

International Conference

“Heritage, Tourism and Political Changes in the MENA Region”

February 15-16, 2013, Tangier, Morocco

Abstracts

Welcome

Dr. Helmut REIFELD, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Rabat, Morocco

Welcome, Introduction

Prof. Dr. Achim LICHTENBERGER/ Prof. Dr. Dieter HALLER, Center for Mediterranean Studies, Bochum, Germany

Panel I: Heritage: National Usage, Identity and Perceptions

The Beautiful Turk: Reactivating the Ottoman Heritage in Turkish TV

Dr. Tarek EL-ARISS, University of Texas at Austin, USA

The revitalized Turkish role in the political landscape of the Arab world, from the Gaza freedom flotilla in 2010 to the current Syrian uprising, could certainly be explained in light of the geopolitical shifts in the region. This role could also be examined as an Eastward turn tied to Turkey's stalled accession to the EU, best captured by Valery Giscard d'Estaing's proclamation that Turkey's Ottoman past firmly situates it outside of Europe—and as Europe's Other. These political developments should be aligned with the emergence of Turkish TV dramas dubbed in Arabic in mid 2000s, which have been the craze in the Arab world (and in Greece as well). Reintroducing Ottoman aesthetics, these shows portray Harem life of Topkapi palace under Sultan Suleyman, but also the beautiful Ottoman-era villas on the Bosphorus, reminiscent of a golden age where Arab politicians, intellectuals, and merchants once lived. These shows, which have been in great part responsible for turning Istanbul to the prime destination of Arab tourists, also portray specific erotic models with beautiful men and women engaging in amorous affairs and sexual relationships.

This paper traces this Arab fascination with Turkey and the Ottoman past to the first TV hit, *Nour* (2005) by focusing on the representation of the male protagonist, Kivanc Tatlitug. I read this show as a moment of both political and sexual seduction, which operates at a profound historical and cultural level in the Arab unconscious. Specifically, I argue that Tatlitug's character harkens back to the beautiful Turkish youth, fair and blue eyed, which is the ideal model of beauty in Arab literary and cultural heritage. Transcending sexual predispositions and identities, the beautiful Turk, whose looks could be associated with Hollywood or Western aesthetics, is in fact Ottoman through and through. This analysis repositions current debates about Arab-Turkish relations and about models of sexuality in contemporary media and Arab cultural discourse.

Les Enjeux du Processus de Patrimonialisation au Rif

Dr. Badiha NAHHASS, Université Hassan II Aïn Chock Casablanca, Morocco

Ces dernières décennies, le Rif connaît des revendications mémorielles qui s'appuient sur une histoire particulière et un fort particularisme identitaire. Le patrimoine constitue, ainsi l'une des logiques privilégiées dans cette construction identitaire locale, mais aussi

un moyen d'intégration dans le récit historique national. Le but est d'en faire également un instrument du développement local, à travers une politique du marketing territorial. Il s'agit d'analyser quelles sont les stratégies que développent ces acteurs pour construire et/ou convertir des ressources « patrimoniales » en des ressources marchandes actives.

Partant de l'hypothèse que le patrimoine est une construction sociale, à travers l'étude du cas d'un site archéologique d'Al Mazamma, dans la région d'Al-Hoceima, où des travaux de construction d'un complexe touristique déclenchent la contestation des associations locales, j'analyse le processus de construction sociale et politique du patrimoine dans la région. J'appréhende ce temps patrimonial pour pouvoir cerner les enjeux et les stratégies qui sous-tendent ce processus de construction et d'appropriation du patrimoine comme ressource. Une ressource non pas seulement en termes économiques, mais aussi en termes politiques, sociaux et symboliques. L'appropriation du patrimoine renvoie d'abord aux retombées économiques (tourisme, valorisation immobilière...) mais il est aussi une ressource en termes de capital social et de l'affirmation d'une identité, l'expression d'une affectation collective de sens. Il joue également une fonction légitimante qui renvoie aux capacités d'intervention et d'influence dans la sphère publique des différents acteurs qui participent à ce processus de patrimonialisation.

Ces enjeux constituent donc de puissants moteurs de mobilisation dans le processus de construction de patrimoine. Il explique que la patrimonialisation se fait, le plus souvent, sous le signe de mobilisation par le bas avec l'émergence de nouveaux acteurs : les associations.

Contribution des TIC à la Valorisation du Patrimoine Culturel

Prof. Dr. Rachid BENSLIMANE, L'Université Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, Fès, Morocco

L'objet de cette communication est de montrer l'apport, qui va en croissant, des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de communication à l'investigation scientifique et à la valorisation du patrimoine culturel. Pour illustrer notre propos, nous focalisons notre présentation sur les arts décoratifs arabo-mauresques et la numérisation du patrimoine culturel.

Concernant les arts décoratifs, nous montrerons comment une recherche scientifique sur les arts décoratifs pourra contribuer, d'une part à leur valorisation, et d'autre part, à la création d'activités innovantes se nourrissant des savoirs faire anciens et de l'exploitation des nouvelles technologies.

La deuxième partie de cette présentation sera consacrée à la numérisation du patrimoine et ses retombées sur le développement d'industries créatives, capables de contribuer au développement du tourisme culturel et des métiers connexes. Plusieurs exemples étayeront cette partie, notamment ceux liés à la numérisation des objets muséaux, de sites et monuments.

Cultural Heritage in Turkey: An Eminently Political Matter

Prof. Dr. Edhem ELDEM, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul Turkey

There are few countries where the whole issue of cultural heritage has been as constantly and systematically influenced by political concerns as in Turkey. Ever since the beginning of Ottoman museology and archaeology, in the second half of the nineteenth century, one of the major issues has been to deal with a discrepancy between the state's cultural identity, on the one hand, and the 'foreign' nature of cultural heritage, on the other. This mismatch has led to a containment of mainstream archaeology and museology within the logic of a civilizational mission, while new avenues were explored that might allow for a greater overlap between heritage and political identity. By the 1910s, a partial solution was found in the development of Islamic archaeology and of a museology geared towards the staging of a 'national,' *i.e.* Ottoman/Turkish/Islamic heritage. The secularizing thrust of the Kemalist regime brought yet another dimension to this complex process by engaging in a gradual 'hijacking' of Anatolian and Near Eastern civilizations as an

invented ancestry of the Turkish nation. By and large, from the 1930s to the present, the issue of cultural heritage in Turkey has been dominated by these three tendencies, which, depending on time, context, or agency, may compete or simply overlap in opportunistic fashion in the definition of cultural policies and of cultural heritage as a whole. To this, one should add the very influential impact exerted by western perceptions of the same process, either at scholarly level or, more widely, at the demotic level of mass tourism.

The post-Kemalist transformations of the system, following the 1980 military coup, have unleashed neo-Ottomanist and Islamist fantasies, always coupled with strong nationalist feelings, while at the same time a booming tourism industry has put a growing pressure on archaeology and museology. This paper will critically assess the present situation, with a particular stress on the growing subservience of the notion of cultural heritage to politics and ideology.

Panel II: Heritage: Local and Global Interaction

Cultural and Natural Heritage as Development Potential in Developing Countries: Heritage Projects as an Element of Development Policy
Dr. Christian RUCK MdB, German Parliament, Berlin, Germany

Impact de la Coopération Internationale dans la Promotion d'un Patrimoine Culturel Local-Cas de l'Ecole Nationale d'Architecture Naissante de Marrakech – Abdelghani TAYYIBI, National School of Architecture Rabat, Morocco

Trente trois ans après l'installation de l'Ecole Nationale d'Architecture de Rabat, son site à Marrakech s'installe avec le Centre du Patrimoine des architectures de terre et démarre les enseignements le mois d'octobre 2012. L'Ecole Nationale d'Architecture de Marrakech devient très vite membre du réseau international Unitwin de la Chaire UNESCO ATCCDD 2012-2016 « Architecture de Terre, Cultures Constructives et Développement Durable », au vu de son bilan engagé et de son plan d'action, et par la signature d'une convention avec les partenaires concernés le 14 novembre 2012. Trois mois d'exercice ont enregistré une dizaine d'activités pédagogiques parallèles, partagées à l'international, et portant des thématiques qui relèvent du 'local' et de la promotion des potentialités patrimoniales des territoires. De nouveaux programmes sont initiés ainsi, et dispensés dans les thèmes de la durabilité, du paysage et de l'histoire interpellant l'élément humain, et visant la promotion du patrimoine marocain mineur et les cultures constructives marocaines aujourd'hui en situation de crise. Ces initiatives complètent le cursus de formation de base et escomptent l'accompagnement des stratégies gouvernementales. L'ENAM a reçu depuis le début de l'année scolaire en cours et chronologiquement, des établissements de formation et de recherche provenant de plusieurs pays, à savoir, l'Allemagne, l'Italie, la Pologne, la France, l'Irlande, l'Angleterre, le Danemark, l'Inde, l'Algérie, pour des workshops mixtes et des sujets d'étude exclusivement tournés vers le patrimoine local et ses effets d'entraînement potentiels envers la revivification du l'héritage culturel bâti et la production d'un cadre de vie durable et responsable. Ces coopérations sont scientifiques et académiques et ont l'avantage de se nourrir des relations privilégiées et excellentes que le Maroc possède et cultive à l'échelle internationale. Ces partenariats représentent avec d'autres coopérations nationales, institutionnelles et de la société civile, une condition indispensable à la concrétisation dès le cours terme, d'une compétitivité territoriale et d'une expertise spécialisée dans l'assistance et l'innovation.

Jebel Ouenat - A World Heritage in the Responsibility of Three Countries
Dr. Rudolph KUPER, University of Cologne, Germany

Located on the junction of the borderlines between Egypt, Libya and Sudan. Jebel Ouenat is the most prominent landmark of the entire Eastern Sahara. Standing out like an island

from the surrounding desert plains in the centre of the Earth's largest hyper-arid region it still received occasional rainfall after its environs had been recaptured by the desert. Hence, besides outstanding geological and ecological values, that alone attract tourists by their beauty, the mountain comprises a wealth of rock paintings and engravings and countless archaeological sites from that particularly important prehistoric period, between 10,000 and 5,000 years ago, when, in this part of the continent, favourable climatic conditions enabled the development of the first African pastoralist societies. At the end of that humid phase, after 5000 BC, the aridification of the Sahara and the consequent movements of people towards the Nile Valley and the Sub-Saharan areas set in motion the processes which led to the development of the Egyptian civilization and the great African migrations.

This view is not at least based on the results of archaeological and environmental research that has been carried out in the Eastern Sahara by the University of Cologne during the last 30 years. So scholars involved in these studies over the years tried to support the endeavours of concerned states to protect important sites of their cultural and natural history, among these some unique archives of rock art. Already more than 10 years ago Sudan has declared the "Wadi Howar National Park", in 2007 Egypt established the "Gulf Kebir National Park", and recently, in 2012, UNESCO has included the "Ounianga Lakes" in Chad into the World Heritage List. Already in 2004 UNESCO has initiated the project of "Jebel Ouenat World Heritage Site" as a Transboundary Cultural Landscape of Egypt, Libya and Sudan, - up to now with limited success. The implementation of the original aims of all these projects is substantially hampered by a number of political, financial, bureaucratic and personal issues that raise the question to what extent such enterprises under the actual circumstances are worthwhile at all and what in spite of everything can be done to develop their effectiveness.

Patrimoine Mondial et Réalités Locales: Quelle Adéquation Possible ?

Prof. Dr. Tebaa OUIDAD, Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakesh, Morocco

Proclamée patrimoine oral et immatériel de l'Humanité en mai 2001, la place Jemaa El Fna de Marrakech, a intégré la Liste représentative du patrimoine culturel immatériel de l'humanité mise en place par la Convention pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel de l'UNESCO, en 2003. Plusieurs années auparavant, en 1985, la richesse patrimoniale de la médina de Marrakech lui avait valu d'être inscrite sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial. Mais dans quelle mesure cette valeur patrimoniale est-elle évaluée à l'aune des habitants de la ville, du lien consubstantiel qui les lie à ce patrimoine tangible et intangible qu'ils ont, depuis des siècles, œuvré à bâtir ?

En effet, la notion de patrimoine, et notamment de patrimoine mondial, renvoie souvent à une approche étriquée où l'objet patrimonial semble comme déterritorialisé. Mais peut-on réellement appréhender un quelconque patrimoine hors de sa référence locale, de son contexte social ? La question est d'importance puisque aujourd'hui, à l'UNESCO, on tente de ralentir le rythme des nouvelles inscriptions au patrimoine mondial, parce qu'elles entraînent avec elles, une plus grande vulnérabilité du patrimoine censé être protégé et surtout l'éviction des populations locales, suite à la spéculation effrénée et à l'engouement touristique brutal pour ces sites nouvellement classés.

Panel III: Heritage: Tourism, Management and Accessibility

Halal-Tourism? Egypt between moral ideals and economical crisis

Hamed ABDEL-SAMAD, Germany/Egypt

Challenges for the Management of Heritage Sites and Attractions in Jordan: The Case of Umm Qais

Dr. Fahrieh DARABSEH, Yarmouk University Irbid, Jordan

Jordan is a country that is rich in its cultural heritage of archaeological and historical sites; it offers tourists a unique variety of experiences, whether through its historical, natural, religious or archaeological resources. Therefore, the country endeavors to prove a sort of adequate management measures to these resources, in order to protect them and enhance their potentiality as tourism products. Nevertheless, no one can deny the challenges and conflicts affecting the management of the many heritage sites in Jordan.

This paper attempts to highlight the main challenges and obstacles facing the archaeological site managers in Jordan, focusing on the case of Umm Qais, and how these challenges can be overcome.

Whose heritage? Petra and the dynamics of heritagization

Dr. Meike MEERPOHL, Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany

The definition of heritage is broad. For the last forty years, numerous guidelines, recommendations and principles have sought to delimit the scope of heritage. Today, the term spans from individual buildings and sites, to groups of buildings, historical areas, towns, environments, social factors and, more recently, to intangible heritage. We distinguish between natural, cultural and intangible heritage and separate monuments, landscapes and cultural practices. The poles of material and immaterial goods imply a responsibility of conservation and preservation of the heritage sites or cultural elements. However, preservation is always based on a selection, because not everything can be preserved. This process of selection results in the conservation, interpretation and finally the use of heritage. At this point, a potential for conflict arises between actors and administrative levels, given different interests and power relations.

In this presentation I would like to draw attention to different points of conflict which may occur over the course of heritagization in general, using the historical site of Petra in Jordan as a particular case study. The historical town of Petra was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985. In preparation for the declaration, a master plan was developed to establish "Petra National Park." This plan, however, included a forced relocation of the local population, which forces one to ask the question: whose heritage is being preserved?

Berbères de la Façade Touristique et l'Identité Refoulée au Maroc

Prof. Dr. Mustapha EL-QADERY, Université à Rabat, Morocco

Le système colonial a inauguré une série d'images sur le Maroc et les Marocains ainsi que sur l'ensemble de l'Afrique du Nord «française». La politique indigène fut orientée vers une dichotomie Arabes et Berbère sous le signe de «Diviser pour mieux régner», avec un raccourci qui fait des Arabes les détenteurs du pouvoir et de la civilisation et des Berbères les autochtones à l'état tribal et en éternel dissidence contre l'Etat du Makhzen. Cela a été souvent reproduit dans la recherche académique qui a reproduit les canevas d'études des savants coloniaux liés aux «Affaires indigènes» et à leurs politiques. Cela avait donné matière à de nombreuses recherches de haute valeur internationale comme c'est le cas pour Gellner, Geertz et Bourdieu.

La politique touristique promue au lendemain des indépendances fait partie d'un ensemble de politiques publiques dans divers domaines de développement, pensés selon des optiques qui changèrent peu des conceptions coloniales. Dans le domaine du tourisme, il reproduit, grosso modo, une politique «exotique» née autour de représentations des médinas «islamiques», des oasis ou montagnes «berbères», en plus des éternels thèmes du soleil et de la plage - piscine en hiver, Parallèlement, l'Etat post colonial se consacre sur le plan identitaire à une notion aussi vague et chargés de sens et de contre sens, autour du référent arabo-islamique vu et

perçu comme fruit de l'histoire autour de la religion musulmane et de la langue arabe. Cela avait fait du Maroc un pays «arabe» et «musulman» avec une minorité linguistique à savoir les Berbères et une très petite minorité religieuse à savoir les Juifs. Une construction de l'histoire nationale dans ce sens avec son cortège de programmes scolaires et de productions intellectuelles qui se sont insérés, à des degrés divers, dans un passé donné souvent imaginaire, plein de contradictions, de paradoxes et de non dits. Les contextes changent aujourd'hui et imposent la mise à l'épreuve des paradigmes et des canevas d'études, afin de recadrer nos connaissances du passé, des constructions de ce passé qui mettent à l'épreuve, ainsi, les systèmes coloniaux et postcoloniaux de connaissance sur les indigènes, leurs politiques et impacts survenus depuis.

Panel IV: Heritage: Between Deterioration and Sustainability

Which Past is Worthy to Preserve? Case Studies from Jordan **Anne RIEDEL, Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany**

Archaeological sites in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan spread throughout the whole modern state and cover a timespan from the very beginning of human dwelling and the earliest evidences of arts in the Transjordan region until very recent witnesses of the dealing with these remains. They mirror the region's eventful past and include sites from prehistorically and classical times as well as important biblical, byzantine and Islamic ones and witnesses of the presence of Christian crusaders. This variety and diversity of historical and religiously charged places and remains raises the question how the modern state deals with them.

From theoretical issues concerning the subjectivity of heritage and its role in decision-making processes such as marketing strategies the paper focusses on the dealing with and presentation of specific remains within modern Jordan. From this background the issues will be considered how different sites and remains are dealt with and valued and in how far the decisions of fostering places or not sustainably influences the perception of the region's past in future times.

Heritage Sites after War: Germany 1945, Syria now **Prof. Dr. John BORNEMAN, Princeton University, Princeton, USA**

Debates within Berlin, Germany on how to deal with rebuilding heritage destroyed in WWII may help frame similar questions that will soon be posed following the devastation of the current civil war in Syria. Since heritage following war is usually a reconstruction of some image of the past rather than preservation of the original, how have Germans preserved the "aura" of the rebuilt site? How have tourists influenced this preservation? In Germany, the contentious rebuilding and repair of heritage sites—churches, castles, places, monuments--has been subject to a range of criticisms, ranging from "Sanierungsfaschismus" (fascistic cleansing of the remains of destruction) to the necessity to retain objects of the destruction in the new sites. When the civil war in Syria ends, it will, in contrast to Germany, begin reconstruction lacking a unified nation, lacking a strong tradition of preservation of history, and lacking the financial support and coercive incentives of occupiers. Under these conditions, what kind of social forces, outside of UNESCO, might be active in reconstruction of Syria's heritage?

To What Extent has the Conservation Strategy Succeeded in Protection of Natura Heritage in Egypt? **Dr. Hoda YACOUB, Egyptian Environmental Affairs, Aswan, Egypt**

Egypt lies at the northeast corner of Africa at the junction of four bio-geographical regions, at the same time it is at the centre of the great Sahara-Sindian Desert belt, however, due to its very varied eco-zones, the country is home of a diversity of

terrestrial habitats for fauna and flora, which although low in species numbers and with few endemic species, is extremely varied in composition. The land of Egypt is bounded on its north and east by two largely enclosed seas, the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea which increase the opportunity of biodiversity. Also the Red Sea and the Nile Basin are two principal highways along the migratory routes of the palearctic-tropics journey of birds, and the Mediterranean wetlands of Egypt (northern lakes: *Bardaweel, Manzala, Burullus, Idku and Mariut*) are vital resting stations. They are internationally important sites within the framework of the Wetland Convention (Ramsar, 1971) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Animals (Bonn, 1979). Biodiversity of flora, fauna and genetic resources expose to natural and unnatural constrains include: Climate change and other global environmental changes, pollution, overuse of resources, habitat degradation and loss, non-native invasive species and extinction of endemic species. The Egypt government has adopted national policy and strategy for protection the natural wealth and to serve basis for economic and social development. National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy [1997-2017] objects: 1) Management the biodiversity areas to conserve biological diversity and natural resources, 2) Management should be based on scientific ground to ensure continuity of the natural ecological balance, 3) Developing Egypt's scientific and technological capacity in areas of biodiversity, 4) Mobilizing national effort to conserve biodiversity in order to ensure sustained survival and optimal use, 5) Setting plan of action aiming at involving civil society in biodiversity conservation, 6) Establishing legislative basis and economic and social incentives that support conservation of biodiversity, 7) Integrating national action with regional and international actions to utilize scientific and technical expertise. The paper evaluated, in the ground, the national biodiversity conservation strategy taking Wadi Allaqi Protected Area as a study case, to find the answer for the question; In what extent has the conservation strategy succeeded to achieve its goals related to biodiversity?

La Patrimoine Éducateur du Regard

Prof. Dr. Sabeh FERDI, Centre National de Recherche en Archéologie, Alger, Algeria

En Algérie, le tourisme patrimonial se propose de découvrir et d'admirer les antiquités du pays ; ce tourisme permet d'approfondir la connaissance de sa propre culture. De manière analogue, le présent des pays visités s'offre aux visiteurs avec l'épaisseur de son histoire. Inversement, tournée vers le passé, cette histoire ouvre à l'intelligence de toute l'humanité, à travers précisément la connaissance d'un patrimoine particulier. Assurément, connaître les origines lointaines de son pays permet de goûter les richesses d'autres cultures, différentes certes, mais présentant des analogies saisissantes : quel enrichissement!

Archaeological Heritage of Libya

Prof. Dr. Muhammed EL-KAWASH, University Benghazi, Libya

Archaeology is part cultural heritage that embraces all those remains and remembrances which link us to our past. This splendid heritage attracts tourists from all over the world and forms the stem of Libyan industrial tourism. Libya is a vast terrain country with a very long coastline estimated 2,000 km long and contained beautiful and breathtaking sand shores.

Libya's cultural heritage is worldclass and outstanding in quality, quantity and diversity. Libya is an open museum contains variety of archaeology from the pre-historic settlements and rock art in the heart of the Sahara to the great cities of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania against the Mediterranean.

Mammoth or Mastodon fossils have been found in Ajedabia, south-west of Benghazi. Mammoths lived during the Pleistocene epoch from 1.6 million to about 10,000 years ago. Remains of great whales, marine shells, fossilized crocodile skin and shark teeth along with petrified forest trees were also found in the desert.

The Akakus Mountains or Tadarat Akakus have a large variation of landscapes. This area is now one of the most arid areas of the Sahara. It is known for its rock art and was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985 because of the importance of these paintings and carvings which dated to 12,000 BC. These paintings reflect climate change in the area. Among the paintings are representations of animals such as giraffes, elephants, ostriches and camels, but also of men and horses. There are also other tropical animals that live on the banks of rivers such as crocodiles, elephants, giraffes and rhinos. There are also views of fishermen and shepherds such as that discovered in Gebel Uweinat Sudanese Egyptian-Libyan border.

Ancient Libyan tribes such as Libo Teheno were frequently mentioned in ancient Egyptian texts on the walls of Pharonic tombs during the wars of Libyans with the Sea Group on Egypt. Finally, Libyans were successful in controlling Egypt when Meshwesh Libyan descent Shoshenq I founded the 22nd dynasty in the middle of the 10th century BC.

Cyrenaica was under Greek domination and from Cyrene, the oldest and most famous of the Greek colonies the fertile coastal plain, took the name of Cyrenaica. It was also known as Pentapolis, the "five cities" being Cyrene, Apollonia, Taucheira, Ptolemais and Berenice. On the western part of modern Libya the Punic established their three cities: Leptis, Oea and Sabratha. Leptis appears to have been founded by Phoenician colonists sometimes around 1100 BC. Local people during these times played an important role and were deeply involved in these urban centers.

After the death of Alexander the Great Cyrenaica passed to his commander Ptolemy, the new king of Egypt. The region consequently became under the Ptolemaic rule in Egypt when Teucheira and Euesperides were renamed Arsinoi and Berenice, respectively. The Romans bequeathed Cyrenaica and subjugated the entire North Africa and expanded their influence to reach the central Sahara and its Garamantian civilization in Fezan.

In Tripolitania, Leptis achieved its greatest prominence beginning in AD 193, when a native son, Lucius Septimius Severus, became emperor. He favored his hometown above all other provincial cities and made Leptis Magna the third-most important city in Africa.

Then followed by the Byzantine period and the introduction of Christianity that witnessed the building of many churches furnished with splendid mosaic floors. By the mid-seventh century Islamic troops advanced westwards and conquered the region to end the Byzantine rule and to establish a new era and founding many new cities across the whole country.

The coastal region of what is today Libya was ruled by the Ottoman Empire from 1551. In 1711, Ahmed Karamanli, an Ottoman cavalry officer, seized power and founded the Karamanli dynasty, which would last 124 years. In 1835 the government of Sultan Mahmud II took advantage of local disturbances to reassert their direct authority and held it until the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Al-Sarai al-Hamra, in Tripoli, is considered among the most prominent buildings which were built during this period. Many mosques were also built all over the country.

The Italian rule in Libya started with the Italian conquest of coastal Tripolitania and Cyrenaica from the Ottomans in 1911. In 1934, with the unification of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan in a single country Italian Government created a huge infrastructure (from 4,000 km of roads to 400 km of narrow gauge railways to new industries). The occupation lasted more than thirty years until February 1943. Officially Italy renounced to Libya in 1947, in the Peace Treaty after World War II.

Lake of Gaber Oan and the beautiful oasis stuffed with palm trees in the deep desert like Gallo, Awjila, Gaghbob and the old city of Ghadames represent the country's greatest and most enduring asset. In addition, traditional industries and handcrafts such as leather, pottery and palm fronds and products have important social and economic roles for community development and for tourism.