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Book Reviews

IN SEARCH OF ANCIENT NORTH AFRICA: A HISTORY IN SIX LIVES. By Barnaby Rogerson, with photographs by Sir Donald McCullin. *Haus Publishing, London, 2017. ISBN 9781909961548, pp. 336 + 12 photographs. Price: £20 (hardback).*
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This book is unashamedly a personal indulgence on the part of the author. He has had long experience of travel in North Africa, which he clearly loves, and he has already written much about its colourful history. Here, he weaves together descriptions of certain archaeological sites with biographies of some fascinating historical characters, pursuing themes that 'refuse to be pinned into tidy narratives' (1) and which he has not, therefore, managed to incorporate into his other writings. As with his other books, his style of writing is enjoyable and easy to absorb. There are no footnotes and no bibliography, thus perhaps deliberately inviting the reader to enjoy the narrative – and the speculation, where the facts are thin – without questioning it too closely. More of that anon.

The six individuals chosen for characterisation are Queen Dido, the legendary founder of Carthage; Hannibal and Masinissa (players in the Second Punic War, alongside Scipio Africanus); Juba II, king of Mauretania under the protection of the Emperor Augustus; Septimius Severus, a Roman emperor of African origin; and the Church father Saint Augustine of Hippo. To these are linked the sites of Carthage (obviously); Iol/Caesarea and Volubilis (developed by Juba); Dougga; Villa Selene and Leptis Magna (characterising the native environment of Severus); and Hippo Regius, where Saint Augustine preached and railed against the schismatic Donatists. A visit to the irresistible oasis town of Ghadames is tacked onto the end, simply because it is irresistible, having asserted its independence of character and spirit in the face of countless waves of cultural change which swept down from the coast, but had not the power to dominate its remote desert fastness. The stories are intended to explore the interactions between a dominant (or growing) power and those on its fringes. Some fight heroically but vainly against it (Hannibal); others align themselves with it and seek its benefits while trying at the same time not to abandon their own roots (Juba); yet others embrace the system with such energy and determination that they rise to the very top and dominate it (Severus).

Rogerson combines travelogue, in the sense of very personal accounts of beautiful and evocative places (apart from Carthage, which must surely disappoint every tourist), with biographies of people who are known to us in widely varying degrees. Dido/Elissa is a semi-mythical person, but embodies a variety of fragments of early history and belief. Hannibal would have been known to every schoolchild of my generation, but is probably not so widely known now: a Romantic and tragic character who fought against the rising power of Rome and ever so nearly won. Juba II was the person of whom I knew least, though he has been studied. He was ten years younger than Octavian/Augustus and brought up in Rome alongside him following the defeat and suicide of his father Juba I of Numidia, who had fought against Julius Caesar. In 25 BC, Juba was sent by Augustus to rule over the buffer state not of Numidia but of Mauretania, further to the west. Juba was imbued with all things Roman and built himself a capital at Iol, which he renamed Caesarea (now Cherchel) and revitalised at huge expense in the image of Rome itself. Wonderful marble statuary and architectural decoration of this period in the museum at Cherchel still bear witness to this. Juba was also provided with a wife, Cleopatra Selene, a convenient way of managing the progeny of Cleopatra VII and Mark Antony. Juba was an intellectual: he assembled a library and he wrote works on music theory, theatre studies, linguistics, applied arts, archaeology and the geographies of Africa and Arabia. The botanical genus *Euphorbia* was named by Juba in honour of his personal physician, Euphorbus, and the Canary Isles were so named after the savage dogs (*canes*) which seemed to characterise it for an exploratory expedition sent out by the monarch. Juba was more than once used by Augustus as an adviser and diplomat – and it may have been these skills which recommended him as ruler over the Mauretanian tribes. He had been sent to research the southern frontier of Africa Proconsularis prior to the successful Saharan expedition of Cornelius Balbus (21–19 BC) and in 2 BC he was one of the senior advisers delegated to accompany young Gaius Caesar on a military expedition to the East.

While Rogerson clearly enjoyed himself writing this book, allowing free rein to his imagination where the facts are thin, the reader may likewise enjoy reading it. Unfortunately, this enjoyment is put at risk by the following defects.

Errors of fact:
Columns on the Mauretanian royal tomb are described as Doric (86) when they are actually Ionic. The existence of an amphitheatre at Cherchel is said to have been 'just a possibility' (92), however it was largely intact until the French despoiled it for building material in the 19th century, and its concrete substructures are still extensively preserved and readily visible. The dedicatory inscription on the Temple of the *Gens Septimia* at Leptis Magna 'has never been found, and probably never will be' (178): in fact there are two recognised fragments, published in 1952 and further discussed in 1993. The 9th/11th-century mosque of Sidi Bou Merouane at Annaba is confused with the 18th-century mosque of Salah Bey (248). Aquileia is placed erroneously at the mouth of the River Po (288).

Errors of Latinity/nomenclature:
Hippo 'Regia' for Regius (91 and 290, but correct on 96); *clementas* for *clementia* (93); the *Legio XIV Gemina* erroneously titled *Germania* (119); 'Eupherides' for Euesperides (176); *viri classimi* for *viri clarissimi* (262 and 307); *principale* for *principalis* (267).

Reversed compass bearings:
Mountains 'to the north' of the royal tomb at Tipasa, sea 'to the south' (87); the 'southern shore of North Africa'

(96 – but perhaps this is just a confusing way of indicating the northern shore of the Syrtic Gulf); Utica set 'just south' of Carthage rather than to the north, the port of Dellys described as 'immediately south' of the Kabylie mountains, i.e. well inland (274).

Lack of copy-editing:
This is a bugbear which I have had occasion to mention more than once in reviews. The text has lacked the attentions of an independent reader, who might have picked up on and eliminated a number of simple errors of grammar or typing, e.g. 'The Berber villages … had to surrender … and must furnish young men' (44–5); 'sited' for 'cited' (195); and 'then' for 'they' (301).

This list is not exhaustive, but it is surely already tedious. It is a great pity, because most of these things could have been identified and corrected relatively easily; but, by being there, they throw doubt (and may sow confusion) on what would otherwise be a very good read.

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TRADE IN THE ANCIENT SAHARA AND BEYOND. Edited by D. J. Mattingly, V. Leitch, C. N. Duckworth, A. Cuénod, M. Sterry and F. Cole. *Cambridge University Press, 2017. ISBN 978-1-107-19699-5, pp. 449, 99 figures (including maps), 8 tables. Price: £120 (hardback).*
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This is the first of a projected four volumes on the results and research implications of the Trans-SAHARA Project directed by David Mattingly between 2011 and 2017. Its focus is on trade and comprises 16 chapters by both project participants and international scholars subdivided into three sections: (I) connectivity and networks, (II) trade in organic materials, and (III) inorganic materials. It is an outstanding and important publication.

The first chapter by David Mattingly is a robust introduction to the environmental, archaeological and historical challenges of reconstructing trade in the pre-Islamic era by a scholar who has now spent decades working in the Sahara. His vivid description of the problems of identifying routeways (6–8) brings into stark focus the difficulty of conducting research in the desert. But the most important contribution of the chapter is its remarkable synthesis of the rich debate over the nature, scale and scope of pre-Islamic trade. Mattingly concludes 'that there was some degree of pre-Islamic, Trans-Saharan trade built on extensive and regular contacts' (32). This is a justifiably cautious assessment which is based more, at this stage, on the absence of evidence than on evidence of absence. Anecdotally speaking – that is, based on the remarkable results of the fieldwork of Mattingly and others in the Sahara and our knowledge of the history and archaeology of the pre-Islamic ancient world – there is room for a broader assertion in the form of a question: why should we assume implicitly that pre-Islamic trade in the Sahara was less significant than that found in post-antiquity? The ancient states which surrounded the Sahara to the north and east were no less developed, certainly than those of the medieval period. The evidence, albeit circumscribed in scope, of settlement, intensive agriculture, the movement of people, goods, technology and ideas, and even a state in the case of the Garamantes, not just oases communities, stands as compelling indicators of a world in which trade must have been nearly as strong, if not as strong, as at any time between prehistory and modernity. Indeed, I suspect that if archaeology, as opposed to textual/documentary evidence (of which there is very little from antiquity and far more from the Islamic period), were deployed as the only measure of trade across time until, say, the early modern period, the arbitrary divide imposed by historical periodisation between pre-Islamic and Islamic trade might well diminish, environmental factors notwithstanding.

Judith Scheele's chapter (2) is likewise an important reminder in this regard of the interconnectedness of trade and different types of communities across time boundaries in her contention that in the Sahara exchange, trade, transport and external investment has long revolved around a symbiosis between sedentarism and pastoralism (75). But her most important point, I think, is that we really do not fully understand, despite this interconnectedness, why states like the Garamantes emerge in some periods and not in others. We still need better models and answers to explain the changes across time and place in the Sahara.

The title of Anne Haour's chapter (3) – 'What made Islamic trade distinctive, as compared to pre-Islamic trade?' – is somewhat misleading, as she later states that her aim 'is not to review once again the general evidence for or against the existence of pre-Islamic Trans-Saharan contacts, but rather to draw attention to the potential of the central Saharan route – the natural candidate for Fazzan's links southward' (81). Following a review of the limited textual and archaeological evidence, she suggests that 'the fundamental difference between the pre-Islamic and the Islamic contexts was not one of nature but of scale. As Muslim belief and practice became more established and the size of the network, and number of its nodes, grew, the network's vulnerability decreased' (95–96). This may be true, but the absence of any kind of comparable documentary information for antiquity makes it difficult to determine the network's 'vulnerability' prior to the advent of Islam.

Mamadou Cisse's chapter (4), the results of a high-quality excavation focused on the Saharan trade connection with Gao along the Niger River in Mali, demonstrates that regional and long-distance connections existed between this region and the western and central Sahara in the middle of the first millennium, earlier than once thought, and included the transport of salt, copper and glass beads from the desert in exchange for gold, ivory and foodstuffs.

Chapter 5 by Mark Horton, Alison Crowther and Nicole Boivin is an interesting comparative study of the Indian Ocean and trans-Saharan trading networks in the medieval period, demonstrating 'the extraordinarily complex relationships that enabled the flows of goods between worlds and major ecological and cultural boundaries' (149).

The trans-Saharan gold trade in the pre-modern period is the focus of Sam Nixon's chapter (6). It is an