



Ibn Omar El-Tounsy, Cheykh  
Voyage au Ouaday



\* 29144 \*

# VOYAGE AU OUADAY

PAR

LE CHEYKH MOHAMMED IBN-OMAR EL-TOUNSY.

REISEUR EN CHEF A L'ÉCOLE DE MÉDECINE DU KAIRE :

TRADUIT DE L'ARABE PAR LE D<sup>r</sup> PERRON.

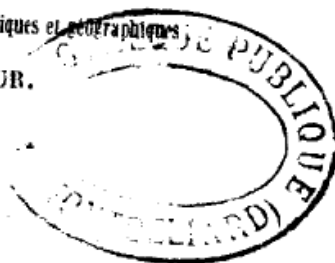
Directeur de l'École de médecine du Kaire :  
Membre de la Société asiatique de Paris et de la Société égyptienne.

OUVRAGE ACCOMPAGNÉ DE CARTES ET DE PLANCHES  
ET DU PORTRAIT DU CHEYKH.

PUBLIÉ PAR LE D<sup>r</sup> PERRON ET M. JOMARD  
Membre de l'Institut, ancien Directeur de la Mission égyptienne en France.

Ouvrage précédé d'une PRÉFACE de ce dernier, contenant des remarques historiques et géographiques

ET FAISANT SUITE AU VOYAGE AU DÂRFOUR.



PARIS.

CHEZ BENJAMIN DUPRAT,  
LIBRAIRE DE L'INSTITUT  
ET DE LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE,  
Rue du Cloître-Saint-Benoît, 7.  
ARTHUS BERTRAND, LIBRAIRE,  
Rue Montfaucon, 22

FRANCK, LIBRAIRE,  
Rue Richelieu, 69.  
RENOUARD, LIBRAIRE,  
Rue de Tournon, 8.  
GIDE, LIBRAIRE,  
Rue des Fossés-Augustins, 5

1851.

## Chapter V.

Preparation for departure from Mourzouk. – Rivalries and war of the Béni-Soleymân Arabs. – Means employed by the Pacha of Tripoli to end them. – Departure from Mourzouk. – Calley of Chlâty. – Deliberative assembly. – Departure for Tripoli. - The Ghiriân; regal hospitality. - Gardens. – Character of the Bichr Arabs; habits of pillaging. – Arrival at Tripoli. - Menchye. – Departure from Tripoli. – Djirbeh (Djerba). – Safâkès (Sfax); Rustic character of the Safâkésains (Sfaxiens); gardens; fruits. – Castle of the villages of El-Djemm.

Pages 578-582

I embarked on a large boat for Tunis. The third day of crossing, or rather of coastal traffic on the coast, we reached the island of Djirbeh. We went ashore there and bought some provisions, but at a price much higher than in Tripoli.

Then we started, and navigated to Safâkès (Sfakes, according to the pronounciation of the Maghreb). We reached it two days after departure from Djirbeh. We disembarked to shore; it was one hour and half after sunset, we did not know where to take lodging. Someone led us to a *okei*, a place intended to receive the travellers, close to the *Gate of the sea, Bâb el-bahr*. We spent the most hateful night there, in truth strangers abandoned and not knowing where to settle, where to lay ourselves, in rooms flooded with dust that we could not clean; because it was closed for the night. It had been twenty times preferable to remain in our boat. The night appeared interminable to us, preyed on as we were with all kinds of insects, fleas, mosquitos, etc. It seemed to us that the orb would never come to announce the day, that the night would never cease its darkness. As early as we could, we fled from our beds as from thieves, and we hastened to make our prayers, prayers with high voice and prayers with low voice (1, See note 73).

I went to visit the town of Safâkès and its markets. The inhabitants are the truly rough, veritable wild asses, not answering a question, not understanding anything, pure beasts of burden under human form; there are hardly any exceptions. Safâkès ains nourish themselves on barley bread and corn bread.

As a meat, they consume great amounts of small fry or fish which they call *sabârès* and which in Egypt they call *biçârieh* and *syr* (2, See note 74).

It is almost astonishing that Safâkès could produce ulémas, distinguished writers, poets. However it has produced several, such as Aly-Holayk, the cheykh Macdych, the cheykh Aly-Ghourâb, a most famous scholar, whose reputation is spread and deserves to be recognized in all the regency of Tunis. Aly-Ghourâb is an author of charming pieces of verse, pretty fugitive poems in detached phrases, like sentences, isolated thoughts, etc. Was I not worried about prolonging this already too long account, I would quote some fragments, some verses of them, as a sample of these compositions full of feeling, skill, and tasteful spirit.

Safâkès is remarkable by the great number of its gardens; by its fruit tree seedlings. The green pistachio is abundant there; this variety of pistachio is recommended, in old medicine, as a gifted fruit with properties favorable to the improvement of the intelligence and the spirit, as a substance whose virtue is that it develops mental faculties, especially in the children. The almonds, the eggplants, and especially the melon *roûmy* or Greek, are abundant in the gardens of Safâkès. The almonds are those which one calls, in Égypt, *ferk*; it is a variety easily split open, i.e. the least effort of the fingers opens them into two. The melon *roûmy*, in Safâkès, is even sweeter than sugar.

The fish, in Safâkès, is cheaply priced; almost for nothing. We bought there *sabârès* by heap weighing from five to six pesants, and each heap cost only a *kharôûbeh* or four *nasryeh*, or a quarter of a Tunisian *ryâl*. Large fish were sold by weight, or by eye and by piece, but always at low prices.

I visited many mosques in Safâkès; the largest is known as the Grand Mosque. It is about the same in extent as the El-Azhar mosque, in Cairo; but it is always deserted, except at the hours of the prayer (i.e. no lessons are given in it).

Safâkès has a small bazaar where I noticed two shops of doctors. One of these two shops is rather large; there were a certain number of books which

the doctor proprietor held in front of him; at side was a balance to weigh the drugs. The interior of the box was furnished with bottles and bottles. I asked the doctor in this shop what were the books that he had in front of him. "They are," he told me, "my consultation books; I look there to find what the diseases are on which people come to question me, which remedies are to be used, what are the quantities that it is necessary to take of various drugs. "

We rested three days in Safâkès. I took for hire two *poste* mules, and, the fourth day, in the morning, we got under way for Tunis. We left at daybreak, provided with money necessary for five stations, or for five days of walk. We arrived at the end of this voyage around three or four hours after midday.

On the way from Safâkès to Tunis, the most remarkable thing I saw was the village of El-Djemm with its old castle with large and high walls, a kind of tower of an almost amazing height and perfect construction. The walls are pierced with many niches with narrow perpendicular openings, made during the construction of the tower. These niches resemble those which one observes in certain village walls behind which the peasants place themselves for defense when an enemy comes to attack. They are true loopholes for the shootings. (1, This old construction is very probably the amphitheatre of El-Djemm, about which Shaw speaks in his voyages.)

The castle was open to the sky, without cover to close it, and also without staircase. I requested from my muleteer what this construction was. "It is", he tells me, "a keep from pagan times, and built by Amalekites. It was built by a woman who established her residence there. She usually stayed at the top, and there she spent the days spinning flax, and she spun so well, that her threads stretched from the top of the castle to the bottom. "

In Tunis, I sought to know what was the castle of El-Djemm; I wasn't able to find any satisfactory information.

In El-Djemm we did not find anything at low price except thorny fig (fruit of the *cactus opuntia*, Linnaeus). I bought some for a quarter of a Tunisian ryâl, and I loaded it on an ass. We all ate until full, and still we threw some away.

Note 73. Page 579.

Of the five daily prayers of the Moslems, some must be said aloud, others in a hushed voice. The prayer at daybreak is said either aloud or in a hushed voice, with discretion. That of midday and that of afternoon must be recited with a hushed voice. That of sunset and that of nightfall, or an hour and half after laying down its sun, must be articulated aloud. It is to these various circumstances, which all are of rigorous obligation, that the text referred to with these words: "Our prayers with high, or low voice. "

Note 74. Page 579.

The author identifies *sabârés* and the *syr*. But this indication does not appear right to me, because the *syr* of the sea is the *joel* or *atherina hepsetus* (Mediterranean Sand Smelt), a small almost diaphanous fish, and the *syr* of Egypt, or as one calls it in slang, the *biçârieh*, is a moenide or ménole. See translation of Abd-el-Latyf, by Sylvester de Sacy, notes from chapter IV.

**Title** : Voyage au Ouaday / par le cheykh Mohammed ibn-Omar el-Tounsy,... ; traduit de l'arabe par le Dr Perron,... ; ouvrage... publié par le Dr Perron et M. Jomard,... précédé d'une préface de ce dernier...

**Author** : Mohammad ibn ?Omar al Tounisí ibn Solaim?n (17..?-18.. ; cheykh)

**Publisher** : B. Duprat (Paris)

**Date of publication** : 1851

**Contributor** : Perron, Nicolas (1798-1876). Traducteur. Éditeur scientifique

**Contributor** : Jomard, Edme-François (1777-1862). Éditeur scientifique. Préfacier

**Subject** : Afrique du Nord -- Descriptions et voyages

**Type** : monographie imprimée

**Language** : French

**Format** : application/pdf

**Copyright** : domaine public

**Identifiant** : [ark:/12148/bpt6k29144f](http://ark:/12148/bpt6k29144f)

**Source** : Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Relation** : <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb30956114c/description>

**Provenance** : bnf.fr

**Thématique** : Geography & travel