

# **IPALMO**

Istituto per le relazioni tra l'Italia e i Paesi d'Africa  
America Latina e Medio Oriente

## **COLLOQUIO INTERNAZIONALE**

"L'incontro tra cultura araba e cultura dell'Europa mediterranea  
nell'epoca contemporanea"

(Firenze 14, 15, 16, dicembre 1972)

"The Magrab civilization, its African Mediterranean vocation  
and its contribution to the civilization of the modern world"

**ABDEL-AZIZ BENABDALLAH**

Set deeply in the African mass, Morocco enjoys a key position which overlooks two of the most active and civilized sectors of the world: the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

Morocco, which for over a thousand years has carried the banner of Moslem civilization, remains today a point of contact between two worlds and an essential "geometrical locus" for international relations.

Through Tangiers, its diplomatic capital, Morocco holds one of the keys of the Mediterranean. Suez is no more for the Eastern basin (which in the Middle Ages was a true Arab sea) than what Tangiers and Gibraltar are today for the Western basin. The two "extremities" of the Arab world which dominate such a neuralgic area, are called upon, in the present circumstance, to play a role of paramount importance in Mediterranean dealings, which might become inadequate, if not completely insignificant, without the equal and sovereign participation of all the Arab countries which from Tangiers to Damascus, mark out in a continuous stretch close on three fifths of the Mediterranean coast. This is a living reality which should have dominated all the Western minds. Today, the Arab world undertakes the excellent initiative of bringing the Mediterranean countries together in a world conference, with a view to defining the real danger which threatens this region which has become, with the frictions of the cold war, one of the most neuralgic in the world.

The African mission in the Magrab took the form of an irradiation reaching the Niger river Southward and the Nile Eastward. Under the Almoravides, already, the Magrab empire encompassed Algiers and the Sahara up to the Soudan, that of the Almohades extended from Castile to Tripoli, "uniting the Moslem West, for the first time, under the same power". The Merinide influence will exert itself, later, both in the Soudan and in Egypt. A major part of black Africa will be subject to Shereefs and dominated by a pashalik regime up to 1893. In brief, Morocco has always been "the nucleus and the live force" of the greatest empires which ever extended their domination over the African lands of the Setting Sun. This eminent role which the "Fortunate Empire" has never ceased to play, until recently, was all the more real since, as from the year 1250 after Christ, when Egypt itself fell under Turkish domination, "there were no longer any politically independent Arab states if not in the Magrab" (Max Vintejoux). The Magrab is the only African state which, overcoming the ups and downs of an

eventful evolution, was able to maintain, since the time of the Arab conquest, its territorial integrity and its full independence. One fact remains as a reason of astonishment in the annals of all nations, which is that the Magrab has always managed "to seal its political unity, even to the point of anarchy" (L. Provençal).

However, there is no need to go back to the pre-islamic period in order to stress the oriental destiny of the Magrab.

Out of the Berber soul shaped by the new faith, emerged a feeling of spontaneous nostalgic quietude. Morocco, which at the time was identified with the Imazigh world, finds in the simplicity of Islam, with its flexibility and tolerance, the inexpressible ferments for the unity of which the tribal individualism hampered the implementation. A new current, at that time, restored the natural contacts between the two worlds. By receiving the first elements of the Eastern Civilization renewed by the Arab genius, the Magrab reaches the destinies which, since thirteen centuries, have never ceased to be its own. From then on, Morocco reinstalled in its true being an indelible constant aim, in all the impulses of its behaviour: that of aligning itself with the East.

Already a good thousand years ago, Fez, the living image of the great Islam capitals, represented "a miracle of adaptation to the Oriental state" (Gautier). By introducing in the life and in the art of the Mediterranean the last oriental elements, the Berber Almohades achieved "the syncretism of the Moslem civilization of the West".

As a matter of fact, nearly all the great Moroccan cities bore the mark and the sign of the East; it is not wrong that some geographers were to compare Fez to Damascus, Rabat to Alexandria and Marrakesh to Baghdad.

This constant tendency of Morocco towards the Eastern traditions became increasingly vigorous throughout the centuries, up to the Merinide era, when the Moslem civilization finally crystallized into strongly orientalized national institutions.

The irradiation of this orientalization process which started with the Berber dynasties themselves, had repercussions in all branches of activity. Saturated by the vitalizing effect of the oriental influence, the Magrab enabled the East to benefit from its syncretizing initiatives. The Magrebans have been, for over three centuries, the African continuators of the Arab mission in the Mediterranean, thus giving the proof of an essential aspect of their calling.

## BY ITS WESTERN VOCATION, MAGRAB IS THE POINT OF CONTACT BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Morocco is the only Arab country, and one of the rare countries in the world, to have a double maritime opening. Dominating the Atlantic for close of five-hundred kilometers, it represents a strategic platform. The privilege of this position, at the crossroads of two international seas, which are the most active in the world, was enhanced when the Straits became a vital corridor between the Mediterranean countries and the New World.

This fortunate position, on one of the great passages of the universe has not failed to influence deeply the historic destinies of the Magrab which was soon to take on the role of mediator and syncretizing element between two worlds. The fourfold vocation of Morocco (African, Oriental, Mediterranean and Atlantic) has made it the meeting point of two civilizations which have never ceased to operate the one with respect to the other, since several centuries, in order to give Humanity an eclectic synthesis of universal significance.

The Atlantic calling of Morocco explains, in part, the irradiation abroad of our Civilization, the echoes of which were to propagate across the oceanic darkness, strongly affecting with their vigorous impact, as early as the XVth century, the social and economic life of people newly conquered by the deeply orientalized Iberian latinity.

Some even believe that, by the intermediary of the Magrab, Arab orientalism has conquered the New World, since nearly a thousand years now. Direct Arab ventures, which as early as the Xth century, started from the Atlantic coasts of Morocco (Safi) are supposed to have preceded the European adventure in America.

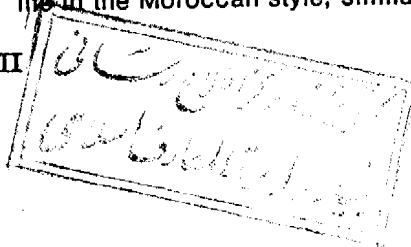
Renan, author of the work "Averroes and averroism", quotes a letter of Cristopher Columbus where he recognizes having drawn his knowledge of the possible existence of solid land across the Atlantic from the treatise "El-Kouliat" by Ibn Rochd.

One fact remains however certain, which is that on the one hand the Arabs had at least envisaged exploring the Atlantic and on the other, had established arsenals on the Ocean coasts and created squadrons for the defence of the Moslem West. Morocco rarely used its Atlantic harbours during the three centuries during which it dominated Andalusia: contact through the Mediterranean was more practical.

But later, the relations of the Magrab with some Atlantic countries, like Denmark, Sweden, England and Holland, encouraged it to make increasing use of the harbours which stretched along our Atlantic coastline. The United Provinces (Holland) was among the first Atlantic countries to establish close relations with Morocco represented by regular traffic, through the Channel, a traffic to which the Treaty of 1610 gave a truly preponderant role. The most important harbours were opening onto the Atlantic Ocean: Safi, Agadir and Massat. Later Salé will become and will remain for nearly a century, the most active harbour of the Magrab. Tangiers, Larache and Arzila (respectively freed from the Iberian yoke in 1684, 1689 and 1691) mark, by their own activity, this Atlantic vocation of the Magrab, which will take over all Moroccan trade. In 1845, the Atlantic harbours received, the visit of 223 European ships. Mogador will remain active up to 1911, when 462 ships entered its port. The exports of Morocco represented at the time three times the imports. This is a concrete argument against those who present the Magrab as a country walled into isolation. It is time that the Magrab, harassed by European intrigues, had been forced at one time, to retire within itself. There was even a time when, obsessed by the demands of some Latin countries, the Magrab turned exclusively to the Protestant countries looking into the Atlantic, such as England, Sweden and Denmark, with which it signed trade and friendship treaties. A few years before his death (in 1786), the Sultant Mohammed Ben Abdallah signed a trade and navigation treaty with the United States for fifty years, which was renewed in 1836.

Far from having lived isolated from the Modern world, or even of having remained indifferent to the evolution of European and American politics, Morocco was following, with lively interest and true sympathy, the movement of emancipation of the people across the Atlantic. It was the first to recognize the independence of the young United States Republic.

But from the XVth century, the Magrab civilization, so far restricted to the Mediterranean, was able to penetrate up to Latin America brought there by the Iberic conquerors of the New World. For over three centuries (after the XVth century), Brazil, for instance, was systematically subject to the Andalusian influence. All aspects of American society became impregnated with a Moorish flavour which was more or less emphasized. The Brazilian women veiled like those of the Magrab, shaped the way of life in the Moroccan style, similarly to the Chris-



tians of Sicily, at the summit of Norman civilization (Ibn Jobeir). Everything in Brazil was the image of our Medieval society, from the social behaviour of the ladies of society who adopted the habit of sitting cross-legged on carpets of Moroccan style, to the outside aspect of the countryside. Notwithstanding the climatic differences, the countryside borrowed, with Spain and Portugal, once again Christians as go-betweens, the agricultural mechanisms and techniques of the Magrab.

"Moorishness" enjoys, in America, a strong reputation. The verb "maurijar" is, in Portuguese, synonymous with acting; throughout America, the expression "working like a Moroccan" has become proverbial. In Portugal, it has not been overlooked that the inhabitant of the South, among which the descendants of the Moroccan conquerors are to be found, are imbued, more so than their fellow countrymen of the North, with an exceptional spirit of initiative and enterprise, together with a shrewdness, an endurance to work, a persistence in exerting efforts and a longevity comparable to that observed in the Moroccan Atlas.

We are even in a position to pretend, together with Western Authors, that if the Portuguese navy was able to cross the Atlantic and reach America, this was thanks to Arab methods of navigation which had become a science. Ibn Majdd, who has left famous works on the "navigation art" was the navigator of Vasco Da Gama (1469-1524), who discovered the route to India in 1498, through the Cape of Good Hope.

These are some features of this Atlantic vocation of the Magrab, which appears more real than ever in the present international situation.

#### CONTINUITY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN MAGRAB AND THE WEST

Interdependence, in its present scope and effects, may be considered as a modern concept. But seen from the standpoint of peoples' rights, it already appeared, though vaguely, as a form of altruism; the very essence of this concept, which is as old as the world in its principle and its ideal, resided in the common good will, vital source of the eternal and peaceful nature of relations between nations.

An agreement may always be reached so as to create a certain form of association between States, but this association will thrive only as a function of a certain state of mind to be created and developed among the part-

ners. This is why interdependence, in the first place, has a psychological basis which conditions the harmonization of the interests in play. Good faith and mutual respect of sovereignties are as many warranties for the formulation of a policy of reconciliation between people.

For us Moroccan, this sincere impulse towards the full international blossoming of our Being, was only lead astray by that series of foreign intrigues against our sovereignty, intrigues which ended up by numbing us into our isolation, at the end of the last century, anachronistically closed within ourselves.

Some think it possible to perceive in the Magrab soul, desirous of freedom, an inborn inclination towards fanaticism and xenophobia. Moving from a few isolated facts taken from the historical mass, or from a present situation poorly interpreted, they conclude that these feelings are inbred in the Arab mind; by objectively analyzing Magrab's history, it is necessary to observe that the accidental flourishing of these inclinations strangely coincide with the birth of colonialism. The feelings which since then were provoked in the minds of the Moroccans as a result of the aggressiveness of certain Powers, the underhand manoeuvres against their independence and integrity, must have gone through "ups and downs", according to the attitude which, later on, was to be assumed by a Europe more or less inclined not to recognize the rights of the Magrab, as a sovereign entity. The pseudo-fanaticism which was presented as the natural expression of an intolerant and narrow mind was nothing but the reaction against the aggressor, and not against the foreigner.

Speaking of Morocco, De Foucauld said: "The conqueror is feared more than the Christian is hated" (Reconnaissance, p. XVI).

When the causes of mistrust disappear, the Magreban becomes once again what he has always been, a man who is highly sociable, imbued with spontaneous amiability and with essentially kindly feelings. But since the end of last century, some circles had the offensive mania of stigmatizing any patriotic impulse shown by the Africans or the Asians, strongly accusing them of fanaticism each time they expressed the noble aspiration towards a free and sovereign life. Any national movement which had not the fortune of having roots in Europe, was systematically given the label of extremism, in the eyes of those who, defying the principles of international morals, as well as those of logics, insisted on preserving out-

dated regimes, solemnly condemned by universal conscience.

Morocco has often given proof of an acute international sense. From the XIth century, it gave free access to foreign tradesmen who did not delay in setting up trade establishments. It is then that, for the first time, the problem arises of how to protect the legitimately acquired interests of foreign nationals. Our sovereigns made no difficulty for the acknowledgement of these interests; better still, they treated these foreigners with extreme solicitude: the royal decrees characterized by a fatherly benevolence granted them a broad freedom of action and gave them solid guarantees. The foreigners were placed, as well as their possessions, "under this high royal expressed—as Latrîe said—by the word protection for the Christians and aman for the Arabs". The same author specifies that "the evil actions of the Moslems with respect to them were subject to the severeness of law".

The Magrab law acknowledged "individual responsibility and freed the compatriots of the delinquent from all collective responsibility". This was a principle of great practical significance and all the more precious since it was rarely respected and applied outside Morocco.

The Moroccan people, jealous of their freedom and sovereignty, knew how to respect the rights, the freedom and the dignity of others. Latrîe points out that so long as the Europeans "avoided provoking the susceptibility of the Moslems, so long as they respected the spirit and the letter of the treaties accepted by their rulers, they found in the population and in the Magrab governments the most equitable respect and protection".

Ignoring any religious prejudice, Morocco, a Moslem country, has never ceased having constant and friendly relations with all countries, including the Vatican. Its rulers, in their diplomatic relations with the Christian world, drew their inspiration only from the principle of international justice, being only concerned with maintaining their sovereignty. Racial or confessional considerations were never taken into account, in the Magrab concept of foreign diplomacy and politics. It is sufficient to consult some archives kept in the European chancelleries, in order to be convinced of the high esteem which Morocco enjoyed within the Christian community. The letter of Gregory VII to Ennacer in 1776 is "the most precious monument of this time and the most curious sample of the easy and friendly correspondence

which existed between the popes and a few African sultans". Addressing himself to the Sultan, the Pope tells him in particular: "The nobles of the city of Rome having heard, through us, of the act which God inspired you, admire the loftiness of your heart and express their praise to you".

This sympathy "which perhaps no Roman pope had ever expressed so affectionately to a Moslem prince" emphasizes the intimate cordiality of the links between Christianity and Islam, of which the Almohades were then the renowned representatives.

On the other hand, Morocco was a land of refuge for the Christians oppressed by the great lords of feudal Europe. "European knights or princes, displeased with their suzerains, were able to abandon their fiefs and go to Africa to serve the Moslem kings" (Latrîe). European armies, including knights and high lords, were in the pay of the Almohades and the Merinides, the Church itself, as well as the Christian governments, having permitted their recruitment in Europe. After the Crusades, Europe, while treating with the Sultans of Egypt and Syria, opens a new era with the Magrab emirs, of peaceful and commercial relations.

After the XIIth century, many were the European ships to call at Moroccan harbours and to leave them freely. Western chronicles noted already that, during this period one was far from the times when the Christian ships thought they were acting dangerously by risking a journey along the African coasts. Even in cases of aggression on the part of European ships, the Moroccan defenders showed no hatred at all in their reaction: they were content to settle matters equitably.

The protection for people and for the goods of merchants, whatever their nationality was, in the eyes of the Magrab people, so natural and so necessary for trade that it was granted to all foreigners "even when the treaties authorized the Arab government to refuse it."

These are a few isolated examples which illustrate the legal system regulating, for nearly one thousand years, the relations between the Europeans and the Arabs of North Africa; The whole set of principles and customs, to the definition of which the preponderant role of the Magrab is obvious, has contributed to the formulation of some rules of contemporary international law.

These illustrations emphasize the international sense which had often inspired the Magrab rulers, whose high concept of mutual aid

and solidarity between nations found its expression in the sincere impulse which brought them to the rescue of a State in distress. Morocco knew how to pass the sponge over past rancours, when its enemy was going through a crisis and already, right in the XIIth century, there was a development of "confidential political relations between princes who were opposed to each other with regard to their religious beliefs".

Thus, the Magrab could not imagine international solidarity of a purely confessional nature. Religious considerations do not appear to have dictated to the Moroccan rulers their international policy in the major Mediterranean conflicts. The fact is that the geographical nearness of the Magrab to the West, their historical mixing, without undermining our strong affinity with the East, represent a vital aspect of our vocation. The essential feature of this integral part of the free world which Morocco represents, is that of forming a point of contact with the most neuralgic area of Mediterranean and Atlantic Europe, a bridge between the Arab and Western worlds.

Our Mediterranean vocation has on the other hand been emphasized by these exchanges between the Magreb and the West; exchanges which we would never have ceased to carry on for our mutual benefit if there had not been "the colonial accident" which, with its expansionist movement, has to disrupt the transcendental course of our history. Both sovereign, independent from each other, treating on an equal footing, the West and the Magrab could not fail, with the strengthening of the notion of interdependence to enhance their reconciliation and achieve, through free ties, a harmonious and long-lasting equation. Interdependence cannot have an adequate basis if not within the framework of a peaceful and sovereign cooperation; because cooperation is only fruitful to the extent that the parties, enjoying their full and whole liberty, and feeling all freedom of action, are open to compromise. Mutual respect and the acknowledgement of the legitimate rights and aspirations of the people certainly represent the best basis on which to establish and develop interdependence.

By recovering the fullness of its sovereignty, Morocco reappears in its true light; it once again becomes what it has always been, before having suffered the intrigues of the colonial period, that is to say the sincere ally of the West, to which it is linked by those imponderable elements which are the outcome and the reflection of a long life in common.

## THE SPIRIT OF TOLERANCE IN THE MOSLEM MAGRAB

Islam, with its simple dogma, accessible to all, without a hierarchy, without formalism, was able to conquer a greater part of Humanity, in the record period of a few decades. History has rarely given the impression of such a clear spontaneity in the peaceful conquest of hearts. "Never has the Arab, acknowledges E.F. Gautier, in all the fervour of his new faith, dreamt of eradicating by bloodshed a competing faith"; this is because "tolerance is related, he specifies further, to the deepest concepts and instincts of the Old East" (*Mœurs et Coutumes des Musulmans*, pp. 207-214).

If the Moslem preached Islam, he has always abstained from exerting pressures on the hearts of the unbelievers. When the Islamic World was at the peak of its power and expansion, Christian and Jewish communities enjoyed within it a happy and peaceful life.

The Islamic conquests aimed neither at exploiting the conquered lands nor at implanting the Arabic element, through massive immigration. For the whole of North Africa, the number of Arabs never exceeded 110,000 up to the IXth century, most of them residing in Tunisia.

The learned scholars of Moslem Law have always been impermeable to the idea of "Islam, the only State religion." When, in the Middle Ages, the Ottoman Sultan Sellim wished to apply the principle of a Moslem empire, the "Cheik El Islam" of the time was categorically opposed to the idea, underlining the respect recognized by Islam for freedom of conscience.

In the Magrab, the Jews have lived side by side with the Moslems since the VIIth century. They were admitted very early within the walls of Fez, which was nevertheless a holy city. Already around the year one thousand, the Jewish colony of the Idrisside capital numbered 5,000 members who freely celebrated their creed, in synagogues built right in the medina. On the other hand, one of the quarters of Fez, called the "quarter of the Church", seems to have grouped the Christian inhabitants of the City.

In 1492, when the Castilian persecutors were venting their wrath against the Jews and Moslems in Andalusia, the preacher Al Maghili one of the cadis of the Empire, was exiled from Fez, for having undertaken an antisemitic campaign.

Before the wave of xenophobia caused by the Christian invasions on the Moroccan coasts, invasions of which a sizeable number bear the character of true crusades, most of the Magrab authors respectfully speak of "the people of the Book." Quoting Idrisi, the famous Moroccan geographer, Quatremere notes that "in the whole course of his work, he shows with respect to Christianity and the Christians the rarest impartiality, and this at a time when the conquest of the Crusades in Palestine and those of the Castilians in Spain, has exasperated the Moslems to the highest degree."

The Jews expelled from Andalusia by the Christian kings became the object of kindly hospitality everywhere in the Magrab up to Deb-dou, which received a good number of them with open arms.

The greater part of the Moroccan Jews descend from the Jews exiled from Europe in the Middle Ages: England (in 1290), France (in 1395), Spain (in 1492). Godard—*Histoire du Maroc*, p. 15 (see also: *l'Etude sur l'hygiène et la Médecine au Maroc* by (Raynaud)—adds Italy (1242), the Netherlands (1350) and Portugal (1476), p.

Moulay Ismail, presented by some as a brutal and blood-thirsty man, is defined by some Christian Chronicles as "the greatest protector of the Franciscans, because he gave them privileges which no Christian nation would have dared to demand for them." The Alaouite Sultan promulgated two "dahirs" (dated 20th December, 1711 and July 1714) in which the death penalty was formally decreed against all those who "undertook to molest the Christians or to insult them."

The Jews were the Sultan's subjects and, as such, were subject to the general regime; however, on 5th February, 1884, the Sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Abderrahman promulgated a "dahir" officially consecrating the assimilation of the Israelites to the Moslems, the ones and the others being placed on an absolutely equal footing.

Thus, throughout one thousand years, Christians and Jews were able to enjoy, side by side with the Moslems, a peaceful and quiet life which rare upheavals upset superficially at times. But these periodical crises fitted into the general framework of social life, and were in no way tinted with racial or confessional rancour.

## SOCIAL ASPECTS OF OUR CIVILIZATION

The old Moroccan authors of Annals and Chronicles were rarely interested in the cultural branch of Magrab history, and even less in its purely social part. Only the political or economic aspects were to retain their attention. History is thus fatally limited, in their writings, to a battle-history encrusted at times by digressions of a literary or social nature. It is therefore not easy, due to lack of precise documents and solid information, to draw a general and clear picture of the general lines which must have characterized the social and cultural fields of the Magrab civilization. We will nevertheless attempt a more or less complete synthesis, moving from the few elements which are to be gleaned here and there in the thick mass compiled by our authors.

It is especially, by a living illustration that we believe it useful to proceed, because this is a method where we have the most chance of remaining objective, while giving the audience the opportunity of appreciating and judging the mode and level of life in the Old Magrab, the mechanism of social insurance, the means of security which the Moroccan citizen enjoyed with regard to the subversive and unhealthy elements which generally caused the uprising of the lowest strata of Medieval society. This society suffered a thousand ills, which worsened its classical calamities: hunger, sickness, ignorance and arbitrariness. Morocco at times represented one of the rare islands in the civilized world enjoying a comparative healthiness and a more or less stable social balance. The State rarely had to intervene: the wheels of society meshed curiously well under the effect of spiritual factors, the reflections of which, now tarnished, still mark Moroccan social life.

The description which Idrisi offers of the Magrab in the 7th century gives an impression of general prosperity. The geographers of the Medieval period have not failed to praise this rich country where people lived in peace and dignity. H. Terrasse was forced to recognize this.

It was mainly independent institutions, operating under the form of "habou" foundations, which actually took care of assisting the non-favored inhabitants of the nation. A whole range of needy people benefited from this aid, going from paupers, widows and orphans, to the blind and the sick. Private initiative was ingenious in undertaking all possible ways of meeting, in

an efficient and permanent manner, the varied needs of the various social strata.

The distribution of daily soup to the people, of weekly foodstuffs, of special monthly rations in exceptional circumstances, there were the normal modes of assistance.

Hospitality centres, disseminated throughout the country, gave shelter to tramps and travellers passing through; from the times of the Merinides, the Sultans had never ceased to increase the number of public shelters and inns, reaching the furthest corners of the countryside. Also thanks to private hospitality, of which the Moroccans made, and still make, a point of honour, no one not even foreigners, could ever feel in any difficulty.

The chapels and mosques (of the Rif) says Moulieras in 1895 "serve as hostels for foreigners and students who receive hospitality there which is both free of charge and pleasant" (Moulieras, T. I, p. 56). Hospitality, given in each mosque, is considered as a sacred duty by all the inhabitants of Morocco (p. 62).

"It should be seen with concern, with what scrupulous loyalty, the Moroccans capitalist acquits himself of legal alms, that is to say the tithe on his income which he distributes himself to the poor, without State intervention, his conscience and God being his only Judges. With his continuous generosity, with this compulsory charity, towards all paupers, with this hospitality granted to all foreigners, the charity institutions, the health clinics of our Modern World have no other reason of existing than that of the relentless class struggles which seriously threaten our old Europe (Moulieras, T. II, p. 195).

Besides its role as an executive and regulating agent, the State undertook an important welfare role, granting the poor regular pensions, the students and professors, stipends which were often periodical, at times monthly. But State intervention was mainly represented by collective subsidies during periods of drought, famine and epidemics, or in other exceptional circumstances.

This feeling of solidarity in the Magrab people strengthened by the absence of characterized social casts, goes together with a rare humanitarian sense.

The Moroccan slaves are in no way interested by freedom which they have no use for. Well lodged, well fed, well treated by their masters, they end up by considering themselves as part of the family they serve. Their eman-

cipation thus becomes a source of trouble for them, of real danger (Moulieras, T. II, p. 63-64).

The charity institutions were even concerned with animals and birds; efforts were made to accumulate sizeable funds for their support. Disabled animals were the object of special care. There still exists, among the "habous" possessions at Marrakesh, a shop the rent of which was regularly devoted to this form of charity. One still remembers, in Fez, the famous hill called "Kodiat El Baratil" where compact swarms of birds of all kinds had taken the habit of coming to pick up grains, scattered to the four winds for that purpose.

"...Never does one see an Arab, says Gustave Le Bon, illtreating an animal, as is generally the rule with our European carters and coachmen. A society for the protection of animals would be perfectly useless among them. The East is the true paradise of animals." (Ibid, p. 376).

The Moroccan dynasties were not content to found or give their patronage to welfare institutions in the Magrab. Their social action was felt in other countries, where they have never ceased to create new "habous" in order to satisfy the requirements of the needy.

Together with this social security system, the State tried to offer a citizen jurisdictional warranties, by the rigorous choice of honest judges and the firm control exerted on the magistrature. The Sultan Moulay Ismail ordered a massive dismissal of all the cadis of the countryside, who were considered unsuitable.

Speaking of the Almohade Yacoub El Mansour, Millet, states that this ruler "addresses a circular letter to the cadis to remind them of the rules which must preside over the observance of justice, and he announces the intention of punishing the dishonest caid." (Les Almohades, p. 112). Moslem law is ideal.

The Moslems are convinced of the universal influence of Moslem law, adaptable to all circumstances and to all periods, as attested by the resolution unanimously adopted during the final session of the International congress of comparative law, on 7th July 1951: "...It has clearly appeared that the principles of Moslems law have an unquestionable value, and that the truth of the schools within this great juridical system implies a wealth of remarkable legal ideas and techniques enabling this Law to satisfy all the adjustment requirements made necessary by modern life."



The activity undertaken in the old Magrab in order to protect hygiene and public health, far from being ideal, was nevertheless not negligible for that period. A Maristan (hospital) was founded for the first time at Marrakesh, under the Almohades.

Speaking of this hospital, Abdelwahid El Merrakchi says that Youssef "began by choosing a vast area in the flat part of the city... He had all sorts of trees planted, for beauty and for fruit. Water was brought there in abundance and around all the rooms, without detriment to the four basins situated in the centre of the building, the most important of which was in marble... A daily income of thirty dinars was allotted for food in the strictest sense of the term, quite aside from remedies, drugs, ointments and eye-washes. Day and night, summer and winter clothing was provided for the patients. After recovery, the poor received, when leaving the hospital, a sum of money for living expenses until the time they were able to support themselves... Any foreigner falling ill in Marrakesh was taken there and cared for until his recovery. Every Friday the prince, after the prayer, went on horseback to visit the sick and inquire after everyone's health..." (Les Almohades, p. 130).

"Not only did this Hospital (writes Millet in 1925) leave far behind it the leper-houses and the principal hospitals of our Christian Europe, but it would still put to shame today the sad hospitals of the city of Paris" (Ibid., pp. 129-130).

At Fez, a hospital treated neurasthenic patients, trying to act on the patients nerves with Andalusian music.

Since the XIth century, the Magrab has known generations of physicians, some of which had a universal reputation. Ibn Tofeil and Ibn Roshd were to successively play the role of official physicians of the Almohade Court. Averroes was the first, long before William Harvey, to analyze, in his "Kolliat", the mechanism of blood circulation in man. The Beni Zohr family had several practitioners, both among the women and among the men.

It is true that medecine was still in its empirical stage. "It should however be noted—as J. Bensimhon points out (Maroc Médical, September 1951)—that in numerous cases, this elementary and fully empirical medecine applied treatments the effectiveness of which has since been unquestionably recognized.

At all times, the Magrab physicians have tried to record the results of their experiences, in works which have remained famous. Some specimens are still kept in private libraries in Morocco and elsewhere.

But during the past centuries, the medical art degenerated to such a point that the maristans were only to play the role of mere shelters where patients were left to their sad fate. Occult sciences and cabalism have generally ended by distorting the laws of medecine, which recedes several centuries into the past. It was rare to find doctors filled with a true scientific spirit.

In the cultural field, the joint efforts of Nation and State, since the time of the Idrissides, aimed at multiplying everywhere schools offering elementary education. For secondary and higher education, the Mosques served as classroom and conference halls. Chapels, of which there were hundreds in the large towns (785 in Fez, 3,000 in Cordova, according to Dozy) were as many university institutes, which lent themselves extremely well to traditional education. Courses were then held at all time of the day by voluntary professors, the mission of teaching being considered as a religious obligation which each doctor of the law had to fulfill personally. At that time, the student only had the embarrassment of the choice. The Karaouyne as just one mosque-school was among hundreds spread out up to the most isolated centres of the country.

"The first school in the World" (Delphin, Fez, son Université, 1889).

These mosques were generally endowed with a library which was more or less important. A decade ago, in a chapel in Fez (under the vault of tombs), a large piece of furniture with shelves has been discovered in very good conditions, under a sculptured lintel, which contained two boxes of books and bundles of ancient documents.

"The Emir's library (Abou Yacoub, the Almohade) enriched itself with the spoils of the previous period, to the point of equaling, it is said, that of the Omayyad Sultan Hakem II" (Millet, les Almohades, p. 101).

With time, the flow of students to the great cities raised a new problem for them; that of housing.

It was then that the Merinides actively undertook the task, as from the XIVth century, of

creating detached university buildings for receiving the students flocking in from the nearby tribes and even from abroad.

Up country, there was no lack of education centres. Even in the South, 200 medersas were flourishing.

Speaking of the up country people, Moise Nahon states in his "Propos d'un vieux Marocain": "Many among them read and write, all honour the learned. They use their language with a correction, a fluency, unknown elsewhere among peasants; they possess a true grammatical genius. They grasp on the spot all legal subtleties and abstractions do not discourage them... They are—within their environment—better equipped to face real life than many people with diplomas where we live" (p. 11).

"It is comforting, he writes elsewhere, to see such rough peasants distinguishing a strictly moral superiority, bowing before an honest man, without ever stopping to look at the colour of the skin or the humbleness of origins. I must admit that, on this occasion, I cannot fail to think of the lynching of Yellow and Black people, beyond the Atlantic" (p. 47).

Under the first Almohade, there was a sort of school "of Moroccan Administration" the student body of which already reached the figure of 3,000, which gave the State its top cadres.

Alongside the traditional sciences, courses of riding, shooting, swimming and rowing were offered.

For a long time, Fez remained the most active intellectual centre of the Magrab. It was this city that inherited the radiance of Kairouan and the great Andalusian cities. Its famous university, one of the oldest in the World, made it one of the capitals of the mind, where North-African, Soudanese, Libyan and even European students gathered. We will only mention the case of the future pope Sylvester II, who after having learnt—it is said—the Arab numbers at Kairouan, introduced them, for the first time, in Europe. Al-Olamaa trained at the University of Fez enjoyed a great reputation in the Moslem world. In Merinide Morocco, the learned of the law were numberless. Abou Hassan, in his expedition to Ifriqya, took 400 Olamaa with him, the enormous erudition of which dazzled Ibn Khaldun and attracted him to Fez.

As a matter of fact, the Magrab has always been a nursery for men of law. Pliny indicated this already in ancient times. The Jewish Academy of Fez played a considerable role in the crystallization of the Thalmudic law.

Everywhere in the Islamic world the Magrab men of letters and of law left their mark: the Berber Ibn Kazzaz, an expert in Arabic philology, excelled over the famous oriental philologists such as Said of Bagdad; Roudani of Marrakesh was able to see his works of physics and Law reach India, after having given rise to the admiration of the Middle East, for the wealth of their documentation; El Harrali dazzled the intellectual milieu of Tunis by his encyclopaedic erudition; El Maqqari held breathless thousands of listeners who gathered around his chair in the Mosque of Damascus.

Thus the influence of the Magrab civilisation went beyond Andalusia and the North African countries, reaching the Eastern sector of the Mediterranean area up to Damascus, passing by Cairo. The Magrab was thus a point of contact between two worlds. "It was through it, writes André Julien, that the theory of music, of intervals and modes penetrated from the East where it was formed, into Spain where it remained practically intact". A Fassi, Mohammed Ben Abdelkrim, in the XVIIIth century, caused a happy revolution in sculptural Egyptian art, whose works of art are still kept in Cairo Museum. Magrab architecture also represents, according to Gsell, "a work of art of harmonious discipline."

The Arab woman was able to make good use of the liberal spirit of the Moslem legislator. As from the first decades of the Hegira period, she was able to assert herself, by her broad and effective participation beside men, in the cultural and social life of the Moslem community. Aicha, daughter of the 1st Caliph and wife of the prophet, must have been brought up according to the new principles and embody the ideal of women: at less than 20 years her profound learning made her one of the most brilliant figures of her times: the great companions of the Prophet came to consult her on legal, historical, literary and even medical matters. From then on, the cultural field of action, of women broadened in an increasing manner.

"The legal situation of the married women, says Le Bon, as it is regulated by the Koran and its commentators, is much more favourable than that of the European women" (G. Le Bon, p. 436).

It is from the Arabs "...that the inhabitants of Europe borrowed, together with the laws of chivalry, the gallant respect of women which these laws imposed" (G. Le Bon, p. 428). "Islamism has raised the condition of women, and we can add that it is the first religion which

has done so... All the ancient legislators have shown the same hardness for women" (Ibid, p. 430).

"The chivalrous spirit of the Arabs, their respect for women are very well known; the Wali of Cordova having, in 1139—writes Gustave Le Bon—besieged Toledo, at that time belonging to the Christians, the queen Berengaria, who was shut in the city, sent him a herald to point out to him that it was not worthy of a brave, gallant and generous knight to attack a woman. The Arab general immediately withdrew, asking as an only favour that of saluting the queen" (La Civilisation des Arabes, p. 286).

The doctrine of Mohammed was not long in falling into a serious stagnation, under the effect of the fallacious interpretations of some dogmatic minds, which were stupidly formalistic. Islam gradually slipped into a dangerous paralysis. Enlightened minds had not then hesitated to react strongly as early as the XVth century; a women's movement started growing in the Moslem world, which reacted against the backward puritan party, the action of which aimed at the most severe cloistering of the Arab women.

Appeals for reform, coming from all corners of the Empire, called for the return to the social liberalism promoted by Islam, the true principles of which were beginning to blur. This energetic feminist movement bore its fruits.

Granada appears to have been the feminist literary city, in the highest sense of the expression. The flourishing of feminine genius, in the Arts and Letters was due to the great social freedom which the Granada women enjoyed, according to Prescott (Ferdinant et Isabelle, p. 192).

As for the Moroccan woman, she played, for her part, one of the most important roles in the social, literary, economic, military and political life of Morocco, after the manner of her Eastern and Andalusian sisters.

Speaking of the Moroccan woman, Moulleiras writes in 1895: "The Moslem woman is still the queen of her home, as at the time of the Abbasides and of the pre-Islamic Arabs" (Le Maroc Inconnu, p. 736).

Princess Hosnâ was the political counsellor of her husband Moulay Idriss, king of Morocco. The names of other women counsellors of the Idrisside princes are mentioned. Similarly Zaineb, wife of the first Almoravide Youssef Ben Tachfine, famous for her beauty and the depth of her political and administrative views, as well as Tamine, daughter of Tachfine and Kamar,

wife of the prince Ali Ben Youseff, were the basis of the feminine liberalism which will be one of the justifications of the puritan campaign carried out by the first Almohade against the Almoravide regime. One of the aspects of this early emancipation of the city women was the putting out of use of the veil, a reminiscence of the Saharan customs of the ruling dynasty. At that same time, Hawwa El Mammoufia gave political lectures, and her sister Zaineb recited by heart collections of poems. Other women attempted timidly to promote a feminism inspired by the stimulating impulse of the Andalusian woman. Vanouh, daughter of Bountian, is one of the most brilliant figures of the Almoravide period. Still a virgin she defended alone, with the sword, the royal palace of Marrakesh for half a day, and finally fell under the blows of the Almohades, who seized the capital by over lectures at Ceuta, and Khairouana, the "scholar" of Fez.

Under the Almohades, Oum Hani, daughter of the Cadi Ibn Atia, gave courses, drafted works in various branches of the religious sciences. She is the mother of Abou Jafar, physician of Al Mansour. Zaineb, daughter of Youssef the Almohade, gave the good example by attending lectures, organized by Mohammed Ibn Brahim on the sources of the Law. Hafsa Errakounia, one of the famous poets of her time, was the preceptress of the al Mansour's Harem; Oum Mar, daughter of Avenzoer, was his physician as well as her daughter Bint Abi Al Alâ. There were other figures who were no less brilliant, such as Warqâ, the poetess of Fez, Amat Al Aziz, poetess of Ceuta, Oum al Alâ, who came from Fez and who directed a school in Granada, the famous traditionalist Mariem, daughter of Al Chafiqi, who presided over lectures at Ceuta, and Khairouana, the "scholar" of Fez.

Under the Merinides, there were three brilliant women of law: Fatima and her sister, daughters of Mohammed El Abdousi, as well as Oum el Banine, grand mother of Zarrouk; Sârra El Halabia of Fez is a poetess of great literary culture.

Under the Watasside, Lalla Aïcha, known as Al Horra, received in her childhood a very careful education, and must have spoken Castilian fluently; she married her father's ally against the Portuguese, Ali Al Mandri, the restorer of Tetouan, where she found the learned and refined literary milieu of Andalusia to which she was used. She was initiated to the intrigues of politics, governed the city, exerting a sovereign authority there; the struggle against the invader was her main concern; to this effect,

she had numerous vessels, always occupied at practicing piracy along the Spanish coasts. Her dealings with Don Alfonso, governor of Ceuta, have remained famous (Hespéris XLIII, p. 222).

The same exuberant activity is to be found for the Saadian women, both in the intellectual field and in the political and social ones.

Under the Alaouites, the feminist movement was inaugurated by Khnatha, wife of Moulay Ismail, who had become "a scholarly woman" (p. 105); a counsellor very much listened to by her husband and later by her son, the prince Moulay Abdallah, she promulgated herself some *cahirs* and administrative regulations.

Quoting a woman from Fez, El Aliya, daughter of Taïb Ben Kirane, gave lessons in logic at the Andalusian mosque, Moulieras writes: "An Arab woman professor of logics! What do our geographers and sociologists, think of that, they who have repeated, in the most dismal tones of voice, that Morocco is buried deep in the darkness of an undiscrivable barbarism, in the Ocean of an incurable ignorance? An intelligent Moroccan woman soars in the high regions of science." (*Le Maroc Inconnu*, vol. 2, p. 742).

Unfortunately, the reactionary social movement was progressively taking the upper hand as the Muslem empire became politically disintegrated. It is curious to observe that this new paralysis coincides with the birth of Western colonialism. Without going to the point of giving imperialism the responsibility of this state of affairs, we are at least able to state that the underhand intrigues, if not the actions of open hostility of Europe, finished by causing a political emancipation of the Arab world, the emancipation of women speeds up in a vast movement of social rebirth. A virile feminism develops, as a reminiscence of a glorious past, the evolution of which was distorted by the aberrant interpretations of the Islamic spirit. The Moslem women will be able to profit from the benefits of Western modernism, in harmony with the imperative rules of its own civilisation.

As for the mission of the Magrab fleet in the Mediterranean, the Almohade squadrons were masters of the seas—because their fleet was the first in the Mediterranean, according to André Julien—and the danger of European corsairs was only a relative one. The Almohade Sultans even supported an army, with the special task of repressing the privateering of both the Christians and the Arabs. But later, the

superiority of the Western navy gave "a certain advantage to the Christian sailors and corsairs, the roles and actions of which were often mixed up together."

The foreign policy of Abdel-Moumen imposed, as an imperative rule, the obligation to punish, everywhere, the corsairs who attacked the Christian navies. The Almohades who well understood the necessity of international traffic (of which the Moslems had inculcated upon the Christians some of the principles, according to the evidence of M. André Julien), made it an absolute point of guaranteeing everywhere and always, the freedom and security of the seas, in the very interest of their foreign trade.

The inhabitants of the Moroccan coast sheltered the wretched Andalusian pirates, but this fact, of little importance in itself, was justified at the time by the Iberian ventures against the Magrab; the least one might have expected from the Moroccans, under these circumstances, was to remain passive—a fact that was later to be considered as a tacit encouragement with regard to the Moriscos in their legitimate reaction against the Christian navy. It might be answered that, if at a stretch, the privateering against the Iberian squadrons was justified, relatively at least, for particular reason, it was unacceptable with regard to all Christians, as such. But in order to better judge the matter, the general state of mind reigning at that time should be remembered, especially in the Christian field. This mentality was eloquently described by Father Dan, who stated that the privateering expeditions made by the Christians should not be considered as blameworthy when made against the enemies of the faith." Christian piracy thus took on the aspect of a true crusade against Islam. However, the Magrab people were not able to affectively participate in these retaliation struggles, concerned as they were, in their direct action, by the enclaves created by the Portuguese and the Spaniards on the coast of the Empire.

At that time, piracy fitted into the maritime war of those times as an essential phase; the corsairs kept on alert the Spanish conquerors who occupied a greater part of the Berber coast.

Nevertheless, the misdeeds of these pirates, somewhat legitimized in the past by a rather complex retaliation pattern became, with time, a source of trouble for Morocco. Our rulers could do nothing about it, the fault being on the European side, and Europe, defying Moroccan

authority, enabled the so-called Moroccan corsairs to enjoy "for two centuries, a legal and nearly official existence" (De Castries).

The Africans, in general, had no calling for piracy. It is possible "to say—writes De Castries—that the pirates of Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers and Salé, just to mention their main cities, were not generally recruited from among the local Magrab population, and we add: and neither from among the Turks, because those to whom this name was given were mostly renegades or descendants of renegades." The number of Christians having betrayed their faith and settled either in Turkey or in the Magrab "exceeds all possible guesses."

These "diplomatic irregularities"—as De Castries likes to call them—which prolonged, in opposition to the Fez authorities, the lively existence of these outlaw renegades, the impunity of whom was knowingly sought for by some overseas governments, were to be the cause and the justification of foreign intervention.

The influence of Arabic was becoming, during the Middle Ages, all the more pronounced that a greater part of Southern Europe considered it "as the only medium of the sciences and letters." The progress was such that the Church authorities had been obliged to have the collection of canons translated into Arabic for the benefit of the churches of Spain. John of Seville was even obliged to draft an illustration of the Holy Scriptures into Arabic. At the same time, books on Moslem religion and law were translated into the Roman language" (G. Rivoire). In Andalusia, all contracts were drafted in Arabic; two thousand texts of these contracts have been discovered." The Andalusian aesthetes were the first to declare that they would willingly give up all the poverty of Latin literature, in exchange for a few Arab verse" (Max Vintejoux). Similarly in Sicily, where the Norman king was clothed in the Eastern manner, his state cloak was embroidered with Arabic letters; the seal and coins carried bilingual inscriptions. In short, "Arabic had become—said he who had the merit of studying this "Arab Miracle"—an international language of trade and sciences".

As early as 1207 A.D., mention is made of an Institute for the teaching of Arabic in Genoa. Later, the Ecumenical Council of Vienna organized this teaching in Europe, by setting up chairs in each of the main universities of the Western world. But it is especially during the

XVIIIth Century that Northern and Eastern Europe finally undertook the study and propagation of the Arabic language; it is only in 1936 that the Swedish government decrees the teaching of Arabic; since then, in Sweden, the publishing of works on Islam was actively prompted. The study of oriental languages, and among them of Arabic, began in Russia under Peter the Great, who sent out five Russian students from Moscow to the East. In 1769, Queen Catherine made this teaching compulsory; in 1816, a department of Semitic languages was set up at the University of St. Petersburg.

Professor Massignons declared, for the benefit of those who attempt to minimize the significance of the medium of Arab thought, that "it is in Arabic, and through the Arabic language, that the scientific method began in Western civilisation."

"Arabic, he further states, is a pure and unbiased linguistic instrument of international transmission of discoveries of the human mind... The international survival of the Arabic language is an essential element of future peace among nations."

Arabic "presents the advantage, says Montagne, of being the medium of a universal civilisation, and of lending itself to the expression of a religious and political thought (Les Berbères et le Makhzen, R. Montagne, p. 52).

As for the Magrab's contribution to the development of science, our work on the history of medicine and pharmacopoeia in Morocco depicts in a realistic presentation, the process of scientific research. Just to mention studies in the field of geography, it may be mentioned that Western explorers of modern times have found valuable documents available for them, not only on Asia, Africa and Eastern and Central Europe, but also on the West, to which Kazouini devoted, in the XIXth century, a whole work. But the Arab works on the unknown regions of Africa and of the Indian Ocean were those that especially inspired Western geography.

Idrisi, who was born in Ceuta in 1100 A.D., belonged to that Arab dynasty which had Islamized the Magrab and molded, very early, its national unity. His daring expeditions across Andalusia, North Africa, Asia Minor, and probably France, Italy, Germany and England, were not long in drawing on him the attention of Roger II, who had turned his small kingdom of Sicily into one of the islands of Eastern civilisation. At the request of the Norman king, Idrisi

undertook the drafting of his famous "Nozhat", which he must have completed before 1154, the year of the death of the patron king. This work of art, according to Amari, holds "the first place among the geographical works of the Middle Ages" (*Histoire des Musulmans de Sicile*). An abridged Latin version was published by Jaubert, in Paris, in 1619 but a translation of the complete work will be published two centuries later (1836-1840) under the auspices of the Geographical Society of Paris.

Idrisi built, under the form of dices, together with this work, a celestial sphere and a representation of the world known during his times. The higher precision of Idrisi over Ptolemy is obvious; just to give one example, the tables drafted by the Greek geographer presented, for the distance separating Tangiers from Alexandria only an error of 18" longitude whereas between Tanger and Tripoli of Syria, the Arab tables contain an error of less than 1". The Moroccan geographer has pointed out a whole series of errors and wrong interpretations made by his predecessor, on the geography of the Mediterranean. It is he, and not directly Ptolemy, who was "the European professor of geography", as E.F. Gautier will have no map of the World other than Idrisi's" (*Mœurs et Coutumes des Musulmans*, p. 239). During modern times, the Magrab explorer "enjoyed as a geographer according to Dozy and Goeje, a considerable reputation in Asia, Africa and Spain." Reinaud which had severely judged Idrisi's work of art, was forced however to acknowledge that "taken as a whole, it is like Strabon's, a true monument erected to geography."

Idrisi's work is original: in Moroccan cartography, the outline of the harbours stand out for the first time, in our geographer's work, and "a whole precise nomenclature appears—says Massignon—the straight banks of the rivers and on the curved edges of the mountain chains."

As for Ibn Battouta, he was born in 1304 A.D., in the nearby city of Tangiers. Soon after the age of 20, he undertook a series of adventurous voyages, through the least explored countries. At Fez, the last stage of his journey, the traveller from Tangiers had the long account of his travels, which had lasted 28 years for a total of 75,000 miles, drafted (like Marco Polo) by a secretary of the Merinide sultan, Ibn Jozey, especially entrusted with this task. This famous account was published, towards the middle of the last century, thanks to Defremery and Sanguinetti; in 1929, Gibb published an abridged version in English, in his *Broadway Travellers*

collection, to which he added a remarkable study on the author.

Hassan Ibn Mohammed Al Ouzzan known as Leo the African, was born probably in Granada towards 1495, but was brought up in Fez, where he spent the best years of his youth. At the age of 21, he undertook a journey towards the East, but was made a prisoner in Naples, in 1519, by Sicilian corsairs. It was Ramisio who, in 1550, published the "Description dell' Africa" which Leo seems to have drafted, directly, in Italian, and which is divided into IX books, the first of which contains remarks of general geography, ethnology, and clinical indications. This treatise represented, according to Massignon, a true "practical textbook of the geography of North Africa" (*Le Maroc dans les premières années du XV<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 43). All matters not related to precise indications and practical applications "found him indifferent and sceptical." The description is "the only methodical and original treatise which was published in the XVIth century, in Europe, on Morocco's geography and which, for three centuries, will be practically the only source."

From this brief illustration it appears that the Arab, Oriental and Magrab work had played a decisive role in the development of the geographical science and of the cartography of the World, during the Middle Ages.

In our work in French entitled "L'art maghré-bien", we have spoken at length of the essential and most representative aspects of art, especially under the Merinides, during the XVth century, an art which at that time was syncretized in a strictly Mediterranean, Spanish-Moorish art?

Notwithstanding the Andalusian influence, this art was enhanced by a particular hue; the concern for static and balanced forces which characterizes Christian architecture, is replaced, in Moslem architecture, not only by the solid nature of the structure, but also by the ornamental sense and the decorative flourishing. The Arabs draw the admiration of the West for their cantilevers, their stalactites, their colour scheme, the often majestic aspect of their forms, their incomparable style. In architecture, during full maturity, notwithstanding the excessive use of arabesques, the excess of decorations, the disorderly nature of details and the poor quality of materials, "the whole remains clear, the proportions are balanced, the decorations perfectly match the spaces which they cover; and especially, the polychrome effect is perfectly in its

assurance and tactfulness" (1). Meridine art will flourish in the Berber region and in the East, by its great prestige and its incomparable wealth. This was a Spanish-Magrabian work where the same features marked the monuments on both banks of the Mediterranean. This artistic harmony is due to the presence of Andalusian architecture, the influence of which was being felt everywhere (2).

Though owing so much to Oriental art, Meridine art "exported its models to the East and its works were appreciated there." But, due to its very maturity, this art bears within itself the germs of its death, the causes of its decline. As from the end of the XIVth century, it had however exhausted its strength. The troubles which marked the next century no longer enabled the creation of great works.

Analyzing the aspects of the Magrab civilisation under the Merinides, H. Terrasse (2) shows the Spanish and urban character of this civilisation where, after the end of the XIIIth century, the classical patterns become fixed and end up by being petrified.

Notwithstanding the patronage of the best Saadian rules, the latter—according to H. Terrasse—did not preside over the Renaissance of Moslem art in Morocco. Civilisation and art were already turned towards the past, and the few foreign influences they received were not able to really change the old basis, nor carry the germ of a fruitful novelty."

According to Terrasse, this would therefore be "an art without vigour, haunted by the models of the past." But thanks to the Turks, "an indirect and transitory contact was newly esta-

blished with the arts of Eastern Islam." The traces of this influence may be seen in the monumental decoration, where certain Egypto-Syrian and Persians elements are to be found, especially in some industrial arts, particularly in binding, carpets and male clothes."

But in any case, Magrab art, exhausted by the previous generations, became, over-burdened with ornaments, lost its sober nature and gained in splendour.

H. Terrasse has tried to present the synthesis of Spanish-Moorish art, under the Alaouites, four centuries after the fall of Granada. According to him, the patterns of architecture solidified.

But if, under the Alaouites, this art continues to sink into traditionalism where the classical themes are petrified, on the other hand, a certain movement, since Morocco's independence in 1956, appears to move in the direction of choices where the Arab character is strongly marked by a Western-Mediterranean hue. A strong vitality reveals in our artists a creative genius, a true talent for eclectic reproduction, a sort of artistic synthesis, which represents the surest catalysing element for the birth of a New Art, where the pragmatic features merge with modern static ones.

This appropriate restoration, shall give birth to the originality which must mark modern Magrabian art, fully Mediterranean in its nature.

Welfare which must spread in a fairly homogeneous setting, will thus draw inspiration from aesthetics, in view of a better life. The meaning of beauty and the need for comfort must preside over the renewal of the Moroccan society of tomorrow.

---

(1) *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, p. 456.

(2) *Histoire du Maroc*, vol. 2, p. 76 and following.