

## The Image of Society in the Southwest of the Regency of Algiers Through Travel Writings

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Received: 21/04/2025 ; Accepted: 25/12/2025 ; Published: 21/02/2026

### Abstract

Travel writings constituted an important and accurate source for the historical events in the southwest of the regency of Algiers, and their impressions differed regarding the societies of the Algerian desert during the Ottoman era. This is because these regions were subject to an independent tribal system separate from the Ottoman administration in Dar al-Sultan. These books also referred to the nature of the human composition and the natural and geographical influences on individuals and groups, as well as the variation of customs, traditions, and practices according to tribal or clan affiliation. They also recorded the most important tribes in Tuat and Boussemgoun, their complex social systems, their strange and rare customs, and their intellectual and religious conditions. Thus, they provided a clear and accurate picture of these societies in the absence of archival sources, recording historical events objectively, through which the study of these regions during the modern period became clearer. From here, our research aims to clarify the following issues:

- The nature of travel writings during the Ottoman era.
- The image of the societies of the southwest of the regency of Algiers.
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The objective indications found in travel books.

**Keywords:** Travel writings, the southwest of the regency of Algiers, the Ottoman era, tribal system.

### Introduction:

Travel is a purely human project and a unique personal experience, prompted either by intellectual need (seeking knowledge and scholarly companionship), spiritual inclination, or real-life circumstances and the tendency toward individual or collective adventure. Thence, viewpoints differed in defining the nature of travel. Where Ibn Khaldun points out: "...Travel in the pursuit of knowledge and meeting scholars adds further perfection to learning, and the reason behind this is that humans acquire their knowledge, morals, and the doctrines and virtues they adopt sometimes through instruction, teaching, and transmission, and sometimes through imitation and direct guidance. However, the acquisition of skills through direct contact and instruction is more firmly established and more deeply rooted; thus, the greater the number of teachers, the stronger the acquisition and consolidation of these skills..." As for Ibn

Battuta, he believed that the first journey should be spiritual, as he said: "I resolved to undertake the journey intending the pilgrimage to the Sacred House of God and the visit to the grave of the Messenger, peace be upon him, alone without a companion whose company I might enjoy..."

According to historical sources, travel is not linked to a specific time or place. Rather, humans have known it since humanity first set foot on earth and understood the meaning of migration, settlement, and survival, which means that the idea of travel accompanied humans since very ancient historical periods, despite the different motives for traveling, since travel is an adventure and a purely human experience, travelers recorded everything accompanying their journeys across various and different places, describing them economically, ethnographically, sociographically, and anthropologically. Furthermore, they mentioned the scholars and literary figures they met during their travels and the discussions that took place in their gatherings, in addition to citing many scientific, historical, and literary benefits, letters, authorizations, and poems, all of which travelers presented in diverse styles.

In the modern era, journeys to the Hijaz increased (which refers to the caravan of pilgrims heading to the lands of the Two Holy Sanctuaries Mecca and Medina in order to perform and complete the prescribed rites of pilgrimage) (Al-Qaduri, 1991, p. 192). Additionally, scientific journeys that connected the Mashriq and the Maghreb also increased, and Algeria thus became a geographical, social, and scientific bridge for these travelers, which can be observed through a group of travelers who crossed the desert of the Southwest of the Regency toward the holy lands or the Mashriq, recording their personal

experiences and impressions about the geography of the region and its social, economic, and political conditions, among these travelers were Al-Ayyashi (Ma' al-Mawa'id), Al-Aghwati (Rihlat al-Aghwati), Al-Yusi, and Al-Hadiki, who in their journeys addressed various details of the southwest of the regency of Algiers in general and the desert society (the southwest) in particular. Considering that, these travel accounts recorded the most precise details of social life (social structure, customs and traditions, people's character, health conditions, and geographical affiliation), and this illustrates the social communication between the Mashriq and the Maghreb during the Ottoman era.

The southwest of the Regency of Algiers was considered a geographical passage for pilgrims from Morocco during the modern period.

### **The Southwest through the Ayyashi Journey:**

Salem Al-Ayyashi is considered one of the most important Moroccan travelers whose fame spread during the modern period. He is Abu Salim Abdullah Ibn Muhammad Al-Ayyashi, born at the end of the month of Sha'ban 1037 AH / 1628 CE in the Berber tribe of Ait Ayyash, bordering the lands of the desert, he received his first principles of education at the Ayyashi zawiya, then joined the Nasiriyya zawiya, and later continued his studies at University of al-Qarawiyyin (Khair al-Din, 2002, p. 13), where he excelled in jurisprudence, literature, and Sufism, he developed a passion for travel and journeys, undertaking three travels: the first in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal 1053 AH / 1643 CE, the second at the end of Rabi' al-Awwal 1064 AH / 1658 CE, and the third titled Ma' al-Mawa'id (or the Ayyashi Journey), which is the best of his travels and in which he recorded the essence of his experience in the Hijaz (al-

Ayyashi, 1999, p. 25), which includes divers kinds of sciences and knowledge, as he himself affirmed at the beginning of his journey: “My intention, God willing, in writing this journey is that it be a book of knowledge, not a book of entertainment and amusement; and if both are found in it together, that would be even more encouraging for the reader.” (Abu Salem, 2006, p. 2).

Al-Ayyashi’s journey Ma’ al-Mawa’id constituted a rich and diverse field of sciences and knowledge, and this can be deduced from the route of his journey, which began from Sijilmasa (Abu Ubayd, 1911), passing through Morocco and then southern Algeria where he penetrated deep into the desert, reaching the oases of Tuat (sources differ regarding the name and origin of the inhabitants of Tuat, from Wadi Gir, Wadi al-Asaouar/Saoura Valley, and Wadi Tamghabut), then he followed a northeastern route from Ouakda to Daghamsa, then to El Goléa and Ouargla, then to Temacine and Touggourt. From there he moved from southern Algeria to southern Tunisia, then to Tripoli, then Cairo, and finally to the Two Holy Sanctuaries in Mecca and Medina then he moved to Jerusalem (Belhamissi, 1981, p. 25). Besides, it was customary for travelers to record information about roads and routes for the purpose of guidance and benefit, and it appears that Al-Ayyashi even described resting oases and water valleys in order to make the journey easier for those who might travel the route later.

### **Elements of the Society of the Southeast of the Regency of Algiers according to Salem Al-Ayyashi:**

Al-Ayyashi provided a precise description of social life in the desert, where he mentioned the composition of society (urban and Bedouin), tribal affiliation (tribes and religious

affiliation), as well as the customs and traditions in some cities of the southwestern desert, as for the population groups, according to Al-Ayyashi, were as follows:

#### **1. Urban population:**

The inhabitants of major cities such as Ouargla and Laghouat lived in fortified ksour (fortified villages), surrounded by walls in order to avoid raids from nomadic Bedouins. Further, most of them practiced agriculture and some traditional crafts that were distributed among families. Al-Ayyashi illustrates the locations of these ksour, about El Goléa and said: “...a fortified village on a solid rock at the foot of an isolated mountain...” (Abu Salem, 2006, p. 111). As for the city of Ouargla, he noted: “...it is surrounded by a trench filled with water from all sides; no one can reach its wall except from the direction of the gates...” (Abu Salem, 2006, p. 117).

From Al-Ayyashi’s journey it appears that the urban population lived a life different from that of the Bedouins, which made their character and habits unlike despite sharing the same geographical space.

#### **2. The Bedouins:**

In Lisan al-Arab and other sources, the Bedouins are Arab nomadic pastoral tribes that historically inhabited desert regions of North Africa, the Levant, and Mesopotamia, they were among the most important inhabitants of the desert, and their lives depended on movement and migration from one place to another in search of stability and different sources of livelihood, their social conditions varied: some lived from pastoralism and trade, while others adopted banditry and raiding as a stable source of livelihood due to the harsh living conditions in the desert.

Al-Ayyashi also mentioned that the Arabs served as a link between local authority and the inhabitants of desert towns and villages. In view of the fact that, Emirs and rulers relied on them in internal and external conflicts, for he reported that the inhabitants of Laghouat began sending for the Arabs of those regions to confront the campaign of the Bey, Mohammed El Kebir (5 Rajab 1206 AH / 1792 CE), against Oran. (Ahmad, 1969, p. 7) .

### **3. Tribes of the desert:**

In his journey, Al-Ayyashi mentioned the most important tribes of the southwest. Among them:

The Khenafsa west of Ouakda, from whom the pilgrims of the caravan hired a guide to show them the road leading to Ouargla, and Awlad Mahmoud from Tuat, whom he described as Arabs who caused no harm, and Awlad Sa'id, whom Al-Ayyashi found at war with Awlad Mahmoud, the Arabs of al-Arba' from Ouargla; the merchants' caravans entering Ouargla coincided with the arrival of the pilgrims (Abu Salem, 2006, p. 537). He also mentioned the Arabs of Nmila in Zribet Hamid, and Awlad Sidi M'barek Ibn al-Naji in Khenchela at Sidi Naji.

Other tribes included: Awlad Soula between the Zab region and Biskra, whom Al-Ayyashi found engaged in raids, as for Awlad Nasr Bouakkaz, whose homeland was in Biskra extending to the eastern regency. Additionally, according to Ibn Khaldun, Awlad Soula and Awlad Bouakkaz belong to the Dhawuawda, one of the branches of the Riah tribe that settled in the region in the 5th century AH.

The Arabs of Ben Damd, who used to accompany the pilgrims in the caravan. Nevertheless, they falsely claimed that there was a plague among the inhabitants of Laghouat, thereby preventing the pilgrims

from entering the city (Abu Salem, 2006, p. 546).

### **Customs and Traditions of Saharan Society according to Salem Al-Ayyashi:**

Among the customs mentioned by Al-Ayyashi in his journey concerning the inhabitants of southwestern Algeria are as follows:

#### **1- The Habit of divorcing women in Tuat:**

One of the social habits that surprised Al-Ayyashi in the region of Tuat was related to family matters, specifically divorce. Abu Salim reported news he heard from trustworthy students from Tuat stating that when a man in that region wished to divorce his wife because of disobedience, he would bring witnesses and declare before them that he divorced her only to discipline her and break her defiance. If she later wished to marry again, the witnesses would testify to what they had heard, preventing her from marrying anyone until she returned to her husband, and the students of Tuat assured him that their judges ruled this practice as valid, they also informed him that some juristic opinions permitted and validated such a ruling.

#### **2- The habit of throwing the clothes of the deceased in Ouargla:**

Abu Salim described this custom under the title "a strange matter," indicating the astonishment it caused him, where he recounts that when he arrived at one of the gates of the city of Ouargla with the caravan of pilgrims, he saw a large quantity of wool and linen cloth and many garments, most of which were still usable and undamaged. He was greatly surprised that people had thrown away such clothing despite its usefulness, the reason remained indistinct to him, and he seemed to question why people abandoned the benefit of these clothes and left them at the city gate

despite their good condition (al-Ayyashi, 1999, pp. 83-84).

### **3- The habit of the people of Boussemgouh on the day of Eid:**

Among the customs of the inhabitants of southern Algeria observed by Al-Ayyashi was their practice on the day of Eid. For, he noticed that the people of Boussemgouh went out early in the morning of Eid carrying weapons. He wrote: "...It was their custom that they went out to the prayer ground with their weapons; no one would go out without a weapon, whether young or old. They built piles of stones at the prayer ground which they used as targets for shooting with rifles" (Abu Salem, 2006, p. 549) Ergo, only a few of them remained engaged in remembrance of God and listening to the Eid sermons.

### **4- Hospitality and generosity:**

Generosity is considered one of the most prominent characteristics of Algerian society, both among the Bedouins and the settled population, especially in honoring guests. Nonetheless, Saharan society in particular was distinguished by this trait, which seemed almost instinctive. Hence, Al-Ayyashi wrote about his arrival at Tadjmout: "We arrived at Tadjmout at noon, and its inhabitants came out to receive us in crowds, young and old, on foot and on horseback. They were extremely happy and showed great affection. Their imam, Sidi Ahmad Ibn Baraka, an elderly man, came out to meet us. They brought us three rams, and another man brought a ram, and we divided them among us." (al-Ayyashi, 1999, p. 56)

The people of the desert are known for honoring their guests and even venerating this custom, competing with one another in practicing it. It was also customary in society that if a stranger sought their help, they would support him. Al-Hasan Al-Wazzan stated that:

"Many of them fight amongst themselves and attack each other, but they do not harm one another" (Al-Wazzan, 1999, p. 134).

Simultaneously, Luis Del Mármol Carvajal noted that foreigners living among them enjoyed security and reassurance despite the conflicts that sometimes erupted among local leaders and rulers (Carvajal, 1998, p. 162).

Ibn Zakur adds: "I drank deeply from the wellsprings of their knowledge and morals until I was thoroughly saturated, and I drank from the rivers of their eloquence until I was quenched. I became one of the branches of their brilliance, and I forgot, through their wisdom and kindness, what I suffered from the chaos of the deserts and what I endured in the depths of the seas." (Zakour, 2018, p. 41)

### **5- Banditry and raids:**

The security of the pilgrimage routes was a constant concern for Moroccan pilgrims, as they were often exposed to raids by bandits along the road. One example mentioned was the theft of a bucket belonging to a pilgrim, which he used to heat water for purification during cold weather (Abu Salem, 2006, p. 159).

According to Al-Ayyashi, some desert tribes depended on plunder and raiding as a means of livelihood, including tribes such as Awlad Nasr Bouakkaz, Awlad Soula near Sidi Okba, the Arabs of Karakda, and the western Arabs of Laghouat (al-Ayyashi, 1999, pp. 502-508).

Pertaining to health conditions, the plague epidemic that struck the Southwest Region of Algiers during the 17th century greatly affected society, including the desert regions and the pilgrims themselves. In addition, the plague was among the most dangerous diseases that devastated various groups of Algerian society east and west, north and

south, its first appearance in the Southwest Region dates back to 1514 and continued to reappear until 1822.

Around 1667, a major outbreak reached Algeria from Tunisia and spread particularly in the eastern and the Titteri region, destroying cities and causing many deaths. In this context the traveler Al-Warthilani recorded his observation when he passed through Laghouat, stating that the epidemic had descended upon them and only a small remnant of people remained alive. (Al-Warithlani, 2006, p. 118)

Al-Ayyashi also noted the precautions taken by the inhabitants of the south against the epidemic, saying that the people of Laghouat suspected that the caravan carrying him might be infected with the disease. Thence, they refused to allow anyone to enter the city or leave it, they lowered crops from the top of the walls for sale and washed the coins they received before touching them so that nothing from the travelers' hands would contaminate them (Abu Salim, p. 522).

### **Southwest through the journey of Laghouat:**

We did not find a thorough biography for Ibn al-Din al-Aghwati except for dispersed information mentioned in his journey "The Journey of al-Aghwati Ibn al-Din in North Africa and the Sudan al-Dariyya." Ibn al-Din was a scholar from Laghouat and served as a jurist and a judge in the court of the Sultan (Dar al-Sultan), among his students was Musa al-Hasan al-Masri. According to indications within the journey itself, it is likely that it was written around the year 1829.

Al-Aghwati described the southwest in his journey, stating that the houses of Timimoun were built of clay or mud bricks and that the town had four mosques, he also mentioned that its inhabitants were sincere Muslims who

performed prayers, paid zakat, and recited the Qur'an (Al-Aghwati, p. 96), he also referred to the oasis of Gourara, saying: "Gourara includes about twenty villages, all irrigated with water through canals. The inhabitants wear garments made of black woolen cloth, and their language is Berber, their complexion tends toward dark" (Al-Aghwati, p. 96). He further wrote: "The town of Aoulef is surrounded by walls built of clay, it has abundant water and dates, and the inhabitants possess a number of slaves, south of Aoulef lies the village of Tit, and to its west another village called Tuat al-Henna" (Al-Aghwati, p. 96)

### **The Image of Society through the Aghwati Journey:**

Ibn al-Din al-Aghwati pointed in his journey to different models of society in the towns and villages mentioned in his travel account, regarding the social composition, he noted that the Berber element came first, as evidenced by the wide spread of the Berber language in the society of the desert, he also discussed the customs and traditions of the main regions of the southwestern desert such as Laghouat, in this context he says: "The language of its inhabitants is Arabic, and they wear woolen clothing. Respectable women never leave their homes, while other women appear in the streets" (Al-Aghwati, p. 87)

He also mentioned that the inhabitants were divided into two groups: al-Ahlf and Awlad Sarghin, who were often in a state of conflict. The cause of their disputes was generally the refusal of one group to obey the local sheikh; he also noted that the people of Tadjmout showed a similar situation (Al-Aghwati, p. 87)

Regarding the inhabitants of El Meniaa, he wrote: "They speak Arabic and ride camels but have no horses. Their clothing is made of

wool... The women, like Bedouin women, go to the wells, draw water, and carry it on their backs in leather bags” (Al-Aghwati, p. 91)

Moreover, he referred to the tribal groups and languages of the inhabitants of the desert. For instance, in Ouargla he wrote: “It is inhabited by three tribes: Banu Waqin, Banu Ibrahim, and Banu Sisin. Their language is Berber, and the inhabitants of Ouargla are called al-Rawagha. Their complexion is dark, and their clothing is made of wool and cotton” (Al-Aghwati, p. 92) As for Timimoun, he said: “Its inhabitants speak Berber, and the complexions of the population vary between white, red, and black. They wear woolen and cotton garments with a black cloth called ‘say.’ They are sincere Muslims who perform prayers, give zakat, and recite the Qur’an” (Al-Aghwati, p. 93)

He also stated about El Guerrara: “The inhabitants wear garments made of black cloth and wool. Their language is Berber, and their complexion tends toward dark” (Al-Aghwati, p. 94)

The inhabitants of Oued Souf, according to him, spoke Arabic and enjoyed complete independence, having never obeyed any sultan, he also mentioned that their women went to the markets without veils and appeared in the orchards. Concerning social aspects, Ibn al-Din described the inhabitants of Ghadames as: “Ghadames is a large town whose inhabitants speak Berber, their clothing is made of wool and cotton, and their complexion is dark. Their women are veiled, and they grind grain in their homes because there are no public mills” He also described the Tuareg as: “Strong people with very light complexions. Their food consists of meat and milk. They wear black cotton cloth and trousers resembling those of Christians. They cover their faces with a cotton veil and do not eat or drink in the presence of

others.” As for Touggourt, he mentioned a group called al-Majahiriya, who lived in a special quarter of the town, in the past they were Jews but later converted to Islam, and they were now diligent in reading and memorizing the Qur’an. It was rare for an Arab to marry a woman from the Majahiriya. Over and above, they possessed considerable wealth, and their women appeared in the markets veiled, when they wished to conceal the subject of conversation, they spoke in Hebrew. Although the journey of Ibn al-Din al-Aghwati was brief, it nonetheless provided geographical and economic details about several regions of southwestern Algeria, attracting the interest of Orientalist scholars in the 19th century.

### **The Southwest in the Writings of Al-Hasan al-Yusi:**

The desert formed one of the most important routes and passages for travelers during the Ottoman era; among these travelers was the Moroccan scholar Al-Hasan al-Yusi, and according to his book Al-Muhadarat, his full name was Al-Hasan Ibn Mas‘ud Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn Yusuf Ibn Ahmad Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Ali ibn Amr ibn Yahya ibn Yusuf, Abu al-Qabila ibn Dawud ibn Yidrasan ibn Yintu (Al-Yusi, 2018, p. 30), his origin and lineage trace back to the tribe of Banu Yusi (Al-Ifrani, 2004, p. 344) in the region of Moulouya River, his ancestry was called Yusfi in reference to their ancestor Yusuf Abu al-Qabila, the tribe of Ait Yusi was one of the Sanhaja tribes of the Middle Atlas. Further, he pursued his studies in several Moroccan regions such as Souss, Doukkala, Marrakesh, and Tamgroute. His religious thought was deeply impacted during his residence at the Zawiya of Dila, which had been founded in the last third of the 10th century AH by Abu Bakr Muhammad Sa‘id al-

Dila'i at the command of Muhammad al-Qastali in the mountains of Bouthour. Thence, in the modern period it was reorganized by Muhammad al-Hajj al-Dila'i between Khenifra and Kasba Tadla (Al-Nasiri, pp.36–37), the period in which Al-Yusi lived is considered one of the most difficult political periods in Morocco, especially during the reign of Moulay Ismail (1082 AH / 1672 CE). Due to the political instability of the time, he was forced to move frequently between Tetouan, Fez, and Meknes until the year 1690 and passed away on 27 Rajab 1107 AH / 7 March 1696 CE.

### **Social Life in the Desert according to Al-Hasan al-Yusi:**

The desert route followed by Al-Yusi and the period he spent in the villages and cities of southwestern Algeria allowed him to gather several impressions about social life in these regions. For, he described some tribes and their origins such as Lamor Awlad Nail, and Awlad Ya'qub, he also stated that the inhabitants of Ain Madhi were shurafa (nobles) claiming descent from the family of the Prophet (Al-Yusi, 2018, p. 70).

Regarding the inhabitants of Mecheria he wrote: "They are like the dead; we saw from them neither good nor evil, neither benefit nor harm." (Al-Yusi, 2018, p. 74), as for the Arabs of Awlad Nasr ibn Bouakkaz, he noted: "You meet none of them without seeing treachery in his eyes, beware of being deceived in these lands as you might be accustomed to in your own country, do not expect from them anything but evil, and increase only your caution toward them." (Al-Yusi, 2018, p. 81)

He briefly mentioned the customs of welcoming and bidding farewell to the caravan of pilgrims in the desert, without giving many details, among these habits was the farewell

given by Umm al-Nun bint Bouakkaza accompanied by drum beating, he was also struck by the beauty of the women of Ain Madhi, stating that: "The beauty of its women is rarely found elsewhere." (Al-Yusi, 2018, p. 188) Besides, he praised the inhabitants of the town for their devotion to learning, saying that many of them were students who read the Qur'an and were eager to meet pious scholars and ask questions about religious knowledge. Hence, the journey of Al-Yusi is considered one of the most important Moroccan Hijazi travel accounts, as it gathered different stages, circumstances, and events that reflect the contact between Morocco and the southwest of the regency of Algiers, highlighting the mutual influence between the two regions during the modern period.

**Women:** Al-Yusi explained that women in the southwestern desert enjoyed influence within their households; historical sources also indicate that some women had influence over the Arab tribes, especially since she is a woman who was the daughter of Rajab Bey (1666–1674) and the wife of Ahmad ibn al-Sakhri, she led several revolts against the beys of the Eastern regency as well as against leaders of other tribes, and some travelers even compared her to European princesses because of her authority and leadership.

### **The Journey of Ibn al-Tayyib al-Sharqi al-Maghribi:**

He is Fakhr al-Din Muhammad al-Tayyib, known as Ibn Muhammad ibn Musa al-Fassi al-Madani al-Sharqi, named after the region of Sharaga in Fez, where he was born in 1110 AH / 1698 CE, he studied under nearly one hundred and eighty teachers (Al-Sharqi, 2014, p. 7)

Biographical sources agree that he followed the Maliki school of thought. For, according to

Khalil al-Muradi: “Ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Musa al-Sharqi al-Fassi, the famous Maliki scholar known as Ibn al-Tayyib, resident of Medina, was a leading imam and hadith scholar (a linguistic scholar, learned jurist, and author), born in Fez in the year 1110 AH” (Al-Muradi, p. 51), his lineage traces back to one of the most prominent Andalusian houses, known for nobility and scholarship, his family was one of the greatest and most respected in Fez, producing numerous renowned scholars and spiritual leaders: “Many great saints and learned scholars emerged from this house, renowned for their high status and extensive knowledge in various fields” (Al-Fadhili, 1999, pp. 336-337). Equally important, he excelled in multiple branches of science, literature, and language and received scholarly licenses from many scholars of Morocco and Medina, due to his vast knowledge and frequent travels, he draw one’s last breath in Medina in 1170 AH / 1756 CE (Al-Muradi, p. 94)

He embarked on the pilgrimage (Hajj) around the year.

### **Women through the journey of Ibn al-Tayyib:**

Women in the southwestern regions practiced trade with the pilgrims in order to secure their income if they were widowed, or to assist their husbands if they were of modest means. This led them, in addition to their domestic duties, to go out to the markets among the caravan of pilgrims to engage in buying and selling. In view of the fact that the women of Bousseghoun were among those who practiced trade with the pilgrims, where the traveler Ibn al-Tayyib al-Sharqi praised their beauty and clothing, saying: “...As for their women, they are among the most radiant and splendid of women, the most dazzling and striking in appearance, with languid eyes

sharper in their effect on hearts than cutting swords” (Al-Sharqi, 2014, p. 89)

### **The Reverence of the People of Mecheria for Shrines and the Tombs of Righteous Men:**

“We hastened our journey until we reached the village of Mecheria, its inhabitants received us, we visited the tomb of Sheikh Muhammad al-Omari, known as Mawla al-Khalwa, and the tomb of Sheikh Abd al-Razzaq al-Mujallad in that same retreat. May God benefit us and all Muslims through these blessed shrines...” (Al-Sharqi, 2014, p. 88)

### **The Journey of Al-Nasser Al-Dar’i:**

Abu al-Abbas Ahmad al-Darai, Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn Abi Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Hasan ibn Nasir al-Dara’i al-Aghlani, was born in the middle of the night of Thursday, 18 Ramadan 1057 AH / 1647 CE, he was one of the famous scholars of Morocco and among the leading Sufi masters there, Muhammad al-Ifrani described him saying: “He was an imam in knowledge and practice, speaking the truth while following the Sunnah in his sayings and actions. He was also persistent in teaching, devoted to reading, and engaged with Sahih al-Bukhari and other books of Hadith...” (Al-Ifrani, 2004, p. 221)

Al-Dara’i was a prodigy of his time and deeply devoted to knowledge, since he memorized the Holy Qur’an and completed the reading of Sahih al-Bukhari at the age of seven. Moreover, he studied under several scholars of the Maghreb, including Salem Al-Ayyashi, Muhammad al-Maqri in Egypt, and Abu Abd Allah al-Basri in Mecca, and this scholarly formation enabled him to write several works, among the most important of which is the book Al-Ajwiba. Al-Dara’i died on Thursday, 19 Rabi’ al-Thani 1129 AH / 1716 CE, and it is also said in 1128 AH / 1715 CE he recorded multiple observations and impressions about

Algeria and other countries he visited during his four external journeys for the pilgrimage: the first in 1076 AH, the second in 1096 AH / 1687 CE, and the third in 1109 AH / 1697 CE.

Ahmad al-Nasiri mentioned the generosity and hospitality of the inhabitants of the southwestern desert, saying: “The caravan of pilgrims, we arrived at Laghouat in the afternoon, and the caravan did not settle except near al-Asfar, all its inhabitants came out, young and old, showing joy, happiness, affection, and delight...” (Abu al-Abbas, p. 123)

Pertaining to banditry, Al-Nasiri spoke about the phenomenon of theft at Tadjmout saying: “When the caravan moved on, some Bedouins from the tribe of Arba followed them, what happened between them and the caravan happened, and they thought it was a war...” As for theft, Al-Hilali al-Sijilmasi mentioned that the first theft experienced by the caravan of pilgrims occurred there, when property of the caravan was stolen by some thieves from the tribe of Awlad Khalifa of the Bedouin tribe of Amour (Al-Sijilmasi, p. 28)

The army of the regency of Algiers carried out its duties effectively to maintain the security of the state’s borders, particularly in the Eastern Beylik. Many Arab and foreign travelers praised the security that prevailed in the territories of the Beylik of Constantine; among them was Husayn al-Warhilani, who expressed pride in the security prevailing in Algerian lands compared with Tunisian lands. He stated that the pilgrims suffered from insecurity in Tunisia and did not breathe easily until they entered Algerian territory, saying: “We traveled for days in safety until we reached Constantine” (Al-Warhilani, 1974, p. 685)

### **Conclusion:**

Algeria constituted one of the most important geographical routes for Moroccan travelers and others during the modern period, which led to a diversity of impressions and differences in observations by means of the varying scientific and religious backgrounds of the travelers, which becomes conspicuous in many travel accounts. For, Salem Al-Ayyashi gathered in his journey the most indispensable and precise details about the southwestern regions, employing sound Arabic language and honesty in conveying the scenes and observations. Despite the modest style of Ibn al-Din al-Aghwati, his journey remains an important historical and geographical reference about the desert. Giving that, he carried out a comprehensive and precise survey of the southwest by identifying the language, elements of society, customs and traditions, and the status of women, and this exploratory journey recorded by Al-Aghwati, carried out under the order of William Hudson, would later serve as a starting point for a colonial project in the desert.

The journey of Al-Hasan al-Yusi presented a real image of the social conditions in the southwestern regions during the modern period, where it precisely defined the geography of society and the economy of the region and offered a clear and detailed description that contributed to enriching the history of the Algerian desert during the period of the regency of Algiers (1520–1830), which historical documents often failed to clearly describe.

The historical writing method of Al-Hudayki relied on observation, direct witnessing, critical examination, and accuracy in description, he also benefited from the writings of Moroccan travelers such as Ibn Rashid al-Sabti and Salem Al-Ayyashi, which is evident through his identification of geographical areas

in the southwestern desert. For example, he described Ain Madhi as containing orchards of figs and grapes protected by fences, and he gave a precise description of commercial transactions in the markets, he outlined the features of social life in detail as well, mentioning in his journey the beauty of the women of the desert, especially those of Ain Madhi and emphasizing the inhabitants of the southwestern desert as generous and hospitable. Latterly, the importance of the Hijazi, scholarly, and exploratory journeys through the desert lies in the valuable historical information they provide, information that was often absent from official documents. These travel accounts therefore represent an important historical resource that requires further research and examination in order to reconstruct the history of this region during the modern period.

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