4. From one colonialism to another: imperialism and the Maghreb

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Introduction
This paper aims to demonstrate how theories of modern and ancient colonialism have become interwoven, and how this has affected the development of Roman archaeology in the independent countries of the Maghreb. Morocco (1956), Algeria (1963) and Tunisia (1957) gained their independence from France; in Algeria’s case following one of the bloodiest colonial wars (Horne 1977). There were also moments of strong resistance in Morocco (against France and Spain, Woolman 1969) and Tunisia (against the French, Abun-Nasr 1975, 282, 352-53). The Italians held Libya (or parts of it) from 1911 until 1942, when the country fell under a British Military Administration until independence was achieved in 1951 (Abun-Nasr 1975, 307-12, 377-92). Resistance to Italian colonization by the Libyans was concerted, the country being considered not fully pacified until 1932, and the British army received support from the Senussi Arabs of Cyrenaica during the desert war (Peniakoff 1950). There are inevitably ‘discrepant experiences’ of imperialism and colonialism in the modern context. Whilst the experience was far from positive for the indigenous people (though nationalist movements grew out of resistance), some of the old colons still peddle the myth about a lost golden age. It is inevitable in these circumstances that the modern experience should have an impact on the debate about the more remote past. The essential point that I wish to make in this paper is that all these different viewpoints must be understood in their modern as well as ancient contexts and that however wrong-headed some theories now appear we should not exclude them from debate. The overly negative prognosis on Rome by Maghrebi historians is a useful balance to the generally indulgent and uncritical European view of the benefits of Roman civilization. Each of these models for the study of Roman Africa transposes polarized views of recent history into the more distant past, and both tendencies in isolation represent serious threats to the future of Classical archaeology in the Maghreb. Although there have been important developments in the study of the Romanization of Africa in recent decades, these have yet to be fully assimilated into a new post-colonial perspective of Africa in the Roman Empire. Many scholars would no doubt claim that no one seriously accepts the more extreme theories of archaeologists and historians working in the colonial heyday, but it is equally clear that there has not been enough explicit rejection of these models. Nor has there been deconstruction of the theoretical positions underlying the consensus vision of Roman Africa. An understanding of the historiography
of Roman Africa is thus an essential starting point.3

*Colonial attitudes (i) the inheritors of Rome*

There are serious distortions in the view of Roman imperialism that was fostered by the self-justifying perspective of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century colonial antiquarians. Both French and Italians in North Africa presented themselves as the direct and natural inheritors of the Romans. This theme is a persistent one in the literature of the time and was used as a justification for the European presence in the region. This is particularly true of the Italians who came late onto the scene, fearful of French or German moves against the declining Turkish power in Libya. In the build-up to the 1911 invasion the Italian press was predominantly in favour of such an action and the arguments about Italy’s ‘legal-historical right - as a successor to the Roman Empire - to Libya’ were very much to the fore (Segrè 1974, 20–32). Giovanni Pascoli, the national poet, typified this attitude in describing Libya as a country made rich by Romans and ruined by the ‘inertia of the nomad’:

We were there already, we left signs that not even the Berbers, the Bedouins and the Turks could erase.

(Pascoli, quoted by Segrè 1974, 22)

The same basic sentiment is echoed in many other writers, stressing the desolation and emptiness of the modern landscape punctuated by Roman ruins at almost every step:

Su questa terra che riceve di nuovo ... la civiltà Italiana, su questa terra che non si può smuovere e scalfinie senza incontrare ad ogni passo una rovina o un ricordo del passato romano.

(Piccoli 1931, 194)

Tutto ciò significa che la regione era in passato molto abitanta e coltivata ... provato da ruder ... che di quando in quando s’incontrano attreverso la vasta zona, e che altro non sono che le tracce indelebili di Roma Imperiale.

(Coro 1928, 23)

Frappès sinon reconciliés par la ressemblance de notre ouevre civilatrice avec l’ouevre romaine ... dont surtout ils retrouvent à chaque pas des traces, ces hommes [les indigènes] ... se résignent à subir en vous les légataires de Rome.

(Boissière 1883, xv)

Lorsque les colonnes françaises s’avancèrent dans la vallé du Chélif, elle trouvèrent maintes traces de l’occupation romaine ... le sol portait partout l’empreinte ineffacable de nos devanciers.

(Yacono 1955, 175)

The use to which this claim to be the direct descendants of the Romans could be put is well illustrated by an anecdote concerning L. Renier, one of the first generation of French epigraphists to descend on Algeria. While copying a Latin text, he was approached by a local sheikh who enquired whether he could read the writing. Renier replied ‘Oui, je la comprends et je l’écris: car c’est la miene aussi. Regards ce sont nos lettres, c’est notre langue’, after which the sheikh turned to the crowd with him and (allegedly)
said, ‘Les Roumis sont vraiment les fils des Roumâns, et, lorsqu’ils ont pris ce pays, ils ont fait que reprendre le bien de leurs pères’ (quoted in Boissière 1883, xv-xvi).

Epigraphy has been the key tool employed in the setting of the academic agenda for Romano-African studies and, indeed, the importance of French North Africa in the development of Latin epigraphy as a discipline cannot be overemphasized (Dondin-Payre 1988, for a clear overview). The pacification of Algeria and the French take-over in Tunisia after 1881 opened up undreamed-of opportunities for French epigraphists from the École Française de Rome (hitherto greatly overshadowed by their compatriots at Athens). While Roman inscriptions on stone in Britain number c 2,500, the former French territories in the Maghreb have yielded over 60,000 Latin texts. On a single epigraphic mission in 1852-53, Renier reported on c 4,000 texts. In contrast to Italy, here the French had extraordinary freedom to organize the collection, preservation and publication of the inscriptions and built up a formidable power-base in international scholarship by training successive generations in the field. The greatest French scholars in Latin epigraphy all passed through North Africa. As Dondin-Payre notes (1988, 33), they were inspired not only ‘par la curiosité scientifique, mais aussi par le désir de prouver la supériorité de la culture européenne’. Until Maghrébi scholars themselves learned Latin, they were effectively locked out of the study of Roman Africa. By controlling the study of the written sources, the French were able to exacerbate the cultural distance from the Romans felt by the Berber and Arab populations.

If the European claim to be the rightful inheritors of North Africa was to carry weight it was necessary to disinherit the native peoples. An important corollary, then, to making a close identification between the modern imperial power and Rome was to reinforce the feeling of inferiority and separateness of the indigenous population. Drawn on the Orientalist tradition, a crude stereotype of the Berber populations thus emerged: they were barbarians, savages; incapable of living at peace or of organizing themselves at polity level. It was their lot to be raised up periodically by indulgent colonizing powers: Carthage, Rome, Vandals, Byzantium, Arabs, Ottomans:

la tragedia della storia del popolo berbero è rappresentata da questi due estremi: essi non sono mai riusciti a costituirsi a nazione e non hanno mai voluto subire il dominio dello stranieri.

(Piccoli 1931, 261)

The notion that the North Africans did not act independently of outside stimuli is strongly echoed in many writers:

La déconcertante sterilité de leur nature, incapable, lorsqu’elle n’est pas contrainte par une autorité extérieure, de dépasser les formes les plus primitives.

(Picard 1954, 37)

or

ces une terre de survivances ... son manque d’originalité est donc un titre particulier ... elle est un terrain privilégié pour l’analyse des influences.

(Benoit 1931, 3)
Following standard European Orientalist thinking (cf Said 1978), it was the mission of the colonizer to educate the Africans about their own cultural heritage:

La France a révélé pleinment l'Afrique à elle-même, en lui apportant le trésor se sa civilisation, héritière des civilisations antiques de la Méditerranéenne.

(Benoît 1931, 4)

The problem, of course, was that the history ‘revealed’ by French and Italians was bogus, particularly in the emphasis it laid on the respective roles of immigrant colonists and native Africans in the making of Roman Africa:

C'est par milliers que les familles romaines viennent dans le pays. Cependant l'agitation [des indigenes] continue, et c'est au milieu des insurrections ... l'épée d'une main et la charrue de l'autre, que Rome poursuit ... son travail colonial et civilisateur sur la terre d'Afrique.

(Guides 1906, 288)

The writing of this period spoke almost invariably of Romans and Berbers as opposites, and even in subsequent scholarship the terms Romano-African or Romano-Libyan have been rarely used. Similarly, much greater emphasis was placed on the study of immigrant groups than their actual numbers warranted. For example, as late as 1962, a book (albeit a slim one) appeared on the subject of *Les Gaulois en Afrique* and this was not a reference to cigarettes (Leglay 1962).

This double process of cultural annexation and alienation could also be achieved by visual narratives, a classic example being provided by the symbolism (‘lo speciale carattere ... il significato simbolico e augurale...’) of the Roman gallery in the museum installed by the Italians in the old Turkish castle in Tripoli. The approach staircase was dominated by a colossal statue of Roma, flanked by two large imperial dedicatory inscriptions. In the vestibule stood a magnificent representation of Victory, flanked in turn by inscriptions from the Roman fort at Bu Njem recording ‘la conquista romana ai limiti del deserto’ (Piccioli 1931, 109). In case the subtlety of this display was missed by anyone, the room next to the Roman gallery preserved the office of the first Italian governor of Libya as he had left it; the wall between the two rooms ‘non significasse separazione, ma intima unione spirituale fra il passato e il presente’ (Piccioli 1931, 110).

The motivation behind the great excavations of the Italian era was questioned by Mortimer Wheeler, who played a vital role in preserving the monuments when they fell to British jurisdiction during the war:

The Italians had cleared and partially restored considerable and imposing groups of buildings [at Cyrene, Lepcis Magna and Sabratha] ... in no small measure they were political whether the intentions were to advertise the splendour that had been Rome's and was now reincarnated in fascist Italy, or whether to lure tourists and to advertise Italian colonisation

(Wheeler 1955, 152)

The reconstructed ruins were thus placed on the same footing as the Fascist architecture of Tripoli and Benghazi: depending on your perspective they were either wonderful symbols of European civilization or they were
propagandist monuments of an alien and authoritarian government.

Nor did the situation change rapidly after independence as Anthony Thwaite’s memory of National Service in Libya during the 1950s makes clear. The maintenance of foreign military bases in Libya was mirrored by continuing Italian and British excavations at the Classical cities, while little effort seems to have been made to expunge the evidence of Italy’s colonial vision:

[Tripoli] still quite clearly bore the remains of the Fascist penchant ... for grandiose slogans, or - more interestingly - passages from d’Annunzio’s poems, full of references to Roman Eagles and Roman Legions. I realised later, during my 1965-67 stay in Libya, one reason why most Libyans take no interest in the Roman monuments: to them they are just another manifestation of Fascism - as Graziani never ceased to remind his troops, ‘Remember that you are Italians, Romans, and remember that your forebears were once in this country’.

(Thwaite 1969, 4)

The long term legacy of such visual narratives has had profound implications.

A further criticism of colonial analyses concerns the common use of ‘binary oppositions’ for rhetorical purposes: thus nomad and sedentarist, desert and sown, Sahara and Tell, African and Roman are recurrent themes in the historiography (Gsell 1933; Lawless 1972; Leschi 1942). The explicit dichotomies are questionable as generalizations, but were widely adopted as explanations of a supposed historical reality, such as nomadic raiding (Benabou 1980, 15-22; Février 1981, 40). Once again, this has the effect of segregating ‘us’ (the colonizers or latterly European scholars) from ‘them’ (the unruly African people) and ignores all possible gradations (social, spatial, and temporal) between, for instance, nomad and sedentarist.

**Colonial attitudes (ii) emulating Rome**

Current discussions on imperialism as an historical phenomenon show that there are fundamental differences in the intrinsic nature of modern European imperialism and that of ancient Rome. In the heyday of European imperialism the opposite tendency was dominant (Haverfield 1912; Hingley 1991) and many aspects of modern colonial government aped Roman titles or institutions (such as the use (whether formal or informal) of the title Proconsul for many governors (Douglas-Home 1978; Gann and Duignan 1978). The Roman Empire was used by the colonial powers not simply as a precedent and justification for their own activities, but it also served as a reference point for the measurement of achievement. Ostensibly the object of such comparisons was to enable the past to shed light on problems of the modern colonies, though commonly the prime function seems to have been to show the superiority of the modern experience over the ancient.

Ce serait un ... bien profitable sujet d’étude que de demander à l’histoire de l’Afrique romaine les leçons et l’expérience du peuple ... il ne serait pas inopportun sans doute de revoir ces romaines que nous proposons volontier, pour modeles ... en face de ces graves questions de politique coloniale, de ces difficiles problèmes de rapprochement de races, d’assimilation progressive, de
réconciliation des vaincus ... de nous les représenter organisant leur conquête africaine dans des conditions qui étaient non pas identiques ... mais assurément analogues.

(Boissière 1883, xvi-xvii)

Nous pouvons donc ... comparer notre occupation de l’Algérie et de la Tunisie à celle des mêmes provinces africaines par les romaines: comme eux, nous avons glorieusement conquis le pays, comme eux, nous avons assuré l’occupation, comme eux, nous essayons de le transformer à notre image et de gagner à la civilisation. ... La seule différence c’est que nous avons fait en 50 ans ce qu’ils n’avaient accompli en trois siècles.

(Cagnat 1913, 776-78)

Lo sforza dell’archeologo e quello del colono procedono insieme e si completano: le lezioni dell’esperienza antica oriente l’attività moderna.

(Piccioli 1931, 194)

The ‘otherness’ of North Africa (Arabic and Berber speaking, with its Islamic culture and its tribal and nomadic societies) was countered by the conscious association of the colonizer with the Roman presence. It was comforting for the French and Italian armies on campaign to the remote desert and mountain margins to find traces of the earlier penetration of the Roman legion into the same spaces. Victorious French generals were compared to legendary Roman commanders, defeated rebels with the great African leaders such as Jugurtha, Tacfarinas, Firmus, etc. French commemorative monuments imitated Roman ones and inscriptions recording the road-building and construction activity of the foreign legion were self-consciously copying the formulae of earlier Latin texts (Dondin-Payre 1991, 145-46). The French army was particularly active in the archaeological exploration of Algeria and Tunisia, partly through the activities of the special mapping units (the brigades topographiques), but also through the individual efforts of many soldiers and officers (for example, Baradez 1949). Their zeal for and admiration of the Roman past led many soldiers to give up their free time to carry out excavations and record inscriptions. In what I believe the most extraordinary case on record, Colonel Carbuccia, the French commander at Batna in central Algeria and himself an amateur epigraphist, had his soldiers restore the mausoleum of a prefect of the Legio III Augusta close to the Roman fortress at Lambaesis. The re-dedication of the tomb in 1849, complete with a new inscription paying homage to the Roman officer on behalf of the French foreign legion, was carried out with the entire garrison parading before the monument to the accompaniment of a military salute (Dondin-Payre 1991, 148-49).

There have been several unfortunate consequences of this too close association between the armies of occupation and the exploration of Roman settlement. First there has been an undoubted tendency to overemphasize the military nature of rural sites (‘fortin’, ‘construction militaire’ were used as blanket terms by some investigators) and ex-military personnel came to dominate many of the regional archaeological societies, ensuring the continued predominance of this perspective (Malarkey 1984). The Roman garrison could not have manned more than a small fraction of these sites (Février 1985, 87-93; Frémeaux 1984), but the military connotations
originally attached to them were perpetuated by the development of a body of theory about supposed soldier farmers and frontier militias colonizing the limes zone (Goodchild 1949, 1950, 1976; cf Mattingly 1995, 194-209). The second and far more damaging consequence in a post-colonial age of its too close association with the actual agents of modern imperialism, has been the stigma attached to Roman archaeology as a result (see below).

Another point of contact between past and present concerned the land. The perceived environmental degradation and dereliction of a region once wealthy required explanation and although climatic change had its advocates, blame was attached to a far greater extent to the indigenous people (the Berbers) or to later invaders (Vandals and Arabs). Acceptance of this interpretation of the environmental decline being due to human action led to goals then being set for the re-establishment of agriculture and prosperity through strong government, European immigration, technology and expertise. The need for French or Italian farmers to emulate the success of their supposed Roman forebears emerges strongly in much colonial writing (Février 1985; Frémeaux 1984). The management of water resources was critical and the colonial governments all took an interest in the evidence for Roman hydraulic systems (wells, cisterns, canals, aqueducts, wadi walls, etc). In Algeria and Tunisia major surveys were carried out of these ‘travaux hydrauliques’ (Gauckler 1897-1912; Gsell 1903), with a view to renovate cisterns, wells, and other features for modern use. A Latin inscription, placed on a Roman dam that was reconstructed in Libya in 1930, combines the practical with the symbolic aspects of archaeology in the service of colonialism:

Antiquum Romanorum aggerem/ aquis continentem vetustate collapsum/
coloniae Libycae praeses/ Petrus Badoglio/ ad agrorum fertilitatem/ maiore
mole restitui voluit/ Camillo Ferrario archiecto curante/ anno mcmxxx.

(Piccioli 1931, 194)

The evident success of farming in Roman Africa was not so easily emulated as it turned out, though this may in part be due to the fact that, as Hobson put it, ‘history devises reasons why the lessons of past empires do not apply to our own’ (1938, 221). The work on Roman hydraulic systems, for example, is notable more for its thick description than for its insights into their functioning (Shaw 1984). For all the bombastic auto-celebration of their similarity with Rome, it is clear that this was more a mechanism for the French and Italians to avoid some unpleasant realities about the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century situations than an objective intellectual inquiry; it enabled them to moderate these experiences by transposing similar problems back into the Roman period (Frémeaux 1984). In effect it was modern imperialism that shaped the interpretation of the past, rather than the other way around (Brunt 1965, 268). This was particularly true of the degree of military resistance encountered and the ugly and repressive measures the colonial regimes were drawn into taking as a result.

**Colonial attitudes (iii) understanding native resistance**

Within metropolitan France, French archaeologists and historians had no
difficulty in understanding the relationship between Roman conqueror and subjugated Gauls. Once the initial trauma of conquest was passed, life under Roman rule was viewed as overall a positive experience, bringing a higher degree of civilization to the region, but also allowing native talents to flourish within the Roman system. The concept of Gallo-Roman archaeology was embedded in scholarly thinking at an early stage, laying great stress on the Gallic contribution to Rome and its empire. Similar tendencies have underpinned Romano-British studies also (Freeman 1991, 1993; Hingley 1991). As we have already noted, however, the role of indigenous people in Roman Africa was relegated to one of being passive recipients of the fruits of civilization or they were characterized as anarchic barbarians, incapable of proper self-government or socio-economic advancement without outside (that is, European) intervention. The contrast between French scholarship on Roman Gaul and Roman Africa could not be more marked in this respect (as noted by inter alia, Dondin-Payre 1991, 149; Février 1986, 102). This fact more than anything should warn us of the severe distortions of a colonial discourse in which the subject population are allowed no voice.

Nor for that matter was the pacification and reconciliation of the Maghrebian peoples as finally resolved as the military authorities and scholars such as Cagnat kept claiming. The history of Algeria is punctuated by revolts and acts of armed resistance. In Italian-held Libya, the 1911-1932 rebellion resulted in well over 50% of the native population being killed, locked up in internment camps or exiled (Peniakoff 1950, 55-157, esp. 84). Such resistance, paralleled in its ferocity in Algeria, is unsurprising given the transparent inequalities and injustices of the colonial societies that were emerging. Stephane Gsell, one of the foremost archaeologists and scholars of Roman Algeria, had more enlightened views than most about what could be learned from the past and stressed the need for modern colonialism to follow Rome in equalizing the status of the indigenous population with that of immigrants. His views were largely unheeded because of the strength of the settler lobby in Algeria who resisted any moves to improve the position of the indigenous population (Lengrand 1991). 7

We have noted already how the colonial discourse strove to disinherit the North African peoples of their cultural history, by ascribing to immigrants all the positive achievements of Roman Africa and by portraying the Africans either as passive receptors of superior culture or as nomadic and lawless people incapable of self-government. The latter characteristic is a projection into the past of the difficulties of tribal control encountered by the French and the Italians, who comforted themselves with the thought that Rome had faced similar problems with little more success (Capot-Rey 1953; Gautier 1952; Gsell 1933; Guey 1939; Leschi 1942). Despite the fact that this can now be identified as having more to do with colonialist ideology than with history, it is still accepted by some scholars that Rome’s African provinces, especially the mountain and desert frontier zones, were subjected to frequent unprovoked and supposedly irrational attacks by Berber tribes (Rachet 1970). The debate is particularly controversial for the Mauretanian provinces, where opinion is now divided on the question of whether raiding was endemic or highly episodic (Euzennat 1984; Février 1981; Frezouls
As in Roman Britain, the question may be insoluble, since the extant source data are inadequate for a proper assessment of the seriousness of many attested moments of unrest. But an alternative line of enquiry can also be suggested, that of examining the mechanisms by which the state and indigenous tribal groups may have tried, on a unilateral or multilateral basis; to avoid warfare and for which the well-known altars of peace at Volubilis are the classic example (Frezouls 1980; Mattingly 1992; Shaw 1987).

Post-colonial attitudes (i) resistance and nationalism
Insofar as there has been a post-colonial backlash to these crude stereotypes it has focused on arguing that the attested revolts were not simply due to native belligerence, but part of concerted and unremitting military and cultural resistance to Rome, akin to the liberation and nationalist movements of the twentieth century. A key moment was the publication in 1970 of Abdullah Laroui’s *L’histoire du Maghreb*, a sustained and brilliant deconstruction of colonialist history of the region. His view of Punic and Roman dominance in the region recognized the potential links between past and present (1970, 32-65, ‘d’une colonialisation à l’autre’ - hence my title), but he also warned of the tendency for such rhetorical comparisons to become historical explanations (1970, 52). Above all he was concerned to demonstrate the way in which the history of the ancient Maghreb had been hijacked by European interests (1970, 25 ‘la science des antiquités maghrébines fut la science de l’administration colonial’). He also criticized the academic agenda that had been set by Romanists, with its emphasis on Roman military antiquities, on the monuments of towns and on aspects of elite culture (none of these receive more than cursory mention in his book). The potential of archaeology as a source for the history of ordinary Africans in antiquity was immense, he observed, but unexploited (1970, 41, 59). In reply to the colonialist vision of the glorious Roman interlude, he chose to emphasize the importance of resistance to Rome. This resistance was not to be interpreted as an inherent tendency to lawlessness or to a perverse rejection of the benefits of civilization, rather it was concerted and continuing opposition to alien conquest and culture. Astonishingly, Laroui’s book was omitted from the two main bibliographical listings on Roman Africa for 1970 (*Archéologie de l'Afrique Antique 1970. Bibliographie des ouvrages parus en 1970 et compléments des années antérieures. CNRS, Aix en Provence; Bibliographie Analytique de l’Afrique Antique IV 1970 [1973], Paris*), and is still rarely referenced by Roman historians and archaeologists, but its impact has been profound, especially on the approach taken by other Maghrebi historians who have developed the theme of nationalist resistance:

En pays berbère, l’histoire de la domination romaine est celle de cinq siècles de guerres acharnées pour la liberté et l’indépendance.
Pressurées par les fonctionnaires romaine, les tribus attendaient le moment propice pour s’insurger.

(Kaddache 1971, 111 and 189)

An essential point to note here though is that the dominant theme of the post-colonial model concerns the rationalization of what I believe to be a
suspect element of the colonial discourse. European scholars maintained the thesis that the Africans were rebellious, ungovernable troublemakers; the antithesis was to make them into freedom fighters and partisans, seeking to throw off the burden of alien rule (Benabou 1977, is a good example of the marketability of the idea). Both views, it must be admitted, seem to represent extremes and both perpetuate a crude ‘us and them’ stereotype of Roman Africa.

**Post-colonial attitudes (ii) civilization and imperialism**

The most sophisticated exponent of the resistance thesis has been Mohammed Benabou, whose revisionist scope extended also to the idea of cultural resistance (Benabou 1976). Essentially he took the view that in their religious preferences, in their maintenance of Punic and Libyan/African languages, even in their selection of names on acquisition of Roman citizenship, Romano-Africans chose to demonstrate their Africaness and thus their passive resistance to the alien power. The controversy that arose over this book was predictable, it being almost universally hailed as a masterpiece by Maghrebian scholars and condemned as a clever but distorting vision of Romanization by European scholars (see reviews and responses by *inter alia* Fentress 1982, 108-09; Whittaker 1978b). Two main tactics have been used to deflect the Benabou thesis: first, by arguing that what he calls resistance is simply the natural variation that we see in Romanization, in each province of the empire assimilating much local culture; second that the resistance theme is based on an anachronism.

> En ce qui concerne M. Benabou, l’opposition est plus apparente que réelle: il appelle résistances à la romanité ce que nous considérons plutôt comme les modalités de la romanité.

(Picard 1990, 12)

> ... la vision d’un protonationalisme maghrébin issu de la rencontre de Jugurtha et de l’analogie. Toute une partie de l’historiographie de l’ancienne Afrique a été ainsi oblitérée depuis plusieurs années par la projection dans son passé d’idées et d’événements récents sans rapport avec lui.

(Euzennat 1986, 576)

There is a splendid irony in these complaints about the historicity of the post-colonial perspective, while refusing implicitly to question the underlying basis of the orthodox view. Sadly after the flurry of reviews, there has been less willingness to engage in a proper discussion. The scope for disagreement was brilliantly demonstrated by a three-cornered debate (Benabou 1978; Leveau 1978; Thébert 1978) with Benabou insisting that Africans needed to be accorded an active role in their relations with Rome, Leveau supporting the view of native Africans resisting a nasty imperial power and Thébert the traditional view that Africans were willing participants in empire. A somewhat acerbic exchange between Shaw (1983) and Fentress (1983) on the impact of the army in central Numidia, also raised important questions about the extent to which regional development might depend on outsiders. Now comes the revelation from Morizot, working in two areas of the Aures mountains (the same region discussed by Shaw and Fentress) that the apparently less Romanized of the two (that with
no trace of veterans and far fewer Latin inscriptions) appears to have undergone the more
dramatic development, with bigger oileries, larger scale irrigation works and splendid mausolea (1991, 441). Similar spectacular
development in non-Romanized and highly marginal areas is attested in Tripolitania (Mattingly 1995, 144-53, 162-70).

Only through extending the debate about the meaning of Roman rule can we hope to start to interpret such phenomena. Benabou himself has published an impressive series of papers, modifying and broadening his approach (Benabou 1978a/b; 1980; 1981; 1982). Some European
community scholars clearly believe that the argument with Benabou is won, but in cutting it short and in refusing to examine the colonial discourse that still underlies much western scholarship on the Maghreb, even more extreme views will undoubtedly flourish:

L'Afrique berbère a été pour Rome une colonie d’exploitation ... Elle a signifié aussi épuisement du sol et déforestation. ... La grande masse des berbères a vu son niveau de vie diminué, son cadre tribal et communautaire disloqué. La prospérité romaine n'était le fait que d'une minorité; la masse berbère n'a connu que l'exploitation, le dur labeur et la miseure.

(Kaddache 1971, 140)

Les luttes des berbères contre les impérialismes antiques ... Les accaparements de l'Empire romain sur les terres de plaine et la réduction de nombreuses populations en esclavage, pour cultiver les grandes domaines, suscitent de grands révoltes des royaumes berbères.

(Lacoste and Lacoste 1991, 38)

There are clearly dangers here that we shall replace one distorted view of ancient colonialism with another equally doubtful formulation. In much the same way the reception of Martin Bernal's Black Athena on American college campuses generated passionate debate and extraordinary revisions to popular history (1987/1991). 8

Archaeology and history in the post-colonial age

The progress of scholarship has caused the progressive abandonment or amelioration of many bigoted attitudes. Prosopographical work on the vast corpus of inscriptions, especially the study of personal names, has established conclusively that the vast bulk of the Roman population (both civil and in the army) was in fact of African origin (Lassère 1977; Le Bohec 1989a, 1989b; M’Charek 1986). Studies of ancient religion, likewise, have demonstrated that the hugely popular Saturn Cult was a continuation of pre-Roman Baal-Hammon (Leglay 1961/1966; 1966) and that numerous other Punic and African deities enjoyed a long afterlife in Roman guises (Benabou 1986; Brouquier-Reddé 1992a, 1992b; Leglay 1975). Private and public architecture also reveal clearcut Punic influences continuing under Rome (Horn and Ruger 1979; Pensabene 1990). 9 Even the hydraulic technology that was for long held to be a Roman introduction can now be seen as belonging in part at least to a far older indigenous tradition (Shaw 1984). Studies of Romanization have moved on considerably (one may trace the development in such works as Barton 1972; Benabou 1982; 1986; Février 1989/1990; Garnsey 1978; Kotula 1976; Lamirande 1976; Pflaum

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Attention has started to focus on the pattern of rural settlement and its development over time, and on the economic success of the African provinces as exporters to Mediterranean markets (Hitchner 1988; Hitchner et al 1990; Leveau 1984; Leveau et al 1993; Mattingly 1988a, 1988b). The Garamantian tribe of the Libyan Sahara has been the subject of intensive investigation, overturning many assumptions about a supposedly nomadic tribe. The Garamantes are now known to have had a proto-urban lifestyle, a mixed farming economy (including cereal, vine and date cultivation in the first half of the first millennium BC), social stratification and developed material culture (Daniels 1970; 1989). Indeed an altogether more sympathetic vision of pastoralists in North Africa has started to emerge (Shaw 1982, 1983a; Trousset 1980a, 1980b, 1982).

Some of the materials are to hand, therefore, for a radical reappraisal of the history and archaeology of Roman Africa. That the pace of change in conceptual thinking has not been quicker or more profound in its impact is thus disappointing. As we have seen, the post-colonial perspective has polarized the subject and restricted debate to a narrow range of issues. There has also been little formal repudiation of previous views, many studies continuing to refer to Romans when Romano-Africans are meant. A partial evolution of sensibilities can be traced in the changing emphasis of British work at the Libyan pre-desert site of Ghirza in the 1950s: from its initial depiction as a frontier settlement of soldier-farmers (‘home-guard’) to the recognition that it was Romano-Libyan farming centre (Brogan 1955; Brogan and Smith 1957, 1984). Similarly, two conferences a decade apart sum up the shift: Cirenee la Grecia (Stucchi 1976), Cirenee i Libyci (Stucchi and Luni 1987). But if anyone doubts that the colonial discourse continues, then consider the following passage which concludes what appears to be a reasonably balanced summary of what Romanization may have meant in Africa:

It would be pleasant to be able to report, too, that Romanization took place without confrontation, but the fact is that the Berbers, however self-denying and enduring they were, were backward and uninnovative, with no gift for politics or urbanization. They also proved themselves, on occasion, faithless, murderous and (in Jugurtha’s case) manic-depressive. To idealize them is to do them a disservice, for to present a falsified picture of a people’s past is to betray them. Historical truth, however harsh and cruel, never fails to give to those who know how to receive it - who can grasp the past with human understanding - the consistent clarity of vision that alone makes it possible to plan for the future.

(Mackendrick 1980, 330)

Overall, the recent history of Roman archaeology in North Africa has been one of mixed fortunes. Prehistoric (eg Camps 1987; Horn and Ruger 1979), Punic (eg Fantar 1993) and Islamic archaeology (Golvin 1970; Mohamedi et al 1991) have all benefited by the change in intellectual climate. In contrast, and for a variety of reasons, Roman archaeology seems struck in a groove. In the transitional phases, foreign archaeologists from the ex-colonial powers continued to play an important role in dictating policy in the Antiquities Services. 10 Subsequently, the archaeological inheritance of the
colonial age has constrained their actions. The conservation problems and/or the tourist potential of the colonial period excavations of Roman city sites, in particular, continue to dictate spending patterns. New excavations of Roman sites by outsiders are generally not encouraged, though there have been some spectacular exceptions (notably the huge UNESCO Save Carthage project), and some of the oldest established French and Italian teams have continued to work at sites such as Bulla Regia, Mactar, and Cyrene. This of course has the effect of leaving the shape of the subject much as it was in the colonial age, with the bulk of the excavated sites comprising towns, villas, and forts. The most prestigious academic qualifications for Antiquities Department staff are still considered to be higher degrees at European universities and, through the influence of research supervisors on the selection of thesis topics, this has also tended to perpetuate the academic agenda of the earlier era. The number of Maghrebian experts in well-established fields such as Latin or Greek epigraphy (e.g. Ben Abdullah 1986; Ben Abdullah and Ladjimi Sebaï 1983; Beschouw 1974; Mohamed and Reynolds 1994), church archaeology (e.g. Bejaoui 1988), architecture (e.g. Ferchiou 1989), Roman mosaics (e.g. Ben Abed 1987; Khanoussi 1988; Mahjub 1988), Roman cities (e.g. Bouchenaki 1988; Mahjoubi 1978; Slim 1983), the army (e.g. Benseddik 1982; Khanoussi 1991) has risen dramatically in recent years, but sadly there are far fewer with expertise in less traditional aspects such as rural archaeology or the ancient economy (though note Ben Baaziz 1991). As such, it does not appear that Roman archaeology is being refocused on a new agenda.

However, by keeping within this very traditionalist framework of Classical archaeology, the Roman archaeologists are out of line with the views of the Maghrebi historians already quoted and have exposed themselves to attacks on the value of their work to the modern state. A good example concerns the UNESCO Libyan Valleys project which was launched in 1979 following a public reprimand for his Antiquities Department by Colonel Ghaddafi. He criticized the archaeologists for concentrating on the Classical cities and argued that they should instead be using their resources to further Islamic archaeology or to carry out work relevant to the modern needs of Libya. In particular, he suggested that a new investigation be carried out on the ancient farming systems of the Libyan pre-desert, in order that the farming technology be better understood and that the possibility of reintroducing farming to these regions be explored (Jones and Barker 1980).

The existence of a plurality of culture in ancient Africa (Berber/Libyan/African/Moorish, Roman, Greek/Hellenistic, Punic/Phoenician, etc) has long been recognized (Millar 1968), though the independent states of the Maghreb have tended to be nervous of and unsympathetic towards such diversity in their attempts to unite contemporary society. The recent trends towards Islamic fundamentalism, towards emphasising Arab culture and towards the active repression of Berber culture in some regions have left Maghrebian archaeologists even more exposed in their work on pre-Islamic cultures (Lacoste and Lacoste 1991, 131-34). In present-day Algeria, the civil war between the government and Islamic fundamentalist groups makes archaeological fieldwork impossible to carry out, while at least one
archaeologist has been dismissed from post and publications impounded in warehouses as government policy vacillates between conciliation of Islamic groups at large and repression of its critics, armed or otherwise. Furthermore, the collapse of tourism, as a result of the fundamentalist offensive, weakens the case for the custodial role of the major Roman sites absorbing a large part of the budget. Algeria is an extreme and alarming case, but it illustrates the real dangers of allowing the theoretical basis of Roman Africa to drift in a post-colonial limbo. Unless Roman Africa is adopted (or re-inherited) by North Africans as part of their own history and culture, it seems to me that there is little hope for the long-term health of the subject.

The languages of scholarship, and thus the language of debate, at first sight also suggest continuing academic inequalities of the post-colonial world. A classic case is a conference on Roman Africa held in Senegal in the 1970s, where the organizing committee decreed that Latin should be the lingua franca, thereby excluding all but a handful of African scholars and making the published proceedings a very exclusive item indeed (Africa et Roma 1979). Amongst Maghrebian Roman specialists publication in Arabic remains rare. Most Tunisians, Algerians, and Moroccans publish in French, and Libyans in Italian or English. However, in the literary field at least, it is now recognized that the role of bilingual colonial subjects (who the French called optimistically ‘les evolus’) was vital in the subversion of the colonial discourse and in the discovery of a post-colonial perspective (Mehrez 1992). There are potentially interesting sub-texts here, as comparison with the ambiguous position of African writers in the Roman period may suggest (Metty 1983). In the long term, though, what is needed is both discussion of the new perspectives in the languages of international scholarship (English, French, Italian, German, Spanish) but also dissemination of those ideas to a wider Arabic reading audience. Yet in the short term, publication of any sort is a critical problem to overcome, with many excavations of both colonial and post-colonial date still unpublished and the major journals of the Antiquities Services appearing with ever increasing time-lags on their nominal cover dates.

New perspectives?
This is not intended to be an entirely gloomy prognosis. But it seems to me that there are three fundamental conditions to be met if Roman archaeology is to regain some of the momentum lost. First, it is essential that the colonial discourse is more thoroughly deconstructed and repudiated by European scholars. The Roman phase needs to be re-established as an important part of the cultural heritage of the Maghreb, not simply as a leitmotif for nationalist resistance. Second, more thought should be given to the creation of a new agenda for Classical archaeology in the region, one that will serve the needs of tourism where that is desired, but that will also address concerns of more relevance to the history and current aspirations of the Maghreb. Some new methodological or theoretical ideas will not go amiss (see, for example, Alcock 1993; Dyson 1993; Millett 1990). More work is urgently needed on tribal settlements (though see Ferchiou 1990) and on the exploration of African and Punic influences in Roman-period Africa.
Recently published lists of all attested Punic and Libyan names and work on Punic and Libyan inscriptions mark fundamental advances in this context (Camps 1993; Vattioni 1979/1980). The study of rural settlement, farming technology, crop and husbandry regimes and economy can also be highlighted as areas which will produce more positive images of Africa in the Roman period. Roman-period olive oil factories (oileries), for instance, would be worthy monuments and symbols of national heritage in all the North African countries, but we lack a modern excavation of a large-scale example.

This brings me to the third and most vital point; changes in scholarship will only create the right circumstances for post-colonial perspectives to come to the fore; in the end it is the degree to which the ordinary people of the Maghrebian countries overcome their prejudices against Romans as foreign oppressors that will determine whether Romano-Africans are welcome in the national consciousness.

When I first visited Leptis Magna in 1979, the site was virtually deserted, one could wander around it for hours hardly meeting anyone apart from the occasional east European or Asian construction worker or oil industry employee. The Libyans, apart from those who worked there, seemed to have turned their backs on the site and the Roman past. This despite the fact that the first North African emperor, Septimius Severus, was born there into a Libyphoenician family. He was educated tri-lingually in Latin, Greek, and Punic, the latter of which remained the local vernacular. There is a huge volume of epigraphic evidence from the town, its hinterland and the desert beyond attesting to the local predominance of Libyphoenicians and Libyans (Mattingly 1987; 1995). For all the false claims of the Italians in the early part of this century, there is very little evidence for state sponsored colonization or immigration. There were clearly moments of resistance, notably in the late first century BC and early first century AD, but thereafter the region as a whole seems to have participated with great success in the Roman Empire, selling its olive oil on a Mediterranean market, enriching its towns and transforming the countryside. In its heyday, Tripolitania sent numerous men to the Senate at Rome, or for imperial service as equestrians. All of these factors culminated in the extraordinary success of Septimius Severus. This ought to be one of the proudest moments in Libyan history, when a Romanized Libyan was dictating to the rest of the world (Birley 1988).

Recent visits suggest that there is hope for the future in this regard. School parties of Libyan children have started to reappear in force at Leptis Magna. There are also magnificent new museums at Tripoli and Leptis which give suitable emphasis and context for the Roman phase within the overall history of Libya. Outside the new museum at Leptis stands a large statue of Septimius Severus, hailed as the African emperor. The vestibule beyond is dominated by a vast photograph of Libya’s current leader, arms raised in acclamation or embrace. Visual narratives are still very much alive in the post-colonial age (though one should note that the design team was Italian!). This does not mean, of course, that Roman period archaeology is being prioritized in any way, but that it is no longer ‘out in the cold’ is encouraging.
My final thought returns to the desirability of arriving at a single post-colonial perspective on Roman Africa. Here again the contrast with traditional Gallo-Roman and Romano-British archaeology comes to mind. Could we in Britain not benefit from a little of the scepticism of the North Africans when we consider the impact of Roman conquest and rule on British and Celtic tribal societies? Roman imperialism involved both the iron fist and the velvet glove and provoked varying responses, including compliance, co-operation, resistance, and rebellion. Discrepant experiences of Roman imperialism there certainly were, then, whether synchronous or successive, and the situation was neither static nor uniform. Too often, perhaps, scholarship creates dichotomies where there are in fact a range of possible actions, reactions and perceptions in between the extremes of the argument. By debating divergent perceptions of Roman imperialism we may enrich our vision of its workings in a specific time or place. Let us not then simply discard existing flawed models for another monolithic vision of what Roman Africa was about. The achievements, ambiguities, and defects of ancient imperialism can be teased out most effectively through the interrogation of a series of contrasting perspectives.

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Footnotes
1 On the other hand, Peniakoff (1950) found the southern Tunisian tribes far more sympathetic to the Axis powers because the war offered an opportunity to them for resistance to France.

2 On the notion of discrepant experiences, see Said 1992, 35-50.

3 See Shaw 1980 for a perceptive summary, and Mattingly and Hitchner 1995, especially pp 165-76, for an overview of the state of the subject.

4 Laroui 1970, 53-5 gives many further examples.

5 The use of such oppositions and prejudicial generalizations is one of the most insidious traits of Orientalism: see Said 1978.

6 On modern imperialism, see inter alia, Curtin 1971; Etherington 1984; Hobson 1938; Lichtheim 1971; Reynolds 1981; Wesson 1967. On Roman imperialism there is much good sense in Brunt 1990; see also Hanson 1994.

7 Abun-Nasr 1975, 316-22 describes the defeat by the settler lobby of legislation aiming to give equal rights and status to at least some members of the Algerian elite.
I witnessed the campus debate at first hand in 1991.

See Barresi 1991, 1993 on the continued use of the Punic cubit in public building projects in Roman Africa.

This was notably the case in Libya, where the Controllers of the Department remained British or Italian for over fifteen years after Independence: see Goodchild 1976.

See Picard 1985 for the colonial legacy in Tunisia.

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