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Historical Dictionary of the Western Sahara and From Socialism to Islam? Notes on Islam as a Political Factor in Contemporary Africa

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BOOK NOTES

Historical Dictionary of the Western Sahara. Tony Hodges. Scarecrow Press, London, 1982. Introduction, chronology, bibliography, map, pp. xxxix - 431. \$28.50 (cloth).

Thirty-fifth in a series of historical dictionaries of African nations edited by Jon Woronoff, Hodges' contribution on Western Sahara is a well researched, comprehensive and useful reference for Africanists, especially those interested in Arab Africa. If support for Saharawi nationalism is implicit in the inclusion of a piece on Western Sahara in a series of national manuals, it is explicit in the conclusions Hodges draws in his chronology and introduction. His skillful recounting of the events leading up to the Madrid Agreement of 1975, which saw the partition of Western Sahara between Morocco and Mauritania, convincingly minimizes both Spanish and Moroccan claims to the disputed territory and highlights the legitimacy of the national aspirations of the Saharawi people. He sees King Hassan's belated move to create nationalist fervor over the Western Sahara as a ruse to co-opt Muslim-led domestic opposition by presenting himself as the defender of Moroccan irredentism and by standing up to the infidel's (Spain's) attempts to set up a "puppet state" on Moroccan claimed territory. (p. 10) The main body of the work is thorough, factual and, as it should be, more objective than the introduction. As Samuel Decalo has noted in his review of the Niger volume in *Africa*, Vol. 51(3):798, while the dictionaries in this series on the larger countries of Africa have not been well reviewed, the single volume format perhaps can successfully cope with the data available on the smaller nations. Hodges' work bears out this appraisal.

From Socialism to Islam? Notes on Islam as a Political Factor in Contemporary Africa. David Westerlund. Research Report No. 61. Upsalla: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1982. Bibliography, map, pp. 62.

In a little more than a pamphlet, Westerlund deals with the relation between socialism and Islam in Africa, a subject more worthy of a book-length monograph. His two main premises are that (1) most African nations with a Muslim majority have tried periods of socialism, and (2) this socialism, called "Islamic socialism" in North Africa and "African socialism" in "black" Africa, is different from classical Marxism in significant ways. One difference is that it rejects the concept of class struggle and urges all social groups to cooperate, based on the Islamic concept of *umma*, i.e., community of all believers. Another difference, he notes, is that the economies of these nations are generally mixed, that is substantial state planning and nationalization of key industries along with widespread petty capitalism.

He generalizes that Christian Africans have adhered to capitalism, and Muslim Africans to socialism. Here he criticizes both the Weber and Rodinson theses on the effect of supposedly inherent aspects of Islam on the development of capitalism. However, his attempt to explain the notable exceptions Ethiopia, Angola and Mozambique by the hypothesis that "Catholic or Orthodox Christianity negatively provides 'fertile soil' for the development of Marxism" is unconvincing. He more successfully uses examples from Muslim and predominantly Muslim nations to show that Islamic-African socialist governments offer a third alternative to the "capitalist materialism of the West" and the "communist atheism of the Eastern socialists."

But he concludes with a broad critique of Islamic-African socialism saying that many socialist governments of Africa came to power either at independence or by coup d'etats, and thus lack the mass support that socialist governments who led their people through a war of liberation enjoy. Lacking popular support, they must rely more and more on repression and foreign aid, often Western. These actions have provoked an upsurge of Muslim fundamentalism in the 1970s which has tempered the severity of this socialism and has urged a rejection of foreign "isms" and supported a mixed economy including small-scale private enterprise.

Westerlund answers his own question "From Socialism to Islam?" by saying "no (or not yet)," meaning that no socialist governments in Africa have yet been replaced by fundamentalist Muslim regimes. However, he clearly regards Islamic fundamentalism as a force with which African socialism must reckon. His analyses seem sound, and are supported by numerous examples, but he fails to develop the possibility of social effect by progressive, non-fundamentalist Muslim political organizations. Nonetheless, his work is a significant contribution to that body of literature which seeks to reintegrate Africa with its northern tier of Arab states.

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