



Julius Dihstelhoff, Charlotte Pardey, Rachid Ouaiassa, and Friederike Pannewick (eds.).- *Entanglements of the Maghreb: Cultural and Political Aspects of a Region in Motion* (Transcript Verlag, 2021), 267p.

The Maghreb is indubitably a ‘region in motion’ with a rich and complex political, cultural, social and economic history. However, in comparison with other parts of the MENA (Middle East and North Africa), the Maghreb has received limited scholarly attention. This scanty research has brought about the absence of a clear paradigm to investigate the region, thus making the task of researchers increasingly onerous. True, there is a significant number of studies carried out about the Maghreb. Nevertheless, these Maghrebi experiences are oftentimes examined independently, leaving thus many research terrains uncharted as erstwhile research has focalized around individual countries, say Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, etc. *Entanglements of the Maghreb: Cultural and Political Aspects of a Region in Motion* is a contribution to filling in this lacuna – as it were – in the study of the Maghreb. As the title entails, the book adopts ‘entanglements’ as a conceptual and analytical approach to the region. In so doing, it proffers a very riveting ‘interdisciplinary turn’ to the Maghreb as part of ‘marginalized epistemologies.’ In this context, the book probes into such topical issues as language, culture, identity, politics, history, economy and globalization. Here, the book stresses the scholarly need for the Maghreb as a region that has been the root cause of the recent changes in the Arab world, particularly after the 2011 uprisings.

As stated earlier, the book adopts ‘entanglements’ as a conceptual tool and approach to the Maghreb. This way, the region is investigated through a kaleidoscope of perspectives and disciplines. To the authors, the choice of this approach rests upon the fact that the Maghreb is a region of both interdependencies and massive interactions with Africa, Europe as well as the larger MENA region. These connections are a common trait to all the five Maghrebi countries. Of course, each country, as a political entity, has its own linguistic, cultural as well as historical policies. That said, the Maghreb remains a heterogeneous region *per se*, making it – according to the authors – one worth researching for different reasons. The first reason has to do with the little research conducted about the region, mainly when it comes to interdisciplinary and comparative studies. Second, there is lack of multilingual research in the sense that the Maghreb is oftentimes investigated in French studies, while Arabic studies dedicate much of its scholarly attention to Middle Eastern studies. Again, although the Maghreb is a multilingual area, the language of research has been monopolized as well. Third, the authors are keen on going beyond homogenizing conceptions of the Maghreb. More than this, they aim to ‘re-center’ this region which has been deemed of peripheral importance as both a territory and an area of research. The use of ‘entanglements’ serves thus this purpose.

This approach – ‘entanglements’ – draws on a combination of ‘transfer history’ and ‘entangled history,’ as tools of historiography, in studying the Maghreb. Indeed, the plural and heterogeneous nature of the region warrants a free-floating approach.

The present anthology is comprised of four parts with different chapters written in English or French. Titled ‘Conceptions of the Maghreb,’ the first section contains one chapter – ‘Le Maghreb en mouvement’ – wherein the authors, Karima Dirèche and Rachid Ouaiassa, outline different conceptions of the Maghreb. The latter is spotlighted as a region of different interdependencies and exchanges between different geographical, religious, cultural, economic and political spaces. Moreover, the Maghreb proffers connections with Europe, the rest of Africa, and the Middle East. This state of affairs produces different social, economic, political, and demographic transformations (and tensions), which contribute to both the dynamism and the complexity of the region. It is in this context that the authors allude to the fact that the Maghreb poses challenges as to its categorization owing to its plural and heterogeneous identities. In short, the Maghreb is a ‘floating signifier’ open to different interpretations and imaginaries. Multifaceted and rich as it is, the Maghreb needs to be re-centred, through the lens of entanglements, because it is marginalized. In doing so, Dirèche and Ouaiassa argue that the complex reality of the Maghreb must be taken into serious account when undertaking to study the region. This section closes with what the authors dub as ‘Le Maghreb des peuples.’ Here, it is foregrounded that today’s ‘revivals’ could pave the path for a ‘productive,’ ‘prosperous,’ ‘democratic,’ and ‘solidary’ Maghreb, albeit with the different inter-state problems.

The second section, ‘Entanglements of Mobility and Society,’ consists of four chapters. This section brings to sharper focus ‘mobility’ and ‘society’ as modes of entanglements. In this vein, the Maghreb is viewed as a site of mass mobility, both local and global. In problematizing this mobility, Hakim Abderrezak focuses on clandestine migration in literary and cinematic productions to reveal the Maghreb’s various entanglements. To the author, the Mediterranean, as site of interactions and tensions, is used in literature and film to communicate the migrants’ ‘leaving’ desires as well as their journeys. Because of different internal and external policies, the Maghreb’s entanglements have only worked as sources and causes of predicaments to migrants. The second chapter of this section highlights issues of national consciousness, nationalist movements, and post-independent nation-states. Because of diverse political factors and actors, the author maintains that there are many differences between the Maghrebi nation-states despite the fact that the countries share cultural, linguistic, historical and demographic affinities. The third chapter ‘Le hirak du Rif et la Diaspora en Europe,’ revolves around the diasporic activism of the hirak. In supporting the protestations from Europe, Christoph Schwarz argues that the Rif diaspora occupies an ‘in-between’ space wherein different cross-border practices are at work. While Schwarz emphasizes the Maghreb’s political entanglements with the European continent, Fadma Ait Mous provides soulful insights into social entanglements in the colonial Maghreb. In her chapter, ‘L’instruction des filles dans le Maghreb colonial,’ Ait Mous focuses on girls’ education in the postcolonial Maghreb as a serious concern for colonial authorities and local elites. She also offers

a critique of the use of the issue of women by both state feminists and social activists.

While the second section is mainly devoted to political entanglements in the Maghreb, the third section centers the debate around the Maghreb's cultural entanglements. As the title, 'Entanglements of Identities and Multilingualism,' demonstrates, emphasis is laid on language, multilingualism, and identity in the heterogeneous cultural Maghreb. In highlighting the Maghrebi cultural discourse, Claudia Grnemann refers to the use of Saint Augustine in colonial and postcolonial discourses. In this, she argues that Augustine, as an ancient historical and mythical figure, remains a significant symbol in the construction of memories and collective identities. This being the case, this figure, 'a mnemonic signifier,' testifies to the Maghrebi cultural entanglements. In the same regard, Samia Kassab-Charfi further stresses these cultural entanglements by presenting the issue of multilingualism in the Francophone Tunisian literature. This way, she discusses different relationships between languages, language attitudes and linguistic representations in sheer link with identity. As for Karima Laachir, she dwells on language ideologies in the multilingual postcolonial context, namely the Moroccan context. Having outlined the different complexities surrounding the issue of languages and languages' choice in literary productions, Laachir calls for a move beyond monolingual interpretations of these productions. This is because monolingual readings yield fragmented understandings as well as 'single language literary histories.' In deflecting these language ideologies and 'choices,' Laachir believes that a multilingual reading of literature should be adopted in order to communicate the multilingual scenes of postcolonial Morocco.

Entanglements of the Maghreb ends with a section on the economic, social and cultural fabric of the Maghreb. The emphasis is on issues of identity politics and globalized systems of economy. This section opens with a discussion of 'Berbersim' in the Maghreb. In her article, 'Le Printemps berbères: pour en finir avec un Maghreb arabe?', Karima Dirèche probes into historically marginalized groups in the Maghreb. She does so by looking at the 2011 Berber uprisings and other instances of resistance. Re-centering Berbersim aims at spotlighting the heterogeneity of the Maghreb in terms of ethnicities and languages, hence dismantling the idea of an exclusive Arab Maghreb. Janicke Stramer-Smith extends the discussion to investigate the different socioeconomic reasons that were behind the 2011 uprisings. In this context, Stramer-Smith underlines that the consequences of the protest movements in the Maghreb vary socially, economically and politically because the Maghreb populations mobilized differently. The author examines these differences with reference to power structures in the Maghreb. Certainly, these structures are informed by colonial experiences and postcolonial politics. The last chapter, 'Rent, Globalization, Dependency, and Impediments to Growth in the Maghreb,' explains the question of economy and globalized in the Maghreb. Here, Hartmut Elsenhans explores what she dubs 'the unsuccessful globalization in the Maghreb.' The reason lies in the failure of economic liberalization. Drawing comparisons with East Asian countries, Elsenhans refers to limited export-oriented industrialization in the Maghreb, making labor less empowered. This state of affairs brought about dependency on the ruling classes.

Entanglements of the Maghreb: Cultural and Political Aspects of a Region in Motion offers interdisciplinary perspectives on the social, linguistic, cultural, and economic entanglements of the Maghreb. This variety of perspectives makes the current anthology a highly innovative and pioneering one in the field of the Maghrebi studies, revealing both the complexity and the heterogeneity of the Maghrebi realities. In so doing, the anthology dismantles essentialist views of a region 'in motion.' More than this, it implicitly elucidates how previous research studies fall short of providing multiple understandings of the Maghreb in the sense that it is confined to particular studies departments. The fact that the anthology comprises articles in both English and French is revelatory- although it could have been outstanding if studies in other languages are included to reflect more the plural scenes of the Maghreb. Interestingly enough, contributors in this study are from different background, providing enriching and multiple perspectives. In the main, *Entanglements of the Maghreb* remains an effectual contribution to the field of Maghrebi studies. The rich and interesting bibliographies and endnotes each chapter offers will certainly help students and researchers alike to map and engage in further research about the region.

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