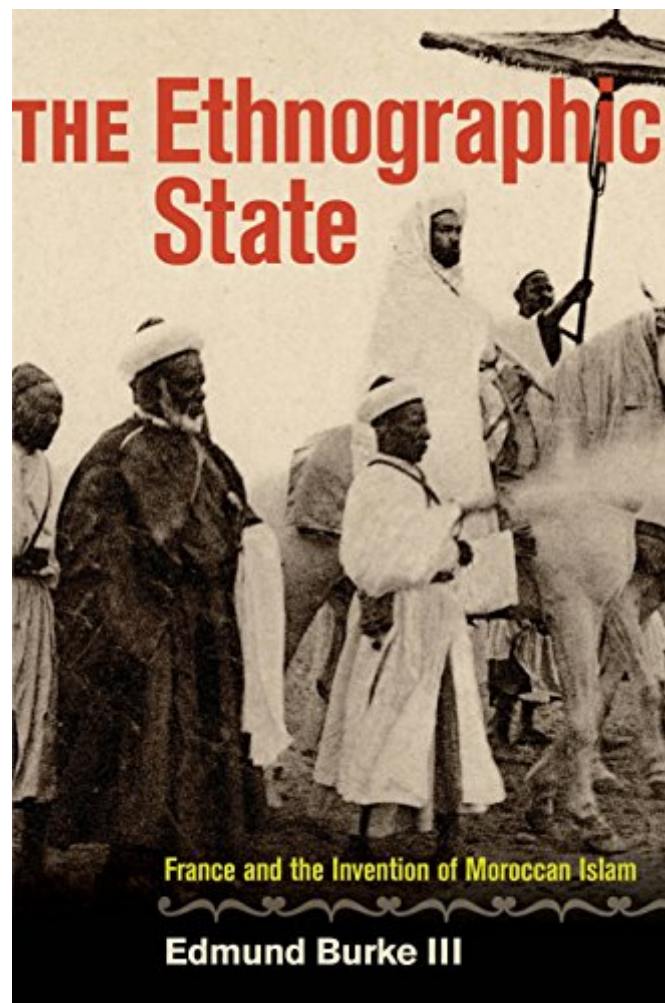




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The Ethnographic State: France And The Invention Of Moroccan Islam



Synopsis

Alone among Muslim countries, Morocco is known for its own national form of Islam, "Moroccan Islam." However, this pathbreaking study reveals that Moroccan Islam was actually invented in the early twentieth century by French ethnographers and colonial officers who were influenced by British colonial practices in India. Between 1900 and 1920, these researchers compiled a social inventory of Morocco that in turn led to the emergence of a new object of study, Moroccan Islam, and a new field, Moroccan studies. In the process, they resurrected the monarchy and reinvented Morocco as a modern polity. This is an important contribution for scholars and readers interested in questions of orientalism and empire, colonialism and modernity, and the invention of traditions.

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Customer Reviews

"The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam" examines the underpinnings of the French protectorate in Morocco (1912-1956). Although the notion of a European nation "protecting" a non-European one was not new, Morocco under soldier-administrator-proconsul Hubert Lyautey (1854-1934) was to be something special. As one candidate for a top administrative post put it, yes, he had worked in a protectorate before, but not in "the protectorate." Burke's expert account of what

France knew (and did not know) about Morocco and how this affected everything it did for 40 years is a cautionary tale. Convinced of their superiority in body, mind, and spirit and everything that constituted the advanced material and technical world of the 20th century, the French claimed to bring a new and "scientific imperialism" to Morocco. What this meant and how it was applied (and often mis-applied) to the conquest and rule of the people, places, and things of Morocco is the key element in Burke's engaging story. As the title proclaims, France built the protectorate on its understanding of Morocco's ethnographic realities. In their process of nation-building (or state-protecting) and as an element in the notion of "indirect rule," Frenchmen "invented" an Islam rooted in the spiritual and political authority of the Moroccan sultan. In exploring why and how all this happened, "The Ethnographic State" probes the foundations and legacies of empires both past and present. It is a very good and very important read!

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