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The role of Manuscripts in documenting The history of Algeria during the Ottoman period 1519-1830

Le rôle des manuscrites dans l'écriture de l'histoire de l'Algérie pendant la période ottomane 1519-1830

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Algerian manuscripts produced during the Ottoman period (16th century – mid-19th century) in constructing and transmitting local history. Its main objective is to highlight the richness of this written heritage, to identify its contributions and limitations, and to define the qualifications and skills required by researchers to use it in a scientific manner. The central problem lies in a double question: how can these manuscripts, despite their rarity and dispersal, reflect the political, social, and cultural realities of Ottoman Algeria? And to what extent do they represent an indispensable source that compensates for the silences or biases of foreign archival documents?

The methodology combines descriptive and analytical approaches. The descriptive dimension allows for the inventory and characterization of manuscripts in terms of form and content, while the analytical-comparative dimension focuses on style, terminology, and mode of production, as well as the contexts of writing, the sources used (poetry, Qur'anic verses, hadiths, official documents, travel accounts), and the degrees of subjectivity and objectivity of the authors. The corpus includes manuscripts preserved in the National Library of Algeria, zawiya libraries, and private collections, as well as international repositories such as the Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul), the Khizana al-Hassania (Rabat), and the Abdaliya Library (Tunis). It also considers the contributions of French Orientalists who translated and published some texts after 1830.

The results of the research reveal that Algerian manuscripts provide a rich testimony to the historical dynamics of the period. They document major military events (the fall of Granada, Spanish campaigns, the liberation of Oran), political developments (relations with the Ottoman Caliphate, local revolts), as well as social and cultural life (Andalusian migration, Sufi practices, marriage customs, epidemic phenomena). Their literary style, often imbued with rhetorical and religious language, reflects the Andalusian tradition and reveals a marked subjectivity, oscillating between support for and criticism of authority. Nevertheless, this subjectivity does not diminish their documentary value; rather, it mirrors the identity, sensibilities, and collective representations of Algerian society under Ottoman rule.

In conclusion, these manuscripts remain an essential resource for historians: they complement official archives, restore local voices often absent from foreign accounts, and open new perspectives on Algerian culture, thought, and memory. However, their scientific exploitation requires continuous efforts of collection, verification, and contextualization to ensure their preservation and their role in the writing of national history.

Keywords: Manuscripts, Algeria, Ottoman period, historical Writing.

Le résumé

Cette recherche explore l'importance des manuscrits algériens rédigés pendant l'époque ottomane (du XVIe siècle au milieu du XIXe siècle) dans l'élaboration et la diffusion de l'histoire locale. L'objectif principal est de valoriser la richesse de ce patrimoine écrit, d'en cerner les contributions et les contraintes, et de déterminer les qualifications nécessaires aux chercheurs pour en faire une exploitation scientifique. Le problème principal peut être résumé en une double interrogation : comment, malgré leur caractère rare et éparpillé, ces manuscrits peuvent-ils témoigner des réalités politiques, sociales et culturelles de l'Algérie sous

le règne ottoman? Et dans quelle mesure représentent-ils une ressource essentielle qui comble les insuffisances des archives étrangères ?

L'approche méthodologique fusionne les techniques d'analyse et de description. L'aspect descriptif vise à inventorier et à caractériser les manuscrits en fonction de leur forme et de leur contenu, alors que l'aspect analytique et comparatif se concentre sur le style, le vocabulaire et le processus de création, ainsi que sur les contextes d'écriture, les sources consultées (poésie, versets coraniques, hadiths, documents administratifs, récits de voyage) et le niveau de subjectivité ou d'objectivité des auteurs. L'ensemble de documents inclut des manuscrits gardés à la Bibliothèque nationale d'Algérie, dans les bibliothèques des zawiya et dans des collections privées, et également au sein d'organismes internationaux tels que la Bibliothèque Süleymaniye à Istanbul, la Bibliothèque Khizana al-Hassania à Rabat et la Bibliothèque Abdaliya à Tunis. Il considère aussi les apports des orientalistes français qui ont traduit et édité divers textes postérieurs à 1830.

Les conclusions de l'étude montrent que les manuscrits algériens offrent un aperçu inestimable de la dynamique historique de cette période. Ils consignent des faits militaires notables (la prise de Grenade, les campagnes en Espagne, la libération d'Oran), des évolutions politiques (liaisons avec le Califat ottoman, insurrections locales), et également l'aspect social et culturel (migration andalouse, rites soufis, traditions de mariage, incidents épidémiques). Leur manière de rédiger, souvent empreinte de rhétorique et d'expressions sacrées, met en lumière la tradition andalouse et révèle une subjectivité marquée, oscillant entre soutien et remise en question de l'autorité. Néanmoins, cette subjectivité ne réduit en aucun cas leur valeur documentaire ; au contraire, elle met en exergue l'identité, les ressentis et les représentations partagées de la société algérienne durant la période ottomane.

Pour conclure, ces manuscrits constituent un outil indispensable pour les chercheurs en histoire : ils augmentent les archives officielles, mettent en lumière les voix locales souvent négligées dans les narrations étrangères et ouvrent des horizons inédits pour l'étude de la culture, de l'idéologie et de la mémoire algériennes. Toutefois, pour une mise en œuvre scientifique réussie, il est indispensable de collecter, authentifier et mettre en contexte ces données afin d'assurer leur conservation et leur pertinence dans l'histoire nationale.

Mots-clés : Manuscrits, Algérie, période ottomane, écriture historique.

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Introduction

History is now classified as a humanities subject and serves as a database for extracting laws and rules based on more scientific methods and means, as well as for intersecting with auxiliary, complementary, and explanatory sciences. This has elevated it from the status of myth and legend to that of science, especially with the use of available technological means.

The modern period in Algeria, from 1519 to 1830, known as the Ottoman period, was characterized by the widespread circulation of manuscripts, including Algerian ones[1], which were a manifestation of knowledge and historical writing at the time. Therefore, this period saw the emergence of several calligraphers and copyists, as the accepted method of recording and preserving events was to write on paper or parchment, then copy and produce manuscripts in an environment where *al-Waraqa* was[2] prevalent and printing presses were non-existent. The latter had

[1]. The French orientalist Edmond Fagnan (1845–1931) is the most famous compiler of Algerian manuscripts after the French occupation of Algeria, and his catalogue is now available to researchers in the manuscripts section of the Algerian National Library in Hamah. See:

Fagnan, Edmond, General Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the National Library of Algeria, Paris,1893, Alger, 1895.

[2]. *Al-Waraqa* originated from the material used for writing, then the concept expanded to include a profession and craft with its own rules and practitioners. It included the copying, binding, decoration, distribution, and sale of manuscripts. Papermaking markets spread, especially in front of mosques, schools, and universities. For more details, see: Al-Manuni, Mohamed, *Tārīkh al-Waraqa al-Maghribiyya: Ṣinā'at al-Makhṭūṭ al-Maghribī min al-'Aṣr al-Wasīṭ ilā al-Fatra al-Mu'āṣira*, 1st edition, Al-Najah Printing Press, Morocco, 1412 AH / 1991 AD.

been known in Europe since the mid-15th century, while it gradually entered the Islamic world: in 1727 for the Ottoman Caliphate, in 1821 for Egypt, and in 1832 for Algeria.

Today, researchers find it difficult to obtain manuscripts, either because of the small number of copies, their rarity, or their dispersion across different places and countries for various reasons and circumstances. This requires patience and travel to obtain copies, as well as contacting and communicating with the entity or family that owns the manuscript, because it remains one of the most important sources for documenting the history of Algeria during the Ottoman period, due to the abundance and diversity of information.

The importance of studying this subject lies in the fact that the manuscripts provide us with insight into major events and issues in Algeria over more than four centuries, including, but not limited to, the fall of Andalusia in 1492; the Andalusian migration; the Spanish occupation of the Algerian coast since 1505; the liberation–jihadist operations, especially the liberation of Oran in 1708 and 1792; Algeria's accession to the Ottoman Caliphate in 1519; and Charles V's campaign against the city of Algiers in 1541.

The study therefore focuses on examining the reality of Algerian manuscripts during the Ottoman period in terms of their form and content, perhaps the most important questions arising from this issue are: Was the production of historical manuscripts the same throughout the Ottoman period, or did it vary across different phases of this last, influenced by different factors and circumstances? What writing methods were used in these manuscripts in terms of language, vocabulary, style, and objectivity? How can they be classified? Are they historical books, chronicles, biographies, autobiographies, or records?

To answer these questions, we employed a descriptive approach to examine the manuscripts in terms of form and content, along with an analytical-comparative approach to analyze the events described, the style of writing, the quality of the sources used, and the issue of subjectivity and objectivity, among others.

In studying this subject, we relied primarily on Algerian manuscripts, whether verified or still in manuscript form, which are distributed mainly among the Algerian National Library, Zawiya libraries, and private collections, as well as the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul, the Khizana al-Hassania in Rabat, and the Abdaliya Library in Tunis. We also relied on what French Orientalists published as part of their interest in Algerian manuscript heritage, including translations and studies in their journals, such as the *Journal Asiatique* and various guides.

1. A descriptive study of historical manuscript production

Three stages can be distinguished in the development of Algeria's historical manuscript heritage during the Ottoman period: the first during the 16th and 17th centuries, the second during the 18th century, and the third from the end of the 18th century to the middle of the 19th century. This development was influenced both by circumstances specific to the authors and, more generally, by the situation in the country.

1.1.The authors

We have recorded a disparity in the production of historical manuscripts during the Ottoman era, with the first phase characterized by the emigration of several Algerian scholars and the instability of their situation, particularly due to the Spanish occupation of the Algerian coast and its continuation (Al-Madani, 1968). The second phase was characterized by a profusion of manuscripts, despite the natural disasters and epidemics that marked the 18th century internally, and the external threats and European raids. Nevertheless, it was a century of stability in terms of administration and authority, during which Algeria completed its sovereignty with the liberation of Oran and Al-Marsa al-Kabir in 1792. This was an opportunity to produce poetry, prose, and *al-*

shurūḥ[3] that immortalized events and personalities. As for the third phase, despite the prolific output, the circumstances of writing—coinciding with the beginnings of major changes in Algeria, from a period of stability and sovereignty to a period of French occupation and unrest which led to the loss of many works.

Among the most important Algerian authors who recorded history during the first phase are: Abdullah Muhammad ibn Maryam al-Tilimsānī (died. 1020 AH / 1611 AD) (Saidouni, 1999: 299) took over his father's teaching position in 1577. Ahmad al-Maqqarī (died. 1041 AH / 1632 AD), who studied under the scholars of Tlemcen and then under those of Fez, continued to interact with historians from Marrakesh, such as Ahmad ibn al-Qāḍī (died. 1616) and Ahmad Baba al-Tinbuktī (died. 1627). Al-Maqqarī made the pilgrimage five times and served as imam and preacher in the al-Qarawiyyīn Mosque in Fez, after that he worked at the Riwaq El-Maghāriba in Egypt, and he taught at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.

Abd al-Karīm al-Fakoun (died. 1662) (al-Hafnāwī, 1991, p. 192) was born and raised in Constantine in a scholarly household, surrounded by scholars from Tunisia, Morocco, and the Levant who frequented Constantine, the capital of the Eastern Beylik. He inherited several positions from his father. Saadallah published documents referring to al-Fakoun's appointments to his father's positions, such as preaching, the imamate, teaching at the Great Mosque of Constantine, and managing its endowments (Saadallah, 1986: 226, 255). He also assumed leadership of the ḥajj caravan.

Muhammad al-'Adwānī, named after the Arab Hilālī tribe of 'Adwān (al-'Adwānī, *Tārīkh*, 2007: 18), was a native of Luja[4] and lived during the 17th century. The exact date of his death is unknown, but his tomb is located in the main cemetery in al-Zaghm. He was very cultured for his environment, which was dominated by Sufism and dervish practices. He was a Sufi ascetic, a follower of the Qādirī order, and sympathetic to the Shābiyya movement, which rejected Ottoman authority. He did not hold any official position but was known for his travels and trade.

The 18th century saw a revival in historical production, with a number of authors such as Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn Maymūn al-Jazā'irī (died. after 1159 AH / 1746 AD), who was the grandson of Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Zawāwī (Ibn Maymūn, *al-Tuhfa*, 1972: 11), and a contemporary of Dey Muḥammad Bekdash (1707–1710), who praised him on the occasion of the liberation of Oran in 1708. He was influenced by the scientific atmosphere in the city of Algiers, which allowed him to develop his literary and linguistic skills. He was a memorizer of poetry and rhymes (*saj'*), but he was also a Sufi scholar and the author of the Algerian poem on *tawḥīd* (monotheism).

Ibn al-Muftī: All biographers agreed that he was the son of Mufti Ḥusayn. He was first identified by the French orientalist Albert Devoulx, who had in his possession a complete copy of Ibn al-Muftī's *Taqayyid* (Unknown, 1923: 320). Ibn al-Muftī lived in the 18th century in the city of Algiers and was raised by its scholars, foremost among them his father, the Ḥanafī mufti, as well as Mālikī muftis such as Muḥammad ibn Sa'īd Qaddoura and Muḥammad ibn Naqro. His culture was further expanded by his travels to Anatolia and the island of Chios in Greece, as well as through his contact with leading statesmen and merchants.

'Abd al-Qādir al-Mashrafī (died. around 1192 AH / 1778 AD) was the teacher of the famous historian Abū Ras al-Nāṣirī. He belonged to a family renowned for its scholarly output in the city of Mascara. His father was Judge al-Ṭāhir al-Mashrafī, also known as 'Abd al-Qādir, and the grandfather of Aḥmad al-Mashrafī, who was a member of Prince 'Abd al-Qādir's *shūrā* council. He

[3]. *Al-Shurūḥ* / *commentaries*: a type of manuscript in which the author, commentator, or copyist transforms the text of a poem or prose into a book intended to interpret and clarify events, simplify meanings, and define purposes.
[4] . *Luja*: the term refers to the eastern suburbs of Wadi Souf, including al-Zaghm

participated in the liberation of Oran and witnessed the return of the Spanish to Oran in 1732. Among his most important positions were those of judge and teacher at the al-Qayṭāna institute[5].

Ḥusayn al-Warthalānī (died. 1193 AH / 1779 AD) (Ḥadj-Sadok, 1951: 317) studied under his father and several shaykhs and scholars of Banī Warthalān in Bejaia, particularly in jurisprudence and interpretation. He communicated and interacted with scholars in Tunisia, Tripoli al-Gharb, Egypt, and the Hejaz through his famous journeys known as the *Warthalānī Hejaz journey*: the first in 1740, the second in 1752, and the third in 1767. He also benefited from the library of his grandfather Yaḥyā, which was visited by students of knowledge from all regions.

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Tlemcānī, known as Ibn Ruqayya (died 1194 AH / 1780 AD), based on the date he finished writing the manuscript *al-Zahra al-Nā'ira* (Ibn Ruqayya, *al-Zahra al-Nā'ira*: 10), had a rigorous religious and jurisprudential upbringing thanks to the scholars of Tlemcen, as he mentioned in the conclusion of his work. The first person to translate and publish it was the French orientalist Alphonse Rousseau[6] (Rousseau, 1841: 214), and it was later verified and published by Salīm Bāba'amar (Ibn Ruqayya, *al-Zahra*, 1967).

'Abd al-Razzāq ibn Ḥammadūsh (died 1200 AH / 1785 AD) grew up in the city of Algiers and studied under many of its scholars, many of whom certified him (Ibn Ḥammadūsh, *Rihlat*, 1983: 40, 63). He also grew up with a love of travel for the purposes of seeking knowledge, trade, and pilgrimage. Although he shared with his contemporaries the sciences of the age—jurisprudence, grammar, and Sufism—he distinguished himself through his scientific specialization, particularly in medicine, logic, and chemistry. He was known for his penchant for freelance work, whether in teaching or trade, and was best known for copying, binding, and selling manuscripts. He had a shop opposite the Great Mosque in Algiers and was also known for manufacturing medicines and writing documents, especially marriage contracts.

Ibn Sahnūn al-Rāshidī (died 1211 AH / 1766 AD) grew up in the city of Mascara, where he received a religious education and developed a penchant for literature and language. He witnessed the events of the second liberation of Oran in 1792, where he served as a lieutenant in the court of the liberator Bey Muḥammad al-Kabīr and as a friend of his son 'Uthmān (1798–1802). He was also a shaykh to Abū Ras al-Nāṣirī. Ibn Sahnūn taught students at the Ribāṭ[7] of Ifri during the siege of Oran, then took up a position as a scribe for Bey Muḥammad al-Kabīr, which allowed him access to many state documents. Ibn Zarfa al-Dahāwī (died 1215 AH / 1800–1801 AD) (Ibn 'Abd al-Qādir, *Khatimat*, 1974: 69) was distinguished by his Sufi religious background. He participated directly in the liberation of Oran as an assistant to the head of the Ribāṭ of Ifri, and later held several positions such as clerk to Bey Muḥammad al-Kabīr and judge after the liberation of Oran.

Two categories of authors from the third phase can be distinguished: those who did not witness or experience the beginning of the French occupation of Algeria, and those who lived long enough to witness the transition from the era of statehood and sovereignty to the era of exploitation and unrest. We will illustrate this with examples: Among those who did not witness the occupation, we mention Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Ḥaṭṭāl al-Tilmisānī (died 1119 AH / 1804 AD), who had a religious upbringing and received a simple education, but later became an adviser, writer, diplomat, and warrior under Bey Muḥammad al-Kabīr. We also have Abū Ras al-Nāṣirī al-Maskarī (died 1238 AH / 1822 AD), who stated that he had more than thirty-eight teachers spread across the cities of Morocco and the Levant (al-Nāṣirī, *Fath*, 1990: 41, 76). Therefore, his culture was characterized by encyclopedic knowledge and diversity, rooted in religion with a strong penchant for history. He

[5]. The Zāwiya of al-Qayṭāna is located in the municipality of al-Qayṭāna, Mascara. It was founded by the grandfather of Emir 'Abd al-Qādir, Muṣṭafā ibn al-Mukhtār al-Rāshid, and follows the Qādiriyya order. It has remained a center for religious education.

[6]. He was a writer and translator for the French authorities' finance department in Algeria, and he donated a copy to the National Library on 15 March 1841.

[7]. Ribat is an Islamic term meaning military fortress.

held several positions, the most important of which were teaching, issuing fatwas, and serving as a judge, though he excelled most in writing.

Among those who lived through the early days of the French occupation, we mention: Muslim ibn ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Wahrānī (died 1248 AH / 1832 AD), who grew up under the authority of the late Beys of Oran but was influenced by a group of scholars and men of culture and thought, such as Abū Ras al-Nāṣirī and Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn Ḥawwā. He held the position of *khoja* (scribe) under Agha Muḥammad al-Mazārī (1787–1862)[8], and later the position of *bash kātib* (chief scribe) when Bey Ḥasan, Bey al-Gharb, took power in 1232 AH / 1816 AD. He also participated in the military forces sent to the battle of Astawali on 19 June 1830 against the French occupation forces.

Ḥamdān bin ʻUthmān Khoja (died around 1255 AH / 1840 AD) grew up and was educated in the city of Algiers by his father, a professor of Islamic law and jurisprudence, then by his uncle and the city's shaykhs and scholars, numbering twelve (Bin ʻAbd al-Karīm, 1972: 118–119). Several factors contributed to the development of his thinking and his multilingualism, such as his travels to Istanbul, the Balkans, the Islamic Levant, Tunisia, and Europe. Before the occupation, Ḥamdān Khoja took up teaching. Afterwards, he served as an advisor to the municipal council and was appointed by the notables and jurists of the city of Algiers as their negotiator in the French parliament in Paris (Bin ʻAbd al-Karīm, 1972: 182). He also worked as a merchant, both on his own account[9] and for others, as well as for the Algerian state (Khoja, *al-Mir'āt*, 2005: 177).

Finally, Muḥammad ibn al-Anābī (died 1267 AH / 1850 AD) belonged to a family with a long history of scholarship, prestige, and positions of authority in the city of Algiers, particularly in the field of *fatwā*. He learned the teachings of Islam from his grandfather, then his father, and later from his family's vast library. Ibn al-Anābī served as a Ḥanafī judge during the reign of Dey Aḥmad Pasha (1805–1816) and as the Dey's correspondent (al-Zahar, *Mudhakkarāt*, 1980: 97). He also held the position of head of the Ashrāf of Mecca and Medina (*naqābat al-ashrāf*)[10] during the reign of Dey ʻUmar Pasha (1814–1815).

2. Historical Content of the Manuscripts

2.1. Political and Military Reality

Ibn Maryam described the deterioration of political conditions in Algeria since the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century, which paved the way for the emergence of the Almoravids and their assumption of responsibility for defending religion, the country, and the people, as well as their alliance with the Ottoman Caliphate as a new Islamic power (Ibn Maryam, *al-Bustān*, 1908: 266–267). Al-Maqqarī also recorded at length the tragedy of the fall of the Islamic cities of Andalusia one after another, and the suffering and migration of Muslims after the fall of Granada in 1492. He likewise viewed the Ottoman State as a savior in the context of the Islamic–Christian conflict in the Mediterranean (al-Maqqarī, *Azhar*, 1939: 109, 113). Al-Fakoun ruled on many political issues, such as the reconciliation between Algeria and Tunisia, which involved drawing the borders between the two countries, and on the strife and revolutions of the Baylik al-Sharq especially in its capital, Constantine such as the Aurès Revolution led by Yaḥyā ibn Sulaymān al-Awrāsī (al-Fakoun, *Manshūr*, 1987: 54). Al-ʻAdwānī also recorded the unrest fueled by tribal confederations and influenced by religious movements such as the Shābiyya sect (Féraud, 1868: 25–208).

We also find that the political reality occupied a large space in Algerian writings during the 18th century. Ibn Maymūn chronicled the liberation of Oran and praised the liberator, Bekdash Dey,

8. He is the brother of the historian Agha ibn ʻŪda al-Muzārī, author of the book *Ṭulūʻ Saʻd al-Suʻūd*.

9. Khoja, Ḥamdān ibn ʻUthmān, *Commercial Register*, film reel 15 MI, 49, vol. 381, 55 leaves, National Overseas Archives, Aix-en-Provence, France.

10. This is attested to by his seal. See: Saadallah, Abū al-Qāsim, *Pioneer of Islamic Renewal: Muḥammad ibn al-Anābī*, who died in 1850, author of *The Praiseworthy Endeavour in the Military System*, 2nd edition, Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, Lebanon, 1990.

whose name appears in the title of his book, and who was nicknamed the mujāhid and the Sufi, providing us with very accurate information about the state and its men. Al-Mashrafī focused on the causes of tension in Algerian-Spanish relations and the continuation of the occupation, attributing it to the corrupt nature of some tribes, which he described and condemned as misguided (Bodin, 1924: 193, 260). Both Ibn Sahnūn (al-Rāshidī, *al-Taghr al-Jumānī*, 1973) and Ibn Zarfa (Ibn Zarfa, *Al-Rihla: 168*.) who was accused by the French orientalist Houdas regarding his manuscripts, and who was the first to summarize and publish the *Lunar Journey* (*al-Riḥla al-Qamariyya*) (Houdas, 1905: 161–233) discussed the stages of the second liberation of Oran, its preparations, circumstances, and results.

Ibn Ruqayya al-Tilimsani specialized in the subject of European raids or campaigns on the city of Algiers from the beginning of the 16th century to the reign of Dey Muhammed Othman (1766–1791), including the campaigns he personally witnessed, such as the O'Reilly Campaign on the city of Algiers in 1169 AH / 1775 AD .

Ibn al-Mufti mentioned the poems that immortalized Algiers's victory against the forces of the Spanish king Charles V in 1541, and how the celebrations for this victory continued. (Delphin, 1922:161-233) Al-Nasiri believed that the tragedy of Andalusia was compensated for by the liberation of Oran, which he chronicled in detail in his manuscript (Al-Nasiri, *al-Hulal:101*). Ibn Hatal also focused on the most prominent unrest in the Beylik of the West at the end of the Ottoman era, particularly the failure of the Bey al-Titri to subjugate the southern regions to the authority of the Beylik. As a result, the Bey of Oran, Muhammad al-Kabir, undertook this task, which became the subject of his writings (Ibn Hatal, Rihlat,1969) and later translations of Gorguos (Gorguos ,1858:51-185). Muslim ibn Abd al-Qadir concentrated on the turbulent relationship between the tribes[11] (Ibn Abd al-Qadir, *Khatimt*, 1974: 69.) and the authorities during this period, particularly the Derkaoua revolt during the reign of Dey Mustafa al-Ajmi (1802-1805), which shook the Algerian regime from within.

Regarding to Algeria's relationship with the Ottoman State, al-Nasiri affirmed Algeria's independence in its internal affairs and the clarity of its borders. Hamdan Khoja also described in his book[12] the events of the French occupation in detail and the various positions taken towards it. He presented a copy of it to the French authorities in Paris in 1833, criticizing and rejecting what was happening in Algeria. His correspondence further shows that the Ottoman authorities had been following the Algerian issue since 1830[13].

These writings especially those of Ibn Sahnoun, Ibn Zarfa, and Ibn Ruqayya provide accurate information about fortifications and towers, the army, the conduct and difficulties of battles, and the number of dead and wounded. They also discuss the ransom of prisoners and the amount of spoils of war. Most of them reflect the spirit of political and military resistance of the Algerians, which continued throughout the Ottoman era in the context of jihad and the defense of the country and its people. Ibn al-Anabi also raised the issue of the collapse of the military institution, which contributed to the French occupation of Algeria. This issue was of concern to the entire Islamic world and was at the heart of Ottoman reforms. Ibn al-Anabi called for the restructuring of the army, which may explain the existence of a copy of his manuscript in Istanbul (Ibn al-Anabi, *Al-Sa'i*).

[11] . There were three types of tribes in terms of relationship with the authorities in Algeria during the Ottoman Era: Cooperating tribes which were the tribes of *El-Makhzen*, Allied tribes, and resistant tribes.

[12] . Khoja Hamdan Bin Othman, *Lamha tarikhia wa ihsaiya hawla Iyalat al-jazair*, written in Arabic (now lost). Researchers rely on the French translation, Paris, 1833.

[13]. *Khatt ḥumayun*, box 33, document no. 46332; box 34, document no. 37464; and no. 22513.

2.2. Social and cultural reality

Socially, the most frequently discussed topics in the social sphere include, but are not limited to: descriptions of cities and urban development, such as Ibn Maryam's description of the urban structure of the city of Tlemcen, mentioning its streets and neighbourhoods, and al-Maqri's description of the beauty of the city of Algiers, which he visited on 19 November 1617, particularly Ras–al-Moul and Tafoura. He also described other cities in the Islamic world, such as Mecca, Medina, al-Quds, Egypt, and Damascus, and highlighted the importance of the location of Ceuta and praised the cultural role of many Andalusian cities, which were limited to their fall. Al-Warthilani provided accurate information about many of the cities, villages, and natural terrains he passed through during his journey.

These writings also detailed the demographic composition in terms of urban and rural population and the relation between them. Al-Maqri is considered the preeminent historian of the Andalusian migration from Andalusia to the Maghreb coasts, especially Algeria, and to other Islamic regions. Al-Adwani provides a clear picture of the Bedouin tribes, their nomadic lifestyle, the geographical area in which they move, and their relations with political and religious authorities.

As for desirable and inherited social customs, there are many, and we find very accurate information from both Al-Fakoun and Ibn Hamadush about marriage, weddings, and the customs of celebrations in cities. Al-Adwani conveys the customs, traditions, characteristics, and rituals of the cities and villages he visited.

As for phenomena considered negative for Algerian society, we find epidemic and diseases that ravaged the demographic structure, marking no distinction between rulers and ruled. Ibn Maryam and Hamdan Khoja (Khoja, *Ithaf al-Munsifin*, 1836:56) wrote on this subject, and Ibn Hamadouch's book *Kashf al–Rumuz* filled (Ibn Hamadouch, Kashf, 2004) a gap in the field of medicine and pharmacy (Collin, 1905:277), addressing the demographic decline caused by the plague that recurred in 1734, 1735, and 1737.

Al-Fakoun criticized the phenomenon of smoking, which was one of the issues of the time that was hotly debated by scholars. (Al-Fakoun, *Muhaddad al-Sinan:* 85) Abu Ras wrote about the moral corruption and bad character of the people, considering it a sign of weakness and decadence, and explained a poem by Muslim ibn Abd al-Qadir that addressed a sick social reality (Al-Nasiri, *Isma' al-Asamm* :87).

2.3. Cultural Reality

Culturally, the predominant themes in Algerian manuscripts are cultural themes. We can read the biographies of scholars and autobiographies, where we find that Ibn Maryam wrote the biographies of more than 150 figures, most of whom were scholars in various disciplines. Despite this, he judged his time to be lacking in knowledge and suffering from a decline in the value of scholars. We find that al-Fakoun classified scholars into moderate scholars, whom he respected, and others who competed for government jobs and assumed legitimate positions for which they were unqualified, calling them pseudo-scholars.

Al-Maqri also mentioned scholars, especially judges and muftis whom he met or corresponded with, including scholars from the city of Algiers. He wrote the biographies of more than thirty-four scholars, most of them from Fez and Marrakesh, such as the Moroccan Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur al-Dhahabi (1549–1603) for his cultural contributions, and famous historians such as Abdul Aziz al-Fashtali (died 1031 AH / 1627 AD), Ahmad ibn al-Qadi (died 1026 AH / 1616 AD), and Ahmad Baba al-Tinbukti (died 1036 AH / 1627 AD) (*Al-Maqri, Rewdat*, 1983). Scholars also communicated with each other, either through travel and movement or through various forms of correspondence, which created scientific and cultural interaction between Islamic cities and metropolises, especially those in the Maghreb.

The manuscripts also contain a wealth of literary works, both from the authors' own era and from earlier periods, in both poetry and prose. Poetry is predominantly in the *malhun* style, which led to the writing of commentaries on various subjects: diverse historical events, the lives of scholars and rulers, the biographies of teachers who taught the author, autobiographies, folk tales and legends, and more. We find that Ibn Sahnoun was dissatisfied with the literary level, especially the level of poetry in his time (Ibn Sahnoun, Al-thaghr,1973:149). While most of the poetry in the curriculum was metered, exceptions are found in *Azhar al-Riyadh*, which was full of *muwashahat*[14].

Al-Maqri praised Andalusian literature and its advantages over other Islamic regions. He believed that writing was a measure of progress and civilisation, defining it as follows: "Writing has seven meanings: something that has not been written before, something that is incomplete and needs to be completed, something that is incorrect and needs to be corrected, something that is unclear and needs to be explained, something that is too long and needs to be shortened, something that is scattered and needs to be gathered, or something that is scattered and needs to be organised."(*Al-Maqri, Azhar*, Vol 3:34,35).

On this subject, we find encouragement and exhortation to write, especially in the works of al-Maqri, Ibn Hatal, Abu Ras, and Hamdan Khoja. Ibn Hatal described history as the most important and complete of the sciences, through which nations are known, while Abu Ras described it as an art, explaining its methodology and merits and even devoting a book to it. (Al-Nasiri, *Zahrat al-Shimarikh :125*)

3. An analytical study of the manuscripts

The analytical study of Algerian manuscripts during the Ottoman period focused on elements that we considered essential to highlight and evaluate their historical writing approach, namely:

3.1 Motives and foundations of Authorship

The introduction is one of the most important parts of the manuscript. It may include one introduction in the case of the original copy, or two introductions if the copy is not original, or an explanation of a poem where the explainer is not the author of the poem. We distinguish between two introductions: the first is by the author and the second is by the commentator or copyist. Among the structural elements of the introduction is a statement of the motive or motives for authorship. Some of the authors discussed in the study stated their motives for authorship, while others did not.

Among the recurring and similar motivations of the authors are reviving the virtues of scholars and rulers, preserving genealogies, and describing cities and towns, as the fall of Andalusian cities and the changing conditions of Islamic Morocco and its exposure to occupation, especially by Spain, were painful events and a motivation for writing. They also wrote to immortalise battles, resistance and victories, such as the conquest of Oran, and to observe social phenomena and attempt to discuss them from a religious perspective.

As for the premises and backgrounds of the writing, we can define them as follows: proximity to or distance from the ruling authority. Most authors wrote from the perspective of the authority and as its supporters, often due to their position or kinship, and even authors who were critical of the authority lived within its circle. The authors also shared a religious reference point, whether they were affiliated with the ruling authority or outside it[15].

[14]. *Muwashahat* is an art form of Andalusian lyric poetry that does not adhere to meter and rhyme and usually conveys the tragedy of the Andalusians and their longing for Granada.

[15]. The religious interpretation of history prevailed in all human civilisations until the European Renaissance. See: Wedjri, Alban, G., *History and Its Interpretations: from Confucius to Toynbee*, translated by Abdul Aziz Tawfiq Jawid, Egyptian Authority for Translation and Books, Egypt, 1997, pp. 9, 10.

This is due, first and foremost, to the author's religious background and then to the nature of the religious conflict between the Christian West and the Islamic East, as well as the social reality behind the writing, such as migration, underdevelopment, occupation, social ills, etc.

3.2 Method of presenting and interpreting events and ideas

These works share the fact that they were written in a traditional manner, whether they were commentaries, texts or footnotes, i.e. they were not written according to a detailed plan with sections and chapters, but rather the introduction followed a single pattern: the Basmala, the Hamdala, the name of the author and the work, the geographical context, and the conclusion. The conclusion usually mentions the name of the copyist, the name of the author, the date of authorship, and the date of copying. Most of them were written in the Hijri calendar, especially the works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The text varies from one manuscript to another, appearing in the form of chronicles and annals that summarize several events in different fields at the same time, adopting a chronological or historiographical approach at the expense of a scientific interpretation of events, which means that there is little explanation or comparison, and even if some events and phenomena are explained, they are interpreted in a deterministic manner.

It also contains digressions, repetitions and lengthy quotations. The text was written in black ink, with a little purple ink. The titles and digressions were written in red or yellow ink under the headings: ‘Warning,’ ‘Anecdotes,’ ‘Stories,’ ‘Jokes,’ and ‘Strange.’ Marginal notes were also written on one side of the manuscript. Most of it was written in Moroccan script without decoration or embellishment, and rarely in ornate Andalusian script.

3.3 Style, language and terminology

Style is the manner of expressing events and ideas, and can be scientific, literary or rhetorical. Algerian historical writings during the Ottoman era were similar in their use of a literary style that was far removed from the scientific style, as it was dominated by emotion and imagination, figurative language, rhetorical devices and composition, whether in poetry or prose, or proverbs and maxims. The abundance of rhymes and short, measured sentences is an extension of the Andalusian literary style, in which Ahmad al-Maqri stood out, influenced by the approach of the Andalusian minister and writer, Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khatīb (died. 776 AH/1374 AD)[16].

French orientalist Carra De Vaux considered Ahmad al-Maqri to be one of the greatest Arab historians and the transmitter of the Andalusian school to the Levant (Carra De Vaux, 1921: 158–167).

A religious style was also used, relying on quotations from the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Hadiths, evoking previous Muslim victories and invoking prayers against the enemy. The language of these works, especially since the end of the 18th century, was characterised by the use of colloquial, vernacular and local expressions, which were more common in the works of Ibn Hatal and Ibn Ruqaya al-Tilmisani and less common in those of Hamdan Khoja and Ibn al-Anabi. These terms were usually a mixture of Arabic, Ottoman, Spanish and Italian, known as ‘Lingua Franca.’ This is particularly evident in the works of authors from the north, especially in the cities. However, it is absent in the works of Al-Adwani. Sometimes these terms are difficult to understand, especially when they contain grammatical and morphological errors, which require effort to understand and interpret them. If we look at the terms used by authors to describe historical writing, we find authorship, recording, chronicling, writing, classification, news, biography, indexing, autobiography, and so on. If this indicates anything, it is that these authors’ concept of history was not the same as today’s concept, i.e., a science with its own rules, methods, and specializations.

[16].He was the last of the great writers of Andalusia, distinguished by his encyclopaedic output in poetry, history, philosophy and medicine, and his appointment to the ministry.

3.4 Sources and references used in these works

These can be arranged according to their importance to these works, as follows: Poetry, where the poem was the primary and central source for recording events and facts and conveying news, and sometimes the subject of the authorship in the case of commentary. Then there are the verses of the Qur'an, the hadiths of the Prophet, and the sayings of the Companions of the Prophet, i.e. quotations from the Holy Qur'an, which were not quotations in their entirety but only in part, without the verse being formatted or corrected or its number mentioned. The same applies to the hadiths of the Prophet, most of which are not mentioned by name and whose source is not indicated. Then come the written or transmitted sources, especially Islamic sources prior to or close to the author's period, so we may find similarities between them, and often the titles of works and names of obscure authors are transmitted. Narration, observation, inspection, memory, and official documents were also relied upon as an important part of writing for these authors.

3.5 Relativity and objectivity in these writings

Today's scientific historical approach assumes that historians should start with the community rather than individuals, or at least with topics where individuals have had an impact on the community. This is known as the social approach, and economic approaches can also be used. During the Ottoman period, Algerian authors either started from the class of scholars, i.e. they wrote for scholars or rulers, or from a social or religious phenomenon. In other words, they were more interested in the event itself than in its dimensions and effects. The nature of their writing prioritised relativity over objectivity, so their writing dealt with personal or family matters, their surroundings, or beliefs in superstition, strange stories, miracles, or religion.

Thus, the historian can resort to objective or subjective reasoning depending on his level, and what he arrives at is the direction of the movement driving the event, which is neither inevitable nor random. In other words, contradictions are to be expected, as Marrou proved when he said: Historical truth is never absolute; it always remains subject to change, and the historian must submit to technical necessities and requirements (Marrou, 1966: 279, 280).

3.6 The Historical Value of Algerian Manuscripts during the Ottoman Period

The historical value of Algerian manuscripts from the Ottoman period lies in their role as authentic witnesses to Algeria's political, social, and intellectual life. They go beyond mere documentation, offering direct insight into the transformations that shaped the country between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Unlike official archives that reflect an external or administrative view, these manuscripts express a local voice one shaped by scholars, jurists, and chroniclers who recorded events from within society.

Their importance stems from their ability to preserve a native interpretation of history and to bridge collective memory with historical analysis. Through them, one can trace the evolution of an Algerian consciousness that combined allegiance to the Ottoman Caliphate with a growing sense of local autonomy. They also provide unique insight into the dynamics between state power, religious institutions, and tribal structures elements often neglected in foreign accounts.

Thus, their study is essential not only for reconstructing events but for restoring the intellectual and cultural agency of Algerian society during a transformative era. Preserving and critically examining these manuscripts ensures that the history of Ottoman Algeria is understood through its own authentic sources, and not through external narratives only.

Conclusion

The conclusions and findings of this study can be summarised in the following points:

- The existence of a vast number of Algerian historical manuscripts from the Ottoman period, some of which have been verified and published, while others still await the efforts of researchers.

Here, we must point out the need to consider the difference between publication and verification, as each has its own scientific conditions and rules. Much of what has been verified still requires re-verification, especially considering the emergence of new copies of the manuscript.

The quantity of historical manuscripts produced varied depending on the international and local circumstances of the author and the country, with the 18th century considered the best and most prolific period for authorship.

- The manuscripts contain a wealth of diverse historical material that could form the basis for new topics, issues and studies in several disciplines. They also preserve some titles of writings and texts whose originals have been lost or are now kept in the private collections of their owners.

The basis for the formation of the authors was the Islamic religion, some of whom were highly cultured, such as Al-Maqri, Ibn Sahnoun, Ibn Hammadouch, Ibn Zarfa, Abu Ras, Hamdan Khoja, Ibn al-Anabi and Ibn Hatal, who combined their professional duties with authorship, composing their works mostly under the authority of the ruling powers.

These works were similar in terms of methodology. If we were to classify them, they would be: biographical works, chronicles based on the year in which events occurred, records based on daily news reports, and autobiographies and travelogues, such as those authored by Al-Warthalani and Ibn Hammadouch. The city was also the starting point, focus, and reference for most authors.

- The manuscripts focused on cultural and social topics, as scholars and Sufis were the pillars of security during the period of conflict, and neglected certain topics such as the nature of the relationship between scholars and the authorities, the causes of internal revolutions, and the analysis of foreign relations. However, we found a strong sense of nationalism present in these writings, which gives them a subjective character, unlike the document, which is characterised by neutrality and a report-like style.

These historical manuscripts remain an expression of the Algerian identity and the spirit of the era, with all its positives and negatives, because they fill many of the gaps and voids that archival documents or foreign sources may not answer.

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