



North African Mosaic: A Cultural Reappraisal of Ethnic and Religious Minorities

Nabil Boudraa and Joseph Krause

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This book's ambition is to offer the most recent scholarship on North African cultures at a time when the very notion of culture is being re-evaluated in the shifting tides that both associate and divorce the forces of nationalism, globalism and neo-liberalism. Another ambition is to be a readable document about the past and the potential of North African civilizations. Those which have been crystallized into a polysemic voice from centuries of occupations, exchanges and what is now commonly called hybridizations. In this work the collective position of the authors, with their different fields of experience, is that the languages, musics, and the many expressions of common life in North Africa continue to flourish. That they are a bridge between sub-Saharan peoples and Europe. That they are a necessary antidote to the anemic political discourses that have prevailed since decolonization. That they are seminal for the future of the African continent as it begins its true voyage into democracy. It is difficult, at this juncture, to measure the distance that, in the decades to come, will be achieved on that voyage. It is, however, less difficult to evaluate the importance of North Africa on tomorrow's world. If the past is an indicator, it will be an important force in the cross-flow of trade, ideas and of global destinies. 'North African Mosaic is a significant landmark in the field of North African studies in the United States. In the past couple of decades, that field has primarily reflected the research and works of scholars in Near East or Islamic studies. It is therefore very satisfying to welcome the publication in the English language of a serious compilation of scholarly essays on North Africa which departs from such a monolithic perspective. The book offers an array of superbly informative essays on a variety of ethnic groups and issues, encompassing Amazigh (Berber) history, Amazigh arts, contemporary views on Amazigh identity and cultural survival, and a remarkable chapter on the peoples of the Western Sahara. Together, the depicted ethnic minorities, Amazigh for the most part but not exclusively, constitute a majority of voices which have unfortunately often been overlooked in American universities and whose history and culture may no longer be ignored. North African Mosaic breaks stereotypes and the Arabo-Islamic lock on North African studies in America. The result is a rich panoply of a little known contemporary North Africa. The perspective it offers its readers is not only refreshing, but undoubtedly more genuine in regards to the rich history and reality of a region which has not until now been examined in all of its diversity and effectively rooted in its African context.' Helene E. Hagan, Anthropologist, Tazzla Institute for Cultural Diversity- Director 'In North African Mosaic, we have a group of innovative junior and senior scholars whose multidisciplinary approaches provide a diversity of subtle and complex interpretations of what it means to be an ethnic minority in a majority Arab-Muslim context. The conceptual and empirical landscapes covered are far reaching and intellectually bold. Whether covering schooling for modern Coptic subjectivity in nineteenth century Egypt or Berbers in medieval Al-Andalus or Amazigh painters in Morocco and Algeria, the authors to this impressive and original volume share a common humanistic vision that respects, indeed celebrates, differences whether in language, religion or ethnicity. Despite what otherwise poorly informed observers of North Africa may believe, the Maghreb is an incredibly diverse region, rich in cultural, religious, and ethnic traditions that neither colonialism nor the postcolonial project could marginalize or eradicate. The timing for such a scholarly endeavor could not be more propitious. As these distinguished authors so

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