

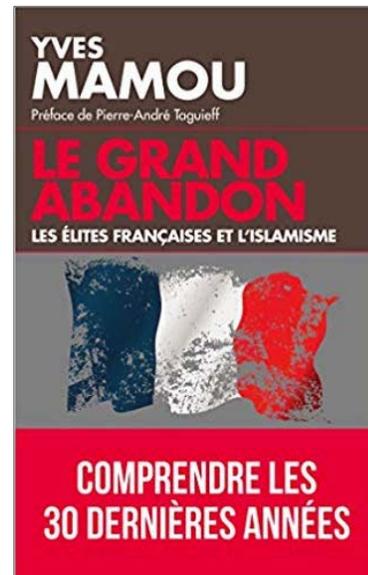
Brief Reviews, Summer 2019

Le grand abandon. Les élites françaises et l'islamisme. By Yves Mamou. Paris: L'Artilleur, 2018. 576 pp. €22.

France today is the European country with the largest Muslim immigrant population, and Islamization of its society is gaining ground. Other books document the anxiety of many French, who see their country changing beyond recognition. Mamou asks why, despite this growing concern, successive governments do not respond but continue with immigration and Islamization. Why do mainstream media relentlessly demonize those who try to sound the alarm?

Mamou, a former journalist for *Le Monde*, posits that a deliberate will is at work. For more than three decades, French elites (political leaders, journalists, major entrepreneurs, intellectuals) have wished to destroy the nation's identity with an "erasure strategy." He convincingly shows that this strategy was pursued with determination and relentlessly implemented in many areas of society (curriculum changes, government information campaigns, foreign policy decisions). The initial goal was not to Islamize France but to break up what the country had been until then, a Christian country with strong national values. Elites, he claims, chose to ally with Islamic groups for the purpose of using the devastating power of their hatred of the Western world.

Knowing that what he writes will be controversial, Mamou presents a thorough and detailed analysis based on hundreds of documents, including newspaper articles,

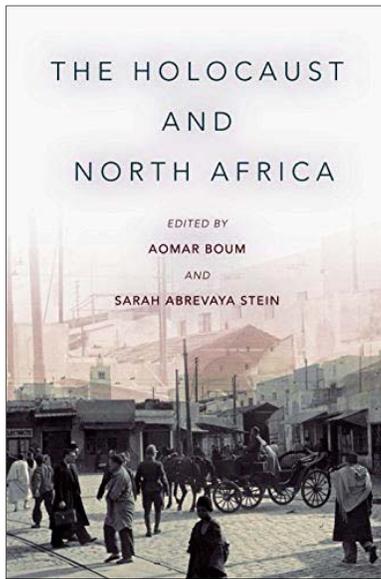


statements by political leaders, and legal documents. He offers little hope, seeing utter disaster and no way to reverse these developments: French society is crumbling.

He notes that Jews with the financial means move to Israel or North America. Those without the means leave their old neighborhoods and settle in safer places. But the Jews who stay realize their children have a bleak future in France. At least, French Jews know that they have an alternate homeland.

The book offers a thorough and masterful explanation of a process of destruction that many authors described but could not fully explain or understand. It deserves to be widely read, though most journalists in France did their best to hide its existence.

Guy Millière
Gatestone Institute and
University of Paris



The Holocaust and North Africa. Edited by Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019. 360 pp. \$90 (\$29.95, paper).

For an experience so centered on Europe, new scholarship on the Holocaust's long reach into Africa, especially the Arab lands of North Africa, has been especially revealing. Not only does this new chapter of Holocaust inquiry bring new actors into the drama—including Mizrahi Jews, local Muslims, and colonial administrators—it sheds new light on the role of such established figures as Nazi perpetrators, Vichy and Fascist collaborators, and European Jewish refugees fleeing the spread of Hitlerism.

The Holocaust and North Africa—an edited volume of papers and presentations delivered at a path-breaking 2015 conference at The University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA)—offers one of the first scholarly collections that mixes original research and

insightful commentary on the connection between the Holocaust and North Africa. Boum and Stein have brought together a fascinating compendium that tantalizes readers by opening new areas of historical inquiry.

This volume is not the final word on the history of the Holocaust in North Africa, but its contributors usefully point to areas where further research is needed. For example, how far were Vichy anti-Semites willing to go to implement their plans? Ruth Ginio's look at the execution of anti-Jewish legislation in colonial West Africa is an instructive case study. An excellent chapter by Boum and Mohammed Hatimi on Muslim-Jewish relations in the Moroccan *bled* focuses on the need for an authoritative account of the many layers of Muslim-Jewish relations across North Africa during this period. Similarly, evocative chapters by Susan Slyomovics and Boum on life in two Vichy internment camps—Bedeau and Djelfa—beg for a comprehensive study of French, Italian, and German camps in North Africa during the war. And in just one brief paragraph in a chapter on Tunisian memoirs of occupation, Lia Brozgal (perhaps unintentionally) underscores the urgency for a study of Jewish women as targets of Nazi and fascist brutality in North Africa, a difficult but much needed topic.

Traditionalists might erroneously view the North African experience as marginal to understanding the Holocaust, but these contributions show it belongs in any comprehensive study of an event about which there is still much to know and learn.

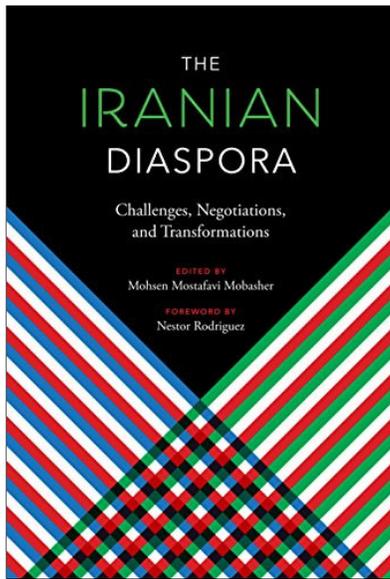
Robert Satloff

Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Author of *Among the Righteous:*

Lost Stories from the Holocaust's

Long Reach into Arab Lands



The Iranian Diaspora: Challenges, Negotiations, and Transformations. Edited by Mohsen Mostafavi Mobasher. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018. 284 pp. \$45.

Since the 1979 Iranian revolution, approximately five million Iranians have left their homeland to begin new lives in free countries where they could build better futures for themselves and their children. This has been the most important wave of Iranian emigration in recent history. Nearly half of Iranian immigrants live in successful communities in the United States, Canada, and Europe. But tens of thousands more Iranians are trapped as refugees in countries including Turkey and Greece, living in harsh conditions, and waiting with little hope for a country to welcome them.

Iranian Diaspora presents scholarly essays written about the experience of Iranians in eight countries: the United States, five countries in Europe, Australia, and the

United Arab Emirates. The book seeks to help readers “determine the extent to which Iranian immigration dynamics across different countries aggregate into a unity of experience.” The essays have two goals: “(1) to understand and describe how Iranians in diaspora (re)define and maintain their ethnonational identity and (2) to explore their integration challenges.” In order to do so, the authors, who are academics and researchers with a focus on Iranian immigrants, consider the relationships among the Iranian diaspora, the countries where they reside, and Iran.

Iranian Diaspora is an important book that provides valuable insights into the Iranian immigrant experience. The book correctly notes that the integration of Iranian immigrants has been negatively affected by “prejudice, discrimination, and media stereotype.” Meanwhile, the book underlines that “the educational and economic success of Iranians [in the United States] has been remarkable.” Similarly, Iranians in Europe and Canada constitute very successful immigrant communities.

But Mobasher also blames Iranian immigrants for “framing” the Iranian government, suggesting that “supporters of the former regime and other political opponents and disenchanted Iranians in diaspora conceived and constructed a horrific image of the Islamic government and ... the Iranian Revolution and its aftermath.” However, his criticism is misplaced, as the major blame should be placed on the Iranian regime, whose actions have caused irreparable damage to Iran, forced millions of Iranians to live in exile indefinitely, and undermined the standing of the Iranian community abroad.

Hassan Dai
Iranian American Forum

Palestine: A Four Thousand Year History. By Nur Masalha. London: Zed Books Ltd., 2018. 448 pp. \$35.

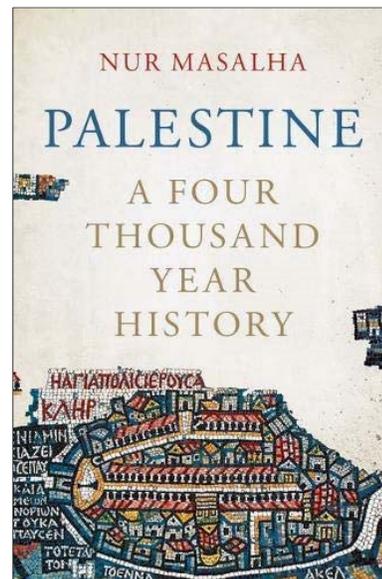
In February 2019, two Israelis found a 1,900-year-old coin from the time of the Jewish Bar Kochba revolt against the Romans (132-35 C.E.) in an area southwest of Jerusalem. Inscribed on one side of the coin were the words the “second year to the freedom of Israel.”

This kind of evidence connecting the Jewish people to the land of Israel is exactly what Nur Masalha seeks to undermine in his new book, a dense and redundant effort to undercut what he calls “the foundational myths of Zionism.”

As an anti-Zionist historian, Masalha exhibits typical contempt for “Zionist settler colonialism,” but he distinguishes himself in one important way. He also endeavors to challenge “the fictional narratives of the Old Testament.” In other words, he seeks to deny the Jewish connection to the Holy Land.

For example, he asserts that “there is no empirical historical evidence or facts to corroborate positively the Old Testament Exodus text.” He further finds a “lack of material or empirical evidence for a ‘United Kingdom of David and Solomon.’” He sneers at what he calls Jewish “myths of ‘exile and return’ and ‘return to history.’” When he does acknowledge Jewish connections, he claims that the Jews were “Palestinians”—seemingly with no claim to the land.

In contrast, he posits that “Palestine and its local heritage have survived across more than three millennia through adaptation, fluidity, and transformation.” In disjointed, repetitive, academic language, he labors to draw a continuous arc from the Late Bronze Age to the current day. Of course, Arabs have connections to the land they today call



“Palestine.” But to assert a continuous four thousand-year history is absurd. The territory has changed hands countless times, as Roman, pre-Islamic, Islamic, and modern empires came and went.

Not surprisingly, Masalha reserves his most unhinged treatment for the present, devoting a full seventy-nine pages to a chapter entitled “Settler-colonialism and disinherit the Palestinians.” He rants about Israeli “appropriation of Arabic toponyms” (a word he uses incessantly) and consumes eight pages excoriating European Jews for taking Israeli names upon emigrating at the turn of the last century.

The main points of the book are made in the introduction, which drags on for fifty-four pages. Masalha certainly could have saved a few hundred trees by truncating his opus into a political pamphlet but chose to stretch his ahistoric rant for ten more chapters. At one point, he notes that “historians often reproduce their own preoccupation with identity politics and imported nationalism.” It is hard to disagree with him on that one.

Jonathan Schanzer
Foundation for Defense of Democracies

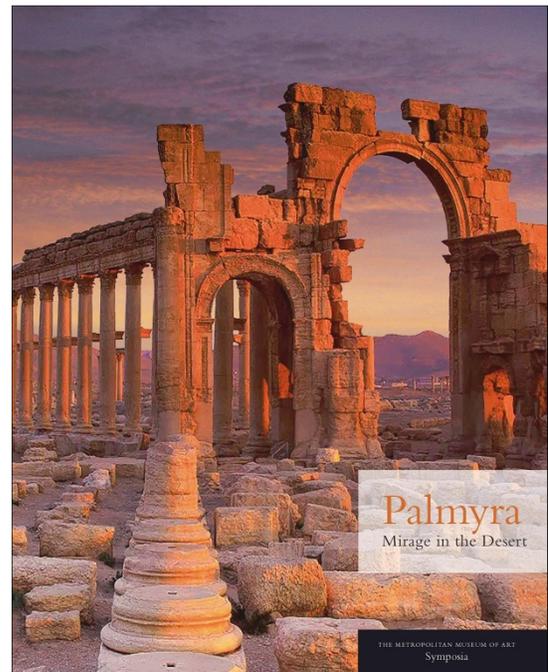
Palmyra, Mirage in the Desert.
Edited by Joan Aruz. New York:
Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018.
160 pp. \$35, paper.

Archaeological sites capture public attention for mostly positive reasons. However, the 2015 destruction of Palmyra by the Islamic State (ISIS) and its barbaric murder of Khaled al-Asaad, chief archaeologist at the site, saw attention refocused on the site for tragic reasons. A 2016 symposium at the Metropolitan Museum of Art offered an opportunity for scholars to review old and new finds at Palmyra in Asaad's memory.

Rising out of the Syrian desert, Palmyra was a vital crossing point from the Mediterranean coast to the Euphrates River and a meeting point between the Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds. Chapters review evidence for its ecological setting and explore its history of settlement from the Neolithic period through the Roman period, and in particular the Roman monuments and artworks for which it is most famous.

Motivated by its Islamic theology, claiming the site offended Islam, ISIS destroyed many of Palmyra's key monuments with high explosives. The gruesome fate of the 83-year-old Asaad—publicly beheaded, his body hung in a public square—compounded the message in the most horrific manner possible. But much as it did at other Syrian and Iraqi archaeological sites, including Hatra, Dura Europos, and Nineveh, the group also looted portable antiquities, which it planned to smuggle out of its territories and sell to Western and other collectors. This was the embodiment not of ISIS's hypocrisy but its self-proclaimed piety, merging iconoclasm, terror, and booty.

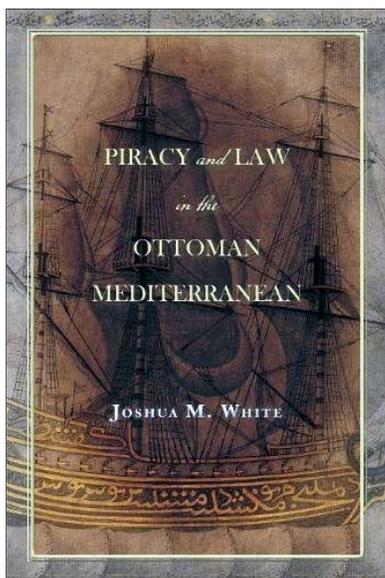
It is sadly fitting that Palmyra in antiquity epitomized a multicultural synthesis



of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds, thanks to wealth gained from its location on caravan routes. Roman style temples dedicated to local Syrian deities, an immense colonnade, and vast quantities of decoration, from architecture to textiles, were created and uniquely well preserved thanks to the desert climate. Inscriptions, coins, frescoes, mosaics, and funerary monuments also provided unique insights into the lives of Palmyra's citizens, who were drawn from all the ethnicities of the period. Perhaps unwittingly, ISIS's destruction of evidence of ancient cultural diversity, what UNESCO has called "cultural cleansing," matched its efforts to homogenize local, living populations.

Palmyrain antiquity is well-discussed in this short, reliable introductory volume. But missing is a full account of its destruction and Asaad's murder, including an explication of the group's Islamist ideology.

Alex Joffe
Middle East Forum



Piracy and Law in the Ottoman Mediterranean. By Joshua M. White. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017. 376 pp. \$65.

In the late sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire and its European opponents increasingly withdrew from the Mediterranean, their primary theater of war, leaving it to privateer allies. As a result, “incidents of piracy increased dramatically, as both Mediterranean corsair proxies and Atlantic entrepreneurs filled the power vacuum at sea, undisturbed by the once dominant Mediterranean superpowers.”

White’s book aims to present “the Ottoman perspective” on piracy and law in the Mediterranean since most of this history is told from the “viewpoint of Europeans and on the basis of European sources.” He argues that the “Ottomans were not simply perpetrators or enthusiastic supporters of piratical violence as they have usually been portrayed, but rather its most prominent victims.”

The more the Ottomans withdrew, “opportunities for [Muslim] raiders to conflate ‘enemy infidels’ with protected [*dhimmi*] subjects increased exponentially.” Non-Muslim Ottoman subjects—religious minorities who paid tribute and were meant to be protected by their Ottoman overlords—became free game for pirates who did not split hairs over their enemy or protected status. This phenomenon, where rogue Muslim groups victimize infidels in the name of jihad irrespective of their protected status, continues to this day. An example is the Islamist jihad on Egypt’s Copts, despite President al-Sisi’s “protection.”

The primary weakness of White’s book is a side-effect of its strength. By heavily relying on Ottoman sources, the book is one-sided, only from the Ottoman point of view. As a result, European and Christian corsairs, particularly Malta’s Knights of St. John, appear as “a serious, recurring, incurable menace that was extremely disruptive to Ottoman state and society and affected lives and livelihoods throughout the empire.” In reality, the entire phenomenon of Christian corsairs preying on Muslims was retaliatory. As Robert Davis explains in *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, slaving around the Mediterranean was “a prevalently Muslim phenomenon.”¹

To demonstrate that Christian pirates “wreaked havoc,” White offers numbers: “Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at least thirty-five thousand to forty thousand [Muslim] slaves passed through Malta.” Compare this with Davis’s statistics: “between 1530 and 1780

¹ Robert Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast and Italy, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003 ed.), p. 9.

there were almost certainly a million and quite possibly as many as a million and a quarter white European Christians enslaved by the Muslims of the Barbary Coast.”²

White’s heavy reliance on Ottoman archives offers a more nuanced and detailed picture concerning the role of piracy in the

premodern Mediterranean. Unfortunately this sometimes comes at the cost of losing sight of the bigger picture provided by European perspectives.

Raymond Ibrahim
Author of *Sword and Scimitar*



² Ibid., p. 23.