



The Portrait of Tlemcen in Lady Herbert's *A Search after Sunshine* Le Portrait de Tlemcen dans *A Search after Sunshine* de Lady Herbert

Omar RAHMOUN

University of Tlemcen

LLC Research Lab

Abstract

English travel writing on the Middle East and North Africa in general, and Algeria in particular, had been tremendously popular especially between the mid eighteenth and early twentieth century. British travelers who visited Algeria left a considerable wealth of literature encompassing novels, travelogues and travel guides in which they voiced their own experience in the country through a portrayal of the land, its people, their religion and their culture. Tlemcen, the former capital of the central Maghreb also known as the African Granada, was the *passage obligé* for the travelers during their journey in Algeria. Lady Mary Elizabeth Herbert's *A Search after Sunshine or Algeria in 1871* is one of the travel accounts that indulges in describing, among other Algerian cities and towns, Tlemcen including its population, famous places and local culture. Lady Herbert's account received little attention as compared to other writings of the same genre. Accordingly, the present paper aims at shedding the limelight onto Lady Herbert's description of Tlemcen arguing that her writing differs, to a certain extent, from those of the second half of the nineteenth century in terms of their prevalent patronizing Orientalist discourse.

Keywords: English travel writing, North Africa, Algeria, Tlemcen, Orientalism.

Résumé

Les récits de voyage anglophones sur le Moyen-Orient et l'Afrique du Nord en général et sur l'Algérie en particulier avaient été considérablement populaires, surtout entre le XVIII^e siècle et le début du XX^e siècle. Les voyageurs britanniques qui ont visité l'Algérie ont laissé une littérature considérable comprenant des romans, des récits et des guides de voyage dans lesquels ils ont exprimé leur propre expérience dans ce pays à travers une représentation des lieux, ses habitants, leur religion et de leur culture. Tlemcen, ancienne capitale du Maghreb central aussi connue sous le nom de La Grenade Africaine, était le passage obligé pour les voyageurs lors de leur séjour en Algérie. *Algeria, a Search after Sunshine* de Lady Mary Elizabeth Herbert est l'un des récits de voyage qui s'adonne à décrire, entre autres villes et villages algériens, Tlemcen, y compris sa population, ses lieux célèbres et sa culture locale. Le récit de Lady Herbert a reçu peu d'attention par rapport à d'autres écrits du même genre. De ce fait, cet article vise à mettre en lumière la description de Lady Herbert de Tlemcen en faisant valoir que son écriture diffère de celle de la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle en termes de discours orientaliste condescendant répandu à cette époque.

Mots-clés : Lady Herbert, récits de voyage anglophones, Algérie, Tlemcen, Orientalisme.

Introduction

With the development of new means of transport, notably railways, and steamships brought about by the Industrial Revolution, travelling beyond the confines of Europe became one of the favourite activities that attracted British travellers, writers and historians. During the nineteenth century, a plethora of British tourists and writers, satisfying their thirst for discovery and leisure,

visited Algeria and produced a vast range of writings varying in terms of their genre and content.

Among the Algerian towns and cities, Tlemcen, the former capital of the central Maghreb, was a popular destination targeted by the British gaze witnessing the succession of writers and travellers who indulged in describing the city and accounting for its history. Miss Betham-Edwards (1912), for instance, described Tlemcen as

a second and hardly less beautiful Granada, moreover, peopled with those who made it what it was, a Granada not wholly dead, but teeming with picturesque Eastern life. The climate is delicious, and the atmosphere of the place so sweet and gracious, that one is never ready to go away (p.235).

In the same vein, ‘Tlemcen the Holy’ according to Stanford (1912), occupied so high a position in the Muslim world “and the reputation of its existing monuments is so widespread, that the enterprising traveller will desire to visit it” (p.148).

This authentic, charming and captivating city triggered the curiosity of Mary Elizabeth Herbert, the British travel writer, and encouraged her to describe it in her travel account entitled *A Search after Sunshine or Algeria in 1871*.

Accordingly, after providing a general review about the British travel literature written about Algeria meant to familiarise with the main aspects of the nineteenth century travel writings, the present article directs its endeavours to Mary Herbert’s account. This entails giving a summary of her journey in Algeria, then focusing on her visit to Tlemcen putting forward her descriptions of the city. Based on the latter, this article will attempt to draw a portrait of Tlemcen as depicted by Lady Herbert.

Algeria in Nineteenth Century British Travel Writings

The nineteenth century British travel writers penned a wide range of texts about Algeria taking forms of novels, travel accounts, tourism guides and newspaper articles. Those travel writings were meant to describe journeys and wanderings of British travellers in what they called Central Barbary. Algeria had been subject to a great fascination on the part of writers who aimed at meeting their imaginary fantasy lands and magical places as recounted in the tales of the *Arabian Nights*, or sought a quest for discovery, exploration and tourism. In this vein, the British novelist and travel writer Mathilda Betham-Edwards (1867) passionately expressed this idea by saying:

I remember wishing as a child that the *Arabian Nights* were all true; little dreaming how I should one day discover nothing to be truer than poetic fiction ... I was no sooner in Algeria than I seemed to hear story after story added to the One Thousand and One Nights, all as new, as true, and almost as wonderful (p.1)

Furthermore, Algeria enthralled writers, travellers and painters who lent themselves to the portrayal of the country as a land of history and mystery or as an enchanting place with its exotic landscapes and healthy climate. According to Cherry (2000) English visitors were particularly interested in enjoying the clement and mild weather, the pleasure of botany, and enthralled by the picturesque towns and exotic entertainments. Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, an English educationalist and artist who visited Algeria in the winter of 1865, exemplifies Cherry’s observation when she described the country’s climate as “delicious”, its mountains and sea as “more beautiful than pencil and words can express” (Cited by Cherry 2000, p.75), not to mention “the new vegetation and new animals, the wonderfully picturesque town and people give one so much to do with one’s 6 senses...I did not expect anything half so wonderfully beautiful as I find. I never saw such a place!” (Cited by Cherry 2000, p.75).

This kind of fascination and admiration of what Algeria would offer to the visitors encouraged more English curious eyes to land on its coast, explore its land, and record what they witness. However, what was written about this magnificent country did not keep the same tone while describing other aspects of the society notably the native population and its religion.

One of the main characteristics of nineteenth century travel literature is the belittlement of the native inhabitants and the denigration of their religion and culture. Besides, in their descriptions, British travel writers seemed to ignore the destruction and the suffering caused by the French colonisation, the source of the harsh and poor life of the Algerians.

Far from the positive discourse resulting from the admiration of the captivating nature, the delicious climate, the authentic Islamic architecture and even the imposing remnants of Roman edifices, a negative narrative permeates the English travel accounts which concern the Arabs. The latter, which form with the Berbers the native Algerian population, are considered by those writings in many instances as an inferior backward race making racist descriptions a usual pattern used by a considerable number of travellers. This sort of descriptions can be read in Rogers (1865), Evans (1968) or Playfair (1891).

Mrs. Ellen G. Rogers in her *A Winter in Algeria*, as many of her likes, often choose to attribute all sorts of repulsive portrayals to the natives epitomised in the following passage:

The training and education of these dogs must be as defective as that of most of the population, for they have neither discrimination, nor discretion. They never distinguish between friend and foe...Riders, too, are pursued by the smaller fry of these pests, and often the long tails which here are allowed to adorn the horses, have a small dog pendant, actually borne along the tail between its teeth. (1865, p.156)

Rogers (1865) in her travelogue vehicles the assumption that Arab character is inherently defected harbouring the view that sees the Algerians as inferior to the French and the British. Likewise, Evans (1868) reckoned Algeria as a “champ de manoeuvre that was and should remain backward for the reason that these people were backward by nature” (p. 164). She even linked the usually celebrated and appreciated ‘exotic’ Arab weddings to bad taste and backwardness; she deridingly described them as follows:

Right glad were we to get home; it was nearly two o'clock, and for the greater part of six hours we had been on our feet in more or less uncomfortable attitudes of curiosity. The heat, the evil odours, scarcely drowned by the heavy scent of mingled rose and musk, the noise, the glare of colour and light, was an exhausting "ensemble" that we did not recover all next day. The spectacle, however, was well worth seeing, once in a lifetime, and once only (p.50).

Opting for the same diction recurrent among English travellers, Playfair (1891) made use of descriptions that had become ‘traditional’ to refer to the Arabs such like “so primitive and so filthy in their habits” (p. 9) , “ effeminate” and “lazy and indolent to excess” (p.11) or even “distrustful”, and incapable to “appreciate the advantages of civilization” (Playfair 1887, p. 8).

This Orientalist Eurocentric view not only derided the Algerian culture and identity but also, out of a patronising attitude and a Victorian view of oriental countries, relegated the Algerian population to a subordinate race, that must be under the sway of a ‘superior’ French ‘masters’. In fact, behind the permanent condescendence expressed in reference to the Arabs resided a justification and defense of the French colonial enterprise in Algeria. It is usual in the travel publications of the second half of the nineteenth century to champion the presence of the French coloniser considered as inscribed in a mission of civilisation; ‘mission civilisatrice’ that the Algerians had to accept. In this respect, Wingfield (1868), claimed that

God never gave the earth to man that he might leave it uncultivated; and those who fail to cultivate the land in which they live, deserve to be dispossessed. It is surely the duty of civilized nations to point the way, and constrain them by all means in their power to follow it. To prove that the Arab does not fulfil his mission towards the land he lives in, we have but to dip into Government returns, and compare the produce of the native, after all his years of experience, with the shackled efforts of the colonist, who only settled here some thirty years ago. (pp. 144-145)

This kind of perceptions reckons also that Algeria was in need to be freed from the mire of barbarism and corruption, and this would only be achieved thanks to the Christian and European help. Similarly, Rogers (1865) claimed that the Algerians needed to be colonized because they were living under a “despotic” rule. She explains, in other words, that this political inferiority of the Algerians is due to their rulers who “had too often waded to the throne through blood” (p. 32). According to her, the poor and backward life of the Algerians was due to their corrupt despotic political system, thus, the French colonisation or ‘civilisation mission’ is required and necessary.

It is worthwhile to mention that the terms Christianity and civilisation were used synonymously in the mid nineteenth century British travel literature, and opposed to Islam, the predominant religion in Algeria, which collocated with backwardness and disdain. Rogers (1865) for example, criticised the Algerians for their observance of Islamic commands like fasting during Ramadan, considering it as a waste of time and preferred to see them directing their devotion to a ‘true’ faith; to convert to Christianity. She said “the implicit obedience which they yield to those hard precepts, shows at least the sincerity of these poor, blind devotees; but alas! Sincerity is no Saviour. Benighted ones, yet how faithful to their creed! Is there no one to go and show them the true light” (1865, p.85).

In the same respect, Evans (1868) wrapped up her *Last Winter in Algeria* with a grateful tone for the efforts exerted by the French during their presence in Algeria who achieved a great mission and offered “a signal service to civilisation” (p. 325) hoping that Christianity would prevail in all north Africa as it was the case in Europe where the tide of Islam “is rolling back all over Europe, and has been ebbing for centuries” (p. 326). Said another way, Evans considered the end of Islam as salvation and a sign of progress.

This kind of discourse is not free from a blatant double standard since those British travellers who opted for such argument considered Islam as a violent religion that spread in Algeria by the ‘sword of the Arab invader’ but when the colonizer was Christian and European, he was praised and entitled as the bearer of enlightenment and civilization.

In general parlance, British travel writings was characterised by, on the one hand, positive and advantageous descriptions of Algeria when it comes to its nature, climate and picturesque attractions. On the other hand, the travel writers publicised stereotypical generalisations popular at that time based on a shared perception that saw the Arabs, often, as backward, irrational, violent, dirty, lazy and especially requiring the French ‘mission civilisatrice’. This genre of literature was not free from a clear justification and defense of colonialism and imperialism which became typical of most writers of the period who wrote about Algeria in the nineteenth century.

A Search after Sunshine or Algeria in 1871 by Elizabeth Herbert, an Overview

One of the travel accounts that were written about Algeria in the second half of the nineteenth century and which have received little attention in academia is *A Search after Sunshine or Algeria in 1871* by Elizabeth Herbert published in 1872.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert, Baroness Herbert of Lea (1822 -1911), known simply as Lady Herbert was a travel writer, translator and philanthropist, of an English Roman Catholic background. Beside her devotion to catholic charities, Lady Herbert wrote a considerable number of books varying between novels, articles, translations and more particularly travel accounts that express her thought, experiences, and religious concern, for instance *Impressions of Spain in 1866* (1867), *Cradle Lands (travels in Egypt and Palestine)* (1867) *Wives and Mothers of the Olden Time* (1871) *A Search after Sunshine, or Algeria in 1871* (1872) *Wayside Tales* (1880) *L'Algérie Contemporaine Illustrée* (1881).

Herbert's *A Search after Sunshine or Algeria in 1871* is divided into nine chapters. She opens her account with general information about Algeria including its geography, people, language and history then accounts for her travel in the country that begins with her arrival to Nemours (Ghazaouet), then going from Oran to Tlemcen by diligence. Lady Herbert's sojourn in Algeria followed its course when she visited Meliana, Teniet el Hadd and Blidah. Algiers was the next destination that she visited where she observed that "the beauty and interest of Algiers are lost; and this applies equally to Constantine, which has preserved far more than Algiers, the 'cachet Arabe.'" (1872, p. 61).

Lady Herbert carries on her charming expedition in direction to the Roman antiquities of Cherchel and the picturesque Kabylia mountains, then going to Constantine where among other places, she appreciated the "beautiful valley, through a succession of orange and citron groves, to a point where we obtained a still more picturesque view of the cascades" (p. 165). Batna, Lambessa, Biskra, and other towns in the province of Constantine were the following target of Lady Herbert's gaze and pen. A curious mausoleum attracted her attention, it is "like the 'Tomb of the Christian' about which, however, the learned are divided, though it is generally supposed to be the burial-place of Massinissa. This is called the Medrasen" (1872, p.185).

Besides, in Biskra, she enjoyed "a walk in the palm groves, which are beautiful" (Herbert 1872, p.196). She could know that "there are upwards of 1 80,000 palms in this oasis of the Ziban... Each palm brings in, from its dates alone, twenty-five francs a-year to its owner. ...The tax paid to the French Government for each palm is twelve sous a-year, or sixpence of our money" (Herbert 1872, p.196). Then, her endeavour to explore the province continues when her little carriage headed to "Hammam-Meskhoutin or the 'accursed baths'" had been one of the main objects of her journey to the province of Constantine.

The eighth chapter of *A Search after Sunshine* touches upon the French government in Algeria. Lady Herbert considers that the chief difficulty the French had to cope with was the subsequent organization of Algeria which is attributed to Emir Abdelkader. The latter, she says, divided the power between the Khalifas, the Aghas, and the Kai'ds in addition to the Kadi. Lady Herbert further explains the Emir's form of government which was based on the laws "contained in the Koran, which are very minute; and also on the rules and customs laid down by their legal authorities in certain cases" (Herbert 1872, p. 230). Herbert did not miss to criticize the Emir's government and reckoning it as despotic that enabled him to turn the Arabs to almost blind obedience. By the end of the chapter, Lady Herbert provides a summary of her thought regarding the colonisation of Algeria concluding that it

contains within herself the elements of one of the finest countries in the world, for she has two hundred leagues of sea-board, fine harbours, a magnificent soil, a beautiful climate, and untold mineral riches ; but from want of sufficient security, capital and labour, these advantages have as yet been little utilised" (Herbert 1872, p.240).

Besides, she argues that France, at that time, could not establish neither a military colony nor a civil one and that the French, unlike the British, "they never look upon the colony as home, and

therefore care less for its ultimate prosperity” (Herbert 1872, p. 241). She wraps up her chapter by aspiring a better colonization and cultivation of Algeria!

The last chapter of this travel accounts unfolds on Lady Herbert leaving Algeria, after spending “such a happy winter and spring, and whose inhabitants had treated [her] everywhere with such genuine kindness and hospitality” (Herbert 1872 p.242), to reach Tunis and Carthage and later on returning to Europe.

A Search after Sunshine or Algeria in 1871, a Portrait of Tlemcen

Tlemcen, the former capital of the central Maghreb also known as the African Granada, was the *passage obligé* for the travelers during their journeys in Algeria. Lady Herbert in her *A Search after Sunshine* devotes a considerable part of the first chapter entitled “Oran and Tlemcen” to the description of Tlemcen including its famous places and local culture.

Before indulging in her descriptive and narrative endeavour, and before introducing the reader to Tlemcen, Lady Herbert found necessary to remind the reader that despite the fact that much had been previously said and written about Algeria, information related to its position and history could not be taken for granted and that what was “written ten or twelve or even five or six years ago, is no longer a true picture of the existing state of things” (Herbert 1872, p.1). Moreover, She considers that “a vague idea exists in England of its inhabitants and configuration” (Herbert 1872, p.1). This introductory statement indicates that although several British travelers wrote about Algeria, its history and its society, Lady Herbert knew little about the country. Also, such statements invite the reader to consider that this travel account is apt to clear that vague idea and offer ample information for whom Algeria and its people are unknown.

Panorama of Tlemcen

The first mention of Tlemcen occurs when Lady Herbert met the English Consul, a Genoese, who had to arrange everything for her journey from Oran to Tlemcen. Before arriving to Tlemcen, in her way, Lady Herbert describes the “lonely and deserted “ (Herbert 1872, p.17) road that leads to Tlemcen running through “an undulating but gently ascending plain of dwarf palm trees (the Chamaerops or fan palm), wild squill and genista” (Herbert 1872, p.17). She reinforces this description when she says that,

There is no cultivation whatever, save a little patch here and there near the wayside caravanserais, which are enclosed by a high wall for defence from both man and beast. Not a living thing was to be seen, nor a human habitation, save the post-houses above named. (Herbert 1872, p.18)

This melancholic tone describing the monotonous route suddenly changes when Lady Herbert, after passing by Ain Tekbalet (a village in the commune of Ben Sekrane) from which “the road rises and winds through a mountainous ravine” (Herbert 1872, p.19) directed her gaze towards “the most beautiful panorama possible” (Herbert 1872, p.9). This latter is of Tlemcen and that its encounter made the Baroness describe it as follows:

A high chain of mountains, still in deep purple shadow, bounded the horizon; while through the plain at our feet, studded with olive and orange groves, the bright stream of the Isser flowed rapidly; and the town of Tlemcen, the ancient capital of the Marreb and the key of the west, with its picturesque mosque, crenelated walls, high Moorish towers, circular tombs or 'koubbas,' and horse-shoe arched gateways sparkled like a gem in the rising sun. (Herbert 1872, p. 19)

The above description contains geographic, natural, historical and architectural elements that denote a considerable knowledge and appreciation of the city and its general visual aspect. Lady Herbert, like all the nineteenth century British travelers, emphasised the aesthetic features of the city not to mention its historical position. This can be seen in her mention of the picturesque

appearance of Tlemcen thanks to its mosques, crenellated walls, arched gateways; and the use of titles like ‘the ancient capital of the Maghreb’ or ‘the key of the west’.

Lady Herbert did not indulge in accounting for the history of Tlemcen as a guise of introduction for her readers, as one may usually read in other British travel accounts. Actually, such kind of information is of utmost importance being a necessary background to comprehend the nature of the descriptions and judgments of the writer. Instead, subsequent to her mention of her room in ‘Hotel de France’ and her visit to “the house of a M. Guès, who had a villa in one of the orange groves which surround the town, very much like those at Sidon in Syria” (Herbert 1972, p.20), Lady Herbert begins her tour and takes her readers to visit one of the most famous sites in Tlemcen namely, Sidi Boumediene.

El Eubbad – Sidi Boumediene

Accompanied with an Arab guide, the picturesque white minaret of Sidi Boumediene attracted Lady Herbert’s attention. On her way to have a close acquaintance with this famous and popular site, she passed by the Arab cemetery (now called ‘the cemetery of Sheikh Senoussi’) and by a succession of olive groves like those of Mentone in France, till she came to the foot of the village, left the carriage and “climbed up the steep, deserted-looking street of mud houses without roofs” (Herbert 1972, p.20).

Her description becomes more enthusiastic and richer when she was led to “the mosque on the right, and the Koubba or tomb of the saint Sidi-Bou-Medin to the left” (Herbert 1972, p.20). Like most of the British travelers of her era who visited Tlemcen and Sidi Boumediene in particular, Lady Herbert stands in admiration before the beauty of the Islamic architecture lending herself to a detailed, lengthy and appreciative description of all the compartments of the site.

Indeed, she formulated her description using a language that reflects her admiration such as “a beautiful Moorish fountain... Fantastic lanterns hung from the centre of the arches, and a quantity of cages filled with singing-birds were suspended from hooks in the wall... The ceiling and doors were richly carved and painted in Arabesque and Cufic character” (Herbert 1972, p.21). Her admiration amplifies when she says “Re-ascending the steep steps we crossed the road to the mosque, for the excessive beauty and richness of which we were quite unprepared” (Herbert 1972, p.22), or when she went indoors and described the ‘mihrab’ as the “Holy of Holies, with its onyx columns, was, of course, the chef-d’oeuvre of the whole; and the ‘minbar’ or pulpit was beautifully carved in cedar-wood. And this description will serve for all the other mosques in Tlemcen; although none are so richly and beautifully decorated” (Herbert 1972, p.23).

What can be noticed regarding Sidi Boumediene is that Lady Herbert focused minutely on the description of the tomb, the mosque “which appeared to be absolutely a bit of the Alhambra” (Herbert 1972, p.23), its minaret, mihrab and minbar in addition to the ‘medresa’ taking into account the materials used to build the site without giving the same importance to Sidi Boumediene himself. Arguably, a brief biography had to be provided knowing that he was an emblematic Islamic figure with a rich history and a great impact on the Muslims in North Africa.

The reverse is done with the beautiful mosque of Sidi El-Haloui the former ‘Kadi’ of Seville and “the patron saint of Tlemcen”. Except a succinct description of the mosque in which she indicates that it was built over the tomb to honor the sheikh containing “some fine Oriental alabaster columns, but its minaret, covered with coloured tiles, is its chief attraction” (Herbert 1972, p.25), Lady Herbert devoted almost two pages to his story starting with his move from Seville to Tlemcen, his name which means the seller of “bon-bons and sweet things (called

Halaoua!)" (Herbert 1972, p. 25), his execution caused by the Sultan's grand vizier, and the building of the mosque.

El Djamaa El Kebir, the Grand Mosque

Coming from Sidi Elhaloui into the direction of the centre of the town, Lady Herbert found nothing particularly to discover in the bazaars. Getting into the centre 'la place', she was agreeably surprised by "a beautiful little mosque intersected by horse-shoe arches and onyx columns, which had been converted into an Arabic and French College" (Herbert 1972, p.26). The Masjid she alludes to is the mosque of Sidi Bellahcene, now a museum, known for its 'mihrab', "the dome and sides of which are covered with the most beautiful and exquisite carvings" (Herbert 1972, p.26). Lady Herbert who appreciates this kind of architecture and acknowledges its beauty sincerely regrets its conversion into an ordinary day-school by the French.

Unsurprisingly, given that she said earlier that her description of the mosque of Sidi Boumediene serves for all the other masjids in Tlemcen, the description of El Djamaa El Kbir did not benefit from Herbert's artistic pen. Rather, she merely depicts the outer court, the fountain and the interior "which is very large, has been ruthlessly whitewashed, and nothing remains of its ancient colours or magnificence, save the 'mihrab' which is still decorated in Saracenic fashion" (Herbert 1972, p.26). Except the beautiful blueish green tiles that she finds beautiful on the minaret, the tourist considers that "the art of making which seems now to be extinct" (Herbert 1972, p.26).

Mansourah

About five kilometers from the east of the town, the remnants of an ancient edifice looking like "the ghost of a deserted city" (Herbert 1972, p.27) grabbed Herbert's attention and triggered her curiosity; it is El Mansourah or the Victorious.

In fact, the crenelated ramparts of reddish brown that she saw once she first approached Tlemcen are those of the Mansourah. This latter as the iconic place that every tourist does not miss to explore, and Lady Herbert is not an exception. Seemingly, the "multitude of towers at regular distances, and a minaret forty-five feet high to the west of the battlements, constructed of those narrow tiled bricks" (Herbert 1972, p.27) impressed and appealed to her. She even finds in it a similitude with the early Roman architecture without neglecting the details of the construction "covered with varnished tiles; the richly laced archway with its onyx columns still bearing the name of the sultan who erected it" (Herbert 1972, p.27).

Lady Herbert provided a short historical account of the siege that lasted eight years (1299-1307) and resulted in the building of this authentic fortress. Besides, she found interesting to emphasise the fact that Marinid Sultan Abou Yakoub Yusuf an-Nasr "having vowed to reduce the town to submission, and wishing to be comfortable in the meanwhile, caused this great city to be constructed, for himself and his army, with baths, mosques, and all the appliances of Eastern civilization" (Herbert 1972, p.27).

Moreover, Lady Herbert seems to have considerable knowledge about 'Mansourah' provided that she wanted to see "the multitude of alabaster columns and interesting inscriptions to be found in the ruined city" (Herbert 1972, p.27) she previously read about in guidebooks on Algeria. Lady Herbert interest and fascination can be inferred from her expression of disappointment not finding those architectural elements in the site because "most unfortunately, they [had] been transported to Algiers, and only a few of the mural tablets to the museum at Tlemcen" (Herbert 1972, p.27).

Nevertheless, Lady Herbert reckons and admits that what remains in such ‘ghost-like old city’ is enough to give it “a cachet of its own” and to give her reasons to wander “in and out of its silent fortifications, musing on the extraordinary perseverance and determination of the old chieftain who had resorted to so marvellous an expenditure in order to accomplish his purpose” (Herbert 1972, p.27).

El Ourit

Accompanied by the head of the Bureau Arabe, Mr. de Signette, Lady Herbert went on a ride to the cascades of El-Ourit, which are about six miles from the town. As it is commonly known of European travel writers, exploring colorful and picturesque natural sceneries is an integral part in both their sojourns and their expectations. Lady Herbert in her turn gives a considerable attention and care to the description of one of the most important touristic natural sites in Tlemcen till the present day. Her depiction of the cascades is as follows:

The road winds through a beautiful and picturesque valley full of orchards and orange groves, cherry trees in full blossom, oleanders and spring flowers, backed by a magnificent chain of mountains which at the waterfall itself, form themselves into a circular mass of reddish stone (Herbert 1972, p.31)

The magnificence of this natural scenery captivated Lady Herbert to the extent that reminded her of the beauty of another place, the image of other falls that are engraved in her mind those of Tirni. At a distance of 11 kilometers from Tlemcen, Tirni or Terny is also a wonderful touristic area. The falls of Tirni left a never-to-be-forgotten impression in Herbert’s mind that she translated in the following passage:

The waters rushing over the rocks at intervals, and occasionally quite hidden by the luxuriant vegetation clothing the hill-side, and which, a little later in the year, must be quite beautiful. As it was, the tender green of the spring leaves, seen here and there through the rainbow caused by the sun’s rays on the falling water, gave to the whole scene a beautifully misty and fairy-like effect which will ever remain on my memory. (Herbert 1972, p.31)

As a passionate explorer, avid for other beautiful landscapes and mind-blowing natural sites, her plan was to visit the grottos beyond El Ourit, alluding to the grottos of Ain-Fezza of which she had even some interesting photographs. However, due to time constraints, she regretted that she had to content herself with visiting the last site in her schedule namely, El Mechouar or The Palace of the Emirs.

El Mechouar

Lady Herbert’s description of El Mechouar is not as profuse as those destined to the natural sites of Tlemcen or to Sidi Boumediene. Although of utmost historical importance and imposing architecture, the Castle of El Mechouar could not be the favourite spot she visited. One of the reasons behind this lack of appreciation is the fact that, except “the magnificent old walls, gateway, and mosque”, little remains to be enjoyed because of the French. Herbert affirms that they “treated the place ruthlessly and converted the most interesting portions of the palace into barracks and hospitals” (Herbert 1972, p. 32).

In fact, this kind of treatment is not strange to the French coloniser. This ruthlessness exerted on constructions that speak volumes about the local history and civilization occurred also when in 1873 the French demolished the Medrasa Tashfiniya built, in front of the Djamaa El Kebir, in the early 14th century by the Zayyanid ruler Abu Tashfin I. Moreover, the tile mosaic decoration (zellij) of the madrasa was removed to be then preserved in the Louvre Museum in France (Oulebsir 2004).

Lady Herbert’s visit to the Mechouar led her to see the private houses with open patios and picturesque Moorish arches and colonnades. Particularly, there was one house with

handsome wide flight of steps and beautifully carved gallery round the court, which was thickly festooned with vine leaves and passion flowers, hanging in graceful wreaths over the old arches, waving in the soft spring air, and throwing flickering shadows on the marble pavement and old well below. (Herbert 1972, p.33)

It is worth mentioning that Lady Herbert's visit to El Mechouar revealed one of the rare instances of criticism vis-à-vis the French occupation behavior and practices and explained how Mr. C. Brosselard rescued a number of antiquities from the vandalism of the French soldiers, even if the most valuable ones were transferred to the museum of Algiers. A similar instance was in her description of Oran where she expected to find the gorgeous forts and palaces she used to read about like the Old residence of the Beys. However, expressing her disappointment, she discovered that "the hand of the French spoiler had been busy everywhere, and except a couple of old towers there are no antiquities left nothing but wide, commonplace streets and dismal rows of barracks"(Herbert 1972, p.8)

Religion

Islam had been recurrently discussed in the nineteenth century British travel literature written about Algeria as it represents an integral part of the Algerian identity. Besides, such texts usually presented Christianity as synonymous to enlightenment and civilization used by the colonizer as a means to reshape and then control the local inhabitants. The discourse used by British travel writers, in most of the cases, vehicles an antagonist duality between Islam and Christianity entailing a distorted image of the Muslims.

As mentioned earlier in this article, Lady Herbert is of an English Roman Catholic background showing a particular devotion to her religion. Benjamin Disraeli, in his novel *Lothair* (1870), wherein she figures as Lady St Jerome, affirmed that "her whole life was dedicated to the triumph of the Catholic cause; and, being a woman of considerable intelligence and of an ardent mind" (1870, p.19). Actually, in *A Search after Sunshine*, Lady Herbert gives a considerable importance to religion.

As far as Islam is concerned, Lady Herbert makes use of the usual distorted version of the origin of the presence of Islam in Algeria when she said that "the Caliph Omar ...compelled the inhabitants to accept the religion of the Prophet". (Herbert 1872, p.2). In other words, she is among the western writers who insist to believe that Islam spread by the sword. This traditional pre-existing allegation was categorically refuted by the Orientalist De Lacy O'Leary (1923) asserting that "the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated." (p.8)

Regarding her account about Tlemcen, Lady Herbert chose not to give a considerable space to Islam. Though the city occupied a high position in the Muslim world, and Islam is an essential part in the life of the Tlemcenians, she contented herself with describing the city's main Islamic monuments without a direct mention of the religion. Besides, in her chapter on Tlemcen, she did not resort to the orientalist discourse when mentioning the Muslims.

One of the rare exceptions is when she visited the 'medresa' connected to the mosque of Sidi Boumediene and talked to the Dervish who was also the village schoolmaster. She said "Boys only, receive instruction in this village.' Girls do not need it; they have no souls; they die like the dog!' was the commentary of our guide to my inquiry as to the education given to the women. They certainly were beautiful enough to deserve a better fate" (Herbert 1972, pp.23-24). A shocking discussion about the education of women that is hard to believe.

As opposed to Herbert's treatment of Islam, Christianity took a considerable attention while recounting her visit to Tlemcen. In Nemours (the French name of Ghazaouet) or in

Tlemcen, Lady Herbert was, verily, concerned with the preaching of Christianity and the building of churches. She mentions the role of the religious order 'Les Dames Trinitaires' in spreading Christianity since they undertook "almost all the schools in [Nemours], in which they have upwards of 250 sisters at work...their object is the same, i.e., the redemption of slaves and captives, and teaching the Arab and Moorish children. (Herbert 1972, pp.6-7).

In Tlemcen, Lady Herbert was content to see a catholic church built in a Norman style praising the effort of the French in building churches and establishing schools throughout Algeria. She even backed up this matter by citing another traveller who said

The settlement of the French in Algeria, although certainly undertaken and continued for political and military purposes, has also, in reality, a decided missionary character. It is the first grand inroad made on the headquarters of Mahometan infidelity since the time of the Crusaders. The gain is the gain of Christianity and of civilisation, and all the Christian nations of Europe ought to feel that they owe a debt of gratitude to France for what she has accomplished in Algeria, and be willing to help her in her great enterprise. (Herbert 1972, p.29)

The above quotation confirms the perception of both the colonizer and the travelers that consider Islam as an antagonist to be defeated by the Christian nations, the so-called bearer of civilization. A perception that Lady Herbert seems to assume and adhere to.

Conclusion

At this juncture of the present article, after shedding light on the main places and aspects Lady Herbert preferred to depict during her sojourn in the city that she left "with real regret" (Herbert 1972, p.37), one may attempt to 'draw' the following portrait of 'Tlemcen in 1871'. Situated in the west of Algeria, Tlemcen is a charming city high of her chain of mountains that embrace the horizon. Once explored, olive and orange groves show to ornament the view of crenellated brownish walls and high Moorish towers. Tlemcen as the ancient capital of the Islamic Maghreb invites the visitor to witness her civilization and encounter the men who made it through the mosques of Sidi Boumedién, Sidi El Haloui, El Djamaa el Kebir, and their mihrabs which are of excessive beauty and richness though according to Lady Herbert not all of them are equally beautifully decorated.

In Tlemcen, Lady Herbert saw the iconic Mansourah standing with its crenellated reddish-brown ramparts; an ancient city that disappoints the visitor for it became 'an old ghost-like city'. The amateurs of nature find where to satisfy their thirst in the fairy-like cascades of El Ourit and the waterfalls of Tirni. They were beautiful and captivating enough to make Lady Herbert remember the scenery forever. Then comes El Mechouar with its magnificent old walls and mosque treated ruthlessly by the French who transformed most of the edifice into hospitals and barracks. Nevertheless, a spot that led the Baroness to appreciate the private houses with their open patios and picturesque Moorish arches and colonnades.

Lady Herbert's exploration of Tlemcen yielded a description that is more or less different than those usually found in nineteenth century British travel literature. Actually, except rare instances, she did not use the Orientalist discourse to talk about the people. Rather, she contented herself with referring to them as 'Arabs' without attaching to them any sort of disparaging traits. Besides, she did not indulge profusely in a positive description of the population of Tlemcen with the exception of describing a group of young girls she met in Sidi Boumediene as "all remarkably beautiful, with bright clear skins, dark eyes, and penciled eyebrows" (Herbert 1872, p.21). Like most of the British travelers of her era, Lady Herbert stands in admiration before the beauty of the Islamic monuments and natural sites of Tlemcen,

and vehicles the same perception with regards to religion, based on a distorted and imperialist perception.

References

- BETHAM-EDWARDS, M. (1867). *A Winter with the Swallows*. London, Hurst and Blackett.
- BETHAM-EDWARDS, M. (1912). *In French Africa, Scenes and Memories*. London, Chapman & Hall
- CHERRY, D. (2000). *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850-1900*. New York, Routledge.
- DISRAELI, B. (1870). *Lothair*. New York, D. Apple and Company
- EVANS, H. L. (1868). *Last Winter in Algeria*. London, William Clowes and Sons
- HERBERT, M.E. (1872). *A Search after Sunshine or Algeria in 1871*. London, Richard Bentley & Son.
- O'LEARY, D.L. (1923), *Islam at the Cross Roads* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co.
- OULEBSIR, N. (2004). *Les Usages du patrimoine: Monuments, musées et politique coloniale en Algérie (1830-1930)*. Paris, La Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- PLAYFAIR, L. R. (1887). *Handbook for Travellers in Algeria and Tunis*. London: John Murray.
- PLAYFAIR, L. R. (1891). *Handbook for Travellers in Algeria and Tunis*. London: John Murray.
- ROGERS, M. E. (1865). *A Winter in Algeria*. London, Sampson Low, Son, and Martson.
- STANFORD, T.C. (1912). *About Algeria: Algiers, Tlemçen, Constantine, Biskra, Timgad*. London, J. Lane.
- WINGFIELD, L.S. (1868). *Under the Palms in Algeria and Tunis*. London: Hurst and Blackett.