



Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds

Dr. Natalie Zemon Davis

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An engrossing study of Leo Africanus and his famous book, which introduced Africa to European readers

Al-Hasan al-Wazzan--born in Granada to a Muslim family that in 1492 went to Morocco, where he traveled extensively on behalf of the sultan of Fez--is known to historians as Leo Africanus, author of the first geography of Africa to be published in Europe (in 1550). He had been captured by Christian pirates in the Mediterranean and imprisoned by the pope, then released, baptized, and allowed a European life of scholarship as the Christian writer Giovanni Leone. In this fascinating new book, the distinguished historian Natalie Zemon Davis offers a virtuoso study of the fragmentary, partial, and often contradictory traces that al-Hasan al-Wazzan left behind him, and a superb interpretation of his extraordinary life and work.

Davis describes all the sectors of her hero's life in rich detail, scrutinizing the evidence of al-Hasan's movement between cultural worlds; the Islamic and Arab traditions, genres, and ideas available to him; and his adventures with Christians and Jews in a European community of learned men and powerful church leaders. In depicting the life of this adventurous border-crosser, Davis suggests the many ways cultural barriers are negotiated and diverging traditions are fused.

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