

**Historiography, Post-Colonial
Theory, and Roman North Africa:
A study of the impact of cultural
beliefs on historical knowledge**

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A thesis presented in partial fulfillment
of requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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**HISTORIOGRAPHY, POST-COLONIAL THEORY, AND ROMAN NORTH AFRICA:
A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL BELIEFS ON HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE**

BY

ROBERT ANNANDALE

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree**

of

MASTER OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

Starting from the premise that the historical treatment of a given topic changes over time, this thesis carries out an historiographical examination of writings on the Roman occupation of North Africa. The fact that the Maghreb was colonized by European powers in both ancient and modern times makes it a particularly fruitful area of study for a topic of this kind. The first half of the thesis is a literature review of two centuries of historical writing on Roman North Africa as well as a tracing of the concept of Romanization which, though developed nearly 100 years ago, remains the dominant framework for the study of Roman provinces. After this, a chapter is devoted to debates concerning the possibility of knowing the past as it actually occurred and to post-colonial theory. These ideas are then applied to urbanization, which has traditionally been treated as an integral part of Romanization. This analysis reveals that, although historical works have become less overtly political, biases remain. The Eurocentric discourse of development is singled out as one which continues to inform most writings on Roman Africa including those produced by non-European scholars. It is argued that, even if such biases can never fully disappear, recognition of their presence and impact is necessary if historical knowledge is to move forward. Finally, some suggestions are made concerning future directions for studies of societies within the Roman Empire.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The focus of the present thesis is on the ways in which dominant cultural values influence the writing of history. Scholars are clearly influenced by their environment, that is to say, by the cultural and political backdrop against which they work. However much one might try to be independent of such forces, they exert an undeniable influence. This is especially true of the human sciences. To give an example with a very contemporary flavour, one could mention the treatment given in historical writings to the Serbs. This is a group that has been demonized to a remarkable extent by the Western media in the last decade. Such was not always the case, however, as R.G.D. Laffan's 1917 work The Serbs: The Guardians of the Gate illustrates. As the title suggests, this particular scholar portrays the Serbs in an altogether more positive light. He speaks of "the services which the Serbs have always done their best to render to Christendom" and refers to the people of that nation as "our heroic but little-known allies".¹ Obviously this sort of panegyric is not likely to be found in any recent works on the same subject. Most historians today would try not to use such value-laden language and would cringe at such an overtly political position. On the other hand, the point could be made that certain current trends in historical writing (most notably,

¹ Laffan (1989), p.4

for our purposes, post-colonial theory) are no less political. What does seem clear is that the same subject is often treated quite differently over time even in fields which attempt to be objective.

Given this apparent fact, it is perhaps not surprising that A. Munslow, in an examination of Michel Foucault's theory of history, claims that "[h]istory is the record not of what actually happened, but of what historians tell us happened after they have organized the data according to their own version of social reality."² This statement, though controversial and needing refinement, is the starting point for the present study. That is to say, my goal is not so much to examine the nature and extent of the Romanization of North Africa as it actually occurred or if in fact it can be said to have happened at all. Rather, I am interested in how the tone of the debate over these issues has changed over time. The issue, in a nutshell, is the extent to which, and the ways in which, the political and cultural climate of the times has had an impact on historical writing concerning Roman North Africa over the last two centuries. There has been considerable research on these kinds of concerns with regards to the historical treatment of people, in all parts of the globe, who were subjugated during the period of modern European imperialism.³ There has been less attention given, however, to the impact that modern events have had on the treatment of ancient societies. Moreover, little work has been

² Munslow (1997), p.127

done on examining the ways in which current hegemonic cultural beliefs affect our examination of these same societies.

The French gained their first foothold in North Africa by occupying Algiers in 1830. Over the next half-century, they completed the task of subjugating the remainder of what is today Algeria. Subsequently, they invaded Tunisia in 1881 and established a protectorate in 1883. Morocco became a French protectorate (with part of the north falling under Spanish control) in 1912. Libya was conquered by the Italians in 1911. The European powers maintained control of these colonies until, in the years following WWII, independence was gained by the local people after considerable bloodshed, particularly in the case of Algeria where over 1 million people died in the fight for liberation.

These four nations (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya) make up the Maghreb and will be the focus of the present study. Over the course of the Roman occupation, this area was divided up into four major regions: *Africa Proconsularis*, *Numidia*, *Mauretania Caesariensis*, and *Mauretania Tingitana*.⁴ In the time of Diocletian, the province of *Tripolitania* was carved out of the eastern portion of *Africa Proconsularis*.⁵ It should be noted that these ancient divisions bear little relation to the modern borders. Moreover, the region in question was by no means a homogeneous cultural block either before or during the time of

³ Most notably in the works of Edward Said.

⁴ Thompson (1969), p.132

⁵ Mattingly (1995), p.xiii

the Roman occupation. Nor is it so today. The differences within the Maghreb, ancient and modern, are readily acknowledged but are not, I contend, central to my argument. What is central is the fact that this part of the world was conquered by European powers in both ancient and modern times. It was during the period of modern imperialism that studies of Roman North Africa and Roman studies in general, with their reliance on archaeology and epigraphy, really took shape. This period also saw the development of the concept of Romanization, which was originally applied to Roman Britain but subsequently extended to the African provinces. Furthermore, the Maghreb today is a part of the so-called developing world, a fact which makes it fertile ground for a developmental bias in which urban societies along with their attendant technological and economic developments are valued over alternative forms of civilization. I believe that this is a bias which is pervasive in the West today. Given these factors, it would seem appropriate for a study of the kind proposed here to be undertaken.

In the first chapter, I shall conduct a literature review of the major works on Romanization in an attempt to trace the origins and evolution of this concept, which came to be the dominant paradigm for discussions of relations between Roman and indigenous populations in the provinces. First of all, I discuss two problematic terms, imperialism and colonialism, in order to establish whether or not they can be applied meaningfully to the Roman period. After that, we turn our attention to the work of

Francis Haverfield who was the originator of the concept of Romanization. T.R.S. Broughton, the first scholar to discuss Romanization in an African context, and Martin Millett, the most recent major proponent of the Romanization orthodoxy, will also be discussed. The traditional view went largely unchallenged for several decades and still has many supporters. In the last thirty years, however, Romanization has come under increasing attack with some scholars claiming that a more nuanced version of the concept is needed and others dismissing it as a vestige of imperialistic thought, which has outlived its usefulness as a tool of scholarly analysis. We then examine the writings of Maghrebi scholars such as Abdallah Laroui and Marcel Bénabou who are united in calling for more attention to be paid to the role played by Africans in their own history but differ on other points. Laroui, for example, questions the ability of disciplines developed in the West to be applied in a useful way to non-Western societies. Bénabou, on the other hand, seems to accept Romanization as a concept but believes that the idea of native resistance is an equally important one. Finally, we turn to European and North American scholars such as Jane Webster, David Mattingly and Richard Hingley who have been influenced by post-colonial theory. Again, while they all have criticisms of Romanization as it has traditionally been studied, their prescriptions vary.

In Chapter 2, we undertake a second literature review, this time concerning historical writings on Roman North Africa. In

Chapter 1, the focus was on the historical development of the idea of Romanization regardless of the area of the Roman Empire under examination. Some of the scholars, such as Broughton and Bénabou, are concerned with North Africa but the majority, including Haverfield and Hingley, discuss other regions (most often, Britain). In this chapter, the primary concern is the geographical region examined regardless of whether or not Romanization was of major concern to the author. By conducting such a review, it is hoped that we can discover the attitudes of authors towards the ancient people, whether Roman or indigenous, of the area. We discover that for nearly 150 years following the fall of Algiers, European scholars, mostly French, had a near-monopoly on the historical analysis of Roman Africa. The intertwining of scholarship and official political aims is examined. Establishing a link between Rome and France became an important part of the colonial undertaking and had implications for both the direction of research and the interpretation of data. There were some dissident French voices, most notably Charles-André Julien, who attempted to give their work less of a Eurocentric bias, but they were few and far between. The significant impact that this appropriation of Roman studies towards political ends had and, Mattingly argues, continues to have, is then discussed. At this point, we again turn our attention to Laroui and Bénabou but this time in a broader context not limited exclusively to Romanization. Mahfoud Kaddache, who holds a more radical view than his aforementioned

compatriots, is also discussed. Finally, recent developments from both sides of the Mediterranean are examined.

Chapter 3 is an examination of theory relevant to questions of historical knowledge. We begin with a discussion of the questions raised above concerning the extent to which accurate knowledge about the past can be obtained, if at all. The origins and developments of the debate between relativists and practical realists are examined. After this, there follows a discussion of post-colonial theory. Both the contributions to our field of scholars such as Frantz Fanon, Cheikh Anta Diop, and Edward Said and some of the criticisms leveled at post-colonial thought are treated.

Chapter 4 is a study of the historiography of Roman urbanization. Given that this phenomenon is generally treated as an integral part of Romanization and is a key component of developmental thought, it is a logical subject for such a study. The chapter begins with a look at the current state of urban studies as they pertain to Roman Africa. Then I trace the evolution of these studies from the colonial period until the present with attention paid to controversies which have arisen in the area. The main focus is on applying the theory of Chapter 3 to the relevant literature. The chapter ends with a criticism of biases in current writings. Finally, in the conclusion, some suggestions are made for future directions for the study of Roman North Africa.

CHAPTER 2

ROMANIZATION: THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF A CONCEPT

Romanization, the idea that over time the culture and institutions of the provinces came to resemble those of their conquerors, has been the dominant concept in the study of interactions between the Romans and the inhabitants of their empire for most of the 20th Century. In fact, until fairly recently, this model of acculturation went almost unchallenged. The criticisms which have been brought forth in recent years have come primarily from two corners. First of all, beginning in the 1970s, scholars from regions (specifically, the Maghreb) which had recently gained their independence from the 19th-20th Century European powers began to retell the history of Roman colonialism from a point of view which was far more concerned with, and favourable to, the indigenous populations than had previously been the custom. And secondly, in the last decade or so, European and North American scholars have become increasingly interested in applying post-colonial theory to the study of the Roman Empire. For the purposes of the present study, it is important to begin by tracing the origins and evolution of the idea of Romanization before moving on to some of the recent criticisms which have been leveled at it. An exhaustive study of writings on the subject will not be possible but we will discuss the major contributions to the field. It should also be noted that much of the material treated does not pertain directly to

Roman North Africa as the majority of scholarship on Romanization deals with Britain. Nevertheless, this literature has created the framework for the dominant model for the study of Roman colonialism in general.

To begin with, it may be necessary to define some terms. Colonialism and imperialism are two rather problematic terms which can easily be confused. There seems to be a scholarly consensus that the two concepts are not interchangeable. There is far less agreement, however, on what the essential differences are. H. Bernstein, T. Hewitt, and A. Thomas define the terms as follows:

Whereas colonialism means direct rule of a people by a foreign state, imperialism refers to a general system of domination by a state (or states) of other states, regions or the whole world. Thus political subjugation through colonialism is only one form this domination might take: imperialism also encompasses different kinds of indirect control...⁶

Some claim that the idea of imperialism is an anachronism when dealing with periods earlier than the 14th Century.⁷ Marxists, for their part, view imperialism as the attempted extension of capitalism and suggest that it is a phenomenon which dates back only a century and a half. In order to avoid getting bogged down by semantic disputes and debates over the extent to which Rome was motivated by economic considerations, it seems best to side with J. Webster who claims that studies of the Roman provinces pertain to colonialism rather than imperialism.⁸

⁶ Bernstein, Hewitt & Thomas quoted in Webster (1996), p.2

⁷ Webster (1996), p.2

⁸ Webster (1996), p.2

As for Romanization, it is generally described as the process occurring in the provinces of the empire, which "resulted in native culture more closely resembling that of Rome."⁹ On this point there seems to be relative agreement. Today, however, there is considerable disagreement on the extent to which the process was the product of an official policy, on whether it was the means or the result of Rome's consolidation of power, whether or not it is possible to identify Roman as opposed to indigenous culture (that is to say, whether or not the two can actually be separated), and to what degree the indigenous populations were resistant, acquiescent or actively receptive to Roman culture. Furthermore, there are those who question the usefulness of a concept which was developed during (and is therefore a product of) the modern era of European imperialism and its attendant beliefs in progress and the "white man's burden".¹⁰ It is important for now to note that Romanization as a concept is very much distinct from colonization. The former was not a necessary consequence of the latter. Indeed, one scholar has suggested that indigenous resistance arose not so much to colonization but to Romanization.¹¹ Now let us trace the origins and evolution of the idea.

⁹ Millett (1990), p.1

¹⁰ Collins and Rundle (1999), p.1152, write in a note concerning the title of Rudyard Kipling's 1899 poem "The White Man's Burden": "This phrase, used to describe the United States' responsibility for Cuba and the Philippines, became popular towards the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898."

¹¹ Bénabou (1976), p.30

Romanization as a concept was fully articulated for the first time in the work of the British historian Francis Haverfield in 1912 in his essay The Romanization of Roman Britain. In it, he examines the ways in which Rome's conquest made an impact on the indigenous culture of Britain. As the term implies, he believes that native institutions were gradually transformed into models which appeared more 'Roman'. Among the aspects studied are language, religion, art and social organization. It should be noted at the outset that Haverfield believed that the process of Romanization was "not altogether uniform and monotonous"¹² and that both the methods and the results varied from place to place depending on local conditions. The differences were especially marked between the more urbanized Greek world to the East and the more tribal west. Haverfield was also of the opinion that Romanization was an actual policy and not something that developed naturally without administrative pressure.

Ostensibly, the main purpose of his work was to refute the 19th Century view that the Romans were an unimaginative people and to rehabilitate Rome's image. Haverfield is willing to accept that the Romans were primarily practical but insists that they were not necessarily uncreative. He claims that their creativity lay in their method of provincial administration rather than in fields such as art and literature, which were traditionally associated with the Greeks. In his opinion, the work of T.

¹² Haverfield (1923), p.12

Mommsen had rendered untenable a view of the Romans as a people devoid of imagination.¹³

It is generally accepted by historians today, that the writing of history is partly a product of the context within which it was produced. If we consider that Haverfield was an Englishman writing in the first part of the 20th Century, it should come as no surprise that he writes about Roman imperialism in a positive light. One passage in particular sums up his view of conquerors and conquered:

The lands, which the legions sheltered, were not merely blessed with quiet. They were also given a civilization, and that civilization had time to take strong root. Roman speech and manner were diffused; the political franchise was extended; city life was established; the provincial populations were assimilated in an orderly and coherent culture. A large part of the world became Romanized. The fact has an importance which, even to-day, we might easily miss. It is not likely that any modern nation will soon stand in quite the place which Rome then held. Our civilization seems firmly set in many lands; our task is rather to spread it further and develop its good qualities than defend its life. If war destroys it in one continent, it has other homes. But the Roman Empire was the civilized world; the safety of Rome was the safety of all civilization. Outside roared the wild chaos of barbarism. Rome kept it back, from end to end of Europe and across a thousand miles of western Asia. Had Rome failed to civilize, had the civilized life found no period in which to grow firm and tenacious, civilization would have perished utterly. The culture of the old world would not have lived on, to form the groundwork of the best culture of today.¹⁴

Now, it is obvious that this sort of tone seems rather out of place in today's world. This enthusiasm for empire is specific to a particular time in history but does this

¹³ Haverfield (1923), p.10

¹⁴ Haverfield (1923), p.11

necessarily mean, as Hingley suggests¹⁵, that the concept of Romanization itself must be abandoned? We shall return to this question later in the chapter but first, it would be helpful to trace the history of the idea after Haverfield.

The first to dedicate a monograph to the Romanization of North Africa was T.R.S. Broughton in his Romanization of Africa Proconsularis, first published in 1929. In it he gives a more nuanced view of how the process of Romanization worked. He sees the process as a two-way street in which Roman colonists and natives adapted to each other. He describes "a long process of contact and mutual assimilation of the Roman citizens...and the more prosperous and prominent of the indigenous folk."¹⁶ He goes on to say that "the story of the Roman development seems largely to be a story of Roman adaptation to the social and economic conditions of the country coupled with a Roman insistence upon orderly settlement and effective exploitation."¹⁷ With the exception of the imperial cults and the dealings with nomadic tribes, he denies that there was any actual policy of Romanization on the part of the conquerors. Finally, he insists that the process of the acculturation and assimilation of the natives was not as extensive in Africa as Haverfield suggests for Britain. He argues that the Punic language not only survived but spread under Roman rule and that, while the elite did begin to associate their interests with those of Rome, the masses remained relatively unaffected

¹⁵ Hingley (1996), p.41

¹⁶ Broughton (1968), p.153

¹⁷ Broughton (1968), p.225

culturally. The work concludes with the statement that, even though Africa never became Roman, the conquerors "gave [Africa] peace and made her prosperous."¹⁸ This comment reveals one point of contact with Haverfield in that Broughton sees Romanization as beneficial. So while he seems to have a more sophisticated view of the process of acculturation, Broughton does nevertheless see Roman civilization as superior to the indigenous ones. The concept of Romanization was still at this point a product of the period of European imperialism. The question that remains to be answered is whether this characteristic is inherent in the concept or whether Romanization can still be a useful model for studying the social dynamics of Rome's colonies.

The most recent major proponent of the Romanization orthodoxy is Martin Millett in his 1990 work The Romanization of Britain. His project seems to be to update the study of provinces by doing away with the "paternalistic" tone of earlier works and by drawing on recent ideas in the social sciences.¹⁹ As a member of the first post-imperial generation, he believes that he will be able to give a new and more sympathetic picture of the indigenous populations. And, indeed, he does present a more refined version. Like Broughton, he sees a process that worked in two directions rather than a process in which the Romans unilaterally imposed their culture. Moreover, he recognizes the difficulties inherent in defining *romanitas*, that is to say what

¹⁸ Broughton (1968), p.228

¹⁹ Millett (1990), p.xv

essential characteristics make something Roman or not. At the outset of the book, he states

...'Roman' culture was by definition a cosmopolitan fusion of influences from diverse origins rather than purely the native culture of Rome itself. We must thus see Romanization as a process of dialectical change, rather than the influence of one 'pure' culture upon others. Roman culture interacted with native cultures to produce the synthesis that we call Romanized.²⁰

Moreover, Millett insists that it would be impossible to study the Romanization of Britain without having considerable knowledge of the culture and conditions of the region prior to conquest. He therefore examines at some length the economy, settlement patterns, and art, among other things, of what he calls the Later Pre-Roman Iron Age of Britain. This approach is one that was altogether lacking in the works of Haverfield and Broughton who seem not to have been interested in local culture prior to conquest. Millett asserts that such knowledge is absolutely essential if one is to understand a complex process such as acculturation.

It is clear, from this limited survey of the literature, that there is not a single version of Romanization even within the traditional framework of the concept. Or, rather, the concept seems to have undergone some fine-tuning. There is also disagreement on the extent to which, if a process of acculturation can be assumed to have taken place, it was a result of an official policy on the part of the Romans. The traditional

²⁰ Millett (1990), p.1

argument in favour of such a policy is the famous passage in Tacitus' Agricola in which he says:

Sequens hiems saluberrimus consiliis absumpta; namque ut homines dispersi ac rudes eoque in bella faciles quieti et otio per uoluptates adsuescerent, hortati priuatim, adiuuare publice, ut templa, fora, domos exstruerent, laudando promptos, castigando segnis: ita honoris aemulatio pro necessitate erat. Iam uero principium filios liberalibus artibus erudire, et ingenia Britannorum studiis Gallorum anteferre; ut qui modo linguam Romanam abnuebant, eloquentiam concupiscerent. Inde etiam habitus nostri honor et frequens toga; paulatimque discessum ad delenimenta uitiorum, porticus et balnea et conuiuiorum elegantiam; idque apud inperitos humanitas uocabatur, cum pars seruitutis esset.

(The following winter was spent on schemes of the most salutary kind. To induce a people hitherto scattered, uncivilized and therefore prone to fight, to grow pleasantly inured to peace and ease, Agricola gave private encouragement and official assistance to the building of temples, public squares and private mansions. He praised the keen and scolded the slack, and competition to gain honour from him was as effective as compulsion. Furthermore, he trained the sons of chiefs in the liberal arts and expressed a preference for British natural ability over the trained skill of the Gauls. The result was that in place of distaste for the Latin Language came a passion to command it. In the same way, our national dress came into favour and the toga was everywhere to be seen. And so the Britons were gradually led on to the amenities that make vice agreeable - arcades, baths and sumptuous banquets. They spoke of such novelties as 'civilization', when really they were only a feature of enslavement.)²¹

As mentioned earlier, Broughton denies such intentionality.

Nevertheless, the common ground among scholars who use Romanization as a concept is that they have been interested in the extent to which Rome's presence was responsible for changing native institutions.

Now it may seem self-evident to some that the Romans had a significant impact on the territories they occupied and that,

over the course of centuries, the indigenous cultures would have begun to resemble more closely that of the conquerors. In the last three decades however, criticism of Romanization has appeared and intensified, questioning it on several grounds. We shall now examine these dissenting voices.

The first serious challenge to the traditional way of studying the colonies of Rome came from the scholars of the newly independent countries of North Africa. Having recently freed themselves from European domination, it is not surprising that they might have an altogether less sympathetic view of ancient imperialism. Just as 19th and early 20th Century French and Italian scholars had seen themselves as culturally descended from the Romans, post WWII Maghrebi scholars seem to have been influenced in their view of history by the excesses of the recent colonial experience. Abdallah Laroui, in The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay, which first appeared in French in 1970, criticizes the lack of progress made in historical writing in the first two decades following decolonization. He claims that decolonization has not had the same influence on history, particularly histories dealing with periods before the 19th Century, as it has on other disciplines.²²

His ideas and those of his successors will be discussed further in later chapters as their scope goes beyond the topic at hand. They did, however, make contributions which relate specifically to Romanization. Some of the issues raised by these

²¹ Tacitus, Ag. XXI; translation by H. Mattingly

Maghrebi scholars have been taken up by European and American historians who would do away with the concept of Romanization altogether. Laroui claims that historians do not differentiate between Romans living in Africa and Romanized Africans.²³

Furthermore, he questions the argument that the rise of certain Africans to prominence in Roman society (Septimius Severus and Lucius Apuleius being classic examples) was a sign of Romanization. He sees this tradition as generalizing on the basis of exceptions. He claims:

...[O]ne might actually draw the contrary conclusion from [these exceptions]. It is in a not very Romanized society that the few Romanized individuals would attain to the highest careers. Compare the Moslem Iran of the second and third centuries H., where the political, administrative and intellectual role of the Arabized Iranians in the Abbasid Empire was out of all proportion to the degree of Arabization of a country which from the fourth century on recovered its national language.²⁴

He argues against seeing monumental architecture as necessarily being the mark of a prosperous African population. Rather, he sees it as proof of a very wealthy property-owning class which, in his opinion, likely spent little of its time in Africa. He also questions some of the traditional assumptions of epigraphy. The multitude of Latin inscriptions does not necessarily prove that the use of Latin was widespread among the general population. Instead, these remains merely give the official side of the story.²⁵ Laroui does not doubt that the local elite underwent a certain amount of Romanization but doubts

²² Laroui (1977), p.5

²³ Laroui (1977), p.45

²⁴ Laroui (1977), p.45

whether this portion of the population was large enough to have a significant impact on society. He concludes his analysis by saying that these 'proofs' can only be accepted as such if we apply an anachronistic reading of history to the evidence.²⁶ Because he raised concerns of this sort, Laroui has been very influential in the 30 years since the publication of his work.

The most famous of the Maghrebi scholars to have taken on the traditional historical treatment of Roman North Africa is undoubtedly Marcel Bénabou. His 1976 work La résistance africaine à la romanisation was a deliberate challenge to the traditional European scholarship, which tended to be highly Romanocentric. He underlines the importance of seeing both sides of the story and argues that it is impossible to separate the study of African resistance from that of Romanization.²⁷ He stresses that indigenous resistance was not so much to conquest and colonization but rather to Romanization, which he sees as an intentional policy on the part of the conquerors. He also criticizes the work of both "European" and "nationalist" historians, as he calls them. He claims that both are obsessed with analogies between ancient and modern colonialism and resistance and that they oversimplify matters, seeing Romanization as completely positive or entirely negative depending upon the historian's agenda. He condemns this manipulation of facts:

²⁵ Laroui (1977), p.46

²⁶ Laroui (1977), p.46

²⁷ Bénabou (1976), p.25

...[C]hacun peut produire sa galerie de portraits symboliques et de gloires nationales pour en tirer des conclusions péremptoires; on trouvera ainsi, d'un côté - héritiers de "l'éternel Juba" - , les Tacfarinas, Faraxen ou Firmus, et de l'autre, - lointains successeurs de Juba II -, les Apulée, Tertullien ou saint Augustin.²⁸

He goes on to say that the key is to recognize that the African population was not a one-dimensional, homogeneous group and that Roman occupation produced complex and seemingly contradictory results.²⁹ He criticizes the traditional use of dichotomies such as Romanized city-dwellers and unassimilated peasants. Instead, he believes there were three important population groups: the Romans (by birth or by adoption) who have usually been the focus of all the attention by historians; those who were outside the control of the Romans (such as those inhabiting central and eastern Morocco and the Tripolitanian desert); and those who were partially Romanized. Whether Romanization is seen to be a successful policy or not depends on which group is selected as the subject of study. It was this last group which, historically speaking, was by far the most important as well as being very diverse (not being able to be classified according to simplistic dichotomies). Despite their numbers, they were unable to be the driving force of African history (this position having been usurped by the Romans) but the ultimate fate of Romanization over time rested with them. He sums up the contradictions of acculturation with this statement:

Or ses membres sont soumis à des influences
contradictoires: tantôt, naturellement désireux de s'élever

²⁸ Bénabou (1976), p.582

²⁹ Bénabou (1976), p.583

dans la hiérarchie sociale, ils adoptent avec empressement certains des traits de l'oligarchie dominante; tantôt se sentant proches encore de la société indigène, ils restent fidèles à leurs traditions et résistent aux innovations. Ainsi les voit-on à la fois rechercher passionnément l'honneur de la citoyenneté romaine et édifier des temples à Saturne africain ou conserver leur langue ou leurs usages onomastiques traditionnels.³⁰

Bénabou's brand of Romanization seems to have been accepted by the majority of Maghrebi scholars today. In the last two decades, there has been little or no questioning of the concept of Romanization coming from the south shore of the Mediterranean. The fact that there is so little criticism of the concept seems to reflect a general acceptance of the more nuanced version of Romanization which Laroui and Bénabou inspired. The interesting thing about this acceptance by North African scholars is that it has coincided with some vociferous criticism of Romanization by European scholars.

It is to these voices we must now turn. Again, an exhaustive review of the literature will not be attempted but some of the salient points should be mentioned. The most thorough laying out of European post-colonial discussions appears in a collection entitled Roman Imperialism: Post-colonial Perspectives. In her introduction to the collection, J. Webster says that the fundamental question that needs to be answered is in what ways is "our position within the 'post imperial' condition causing us to reassess not only Roman imperialism, but the epistemological basis of our own discipline (the study of the Roman Empire), which

³⁰ Bénabou (1976), p.584

developed in the context of Western imperialism?"³¹ Borrowing from Samir Amin's concepts of centre and periphery, she criticizes Romanization, which she considers virtually the only framework for studying the Roman provinces, as being centrist.³² By this, she means that the concept is Romanocentric. At this level, the influence of Bénabou and Laroui (as well as of post-colonial theorists more generally) is obvious. In her view, post-colonial theory is useful in that it examines how knowledge of conquered peoples is formed.³³ She argues in favour of decentring categories of knowledge, showing how indigenous populations played an active role in the making of their own history, deconstructing traditional dichotomies (of which, it should be noted, she herself seems to make use in the case of centre and periphery), and examining the power dynamics involved in representations of the Other.³⁴ These ideas are common to much of the scholarship included in the volume. D. Mattingly argues in favour of a more complete approach to the study of Romanization in which more attention is given to areas such as rural settlement patterns and the culture of African tribes. He claims that the few studies of this kind which do exist, have shown a higher level of 'development' on the part of 'natives' than was previously supposed.³⁵ There are problems in this kind of thinking, which will be discussed at a later point. At this stage, let us simply

³¹ Webster (1996), p.1

³² Webster (1996), p.5

³³ Webster (1996), p.6

³⁴ Webster (1996), p.7

³⁵ Mattingly (1996), p.60

point out that the idea of development itself is one which needs to be questioned. Is there an inherent superiority to proto-urbanization (or urbanization for that matter) over nomadism? And is social stratification really an indication of sophistication? But more on this later. Mattingly does not seem to want to do away with the concept of Romanization altogether but, like Bénabou, to refine it.

The same is not true of Hingley, who might be the most radical of Romanization's critics. As one might expect from the title ("The 'Legacy' of Rome: the Rise, Decline, and Fall of the theory of Romanization"), he claims that the concept is outdated and that it should be done away with altogether. In his view, Haverfield's view of Romanization was flawed not only because of its patronizing tone but also because it saw the process as "directional and progressive".³⁶ Hingley argues that Millett's version of Romanization shares a "common analytical framework" with that of Haverfield and therefore that it is merely an extension of ideas which were the product of the morality of the British Empire.³⁷ The necessary radical break with past theories has not yet occurred. Furthermore, he warns against the biases present in the primary sources. The fact that ancient historians give the impression that native revolts were relatively rare does not necessarily mean it was so. As the saying goes, the winners write the history books; we do not have access to literary testimony by the other side. He then goes on to question the

³⁶ Hingley (1996), p.39

evidence which is traditionally used to support the Romanization thesis. Pertaining to material culture, Hingley follows P. Freeman's³⁸ lead by pointing out that "there was no unified Roman material culture package and the concept of 'Roman' is not a secure category upon which to base analysis of change."³⁹ In fairness to Millett, he does seem to be aware of the difficulties associated with defining *romanitas*. Hingley also says that recent work in the social sciences has suggested that cultural change is a more complex process than that depicted by the existing model of Romanization.

Most recently, D. Cherry has carried out a critique of "unworkable models" of Romanization.⁴⁰ By this term, he refers to the cultural elements which have traditionally been used by historians to gauge the process of acculturation in the provinces of the Roman Empire. His list includes certain architectural forms, urbanization, Latin names, Roman religious practices, coinage, and the presence of Roman-style graves.⁴¹ In each case, he finds that these are inadequate indices of acculturation. Urbanization was not alien to North Africa prior to the Roman conquest, coinage merely indicates the presence of Roman traders, the gravestones which were popular in the 2nd Century did not differ radically from those used in the pre-Roman period, etc.⁴² These points raise the question: What then is Roman culture?

³⁷ Hingley (1996), p.41

³⁸ Freeman (1993)

³⁹ Hingley (1996), p.42

⁴⁰ Cherry (1998), p.82

⁴¹ Cherry (1998), pp82-91

Obviously, there were substantial cultural differences between, say, 4th Century Britain and 1st Century Egypt. But are there essential and stable characteristics which transcend time, and place by which one can identify *romanitas*, that is to say, the quality by which something can be said to be Roman?

In contrast to the ideas of Freeman and Hingley, the prevailing view maintains that, despite regional variations, it is possible to identify certain things as representative of Roman culture. It would certainly be difficult to argue that the appearance of togas in Britain was not the result of an aspect of Roman culture having been exported by the conquerors. The same could be claimed regarding certain aspects of towns such as triumphal arches, fora, amphitheatres, etc. It is not merely European/North American imperialists, as Freeman seems to suggest, who hold this view. Bénabou agrees in part with Freeman regarding traditional scholarly treatment of local diversity in his statement:

Mais cette diversité politique et culturelle a été rarement acceptée et analysée comme telle. On a cherché au contraire à la réduire, à la mutiler au besoin, pour la faire entrer dans un cadre exclusivement romain. Véritable lit de Procuste: tout ce qui ne trouve pas place dans ce cadre, tout ce qui s'écarte du modèle romain est considéré comme anomalie ou survivance. Ainsi s'est mise en place toute une vision romano-centriste, fondée sur le schéma simpliste d'un monde articulé selon une division binaire, ou tout ce qui n'est pas romain se trouve rélégué aux marges, à la périphérie. Dans cette perspective, le catalogue des survivances n'est plus qu'un amas disparate de résidus, un agrégat de scories, subsistant tant bien que mal de l'autre côté d'une invisible frontière, comme s'ils

⁴² Cherry (1998), pp82-91

n'étaient que les insignifiants vestiges d'un passé condamné.⁴³

Bénabou is objecting here to the way that indigenous contributions to Romano-African culture have traditionally been glossed over by European scholars. He does not, however, deny the existence of an identifiable Roman culture. He warns against a simplistic Roman/African dichotomy but, as stated earlier, he accepts a modified form of the concept of Romanization. Inherent to this view is an acceptance of the possibility of identifying Roman culture. Nevertheless, Freeman's point is a good one: *romanitas* is a complicated concept and one that should not be used too freely. The importance of regional differences has been duly noted by most scholars and today one generally speaks of Romano-African culture rather than simply Roman culture.

Cherry also addresses some of the methods by which Romanization is said to have taken place. Foremost among these are the co-option of the elites, intermarriage between Romans and indigenous Africans, and the recruitment of the local population into military service. He downplays the impact that each of these processes had on the cultural practices of the North African people as a whole. In his opinion, much like Laroui's, the segments of the population affected were not large enough numerically to produce the extent of acculturation that has sometimes been described by historians. Cherry's conclusion is that Romanization did occur but to a very limited degree.⁴⁴

⁴³ Bénabou (1980), pp11-12

⁴⁴ Cherry (1998), pp158-161

To sum up then, the theory of Romanization has a long intellectual history. It had its birth in the age of European imperialism nearly a century ago. Since then, it has undergone considerable alterations and refinements. It would not be fair to think that all who have made use of the model have necessarily been sympathetic to imperialism. Despite what some (such as Hingley) claim, Millett has more in common with Bénabou than with Haverfield. Bénabou does not reject the concept of Romanization but rather the form of it which seemed completely unable to recognize that the indigenous populations were at least as significant in the history of the provinces as were the Romans. It is true that Millett does not give satisfactory treatment to indigenous resistance but he does reject the idea that natives "did what they were told because it represented *progress*."⁴⁵ Although Haverfield is generally regarded as the father of Romanization, Bénabou should be seen as the originator of its present incarnation. There is no doubt that some of the more orthodox scholars have been quick to denounce Bénabou's model of Romanization.⁴⁶ This needs to change as both sides of the story must be examined, to the extent that this is possible, in order to give a fairer picture of the history of North Africa. Both Mattingly and Laroui point out the impact that the way in which history is told has on the people of today. No people should be robbed of their own history. It is also clear that the questions raised by Hingley among others need to be addressed, particularly

⁴⁵ Millett (1990), p.xv

those asking how our cultural beliefs affect our creation of knowledge. We shall return to these issues at a later point. For the time being we shall reserve judgment on Romanization until we conduct our own study which pertains to the historiography of urbanization in Roman North Africa. But first we shall perform a review of the scholarship pertaining more generally to the Maghreb in the Roman period.

⁴⁶ Y. Thébert (1978)

CHAPTER 3
PERSPECTIVES ON ROMAN NORTH AFRICA: SCHOLARSHIP DURING
COLONIZATION, INDEPENDENCE, AND BEYOND

It is a truism that historical writing is influenced by the time and culture of which it is a product. Historians, even ones dealing with ancient times, cannot escape their own *Zeitgeist*. This is especially true in the case of North Africa, which is weighed down with ideological baggage. The study of ancient colonialism in the region has always been coloured by the more recent colonial experience of the 19th and 20th centuries. Until recently, virtually all work on the subject was carried out by the French who saw themselves as following in the footsteps of their Roman predecessors. This attitude had a significant impact on the direction and findings of early studies of Roman North Africa and, despite the end of European colonialism, the impact is still being felt today. In D. Mattingly's words, the "historiography of Roman Africa is indelibly linked to the history of the modern colonial occupation of the region and to the post-colonial reactions that have followed."⁴⁷ In addition to the potentially distorting influence of recent history, another factor has influenced Roman studies in North Africa. Due to the abundance of inscriptions, epigraphy has played a preponderant role as a tool of study. This was especially true in the early

⁴⁷ Mattingly & Hitchner (1995), P.169

years of European scholarship in the area but is still the case, to a lesser extent, today. The problem with this scenario is that Latin inscriptions "are by definition expressions of the hegemonic culture."⁴⁸ Both E. Fentress and Mattingly, therefore, call for a greater dependence on archaeology as a tool for obtaining more complete knowledge of North Africa during the Roman occupation. In this way, they argue, we can learn a great deal more about the indigenous population as well as the lower classes. There are questions to be asked about archaeology itself which, as B. Shaw points out, is the product of the era of European colonization.⁴⁹ But for now, let us turn our attention to the evolution of Roman studies in North Africa from their inception.

The French occupation of the Maghreb began in 1830 with the conquest of Algeria. Almost immediately, the new colonizers turned to studying the Roman legacy which was so evident from the large number of remains, both epigraphical and archaeological. It would be a mistake to think, however, that this interest was purely scholarly. Indeed, it had official encouragement from the state. As early as 1833, France's minister of war issued a letter suggesting that scholars devote themselves to a study that would benefit both science and the state. What he had in mind was a geography of Mauritania in ancient times as well as a history of the Roman colonization of the region but the scholars

⁴⁸ Fentress (1979), p.2

⁴⁹ Shaw (1980), p.31

of the day were rather luke-warm to the idea ⁵⁰. They made it clear that, in their opinion, a study of the Roman period of Africa in isolation from earlier and later periods would be of only limited use in any attempt at understanding the present. They seemed to want to distance themselves somewhat in their scientific quest from the aims of the state.⁵¹ That said, however, there were certainly scholars who wished to learn from the Roman example in order to advise on how the French should carry out their mission. J. Toutain, for example, states on more than one occasion that he believes that history can be useful in addressing modern-day issues:

Le grand oeuvre de la colonisation romaine s'est édifié, s'est épanoui au milieu de la paix générale. Bien que les temps soient changés, méditons cet exemple. Apprenons du peuple le plus guerrier qui ait vécu dans l'antiquité, qu'aux luttes militaires doit succéder la collaboration pacifique des ennemis de la veille, et que toute conquête coloniale est fatalement stérile et vaine, que ne suivent pas l'union, la fusion, la pénétration mutuelle des vainqueurs et des vaincus.⁵²

In fact, he believes that it is the duty of historians to ensure that their discipline not be purely abstract, divorced from the realities of the day.⁵³ In any event, there came to be an undeniable link between scholarly and military work. The fact is that a whole new set of data had been made available for study and it was exploited by people with different motivations. The distinction between academic and military studies was further blurred by the fact that many of the first archaeological and

⁵⁰ Frémeaux (1984), p.32

⁵¹ Frémeaux (1984), p.34

⁵² Toutain (1896), p.380

epigraphical studies were carried out by soldiers and functionaries. Frémeaux states that, without trying to portray colonial history as purely ideological, one cannot avoid the conclusion that the simultaneous development of both colonization and African antiquities means that the latter produced certain elements which could be exploited by the former.⁵⁴

He goes on to point out that references to Rome date back to a time which preceded the conquest. This phenomenon was a product of an education system which stressed the humanities and was predominant in the period under examination. This education, Frémeaux argues, led to the belief that Rome was not only a model for the French but also a part of their cultural memory. As a result, the material vestiges of Africa's Roman past were seen as something familiar and comforting in an otherwise alien and hostile environment. In the early years of the conquest, the main focus of scholarship was on locating, identifying and mapping Roman remains. At this point, the interests of academics and of the military converged in that both were attempting to gain knowledge about the geography/topography of the region. In Frémeaux' words, "cette coïncidence d'objectifs aboutit, dans un certain nombre de cas, à faire établir par des savants des documents susceptibles de guider la conquête".⁵⁵ The French military, in this period, was in the habit of selecting Roman sites to establish their own outposts. The reasoning was that

⁵³ Toutain (1896), p.12

⁵⁴ Frémeaux (1984), p.29

⁵⁵ Frémeaux (1984), p.37

the Romans must have chosen strategically and logistically suitable locations for the purpose of conquest and consolidation. In this sense, therefore, scholarly work certainly aided the aims of the state. Frémeaux cites examples of archaeologists' being brought in by the military to help them in choosing appropriate sites to be settled. Although the most common, help in selecting military positions was not the only contribution made by archaeologists. Agriculture was another field in which state and scholarly pursuits overlapped. In Tunisia (after the conquest of 1881), scholars were called upon to offer their expertise so that the French could emulate Roman hydraulic and olive-growing practices.⁵⁶

Of course, some of these projects were undertaken on the basis of errors of interpretation. For example, likely due to the interests of the time, farms were often taken to be military forts, walls for retaining soil were thought to be dams, etc. An example of this kind of bias can be seen in the works of P.-M. Toussaint who identified himself in his articles either as Lieutenant-colonel or Commandant Toussaint. His reviews of archaeological field work carried out in North Africa in the first years of the 20th Century show that a very large percentage of sites were thought to have served military functions.⁵⁷ According to Frémeaux accuracy was of secondary concern to the colonizers: "Ce qui compte en effet est bien plus de se rattacher à un passé dans lequel, comme magiquement, la légion,

⁵⁶ Frémeaux (1984), p.39

le camp romain, la cadastration engendrent la paix et les belles moissons, que de s'interroger sur ce que ce passé a pu être réellement."⁵⁸

According to Frémeaux, in the early years of the conquest, there was a sense of optimism that the French would be able to outdo their Roman predecessors. Since they had the benefit of being able to learn from the mistakes of others, they believed that they would be in Africa permanently. After 1870, however, the tone in many of the writings changes and there is more and more emphasis on indigenous resistance. Interest began to turn to the supposedly constant struggles between the Romans and the 'barbarians'. This sort of writing, of which Stephane Gsell was an important example, was used to justify a tough policy by the French towards the natives. And indeed, the colonizers turned once again to the Romans for instruction in methods of repression. They borrowed military tactics (*agmen quadratum*) as well as methods for the governing of tribes. In this period, as opposed to the years immediately following the conquest, the French were no longer looking to Roman North African history for a sense of familiarity and comfort in a foreign land. Rather, they wanted to discover the essential nature of the land and its people by identifying what appeared to be features which had remained constant throughout its history.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Toussaint (1905, 1907, &1908)

⁵⁸ Frémeaux (1984), p.40

⁵⁹ Frémeaux (1984), p.45

Now, the problems inherent in this sort of approach to studying are quite obvious. Both the findings of such ideologically-driven studies as well as the measures carried out as a result of these are likely to be flawed. J. Malarkey devotes an article to criticizing and identifying the six major logical fallacies in the writings of the journal of the Société Archéologique de Constantine from 1853 to 1876. He states that the works of the time were "partially derived from empirical research, partially elaborated according to colonial political ends".⁶⁰ The first part of his statement, however, should remind us not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Certainly, one needs to approach such works with a healthy skepticism but they did provide us with a vast quantity of valuable information. The historian's task today is to attempt to draw this information out from its ideological context.

It should be noted that, although, as J.-C. Vatin points out, the French had a near-monopoly on North African studies in the 19th century⁶¹, there were some works by other Europeans. The tone of these studies was much the same whether the authors were French, English or German. One of these scholars was Alexander Graham who, as one would expect from a European writing in 1902, was very sympathetic to the colonial cause. Comparing Roman North Africa to the central and southern African colonies of the day, he says:

⁶⁰ Malarkey (1984), p.137

⁶¹ Vatin (1984), p.15

The methods of civilisation adopted in one age differ in marked degree from those of another, varying with the habits of national life, and governed by the insuperable natural laws affecting climate and race. But the outcome of human progress is invariably the same, exhibiting respect and obedience to ruling authority, a mute recognition of the unwritten rules of social life, and greater regard for personal preservation.⁶²

This kind of tone was the norm in works on North Africa right up until the decades following independence. It should be noted, however, that there were a few dissenting voices even if few and far between. Frédéric Lacroix, writing in 1862, condemned Rome's policy in Africa, claiming that the conquerors did not care about the interests of the indigenous population. He claimed, concerning the treatment of natives, that Rome "marcha, sans les indigènes et malgré eux, vers le but qu'elle s'était assigné en Afrique; sans eux et malgré eux, elle romanisa ces riches contrées".⁶³ As one would expect, Lacroix' voice carried little weight and the majority of his work went unpublished most likely, according to Frémeaux, because of his "positions 'indigénophiles'".⁶⁴

Another dissenting voice, this time considerably later and considerably more influential, was that of Charles-André Julien. His Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord, published in 1952, has long been considered a classic. Abdallah Laroui who is, on the whole, more than a little unsympathetic to works of Maghrebi history written by Europeans, said of Julien's study "...no Maghribi, young or old, can fully appreciate the intellectual courage it

⁶² Graham (1971), p.vii

⁶³ Lacroix, quoted in Frémeaux (1984), p.41

required for this man, as militant and historian, to publish such a book at the time when the centenary of the capture of Algiers was being celebrated with pomp and circumstance."⁶⁵ Julien did not paint the same sort of picture of Africa under Roman rule as was the custom. For example, he questions the traditional view of what he calls the proverbial wealth of the province. He sees it rather as having been exploited and manipulated by Rome. He claims that not only did the Romans not introduce agriculture to the Berbers but, in fact under Domitian, they reduced the province virtually to a state of monocultural production because of a ban on olive and grape cultivation.⁶⁶

As mentioned above, the likes of Julien and Lacroix were the exception rather than the rule. For nearly a century and a half, the Roman period of North African history was studied nearly exclusively from a Eurocentric perspective. The indigenous population, when discussed at all, was portrayed in a negative light, appearing as the barbaric opposition to the civilization and enlightenment of Rome. And this negative picture of the African population is not limited to the native Berbers. Stéphane Gsell, writing about the Carthaginians in 1920, even though he saw them as culturally superior to the indigenous population, describes them as "des gens incapables de garder le

⁶⁴ Frémeaux (1984), p.41

⁶⁵ Laroui (1977), p.6, n8

⁶⁶ Julien (1968), pp148-9

juste milieu entre l'arrogance et la bassesse, perfides, cruels, tristes et fanatiques."⁶⁷

It is important to note the impact that these early studies had. Mattingly argues that the colonial ideology deprived Africans of a significant place in their own history. Foreigners were responsible for all positive developments while the indigenous populations were the beneficiaries of a superior culture.⁶⁸ Mattingly himself, as we shall see, may be guilty of certain biases as well. Although he rejects early scholarly treatment of African peoples, he accepts the idea of certain developments (regardless of what group was responsible for these) as 'positive'. But we shall return to this later. For now, the key point is the long-lasting impact that studies from the colonial era have had. Indeed, Mattingly and Hitchner suggest that, due to unpleasant associations with European colonization, many Maghrebi scholars avoid studying military sites to this day.⁶⁹

Eventually, in the 1950s and 1960s, the French were driven from their colonies in North Africa and the tone of academic works began to change. Abdallah Laroui, as we have seen, was the first Maghrebi scholar to challenge the conventional views openly. He is interested not only in the Roman period but, like Julien, in the entire history of the region. His criticisms, if not limited to the Roman occupation, nevertheless apply to it.

⁶⁷ Gsell (1920), p.485

⁶⁸ Mattingly & Hitchner (1995), p.169

⁶⁹ Mattingly & Hitchner (1995), p.169

He is opposed to the biased and, to our eyes today, racist writings of the colonial period but he also has more subtle and far-reaching criticisms which deserve our attention. He spares no one in his attacks, even training his sights on Julien who, as mentioned earlier, was opposed to colonialism. He raises some fundamental questions about the nature of history as a discipline and questions whether, as a western creation, it is equipped to deal properly with the Maghreb's past. We shall return to these questions in the next chapter but for now, let us say that Laroui wishes to give the ancient people of North Africa a voice and challenges the traditionally Eurocentric tenor of historical writing. Essentially, he wishes to give Africans their history back. This work, which Mattingly describes as a *tour de force*, although it was largely ignored by Europeans at the time of its publication, had a significant influence on subsequent post-colonial writers.⁷⁰

Among these were two other Maghrebis: Marcel Bénabou who has already been discussed and Mahfoud Kaddache who essentially inverted the traditional European view of Roman North Africa. In his L'Algérie dans l'antiquité, Kaddache downplays the extent both of Rome's cultural contributions to and its control of Africa. He believes that Romanization was neither permanent nor complete and that native resistance, both military and cultural, was a constant over four centuries.⁷¹ He also believes that Roman rule was by no means beneficial to the indigenous population: "La

⁷⁰ Mattingly & Hitchner (1995), p.170

prospérité romaine n'était le fait que d'une minorité; la masse berbère n'a connu que l'exploitation, le dur labeur et la misère."⁷² These views may be somewhat exaggerated and based partly on an anachronistic projection backwards of the 20th century Algerian struggle for independence but they are likely no further from the truth than much of what was written by scholars prior to decolonization. At the very least, they make for an interesting counterweight to the works of scholars such as Toutain who writes: "...il n'y eut pas de haine entre les vaincus et les vainqueurs...Au contraire, les Africains accueillirent avec faveur la civilisation gréco-romaine".⁷³ If we are not to ignore earlier European works entirely, it would seem unfair to dismiss their African nationalist counterparts. Indeed, Février points out that there is no innocent reading of history. Archaeology is always at the mercy of ideology and we must face up to this realization with regards to our own work as well as that of others.⁷⁴

Today, in the wake of the likes of Laroui, Bénabou, and Kaddache, very few European scholars openly propound the totally Romanocentric views of the 19th and early 20th centuries but there are still some exceptions. For example, Paul Mackendrick, writing in 1980, described the ancient Berbers as "backward and uninnovative with no gift for politics of urbanization" as well as "faithless, murderous and (in Jugurtha's case) manic-

⁷¹ Kaddache (1982), p.111

⁷² Kaddache (1982), p.140

⁷³ Toutain (1896), p.376

depressive".⁷⁵ Moreover, J.-R. Henry argues that the French have traditionally used the Maghreb as a counter-image of themselves and that this is apparent in writings (including scientific) on North Africa. What is interesting is his claim that this has not stopped in the period since decolonization.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, for the most part, there has been a real change in the last three decades in the way North Africa is studied.

Without question, the most significant change is that Maghrebi scholars are now active in the field. Finally, North Africans are adding to the knowledge base and helping to shape the way in which their history is told. Their contributions to archaeology and epigraphy are many and cover the full spectrum, from A. Beschouch's work on native religions⁷⁷, through M. M'charek's work on the demographic and social evolution of Mactaris⁷⁸, to M. Fantar's studies of the civilization of Rome's Punic predecessors in the region⁷⁹. For more theoretical studies on the nature and possible future directions of the study of Roman North Africa, however, one must turn again to foreigners such as Shaw, Mattingly and Février whose works will be discussed in Chapter 4.

It is evident that much work remains to be done. Nevertheless, it should be clear at this point that Roman studies in North Africa have undergone considerable changes in their

⁷⁴ Février (1986), p.87

⁷⁵ MacKendrick (1980), p.330

⁷⁶ Henry (1986), p.6

⁷⁷ Beschouch (1980)

⁷⁸ M'charek (1982)

nearly two centuries of existence. The origins of the field lie with the military. Even when the immediate military and political motivations underlying these studies had faded and soldiers and functionaries no longer dominated the field, the colonial mentality continued to permeate scholarly work until the middle of the 20th century. In fact, it was not until the 1970s with the works of Laroui and Bénabou that things really began to change. In the quarter-century since Bénabou's book, however, the change has been enormous. Most significantly, a large number of Maghrebi scholars have now turned their attention to the Roman period of their history. If Laroui is to be believed, there was very little in the way of interest in ancient history among Maghrebis in 1970. Today, a quick glance at the table of contents of any journal relating to Roman Africa is enough to assure the reader that this situation has changed. Of course, there are still many reasons to criticize the state of scholarship today. One thing that is rarely undertaken (although Février is aware, as are many others no doubt, that all historical writing is a product of ideology) is an attempt at seeing how it is that our studies today are being affected by contemporary ideology. This will be one of our goals, but first we must review some epistemological theory.

⁷⁹ Fantar (1987), (1992) & (1998)

CHAPTER 4
HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ISSUES: RELATIVISM
AND POST-COLONIAL THEORY

As the preceding chapters have illustrated, 19th and early 20th century accounts of Roman North Africa are problematic. Their Eurocentric bent not only gave a distorted picture of the object of study but also had the effect of dispossessing North Africans of their history. This realization raises a more fundamental problem concerning history as a discipline. If the political climate of a time allows for distortion, then to what extent is it possible to know the past with any degree of accuracy? This has been a central concern in recent years, pitting realists who believe that the past can be discovered with a certain degree of accuracy against the relativists who believe that there can be no real correspondence between history as it is written and as it occurred. Current theories regarding the relationship between power and knowledge have left it unclear as to whether or not it is possible to represent the world in a way that is divorced from ideology. On the extreme end of the relativist side of the spectrum is Hayden White who argues that historians shape the past through the form of narrative they employ.⁸⁰ The majority of historians believe that, even if complete objectivity and accuracy are impossible, one can and must strive nevertheless for reasonable facsimiles thereof.

⁸⁰ Munslow (1997), p.140

Later in this chapter, the contributions of post-colonial theory will be discussed. But first, we must turn our attention to basic questions about the knowability of the past.

Recently, a scandal of sorts arose over a new encyclopaedia developed by a software company for personal computers. Versions of the encyclopaedia were produced in a number of languages in order to market the product in non English-speaking countries. The point of contention concerned the treatment of historical events. It seems that, for example, the account of the Battle of Waterloo was considerably different in the French version from that given in the English one. A clamour arose over the perception that political correctness and cultural sensitivity were holding history hostage. It was argued by some that the one true account should be given regardless of whose feathers were ruffled.⁸¹ Mud-slinging aside, two interrelated questions arise: is there one correct version of history and, if so, can it be known? These are fundamental questions and an attempt at answering them must be made before we can go any further.

Prior to WWII, the majority of scholars would have replied affirmatively to these queries without a second thought. Until that time, the prevailing view of history was a positivistic one in which, it was believed, empirical research could get at the truth. The Enlightenment veneration of science remained unchallenged and historians sought to emulate the natural sciences to the greatest extent possible. The idea of 'the other

⁸¹ Moss (1999)

side of the story' was for the most part a non-issue. According to Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, there were, beginning in the 19th Century, three reigning intellectual absolutisms. The first was a belief in the heroic model of science, which led to attempts by historians to be completely objective and dispassionate. The second was the idea of progress which led scholars to trace human evolution through the stages (whether they be economic, intellectual, political, etc.) of its development. Historians went about trying to discover the laws which governed this evolution. The third was nationalism, which stimulated attempts to develop national histories in order to help in the project of nation-building. These three beliefs co-existed for over a century because "they were freshly-minted theories unscarred by rough encounters with verification."⁸² Decolonization in the 'Third World' and the Cold War, among other factors, led to a questioning of the underlying assumptions of history as a discipline. Skepticism is now the order of the day and history has not been spared as a target by the critics. "Having been made 'scientific' in the nineteenth century, history now shares in the pervasive disillusionment with science which has marked the postwar era."⁸³ The undermining of the heroic model of science has been so pervasive that very few pure positivists remain among the ranks of historians.

⁸² Appleby, Hunt & Jacob (1995), pp241-242

⁸³ Appleby, Hunt & Jacob (1995), p.244

Today, the debate is predominantly one which pits relativists against practical realists.⁸⁴ The former, among whom M. Foucault and H. White are preeminent, question the ability of language to represent reality accurately and in a manner which is free of ideology. Furthermore, since historical works are the product of our linguistic frame, they necessarily reflect the interests and beliefs of the Western white males who created the linguistic structures in the first place.⁸⁵ Relativists also criticize the omniscient tone taken by scholars which not only gives a false impression of authority but also leads the reader to believe that "history, not historians, were doing the talking".⁸⁶ The position of the relativists is perhaps best summed up by A. Munslow's statement that "history itself is historical, that is, its methods and concepts as well as the debate about its nature are the products of historical time periods."⁸⁷ But perhaps the most extreme view promulgated by this school of thought is the one suggesting that history is merely a cultural practice and, in that way, no different from music and poetry.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Scholars are not in complete agreement as to what to call the different schools of thought. Munslow, for example, uses the terms deconstructionist and constructionist for the positions described as relativist and practical realist respectively. I shall adopt the terms used by Appleby, Hunt and Jacob but regardless of the names, the positions held by the different schools are generally agreed upon.

⁸⁵ Appleby, Hunt & Jacob (1995), p.244

⁸⁶ Appleby, Hunt & Jacob (1995), p.245

⁸⁷ Munslow (1997), p.13

⁸⁸ Munslow (1997), p.15

Practical realists, such as J. Appleby, L. Hunt, and M. Jacob, unlike positivists (or reconstructionists, as Munslow calls them), accept some of the objections raised by relativists. Most significantly, they agree that much 19th Century scholarship was ideologically tainted and had more to do with power than scientific rigour. They credit relativists with freeing historians from "the tyranny of positivism" and with alerting the public to the way in which historians' personalities and beliefs enter into their work.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, practical realists are unwilling to travel all the way down the path of relativism. They acknowledge that there can be no such thing as pure objectivity or complete correspondence between the past as it was and history as it is told but they do not accept that history only appears to be factual as a result of the narrative techniques employed by historians. Appleby, Hunt and Jacob sum up the practical realist objection to relativism as follows:

Nineteenth-century philosophers so overdichotomized the difference between objectivity and subjectivity that it is difficult, when using their terms, to modify the absolute doubt that springs from the recognition that human minds are not mirrors and recorders. Denying the absolutism of one age, the doubters, however seem oblivious to the danger of inventing a new absolutism based upon subjectivity and relativism.⁹⁰

And indeed, this seems to be the problem with relativism. If followed to its logical extreme, this approach to writing history renders historical inquiry rather pointless. Munslow argues that relativists do not claim that any account is as sound

⁸⁹ Appleby, Hunt & Jacob (1995), p.246

⁹⁰ Appleby, Hunt & Jacob (1995), p.247

as another. He repeats this statement on several occasions but never explains by what criteria a relativist would judge the validity of a historian's work. Surely, historical writing is not to be assessed purely on the basis of its literary qualities. The problem is that relativists, while raising excellent points about the problems inherent in the historical method, which can never attain the rigour and testability of the natural sciences, do not suggest any concrete alternative ways of conducting research. Nevertheless, they have made some very valuable contributions to the discipline. Their rejection of pure objectivity and their linking of historical knowledge with power have significantly altered how people write and view history. But to accept that historians are never free of bias does not mean that they are merely producing literature. For this reason, I shall be adopting a practical realist view, in which I assume that there is a reasonable correspondence between words and reality (though imperfect and never free of ideology) and that it is possible, through the self-reflexion prescribed by relativists, to improve on the methods of historical inquiry without rejecting them altogether.

This questioning of the basic assumptions of post-Enlightenment European thought has been the starting point for a number of intellectual currents over the last decades, perhaps foremost among which (at least for our purposes) is post-colonial theory. This movement whose origins lie in the *négritude* movement most notably represented by Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire

and Léopold Senghor is notoriously difficult to pin down conceptually and A. Loomba warns against attempts to homogenize the views expressed by its numerous proponents.⁹¹ Nevertheless, an attempt will be made to highlight some of its more salient features. It is described by J. Webster as being not so much anti-colonialism as "an exploration of colonial cultural politics, the main thrust of which is the critique of the processes by which 'knowledge' about the colonial other was produced."⁹² A. Dirlik states that post-colonial theory does away with all grand narratives, which it accuses of being Eurocentric. The most important of these narratives is that of modernization.⁹³

D. Chakrabarty takes things a step further by questioning the very discipline of history, which he sees as a product, and tool of European 'modernity'. He argues that, because the "discourse of history" was created in European institutions, all histories have Europe as their primary subject even if they appear to be dealing with the pasts of India or China.⁹⁴ He believes that what is needed is a project of "provincializing Europe" in order to undermine its claims to universality.⁹⁵ By this, he does not mean the outright rejection of European thinking.

For the point is not that Enlightenment rationalism is always unreasonable in itself but rather a matter of documenting how - through what historical process - its 'reason' which was not always self-evident to everyone, has

⁹¹ Loomba (1998), p.252

⁹² Webster (1996), p.6

⁹³ Dirlik (1997), p.298

⁹⁴ Chakrabarty (1995), p.383

⁹⁵ Chakrabarty (1995), p.385

been made to look 'obvious' far beyond the ground where it originated. If a language, as has been said, is but a dialect backed up by an army, the same could be said of the narratives of 'modernity' that, almost universally today, point to a certain 'Europe' as the primary habitus of the modern.⁹⁶

Essentially then, at the risk of oversimplifying a complex body of theory, the primary concern of postcolonial scholars is to give a voice, through a questioning of Western epistemology, to those traditionally left on the margins of history. This task is, on the whole, recognized today as a worthy and necessary project in our current political environment. Postcolonial theory is nevertheless not without its detractors.

A. McClintock is one of a number of scholars to question the very term 'post-colonial'. She claims that it implies a continued belief in linear progress, which is "one of the most tenacious tropes of colonialism."⁹⁷ Others such as Loomba raise the question of what nations can be considered post-colonial. Are Canada, the United States, and Australia, as former colonies, to be considered post-colonial? The white settler populations in these countries were never victims of genocide and exploitation in the way that their indigenous counterparts were.⁹⁸ With regards to the prefix "post", it is not clear whether or not we should be celebrating the demise of colonialism just yet. The United States has become a neo-colonial power in its own right and the aboriginal populations of all three of these countries remain in an unfavourable social position in relation to their

⁹⁶ Chakrabarty (1995), p.386

⁹⁷ McClintock (1994), p.292

European-descended counterparts. The Maghreb is somewhat less problematic in this respect as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya were far more typical colonies than were the aforementioned countries in the 'New World'. Even in North Africa, however, the picture is not perfectly clear. Today, Libya appears to have colonial pretensions of its own in Sub-Saharan Africa. These are primarily of an economic rather than military nature but it should be remembered that Chad was invaded by its northern neighbour in the late 1970s. As for the rest of the Maghreb, the Berber population, which predates both the Romans and the Arabs in the region, continues to have certain grievances with their treatment at the hands of the Arab majority. The very term Berber is derived from the Latin *barbarus* and, consequently, many Berbers prefer the term *amazigh*.⁹⁹ Furthermore, while French military and direct political intervention no longer exists in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, the former metropolis continues to exercise considerable influence in the affairs of these 'independent' nations.

H. Trabelsi also makes the point that the idea of post-coloniality is an oversimplification of reality. It homogenizes radically different groups of people on the grounds that they were all subjects of a particular empire. Such a view attributes primary importance to the language which all these people have in common rather than recognizing their differences.¹⁰⁰ This insight

⁹⁸ Loomba (1998), p.9

⁹⁹ Haddadou (1997), p.80

¹⁰⁰ Trabelsi (1995), p.101

is particularly interesting in our context because it is very similar to the criticism levelled against Romanization, which states that the concept inevitably pays undue attention to the colonizers at the expense of the colonized.

A. Ahmad expresses similar concerns that post-colonial theory "privileges as primary the role of colonialism as the principle of structuration" in the history of lands which were once under European domination. He claims that this may be the impression that one gets from the outside looking in but "those who live inside that history" do not share this feeling. He sites histories of gender and caste as examples where one cannot separate the colonial from the pre- or post-colonial.¹⁰¹

As mentioned above, one of the main preoccupations of post-colonial theory has been to question the ways in which Eurocentrism has impacted the development of history as a discipline. A. Dirlik points out, however, that post-colonial scholars only rarely examine the ways in which their own ideas are influenced by the context out of which they arose. This context, he claims, is contemporary capitalism.¹⁰² He goes on to say that, by focusing their attention upon the past, post-colonial critics fail to deal with contemporary issues.¹⁰³ Furthermore, their refutation of grand narratives leads them to downplay the significance of capitalism in shaping the world and, in so doing, they divert attention away from its devastating

¹⁰¹ Ahmad (1997), p.281

¹⁰² Dirlik (1997), p.295

¹⁰³ Dirlik (1997), p.305

effects and subvert possible opposition.¹⁰⁴ In this way, Dirlik believes that post-colonial theory actually serves global capitalism.

The complicated social and cultural composition of transnational capitalism makes it difficult to sustain a simple equation between capitalist modernity and Eurocentric (and patriarchal) cultural values and political forms. Others who have achieved success within the capitalist world system demand a voice for their values within the culture of transnational capital...Eurocentrism, as the very condition for the emergence of these alternative voices, retains its cultural hegemony; but it is more evident than ever before that, for this hegemony to be sustained, the boundaries must be rendered more porous in order to absorb alternative cultural possibilities that might otherwise serve as sources of destructive oppositions.¹⁰⁵

He believes that post-colonial thinkers, by producing a discourse which alleviates some of the alienation traditionally felt by non-Europeans towards capitalism, are actually paving the way for the expansion of this newly global system.¹⁰⁶

As for the idea that post-colonial theory does away with Eurocentric ways of thinking, H. Trabelsi argues that western biases must inevitably appear even in the writings of scholars native to former colonies (for his purposes British ones) because they were educated in the language of the metropolis and, in the process, internalized its values.¹⁰⁷ Obviously, this argument could be applied to Maghrebi classicists of whom most, if not all, have received their formation in French (and often in France). And beyond linguistic issues, it could be said that

¹⁰⁴ Dirlik (1997), p.315

¹⁰⁵ Dirlik (1997), pp313-314

¹⁰⁶ Dirlik (1997), p.314

¹⁰⁷ Trabelsi (1995), p.101

their training in archaeology, itself a European invention, only contributes to the potential problem. There is no doubt that they do not accept the obvious distortions of colonial scholarship but perhaps even they are blind to certain western biases.

This last point leads us back to Chakrabarty's project of provincializing Europe. He believes that this task is an impossible one given the "knowledge protocols" of universities. Having come to this rather pessimistic conclusion, he calls for history to embody what he dubs a "politics of despair". He asks "for a history that deliberately makes visible, within the very structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive strategies and practices".¹⁰⁸ This, it would seem, is sound advice especially for a field such as Classics which is inherently Eurocentric. Chakrabarty's pragmatic approach may allow us to approach the subject at hand in a constructive manner. Certainly, post-colonial theory has its flaws but it can, if used with humility and an awareness of these shortcomings, be a useful tool in attempting to see history in a different light.

Of course, post-colonial theory originally focused on the recently decolonized countries which had belonged to the European powers until the end of WWII. It has since been applied, to a limited degree, to the study of ancient colonialism as well. In the case of North Africa, it is a doubly useful concept because this region was colonized in ancient and modern times. We shall

¹⁰⁸ Chakrabarty (1995), p.388

now discuss some of the post-colonial writers whose works can help us to examine the historiography of the Maghreb.

Frantz Fanon's Les damnés de la terre is primarily concerned with what he sees as the necessary steps for the people of recently decolonized lands to prosper. For the most part, his interests are not so much historiographical in nature as economic, organizational and social. Perhaps his most important contribution, for our purposes, is his insistence that the decolonized people of the world not emulate Europe but rather seek to find new ways of thinking. He believes that European thought has been responsible for too much bloodshed and suffering and that attempts to follow in these footsteps would be disastrous. He cites the United States as an example of a former colony which successfully played its erstwhile master's game with a result that was of no benefit to humanity. Instead, the people of the decolonized territories owe it to all humankind, including Europeans, to try to be innovative so as to make the world more liveable. He concludes his work with this exhortation:

Si nous voulons transformer l'Afrique en une nouvelle Europe, l'Amérique en une nouvelle Europe, alors confions à des Européens les destinées de nos pays. Ils sauront mieux faire que les mieux doués d'entre nous.

Mais si nous voulons que l'humanité avance d'un cran, si nous voulons la porter à un niveau différent de celui où l'Europe l'a manifestée, alors, il faut inventer, il faut découvrir.

Si nous voulons répondre à l'attente de nos peuples, il faut chercher ailleurs qu'en Europe.

Davantage, si nous voulons répondre à l'attente des européens, il ne faut pas leur renvoyer une image, même idéale, de leur société et de leur pensée pour lesquelles ils éprouvent épisodiquement une immense nausée.

Pour l'Europe, pour nous-mêmes et pour l'humanité, camarades, il faut faire peau neuve, développer une pensée neuve, tenter de mettre sur pied un homme neuf.¹⁰⁹

Fanon is primarily speaking here of alternatives to capitalism, nation states and other western institutions. Nevertheless, his call for new ways of thinking applies to fields such as history as well. As Edward Said points out, "Fanon penetratingly links the settler's conquest of history with imperialism's regime of truth, over which the great myths of Western culture preside."¹¹⁰

Cheikh Anta Diop followed in Fanon's footsteps in questioning the assumptions of European thought but he differed from his illustrious predecessor in that his primary interest was in fact history. In Civilisation ou barbarie: Anthropologie sans complaisance, he attempts to reinvigorate African history by arguing that Egypto-Nubian civilization should hold the place in this field that Greco-Roman civilization holds in European history. Beyond this, he asks important questions about the discipline. For example, the distinction he draws between history and prehistory undercuts the traditional basis of this dichotomy. He states: "On peut dire qu'un peuple est sorti de la Préhistoire dès l'instant qu'il prend conscience de l'importance de l'évènement historique au point d'inventer une technique - orale ou écrite - de sa mémorisation et de son accumulation."¹¹¹ His idea that oral as well as written forms of recording history

¹⁰⁹ Fanon (1961), p.242

¹¹⁰ Said (1993), p.268

¹¹¹ Diop (1981), p.275

are equally valid contrasts with the traditional Western view that writing is the essential element in deciding whether or not a given society has emerged from prehistory. Diop's definition draws attention to a western technological bias in favour of the written word. Certainly, oral records are more problematic in terms of historical studies but they should not be marginalized as inherently inferior. Diop also calls into question the supremacy of the scientific method, claiming that it can be manipulated to suit the wishes of the researcher. As an example, he cites the claims made by J.A. Gobineau in his remarkably racist Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines from 1854 that his research was "toute rigoureuse".¹¹² He sums up his mistrust of the scientific method with this statement: "La vérité scientifique était devenue depuis si longtemps blanche que... toutes ces affirmations faites sous couleurs scientifiques devaient être acceptées comme telles par nos peuples soumis."¹¹³ Obviously, Gobineau's work is an extreme example but the point that science (especially the human sciences) is not as value-free as it might like to pretend is a valid one. Fanon and Diop, therefore, laid the groundwork for future work by calling into question the very foundations of western thought.

Abdallah Laroui, as previously mentioned, was the first Maghrebi scholar to apply what can be called, in hindsight, post-colonial theory to North Africa. His primary goal is to give North African history back to North Africans. He condemns

¹¹² quoted in Diop (1981), p.278

earlier historical works on the Maghreb for treating the region and its people as objects seen only through the eyes of foreign conquerors.¹¹⁴ He also objects to the way that Maghrebi history is broken down into periods such as Punic, Roman, Vandal, Arab, Turkish, French, etc. and wonders where the Maghrebis are in all this.¹¹⁵ Even more significantly, he also raises questions about the very nature of history. He points out that there are parts of the Maghreb about which a great deal is known and others which have remained relatively obscure. He states that "this cleavage between historic field and its non-historic hinterland springs from the fact that history was not born in this part of the world, that 'civilization' came to it from outside".¹¹⁶ This observation echoes some of Diop's concerns and gives weight to the contention that historical writing is to a certain extent a cultural product and a European one at that. Laroui, however, is interested first and foremost in the necessity of Maghrebis' taking back their history.¹¹⁷ The historical writings of the colonial period, whether concerned with ancient or modern times, were Eurocentric and displaced Maghrebis from the central position which they ought to have occupied in their own history. In Laroui's opinion, this has had a very serious impact on the psyche of the people of North Africa and the situation must be remedied at all costs. He sees the reclaiming of history as an

¹¹³ Diop (1981), p.279

¹¹⁴ Laroui (1977), p.9

¹¹⁵ Laroui (1977), p.11

¹¹⁶ Laroui (1977), p.9

¹¹⁷ Laroui (1977), p.384

essential step in the Maghreb's recovery from a century of colonization.

Perhaps the most famous proponent of post-colonialism is Edward Said, whose Orientalism, first published in 1978, has done much to show to what extent history, among other disciplines, is influenced by the ideologies which predominate at any given time. In this work, he is interested specifically in how the French and British (and to a lesser extent, the Americans) have studied the Near East over the last two centuries. It is to this body of literature that he gives the name Orientalism. He argues that "ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied."¹¹⁸ He refers to Orientalism as only "one discipline among the secular (and quasi-religious) faiths of nineteenth-century European thought".¹¹⁹ No doubt, the archaeology and epigraphy of Roman North Africa also fall into this category. Furthermore, he claims that the ideological aspect of history, literature, philology, etc. did not justify imperialism but rather helped to create it in that they enabled Europeans to see "Orientals" as generic beings, all possessing roughly the same characteristics.¹²⁰ In fact, he speaks of the Orient as having been "academically conquered".¹²¹

It should also be noted that Said believes that the problems inherent in Orientalism are alive and well in today's

¹¹⁸ Said (1994), p.5

¹¹⁹ Said (1994), p.116

¹²⁰ Said (1994), pp39-42

scholarship. Moreover, he states that Orientalism tells us more about the power of Europe over the Orient than it does about the Orient itself.¹²² Indeed, unlike many post-colonial writers, Said is not so much interested in giving a voice to the historically dispossessed but rather in examining the mechanisms of this appropriation by a politically stronger culture (in this case, France and Britain).

In any society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more or less influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as hegemony, an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West.¹²³

Indeed, it is perhaps this line of thinking which may be most useful in pushing Roman studies forward. Certainly, giving the indigenous populations of North Africa their rightful place in the history of the region under Roman occupation is a necessary project. Moreover, D. Mattingly's claim that the colonial discourse needs to be more thoroughly analyzed and rejected¹²⁴ is very true. On the other hand, Dirlik would likely tell us that classical scholars are focusing too much on the errors of the past and not enough on the present. In the next chapter, we shall focus on historiographical problems, not only those from the colonial period but also contemporary ones.

In this chapter, we have dealt with the debate between practical realists and relativists over the extent to which, if

¹²¹ Said (1994), p.51

¹²² Said (1994), p.6

¹²³ Said (1994), p.7

¹²⁴ Mattingly (1996), p.62

at all, it is possible to know the past. Although the relativists have raised important questions about objectivity and language, if their ideas are followed all the way to their logical conclusion (despite their insistence to the contrary), historical inquiry becomes a futile endeavour. A rejection of extreme relativism as a general philosophy while attempting to keep some of its contributions in mind, led us to examine post-colonial theory. This school of thought has led to considerable changes in Roman provincial studies, the most significant being that the indigenous populations of North Africa are finally being studied in order to obtain a holistic view of the region's history. In the following chapter, an attempt will be made to apply some of these ideas to an analysis of studies on urbanization in Roman North Africa.

CHAPTER 5
URBANIZATION: A STUDY OF AN ASPECT
OF ROMANIZATION

We shall now turn our attention to an examination of historians' treatment of urbanization in North Africa during the period of Roman occupation. We will begin by an explanation of urbanization as an appropriate subject for the task at hand. After this, we shall examine the works of scholars in three periods: first of all, the colonial period; secondly, the 1970s which saw the reaction to the mainstream by Maghrebi historians; and finally, the last twenty years. The main goal of this chapter is to apply the theory of the previous chapter to a specific area of research in order to see whether or not ideology has played a significant role and continues to do so in our understanding of Romano-African history.

First of all, a justification of the choice for the focus of our study is in order. One must ask the question, Is urbanization relevant to the larger concept of Romanization? My concern here is not to prove that the former is an accurate gauge of the latter but rather that urbanization almost invariably comes up in discussions of Romanization which, as we have seen in chapter 1, has had a long life as a subject of study. The same is true of urbanization, defined by Rostovtzeff as "the development of new cities out of former tribes, villages,

temples, and so forth"¹²⁵, which has been treated as an essential aspect of Romanization. Cities have traditionally been and continue to be seen as one of the defining characteristics of Roman culture. Given this view and the fact that towns leave an obvious archaeological trace, it is no surprise that urban development has been treated as an integral aspect of Romanization. From Haverfield to Cherry, historians concerned with cultural interactions between indigenous and settler populations in the Roman provinces have paid considerable attention to the development of towns. So much so that D. Mattingly and B. Hitchner have argued that there has been too much interest in urban sites at the expense of rural areas and that this apparent bias has led to an incomplete view of the realities of North African life in the Roman period. As to why towns have held such a privileged position in Roman studies, Mattingly and Hitchner suggest the following:

The explanations may be found in colonial and post-colonial historiography, and with the accepted definitions of 'important' sites (towns, churches, etc.) in the region. The study of the rural landscapes has undoubtedly been prejudiced by the colonial claim that they were the achievement of Roman (that is, 'outside') colonization and by the deep-seated antipathies by Maghrebian scholars towards what are (incorrectly) presumed to have been for the most part slave estates.¹²⁶

Certainly, there is a legitimate problem in the disproportionate amount of attention paid to urban phenomena. For our historiographical purposes, however, the very volume of research on towns makes them an ideal subject for analysis. The

¹²⁵ Rostovtzeff (1926), p.81

fact that the relevant scholarship spans a century and a half as well as, in the last decades, both sides of the Mediterranean (not to mention the Atlantic) gives us a wealth of material to examine. The quantity of research in this area, as the above quote suggests, may itself be the product of ideology. Moreover, Mattingly and Hitchner's claim that despite the amount of work done in the urban archaeology of the Maghreb, the field remains "conservative in both theoretical conceptualization and practice"¹²⁷, leads us to believe that the last word on urban studies in the Roman world has not been said. As mentioned in earlier chapters, North Africa is of particular interest for a study of this kind, given its history of European colonization both ancient and modern. Furthermore, the Maghreb, as part of the 'developing' world, and urbanization, as an aspect of 'development', make for relevant topics of discussion in examining a bias which I believe exists in our culture today and has an impact on Roman studies. For these reasons, the historiography of urbanization in Roman North Africa will, it is hoped, provide fertile ground for an examination of some of the trends and problems present in Roman archaeology both in the past and present.

Our previous discussions have indicated that the works of colonial era scholars reveal a certain pro-Roman bias. We shall nevertheless examine some of their writings which pertain specifically to urbanization in order to illustrate the point

¹²⁶ Mattingly & Hitchner (1995), p.189

further. Stéphane Gsell, writing in the period between the two World Wars, states:

C'est dans les villes que la civilisation s'est développée en Berbérie aux temps historiques, civilisation d'emprunt, plus brillante que solide, tour à tour punique, romaine, musulmane. Elle ne s'est guère répandue en dehors des cités. D'où le contraste souvent violent, entre les populations urbaines et les populations rurales, entre les moeurs plus ou moins policées et la barbarie ou la demi-barbarie presque immuables: cette opposition est un des caractères évidents de l'histoire de l'Afrique septentrionale.¹²⁸

The relevance of this passage is two-fold. Gsell clearly believes that 'civilization' was imported by foreign conquerors, whether Punic or Roman. He also sees urban life as superior to rural existence. His language, which opposes civilized urban dwellers to barbaric rural populations, is common in writings of the period. J. Toutain, a contemporary and compatriot of Gsell's, is more explicit in attributing urbanization to the influence of the Roman conquerors. Comparing Africa in the Roman and pre-Roman periods, he states: "A century later, these same regions, which Strabo and Pomponius Mela described as the domain of pastoral nomads were covered with rich cultivated land and flourishing cities."¹²⁹ R.M. Haywood, writing a quarter of a century later, has this to say regarding developments in the interior: "The general extension of settled life through these southern regions was an important achievement of the imperial period."¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Mattingly & Hitchner (1995), p.180

¹²⁸ Gsell, vol.6 (1927), p.74

¹²⁹ Toutain (1930), p.267

¹³⁰ Haywood (1959), p.32

These examples are merely three among many but they should suffice to give an impression of the tone of historical writings in the early part of the 20th Century. This tone appears to be a projection backwards in time of the general attitude of Europeans to the people of their colonies. As we have seen, the French believed themselves to be the heirs of Rome in North Africa and thought that Europe, ancient and modern, had exported a superior brand of culture to the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Even Ch.-A. Julien, who was opposed to the excesses of French rule in the Maghreb, seems to have seen Roman-style cities as a benefit to the people (or at least the elite) of Africa:

"L'aristocratie romaine et indigène habitait les cités, où elle s'ingéniait à imiter, pour augmenter son bien-être, les monuments et l'aménagement de Rome."¹³¹

The fact that even Julien appears to have bought into the idea of the superiority of Roman urban culture brings us to examine E. Said's claim that "every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric."¹³² This is certainly a harsh view but is it an unjustified one? L. Gandhi warns against falling into the trap of creating the counter-stereotype of the racist Westerner.¹³³ Said does go on to say that virtually all "advanced" societies are racist and imperialist.¹³⁴ So his claim is not merely an attack on Europeans but on all those who attempt

¹³¹ Julien (1968), p.167

¹³² Said (1994), p.204

¹³³ Gandhi (1998), p.79

to study other cultures. If this is his belief, it is difficult to imagine why he would refer to the societies in question as advanced. In any case, if we accept his argument uncritically, it becomes impossible to justify any attempt made by 'outsiders' to study another civilization. Implicit in his statement is the claim that people studying their own culture will be free of biases. This suggestion on the part of Said is stated explicitly by M. Al-Da'mi who believes:

Orientalist histories are useful, not only because they show us the image of our past through a different and biased perspective, but also because Orientalist motives and compulsions, distortions and prejudices, provide the Oriental writers with the counter-compulsion and with the incentive to research his own history in an enlightened and objective manner.¹³⁵

This possibility of value-free research might exist in a society in which there were no ethnic, linguistic or social differences, but otherwise, there will always be room for biases. Nevertheless, Said and Al-Da'mi do us a service by exposing the colonial discourse which informed much scholarly work prior to the independence movements of the post-war period. Let us now turn to the non-European voices which arose following decolonization.

As previously mentioned, M. Bénabou is the most significant representative of the Maghrebi reaction to colonial writings. His primary concern is to demonstrate that there was continual resistance to Romanization and, in the process, to give more of a voice to indigenous Africans. He also attempts to show that

¹³⁴ Said (1994), p.204

certain cultural features traditionally believed to have been exported by the Romans actually pre-dated the arrival of Europeans on the south shore of the Mediterranean. One such feature is monumental architecture. This aspect of cities has for so long been considered typical of Roman civilization that L. Revell has spoken of "the academic game of judging the progress of Romanization by counting the number of public buildings a community possesses, with the implicit assumption that the more signs of *romanitas* evident, the further that community has progressed along a fixed scale from 'native' to 'Roman'."¹³⁶ Bénabou, in contrast, gives the example of Souk-el-Gour to claim that, under Roman rule, Numidian and Mauretanian kings lost their ability to bring about the mass-mobilization necessary for monumental building projects.¹³⁷ This suggests not only that monumental architecture existed prior to Roman occupation but also that, in some cases, it may have diminished under foreign domination. More generally, Bénabou argues in favour of a pre-Roman urban tradition in the region¹³⁸.

Another proponent of the anti-colonial reaction of the 1970s was Mahfoud Kaddache. His statement that "le phénomène de l'urbanisation, avec ses importantes constructions, traduit donc une véritable richesse"¹³⁹ appears, at first glance, to support the traditional association between urban development and

¹³⁵ Al-Da'mi (1998), p.8

¹³⁶ Reveil (1998), p.52

¹³⁷ Bénabou (1976), p.402, n58

¹³⁸ Bénabou (1976), p.416

¹³⁹ Kaddache (1982), p.167

prosperity. This is not the case, however, as we can see by the following:

Cette richesse, ces villes, traduisaient le luxe d'une certaine minorité qui s'est enrichie de l'exploitation économique du pays et qui a profité du travail de la grande masse des Berbères. Elles symbolisaient la richesse des possédants, dont beaucoup ne résidaient même pas en Afrique.¹⁴⁰

F. el-Bédoui's monograph on Tébourba (ancient *Thuburbo Minus*), even though it is not devoted exclusively to the Roman period, presents some useful criticisms of traditional views. Perhaps most significantly, he points out that virtually all existing models (in his case, sociological but the same is true of historical ones) have been developed by Europeans/Americans whose aims were different from those of a native.¹⁴¹ He also reminds us that the interests of the scholar influence the direction that the research will take.¹⁴²

From these examples, it should be sufficiently clear that Maghrebi writers of the 1970s had an agenda when approaching the writing of history. This is not necessarily a criticism, as a counter-weight to the traditional colonial discourse was needed. These scholars went about demonstrating that this discourse had hijacked historical writings on Roman North Africa and attempted to present alternative versions of history in which ancient Africans played a significant, even central role for the first time.

¹⁴⁰ Kaddache (1982), p.167

¹⁴¹ el-Bédoui (1977), p.2

¹⁴² el-Bédoui (1977), p.2

At this point, a word of caution is necessary. It is important that we not allow our discussion to become racialized. Said's comment quoted above threatens to lead us down a dangerous path. It is true that early works on Roman Africa were the exclusive domain of Europeans and that the reaction of the 1970s was initiated by Maghrebis. Both were largely the result of the political and cultural climates within which these scholars worked. Today, in contrast, historians from both sides of the Mediterranean have much more in common. It is true, regarding the Eurocentric aspect of scholarship in the colonial era, that that period did not have a monopoly on this kind of writing. MacKendrick has already been mentioned in an earlier chapter. Another example is C. Lepelley who, writing on Africa in the Late Empire, draws a distinction between "l'est du pays, riche, romanisé et pacifique" and Mauritania "où les villes peu nombreuses étaient menacées en permanence par les tribus berbères, imperméables à la romanisation et inexpugnables dans leurs montagnes."¹⁴³ It is clear from this statement that the author views towns as bastions of Roman civilization, which is portrayed in a positive light as struggling against the threat of barbarism. So, while the kind of writing found in colonial times has become considerably more rare, it has not disappeared altogether. Nevertheless, it is no longer accurate to present a picture in which European and Maghrebi scholars are pitted against each other in an ideological battle for possession of

¹⁴³ Lepelley, vol.1 (1979), p.21

African history. Rather, they seem to be working toward a common goal of describing Romano-African culture as accurately as possible. This does not mean, of course, that current scholarship is above reproach but simply that it should not be divided along national or ethnic lines. Let us now turn our attention to some of the research of the last twenty years which pertains to urbanization.

The same realization (that colonial-era scholarship may still exert some influence today) which caused Mattingly to make a plea for a more thorough deconstruction of the colonial discourse has led others to continue to work towards a greater understanding of ancient North African indigenous culture. M. Fantar's study of Punic Kerkouane not only supports Bénabou's claim that urban settlements in Africa pre-date the arrival of the Romans but also demonstrates that there existed a high level of urban planning. Furthermore, he criticizes the Eurocentric view that the grid-pattern adopted by Phoenicians in Africa was indebted to Greek models, arguing instead that the ultimate source of inspiration was Mesopotamian.¹⁴⁴ N. Ferchiou echoes Bénabou's point concerning the capacity of the indigenous population to produce large architectural projects. In her study of the indigenous settlement of Thaca in present-day Tunisia, she gives us an example of a decline in monumental construction during the Roman occupation. In stark contrast to the traditional European view of this period as North Africa's golden

¹⁴⁴ Fantar (1987), p.68

age, she suggests that the aforementioned decline was a result of "un certain appauvrissement, sur le plan non pas financier, mais civilisationnel, - Rome ayant quelque peu étouffé la personnalité de la population locale."¹⁴⁵ Mattingly speaks of two regions of the Aurès mountains where:

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. Similar spectacular development in non-Romanized and highly marginal areas is attested in Tripolitania.¹⁴⁶

All three of these scholars (and they are not alone) are working toward the interrelated goals of undermining the colonial discourse and giving a voice to the historical 'Other' by demonstrating the accomplishments of which Africa's indigenous populations were capable. It should be noted that they do not deny that Romanization took place but argue that the Romans were not solely responsible for all the positive aspects of ancient North Africa's civilization. This is certainly a laudable project but, at the same time, it is not without problems. Historians today tend to treat the works of colonial-era scholars as well as those of Maghrebis such as Bénabou and Laroui as ideologically tainted. And while individual works of contemporary scholarship are often criticized on methodological grounds, there is little in the way of examining the influence of cultural beliefs on them except in cases where older biases seem

¹⁴⁵ Ferchiou (1984), p.46

¹⁴⁶ Mattingly (1996), pp58-9

to persist, as in the case of MacKendrick. But as Michel Foucault suggests:

the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them.¹⁴⁷

Foucault is not speaking here specifically of history but Said has convincingly argued that scholarship can be a powerful political tool. Laura Nader, for her part, has argued that we may be unaware of hegemonic cultural beliefs which influence our thinking. For these reasons, it is necessary to read historical works very critically. In early works, one finds the claim that Rome urbanized Africa and thereby made it better. In Maghrebi works of the 70s, there is the claim that urbanization was inflicted upon the locals. In post-colonial works, the idea of the superiority of cities is not challenged. Instead it is the claim that urbanization was a Roman phenomenon which is disputed.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Said believes that the problems inherent in Orientalism are alive and well in today's scholarship. This is not surprising since there still exists a considerable power imbalance between the so-called developed and developing nations. As mentioned in Chapter 2, it is a truism that history writing is a product of the present as much as of the past. But to what extent do people really stop to think about this statement? One gets the impression that awareness of it is limited to acknowledging that both imperialism and

decolonization have had a profound influence on the scholarship of their respective times. This recognition may lead to the rather cozy conclusion that, whereas historical works of the last century were Eurocentric, today's history is a totally (or very nearly) democratic discipline. In addition to Mattingly's plea concerning the colonial discourse, perhaps there should be a call for a more thorough examination of the hegemonic ideas masquerading as common sense which influence today's writing in a way that, although it appears more subtle (possibly even invisible) to our eyes, may be no less damaging or condescending than were the patently Eurocentric views of earlier works. There is a saying that if fish were capable of reason, the last thing they would discover is water because it is such a self-evident part of their existence.¹⁴⁸ The point is that certain things are taken for granted to such an extent that we may not recognize their ideological component. It would seem that certain aspects of so-called development such as technology and urbanization fall into this category. At least in Classics, there does not seem to be much questioning of "development, organization - in other words, the generalized application of other people's inventions."¹⁴⁹ A. Escobar claims that the development discourse "created a space in which only certain things could be said or even imagined."¹⁵⁰ He is not speaking of Roman studies here but I believe that the statement applies. Mattingly and Hitchner, for

¹⁴⁷ quoted in Rabinow (1984), p.6

¹⁴⁸ Zubrow (1989), p.44

¹⁴⁹ Laroui (1977), p.45

example, claim that recent archaeological studies of Garamantian sites in the desert interior of Libya:

have overturned many cherished beliefs about the level of development, economic mode and sophistication of people who remained always on the fringe of the Empire. This tribe cultivated wheat early in the first millenium B.C., developed proto-urban settlements, and incorporated a huge range of Mediterranean material culture into their funerary assemblages.¹⁵¹

Now, there is no doubt that this sort of writing is preferable to the 19th Century variety or, for that matter, MacKendrick's. The problem is that agriculture, urbanization and trade are clearly seen as signs of civilization. Although well-intentioned, Mattingly and Hitchner seem to be saying implicitly that the Garamantians were culturally superior to their nomadic neighbours (though still inferior to the Romans). They have apparently internalized the values of our industrialized, capitalist, free-trading society. Regarding the consequences of such biases, Barabas states:

the "convictions" of a hegemonic paradigm, once reified, internalized, positively valued, and socially reproduced, allow the classification of the social behaviors and phenotypes of other cultures or subcultures according to criteria ethnocentrically defined from a supposed maximum level of "civilization".¹⁵²

If we accept that earlier historical writing was influenced by ideology, then there is no reason to think that present-day scholarship is any different. The connection between power and knowledge has been discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to the colonial 'Other'. It should be noted, however, that this

¹⁵⁰ Escobar (1997), p.85

¹⁵¹ Mattingly & Hitchner, p.171

connection is not limited to the use of knowledge of this other by an imperial power in order to increase its power. Nader discusses how our knowledge of our own environment, not just that of others, can be the product of ideology.

The notion of hegemony as flexibly expressed by Antonio Gramsci implies that some systems of thought develop over time and reflect the interests of certain classes or groups in the society who manage to universalize their beliefs and values. Dogmas reinforce controls as they are produced and reproduced by intellectual elites...A key factor in constructing dogmas is the restriction of discourse on alternative conceptions of reality, accomplished through what Foucault terms the construction of 'true discourses'...What we see depends on what we know. What we know depends in part on how knowledge or knowing is produced and by whom and when and how it is filtered by experience.¹⁵³

The over-valuing of 'development' appears to be one such hegemonic idea in our times. There seems to be a prevailing view which was also present in the minds of the Greeks and Romans that urban settlement, along with its attendant factors such as large-scale agriculture and trade, is somehow superior to alternative modes of life. These elements are central to the concept of development as applied by all-powerful bodies such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United Nations to 'developing' nations. They are also significant aspects of the traditional view of Romanization. Today, we rarely use terms like 'barbarian' or 'primitive' to describe these civilizational others but the tone of much writing reveals a subtle but all too real bias in favour of societies that more closely resemble our own. Why is this? Edward Said wrote

¹⁵² Barabas in Nader (1997), p.723

regarding the impact of colonialism on the society of the colonizers:

The asymmetry is striking. In one instance, we assume that the better part of history in colonial territories was a function of the imperial interventions; in the other, there is an equally obstinate assumption that colonial undertakings were marginal and perhaps even eccentric to the central activities of the great metropolitan cultures. Thus, the tendency in anthropology, history, and cultural studies in Europe and the United States is to treat the whole of world history as viewable by a kind of Western super-subject, whose historicizing and disciplinary rigor either takes away or, in the post-colonial period restores history to people and cultures 'without' history. Few full-scale critical studies have focussed on the relationship between modern Western imperialism and its culture, the occlusion of that deeply symbiotic relationship being a result of the relationship itself.¹⁵⁴

The relevance of this quote is three-fold. First of all, it calls for an assessment of how European colonization influenced European culture and scholarship. Secondly, Said's words could be applied to Roman studies in that not enough attention has been given to the ways in which colonization affected Rome itself, not just the colonies. And finally, it could be argued that the present-day Western developmental ardour is not so different from the colonialism of the past. As Dirlik states, following G. Prakash, "bourgeois modernization, or 'developmentalism', represents the renovation and redeployment of 'colonial modernity...as economic development.'¹⁵⁵ The methods are certainly different but, in many ways, the results are the same. And the effects are not uni-directional. We need to be more aware of the ways in which the actions of our culture lead to the

¹⁵³ Nader (1997), p.721

¹⁵⁴ Said (1993), p.35

internalizing of certain values and have an impact on our scholarship. I single out Mattingly because he seems to be one of the more innovative thinkers in his field and yet this bias remains. I believe that it is a serious problem and must inevitably have an impact on studies of Romanization. As for Hingley's outright rejection of Romanization as a useful concept on the grounds that it originated in the period of modern colonialism, this seems extreme. If we follow his logic, Classics itself would be completely discredited as a field of study, given its links with imperialism. A flawed model need not necessarily be abandoned. D. Chakrabarty's advice concerning a politics of despair would seem to lead down a more productive path. As we shall see in the conclusion, there are problems with our tools of research and perhaps all that we can do is be aware of their limitations. But when it comes to our own cultural biases, by confronting them, perhaps we can do away with them or at least lessen their impact. Obviously, historians and archaeologists can never be free of values but we should not stop trying to better our research.

¹⁵⁵ Dirlik (1997), p.298

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been an examination of the ways in which historical writing is influenced by the culture and times in which scholars work. For this undertaking, I selected, as my subject matter, the historiography of Roman North Africa. The particular focus was on the concept of Romanization and, more specifically, urbanization. North Africa (modern Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya), having been colonized by European powers in both classical and modern times, seemed to be an ideal area for a study of this kind.

The study began by a tracing of the origin and evolution of the concept of Romanization. The idea was first given full expression in Britain and soon gained widespread favour as a tool for the study of all parts of the Roman Empire, including North Africa. In the last three decades, this concept has come under increasing fire to the point that, today, scholars such as P. Freeman and R. Hingley argue that it has outlived its usefulness.¹⁵⁶ Their view is by no means accepted by all their peers and we noted the wide spectrum of opinions on the matter. The following chapter was a literature review of historical writings on Roman North Africa beginning with the European (mostly French) scholars of the 19th and early 20th Centuries, followed by the Maghrebi reaction of the 1970s, and finally, the

¹⁵⁶ Hingley (1996); Freeman (1993)

scholarship of the last twenty years by scholars from the Maghreb, Europe and North America. In the third chapter, we carried out a review of pertinent contemporary theory. The main topics dealt with were post-colonial theory and the debate between relativists and practical realists concerning the knowability of history as it actually occurred.

The final chapter was a study of scholarship pertaining to the urbanization of North Africa during the Roman period. The goal was to examine not so much the nature of this urbanization as the treatment the topic has received from historians over the last 150 years. After analyzing this scholarship in light of the theory discussed in the previous chapter, I reached the following conclusions.

Early writings on the topic tended to be extremely Eurocentric. As described by S. Gsell and J. Toutain, urbanization was seen as a cultural phenomenon exported to Africa by more advanced civilizations. In certain coastal areas, most notably Northern Tunisia, cities were identified as Punic creations with subsequent development being attributed to Roman influence. For most of North Africa, however, the Roman conquerors were seen to have been almost exclusively responsible for the establishment of towns. In short, urbanization was a positive but foreign development for ancient North Africa. This view was prevalent for the duration of the modern colonial period.

In the years following the decolonization of North Africa (and European empires in general), historical writing started to change. Inspired by writers such as Frantz Fanon and Léopold Senghor, some scholars began to question traditional versions of history and attempted to give alternate readings which were less Eurocentric. Roman studies were not left untouched by this new school of thought. Indeed, post-colonial theory has contributed much to the study of Roman North Africa. This can be seen especially in attempts to give a place to indigenous Africans in the history of the period as well as in deconstructions of the colonial discourse. Perhaps inevitably, given the new climate of self-reflexive historical writing of which post-colonial theory has been an important part, it too has been deconstructed to a certain extent. Today, some scholars view both colonial and post-colonial writings as carrying the taint of ideology. Both are seen to be the products of their respective times and, to a certain extent, as distortions of reality. What seems to be lacking in Classics and is certainly more difficult is a concerted attempt to engage and deconstruct the hegemonic concepts which influence the writing of history today. One such concept is, I believe, developmental thought which holds that urbanization, industrialization, surplus-producing agriculture, extensive trade networks, etc. are necessary for the well-being of a given society. These elements are central to the contemporary concept of development but are also significant aspects of the traditional view of Romanization. Today, scholars

such as M. Fantar, D. Mattingly and B. Shaw are attempting to show that these phenomena existed, at least to some degree, in North Africa prior to Roman conquest. What these historians do not do is question the superiority of these aspects of civilization over others. "For lack of a critique of the ethnocentric bias of economic and Western assumptions, the new universality is just as vitiated by common ethnocentrism as the old one was", writes S. Latouche.¹⁵⁷ Though the preceding quote does not refer to Roman studies, I believe it applies. Scholars, whether from 'developed' or 'developing' nations, are eager to show that indigenous Africans were capable of creating some semblance of urbanization (usually referred to as proto-urban) but do not explain why a sedentary life-style is seen to be a sign of sophistication. It seems to me, therefore, that they have internalized this hegemonic concept of development and are reproducing it in their works on Roman North Africa.

The present thesis has examined one discourse which is problematic in today's historical writings, but it is likely not the only such discourse. I believe that more self-reflexive writing is needed, but there are other less fundamental ways in which Roman studies can be improved. What follows are some suggestions made by scholars who are looking for ways to improve historical research. We shall start with some possible directions for studies concerning urbanization in the Roman world and then

¹⁵⁷ Latouche (1997), p.135

turn our attention to new methods which could impact archeological research in general.

A significant issue in the study of urbanization is the problematic relationship between town and country. As mentioned in Chapter 4, too little attention has been paid to rural areas but, perhaps more significantly, there is a need for increased focus on the symbiosis between cities and their hinterland. Towns cannot be understood properly in isolation without an examination of their environment as a whole. Whittaker cites theorists such as Abrams and Wallerstein on the need to do away with the town/country dichotomy and replace it with "the model of the ancient integrated *polis*".¹⁵⁸

This traditional dichotomy between rural and urban settlements is a distorting factor especially in the case of such a densely populated area as were certain regions of ancient North Africa. P.-A. Février asks: "Où est la ville? Où est la campagne? Qu'est-ce qui permet d'opposer ces espaces dans des zones où la densité du groupement est si forte que l'on peut parler de sururbanisation?"¹⁵⁹

Within urban studies, there has been a disproportionate focus on the elite. This realization has prompted D. Mattingly and B. Hitchner to call for increased attention to be given to the study of suburbs and the houses of segments of society other than the elite.¹⁶⁰ K. Lomas agrees but she recognizes the

¹⁵⁸ Whittaker (1995), p.10

¹⁵⁹ Février (1982), p.328

¹⁶⁰ Mattingly & Hitchner (1995), p.187

difficulties inherent in any such attempt, given the imbalance in the available data favouring this segment of society. She does, however, point out an interesting direction which the study of the elite might take, one which would have implications for issues of urbanization and Romanization. Writing about cities in Italy, she claims:

In any city, [the elite] are the group most exposed, and receptive, to external contacts, but also the group with the greatest need to control outside influences. In the Greek and Hellenized cities of southern Italy, this can be observed with particular clarity, as the Romanized elite developed ways of manipulating the Greek heritage of the region to validate its own position and relations with Rome.¹⁶¹

Also along the lines of social hierarchy, R. Hingley argues that our conceptions of wealth and poverty are based on views of our own society. He suggests that large villas may not have been the only way to display wealth and power but that social behaviour such as control of feasting or ritual might have been other means. How this theory is to be proven or disproven through archaeology, he does not say but at least it is a recognition of a problem.

Another interesting suggestion for possible future directions for the study of urban sites comes from Mattingly and Hitchner who call for "an archaeological mode of analysis which is both independent of the prevailing historical perspective derived from texts and epigraphy, and capable of producing its own interpretive models of urban development."¹⁶² They would

¹⁶¹ Lomas (1995), p.4

¹⁶² Mattingly & Hitchner (1995), p,186

"substitute juridical status of cities (*colonia, municipium, etc.*) with a typology based on function, as derived from the structural and material record."¹⁶³ Despite J. Gascou's claim that cities in North Africa have traditionally been studied from a social and cultural rather than a juridical perspective¹⁶⁴, there is no shortage of works which adopted the latter. For example, T.R.S. Broughton makes no use whatsoever of archaeology, relying solely on epigraphy for his examination of towns in Africa *Proconsularis*. Mattingly and Hitchner call for less reliance on juridical status in the study of towns in the provinces. They suggest that this "restructuring of the evidence on African towns provides a useful model for deconstructing the process of cultural transmission, evolution, and synthesis."¹⁶⁵

As for the methods used to obtain knowledge concerning Roman Africa, both Mattingly/Hitchner and Février make a plea for greater reliance on archaeology. Due to the abundance of inscriptions in North Africa, epigraphy has played a preponderant role as a tool of study. This was especially true in the early years of European scholarship in the area but is still the case, to a lesser extent, today. The problem with this scenario is that Latin inscriptions "are by definition expressions of the hegemonic culture."¹⁶⁶ Février is particularly impassioned in his plea, saying "le temps du questionnement est venu. Du questionnement sur le fonctionnement de l'épigraphie, comme sigue

¹⁶³ Mattingly & Hitchner (1995), p.186

¹⁶⁴ Gascou (1982), p.139

¹⁶⁵ Mattingly & Hitchner (1995), p.187

du pouvoir et donc d'une propagande, comme manifestation de l'idéologie."¹⁶⁷ As Shaw points out, however, archaeology is itself the product of the era of European colonization.¹⁶⁸

It would be preferable for different methods to be combined in order to further our knowledge. Bénabou drives this point home by highlighting the shortcomings of both archaeology and onomastics for the study of towns in Roman North Africa. Archaeology by its very nature can only study material remains and this, Bénabou claims, is problematic. He believes that it is a distortion to label as Roman any site containing Roman ruins without taking into account the origins of, reasons for and length of the occupation. Moreover, the use of Roman procedures or techniques does not necessarily mean that those using them were Roman or even Romanized. He cites centuriation as an example. Furthermore, stone structures have the best chance of survival and, given that the majority of indigenous dwellings were made of earth, there is a definite pro-Roman bias in the record.¹⁶⁹ Finally, with regards to archaeology, Ferchiou expresses concern that certain methods which have been effective in Europe may be less so when transplanted to North Africa. She cites the sudden, violent rainfall and attendant soil erosion characteristic of Tunisia as possible problems in that they can carry away smaller artifacts such as tesserae, thereby giving the

¹⁶⁶ Fentress (1979), p.2

¹⁶⁷ Février (1989) vol.1, p. 80

¹⁶⁸ Shaw (1980), p.31

¹⁶⁹ Bénabou (1976), pp391-2

impression that a structure may have existed where in actuality there was nothing.¹⁷⁰

As for onomastics, Bénabou asks whether the adoption of Roman nomenclature really means total assimilation of the individual. Moreover, he says that this particular research tool is useful in studying Romanization only if we have a complete list of all the names of a given population at a given time. Instead, we have the names engraved on tombs in certain centres. He claims that these names may not be representative of the population as a whole. He asks: "Que representent les quelques dizaines de milliers d'inscriptions que nous pouvons connaître, étalées sur plus d'un demi-millenaire, au regard de l'ensemble de la population de l'Afrique?"¹⁷¹ The majority of the population, after all, could not afford or simply did not want to have their names engraved in stone. He says, therefore, that onomastics can help but must not be the only research tool.¹⁷² Bénabou is not trying to dismiss onomastics or archaeology altogether but is merely trying to draw attention to the fact that both methods tend to exaggerate the Roman presence and obscure the indigenous one from our view. Février too believes that North African studies are still too Romanocentric and asks the question: "Et donc faut-il voir seulement les choses à partir de Rome?"¹⁷³

This last point, along with earlier concerns raised by C.A. Diop and A. Laroui, raises the question of whether or not

¹⁷⁰ Ferchiou (1995), p.39

¹⁷¹ Bénabou (1976), p.394

¹⁷² Bénabou (1976), pp393-4

archaeological and historical research in their present forms are capable of reaching conclusions that contradict our biases, given that both the research methods and the biases are products of the same culture. Let us assume that it is only a matter of fine-tuning.

Finally, let me reiterate that my intention in this thesis has not been to judge but, given that practical realists believe in the possibility of improving historical methods, merely to suggest possible ways in which classical archaeology might become less ethnocentric. There is much excellent work in the area but there is still room for improvement. In this matter, I shall leave the final word to Michel Foucault: "My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not the same thing as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do..."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Février (1989), vol.2, p.196

¹⁷⁴ Foucault quoted in Rahnema (1997), p.377

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