

What Mahmoud Teymour (1894-1973) wrote on Ali Hammami's novel: "*Idris, A New Pattern of National Narrative*"

There are three elements that contribute to the success of any artistic work and enable it to reach its most perfect state and thereby cause the soul to rejoice . These are a high degree of sensitivity, a sincerity of expression, and a gifted performance.

These three elements are harmoniously and pleasingly articulated in the novel entitled "*Idris, A North African Novel*" written in French by the novelist Ali Hammami , in which he depicts the Maghribi life with its ordeals ,vicissitudes , pains and hopes.

Throughout the novel, historical events are recounted to serve as a mirror to the present , revealing political and social situations , and a spirit of patriotism likely to deeply stir the reader's emotions. In this regard, the book may be considered as a pattern of national narrative, worthy of praise and admiration.

Discerning literary critics agree that art cannot thrive and bear fruit unless it is granted freedom to soar unbound, with no principles imposed upon it. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that historical, political and national narratives have always lagged behind the artistic ones, given the bounds set to their authors' pens and the directions assigned to them.

In his national narrative «*Idris , a North African Novel* ",the novelist Ali Hammami succeeds in escaping, and even transcending all criticism with respect to this issue. For his pen is not bent to a given orientation and his art is not driven by a suspicious goal. Because he has felt so deeply the conditions of his people and expressed his feelings with sincerity, he has been able to admirably execute his work.

The author has lived among his people long enough to gain a detached assessment of the ills and catastrophes that have befallen them as well as the obstacles hindering their progress. He is able to sense the pride and deep aspiration of his community for freedom and the urgent need to voice these feelings. His narrative starts to flow depicting their lives, with all the pains and trials, in the most artistic manner.

As Idris , the main protagonist of this novel, goes about recounting the events of his life and its vicissitudes , and as the story proceeds, pages of the Maghrebi life in its glorious periods unfold before our eyes. We then come to realize the extent of the damage inflicted by the French colonial authorities on this powerless nation and the cruel practices endured under the hellish oppressive policy , and how the quest for a life of freedom and dignity has naturally led Idris and his people to resist and fight the oppressor with all means available to them.

The reader may feel unsettled by the ominous episodes of the narrative that reveal the character of a proud and undaunted people willing to die on the battlefield , and testify to their deeply rooted sense of chivalry and ardour .By the same token, they convey the narrator's feeling of pride in the Maghrebi nation's glorious past and his illustrious ancestors who were among the earliest civilization builders and leaders of nations.

Overall, the novel's style displays a range of subtle humour along with a mix of history, politics, and sociology or a thriving energy combining all of those distinctive narrative devices. The talent of the author is revealed through this happy mix and the coordination of that energy. The reader is therefore challenged to come across a single episode irrelevant to the story or a plot out of context or an exaggeration in the description that would weaken the narrative grip.

So far, Westerners have written a lot about Eastern and Islamic nations and have done this in the languages of the West. What they have written, however, does not fairly reflect the character of these nations and their mentality; nor does it represent the realities of these nations as they actually are. Those authors have done so either deliberately, based on tendentious interpretations, or because they are inherently incapable of pursuing honest enquiry upon these realities.

The author of *Idris* has therefore done a good job of writing in a Western language .This would fill a gap and inform the Western readers about the realities and facts of a young Moslem nation aspiring for economic security and dignity.

Moreover, in writing in French this narrative which is just one episode of the French repressive colonial policies, the novelist does a great service to the French audiences in that they will be able to judge by themselves the way their country is pursuing in the Maghreb its stated mission of freedom and peace.

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