

Representations of Economic Life in Ottoman Algeria in Travel Accounts: Markets as a Case Study

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Abstract

Travel literature on Algeria during the Ottoman period constitutes a significant source for documenting and preserving the country's cultural and historical heritage. These travel accounts provide valuable information on various aspects of social life in different communities. Among these, economic life occupies a prominent place, particularly through travelers' descriptions of markets, which represented one of the most important manifestations of economic activity in Ottoman Algeria. Hardly any travel account is devoid of references to the numerous markets spread across cities and villages, as well as the diverse goods traded within them. These markets served not only as centers of commercial exchange but also as spaces of cultural interaction, functioning as meeting points where foreign travelers and local inhabitants came into contact. This study seeks to examine the role of travel literature in documenting economic life and introducing the markets of Algeria during the Ottoman period.

Keywords: *Economic life, Ottoman Algeria, Travel literature, Markets.*

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Introduction

During the early modern period, travel activity experienced remarkable growth, both from Algeria to other regions and to Algeria itself. The motivations behind these journeys became increasingly diverse, including pilgrimage (particularly to the Hijaz), which constituted the largest category of travel, in addition to scholarly and diplomatic missions. Travel literature produced during the Ottoman period represents a rich scholarly, cultural, intellectual, and civilizational heritage. It serves as a repository of national identity and collective memory and constitutes an important source for reconstructing the economic history of Algerian cities and rural areas.

Travel accounts are among the primary historical sources upon which researchers and historians rely, as they contain valuable information on various aspects of life, especially economic activity. Travelers frequently described trade, markets, commercial exchanges, currencies, commodities, and other economic features. Particular attention was devoted to markets and the goods available within them. Consequently, travel narratives provide invaluable firsthand observations documenting different dimensions of economic life through detailed descriptions of markets and the principal commodities traded in the regions the travelers visited or passed through. Moreover, travelers consistently portrayed markets as spaces of interaction between foreign visitors and local inhabitants. Accordingly, almost every travel account, whether written by Algerian travelers journeying to the Mashriq and the Maghreb or by foreign travelers visiting Algeria, includes descriptions of local markets.

This study seeks to examine the significance and value of travel literature as a source for writing the economic history of Algeria and documenting the markets of Algerian cities during the Ottoman period. It aims to highlight the role of travel accounts in introducing and describing the markets of Algerian cities under Ottoman rule.

The study addresses the following research questions: What information and insights do travel accounts provide about the markets of Ottoman Algeria? How were Algerian markets represented in travel literature?

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To answer these questions, the study adopts a historical methodology, combining descriptive, narrative, and analytical approaches to present and interpret the available historical evidence.

First: Travel: Concept and Motivations

1. The Concept of Travel

Linguistic Definition

The Arabic term *riḥla* (travel or journey) derives from the verb *raḥala*, meaning "to depart," "to set out," or "to travel." Classical Arabic dictionaries associate the term with movement, departure, and migration from one place to another². Expressions such as *irtaḥala al-qawm* indicate that a group has departed or moved from one location to another, while *riḥla* may also refer to a single journey or voyage³. The term further denotes a destination or intended place of travel, the act of setting out, or the approach of the time of departure. Accordingly, the various linguistic meanings of *riḥla* revolve around movement, travel, destination, migration, and departure, from which the term *raḥḥāl* (traveler) is derived to designate a person who frequently journeys from one place to another.⁴

Terminological Definition

The concept of travel has acquired numerous definitions in scholarly literature. According to *Al-Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ* (The Intermediate Dictionary), travel refers to the movement of an individual or a group from one place to another for various purposes, including earning a livelihood, escaping danger or persecution, or pursuing other objectives.⁵

From a literary perspective, travel literature is regarded as a literary-geographical genre that records the traveler's experiences throughout a journey. It documents routes, landscapes, communities encountered, and the events observed, while also recounting the traveler's personal activities and experiences. Such narratives typically preserve the names of scholars and notable figures whom the traveler met, the knowledge acquired from them, as well as geographical and historical descriptions of the regions visited. Consequently, travel literature constitutes an important historical source that combines personal observation with geographical, social, and cultural documentation.⁶

2. Motivations for Travel

The motivations for travel have varied according to individuals, historical periods, and cultural contexts. The principal motives include religious, scholarly, economic, political, and recreational purposes.

Religious Motivations

Religious travel possesses a profound spiritual dimension, particularly through pilgrimages to sacred places, including the Hajj, ʿUmrah, and visits to the shrines of prophets and saints within the Islamic tradition⁷. Pilgrimage played a significant role in strengthening cultural and civilizational exchanges among the Maghreb, al-Andalus, and the Mashriq. Annual pilgrimage caravans brought together pilgrims, scholars, and

² Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (The Tongue of the Arabs), Vol. 3, Part 18, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, p. 1609.

³ Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs* (The Crown of the Bride from the Jewels of the Dictionary), Vol. 14, edited by ʿAlī Bashīrī, 1st ed., Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, 1414 AH, p. 273.

⁴ Ibn Manẓūr, op. cit., p. 1609.

⁵ Shawqī Dayf, *Al-Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ* (The Intermediate Dictionary), 4th ed., Arabic Language Academy, International Sharq Library, Egypt, 2004, p. 973.

⁶ Nabila Shallali, *Maghrebi Travel Accounts to Algeria during the Ottoman Era: A Comparative Study*, PhD Dissertation, Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Department of Arabic Language and Islamic Civilization, University of Batna 1, 2020–2021, pp. 11–12.

⁷ Nabila Shallali, op. cit., p. 12.

students from diverse regions, thereby fostering religious, intellectual, cultural, and even economic interactions. Consequently, pilgrimage journeys fulfilled not only religious obligations but also broader cultural and commercial functions.⁸

Scholarly Motivations

Scholarly travel represents one of the most widespread forms of travel in Islamic civilization. Students and scholars often embarked on journeys after exhausting educational opportunities in their home regions, seeking advanced learning at renowned centers of scholarship. ⁹Major institutions such as Al-Azhar Mosque and University in Cairo and the Qarawiyyin Mosque and University in Fez attracted scholars from across the Islamic world because of their distinguished reputation in various branches of knowledge.

Economic Motivations

Travel was frequently motivated by economic considerations, including commercial exchange, trade, and the expansion of markets. Merchants traveled to introduce local products to new markets or to obtain commodities that were scarce in their own regions. Economic migration also resulted from the search for employment, better living conditions, relief from economic hardship, or access to more prosperous commercial opportunities.¹⁰

Political Motivations

Political travel, often referred to as official or diplomatic missions, involved the dispatch of ambassadors and envoys by rulers to foreign courts. Such missions aimed at establishing or strengthening diplomatic relations, negotiating treaties, concluding agreements, or addressing matters of governance and international cooperation.¹¹

Recreational Motivations

Travel could also be undertaken for recreational purposes, driven by a desire for exploration, discovery, and adventure. Many travelers were motivated by curiosity about unfamiliar places and peoples, seeking firsthand knowledge of different societies, cultures, and ways of life. Thus, travel was valued not only as a means of acquiring knowledge or engaging in commerce but also as an opportunity for exploration and personal enrichment.¹²

In addition to these principal motives, travel could also result from necessity, including journeys undertaken for medical treatment, recovery, or security-related reasons such as escaping conflict or other dangers.

Regardless of its motivation, travel has historically represented a significant human and civilizational practice. It enriches both individuals and societies by broadening intellectual horizons, facilitating cultural exchange, and fostering mutual understanding. Indeed, neither the traveler nor the society to which they return remains unchanged after the experience of travel.¹³

⁸ Abdelkader Rebouh, "Travel and Its Role in Cultural Communication between Algeria and the Arab East during the 11th Century AH/17th Century CE: The Journey of Yahyā al-Shāwī al-Milyānī (d. 1096 AH/1685 CE) as a Case Study," *Journal of Research and Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Winter 2018, p. 302.

⁹ Fouad Kandil, *Travel Literature in the Arab Heritage*, Arab House for the Book, Cairo, 2002, p. 21.

¹⁰ Fouad Kandil, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹¹ Nabila Shallali, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

¹² Abdelkader Rebouh, *op. cit.*, p. 300.

¹³ Fouad Kandil, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

Second: The Historical Significance of Travel Literature

Travel is a fundamental human practice that has accompanied humanity since its earliest existence. Throughout history, people have journeyed from one region to another in search of water and pasture, fertile agricultural lands, new communities, or as a means of escaping wars, famines, and other hardships. Regardless of the motives behind these journeys, whether undertaken individually or collectively, travel accounts constitute a rich historical source that provides valuable geographical, descriptive, and chronological information about the places and periods in which they were written. They document diverse aspects of social, scholarly, economic, political, and cultural life through the direct observations of travelers.¹⁴

Travel literature, in its various forms, religious, scholarly, recreational, and necessity-driven, represents an invaluable repository of knowledge, literature, historical memory, and spiritual experience. These works preserve a wide range of texts, letters, scholarly authorizations (ijāzāt), and documentary records, while recording travelers' daily observations and impressions of the political, cultural, social, and economic conditions of the regions they visited.¹⁵

Travel narratives encompass a broad spectrum of subjects, including learning, literature, customs, and traditions in the cities and scholarly centers frequented by travelers¹⁶. They describe monuments, educational institutions, manuscripts, scholarly licenses, and books, while frequently providing detailed accounts of distinguished scholars, Sufi orders, and methods of instruction. Moreover, travelers recorded poetry, literary production, intellectual debates, religious doctrines, and political opinions. They also documented archaeological remains, roads and travel routes, systems of government, rulers, ministers, military commanders, and administrative institutions. Equally important are their descriptions of ordinary people, craftsmen, and other social groups, together with local customs surrounding celebrations and mourning ceremonies. Travel accounts further preserve anecdotes, biographies of scholars, narratives concerning Sufi saints, descriptions of historical monuments, city gates and fortifications, taxation systems, customs duties, corruption, standards of living, markets, commercial practices, as well as episodes of social unrest and popular resistance.¹⁷

Among the economic aspects that attracted particular attention during the Ottoman period was trade. Travelers frequently referred to the relatively modest commercial activities associated with pilgrimage caravans, including the exchange of camels and the trade in saffron, ghassoul clay, siwāk sticks, alum, wooden writing tablets, combs, textiles, woven fabrics, and leather products. Monetary systems also received considerable attention, with travelers describing the gold and silver content of coins, their weights, and their relationship to prevailing political authorities and administrative systems.¹⁸

Travel literature thus constitutes an important intellectual window through which historians gain insight into numerous countries and regions. Rooted in the traditions of Arabic scholarship, these narratives rely primarily on firsthand observation and personal experience, thereby enhancing their value as historical sources for reconstructing past societies and events.¹⁹

Accordingly, travel literature represents a comprehensive repository of knowledge, experience, and historical memory. It enriches intellectual understanding, broadens cultural awareness, and refines individual character through the challenges of travel, encounters with unfamiliar environments, and

¹⁴ Amani bint Saeed Al-Harbi, Egypt through the Writings of Maghrebi Travelers, Master's Thesis in Islamic History, Faculty of Sharia and Islamic Studies, Department of Graduate Historical Studies, Umm Al-Qura University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1436 AH/2015 CE, p. 22.

¹⁵ 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-'Ayyāshī, Al-Rihla al-'Ayyāshiyya (The Ayyashi Travel Account), edited by Sa'īd al-Fāḍilī and Sulaymān al-Qurashī, Vol. 1, Dār al-Suwaydī for Printing and Publishing, Abu Dhabi, 2006, p. 12.

¹⁶ Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, Studies in Arab-Islamic History, 1st ed., Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, Beirut, 2003, p. 150.

¹⁷ Nabila Shallali, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁸ Abdelkader Rebouh, op. cit., p. 298.

¹⁹ Fouad Kandil, op. cit., p. 21.

engagement with diverse peoples and customs²⁰. At the same time, it promotes intercultural exchange and mutual understanding, making it an indispensable source for studying the historical interactions among societies.

Third: The Description of Algerian Markets in Travel Literature

1. The Importance of Markets

A market is a place where commercial transactions take place to meet people's needs, ranging from essential commodities such as wheat and barley to complementary and luxury goods, including fruits, clothing, household utensils, means of transport, and manufactured products.²¹ During the Ottoman period, domestic trade in Algerian cities was conducted through local and regional markets, which operated either daily or weekly. These markets were regulated by commercial measures, including the collection of taxes and customs duties on goods offered for sale.²²

Markets constituted one of the most prominent manifestations of economic activity in Ottoman Algeria²³. The abundance of markets in cities and villages attracted the attention of numerous travelers, particularly those undertaking pilgrimage journeys to the Hijaz, who frequently described them in their travel accounts. In this context, travel literature provides an important source for understanding the organization and economic significance of markets in Ottoman Algeria.

Travel narratives vividly portray the living conditions of local populations as well as the difficulties encountered by travelers in obtaining provisions, fluctuations in prices, and periods of scarcity²⁴. Travelers described the economic conditions of the regions they visited, noting episodes of inflation, epidemics, and the taxes imposed on local inhabitants. Consequently, travel accounts constitute a valuable historical record documenting the economic, social, cultural, and political realities of their time.²⁵

Markets attracted particular attention because of their abundance and their central role in urban and rural life. Their activity intensified during the pilgrimage season, when merchants from neighboring regions brought a wide variety of goods for sale. Travelers generally provided comprehensive descriptions of places where essential supplies could be obtained, identifying areas of material prosperity while also informing future travelers about commodities that were scarce or readily available. Such information facilitated commercial exchanges between pilgrims and local communities.²⁶

Markets represented an essential component of urban planning and settlement patterns. Unlike political institutions, they were relatively unaffected by changes in rulers and remained enduring features of cities and villages throughout successive historical periods. Since markets naturally emerged wherever population centers developed, they served as communal spaces where inhabitants gathered to exchange goods and acquire essential commodities.²⁷

Most markets operated on fixed days of the week, with merchants and customers assembling on designated market days before dispersing during the remainder of the week. Certain merchants specialize in regional

²⁰ 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah* (The Muqaddimah), Vol. 1, Dār al-Imām Mālik, Algeria, 2002, p. 239.

²¹ Nabila Shallali, op. cit., p. 442.

²² Mustapha Al-Ghashi, *Moroccan Travel Literature and the Ottoman East: An Attempt to Construct the Image*, 1st ed., Arab Diffusion Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon, 2015, p. 460.

²³ Amani bint Saeed Al-Harbi, op. cit., p. 22.

²⁴ Mustapha Al-Ghashi, op. cit., p. 459.

²⁵ Mustapha Al-Ghashi, *ibid.*, p. 386.

²⁶ Omar Bellout, *Hotels of Zayyanid Tlemcen: An Archaeological Study*, Al-Duha Foundation for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 1st ed., 2011, p. 86.

²⁷ Omar Bellout, op. cit., p. 87.

markets according to established schedules. Besides functioning as centers of commercial exchange, markets also fulfilled important social, cultural, educational, and religious functions. They hosted intellectual and religious debates, public sermons, charitable activities, mediation of disputes, and the dissemination of religious teachings. Large markets served as places where public order was maintained, assistance was provided to those in need, and lost property could be recovered.²⁸

The practical requirements of long-distance travel, especially pilgrimage, encouraged commercial interaction between travelers and local populations. Pilgrims regularly purchased provisions along their routes while also selling goods transported from their regions of origin. The experience recorded in travel accounts subsequently guided future travelers, enabling them to prepare for similar journeys and identify profitable opportunities for commercial exchange. Such activities helped offset travel expenses while strengthening economic links between different regions.²⁹

2. *An Overview of the Major Markets*

Daily and weekly markets were widely distributed throughout Ottoman Algeria and constituted the principal venues for commercial exchange. Pilgrimage caravans frequently relied on these markets to replenish their supplies before continuing their journeys. Among the earliest descriptions is that of the French traveler Nicolas de Nicolay, who visited Algeria in 1551. He observed that the lower part of the city was bustling with commercial activity and described a market frequented by inhabitants of both the mountains and the plains, who brought vegetables, fruits, cereals, and poultry for sale. He also referred to specialized markets for tanned leather, perfumers, and medicinal herbs, reflecting a well-organized commercial structure. In addition to being centers of trade, these markets hosted public entertainment and functioned as important venues for the exchange of news³⁰ and information among different segments of society.

Similarly, Leo Africanus noted that the markets of Algiers were systematically organized, with craftsmen grouped according to their respective trades³¹. Each profession occupied its own designated market, such as the tanners' market and the perfumers' market, illustrating the degree of specialization within the urban economy.

The city of Biskra experienced particularly intensive commercial activity during the Ottoman period owing to its strategic location as a major transit station for both commercial and pilgrimage caravans. Virtually every village in the region organized a market whenever caravans passed through. Numerous travelers documented the city's economic conditions, concentrating on its markets, traded commodities, and local products. Both the regional and local markets of Biskra³² ranked among the most renowned in Algeria and attracted large numbers of Moroccan pilgrimage caravans, whose members sold their merchandise and purchased provisions for themselves and their animals.

Among these markets³³, the Market of Biskra was consistently described by Moroccan travelers as a "great market" because of its vast size, the diversity of goods available, and its importance as a meeting point for caravans arriving from both eastern and western regions. Biskra's strategic position along the principal imperial and regional routes further enhanced its commercial significance.

²⁸ Mustapha Al-Ghashi, op. cit., p. 388.

²⁹ Fateh Baamri, *Urban Life in the City of Algiers during the Ottoman Period through Travel Sources*, PhD Dissertation, Faculty of Arts and Civilization, Department of History, Emir Abdelkader University of Islamic Sciences, 1437–1438 AH / 2016–2017 CE, pp. 304–306.

³⁰ Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fasi (Leo Africanus), *Description of Africa*, Vol. 2, translated by Mohammed Hajji and Mohammed Al-Akhdar, 2nd ed., Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, Beirut, 1983, p. 37.

³¹ Mohamed El Arbi Zbiri, *Foreign Trade of Eastern Algeria during the Period 1792–1830*, 2nd ed., National Book Foundation, Algeria, 1984, p. 112.

³² The Sultan's Roads were the routes customarily used by the Ottoman rulers and their officials.

³³ Most Maghrebi travelers mentioned these markets in their travel accounts, and many of them shopped there, including al-'Ayyāshī, al-Hilālī al-Sijilmāsi, Ibn al-Tayyib al-Sharqī, and other travelers from the Maghreb during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Smaller markets in the surrounding areas also flourished whenever caravans passed through. Nomadic Arab communities established temporary markets where they sold local products and obtained essential goods. Travelers mentioned several of these markets, including those of Sidi Okba, Sidi Khaled, Khenguët Sidi Naji, and Zeribet El Oued.³⁴

The markets of Biskra offered both locally produced goods and merchandise brought by travelers for barter or sale. Available products included meat, flour, clarified butter, milk³⁵, vegetables, fruits³⁶ such as apples, apricots, and melons, as well as cereals, particularly wheat and barley. The Moroccan traveler al-Hilālī al-Sijilmāsī remarked that barley was scarce in one locality but considerably cheaper in the market of Sidi Okba than in Biskra.³⁷

Dates constituted one of the region's most important products, and their exceptional quality attracted numerous travelers. The finest variety was known as al-Ḥurra³⁸. Besides foodstuffs, the markets also offered carpets, especially the renowned Biskra carpets³⁹, textiles, leather goods imported from Morocco⁴⁰, tar used for treating camels⁴¹, poultry, sheep, mules, and camels, which served both as riding animals and as pack animals for transporting merchandise.⁴²

Travelers generally agreed that prices in the markets of Biskra were lower than those in many other regions. An exception was reported by al-Nāṣirī al-Dir'ī, who observed unusually high prices⁴³ during one of his visits, particularly for dates and barley during autumn, when supplies were limited.⁴⁴

Travel accounts likewise describe the thriving market of Zeribet El Oued, which reached its peak during the passage of pilgrimage caravans. A wide variety of goods, including camels, mules, barley, wheat, meat, sheep, carpets, clarified butter, coffee, fruits, poultry, and tar, were available. The market of Sidi Okba was similarly renowned for its abundant supplies of dates, butter, and barley. The repeated description of these markets as "great markets" reflects both their size and their economic importance. Women also participated actively in commercial life; one traveler described a temporary market established by a Bedouin woman in Wadi Sidi Khaled, where barley, dates, milk, apples, and other essential provisions were sold to pilgrims.⁴⁵

The village of Aïn Madhi also served as an important stop for pilgrimage caravans, where travelers purchased food, clothing, and other necessities before continuing their journey. Likewise, the nearby mountain village of Amoura possessed a market in which travelers replenished their supplies.⁴⁶

³⁴ Abū al-Ṭayyib ibn Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Fāsī, known as al-Sharqī, *The Journey of Ibn al-Ṭayyib from Fez to Mecca*, edited by Arif Ahmad Abd al-Ghani, n.p. (no edition), Dār al-ʿArrāb for Studies and Publishing, Syria, 2014, op. cit., p. 320.

³⁵ Ḥusayn al-Warṭhilānī, *Nuzhat al-Anzār fī Faḍl ʿIlm al-Tārīkh wa al-Akhbār* (Al-Warṭhilānī's Travel Account), Pierre Fontana Orientale Press, Algeria, 1908, p. 88.

³⁶ Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Hilālī al-Sijilmāsī (d. 1175 AH), *Al-Tawajjuh li-Ḥajj Bayt Allāh al-Ḥarām wa Ziyārat Qabirih ʿAlayhi al-Ṣalāt wa al-Salām* (Setting Out for the Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of God and Visiting the Prophet's Tomb), edited by Mohammed Bouziane Benali, n.p. (no edition), 2011, p. 206.

³⁷ Al-Hilālī al-Sijilmāsī, *ibid.*, p. 201.

³⁸ Abū al-Ṭayyib ibn Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Fāsī (al-Sharqī), op. cit., p. 320.

³⁹ Al-Hilālī al-Sijilmāsī, op. cit., p. 218.

⁴⁰ Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Salām al-Nāṣirī, *Al-Rihla al-Nāṣiriyya al-Kubrā* (The Great Nasiri Journey), Vol. 1, edited by Al-Mahdi Al-Ghali, Publications of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Kingdom of Morocco, 1434 AH/2013 CE, p. 239.

⁴¹ Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Sharqī, op. cit., p. 320.

⁴² Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Salām al-Nāṣirī al-Dir'ī, op. cit., pp. 152–153.

⁴³ Al-Hilālī al-Sijilmāsī, op. cit., p. 218.

⁴⁴ Abū al-Ṭayyib ibn Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Fāsī, known as al-Sharqī, op. cit., pp. 319–321.

⁴⁵ Abū Muḥammad Sīdī al-Sharḥī ibn Muḥammad al-Ishāqī (d. after 1150 AH), *The Hijazi Journey of the Minister al-Ishāqī*, edited by Mohammed Al-Andalusī, Vol. 1, 1st ed., Publications of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Kingdom of Morocco, p. 290.

⁴⁶ Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Wazzān al-Fāsī (Leo Africanus), op. cit., pp. 26–27.

Regarding Tlemcen, Leo Africanus observed that craftsmen were distributed throughout the city's squares and streets according to their occupations. He also described the weekly Thursday market of Mascara in the Beni Rached region, where livestock, cereals, olive oil, honey, locally woven textiles, ropes, saddles, and other commodities were sold. He personally visited this market to purchase supplies for his journey.⁴⁷

The traveler al-Aghwāṭī also described the markets of the towns and villages he visited. He noted that Laghouat lacked a permanent market square, although commerce remained active and both Algerian and Fez currencies circulated there. He further described Ghardaïa as a walled town with a large market and Timimoun as possessing a major market famous for dates, other fruits, and red alum. Another market specialized in the sale of enslaved persons and gold dust, the latter being traded by weight. In the Souf region, he observed that women attended the markets without veils, while Touggourt was portrayed as a prosperous town producing dates, figs, grapes, pomegranates, apples, apricots, pears, and other fruits, with an exceptionally large market.⁴⁸

As the capital of the Beylik of the East, Constantine possessed numerous general and specialized markets distributed throughout the city, most of which consisted of permanent shops attracting merchants from both within and beyond the Regency of Algiers⁴⁹. Leo Africanus described Constantine's markets as well organized and noted the large number of merchants engaged in trading locally manufactured woolen textiles⁵⁰, which were commonly exchanged for dates and enslaved persons. Most commodities offered for sale were locally produced and widely consumed, including foodstuffs, wool, and leather used in local manufacturing.⁵¹

Finally, the city of Annaba, an important economic center of the Beylik of the East, possessed two principal weekly markets: the Grain Market (al-Rahḥba) and the Livestock Market, which extended toward Wadi Boujemaa and convened every Friday⁵². Leo Africanus described Annaba's market as an ancient commercial center frequented by ships arriving from Tunis, Djerba, Tripoli, other North African ports, and even Genoa to purchase wheat and butter. Located outside the city walls, the market remained active until evening⁵³. Farmers from the surrounding plains and the Edough Mountains sold fruits and horticultural products while purchasing locally manufactured goods as well as imported commodities such as tea, coffee, sugar, and textiles.

This brief overview demonstrates that travel literature offers valuable evidence for reconstructing the organization, functions, and commercial importance of markets in Ottoman Algeria. Through detailed firsthand observations, travelers documented not only patterns of trade and consumption but also the broader economic and social dynamics that shaped urban and rural life throughout the Ottoman period.

Conclusion:

This study has led to several important findings:

- Travel refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one place to another for a variety of purposes, including religious, political, economic, scholarly, and recreational motivations.

⁴⁷ Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, *The Journey of al-Aghwati*, International Knowledge Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 2011, pp. 13–25.

⁴⁸ Abdelkader Dahdouh, *Manuscript of the Register of Endowments (Awqāf) of the City of Constantine during the 10th–11th Centuries AH / 16th–17th Centuries CE*, Publications of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments, Algeria, 2015, p. 44.

⁴⁹ Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fasi (Leo Africanus), *op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁵⁰ Omar Bellout, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁵¹ Said Dahmani, *Annaba: Art and Culture*, National Printing Arts Foundation, Reghaïa, Algeria, 1983, p. 77.

⁵² Al-Hasan al-Wazzan (Leo Africanus), *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁵³ Charles Féraud, *History of the Cities of the Province of Constantine: Sétif, Bordj Bou Arréridj, M'Sila, and Boussaâda*, Challamel, Paris, 1872, p. 351.

- Travel literature constitutes one of the most important primary historical sources for reconstructing the economic history of Ottoman Algeria. Through firsthand observations and detailed descriptions, travel accounts provide valuable information on the country's economic life and its various manifestations.
- Travel narratives played a significant role in documenting economic activity by describing the principal markets of Algerian cities and villages and recording the commodities and merchandise traded in them during the Ottoman period.
- Markets in Ottoman Algeria existed in various forms, including daily, weekly, and seasonal markets. They represented vital urban and rural institutions, functioning not only as centers of economic exchange but also as cultural and social spaces that reflected the daily life of local communities situated along major travel and pilgrimage routes.

Overall, this study demonstrates that travel literature is an indispensable historical source for understanding the economic landscape of Ottoman Algeria. Beyond recording commercial practices, travelers documented the organization of markets, the diversity of goods exchanged, pricing patterns, and the interaction between local populations and foreign visitors, thereby providing valuable evidence for reconstructing the economic and social history of the period.

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