

values of wonderful humour and satire, and his appeal spanned a quite extraordinary range of class and culture in Egypt. That said, this is an important book. Its most salutary lesson is that none of us is innocent in those processes of inclusion and exclusion which constitute the canons of literature.

R.C. Ostle
University of Oxford

VIRGINIE PREVOST:

Les mosquées ibadites du Djebel Nafūsa. Architecture, histoire et religions du nord-ouest de la Libye (viii^e–xiii^e siècle).

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Djebel Nafūsa is a mountain range standing high over the Djeffara plain from Yefren to Nālūt and the Tunisian frontier. During the middle ages and the modern period, this rocky stronghold was home mainly to Ibadi Berbers. A dense network of villages and small towns flourished on the upper ridges and plateaus, so that a tenth-century geographer could assert that their number reached 300 *qurā* (Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-masālik wa l-mamālik*, ed. W. McGuckin de Slane, *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale*, reprint Paris, 1965, p. 9). Al-Ya'qubī also stressed the quantity of rural estates (*diyā'*), villages, fields and buildings (*Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. T.G.J. Juynboll, Leiden, 1861, pp. 135–6). The use of terrace cultivation, the building of earth dams (called *jusūr*) against soil erosion, along with a specific management of water resources enabled crop production (in particular olive trees), associated with cattle breeding. Jean Despois, who visited the area in 1933, analysed this complex local ecosystem and highlighted the civil and religious architectural tradition (*Le Djebel Nefousa (Tripolitaine). Étude géographique*, Paris, 1935). However, scholars mainly approached the holy geography of the Djebel through literary sources and oral surveys until the Society for Libyan Studies supported three archaeological missions led by J.W. Allan (1969, 1971 and 1973) (see A. de Calassanti-Motyliniski, *Le Djebel Nefousa*, Paris, 1898; R. Basset, "Les sanctuaires du Djebel Nefousa", *Journal Asiatique*, 1899, pp. 423–70 and 1899, pp. 88–120; T. Lewicki, "Ibādītica, 1. Tasmiya šuyūḥ Nafūsa", *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, 25/2, 1961, pp. 87–120). They gave way to a first comprehensive study of 29 mosques, of which 11 had their floor plan drawn (J.W. Allan, "Some Mosques of the Jebel Nefusa", *Lybica*, IX–X, 1972, pp. 147–69). Muḥammad Warfallī, a Libyan member of the expeditions, achieved his PhD at SOAS in 1981. His book, published in 2009, still represents the most complete archaeological ground study ever achieved and includes 12 mosques (M.S.M. Warfalli, *Some Islamic Monuments in Jabal Nafūsa*, unpublished thesis, University of London, 1981, 2 vols). It contains valuable black-and-white photographs, unlike the Arabic version (*Ba'd al-āthār al-islāmiyya bi jabal Nafūsa fī Lībyā*, Mu'assasat Tāwālt al-thaqāfiyya, 2009, 5 vols). A group of Italian amateur archaeologists nevertheless explored other buildings between 2006 and 2008.

Virginie Prevost, a specialist in Maghrebi Ibadism, published this monograph six years after a study trip to Djebel Nafūsa (2010). The "Arab spring" in Libya prevented her from returning, and in her foreword she explains the limitations she encountered (p. xvi). She could not enter every sanctuary and lacked time for

investigating more deeply through exhaustive photographic coverage and studying the archaeological environment. Yet her work will certainly become a key reference on this poorly studied province: it relies on a very complete reading of the available primary and secondary sources and combines material evidence with the information given by the *siyar*, hagiographical biographies of ulama arranged in chronological or geographical order.

She introduces very clearly these little-known sources (pp. xvi–xix) but the historiographical balance lacks a deeper analysis of what the author really owes to previous studies. The results and hypotheses developed by Warfallī, and his presentation of the archaeology, deserve a much closer discussion. The first chapter (pp. 3–17), dedicated to geographic and human patterns, introduces the Djebel's regions (Nālūt, Kābaw, al-Ḥarāba, Jadū and Yafran), but the reader lacks basic data for understanding how so many people could live in a seemingly hostile landscape. A broader presentation of the regional environmental, agrarian and economic history would have helped contextualize the organization of these human settlements.

The historic framework (pp. 19–37) deals in particular with the transition from Late Antiquity to Islam, how the Nafūsa contributed to the Imamate state building, their relationship with the neighbouring states, and the local impact of the Banū Hilāl. The chapter closes with the thirteenth century, while al-Shammākhī's *Siyar* contains valuable material on the following two centuries. A fascinating narrative describes, for instance, how a delegation from Tunis led by the governor of Tripoli tried to convert the highlanders with the help of soldiers and Maliki ulama (Al-Shammākhī, *Kitāb al-Siyar*, ed. M. Ḥassan, Beirut, 2009, II, pp. 800–4).

Some issues deserve further discussion. The author mentions the Jewish communities of Jādū and Sharūs (pp. 34–5) but may have over-interpreted the evidence for a Christian presence after the ninth century. An inscription alluding to Jesus, local tales on the Apostles and Christian martyrs and the use of the names *Taghlīs* (allegedly derived from *ecclesia*) and *Kanīsa* may also reflect common topics found in the geographical tradition (pp. 31–4). The assumption that local practices observable in rural sanctuaries like votive offerings and rituals of fertility are “pre-islamic Berber cults” (p. 35) tends to legitimize a dogmatic vision of what the true religion should be. Similarly, the author asserts that subterranean mosques could be the oldest ones since she associates them with the ancient sacred caves (p. 162).

The heart of the book is a catalogue of 28 mosques (pp. 41–150) covering ground observation, a critical reading of previous studies and the identification of the holy patrons. Each description includes GPS coordinates, floor plans, short references to studies and sources when possible and valuable colour photographs. Six new mosques are included (pp. 50–4, 67–71, 128–31, 139–47). The reader only lacks elements for situating the building in a broader social and natural context. The use of satellite views would have been helpful for such a contextualization.

The last part of the book is a comparative essay on Ibadi sacred architecture, full of interesting suggestions on space organization (the use of minbars, the multiplication of mihrabs, the stairway minaret, etc.) and the decoration. It is only regrettable that the author does not make any serious attempt at periodization as the available inscriptions, comparisons with other mosques outside Ibadism and the historical data on the buildings and the associated settlements could provide some clues.

Cyrille Aillet
Université de Lyon