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From Roman Proconsularis to Islamic Ifriqiyyah
North Africa c. 400-800

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ABSTRACT

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Over the past two decades there has been a rapid growth of interest in the
archaeology of the centuries of the transition between the Late Roman and the
Early Medieval period in Europe. This thesis considers the archaeological evidence
of North Africa c. 400-850. The overall purpose of the thesis is to pursue change
and continuity of the culture in the former province.

An introductory chapter surveys the earlier and the currently standard
version of the development from Roman to Islamic (over “Barbarian” - Vandal - and
Byzantine). Common issues of geography, history and archeology with relevance
for the study of change in the region are presented.

The following chapters examine changes and persistence within towns, land
utilization, defensive strategies and trade patterns. It is argued that changes
happened not as much subsequent to political shifts as to other factors. Also, it is
suggested that changes in the town-scape and in the contents of towns and of the
character of urban institutions owed much to a general development. Trade also
followed general trends in the Mediterranean and in North Africa.

It is concluded that despite intermittent turbulence and destruction, much of the
ex-Roman (whatever the extent of the Romanisation had been) came under Vandal,
Byzantine and Islamic mastery in an orderly fashion, although not without some
turmoil and overturning of landownership. The thesis proposes ways in which the
standard versions of the concepts of the passage from the Late Roman province
into the Islamic state should be modified.

Keywords:

Roman, Islamic, Vandal, Byzantine, archaeology, medieval, changes, cities, land
use, defences, trade, North Africa, Mahgreb, Ifriqiyyah.