

previously gone unnoticed: the extent to which colonized women bore the weight of the extension and defense of French colonialism.

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LAW, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY IN COLONIAL ALGERIA

Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria, 1830–1930.

By Judith Surkis.

Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019. Pp. xvi + 333. \$29.95, paperback (ISBN: 9781501739507).

doi:10.1017/S0021853721000050

KEY WORDS: Algeria, North Africa, gender, sexuality, law, colonial administration.

Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria is a stunning study that reframes how we think about the formation of French Algeria between 1830 and 1930 — what historian Judith Surkis refers to as a colonial century that covers ‘France’s fantasmatic sovereignty’ over Algeria. Fantasy, in Surkis’ application, is legal and works as both a premise and a technology of law. Drawing on feminist theory that shows how fantasy builds frameworks of power through constructions of difference, Surkis illustrates how the affective influence of fantasy lay at the heart of particular legal benchmarks in Algeria’s colonial history, seen most vividly in the swirl of ‘scandal’ and ‘affair’ as they appear in both legal and fictional writing.

With the formal legal apparatus serving as scaffolding in each of the book’s eight chapters, Surkis builds an intricate analysis that moves beyond a discussion of the laws themselves to focus on the cultural landscape, the work of fantasy, and the stakes of particular predicaments pertaining to sovereignty. The formal annexation of Algeria in 1834, the 1865 *sénatus-consulte* establishing the legal distinction between French nationality and French citizenship, the devastating 1873 Warnier Law, which opened the door for massive settler expropriation of arable land — each of these legal actions marked moments in a process based largely in the fantasy that Algerian Muslim men were irredeemably committed to child marriage, repudiation, and polygamy as elements of their personal status. French constructions of these sexual and gendered differences were rooted in understandings of religion, in this instance Christianity and Islam, and the fantastical relationship between religion and secularism. By the 1870s, Surkis argues that legal status and difference, which French administrators had framed as rooted in religion, began to take on corporeal aspects. The embodiment of religio-legal difference manifested in anxiety over so-called mixed marriages between Muslim Algerian men and European women. Uncommon as these marriages were, the fantasy of these relationships provoked extensive discussion about difference and the legal implications for citizenship rights through ‘mixed’ marriage. In the early twentieth century, the assimilationist and elite Young Algerians pushed back against colonialist arguments for Muslim Algerian men’s sexual differences and exposed the reality that so-called Muslim law in Algeria *was* French law; it was

codified and rendered as a French legal construct. The law around which these debates swirled was the 1919 Jonnart Law, which expanded the franchise to elite *évolué* Algerians, but continued to exclude Muslims and was widely seen as a major concession and a disappointment. If there is any hope to be gained in all of this, it is the way feminist and Algerian intellectuals pushed back against the fantasy of a progressive French civilizing mission on the occasion of the centenary in 1930, as Surkis shows at the end of the book. Here, she suggests we look to these critiques as a lens onto the limitations of exclusionary fantasies upon which French sovereignty in Algeria was built.

While the book is evenly strong and consistent in its presentation and argumentation, Chapter Three might be considered a load-bearing wall, at least in terms of the implications of Surkis' argument for historians of Algeria and the Maghreb. Here, she effectively contextualizes the watershed Warnier Law within her argument for sexual politics as the elaboration of land law. Historians of Algeria have previously documented the environmental arguments for the Warnier Law; that is, the way Third Republic administrators argued that Algerians depleted and misused agricultural land as a justification for expropriation. Surkis shows how the architects of the law used this as an opportunity to fashion a category understood to be 'Muslim family law' set apart from property law; land became separated from the intimate and the domestic in this formulation.

Sex, Law, and Sovereignty is a standard bearer for scholars of gender and law in colonial societies. Based on an array of sources, ranging from court documents and political correspondence to novels, the book is tightly researched and highly sophisticated in its analysis. Surkis brilliantly illustrates how the French project of colonial legal plurality — ostensibly rooted in an effort to protect and codify local patriarchal norms through personal status and family law — was ultimately about stripping Algerians of their land and establishing French sovereignty. Her most direct and forceful intervention is that land expropriation, a central and violent element of French colonization in Algeria, was directly tied to the legal project of organizing gender and sexuality. In short, Surkis succeeds in showing readers how a gendered legal regime ordered both personality and territoriality in colonial Algeria.

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AQUATIC CULTURES IN THE ATLANTIC DIASPORA

Undercurrents of Power: Aquatic Culture in the African Diaspora.

By Kevin Dawson.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. Pp. 360. \$45.00, hardcover (ISBN: 978-0-8122-4989-7).

doi:10.1017/S0021853721000098

KEY WORDS: West Africa, Central Africa, diaspora, Atlantic world, material culture, intellectual, slavery.

Much of the scholarship on 'the Atlantic world' ignores water and the ways people lived with aquatic environments. Kevin Dawson seeks to reveal this unmapped realm and correct assumptions about the roles of African descendants as expert swimmers and watercraft