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Crossing Borders, Translating Encounters: Moroccan Ambassadorial Travellers to Europe and the Linguistic Negotiation of Alterity

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Abstract

The Moroccan ambassadorial travel narratives to Europe display an interesting interplay between the processes of translation and cross-cultural exploration. As these travellers embarked on their journeys, they embraced a versatile approach to translation, employing their native language, borrowing foreign loanwords, and transliteration techniques to grapple with the enigmatic manifestations of the alien world they visited. This intricate process, the paper argues, not only reflects their determination to comprehend the unfamiliar landscapes and exotic people they encountered but also highlights their inherent curiosity about European culture and civilization. The other conclusion is that the act of translation within their narratives embodies their conscious efforts to convey the essence of their experiences to audiences back home who lacked the opportunity to embark on similar journeys.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, a discernible shift has been observed from Orientalism to Occidentalism studies. This shift is particularly evident in the exploration of Arabo-Muslim perspectives of Europe. A significant contribution to this evolving field has been Nabil Matar's *In the Land of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century* (2003) and *Europe through Arab Eyes* (2009). Both works prominently feature Moroccan accounts of Europe, attributed to the numerous Moroccan diplomatic missions to the continent. This growing interest in Moroccan travel narratives finds further expression in the publication of two recent translations of eighteenth-century Moroccan travellers, Ibn Uthman al Maknassi in Matar's *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World* (2015) and Abdulrahman al-Ruwaishan's translation of Ahmed al-Ghazzal's travelogue in *The Fruits of the Struggle in Diplomacy and War: Moroccan Ambassador al-Ghazzal and His Diplomatic Retinue in Eighteenth-Century Andalusia* (2017).

Simultaneously with this surge in translation interest, Moroccan ambassadorial Occidentalism has attracted significant scholarly attention. As evidenced in the literature

review section, most of the critical studies have predominantly employed a thematic framework for the analysis of Moroccan European diplomatic accounts.

The current article tries to be innovative by conceptualising travel as a form of translation and seeking to highlight the rich and fruitful possibilities of deciphering the complex signs of alterity while fostering comprehension across differences.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the studies have approached Moroccan ambassadorial travel writing through three paradigms: a historical approach, the dynamics of cultural clash, and the correlation between European modernity and domestic reforms. These paradigms often overlap.

The historical analysis is best observed in Abdelmajid Kaddouri's book, *Sufara Maghariba fi Urubba, 1610-1922* (*Moroccan Ambassador in Europe*, 1995) and Said bin Said Al Alawi's *Uruba fi Mir'at ar-Rihla* (*Europe in the Mirror of Travelogue*, 1995). Both scholars were interested in theorising the development of Moroccan interactions, perceptions, and representations of Europe. Kaddouri analyses the evolution and transformation of the images of the Self and the Other from Al Hajari's *The Book of the Protector of Religion against the Unbelievers* (1610), a time when Moroccans entertained a sense of Jihadist superiority, to the colonial period with as-Sayah's *A Week in Paris* (1922), where Moroccan grappled with a traumatised awareness of the power and superiority of Europe.

In a similar vein, Al Alawi identifies three crucial phases in the history of Moroccan diplomatic encounters with Europe. Firstly, the phase of strength and self-confidence, referring to the period when travellers exhibited pride in their national identity and the power of their country. For Al Alaoui, this is best illustrated in al Maknassi's *Elixir for the Captive to Be Set Free* (1779-1780). The second phase marks a moment of defeat and exposure, following Morocco's loss in the Battle of Isly in 1844. During this phase, the traveller became aware of his country's vulnerability and the formidable military and technological might of Europe and attempted to comprehend its origins. This phase is illustrated in Mohamed As-Saffar's *A Journey to France* (1845-1846) and Mohamed Al Fassi's *Journey to England* (1860). The last period, epitomised by Mohamed Al Hajwi's *The European Journey* (1919), is the moment of amazement and recovery of awareness, historically beginning with the Spanish and French occupation of Morocco in 1912. This phase is characterised by a profound sense of setback, astonishment at the power of Europe, and an urgent need for reform.

The cultural clash perspective is evident in Abdul Salam Heimer's article "The Other's Image in Maghrebi Travel Writings" (2008). Al Hajari, according to Heimer, presents the religious outlook towards Europe as an irreconcilable conflict between the House of Islam and the House of Infidels and takes the form of the religious debates between the Muslim traveller and the Christians he meets with. "Both parties considered these religious debates as verbal holy wars against the other whose effect and power are no less than that of the real war of swords and spears." (Heimer, 2008, p. 184) Al Hajari goes so far as to interpret the French girl's passionate profession of love for him as "another pretext for tension, struggle, and conflict." (p. 187)

The image of cultural tensions between the Crescent and the Cross is intrinsic to al Maknassi's *Elixir for the Captive to Be Set Free*. While travelling in Spain, which he perceived

as an Islamic territory usurped by Christians, al Maknassi's narrative is replete with a hostile discourse and rhetoric of Otherness. However, as a part of his history and heritage, Andalusia is not perceived through a binary lens of radical difference. Instead, it emerges as the familiar land of his ancestors and their cultural achievements. Al Maknassi "discovered that Europeans shared his love and appreciation of Arab Islamic monuments. Despite the difference in religion and faith, Europeans considered their heritage too." (p.190) Nevertheless, even with this shared heritage, al Maknassi displayed no interest in acquainting himself with the intellectual achievements of Spain.

According to Heimer, this indifference towards European intellectual contributions and the refusal to acknowledge Europe's civilizational superiority is also evident among subsequent travel writers like Al Kardoudi, As-Saffar, Al Amrawi, Al Fassi, and Al Ghassal.

Other critics such as Ahmed Alami in his book *Mutual Othering: Islam, Modernity, and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Encounters in Pre-Colonial Moroccan and European Travel Writing* (2013) have directed their attention towards Moroccan interactions with European modernity and technological progress, particularly in the context of advocating for domestic reform. Alami analyses Moroccan engagements with European modernity in three nineteenth-century Moroccan diplomatic narratives. These narratives include two journeys to France, authored by As-Saffar and Amrawi, and one to England by Al Fassi. Though writing from different ideological positions, these travellers were acutely aware of the military, economic and technological power of Europe and adopted diverse reactions towards its modernity. As-Saffar, in particular, portrays France in favourable terms and subtly critiques his own nation's weaknesses and lack of advancement. He overtly advocates for the introduction of reforms in his country, drawing inspiration from the French model. Alami concludes about As-Saffar that "through his carefully chosen observations, he conveys a sense of the urgent need for reform at home by employing a rhetoric that constructs the French public domain as an exemplary model." (Alami, 2013, p. 55)

Similarly, Amrawi acknowledges the superiority of France in his travel account and frequently finds himself fascinated by aspects of its modernity. While he maintains the moral superiority of Morocco, he nevertheless implicitly advocates some French-inspired reforms and "reinvents some facets of Western modernity to appeal to his audience while recasting the interaction with the West in theological terms. The asymmetries that surface in his depiction of the economic and military achievements of the West are not only counterbalanced but also played down in his cyclical model of cultural rise and fall." (p. 89-99)

On the other hand, in his *Journey to England* (1860), Al Fassi, a very conservative *faqih*, is uncompromising in his rejection of European modernity. While he concedes Europe's technological superiority, he dismisses it on theological grounds, branding it as a manifestation of malevolent forces that undermine the spiritual essence of religion. So, unlike As-Saffar, "al-Fassi constructs Western culture through the lens of his theological outlook. His analysis inscribes the cross-cultural encounter as a confrontation between the spiritual and the profane. He therefore remains strongly anchored to his background as a conservative Muslim *faqih*." (p. 89)

Clearly, these critical works have predominantly utilized a thematic approach in analyzing Moroccan travel texts, often treating them as historical records. In contrast, the

present study regards travel as a form of translation, aiming to emphasize the traveler's rich and fruitful possibilities in deciphering the intricate signs of alterity and interpreting them across differences.

Shifting from the content to the language of the text, the paper sheds light on the intriguing interplay between voyaging in foreign lands and engaging in linguistic translation processes through loanwords and transliterations. These processes inevitably turn into an adventure into the foreign language of the other. This dynamic interaction serves as an enriching exploration into cross-cultural interpretation and deciphering, while the very act of translation weaves itself into the linguistic tapestry of the traveller's autobiographies.

3. MOROCCAN TRAVELLERS AND THE TRANSLATION OF CULTURAL OTHERNESS

Travelling is often associated metaphorically with translation. As travellers journey to foreign lands, they inevitably engage in translation activities, deciphering the unfamiliar signs of the foreign culture and rendering them into a familiar language. For Susan Bassnett, the traveller and the translator are fundamentally interpreters. Travelling involves crossing borders and interpreting cultural differences. Bassnett stresses that "just as translators exercise a high degree of individual creativity in their rewritings, so the travel writer negotiates between cultures, bringing to a target audience his or her subjective impressions of a journey undertaken. This role is akin to that of the translator, who is, above all, a mediator between cultures." (Bassnett, 2019, pp. 550-564) Thus, both traveller and translator engage creatively with cultural differences and have to constantly navigate and negotiate between cultures and audiences.

Russian Formalist, Roman Jakobson, proposes a tripartite model of translation (Roman Jakobson, 2000, pp. 113-118) in the context of travel:

Intralingual: refers to a translation process which takes place in the context of visiting another country, where the traveller is acquainted with the language of the host nation.

Interlingual: a translation that takes place between different languages.

Intersemiotic: a translation process that occurs when the traveller lacks any knowledge of the language spoken in the host country he is journeying through.

Moroccan ambassadorial travellers to Europe were frequently placed in intersemiotic situations. The purpose of travelling in foreign lands was to negotiate and establish political and commercial treaties. But the mission entailed an encounter with a world teeming with strange languages, enigmatic cultural symbols and mysterious visual signs. To put it in the words of Michael Cronin, the Moroccan ambassadors must have found themselves "adrift in a world of alien, threatening signs." (Cronin, 2017, p. 695) The intersemiotic context must have seemed to them to be "profoundly disabling – the traveller a mute presence in a world of foreign signs that is disorienting and threatening." (Cronin, 2000, p. 3) Faced with this situation, Moroccan travellers relied during their journeys on language brokers, dragomans and interpreters, who deciphered and interpreted for them the perplexing foreign realities and the complex visual signs of the host country into a familiar language.

To document their complex travel experience, their observations, and the knowledge they managed to gather in a travel account for the entertainment and enlightenment of their diverse audiences at home they had to engage with various forms of translations. Michael Cronin observes that "A fundamental feature of travel experiences down through the centuries is that the foreign culture is experienced through a foreign language." (Cronin, 2017, p. 694)

The encounter with and representation of foreign countries, people, places, and cultures necessitated a vocabulary to describe alien realities. One of such vocabulary was the transliteration of foreign words and their incorporation into their Arabic texts. For instance, travelling in France in the mid-nineteenth century on a diplomatic mission, As-Saffar describes the city of Lyon in his *Rihla*:

> مدينة اليون بفتح الهمزة و سكون اللام و ضم الياء التحتية و هي مدينة كبيرة من حواضر بلاد فرانسا ... يدخلها نهران أحدهما يسمى الرون و هو المتقدم ذكره، و الآخر يسمى لاصون، و يلتقيان بداخلها فيصير نهرا واحدا عظيما يشقها إلى انتهائها. و معنى الرون في لسانهم الرجل و لاصون المرأة، فكأنه التقى رجل بامرأة و تزوج بها. (Bensghir, 2007, p. 152)

As-Saffar transliterates the name of the city of Lyon in Arabic and provides the phonetic transcription of the term so that it is pronounced correctly as if this is of great importance. Then he explains to his audience that Lyon is one of the biggest cities in France and that two rivers, one called Rhône الرونand the Saône لاصون, meet inside the city and become one big river. Interestingly, the Moroccan traveller goes on to clarify to his Moroccan audience that Rhône means in their language a man (معنى الرون في لسانهم الرجل) and Saône means a woman and goes on to compare the convergence of the two rivers metaphorically to the marriage between a man and a woman.

The processes of translation and transmission of information continues. As-Saffar explains that there is in Lyon

> جلنار العسكر و كبير البلد الذى يسمونهم بلسانهم البريفي كما تقدم في مرسيليا. و بها كثير من ديار الصنائع التي يسمونها الفبريكات حتى أن جل حيطانها سود من دخان ديار الصنائع، و غالب من يخدم في هذه الصنائع بهذه المدينة و غيرها النساء، فعلين العمدة في ذالك. (*Rihla*, p. 153)

In this short passage, As-Saffar is involved in multiple forms of translation. He uses the French word *général*, which he corrupts in Arabic as جلنار*jilnar*, and explains that he is the greatest person in the city. The Moroccan traveller transliterates another French term البريفي*al prifi***,** *le prefét*, which he introduces using a common expression in Moroccan travel narratives when using foreign words: "يسمونهم بلسانهم" "they are called in their tongue." He adds that in this city there are several "ديار الصنائع"**,** which translates as "houses of manufactures," and provides the French name of these houses in Arabic transliteration " و بها كثير من ديار الصنائع التي يسمونها الفبريكات" "there are in it numerous houses of manufactures which they call *al fabricat*". As-Saffar Arabizes the plural of the French word *fabriques* (factories) into *al fabricat*.

Then shifting from a linguistic to a sociological and cultural translation, As-Saffar explains that women are the main workforce within the French factories and that they are much depended on in the industrial sector:

و غالب من يخدم في هذه الصنائع بهذه المدينة و غيرها النساء، فعلين العمدة في ذالك.

As-Saffar's seemingly casual reference to women workers and their significance as a labour force might be interpreted as an implicit critique of the status of women in his own society.

A similar form of multiple translations is observed in other Moroccan ambassadorial travel narratives. For instance, in *Ar-Rihla al-Ibriziya li ad-Diyar al Injliziya*, composed by Mohamed al Fassi, Sultan Mohammed IV's envoy to the court of Queen Victoria in 1860, London is described in this way:

وهذه المدينة من المدائن العظام ، ما رايت اعظم منها ولا احظى ، حتى تكرر على اسماعنا ان طولها ستة ايام ، وعرضها كذلك ، وبها سلطانة الجنس النجليزي وغالب بنائها بالحجر المنحوت، ويبطنون الحيطان من داخل بالخشب، ويجعلون عليه كاغيدا مموها، ويفرشون الأرض ببسط و زرابي جيدة، وكان نزولنا بمحل يسمى عندهم بالبسطة ويسمى ايضا بالهطيل وهو محل معد لنزول الباشدورات والاكابر، في ارضه بسط من بابه الى منتهاه، وهو مشتمل على صالات متعددة. (Al Fassi, 1860, p. 10)

This passage can be translated as follows:

> This city was one of the greatest cities. I have never seen one greater. We were told that it is six days in length and the same for its breath. In it is the seat of the Sultana of the English people. Most of its buildings are made from carved stones. The walls inside the houses are panelled with wood and covered with painted paper. They spread the ground with rugs and excellent carpets. Our residence was in a place called by them the *Posta*, also called the hotel, which is a place intended for the residence of ambassadors and grandees. The floor is carpeted from the gate to its end and it contains many rooms.

In his description of London, al Fassi uses a combination of languages and invokes several loanwords:

Classical Arabic: Moroccan colloquial Arabic (darija) كاغيدا which means paper,

French: صالات Arabicized plural of French *salle*,

Spanish: البسطة *posta* and الباشدورات the Arabicized plural form of *embajador*, and

English: الهطيل hotel, which he transliterates using an English pronunciation.

The passage is a perfect illustration of how the Moroccan traveller struggles to discover and understand the unfamiliar realities of a foreign city and translates his experience through language and literature for an audience that is eager to know about remote countries.

Al Fassi is often critiqued as a fanatical faqih who condemns Western modernism and technological materialism.

Ahmed Idrissi Alami, for instance, states that al Fassi continually interprets the industrial "advancements and technological phenomena in a more critical light, one that often positions Moroccan culture, and more importantly, Muslim practice, as superior to that of their European hosts." (Alami, 2013, p. 48) Elsewhere, Alami argues that al Fassi considers the inventions that use steam (vapour) "as an instance of the dark side that he associates with materialistic achievements that strengthen the worldly and corrupt the soul." (p. 51) Similarly, Ziyadah Khalid states that al Fassi "maintains a position of hostility and contempt towards Europeans and non-believers."

In fact, al Fassi's translation endeavours highlight a sincere curiosity about the technological achievements of the host country and his keenness in disseminating practical information to his countrymen. For instance, he represents the ship which carried the Moroccan delegation to London, saying,

وهذا المركب - بابور - عظيم ، يسمي – ببابور فركطة – لعظمه، وهو لدولة – النكليز – واسمه بلغتهم فركط مل بمن ومعناه بالعربية، الصاعقة. (Al Fassi, p. 4)

> This vessel, *babur* (steamer), is massive and called *babur* frigate because of its greatness. It belongs to the country of England and is called in their language frigate *mil bimin*, which means in Arabic thunderbolt.

The use of the phrases "it is called in their language" and "which means in Arabic" unfolds a Moroccan traveller earnestly engaged in an active process of translation between two worlds, even at the risk of mistranslation. Being confident in his linguistic mediation skill, al Fassi assumes authorship for the translation. He describes the role of a ship crew who is "called by them the warden," "وهذا يسمى عندهم بالوردن" and explains, "الحارس أعني", "I mean the guard." Al Fassi becomes the translator himself.

At the Zoological Gardens, al Fassi's translation pedagogy encounters challenges when confronted with extraordinary creatures, as he endeavours to represent them in his native language. He says,

رأيت حيوانا عظيما على هيئة الزرافة يسمى عندهم باللين له أحد عشر قرنا صاعدة في الجو مثل الشجرة، وحيوانا آخر على هيئة الغزال له اولاد صغار يدخلن في غلاف لازق ببطنها فإذا مرت دخلن في ذلك المحل ولا يظهرن. (Al Fassi, p. 22)

> I saw a great animal in the shape of a giraffe, called by them eland. It had eleven horns rising in the air, resembling a tree, and another animal in the shape of a gazelle. It has young babies who enter a pouch in its belly. If you walk by, they hide inside and do not appear.

Here, al Fassi describes the utterly unfamiliar animals by comparison with the familiar. He first compares the eland with the giraffe and its horns to the branches of a tree. For the second exotic creature, al Fassi likens it to a gazelle and explains how its babies hide inside its belly pouch at the sight of humans. He is obviously referring to the kangaroo but, unlike in the case of the eland, he does not record its name. Al Fassi uses familiar references to describe the unfamiliar and the unknown. To provide a full account of his observations, he willingly involves himself in processes of interpretation, comparison and explanation to produce knowledge and convey it to his Moroccan compatriots. He further explains that each of the animals has a wooden plate mentioning its origin and other information.

A similar struggle in translating the foreign is observed in As-Saffar when describing unfamiliar fruits he encountered at the botanical garden in Paris:

> فمما رأينا عندهم في تلك البيوت، ... ثمرة يسمونها أنانا تجلب من بلاد ميريكة، و هي قدر الليمة الكبيرة في رأسها ورقات، و هي مدرجة كجوزة الصنوبر، و لهم بها اعتناء تباع الواحدة منها بخمسة ريال و أكثر، و يقطعونها قطعا قطعا و يأكلونها بالسكر و ربما طبخوها، و مذاقها حلو في حموضة فلذالك يدرون عليها السكر.
> (*Rihla*, p.182)

> Among the plants we saw here … a fruit called (أنانا*anana*) the pineapple, which they get from the land of America. It is the size of a large orange with leaves coming out of its head, but graduated like the cone of a pine tree. They adore it even though a single one costs five *riyals* or more. They cut it up into small pieces and eat it with sugar, and sometimes they cook it. Its taste is both sweet and sour at once, and for that reason they pass sugar with it. (Miller, 1992, p. 141)

To translate an unfamiliar fruit to his Moroccan compatriots, As-Saffar resorts to comparison with a familiar fruit, the lemon, adding that the أنانا*anana* fruit is imported from America. He mentions its price in Moroccan currency and provides copious information on the manner of cooking and consuming it. All these pieces of information have been certainly acquired by As-Saffar from the interpreter of the Moroccan diplomatic delegation.

Evidently, the Moroccan traveller-writer unfolds as a keen inquisitor and investigator. His narrative demonstrates his curiosity, keen interest, and diligent efforts in acquiring information from interpreters and various sources, and sharing it with his fellow compatriots. He is a good observer of the curious aspects he encounters in the strange places he visits. He patiently records what he observes and supplements his observations with detailed additional explanations.

Euben emphasises the edifying role of the Muslim *rihla*, its pedagogical purpose "to seek in other places and nations knowledge which is useful at home, where 'useful knowledge' includes not only practical information but also wonder at what is new and different." (Euben, 2006, p. 97) This pedagogical purpose of travelling is emphasised by As-Saffar. He states in his *rihla sifariyya* to France,

> It is wise for those who go far from home to record everything they see and hear, since they may find some knowledge and value in it. There is no better way of obtaining useful information than by mixing with people. According to a wise saying of the Ancients: the eye never tires from seeing, nor the ear from hearing. Therefore, I decided with the help of God to blacken these pages with what I saw and heard during this voyage, be it clear or obscure. (Miller, 1992, p. 77)

Interestingly, cross-cultural mobility and diplomatic missions evolve into a "*rihla talab al ilm*," a journey in pursuit of knowledge beyond the boundaries of Dar al Islam.

In accordance with the concept of "rihla talab al ilm," As-Saffar's French journey was captivated by the phenomenon of the gazette. He notes,

> و لأهل باريز كغيرهم من سائر الفرنسيس بل و سائر الروم، تشوق لما يتجدد من الأخبار و يحدث من الوقائع في سائر الأقطار، فاتخذوا لذالك الكوازيط، و هي ورقات يكتب فيها كل ما وصل إليهم علمه من الحوادث و الوقائع في بلدهم أو غيرها من البلدان النائية أو القريبة. و بيان كيفيتها أن صاحب دار الكازيطة، يتخذ أقواما يرسلهم لالتقاط الأخبار من كل ما يسمعونه أو يرونه في ذالك اليوم من المهمات و الحوادث و الوقائع و النوادر، و غير ذالك مما يحسن الإخبار به. و من جملة محال التقاطهم للأخبار، القمرتان الكبيرة و الصغيرة اللتان يجتمعون فيها لتدبير قوانينهم . فإذا اجتمع أهل القمرة و أخذوا في الخوض في نوازلهم و وقائعهم، جلس أصحاب الكوازيط في ناحية يكتبون كلما تكلم به فيها. فكل ما وقع الكلام عليه فيها و انبرم من الأحكام يصبح غدا في الكوازيط، و يشهر لسائر الناس. (*Rihla*, p.190)

> The people of Paris, like all the French—indeed, like all of Rum—are eager to know the latest news and events that are taking place in other parts. For this purpose, they have the gazette. These are papers in which they write all the news that has reached them that day about events in their own country and in other lands both near and far. This is the way it is done. The owner of a newspaper dispatches his people to collect everything they see or hear in the way of important events or unusual happenings. Among the places where they collect the news arc are the two Chambers, the Great and the Small, where they come together to make their laws. When the members of the Chamber meet to deliberate, the men of the gazette sit nearby and write down everything that is said, for all debating and ratifying of laws is matter for the gazette and is known to everyone. (Miller, 1992, p. 150).

Describing a phenomenon that was thoroughly alien to him, As-Saffar uses an Arabic transliteration of the original French *gazette* (الكازيطة**)** and defines its meaning as **"**papers in which they write all the news that has reached them that day about events in their own country and in other lands." Then he explains how the gazette works. The owner of the printing house of the gazette "صاحب دار الكازيطة" dispatches reporters to various places and countries to collect important or unusual events.

The reporters, As-Saffar further observes, are mostly active in reporting on the activities of the Chamber of Peers and the Chamber of Deputies. Not finding the terms to describe these Chambers, another alien phenomenon, As-Saffar calls them "القمرتان الكبيرة و الصغيرة". The term "القمرة," Khalid Ben Srhir explains, is originally from the Spanish term *camara* and refers to the room reserved for the passengers on board a ship. (p. 145) As-Saffar has borrowed the Spanish word *camara* because of the resemblance between the semi-circular shape of the Chamber of Deputies and a large public room on a ship.

As-Saffar has certainly gathered his copious information about the gazette from the interpreter. In his discussions of the gazette, and as is often the case in his rihla, As-Saffar departs from mere wonder and bewilderment to a serious endeavour to acquaint his Moroccan readers with aspects of French modernity, means of public information, and various institutions. Abdelfattah Kilito rightly observes that "when it comes to institutions and inventions unknown to Moroccans, such as trains, theatre, telegraph, printing, newspapers, the two chambers, there can be no comparison. In such cases, As-Saffar assumes a pedagogical tone as he explains those innovations in detail, often starting with the phrase, 'You should know that.'" (Kilito, 2008, p. 59)

Moroccan travellers were interested not only in strange things or curious inventions and practices but also in cultural issues such as the French form of expressing gratitude and festivities. As-Saffar informs his readers that the French use the expression "مرسي", *merci*, and explains that the expression means "كثرخيرك", literally, may God increase your wealth, or my God reward you. Elsewhere, As-Saffar describes festivities in France, especially the special annual occasion which they call the carnival "يسمونه الكرنوال" and goes on to explain that it is a three days celebration during which the French enjoy themselves and wear disguises. And like many Moroccan travellers, As-Saffar does not fail to talk about theatrical venues:

> و قد رأينا مرة موضعا عندهم يسمونه الديوراما، دخلناه نهارا فصعدنا في درج مظلمة حتى انتهينا إلى أعلاه، و هو مظلم إلا أن فيه بعض الضوء من كوة هنالك، و هو على شكل التياتروا. (*Rihla*, p.187)

> One time we went to a place there called Diorama. We entered during the day and went up to a flight of stairs to find ourselves in total darkness, except for a light let in through a tiny window. The room was shaped like a theater. (Miller, 1992, p. 145)

4. 3. CRAFTING WORDS: TRANSLITERATION AND LOANWORDS IN THE TRAVELLER'S TALE

The Moroccan diplomatic missions to Europe commenced in the early 17th century, extending through the first half of the 20th century. Ambassadors and their entourage visited numerous European countries, gaining exposure to a plethora of cultures, peoples, places, and languages. The Moroccan European journeys which culminated in written narratives have represented Spain, France, Belgium, France, Holland, Britain, and Italy.

Spain	Mohammed Bin Al Wahab Al Ghassani's *Rihlat Al Wazir fi Iftikak Al Asir* (1690–1691) Ahmed al-Ghazzal's *Natijat al Ijitihad fi al-Muhadana wa al Jihad* (1766) Mohamed ibn Uthman al-Miknasi's *Al-Iksir Fi Iftikāk Al-Asir* (1779–1780) Abu Al Abbas Ahmed al Kardoudi's *Al-Tuhfa al-Sunniya Lil'Hadra al-Hassaniya Fil'Mamlaka al-Isbanyoliya* (1844)
France	Ahmed Bin Qassim al Hajari's *Kitab Nasir Al Din Ala Al Qawn Al Kafirin* (1611–1613) Mohamed As-Saffar's *Rihlat As-Safar Ila Faransa* (1845-1846) Ibn Driss al Amrawi's *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi-Mamlakat Bariz* (1860) Abdellah al Fassi's *Hadiqatu aT-ataaris fi Wasf Dakhamat Baris* (1909) Hassan al Hajwi's *Al Rihla al Urobiya* (1919) Mohamed Bin Abdeslam Sayah's *Usbuu fi Baris* (1922)
Belgium	Ibn Idriss Jaaydi's *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al Akhbar* (1876)
Britain	Mohamed al Fassi's *Al-Rihla al-lbriziyya ila al-Diyaral- Injliziyya* (1860) Ibn Idriss Jaaydi's *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al Akhbar* (1876) Hassan bin Mohamed al Ghassal's *Al Rihla at-Tatwijiya ila Asimat al Bilad al Inghliziya* (1902) Hassan al Hajwi's *Al Rihla al Urobiya* (1919)
Italy	Mohamed ibn Uthman al-Miknasi's, *Al-Badr Al-Safir Li Hidayat Al-Musafir Ila Fikak Al-Asara Min Yad Al-ʿAduww Al-Kafi*r (1781–1783)
Holland	Ahmed Bin Qassim al Hajari's *Kitab Nasir Al Din Ala Al Qawn Al Kafirin* (1611–1613)

Chart 1: European Countries in Moroccan Diplomatic Travelogues

Confronted with the intricate alien complexities of foreign lands, Moroccan travellers to Europe resorted to an array of translation strategies. Adapting to foreign realities required skilful navigation, prompting them to creatively incorporate various forms of foreign loanwords into their translation encounters, seamlessly integrating them into their narratives to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps and convey their exotic experience to their home audiences. Hence, as the chart illustrates, the tapestry of their texts is teeming with terms from European lexicons:

كنابس	Spanish: canapés	Al Ghassal
بنيوس	Spanish: bagnios	Al Ghassal
الكميدور	Spanish: comedor	Al Ghassal
قنسلاتوا	Spanish: consulato	As-Saffar

فبريكة	Spanish: fábrica	Al Ghassal
بزيطة	Spanish: visita	Al Ghassal
بشادور	Spanish: embajador	Al Ghassal
البوصطى	Spanish: posta	As-Saffar
الديوراما	French: diorama	As-Saffar
طل أكراف	telegraph	Amrawi and Al Fassi
السنسور	French: ascenseur	As-Saffar
الأوتيل	French: hôtel	As-Saffar
المرشال	French: Maréchale	As-Saffar
موسيو	French: Monsieur	As-Saffar
الأوبرا	French: opéra	As-Saffar
بولفار	boulevard	As-Saffar
البوليس	English: police	Al Ghassal
إسيطيشين	English: station	Al Ghassal
طيطر	English: theatre	Al Ghassal
الوردن	English: warden	Al Fassi
الدكس	English: docks	Al Ghassal
سطوار	English: store	Al Ghassal
روبيل	English: ruby	Al Ghassal
طرخة	Spanish: tarjeta	Al Ghassal

Chart 2: Loanwords from European Languages

This list is only an illustration and not meant to be exhaustive. Yet, though short it reflects the extent of the contact the Moroccan travellers have with the language of the Other. The Moroccan traveller is keen to be seen as a translator who faithfully and accurately describes the foreign world in his own language as well as in the vocabulary of the foreign countries he visited. They observe with interest and listen carefully to the explanations given to them by their interpreters and guides. Travelling becomes translation, a process of deciphering the complex signs and symbols of the new world. In the Moroccan diplomatic travel narrative, we consistently find expressions of cross-cultural translation.

That is the case for Moroccan travellers. In their quest to introduce otherness to their people. And in their effort to relay their Cross-cultural encounters with the Other, Moroccan travellers take the role of translators. They often introduce the foreign environment by using foreign words that they learn and accompany them with context, explanations, and examples.

The loanwords are usually followed with explanations. For instance, al Ghassal mentions إسيطيشين, a transliteration of the English word "station" and provides the definition of the term: "I mean the parking place of trains." (Al Ghassal, 2022, p. 68) Al Ghassal uses "بزيطة", *visita*, and states that the word "is an expression among them for returning a visit."

The degree of their success varies. They may make mistakes in writing these foreign words in Arabic or misunderstand their meaning but that in itself showcases their struggle to decipher the complicated signs and realities of their foreign environment and translate them into a language that can be understood at home. The travellers do not consider their experience of travel and cross-cultural encounters as personal journeys. They are recorded for the benefit of the collective. Thus, the Rihla shifts from being a personal journal to a record for public usage. Although these loanwords are transliterated in Arabic script, they remain visibly foreign, conspicuously charged with the cultural and civilizational Otherness of *Dar al Harb*. The Moroccan traveller is by no means bothered by the alterity embedded within the fabric of the words.

The second form of translation that the Moroccan travellers to Europe engage in is the adoption of Arabicized loanwords. The European terms are subjected to a process of phonological and morphological adaptations and assimilated into the lexicon of the Moroccan *rihla sifariyya*. The following chart records some of these Arabicized loanwords:

Chart 3: Arabicized Loanwords

الكنبية	Corruption of compagnie
مترات	Arabicized plural form of French mètre
للأتومبيلات	Arabicized plural form of French automobile
البزيطة	Corruption of the Spanish visita
بابورات	From Vapour/Steamers
أسبيطارات (أسبيطار)	Arabicized plural form of the Spanish hospital
المون	Corruption of the French môle
البنكة	Banque
الجرنالات	Arabicized plural form of the French journal
كوازيطهم	Arabicized plural form of the French gazette
الشنيالية	Corruption of champagne
الفابريكات	Arabicized plural form of the French fabrique
نمرة	Corruption of the French numéro

The Arabicized loanwords indicate that for Moroccan travellers, Arabic is able to accommodate and incorporate foreign words. Nazik Yared notes that Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq refused to incorporate foreign words in his travel narrative *Leg Over Leg* on nationalist grounds. (Yared, 1996, p. 115) Whereas Moroccan travellers felt that borrowing foreign words posed no threat to the sacredness of Arabic or to the Moroccan/Islamic cultural identity, nor did they even feel the need to justify such borrowing terms from foreign languages and incorporating them in their texts.

Most of the Moroccan travellers to Europe were explicitly or implicitly advocates of reform at home through the imitation of or inspiration by the European models. Their adoption of foreign terminology seems to indicate that reform is already discursively performed in their

travel texts. Moroccan travellers have effectively contributed to the development of the Arabic lexicon by borrowing from Western terminology. Linguistic borrowing in ambassadorial travel narratives can in themselves be read as a modernization of language.

In other cases, however, the travellers preferred to coin new phrases and expressions to describe unfamiliar phenomena. In his *Ithaf al Akhyar bi Ghara'ib al Akhbar*, Idriss Al Jaaydi, for instance, calls the zoo "جنان الوحوش", *jnan al wuhush*, which translates as "the garden of the beasts." While Al Ghassal uses the expression "بستان الوحوش", As-Saffar refers to the factory using the expression "دار الصنائع", *dar al sanaai'i*, "the house of manufactures" and "دار الإصطنبا" *dar al istanba* to mean the printing press. Interestingly, As-Saffar combines Arabic and Spanish terms. Al Maknassi uses "دارالرقاص", *dar al raqass*, to describe the post office in Spain (Tazi, 1986, pp. 230-233). It is interesting how al Maknassi resorts to an ancient Moroccan word to express a modern Spanish phenomenon. Idriss al Jaaydi uses "دار الفرجة", *dar al furja*, the house of spectacle for the theatre and "دارالسلاح", *dar slah*, the house of weapons for the weapon museum and the expression "مواضع للقهوة", *mawadia al qahwa*, places for coffee, for cafés. As-Saffar and Al Hajwi use the term "تصاوير", *tasawir*, pictures for paintings. And most of the travellers use the phrase "بابورالبر", *babur al bar*, land steamer to refer to the train. The phrase borrows the term "بابور", from the Spanish vapour meaning steam, a term commonly used by Moroccan travellers to refer to a steamer and combines it with "البر" land. So that *babur al bar* becomes in English a land steamer since trains too used steam. Another commonly used expression in Moroccan travel writings, in Al Jaaydi and Al Ghassal for instance, is the expression "وزير الأمور البرانية", *wazir al umur al barraniya*, to refer to the minister of foreign affairs. The phrase uses a Moroccan colloquial term "البرانية", meaning outside so that the phrase translates as "the minister of the outside affairs."

In *Muslim Discovery of Europe*, Bernard Lewis denies Muslim travellers genuine curiosity and interest in the affairs of Europe. For him, their travel accounts were primarily driven by intentions of espionage. The traveller is keen to collect information on Europe to discover the secret of its power. The various processes of translation Moroccan travellers were engaged in reveal an altogether different narrative. They were keenly involved in cross-cultural missions and willingly introduced the foreign world to their compatriots whether it was a strange fruit, an extraordinary animal, a curious technological invention, entertainment venues or a greeting expression of "*merci*."

The traveller is committed to searching for information and knowledge and translating the foreign into a familiar language for the edification of their uniformed compatriots rather than gathering secret information for the benefit of the Makhzen. Obviously, the wide variety of material and cultural items that travellers choose to translate and explain are not necessarily related to power dynamics and political espionage. This is further evidence against the claims of any premeditated agenda held by the diplomatic travel accounts. Their translation efforts are meant to promote communication rather than engender cultural or ideological conflicts between the world of Islam and Christianity. As-Safar advocates translation as a means for cultural dialogue between nations, stressing that "thanks to translation relationships become tighter, interests and rights are strengthened, and misunderstandings and ambiguities disappear." (Ben Addada, 1998, p. 482) The encounter with Europe is cordial rather than conflictual or confrontational. Muslim travellers, as Ibrahim Abu-Lughod emphasises, "approached the West with open minds, and found much to admire and to imitate." (Abu-

Lughod, 1957, p. 3) This perspective aligns with Abderrahmane El Moudden's argument through undertaking the *rihla*, "Moroccan travellers shared experiences with various components of the *umma*. At the same time, they were able to understand their difference through experiencing numerous comparisons." (El Moudden, 1990, p. 145).

5. CONCLUSION

The Moroccan European travelogues exhibit a fascinating interaction between the practices of translation and cross-cultural exploration. While embarked on their journeys, Moroccan diplomats embraced a versatile approach to translation, employing their native language, borrowing foreign loanwords, and transliteration techniques to grapple with the enigmatic manifestations of the alien worlds they visited. This intricate process not only reflects their determination to comprehend the unfamiliar landscapes they encountered but also highlights their inherent curiosity about European culture and civilization.

The act of translation within their narratives serves as a bridge between the unfamiliar and the familiar. The skilful intertwining of their narratives with creative translations, encapsulates their conscious efforts to convey the essence of their experiences to audiences back home who lacked the opportunity to embark on similar cross-border journeys and vicariously share in their European expedition.

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