

ture as well as multiculturalism or *laïcité* immediately suspect.

The remaining chapters deal overwhelmingly with Morocco and Algeria. They detail the joining of “Pan-Arab” movements and both North African governments in a dialogue of legitimacy that explicitly leaves out the significance of Amazigh contributions to national identities. Much has been written about the explicitly ideological character of official historical narratives in North Africa – which usually leave out any role for minorities, Amazigh or Jewish. While all states tend to do something similar, monopoly of the media and access by most citizens only to Arabic language texts makes it much easier to provide particularly biased and narrow official narratives in the Near East. The account of recent changes in Moroccan and Algerian official narratives is one of the strengths of the book.

Discontents with the status quo including the domination of each country by particular elites initially took a leftist orientation with affinities to that of European Marxist groups. As these efforts failed by the 1980s, an Islamist alternative developed that the states initially attempted to coopt but this changed nothing in Morocco or Algeria with regard to the standing of Amazigh language or culture, because Islamist groups also felt driven to devalue Amazigh matters.

Since Amazigh movements explicitly opposed Pan-Arabism while Islamist movements identified Islam with Arabic, the latter opposed cultural and linguistic pluralism and put promotion of either European or Amazigh languages on a par as equally antithetical to Islam. Ironically, the arbitrary character of this position provided an opportunity for the Moroccan and Algerian governments to set themselves up both as protectors of minority rights, thereby gaining local and international legitimacy, and as the true custodians of North African identity.

While it is clear that key individuals, such as Mohamed Chafik and Ferhat Mehenni, exerted their intelligence and helped organize people to bring about these transformations, their partial success in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but not earlier, seems to be largely the result of what the Annales school of history would call a “conjuncture”: a time ripe for these particular ideas due to the confluence of any number of processes: geopolitical, personal ties of mentorship with the king (in Chafik’s case), the dynamics of radicalism in the Near East, and global movements in favor of multiculturalism.

Maddy-Weitzman devotes considerable time to the actual details of individual agency and policy shifts, the many figures participating in this dialogue and the subtleties of their positions, running from extremely dogmatic to a willingness to compromise, as well as to the declared and implicit reasons for these positions. Algeria’s initial more leftist or socialist government made only minor efforts to mollify the Islamist groups of the 1980s and 1990s and then later, under threat from electoral success by Islamist groups, broke entirely with them – something Morocco’s Sharifan government has not yet felt obliged to do. Remarkably, in both cases Amazigh movements had similar obstacles to recognition and achieved moderate

success in roughly the same time frame. This similarity in difference constitutes one of the most interesting features of Maddy-Weitzman’s book.

Rather than presenting a typical historical narrative in which causality is presented as understandable in hindsight, the book provides us a comparison between two countries that raises innumerable questions, not least whether the major differences between government type (monarchy vs republic) or economy disguise regimes that in the modern context are functionally identical, whether broad cultural movements have more impact on government or societal options than economics and whether individual agency has anything at all to do with these transformations.

The successes of Amazigh movements as well as the government backlash against them get equal coverage. The discussion of the Amazigh Dahir (1 March 2000) and the establishment of the “Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe” (IRCAM: 17 October 2001) in Morocco richly detail the former’s critique of social and government discrimination against Amazigh culture and the variously successful efforts of the latter to improve the situation. The nuanced discussion of Kabyle alienation (chap. 7) and *la Kabylie autonome* platform advocated by Mehenni is of comparable richness.

Resistance to this trend has varied from efforts (c. 2009) to disallow Berber names – as un-Moroccan in nature and so contrary to Morocco’s Law No. 37–99 – to government pressure on systems of transcription. While the vast majority of Amazigh activists in both Morocco and Algeria wished Amazigh languages to be written in the Latin alphabet in line with a long and impressive set of efforts by professional linguists and Amazigh concern to connect to modernity, Morocco imposed the Tifinagh alphabet while the Algerian government supported use of the Arabic alphabet. Mohamed Chafik and many others have explicitly declared both choices as retrograde attempts to keep Amazigh populations and movements in line. In Europe, Amazigh groups largely continue use of the Latin alphabet due to its phonetic advantages, due to the abundance of linguistic work on Berber languages already available in Latin script, and its use in the overwhelming majority of scientific research.

While “The Berber Identity Movement” has a 2011 publication date, it antedates in its writing the 2011 movements across North Africa and the Near East recently referred to as an Arab spring and ends by reflecting on the future of the Amazigh vision of pluralistic societies within authoritarian regimes.

Thomas K. Park

**Manca, Maria** : La poésie pour répondre au hasard. Une approche anthropologique des joutes poétiques de Sardaigne. Paris : CNRS Éditions, 2009. 344 pp., CD-ROM. ISBN 978-2-7351-1259-3. Prix : € 27.00

“La poésie pour répondre au hasard. Une approche anthropologique des joutes poétiques en Sardaigne”. Il faut prendre au sérieux le sous-titre du livre de Maria Manca. Car ce n’est pas uniquement en terme disciplinaire qu’il faut entendre l’adjectif *anthropologique*, mais dans son

sens philosophique. Le propos de l'auteur ne se résume pas à nous offrir la fine description ethnographique d'un genre de performance singulier – la *gara* – ou de le replacer consciencieusement dans son contexte culturel insulaire et méditerranéen, mais de démontrer en quoi la *gara*, ses acteurs (les poètes-chanteurs-improvisateurs), son public et ses contenus explicites et ésotériques participent de l'élaboration sociale d'une conception de l'homme et du monde. Sans jamais oublier cependant que la pratique du terrain, l'écoute, le partage et la patience lui ont seuls permis d'entrer peu à peu dans ce petit monde, l'auteure propose une interprétation philosophique, existentielle et culturelle qui la conduit à penser que la joute est un moment privilégié de construction, reproduction et mise à jour des valeurs collectives sardes.

On doit lire ce livre – et l'écriture de Maria Manca y contribue grandement – comme une immersion lente et sensible dans un univers étranger, tant la profondeur et l'enracinement de la pratique et des références mises en jeu par les poètes et leur public renvoient aux différentes strates de l'histoire culturelle de la Sardaigne, de l'Italie ou de l'Occident. Débutant par une description formelle de la performance, des participants, de son contexte et des règles du genre (chapitres I à IX), l'auteure présente et approfondit ensuite successivement les thèmes de l'improvisation, de la compétition, de la transmission, de la pédagogie, de la valeur collective, de la dimension philosophique et ludique (chapitres X à XVIII). Elle termine par trois chapitres essentiellement interprétatifs sur la joute comme représentation de la vie humaine, sur les valeurs sardes et sur la centralité du hasard (chapitres XIX à XXI). Cette analyse se fonde sur une pratique ethnographique patiente et de longue haleine, une immersion familiale, l'étude d'une centaine de textes de *garas* (1893–2001) sans ignorer non plus l'histoire de ce genre poétique.

La *gara* a lieu pendant les fêtes patronales estivales des villages de la partie septentrionale de l'île. Formellement, il s'agit d'un dialogue nocturne de trois heures de poésie improvisée, entre deux ou trois poètes, souvent d'anciens bergers, invités et payés par le comité des fêtes, installés sur une estrade et dont la voix est amplifiée par un micro. Ils sont accompagnés par un petit chœur masculin ponctuant la fin de certains vers. On distingue trois parties dans la joute, l'*esordiu*, les *temas* et la *moda*, qui correspondent respectivement à une introduction/présentation libre des poètes, puis à une discussion dialectique dont les thèmes sont tirés au hasard et enfin à des récits mythiques de la vie du saint patron. Chacune de ces parties possède ses propres canons poétiques, métriques et sémantiques. L'ensemble de la joute est chantée sur une mélodie propre à chacun des poètes qui porte l'improvisation poétique. La base de l'improvisation de la joute réside dans sa plus petite unité, le vers de onze syllabes, qui s'enchaîne et s'associe en séries de deux, de quatre ou huit vers, formant alors des strophes aux caractéristiques métriques et poétiques différentes selon la partie durant laquelle elles sont proférées.

La valeur d'un poète se mesure à la maîtrise de ce cadre formel d'improvisation mais également à la richesse des arguments, du vocabulaire et des métaphores

qu'il met en œuvre pendant une performance d'environ un millier de vers. Les poètes sont admirés et leur réputation dépasse le cadre de leur région natale. On rapporte leurs légendes avec passion et ils restent des personnages d'un abord difficile. Ils sont de véritables lettrés capables de dissenter sur n'importe quel sujet tiré au hasard, tout en faisant référence à la culture sarde, à l'actualité comme à l'histoire et à la mythologie. Ils sont en outre de bons hagiographes professant l'éloge de tous les saints des villages qui les invitent. Si les poètes se connaissent, se jugent et se défient lors des *gara*, Maria Manca montre également que le public est un élément central de la joute, à laquelle il prend part effectivement. Constitué par des auditeurs coutumiers, des amateurs avertis et des experts, les spectateurs jugent la performance, comparent les joueurs, mémorisent les *garas* du passé et font partie intégrante du système de communication que ce genre poétique constitue.

Le poète est souvent un berger, qui a appris à improviser en famille (puisque la poésie est une pratique quotidienne en Sardaigne) et dont le rôle principal, nous dit Maria Manca, réside dans sa capacité à figurer et actualiser les valeurs collectives sardes, tout en les vivant lui-même dans sa vie et ses joutes. Ainsi, le parcours de vie du poète semble se refléter dans la conduite et le développement de la *gara* improvisée, et la *gara* elle-même peut s'interpréter comme une image idéale de la vie humaine. Cependant, les valeurs ne sont pas énoncées littéralement dans la performance, mais on doit comprendre la *gara* comme un subtil système métaculturel. D'une part, ce sont les métaphores et les images poétiques qui donnent à comprendre, transmettent et actualisent la valeur morale des énoncés. D'autre part, la dimension dialogique de la joute, surtout la partie centrale des *temas*, crée une dynamique dialectique propre à représenter l'homme face à ses choix éthiques. Enfin, l'intervention du hasard, soit dans le tirage au sort des *temas* auxquels chaque poète s'identifie, soit dans la composition des vers improvisés, soit dans l'association des poètes sur scène, est mise en parallèle avec les aléas de la vie humaine et le combat pour prendre en main son destin.

Evidemment, Maria Manca ne faillit pas dans sa description et passe en revue l'ensemble des échelons poétiques qui mènent les improvisateurs et le public de l'évocation locale du village au destin de l'homme, en soulignant notamment comment la Sardaigne, ses bergers, son paysage et ses habitants sont façonnés dans les joutes comme un petit monde, un univers en soi, s'opposant au continent, mais devenant au final l'étalon de toute chose. La force de ce livre tient sans doute ainsi à la mise au jour d'un système poétique de fabrication de l'homme sarde, qui, comme tout système culturel efficace, produit également de l'humanité. A la lecture, on aurait parfois aimé sortir de la Sardaigne des *garas*, pour comprendre ce que d'autres poètes improvisateurs juste cités, comme les Peuls, partagent avec les Sardes, ou pour voir comment les joutes dialoguent elles-mêmes avec d'autres performances poétiques méditerranéennes, à peine évoquées elles-aussi. Mais ces échappées, qui semblent volontairement refusées par l'auteure, auraient sans doute eu le

mauvais travers de nous distraire de l'écoute des joueurs et de nous empêcher de comprendre de l'intérieur ce que les poètes sardes ont à (nous) dire. Cyril Isnart

**Manger, Leif:** *The Hadrami Diaspora. Community-Building on the Indian Ocean Rim.* New York: Berghahn Books, 2010. 201 pp. ISBN 978-1-84545-742-6. Price: £ 35.00

Yemen has frequently been in the news over the past decade, and for all the wrong reasons; this study of a diaspora originating from the Hadramawt region of southern Yemen should help to correct any misconceptions that all things that issue forth from Yemen are bad. That said, however, and as the author of this title makes clear, Hadramis are not quite Yemenis; and the biggest baddie of them all, Osama bin Laden, was of Hadrami origin. Nevertheless, this book is a welcome contribution to the literature on a diaspora that is substantial, influential, and not particularly well known. Hadramis have been present around the Indian Ocean rim for centuries, and this presence has led to the construction of a number of diasporic communities with varying but generally well-structured senses of cohesion. Leif Manger has the advantage of having carried out fieldwork in several of these locations and is able to provide an informed comparative perspective on the Hadrami diaspora, both generally and in particular.

After an introductory chapter, which briefly presents Hadramis and lays some theoretical groundwork, Manger discusses the Hadrami communities in four very different locations: Singapore, Hyderabad, Sudan, and the Horn of Africa. In each of these sites, Hadramis have faced different constraints and opportunities: in Singapore (and by extension nearby Southeast Asia) as fellow Muslims but ethnically different; in Hyderabad as Muslims in a largely Hindu environment; in Sudan as fellow Muslims and fellow Arabs; and in the Horn as Muslim Arabs in an East African Christian-Muslim frontier area with its attendant conflicts. Each of these contexts has prompted different strategies on the part of Hadramis, and if integration was simplest in Sudan, it is a tribute to their skills, both social and economic, that they have been equally successful in contemporary Singapore.

However, the various communities are not homogeneous. Chapter 6 describes how social stratification in the homeland has been carried into diaspora where the distinction between Sada, descendants of the Prophet, and the rest remains salient. Religious leaders were generally drawn from the Sada families, and their economic activities involved trade and commerce; the lower status non-Sada were more likely to be manual labourers. The two groups maintain their identities through marriage practices: Sada prefer to marry their own, often importing a spouse from the homeland, while non-Sada were more likely to marry among the host population, and were thus more likely to assimilate. Strategies of assimilation have waxed and waned with time: as Manger explains, there have clearly been moments when discretion was more appropriate, such as in the postcolonial periods of assertions of national identity; in contemporary Singapore, in con-

trast, assertions of Arab identity allow Hadramis to claim a role in interactions with the Arab and Islamic world.

The suggestion – discussed at some length – that Osama bin Laden, who was resident in Sudan in the 1990s, was part of a response to threats to the Hadrami diaspora, is not entirely convincing. Hadramis are by and large not well disposed towards Wahabi proselytism, either at home or in the diaspora, and Osama's entourage, as far as can be judged, was generally not of Hadrami origin. It is indicative that Al Qaida is not particularly active in Hadramawt, its centre of activities being located further west and particularly in Abyan. More widely, this is part of a suggestion that Hadramis are particularly active in anti-Western Islamic movements; but the evidence for this is slim. Hadramis provide religious leadership throughout the Indian Ocean region, and have done for centuries, largely because the dominant *madhhab* is Shafi'i (as it is in Hadramawt), and are, therefore, likely to be more prominent in religious spheres; expressions of Muslim identity and intercultural conflicts do not seem to be the particular preserve of Hadramis.

Perhaps a more fundamental problem with this book is its scope, which appears overambitious. All four ethnographic chapters devote a great deal of space to the general historical context in which the Hadrami diaspora receives little more than a passing mention; so, too, does the chapter on stratification and the Sada in the homeland. The author clearly has an extensive background knowledge, but lengthy histories of Ethiopia or the Ottomans detract from what should (judging by the title) be the focus of the book. As a result, the detailed ethnography is lacking. Thus, when the author states that "the biographies of these people look somewhat alike" (142) we really only have his word for it. Similarly, while there was a revealing discussion of the role of *waqf* and relations between moral and economic spheres of thought (141), a brief reference to Hadrami roles in financial services (78) was not explored; and while the links between Sudan and Hadramawt initiated by the British in the sphere of education were revealing, discussion of the Yemeni school in Addis Ababa could have been expanded (101). To be fair to the author, he acknowledges this problem of scope in the last chapter, which was itself a more theoretical discussion of globalisation, and Muslim responses, rather than a discussion of the Hadramis themselves.

There were a couple of minor factual errors (the protectorates were never part of the Aden colony); and in more than one passage the distinctions between Arab, Yemeni and Hadrami were not entirely clear, e.g., a reference to the luxury good trade being in the hands of "Arabs" (71): were they Hadramis? These distinctions (and the lack of them) are often important. Generally, however, the text is well written and readable and this book will be a useful text for migration studies scholars, dealing as it does with a multcentred diaspora – or perhaps "diasporas," since the author suggests that Hadramis constitute a collection of diasporic communities with little in common but a point of departure. The text's wide focus will be of particular value to readers who are not familiar with the societies in question.

Iain Walker