

# THE PARADIGM OF THE SPACE IN THE TUNISIAN CULTURAL PRODUCTION BETWEEN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

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*Between the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Aḥmad Bāy, Bayram al-Ḥāmis, Nāṣir Bāy and Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥūḡah, were among the first to travel from Tunisia to Europe. From Tunis, a destination for centuries-old migration, the travelers cross Italy, a land of transition, and France, whose capital is unanimously considered the pinnacle of modern progress. Their constant search in Europe for ‘umrān, that is civilization and urbanisation, makes the conception and the perception of urban space the protagonist of monumental works that fall into the category of travel literature (riḥlah). The concept of ‘umrān is central in the Muqaddimah by Ibn Ḥaldūn, considered here forerunner of the Geocriticism. The 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries works analysed in this paper highlight the various modes by which the encounter with the space of the “Other” takes place.*

## 1. Introduction

In 1949, Fernand Braudel described the Mediterranean as follows: «a thousand things together. It is not one landscape, but numerous landscapes. It is not one sea, but a complex of seas. It is not one civilization, but a number of civilizations, piled one above the other»<sup>1</sup>. The cultures of the Mediterranean area are so deeply connected that they cannot be said to be separate: in this perspective, the distances, the territory and the duration of the journey are reduced; the travel experience becomes ordinary. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the route from the south to the north of the Mediterranean Sea represented an attempt to foray into a foreign world, an exercise to expand one's knowledge. Consequently, the travel experience was perceived as an initiatory practice.

In *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe* Abu Lughod wrote: «Prior to the nineteenth century, Arab interest in the West was almost non-existent. As far as can be determined, between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries only one work appeared in Arabic which depicted the continent of Europe and, that book was rather general and vague»<sup>2</sup>. Apparently, he described a situ-

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<sup>1</sup> F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 4, translated by S. Reynolds, Harper & Row, New York 1972, cit., p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> I. Abu Lughod, *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1963, cit., p. 67.

ation of lack of curiosity on the part of the Arab-Muslim peoples towards Europe, but he continued: «This does not mean that Arabs did not journey to Europe at all during that early period. To the contrary, we know of at least two significant trips during that era. The first was made by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ma‘ni, whose sojourn in Europe lasted the five years between 1613 and 1618. The second traveller was Ilyās Yuḥanna al-Mūṣili, whose trips to Europe and the New World covered a period of about fifteen years, between 1668 and 1683»<sup>3</sup>.

With the opening to modernity, summarised in the definition of *Nahḍah*, the Ottoman Empire began to look at Europe as a reference model: this would have pushed an erudite *élite* towards the territories of the West. The travellers chosen in this research, Aḥmad Bāy (1784-1851), Bayram al-Ḥāmis<sup>4</sup> (1840-1889), Nāṣir Bāy (1855-1922) and Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥūḡah (1869-1943) were among the first to travel from Tunisia to Europe. Their travels do not represent a mere wandering, but the desire to meet and participate in the construction of a bridge over the Mediterranean Sea. Tunisia had been, over the centuries, a privileged area for immigration and intense cultural exchanges. Consequently, it was a territory particularly open to the relationship with otherness.

Monumental works testifying their travels will be analysed in this paper. The conclusions that will be drawn will be essentially two: the emergence of the space of the Other perceived and conceived according to different canons, and the constant search, in Europe, for *‘umrān*, as formulated by Ibn Ḥaldūn, that is civilization, optimal land occupation and, ultimately, urbanisation. The interest in spatiality is not surprising: the spatial history outlined by Michel Foucault<sup>5</sup> recognizes today’s age as *époque de l’espace*<sup>6</sup>: in the 20<sup>th</sup> century spatiality seems to have finally taken over temporality<sup>7</sup>.

Before presenting the actors involved and their relationship with the space of the Other, a first historical excursus will be necessary.

## 2. Before leaving

### 2.1. Brief historical profile of non-indigenous peoples in Tunisia

During the reign of Aḥmad Bāy, a real lobby of Genoese origin was involved in Tunisian affairs: the Tabarkans, gathered around the inspirer of the sover-

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> From now on Bayram V.

<sup>5</sup> M. Foucault, *Des espaces autres*, in Id., *Dits et écrits 1954-1988. IV 1980-1988*, Gallimard, Paris 1994.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 752.

<sup>7</sup> According to Westphal, the start of the revolution in the relationship between space and time coincided with the end of the Second World War and the subsequent collapse of the colonial empires; cf. B. Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, translation by Robert Tally Jr., Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2011.

eign's foreign policy, Giuseppe Raffo, and Bāy's mother, Francesca Rosso, who became the principal adviser to her son<sup>8</sup>. The Genoese presence on the northern coasts of Tunisia had become massive starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was further consolidated with the installation, in the 40s of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, of a settlement on the islet of Ṭabarqah, nominally under the Spanish sovereignty<sup>9</sup>. This settlement was built with military control functions of the coastal routes and was made profitable precisely through the population by Ligurian coral workers employed by a company controlled by the Lomellini family coterie.

The strengthening of the Tunisian monarchy under the Husaynid dynasty and the increasing French pressure contributed, in the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to the islet crisis, accelerated by the lower profitability of coral reefs and by the population growth. A part of the population negotiated, at that time, the transfer to San Pietro island in Sardinia, an area involved in the coastal repopulation programs of the new Savoia monarchy<sup>10</sup>, and gave life to the town of Carloforte in 1738. In 1741 the Tunisians occupied Ṭabarqah and deported the remaining population to Tunis and Algiers. Finally, a group of free Tabarkans who remained in Tunisia, accepted the invitation to rejoin the compatriots of Carloforte, giving birth, in 1770, to the town of Calasetta.

Ṭabarqah's statute of extraterritoriality guaranteed its inhabitants a fair amount of freedom of movement on the Regency<sup>11</sup>. Starting from 1741, the fundamental distinction was between free Tabarkans, members of the community that had formed autonomously on the mainland, and slaves, i.e. the population deported to Tunis after the conquest and demolition of the settlement<sup>12</sup>. Due to the lack of their own sovereign, the Tabarkans' juridical status was equated to that of an indigenous religious minority, *ḍimmī* or *millet*: this guaranteed some rights denied to Europeans subject to consular regime<sup>13</sup>. Many Tabarkans had assumed an important role in the relations between the Regency and the European powers already during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and especially starting from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century: their condition as indigenous Christians encouraged politics to propose them as ideal intermediaries with the other side of the Mediterranean<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> F. Toso, *Tabarchini e tabarchino in Tunisia dopo la diaspora*, in "Bollettino di Studi Sardi", 3 (2010), pp. 43-73.

<sup>9</sup> Tunisia remained in the orbit of the Iberian monarchy from 1535 to 1575.

<sup>10</sup> G. Salice, *L'invenzione della frontiera. Isole, Stato e colonizzazione nel Mediterraneo del Settecento*, in "Ammentu. Bollettino Storico, Archivistico e Consolare del Mediterraneo (ABSAC)", 2 (2012), pp. 93-113.

<sup>11</sup> F. Toso, *Tabarchini e tabarchino in Tunisia dopo la diaspora*, cit., p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Ph. Gourdin, *Tabarka. Histoire et archéologie d'un préside espagnol et d'un comptoir genois en terre africaine (XV-XVIII siècle)*, École française de Rome, Rome 2008.

<sup>13</sup> F. Toso, *Tabarchini e tabarchino in Tunisia dopo la diaspora*, cit., p. 47.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

The period of greatest prestige of the community seems to be the one that goes from 1838 to 1855 under the reign of Aḥmad Bāy, a sovereign particularly open to confrontation with Europe, an advocate of reforms inspired by those of Muḥammad ʿAlī in Egypt and the Ottoman Tanzīmāt model<sup>15</sup>. Alongside the members of the families who had retrained as interpreters and advisers to the local authorities, there was a mass of population that, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, crowded the European suburb of Tunis and mixed with Christians of other nationalities<sup>16</sup>.

According to Ganiage<sup>17</sup> the Maltese were the first to arrive in Tunisia long before the Italians. Undoubtedly, Maltese immigration became massive from 1815 due to misery and unemployment<sup>18</sup>.

Equally early was the arrival in Tunisia of the *grāna*, that is the Jews from Livorno, descendants of Marranos expelled by the Portuguese Inquisition. They had found refuge in Tuscany in 1593. After having established close commercial relations with Tunisia, they established a colony in North Africa. Initially settled in the *Hārah* of Tunis, the Jewish neighbourhood, they began to organise themselves according to their own institutions and went as far as the European suburb where the Christian traders had their activities<sup>19</sup>.

As for Sicily, which was excluded from industrialization processes, compared to the north of the Italian peninsula, it suffered severe problems of overpopulation, in addition to generalised poverty and banditry which had become forms of collective protest<sup>20</sup>.

In addition to economic and social factors, the adoption of the institutional reform program initiated by Aḥmad Bāy and his successors also favoured these migratory flows in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Taking note of the role that France was playing in North Africa after the conquest of Algiers in 1830, Aḥmad Bāy tried on the one hand to assert greater autonomy with respect to the central power of Istanbul, by reorganising the army and the administration of the state<sup>21</sup>, on the other hand, to get closer to European governments,

<sup>15</sup> R. Mantran, *L'évolution des relations entre la Tunisie et l'Empire ottoman du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in "Cahiers de Tunisie", 26-27 (1959), pp. 319-333.

<sup>16</sup> F. Toso, *Tabarchini e tabarchino in Tunisia dopo la diaspora*, p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> J. Ganiage, *Les origines du protectorat français en Tunisie, 1861-1881*, Maison tunisienne de l'édition, Tunis 1968.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>19</sup> P. Sebag, *La hara de Tunis – L'évolution d'un ghetto nord-africain*, Institut des Hautes Études de Tunis, Tunis 1959, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> K. Jerfer, *Siciliens et Maltais en Tunisie aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles. Le cas de la ville de Sousse*, in "Mawarid Revue de la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Sousse", 18, Sousse 2013, p. 161.

<sup>21</sup> Aḥmad Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf, *Iṭḥāf ahl al-zamān fī aḥbār mulūk Tūnis wa 'ahd al-amān*, vol. IV, al-Maṭba'ah al-Rasmiyyah al-tūnisiyyah, Tūnis 1963, pp. 25-49.

by visiting France<sup>22</sup>, participating in the Crimean war alongside the Western powers<sup>23</sup>, abolishing slavery and granting privileges to the Catholic Church<sup>24</sup>.

His successor, Muḥammad Bāy proclaimed, in 1857, the Fundamental Pact which provided, for all non-natives, civil rights, freedom of worship and trade, right to exercise their profession and recognition of the right to real estate<sup>25</sup>.

With the establishment of the Protectorate, however, the increasingly massive naturalisation, encouraged by the colonial authorities, began. In 1956, at the time of independence, the fate of Europeans, whose families had lived in Africa for centuries, was common: they were forced to “repatriate” to a land to which they had never belonged.

## 2.2. *Two sides of the same coin: perception of the East, perception of the West*

In *Branchement. Anthropologie de l'universalité des cultures*, Amselle wrote: «le ressort intime d'une cultures s'exprime dans les autres cultures»<sup>26</sup>. The experience of the *Nahḍah* seems to confirm this statement: the penetration of European cultural models and progress did not become alienation, submission or blind acceptance, but the mean to modernize Islam and to renew its principles. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of profound transformations in the Arab world. The Ottoman Empire, notably weakened both on a military and on an economic level, put in place a process of modernization and set in motion some reforms (*tanẓīmāt*) inspired by the West. Strictly speaking, the *Nahḍah* was the renewal that took place in the literary field from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Arab world and led to the development of printing, translation and the birth of new genres borrowed from European literature. In a broad sense, however, it was a great movement of political, economic, social and cultural change and westernisation that developed mostly in Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon following contacts with Europe starting from Napoleon's expedition.

At the same time, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a progressive and reformist evolution (*iṣlāḥ*), accompanied the renewal of religious thought, especially in Egypt with Ḡamāl al-Dīn al-Afḡānī (1839-1897) and Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905). They proposed a reform of Islam that was neither a servile imitation of the West nor a retrograde application of the Koran, but an attempt to reconcile reason and faith. The deviation towards the culture of the Other became the best way to express the truth of the own

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 92-113.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157-167.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 231-265.

<sup>26</sup> J.L., Amselle, *Branchement. Anthropologie de l'universalité des cultures*, Flammarion, Paris 2005, cit., p. 13.

culture, its interculturality and, therefore, its universality. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Nahḍah* and *iṣlāḥ* mixed since both shared the desires to adapt Islam to the evolution of the world without destroying Muslim values or Arab identity, on the one hand, and to reconcile two complementary perspectives, Muslim and Western, on the other hand.

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the relations between Europe and the Arab world had never been interrupted over the centuries: the two shores of the Mediterranean continuously inhabited each other's imaginations and representations. The weakening of the Ottoman Empire and the expedition of Napoleon paved the way for unprecedented interactions. The invasion by Europe was the source of a profound questioning of identity, which led the East to develop an ambivalent attitude towards the West: attraction and desire for imitation on the one hand and a tendency to protect the tradition on the other hand. In short, this Western domination pushed the Arab-Muslim world to consider Europe, at times mythologized, as its other side of the coin<sup>27</sup>.

In 1813, Muḥammad 'Alī's started to send students to France: he aspired to the formation of an Arab *élite* according to the model of the European civilization. In this context, Rifā'ah Rāfī' al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801-1873) was one of the first participant in a study mission in Paris. Ṭaḥṭāwī published in 1834, *Taḥlīṣ al-ibrīz fī talḥīṣ Bārīz*, translated as *L'or de Paris*, a modern account of his five-year stay in Paris. While firmly rejecting the atheism of the French, he advocated a reform of Islam based on reason, explicitly hoping for a return to the rationalist spirit of the Abbasid caliphs at the time of the *Bayt al-Hikmah*<sup>28</sup>. After Ṭaḥṭāwī's experience, the journey to Europe became an essential step in the process of education of the *élite*: especially in Egypt, most of the first modern novels were travel reports<sup>29</sup>.

If in *Orientalism*<sup>30</sup>, Said described a situation of hegemony of the West over the East that concretized in a set of hegemonic discourses, representations and practices linked to the historical position of domination, the perspective can be reversed: between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, also the Arab-Muslim world perceived and constructed the West, giving birth to the phenomenon of the "Occidentalism". Among the various approaches to this topic<sup>31</sup>, in *Occidentalisms in the Arab World*<sup>32</sup>, Woltering analysed a large corpus of non-fictional texts published in Egypt from the late 1700s until the

<sup>27</sup> Abdallah Laroui, *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine: essai critique*, François Maspero, Paris 1967.

<sup>28</sup> Taḥṭāwī, *L'or de Paris. Relation de voyage. 1826-1831*, traduit par A. Louca, Sindbad, Paris 1988, p. 52.

<sup>29</sup> Taha Hussein, *Adib ou l'aventure occidentale*, traduit par A. Moënis, Éditions Clancier Guenaud, Paris 1988; T. El Hakim, *L'oiseau d'Orient*, traduit par G. Wiet, Nouvelles Éditions Latines, Paris 1960.

<sup>30</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism*, Pantheon Books, New York 1978.

<sup>31</sup> I. Buruma; A. Margalit, *Occidentalism. A Short History of Anti-Westernism*, Atlantic Books, London 2004.

contemporary period. He studied the texts chronologically and contextualised them historically, focusing on the images in which the West has taken the place of the typical Other.

The title of the work is indicative: the noun “Occidentalisms” is in the plural because «images are subjective and therefore diverse»<sup>33</sup>. He identified five Occidentalisms in Egyptian thought. The first one he calls the “Benign West”, which is filled with admiration for the West because of its association with progress, human development, science, technology, equality and democracy<sup>34</sup>. The second Occidentalism is the “Malign West”, or the West as «seen from the perspective of Egyptians under English-dominated rule»<sup>35</sup>, but the author also specifies that during the British occupation, animosity was directed at Great Britain, «not against the West or Europe in general»<sup>36</sup>. The third Occidentalism is the «Weak West, the ‘West as being in decline’ and standing in contrast to a notion of Western supremacy»<sup>37</sup>. The fifth Occidentalism is the “True West” which recognizes negative aspects of the West such as imperialism and appeals to the writings of French philosophers, constitutionalism, progress, and the ideal of democracy and equality<sup>38</sup>.

Regarding the fourth Occidentalism, that is the “Appropriated West”, it includes «the admirable qualities of the West as hailing from the Self, which often involves an historical argument»<sup>39</sup>. In this Occidentalism, the West is «portrayed as Islamic (or Arabic) in origin», or as being a part of Islam as practiced by non-Muslim. Woltering notes that this Occidentalism «denies that any identity-alterity logic is at play in the Self’s relation towards the West»<sup>40</sup>. It does not allow pointing at the West as an Other.

In *L’Or de Paris*, Ṭaḥṭāwī proposed the analysis of the causes that led to the decline of Islam: the rise of religious sciences would have curbed curiosity for the secular sciences: «Les pays islamiques ont excellé dans les sciences juridico-religieuses [...] mais on négligé la totalité des sciences profanes; ils ont ainsi recours aux pays étrangers afin d’apprendre ce qu’ils ignorent et de d’acquérir ce qu’ils ne savent pas fabriquer»<sup>41</sup>. But in the name of universal and shared rationality, Ṭaḥṭāwī claimed the Muslim footprint of European knowledge, arguing that the Western character of modernity, scientific and technical, was a recent development. Indeed, Islam was the

<sup>32</sup> R. Woltering, *Occidentalism in the Arab World. Ideology and Images of the West in the Egyptian Media*, I.B. Tauris & Co. LTD, London-New York 2011.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>41</sup> Ṭaḥṭāwī, *L’or de Paris*, cit., p. 51.

main precursor of rationality, so much so that the French themselves recognized it: «Ils reconnaissent que nous étions leurs maîtres en toutes sciences et que nous avons la priorité sur eux»<sup>42</sup>.

This line of argument therefore falls within the fourth Occidentalism, the “Appropriated West” described by Woltering, which is «the presentation of the admirable qualities of the West as hailing from the Self»<sup>43</sup>, because «all the Western science can eventually also be found in the Quran [...] What is good in the West is not foreign to oneself: it is to be found in Islam, and often it is even extracted from Islam»<sup>44</sup>.

In short, starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and after the consolidation of Western domination in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Arab world began to consider the West as its main Other in a constantly binary relationship. The texts examined in this paper make evident the arduous attempt made by the Arab travellers and the Tunisian *élite* to modernise their culture because of a strong fascination with the West without betraying their own tradition. These travellers and their works, written with the intention of getting to know Europeans, overcome the dichotomy East-West and replace it with the West-Modernity paradigm and it is through this binom that they look at Europe and at themselves.

### 2.3. *The protagonists and the sources involved*

Apparently, urbanism was born, as an autonomous discipline, in the Western world with the first founding text<sup>45</sup>, the *Teoria general de la urbanización* by the Spanish architect Cerdà (1816-1876) who presented himself as the creator of a new science of which he had found no trace<sup>46</sup>. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he tried to understand the meaning of contemporary cities referring to their history: «l’histoire de l’urbanisation est l’histoire de l’homme»<sup>47</sup>. Actually, the study of the city space and its relation with the history and the society, can be traced back to Ibn Ḥaldūn (1332-1406): he thoroughly studied the city, underlining that after its constitution it generates the decline of a civilization.

Ibn Ḥaldūn’s thought focused on the concept of *‘umrān*, that is progress, civilization and development. It was taken up by the members of the Tunisian reform movement and adapted to the context of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. But if on the one hand, modern reformers made extensive use of the notion of *‘umrān* and the political philosophy by Ibn Ḥaldūn, on the other hand

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>43</sup> R. Woltering, *Occidentalism in the Arab World*, cit., p. 84.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>45</sup> F. Choay, *L’urbanisme, utopies et réalités, une anthologie*, Seuil, Paris 1965, p. 448.

<sup>46</sup> I.F., Cerdà, *La théorie générale de l’urbanisation*, Seuil, Paris 1979, p. 73.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.



the European contribution was constant. Entering modernity meant adopting the capitalist production and the urbanisation of the Western societies as a reference system, an expression of progress.

The works that will be analysed in this paper focus on the travel experiences of four great exponents of the reform movement: Aḥmad Bāy, Bayram V, Nāṣir Bāy and Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥūḡah. Specifically, for Aḥmad Bāy's trip to Paris, reference will be made to the fourth volume of the work *Ithāf ahl al-zamān fī aḥbār mulūk Tūnis wa 'ahd al-amān*<sup>48</sup> (Presenting Contemporaries the History of Rulers of Tunis and the Fundamental Pact) by Aḥmad Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf (1802-1874), court historian of the Bāy. Bayram V, on the other hand, left us his monumental work that combines geographical syntheses and personal observations: *Ṣafwat al-i'tibār bi-mustawda' al-amṣār wa 'l-aqtār* (The best of the Cities and Nations of the World)<sup>49</sup>. The third part of the first volume is entirely dedicated to his trip to Italy and France. As for the journey of Nāṣir Bāy, we will refer to the work *al-Rihlah al-nāṣiriyyah bi 'l-diyār al-faransāwiyyah* (Nāṣir's Journey through France) by Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥūḡah<sup>50</sup>. The latter also made several trips to France and left us another work: *Sulūk al-ibriz fī masālik Bāriz* (Threads of Gold in the Streets of Paris)<sup>51</sup>.

A wise diplomat, Aḥmad Bāy visited France without consulting the Ottoman central power. After the conquests of Algiers and Constantine in 1830 and 1837 and the acquisition of Tripoli in 1835, the Ottoman power had begun to feel the pressure on the borders. Aḥmad Bāy started to entertain cordial relations with the enemies of the Muslim establishment, apparently sketching a reversal of alliances.

On his trip to France, he was accompanied by the court historian and trusted official, Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf. He was born into a prominent family from the *Awlād 'Un* tribe<sup>52</sup>: his father was an important scribe for the ruling regime. Trained thoroughly in the traditional religious studies, Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf entered government service in 1827. He was soon promoted to the post of private secretary, a position he held under successive beys until his death<sup>53</sup>. His ma-

<sup>48</sup> Aḥmad Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf, *Ithāf ahl al-zamān*, vol. IV, cit.

<sup>49</sup> Muḥammad Bayram al-Ḥāmis, *Ṣafwat al-i'tibār bi-mustawda' al-amṣār wa 'l-aqtār*, voll. I-IV, al-Maṭba'ah al-'ilāmiyyah, al-Qāhirah 1885; vol. V., al-Muqtaṭaf, al-Qāhirah 1894.

<sup>50</sup> Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥūḡah, *al-Rihlah al-nāṣiriyyah bi 'l-diyār al-faransāwiyyah*, al-Maṭba'ah al-Rasmiyyah al-Tūnisiyyah, Tūnis 1913.

<sup>51</sup> Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥūḡah, *Sulūk al-ibriz fī masālik Bāriz*, al-Maṭba'ah al-Rasmiyyah al-tūnisiyyah, Tūnis 1900.

<sup>52</sup> M. Oualdi, *Ibn Abī 'l-Ḍiyāf*, in *EF*<sup>3</sup>, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_ei3-COM\\_30662](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3-COM_30662) (last accessed 27/05/2022).

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf rendered his official services under Ḥusayn Bāy (1824-1835), Muṣṭafā Bāy (1835-1837), Aḥmad Bāy, Muḥammad Bāy (1855-1859), and Ṣādiq Bāy (1859-1882). Cf. L.C. Brown, *The religious establishment in Husainid*

jour work, *Ithāf ahl al-zamān fī aḥbār mulūk Tūnis wa 'ahd al-amān*, is a chronicle in eight volumes. The first six books address Tunisian history from the arrival of the Muslim Arabs forward. The volumes give biographical information of the Husainid sovereigns and detailed accounts of internal and social politics. The last two volumes contain over 400 biographies of leading statesmen and religious figures who died between the years 1783 and 1872.

Bayram V was an important reformist linked to the modernising ideas of Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Afġānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh. He was in fact spokesperson for the policy of the minister Ḥayr al-Dīn. He was born in 1840 from a lineage of great *'ulamā'* who played a leading role at the Zaytūnah University, such as his great-grandfather Muḥammad Bayram II, his grandfather Muḥammad Bayram III and his uncle Muḥammad Bayram IV. Bayram V became spokesman for the reformist policy of the Minister Ḥayr al-Dīn: he supported the intellectual affiliation to the reformists, distinguishing himself from his uncle and his colleagues in the religious establishment, opposed to the Fundamental Pact in 1857 and to the Constitution in 1861. He was appointed chairman of the property administration commission, then head of the Tunisian Official Gazette "al-Rā'id al-tūnisī". In 1875 he also presided over a commission that approved the creation of the *madrasah al-Ṣādiqiyyah*, dedicated to the study of religious knowledge and exact sciences. Suffering from a nervous disease, which he could not cure in Tunis, Bayram V left for Italy in November 1875. After the collapse of Ḥayr al-Dīn's government in 1877, he left Tunis for good in October 1879 and he intensified his travels to Europe Italy, France, England, Serbia, Greece, Austria, Germany. Eventually he settled in Cairo, where he wrote his work. *Ṣafwat al-i'tibār bi-mustawda' al-amṣār wa 'l-aqtār* by Bayram V is a 5-volume treatise on universal history. The first book is divided into three chapters (*abwāb*), which respectively talk about the journey in general, the journey outside the *dār al-Islām* and the division of the Earth into five parts (Asia, Europe, Africa, America, Australia). Each continent is described from a geographical, historical and political point of view. The second volume is dedicated to Tunisia, its government and its history. The third volume concerns Italy and France. The fourth book talks about Algeria, England, Malta and Egypt. In the fifth book Bayram V talks about Hiġāz and his journey to Mecca to make the pilgrimage. The work ends with his *tarġamah* in which he collects his experiences and the characters he met during his travels.

Nāṣir Bāy was the son of Muḥammad Bāy who had promulgated the "Fundamental Pact" in 1857. He symbolically took the reins of power<sup>54</sup> in 1896. His trip to France was not an innovation: he felt that a trip to Paris, the center of power that managed the Regency as a Protectorate, was among his

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*Tunisia*, in N.R. Keddie (ed.), *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis. Muslim Religious Institutions since 1500*, University of California, Berkeley 1972, p. 47.

<sup>54</sup> Tunisia was a Protectorate since 1881.

duties. He left ignoring popular discontent: in 1911 there was the first great nationalist revolt and in 1912 the boycott of the tram by the Tunisian population took place.

Ibn al-Ḥūḡah was a Tunisian of Turkish origin. He belonged to a lineage of ‘*ulamā*’, but his figure was overshadowed because of his collaboration with the French government. He studied at the *madrasah al-Ṣādiqiyyah* founded by Ḥayr al-Dīn in 1875. Then he started working for the colonial government as an interpreter. Since 1900 he directed the official Tunisian printing house, between 1914 and 1920 he held the position of director of the Protocol of the Court of Tunis, and participated in numerous official missions, as a representative of the Muslim politics of France. He is one of the founders of the *Ḥaldūniyyah* school, opened in Tunis in 1896. The text of his work *Sulūk al-ibrīz fī masālik Bārīz* is divided into *rasā’il*, since, as the author explains, it was serialised in the newspaper “al-Ḥāḍirah”<sup>55</sup>.

These works can be inserted into the category of the travel literature (*adab al-riḥlah*), adapted according to the needs of modern society. This was a well-established genre in Arabic literature:

The origin of Arabic travel literature can be found in the ninth century within the group of people involved in shipping trade with India and China. At the beginning this literature had as its main purpose to popularize knowledge about India and China and deliver necessary information which was needed in order to establish and develop stable trade relations with these countries. However, a century later one can observe evolution of this ‘documentary’ literature, i.e., works contain descriptions of routes, cities, inhabitants and important events towards literary fiction<sup>56</sup>.

Between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the journeys are made to Europe, but the authors mentioned above still offer as much information as possible on the country visited, its history, its geographical position, its government, its legal and economic system, its social conditions. On the one hand, the purpose of their works seems to be the same as that of *adab al-riḥlah*, that is to show what they saw in the places visited, on the other hand, the authors try to make the public participate in the modernity of Europe. Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf, Bayram V and Ibn al-Ḥūḡah put at the center of their works the European space as a model of progress and urbanisation (‘*umrān*’).

Since the concept of ‘*umrān*’ by Ibn Ḥaldūn is taken up to the bitter end, it will be necessary to trace the fundamental lines of his thought expressed in the *Muqaddimah*.

<sup>55</sup> Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥūḡah, *Sulūk al-ibrīz fī masālik Bārīz*, cit., p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> M. Kowalska, *From Facts to Literary Fiction. Medieval Arabic Travel Literature*, in “Quaderni di Studi Arabi”, 5/6 (1987), p. 397.

3. *First stop: the birth of urbanism. Ibn Ḥaldūn forerunner of the geocriticism*

In the *Muqaddimah*<sup>57</sup>, Ibn Ḥaldūn developed a grandiose reconstruction of the origin and the development of human civilization in which the bedouin-sedentary dichotomy plays a fundamental role. The author warns quite explicitly that his work has no other object than the discernment of the ‘*umrān*’<sup>58</sup>. The concept can be reinterpreted according to the principles of urbanism that originated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the translation of the term is still problematic, however, if one wishes to approach the study of the *Muqaddimah* in a new way, ‘*umrān*’ can be compared to the concept of “urbanisation” of the modern era.

For Ibn Ḥaldūn, the notion of ‘*umrān*’ is a new and independent science<sup>59</sup> that attempts to grasp the meaning of history. He defines this new science in the following way:

It should be known that history, in matter of fact, is information about human social organization [*al-iğtimā’ al-insānī*], which itself is identical with world civilization [*‘umrān al-‘ālam*]. It deals with such conditions affecting the nature of civilization [*‘umrān*] as, for instance, savagery [*al-tawahḥuṣ*] and sociability [*al-ta’annus*], group feelings [*al-‘aṣabiyyāt*], and the different ways by which one group of human beings achieves superiority over another. It deals with royal authority and the dynasties that result in this manner and with the various ranks that exist within them. Also with the different kinds of gainful occupations and ways of making a living [*al-ma’āṣ*], with the sciences and crafts that human beings pursue as part of their activities and efforts, and with all the other institutions that originate in civilization [*‘umrān*] through its very nature<sup>60</sup>.

Thus, the term ‘*umrān*’ designates in Ibn Ḥaldūn’s work both demographic and economic problems, as well as social, political and cultural activities. The author traces the etymology of the term by combining it with the concepts of inhabited place, but also culture, prosperity, civilization: in short, the whole semantic field that covers the meanings of development and growth<sup>61</sup>. In his terminology, it is central and represents the product of socio-economic, demographic and urban evolution whose dynamics are oriented by human needs.

<sup>57</sup> In this contribution I will refer to both the original Arabic text and Rosenthal’s English translation. Cf. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, al-Maktabah al-aṣriyyah, Bayrūt 2000; Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima. An Introduction to History*, translated by F. Rosenthal, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2005. Specifically, the quotations are from the English translation. When deemed necessary, I put the Arabic words in square brackets in order to support my discourse.

<sup>58</sup> Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, cit., p. 12. Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, cit., pp. 53-54.

<sup>59</sup> Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, cit., p. 42. Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, cit., p. 94.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89. Cf. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, cit., p. 40.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12. Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, cit., p. 54.

According to Ibn Ḥaldūn, all citizens have rural origins and the transition from one type of civilization to another occurs gradually. Two extreme phases, in fact, mark the transformation of civilization: rural civilization (*'umrān badawī*) and urban civilization (*'umrān ḥaḍarī*), both would be historically linked to two different types of production and socio-economic factors<sup>62</sup>. Living in the city (*tamaddun*) is synonymous with civilization and it is inseparable from the government:

Dynasties and royal authority are absolutely necessary for the building of cities and the planning of towns. Then, when the town has been built and is all finished, as the builder saw fit and as the climatic and geographical conditions required, the life of the dynasty is the life of the town. If the dynasty is of short duration, life in the town will stop at the end of the dynasty. Its civilization will recede, and the town will fall into ruins. On the other hand, if the dynasty is of long duration and lasts a long time, new constructions will always go up in the town, the number of large mansions will increase, and the walls of the town will extend farther and farther<sup>63</sup>.

According to Ibn Ḥaldūn: «Dynasties are prior to towns [*mudun*] and cities [*amṣār*]. Towns and cities are secondary products of royal authority»<sup>64</sup>. He concludes: «human social organisation is something necessary. It is the thing that is meant by 'the civilization' [*'umrān*] which we have been discussing. [People] in any social organisation must have someone who exercises a restraining influence and rules them and to whom recourse may be had»<sup>65</sup>.

Since the city is a political space, the evolution of the city always follows the government: «We have found out with regard to civilization that, when a dynasty disintegrates and crumbles, the civilization [*'umrān*] of the city that is the seat of the ruler also crumbles and in this process often suffers complete ruin»<sup>66</sup>. To fully understand the relation between city and politics, it is necessary to understand the organisation of the cities (*amṣār*) and their relationship with the social classes (*al-ḡāh*):

Ranks are widely distributed among people, and there are various levels of rank [*al-ḡāh*] among them [...]. The existence and persistence of the human species can materialize only through the co-operation of all men in behalf of what is good for them. It has been established that a single human being could not fully exist by himself, and even if, hypothetically, it might happen as a rare exception, his existence would be precarious [...]. Each class among

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<sup>62</sup> Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, cit., pp. 137-139. Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, cit., pp. 163-164.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 400-401. Cf. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, cit., p. 377.

<sup>64</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, cit., p. 400. Cf. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, cit., p. 377.

<sup>65</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, cit., p. 391. Cf. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, cit., p. 343.

<sup>66</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, cit., p. 435. Cf. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, cit., pp. 347-348.

the inhabitants of a town or zone of civilization has power over the classes lower than itself. Each member of a lower class seeks the support of rank from members of the next higher class, and those who gain it become more active among the people under their control in proportion to the profit they get out of it<sup>67</sup>.

Each class of people in the urbanisation process exercises power over the lower classes. Ibn Ḥaldūn's epistemology is based on a unitary vision of the universe in which things are perceived simultaneously in a physical and metaphysical way: «It should be known that the things that come into being in the world of existing things, whether they belong to essences or to either human or animal actions, require appropriate causes which are prior to (their existence) [...]. Each one of these causes, in turn, comes into being and, thus, requires other causes. Causes continue to follow upon causes in an ascending order, until they reach the Causer of causes, Him who brings them into existence and creates them»<sup>68</sup>. The universe, with its hierarchy of simple and complex elements, follows a natural bottom-up order, so that everything becomes an inseparable union with the existence. The consciousness of oneself, of the government and of the universe is called ' *umrān al- 'ālam*, a universal urbanisation or civilization.

The foundation of a city must be in harmony with the laws that structure the entire universe. Thus, Muslim urbanization «in its most general form, holds its character both realistic and spiritual: it meets material requirements but never separates them from requirements of a higher order»<sup>69</sup>. In this organic vision of the city, space becomes a system in which places can no longer be defined independently of each other: each place no longer has any existence or identity to itself, but only in relation to others and to the whole<sup>70</sup>. Places can always be juxtaposed, but always in relation to the overall configuration: each place can be conceived as part of a larger whole, nested in turn in another whole, until the entire space is found.

This organic view is opposed to urban thinking currently dominated by the mechanism which is essentially based on the Cartesian principle of divisibility, at the origin of Newtonian mechanics. It leads to represent the space through a set of juxtaposed places, each of them with its own identity. The resulting absolute space is a pure container, a neutral and universal substrate, previously endowed with purely geometric properties and ready to receive in every place a content that will give it new properties<sup>71</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, cit., pp. 457-458. Cf. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, cit., p. 362.

<sup>68</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima*, cit., p. 516. Cf. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, cit., p. 441

<sup>69</sup> T. Burckhardt, *L'art de l'Islam, langage et signification*, Sindbad, Paris 1985, p. 263.

<sup>70</sup> A. Bailly et al., *Economica*, Paris 1995, p. 40.

<sup>71</sup> P.H. Derycke et al., *Penser la ville théories et modèles*, *Economica*, Paris 1996, p. 21.

Instead, Ibn Ḥaldūn's view, together with the sense of the *Muqaddimah*, that is the triple engine of spatiality, historicity, sociality, seem to anticipate what will be the methodology of investigation introduced by Lefebvre's: he argued that space, especially social and urban space, «emerged in all its diversity and with a structure far more reminiscent of flaky mille-feuille pastry than of the homogeneous and isotropic space of classical (Euclidean/ Cartesian) mathematics»<sup>72</sup>. Space, therefore, can be stratified, each layer is made up of its own unity of composition and is organised as a function of another layer. He proposed to analyze how power, history and social practices transform space. According to Lefebvre, the terms of this trial are *espace perçu*, a space perceived mentally; *espace conçu*, the conceived space; *espace vécu*, lived space, crossed by images and symbols that the individual imagination modifies<sup>73</sup>. In an organicistic sense understood in the manner of Ibn Ḥaldūn, the city thus becomes significant and repository of symbolism and social wisdom. Almost all medieval Islamic cities have in common the spatial expression of spiritual essence<sup>74</sup>: they are a lived-in place (*vécu*), perceived (*perçu*) and conceived (*conçu*)<sup>75</sup>. Indeed, the city is always an image of the whole, its shape indicates how man fits into the universe. Referring to Ibn Ḥaldūn's view about the civilization, the travel experiences of the Tunisian reformers in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, together with the approach to the space of the Other, represent a conception of spatial reality in a trialeptic sense, thus arriving at what Augé will define as an anthropological place<sup>76</sup>. As will be seen, the travellers not only described and analysed the urban spaces, but also peoples, social practices and governments.

#### 4. Second stop: the European space for the Tunisian travellers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

In the writings of the Tunisian reformists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there are many references to the *'umrān* and to the historical evolution of the cities by Ibn Ḥaldūn, but the contribution of Europe, understood and readapted in Islamic terms, is constant. Their line of thinking coincides with the first Occidentalism, the «Benign West» postulated by Woltering<sup>77</sup>: a liberal and constitutional system of power is borrowed from Europe. An administration based

<sup>72</sup> B. Westphal, *Geocriticism*, cit., p. 57.

<sup>73</sup> H. Lefebvre, *La Production de l'Espace*, Anthropos, Paris 1974.

<sup>74</sup> Ch. Delfante, J. Pelletier, *Villes et urbanisme dans le monde*, A. Colin, Paris, 2000, p. 121.

<sup>75</sup> Ph. Lagopoulos, *Urbanisme et sémiotique dans les sociétés pré-industrielles*, Anthropos, Paris 1995, p. 354.

<sup>76</sup> M. Augé, *Nonluoghi. Introduzione a una antropologia della surmodernità*, traduzione di D. Rolland, C. Milani, Elèuthera, Milano 2009.

<sup>77</sup> R. Woltering, *Occidentalism in the Arab World. Ideology and Images of the West in the Egyptian Media*, pp. 81-82.

on the customs of the nation (*idārah ‘alā qānūn ma‘lūm muwāfiq li-‘ādāt al-ummah*)<sup>78</sup>, and the reform of the laws (*iṣlāḥ al-qānūnīn*)<sup>79</sup>, guarantee personal rights (*ḥuqūq al-nās*)<sup>80</sup>, security (*amān*)<sup>81</sup>, justice (*‘adālah*)<sup>82</sup>, and generate progress and civilization (*‘umrān*) in Europe. But this borrowing is made compatible with the socio-historical and juridical-religious foundations of Islam which comes into play with a fundamental role because it represents a unifying factor.

The doctrine of progress (*‘umrān*) by Ibn Ḥaldūn, plays a fundamental role: it goes on to indicate the degree of urbanisation understood as a new system of values, a movement towards renewal and, ultimately, the best way to operate bringing Ottoman society towards economic and technical development. The 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries works analysed in this paper highlight the various modes by which the encounter with the space of the “Other” takes place. The travel reports from the modern era are conceived as essays or as reportages in which the personal emotions aroused by places and by landscapes are reduced to a minimum. The description of reality is as objective as possible. The authors focus on all those aspects that can direct the Arab nation towards a correct development, that is everything that pertains to the political, social and economic reality<sup>83</sup>. The places that arouse the greatest interest are factories, hospitals, offices and libraries: all those places that can make a nation great. They do not go in search of the past, but they try to grasp the essence of modern Western civilization and to understand the secrets of the progress that can allow the Arab countries to emerge from decadence<sup>84</sup>.

In *Histoire de Tunis*<sup>85</sup>, Marcel reconstructed the French adventure in the Aḥmad Bāy’s imagination when he saw the coasts of the Regency disappear: «Lorsque, du vaisseau qui l’emportait loin de Tunis, Ahmed Pachà avait vu disparaître les côtes de l’Afrique, il s’était écrié: “Les princes musulmans, en allant dans l’Arabie, visiter les villes saintes (*Hamaréyn*), aspirent à obtenir

<sup>78</sup> Muḥammad Bayram al-Ḥāmis, *Ṣafwatal-i ‘tibār bi-mustawda‘ al-amṣār wa al-aqtār*, vol. I, cit., p. 101.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>83</sup> M. Avino, *Impressioni europee di viaggiatori siro-libanesi all'alba del XX secolo*, in “La rivista di Arablit”, VI, 11 (2016), pp. 6-7, [http://larivistadiarablit.it/riviste/articoli\\_rivista/impressioni-europee-di-viaggiatori-siro-libanesi-allalba-del-xx-secolo-2/](http://larivistadiarablit.it/riviste/articoli_rivista/impressioni-europee-di-viaggiatori-siro-libanesi-allalba-del-xx-secolo-2/).

<sup>84</sup> M. Avino, *Due viaggiatori siriani nell'Italia fascista: Ṣafīq Ġabrī e Sāmī al-Kayyālī*, in “La rivista di Arablit”, IV, 7-8 (2014), pp. 26-27, [http://larivistadiarablit.it/riviste/articoli\\_rivista/due-viaggiatori-siriani-nellitalia-fascista-limmagine-dellitalia-e-degli-italiani-nei-diari-di-viaggio-dei-siriani-safiq-%c7%a7abri-e-sami-al-kayyali/](http://larivistadiarablit.it/riviste/articoli_rivista/due-viaggiatori-siriani-nellitalia-fascista-limmagine-dellitalia-e-degli-italiani-nei-diari-di-viaggio-dei-siriani-safiq-%c7%a7abri-e-sami-al-kayyali/).

<sup>85</sup> J.J. Marcel, *Histoire de Tunis; précédée d'une description de cette régence par le D. Louis Frank*, Firmin Didot Frères Editeurs, Paris 1851, pp. 213-214.



le titre de pèlerin de la Mecque (*hadjy*); moi, je serais le premier qui ait été visiter les terres des Francs pour mériter le titre de pèlerin de la civilisation européenne (*hadjy frandjy*)”<sup>86</sup>.

According to these words, before Aḥmad Bāy went to France, the trajectories of Arab travellers pointed to the East, that is, the pilgrimage sites and he would have been the first to head to the northern shores of the Mediterranean in 1846. Furthermore, in *The Muslim discovery of Europe*, Bernard Lewis wrote: «In the Muslim, and particularly the Arab lands, the cities offered an infinite variety of types, enriched by returning travelers, visitors, slaves, and merchants coming from the far lands of Asia, Africa, and even Europe. The appearance of men with outlandish costumes and unfamiliar features aroused no curiosity in the great metropolises of the Middle East, where such were commonplace»<sup>87</sup>. To partially disprove Lewis’s words, more recent studies highlighted journeys undertaken not only within the *Dār al-Islām*, but also in the West and the reasons were both diplomatic and private<sup>88</sup>.

However, Aḥmad Bāy’s travel experience created a precedent for the Ottoman court. Furthermore, the keyword of the lines written by Marcel in 1851 is “pilgrim”: in 2002, Newman stated that the journey to the West became a sort of metaphor for pilgrimage, not as an obligation for everyone, but certainly for those who wanted to cover a role in the modern Arab society<sup>89</sup>. The historian Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf reports that the Sovereign confided to his collaborators: «no member of our dynasty has ever left the Regency by sea»<sup>90</sup>. He left driven by love for his country: «God knows that the love of my subjects and my Regency demands that I face dangers to ensure their safety. We endure the pains of the journey to ensure the peace of their territories»<sup>91</sup>.

Aḥmad Bāy’s mother, Francesca Rosso, was a prisoner deported with her mother and sister during the 1798 attack by the privateers of Tunis from Saint Peter Island (§2.1.). Maḥmūd Bāy, Aḥmad Bāy’s grandfather, took care of the captive family, educated his two daughters and married his son to one of them. In a sense, Bāy’s mother belonged to both sides of the Mediterranean and represented a link between two cultures and civilizations. After he made the decision to leave for France, the Sovereign worried about obtaining his mother’s consent: «My mother has only me. Since no member of our family has ever left the Regency by sea. I think my journey may worry

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 213-214.

<sup>87</sup> B. Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, Norton, New York 1982, p. 299.

<sup>88</sup> H. Kilpatrick, *Between Ibn Baḡḡūta and al-Ṭaḡḡāwī: Arabic Travel Accounts of the Early Ottoman Period*, in “Middle Eastern Literatures”, 11 (2008), pp. 233-248.

<sup>89</sup> D. Newman, *Myths and Realities in Muslim Alterist Discourse: Arab Travellers in Europe in the Age of the Nahda (19th c.)*, in “Chronos”, 6 (2002), p. 32.

<sup>90</sup> Aḥmad Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf, *Iḡḡāf ahl al-zamān fī aḡḡbār mulūk Tūnis wa ‘ahd al-amān*, vol. IV, cit., p. 93.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

her. I cannot enjoy what worries her»<sup>92</sup>. Aḥmad Bāy asked his minister, Muṣṭafā Ṣāḥib al-Ṭaba', to intercede with her<sup>93</sup>. The Sovereign embarked at La Goulette in November 1846, aboard the *Dante*, a small steamer offered by Louis Philippe. The Sovereign was accompanied by a large retinue formed by the Prime Minister Muṣṭafā Ḥaznadār, the Minister of War Muṣṭafā Āgā, the historian Ibn Abī Diyāf, the Foreign Minister Giuseppe Raffo, the Captain Ḥassūnah al-Mūrālī, the regular army guards and the French consul de Lagou<sup>94</sup>. After a four-day crossing, the Bāy arrived in Toulon, where he was received by the civil and military authorities, in November 1846. He moved to Paris the following day and came back to Tunisia a month and eight days later.

Bayram V left in November 1875 on the Italian ship *Foria*. At the beginning of the third volume of his work, Bayram explained that the trip to Europe was strongly recommended to him by the medical staff: «when my nervous illness worsened in the summer of 1292 in the Hegira [...] the doctors advised me to travel to Europe»<sup>95</sup>. Bayram V then embarked at La Goulette equipped with a passport written in French since: «if you leave for a French city [the passport] is written in French, if you leave for a Muslim one [the passport] is written in Arabic»<sup>96</sup>. He left with two servants, one of them spoke Italian, French, German and Arabic.

In 1912, Nāṣir Bāy went to France at the invitation of the President of the French Republic, Armand Fallières, who had visited the Regency of Tunis in April 1911 to inaugurate the high school that was to bear his name. Nāṣir Bāy, realising that he had just symbolic and formal sovereignty, sought to cultivate relationships of solidarity with the men of the French power. Then, he accepted the invitation to attend the celebrations of July 14<sup>th</sup> in Paris.

For the Tunisian *élite*, these trips had become an act of belonging to the establishment, an opportunity to meet those who held colonial power: the journey of Nāṣir Bāy was born from the concern to meet the leaders, the «possessor of the Kingdom of Tunis»<sup>97</sup>. The Sovereign was accompanied by his sons, Munṣif and Hāṣimī, who led a delegation of ten collaborators, including the general secretary for judicial affairs, the influential Jean-Bapiste-Bernard Roy. Given the state of the sea that prohibited boarding at the port of La Goulette, in July, the Bāy took the train to Bizerte where he boarded

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>95</sup> Muḥammad Bayram al-Ḥāmis, *Ṣafwat al-i'tibār bi-mustawda' al-amṣār wa 'l-aqtār*, vol. I, cit., p. 3.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥūgah, *al-Rihlah al-nāṣiriyyah bi 'l-diyār al-faransāwiyyah*, cit., p. 2.

the *Victor Hugo*, offered him by the French government<sup>98</sup>. Nāṣir Bāy reached Paris by train, after a short stay in Toulon where he visited the port of Mourillon and the arsenal.

As Ibn al-Ḥūḡah lets understand, the aim of this visit to the fulcrum of French naval power was to show the power of the French metropolis and to consolidate the legitimacy of the Protectorate<sup>99</sup>. On this occasion, Ibn al-Ḥūḡah accompanied the Sovereign to Paris, but this was not his first trip to France: he had left Tunis for the first time on 10 September 1900 to reach Marseille first and then Avignon, Montpellier and Lyon<sup>100</sup>. Finally, he had gone to Paris to visit the Universal Exposition of 1900. Moreover, he had gone to Paris a second time with Hādī Bāy in 1904.

Compared to Aḥmad Bāy's trip to France, Franco-Tunisian relations had changed at the time of Nāṣir Bāy's trip. The geo-history, in fact, had already been outlined as described by Edward Said in *Orientalism*: a centre of hegemonic power (Europe) had placed itself in an unequal way to an ideological and symboli ḡ sed periphery (the East). Observing the East and the West «as both geographical and cultural entities»<sup>101</sup> which are man-made, Said seems to recall Lefebvre's epistemology (§3.). The space in question is not *espace vecu*, but *conçu*, and orientalism affects the spatial representations that preside over certain attitudes towards the place, the culture and the "other" people. This concept therefore designates the non-neutral way of relating to the East implemented by a West that defines itself through a contrastive relationship with otherness. Orientalism is therefore not an abstraction, but a tangible political and cultural phenomenon with boundless territorial ambitions<sup>102</sup>. The territory of the "Other" becomes rigid, subject to the authority of the Orientalists. Defined in its immutability, the East thus becomes «less a place than a *topos*»<sup>103</sup>, or even what de Certeau calls «non-place»<sup>104</sup>, that is an erosion created within the space by the imposition of oneself to create a space without identity<sup>105</sup>.

In the experience of the travellers examined here, in the constant search for social and urban *'umrān*, the space of the Other is *perçu*, perceived in everyday life. Through the different social forms, space is produced and reproduced: «la pratique spatiale d'une société se découvre en déchiffrant son espace»<sup>106</sup>. From the negative de Certeau's «non-place», the arrival to the

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>100</sup> Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥūḡah, *Sulūk al-ibrīz fī masālik Bārīz*, cit., p. 15.

<sup>101</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism*, cit., p. 5.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>104</sup> M. de Certeau, *L'invenzione del quotidiano*, traduzione di M. Baccianini, Edizioni Lavoro, Roma 2001, pp. 175-177.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>106</sup> H. Lefebvre, *La Production de l'Espace*, cit., p. 48.

territory of the Other translates into the entrance to the «anthropological place» formulated by Augé<sup>107</sup>: a concrete and symbolic construction that, at the same time, makes an “other” space intelligible to the non-native observer and gives meaning to the “own” place in the eyes of the native. Ultimately, the spaces of Europe do not appear indistinct, large and insidious, but highly significant. The forms and the spaces of the Other are filled with meaning.

If Aḥmad Bāy’s and Nāṣir Bāy’s travels were limited to France alone, Bayram V travelled extensively in Europe: he went to Italy three times, in 1875, 1881 and 1887. He travelled to France, England, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Serbia, Greece. Italy represented the favourite stop on his European itinerary: Bayram V visited the whole country and his travels allowed him to compare the North and the South. He had often been in Livorno as a guest of General Ḥusayn<sup>108</sup>. He went to the thermal baths of Montecatini<sup>109</sup>. He went to Pisa where he visited the Leaning Tower and the Cemetery whose land had been brought during the Crusades from Jerusalem<sup>110</sup>. He went to Milan on his second trip, in 1881 on the occasion of the National Exhibition of Industry and Art. According to him, Milan was «the most beautiful city in Italy»<sup>111</sup>. But the beauty the author talks about is linked to the urban reality, the commerce and the industries: he talks very little about the Milanese countryside. What is gleaned from his work is that the strength of a nation is measured by its industries and trade. At that time, Milan was becoming the economic capital of Italy, getting closer and closer to the more industrialized European cities. Bayram’s work shows that he considered Italy among the last powers after France, Great Britain in terms of industrialisation, but «the Italians are making every effort to reach the level of the most advanced peoples»<sup>112</sup>. Italy, from his point of view, could represent, for the Arab world, a more accessible model than other European countries or, at least, an intermediate bridge between two realities considered at its ends.

In this paper, only four cities have been selected, Cagliari, Naples, Rome and Paris. The first three are arranged in chronological order with respect to the trips made by Bayram V. On the other hand, Paris, the stage of all four travellers, has been inserted last: the aim is to show a crescendo in terms of progress and urbanisation starting from what is considered by Bayram V the most devoid of ‘*umrān* and *tamaddun*, Cagliari, to arrive in Paris, considered by all to be the culmination of civilization. The Italian reality was complex

<sup>107</sup> M. Augé, *Nonluoghi*, cit., p. 78-81.

<sup>108</sup> In Livorno there was a consular office.

<sup>109</sup> Muḥammad Bayram al-Ḥāmis, *Ṣafwat al-i‘tibār bi-mustawda‘ al-amṣār wa ‘l-aqtār*, vol. I, p. 27.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

compared to the European context. In those years the country was in fact divided in two: northern Italy had almost reached the level of urbanisation and industrialisation of other European countries, while southern and central Italy represented the first phase of a growth process. From Sardinia to Rome, the space represents the primordial phase of the «Benign West»: it is a space perceived in the urbanisation process that gradually becomes larger.

Paris is the other side of the coin in terms of progress. From the authors' accounts, it is clear that France staged its power in the Universal Exhibitions held in Paris. Bayram V and Ibn al-Ḥūğah participated in the exhibitions in 1878 and 1900 respectively. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, colonialism had begun to show its face and Europe had begun to characterize itself as the «Malign West». However, Ibn al-Ḥūğah worked for the French government. Bayram V, on the other hand, had a very clear idea of colonialism and recognized the contradictions of France which was adopting different measures inside and outside its borders. Particularly in Tunisia, France was taking actions that would have been unacceptable in Europe<sup>113</sup>.

#### 4.1. Cagliari

While noting the importance of the port traffic, a driving force for the export of salt, fruit and vegetables, Bayram V's first impression of Cagliari was: «Then I saw the mountains that surrounded us, most of which were arid, without vegetation. Their appearance was hostile, mostly devoid of civilization [*umrān*], because urbanization [*tamaddun*] has not spread to that Island»<sup>114</sup>. Not impressed therefore by the city, the author continued: «most of the streets are narrow, the buildings are in European style, but do not exceed four floors. It is a city that stands on the mountain, its streets are all paved [...]. The steep roads were tiring to see and tackle. You can see ropes stretched between the houses, from one top of the street to the other one, which are used to hang on the freshly done laundry»<sup>115</sup>.

Bayram V described the different aspects of the city: its public garden animated on Sundays and public holidays by a military clique, its hotels of several floors, its modest squares, its cafes and its business premises. What attracts his attention, however, were the elements of the urban space that represented signs of progress for him, such as the railway under construction, the hospital, the schools, the printing houses and the four newspapers: «there are a hospital and schools where the principles of the arts are taught. There are printing houses, and about four daily newspapers. However, the air of the city is unhealthy: fevers abound in the summer due to its proximity to a

<sup>113</sup> Muḥammad Bayram al-Ḥāmis, *Ṣafwat al-i'tibār bi-mustawda' al-amṣār wa'l-aqtār*, vol. I, p. 150.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

swamp [...] a railway has begun to extend from this city, which is in the southwest of this rectangular-shaped island, to the north-east»<sup>116</sup>.

Introducing the Sardinian society, Bayram V specified: «the population of the country is divided into two parts. The notables and foreigners were dressed in European style. The rest of the inhabitants of the countryside and villages wear sheepskin. The dress code provides for bodice and trousers reminiscent of Tunisian ones [...]. The women dress like European ones, but in an impure form and most of them wear wooden clogs [*kubkab*]»<sup>117</sup>.

Between the lack of civilisation recognized by Bayram V and the clothing matched to that of Tunisia, the author seemed to suggest that he saw Sardinia as a transition region between Europe and North Africa. The arrival in Cagliari was for Bayram V the entrance to an anthropological place: people symbolized the space they occupy. The territory was barren and scarcely urbanised. The housing units were recognizable and delimited by the laundry hanging between the houses. The places of culture and progress were few and delimited. The sparsely urbanised space corresponded to a population that maintained tradition through the dress code and entered into a relationship with a wild nature. It seems that the space devoid of civilisation gave identity to the people who lived it intensely and harmonized with each other.

The question of clothing is recurrent in Bayram V's work: for the author, the dress code identified a lifestyle. Alongside women, food and the way of life, clothing is a literary *topos* that harks back to the work of Ṭahtāwī<sup>118</sup>. Bayram V will resume the topic of clothing in his travel report to Naples where he was annoyed by having to move in a carriage because his clothes attracted crowds of onlookers<sup>119</sup>. Even in Rome his clothes aroused so much interest that they ended up in national newspapers<sup>120</sup>.

#### 4.2. Naples

The port of Naples appeared in the eyes of Bayram V «much more important than the port of Cagliari, but much less frequented»<sup>121</sup>. The author was very impressed by the main street of the city and by the buildings that stood there: «his most beautiful and joyful street is Via Toledo, wide to the right and left with very tall buildings, and at the bottom there are shops of elegant items and antiques, and near it you can see Via della Posta and Via del Duomo, then a new street called Foredo, wider and more elegant than the others»<sup>122</sup>.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> Tahtāwī, *L'or de Paris*, p. 119.

<sup>119</sup> Muḥammad Bayram al-Ḥāmis, *Ṣafwat al-i'tibār bi-mustawda' al-amṣār wa 'l-aqtār*, vol. I, p. 8.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

The author proceeded with the description of the main attractions: the ancient Certosa di San Martino, the Capodimonte castle, transformed into a museum, and the San Carlo theater. As for the latter, the author regretted its closure, since the proceeds could no longer cover his expenses, despite having a capacity of 1,500 spectators<sup>123</sup>. As happened for Cagliari, what aroused his interest were those he considered the symbols of progress, that is the great hospital and the quality of its services. The author also pointed out the visits of good people to the sick, to help and support them:

The hospital does everything the sick need. They choose the care of the hospital because it is more efficient and less expensive than their homes, especially when it comes to supervising everything that has to do with medicines [...] the rooms of the patients in hospitals are more sanitized and cleaner than public places. Each patient can remain in his small room suitable for the environment, so that all the movements of the hospitals are as much in accordance with the needs of medical judgment. In addition, hospital expenses are of various types: there are those that the government takes care of, those charged to the municipal council, and those remitted to people's charity. This is the same in every part of Europe: they accept the charity of anyone, even tourists<sup>124</sup>.

In the same vein of researching spaces synonymous with progress, the University, with its various departments and its rich library, also attracted his attention:

The House of Arts is called the Università di Napoli, and the arts of medicine, law, politics, commerce, chemistry, pharmacology, architecture, astronomy, algebra, interviewing, geometry, dimensions and weightlifting are taught there. Each art has a department and teachers. There is a place for the bodies of animals, most of which are known: from humans to flies, from insects to marine animals. But they are all dead, without meat or anything else, but they are preserved with an original appearance: their skin is made of plant materials and painted in accordance with the original appearance of the living animal. The eyes are made of glass and the viewer sees it as if it is still alive. There are countless of them like this. There is a book, printed in the city itself that deals with these animals and their translations<sup>125</sup>.

When Bayram V visited Naples, the city had undergone an important urban transformation which led to the construction of the wide roads described by the author. In fact, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after a cholera epidemic, numerous buildings and monuments were demolished, new neighbourhoods were built and today's arteries of Via Duomo, Via Francesco Caracciolo and Viale Gramsci were opened. This event coincided with the birth of a dy-

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

namic cultural and social environment<sup>126</sup>. In Naples, Bayram V realized the trialectic link between power, history and social practices. Furthermore, the author noted the relationship between a growing urbanisation process and a renewed cultural activity. The author's surprise in front of the hospital, the artistic sites and the university is significant: an advanced state apparatus must take care of the health of citizens and must strive for the education of the people.

### 4.3. Rome

Upon arriving in Rome, Bayram V visited the city. He estimated that «it is a city with a large population of about three hundred thousand people, and they are more civilized than those of Naples»<sup>127</sup>. In support of this «all its streets are paved and clean»<sup>128</sup>. Bayram V highlighted the remains of antiquity and in particular the Colosseum, «a great place of distraction, in ruins, similar to that of Pompei»<sup>129</sup>. He was fascinated by the Basilica of San Pietro which he mistakenly called “San Paolo”, he described its slender figure in the Baroque style, he admired the domes and the mosaics. Then he described the Papal State: «one of the largest royal palaces, with its 1,200 rooms, and one of the richest Italian libraries, including many manuscripts written in ancient languages»<sup>130</sup>.

He was informed that the Pope intended to receive him, but he apologised, under the pretext of resuming the journey. Bayram V wanted to avoid meeting the Pope, since «whoever enters is obliged to honor him as kings are honored, indeed, kings of Christians pay homage to him as if he were their king»<sup>131</sup>. Bayram V believed, however, that nothing prohibited visits to churches, since, starting from the unification of Italy, tourists were exempted from any religious practice in places of worship. In this case, one could visit churches as well as palaces. Bayram V took note of this principle of tolerance and stated: «Since the Sardinian-Piedmontese kingdom took over all the kingdoms of Italy and allowed freedom even in religions, inside the churches one must not practice one's own rite as before, but one must not do anything that contradicts the religion. It is as if he is looking into a palace, but he must not cause any insult. The Muslim enjoys security, entering his monuments, he must not cause any damage»<sup>132</sup>.

<sup>126</sup> F. Barbagallo, *Napoli Belle époque*, Laterza Editori, Roma 2015, p. 5.

<sup>127</sup> Muḥammad Bayram al-Ḥāmis, *Ṣafwat al-i'tibār bi-mustawda' al-amṣār wa'l-aqtār*, vol. I, cit., p. 15.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*



What seemed to impress him most was his participation in a session of the Italian parliament in which the deputies criticised the government and questioned its financial management, in the presence of journalists:

It happened to witness a financial dispute. The finance minister presented to the Council that the Government's incomes are not sufficient compared to the expenses, and to modify it an increase in incomes is necessary. The Government believed that the most appropriate way was to raise the weapons tax. So, there was a dispute about the origin of the increase of the expenses, and the most fierce opponents were the deputies of Sicily [...] journalists were sitting and noting everything was said<sup>133</sup>.

This lesson of direct democracy was supposed to impress Bayram V, while he was in favour of the establishment, in Tunisia, of a constitutional regime. As happened in Naples, also in Rome Bayram V realized the link between power and social practices. As a reformer, he recognized the importance of a state apparatus that was concerned with guaranteeing democracy. Furthermore, the author felt free to enter the church without necessarily having to practice Christian worship. This shows that for Bayram V the opposition between the East and the West was not based in any way on the religion. The author knew that the difference between two faiths really existed, but one did not exclude the other. The contrast between the two worlds was based on economic-political factors that also affected the course of history and the organization of society.

#### 4.4. Paris

In Ṭahtāwī's *L'Or de Paris* the whole of France was represented by Paris<sup>134</sup>. The travellers examined here, however, visited and described other French cities, especially Toulon and Marseille.

Toulon was, as part of Aḥmad Bāy's journey, only a stage towards the French capital. However, Toulon represented the starting point for the discovery of a country that was industrialising, developing its agriculture, modernising its army and promoting its interests in artistic creations. «The traveller who takes the road from Toulon to Paris perceives the meaning of urbanisation [*ʿumrān*], the image of progress, in the fields of civilization and the consequences of peace and security. You can hardly find an inactive site: there are growers or ranchers everywhere [...]. The traveller on that road would like the distance to be longer, to enjoy the road, the buildings, the trees, the meadows, the rivers, and the many passers-by of all kinds»<sup>135</sup>.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

<sup>134</sup> Tahtāwī, *L'or de Paris*, cit., p. 19.

<sup>135</sup> Aḥmad Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf, *Ithāf ahl al-zamān fī aḥbār mulūk Tūnis wa ʿahd al-amān*, vol. IV, cit., p. 99.

Thus, we find the concept of *'umrān* understood as formulated by Ibn Ḥaldūn, that is optimal occupation of the land, population and urban civilization. The word is updated, adapted to the context of the time, namely the development of agricultural and industrial activities.

Paris is the city of the revolution of 1789, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also the capital of a colonial empire. These factors, albeit antagonistic, combined to mark the history of Paris in its relationship with the rest of the world, the Arab world in this specific case. In *Le Paris Arabe*, the authors specify: «Cette histoire met en relation des générations et des destins croisés qui ont fait de la ville une capitale arabe dès le début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle [...]. C'est à Paris que s'élabore cette fameuse 'politique arabe', qui va de Napoléon Bonaparte à Jacques Chirac en passant par Napoléon III et le général De Gaulle»<sup>136</sup>. It was already said (§2.2.) that, from Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, many of the young men of the Turkish and Arab *élite* had started to study in France: Paris, with its *École militaire égyptienne* and *École impériale ottomane*, became one of the most privileged destinations in Europe<sup>137</sup>. In short, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Arab presence in Paris must have been incredibly rich.

The visit to Paris wondered all travellers here analysed: from Aḥmad Bāy to his entourage, from Bayram V to Ibn al-Ḥūḡah. In the sources, Paris is repeatedly compared to the female figure. Taḥṭāwī called it the «belle fiancée»<sup>138</sup>. Ibn al-Ḥūḡah presented it as «women's paradise»<sup>139</sup>. The historian Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf compared the city to a charming female figure: «How to describe Paris? She is a beautiful girl who welcomes the visitor with a smile. She collects all the wonders of the world, all the existing beauty [...], whatever you want in terms of science and industry, wealth and politics, elegance and justice»<sup>140</sup>. From the account of the historian Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf, Bāy's amazement at all that he considered a symbol of progress can be seen. During his time in the French capital, Aḥmad Bāy visited tourist places and political institutions: the Hôtel de la Monnaie, the shops of the Gobelins, the Palais Bourbon, the Chamber of Deputies, the City Hall, the Hôtel des Invalides where he also paid tribute to the disabled in war. In front of Napoleon's tomb, he wanted to meditate. Two full days were dedicated to Versailles, the castle, the park and the Grandes Eaux<sup>141</sup>.

<sup>136</sup> P. Blanchard et al., *Le Paris Arabe, deux siècles de présence des Orientaux et des Maghrébins*, La Découverte, Paris 2003, p. 8.

<sup>137</sup> Anouar Louca, *Voyageurs et Ecrivains Egyptiens en France aux XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Didier, Paris 1970, pp. 33-74.

<sup>138</sup> Taḥṭāwī, *L'or de Paris*, cit., p. 43.

<sup>139</sup> Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥūḡah, *Sulūk al-ibrīz fī masālik Bārīz*, cit., p. 18.

<sup>140</sup> Aḥmad Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf, *Iḥāf ahl al-zamān fī aḥbār mulūk Tūnis wa 'ahd al-amān*, vol. IV, cit., p. 99.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-113.

Bayram V left by train from Turin to Modane. Here he took a night train, but he could not sleep because of the cold. But the beauty of the city, on the way from the station to the hotel, made him forget the fatigue of the journey: Paris, illuminated, appeared to him like a sky adorned with stars<sup>142</sup>. The next day he moved to a house «on the great path of Paris called Boulevard des Capucine, which is one of the famous places for urbanisation [*'umrān*] in Paris»<sup>143</sup>. Bayram V described Paris in the following way: «goal of the universe, garden of the terrestrial world, prodigy of the times. I swear by my life that it deserves the name of Kingdom more than Egypt. It is a model of prodigy of human productions. The French have every right to boast in front of other nations for its beauty, wealth, erudition and factories»<sup>144</sup>.

He described the city and its most famous places, as well as the changes and improvements like the recently restored Opéra and the Palais Royal<sup>145</sup>. Ibn al-Ḥūḡah explained, in fact, that the architectural structure of Paris had been the work of Baron Haussmann (1809-1891)<sup>146</sup>. The organisation of the city and its illumination aroused his amazement: Ibn al-Ḥūḡah found it surprisingly orderly, despite the continuous coming and going of people and cars along his boulevards, which, he explained, were very wide roads, several miles long<sup>147</sup>.

Bayram V addressed multiple aspects: hospitals, the system of canals that brought water into homes and heating. He was impressed by the means of transport like the boats on the Seine which in spring and summer allowed for pleasant trips<sup>148</sup>. The traveller wanted to show readers the importance of a strong government, which invested in the well-being of its citizens, who, in turn, felt part of the nation and worked to improve themselves and the nation. In this regard, Bayram V dedicated part of his report to department stores, citing the Grands Magasins du Louvre, a four-storey building where about 600 people worked<sup>149</sup>.

All travellers were amazed at the circulation of knowledge that, they believed, was the basis of the high cultural level of France. Aḥmad Bāy, for example, was fascinated by the visit to the National Library, where he was shown numerous copies of the Koran and other books on Islam. Bayram V emphasised the importance of printing and translations: he was surprised that 56 newspapers were printed every day in Paris, and that the French people

<sup>142</sup> Muḥammad Bayram al-Ḥāmis, *Ṣafwat al-i'tibār bi-mustawda' al-amṣār wa 'l-aqtār*, vol. I, cit., p. 64.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>146</sup> Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥūḡah, *Sulūk al-ibrīz fī masālik Bārīz*, cit., p. 24.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>149</sup> Muḥammad Bayram al-Ḥāmis, *Ṣafwat al-i'tibār bi-mustawda' al-amṣār wa 'l-aqtār*, vol. I, cit., pp. 87-88.

translated texts of all kinds<sup>150</sup>. At the National Library, Bayram V discovered, among its rarities, a chessboard gift from the Caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd to Charlemagne and numerous ancient Arabic texts, some of which had been taken by Napoleon in Egypt or Algeria<sup>151</sup>. Ibn al-Ḥūḡah cited various Arabic examples including a manuscript Koran, the History of Ibn al-Aṭīr, the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī and a gold vase decorated with precious stones, a gift from the caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd to the emperor Charlemagne<sup>152</sup>.

Certainly, the most amazing experience in Paris was the participation in the Universal Exhibitions. Bayram V visited the Exhibition in 1878, and he wrote he could not find the right words to describe such beauty<sup>153</sup>. Bayram V described his first impressions at the entrance of the Exhibition:

What was on the right bank of the Seine was called ‘Trocadéro’. A palace of an exquisite shape was built there [...]. In front of it there was a gallery with a very large basin of water. On its sides there were the reproductions of a lion, a bull, a horse and a pig: each of them was very large and golden. The water flowed beautifully. Everything was surrounded by an elegant garden. Around this place there were buildings that represent those of the kingdoms that had responded to the invitation. Among them there was a house sent by the Sulṭān of Morocco, all in wood like the houses of Fās [...]. A beautiful palace of the Šāh of Irān, like his palace in his country. It was surprising that the roof of an entire house was made of polygonal crystal in the shape of clusters<sup>154</sup>.

Bayram, then, described the wing that stood north of the Champs des Mars: «The second part of the Exhibition is called “Champ de Mars” and contains gardens, cafes and restaurants. There is the important place intended for the exhibition, which is a large building with a length of about two miles of the whole Exhibition. A construction of iron bars divided the sections according to the kingdoms. Each kingdom provided its own specimens of inanimate objects, plants, animals and artefacts»<sup>155</sup>.

Finally, he described the elements that most impressed him in the various pavilions:

A clock with four dials, raised on a cylinder more than six cubits high [...]. A throne of fine crystal with three steps and twelve raised sides and a dome made up of crystal cylinders [...]. A machine that prints in two colours at once [...]. Written messages sent through airless iron pipes. They arrive in a flash and in different parts of Paris they have started sending messages like

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149-151.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>152</sup> Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥūḡah, *Sulūk al-ibrīz fī maṣālik Bārīz*, cit., pp. 25-27.

<sup>153</sup> Muḥammad Bayram al-Ḥāmis, *Ṣafwat al-i’tibār bi-mustawda’ al-amṣār wa’l-aqtār*, vol. I, cit., p. 81.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

this. The strange jewels and artefacts that the kings of India gave to the Crown Prince of England<sup>156</sup>.

Ibn al-Ḥūḡah visited the Exhibition in 1900, guest of the French Government. On that occasion, the sections of Maghreb, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco stood alongside the other French possessions. The *Guide Pratiques du visiteur de Paris et de l'exposition* offers a description of the architectural layout of the Tunisian pavilion:

D'une architecture orientale élancée et svelte [...] Les blanches coupoles qui dominent la mosquée et que couronne le croissant du Coran ajoutent à l'illusion de la réalité. Le minaret qui s'élance au-dessus du village, prêt à porter vers le ciel la prière du muezzin [...] La Tunisie est en pleine prospérité. C'est une des parties de notre empire colonial sur laquelle on fonde justement les plus d'espoir [...]. Les différentes constructions s'étendent sur une superficie d'environ 5000 m. carrés, parallèlement aux palais de l'Algérie. C'est une véritable petite ville arabe en miniature qui se trouve ainsi transportée sur le bord de la Seine<sup>157</sup>.

The Tunisian section was, on the outside, made up of a building preceded by a portico. Inside, however, a square courtyard was flanked on the left by the markets and on the right by the reproduction of a Tunisian oasis.

The real attraction of the pavilion, according to the guide, were the reproductions of the *sūq*:

Mais le visiteur sera surtout intéressé par la reproduction pittoresque des Souks, un tableau de la vie marchande musulmane saisi sur le vif et fidèlement reproduit. Le souks, ce sont d'interminables rangées de petites boutiques curieuses, d'échoppes bizarres où tous les petits industriels tunisiens fabriquent les mille objets de l'industrie locale. Voici le potier de Nabéral, le tisserand de Gafsa, le tapissier et le chaudronnier de Kairouan, l'émailleur de Moknin, le cordonnier de Béza. L'un vous offre ses nattes et l'autre ses étoffes de soie aux couleurs vives et bariolées. Celui-ci enlumine devant vous des manuscrits arabes, celui-ci cisèle et damasquine. En voici qui sculptent sur bois et sur nacre, d'autres qui brodent sur étoffe et sur cuir. Non loin, voilà pour les amateurs de confiserie et de cuisine exotique des marchands de bonbons et des cuisiniers, des pâtisseries et des marchands d'épices; plus loin encore, nous trouvons le tailleur en burnous, le parfumeur, le décorateur de gargoulettes, le bijoutier, l'orfèvre, l'ébéniste, l'éventailiste et le barbier<sup>158</sup>.

In this regard, faced with such a spectacle in which everything was a great fair, Ibn al-Ḥūḡah enacted the fourth Occidentalism, the "Appropriated

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>157</sup> *Paris Exposition 1900: Guide Pratiques du visiteur de Paris et de l'exposition*, Hachette, Paris 1900, p. 338.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339.

West”, formulated by Woltering<sup>159</sup>: he connected the origins of the Exhibition with the Arab civilization and, in particular, with the *sūq* of the 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>160</sup>. In short, the Arab civilization would have played a primary role in the history of humanity, even if it was later replaced by Europe, which took this heritage and made it progress<sup>161</sup>. Already after the description of the main scientific institutions, such as the Académie de France, Ibn al-Ḥūḡah, had emphasized the key role of the Arabs in the progress of modern Western civilization: between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Arabs produced and disseminated science and culture. In this regard, he mentioned the role played by the *Bayt al-Ḥikmah* and the translation movement at the time of al-Ma'mūn<sup>162</sup>.

However, he visited the Tunisian section. His first impression was positive and he appreciated, in particular, the market, similar in all respects to a Tunisian. The author therefore seemed to be in perfect harmony with the descriptions of the *Guide*. But precisely in the Tunisian pavilion, Muḡammad Amīn Fikrī (1856-1900), son of 'Abd Allāh (1834-1890), the Egyptian Minister of Education, recognized a scribe who in exchange for a few cents of franc wrote the name in Arabic to visitors: he was an old school friend who was not Tunisian, but Egyptian<sup>163</sup>. It would not have been an isolated case, other Arab travellers complained about the representations of their world in which they did not recognize themselves<sup>164</sup>.

The presentation made about the Tunisian pavilion by the *Guide* mentioned above, «a small Arab city transported to the bank of the Seine»<sup>165</sup>, is exotic and picturesque. Again, the space reproduced became *conçu*, stereotyped and fixed in its immutability. The Universal Exhibition of 1900 was highly indicative of a folkloric exoticism: France showcased imported products from colonial possessions, many of which were packaged directly on site by indigenous artisans who performed their activities. But it was a reality voluntarily made exotic. The representation of Tunisia in the Exhibition of 1900 was a metaphor for a wider reality: a representation of the world that placed it in a subordinate position.

<sup>159</sup> R. Woltering, *Occidentalism in the Arab World*, cit., p. 84.

<sup>160</sup> Muḡammad Ibn al-Ḥūḡah, *Sulūk al-ibrīz fī masālik Bārīz*, cit., p. 55.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56-58.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>163</sup> C. Baldazzi, *Lo sguardo arabo: immagini e immaginari dell'Occidente*, Edizioni Università di Trieste, Trieste 2018, p. 119.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 117-120.

<sup>165</sup> *Paris Exposition 1900: Guide Pratiques du visiteur de Paris et de l'exposition*, cit., p. 338.

### 5. *Arrival: concluding reflections*

Along this path undertaken in the exploration of the space of the Other, starting from the notion of *'umrān*, some essential determinations of Arab-Muslim society were showed: urban reality, social spaces, growth, economic development, power, civilisation and culture. All these notions are the basis of the socio-political thought formulated by Ibn Ḥaldūn before and by the Ottoman reformers after. The brief exploration of the meanings and implications of the notion of *'umrān* showed the importance of the city as an economic, political and cultural center. The study was limited to the travel experiences made by an autonomous prince, Aḥmad Bāy, an academic, Bayram V, a symbolic Sovereign, Nāṣir Bāy and a collaborator of the French government, Ibn al-Ḥūḡah.

In the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries the travel to Europe is always justified: Aḥmad Bāy asked her mother's permission to leave, explaining that he was acting under the influence of political necessity. Bayram V made several trips to treat his nervous disease. Nāṣir Bāy, on the other hand, embarked on his trip to France after accepting the invitation of the French President. Ibn al-Ḥūḡah was guest of the French Government several times.

The image of Europe given by the authors is "benign", positive and full of admiration: they hope, for the Arab world, to achieve the same administrative organisation, justice, educational system and circulation of knowledge. In fact, the most visited places were connected to European cultural life: libraries, newspapers, museums. European urban spaces are perceived in their evolution, in harmony with the dynamic spirit that seems to distinguish their people. The Universal Exhibition of 1900 stages a pictorial Tunisian space with its markets, a space deliberately conceived as oriental and exotic, although this representation clearly contrasts with that of modernity towards which the reformist movement aspired.

In this time, Arab-Muslim societies are beginning to become aware of their subordinate position: the West is no longer a model of progress, but a political and economic reality that has established itself in Algeria (1830), in Egypt and in Tunisia (1881). However, Ibn al-Ḥūḡah, had begun to look at Europe as the "Appropriated West". In his day, the balance of power had begun to sharpen: the East was about to put into practice a defensive reaction by affirming its spiritual superiority by virtue of a divine Revelation that the West did not possess, as Abu Lughod concluded in his book:

A number of scholars have claimed that nineteenth-century Arabs were interested almost exclusively in the techniques and technology of the West [...]. Implicit or explicit in their writings is an acknowledgment of western superiority in all spheres except the religious. They called upon their compatriots to

examine western culture objectively and to adopt those elements which would spark an evolution within their own society. But they also recommended adapting the change to the framework of their own cultural values, i.e. within the Sharī‘ah [...]. Together with this acknowledgment of superiority, however, went a defensiveness and what we have termed elsewhere the beginnings of Arab “apologetics”<sup>166</sup>.

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<sup>166</sup> I. Abu Lughod, *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, cit., p. 158.