It is obvious that al-Fāsī's text was a major contribution to challenging the claims of French colonial scholars. However, I stress the importance of understanding the similarities of different approaches to historical writing *in detail*, in order to better appreciate what each work of historical writing accomplished in its historical moment. As I have described above, al-Fāsī was aiming to both oppose French colonial ideology, as well as carve out ideological space independent of the Moroccan sultan. His historical writing provides a source of information on how these contemporary political aims were conceptualized and articulated in a historical narrative. Ultimately, all of the authors discussed in this thesis borrowed preexisting intellectual equipment and *also* introduced new concepts in order to fashion a historical narrative that suited their present aims and visions.

My focus on both continuities and ruptures in historical writing in Morocco brings to light issues that continue to be relevant to understanding intellectual history of the country. After Morocco became an independent state in 1956, Moroccan historians continued to borrow from

past historical narratives in order to produce new works of historical writing. Whereas the historian Abdallah Laroui sought to *historicize* concepts like the Maghrib in his writings,¹³⁸ other historians found new ways of repurposing the romantic conceptualization of an everlasting spatial entity. In 2011, for example, a state-sponsored history of Morocco was published by the l’Institut Royal pour la Recherche sur l’Histoire du Maroc (the Royal Institute for Research on the History of Morocco). This tome, entitled *Histoire du Maroc: Réactualisation et synthèse*¹³⁹ compiles the contributions of forty-four Moroccan scholars to tell the history of Morocco from the paleolithic age (what is referred to in the text “les premiers balbutiements de l’humanité locale”¹⁴⁰) until the twentieth century. In this new discursive articulation, Morocco is the primary historical object, but the authors also use an amalgamation of different historical spatial units including the Maghrib as well as neologisms like the “Pays de Tanger”¹⁴¹ in order to narrate the history of the country.

Evidentially, this 2011 history of Morocco offers a great deal of potential as a source of analysis about the recent history of the country. The concept of Morocco, much like the Maghrib and North Africa, appears to be self-evident, but in reality, its use is contingent on a certain vision of the past and the present. In short, the choice of Morocco as a historical object is not natural but rather ideological. It is informed by the socio-political present in which the authors are living. For this reason, while it is beyond the scope of the present thesis, *Histoire du Maroc*

¹³⁸ See his call for a “Marxist historicist” methodological approach in Abdallah Laroui, *La crise des intellectuels arabes : traditionalisme ou historicisme ?*, (Paris: Maspero, 1974).

¹³⁹ *Histoire du Maroc: Réactualisation et synthèse*, ed. Mohamed Kably (Rabat: Édition de l’Institut Royal pour la Recherche sur l’Histoire du Maroc, 2011).

¹⁴⁰ “from the beginnings of local civilization.” Kably, *Histoire du Maroc*, 1.

¹⁴¹ The authors’ use of the concept “Pays de Tanger” is especially intriguing. This neologism is used as the spatial frame for their narration of the seventh-century conquests. In this way, the authors manage to incorporate key historical events of the conquests into the official history of Morocco, even when they took place outside the borders of present-day Morocco. See, for example, Kably, *Histoire du Maroc*, 141-143.

could be subjected to the same type of analysis that I have conducted in the above chapters. How do contemporary historians define Morocco as a historical object? How do they tell the story of the seventh-century conquests of the Maghribī region? What is the relationship between regional and the national? How do these historical objects compare to the ones used by previous historians of Morocco? Undoubtedly, understanding the mechanisms by which this set of concepts are defined and rendered in the historical narrative would offer insights into contemporary state discourse in Morocco.

Ultimately, historical writing sheds light on the different ways that discourses have been articulated in different historical moments. The cases that I have examined in this thesis demonstrate how historical objects and narratives are deployed to effect change in the present. Al-Nāṣirī bolstered the authority of the sultanate of the Maghrib al-Aqṣā, Mercier advocated a Berberophilic policy in French North Africa, Gautier legitimized direct rule in French colonies, and al-Fāsī asserted the region's independence from French colonialism, as well as the people's independence from the sultanate. In this sense, portrayals of the past distill interpretations of the present and aspirations for the future. By understanding the claims and contradictions implicit within these portrayals of the past, we gain insight into the articulation and functioning of discourses that continue to impact our own present moment.

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