



2013

# Moroccan Discoveries: From the Imperial Cities to the Sahara

David Giovacchini

University of Pennsylvania, davidgio@pobox.upenn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [http://repository.upenn.edu/alumni\\_reading](http://repository.upenn.edu/alumni_reading)

 Part of the [African Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Other French and Francophone Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [Other Languages, Societies, and Cultures Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Giovacchini, David, "Moroccan Discoveries: From the Imperial Cities to the Sahara" (2013). *Alumni Travel Reading Lists*. 10. [http://repository.upenn.edu/alumni\\_reading/10](http://repository.upenn.edu/alumni_reading/10)

Giovacchini, D. (2013). Moroccan Discoveries: From the Imperial Cities to the Sahara. In *Penn Alumni Travel*.

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. [http://repository.upenn.edu/alumni\\_reading/10](http://repository.upenn.edu/alumni_reading/10)  
For more information, please contact [libraryrepository@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:libraryrepository@pobox.upenn.edu).

---

# Moroccan Discoveries: From the Imperial Cities to the Sahara

**Abstract**

Suggested readings for the Penn Alumni Travel trip to Morocco. See the Library Guide for this bibliography [here](#).

**Keywords**

morocco, penn, alumni, travel, bibliography, fiction, film

**Disciplines**

African Languages and Societies | Other French and Francophone Language and Literature | Other Languages, Societies, and Cultures

**Comments**

Giovacchini, D. (2013). Moroccan Discoveries: From the Imperial Cities to the Sahara. In *Penn Alumni Travel*.

Alumni Travel Bibliography

**Moroccan Discoveries: From the Imperial Cities to the Sahara**

Prepared by Penn Library Subject Specialist:

David Giovacchini  
Middle East Studies Librarian  
davidgio@pobox.upenn.edu

---

**Morocco: An Experiential Bibliography**

*The View from Fez.* <http://riadzany.blogspot.com/>. This blog is the best introduction to all things Moroccan. From food to news to required reading to Moroccan “basics,” this is an easy and fun place to go wherever you are for a one stop guide to the country. The photo journal with more than a thousand pictures captures the beauty, magic and diversity of the land and people of Morocco, and is itself worth a visit to the blog.

*Ali Zaoua, Prince of the Streets* (2000), directed by Nabil Ayouche. This film gives a realistic and moving portrayal of the plight of the homeless children, who roam the desolate slums of Casablanca. This is not a side of Morocco usually seen by tourists, but it is the reality of many of the modern urban areas of the country. The unlooked for victory is that despite their desperate circumstances, the children’s courage, playfulness and vibrant camaraderie come through so clearly. In Arabic, with English subtitles.

Basan, Ghillie. *Modern Moroccan: Ancient Traditions, Contemporary Cooking*. London: Southwater, 2011. Ghillie Basan is the author of numerous books of Middle Eastern cookery, but the cuisine of Morocco seems to be her favorite. This book does just what it says; it takes traditional Moroccan dishes, like the savory stew known as a tagine, and gives them a modern spin. But not too modern, the recipes are still very authentic. The meals are easy to make and delicious. Indulge yourself with some of the dishes on offer here, and prepare your palette for what you’ll find in the casbah.

Laroui, Abdallah. *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977. Translated from French by Ralph Manheim. This is not the most recent history of Morocco, but it is the most thought-provoking. Laroui is a leading Moroccan historian, intellectual, and author. As you might have noticed from the title, this work is not just about Morocco, but the Maghrib, which is the Arabic term for North Africa, west of Libya, as a whole. Laroui traces the major themes of North African history, like ethnicity, tribalism, religion, and colonialism from the time of the earliest inhabitants until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. This will give you a broad understanding of the issues which frame Morocco's intellectual and social life. If you would like to read a history of modern Morocco, try the newly released "*A History of Modern Morocco*" by Susan Gilson Miller.

Mernissi, Fatima. *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1994. This book is set in the 1940s in Fez. At that time "harems" still existed in Morocco, but these harems were not the stereotypical, Western idealized type with partially clad women, lounging about waiting for a call to satisfy the man of the house. It was a domestic arrangement where women and girls were kept separate from the greater world of men. This is the setting for the author's girlhood, and "*Dreams of Trespass*" is her account of her years there. The tales are those the women tell each other about their lives, and those of men. Some dream of trespass into the outside world, man's world. Eventually, this women's world disappeared, and the women were free to follow their dreams. The author herself became a noted writer and sociologist. On your travels, you will see how much has changed for women in Morocco, and how much has stayed the same. If you'd like to read a fascinating account of how tradition and modernity struggle in women's lives in modern Morocco, try the novella "*Year of the Elephant*" by Leila Abouzeid, translated by Barbara Parmenter.

Bowles, Paul, trans. *Five Eyes: Stories*. Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1979. The American expatriate author, Paul Bowles, is known for his novels and stories about Morocco, like "*The Sheltering Sky*" or "*The Spider's House*", but he was also a keen judge of literary talent and a fine translator. By the mid-1960s Bowles had largely given up his own fiction writing to concentrate on translations of Moroccans he met in Tangier, where he lived. This anthology consists of stories by five Moroccan authors—Abdeslam Boulaich, Mohamed Choukri, Larbi Layachi, Mohammed Mrabet, Ahmed Yacoubi. These stories were improvised on the spot, unwritten, spoken in a Moroccan Arabic dialect. Bowles encouraged the men, transcribed, and translated their efforts into English. The resulting stories are surprisingly modern and hard-edged. They are imaginative, but there is little of the folk tale about them. Reading these stories you will hear a compelling and authentic voice of Morocco, from the throats of average men who discover there are people who care what they have to say. Most of these authors went on to "write" other works, if you'd like to read further.

*Musique Classique Andalouse de Fes*, ensemble led by Ustad Massano Tazi. Recorded 1987. Paris : Ocora : Distribution, Harmonia Mundi France, 1988. C 559035 HM 83 Ocora. Maroc: Radio France.

Nass El Ghiwane *La Legende*. EMI France, 2008.

*Hadra des Gnaoua d'Essaouira*. Traditional music of Gnawa groups of Essaouira, Morocco. Field recordings by H. Vuylsteke, Morocco, Aug.-Sept. 1990. Paris : Ocora Radio France : Distribution, Harmonia Mundi France, 1993. Maroc: Radio France.

Morocco is a land of music. The CDs here have been selected to give you some idea of the diversity of music you will find. First, we have a CD of Moroccan classical music. This music is supposed to have come to Morocco with the many Muslims who fled from Spain after the conquest of the last Muslim stronghold, the city of Grenada, in 1492. This is the origin of its name "andalousi" or Spanish. There is a set instrumentation of plucked and bowed strings, and a set repertoire based on musical keys/modes or noubas. This music is the soul of courtly Moroccan culture, and is esteemed in the same manner as Western classical music. Next is the popular group, Nass El Ghiwane. Formed in the late 1960s, Nass El Ghiwane are living legends, who have developed a compelling mixture of Moroccan folk forms and instruments with the intensity and musicianship of Western rock'n'roll. Their lyrics reflect political or social concerns. Their music is usually referred to as Chaabi, or popular. This CD dates from 1975, and is one of their best. The last CD contains Gnaoua or Gnawa music. This is the music of Black Sufi brotherhoods, many of which are based in the towns on the edge of the Sahara. The music is percussive and repetitive, and is very trance-inducing. Despite this, Gnaoua is one of the major musical currents in Morocco. It is often heard at the international festival, Fes Musiques Sacree du Monde, which usually takes place in the summer.

Courtney-Clarke, Margaret. *Imazighen: the Vanishing Traditions of Berber Women*. New York : C. Potter, 1996. (Essays by Geraldine Brooks.) This is a beautiful book with numerous color photographs by Courtney-Clarke, which record the multiplicity of wondrous things created by Berber women, such as murals, pottery, fabrics, rugs, and other woven products. Featured too in the photographs are the women themselves, shown working at their crafts, and many other daily tasks. The Berbers are thought to be the original inhabitants of Morocco and North Africa. Certainly, we can date them there definitely in Roman times, when their king Jugurtha fought the Republic. Many of the arts and crafts practiced by Berber women today have been in use for centuries, but as this book points out, modern conditions and expectations have begun to eat away at tradition.



Peyron, Michael, trans. *Berber Odes: Poetry from the Mountains of Morocco*. London : Eland, 2010. Another book of Berber culture, this time literary in nature, and deriving from the world of men. *Berber Odes* is the product of almost 20 years of work by collector, translator, Peyron. Morocco's Berber population is spread throughout the country, with Tarifit-speaking Berbers in the northern Rif Mountains, Tamazight-speaking Berbers in the Middle Atlas, and Tashelhit-speaking Berbers in the Sous region in southwest Morocco. While the book focuses on poetry from the Middle Atlas, Peyron's primary area of research, it also includes a short selection of poetry from the Rif and a substantial selection from the Sous. The poems are organized by region. Each is given in English translation with a brief discussion. In reading and appreciating the translations, it is important to remember that these poems, like the tales in "Five eyes", were originally oral creations. The collection includes a broad selection of genres, from humorous pieces to traditional ballads to didactic works to works of popular religion, although many of the poems have martial themes. These traditional poems, and the context given for each one, offer unique insights into Berber history and culture, which are both centuries old and an important part of modern Moroccan culture. The poems have never been translated into English before.