

## The Domestic and International Travel Experiences of Algerian and Arab Travelers and Writers

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### Abstract:

The travel experience constitutes a comprehensive world. It embraces within it many smaller worlds. Through it, the customs of peoples are narrated. Their values, weddings, celebrations, and the finest details of daily life are recorded. The traveler does not always intend to document these details. Rather, this often reflects a spontaneous attitude. The traveler writes what he sees across different regions.

The Arab and Algerian travel experience is no less significant than other traditions of travel writing. Yet it retains its own character, atmosphere, and particular details. For this reason, one journey differs from another. Each traveler who recounts such an experience possesses a distinct identity, perspective, background, and position. These elements shape the narrative and grant it a unique tone.

**Keywords:** Travel, Writer, Experience, World, Exceptional, Algerian, Arab

### Introduction:

Movement and travel are inherent to human nature. They reflect a natural inclination within

the individual. Travel expresses the voice of a balanced self that interacts with social development. It also represents a necessity imposed by diverse human needs. These needs vary according to the different spheres of life.

The need to worship differs from the need to preserve health. Health is not merely one aspect of life. It is the primary force behind achievement. Although this view may invite discussion, good health remains essential for accomplishment.

Other aspects of life are equally important. A person needs work and medical care. One also seeks to restore balance through leisure and similar activities. I prefer to describe such practices as forms of restoring balance rather than mere entertainment.

Because travel holds such importance in human life, it has always accompanied the individual. In the beginning and in the end, it forms a travel experience. This experience

varies from one writer to another according to the nature of that experience.

Based on the foregoing, we raise a central question from which other questions emerge. The principal question is:

**How has the domestic and international travel experience been manifested?**

From this main inquiry arise several subsidiary questions:

- a. What is the travel experience?
- b. How does the literary traveler differ from the ordinary traveler?
- c. What are the Algerian models of travel writing?
- d. What are the Arab models of travel writing?
- e. What are their aesthetic features? In other words, what aesthetic strategies characterize Algerian texts?
- f. What aesthetic strategies define Arab and Algerian travel texts?
- g. What distinguishes the travel text in the context of Arab journeys abroad?

These articles aim to answer the questions presented in the introduction. They also seek to enrich the discussion. The analysis goes

beyond scattered information and isolated facts found in various books and references.

**1. The Nature of the Travel Experience:**

The sciences in particular, and human knowledge in general, require strategies of interpretation. Such strategies help clarify concepts that may appear vague to readers and listeners.

The term “travel experience” is a compound expression. It consists of two elements: “experience” and “journey.” The suffix in Arabic indicates relation. In this section, we will examine this compound term and define its meaning.

**1. The Definition of Travel Literature:**

**A. In Language:**

In *Tahdhib al-Lugha*, Al-Azhari states that one says *rahala al-rajul* when a man sets out. Travel therefore signifies movement and transition from one place to another. He explains that *rahla* with a *ḍamma* refers to the destination one intends, while *rihla* with a *kasra* denotes the act of departure.

In *Al-Sihah fi al-Lugha*, Al-Jawhari confirms this distinction.

Likewise, in *Supplement aux dictionnaires arabes*, Reinhart Dozy explains that *rahala* and

irtahala mean to move or relocate, and that rihla signifies a journey or trip.

These statements may be clarified as follows:

### **1. The First View:**

According to the first lexicographer, travel is the act of moving from one place to another. This act of movement leads us to consider two points.

**a. The first point concerns the motives for travel.** If movement is a necessity imposed by human needs, its causes must be identified. They include:

1. Medical reasons.
2. Religious purposes.
3. Scientific pursuits.
4. Creative aims.
5. Social considerations.
6. Political objectives.

There are other motives as well that require a person to relocate from one place to another.

**b. The second point concerns the geographical scope of travel.** Movement may take place within one's own country. It may occur between provinces in states such as Algeria, Egypt, or Saudi Arabia. It may also extend beyond national borders. This distinction leads to two types of journeys: domestic travel and international travel. These will be discussed later in greater detail.

### **2. In Terminology:**

From a terminological perspective, travel literature may be defined as a prose genre. It relates to the lives of individuals and nations visited by the traveler. It presents various aspects of their life and conditions with a degree of detail. The style is literary and engaging. It encourages the reader to continue from the first line to the last without fatigue or boredom (Hussein, 1983, p. 110).

We may comment on this definition by stating that travel is not merely a photographic representation of events, situations, and geographical spaces observed by the traveler. The journey rises above simple depiction. It is not a neutral transfer of bare details stripped of reflection, knowledge, feeling, or position.

What we have stated may be clarified as follows:

#### **a. Experience:**

The traveler's experience plays a decisive role in conveying the realities of countries and peoples. It guides his focus. He may highlight certain aspects and leave others aside. His background shapes what he observes and how he records it.

#### **b. Thought:**

By thought and knowledge, we refer to the traveler's intellectual formation. His broad

reading, cultural exposure, and familiarity with different fields of knowledge distinguish his account. His narrative is not literal transmission. It is a professional rendering shaped by skill and awareness. It reflects intellectual capacity and varied forms of intelligence, such as social and emotional intelligence.

### **c. Feelings and Sensibility:**

Feelings refer to the emotional impulse present within the human heart. No traveler writes from complete neutrality. Even when striving for balance, traces of inclination may appear. For example, a Tunisian traveler may unconsciously show sympathy toward his homeland and its people. Such tendencies surface naturally in moments of expression (al-Ghubrini, n.d., p. 285).

### **d. Positions:**

By positions, we refer to the opinions expressed on various subjects. These may concern religious beliefs, such as the worship of rats in India or the veneration of the dragon in China. They may also relate to social and cultural practices in different fields of life. In such matters, the traveler is expected to be fair and balanced. Travel literature, however, does not always rise to the level of an autonomous art such as the short story, poetry, drama, or the literary essay. It brings together elements from

these genres without being governed by their strict standards (Hussein, 1983, p. 9).

From this view, travel writing appears as a distinct form. It does not fully belong to the short story, even if many narrative elements are present. It lacks the formal constraints of poetry, such as meter and rhyme. It is not a play, although it may include dialogue, characters, events, places, and time. These features resemble drama, yet the travel text cannot be classified as a theatrical work.

The same applies to the essay in its various forms, whether social, medical, or political. The structural components of the essay, such as introduction, development, and conclusion, may appear in travel writing. Nevertheless, the travel text remains different in nature and purpose.

We may therefore conclude that the travel text draws from all these literary genres. It borrows their elements and techniques. It reshapes them into a new composition that bears its own distinctive character. The travel text is thus both convergent and distinct.

### **a. Convergent:**

By this term, we mean that the travel text harmonizes with other literary forms. It interacts with them. It borrows from them and, in turn, enriches them.

### **b. Distinct:**

At the same time, it draws from these genres in order to establish its own independence. It presents issues from the perspective of a travel narrative. It is neither a play, nor poetry, nor a short story, nor an essay. It is a text that is both convergent and distinct. It takes and gives, yet it preserves its specific identity.

Some scholars affirm that travel writing, as a literary form, contains narrative components and writing mechanisms that justify its classification within the literary field (Halifi, n.d., p. 40). This view aligns with what we have stated earlier. The traveler is not merely a transmitter of historical events or a recorder of geographical sites. The travel text contains a clear narrative structure.

Among its main elements are:

**a. Characters:** These are the individuals encountered by the traveler. They may include diplomats, presidents, physicians, or others. The traveler writes about them because they contribute to the fabric of the partial and complete stories that shape the journey.

**b. Place.**

**c. Time.**

**d. Narrative Structure:**

These elements are interrelated. None of them stands alone. Each gains meaning through its connection with the others.

For example, consider the simple statement: Sebastian went to the Church of San Francisco at seven in the morning in order to draw closer to God (Khrakhria & Zaytoun, December 2023, p. 7).

This sentence contains the essential narrative elements:

- **Character:** Sebastian.
- **Place:** the church, for instance in Italy.
- **Time:** seven in the morning.
- **Event:** going to the church to seek closeness to God.

No single element provides full meaning on its own. Meaning emerges through their combination. Together, they allow the traveler to convey the details of the journey within an artistic and literary narrative framework, even when it avoids elaborate figurative language or rhetorical ornamentation.

## **2. The Algerian Travel Experience:**

Algerian travel experiences have varied according to circumstances, contexts, and personal positions. Several names have stood out in the history of Algerian travel literature. Among them is:

### **1. Abd al-Razzaq Ibn Hammādūsh:**

He lived in the twelfth century AH. He was deeply devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. Seeking knowledge required travel and

movement across regions. The student of knowledge often journeyed widely in search of learning. Trade also motivated his travels. For these reasons, Ibn Hammādūsh traveled from Algeria to Tetouan, Meknes, and Fez.

At that time, Morocco was closely connected to Algeria. The absence of strict borders facilitated movement between the two lands. During his stay, he described scholarly life in detail. He portrayed the efforts of students in Qur'anic schools, institutes, and mosques as they sought knowledge.

He referred to:

**a. Study circles in mosques.** Students gathered to memorize the Qur'an and study religious sciences. They also engaged with grammar, morphology, rhetoric, and other branches of the Arabic language. These disciplines enabled them to grasp the meanings of the sacred text.

**b. The hardships faced by students of knowledge.** The path was not easy. It demanded patience and endurance. Such a pursuit was not accessible to everyone.

Ibn Hammādūsh did not limit his account to scholarly life. He also addressed political life in its various aspects. He spoke about royal palaces and ministerial institutions. He mentioned certain features of governance in Morocco and aspects of its political system. He

was known for his proximity to the court, which honored him with gifts and rewards.

He further examined the economic life of Morocco. Among the matters he described were:

1. The way of life in Morocco, including food, drink, and clothing.
2. The description of palaces and houses.
3. Certain political and economic practices.

He also referred to gatherings held in his home with officials. These meetings included discussions on governance, political order, and public affairs.

In addition, his travel account contains rich passages on pilgrimage journeys. He described:

1. The path between al-Safa and al-Marwa.
2. The circumambulation around the Ka'ba.
3. The state of ihram and the preparation for its observance.
4. Praise of the Prophet, expressed in refined language.
5. The intense emotions experienced by the believer when longing for God, for the Prophet, and for the sacred sanctuary.

These descriptions reveal a deeply emotional dimension centered on:

- a. Allah. b. The Prophet, peace be upon him.
- c. The Holy Sanctuary.

## **2. Ibn al-Fakkūn (Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-Qusantīnī):**

Ibn al-Fakkūn was raised in a family renowned for scholarship and literature during the Almohad period. He possessed a rich and multifaceted personality, being:

- a. A traveler.
- b. A man of letters.
- c. A jurist (Halifi, n.d., p. 41).
- d. A poet.

Travelers and literary critics have consistently praised him. Al-Ghubrīnī writes:

"He is among the scholars whose accounts delight the reader and whose poetry pleases the listener. His prose and verse are abundant, as if they were radiant lights. He was counted among the distinguished and perceptive, a figure of elevated status and worthy of consideration. For him, literature was a source of refinement and perfection. He did not practice it merely to gain favor or influence. He hailed from Constantine, from one of its noble

households, and belonged to a family of respected standing" (Al-Ghubrīnī, n.d., p. 285)

From this account, it is clear that Ibn al-Fakkūn did not simply record events or depict them literally. He enriched his narratives with literary embellishments and rhetorical finesse. His travel accounts were not mere chronicles; they were artistic compositions that combined expressive language, stylistic elegance, and the subtleties of Arabic rhetoric.

He was also a devoted courtier, honored with gifts for his praise of the Almohad caliph from the Banū ‘Abd al-Mu’min. In one of his poems, he wrote:

“Tell the noble son of the noble,  
generous moon, radiant and illustrious,  
embodiment of sovereignty and high rank,  
sea of bounty, moon of grace,

By your majestic dignity and noble lineage...”

“...and all that has been sown by the hands of the worthy.” (Al-Ghubrīnī, n.d., p. 285)

These few lines consolidate the richness of Arabic expression and convey a collection of admirable qualities:

- a. Beauty and a luminous countenance.
- b. Elevated status and high rank.

c. Generosity, unlimited and unconditional.

d. Grandeur and nobility.

Ibn al-Fakkūn's journeys were far from devoid of longing, love, and the burning passion of desire. His poetry frequently reflects these emotions. For example, he wrote: "The fire of my heart is enough in its blaze."

This verse expresses the poet's innermost feelings and the intense flame that consumed him. It illustrates the universal notion that the heart of a lover is always aflame, driven by longing, yearning, and affection.

The writer also described the sentiments of estrangement and the emotions accompanying the traveler, whether the journey was undertaken for health or religious purposes. Regardless of the journey's purpose, these feelings were intertwined with acceptance and nostalgia for one's homeland, family, and companions.

Among these journeys was his visit to the city of Bejaia. On this occasion, he wrote:

"Bejaia spoke to me: you are alone.

Alas, the sorrow of my heart!

I came bearing a memory,

And it stirred hidden grief within me.

I did not waver from the path of sincere counsel,

If you are truly discerning, then understand my words.

Whoever wishes to hear the story, let him speak of Constantine,

For it recounts the tale of the Maghribi." (Al-Abdri, 1968, p. 582)

It is evident to the discerning reader that Bejaia is a significant province within the Algerian state. According to contemporary administrative divisions, it is subdivided into several districts, among which Beni Wazzar is included. The travel writer also provides a vivid account of his psychological and emotional state following his visit to this region.

Among his most notable works is Anas al-Faqir wa 'Izz al-Haqir, which is the focus of this study. In this travelogue, the author traces his movements across the far western regions of the Maghreb and records the scholars and pious individuals he encountered. The work is rich with the experiences of Sufis and various social groups, including the Sha'bi and Sanhaja communities, reflecting the predominance of Sufi influence and a renunciation of material concerns. The travelogue also addresses core human values such as brotherhood, faith, and benevolent

judgment. Travel experiences naturally vary according to the journeys undertaken and the perspectives of the travelers.

## **Arab Travel Experiences:**

### **1. Ibn Jubayr:**

This journey was undertaken by Abu al-Hasan Muhammad ibn Ahmad Ibn Jubayr, the Andalusian chronicler. His purpose was a religious pilgrimage to visit the House of God. Given its religious nature, the language employed throughout the travelogue is drawn from the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions. The narrative is infused with intense emotions, profound devotion, and a deep longing for closeness to God.

The journey began on the eighth of Shawwal in 578 AH (corresponding to 1182 CE) and concluded in 583 AH (1187 CE). The journey from Granada and back lasted approximately two years and three and a half months. Along the way, Ibn Jubayr passed through Egypt and the Hijaz, where he stayed for several months. After performing the pilgrimage, he traveled by sea via Sicily and returned to his homeland on the fifteenth of Muharram (Uthmaniyyah, p. 51).

The journey also reflects historical heroism, such as the victories of Salah al-Din (Saladin), who defeated the Crusaders and reclaimed Jerusalem. Narratives concerning this journey

indicate that the author did not intend for his account to become widely known, nor did he seek such fame. Some of the most notable features of this journey include:

1. **Clarity of focus:** Unlike many of his contemporaries, Ibn Jubayr avoided blending multiple subjects within the same narrative. This approach gave his work a purer and more refined literary quality, making it one of the most valuable medieval contributions to the field of travel literature.
2. **Recording key events:** He documented significant experiences he encountered, including visits to the graves of companions of the Prophet and other pious figures.
3. **Detailed description:** He provided vivid portrayals of mosques, architectural designs, and artistic patterns. (Uthmaniyyah, p. 50)

## **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, travel literature can be described as a vast crucible of knowledge, encompassing rich structures, teachings, and detailed narratives. The rituals and forms of expression vary from one traveler to another, shaped by each author's background, perspective, and worldview. These experiences are then reflected in the different travel writings, revealing both similarities and differences.

The similarities lie in the fact that these texts are the products of skilled authors rather than the general populace. These writers document, archive, and even anticipate events, creating a continuous historical and cultural record.

The differences, however, emerge from the unique composition and perspective of each traveler. It is this individual configuration that leaves a distinct imprint, shaping the originality and signature of each travel narrative.

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