



Dispatches From New York: The Travels of a Moroccan diplomat at the end of the age of empire

David Stenner

To cite this article: David Stenner (2023) Dispatches From New York: The Travels of a Moroccan diplomat at the end of the age of empire, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 28:3, 519-539, DOI: [10.1080/13629387.2021.1973244](https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2021.1973244)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2021.1973244>



Published online: 19 Sep 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 55



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Dispatches From New York: The Travels of a Moroccan diplomat at the end of the age of empire

David Stenner



Department of History, Christopher Newport University, Newport News, VA, USA

ABSTRACT

The Moroccan nationalist Mehdi Bennouna traveled to New York in 1947 to advocate for his country's independence before the United Nations. Throughout his six-month stay, he wrote daily reports to inform his colleagues back home about his activities, focusing not only on politics but also detailing the rhythm of daily life in the global metropolis. He thereby reasserted Morocco's rightful place on the global stage and portrayed the kingdom's urban bourgeoisie as the social force most capable of leading the nation into the future. In many ways, his diary contained resonances of the rihla account penned by the Moroccan diplomat Mohammad al-Saffar, who had provided a detailed report about life under industrial modernity upon his return from France in 1845. Contrasting the two travelogues offers unique a window onto the transformation Moroccan society during a century of European colonial expansion and contraction. The same international system, which had once posed an eminent threat to the kingdom's sovereignty, now seemed to invite Morocco's return on the basis of true equality.

KEYWORDS Colonialism; decolonization; Rihla; United Nations; Morocco

On 11 June 1947, the Moroccan anticolonial activist Mehdi Bennouna recorded his first impressions 'from between the skyscrapers of New York'.¹ He began by describing the last leg of his flight to La Guardia airport: 'When we entered the United States, we began to cruise above the cities glittering with lights, one after another, until New York appeared before us with her greatness, beauty, and colossal buildings'. Though happy to have successfully completed the lengthy journey, his adventure did not end after he had cleared customs and recovered his suitcases. 'Travel from one place to another is no easy matter here', he explained, because 'the city is big and every building equals all of Tetouan and every street equals perhaps half of [Spanish Morocco]'. New York was unlike anything his friends and relatives back home had ever seen—both its size and the speed of everyday life had to be experienced first-hand. Before finally going to bed, he dined at a nearby Arabic restaurant

CONTACT David Stenner  david.stenner@cnu.edu  Department of History, Christopher Newport University, Newport News, VA, USA

© 2021 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

'with tasty food that reminds me of Palestine and Egypt'. Amidst the shock of the new, the familiar provided a degree of comfort.

These initial observations formed part of a 229-page travel account that Bennouna penned during his six-month stay in New York, where he had traveled to secure UN support for Moroccan independence from French and Spanish rule (1912-56). He had journeyed across the Atlantic as representative of his country's two largest nationalist parties, *Hizb al-Istiqlal* (Independence Party) and *Hizb al-Islah al-Watani* (Party of National Reform, PNR), whose leaders had asked him to lobby on their behalf in the new capital of global diplomacy. His visit could not have occurred at a more momentous time: he witnessed both the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states and the growing tensions between the Western and Eastern blocs. Bennouna thus chronicled the early Cold War from behind the scenes. However, he did not just describe the inner workings of international diplomacy, but also used his daily adventures in New York to reflect on American society and culture in general. In so doing, he introduced his readers to an exciting but unfamiliar place while simultaneously reflecting on Morocco and its place in the world.

In numerous regards, Mehdi Bennouna's account paralleled that of Muhammad al-Saffar, the secretary of the Moroccan ambassador who had traveled to Paris in the winter of 1846. Sent abroad to participate in the renegotiation of bilateral relations in the aftermath of the Battle of Isly (1844), during which the French army had dealt a devastating blow to a much larger Moroccan force, al-Saffar revealed himself to be an astute observer of the foreign lands he visited. Following his return to North Africa, he published a 139-page manuscript, which he presented to Sultan Abd al-Rahman (r. 1822-1859) in the royal palace in Fez. His travelogue offered a vivid portrait of life in France that stood in sharp contrast to the prevailing conditions in Morocco; it covered administrative practices, local customs, gender relations, and technological developments in great detail. Al-Saffar argued that it was the French 'concern for organisation and an aptitude for putting everything in its place' that constituted the secret of their strength (Miller 1992, 121). Muslim societies, by contrast, had no means to counteract Europe's increasing economic and military prowess. Al-Saffar offered vital lessons about the need to reform the Moroccan kingdom in order to secure its survival in the modern world. His travelogue was brought to the attention of scholars by historian Susan Gilson Miller, who recuperated the manuscript from the oblivion of the royal archives in Rabat by publishing a commented version nearly one hundred fifty years later.

Muhammad al-Saffar's account adhered to the precepts of *rihla* literature, a classical Arabic genre that focused on the quest for knowledge and spirituality (Netton 1998). *Rihlas* proliferated especially in the Western Mediterranean, as exemplified by the legendary Moroccan globetrotter Ibn Battuta (1304-1369), who combined personal experiences and hearsay to compile a captivating account of his journeys from West Africa to Central Asia (Gibb 1958; Dunn

2005; Elger 2010). Such accounts highlighted both the unity of the Islamic world and the distinct characteristics of its various subregions (Dejugnat 2017; Lunde and Stone 2012; Mackintosh-Smith and Montgomery 2014). They disseminated religious learning and administrative practices and could help elevate the social standing of traveling scholars (Garden 2015). Beginning in the sixteenth century, an increasing number of Arabs wrote reports about their travels to Christian Europe as the regional balance of power shifted away from the Muslim world (Matar 2009; Newman 2001; Heyberger 2018). The Chaldean priest Elias al-Musili even reached the Americas in 1675 (Farah 2003). *Rihlas* were highly stylised, usually beginning with an invocation of God's protection and weaving Quranic passages, religious wisdoms, and poetry into the narrative; they aimed at providing accurate descriptions of places, personalities, and customs as well as *'aja'ib* (curiosities, miracles) encountered along the way. They introduced the early modern reader to foreign lands without foregrounding the personality of the author himself. Beginning with Napoleon's conquest of Egypt (1798) and the subsequent European imperialist expansion into the Middle East and North Africa, a new generation of young Arabs traveled abroad to discover the secrets of Western power. The author of the most widely read account was Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, a religious scholar who had served as spiritual guide to an Egyptian student mission in Paris (Newman 2004). His *The Extraction of Pure Gold in the Overview of Paris* (1839) became a foundational text for the *nahda* (cultural renaissance) that modernised Arab intellectual life during the long nineteenth century.

Morocco's unique position as the only Arab country that had always maintained its independence from the Ottoman Empire (1300-1922) meant that it had a history of dispatching diplomats across the Mediterranean. Some of the embassies sought to protect Moroccan autonomy within the Islamic world (Kitlas 2015; El Moudden 1992; Ibn Muammad 1994). Many of them went to Europe, initially to ransom captured Moroccan subjects but later to recalibrate bilateral relations with the Western powers steadily expanding their influence in North Africa (Qaddūri 1995). Moroccan sultans sent a total of nine envoys to France during the nineteenth century alone, a time when professional diplomats still remained rarities in the Islamic world (Caillé 1960). (The Ottoman Empire and the Regency of Tunis had opened their first permanent embassies in Europe in the early nineteenth century) (Smida 1991; Gürpınar 2014: ch. 2). Muhammad al-Saffar's journey formed part of this wave of diplomatic engagement, but his travelogue stands out as a singular literary achievement. While still following the conventions of the *rihla* genre, it also presented the author's voice and portrayed the emotions he experienced on his journey. Al-Saffar went beyond merely describing what he saw and instead offered thoughtful analyses. The influence of al-Tahtawi's travelogue, which he had read, immediately becomes apparent to the reader. In the words of Susan Gilson Miller, al-Saffar had a unique 'aptitude for opening a window on a world remote from his own and transmitting what he saw to others' (Miller 1992, 4).

It might seem that Mehdi Bennouna's account has little in common with Muhammad al-Saffar's *rihla*, who had only mingled with the French upper-class and participated in events carefully chosen by his hosts. Bennouna, by contrast, traveled alone and could thus immerse himself in all aspects of American life. But he, too, penned a detailed account of his travels, which consisted of daily updates about his activities and impressions unmediated by the conventions of classical literature. Every evening, Bennouna sat at his desk to write down his thoughts in simple Arabic, and he regularly sent copies via air mail to Morocco to keep his colleagues informed. Just like al-Saffar before him, Bennouna wanted to understand, not just describe, everything he witnessed. His diary was thus not primarily a tool of intimate personal reflection, but rather snapshots of life in the nascent capital of international diplomacy. Although read exclusively by his closest associates, the PNR regularly shared details about his efforts on behalf of Moroccan independence, though not his private commentary, with a wider audience. The diary remained hidden among his personal papers after his return home and only resurfaced in recent years when his youngest brother, Aboubakr Bennouna, began organising the family archive and making it accessible to researchers.

Mehdi Bennouna's account should also be put into conversation with the reports of other Arabs visiting the United States during the twentieth century. The renowned historian Phillip Hitti was so overwhelmed upon his arrival in New York in 1924 that he viewed its inhabitants as 'giants among men', who were 'superior in their qualities, distinguished in their vitality, and unique in their abundance of energy' (2011). Already in 1912, Egyptian prince Muhammad Ali Pasha quickly 'grew tired of New York' where felt like he 'had been placed in a hollow cylinder along with pieces of metal and thrown down a slope, finding myself turning unstopably' (2011). The city's skyscrapers 'rendered [man] insignificant' and manifested 'the power and greatness of America', commented the Egyptian writer Mahmud Taymur three decades later (2011). These travelers not only commented on the urban built environment, but also sought to decipher the innate logic of American society in general. The Egyptian microbiologist Zaki Khalid was not the only one who noticed his hosts' 'love of money and their desire to make it' (2011). Americans were inherently pragmatic and expected that 'their teachers prepare knowledge for them in the same fashion a pharmacist prepares easy-to-swallow pills for patients', noted the Syrian academic Shafiq Jabri (2011).

Such a seemingly excessive focus on commercial success caused the prominent Islamic intellectual Sayyid Qutb to pathologize American society as materialist, violent, and hollow despite acknowledging its 'virtues of production and organisation' (2011). And while Americans generally received foreign visitors with great enthusiasm and curiosity, this could not hide the fact that 'they know very little, or perhaps even less than little' about the 'outside world', according to the Egyptian professor of philosophy Zaki

Najib Mahmud (2011). These travelers did not replicate the generally quite enthusiastic travelogues penned by their nineteenth-century predecessors visiting Europe. Decades of experiencing colonial modernity, coupled with an increased self-esteem brought about by the rise of nationalist movements across the Arab world, enabled them to offer much more nuanced, and sometimes quite critical, accounts of their host country.

The best way to read Mehdi Bennouna's dispatches from New York, however, is against the background of al-Saffar's *rihla*, not to compare and contrast these two texts, but to discover resonances of the latter in the former. These two upper-class gentlemen—both born in the same city, proud of their Andalusí origins, and traveling to the respective centres of global power almost exactly one century apart—had much in common. I argue that Bennouna's *rihla* operated on three levels: internationally, it sought to reassert Morocco's rightful place as a full member of the concert of nations as the process of decolonisation was sweeping away empires across Africa and Asia; domestically, it proclaimed the right of the Moroccan urban elites to lead the nation politically and represent it abroad; and personally, it offered a carefully constructed image of Bennouna as an educated gentleman capable of successfully working with the movers and shakers of the modern world. In other words, Bennouna's travelogue exemplified the desire of the Moroccan bourgeoisie to secure its domestic status while gaining international recognition on the basis of true equality. While al-Saffar used his experiences in France to outline the reasons behind Morocco's decline vis-à-vis Europe, Bennouna foreshadowed the kingdom's return onto the international stage. Following the young Moroccan nationalist to North America enables us to witness what it meant to experience the end of an era and the beginning of a new one.

New York

Mehdi Bennouna was uniquely suited to serve as the Moroccan nationalist movement's unaccredited delegate to the United Nations. Born in Tetouan in 1918 as the sixth child of a reputable upper-class family, he attended the modernist *al-Najah* high school in Nablus, Palestine, before moving to Cairo in 1936 to study at law at Fu'ad University and journalism at the American University (Stenner 2020). He freelanced for a few years upon graduating but returned home following the end of the Second World War to teach at a nationalist 'free school' and write articles for the anticolonial press. Bennouna also joined the PNR, which was led by friends and relatives; his brother Tayib served as its secretary general. He was the logical choice for the task at hand due to his media experience and fluency in English, skills only a handful of Moroccans possessed at that time. On 7 June 1947, he bid farewell to friends and family at Tangier airport as he embarked upon his mission to make the case for Moroccan independence on the global stage.

Mehdi Bennouna's account begins by detailing the travails of the journey itself. Traveling on a plane differed from anything he had done before. One example was the severe ear pain he experienced during the ascent from Tangier airport, a problem that afflicted all passengers. Luckily, though, he soon noticed that 'this pain decreased substantially when closing one's nose and holding one's breath' thus alleviating his initial anxiety.² The rest of the trip was 'relaxing and pleasant' as the passengers slept or conversed while being waited on by 'a beautiful and very polite young woman'.³ Just like al-Saffar before him, who had recounted the 'dread of the terrors of the sea' he had experienced onboard the steamer to France, overseas travel impacted him both physically and psychologically (Miller 1992, 87). Describing all of his emotions during the journey 'would take very long' the tired traveler noted upon his arrival in New York, four flights and thirty-six hours after his departure. Moving across the Atlantic was a profoundly transformative experience that created a clear mental distinction between two different worlds.

Life in New York was truly spectacular, even for someone accustomed to a cosmopolitan metropolis like Cairo. The city's size and rhythm of daily life overwhelmed any visitor. Special events could further exacerbate the problem. A parade by 52,000 members of the American Legion, which lasted all day, 'made it impossible to cross from one street to another until after trying to do so for an hour or more'.⁴ Bennouna was thus forced to spend an entire Sunday inside his hotel room. Such observations are reminiscent of al-Saffar's first impression of Paris, which he described as 'a city overflowing with people' who lived in 'lofty houses and imposing buildings' (Miller 1992, 124 & 106). 'Compared to the other cities of France', he noted, 'it is like a market day in our country compared with the days on which there is no market' (Miller 1992, 124). By beginning their accounts with an emphasis on the sheer magnitude of the respective cities, the authors prepared their readers for entering a completely novel social order that stood outside their traditional points of reference.

New York city offered an astonishing number of amenities. Bennouna found it nearly impossible to leave the Museum of Modern Art where he learned about 'the newest art theories' and 'the designs of the modern cities'.⁵ Even more impressive was the New York Public Library, which Bennouna visited on numerous occasions. He marveled at its large collections covering virtually every topic imaginable, including the Maghrib.⁶ Bennouna was especially impressed by the system of pneumatic tubes:

To request the book, one writes on a paper and puts it into an opening with pressured air. After three or four minutes, the book arrives to you from another opening, one of the employees hands you the book, and you enter the reading hall ... [full] of people reading the whole day

remarked the astonished Moroccan. In his opinion, it was 'the most amazing library in the world'. Al-Saffar's experience at the royal library in Paris had been

very similar. He had marveled at the astonishing size of its book collection, especially religious works in Arabic, and proclaimed that 'if our eyesight had allowed it, we would have whiled away the entire day there' (Miller 1992, 189). The accessibility of such vast bodies of knowledge clearly impressed these visitors who had grown up in a social milieu that placed a high value on learning.

As a journalist, Bennouna immediately noted the centrality of media consumption to the lives of most Americans, who 'love everything new and interesting' as long as it was presented in a 'concise' manner.⁷ Their curiosity was genuine, but also somewhat superficial. The press, for example, 'pays more attention to silly and unusual things than to important cases'.⁸ Such a desire for spectacle meant that substance alone would not suffice to attract attention. A partial explanation could be that the American public suffered from information overload; 'the daily press is something the public reads and then forgets ... because the newspapers here sometimes exceed one hundred pages', concluded Bennouna.⁹ Al-Saffar had made the same observation in France one century prior. According to his *rihla*, 'The gazette is of such importance that one of them would do without food or drink sooner than do without reading the newspaper' (Miller 1992, 153). Not all information consumed by Parisians was 'necessarily true' as they also enjoyed gossip and other 'news that human nature loves to hear' (Miller 1992, 152). Nonetheless, the two travelers made it clear that the West's technological advancement went hand in hand with a serious commitment to acquiring and disseminating knowledge.

Though generally totally ignorant about North African affairs, or virtually all other aspects of the wider world for that matter, the Americans Bennouna encountered displayed a genuine interest in learning about the Moroccan case for independence. Particularly the country's vibrant civil society impressed Bennouna, who regularly received invitations to make his case in front of civic associations and religious groups. Following a lecture at a Unitarian church, its members submerged him under 'a torrent of questions' and then decided to 'send letters to the Department of State' to protest against French colonial policies in Morocco.¹⁰ This showcased the seemingly marvelous character of US democracy, defined by 'the control of the people over their government'.¹¹ Securing the sympathies of ordinary folks might ultimately lead to political victories. The key to establishing such beneficial relations was the continuous exchange of 'pleasantries', a central pillar of American culture.¹²

Religious life in the United States differed dramatically from the Catholicism practiced by the vast majority of European settlers in Morocco. In particular the practice of interreligious dialogue deeply impressed Bennouna. Following one of his lectures at a church, all Christian attendees 'prayed to God to deliver our nation from its darkness' while 'the Muslims and Jews stood up out of honour and respect for the situation'.¹³ This experience profoundly moved Bennouna, who noticed 'a happiness pervading me that I cannot describe; the Lord granted us success, because he is good and proper'.¹⁴ The Catholic Church

in Morocco, despite its complicated relationship with the protectorate authorities, supported the colonial order and only opened a dialogue with the Muslim majority on the eve of independence (Baida and Feroldi 2003; Marguich 2017). Yet in the United States, Bennouna encountered Christians willing to embrace a just cause despite their religious differences. This was certainly a reason for hope. By contrast, al-Saffar had viewed Christians as fundamentally repugnant, asking God to protect him from 'the untruth of their claim and the falsity of their belief' (Miller 1992, 108).

Americans relished in commercial activities and constantly searched for new commercial opportunities; a retired US army general now working as an arms dealer contacted Bennouna in order to expand his business to North Africa (Bennouna politely declined the deal).¹⁵ During an hour-long meeting with the chief of the Division of African Affairs at the State Department, Henry S. Villard, the two men talked about 'natural resources and how to exploit them' as well as 'the Maghreb as a market for selling American commodities'.¹⁶ As many Arab visitors had noticed before him, the constant drive to accumulate wealth seemed to be the motor propelling American society forward. This view mirrored a similar observation made by al-Saffar, who had noted that 'the people of Paris, men and women alike, are tireless in their pursuit of wealth. They are never idle or lazy' (Miller 1992, 153). While certainly noteworthy, and even a bit peculiar, neither of these two men viewed Western-style materialism as inherently bad.

Perhaps the single most distinctive characteristic of US society for Bennouna was the widely held fear of communism. Within a mere week of his arrival, Bennouna 'noticed that there is a strong "fever" against communism among all classes of Americans'.¹⁷ Especially national liberation movements had to tread carefully so as to avoid being tarnished in the eyes of the American public. Commenting on the coverage of West African nationalism in the *New York Herald Tribune*, he remarked that it had become a 'fashion' to describe the same anti-colonial activists as 'spies of the Kremlin and propagandists of Moscow' who had allegedly been following 'the Axis, Nazism, and Fascism' just a few years prior.¹⁸ The general frenzy of the Second Red Scare pushed the American government to 'dismiss all communists or anyone linked to communism from public service'.¹⁹ Such hysterical reactions showed that even a people so proud of its individual liberties did not hesitate to deny the rights of those with different beliefs. Bennouna thus went to great lengths to avoid associating with anyone working for 'any organisation sympathetic towards communism' lest it might undermine his own credibility in the public eye.²⁰ This decision did not just stem from an appropriate degree of caution, but also the preferences of the bourgeois leaders of the Islamic-conservative nationalist movement, who unsurprisingly showed little interest in radical leftist politics.

Two anecdotes illustrated the inner contradictions of the United States. While walking the streets of New York, he observed that people had no

problem depositing parcels and envelopes next to overflowing public mailboxes. Despite laying 'in the street without a guard', no one would dare to touch them due to the 'honesty' innate in the American people.²¹ But Bennouna also noticed a very different side of his host country the very same day: police officers chased a thief through Midtown Manhattan and, upon cornering him, 'opened fire despite the presence of many cars'. The evening newspapers then published photos of the state-sanctioned killing in broad daylight. This story troubled Bennouna, who marveled that 'the entire American life is filled with contradictions, from complete trust to betrayal in its outermost form, from love and affection to hate and rancor'. His observation mirrored one that Sayyid Qutb would make four years later when highlighting the widespread 'love for hardcore violence' as a central component of American society (2011, 26–7).

Nonetheless, Bennouna's final verdict was quite positive. The Americans were ultimately 'a good race' who could certainly be convinced to lend their 'sympathy' and 'support' to the aspirations of the Moroccan people.²² Interestingly enough, though, he never commented on the topic of race relations; his readers learned nothing about the status of African-Americans and other minorities. This silence reflected both the nationalist movement's campaign for unity across communal lines inside Morocco and a blind spot of those 'white' urban elites who thought that their Andalusí heritage made them culturally more refined than their ethnically diverse compatriots. The nationalist leaders showed little interest in the status of Morocco's historically marginalised black communities (Benachir 2003; El Hamel 2013).

Mehdi Bennouna's report introduced its readers to a fascinating new world, which stood in sharp contrast to anything they had ever seen in Africa, Western Asia, or Europe. New York combined chaos and noise with sophisticated technology and a high quality of life. The city stood at the pinnacle of modernity, just like Paris one century earlier. Its inhabitants received the visitor with open arms and genuine curiosity. Yet despite such similarities, the accounts of the two Moroccan travelers conveyed very different connotations about Morocco and its place in the wider world. Whereas Muhammad al-Saffar had correctly perceived France's technological superiority as a fundamental threat to all Muslims, Bennouna viewed the United States as a potential ally whose material prowess could serve Morocco's interests. Americans and Arabs were not totally unlike. Nothing prevented them from becoming friends. The new superpower had the ability to replace the declining European empires and establish a more just world order. Furthermore, liberation from colonial rule did not require repudiating the material comforts that capitalist modernity seemed to offer. Instead, the Moroccan bourgeoisie, the country's rightful ruling class, should strive to find acceptance among its 'advanced' peers abroad. This did not mean wholesale imitation but seeking new paths forward on the basis of transatlantic cooperation.

The United Nations

Mehdi Bennouna had obviously not come to New York for sight-seeing, but to make the case for Moroccan independence before the United Nations. The nascent intergovernmental organisation was still in a state of flux. While most daily activities occurred at the UN's temporary headquarters at Lake Success on Long Island, the meetings of the General Assembly and the Security Council actually took place at a facility in Flushing, Queens. Traveling to either of these sites from his hotel in Manhattan took Bennouna more than one hour. A press card granted him access to all events. The general atmosphere inside the buildings mirrored the egalitarian and multi-national world order the UN allegedly sought to establish. The best place to experience its unique character was the cafeteria, which catered to thousands of diplomats, politicians, lobbyists, journalists, and staff members each day. Bennouna marveled at the diversity of people he encountered during his daily lunch break. 'You see the janitor next to the council president, and the small writer next to the prime minister ... according to coincidence and the place which he found empty'.²³ The challenge of finding a vacant seat at a communal table in the 'very crowded' cafeteria served as a great equaliser.

Despite lacking any official accreditation, Bennouna immediately felt a sense of belonging among the community of diplomats gathered in New York. As he explained in his diary, 'Every time I talk to those I know, I get to know other people and they invite me to drink or eat [with them] during the breaks'.²⁴ On a busy day, he might converse with up to fifty individuals.²⁵ A single coffee break could include informal chats with a Near East specialist from the Department of State, the press attaché at the Mexican embassy, and the head of the Polish UN delegation. Many of his interlocutors displayed a genuine interest in the situation in North Africa, a region most of them knew little about but which they considered to be of vital strategic importance. The countless parties organised by the various delegations offered ideal opportunities for meeting new acquaintances in a relaxed atmosphere. After returning from a reception held by the Arab League for Asian diplomats, a satisfied Bennouna described it as 'the most glamorous one, despite the bit of chaos that accompanies Easterners in all they do!'²⁶

Those closest to Bennouna were of course the members of the six Arab delegations, who provided informal advice, personal introductions, and a modicum of public support. Shared bonds of language and religion facilitated these relationships. The secretary general of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha, became a close friend. Nonetheless, Bennouna did not hesitate to criticise his Arab colleagues for their lackluster efforts with regard to the future of Palestine. Instead of adequately preparing for important committee meetings, they often arrived late and too hungover to pay any attention to the proceedings. After a particularly long day at Lake Success, he noted with disgust, 'Parties,

soirées, card games, night clubs, and appointments with beautiful ladies!! This takes up all of their time, money, and thoughts'. Gossiping behind their backs, other delegates described them as 'amateurs' and 'children'.²⁷ But Bennouna noticed that the performance of the Arab diplomats improved during the weeks immediately prior to the partition vote; the Lebanese ambassador Camille Chamoun, for example, was a 'first-class orator' who gave several passionate speeches in defense of the Palestinians.²⁸ By late October, no one could doubt that the Arab diplomats were 'doing their utmost on behalf of Palestine'.²⁹ But they ultimately proved powerless to derail the partition proposal, which the General Assembly approved on 29 November 1947.



Figure 1. Mehdi Bennouna (far left) at a party organised by Yemeni prince Sayf al-Islam Abdallah (centre). Fall 1947. (Courtesy of Aboubakr Bennouna.)

Bennouna deemed it an essential aspect of his mission to project a positive image of himself, and by extension the Moroccan people. He was thus quick to criticise how other Muslims handled themselves. A party hosted by Sayf al-Islam Abdallah exemplified the discrepancy between façade and reality. As was his custom, the Yemeni prince appeared in his traditional garments with a turban and dagger, serving his guests fruit drinks and sweets. This assured Bennouna who had considered him a model for 'keeping the Islamic traditions in the land of Uncle Sam'.³⁰ But after just one hour, 'glasses of champagne and whiskey' began to circulate among the guests, thus undermining his carefully crafted public image of piety. Indeed, Bennouna remarked, many Muslims seemed quite 'proud' of drinking alcohol in America.³¹ New York was not only a place where one might experience

the miracles of industrialised modernity, but apparently also a cesspool of vice that could easily ensnare any visitor unprepared to resist its lure.

There is no doubt that Bennouna did indeed feel disgusted by the doings of some Arab diplomats. But highlighting their moral shortcomings also enabled him to present his own activities in a particularly positive light. We know for a fact that Bennouna was no teetotaler: in the fall of 1948, he spent a lively evening with the staff of the American Legation in Tangier during which 'he entertained the group with amusing stories of his visit to the United States last summer' and 'did not hesitate to drink several whiskeys prior to dinner'.³² It also seems unlikely that he abstained from alcoholic beverages during the many meals he shared with American journalists, a professional group known for its heavy drinking culture. Nonetheless, he took great pride in his public image as a dedicated servant of the Moroccan nation, who avoided the ubiquitous siren calls of temptation. Just like al-Saffar before him, Bennouna used his travel account to ensure that his readers would acknowledge his diligent work and virtuous public appearance abroad.

Bennouna did not focus primarily on his personal encounters but rather on international diplomacy; his minute observations provide a fascinating first-hand account of the dynamics inside the UN just two years after its establishment. Unsurprisingly, the emerging Cold War weighed on everyone's mind. Bennouna noted that every topic on the UN's agenda immediately became polarised since 'the atmosphere is extremely tense between the United States and Russia'.³³ The geopolitical competition dominated every discussion even if an issue 'violated all human principles and all paragraphs of the [UN] charter'.³⁴ Its binary logic undermined 'all efforts undertaken by the nations which are not interested in the rivalry'.³⁵ It even cast its shadow on the future of the Maghrib. Fearful of the growing influence of the French Communist Party, which might cause Paris to eventually join the Eastern bloc, US diplomats did not want to alienate France by criticising its policies in North Africa.³⁶ The American desire to 'resist communism' trumped all other considerations.³⁷ Yet the descending Iron Curtain was not the sole factor shaping international politics.

The Indonesian struggle for independence from Dutch rule offered a prime example for the hierarchical global order. Britain and the United States backed The Netherlands in its attempt to merely 'reform' its administrative apparatus amidst popular pressure calling for the immediate termination of foreign rule. They were opposed by an alliance of 'small countries' led by India, which wanted to overcome the pro-colonial status quo.³⁸ Bennouna described the situation as 'extremely tense' as he witnessed the first diplomatic clash between several newly independent nations and the Western powers. Ultimately, 'the pressure of world and international public opinion' forced the Security Council to pass a total of six resolutions calling for a cease fire and immediate negotiations regarding the future of the archipelago nation.³⁹

That was certainly a success. The Indonesian delegate Lambertus Nicodemus Palar had done tremendous work behind the scenes even though he only enjoyed observer status, which confirmed Bennouna's 'hopes for the progress of the [colonial cases] in the international establishment'.⁴⁰ But obtaining concrete victories was easier said than done given the UN's preference for geopolitical stability (Mazower 2009). The Moroccan nationalists had to realise that they would 'not secure anything without securing the votes of the United States and a few important nations', a daunting task to say the least.⁴¹ The UN could indeed become an arena for anticolonial movements to present their grievances, but this required putting together a large coalition of states.

Creating such partnerships required an immense amount of backroom dealings as diplomats bartered away their votes in exchange for concessions on other issues. For example, the representatives of Argentina and the Dominican Republic offered to vote against the partition of Palestine in return for the silence of the Arab states on the status of Spanish Morocco ('Yes, dear brothers, the Arabs began to haggle with our interest, and they are playing with our future', Bennouna noted angrily in his diary).⁴² It was not 'the strength or weakness of an argument' that decided individual cases, 'but political tricks and schemes as well as the buying of votes with money, promises or terrorism'.⁴³ Despite the constraints imposed by such *realpolitik*, Bennouna repeatedly tried to attract attention to the case for Moroccan independence through press releases and conversations with journalists and diplomats (Secretary General Trygve Lie privately expressed his sympathy for the Moroccan case).⁴⁴ But since 'international public opinion' remained entirely absorbed in the future of Palestine, Bennouna acknowledged that 'our case would be buried before its birth, if we set it in motion at this critical time'.⁴⁵ He nevertheless remained optimistic about the future, because he had learned 'a lot about [the UN's] secrets and details and every day that knowledge increases'.⁴⁶ Whereas the General Assembly appeared sympathetic towards national liberation movements, the Security Council suffered from a 'strong partisanship [*asabiyya*] created by the colonial nations and their friends and followers'.⁴⁷ Organising a coalition of anticolonial nations in support of Moroccan independence was a prerequisite for exposing the case to world public opinion and thus putting pressure on the great powers to act.

Bennouna even experienced what it felt like to be a 'real' diplomat by way of his interactions with Spanish officials and their antagonists. Because Spain's dictator, Francisco Franco, had cooperated with the fascist powers during the previous decade, the UN refused to let the country join its ranks. Obtaining the recognition inherent in full membership status thus became the central aim of Spanish foreign policy post-1945, which focused in particular on strengthening relations with the member states of the Arab League (Algora Weber 1995). When the Spanish minister plenipotentiary learned about Bennouna's anticolonial activities, he sought to negotiate a temporary diplomatic

truce in exchange for a decrease in political repression inside the Moroccan protectorate (Bennouna very much enjoyed this meeting with the 'extremely troubled and worried' Spaniard).⁴⁸ For a few weeks, it seemed as if real negotiations between colonisers and colonised might become possible. Nonetheless, their talks failed to yield any tangible results.



Figure 2. Mehdi Bennouna (centre right) and Spanish minister plenipotentiary Manuel Aznar Zubigaray (centre left) at the United Nations. Fall 1947. (Courtesy of Aboubakr Bennouna.)

Bennouna also engaged the government in exile of the Spanish Republic, which consisted of numerous factions. During a private lunch, the permanent representative of the Basque country in New York warned him that many members of the anti-Francoist movement could not be trusted because they were too Francophile.⁴⁹ The next day, Bennouna met Álvaro de Albornoz,

head of the Spanish Republican government in exile, who made an extraordinarily bad impression on the Moroccan nationalist. 'We talked for a long time, but the conversation did not yield anything, because the man is one of those who love stories and history. He took me back to the days of al-Andalus and his Arabic roots and such', bemoaned the Moroccan, who wanted to focus on the future, not reminisce about the ancient past.⁵⁰ Such anecdotes reveal the relatively open atmosphere that characterised the UN during its early years, which enabled all kinds of people to exchange ideas independent of their diplomatic status. For a brief moment, however fleeting, a Moroccan representative could imagine himself shaping the new global order.

Bennouna's activities at the UN presaged Morocco's return to the international concert of nations that would occur one decade later. By contrast, al-Saffar had witnessed the decline of Moroccan power as the country showed itself incapable of fending off the steadily encroaching imperialist powers. He and his colleagues had left France with 'our hearts consumed with fire from what we had seen of their overwhelming power and mastery ... in comparison with the weakness of Islam' (Miller 1992, 193). Bennouna now saw a new world emerge out of the ruins created by the Second World War. This transitional moment seemed like an ideal opportunity to reassert Moroccan sovereignty after more than three decades under foreign rule. Bennouna's report made it clear that doing so would not be easy. The prevailing power discrepancies and the brutal realpolitik he observed at the UN would prove considerable obstacles in the path of all self-appointed representatives of non-member states demanding their rights. Yet it also showed the myriad ways in which diligent work by dedicated activists could create new opportunities in the struggle against colonialism. Bennouna was heard, seen, and even taken seriously by the diplomats gathered in New York. Some even showed him more respect than some of their officially accredited colleagues. The age of imperialism—characterised by European powers working in concert to unilaterally impose their will on the unfortunate peoples of Africa and Asia—was certainly coming to an end.

Personal Reflections

The excitement and stress of living in New York and lobbying at the United Nations took a toll on Bennouna. While he was glad that so many people he encountered wanted to hear about the Moroccan case, making the same points again and again could be quite exhausting. 'I repeat it each day five or six, if not ten times. I sometimes begin to memorise arranged sentences, one following the other, until I find myself to be a parrot or a phonograph that does not know anything else', he complained less than a month after his arrival.⁵¹ The constant meetings, writing of letters, interviews with journalists, and printing of brochures meant that Bennouna had very little

time to rest. 'I think that the burden weighs very heavily upon me', he noted in mid-August.⁵² Two weeks later, he expressed his desire to 'return to the beloved homeland at the nearest opportunity possible'.⁵³ The emotional roller coaster caused by the constant interplay of minor victories and demoralising setbacks drained Bennouna. By the end of November, Bennouna had to reduce the scope of his efforts due to 'extreme fatigue and weariness' that resulted in 'a sudden sickness'.⁵⁴

The third session of the United Nations concluded with numerous going-away parties that gathered New York's unique multinational biotope for a few final reunions. Diplomats, politicians, journalists, and their spouses sang, drank, and laughed to celebrate the end of their time together. A few of them engaged in last-minute arguments. To almost everyone's delight, or so he claimed, Bennouna theatrically compared French colonial rule to feudalism at one such event; two young French journalists abruptly left the party 'without being mourned'.⁵⁵ Bennouna also invited two dozen journalists and UN officials to an informal get-together over snacks and drinks at the Hotel Plaza. Moved by the experiences of the last six months, Bennouna 'thanked them for their aid, bid them farewell, and promised to return soon'.⁵⁶ His stay in New York had made a pivotal contribution to advancing the case of Moroccan independence on the international stage (Stenner 2019); it had also been a profoundly transformative experience for him personally. His peers from around the world had treated him almost as an equal, not like a colonial subject.



Figure 3. Mehdi Bennouna (right) aboard the Queen Mary. December 1947. (Courtesy of Aboubakr Bennouna.)

Bennouna's final diary entry described his return voyage on the Queen Mary, which was filled with UN delegates seeking to spend Christmas and New Year's Eve with their families. He spent most of the time 'resting and doing gymnastics' in order to recuperate from his strenuous sojourn in New York.⁵⁷ 'Everyone avoided talking about politics because we really had become bored of all personal topics', he noted.⁵⁸ The ship itself was a true marvel that encapsulated the novelty of his trip across the Atlantic. 'It really does not feel like traveling on the ocean ... One rather finds it like a splendid and large hotel in which one spends hours traveling between places without seeing the sea or feeling [its] movement at all', Bennouna remarked. Numerous restaurants, swimming pools, cinemas, and libraries gave it the feeling of a bustling city rather than a mere means of transportation. With everyone engaging in 'elegant dancing, games, betting, and listening to music', time passed quickly, and passengers soon forgot that they were aboard a ship. Just as his travels to the North America by plane had left a deep impression on Mehdi Bennouna, so his return voyage offered him another opportunity to physically experience modernity via technology, at the same time as it opened the door to the possibility of the Moroccan bourgeoisie joining the international community as peers.

Conclusion

Muhammad al-Saffar closed the marvelous account of his voyage to France by invoking the divine:

May God forgive me for what my hands have committed, for the repulsive abominations my eyes have witnessed, and for the abhorrent blasphemies and confused mutterings of the misguided that my ears have heard. I ask Him to lead me back to the path of the righteous

he appealed to his Creator (Miller 1992, 221). Returning from the land of the infidels required spiritual purification. Even though al-Saffar had provided a very sympathetic account of his hosts, the French—like all the inhabitants of the land of *rum*—fundamentally remained the Other whose very existence threatened the abode of Islam. Yet we should avoid simply taking such statements at face value given his otherwise quite enthusiastic account of France and its people. Their main purpose was the performance of 'ideological correctness' that his readers would certainly have expected rather than an expression of a deeply held personal conviction (Miller 1992, 52). They were also undermined by the very logic of the *rihla* itself. According to Susan Gilson Miller, al-Saffar proved to his readers that 'one can go to the land of enchantment, the abode of both good and evil, immerse oneself in it, and return home wiser and yet unscathed' (1992, 69). Al-Saffar warned about the threat posed by the European states while simultaneously

urging his compatriots to show greater interest in developments taking place on the northern shores of the Mediterranean.

Mehdi Bennouna's dispatches also introduced his readers to a new world that seemingly lay just beyond the horizon. Although written in the form of a diary and thus meant to convey the emotions of the moment, it followed the time proven structure—departure, adventure, return—of virtually every travelogue. One might argue that such an account could have been written by any modern traveler anywhere in the world. It certainly was not an impressive literary achievement. Nonetheless, its topic, purpose, and intended audience enable us to read it against the background of al-Saffar's *rihla* so as to better understand the transformations the North African kingdom had undergone during the preceding century. Moroccans no longer deemed it necessary to prostrate themselves before the European powers and instead wanted to secure their country's standing on the world stage.

As part of that historical process, the scions of the country's urban elites—highly educated, multilingual, modern—sought to regain the social status their ancestors had once possessed. Bennouna's self-confident appearance at the United Nations, and the boldness of his claim to speak on behalf of the Moroccan people, embodied the desire of an entire social class to reassert itself. It also showcased his personal ambition to a leadership role in the making of the new Morocco. (Bennouna would go on to establish the country's first news agency, *Maghreb Arabe Press*, in 1959, thus playing a dominant role in the post-independence Moroccan media landscape). This had only become possible due the tectonic shifts in the landscape of international relations as the colonial powers no longer remained capable of completely containing the aspirations of their subject peoples. The age of empire was finally giving way to the age of the nation state. The travel accounts by Muhammad al-Saffar and Mehdi Bennouna give us insights into how ordinary Moroccans experienced this dramatic transformation.

Notes

1. Letter from Mehdi Bennouna to his brother Tayyib, 11 June 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, Bennouna Family Archive, Tetouan, Morocco (BFA).
2. Letter from Mehdi Bennouna to his brother Tayyib, 7 June 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
3. Letter from Mehdi Bennouna to his brother Tayyib, 11 June 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
4. Diary Entry, 30 August 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
5. Diary Entry, 27 July 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
6. Diary Entry, 21 June 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
7. Letter from Mehdi Bennouna to his brother Tayyib, 11 June 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
8. Diary Entry, 28 August 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.

9. Diary Entry, 19 June 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
10. Diary Entry, 15 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
11. Diary Entry, 15 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
12. Diary Entry, 8 July 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
13. Diary Entry, 1 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
14. Diary Entry, 1 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
15. Diary Entry, 4 November 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
16. Diary Entry, 30 June 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
17. Diary Entry, 16 June 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
18. Diary Entry, 13 November 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 2, BFA.
19. Diary Entry, 15 July 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
20. Diary Entry, 17 July 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
21. Diary Entry, 6 July 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
22. Diary Entry, 6 July 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
23. Diary Entry, 30 September 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
24. Diary Entry, 14 August 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
25. Diary Entry, 11 September 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
26. Diary Entry, 6 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
27. Diary Entry, 28 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
28. Diary Entry, 2 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
29. Diary Entry, 31 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
30. Diary Entry, 17 November 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 2, BFA.
31. Diary Entry, 17 November 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 2, BFA.
32. Transmittal of Memorandum of Conversation with Moroccan Nationalist Leaders, 1 September 1948, RG59/881.00/9-148, US National Archives II, College Park, MD.
33. Diary Entry, 23 September 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
34. Diary Entry, 23 September, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
35. Diary Entry, 30 September, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
36. Diary Entry, 23 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
37. Diary Entry, 10 November 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 2, BFA.
38. Diary Entry, 30 July 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
39. Diary Entry, 2 August 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
40. Diary Entry, 2 August 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
41. Diary Entry, 26 November 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 2, BFA.
42. Diary Entry, 19 September 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
43. Diary Entry, 26 November 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 2, BFA.
44. Diary Entry, 26 September 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
45. Diary Entry, 22 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
46. Diary Entry, 13 November 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 2, BFA.
47. Diary Entry, 26 August 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
48. Diary Entry, 9 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
49. Diary Entry, 1 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
50. Diary Entry, 1 October 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
51. Diary Entry, 2 July 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
52. Diary Entry, 14 August 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
53. Diary Entry, 27 August 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 1, BFA.
54. Diary Entry, 12 November 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 2, BFA.
55. Diary Entry, 30 November 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 2, BFA.
56. Diary Entry, 8 December 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 12, BFA.

57. Diary Entry, 11–17 December 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 2, BFA.

58. Diary Entry, 11–17 December 1947, Mehdi Bennouna File, vol. 2, BFA.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Bibliography

- Algora Weber, María Dolores. 1995. *Las relaciones hispano-árabes durante el régimen de Franco: la ruptura del aislamiento internacional (1946–1950)*. Madrid: Ministerio de asuntos exteriores.
- Ali Pasha, Prince Muḥammad. 2011. "A Passage to America (1912)." In *America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature, 1668 to 9/11 and Beyond*, edited by Kamal Abdel-Malek, and Mouna El Kahla, 157–159. New York: Palgrave.
- Baida, Jamaà, and Vincent Feroldi. 2003. "Une mémoire commune en devenir: chrétiens et musulmans au Maroc (1856-1985)." In *Chrétiens et musulmans en dialogue: les identités en devenir*, edited by Vincent Feroldi, 53–83. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Benachir, Bouazza. 2003. *Négritudes du Maroc et du Maghreb*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Caillé, J. 1960. "Ambassades et missions marocaines en France." *Hespéris-Tamuda* 1: 39–84.
- Dejugnat, Yann. 2017. "La rihla: une pratique lettrée au cœur de la mondialisation islamique." *Histoire monde, jeux d'échelles et espaces connectés, XLVIIe Congrès de la SHMESP*, Paris: 179–192.
- Dunn, Ross E. 2005. *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Elger, Ralf. 2010. *Die Wunder des Morgenlandes: Reisen durch Afrika und Asien*. Munich: C.H. Beck.
- El Hamel, Chouki. 2013. *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- El Moudden, Abderrahmane. 1992. *Sharifs and Padishahs: Moroccan-Ottoman Relations from the 16th through the 18th Centuries*. PhD Thesis, Princeton University.
- Farah, Caesar E. 2003. *An Arab's Journey to Colonial Spanish America: Travels of Elias al-Musili in the Seventeenth Century*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Garden, Kenneth. 2015. "The Rihla and Self-Reinvention of Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabi." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135 (1): 1–17.
- Gibb, H. A. R. ed. 1958. *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, A.D. 1325–1354*, vol. 1-2. London: Hakluyt Society.
- Gürpınar, Doğan. 2014. *Ottoman Imperial Diplomacy: A Political, Social and Cultural History*. New York: I. B. Tauris.
- Heyberger, Bernard. 2018. "A Border Crossing Ottoman Christian at the Beginning of the 18th Century: Hannā Dyāb of Aleppo and his Account of his Travel to Paris." *Studi e materiali di storie delle religioni* 84 (2): 548–564.
- Hitti, Phillip. 2011. "America in the Eyes of an Easterner, Or Eight Years in the United States (1924)." In *America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature, 1668 to 9/11 and Beyond*, edited by Kamal Abdel-Malek, and Mouna El Kahla, 49–54. New York: Palgrave.
- Ibn Muammad, Majrūti Alī. 1994. *Al-Nafha al-miskiyya fi al-sifara al-turkiyya: Relation d'une ambassade marocaine en Turquie, 1589-1591*. Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University.

- Jabri, Shafiq. 2011. "The Land of Magic (1962)." In *America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature, 1668 to 9/11 and Beyond*, edited by Kamal Abdel-Malek, and Mouna El Kahla, 81–86. New York: Palgrave.
- Khalid, Zaki. 2011. "America Under the Microscope (1954)." In *America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature, 1668 to 9/11 and Beyond*, edited by Kamal Abdel-Malek, and Mouna El Kahla, 63–65. New York: Palgrave.
- Kitlas, Peter. 2015. "Al-Miknāsī's Mediterranean Mission: Negotiating Moroccan Temporal and Spiritual Sovereignty in the Late Eighteenth Century." *Mediterranean Studies* 23 (2): 170–194.
- Lunde, Paul, and Caroline Stone. 2012. *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travelers in the Far North*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Mackintosh-Smith, Tim, and James E. Montgomery. 2014. *Two Arabic Travel Books: Accounts of China and India Abū Zayd al-Sirāfi and Mission to the Volga Aḥmad ibn Faḍlān*. New York: New York University Press.
- Mahmud, Zaki Najib. 2011. "My Days in America (1955)." In *America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature, 1668 to 9/11 and Beyond*, edited by Kamal Abdel-Malek, and Mouna El Kahla, 67–80. New York: Palgrave.
- Marguich, Moussa. 2017. "L'Église catholique au Maroc sous le protectorat français: Rabat-Paris-Rome ou le heurt des logiques (1912-1956)." *Histoire, monde et cultures religieuses* (44): 33–54.
- Matar, Nabil. 2009. *Europe Through Arab Eyes, 1578–1727*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mazower, Mark. 2009. *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Miller, Susan Gilson. 1992. *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845–1846, the Voyage of Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣaffār*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Netton, I. R. 1998. "Rihla". In *The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol. VIII*. Leiden: E.J. Brill: 528.
- Newman, Daniel. 2001. "Arab Travellers to Europe Until the End of the 18th Century and Their Accounts." *Chronos* 4: 7–61.
- Newman, Daniel. 2004. *An Imam in Paris: Al-Tahtawi's Visit to France (1826–31)*. London: Saqi Books.
- Qaddūrī, Abd al-Majīd. 1995. *Sufara' Maghariba fi Urubba, 1610-1922: fi al-wa'y bi-l-tafawut*. Rabat: Jamī'at Muḥammad al-Khamis, Kulliyat al-Adab w-al-Ulum al-Insaniyya bi-l-Rabat.
- Qutb, Sayyid. 2011. "The America I Have Seen': In the Scale of Human Values (1951)." In *America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature, 1668 to 9/11 and Beyond*, edited by Kamal Abdel-Malek, and Mouna El Kahla, 9–27. New York: Palgrave.
- Smida, Mongi. 1991. *Consuls et consulats de Tunisie au 19e siècle*. Tunis: Imprimerie de l'Orient.
- Stenner, David. 2019. *Globalizing Morocco: Transnational Activism and the Postcolonial State*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Stenner, David. 2020. "On the Margins of the Arab World?" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52 (1): 154–160.
- Taymur, Mahmud. 2011. "The Flying Sphinx [in America] (1946?)." In *America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature, 1668 to 9/11 and Beyond*, edited by Kamal Abdel-Malek, and Mouna El Kahla, 61–62. New York: Palgrave.