

Constantine during the Ottoman epoch, as depicted by the writings of the travelers and explorers

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Abstract:

The epoch of Ottoman presence in Algeria, which spanned from the early 16th century to the early 19th century, witnessed significant activity in the field of scientific and exploratory travel in North Africa in general, and Algeria in particular. Local and Arab travelers, as well as foreign explorers, engaged in various expeditions for the purpose of travel, exploration, scientific research, espionage, and compiling military reports. Their descriptions of the cities they visited were highly accurate and detailed. In this paper, we aim to highlight one of the most important Algerian cities during that epoch, namely the city of Constantine, which mesmerized all who visited it. We do so by examining the descriptions provided by some of the travelers, explorers, and military personnel who encountered the city. Our goal is to showcase the historical, social, and cultural significance of Constantine during that important period. Through our research, we have concluded that the writings of these travelers and explorers played a significant role in documenting the history of Constantine and other cities.

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Introduction

Constantine is one of the oldest cities in Algeria, is an ancient city that has been visited by many explorers, geographers, researchers, Arab and foreign scientists, and locals who were mesmerized by its beauty. They were astonished by its natural fortification, which earned it the nickname "Eagle's Nest". They likened it to a bracelet surrounding the arm or a ring encircling the finger, Constantine is built on a rock surrounded by void on all sides, with steep mountains protecting the city from every direction. The surrounding sandstone cliffs, formed by the ravages of time and geological events throughout ancient history, (Reboulleau, 1867, pp. 9-10) create a natural barrier. Additionally, the city is bordered on three sides by a river that used to be navigable, which played a significant role in the city's civilization, society, and economy. As the capital of the Numidians and the eastern part of Numidia during the Roman, Vandal, Byzantine, and Islamic periods, Constantine held a leading role due to its important topographical features.

In our article, we attempted to explore various descriptions of the city provided by explorers, geographers, researchers, and officers who visited Constantine prior to its Ottoman occupation. Examples include Hassan Al-Wazzan and those who visited during the Ottoman period, as well as those who arrived in the early years after the French occupation of Constantine, such as the German explorer Heinrich. He described the city, which still retained its local Ottoman character before the onset of changes, renovations, and additions implemented by the colonial authorities. Based on the above, we can pose the following question, which revolves around the key characteristics and features that distinguish Constantine as the capital of the eastern province during the Ottoman presence in Algeria.

In this study, we relied on the historical and descriptive methodologies by collecting information about the city of Constantine, describing it, and subjecting it to study.

Study Objectives

- Highlighting the historical, social, and cultural significance of Constantine during an important period in the history of Algeria.
- Understanding the key aspects of life in the community of Constantine during that period through the accounts of explorers and geographers.
- Emphasizing the significant role of travel literature in documenting the history of nations and peoples

1. Hassan Al-Wazzan's description of Constantine

The description of Constantine by Al-Hasan Al-Wazzan (Leo Africanus) dates back to a period of turmoil in North Africa in the early 10th century AH (early 16th century CE), which witnessed the Spanish invasion of North Africa and the beginning of the The Barbaros brothers movements in the Mediterranean basin, as well as their resistance against Spanish campaigns. This period also witnessed a significant political shift in the region, marked by the fall of the Kingdoms of Tlemcen (Zayyanids) and Tunis (Hafsid dynasty), and the rising dominance of the Ottoman Empire over

North Africa, Although Al-Wazzan completed his book "Description of Africa" in the year 1526 CE, a period that witnessed Ottoman presence in the Maghreb, he attributed his mention of Constantine and other regions to the Hafsid period, despite also mentioning the Hafsid leader Ibn Farah, who came after the initial Ottoman entry into Hamah. (Jean Léon, 1896-1898, pp. VI-XXXIX).

Al-Hasan Al-Wazzan described Constantine as an ancient city due to its high and thick walls, built with carved stones. He also mentioned its location, stating that it is situated on a towering mountain surrounded by large and elevated rocks to the south. A river called "Sufghamar" flows beneath it, referring to the sand valley, while on its other bank, there are rocky formations that create two large cliffs, which the local people used as a moat for the city. Al-Wazzan mentioned that access to the city is only possible through two narrow roads, one in the east and the other in the west. He described the city gates as grand, beautiful, and fortified with iron. (Jean Léon, Description de l'Afrique, 1898, pp. 96-97)

Regarding the architecture, Al-Hasan stated that Constantine is a highly civilized city with beautiful houses and organized structures, such as the Grand Mosque, the two schools, and the four zawiyas (religious institutions). He also mentioned the fortress located in the western part, describing it as large and fortified, built during the city's foundation. He discussed the renovations that took place during the Hafsid leader Nabil's reign. Al-Wazzan also mentioned some ancient buildings dating back to the Roman period, such as the Arch of Victory and the hot spring bath located outside the city at a short distance (Hammam Sidi M'Sid). Nearby, there is a cold spring with a marble structure, resembling those seen in Italy. (Jean Léon, Description de l'Afrique, 1898, pp. 98-99)

In terms of economy and trade, Al-Wazzan stated that the city's markets are well-organized and spread throughout the city, accommodating various industries and crafts. Each craft has its own dedicated market. The city is known for its numerous merchants, especially those engaged in the local production of woolen fabrics. The city stood out with its numerous trade routes, and its traders, traveled to different regions to sell their goods, including woolen and silk fabrics and oil, in exchange for dates and refined sugar. As for the city's inhabitants, Al-Wazzan described them as thrifty in their attire and haughty, not accepting any ruler over them. (Jean Léon, Description de l'Afrique, 1898, pp. 100- 101)

2. Marmol Carvajal's description of Constantine

Marmol Carvajal, whose birthplace is believed to be Granada, ventured to North Africa with the Spanish army that attacked and occupied Tunis in 1535. He remained in North Africa for twenty-two years, where he served as a spy for the Spanish. Characterized by his perpetual wanderlust, Marmol acquired proficiency in the Arabic language and even the Berber language. It is known that Marmol completed his book "Africa" after 1571. (Marmol, 1667, pp. 4-6)

Marmol's description of the city of Constantine depicts it as an incredibly ancient and grand city, which served as the capital of Numidia Nova. He states that the Romans were the ones who built

the city, and the stone-carved walls serve as strong evidence of this. This supports our historical understanding that the Spanish campaign in North Africa, known as the "Reconquista," aimed to deplete the region's wealth, spread Christianity, and eliminate Islam. In ancient times, these areas were under Roman rule and followed the Christian religion before being seized from them. (Marmol, *L'Afrique de Marmol*, 1667, p. 438)

Returning to his description of the city, Marmol mentioned that it occupies a fortified and advantageous location, situated atop a high mountain. It is surrounded on the southern side by a steep rock, from which a river flows, carving a deep path in the ground. He noted that the eastern and northern walls of the city are in good condition. Access to the city is only possible through two narrow passages. He mentioned that the city has a main gate adorned with intricately carved and decorated stones. Regarding the city's streets and buildings, he praised their beautiful layout, with orderly and non-consecutive structures. According to his census, there were approximately eight thousand inhabited houses. He also mentioned the grand mosque and stated that the city has two schools where various sciences are taught. In the north, he also mentions the fortress of Qasbah, describing it as a mighty stronghold built by the Romans, which has been restored, renovated, and fortified. (Marmol, *L'Afrique de Marmol*, 1667, pp. 439-440)

Regarding the economic and commercial aspect, Marmol observes that the city is wealthy, encompassing various industries and trade exchanges. The city's merchants send their caravans to different regions laden with all kinds of fabrics, textiles, and oils, while they return with dates and black slaves. As for agriculture, Marmol describes it as fertile land that yields thirty measures per measure of crops, with abundant pastures. Along the riverbanks, there are gardens, although they produce a limited harvest, and their fruits are not of good quality. Additionally, Carvajal refers to the Roman ruins, mentioning the triumphal arch. He also informs that the city contains an underground vault, carved in a stepped shape into the rock, beneath which lies a large dome. The walls, floor, columns, and ceiling of this vault are intricately carved using picks wielded by women who traverse this underground passage on their way to the river. (Marmol, *L'Afrique de Marmol*, 1667, pp. 440-441)

As for the water sources, Marmol mentions a large bathhouse outside the city, with a hot spring pouring over a large rock. Not far from it, to the east, there is a cold spring. In conclusion, the reader of the two aforementioned descriptions finds a significant similarity in the information between Al-Hasan Al-Wazzan and Marmol Carvajal, even in the minor details. This confirms the transmission carried out by Carvajal from Al-Wazzan, especially considering that they were from the same generation, with only a gap of approximately thirty or forty years between them. (Marmol, *L'Afrique de Marmol*, 1667, p. 441).

3. Habbinstrait's description of Constantine

The journey of the German physician and botanist, J.O. Habbinstrait, was distinguished by objectivity, moderation, and balance compared to the writings of contemporary Western travelers. (Habbinstrait, 2007, pp. 12-13) The German scholar visited the city of Constantine between July 2 and 12, 1732, during the reign of Hussein Kleyani Pasha. The purpose of his visit was to explore and observe the Roman ruins in the city. The first thing that caught his attention was the remnants

of the triumphal arch. He described Constantine as a city built on a rock facing an elevated mountain known as Jebel Mansoura. Due to the steepness of this rock, the individuals below appeared very small. Several natural caves were formed along the edges of this rock, known for their coolness despite the high temperatures outside. (Habbinstrait, 2007, pp. 88-89)

A bridge dating back to the Roman period connected the two parts of the city. The highest arch of this bridge reached a hundred feet in height. The German traveler also mentioned the Wadi El-Rummal, whose waters disappear underground at times and reappear in another direction, flowing northeast until they reach a rock that stands thirty meters high. Water cascades through this rock, forming numerous beautiful waterfalls. Mist is created by the scattered water particles, along with the emergence of spectral colors. (Habbinstrait, 2007, pp. 89-91)

During his visit to Constantine, Habbinstrait focused on searching for Roman artifacts. He mentioned inscriptions, a Roman eagle, a carved female figure below the bridge, an anchor of a ship, and the depiction of opposing elephants. Habbinstrait considered Constantine to be a prestigious Roman city, emphasizing its rich historical significance. (Habbinstrait, 2007, pp. 91-92).

4. Al-Warthilani's description of Constantine

In his journey, Hussein bin Muhammad Al-Saeed Al-Sharif Al-Warthilani (1125-1194 AH / 1713-1779 AD) described his visit to Constantine in 1179 AH/1765 AD, which lasted for a whole year (Al-Warthilani, 1908, pp. 1-4). It should be noted that his visit coincided with the reign of Ahmad bey Al-Qoli (1756-1771 AD), who was highly interested in agriculture, urban development, and improving the livelihood of the inhabitants. The Warthilani entered Constantine coming from Tunis and considered it one of the most important cities in the country. Even if the Pasha was not present, his deputy, the Bey, resided there. (Al-Warthilani, 1908, p. 285).

Regarding the city's size, it is described as neither large nor small, built on a large cliff that overlooks a steep slope where inevitable death awaits. Underneath the city, there is a large river whose fresh water is consumed by the city's inhabitants. As for the city's infrastructure, the Warthilani mentions that it is surrounded by a large wall with four gates: Bab Al-Wad, Bab Al-Qantara, Bab Al-Jabiya, and a smaller gate. The markets are numerous, and the number of shops exceeds count. The Warthilani also counted the city's mosques, totaling five. He was greatly impressed by their architectural style and beauty, comparing them to the mosque of the Pasha in Tripoli. (Al-Warthilani, 1908, pp. 285-286).

Regarding the Qasbah, it was described as magnificent. In terms of the economic aspect, in addition to mentioning the numerous markets and shops, the city experiences significant commercial activity, attracting caravans from all directions. Although fruits are not widely available, there are numerous farms, and meat, wheat, figs, and ghee are abundant and affordable. The city was characterized by wealth and agriculture, which positively influenced the social life of its inhabitants during that period. (Al-Warthilani, 1908, pp. 287-288).

However, the emphasis on education was not significant, as teaching was limited to the winter season and the beginning of spring. There was not much focus on building schools and endowments

during that period, unlike Tunis. The Warthilani mentions that the people of the city were characterized by bad manners, excessive cursing and swearing, and they did not hold their scholars in high regard, instead indulging in their desires. (Al-Warthilani, 1908, pp. 288-289).

5. Peyssonnel and Des fontaines's description of Constantine

Peyssonnel and Des fontaines, the two travelers and scientists, mention that their journey to Tunisia and Algeria aimed to serve the natural sciences and exploration, specifically in the fields of botany and soil science, given their backgrounds as naturalists. Their expeditions were commissioned by the Minister of War. Peyssonnel's journey took place between 1724 and 1725, while Des fontaines's took place from 1783 to 1786. Although these two journeys may appear purely academic on the surface, the truth is that these expeditions, along with other scientific trips to Africa known as scientific expeditions, had a primary objective of espionage and providing information to the French army and leadership. This information would assist in future colonial campaigns in Africa. This aspect is confirmed in the introductory part of the source itself. (Peyssonnel, 1838, pp. 1-2).

Des fontaines's visit to Constantine coincided with the reign of Salah Beyben Mustapha (1771-1792 CE), a period marked by significant development in various fields, including economy and urbanization. The traveler provided a detailed description of the city, focusing on the simplest details. Let's highlight the key points mentioned. According to Des fontaines, the city is called "Constantine" by Arabs, and it sits atop a large rock that is surrounded by the waters of the Oued Rhumel from its northeastern side. The highest point in the city, reaching an elevation of 1400 meters above sea level, is located beneath the Qasbah towards the west. As one moves eastward, the land gradually slopes downward. (Peyssonnel et des fontaines, 1838, pp. 330-331).

Regarding the Oued Rhumel, the traveler mentions that the Arabs refer to the gorge into which the river flows as "Al-Hawa." It is a pit-like formation with walls made of limestone rocks. There is only one bridge connecting the two banks, constructed at the nearest point of convergence between the riverbanks. Below the Qasbah, near the Kaf Chkara, there is a descending passage used by women that leads to the Marble House on the river's edge, intersected by another passage in the form of steps called "Al-Madraj". (Peyssonnel et des fontaines, 1838, p. 332)

As for the springs, the city boasts several, including the Seven Springs ("Sab'a 'Ayun"), Umm Al-Dhib Spring, Ain Al-Ghadir, Ain Al-Lawzat, Sidi Mabrouk Springs, Manba' Al-Safsaf, Ain Al-Azzab, and Ain Al-Yahud. Additionally, beneath the Qasbah, at a depth of 200 meters in the valley, there is a hot spring used for treating various illnesses. It is located beneath a vault carved by the Romans and now houses the shrine of Sidi Maimoun. The descent to the spring is approximately 15 degrees. (Peyssonnel et des fontaines, 1838, pp. 332-333)

Regarding the city's social life, the traveler mentions that most of the surrounding lands, known as "Aazel," are owned by prominent figures of the city. The Arabs who work on these lands receive one-fifth of the produce. In terms of livestock, the city has cattle, sheep, and chickens. However, bakeries are scarce as women prepare bread in their homes, while the actual baking takes place in traditional ovens. The traveler counted a total of eighteen ovens, including the Ziyat Oven, Bab Al-Jabiya Oven, Siraaj Oven, Al-Mawqif Oven, Al-Dareebah Oven, Ghadir bin Ghazart Oven, Zaqaaq Al-Balat Oven, Bay Jaddid Oven, Bilbirjhotse Oven, Al-Jibs Oven, Rahbat Al-Suf Oven, Bin Hajar

Oven, Abd al-Rahman bin Wataaf Oven, Al-Sharza Al-Wataniya Oven, Al-Zaliga Oven, Bataha Sidi Sheikh Oven, Dar Khalil Oven, and Ruba'in Sharif Oven. Each oven has the capacity to produce one hundred loaves. The secretary oversees the bakers' guild and is known as the "Amin Kuwachin". As for mills, there are twenty-two of them, with ten located near Sidi Maimoun, another ten near Ras el-Hamra, and two adjacent to Sidi Ibrahim. These mills operate throughout the year. (Peyssonnel et des fontaines, 1838, pp. 333-336).

The economic and commercial sector of the city thrives, as described by the traveler. He sees the city as wealthy and bustling with artisans and merchants. The main craft of its inhabitants is tanning in all its forms, including the production of saddles, regular shoes, high shoes, and traditional Arab footwear. The Shatt Street is filled with craftsmen in the leather industry. However, the main reason for the city's wealth is the cultivation of its lands, in addition to commercial activities with various regions of Africa. (Peyssonnel et des fontaines, 1838, pp. 336-338).

Every two months, caravans loaded with gold dust, ivory, ostrich feathers, carpets, silk or woolen blankets enter the city to proceed to Tunis. These caravans consist of 150 to 200 pack animals and are engaged in trade and the exchange of goods. The local ruler, the Bey, sells metallic tools to the French company stationed in Qala, which are then converted into agricultural implements, horse harnesses, and other equipment. (Peyssonnel et des fontaines, 1838, pp. 339-340).

Women also contribute to the city's economic activity through spinning wool and selling it in the spinning market, as well as weaving blankets and other textile industries. As for the city's architecture, the traveler describes its narrow and steep streets leading from the Qasbah towards the bridge. The streets are paved with gravel, and the houses are very tall, mostly three stories high (ground floor and two upper floors). They are adorned with various colorful and patterned tiles. The outer walls are built with baked bricks, while the interior is made of sun-dried bricks. The rooms are ceilinged, and the staircases are narrow. The traveler counted around nine thousand houses in the city. The residences of the Bey and the Amir Khodja feature small gardens with lemon, orange, and tangerine trees. (Peyssonnel et des fontaines, 1838, pp. 341-342).

The traveler mentions that the city has three main squares: Rahba As-Suf (Wool Square), Rahba Al-Jamal (Camel Square), and Souq Al-Asr (Afternoon Market). He states that the reign of Bay Salah was one of the best periods for the city. He constructed the market street of spinning and established numerous luxurious hotels, cafes, and houses. Additionally, he built the Sidi Al-Katani Mosque and restored the bridge in 1793. He sought the expertise of skilled builders and engineers, such as the European architect Mahon, who also completed the construction of the Bey Mosque in Annaba. Initially, building materials were transported by camels from the port of Stora in Skikda. However, this process proved costly, so they later brought stones from the Mansoura quarry. The bridge consists of two arches with a height of approximately thirty meters. (Peyssonnel et des fontaines, 1838, pp. 343-345).

Regarding mosques, the traveler states that the city has thirteen main mosques: the Grand Mosque, Sidi Abderrahman Mosque, Sidi Abdelqader Mosque, Sidi Yassmine Mosque, Bey Mosque, Sidi Al-Katani Mosque, Souq Al-Suf Mosque, Qasbah Mosque, Sidi Abdelrashid Mosque, Bab Al-Qantara Mosque, Sidi Bou'anaba Mosque (Bab Al-Jabia), Sidi Boulonba Mosque (near the Qasbah), and Sidi Gazi Mosque (possibly referring to Qasi or Ghazi). In addition to these, there are numerous small prayer halls. The traveler also mentions that the city is surrounded by

high walls constructed using remnants of Roman ruins. The front wall is approximately one and a half meters thick and behind it, cannons and ammunition are stored. Furthermore, he mentions that the city has three gates: Bab Al-Jabia in the eastern entrance, Bab Al-Rahba or Bab Al-Wad (also known as Bab Al-Souq or Bab Al-Ma'a) in the middle, and Ban jdid in the western direction. (Peyssonnel et des fontaines, 1838, pp. 345-351).

6. Muhammad ibnAbd al-Wahhab al-Miknassi's description of Constantine

The journey described by Muhammad ibnAbd al-Wahhab al-Miknasi revolves around the travel of the Moroccan ambassador to the Ottoman Sultanate from Constantinople to the sacred city of Mecca to perform the pilgrimage in the year 1785. On his return route, he traveled from Jerusalem to Cyprus, then Marseille, followed by Tunis by sea. He then traveled overland from Tunis to Morocco, with the city of Constantine being one of the stops he visited and stayed in for seven days. He referred to it as "Qasamtina". (Al-Miknasi, 2003, p. 329)

It is mentioned that Constantine is situated on an elevated plateau through which a river valley passes, possibly referring to the Wadi al-Rumal, from which the inhabitants drink and transport water to their homes, baths, and mosques through large caravans carried by animals. Al-Miknasi describes the city as of moderate size, with houses roofed with tiles, possibly due to the severity of the cold and frequent snowfall. From an economic and commercial perspective, he describes the city as highly prosperous, attracting people from various regions to the extent that it becomes overcrowded, making movement within it arduous. Its market thrives every day, and people from different areas flock to it with their goods loaded on pack animals to such an extent that it can leave one amazed. The city is known for its great prosperity, and everything is available except that the traveler described it as closer to the wilderness. (Al-Miknasi, 2003, p. 329).

7. Officer Hippolyte's description of Constantine

Hippolyte is an officer in the French Army Staff and a proponent of the attack on Constantine. This description is based on a document accessed by Professor Nasser Al-Din Saidouni from the archives of the Ministry of War in Vincennes, Paris. The document dates back to March 1832, during the period following the French occupation of Algiers and the planning for the expansion into the depths of Algeria. The purpose of this document is purely military, in which the French officer focused on the military capabilities and war plans of Ahmed Bey. In his description, he first mentioned its ancient name as "Cirta" among the ancients and "Constantine" among the Arabs. (Saidouni, 1978, p. 6)

Constantine is situated on the slopes of the Atlas Mountains, forming a high stepped structure towards Mansoura in the northwest of the city. It is separated from the city by the Wadi El-Rummel, which is fed by the Wadi Boumerzoug coming from the east at a point known as Dar Al-Aqwass. In the northeast, there is Mount Mansoura, extending southeast and northwest. On the plateau of Mansoura, there are two shrines: Sidi Mabrouk in the east and Sidi Messid in the northwest. One kilometer northwest of the city walls, there are the lofty heights of Kedia Aati. (Saidouni, 1978, p. 7).

Regarding the general shape of the city, it is described as oval with an ancient wall approximately 30 meters high. It has three gates: the first is the New Gate in the western direction, leading to the

road to Algiers. In the middle, there is the Wadi Gate, leading to the south and also providing access to the road to Algiers. The third gate is the Jabbia Gate, connected to Wadi El-Rummel. These gates are equipped with forty cannons for the defense of the city. (Saidouni, 1978, p. 8).

Opposite the city, on the steep slopes of Kedia Aati, there is a small suburb inhabited by artisans, and nearby markets are set up. Close to them are the stables of the Bey and some orchards, as well as a few shrines. In addition to the mentioned three gates, there is a fourth gate known as the Qantara Gate on the edge of Mount Mansoura, facing the bridge that connects the city and Mount Mansoura. It is fortified with six cannons. (Saidouni, 1978, p. 9).

Hippolytus mentions the Qasbah perched atop rocks that rise a hundred meters above the depths of the valley, and it lies in the middle of the walls built between Bab al-Qantara and Bab al-Jadid. This ancient structure serves as a military barracks for the city. As for the Wadi al-Rimal, the officer describes its source as located five days' journey on foot. Upon reaching Bab al-Jabiya, the water cascades into an underground cavity, disappearing momentarily before reappearing amidst a deep trench that encircles over half of the city. The trench is less than fifty meters deep and less than ninety meters wide, but it widens as it approaches the citadel. (Saidouni, 1978, pp. 9-10).

Regarding Hippolytus' description of the city's architecture and its inhabitants, he notes that the population during that period ranges from twenty-five to thirty thousand individuals, including eight thousand men capable of bearing arms. The city boasts 1,700 tile-roofed houses. Public squares are abundant in the city, albeit with narrow spaces, except for the square near Bab al-Qantara. The streets are characterized by their numerous twists and turns and their narrowness. The mosques, according to Hippolytus, are adorned in their finest attire, embellished with the finest marble. The markets are spacious, and the barracks and warehouses are large in size. The palace stands out with its green-tiled roofs and its grand interconnected rooms. In its center, a majestic cypress tree, once used by the bey as a scientific observatory, stands tall. (Saidouni, 1978, p. 11).

As for the city's water sources, they are scarce, with the exception of a few cisterns. The city's residents rely on the water from the valley, which is accessed through a passage near Bab al-Jabiya. However, there are several springs in the vicinity of the city. In terms of the commodities most commonly traded and available in the city, Hippolytus mentions grains, straw, oil, and figs. Firewood is scarce, leading the inhabitants to resort to the use of charcoal for heating and cooking purposes. (Saidouni, 1978, pp. 11-12).

8. Wendelin Schlosser's description of Constantine

In his book, "Constantine: The Days of Ahmed Bey," Wendelin Schlosser provided a detailed description of the city of Constantine. Schlosser, a German traveler, journeyed to France and joined the Foreign Legion, which accompanied him to Algeria in 1831. He was captured by Algerian resistance fighters in 1832 and was subsequently sold multiple times until he settled in Constantine. There, he lived in the palace of Ahmed Bey as a servant. After the French occupation of Constantine, Schlosser returned to his homeland and published the book "Constantine: The Days of Ahmed Bey." In the eleventh chapter, he dedicated a section to describing the city. (Schlosser, 2007, p. 73).

According to Schlosser, the Turks referred to the city as "Qustantīniyya," while the locals called it "Qusamṭīna." He mentioned that the city is situated on rugged cliffs, with a river flowing at the foot of the cliffs. The river, known as the "Great Wadi," connects with the WadiRamel, which passes through the northern, eastern, and southern sides of the city, forming a natural fortress. Schlosser noted that the city has four gates. The first is the Qantara Gate, located in the east and facing southwest. It can be reached by climbing stone steps above three arches. The other gates are located in the southwest: the Rahba Gate, which later became known as the New Gate after an additional arch was added during its renovation in 1836; the eastern gate, known as the Jabiya Gate; and the central gate, known as the Wad Gate. (Schlosser, 2007, pp. 73-74).

Schlosser described the city's roads as poor due to the deep sand. He mentioned that the highest point in the city is the Qasbah, while the main streets are wide enough for carriages to pass. These streets stretch horizontally and are interconnected by numerous narrow alleys. The majority of the streets are adorned with public baths and cafes. Regarding the city's markets, the German traveler enumerated several specialized markets, such as the honey market, the weapons market, the leather market, the wheat market, the lantern market, and the shops of blacksmiths, herbalists, and Jewish fabric merchants. He also described the old Qasbah gate, supported by four columns and topped with a ribbed arch, speculating whether it was made of genuine bone and stone or constructed from stones to create its height. (Schlosser, 2007, pp. 74-75).

Schlosser further discussed the Qasbah, a spacious square that he believed to be twice the size of the Algiers Qasbah. It was surrounded by several tall buildings, and there was an arch leading to another square. Through this arch, one could behold the entire city. Additionally, he provided a detailed account of the palace of Ahmed Bey, describing its various wings, corridors, rooms, walls, and decorations. (Schlosser, 2007, p. 76).

9. Heinrich von Maltzen's description of Constantine

Heinrich von Maltzan, the German traveler, visited the city of Constantine twice. His first visit was in 1853, and the second visit, during which he described the city, took place in 1862. It is worth noting that in some instances, he mentions certain elements that have been erased or demolished since his first visit. He describes them as either existing or contrasting with their current state compared to his initial visit. (Maltzan, 1980, p. 37).

Maltzan likens Constantine to the African eagle's nest and mentions the limestone rocks that appear on the sides of the cliffs. He also notes the presence of a massive isolated rock and highlights Wadi El Kebir (the Sand River), which surrounds the rocky palace on three sides, comparing it to the Spanish city of Toledo. Above the deep gorge, he observes several houses that appear to be hanging, resembling mythical genie palaces. (Maltzan, 1980, p. 35).

Maltzan believes that the city does not require any fortifications since it is naturally fortified by the trench excavated by Wadi El Kebir, which surrounds it on three sides. He expresses regret over the state of the old bridge (Bab El Kantara Bridge), which he finds reduced to a pile of rubble compared to his previous visit when it stood in all its splendor. He also describes Ahmed Bey's palace as an architectural masterpiece. (Maltzan, 1980, pp. 37-38).

Regarding the social and cultural aspects of the city, Maltzan touches upon the phenomenon of visiting tombs and seeking blessings from them. Additionally, he mentions the occult rituals practiced by the Issawa sect, such as fire-eating, broken glass consumption, and nail piercing. He considers these rituals peculiar and unrelated to Islam, associating them with snake worship and paganism. Furthermore, he comments on the unique marriage customs of the Jews and the reception of the inhabitants during the month of Ramadan and the sighting of the crescent moon. (Maltzan, 1980, pp. 42-69).

Although Maltzan's description dates back to twenty-five years after the Ottoman period, it appears that the city, in general, still retains much of its urban character, customs, traditions, and cultural and social activities dating back to the Ottoman era.

10. Study results

-Travelers' books played a significant role in documenting the history of Algeria in general and Constantine in particular. Almost every research or book references and quotes from these sources.

-Through careful examination of the writings of foreign travelers, especially the French and Spanish ones, it is evident that their primary objective was espionage and gathering as much information as possible to be presented to the armies and military leaders, which would aid in their future colonial campaigns in North Africa.

-Constantine played an important civilizational role in the history of Algeria, as it was the capital of the Eastern Beylik during the Ottoman presence in Algeria. It also served as the capital of the Eastern Algerian region throughout the ages.

-Despite being described as a civilized city by the travelers and geographers in the Middle Ages, writings from their counterparts who visited the city during the Ottoman era confirm that Constantine witnessed significant urban development during this period, especially during the reigns of Hassan bey (1736-1754 CE) (Vayssettes, 2002, p. 107) and Salah bey bin Mustafa (1771-1792 CE) (Mercier, 1903, pp. 292-298), which made it a more sophisticated and advanced city.

-The studied writings of the travelers confirm that Constantine was a commercial center for the eastern region of the Algerian Eyalet and a meeting point for various trade caravans, both from the internal regions of the Eyalet and from outside it.

-The descriptions by the travelers affirm that the urban division of Constantine was highly organized, with each profession or product having its dedicated street, and the presence of mosques in the middle of the major neighborhoods, opening onto them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, through our study, it can be said that Constantine played a pioneering role politically, economically, culturally, and socially, enabling it to be the capital of the Eastern region of Algeria throughout the ages. It captured the attention of many travelers, geographers, historians, explorers, enthusiasts, and writers, inspiring their minds and astonishing their eyes, regardless of their backgrounds, religions, orientations, and hobbies. Their admiration for the city was reflected

in their writings about it. This fact ignited the greed of invaders, colonizers, opportunists, and those desiring to settle and exploit the city's resources.

In addition to possessing natural features and diverse resources, Constantine is situated on a large rock surrounded by empty space from all sides, making it one of the most fortified cities in Algeria. Moreover, its unique geographical location made it a connecting link between the eastern borders of the Algerian Eyalet with Tunisia and the northern, inland, and southern regions of the Eyalet. This is because most of the trade routes of the Eastern Beylik pass through its capital. Consequently, Constantine became the political, economic, and cultural capital of the Eastern region of Algeria during the Ottoman period.

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