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Socio Cultural Aspects of the Algerian Hajj Caravan and Its Relationship with the Holy Lands during the Ottoman Era

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AbstractThe study highlights the conditions related to the Algerian Hajj caravan during the Ottoman period. The relationship between Algerians and the Ottomans was distinct from that of other nations, and Algerians demonstrated a profound belonging to the Holy Lands since the Ottoman presence in the region. In taking a similar Hajj pilgrimage as Muslims, Algerians as well as other Algerians, are documented as early as the Ottoman Empire as taking these overland journeys shaped social and cultural aspects of the Algerian society and devoted these aspects as elements of cultural heritage. The under-documented aspects of these overland journeys are the social and cultural elements of a tourist voyage and the journeys themselves. In this case, the overland pilgrimage journeys undertaken by Algerians and the purpose, which are the Algerian Hajj caravans of the Ottoman era .

Keywords: Hajj; Caravan; Socio-cultural; Algeria; Ottoman

Résumé :L'étude visait à mettre en évidence la situation du cortège des pèlerins algériens à l'époque ottomane. En effet, la relation entre les Algériens et les Ottomans différait de celle des autres régions, et l'attachement des Algériens aux Lieux saints de l'islam remonte à la présence ottomane. Comme l'ensemble des musulmans à travers le monde, ils étaient – et demeurent – soucieux d'accomplir les rites du pèlerinage. Les voyages terrestres entrepris par les Algériens durant la période ottomane illustrent clairement cette importance, reflet des dimensions sociales et culturelles de la société, préservées et transmises de génération en génération comme des valeurs sacrées.

Malgré les conditions difficiles et les obstacles auxquels se heurtaient les pèlerins algériens en raison de la longueur du trajet – notamment les dangers posés par les bandits et les chercheurs de trésors ou de butin – ces voyages constituaient une véritable expression des manifestations culturelles portées par le tourisme et le voyage. Ainsi, notre étude vient pour mettre en lumière les aspects socioculturels du voyage algérien du pèlerinage et son rapport aux Lieux saints durant l'époque ottomane.

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Introduction

Hajj is one of the most significant religious obligations for Muslims. As one of the five pillars of Islam, it is a mandatory act for every capable adult Muslim, and which is performed once in a lifetime. : Muslim hajj travel very long distances from different parts of the world seeking the Holy Lands and fulfill the rites of Hajj.

From all parts of the world, regardless of race, language, or region, pilgrims take their journey to the House of Allah. Today, with the advancement of transportation, this journey takes only a few hours by air. In contrast, the Hajj caravan then would span several months from departure to arrival at the sacred sites.

Since the Ottoman period, Hajj has been one of the most important religious pilgrimages in the history of travel in Algeria. Because of technological and social changes, the socio-cultural dimension of the Hajj caravan has evolved. A long time ago, reaching the Holy Lands was a difficult trip particularly concerning the means of transportation.

The journey was mostly full of obstructions, bandits, natural hazards such as rain and wind, maritime dangers for instance drowning, and the risk of getting lost - either the caravan itself or individual pilgrims - which could delay or hinder hajj.

The socio-cultural aspect of these journeys was particularly distinguished. They referred to the significance and value of Islamic heritage of communities and its links to all generations, encapsulating the history of the Islamic Ummah. These journeys were a blend of travel, exploration, tourism, enjoyment, and religious devotion.

1. Research Problem

The questions raised by this research:

- What are the socio-cultural manifestations of the Algerian Hajj caravan?
- How is the Algerian Hajj caravan connected to the Holy Lands?
- Were there any challenges facing it?

2. The importance of the study

- Providing a panoramic overview of the socio-cultural aspects of the Algerian Hajj caravan.
- Provide a deeper understanding of the extent of its influence by the Holy Lands.
- Spot light on the way how the Algerian Hajj caravan was performed during the Ottoman period.
- Addressing the main hurdles that hindered the pilgrimage from fulfilling its spiritual aim.

3. Purposes of the Study

- To pinpoint the main connections that emphasize the socio-cultural aspect of Hajj.
- Investigating the main distinctions within the Algerian Hajj caravan during the Ottoman period.
- To identify the best method for recognizing the characteristics that reinforce social relations.
- To offer a global image of the connection between the Algerian Hajj caravan and the Sacred Lands.

4. The Holy Lands During the Ottoman Era

Since the early ages of Islam, the Holy Lands - especially Mecca - have been regarded as most sacred places on Earth, attracting all categories of peoples and ethnicities for hajj. Their spiritual importance has earned them significant attention, as visiting the Kaaba is an adored aspiration for Muslims worldwide.

The Ottomans placed great value on the Holy Lands, and this sentiment continued with other Sultans, owing to the reverence these lands commanded within the Islamic community. The sacred Islamic sites and the Holy Lands were under Ottoman dominion, which granted them an unparalleled religious esteem across the Islamic world. The Ottoman state exempted the region from taxes and also military conscription. The Ottomans allowed the region to retain its local autonomy, which was managed under the Sharifate system (Safsafi, 2012).

The Ottoman Empire paid special attention to the Hajj caravan. Organized and overseen by the Ottomans, it constituted a religious obligation. As a state obligation, organizing the Hajj was a top priority since it is the fifth pillar of Islam. The construction of pilgrimage caravans, the maintenance of roads, and building of fortresses and inns were state sponsored initiatives. They also dug wells

and established other facilities along the pilgrimage routes. The empire supervised the main Hajj caravans which were scheduled to leave the empire from designated locations and on specific dates. These processes were managed by military escorts, composed of senior officers termed “Sardar al-Hajj.” The military chaplain of the caravan held the title “Amir al-Hajj.”

The Ottomans looked at the Hajj caravan as being a symbol of their political strength and a reaffirmation of the Sultan’s leadership over the Islamic world. From a religious point of view, they saw Hajj as a core Islamic obligation and their role as guardians of Islam necessitated organizing and supervising the pilgrimage (Hussein, 2018).

The Egyptian and Maghrebi caravans which carried pilgrims from Libya Tunisia Algeria and Morocco were among the caravans supervised by the Ottoman Empire during the Hajj. These caravans which were regarded as some of the most important during the Ottoman era would congregate under the jurisdiction of each province. The new Kaaba covering and the Egyptian Mahmal were among them. Every year the caravan left Cairo during the final week of Shawwal accompanied by lavish festivities overseen by the governor. The distance is covered in 37 days through the Suez, Senai and Aqaba roads, and on some roads it encounters the Syrian Hajj caravan, years before ships would move from Suez to other Egyptian ports heading to Jeddah (Safsafi, 2012)

5. The Algerian Hajj Caravan During the Ottoman Era

The Ottoman era in Algeria (1520–1830) has an exceptional legacy regarding the journeys of Algerians, who were well-known for their frequent travels both eastward and westward, within and beyond the borders of Algeria. Any attempt to enumerate the names of these travelers and their journeys is deemed futile due to their vast numbers and the silence of historical sources regarding many of them. Numerous journeys have been lost to history, leaving no trace. Among these travels were pilgrimages to the Two Holy Sanctuaries, driven by the Algerian soul’s yearning to visit the sacred sites, the Kaaba, and the Prophet’s Rawda, seeking blessings and the honor of witnessing the grave of the Prophet Muhammad—peace and blessings be upon him (ʿUmq al-ʾAṣāla, 2014).

As representatives of the Islamic Caliphate, the Ottoman sultans ensured the security and facilitation of the Hajj caravan’s passage to the Holy Lands. Along its route, the caravan encountered various geographical landmarks—mountains, plains, and valleys—such as Khid al-Dayr (near Ouled Mimoun), Tessala (near Sidi Bel Abbès), and the Biban range (in Kabylia). Plains included El Habra, Mitidja, and Majāna, while valleys comprised Yellal, Mina, Oued Jarr, Blida, and Constantine. In addition to Algerian cities, the caravan passed through Tunis, Tripoli, and Cairo, which served as rest stations. Notable among these were Qasra, al-Dār al-Ḥamrāʾ, and ʿAjrūd

in Egypt, as well as Abiyār al-Sulṭān and Wād al-Nār in the Arabian Peninsula. These stations provided pilgrims with food, water, and opportunities to change modes of transport (ʿUmq al-ʾAṣāla, 2014).

A single unified Hajj caravan was organized for the Regency of Algiers, comprising pilgrims from all regions—west, center, east, and the Sahara. They would gather in Biskra, where they were joined by the Moroccan caravan, then proceeded to meet the Tunisian caravan, followed by the Libyan and Egyptian caravans (Bin Qūmār, 2017).

In addition to the pilgrimages to the Two Holy Sanctuaries, the Regency of Algiers annually allocated a considerable amount of gifts and funds to be sent to the Holy Lands. These were designated for scholarly pursuits, the noble and pious, and the poor and needy. The source of these funds was the waqf (endowment) institutions. To ensure the success of this mission, the Amir of the Hajj caravan appointed an official each year known as the "Agent of the Two Sanctuaries," entrusted with the responsibility of delivering these gifts and funds intact. He would prepare a detailed inventory and dispatch it with the caravan.

The Muslims desire to do good and his sense of unity with the larger Islamic community are reflected in the waqf system. In Algeria during the Ottoman era the waqf was supervised by an agent who oversaw a committee that had joint administrative duties. The ṣurra (money pouch) which contained gold donated to the underprivileged in the Two Sanctuaries was under the treasurers care. This ṣurras value changed every year. As a source of income for the impoverished and destitute as well as a basis for the maintenance and expansion of mosques schools Quranic institutes scholars and students the endowments of the Holy Lands were of great social and cultural significance (Saʿd Allah 1981).

An enormous amount of cash gold silver clothing and other items were transported annually by the Algerian Hajj caravan to the Two Holy Sanctuaries guardians and the impoverished people of Mecca. Each caravan in the region aimed to outshine its peers in terms of wealth and prestige. According to Saʿd Allah (1981) Bey Muḥammad al-Kabīr Judge Aḥmad al-ʿAbbāsī and ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Fakkūn were among the most well-known bearers of the charity for the Two Sanctuaries. The Hajj caravan allows social and scientific communication between Algerian pilgrims and other eastern societies, especially in places where the departing pilgrims stay for an extended period of time, so there is ample time to learn about the social and scientific activities of its people. The people of these regions also have the opportunity to know and get to know the members of the Hajj caravan (Zohari, 2012).

6. Sociocultural Manifestations of the Algerian Hajj Caravan during the Ottoman Era.

6.1: The Social Aspect of the Algerian Hajj Caravan during the Ottoman Era

This thrilling journey was depicted in the most magnificent ways possible by the movement of the Algerian Hajj caravan on its external journey to the Hijaz (both going and returning). It was full of meanings that blended the desire and longing for the Honorable Kaaba the purest place on earth. According to some one of the most magnificent forms of travel during the most illustrious periods of Islam was making the journey to Mecca with the Hajj caravan. The pilgrims diverse social interactions and the closeness of their bonds as a result of the caravans interactions with its surroundings are both amply illustrated in the different traveler texts. Numerous tourists shared with us their experiences in different cities praising the kindness of the locals (Sulayman 2017).

Overcoming geographic and tribal ties the pilgrimage was the impetus for all Muslims to perform the Hajj. The pilgrims close bonds and togetherness were a manifestation of their shared religious beliefs and the Hajjs obligation. This was demonstrated during the festivities that preceded the departure of the Egyptian Hajj caravan which paraded the Kaabas covering (Kiswah) throughout the town before departing for the Hajj. As the Maghrebi Hajj caravan (which included the Algerian Tunisian and Libyan Hajj caravans) journeyed to the Hijaz as a single group they shared this fostering a happy and auspicious environment full of indescribable emotions. With the Amir al-Hajj (Commander of the Hajj) in charge the Algerian Hajj caravan would assemble in one area and depart as a single unit. The people who lived in the areas they traveled through welcomed them with joy. Locals in some of the previously mentioned areas like Biskra the Ziban capital came out to greet the Hajj caravan. They encircled it from all sides and amused the pilgrims by playing with mules and horses decked out in their finest garb. The people of Tripoli also showed the caravan the same hospitality going out of their way to show the Algerian Hajj caravan their respect by providing them with a wide variety of food and beverages. Along the way pilgrims were given food containers in one small town one of these containers alone contained half a sheeps worth of meat (Bou Said S. D.).

6.2: The Cultural Appearance of the Algerian Hajj Caravan during the Ottoman Era

The journey to Hajj was a symbol of deep interaction and unity inherant in the land of Islam and Arabism the Hajj caravan is beleived to be the most eloquent picture of the splendor of scientific and cultural communication between the countries of the East and the West. It was considered a mobile library due to the wealth of knowledge it contained. Among the pilgrims were scholars who carried their books, writings, letters, and journals to sell, and in return, they would purchase

whatever books and publications they did not possess in various sciences. This was in addition to the various scholarly sessions held during the journey or in the Hijaz (Sulaiman, 2017).

Numerous authors have explained the different scientific phenomena, which occurred between Hajj caravans during the Ottoman period and different scholarly periods. We refer to some of them:

*Al-Jabarti's father's travels, where it is described that his father informed him that there were some Algerian pilgrims who came to them in Egypt in 1196 AH and inquired of him about some books they could purchase, one being a manuscript of Al-Samarkandi's Zij al-Rasid, which he (Al-Jabarti's father) had a copy of.". The Algerian pilgrim attempted in different ways to persuade him to sell it to him, but Al-Jabarti's father was unwilling to part with his cherished copy. When Algerian pilgrim finished the Hajj pilgrimage and arrived back in Egypt, he visited Al-Jabarti's father with a sizable package of books that he bought at the Two Holy Mosques, such as a copy of Al-Tabsira, a commentary on Al-Tadhkira, a copy of Al-Bare', Zij of Ibn Al-Shatir, and the same Zij. He presented them to Al-Jabarti's father and inquired, "Is your copy better or that one?" Al-Jabarti's father replied that he had never heard of anything like it, nor were there any other books beyond the treasuries of kings (Saad Allah, 1981). Algerian Hajj caravan journey was prolific with books, libraries, and sciences pilgrims dreamed of learning, men of accomplishment and men of learning who dreamed of visiting, and youths and men who opened their arms to the caravan. Algerian men of learning were greatly valued and held high esteem by people of society in the country of the Two Holy Mosques, and were highly learned in a number of sciences. They were Ali ibn Wali ibn Hamza, the mathematically talented one who passed away in Mecca, and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Buni, the famous litterateur who passed away in the Hijaz. But among the most famous of the Algerian scholars who emigrated to the Levant for good was Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Maqri al-Tilimsani, author of "Nafh al-Tayyib fi Ghusn al-Andalus al-Ratib." He was born in Tlemcen and emigrated to Morocco, from which he went to Egypt and then the Hijaz, performing Hajj pilgrimage five times. He taught, went to Jerusalem and Damascus, and passed away in Cairo. It was not only for men but also for women from Algeria, who were skilled in sciences such as Safiyya bint Muhammad or Umm al-Hiya al-Baskariyya, who immigrated to Medina. And excelled in the science of Hadith (Depth of Authenticity, 2014), and sociologically here it can be stated that the important element here in these caravan voyages is that many scholars and jurists had good opportunities to learn due to interaction with their fellow scholars, the sheikhs from whom they learned and gained, so the socio-cultural relations are here clear through the historic Algerians' affinity to the Two Holy Mosques land and since the Ottoman presence, so the Hajj caravan was an opportunity to practice worship and simultaneously learn Islamic heritage and derive lessons and knowledge, through schooling carried through the words of deep interaction between Muslims

despite how diverse their races and values are, except that the belief is one and the faith is one, and this is what strengthens the relations, especially in the Algerian Hajj caravan during the Ottoman period.

7. Issues faced the Algerian Hajj Caravan During the Ottoman Era:

The Hajj caravan encountred several issues, primarily caused by individuals. Other issues were primarily were traced to natural factors. These issues are both identified as human-related and natural-related, as discussed below:

7.1 Human Problems:

The Hajj caravan's journey to the land of the Two Holy Mosques is not without its challenges and difficulties, which the blessed pilgrims encounter. As the caravan makes its way through the desert, it encounters numerous problems, which can be broadly divided into two types: problems of a human nature, including raids by tribes from nomadic Bedouins, thieves, and others. Many Hijazi trips faced these difficulties, as did the scarcity of provisions and the passage through areas strugling with social unstability, revolutions, wars, and conflicts between tribes, which led to the deaths of huge numbers of people. This places the caravan at risk upon arrival in these regions, in addition to the terror it instills in the pilgrims' souls, also the areas plagued by deadly diseases that kill. The strong, and in some cases it ends life, and sometimes the caravan is subject to taxes and extortion by the goverors of some countries, and we have in what Al-Masabi Ibrahim Ben Bahman mentioned the greatest evidence of that where he mentions the extortion he was exposed to in Egypt during the governance of Ibrahim Basha the Great where he would detain an elderly sheikh or a prominent figure and ask his companions for a ransom to leave him alone in addition to looting the luggage, and there are three types of people who cause problems for the Hajj caravan, we classify them into three types, which are:

The first type:

The Hajj caravan itself can comprise another set of individuals who repel other pilgrims. Pilgrims as such, they are a thorn in the side of the Hajj caravan. They encamp inside it, taking shelter from it so that their lives will be saved. They do nothing in favor of the caravan, neither by protecting it at night nor by joining the congregation. They are a vagabond group between themselves, going for Hajj for the sake of earning pennies and dinars, and they have no sense of right and wrong. This group has been causing trouble to the caravan during the journey. They do not listen to the caravan leader, nor are they interested in public interest or obedience. They also do activities and acts that

demolish the caravan. They also used to depart from the congregation without authorization (Bousaid, Ds).

The second type:

The Hajj caravans are raided by some people, referred to as Bedouins, who have turned it into their job to raid and pillage the Hajj caravans coming and going. They take advantage of the fact that the Hajj caravans travel along valleys and ravines that they have to travel through. They make use of the time of sunset and their knowledge of the gates and gorges to loot the Hajj caravans. The nature of the attacks the Hajj caravans were subjected to was different, and always intended for pillage. They employed tactics of deception and cunning, for example, attacking the back of the Hajj caravan and sneaking in quietly to loot (Boussaid, Ds). Sheikh Al-Wertelani mentioned, ".We reached Al-Hawra between noon and the afternoon. After settling down, we overheard a rumor that the virtuous and superior head of the Fulali caravan, Sidi Muhammad, had been wounded by the Arabs among the Nabataeans at the back of the caravan. They explained that they took only a single shot, which struck him." (Sufi Library 2007).

The third type:

Besides the Bedawin, there were tribes before whom few travelers passed with their lives, so fierce were they in their enmity. This included the Mountain's Arabs, who were referred to as "the most impudent and the greatest hypocrites of Arabs." They did not know what Allah had sent down to His Messenger and their sole work was tending flocks and committing banditry. Seldom had a caravan traversed their country without being attacked due to their perfidy, fighting against them with inhuman violence at the time when nature intended men for commerce, and dealt harshly with one another.

The second kind is. . . Some people who have made it their career to pillage and loot the Hajj caravans on their way there and back are known as Bedouins and they attack them. The Hajj caravans must traverse valleys and ravines so they take advantage of the situation. The Hajj caravans are attacked by them who use the approaching night and their knowledge of the entrances and ravines. The Hajj caravans encountered a variety of attacks all of which were intended to steal something. They attacked the back of the Hajj caravan and stole covertly among other acts of deception and deceit (Boussaid Ds). Sheikh Al-Wartelani said. Between noon and afternoon, we disembarked at Al-Hawra. We learned after we had taken up residence that the Arabs among the Nabataeans at the back of the caravan had wounded Sidi Muhammad the morally upright and ideal

leader of the Fulali caravan. He was hit by the lone gun they claimed to have fired. (2007) Sufi Library.

7.2 Natural Issues

The most notable issues of a natural and environmental nature are the unsuitability of drinking water and their exposure to cold, which is one of the most challenging situations. They also have to deal with the challenge of traversing deserts and gorges in caravans of horses and camels, which can occasionally become a burden for the pilgrims as they pass out from carrying such heavy loads over such long distances. This is on top of the significant and non-trivial expense of food and drink. In addition, there are desolate roads and arid wastelands that stretch for days at a time and for great distances during which time there is frequently no sign of water. If water is present, it is frequently in the form of molten lead or bitter salt (Sulayman 2017). Regarding this Al-Wartalani states: It was a very hot day and we followed the caravan until we arrived at Nabataeans after noon. Some people died from thirst and others were almost completely worn out.

Conclusion

Fulfilling the ritual component of the Hajj pilgrimage was the goal of the A

lgerian Hajj caravan. However, the Algerian Hajj caravans travels were beneficial especially on a cultural level where these facets of social life with their moral and human dimensions surfaced. The social environment and the varied individuals of the Algerian Hajj caravan interacted to produce this. For Algerian scholars and travelers in particular these pilgrimages were seen as a source of inspiration and a means of intellectual and cultural exchange. They allowed their minds and pen to roam freely recording their experiences in the most sacred location on earth. These cultural and social aspects of the Algerian Hajj caravan were clearly visible as was the knowledge and culture it spread throughout Algeria and the region of the Two Holy Mosques.

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