

Phonetic Alternations in the Tlemcen Dialect between Urban Centres and Surrounding Areas: A Phonetic Study

Hicham Khalidi

University of Tlemcen - Algeria

Laboratoire d'Analyses Statistiques en Sciences Humaines et d'Élaboration d'un Dictionnaire Unifié selon des Normes Scientifiques

Email: khalidi1974@yahoo.fr

Fatiha Ben Yahia

University of Tlemcen – Algeria

Laboratoire d'Analyses Statistiques en Sciences Humaines et d'Élaboration d'un Dictionnaire Unifié selon des Normes Scientifiques

Email: afnan_26@yahoo.fr

Received: 30/08/2025

Accepted: 03/12/2025

published: 26/12/2025

Abstract:

This study is confined solely to the phonetic dimension, that is, the articulation points and phonetic features of the two sounds ق (*qāf*) and ك (*kāf*), their modes of formation, and the principal phenomena and alternations that have affected them. Notably, the colloquial dialect of Tlemcen cannot be described or codified with precision because this city and its vast surrounding region have witnessed the convergence of diverse elements: urban dwellers from different Tlemcenian centres, villagers, Bedouin, and other non-Arab groups. Furthermore, the writing of the modern Arabic dialect exclusively in the traditional Arabic script proves unfeasible since the current state of Arabic orthography is inadequate for rendering the correct pronunciation of the modern Arabic dialect. This is because these dialects contain consonantal clusters and vowels for which the Arabic script possesses neither corresponding letters nor diacritical signs.

Keywords: Tlemcen dialect; phonetic alternations; qāf and kāf; Arabic sociolinguistics; Maghribi Arabic; language contact

1.Introduction:

At times, the dialect of Tlemcen has been characterized by ellipsis, metathesis, and substitution in the use of certain phonetic sounds. Therefore, if we were to catalogue the sounds of the local dialect, we would find that it has undergone numerous changes, the result of the population's exposure to wars, invasions, or various geographical and social factors. The colloquial speech of Tlemcen is further distinguished by a set of linguistic features shared by the inhabitants of this region, whether urban or Bedouin. Several factors have contributed to the formation and differentiation of this colloquial variety, setting it apart from other regions of Algeria in certain phonetic and dialectal traits. Chief among these factors are the geographical location of the area, as well as the historical periods through which it and its neighboring regions have passed, periods that transformed Tlemcen into a center of scholarly and cultural influence, an economic and commercial hub, and a destination for students and scholars from both East and West.

On this basis, although the present study seeks to highlight certain features, characteristics, and the most significant changes that have occurred and continue to occur through the processes of linguistic evolution in the pronunciation of the two sounds ق (*qāf*) and ك (*kāf*), it is first necessary to provide a historical overview as a point of departure and foundation for this research. Such a perspective will clarify the extent of the dialect's interactions with other communities, particularly those of the Mashriq, and specifically its southern regions. The earliest settlement of this generation in Ifrīqiya and the Maghreb coincided with the earliest settlement of the Berbers in these lands from ancient times. One description is as follows: "*It is a town within the territory of Algeria, and it contains Arabic schools, as well as trade in grain, cork, and livestock.*"¹

Tlemcen lies in the western region of Algeria, at an altitude of 830 metres above sea level. The city is situated at the foot of mountain elevations to the south and is covered by dense forests of green pine.

To the north of the city stretches the vast plain of الحنايا (*al-Hanāyā*), which extends westwards to the plain of مغنية (*Maghnīya*). تلمسان (*Tilimsān*) itself appears at a distance of thirty kilometres to the north. "*In the north-west, the horizon is concealed by the elevation of ترارة (Trārā), where*

¹ Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī, *DA'IRAT MA'ARIF AL-QARN AL-'ISHRIN* [Encyclopaedia of the Twentieth Century], vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 3rd ed., 1971), 683.

one may observe the mountains of *فلأوسن* (Fellāwsan), whereas in the north-east lies the elevations of *السبعة شيوخ* (al-Sab‘at Shuyūkh) and *تأسلة* (Tāsila).¹

Several rivers and valleys flow along the slopes of the mountains of Tlemcen, such as the *تافنة* (Tāfna) River, the *المفروش* (al-Mafrūsh) River, the *الشولي* (al-Shūlī) River, the *يسر* (Yusr) River, and the *الصفيف* (al-Safṣīf) River, most of which are seasonal. The city lies at the beginning of the fourth climatic zone of the seven regions, at a longitude of 14 degrees for 40 minutes and a latitude of 33 degrees for 42 minutes.²

God, exalted be He, has bestowed upon this region an excellent geographical location. It lies far northwest of Algeria, as mentioned earlier, bordered north by the Mediterranean Sea, south by the province of *النعامة* (Naama), east by the province of *سيدي بلعباس* (Sidi Bel Abbès), and west by the Kingdom of Morocco. The region is distinguished by the abundance of its municipalities and districts, comprising twenty districts and more than fifty municipalities. These are densely concentrated in the north and sparser in the south, lying so close to one another that, to an observer or geographer viewing from above, they appear as although a single mass of habitation.

Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb (may God have mercy upon him), in his description of the city, is the following portrayal: “*Tlemcen is a city that unites desert and countryside, placed in a noble location as although it were a king crowned with a diadem. Around it are gardens like courtiers and attendants; its worshippers are its hands, its sanctuary its palms, its adornment its embellishment, and its noblemen its eyes.*”³

Owing to its location, its climate is the most temperate.

Its mountains, known among contemporary geographers as the “Mountains of Tlemcen”, consist of four ranges that are almost parallel to one another. The most important are the following:

¹ Ibn Maryam al-Sharīf al-Milīṭī al-Madyūnī al-Tilimsānī, *AL-BUSTAN FI DHIKR AL-AWLIYĀ’ WA-AL-‘ULAMA’ BI-TILIMSAN* [The Orchard: On the Saints and Scholars of Tlemcen] (Algiers: Dīwān al-Maṭbū‘āt al-Jāmi‘iyya, 1980), 9.

² Abū al-Fidā’ al-Malik al-Mu‘ayyad, *TAQWĪM AL-BULDĀN* [Survey of the Lands] (Paris, 1840), 136.

³ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maqqarī al-Tilimsānī, *NAFḤ AL-ṬĪB MIN GHUṢN AL-ANDALUS AL-RAṬĪB* [The Fragrant Breeze from the Gentle Branch of al-Andalus], vol. 7, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1388 AH/1968 CE), 135.

a. The Tannūshfī Mountains (تنوشفي, *Tanūshfī*), whose highest peak rises to 1,483 metres. This range overlooks the steppe, which lies in the city of سبدو (*Sebdou*), situated approximately thirty-seven miles south of Tlemcen.

b. The Banī Ismā‘īl Mountains¹ (بني إسماعيل, *Banī Ismā‘īl*), Overlooking the steppe that extends from the village of أولاد ميمون (*Ouled Mimoun*) in the east to the city of سبدو (*Sebdou*) in the west. This range, composed of twelve peaks, is called the “Twelve Apostles” and appears from afar like great spectres seated, gazing towards سبدو (*Sebdou*).

c. The ‘Uṣfūr Mountains (عصفور, *‘Uṣfūr*), whose highest peak rises to 1,566 metres. This range overlooks the plain where the city of وجدة (*Oujda*) lies, near the Algerian–Moroccan border.

d. The Lalla Setti Mountains (لالة ستي, *Lālla Sītī*), whose highest peak rises to 1,306 metres. This last range overlooks the city of Tlemcen, which lies at its northern foot.²

In addition, we find the Fellāwsan Mountains (فلأوسن, *Fallāwsan*), which bound the region of تلمسان (*Tilimsān*) from the north, extending from the area of هنين (*Hunayn*) to the northern frontier with المغرب الأقصى (*al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā*, Morocco). These mountains serve as a formidable barrier against cold air currents that sweep across the region of تلمسان (*Tilimsān*) during the cold season. The city is thus well fortified and secure, even though it lies in a lowland area. Its fortifications were such that the sultan Abū Ya‘qūb al-Marīnī.³ أبأ يعقوب المريني, *Abū Ya‘qūb al-Marīnī*) Besieged it for ten years but remained unable to conquer it.⁴ The city was surrounded by numerous walls, which protected it from the hands of those who coveted it.

Yahyā ibn Khaldūn (يحيى بن خلدون, *Yahyā ibn Khaldūn*) records that the city possessed five gates: to the south, Bāb al-Jiyād (باب الجياد, *Bāb al-Jiyād*); to the east, Bāb al-‘Aqaba (باب العقبة, *Bāb al-‘Aqaba*); to the north, Bāb al-Ḥilwī (باب الحلوي, *Bāb al-Ḥilwī*) and Bāb al-Qarmādīn (باب القرمادين, *Bāb al-Qarmādīn*).

¹ Local inhabitants pronounce it “Jibāl Banī Ismīl” [Mountains of Banī Ismīl].

² al-Ḥājj Ramaḍān Shāwush, *BĀQAT AL-SAWSĀN FĪ AL-TA‘RĪF BI-ḤĀḌĪRAT TILIMSĀN ‘ĀṢĪMAT DĀWLAT BANĪ ZAYYĀN* [The Lilies’ Bouquet: On the Capital Tlemcen, Seat of the Banū Zayyān State] (Algiers: Dīwān al-Maṭbū‘āt al-Jāmi‘iyya, 1983), 31–33.

³ Yūsuf ibn Ya‘qūb ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Marīnī, surnamed al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh, assumed power in 685 AH (1286 CE) and died in 706 AH (1306 CE), a contemporary of Tlemcen. See *RAWḌAT AL-NĀSRĪN FĪ DĀWLAT BANĪ MARĪN IBN AL-AḤMAR*, ed. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Maṣṣūr (Rabat, 1962), 16; and *JADHWAT AL-IQTIBĀS FĪ DHIKR MAN ḤALLA MIN AL-‘ĀLĀM MADĪNAT FĀS*, by Ibn al-Qāḍī, part 2 (Rabat, 1973), 548.

⁴ al-Qalqashandī, *ṢUBḤ AL-‘A‘SHĀ FĪ ṢĪNĀ‘AT AL-INSHĀ’* [The Dawn of the Blind in the Art of Composition], vol. 5 (Beirut: n.p., n.d.), 150.

Bāb al-Qarmādīn); and to the west, Bāb Kashūṭa.¹ (باب كشوطه, *Bāb Kashūṭa*). However, all of these fortifications did not protect the city in every period or circumstance because it was exposed to invasion and occupation on several occasions and in successive eras.

The city was composed of two towns, now enclosed within a single wall: one was Aghādīr (أفادير, *Aghādīr*), and the other was Tāqrārt (تاقرارت, *Tāqrārt*). The latter is today the larger and more renowned of the two, containing the Great Mosque, royal palaces, and splendid properties. It is more strongly built, more inclined towards habitation, and receives greater care and attention.²

The city of Tlemcen and its surroundings passed through successive historical stages; however, the historical sources do not reveal the name of the city in antiquity. Only its Roman name has reached us: *Pomaria* (بومارية, *Būmāriyya*), meaning “orchard,” for it has enjoyed an abundance of water and vegetation owing to its excellent geographical location.³

Al-Khaṭīb ibn Marzūq (الخطيب بن مرزوق, *al-Khaṭīb ibn Marzūq*) expressed it well in his words concerning تلمسان (*Tilimsān*): “*Its water and air are sufficient for you, and if we forget, we do not forget the متشكّانة (Mutashkāna) Valley, which comes from the south, bends towards the eastern side of the town, whose waters have now dried up, overtaken everywhere by construction.*”⁴

Al-Maqqarī (المقري, *al-Maqqarī*) offered the most apt comparison of this town and this valley when he wrote:

وَجْهٌ جَمِيلٌ وَالرِّيَاضُ عِذَارُهُ

بَلَدٌ يَحْفُ بِه الرِّيَاضُ كَأَنَّهُ

وَمِنَ الْجُسُورِ الْمُحْكَمَةِ سِوَارُهُ

وَكَاثِمًا وَاِدِيهِ مَعْصَمٌ غَادَةٌ

¹ BUGHYAT AL-RUWĀD FĪ DHIKR MULŪK MIN BANĪ ‘ABD AL-WĀD, ed. and comm. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ḥājiyyāt, vol. 1 (Algiers: al-Maktaba al-Waṭaniyya al-Jazā’ir, 1400 AH/1980 CE), 9.

² Mubārak ibn Muḥammad al-Mīlī, TĀRĪKH AL-JAZĀ’IR FĪ AL-QADĪM WA-AL-ḤADĪTH [History of Algeria, Ancient and Modern], vol. 2, rev. Muḥammad al-Mīlī (Algiers: al-Mu’assasa al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Kitāb, 1989), 446.

³ Muḥammad ibn ‘Amr al-Ṭammār, TILIMSĀN ‘ABRA AL-‘UṢŪR WA-DAWRUHĀ FĪ SIYĀSAT WA-ḤADĀRAT AL-JAZĀ’IR [Tlemcen through the Ages and Its Role in Algerian Politics and Civilization] (Algiers: al-Mu’assasa al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Kitāb, 1984), 7.

⁴ Ibid., 8.

2. English Translation

A town encircled by gardens, as though

its valley were the wrists of a maiden.

A beautiful face, its gardens the locks upon it,

and its well-built bridges the bracelets that adorn it.

The name *Pomaria* (بومارية, *Būmāriyya*) does not imply that the Romans founded the city. Undoubtedly, it predates the Roman presence in that part of the land, and it must have borne an earlier Berber name. Its naturally beautiful, geographically strategic, and uniquely advantageous location would necessarily have rendered it a settled and inhabited land. It could not, therefore, have remained without a name. The name *Pomaria* was likely merely a translation of the city's more ancient Berber designation.¹

When authority was established for the Berbers after the decline of foreign rule by Rome, the Vandals, and Byzantium, they gave the city, in their language, the name أفادير (*Aghādīr*),² which corresponds to the two Arabic expressions “*ancient wall*” and “*fortified city*.”

Some historians and early writers claimed that the wall mentioned in the Qur'ānic account of al-Khiḍr (الخضر, *al-Khiḍr*) and Mūsā (موسى, *Mūsā*), peace be upon them both, was located in the vicinity of أفادير (*Aghādīr*). Ibn Khaldūn (ابن خلدون, *Ibn Khaldūn*) noted in his *history*:

“Tlemcen (تلمسان, Tilimsān) is the capital of the Central Maghrib and the principal town of the Zanāta. The Banū Ifran founded it as part of their domain. We have not come across any

¹ Muḥammad al-Ṭammār, *TILIMSĀN ‘ABRA AL-‘UṢŪR* [Tlemcen through the Ages] (Algiers: al-Mu’assasa al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Kitāb, 1984), 8.

² Burjis argues that the word *AGHĀDĪR* may be of Phoenician or Carthaginian origin. He reasons that in Hebrew there is the word *QĀDĪR*, and undoubtedly the same word exists in Phoenician, since both are Semitic languages. However, we do not accept that *AGHĀDĪR* is derived from Phoenician or Carthaginian, despite the close contact of the Berbers with the Phoenicians and their influence upon them, for we remain ignorant of the original Phoenician term from which the Berber word *AGHĀDĪR* might have been derived. See Muḥammad al-Ṭammār, *TILIMSĀN ‘ABRA AL-‘UṢŪR* [Tlemcen through the Ages], 8.

account of it prior to that. For what some of the common people of its inhabitants assert that it is eternal in construction and that the wall mentioned in the Qur'ānic story of al-Khiḍr and Mūsā, peace be upon him, is in the vicinity of Aghādīr such a claim is far from substantiated, for Mūsā, peace be upon him, would not have departed from the Mashriq to the Maghrib, and the dominion of the Banū Isrā'īl did not extend to Ifrīqiya, let alone beyond it. Rather, such sayings are a product of the partisan attachment innate to mankind in extolling whatever is attributed to them."¹

The city was later named تلمسان (Tilimsān). In the language of the Zanāta (زناتة, Zanāta), its name is a compound of two words: *Tilm Sīn* (تلم سين, *Tilm Sīn*),² meaning "a gathering of two," referring to land and sea.

Al-Maqqarī (المقري, *al-Maqqarī*) stated, "It was then named Tilmisan (تلمسن, *Tilmisan*), and in the language of the Zanāta (زناتة, *Zanāta*), the inhabitants of the region, the name is composed of *tilm*, meaning 'gathering,' and *san*, meaning 'two' that is, the hill and the desert. It is also said *Tilmshān* (تلمشان, *Tilmshān*), which is likewise composed of *tilm*, meaning 'gathering,' and *shān*, meaning 'dignity' or 'importance': that it has prestige."³

Arab geographers, such as Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī⁴ (ابن الفقيه الهمذاني, *Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī*), refer to the city as Tlemcen. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (ياقوت الحموي, *Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī*) notes in his *Mu'jam*:⁵

Tilmisan (تلمسان, *Tilimsān*): with two kasras الكسرة, a sukūn on the mīm, and a sīn without a dot. Some say *Tinimsān* (تينمسان, *Tinimsān*), substituting nūn for lām. It is in Maghrib, and the two towns lie adjacent to one another, wall, and separated only by a stone's throw. One is ancient, and the other was founded later by the Almoravid kings of the Maghrib; its name is Tāqrārāt

¹ 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, *KITĀB AL-'IBAR WA-DIẒĀN AL-MUBTADA' WA-AL-KHABAR FĪ AYYĀM AL-'ARAB WA-AL-'AJAM WA-AL-BARBAR WA-MAN 'ĀṢARAHUM MIN DHAWĪ AL-SULTĀN AL-AKBAR* [Book of Lessons and Record of Origins and Events in the History of the Arabs, Persians, Berbers, and Their Contemporaries of Great Power], part 1, vol. 7 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1981), 156.

² Ibn Khaldūn, *KITĀB AL-'IBAR WA-DIẒĀN AL-MUBTADA' WA-AL-KHABAR FĪ AYYĀM AL-'ARAB WA-AL-'AJAM WA-AL-BARBAR...* [The History of Ibn Khaldūn: Book of Lessons and Record of Origins and Events...], 157. Variant readings: *TILM SAN* and *TINAM SAN*.

³ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maqqarī, *NAḤḤ AL-ṬĪB* [The Fragrant Breeze], vol. 7 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), 134.

⁴ Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad al-Hamadhānī, known as Ibn al-Faqīh (d. 636 AH/1238 CE). See Muḥammad ibn Shākir al-Kutubī, *FAWĀT AL-WAFAYĀT* [Deaths Omitted from al-Wafayāt], vol. 2, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut, 1985), 413–14.

⁵ Yāqūt ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī al-Baghdādī, *MU'JAM AL-BULDĀN* [Dictionary of Countries], vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-al-Nashr; Dār Bayrūt li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-al-Nashr, n.d.).

(تآقراارات, *Tāqrārāt*), inhabited by soldiers, courtiers, and various classes of people. The other city is Aghādīr (أقادير, *Aqādīr*), in which the common folk is located. The two are like Fustāt and Cairo on the land of Egypt. In Tlemcen, the horses of the Rāshidī breed are found to be superior to all others. From there to وهران (*Wahrān*, Oran) is a stage journey. Some assert that it is the town in which al-Khiḍr (الخصر, *al-Khiḍr*), peace be upon him, built the wall mentioned in the Qur'ān; I heard this from one who had seen the city. It has produced notables, including Abū al-Ḥusayn Khiṭāb ibn Aḥmad Khiṭāb ibn Khalīfa al-Tilimsānī (أبو الحسين خطاب بن أحمد خطاب, *Abū al-Ḥusayn Khiṭāb ibn Aḥmad Khiṭāb ibn Khalīfa al-Tilimsānī*), who came to Baghdad around the year 520 AH (1126 CE). He was an accomplished poet of fine verse, as Abū Sa'd reports.”

From the foregoing, it is evident that the name Tlemcen has been applied to the city since the earliest centuries of Islam.

Tlemcen consists of two towns: the older town, known as Aghādīr (أقادير, *Aghādīr*), was founded by the Banū Yafran (بنو يفران, *Banū Yafran*) before Islam; the second was established by Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn (يوسف بن تاشفين, *Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn*) in the year 474 AH (1081 CE) at his encampment besieging Aghādīr (*Aghādīr*). He named it Tāqrārāt (تآقراارات, *Tāqrārāt*). Al-Bakrī (البكري, *al-Bakrī*) devoted considerable attention to describing ancient Tlemcen, as well as its surrounding plains, fortresses, and ports.¹

Since the Islamic conquest, Tlemcen has remained the capital of a kingdom, carefully maintained in its construction and fortifications, particularly during the era of the Almohads and under the Almoravids, during their siege of ancient Tlemcen, Aghādīr (أجادير, *Aghādīr*), in the year 473 AH (1080 CE). Marinids² (المرينيون, *al-Marīniyyūn*), during their prolonged siege of Tlemcen at the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth century AH (thirteenth–fourteenth century CE), built a new city named al-Manṣūra.³ (المنصورة, *al-Manṣūra*), as an omen of victory.

¹ Ismā'īl al-‘Arabī, *AL-MUDUN AL-MUGHRABA* [The Cities of the Maghrib] (Algiers: al-Mu‘assasa al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Kitāb, 1984), 134.

² A reference to the Banū Marīn, who were descended from the Banū Wāsīn, brothers of Banū Bādīn, and thus cousins of the Banū ‘Abd al-Wād. They aspired to rule the Maghrib al-Aqṣā beginning in 642 AH (1244 CE).

³ BUGHYAT AL-RUWĀD, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ḥājiyyāt, vol. 1 (Algiers: al-Maktaba al-Waṭaniyya al-Jazā’ir, 1980), 210. al-Tanasī refers to it as “New Tlemcen.” See *TĀRIKH BANĪ ZAYYĀN MULŪK TILIMSĀN: MUQTATAF MIN NAẒM AL-DURR WA-AL-‘UQBĀN*, ed. Muḥammad Bū‘ayyād (Algiers, 1985), 130.

Thus, Tlemcen was composed of three successive towns: Aghādīr (أجاديير, *Aghādīr*) in the east, Tāqrārāt (تأقرارات, *Tāqrārāt*) in the centre, and al-Manṣūra (المنصورة, *al-Manṣūra*) in the west. Of these three, only the central town has survived, retaining the name Tlemcen to the present day.

The importance of Tlemcen increased during the Almoravid (المرابطون, *al-Murābiṭūn*) era with the addition of Tāqrārāt (*Tāqrārāt*). The most significant work undertaken by the Almoravids was the construction of their Great Mosque in the year 473 AH (1080 CE).

The Almohads (الموحدون, *al-Muwahḥidūn*) took special care of Tlemcen, building houses and palaces and strengthening its fortifications. Owing to these defences, the city was able to withstand and survive the incursions of Ibn Ghāniya.¹ (ابن غانية, *Ibn Ghāniya*) And his allies.

When authority was consolidated under ‘Abd al-Mu’min ibn ‘Alī² (عبد المؤمن بن علي, *‘Abd al-Mu’min ibn ‘Alī*), he ordered the people to rebuild the city and repair what had fallen off its walls. Among the tribal groups were: Maṭṭaghra (مَطَّغْرَة, *Maṭṭaghra*), Kūmiyya (كُومِيَّة, *Kūmiyya*), Madyūna (مَدْيُونَة, *Madyūna*), Mghīla (مَغِيلَة, *Mghīla*), Malzūza (مَلْزُوزَة, *Malzūza*), Kshāna (كُشْنَانَة, *Kshāna*), Dūna (دُونَة, *Dūna*), Ṣadīna (صَدِيْنَة, *Ṣadīna*), Maṭmāṭa (مَطْمَاطَة, *Maṭmāṭa*), and Lemāya (لَمَايَة, *Lemāya*).

For Maṭṭaghra (*Maṭṭaghra*), known collectively as the Madāghir (المداجر, *al-Madāghir*) throughout much of the far Maghrib, they were connected eastwards with Kūmiyya (*Kūmiyya*), into which they were absorbed from the rise of the Almohad state. Some of them were located south of Tlemcen, at Figuig.³ (فقيق, *Fīqīq*).

During this period, one of the greatest Ṣūfīs of the region, Abū Madyan Shu‘ayb ibn al-Ḥasan⁴ (أبو مدين شعيب بن الحسن, *Abū Madyan Shu‘ayb ibn al-Ḥasan*), passed away at Tāqbālat (تاقبالت,

¹ Yaḥyā ibn Ishāq ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Musūfī ibn Ghāniya (d. 633 AH/1236 CE), the last of the Banū Ghāniya princes who ruled Majorca and its environs. See ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *AL-MU’JIB FĪ TALKHĪṢ AKHBĀR AL-MAGHRIB* [The Delightful Book: Summary of the History of the Maghrib], ed. Muḥammad Sa’īd al-‘Aryān (Cairo, 1963), 273–75.

² Founder of the Almohad state in the Maghrib. He was born in the town of Tājart near Tlemcen and died in Salā (Morocco) on his way to al-Andalus.

³ Mubārak ibn Muḥammad al-Mīlī, *TARIKH AL-JAZA’IR FI AL-QADIM WA-AL-ḤADITH* [History of Algeria, Ancient and Modern], vol. 2 (Algiers: al-Mu’assasa al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Kitāb, 1989), 222.

⁴ Abū Madyan (b. ca. 520 AH/1126 CE, Seville, al-Andalus) was one of the foremost masters of asceticism and piety. See Ibn Maryam al-Tilimsānī, *AL-BUSTĀN FĪ DHIKR AL-‘AWLIYĀ’ WA-AL-‘ULAMĀ’ BI-TILIMSĀN* [The Orchard: On the Saints and Scholars of Tlemcen] (Algiers: Dīwān al-Maṭbū‘āt al-Jāmi‘iyya, 1980), 108.

Tāqbālat), a village near Tlemcen, on his way to Marrakesh (مراكش, *Marrākush*). He was buried on one of the hills of Tlemcen, in the village of al-‘Abbād (العباد, *al-‘Abbād*).

Yaghmurasan ibn Zayyān¹ (يغمراسن بن زيان, *Yaghmurasan ibn Zayyān*) seized the opportunity to wrest Tlemcen from the Almohads and made it the seat of a great emirate and the capital of the Zayyānid state.

During this period, the five schools of Tlemcen were founded. The first was built at the command of Abū Ḥammū Mūsā I (أبو حمو موسى الأول, *Abū Ḥammū Mūsā al-Awwal*) at the beginning of his reign (707–718 AH/1307–1318 CE). His son, Abū Tāshfīn I (أبو تاشفين الأول, *Abū Tāshfīn al-Awwal*), later constructed the Tāshfīniyya School (المدرسة التاشفينية, *al-Madrassa al-Tāshfīniyya*) beside the Great Mosque (718–737 AH/1318–1337 CE), which became a remarkable artistic masterpiece.

Subsequently, during the Marinid (المرينيون, *al-Marīniyyūn*) occupation of the Central Maghrib, another school was founded in the village of al-‘Abbād (العباد, *al-‘Abbād*) outside Tlemcen, commissioned by Sultan Abū al-Ḥasan al-Marīnī (أبو الحسن المريني, *Abū al-Ḥasan al-Marīnī*) in 748 AH (1347 CE). His son, ‘Inān (عنان, *Inān*), later founded another school beside the mosque of the saintly Walī Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Shūdhī al-Ishbīlī (أبي عبد الله الشوذني الإشبيلي, *Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Shūdhī al-Ishbīlī*), known as al-Ḥilwī (الحلوي, *al-Ḥilwī*), in 754 AH (1353 CE).

The fifth school was the Ya‘qūbiyya (المدرسة اليعقوبية, *al-Madrassa al-Ya‘qūbiyya*), founded by Abū Ḥammū Mūsā II (أبو حمو موسى الثاني, *Abū Ḥammū Mūsā al-Thānī*) in 765 AH (1363 CE), beside the mausoleum erected over the tomb of his father Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf (أبو يعقوب يوسف, *Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf*), together with his two uncles, Abū Sa‘īd ‘Uthmān (أبي سعيد عثمان, *Abū Sa‘īd ‘Uthmān*) and Abū Thābit (أبي ثابت, *Abū Thābit*). ♦ Later, the pious scholar Ibrāhīm al-Maṣmūdī (إبراهيم المصمودي, *Ibrāhīm al-Maṣmūdī*), who died in 804 AH (1401 CE), was buried there.²

¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *KITAB AL-‘IBAR WA-DIWAN AL-MUBTADA’ WA-AL-KHABAR*, vol. 13 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1981), 162.

² ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ḥājiyyāt, “al-Ḥayāt al-Fikriyya bi-al-Jazā’ir fī ‘Ahd Banī Zayyān” [Intellectual Life in Algeria under the Banū Zayyān], in *AL-JAZĀ’IR FĪ AL-TĀRĪKH: AL-‘AHD AL-ISLĀMĪ MIN AL-FATḤ ILĀ BIDĀYAT AL-‘AHD AL-‘UTHMĀNĪ* [Algeria in History: The Islamic Era from the Conquest to the Beginning of the Ottoman Period] (Algiers: al-Mu’assasa al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Kitāb, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 1984), 438.

In the year 1555 CE, Rā'īs Bāshā al-Jazā'ir (رايس باشا الجزائر, *Rā'īs Bāshā al-Jazā'ir*) seized Tlemcen at the head of the Ottomans. The city thus came to represent the furthest Moroccan frontier of the Ottoman state, and the Turks settled in Tlemcen and mingled with its inhabitants.

The native urban element of Tlemcen's population became known as al-Ḥaḍar (الحضر, *al-Ḥaḍar*), with the ḍād pronounced open, and this designation was restricted to them alone. Their neighbours in the city, not of this element, were known as the Kūrughla (الكرغلة, *al-Karāghila*), that is, the *kouloughlis*, the offspring of Algerian mothers and Turkish fathers.¹

Ibn Khaldūn (ابن خلدون, *Ibn Khaldūn*) recounts how Arab genealogists agreed with Berber genealogists on the Arab origin of Berbers. Ibn Khaldūn, in his usual manner, critically discusses this attribution and disagrees with the genealogists concerning the Arabness of all Berber tribes. However, he acknowledges the Arab origin of the two greatest Berber tribes, Ṣanhāja (صنهاجة, *Ṣanhāja*) and Kutāma (كتامة, *Kutāma*). As the eminent historian, he affirms that they had migrated from Yemen in waves prior to the Islamic conquest, even before the Christian era. He writes:

*"There is no disagreement among the Arab genealogists that the Berber peoples we have mentioned are all Berbers, except for Ṣanhāja and Kutāma. Among the Arab genealogists, there is disagreement, but the prevailing view is that they are of Yemeni origin and that when Afrīqus invaded Ifrīqiya, he settled them there... In my view, they are their brethren, that is, Arabs and God know best."*²

Ibn Khaldūn (ابن خلدون, *Ibn Khaldūn*) also related in his history:

"Ibn Abī Dīnār (ابن أبي دينار, Ibn Abī Dīnār) reports from al-Maqrīzī (المقريزي, al-Maqrīzī) that Afrīqus ibn Abraha Dhū al-Qarnayn (إفريقس بن أبرهة ذي القرنين, Afrīqus ibn Abraha Dhū al-Qarnayn) invaded the Maghrib and there built a city which he named Ifrīqiya³ (إفريقية, Ifrīqiya)."

Ibn Khaldūn further recounts:

¹ 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Jilālī, *TARIKH AL-JAZA'IR AL-'ĀMM* [General History of Algeria], vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa; Algiers: Dīwān al-Maṭbū'āt al-Jāmi'iyya, 1982/1402 AH), 21.

² 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, *TARIKH IBN KHALDUN*, vol. 6 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1981), 192.

³ *Ibid.*, 338.

“The genealogists of the Zanāta (زناتة, Zanāta) trace their lineage to Ḥimyar (حمير, Ḥimyar) and the ‘Amālīqa¹ (العمالقة, al-‘Amālīqa).”

On this basis, the most significant phonetic changes that have affected certain sounds in the Tlemcen vernacular, particularly the sounds ق(qāf) and ك(kāf), together with the emergence of dialectal phenomena such as al-kashkasha (الكشكشة, al-kashkasha), al-kaskasa (الكسكسة, al-kaskasa), and the alternation of ق(qāf) into a glottal stop (‘) or into a palatalized Cairene ج(jīm qāhiriyya mu‘aṭṭasha), are nothing but continuations of the significant sound changes that occurred in the Arab East, especially among the Yemeni tribes and likewise among the inhabitants of Cairo. Consequently, the Tlemcen dialect remains close to Classical Arabic.

Ibn Khaldūn (ابن خلدون, Ibn Khaldūn) explains this in detail in his *Muqaddima*, stating:

“Among the linguistic features of this Arab generation in our time, wherever they dwell in the lands, is their manner of pronouncing ق(qāf). They do not articulate it from the point of ق(qāf), as do the people of the towns, as mentioned in the works of Arabic philology, namely, from the deepest part of the tongue and the upper palate. Nor do they pronounce it from the point of ك(kāf), although that is slightly lower than the point of ق(qāf) and adjacent to it on the upper palate. Rather, they bring it forth as a sound intermediate between ك(kāf) and ق(qāf). This is found among all the Arab Bedouin generation, whether in the West or the East. The most apparent conclusion is that this pronunciation of ق(qāf), current among the Arab Bedouin, represents the original articulation of ق(qāf) among the earliest speakers of the language, for its point of articulation is broad: its uppermost from the high palate and its lowermost adjoining ك(kāf). Thus, pronouncing it from the high palate is the usage of the towns, while pronouncing it nearer to ك(kāf) is the usage of this Bedouin generation.”²

We may thus affirm that this development in the pronunciation of these two sounds is merely a continuation of their older forms. Accordingly, the dialect of Tlemcen remains close to Classical Arabic. It maintains historical ties and connections with the cities of the Arab East, particularly Cairo (القاهرة, al-Qāhira), and certain Yemeni tribes.

¹ Ibid., vol. 7, 6.

² ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, *AL-MUQADDIMA* [The Muqaddimah] (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, Maktabat al-Madrassa, 1960), 1076–77.

From this perspective, we find that in the province of Tlemcen and its surroundings, three dialects are prevalent: the urban dialect (اللهجة الحضرية, *al-lahja al-ḥaḍariyya*), the Bedouin dialect (اللهجة البدوية, *al-lahja al-badawiyya*), and the Ḥawzī dialect.¹ (اللهجة الحوزية, *al-lahja al-ḥawziyya*). All of these are derived from classical Arabic, which loses all of its case inflections, leaving every word-final position quiescent. Thereafter, changes entered into the pronunciation of specific letters, and some vocabulary was replaced by words from other languages, such as Zanāta (الزناتية, *al-Zanātiyya*), Turkish, and even Spanish and French, during the period of colonization.

3. The urban dialect:

In this dialect, many Arabic letters undergo alteration. For instance, the voiceless interdental ث (*thā*ʾ, th) is transformed into ت (*tā*ʾ, t). Thus, the people of Tlemcen say *al-talj* (التلج) instead of *al-thalj* (الثلج, “snow”). Similarly, the voiced interdental ذ (*dhāl*, dh) is changed into د (*dāl*, d), so they say *al-dīb* (الديب) instead of *al-dhīb* (الذيب, “wolf”) and *al-dahab* (الذهب) instead of *al-dhahab* (الذهب, “gold”).²

The sound most distinctly unpronounced in its standard form in Tlemcen, however, is ق (*qāf*, q). It is softened until it nearly becomes a glottal stop, resembling the pronunciation in Fes (فاس, *Fās*) and Cairo (القاهرة, *al-Qāhira*). Thus, one often hears expressions such as 'aw'aw (أوأ) instead of *qawqaw*.³ (قاوقاؤ), and 'ar'ara (أرأرة) instead of *qarqara*.⁴ (قرقرة).

This feature is mainly found among women and children; indeed, even the ك (*kāf*, k) among them and some men may also be transformed into a glottal stop. Thus, for example, they say *ba'bu'a* (بأبوة) instead of *bakbūka*.⁵ (بكبوكة, “gourd”).

¹ Ḥājj Muḥammad Ramaḍān Shāwsh, *BAQAT AL-SUSAN FI AL-TA'RIF BIḤAḌIRAT TILIMSAN DAWLAT BANI ZIYAN* (Algiers: Dīwān al-Maṭbū'āt al-Jāmi'iyya, 1983), 361.

² Ibid., 361.

³ “Peanut.”

⁴ “Umm Qarqar: Frog.”

⁵ “A delicious dish made from tripe meat.”

For the emphatic qāf (القاف المعقودة), *al-qāf al-ma'qūda*, the uvular stop used in the countryside is rarely heard in Tlemcen, except in a few words that can almost be counted on one's fingers, such as *qamar* (قمر, "moon") or *qunfudh* (قنفذ, "hedgehog"). However, such instances remain very rare. One may also hear in Tlemcen the pronunciation of the Turkish letter.¹ ج المثلثة (*jīm al-muthallatha*), which corresponds to the sound [tʃ], a combination of ت (*tā'*, t) and ش (*shīn*, sh), i.e., *ch*.

4 .The Bedouin Dialect:

By this, we mean the Bedouin Arabic dialect spoken outside Tlemcen, in the villages, hamlets, mountains, and plains around it. It does not differ in any way, either in the pronunciation of the letters or in the manner of expression, from the Arabic dialect spoken throughout the entire province of Oran.² وهران, *Wahrān*). Among them, ق (*qāf*) is usually articulated as the uvular stop (q) and is softened in very few words, such as *al-qalam* (القلم, "pen") or *al-qarya* (القرية, "village"). However, they interchange certain sounds, substituting one letter for another within the same word. For instance, they say *al-znāja* (الزناجة) instead of *al-janāza* (الجنابة, "funeral").

In terms of vocabulary, they employ words no longer used in urban speech, such as *al-qarqā'* (القرقاع, with two emphatic qāfs), meaning "walnut."

To these two dialects, the urban and the Bedouin, one may add a third, the Ḥawzī Dialect (اللهجة الحوزية, *al-lahja al-ḥawziyya*). By this, we mean the dialect spoken in the immediate outskirts or central areas of the city, which serves as an intermediate form between the two previously mentioned dialects.

5 Conclusion:

The vernacular of Tlemcen is very close to Classical Arabic, except for a few minor differences, which can be counted on one's fingers, particularly in words or vocabulary involving the sounds ق (*qāf*) and ك (*kāf*). Most of these changes have long affected the two aforementioned letters and are not recent. This is evident in the dialects of South Yemen and certain tribes, such as

¹ Ḥājī Muḥammad Ramaḍān Shāwsh, *BAQAT AL-SUSAN FI AL-TA'RIF BI-ḤAḌIRAT TILIMSAN 'ĀṢIMAT DAWLAT BANİ ZIYAN*, 362.

² Ḥājī Muḥammad Ramaḍān Shāwsh, *BAQAT AL-SUSAN FI AL-TA'RIF BI-ḤAḌIRAT TILIMSAN*, 363.

Tamīm (تميم, *Tamīm*), as well as in the similarities that exist between the speech of the inhabitants of Cairo (القاهرة, *al-Qāhira*) and that of Tlemcen..)

6 Bibliography:

1. Wajdī, Muḥammad Farīd. *Dā'irat Ma'ārif al-Qarn al-'Ishrīn* [Encyclopaedia of the Twentieth Century]. Vol. 2. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 3rd ed., 1971.
2. Ibn Maryam al-Sharīf al-Milīti al-Madyūnī al-Tilimsānī. *al-Bustān fī Dhikr al-Awliyā' wa-al-'Ulamā' bi-Tilimsān* [The Orchard: On the Saints and Scholars of Tlemcen]. Algiers: Dīwān al-Maṭbū'āt al-Jāmi'iyya, 1980.
3. Abū al-Fidā' al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad. *Taqwīm al-Buldān* [Survey of the Lands]. Paris, 1840.
4. al-Maqqarī, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad. *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb min Ghuṣn al-Andalus al-Raṭīb* [The Fragrant Breeze from the Gentle Branch of al-Andalus]. Vol. 7. Edited by Iḥsān 'Abbās. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1388 AH/1968 CE.
5. Shāwush, al-Ḥājj Ramaḍān. *Bāqat al-Sawsān fī al-Ta'rīf bi-Ḥāḍirat Tilimsān 'Āṣimat Dawlat Banī Zayyān* [The Lilies' Bouquet: On the Capital Tlemcen, Seat of the Banū Zayyān State]. Algiers: Dīwān al-Maṭbū'āt al-Jāmi'iyya, 1983.
6. al-Qalqashandī. *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī Ṣinā'at al-Inshā'* [The Dawn of the Blind in the Art of Composition]. Vol. 5.
7. Ḥājiyyāt, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, ed. and comm. *Bughyat al-Ruwād fī Dhikr Mulūk min Banī 'Abd al-Wād* [The Desire of the Seekers: On the Kings of the Banū 'Abd al-Wād]. Vol. 1. Algiers: al-Maktaba al-Waṭaniyya al-Jazā'ir, 1400 AH/1980 CE.
8. al-Mīlī, Mubārak ibn Muḥammad. *Tārīkh al-Jazā'ir fī al-Qadīm wa-al-Ḥadīth* [History of Algeria, Ancient and Modern]. Vol. 2. Revised by Muḥammad al-Mīlī. Algiers: al-Mu'assasa al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Kitāb.
9. al-Ṭammār, Muḥammad ibn 'Amr. *Tilimsān 'Abra al-'Uṣūr wa-Dawruhā fī Sīyāsāt wa-Ḥaqārat al-Jazā'ir* [Tlemcen through the Ages and Its Role in Algerian Politics and Civilization]. Algiers: al-Mu'assasa al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Kitāb, 1984.
10. Ibn Khaldūn, 'Abd al-Raḥmān. *Kitāb al-'Ibar wa-Dīwān al-Mubtada' wa-al-Khabar fī Ayyām al-'Arab wa-al-'Ajam wa-al-Barbar wa-man 'Āṣarahum min Dhawī al-Sulṭān al-Akbar* [Book of Lessons and Record of Origins and Events in the History of the Arabs, Persians, Berbers, and Their Contemporaries of Great Power]. Part I, Vol. 7. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1981.

11. Ibn Khaldūn, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn: Kitāb al-‘Ibar wa-Dīwān al-Mubtada’ wa-al-Khabar...* [The History of Ibn Khaldūn: Book of Lessons and Record of Origins and Events...]. p. 157. Variant readings: *Tilm San* and *Tinam San*.
12. al-Ḥamawī, Yāqūt ibn ‘Abd Allāh. *Mu‘jam al-Buldān* [Dictionary of Countries]. Vol. 2. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir li-l-Ṭibā‘a wa-al-Nashr; Dār Bayrūt li-l-Ṭibā‘a wa-al-Nashr.
13. al-‘Arabī, Ismā‘īl. *al-Mudun al-Mughraba* [The Cities of the Maghrib]. Algiers: al-Mu’assasa al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Kitāb, 1984.
14. al-Jīlālī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad. *Tārīkh al-Jazā’ir al-‘Āmm* [General History of Algeria]. Vol. 4. Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa; Algiers: Dīwān al-Maṭbū‘āt al-Jāmi‘iyya, 1402 AH/1982 CE.
15. Ibn Khaldūn, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. *al-Muqaddima* [The Muqaddima]. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, Maktabat al-Madrasa, 1960.
16. Shāwush, al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Ramaḍān. *Bāqat al-Sawsān fī al-Ta’rīf bi-Ḥaḍīrat Tilimsān Dawlat Banī Zayyān* [The Lilies’ Bouquet: On Tlemcen, Capital of the Banū Zayyān State]. Algiers: Dīwān al-Maṭbū‘āt al-Jāmi‘iyya, 1983.