



Freedom for Morocco: a family tale

by Osire Glacier, Trenton, Red Sea Press, 2022, 174 pp., \$ 21.95 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-1569027875

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BOOK REVIEW

Freedom for Morocco: a family tale, by Osire Glacier, Trenton, Red Sea Press, 2022, 174 pp., \$ 21.95 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-1569027875

This book is a historical and autobiographical narrative. It sheds a harsh light on significant events of Morocco's political and social history while also detailing the journey of the author's family. The work covers a period from the start of the 20th century to the two first decades of King Mohammed VI's rule.

This work skilfully allies micro-history with memoir and large-scale history. It uses an innovative approach to describe the major political twists and turns that shaped the North African kingdom during the period under study. It explores the era's anti-colonial struggles, the neocolonial trap masked as 'formal independence', the rise of predatory capitalism, the construction of a democratic façade, the weakening of the national and secular opposition, the politics of 're-traditionalization' led by the ruling elite, and the emergence of Islamism. At the same time, the book follows the trajectory of an occasionally rebellious society absorbed by the imperatives of daily survival. This people succeeded at engraving into the collective memory, as a whole or sometimes in segments, memorable epics that were often written in its own blood. During the first decades of the twentieth century, Morocco violently shook off the colonial yoke several times, including during the resistance led by Abdelkrim al-Khattabi in the Rif (1921-1926). The Rif, a northern region of Morocco, opposed the central power, and presented itself as Morocco's sentinel. The Rif, jealous of its freedom, fiercely defended Morocco's borders against the Reconquista and contemporary colonialism. Subsequently, the Moroccan people, subservient to the Makhzen but never servile, launched new struggles after Independence, shaking off ever so slightly the crushing weight of a theoretically constitutional monarchy that is effectively an absolute one.

As mentioned earlier, this work also shares the memories of a family made up of two parents and their five daughters. The narrator shares her story confidently, guiding the reader as if taking them by the hand through the twists and turns, worries, and joys, that shaped the daily life of her household. Originally from the Rif in northern Morocco, the family moved to Agadir in the south. The narrative also documents the life of the neighbourhood, city, and region. Due to her father's political engagement, the author's family experienced the *Années de plomb* (Years of Lead) firsthand, immersed daily in an atmosphere tinged with fear, resilience, and love. Despite everything, the children, politicized from a young age, were skilfully protected, a veritable squaring of the circle.

The originality of this book lies in the fact that, from the first chapters, the reader has the impression of plunging into a novel evoking a Moroccan-style tale and revealing progressively the country's tumultuous history. Reading this narrative, and even rereading it, provides real pleasure. The text, relatively short but written in a creative style, captivates the reader by relating information and precise historical data. It transports the reader to a conquered Morocco, a Morocco colonized by the Spanish and the French and, after Independence, to a Morocco crushed by an absolute monarchy. The author has succeeded in accomplishing the delicate task of combining the pleasant with the useful, the personal with the collective, and the recent past with the vivid present. By combining in-depth analysis with subject clarity, Osire Glacier has triumphed where other academics have failed.

However, this narrative does not adopt an academic approach or methodology. Nor does it seek to engage in debates with peers specializing in the same historical period. That said, the book is informed by works and theoretical frameworks developed in the field of postcolonial history in Morocco, allowing the author to present the perspectives of the actors 'from below'. She undertakes a delicate, yet severe critique of key concepts and events conveyed by official history.

In short, this book presents an essential testimony for understanding the Rif's history and the history of contemporary Morocco. And in order, perhaps, to extend the work while also completing it, the author promises at the beginning of the book to later publish the Arabic primary sources that fuelled her work, including most notably the newspaper clippings and writings of her father.

To conclude this rapid critical note, the text constitutes a resource for students, teachers, and researchers interested in the social history and political life of Morocco and the Maghreb in the context of colonialism and post-colonialism. Its contents contribute significantly to debates on democracy and authoritarianism in the region. Beyond its academic utility, the work is also aimed at the general public of the Maghreb and of Maghrebi communities in Europe and North America. By adopting an accessible and informative approach, the author succeeds at rendering the history of the region accessible to a wide range of readers, promoting a better understanding of Morocco's and North Africa's social and political issues.

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