

The Society Of Dār Al-Sultān During The Ottoman Era Through The Memoirs Of The German Captive Simon Pfeiffer

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Abstract: During the Ottoman period, Dār al-Sultān constituted a socially and ethnically diverse urban center shaped by its strategic political position, military importance, and economic vitality. These characteristics attracted various population groups, including local inhabitants, foreign merchants, and European captives. Among the latter was the German captive Simon Pfeiffer, who resided in Dār al-Sultān for several years and recorded detailed observations concerning the city's social structure and everyday life in his memoirs.

This study examines Pfeiffer's memoirs as a historical source for understanding the social composition of Dār al-Sultān during the Ottoman period. It analyzes the various social and ethnic groups mentioned in his account and explores the nature of their roles and interactions within the urban environment. The study adopts a historical and analytical approach based primarily on the examination of narrative sources.

The study concludes that the society of Dār al-Sultān was characterized by functional diversity and relative social coexistence despite ethnic and religious differences, reflecting the complexity of Ottoman urban society.

Keywords: Dār al-Sultān; prisoners; Simon Pfeiffer; Ottomans; Izmir.

Introduction:

The society of Dār al-Sultān during the Ottoman period constituted a complex urban formation shaped by intertwined political, military, and economic transformations. Owing to its strategic position within the Ottoman Regency of Algiers, Dār al-Sultān developed into a dynamic center characterized by significant ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity. Its economic vitality, maritime activity, and political importance attracted various social

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groups, including Ottoman elites, local inhabitants, Andalusians, Europeans, merchants, and captives, all of whom contributed to the formation of a heterogeneous urban society.

Among the European captives who documented their experiences in Ottoman Algeria, the German captive Simon Pfeiffer occupies a particularly important position. Having resided in Dār al-Sultān for several years, Pfeiffer provided detailed observations concerning everyday life, social relations, and the interactions among the city's diverse communities. His memoirs constitute an important narrative source for examining the social structure of Ottoman Algiers and the mechanisms through which different groups coexisted within a shared urban environment.

This study examines the social composition of Dār al-Sultān through the memoirs of Simon Pfeiffer, with particular attention to the roles and functions of the various ethnic and religious groups mentioned in his account, including the Ottomans, the Karāghila, the Andalusians, and other social categories. It also investigates the patterns of coexistence and interaction that characterized urban society in Ottoman Algeria.

The study is guided by several central questions: How did these diverse groups interact within the social framework of Dār al-Sultān? What roles did they play in the political, economic, and social life of the city? To what extent did this coexistence reflect the broader characteristics of Ottoman society in Algeria?

Methodologically, the study adopts a historical and analytical approach combining the examination of primary narrative sources most notably Pfeiffer's memoirs with relevant secondary studies addressing the social history of Ottoman Algeria. It argues that the relative coexistence among these groups was shaped by practical considerations related to political order, economic activity, and urban stability, despite the persistence of ethnic and religious distinctions.

I. INTRODUCING THE CAPTIVE SIMON PFEIFFER:

I.1 His Early Life:

Simon Pfeiffer was born on 9 September 1806 in the city of Worms, in the Rhine-Hesse region of Germany. Having lost his parents at an early age, he was raised and educated by members of his family. During his adolescence, he developed a particular interest in the medical sciences, especially surgery, which motivated him to pursue formal medical training. Pfeiffer studied under the

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supervision of Baron von Lieblig and Baron von Ritz in the city of Tübingen, where he acquired substantial medical knowledge and demonstrated considerable competence in surgical practice. After completing his studies, he moved to the Netherlands, where several of his relatives were residing at the time¹.

Upon his arrival in Amsterdam, Pfeiffer received support from one of his relatives, who facilitated his admission to a naval training institution. Through this connection, he became acquainted with a Dutch naval official who appointed him to serve aboard the ship *Diana*. The vessel was assigned to escort and protect Dutch commercial ships navigating the Mediterranean during a period marked by maritime insecurity. In December 1824, the *Diana* encountered a violent storm that nearly caused its destruction. The crew managed to seek refuge near Gibraltar, thereby avoiding major losses before continuing their voyage through several southern European ports along the Mediterranean coast².

I.2 His Capture and Transportation to Algiers:

In 1825, the ship arrived at the port of Orlé, where members of the crew, including several wounded sailors, temporarily disembarked for rest and recovery. During this period, Simon Pfeiffer and several of his companions left the port area and headed toward the nearby forests. While there, they were reportedly attacked by a group of Janissaries, during which Pfeiffer sustained injuries that led to his capture. Following this incident, he was transferred to the port of İzmir, where an Algerian vessel was stationed. He was subsequently transported to Algiers alongside a group of Greek captives, marking the beginning of his captivity in Ottoman Algeria³.

I.3 His Life in Captivity:

Like many European captives in Ottoman Algeria, Simon Pfeiffer was initially assigned to domestic service within the Khaznāji Palace. His responsibilities included a variety of physically

¹ Simon Pfeiffer, *Algerian Memoirs on the Eve of the Occupation*, translated, presented and commented by Abu El-Aid Doudou, Homeh Publishing House, Algiers, 2009, p. 5.

² Ibid., pp. 5–6.

³ Ibid., p. 6.

demanding tasks, such as cleaning the palace, preparing kitchen fires, slaughtering livestock and poultry, washing utensils, and assisting in food preparation. These duties reflected the hierarchical organization of labor imposed on captives within elite households during the Ottoman period⁴.

Pfeiffer provides a detailed account of the living conditions experienced by captives inside the palace. According to his memoirs, their clothing consisted of simple garments, including a red cap, a shirt, a woolen vest, short trousers, and basic footwear. He further notes that their meals depended largely on leftovers from the household kitchens and dining tables. The captives reportedly slept in a storage room furnished with rudimentary bedding made of wooden planks covered with animal skins and light woolen blankets. Pfeiffer also refers to the poor sanitary conditions within the residence, mentioning the presence of insects and rodents in the sleeping quarters⁵.

A significant turning point in Pfeiffer's life occurred when palace officials discovered his medical training and surgical expertise. During an illness suffered by the Khaznājī, Pfeiffer was entrusted with his treatment and succeeded in improving his condition. This event considerably altered Pfeiffer's position within the palace hierarchy, leading to his removal from domestic service and his appointment as the personal physician of the Khaznājī. He remained in this position until the French occupation of Algiers in 1830. Even after obtaining his freedom following the collapse of Ottoman authority in the city, Pfeiffer chose to remain in Algeria. Subsequently, he entered the service of the Bey of Titteri, Muṣṭafā Būmarzāq, who appointed him to an administrative position.⁶

I.4 Simon Pfeiffer's Final Departure from Algeria:

Following the political and military transformations that accompanied the French occupation of Algeria in 1830, Simon Pfeiffer decided to leave his position after the Bey of Titteri announced his intention to resist the French forces. In this context, Pfeiffer permanently departed from Algeria and returned to his homeland on 16 September 1830. After returning to Europe, he later

⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵ Simon Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

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emigrated to the United States in order to continue his medical studies and pursue his professional career. He subsequently practiced medicine in Baltimore before settling in Camden, where he was appointed professor at a medical school. He remained engaged in academic and medical activities until his death on 29 November 1883⁷.

Pfeiffer is also known for authoring *Algerian Memoirs on the Eve of the Occupation*, a work documenting his experiences in Algeria and providing detailed observations concerning the places he visited and the social conditions he encountered during his captivity. According to Pfeiffer, the book was written in response to repeated requests from his friend, the linguist Friedrich Schmitthenner⁸.

I.5 Critical Study of the Book and Its Author

The study of Simon Pfeiffer belongs to the broader corpus of captives' memoirs written by prisoners who lived in Algiers during the Ottoman period. Consequently, his work constitutes an important historical source, particularly for understanding the social and political conditions of the period, as it is "full of historical facts and events." Pfeiffer recorded both what he witnessed and what he heard, elaborating extensively on his observations without deliberately concealing the information available to him. For this reason, his memoirs contain a wealth of material that is rarely found in other contemporary sources, including the writings of figures such as Hamdan Khodja, who addressed similar issues more briefly and without the same level of detailed analysis. According to Abu El-Aid Doudou, Simon Pfeiffer was the only captive to base his writings primarily on personal experience and direct observation of the inhabitants of Algiers during his movements throughout the city. Doudou further notes that Pfeiffer demonstrated considerable concern for the accuracy of his information, at times indicating that he had personally witnessed certain events, while at other times clarifying that his accounts were based on Algerian oral narratives. He also emphasizes that Pfeiffer did not claim absolute certainty regarding all of his accounts, arguing that such reservations may themselves constitute evidence of his honesty and intellectual

⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

integrity. This assessment is reinforced by Friedrich Schmitthenner, who stated in his preface that Pfeiffer's work is characterized by simplicity and sincerity⁹.

On the other hand, some scholars argue that Pfeiffer's memoirs belong to the broader tradition of European captives' narratives, which frequently reproduced stereotypical representations of Muslims shaped by European discourse. In this context, Pfeiffer is portrayed as depicting Muslims as religiously fanatical, particularly in references to Christians, whom he describes as "infidels." For instance, while discussing Dey Hussein and the French naval attack on Algiers, he wrote: "The fleet of the infidels is heading toward Algiers, beloved by all Muslims." According to this interpretation, Pfeiffer's narrative does not attempt to examine the deeper causes of conflict between Muslims and Christians, but instead focuses primarily on descriptive accounts of warfare, captivity, and interreligious tensions. Nevertheless, these memoirs continue to provide valuable insights into certain aspects of Algerian society during the Ottoman period. Abu El-Aid Doudou maintains that Pfeiffer's work differs from many other captives' narratives, particularly those marked by strong subjectivity in their accounts of the French expedition to Algeria. In his view, Pfeiffer demonstrated a relatively higher degree of objectivity in his writings¹⁰.

II. THE GEOGRAPHY OF DAR AL-SULTĀN:

Dār al-Sultān comprised the city of Algiers and its surrounding territories during the Ottoman period. Geographically, it extended from Dellys in the east to Ténès in the west, bordered by the Beylik of Titteri to the south and the Mediterranean Sea to the north. As the political center of the Ottoman Regency of Algiers, Dār al-Sultān occupied a position of considerable administrative, military, and economic importance within the eyalet. The region hosted the principal institutions of government, including the ruler's residence, the administrative council, military headquarters, and several major economic establishments. Owing to its strategic

⁹ Abu El-Aid Doudou, "The German Historians and Algeria", *Al-Asala Journal*, No. 14–15, Ministry of Original Education and Religious Affairs, Algeria, 1973, p. 118; Simon Pfeiffer, *Memoirs or a Historical Glimpse of Algeria*, op. cit., p. 1

¹⁰ Hassan Boubidi, "The Image of the Muslim in the Memoirs of Captives of the Regency of Algiers: A Comparative Imagological Study", *Al-Ihya Journal*, University of Batna, 2024, No. 34, pp. 410–418; Abu El-Aid Doudou, op. cit., p.1

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significance, the Ottoman authorities implemented special security measures aimed at preserving political order and urban stability. Among these measures was the establishment of a security unit known as the Bīklik, composed primarily of experienced Janissaries responsible for supervising the neighborhoods and population of Algiers from both military and administrative perspectives¹¹.

Economically, Dār al-Sultān benefited from several factors that enhanced its regional importance and attracted diverse population groups from within and outside the eyalet. Agriculturally, the region possessed favorable climatic conditions and fertile soil, which contributed to the expansion of agricultural production. Contemporary European accounts emphasized the agricultural potential of the region. In this context, one of Napoleon Bonaparte's envoys to Algeria in 1802 described the territory as containing fertile lands capable of producing substantial quantities of wheat, barley, and corn when provided with sufficient labor and agricultural tools. In addition to agriculture, the region witnessed notable industrial activity due to the availability of raw materials and the expansion of urban economic life. Several industries developed in Dār al-Sultān, including leather production, food processing, and arms manufacturing, reflecting the economic diversity of the Ottoman capital in Algeria¹².

Dār al-Sultān also functioned as a major commercial center that attracted merchants from various cities within the eyalet as well as from foreign regions. This commercial vitality was largely supported by the presence of numerous well-organized markets, which facilitated the circulation and exchange of goods across different social and geographic networks. Consequently, the urban economy was characterized by sustained commercial activity and the integration of diverse trading communities¹³.

¹¹ Saleh Abad, *Algeria Under Ottoman Rule (1514–1830)*, Homeh Publishing House, Algiers, 2014, p. 285. See also: Farid Benour, *Spies in Algeria (1782–1830)*, Ministry of Culture / Dar Al-Waha Publishing, Algiers, n.d., p. 36.

¹² Fella Al-Qashai Moussaoui, *The Tax System in the Constantine Rural Area at the End of the Ottoman Era (1771–1837)*, Master's thesis, Institute of History, University of Algiers, 1989–1990, p. 177. Farid Benour, *op. cit.*, pp. 274–301. Saleh Abad, *op. cit.*, pp. 336–338.

¹³ Saleh Abad, *op. cit.*, pp. 339–341.

These combined economic and structural factors contributed to the emergence of Dār al-Sultān as an important center of population movement, attracting individuals and merchant groups from across the eyalet and beyond, while reinforcing its position as a central node within regional and Mediterranean trade networks.

III. THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF DĀR AL-SULTĀN:

The social composition of Algiers during the Ottoman period was characterized by considerable diversity shaped by both internal dynamics and external influences. These factors contributed to the formation of indigenous and immigrant population groups marked by ethnic and religious plurality. Within this context, several distinct urban social categories can be identified.

III.1 Urban Population:

III.1.1 The Ottomans:

The Ottoman presence in Algeria dates back to the arrival of the Barbarossa brothers in the early sixteenth century, when Ottoman authority was first established in the region. Initially limited in number, particularly outside urban centers, the Ottoman population gradually increased following the formal incorporation of Algiers into the Ottoman imperial system. According to Haedo, their number was estimated at approximately 1,600 individuals. This group was not ethnically homogeneous, as it included individuals originating from various parts of the Ottoman Empire and the Mediterranean world, including Turks, Albanians, Italians, and Rhodians, among others. Such diversity reflects the broader imperial character of Ottoman recruitment and settlement patterns¹⁴.

The Ottomans occupied the highest political and military positions within the administrative structure of Dār al-Sultān. Their dominance over key state institutions granted them a privileged status in comparison with other social groups, thereby placing them at the apex of the urban hierarchy¹⁵.

¹⁴ Ahmed Bahri, *Social Life During the Deyship*, Faculty of Human Sciences and Islamic Civilization, Department of History, University of Oran, 1422–1423 H / 2001–2002, pp. 35–36. Diego de Haedo, *Topography and General History of Algiers*, translated from Spanish, 1870–1871, Vol. 14, pp. 496–497.

¹⁵ Abu Al-Qasim Saadallah, *The Cultural History of Algeria (1500–1830)*, 2nd ed., Dar Al-Gharb Al-Islami, Beirut, 2005, Vol. 1, p. 153. D. Monnerneau and A. Berbrugger, “Article in *Revue Africaine*”, 1870–1871, Vol. 14, pp. 496–497.

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III.1.2 The A'ljāj:

The A'ljāj, referred to in some sources as *musta'ribūn* or converts to Islam, were originally Christians who embraced Islam, many of whom were of European origin, particularly from Italian territories such as Corsica and other Mediterranean regions. This group constituted an important component of the Ottoman social and political structure in Algiers. The Ottoman authorities integrated the A'ljāj into the administrative and military system, granting them access to high-ranking positions comparable to those occupied by Ottoman elites. Their integration reflects the pragmatic and merit-based dimensions of Ottoman governance in the Regency of Algiers. Historically, several members of this group rose to positions of considerable authority, including the leadership of the Regency itself. According to historical accounts, seven out of sixteen rulers were of A'ljāj origin. They also occupied influential positions within the Algerian military establishment.¹⁶

The variety of names attributed to this group in European sources reflects the ideological perspectives underlying these writings. They were frequently described as “renegades” (*les renégats*), and at times characterized as “traitors” or “turncoats.” Such designations reveal the hostile tone that often shaped European discourse toward this group. European accounts frequently accused the A'ljāj not only of abandoning Christianity, but also of becoming a threat to European maritime interests. This perception was closely linked to their active participation alongside Algerian forces in Mediterranean naval warfare, including corsair activities and the capture of European ships and prisoners¹⁷.

III.1.3 The Andalusians:

The Andalusians were Muslim populations who migrated from the Iberian Peninsula following the Fall of Granada in 1492, an event that marked the end of Muslim rule in al-Andalus. After their expulsion, many settled along the North African coast, including

¹⁶ Aisha Ghtas, *Crafts and Craftsmen in Algiers (1700–1830): A Social and Economic Approach*, ANEP Publications, n.d., p. 27.

¹⁷ Mohammed Bousseta's study, “The A'ljāj and Their Conversion to Islam through European Writings (1588–1699)”, *Jisour Al-Ma'rifa Journal*, University of Hassiba Ben Bouali, Chlef, No. 1, 2020, p. 612.

Morocco and Ottoman Algeria, where they became an important component of the urban population. According to some historical estimates, the Andalusian population in the region increased progressively, reaching approximately 25,000 individuals in 1518, around 70,000 by 1580, and nearly 120,000 by 1634. These figures reflect successive waves of migration and integration into Maghrebi urban centers. Economically, the Andalusians were particularly active in artisanal and craft production. They were renowned for their expertise in silk manufacturing, velvet weaving, and other textile industries. In addition, they contributed significantly to agricultural development through the improvement and expansion of irrigation systems, including the construction and maintenance of water channels and hydraulic infrastructure. Beyond their economic contributions, some Andalusians also succeeded in integrating into administrative and, to a lesser extent, military structures, reflecting their gradual incorporation into the socio-political fabric of Ottoman Algeria¹⁸.

III.1.4 The Karāghla:

The Karāghla constituted a distinct social group in Ottoman Algeria that emerged from mixed marriages between Ottoman fathers and local Algerian mothers. This mixed heritage placed them in an intermediate position within the urban hierarchy of Dār al-Sultān. Economically, the Karāghla were engaged in a wide range of occupations, with trade representing one of their principal activities. Their involvement in commercial networks contributed to their prominence within urban economic life. In addition to their economic activities, some members of this group were integrated into administrative structures, while others succeeded in entering the military establishment, albeit to a more limited extent than the Ottoman elite¹⁹.

III.2 The Barāniyya:

The term *Barāniyya* refers to migrant labor groups originating from various regions of the Algerian hinterland who settled in Algiers

¹⁸ Olfert Dapper, *Description of Africa*, Amsterdam, 1686, p. 177. J. Savary, *The Perfect Merchant*, 7th ed., Paris, 1712, p. 359. Sieur de La Croix, [Title not specified], Vol. 2, p. 71. R. Lespès, "Variations in the Population of Algiers Before 1830", *Revue de l'Armée de l'Afrique*, No. 2, 1925, pp. 26–30.

¹⁹ Abu Al-Qasim Saadallah, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 153; see also Saleh Abad, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

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in search of employment. These groups were integrated into the urban system through an organized structure in which each group was placed under the supervision of a designated leader responsible for regulating its affairs and coordinating with municipal authorities:

III.2.1 The Biskrians:

The Biskrians constituted one of the most prominent Barāniyya groups in Ottoman Algiers. They originated from the Ziban region, including areas such as Ouargla, the Souf, and Taghit. Their migration to Algiers dates back to the sixteenth century, reflecting early patterns of rural–urban mobility within Ottoman Algeria. Occupationally, the Biskrians were primarily engaged in essential urban services. Their activities included working in public baths, performing night-watch duties, cleaning streets and water channels, collecting waste, and supplying households with water. These functions placed them at the center of the city's basic infrastructure and daily maintenance, highlighting their importance within the urban labor system of Dār al-Sultān²⁰.

III.2.2 The Beni Mzab:

The Beni Mzab originated from the Mzab Valley in southern Algeria, particularly the Ghardaïa region. Their migration to Algiers contributed to the diversification of the city's population and the expansion of its commercial and service-based activities. Historical estimates suggest that their community in Algiers reached approximately 80,000 individuals, although such figures should be interpreted with caution given the variability of early modern demographic records. Economically, the Beni Mzab were engaged in several urban occupations. They played an important role in the management of public baths and participated in the livestock trade. Their most significant contribution, however, lay in commercial activities, particularly the trade in agricultural goods such as wheat, as well as luxury and export-oriented products, including ostrich

²⁰ Nasser Al-Din Saidouni and Sheikh Al-Bouabdli, *Algeria in History: The Ottoman Era*, National Book Institution, Algiers, 1984, Vol. 4, p. 100. See also: Simon Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 155. See also: Abdelkader Hlimi, *The City of Algiers: Its Origins and Development Before 1830*, 1st ed., Arab Printing Press for Islamic Thought, 1972, p. 266. See also: Simon Pfeiffer, *Algerian Memoirs on the Eve of the Occupation*, translated, presented and commented by Abu El-Aid Doudou, Homeh Publishing House, Algiers, 2009, pp. 155–156.

feathers. Through these activities, they became integrated into the commercial networks of Dār al-Sultān and contributed significantly to its economic dynamism²¹.

III.2.3 The Ghawātiyya:

The Ghawātiyya were migrant groups originating from the northern fringe of the Algerian Sahara, particularly the regions associated with the Amour and Ghardaïa mountain areas. Their presence in Algiers reflects broader patterns of internal migration from rural and semi-arid regions toward urban centers during the Ottoman period. Economically, the Ghawātiyya were integrated into a variety of essential urban services and informal commercial activities. They were involved in transporting and selling goods, particularly oils, while some were entrusted with market-related functions such as weighing and measuring commodities. Others worked in public baths, whereas additional members were assigned to municipal sanitation tasks, including street cleaning and waste removal. A portion of this group also maintained agricultural activities on the outskirts of the city, engaging in farming and land cultivation. Overall, the Ghawātiyya contributed to both the service infrastructure and the subsistence economy of Dār al-Sultān, occupying labor-intensive roles essential to the functioning of urban life²².

III.2.4 The Kabyles:

The Kabyles were an Amazigh population inhabiting primarily the Kabylie Mountains and the surrounding regions of

²¹ Amar Ben Khorof, *The Beni Mzab Group in Algiers During the Ottoman Period (1520–1830): Organization, Activities, and Relations*, *Al-Wahat Journal of Research and Studies*, No. 10, December 2006, p. 41; see also Simon Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 163–164; see also Aisha Ghtas, *op. cit.*, p. 30; see also Saleh Abad, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

²² Simon Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 154; Mohammed Al-Hadi Al-Arouk, *Atlas of Algeria and the World*, Dar Al-Aqsa, p. 34; François de Villari, *The Steppes Through the Ages (Ports for the History of Djelfa)*, trans. Issa Ben Mohamed Benouh, 1st ed., Rouiquet Press, Laghouat, Algeria, 2015, p. 92; Arzqi Chouitem, *Algerian Society and Its Activities During the Ottoman Era (1519–1830)*, Doctoral Thesis, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of History, 2005–2006, pp. 101–102; see also Saleh Abad, *op. cit.*, p. 359; Nasser Al-Din Saidouni, *The Financial System of Algeria in the Late Ottoman Period (1792–1830)*, 1st ed., National Book Institution, Algiers, 1985, p. 45; see also Simon Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

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northern Algeria. Their social organization was traditionally based on tribal structures, which historically shaped their patterns of settlement, identity, and communal life. In the context of Ottoman Algiers, Kabyle migrants formed part of broader patterns of internal mobility toward urban centers, where they contributed to various sectors of the city's economic activity²³.

III.2.5 The Jijelians:

The Jijelians originated from the coastal region of Jijel and settled in Algiers during the early sixteenth century, particularly following the establishment of Ottoman authority in the city under the Barbarossa brothers. Their arrival formed part of the broader demographic restructuring of Algiers during the early Ottoman period. Occupationally, the Jijelians were primarily engaged in artisanal and food-production activities, particularly in mills and bakeries. These functions placed them within the city's essential provisioning sector, contributing to the daily supply and subsistence needs of the population of Dār al-Sultān²⁴.

III.3 The Outsider Groups:

III.3.1 The Jews Community :

The presence of the Jewish community in Algeria dates back to antiquity, with roots extending to the Roman period. Over time, its demographic and social presence was reinforced by successive waves of migration, most notably following the fall of al-Andalus. In the aftermath of the Reconquista, both Muslims and Jews were subjected to persecution and forced conversion in the Iberian Peninsula, contributing to their migration toward North Africa, including Ottoman Algeria. Additional Jewish groups also arrived from various European regions, further diversifying the composition of the community. Within the urban context of Dār al-Sultān, the Jewish population played an important role in the city's economic structure. They were primarily engaged in artisanal production and commercial activities, including tailoring, glassmaking, jewelry craftsmanship, coin minting, and trade. Through these occupations, they contributed

²³ See Simon Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 149–150; see also Saleh Abad, *op. cit.*, p. 359; see also Aisha Ghtas, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

²⁴ Nasser Al-Din Saidouni and Sheikh Al-Bouabdli, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

to the development of specialized urban crafts and participated actively in the broader commercial networks of Algiers²⁵.

III.3.2 The Christians Population:

The presence of Christians in Algiers during the Ottoman period was heterogeneous and closely linked to the political, diplomatic, and maritime dynamics of the Mediterranean. Their status varied significantly according to their social and functional roles within the city. Some served as consuls, merchants, or members of the clergy, benefiting from recognized diplomatic or commercial privileges, while others arrived as captives taken during naval conflicts involving Ottoman corsairs. Christian captives constituted a distinct category within this population. They were incorporated into the urban and maritime economy of Dār al-Sultān and assigned to various forms of labor, including shipbuilding, harbor surveillance, and other naval-related activities. Many were also employed in domestic service within elite households, palatial residences, and the gardens of the Deys, reflecting their integration into the broader system of coerced labor that characterized captivity in Ottoman Algeria²⁶.

3.3.3 The Black Africans:

The Black African population in Ottoman Algiers consisted of individuals brought from various regions of sub-Saharan Africa, including areas corresponding to present-day Niger and Sudan. Their presence reflects the broader trans-Saharan networks of mobility, trade, and forced migration that connected North and West Africa during the Ottoman period.

Within the urban structure of Dār al-Sultān, members of this group were primarily integrated into labor-intensive occupations. They were employed in a variety of physically demanding tasks, particularly in domestic service, manual labor, and other forms of

²⁵ Fawzi Saadallah, *The Jews of Algeria: These Unknowns*, Al-Umma Publishing and Printing Company, Algiers, 1995, p. 120; see also Korinchovalieh, *The First Thirty Years of the Establishment of Algiers (1500–1540)*, National Printing House, Algiers, 2007, p. 67; H. A. de Grammont, *Histoire d'Alger sous la domination turque (1515–1830)*, Imp. Baudin et Cie, Paris, 1887, p. 233; see also F. de Haedo, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

²⁶ Abu Al-Qasim Saadallah, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 150; see also Saleh Abad, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

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strenuous work that supported both household economies and urban infrastructure²⁷.

IV. SOCIAL COHESION AMONG THE GROUPS COMPOSING THE SOCIETY OF ALGIERS

Despite the ethnic diversity and religious differences among the various social groups in Algiers during the Ottoman period, this plurality contributed to the formation of a shared urban space characterized by varying degrees of coexistence and interaction. Consequently, coexistence among these groups became a social necessity shaped by the economic and social dynamics of urban life. However, this coexistence was not uniform; rather, it assumed different forms ranging from partial integration to limited coexistence and, at times, internal tension.

From an economic perspective, relations of cooperation developed among the various groups, while forms of social integration also emerged through intermarriage, which, according to Aisha Ghtas, constituted one of the principal indicators of urban social integration. Nevertheless, this coexistence was not free from tension, as certain periods witnessed internal disturbances and conflicts among the components of urban society.

For instance, the settlement of the Ottomans in the Regency of Algiers led to interaction with the local population on both political and economic levels, while some Ottomans also intermarried with Algerian families. This interaction contributed to the emergence of a new social group known as the Karāghla, whose formation dates back to the late sixteenth century. Although they were the product of mixed Turkish and local ancestry, they experienced varying degrees of social exclusion, particularly from high political and military positions, despite their attempts to integrate through the adoption of the Ottoman language and cultural norms. This situation generated internal social tensions, reflected in several uprisings led by the

²⁷ William Schaller, *Memoirs of William Schaller, U.S. Consul in Algiers (1816–1824)*, translated, presented and edited by Ismail Al-Arabi, National Publishing and Distribution Company, Algiers, 2009, p. 92.

Karāghla against Ottoman authority, which some studies interpret as a form of socio-anthropological fragmentation²⁸.

Similarly, interaction developed between the Ottomans and the A'ljāj (renegades), who in some cases became integrated through intermarriage, particularly within elite circles of power, as occurred with certain deys²⁹.

As for the Barāniyya, they experienced varying forms of coexistence with the urban population. The term referred to migrants originating from rural, mountainous, and Saharan regions. The relationship between these groups and the urban population was characterized by a hierarchical social order in which "urbanity" functioned as a dominant social criterion, giving rise to forms of social distinction, particularly toward groups such as the Biskrians. Nevertheless, certain Barāniyya groups succeeded in establishing complex social and economic relations, including commercial cooperation between the Beni Mzab and the Jijelians, as well as cases of intermarriage with other social groups, including manumitted women and groups such as the Karāghla. In some instances, members of the Barāniyya also married Jewish women who had converted to Islam, reflecting the multilayered social dynamics of the city. In this regard, Aisha Ghtas observes that "one cannot speak of complete integration nor absolute marginalization, as it is possible to distinguish between groups that integrated into the social fabric and others that remained on its margins."³⁰

Conclusion:

This study has examined the social structure of Dār al-Sultān during the Ottoman period through the memoirs of Simon Pfeiffer, offering a historical and analytical interpretation of its urban composition and patterns of coexistence.

²⁸ Aisha Ghtas, *op. cit.*, pp. 361–362; see also Aisha Ghtas, *The Barāniyya Migrants in Algiers (1787–1830): Between Marginalization and Integration*, *Arab Historical Journal of Ottoman Studies*, Tamimi Foundation for Scientific Research and Information, Zighouan, 2002, No. 25, pp. 167–180.

²⁹ Aisha Ghtas, *Crafts and Craftsmen in Algiers (1700–1830): A Socio-Economic Approach*, ANEP Publications, Algeria, n.d., pp. 350–357.

³⁰ ouad Yamina Chboub, "The Biskra Community in Algiers During the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries", *Arab Journal of Research and Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, University of Djelfa, No. 1, January 2022, p. 704.

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The findings indicate that Dār al-Sultān was characterized by a high degree of social heterogeneity, encompassing various ethnic and religious communities, including the Ottomans, the A'ljāj, the Andalusians, the Karāghla, the Barāniyya, and other groups. Each of these communities occupied specific functional roles within the broader organization of urban life, contributing in different ways to the political, economic, and social structure of the city.

The analysis further demonstrates that relations among these groups were shaped less by rigid separation than by forms of functional interdependence. Despite ethnic and religious distinctions, coexistence was largely maintained through shared economic interests and the administrative framework imposed by the ruling authorities, particularly the Ottoman elites and the A'ljāj.

From a socio-economic perspective, the Ottoman urban system in Algiers relied on a differentiated division of labor. While the Ottoman and A'ljāj elites predominated within political and military institutions, other groups, such as the Andalusians, the Karāghla, and the Barāniyya, played central roles in artisanal production, trade, services, and urban maintenance. This diversity of functions contributed to the economic vitality and functional stability of Dār al-Sultān.

Overall, the case of Dār al-Sultān illustrates a structured form of urban coexistence within the Ottoman Maghreb, where diversity was managed through institutional hierarchy and economic interdependence rather than through complete social integration. Pfeiffer's memoirs therefore provide valuable insight into the mechanisms of urban governance and social organization in Ottoman Algeria.

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