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The Dialectic of Historical and Sufi Writing in the Travel Literature of ʿAbd al-Razzaq ibn Ḥammadush al-Jazāʾirī : A Study in the Intersection of Two Discourses and the Aesthetics of the Travel Text

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Abstract

This study examines the dialectic between historiographical writing and Sufi writing within the travel literature of the Algerian scholar and traveller ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Ḥammādūsh al-Jazāʾirī (d. after 1204 AH / 1789 CE). Taking as its primary case study the journey he undertook in 1199 AH / 1785 CE, the study seeks to deconstruct the aesthetic and epistemological interplay between the two discourses, and to show how each contributed to shaping the narrative architecture of the travelogue and orienting its meanings. The significance of this approach lies in its departure from the conventional linear reading of classical Arabic texts: it proposes instead an integrated methodological framework. The travel text of Ibn Ḥammādūsh cannot be fully understood without taking into account its generic hybridity, in which history subordinates itself to the service of Sufism, while Sufism takes geography and history as a stage for its own manifestations. The central hypothesis of this study is that the tension between these two discourses does not lead to a disintegration of the travelogue; rather, it constitutes the source of both its aesthetic energy and its civilizational function.

Keywords: travel literature ; Ibn Ḥammādūsh; historiographical discourse; Sufi discourse; literary genres.

Introduction

In the contemporary critical landscape, travel literature is no longer the marginal literary genre it once was considered — a passing form of descriptive writing — but has emerged as one of the most fertile fields for interdisciplinary inquiry, where historical, geographical, literary, and anthropological frames converge. Within the Arabic travelogue tradition, the Algerian corpus of the Ottoman period occupies a distinctive position in this critical cartography: it stands as a living record of the social, cultural, and political reality experienced by the Regency of Algiers during the twelfth century AH / eighteenth century CE. Among the most conspicuous texts to have come down to us from this period is the riḥla of ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Ḥammādūsh al-Jazāʾirī, Lisān al-Maqāl fī al-Nabaʾ ʿan al-Nasab wa-l-Ḥasab wa-l-Ḥāl (The Tongue of Discourse on Lineage, Nobility, and Condition), a work that fuses historical, mystical, scientific, and literary material within a single textual fabric.

The importance of this text derives from the fact that it occupies a liminal zone between several writing traditions: it is at once the diary of a travelling scholar, the field notebook of an astronomer, physician, and pharmacist, the annals of political events and administrative chronicles, and a Sufi register recording visits, licentiations (ijāzāt), and the merits of shaykhs. This generic plurality raises a complex methodological question: how is it possible to read this text critically in a manner that preserves its unity without impoverishing it by reducing it to a single one of its components? How, within the same page, does the discourse of the witnessing historian enter into dialogue with the discourse of the visiting disciple? This is the central question to which the present study seeks to respond.

Travel literature has long remained an inexhaustible source of historical, geographical, and social information; at the same time it has offered a generous space in which to express personal and spiritual experiences. Muslim travellers have bequeathed to the world precious epistemological treasures through their precise observations and written records, which combined eyewitness description with inner contemplation. This fusion has lifted their texts into multidimensional documents that transcend the narrow boundaries of academic specialization. Such writings have built a bridge between East and West, between past and present, offering living testimonies on the conditions of nations and peoples, on the development of sciences and arts, and on the political and economic transformations that the Islamic lands — and others — have undergone. The significance of travel literature lies not only in the quantity of information it delivers, but in the manner of its delivery, since the author's personal voice intermingles with the historian's objective voice, while the individual perspective overlaps with the collective scene.

At the heart of this rich tradition, a central question arises that takes on particular weight when we study specific texts: how does the historiographical discourse, with its documentary bent, intersect with the Sufi discourse, with its spiritual dimension, within the riḥla texts? The answer to this question is not merely an academic exercise; it is the key to grasping the hybrid and complex nature of this literary genre. The riḥla, by its very nature, is at once a movement through space (geographical transit), a movement through time (the recording of historical events), and — frequently — a movement through the soul (spiritual ascent). The historiographical discourse seeks to fix external truth through observation, description, and verification, whereas the Sufi discourse seeks to explore inner truth through unveiling (kashf), dream-vision (manām), and symbol. When the two discourses meet within a single text, they do not simply lie side by side; they interact and intertwine to create a singular narrative fabric in which the historical event acquires symbolic depth and the spiritual experience acquires a real-world chain of transmission (sanad).

Although the riḥla has received important scholarly attention in the Eastern Arab world (Ibn Jubayr, al-ʿAbdari, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, al-ʿIyāshī), the Algerian riḥla of the Ottoman era has received its due share of modern critical attention only in recent years, through the combined efforts of researchers from the Universities of Mostaganem, Constantine, Khenchela, Sétif, Bordj Bou Arreridj, and Sidi Bel Abbès, who have framed this field through multiple approaches: the reading of history, the analysis of method, the representation of the Other, scientific interests, and generic interpenetration (Baḥrī, 2019, pp. 394–408). The present study draws upon and builds upon this body of work, yet differs from it in one specific direction: it foregrounds the dialectic of the historical and the Sufi discourses as a constitutive problem of the text rather than as a passing phenomenon, and reads literary aesthetics as the mortar that binds the two structures together rather than as something that separates them. The study is grounded in three complementary methods: the socio-historical method for the reconstruction of events and personalities, the textual-analytical method for the study of narrative structures and rhetorical figures, and the comparative method for situating Ibn Ḥammādūsh's text alongside the major works of Maghrebi travel literature such as those of Ibn Jubayr, al-ʿIyāshī, and al-Ghammārī.

The central problematic of this study crystallizes in the following question: how, within the riḥla of Ibn Ḥammādūsh, did two radically different writing structures (a historiographical field-structure and a mystical visionary-structure) actually operate, what is the nature of the dialectical relation between them, and what is the impact of this intersection on the aesthetic value of the text and on its historical credibility? Three sub-questions branch out from this central inquiry: (a) How did Ibn Ḥammādūsh deploy the tools of historiographical writing (eyewitness observation, audition, annalistic documentation, external source-criticism) within a travelogue of fundamentally personal character?

(b) How did he deploy the tools of Sufi writing (karāma, dream-vision, ijāza, allusive indication) within the same text? (c) What makes literary craft (al-ṣanʿa al-adabīya) the common denominator between the two modes, and how does narration, figuration, and intertextuality serve both discourses simultaneously?

1. Travel Literature in the Classical Arabic-Islamic Tradition and the Problem of Genre

1.1. The Concept of Travel Literature

The question of genre classification (tajnīs) has occupied Arab critics from the moment they began to construct a methodological approach to travel literature; for the riḥla is a text that draws upon more than one narrative genre: it borrows from diaries and memoirs, it echoes geographical treatises and country-monographs, it intersects with biographical dictionaries (ṭabaqāt) and hagiographies of the shaykhs, and it admits verse, anecdote, and tale. Genre is a category that brings together a set of texts on the basis of differing criteria (Stalloni, 2014, p. 25). On the one hand, historians count the riḥla among objective histories on account of the political and economic data it accumulates; on the other hand, littérateurs see in it a form of self-narrative close to the literary diary; on yet another hand, scholars inscribe it within "geographical literature" or "travel literature" as an autonomous genre.

As one critical observer has remarked, *"This riḥla contains certain information that neither the historian, the geographer, nor the literary scholar who wishes to study this important period of Islamic life can do without; through it, its author raised this form of literary composition to a high degree."* (Samīra, 2009, p. 44).

It is hardly necessary to note that this problem is not the product of the contemporary critical moment alone; it is in fact an old problem, going back to the moment when Ibn Jubayr marked his riḥla as literary description and to the moment when Ibn Baṭṭūṭa placed his riḥla within the larger histories. Some scholars have gone so far as to consider the riḥla "a particular mode of historical writing among historiographers." Among the definitions of travel literature that have been proposed is the following: "Travel literature is a charming, highly stimulating, and far-ranging literature; the Arabs knew it from old, and indeed the riḥla in the Jāhiliyya (pre-Islamic era) opens this literary type. Our early travellers composed books and itineraries about their travels, and their riḥlas were characterized by the fact that some of them were geographical — like the riḥla of Ibn Faḍlān — others scientific, like that of al-Bīrūnī to India, and others historical, like that of Usāma ibn Munqidh; some were overland, others maritime, and yet others both overland and maritime" (al-Tūnjī, 1999, p. 476). The riḥla thus meets the annals (ḥawālīyāt) in chronological ordering, yet departs from them in that its narrator is a mobile

self that animates the scene through the first-person pronoun, rather than an external voice that assembles reports from a distance.

1.2. Generic Hybridity (al-Hajna al-Ajnāsīya) as an Operative Concept

In this study we propose to handle the term "generic hybridity" (al-hajna al-ajnāsīya) as an operative concept more precise than "interpenetration" (al-tadākhul), since hybridity points to the production of a new fabric woven out of several textures, whereas interpenetration may suggest the persistence of each genre in distinct form within the text. In Ibn Ḥammādūsh's riḥla, what we observe is not the mere succession of historical and mystical passages, but a chemical interaction that produces a third narrative image that cannot be reduced to any one of its original components; this we have chosen to call the dialectical travelogue fabric.

Others have argued that travel literature resists the very operation of genre classification, because it embodies within itself a host of varied literary genres, making it difficult to confine the riḥla within quotation, the maqāma, description, or the historical text, since it includes all of these at once: "The strictness of definition and the rigidity of generic pigeonholing may limit the richness that the riḥla can offer, and its generic classification remains operative only from the perspective of investigating its elements, components, and the mechanisms of writing that produce the imaginary; it is a transformed linguistic text with its own elements and visions, leading us to engage with it as a text open to multiple discourses, which makes the concept of the riḥla — itself a mark of texts known to Arabic literature — remain ambiguous and general in turn" (Ḥulayfī, 2002, p. 39).

What confirms that the travelogue discourse in Arabic literature, before it is an independent genre, is a way of seeing the world distributed across several levels without ever severing the inner threads that connect them. "It may not rise to the level of an autonomous art like fiction, poetry, drama, or the literary essay, but it gathers within itself the styles and subjects of all these arts without being confined by their criteria or subjected to their measures" (Ḥusnī, 1983, p. 9); for travel literature carries within itself numerous historical, geographical, and narrative texts, which makes it varied in subjects and styles.

2. The Historical Context of Algerian Travel Literature before Ibn Ḥammādūsh

The experience of Ibn Ḥammādūsh in the Algerian riḥla cannot be understood without comparison with the earlier experiences of the eleventh century AH / seventeenth century CE. The work Nuzhat al-Mudhākara wa-l-Ashʿī fī Akhbār al-Jazāʾir (The Pleasant Diversion and the Hymns on the News of Algeria), by Aḥmad ibn Abī Dīnār, marks the foundational point, for it established a form of

Algerian historical writing that took its departure from the actual terrain. On another front, Yūsuf ibn Ismāʿīl al-Ghammārī produced, in the same period, short travel texts; then writings from Mostaganem emerged in the late eleventh century AH, representing the historical bridge that carried writing about Algeria from the purely political register to the composite travelogue discourse (Farīda, 2019, pp. 443–466). Strikingly, Ibn Ḥammādūsh absorbed this development quite naturally, adding to it three elements that had not been available to his predecessors: first, the allusive Sufi lexicon that transports the text from the purely political register to a composite spiritual register; second, the literary-descriptive dimension that turns the city into a visual aesthetic object before it is merely a geographical location; and third, annalistic precision in setting dates through the simultaneous use of the Hijri, Julian, agrarian, and Alexandrian calendars.

3. Historiographical Writing in the Travel Texts: Concept and Documentary Function

3.1. Defining Historiographical Writing within the Travel Text

Historiographical writing within the travel text can be defined as that written activity that aims to fix the event in its time and its place and to document it through the historian's tools: eyewitness observation, audition, and citation from written sources. This writing operates within travel texts according to two complementary functions: a witnessing function (shahādī), whereby the traveller presents himself as an eyewitness to events that official historians have either not mentioned or have mentioned from a different angle; and a documentary function, whereby he inserts original texts — contracts, letters, ijāzāt, and poems — into the body of the riḥla, so that the travel text becomes an authentic documentary memory in its own right (Fītīsī, 2023, pp. 501–551).

3.2. The Methodological Tools of Historiographical Writing

The historiographical tools that the travelling scholar deploys are arranged in four principal levels: first, immediate observation (personal witnessing), expressed in formulas such as "I saw" (raʾaytu) and "I attended" (ḥaḍartu); second, audition (al-samāʿ) attributed to its narrator from a shaykh, a scholar, or a merchant ("the trustworthy one informed me" / "I heard from the people of the city"); third, transmitted report (al-takhbar), that is, the transmission of circulated news without direct reception; and fourth, citation from written sources, including the histories of the Mashriq and the Maghrib and the geographical and country-monograph literature. To these four tools Ibn Ḥammādūsh adds the practice of external criticism of transmitted sources; he did not content himself with listing the sources on which he drew, but went further to pass judgment on some of them and to subject them to a sound scholarly critique.

3.3. Visual Documentation and the Precision of Date-Fixing

Ibn Ḥammādūsh is distinguished by an unusually meticulous setting of dates, in that he uses at the same time the Hijri, the Eastern Julian, the agrarian, and sometimes the Alexandrian calendar — and may combine them within a single sentence to confirm the precision of the date in his mind. This careful use of multiple calendars places his text in an advanced position among the Algerian and Maghrebi historical sources of the twelfth century AH, since it offers the modern historian a means of cross-checking the accuracy of events.

Hence, historiographical writing within the travelogue is not mere transmission but a production of composite knowledge that combines the time of observation with the time of writing, and that invests the traveller's geographical location as a unique epistemic site. The function of the "witness" in Ibn Ḥammādūsh's travelogue approaches the function of the field historian in the contemporary echographic school: it does not limit itself to seeing the event, but records the surrounding details of place, time, persons, clothing, and speech.

4. Sufi Writing: Its Visionary and Rhetorical Properties

4.1. The Spiritual Experience as the Center of Meaning

Sufi writing, as an autonomous writing mode, is grounded in a specific conceptual framework that places the spiritual event — not the sensory event — at the center of meaning. In his lexicon, the karāma (charismatic miracle) is a breach of the customary order that confirms the saint's station in people's hearts; the manām (dream-vision) is a divine indication bearing a meaning inaccessible to the senses; the visit (ziyāra) is an act of devotion in quest of blessing (baraka); and the ijāza is an acknowledgment of the legitimacy of connection within the chain of transmission and audition (sanad). The language of this writing is characterized by allusive density (ishārīya): it operates a technical vocabulary (ḥāl, maqām, fatḥ, sirr, dhawq) intelligible only to those who share the experience, which confers on the Sufi text a stratum of meaning closed to all but its initiates.

4.2. The Narrative Structure of Sufi Writing

Whereas in the Sufi tradition the karāma divides into the manifest (visible, sensory) and the inner (a heart-state, invisible), Ibn Ḥammādūsh's travelogue is principally concerned with the manifest karāmāt that he reports from his shaykhs or that he witnesses in their presence. The Sufi narration in this text adopts a clear tripartite narrative structure: a preamble that introduces the saint and enumerates his virtues (manāqib); then the narration of the karāma or vision; and finally a closing in which the narrator commits himself to a confirmatory formula such as "It became verified to me" (fa-

ṣaḥḥa ʿindī) or "It became verified to me beyond all doubt" (fa-ṣaḥḥa ʿindī bimā lā shakka fīhi). This structure differs structurally from the chain of the historical report (isnād, matn, istikhlāṣ), even as it deliberately echoes it.

5. Ibn Ḥammādūsh and the Context of His Scientific, Sufi, and Cultural Journey

5.1. Identification and Lineage of the Traveller

He was Abū ʿAbd Allāh ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥammādūsh al-Jazāʾirī, born in the city of Algiers at the beginning of the twelfth century AH. He grew up in a household of scholars engaged with the Algerian scholarly elite of the Ottoman period. He firmly established his noble lineage (al-nasab al-sharīf) and guarded it carefully, counting it among the comprehensive objectives of Islam (maqāṣid). He missed no occasion to recall his noble lineage, which explains his persistent attachment to the nisba "al-Jazāʾirī," tracing his descent back to Ahl al-Bayt (the Prophet's family) (Dahma, 2026, pp. 77–92).

5.2. His Encyclopedic Scientific Formation

From his youth, Ibn Ḥammādūsh turned toward the natural and experimental sciences such as medicine, astronomy, pharmacology, botany, and the combinations of chemistry; he thus earned the title of encyclopedic scholar (al-ʿālim al-mawsūʿī). He combined his engagement with the experimental sciences with a sustained apprenticeship under the scholars of his time in Algiers, Fez, and Tetouan. He composed works on ʿilm al-blūṭ ("the science of the oak" — i.e. the science of sea-winds), drew navigational charts, initiated the composition of the book Fatḥ al-Mujīb fī ʿIlm al-Takʿīb (The Opening of the Responsive One on the Science of Cubics), and conducted experiments on the firing of cannon projectiles. This encyclopedic personality throws light on the architecture of his travelogue, since he engages the geographical scene with the science of the mathematician, the medicinal plants with the science of the physician-pharmacist, and the shaykhs with the science of the sober Sufi.

5.3. His Sufi Affiliation and His Standing among the Shaykhs

Ibn Ḥammādūsh belonged to the Shādhilī Order, one of the largest and most widespread of the Sufi orders in the Maghreb; he had his shaykhs in this path, from whom he received instruction and by whom his spiritual formation was shaped. Bakkārī has transmitted from Ibn Ḥammādūsh the letter his shaykh Aḥmad al-Warzīzī wrote to the official in charge of tax collection at the port of Tetouan in his defense: "Three qualities were combined in him, each one of which by itself would have obliged you not to bother him at all: first, his lineage: he is a man of noble descent from the Prophet's family;

second, he is a man of learning; and third, the slender means at his disposal." This letter reveals an early consciousness of the values of noble descent, learning, and manliness united in a single person.

5.4. The Riḥla: Its Motivations and Its Course

Ibn Ḥammādūsh's journey set out on "the night of Monday, the first of the year 1156 AH, corresponding to February 1743 CE." Its purpose was the Pilgrimage (Ḥajj) to the Holy House of God by way of the Far Maghreb (al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā). Researchers have pointed out that his second Hijazi riḥla crowned his scientific and spiritual trajectory in the late twelfth century AH (around 1199 AH / 1785 CE), and that the text that has come down to us is the second part of this riḥla, which he wrote on the return from the Pilgrimage. His riḥla took place in a cultural context characterized by the weakening of Ottoman central authority in the Maghrebi provinces, by the activity of the Algerian cultural centers (Algiers, Médéa, Blida) in traditional knowledge, and by the rising influence of the Sufi lodges (zāwiyāt) as institutions parallel to the governmental (makhzan) authority.

Thus Ibn Ḥammādūsh's riḥla is, implicitly, a study of that society at a moment of deep civilizational transition. The riḥla reflects the duality between the political center and the spiritual center: on the one hand, Ibn Ḥammādūsh describes the Deys and the Pashas with accuracy and supplies the dates of their assumption of power and the duration of their tenure; on the other hand, he spends long weeks in the presence of a Sufi shaykh from whom he takes instruction and requests an ijāza. This reflects an important historical reality: that Algerian society in the eighteenth century was not governed by a single stratum, but was composed of a network of powers — divergent and complementary at once.

6. Historiographical Writing in the Riḥla of Ibn Ḥammādūsh

6.1. Political Observation and the Image of Ottoman Rule and the Deys

The political dimension occupies the foreground of the historical layer in Ibn Ḥammādūsh's riḥla. He has recorded in his text "the successive stages of Pasha-rule in Algiers in chronological order according to the duration each Pasha spent in power," thereby presenting what amounts to a historical table that may be relied upon in studying the exercise of authority in the Regency of Algiers. His political observation is not limited to the central state but extends to the provinces and the peripheries; he addresses the relation between the Regency of Algiers and the Far Maghreb, the relation of the western provinces (Oran and Tlemcen) with the center in the capital, and then the relation of the Deys with the local notables in the countryside and the mountains (Baḥrī, 2019, pp. 394–408).

Among the historical narration in the riḥla is Ibn Ḥammādūsh's account of the Sultan's actions after the killing of the Rīfī rebel, where he says: "When the Pasha killed him, he went with his soldiers to

Tangier to bring out the monies and the supplies. When he had gathered what was there and extracted what had been buried, he loaded it onto four hundred mules and three hundred camels of the finest there ... When he wished to dispatch what he had assembled to Fez, he was told that Mawlāy al-Mustaḍīʿ bi-Nūr Allāh was waiting for him with eight thousand horsemen. The Sultan marched out with his troops until he reached Dār al-ʿAbbās ... the two armies met opposite the army of Mawlāy al-Mustaḍīʿ, and they turned their backs at once" (Ibn Ḥammādūsh, 2011, p. 95).

The traveller also recorded "the flight of Ibn Aḥmad al-Rīfī and Muḥammad Bāy al-Tūnisī to Algiers at the same time and their meeting with the people of the Zāwa tribe, the Commander Bissau, and the Dey of Algiers at the time Ibrāhīm Bāshā," and transmitted with eyewitness precision the details of "the Rīfī revolt" in the Far Maghreb, events that some contemporary Maghrebi sources such as al-Istiqṣāʾ of al-Nāṣirī have not mentioned. At the level of foreign relations, Ibn Ḥammādūsh set aside pages to record the Algerian recapture of Oran from the Spanish, the peace agreements with Denmark, and the refusal of the people of Algiers to receive the delegate of the Ottoman Sultan in protest against certain of his policies.

Researchers have noted that this stance reveals "an early awareness of the political independence of the Regency vis-à-vis the Sublime Porte," an awareness that anticipates by far the Moroccan reformist discourse of the thirteenth century AH. His careful observation of diplomatic relations with the European powers (Spain, Denmark, France) shows that Algiers possessed considerable diplomatic capacity, and not merely military capacity — which corrects a stereotypical image that still persists in some Western writings.

6.2. Geographical and Urban Description as Spatial Witnessing

Geographical description in the riḥla constitutes a documentary element no less important than the political description. Researchers have divided his geographical description into three levels: the classificatory level (the naming of cities, tribes, and valleys); the quantitative level (distances, miles, hours of travel); and the impressionistic level (rhetorical descriptions, figures of speech, personal impressions). He describes the city of Fez and likens it to Paradise; he records the distance between cities with the precision of an expert in time-keeping (mīqāt).

A sample of this precise description is his remark on the return journey: *"On Sunday, the twenty-sixth of Ṣafar of the year 1153, corresponding to the tenth of April 1740, I entered Meknès at the noonday hour."* This sentence encapsulates his manner of pairing the Hijri date with the Julian date and occasionally fixing the event by the hour. This chronological precision recurs in the description of

nearly every station of the riḥla, which means that Ibn Ḥammādūsh was carrying a daily notebook in which he recorded everything he saw, heard, and memorized of names, places, and personalities.

This geographical description is not, however, confined to the physical dimensions; it occasionally expands to include aesthetic taste and moral judgment, as in his account of the city of Tetouan or the caravanserais (khānāt) of Meknès, where historical testimony meets literary impression in a single text. This duality makes Ibn Ḥammādūsh's geographical description a form of geographical literature that combines objectivity and subjectivity at once.

6.3. The Documentation of Social and Economic Life

Among the most distinctive features of Ibn Ḥammādūsh's riḥla are the complete documentary texts that he has inserted inside the travelogue narration, foremost among which are the marriage contracts that researchers have counted among "the most important texts documented by Ibn Ḥammādūsh." He included in his riḥla "a marriage contract for a virgin in the presence of notables … the contract was concluded with a blessed dowry amounting to eight hundred Algerian dinars — lawful and good, declared free from any defect; the guardian of the bride received eight and a half ounces of large pearls of first quality (jawhar farat), one [Chinese piece (shinsh)], fourteen individual pearls and twenty-one large pearls and one ornamented piece (musammaṭ)" (Ṣiyām, 2023, pp. 194–206).

These contracts are not merely juridical filler; they constitute a documentary network that reveals the prices, the currencies in circulation such as the Algerian minted coinage (sikka jazāʾirīya), the krone, and the silver real, the types of jewelry worn by Algerian women in the Ottoman period such as the mishrāf, the jawhar, and the munājish, along with the social customs accompanying marriage and wedding banquets. The riḥla has thus become a primary source for the social history of Ottoman Algeria.

Studies have noted that Ibn Ḥammādūsh recorded "the fluctuations of prices in the markets and the religious celebrations such as the Night of Power (Laylat al-Qadr), the Prophet's Birthday (al-Mawlid al-Nabawī), and the closing-reading of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī," thereby presenting a complete picture of everyday life in the cities he visited. This feature lends the text a unique anthropological cast, since it shows how religious festivals and observances would reshape the social and economic space of the city. To this the traveller adds descriptions of agricultural livelihoods (vineyards, olive trees, figs, cereals) and industrial crafts (weaving, pottery, goldsmithing, leather-tanning).

6.4. The Historical Tools of the Narrator: The Limits of Verification and Refutation

In his historical writing, Ibn Ḥammādūsh employs a set of methodological tools that bring him close to the practice of the professional historian, even though he remains in origin a travelling scholar. Among the most conspicuous of these tools are: immediate observation, for he says of himself "I saw" (raʾaytu) and "I attended" (ḥaḍartu), attending the event; audition from the shaykhs and notables, with the chain of transmission attributed to its narrator; and citation from written sources, whether scientific, literary, or religious. It is to be noted that Ibn Ḥammādūsh does not content himself with mentioning the name of the source: he sometimes describes the method of its author and comments on its precision or on its bias.

Ibn Ḥammādūsh studied with his shaykh Ibn Maymūn a number of questions and books in the fields of literature, history, and science, demonstrating a wide range of interests and a depth in their circulation. He says, for example: "On Monday, the eighth of Rabīʿ al-Awwal, corresponding to the ninth of April, my shaykh Ibn Maymūn sent for me; after the afternoon prayer, in his house, until sunset, we reviewed together scientific questions from the literary disciplines and others" (Ibn Ḥammādūsh, 2011, p. 118). And he says in another passage — on the first of Jumādā al-Ūlā of the year 1158: "On the first day of it, I began with my shaykh Ibn Maymūn, in his house, after the reading of the Kardabūs, the eyewitness reading of the questions of Ibn Ḥajja on literature, and it was a Monday corresponding to the twentieth of May (māya). On Sunday, the nineteenth of Jumādā al-Ākhira, corresponding to the seventh of July, I began with my shaykh Ibn Maymūn the reading of the qaṣīda of Mālik ibn al-Murhal — the versification of Faṣīḥ Thaʿlab on linguistics — which is in the rajaz metre, and the number of its verses is one thousand three hundred and odd. On Wednesday, the shaykh — meaning Ibn Maymūn — examined with me al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān" (Ibn Ḥammādūsh, 2011, p. 216).

Ibn Ḥammādūsh was assiduous in visiting his shaykh Ibn Maymūn in order to study a number of books on Islamic history and literature, and each time he mentions a learning episode or his discussion of a particular book, he provides both the Julian and the corresponding Hijri dates. Ibn Ḥammādūsh relied on the Hijri Islamic calendar, and in most cases he mentions alongside it the Eastern Julian or agrarian date, and occasionally also the Alexandrian date. It is to be observed that Ibn Ḥammādūsh handles the three calendars with remarkable precision, never losing himself in converting between them, and on occasion using them within a single sentence to confirm the precision of the date in his mind.

However, the limits of verification and refutation in the historical layer of Ibn Ḥammādūsh's text remain subject to the standards of his age: he accepts the report of the trustworthy shaykh and reserves

the right to withhold assent from what contradicts reason, yet he opens the door wide within the Sufi layer to the breach of the customary (kharaf al-ʿāda), for there the event is subjected to a logic other than that of history. These dual standards do not constitute a methodological inconsistency so much as an intelligent adaptation to the composite nature of the text: when the traveller moves from a political report to a religious one, he formulates the proofs and adjusts the tools of verification in a manner suited to the nature of each report. This may be termed "contextual criticism" (al-naqd al-siyāqī), in which the measure of verification differs according to the nature of the event.

7. Sufi Writing in the Riḥla of Ibn Ḥammādūsh

7.1. The Riḥla as a Spiritual Journey and the Quest for Blessing and Instruction from the Shaykhs

Ibn Ḥammādūsh's riḥla cannot be fully understood until it is grasped as, at its core, a spiritual journey, not merely a geographical transit. The original destination — the Ḥajj — is in the Islamic conception both a sensory and a metaphysical act of worship; the zāwiyāt through which the traveller passes in the cities of the Maghreb are educational stations that carry the wayfarer (sālik) from one state (ḥāl) to another, not merely inns along the road. For this reason, the traveller devotes long pages to mentioning his meetings with the shaykhs and to requesting ijāza from them — not only because these are scholarly procedures but because they are spiritual contracts that link him to the chain of transmitters and shaykhs (Khalīfātī, 2025).

Studies have observed that Ibn Ḥammādūsh "drew a luminous and respectable portrait of the Maghrebi scholars he met, and described them with honorific titles such as al-ʿAllāma al-Naḥīr (the eminent scholar), al-Imām al-Mufṭī (the muftī imam), and al-Walī al-Ṣāliḥ (the saintly friend of God), using them as a mirror of his own scholarly self through the request of ijāza from them." This portrait is not social flattery; it falls within an authentic Sufi ritual, that of tabjīl (veneration), in which every visible shaykh in the presence of the disciple becomes a mirror of divine truth.

Among his remarks on attending his shaykh al-Bannānī's lessons: *"The first day I attended his lesson was after the dawn prayer until sunrise; he taught at the mosque of the zāwiya of Sīdī Aḥmad ibn Nāṣir, and I found him in the book of prayers (al-daʿawāt); his listener was Sīdī al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Būzibʿ al-Tilimsānī. He had a lesson at mid-morning in which he read Sīdī Khalīl in the jurisprudence of Imām Mālik — may God have mercy on him. So I used to attend, and I found him at the end of the vow in his saying: 'Or as a devotional offering (hady) to other than Mecca'; he spoke here on what deflects charitable offerings from the graves of the righteous"* (Ibn Ḥammādūsh, 2011, p. 34). He also says: *"On Monday, I began the construction of a wind-card (kārīṭa) for sea-winds, which is an easy*

geometric procedure: one draws a circle with a pair of compasses without ink, then one draws from each side of its four sides a black line, so that the circle becomes squared lines, then one divides the circle into thirty-two equal parts and draws their lines after making its center a circle and the center of each part likewise, and draws from each to the other a line, which becomes ..." (Ibn Ḥammādūsh, 2011, p. 255).

Visitation (ziyāra) plays a fundamental role in the travelogue, going beyond the mere visiting of places and monuments, for it includes visiting tombs and saints, reciting the Fātiḥa, presenting vows, and sitting in the presence of the shaykh. It is evident that Ibn Ḥammādūsh did not pass by any zāwiya or saint's tomb without entering it and recording what he saw there, which means that the geographical route of the journey coincides with the spiritual route to the point of identity. The traveller's yearning to visit a particular saint becomes itself the engine of the geographical route: the line that connects the cities on the map is therefore not a commercial or diplomatic line but a line of spiritual stations (manāsik).

7.2. The Discourse of Sainthood and Karāma: Its Narrative Fabric and Its Emotional Function

The discourse of sainthood (walāya) and karāma in the riḥla constitutes an integrated narrative system with its own structure: a preamble that establishes the rank of the saint and authenticates him; then the narration of the karāma or vision, focused on the supernatural element (the healing of a sick person, knowledge of the unseen, the vision of light, an answer in a dream); and finally a coda in which the narrator returns to the first-person pronoun to confirm the truth of the transmission or to draw from it a moral benefit. This tripartite structure (authentication — breach of the customary — confirmation or deduction) recurs like a small-scale unit within the text and constitutes an emotional parallel to the structure of the historical report (chain of transmission — content — conclusion).

Although Ibn Ḥammādūsh mostly approaches the reports of karāmāt with the attitude of the trustworthy witness, he does not abandon his scientific sensibility altogether: we find him at times using poetry and literary metaphors to deepen the emotional effect in place of rational verification. Researchers have noted that among the literary images relevant in this context is "his deployment of the figures of Jamil and Buthayna to express his longing for his wife al-Zahrāʾ," which is evidence that the Sufi emotional register widens in his text to admit the traditional amorous-emotional register, so that the yearning for one's family becomes of the same order as the yearning for the Absolute.

It is striking that Ibn Ḥammādūsh also transmits personal dream-visions (his own, not those of others), a phenomenon unique within Algerian travel literature. When we analyze these dream-visions, we discover that they take the form of indications related to the subject preoccupying the traveller at that

moment: he sees the Prophet ﷺ in his dream before meeting an eminent shaykh, sees the Holy House in his dream before arriving in Mecca, and sees signs in his dream that presage political events which indeed come to pass. This gives the dream-visions in his text a dual function: on the one hand, they are a testimony to the sincerity of the traveller's faith; on the other, they are a remarkable narrative technique that shapes the text at the level of plot (ḥabika) and rhythm.

7.3. Sufi Cartographies within the Travel Text and the Networks of Apprenticeship

The riḥla of Ibn Ḥammādūsh can be read as a Sufi cartography parallel to the geographical cartography; each spatial station on the route corresponds to an isnād-station within the network of discipleship. Passing through Fez is not just passing through a political and scholarly capital, but through a center that gathers the threads of the Maghrebi Sufi orders (al-Jazūlīya, the Shādhilīya and its Fasi branches); Meknès is not only the city of Sultan Mawlāy Ismāʿīl and his makhzan, but the home of the masters of ijāza and of the saints of the tombs. Thus the riḥla brings into being within its text what may be called a "geography of the spirit," in which the overland roads between the cities are converted into spiritual paths linked by the saint rather than by the ruler.

Although Ibn Ḥammādūsh met a number of shaykhs in the Far Maghreb and recorded their full titles and the names of their orders, the researchers have noted that the names of the shaykhs cited in the text make it an important source for the history of the Maghrebi Sufi orders in the twelfth century AH. Among the most prominent shaykhs he met were Aḥmad al-Warzīzī, Muḥammad al-Bannānī, and Aḥmad ibn al-ʿArabī ibn al-Ḥājj, who granted him ijāza and from whom he took instruction. Notably, Ibn Ḥammādūsh mentions in certain passages the names of shaykhs that the known biographical dictionaries have not recorded, which means that his text adds to the Maghrebi biographical landscape new information not found in the major sources.

The great biographical value of Ibn Ḥammādūsh's text lies in its documentation of a series of ijāzāt that link the present with the great Maghrebi saints, such as Idrīs ibn Idrīs, al-Jazūlī, and al-Shādhilī. These ijāzāt link the rings of the Sufi chain of transmission and make Ibn Ḥammādūsh's text a witness to the vitality of the Sufi orders in the twelfth century AH.

7.4. The Sufi Lexicon, the Language of Spiritual Experience, and Its Effect on the Shaping of the Text

At the lexical level, the travelogue opens onto a network of Sufi terms which include: ḥāl (state), maqām (station), fatḥ (unveiling), baraka (blessing), idhn (permission), ijāza (licentiation), sirr (secret), dhawq (taste), and uns (intimacy); it also includes the vocabulary of visitation, vision, and

dream. This terminological network shifts the rhythm of the text as it moves from the space of geographical description or contractual documentation, so that the text appears to slow down and to raise its rhetorical register as it draws near to the Sufi gatherings (ḥaḍarāt).

The allusive language occasionally opens out to admit even the traveller's scientific experiences: a plant in the mountains becomes a site of reflection on the signs of God (āyāt Allāh); observing a star becomes a moment of inner knowledge. Within a single lexical register the horizons of the experimental scientist and the gnostic Sufi meet. This intersection between the scientific lexicon and the Sufi lexicon generates what may be called a "tripartite language" (al-lugha al-thalāthīya) in Ibn Ḥammādūsh's text, a language that oscillates between three levels: the religious-legal (Qurʾānic verses and Hadith), the Sufi-allusive (technical terms and symbol), and the scientific-experimental (astronomical and medical terminology).

Researchers have noted that Ibn Ḥammādūsh uses the Sufi lexicon at two distinct levels: a high level that approaches the language of the technical Sufi specialists (the use of the terms fatḥ, maqām, and dhawq in their technical narrowness), and a general level that employs the same terms in their everyday worldly meanings (place as maqām, time as ḥāl, book as uns). This interpenetration of levels is not a defect but a travelogue style: Ibn Ḥammādūsh combines the faithful transmission of Sufi talk and the contemporary pleasure of travelogue writing for a general readership.

8. Literary Aesthetics and the Intersection of the Two Discourses

8.1. Narrative Structure, Storytelling Techniques, and the Variety of Scenes

The riḥla of Ibn Ḥammādūsh is governed by a narrative structure founded on the first-person pronoun, which is present in the three capacities of eyewitness witness, traveller, and disciple at the same time. Researchers have dwelt on the analysis of the "temporal techniques" of this text, observing that it relies on flashback to return to previous events, on summary to compress long stretches of time, and on the densely focalized scene in which narrative time slows down at moments of value (the meeting with a shaykh, the description of a karāma, the entry into a city).

At the level of dialogue, researchers have noted that in the riḥla "we do not find scenic representation in the sense of ordinary dialogue between two persons, and we scarcely find dialogue either between Ibn Ḥammādūsh and one of his shaykhs in the traditional manner … what we find within this framework is the formula 'and I asked' (wa-saʾaltu)," a formula that betrays the dominance of the narrator's individual consciousness and the reduction of the Other — whether shaykh or ruler — to a

narrative function rather than to a fully dimensioned character. This structure distinguishes the classical riḥla from the modern novel.

In general, the narrative structure in Ibn Ḥammādūsh's text rests on three complementary techniques: the technique of the scene at moments of dense description (entering a city, meeting a shaykh, reading a contract); the technique of summary in the rapid transition between events (from one season to another, from one day to another); and the technique of descriptive pause in the review of natural phenomena or major historical events. These three techniques generate a rhythmic narrative fabric that diversifies the text's speed: the reader neither tires from it nor is exhausted by an overlong pause in a single spot.

8.2. Style, Figurative Image, and the Duality of the Lexicon

Stylistic craftsmanship in Ibn Ḥammādūsh's riḥla is visible at the level of figurative image and description; "description has occupied a substantial place in Ibn Ḥammādūsh's riḥla; he has been able to describe numerous aspects of life and to penetrate into their details and particulars." The images range from similes with natural reference (his description of Fez as Paradise and its streams) to moral-laden metaphors such as his remark on the caravanserais of Meknès: "I alighted at a khan as if it were one of the houses of disobedience — or rather, beyond doubt, one of the houses of disobedience: the spectator is not gladdened by it nor the heart comforted; so I withdrew into a chamber and shut my door to keep my loved ones safe, as if I had fallen into a pit."

At the lexical level the riḥla is distributed among three linguistic strata: a historiographical-documentary stratum rich in terms of governance, office, currency, and weights and measures; a Sufi-allusive stratum relying on the terminology of the path, the station, the state, and karāma; and a literary-rhetorical stratum that admits verse, metaphor, and discreet sajʿ. The riḥla succeeds in managing this variety without collapsing into contradiction, thanks to the unifying first-person narrator who moves between the strata and thus preserves the unity of the text.

We have observed that Ibn Ḥammādūsh's artistic lexicon at times takes on a hidden musical quality, in that his phrases are rhythmically balanced and near in cadence, which gives the text a special tone accessible to the reader of eloquent Arabic by ear before it is accessible by reading. This property makes the riḥla suitable for oral delivery as much as for silent reading.

8.3. Intertextuality, Textual Embedding, and Their Rhetorical and Documentary Function

Among the most striking mechanisms of literary aesthetics in the riḥla is the density of intertextuality (al-tanāṣṣ): Ibn Ḥammādūsh's text interweaves with the Qurʾān, the Hadith, Arabic poetry, and

proverbs. Researchers have noted that "Ibn Ḥammādūsh relied on [poetry] extensively, and used it in general, as a heading by which he sought to achieve several aims, most importantly: supporting his sources, and clarifying the historical facts he mentioned by inserting poetic evidence for them."

The functions of intertextuality move in two directions at once: the documentary, in which poetry reinforces a historical report, documents a social event, or attests an academic ijāza; and the literary-aesthetic, in which poetry gives the text rhythm and music that rescue it from the dryness of straightforward report. Thus intertextuality serves both discourses, becoming a tool for bridging the historian and the Sufi within a single person.

In addition to poetic intertextuality, Ibn Ḥammādūsh extensively uses Qurʾānic and Hadith-based intertextuality, and cites Maghrebi and Arabic proverbs in many places of the riḥla. When we examine the distribution of these intertextual categories, we discover that the citation of the Qurʾān is generally reserved for religious and spiritual occasions; that the citation of the Hadith is reserved for juridical and legal reports; that the citation of poetry is reserved for descriptions and impressions; and that the citation of proverbs is reserved for personal judgments and experiences.

8.4. Generic Hybridity, Aesthetic Intersection, and the Effect of Interpenetration on Historical Credibility

What emerges from these inquiries is that Ibn Ḥammādūsh's riḥla represents an advanced model of what may be called "generic hybridity" (al-hajna al-ajnāsīya); it is not pure history, nor pure Sufism, nor pure scientific memoir, but a woven fabric in which every stratum serves the others. The annalistic precision of history lends the Sufi report temporal credibility: a saint's karāma is dated to a known day and a known month and thus anchored to a body of reality rather than to the atmosphere of an unbounded wonder-tale. In the opposite direction, the Sufi tone introduces into historical description the warmth of emotion and of personal presence, so that the event is transferred from the cold setting of an official register to a living human scene.

This interpenetration does not diminish the historical credibility of the text; on the contrary, it may multiply it, for the traveller declares openly the sources of his information and avows his own observation and audition, which makes it easy for the modern researcher to distinguish what is a field report open to verification from what is a vision-event governed by its own logic. The riḥla thus remains both a serious historical source and a profound spiritual testimony and a literary-aesthetic text at the same time — which is the highest that the travelogue in the Arabic tradition can reach.

The apparent opposition between the historical and the Sufi discourses in Ibn Ḥammādūsh's text has raised several key critical questions. First: the nature of the truth that each discourse aims to attain; while the historical discourse seeks to produce the "truth of reality" through documentation and observation, the Sufi discourse seeks to produce the "truth of experience" through karāma and manām. Researchers have noted that Ibn Ḥammādūsh does not pit these two truths against one another but fuses them within a "composite truth" (ḥaqīqa murakkaba) — an encompassing frame in which he sees that the sensory world and the metaeensory realm are both domains of human knowledge.

Second: is the interpenetration of the two discourses within a single text a structural fusion that unifies the text, or is it a dispersal that weakens its architecture? The question is fundamental because some critics hold that any text that gathers multiple genres loses the unity of one genre without acquiring a substitute unity. Ibn Ḥammādūsh's text, however, offers a model that contradicts this hypothesis, since it shows how a text can acquire a new unity through the intersection of textures, so that the "hybrid" becomes the rule rather than the exception.

Third: does the historical discourse, as a rational discourse, conflict with the Sufi discourse, as an allusive discourse, at the level of credibility (al-muṣādaqīya)? The question is delicate because it touches the very basis of the legitimacy of each. Yet the reading of Ibn Ḥammādūsh shows that his credibility is not a single-track credibility but a contextual credibility (al-muṣādaqīya al-siyāqīya): the historical report is measured by the standards of transmission and documentation, the Sufi report is measured by the standards of taste and unveiling, and each is held to be "true" within its own field.

Conclusion

This study has concluded that the text Lisān al-Maqāl fī al-Nabaʾ ʿan al-Nasab wa-l-Ḥasab wa-l-Ḥāl cannot be reduced to a single writing mode. The historical discourse within it operates through rigorous scholarly tools: annalistic documentation doubled by the Hijri, Julian, agrarian, and Alexandrian calendars; citation of sources and their critical examination; incorporation of complete contractual texts; and the observation of the political, social, and economic life of Algeria and the Maghreb in the twelfth century AH. The Sufi discourse within it operates through a parallel system of visitation, karāma, ijāza, and allusive indication, built upon a closed technical lexicon and on a small-scale narrative structure with three moments: authentication, breach of the customary, then confirmation or deduction.

As for the tension between the two discourses, far from producing a fracture within the text, it produces an aesthetic and epistemic energy that has made the riḥla of Ibn Ḥammādūsh a model in which Maghrebi travel literature came to maturity in the modern period. Literary craftsmanship —

through the techniques of narration, the deployment of intertextuality, the shading of the lexicon, and the shaping of the figurative image — has succeeded in serving both discourses at once, so that we cannot imagine one of them apart from the other. The travelogue thus stands as an open critical project that deserves to be pursued further from the angles of reception, anthropology, social history, and linguistics.

Two writing structures of differing reference and method intersect within Ibn Ḥammādūsh's text: the historiographical field-structure and the mystical visionary-structure. The text cannot be read scientifically without acknowledging both structures at once.

Generic hybridity in Ibn Ḥammādūsh's text emerges from the intersection of three narrative textures: the historiographical-documentary, the Sufi-allusive, and the literary-rhetorical. These three textures interweave within a single page and produce what we have termed "the dialectical travelogue fabric".

The tools of Ibn Ḥammādūsh's historiographical writing consist of "immediate observation," "attributed audition," "citation from sources and their criticism," "precision in fixing multiple dates (Hijri, Julian, agrarian, Alexandrian)," and "incorporation of complete documents such as marriage contracts, ijāzāt, and letters."

The tools of his Sufi writing consist of "visitation," "instruction from the shaykhs," "request for ijāza," "narration of karāmāt and dream-visions," and "the operation of an allusive technical lexicon (ḥāl, maqām, fatḥ, dhawq, sirr)."

The literary craftsmanship that unites the two discourses appears in three major narrative techniques: the unifying first-person narrator; the scenes segmented in time and concentrated in rhetoric; and the multi-source intertextuality (Qurʾān, Hadith, poetry, proverbs).

On the anthropological level, the riḥla of Ibn Ḥammādūsh hosts three categories of notables, shaykhs, and places, thereby constituting a detailed cartography of scholarly, Sufi, and political life in Algeria and the Maghreb in the twelfth century AH.

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