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Review: The Aith Waryaghar of the Moroccan Rif: An ethnography and history.

David Montgomery Hart: Tuscon: Viking Fund Publ. in Anthropology, Univ. of Arizona Press XXIII + 556 pp., glossary, six appendices, tables, figures, maps, photos, annotated bibliography. \$ 20.00.

In April, 1979 I was invited to deliver a lecture at the University of Rabat (Morocco). It was agreed that I should speak about "La femme africaine au temps du neocolonialisme" ("The African Woman in the Era of Neocolonialism"), a sort of ethnopschoanalytic investigation based on an unsparing analysis of economics. A young and bright lady journalist interviewed me after I had delivered the lecture. As I am used to doing, I had asked her whether she, too, would answer some questions after the interview. At my first question, how it could be that she was much better aware of those concealed economic, ethnologic and human problems of present day Africa than all the students and scholars who discussed my paper, she answered: "I am not an Arab, I am a Rifian Berber." On the spot, my inner image of 'Abd-al-Krim was revived, a man I did meet, in fantasy of course, on some crucial points in my life. The first time when I was a boy in the mid-twenties, my parents turned away disapprovingly from the atrocities committed by that rebel as reported in the "Illustration Française" whereas

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I thought he was a hero equal to Hannibal, to the Inca Kings and to the proud American Indians, ideals out of my reading in those days. The second time 'Abd-al-Krim rose before my inner eye was when we started with a jeep from Algeria in fall 1954 for our first trip to West Africa. An overly cautious Swiss diplomat warned us: "This is the most inappropriate moment to choose for such an enterprise", Some skirmishes had just been reported from the Aurès mountains which launched the long and cruel Algerian struggle for independence, long-time overdue. My last reminding of 'Abd-al-Krim was in spring '78 when we slept in EI-Hoceima and drove through the central Rif as mere tourists, a bit sad to acknowledge that we are prevented by old age now to enter in a research-relationship with such noble people as we met along the steep roads of the Rif-mountains and to reveal the ethnic and hidden psychological roots of men like that tragic hero.

I mention all these very personal things to disclose my bias in reviewing this book and to explain how I was motivated to accept referring about a work the merits of which only a specialist for Berber history and language, or at least an "arabisant," could appreciate (which I am not at all) and to explain why I did not decline the offer. When we returned that spring from Morocco and Algiers, David Montgomery Hart's work was on my desk. At very first glance I noticed that this is the lifework of an outstanding scholar in Berber ethnography: the volume in itself is impressive, 556 pages, 21 x 28 cm. (8 x 11 in.), a glossary, 6 appendices, an annotated bibliography, tables, figures, maps and about 150 photographs (most by the author). I looked at them first, which I think any presumptive reader should do, just to take heart to launch reading. Even Carleton S. Coon, the author's teacher and friend, may have felt that it needs courage for he closes his foreword with some encouragement. I may add now, the courage of the reader is fully rewarded. The author attended Princeton University and pursued graduate studies in anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. He has concentrated his ethnographic work on Muslim North Africa and the Near and Middle East, his theoretical interest centering around the nature, manifestations, structure, function and dynamics of tribalism. He was eleven years in Morocco, spending half his time in the field and teaching as well at the former Institute of Sociology at the University Mohammed V in Rabat. The total time the author spent in Waryagharland and in the Central Rif, generally, was four full years, which was split up into two periods; the first between December 1952 and August 1955, the second between March 1959 and December 1967. As Moroccan national independence came in the interim (1956) and the Aith Waryaghar had staged a serious tribal revolt against the government in Rabat (1958-59) only a few months before the author's return to the field (in July, 1959), he was a personal witness to these crucial historical events. The "ethnographer's eye" (to use Michel Leiris' term), which is and should be the main tool of any anthropologist, was there for a 'study of the history', of the Moroccan Berber tribes as well, even more than other anthropologists all over the world have experienced it in our time.

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The first purpose of the author's work, to be "a study of Aith Waryaghar sociopolitical structure, feuds and alliances" may be called historical too. The tribal structure seems to have lost much of its direct bearing on life when the author pursued his studies, feuds and alliances had been abolished during the reign (as it may be called) of the great reformer 'Abd-al-Krim (1921-26). Therefore the methods of investigation applied to the bulk of these topics were those of the historian. The tribesmen, mostly illiterate with regard to their Berber language, were used to put down main social events, important political, economic or family affairs in Arab language by the

religious caretakers of the mosques; French and Spanish ethnographers had done a lot of descriptive and even analytic work on which the author relied in a most careful and critical manner (making clear that he prefers Spanish sources, especially the writings of Colonel Emilio Blanco Izaga); and finally his informants provided detailed information in abundance, and obviously with a sense of precision. However, it strikes the reader that a single investigator was able to collect so much information in detail even concerning events one, two and more generations before his time. Of course, the Aith Waryaghar are proud and conservative men and were fond of a real scholar speaking their language, and Arabic, Spanish and French as well, who was seriously interested in their past. Diligence alone would not suffice to explain the breadth and accuracy of information about reconstructed events he reports. David Montgomery Hart must have been a passionate worker in the field.

The author clearly states what are the aims and significance of his study (p. XVII): "This is a study in both the social and political anthropology and in the social and political history of the most important single tribal grouping in Northern Morocco: the Aith Waryaghar." This group, and the Berber-speaking region in which it is located, the Rif, has always been characterized by the infertility of its agricultural terrain and by its over- population, to which the two standard cultural responses have been labor migration (first to Algeria and today to Western Europe) and, at another level, the blood-feud. Owing the external pressures from first a Spanish Protectorate and later an Independent Moroccan central government, the blood-feud is no longer viable; but the author shows that it (and the alliances which were ramified from it) was the dominant theme in Rifian society, in the days prior in 1921. In that year 'Abd al-Krim, the first Rifian ever to overcome the barrier of tribal politics, welded together not only his own tribe, the Aith Waryaghar , with all others in the Rif, but all those of Northern Morocco as well, in order to combat the Christian invader.

The work thus attempts to study the sociopolitical structure of the Aith Waryaghar from two points of view: from within, as they see themselves, and also from without, as seen by the wider national Moroccan society. The Aith Waryaghar have, despite a traditionally Rifian sentiment of uniqueness and apartness, always been acutely aware of this wider society, which has also, reciprocally, been acutely aware of them, mainly as "recalcitrants who fail to come to heel."

But the agnatic and segmentary values which once underlay the feud have now been transposed to the context of labor migration, while the Rifian laborers' experience in Europe is ushering in social change at home on an unprecedented scale. The major focus in this book, however, is on

the traditional society, and on what the change was from, rather than on the directions in which it is going.

This book should be of interest not only to anthropologists and historians interested in tribal societies in North Africa and the Middle East, but also to those interested in societies which, once traditionally segmentary and rent asunder by blood-feuds, are now making their own adjustments to the modern world .

The purpose, unassuming as it is formulated here, was attained. What will be said in this review below in a somewhat critical tone may fit more the anticipations of the reviewer than those of the author, who provides only what he feels is reliable enough to be issued.

To go through the contents of the work would fill more pages than a review is supposed to cover. In a general orientation the choice of the Central Rif with the "five fifths" of the Aith Waryaghar tribes is explained. (For more detailed data the author chose the Aith Turirth tribe as his "primary social unit.") The theoretical definition of a tribe provided by Evan-Pritchard (p. 4) and reshaped by the author introduces the general lines to follow-as the reviewer must add a theoretical network by far too wide to hold together the amount of information which unfolds before the reader.

Literally *all* topics any ethnographer may consider worthwhile to report are dealt with extensively in detail and based on various and appropriate methods of investigation. To give just one example. How could one prove the general impression gained from demographic data and a survey of agricultural production that the subjects of investigation become poorer every year in a country where there are relatively rich, medium wealthy and poor families? The author provides the budgets of three persons (two of the same lineage (Imjjat), one of another of the same sub-clan) of different wealth by means of a bookkeeping, the accuracy of which would satisfy the most suspicious European tax collector. And indeed: the net loss which would be invisible for any superficial observer because of an acting debt distribution system comes out convincingly for rich and poor men as well.

Whatever an anthropologist is eager to know about these poor, proud and belligerent farmers, he will be able to find documented here: weaning and child care as well as communal work with its refinements and exceptions, including the irrigation system, with the amount of fines to pay for those who would neglect their correlated duties-beliefs and legends, the special brand and devotion to Islam as well as marriage patterns, political and legal systems, linguistics, and history, of course. All centered geographically on the Central Rif, socially on the Aith Waryaghar , put in due relationship with the outside world, be it the first bringers of Islam, the Moroccan sultanate through the ages, the Spanish as neighbors, conquerers, reformers up to labor emigration to Western Europe of our time.

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It is as if the spirit of Franz Boas had attended a research which would omit nothing worthwhile to report, i.e. anything which makes for a culture. This is indeed a perfect monograph. The same spirit may be held responsible for the peculiarity of this work that no theory-or almost none-holds together these many henceforth undeniable facts, events, material and traditional structures. Many readers of this journal would feel the same ever growing impatience I felt the deeper I engaged in reading. I would have liked to know what the author really thought about the phenomena he collected with so much care and diligence. He alone and not the inexperienced reader would have to give his scholarly opinion, whether the abortive (economic) 'equality' of woman had some relation to the unexpected existence of women's markets and how these facts are related to the special form of female segregation. He alone could explain how child-rearing practices, the psychological characterization of the tribesmen as being "quarrelsome" may relate to the most striking structural feature of a sharply organized agnatic structure with its obligations, alliances and dependencies cross-cut by organized blood-feuds originating alliances (liffs) which form (or formed until 'Abd al-Krim's time) the "dominant political institutions" of his people. No doubt that the author could have provided valid judgment. He does so when comparing one step in developing his own views out of contradicting ones in former writings or when discussing seemingly contradictory items. It must be his scientific conviction not to indulge in any theoretical framework, not to speak of organizing ethnographic data in a free speculative way or to avoid that pure ethnography which would be transformed into some kind of comprehensive or holistic anthropology.

During my reading I could not help following my own ethnologic fantasy again and again. How could a psychologically oriented ethnologist not raise the question whether that strongly agnatic system, the authoritarian way the *pater familias* rules (similar to the Serbian *porodica*) and the special attitudes concerning male children together with the institutionalized control and jealousy of the male over the female (similar to the traditional Sicilian pattern) would create strong aggressive tensions even from son to father and from brother to brother so that the organization of the "liffs" was necessary to supply the agnatic system and whether all this created a "quarrellsome" i.e. chronically aggressive-oriented mood which was drained in a real anticolonial war, the first in all Africa, and whether this same socio-psychological result facilitated identification with Spain's aggressive Franco and his government, and so on.

Even when ideas were present as in *Germaine Tillion*: "Le Harem et les Cousins" (Paris Ed. du Seuil, 1966) which would explain some noncorrelated findings testified over and over in Hart's

work, like clan endogamy, the Aith Waryaghars choice to observe some koranic rules and (astonishingly enough) to neglect others, the author dispels those hypothetical explanations with hard words: "Idealized statements abound...Of little value" (p. 543). He prefers to explain those strange phenomena by "tradition and custom."

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When I had nearly completed my reading, the political personality of 'Abd al-Krim stood before by inner eye, clearcut and abstract as a creature not made by his tribe, his parents or by the will of God but by the "Zeitgeist" of Hegel himself. This work composed out of thousands of hard facts and realistic accounts avoids a more general understanding to a point that all remains open for the reader. When discussing "the Aith Waryaghar and the concept of democracy" (p. 443), we read with some ex-asperation, "Egalitarianism and competition for land, women, power and prestige are socio-cultural keynotes in Waryagharland-as indeed they are elsewhere." And we continue to learn that "shifting alliance, the treachery (conceived as "cunning," and sometimes extolled as such) involved, and the gunning-down of members of one's own agnatic lineage are hardly in the spirit of democracy as conceived, for example, by the Founding Fathers of the U.S.A." (pp. 444, 445).

Henceforth, if I should meet again 'Abd al-Krim, a real Rifian and anticolonial fighter, he will be incorporated in an immense tapestry in figures embroidered by the author with sharp needles in well-tuned colors. But if the admiring spectator would wish to divine the meaning of all the dramatic or epic events represented in the work, he would have to rely on his own fanciful imagination. The image is enigmatic as before.

To allow the readers of this journal to have a look at the huge picture, I quote some lines in which the author quotes an article about "Rifian morals," which he composed with a co-author Jose Rodriquez, *Erola* (in FERM, Vergilius, Ed. Encyclopedia of Morals, New York: The Philosophical Library, 1956, pp. 481-490) which is, as he adds with caution, "based purely on observation, and not on any projective testing":

"As they themselves [the Aith Waryaghar] are conflicting and contrasting, so are the morals which they underlay. The same man who bashes in this neighbor's head with a billhook will give his all to a stranger who comes to his door seeking shelter and hospitality. In the same way, bravery is inextricably linked with prudence, arrogance with obsequiousness, and xenophobia with liberalism."