

19th Century Tunisian Travel Literature on Europe Construction of Memory and the Other

Daniel L. NEWMAN

Introduction

The 19th century marks the starting point of the modern Middle East in light of the major changes at every level - political, social and cultural - that took place, all of which arguably set in motion as a result of contact with Europe, with the main trigger being Napoleon's Egyptian expedition (1798).

As this period signalled a rebirth of sorts, it became known as the *Nahdha* or Renaissance. The term has both cultural and political connotations. In the early period, it involved the rediscovery of classical literature, whereas later on it referred to the creation of new genres, such as the novel, short story or the theatre. Politically, it denotes to the incipient political and social awareness of Arab populations in the face of increasing European encroachments, and the resultant reform movements around the ideas formulated by people like the Egyptian *shaykh* Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) or the Tunisian statesman Khayr al-Dîn al-Tûnisî (1810-1890)¹. The *Nahdha* was also the period during which a spate of European technological and scientific innovations was introduced into Muslim lands.

Although the history of the Arab 'Awakening' remains inextricably linked with Egypt, Tunisia witnessed its own *Nahdha*, thanks to the visionary efforts by some of its rulers. Unfortunately, in addition to new technology and ideas, the century also brought increasing control from European powers, often through military intervention (Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria), especially in the local economies, with European trade competition in many instances crushing local industry².

¹ See A. HOURANI 1989. For Tunisia, see B. TLILI 1974.

² For Tunisia, see Lucette VALENSI, "Islam et capitalisme. Production et commerce des chéchiâs en Tunisie et en France aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles", in *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 16, 1969, 376-400; Mohamed Hédi CHERIF, "Expansion européenne et difficultés tunisiennes. 1815-1830", *Annales. ESC*, 3, 1970, pp. 714-45; Mustapha KRAÏM 1973, II, 73 ff. Also see L. VALENSI 1977.

Eventually, economic control through the vicissitudes of international capitalism - with Turkey, Egypt, and Tunisia succumbing under massive debts to European banks by the middle of the century¹ - resulted in *de facto* political domination, with the Ottoman empire - the last Muslim superpower - being able to do little else but stand by and watch things slowly disintegrate.

However, 'Europe' was present through a sizeable resident European community, predominantly Italians, Maltese and Frenchmen, who were traders, or craftsmen and technicians recruited by the rulers, first and foremost among whom Ahmad Bey (1837-1855)², for their modernization programmes. In the 19th century (pre-1881), the country counted 1m-1.5m inhabitants, with the number of Europeans in the 1870s amounting to 40,000, half of whom lived in the capital (out of a total population of 100-150,000)³. The Regency's international trade was entirely in the hands of European merchants⁴.

¹ See R. OWEN 1993, 83 ff.; F. R. HUNTER, "The comparative history of Egypt and Tunisia in the nineteenth century; a re-examination", *Arab Historical Review for Ottoman Studies*, 7-8, 1993, 59-70. For the Ottoman debt crisis, see D. BLAISDELL, *European financial control in the Ottoman empire*, New York, 1929; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Maliyye" (C. V. FINDLEY). For Egypt, see D. LANDES, *Bankers and Pashas: International finance and economic imperialism in Egypt*, Cambridge Mass., 1958. For Tunisia, see M. EMERIT, "Les crises des finances tunisiennes et les origines du protectorat", *Revue Africaine*, 1949, 249-276; J. GANIAGE 1959, 287-312; M. BAYRAM 1884-93, II, 37ff.

² The definitive study of Ahmad Bey's rule is L. C. BROWN 1974. The main contemporary Tunisian source is Ahmad IBN ABĪ AL-DHIYĀF's *Ithāf...*, vols III & IV, which were edited separately (Ahmad ABD AL-SALĀM, *Chapitre VI. Chronique du règne d'Ahmad Bey*). Also see M. BAYRAM 1884-93, I, 136-145, II, 6-9.

³ M. BAYRAM 1884-93, I, 122, 127. On the population in Tunisia in the 19th century, see J. GANIAGE 1959, 146 ff.; *Idem*, "La population de la Tunisie vers 1860, essai d'évaluation d'après les registres fiscaux", *Mélanges Charles-André Julien*, Paris, 1964, 165-198; *Idem*, *La population européenne de Tunis au milieu du XIX^e siècle. Étude démographique*, Paris, 1960; *Idem*, "Les Européens en Tunisie au milieu du XIX^e siècle (1840-1870)", *Cahiers de Tunisie*, 3, 1955, 388-421; L. C. BROWN 1974, 375-378; L. VALENSI 1977, 14 ff.; K. CHATER 1984, 599-602; N. GALLAGHER 1983, 107-113.

⁴ See J. GANIAGE 1959.

Even though several Muslim countries had long-standing European communities prior to the 19th century, very few of their subjects had set foot on European soil, and those who had tended to be there for official reasons, such as envoys, some of whom left accounts of their journeys¹. However, things changed dramatically in the 19th century, when Europe, France in particular, became a popular destination among Muslims as a place of learning, with Egypt sending its first contingent of students to France in 1826. The description of this visit, written by the mission's young *imam*, Rifā a Rāfī al-Tahtāwī (1801-1873), was entitled *Takhlīs al-ibrīz ilā talkhīs Bārīz* ('The Extraction of Pure Gold in the Summary of Paris')² and published in 1834. It was the first in a series of accounts in which Arab - both Muslim and Christian - visitors recorded their impressions on the new Continent³. The changing political relationship with European states also meant a substantial expansion in the number of official delegations and missions, with several Muslim states, including Tunisia, setting up embassies and consulates in Europe⁴.

The travellers

Of the forty-three works written by 19th century Arab visitors to Europe on their experiences, a disproportionately high number are contributed by Tunisian travelers (second only to the seventeen produced by Egyptians)⁵:

¹ See D. NEWMAN 2000; *Idem* 2008a.

² See D. NEWMAN 2004.

³ For a detailed discussion of the *Nahdha* travellers, see D. NEWMAN 2002; *Idem* 2008b.

⁴ See D. NEWMAN 2007.

⁵ See D. NEWMAN 2002. The dates in the list refer to either the publication date or, for works unpublished in the century, the year(s) of travel. Some sources (A. HAMĪDA 1969, 678-684; H. PÉRÈS 1935, 190) mention another work, written by Muhammad IBN UTHMĀN AL-HASHĪ'ISĪHĪ (1855-1912) on the 1900 Paris World Exhibition (which is also the subject of Muhammad IBN AL-KHŪJA's, entitled *Wasf ma radh Bārīs*. However, this is not, in fact, a separate work; rather it consists of a long poem, appended to Muhammad IBN AL-KHŪJA's *Sulūk al-ibrīz fī masālik Bārīs*.

(1) 1845. Ahmad Ibn Abī al-Dhiyāf (d. 1874): *Ithāf ahl al-zamān bi-akhbār mulūk Tūnis wa ahd al-amān* ('Gifts from the People of the Time Regarding News on The Rulers of Tunis and the Fundamental Pact')¹;

(2) 1853. Captain (*sāghqūl-aghāsi*) Murād: *Rihla*²;

(3) 1866. Sulaymān al-Harā'irī (1824-1877), *Ardh al-badhā'i al-āmm bi-Bārīs* ('The Universal Exhibition in Paris')³;

(4) 1867. Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī: *Aqḡam al-masālik fī marīfat ahwāl al-mamālik* ('The Surest Path towards Knowledge about the State of Kingdoms')⁴;

¹ The *rihla* is an account of Ahmad Bey's state visit to France in December 1845. IBN ABĪ AL-DHIYĀF 1963, IV, 96-110. For a detailed discussion, see D. NEWMAN 2008a.

² B. MOKADEM "Une mission tunisienne à Paris (février-mai 1853)", *Revue Africaine*, 90, 1946, 58-98. See IBN ABĪ AL-DHIYĀF, IV, 143.

³ Paris, G. Lousset, Clet et Cie, 6 pp. French trans., *Exposition universelle de Paris. Année 1867*. Imprimerie V. Goupy., 1866. Both Ph. DĪ TARRĀZĪ (1913, I, 119) and H. PĒRĒS (1935, 189) give 1867 as the date of publication, whereas I. ABU-LUGHOD (1963, 73, 79) actually puts the Exhibition in 1866. The text was reprinted in A. KARRŪ 2001, 101-108 (French trans. 109-118).

⁴ Tunis, al-Matba'a al-Rasmiyya. The introduction (pp. 2-89) has been reprinted several times, 1285/1868 (Cairo, n.p.); 1876 (Constantinople, Matba'a al-Jawā'ib); 1299/1881-1882 (Alexandria, n.p., 96 pp.); 1972 (M. AL-SHANNŪFĪ ed., Tunis, MTE); 1978 (M. ZIYĀDA ed., Beirut, Dār al-Talī'a); 1985 (Beirut). To date, only the introduction has been translated: (part.) French trans. supervised by the author, *Réformes nécessaires aux états musulmans. Essai formant la première partie de l'ouvrage politique et statistique intitulé, La plus sûre direction pour connaître l'état des nations*, Paris, P. Dupont, 1868. This was reprinted in 1875 (Saint-Omer, typogr. H. d'Homont; Paris, P. Dupont) and re-edited in 1987 (M. MORSY, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud), with extracts appearing in the *Revue Tunisienne* (no 12, 1896, 501-522). Turkish trans. Ismā'īl HAQQĪ, *Mukaddime-i Akvām el-masālik fī marīfat ul-ahwāl al-memālik*, Constantinople, Matba'a al-Jawā'ib, 1296/1878; English trans., *Necessary reforms of the musliman states. Essay which forms the first part of the political and statistical work entitled 'The surest way to know the state of nations'*, Athens, 1874; L. C. BROWN, *The surest path. The Political Treatise of A Nineteenth-century Muslim Statesman*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1967. Also see D. NEWMAN 2007.

(5) 1884-1886. Muhammad Bayram al-Khāmis al-Tūnisī (1840-1889), *Safwat al-ītibār bi-mustawda al-amsār wa al-aqtār* ('The Best Consideration in The Location of Countries and Regions')¹;

(6) 1882-3. Muhammad al-Sanūsī: *al-Rihla al-Hijāziyya* ('The Journey to the Hijaz')²;

(7) 1888-90. Alī Ibn Sālim al-Wardānī al-Tūnisī (1861-1905): *al-Rihla al-Andalusīyya* ('Journey to al-Andalus')³;

¹ 4 vols, al-Matba'a al-I'lāmiyya, Cairo, 156/148/166/168 pp. H. PĒRĒS (1935-40: 189) has Cairo, 1300/1882-1311/1893, "five tomes in 1 vol", ABU-LUGHOD (1963, 73) claims Cairo, 1884-1886, 5 vols, C. VAN DYKE (*op. cit.*, 414) 5 vols in Cairo in 1305/1887, while M. BENCHENEB (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed., s.v. 'Bayram V') has "6 vols,... in 1302-1303, 1303, 1304, 1311, the sixth volume being devoted to the biography...". According to A. ABDESSELEM (1975: 396) it is 1302-1303/1885 for the first four volumes, and 1311/1893-94 for the fifth. In fact, none is correct. As for the dates; the first three parts were published in 1302/1884-1885, part IV in 1303/1886 (all printed at al-Matba'a al-I'lāmiyya). The author never finished what was to be the fifth and final part of his work. This was published posthumously (Cairo, Matba'a al-Muqtataf) in 1311/1893 by his son, who added a biography of his father (re-edited by A. AL-SHANNŪFĪ, *Tarjamat Muhammad Bayram al-Khāmis fī Safwat al-ītibār bi-mustawda al-amsār wa al-aqtār*, Tunis, 1989). Nusayr mentions the following editions, 5 vols, Matba'a al-Muqtataf, 1885-1893 (1990, 241, No. 9/111); 5 vols, al-Matba'a al-I'lāmiyya, 1892 (241, No. 9/112); al-Matba'a al-I'lāmiyya, 1304/1886 (241, No. 9/113). The parts dealing with Tunisia were the subject of a separate edition, entitled *al-Qutr al-Tūnisī fī Safwat al-ītibār bi-mustawda al-amsār wa al-aqtār*, by A. al-SHANNŪFĪ et al., (Carthage, 1989) whereas there are also two (offset) reprints published by Dār Sādīr (n.d.) in two volumes. In 2005, a re-edited and annotated edition (by A. AL-SHANNŪFĪ) of the entire *Safwa* was published by the Bayt al-Hikma in Tunis.

² ed. by A. AL-SHANNŪFĪ, 3 vols, Tunis, 1976-81. On the author, see A. CHENOUI 1977: 49-109; A. ABDESSELEM 1975: 430-437; D. NEWMAN 1998: 127ff.

³ *al-Hādhirā*, (Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 26, 27, 28, 30, 33, 34, 37, 40, 41, 42, 43, 53, 61, 62, 76, 90, 91, 94). Subsequently, the travelogue was re-edited by Abd al-Jabbār AL-SHARĪF (Tunis, 1984) and by al-Ibbāb AL-AWWĀDĪ (Tunis, 2008). Also see D. NEWMAN 1998: 240-66; N. PARADELA ALONSO 1984, 127-139; H. PĒRĒS 1935, 190; *Idem* 1937, 62-72; H. H. ABD AL-WAHĀB 1966, II, pp. 461-5.

(8) 1891. Muḥammad al-Sanûsî (1850-1900), *al-Istiltâ'ât al-Bârîsiyya fî ma'arad sanat 1889* ('Parisian Curiosities in the Exhibition of 1889')¹;

(9) 1900. Muḥammad Ibn al-Khûja (d. 1325/1907-8), *Sulûk al-ibrîz fî masâlik Bârîz* ('The Paths of Pure Gold in the Roads of Paris')²;

There are a number of points that merit attention with regard to the list. Firstly, the fact that not all works were published at the time: (1) and (6) were edited in the 20th century, whereas (2) has been published only in translation. Secondly, the accounts epitomize the remarkable variety that existed in 19th-century Arab accounts on Europe, with contemplative historical philosophical works dealing with certain aspects of European culture, like Khayr al-Dîn's *Aqwam* alternating with straightforward travelogues in the traditional *Rihla* genre, like al-Wardânî's or Ibn al-Khûja's travel diaries, or a combination of both with elements of human geography thrown in for good measure, an eclectic genre exemplified by Bayram V's *Safwat al-Itibâr*. At the same time, one cannot but observe the *leitmotiv* of didactic intent that runs through all the works. These were not tourists; their aim was to inform and educate.

Thirdly, some of the accounts are included within historical works, as is the case for (1), (4) and (5). It is interesting to note that the section of Khayr al-Dîn's *Aqwam* that deals with Europe (the Introduction) became an almost instant bestseller, and was translated and published in French soon after the release of the original, which was republished several times during the author's lifetime (1868, 1867, 1881). The French translation was personally supervised by Khayr al-Dîn and was clearly intended to be a work in its own right that not only reflected the ideas of the original, but also adapted them for a European audience³.

Fourthly, in line with other Arab travellers, the Tunisians, with the exception of al-Wardânî (who journeyed through Spain), all visited

¹ Tunis, al-Matba'a al-Rasmiyya, 279 p. See D. NEWMAN 1998, 143-86.

² Tunis, al-Matba'a al-Rasmiyya, 89 p. See D. NEWMAN 1998, 200-31.

³ See D. NEWMAN, 2007.

France, with only two of the travellers mentioning other European countries like Italy (al-Sanûsî and Bayram V) and England (Bayram V). Indeed, no account of a journey to Europe was considered complete without a visit to the French metropolis, which came in for high praise from all travellers¹. The fact that Paris in the latter half of the century became a haven for exiles and intellectuals of various nationalities further increased its almost mythical status.

A number of travellers, such as Khayr al-Dîn and Bayram V, were able to rely on lengthy stays and repeated visits to Europe whereas there is the case of the *emigré* Sulaymân al-Harâ'irî², the first Tunisian to experience modern Western civilization as a result of a period of residence in Paris which lasted for nearly twenty years (1858-1877). In addition to a number of translations from French - most notable among them Lhomond's *grammaire française* (1857)³ - and the already mentioned promotional booklet on the 1867 Paris *Exposition Universelle*, al-Harâ'irî wrote several works dealing with a number of practical issues facing Muslims who find themselves in non-Muslim territories, such as the lawfulness of the slaughter (*dhakâ*) performed by Christians⁴ and the permissibility of wearing the European hat⁵.

¹ M. BAYRAM V 1884-93, III, 66; A. IBN ABÎ AL-DHIYÂF 1963: IV, 99.

² See D. NEWMAN 2009; T. AL-ANNÂBÎ 1972; A. KARRÛ 2001, 1-44; H. PÉRÈS 1935, 189; Y. SARKÎS 1924, 746-47; Ph. DÎ TARRÂZÎ 1913, I, 119; J. ZAYDÂN 1957, IV, 214-15; L. SHAYKHÛ 1991, 103-104; Kh. AL-ZIRIKLÎ 1954-9, III, 194; Y. DÂGHIR 1972, III/1, 306; U. KAFHÂLA n.d., IV, 270; M. MAHFÛZ 1982-6, II, 120-1; M. CHIENOUFI 1974, I, 117-125.

³ *Nahw Faransâwî. Grammaire française de Lhomond traduite en Arabe*. The book contained a French preface (32 pp.), an Arabic preface (20 pp.), *Taqârîz* (pp. 21-25), Arabic text (68 pp.), French text (73 pp.). A heavily annotated literal translation of Lhomond's text is followed by an abridged, 'free' translation, in which al-Harâ'irî approached the rules of French grammar from the point of view of Arabic syntax. J. ZAYDÂN, *Op. cit.*, IV, 215; Y. DÂGHIR, *Ibid.*; L. SHAYKHÛ 1991: 104; M. CHIENOUFI, *Ibid.*, 124-125; G. DUGAT, in *Journal Asiatique*, (Oct.-Nov.) 1857, 454-457 (review).

⁴ *Fatwâ fî ibâhat dhakât al-Nasârâ alâ ayy sûra kânat wa akl luhûmihim li raf' al-haraj an al-musâfirîn ilâ bilâdihim wa tashîl mu'âmalâtihim*, Paris, 1860.

⁵ *Ajwibat al-hayârâ an qalansuwwat al-Nasârâ*, Paris, 1862.

Together with Muhammad Bayram V¹, al-Harâ'irî was one of the few authors to deal with these questions, many of which remain as controversial as today as they were then. As Muslim travellers in the 19th century were the first to go to Europe by choice – rather than to reconquer land, or to ransom Muslim prisoners (the usual reasons for travel in previous centuries) –, and even settled there, they could be considered to have migrated to the *Dâr al-Harb* ('The House of War') or *Dâr al-Kufr* ('The House of Unbelievers'), as non-Muslim territories were known. Although the quest for knowledge remained a valid pretext - did not the Prophet, himself, enjoin his followers to 'seek knowledge, even as far as China' (*utlub al-ilm wa law bi al-Sîn*)? -, many authors felt compelled to justify the reasons behind their visits to the lands of the Christians, often relying on religious texts proving the lawfulness of travel, lest their praise of European society should provoke accusations of *tafarnuj* ('Europeanization')². Al-Harâ'irî also ventured into the political arena, with his *Guide de l'Afrique du Nord et de l'Orient*³, which was prefaced to the translation of Lhomond's grammar and is essentially a eulogy for Western education and an attack on traditional Muslim education.

The *rihlat* by al-Sanûsî, Ibn al-Khûja, al-Wardânî and Ibn Abî al-Dhiyâf share a number of characteristics with the traditional exponents of the genre. The coherence in the surface text through linear narrative continuity corresponds to a journey along a linear temporal and spatial continuum, with the traveller appearing as an individual who acts upon his environment, while he is also perceived to be acted upon by it.

Like the classical *rihlât*, those written by the Tunisians may be subdivided into a number of stages. The introduction includes extensive details on the preparation for the journey, and as the infidel Europe is the destination, the purpose of the trip is clearly stated, while several authors examine the lawfulness of travel in religion. As a result, the

¹ Bayram V's *Risâla fî sukânâ dâr al-harb*.

² D. NEWMAN 2001, 2002b.

³ The French text of which was reprinted twice (1857, 1861). This booklet is also reprinted in A. KARRÛ 2001, 119-144. For a detailed discussion, see D. NEWMAN 2009.

reader catches a first glimpse of the imminent alienation of the traveller, who is about to leave his world and enter another, unknown universe. The second stage is that of the actual journey, the early parts of which are discussed in great detail, and the reader is prepared slowly but surely to make his own descent into the new world together with the traveller who visibly intervenes as an individual. In this respect one should also point to the travellers' experiences with the sea, which are every bit as unfavourable as that of their predecessors. The description of the rough seas and travellers' ill health reveals the palpable sense of alienation; the sea as a metaphor for the unknown and unsettling. The alienation reaches its first climax upon landing on European soil.

The third component continues with the journey to the end destination and a description of the stay. The fourth, and final, stage is that of the return journey and the arrival home.

In more ways than one, travel writing involves the construction of memory and identity, the projection of the Other viewed through the prism of the traveler-author. As the distance between the source and destination culture grows, so does, of course, the alienation that is experienced by both the traveler and the reader, who is immersed into the foreign, even if the position is a more comfortable one, devoid as it is of the sensory violence that often accompanies alien encounters. In the case of the 19th-century accounts by Arab Muslim visitors to Europe, the latter were the sole 'possessors' of European modernity as they had gone where hardly any of their coreligionists and compatriots had gone before.

In more ways than one, Tunisian travellers were the main agents in the construction of the collective consciousness in respect of the features of European civilization. At the same time, they did so by exploiting a native tradition. For instance, in terms of the format and language, the 19th-century authors used the same linear non-poetic style that had gained currency among the Arab geographers of the Middle Ages¹, but infused it with new life as the register became a manifestation of modernity, with the factual and informative

¹ See D. NEWMAN 2000.

superseding the ornate and superficial of contemporaneous *belles-lettres*. In fact, the authors reclaimed the Arabic language, which had for centuries become the preserve and symbol of tradition and conservatism, and turned it into a medium fit to deal with the new world.

Nineteenth-century travellers were pilgrims of knowledge, on a quest for modernity. They were attracted by the Europe of new technologies and sciences, of wondrous novelties, all of which were encapsulated by France, or Paris to be more precise, which became like the shrine in the pilgrimage travelogues. An entirely new set of reference points – mnemonics – was constructed, and just as the Hajj journey included a number of obligatory stops, so this modern pilgrimage also had its own itinerary, sights and destination. The pilgrimage metaphor can be extended further, since very soon a European stay (preferably with some education) became the sole criterion or credentials for the modern Muslim.

The fact that travellers felt the need to give their own descriptions of sites already amply charted by their predecessors reveals the traveller as a clear autonomous entity, making his mark; his hitherto latent presence becomes, as it were, actuated through a description of his surroundings, as a result of which he himself in a way becomes part of them, blends in with them. By quoting earlier authors the traveller presents himself as part of a tradition, and is keen to associate himself with his predecessors.

To a lesser or greater extent, the works by 19th century Muslim travellers, both Tunisian and Eastern, all reveal the existence of a multiple polarized Europe, which in many cases also marked a transition in the perception of Europe on the part of the travellers. The authors often lurch from one level to another – from the semi-mythical Europe as the centre of technology and science, of justice and freedom, to the Europe of *ajâ'ib*. In addition, two other levels intersect the metaphoric Europe, i.e. Europe as a mirror to contemporary Islamic society, which is largely bound up with Europe as a monodimensional entity, de-contextualized and extrapolated from its great capitals (esp. Paris) and seats of learning and technology, whose existence was reified by the sheer volume of statistical data.

On a deeper, subtext level there is the Europe which appears as a mirror to itself and to the author, whereby the latter's Self becomes embroiled, and eventually falls in with, the equally monodimensional perception by Europe of itself. As a result, the Other, not content with being a mere object, played an active part in the shaping of the collective perception of its beholders.

The composite memory thus constructed relied on common views of crucial aspects of European society, whether they involved sciences and technological advances, society, the economy, or the political system. Confronted with what can best be described as a Manicheistic view, within which the advanced Western nations were contrasted with the backwardness of Muslim states, the travellers set forth a number of remedies, which, though not always enunciated clearly, varied between 'Muslim reformism' (e.g. Bayram V), 'Muslim secularism' (e.g. Khayr al-Dîn), and outright 'westernization' (e.g. Ibn al-Khûja, al-Harâ'irî).

The way things developed over time sheds some interesting light on the changes in perception, or the deconstruction of memory, if you will, in that the travellers in the early colonial period (al-Sanûsî, Ibn al-Khûja) stripped Europe of the more negative connotations it had acquired, seeking solace in the comfortable, superficial Europe of wonders and novelties. This was in stark contrast to the approach taken by travellers from the East, in whose works their ambiguous attitude towards Europe became ever more palpable as the century wore on.

As far as the Tunisian travellers were concerned, the single biggest contradiction lies, of course, in the fact that this should happen at a time when European colonization was making itself felt in every layer of their native society. And in a number of cases, at least, memory was being re-created by travellers whose links with the French colonizers were very close (as was the case with, for instance, a government official like Ibn al-Khûja), and their mission became to persuade their compatriots to accept all that France had to give. And what better way to do this than to stress the wonders and beneficences of which France was capable, to the exclusion of more fundamental issues such as the separation from the *umma*. Most crucially, this relied on Europe being stripped of its 'Christianness' and, thus, heathenness.

In the end, both sides of the coin invariably collided, with the perceptions created in literature increasingly clashing with the harsh reality of the Other at home, rather than as a construct on the written page.

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Daniel L. NEWMAN
Durham University