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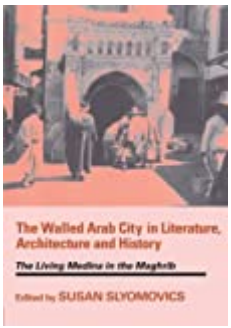

Susan Slyomovics, ed. *The Walled Arab City in Literature, Architecture, and History: The Living Medina in the Maghrib.* History and Society in the Islamic World. London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2001. 165 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7146-8215-0.

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The Walled Arab City in Literature, Architecture, and History explores a trajectory famously charted by Janet Abu-Lughod and critics of her influential article "The Islamic CityÝÃHistoric Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance" (1987). Abu-LughodÐÃs article continued a discussion begun in the late 1960s to early 1970s among scholars and practicing architects regarding the history and continued viability of the category "Islamic city." Her article specifically addressed the concerns of planners and bureaucrats in the Middle East who desired to include "Islamic" elements in development projects. Drawing on previous studies and fieldwork, Abu-Lughod dismantled the category, historicizing and exposing its overly-reductive, self-referential contents, and critiquing its authors for ignoring or disallowing certain socio-economic conditions. After exploring circumstances in which the category could be used, Abu-Lughod concluded that the notion of an "Islamic city" will remain relevant only if it is accepted that "cities are processes, not products," or rather the sum of both design and usêÃa response reflecting the dichotomization between space and place popular in humanist geography since the 1970s.

However, Abu-Lughod was subsequently criticized for her idea of "use," or rather her overt focus upon Islam and particular definition of "Islamic".[1] Abu-LughodÐÃs article and the response it generated affirmed two major sentiments characterizing the discourse on "Islamic" cities during the late 1980Ðs through 1990Ðs: the import of process over form and the suspicion of universalizing characterizations.[2] The legacy of the debate and its participantsÎ interest in balancing practical and poststructuralist approaches is evident in *The Walled Arab City*, a recent publication on place making in a North African context.

The Walled Arab City contains several papers presented at the May 29-June 7, 1996 conference sponsored by the American Institute for Maghrib Studies and held at the Tangier American Legation Museum in Tangier, Morocco. The introduction states several goals, including championing investigations into social praxis, encouraging the revitalization and preservation of the area around the museum, and announcing current research projects. Conference participants based in the United States, North Africa, and Europe, and from disparate fields in the humanities and sciences either created or examined pre- to post-colonial characterizations of enclosed or formerly enclosed cities ("medinas") in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt.[3] All but one essay demonstrate authorsÎ extensive fieldwork and research in municipal or national archives of North Africa and Europe.

The Walled Arab City builds on the thoughts of Abu-Lughod and her critics, paying particular attention to

Abu-LughođÃs interest in social networks. Contributors avoid the problematic "Islamic" qualifier and definitions of "Islamic" life, and eschew generalizations about the southern Mediterranean experience as a whole. Essayists rethink established research agendas and city images, especially those founded upon morphology which they criticize in particular for privileging visual apprehension of medinas, and supporting an elliptical belief that certain designs signify an unduly valued and idealized premodern civilization. Taking inspiration from Michel de CerteaûÃs approach to "everyday life" [4], several authors explore how towns once conceived or edified under pre-modern, Arab, Berber, or Ottoman Muslim rule can be characterized by late nineteenth to early twentieth century activity within them, though not definitively or homogeneously so.

Like Abu-Lughod, several authors address the practical desire to map cultural identities; they direct their papers towards urban planners and architects involved in preservation and revitalization. In 1996, rehabilitation projects organized and sponsored by national governments, local experts, and international organizations, such as UNESCO, The World Bank, and IMF, were either recently completed, planned or renewed in several North African cities, most notably Fez. More than a few conference participants feared preservation and revitalization under an imagined idea of authenticity would lead to gentrification and museumification at the expense of the complex social networks through which the North African medinas "lived."

Essays in *The Walled Arab City* can be divided into roughly two thematic types: meditations on use of space and examinations of medinas in text. Three papers in the first category present examples of twentieth century life from the position of various actors, while a fourth considers a collective memory.

Djilali Sari recounts the histories of artists and intellectuals such as himself living in the Algerian medinas and similar settlements. He brings to light tactics used by a rising elite and middle-class towards establishing an expressly Algerian cultural identity during the final century of French colonial rule. Drawing on archival research and personal experience, Sari "remaps" several cities, emphasizing sites frequented by musicians, painters, writers, among others, and the location of schools.

Justin McGuinness describes walking the rue du Pacha and rue Marr in Tunis where he lived for several years. McGuinness takes careful note of sights, smells, colors, sounds, and activity on the street. Though he speaks as a resident and explains how both genders occupy the city, McGuinness refreshingly acknowledges his complicated identity as an author, admitting "much of what I have to say is highly subjective, from the standpoint of a European male living in one of the poorer districts of a historic Mediterranean Muslim city." His essay shows the sensory richness of everyday life in the popular quarter of a medina which he argues is little acknowledged by current Tunisian protective legislation.

Veterinarians Diana K. Davis and Deny Frappier consider the social role of equines in Fez, demonstrating through meticulous fieldwork how the pack animal system of transportation remains vital today for a significant proportion of inhabitants and small business owners. Davis and Frappier then examine proposals to restore Fez, criticizing them for ignoring or undermining the equine network.

Susan Slyomovics examines the role of memory in making places habitable for diaspora communities. She discusses how Jewish immigrants symbolically relocated holy sites and pilgrimage from the medina of Tlemcen to the confines of a Parisian synagogue after the 1962 exodus. She explains how TlemceníÃs sacred geography is conjured visually through photos and commemorative plaques; aurally with prayer, music, and recitation of stories; and physically through walking a revived "pilgrimage" trail among other rituals. Her essay draws upon her observations in Paris, inhabitantŝÃ accounts, travelerŝÃ descriptions, and academic studies of Jewish life in Tlemcen from the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.

Papers in the second category explore ways in which medinas and medina life are subjects in history and literature. Authors alternatively develop a less recognized area of study, rethink a methodological approach, and recharacterize an orientalist travelogue.

Mia Fuller exposes the under-studied differences between colonial European attitudes towards medinas and Islamic culture. Focusing on Tripoli, Fuller compares colonial French and Italian policy during 1911-1943, the era Italy controlled Libya. Fuller bases her study on administrative documents found in Italian archives. However, as she had yet to conduct research in the municipal archives of Tripoli, Fuller only tentatively concludes that Italians preservationists were comparatively less interested in Ottoman and Arab sites than Roman. Nonetheless, Fuller carefully and cogently argues several political and cultural reasons motivating Italian disinterest in Tripoli. Her essay provides a well-researched, thought-

provoking contrast to studies on French colonial policy in both Algeria and Morocco.

Susan Gilson Miller argues against an overly homogeneous understanding of "Western" and "Eastern" urbanism by demonstrating how these categories do not hold water, so to speak. Miller charts the exchange of ideas in Tangier between Moroccan, European, and descendants of European residents during the long conflict over water distribution from the latter half of the eighteenth through early twentieth centuries. She shows how over time and due to specific circumstances Moroccan officials adopted what was once pejoratively positioned as "European ideas," and thus supported hybridized solutions to the problem of water distribution. During the course of her argument Miller precisely explains how the water system functioned, focusing upon canalization, sources, fountain placement and use. Her work draws upon travel accounts, newspapers articles, and municipal records found in Tangier and the National Library of Morocco, among other collections.

James Housefield reads Nerval anew. Housefield claims GÃ©rard de Nerval "humorously debunks the orientalist expectations of his readers" in *Voyage en Orient*.[5] Housefield then concludes that NervalÎs text can be valued as a history of lives and stories from the medinas he visited, such as Cairo. Housefield positions his opinions against the arguments of Edward Said (1978) and Dorothy M. Betz (1991).[6]

Two great strengths of *The Walled Arab City* are the open way conference organizers respond to the issue of determining cultural identity and authorsÎ use of unpublished, primary sources. Though some readers may not be satisfied by the cursory manner in which a few authors frame their arguments, *The Walled Arab City* should be of interest to scholars of human geography and cities in text, in addition to specialists of North African studies.

Notes

[1]. Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic CityÎHistoric Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 19 (1987): 155-176, pp. 155, 172, and 172 and footnote no. 31, p. 175. For a contextualization of Abu-LughodÎs position see the introduction to Masashi Haneda and Toru Miura, eds., *Islamic Urban Studies: Historical Review and Perspectives* (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1994), including a summary of critiques against Abu-LughodÎs position in 1987 on p. 7. Also see Akira Goto, "Keynote Presentation: A Challenge to the Notion of Islamic Cities," *The Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Urbanism in Islam (ICUIT II). November 27-29, 1990. The Middle Eastern Culture Center, Tokyo, Japan* (Tokyo: The Middle East Culture, 1994), pp. 287-300. Articles published in *MIMAR* magazine during the 1980s and workshops sponsored by the Aga Khan Foundation during the late 1970s are two among many arenas in which architectsÎ and urban plannersÎ expressed interest in exploring "Islamic" designs and city planning. Abu-LughodÎs bibliography contains more citations, and demonstrates the active role she played in the discourse by both presenting papers and taking part in discussions at conferences since the early 1970Îs, and publishing extensively on the issue of "Islamic" urbanism and cultural identity, her 1987 *IJMES* article being one of the most recognized. The crisis of functionalism and space/place dichotomy I refer to is culled from Diana ArgesÎs summary in *Architecture from Without: Theoretical Framings for a Critical Practice* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1993 [1991]), a contemporary book to Abu-LughodÎs studies in "Islamic" urbanism.

[2]. Papers given in Workshop C "A Challenge to the Notion of Islamic Cities" from the proceedings mentioned above show participants cover much the same ground. They attack Abu-LughodÎs idea of Islam, yet position her work as a center around which discussion turns. See Goto above, also Dale F. Eickelman, "The Comparative Study ofˆÃIslamicÎ Cities," *The Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Urbanism in Islam (ICUIT II)*, pp. 309-322.

[3]. To be precise, the plural of "medina" in Arabic is "mudun," but "medinas" is common in English language publications, as is "medina" rather than "madinah." These points are noted in the Introduction. However, it is a little unclear why conference organizers choose to qualify "walled cities" with "Arab" in the title of this book. True, most scholars agree that the Arabs were the first major city builders in North Africa after the Romans, and that Arab rulers favored protective walls. Yet, not only ethnically Arab rulers developed the medinas mentioned in this book. For example, the Marinids of the Banu Marin Zanata Berber tribe built much of Fez during the late thirteenth centuries, including establishing the walled palace city Fez al-Jedid. In the eighth century, the Banu Ifran, also a tribe of Zanata Berbers, built Tilimsan (Tlemcen) over a Roman settlement. Subsequent Berber Muslim dynasties, especially the Zayyanids, contributed religious monuments to Tlemcen. After the sixteenth century, Ottoman Turks built palaces, mosques, baths, warehouses/hotels and religious schools in Tunis, Tripoli

(especially), and Algiers, among other modern-day Algerian and Libyan cities. Also, the medinas mentioned in this book have been comprised of ethnically diverse populations during much of their existence, especially during the colonial and postcolonial eras favored in this publication. See Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[4]. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984). Slyomovics and Miller in their jointly written Introduction refer to de Certeau as an inspiration for the conference as a whole. Most authors do not directly refer to de Certeau.

[5]. GÃ©rard de NervaÌÃs *Voyage en Orient* in *Oeuvres complÃ¨tes*, ed. Jean Guillaume and Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard/BibliothÃ¨que de la PlÃ©iade, 1984), vol. 2.

[6]. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979 [1978]); and Dorothy M. Betz, "NervaÌÃs *Voyage en Orient* and BaudelairêÃs Imagined Orient," *Romance Quarterly* 38/4 (1991): 399-406.

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