

looked upon askance by the authorities in Tripoli (up to and including the previous regime), the architecture in the area has remained simple and generally unaffected by trends elsewhere in the Islamic world. With regard to the historical background, some attention might have been given to settlements in the Classical period, but in a work on medieval mosques this is not a serious shortcoming.

Virginie Prevost has used all the available sources on the sites in the Djebel to inform her reconnaissance, from both Ibadi and Arab chronicles (helping, amongst other things, to date the original mosques and settlements), as well as the work of the Polish orientalist Tadeusz Lewicki, the geographical and ethnographic study by Jean Despois, a true classic on the area (Despois 1935), to more recent research of a largely architectural nature by James Allen (1973; assisted by Olwen Brogan and Philip Kenrick), the published PhD thesis of Mohamed Warfelli (2007) and (to a lesser degree) by the Italian amateur enthusiasts Franco Bencini and Claudio Dell'Aquila, who undertook some private trips in the Djebel a few years before Prevost (cf. e.g. Bencini and Dell'Aquila 2007), referred to by Prevost (xix).

The result is an excellent book. The author has covered her subject thoroughly, both from the point of view of the history and background of Ibadism and the architecture of the mosques themselves, with first-rate colour photographs (by Axel Derricks) and the reproduction of remastered black and white photos from earlier publications. It is a pity, though no fault of the author, that further fieldwork has been impossible given the current uncertain conditions in Libya. More fieldwork was originally envisaged before publication, in order to gain greater knowledge of the area, with more time to study the previously known mosques and to find others, while also creating new and accurate plans, and with better lighting to photographically document the buildings more thoroughly, all of which would have taken our understanding of the area to the next level. As it is, apart from new photographs and in situ observation (followed by a patently exhaustive library research), the overall data on the Djebel Nafusa remains only slightly further on from the works of James Allen and, in particular, Mohamed Warfelli. On the other hand, Allen's fieldwork is restricted to one 30-page article published some 45 years ago, and Warfelli's PhD thesis, completed in 1981 and subsequently published by the Tripoli DoA in 2007, is not widely available. Prevost deals with all aspects of the mosques, some actually underground and others among the mysterious Hawariyyin, or so-called Apostolic mosques. It is hoped that this volume will in the future be followed by a second tome, with a more detailed structural analysis of not only the mosques but also of the associated domestic buildings and granaries, together with new plans and elevations. This in association with excavation at key sites, such as at the long-abandoned Berber town of Sharus (96–102), or at selected mosques, such as at the Kanisa mosque at Tamazda.

Finally, an important aspect of the book is that it highlights the fragile nature of the vernacular architecture, whose coarse stonework, mud mortar and fragile plasterwork requires an amount of maintenance to withstand the vicissitudes of time and weather, not to mention human interference. While some of the mosques are clearly cared for by the nearby modern communities (vide figures,

passim), others are further from towns and far more exposed. The photographs and descriptions may in time be useful for restoration work, if necessary, and when it becomes possible.

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ALGERIA MODERN: FROM OPACITY TO COMPLEXITY. Edited by Luis Martinez and Rasmus Alenius Boserup. *Hurst Publishers, London, 2016. ISBN 9781849045872, pp. 176. Price: £45 (hardback).*
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In reaction to nearly a week of uninterrupted and radical anti-government protests, supporters of the Iranian regime took to the streets on 3 January 2018. As a consequence, the ongoing mobilisation came abruptly to an end. In sharp contrast, during the Arab uprisings in 2010–11, both Ben Ali and Mubarak were unable to organise a single demonstration in their favour, eventually succumbing to the pressure from below. These brief examples show how the dynamics of an autocracy's systemic stability are a complex and multifaceted process in which the emergence of mass-based protests is not sufficient to determine the breakdown of the existing regime. Another necessary condition is, in fact, the gradual shrinking of the ruling coalition in the previous years, if not decades, culminating in the regime's incapacity to strike back. The main merit of Luis Martinez and Rasmus Alenius Boserup's edited volume *Algeria Modern* is exactly to avoid oversimplified explanations of the resilience of the Algerian regime in a phase of great political transformation and instability in the Middle East and North Africa. Bringing together a team of qualified scholars, the editors provide an overarching picture of Bouteflika's Algeria, discussing not only the rise of new protest movements (and their weaknesses) in the wake of the Arab uprisings, but also the elements that help explain the capacity of the regime to upgrade its structure.

The book relies on three premises. First, after the end of the civil war that nearly tore the country apart in the 1990s, Algeria emerged as an example of what Andreas Schedler would define as electoral authoritarianism. That is, a regime that formally adopts democratic institutions,

but that remains authoritarian (10). Second, and partially as a result of the hybrid character of a regime in which independent media outlets exist, Algeria's political landscape has moved from being opaque and impenetrable to becoming visible in its ordinary complexity (2–3). Third and finally, rather than being about a single person or institution that holds incontestable power, the struggle at the apex of the state is a never-ending conflict among several rival groups, determining tactical alliances as well as long-lasting antagonisms (6). The coming together of these three elements opens up two rather different perspectives. In scholarly terms, the broad transformations currently ongoing in Algeria can be observed as never before, allowing a depiction of the previously blurred game of the decision-making process. In political terms, by contrast, whereas the hybrid regime offers some safety valves to the mounting pressure from the lower and middle classes, a widely shared call for political change has indirectly pushed several and different social forces to coalesce. In Martinez and Boserup's introductory notes, the latter aspect is seen as the likely stepping stone for a process of gradual and genuine political opening, which, after Bouteflika's departure, might avoid abrupt outbreaks and expected subsequent repressive closures by the military, as already happened in January 1992. Yet such a scenario remains, in the opinion of this reviewer, highly unlikely in light of the interests and power of the army. If such a view is correct, the ruling elite will be tempted to compromise only under an extensive and almost unbearable wave of discontent.

Beyond the introduction, the seven chapters are divided almost equally between those focused on the regime and those contributions that draw attention to its opponents. Regarding the former, Martinez's chapter lays the foundations for analysing the Algerian regime 'as a collection of organised interest groups' and interpreting the government as an indirect expression of the conflicts among these groups (14). Despite the consequent unaccountability of the executive to social demands, the regime relies on three important bases: hydrocarbon revenues; the loyalty of some constituencies; and a legitimising narrative founded on the image of a country that represents itself as a bulwark of stability in a problematic area (13). These factors are extensively discussed in three following chapters. Samia Boucetta deals with the double-edged sword of the Algerian economy's tremendously high dependency on oil and gas charges, both evaluating the huge amount of social spending that hydrocarbon exports have allowed from the early 2000s onwards and considering the country's diminishing oil reserves and constant reduction in energy production in the last decade (42). In Djallil Lounnas's chapter, the paradoxical support that moderate Islamist parties, and Hamas-MSP in particular, have provided to the regime from the mid-1990s onwards is analysed in detail (86–90), whereas Abdennour Benantar casts doubt on the current validity of Algeria's three fundamental pillars in security policies – that is, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, non-intervention of its forces abroad and foreign non-intervention in the region (109). The failure of the Libyan state, the French intervention in the Malian crisis and the unprecedented terrorist attack on the In Amenas gas facility in January 2013 are all factors that can be cited to support Benantar's view.

In one of the most interesting chapters, Boserup analyses the growing number of popular protests in Algeria during Bouteflika's presidency. Correctly rejecting the often mentioned hypothesis that the collective trauma of the civil war would prevent Algerians from moving from unplanned riots to openly anti-systemic demonstrations, Boserup sees protests as a rational political calculation to exert pressure on the regime to share its revenues. In such a view, contention in Algeria is thought of as 'non-revolutionary' (59). I suspect that the statement is empirically correct – after all, it would be difficult to argue differently – but theoretically erroneous. Uprisings and revolutions are not the product of a conscious project of the masses. Rather, their outbreak represents the plastic evidence that structural contradictions cannot be absorbed by the existing system. For some of the factors previously noted, such a tipping point has not been reached yet in Algeria. In this regard, that contentious politics has been non-revolutionary in Bouteflika's Algeria depends more on the regime's capacity to maintain the support of some key constituencies than on a strategic calculation by protesters. In spite of these theoretical issues, Boserup's framework is compelling as it explains street protests experienced by the country in the last decade. This clearly emerges in the chapters by Ed McAllister and Anouar Boukhars. The former deals with the most famous Algerian neighbourhood – that is, Bab el-Oued – which has constantly been a litmus test for the country's developments, anticipating nationwide tendencies and transformations (63). The latter tackles instead Algeria's south and the wave of protests and strikes that have developed there in the last five years, showing that too few new discoveries of oil and gas fields forced the regime to embark on plans for shale gas extractions. In response to this, as well as to the long-lasting social and economic marginalisation, the 'quiet' south has emerged as a new frontline for the regime. It is exactly here, at the point of conjunction between the regime and its opponents, that the volume makes an important and interesting contribution to understanding contemporary Algeria, deserving the full attention of scholars interested in the country and in the region more generally.

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TRIBE, ISLAM AND STATE IN LIBYA: ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE ROOTS OF LIBYAN TRIBAL SOCIETY AND EVOLUTION UP TO THE QARAMANLI REIGN (1711–1835). By Faraj Najem. *The Centre for Africa Research, Benghazi, 2017. ISBN 977-404-002-3, pp. 251, 15 maps, 6 family and tribal genealogical trees, 2 indexes of major Libyan places and major Libyan tribes and families, and an index of Berber/Tefinagh alphabets. Price: \$20 (paperback).*
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Tribalism in Libya has long remained an enigma, shrouded by the country's decades of isolation and the paucity of serious scholarship on the topic, especially in Western