

Narrative and History in Arabic Novels - Circles and Doors by Abdel Wahab Aissaoui as a Model

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Abstract:

The novel "Circles and Doors" is a historical novel for great distinction, in which the author relied on the factor of history, making it a starting point for an imagined artistic narrative framework, thanks to the fictional narrative spaces such as characters, time, and place. And others. The interaction between narrative and history in the novel was of great importance in conveying the novelist's message, which is represented by the narrative's focus on historical themes. The novelist borrows from historical texts the diverse narrative structures they contain, which help attract readers' attention and make historical events more relatable and understandable. Abdelwahab Aissaoui employed the novelist's historical narrative in various forms, through which he was able to embody the identity of his region - Djelfa - during the French colonization of Algeria, in diverse forms and artistic images.

Keywords: Narration; History; The novel; Heritage; Time; Identity.

I - Introduction

The novel is often regarded as the literary genre most closely connected to reality, expressing various social, political, and religious transformations that occur in the lives of peoples throughout history. It reflects the human emotions resulting from these transformations, both hopes and pains, inspiring the novelist to convey and express them artistically. The novelist resorts to history, narrating real historical events, invoking and restructuring them into a narrative form that demonstrates his artistic creativity, represented in the structural composition of the novel (characters, time, place), whether they are realistic or imaginary historical. He brings to light the unspoken and highlights the identity of regions marginalized by history within the folds of his books.

The interaction between narration and the novel played a significant role in the emergence of the historical novel, due to the narrative spaces known in the structure of the novel. This made history a primary material with which the novelist builds their artistic world, starting from the element of imagination that varies from one novelist to another.

There is no doubt that historical novels hold great importance in Algerian literature, due to the persecution and injustice Algeria experienced at the hands of the French authorities, who sought to erase the identity of the Algerian people. This has placed the responsibility of reclaiming identity on

the shoulders of the Algerian novelist, who returns to history and reshapes it into an imagined narrative form, depicting the identity of some marginalized regions in history books.

The novelist tried to narrate history by transforming historical events into a narrative. The narration of history takes care to present historical facts and events in a narrative manner that makes them more engaging and understandable for readers or listeners. Literary narrative techniques, such as detailed descriptions of characters and places, dialogue, and suspense, are used to make the historical story more vivid and interactive.

II- The relationship between history and the novel:

Novels enhance pride in cultural heritage and help transmit values and beliefs from one generation to another.

In this way, we can see that the relationship between history and narrative is multidimensional and intricate, where each complements the other in ways that contribute to a deeper and richer understanding of the past and its impact on the present and future.

Opinions have differed regarding the relationship between history and the novel due to the varying perspectives of critics and scholars. This is attributed to the novel's constant influence by history. When the critic Ragaa Al-Nakakh asked Naguib Mahfouz about the relationship between the novel and history, he replied: "In my opinion, the relationship is strong, as the novel is a portrayal of daily life with all its problems, issues, and people." (...) "This is a part of history that historians did not write, and history is made up of events, people, interpretation, and vision, just like the novel¹." Here, we observe Naguib Mahfouz's description of the relationship between history and the novel as strong and interconnected.

Abdelmalek Mertad describes the relationship between the novel and history as a marriage of loyalty. The novel, before reaching its current excellent status, was burdened by the denial of history, humanity, and place. The truth (the new novel) was married to history in a marriage of loyalty, seeking an intimate relationship with it. However, it was perhaps just a phase where the novel was often unsure of itself, uncertain of its artistic beauty, and its captivating literary authority. We found it heavily relying on historical events, either directly or by inspiring the reader to believe that what happened took place in the era of history². We conclude that the relationship between history and the novel is one of integration and mutual influence, where each benefit from the other in different ways.

III- The relationship between history and the novelist:

The relationship between history and the novelist is one of influence and being influenced, where each party benefits from the other in various ways, and their interplay leads to the production

of literary works that reflect historical reality in different ways. There is a strong relationship between history and the novelist, as the novelist reinterprets or reworks history into an artistic narrative form, aiming to entice the reader to explore history.

The novelist and the historian do not resemble each other in the process of conveying history. The historian studies the socio-historical context of humanity objectively, without dramatic or tragic interaction; he conveys the historical event without personal influences and views humans in an abstract manner that seeks only the truth. Meanwhile, the novelist's interaction is more flexible; he does not study it from an objective context but adds something of himself through imagination, emotion, and drama, which fills the historical gap and presents the overlooked historical dimension³.

History, for the novelist, is a raw material that needs to be restructured through a new assembly of facts, events, historical circumstances, and the characters mentioned in that raw material. The novelist adds imaginary characters to help furnish the setting and revive the warmth of human moments and bygone eras. The historian also collaborates with the novelist in reconstructing the historical material, borrowing some of his tools to depict characters, define the features of places, and frame the time periods in which the events take place⁴.

The intertwining of narrative with history in the novel has greatly contributed to the emergence of historical novels, both Arab and Western. Moreover, the historical novel has undergone many stages of development until it became an art form in its own right. The novelist draws the initial material from history, which serves as the foundation for building their imagined narrative world. Here, a strong link is established between history and the novel, making the novelist in the historical novel an artistic historian who conveys history in an imagined artistic manner. In this way, it becomes clear that the relationship between history and the novelist is a complementary and reciprocal one, where each benefit from the other in ways that enhance the deep understanding of historical reality and enrich literature in general.

IV- The Narration of History in the Novel "Circles and Doors":

The history of Algeria during the French occupation has inspired many Algerian novelists due to the psychological impact the occupation left on the collective memory of the Algerian people. This made that period a subject of their historical novels, preserving the continuity of history through the ages. Among these novelists, we mention Abdelwahab Aissaoui, who drew the theme of his novel "Circles and Doors" from the history of the French colonization of Algeria, employing fictional narrative and storytelling spaces to artistically depict history, with the desire to convey the identity of the region where the events of the novel took place. Abdel Wahab Aissaoui employed history in various forms and diverse narrative spaces, such as characters, time, place, and various tools, to weave a fictional narrative world based on a historical fact. This raises a question in our minds: how

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does he blend fiction and history in his novel, and what forms does he use to incorporate history? How did Abdel Wahab Aissaoui blend fiction and history in the novel "Circles and Doors"? And in what forms has history been employed?

1- A descriptive reading of the novel "Circles and Doors":

The novel "Circles and Doors" is written by the author Abdel Wahab Aissaoui⁵, published by Dar Mim for Publishing in Algeria in 2018, first edition, containing 239 pages. It is a historical novel in which the author addresses the history of French colonization of Algeria in general, and the Djelfa region and some desert areas in particular. Where some miraculous stories were employed, and it was characterized by its religious and romantic tone.

The events of the novel "Circles and Doors" take place in the Algerian desert in the Djelfa region and some nearby oases, which aligns with the character of Ahmed, the protagonist, who loves wandering in the desert and discovering its infinite world. This is related to the title of the novel; circles are geometric shapes that have no beginning or end, while doors were for Ahmed exits from some circles created by his subconscious mind.

2- Imagination and History through the Structural Formation of Time in the Novel "Circles and Doors":

Abdelwahab Aissaoui was able to blend history and fiction in his novel "The Circles and the Doors." And this is thanks to the structural spaces of the novel (character, time, and place), where he added an element of imagination to historical events, in order to present his historical novels in an imagined artistic form.

Time is closely linked to the humanities due to its significant importance in determining the history and civilizations of peoples. Among these sciences, we find literature present in general and the novel in particular. Every novel must have a specific temporal space, in which the novelist creates, making it compatible with the events of the novel. It is impossible to narrate events without mentioning the time of their occurrence, as it "deepens the sense of the event and the characters in the recipient's mind⁶"; that is, the narrative time brings the image of the characters and events closer in the reader's mind.

Time, in its simplest definition, is the period in which the situations and events represented in the story's time occur, and the period it takes to present these situations and events, which is represented in the narrative time⁷.

Researchers usually distinguish between two levels of time; they are⁸:

- The time of the story: It is the time when the events narrated in the story occur. Every story has a beginning and an end, and the time of the story follows the sequence of events.

- **Narrative time:** It is the time through which the narrator presents the story, and it necessarily corresponds to the time of the story; that is, the narrative method that the narrator adopts in conveying the story. After this conceptual approach to narrative time, we note that we will not delve into the issue of defining time according to each field, as this is beyond the scope of our article.

Based on this, our study of time in the novel "Circles and Doors" is based on a specific foundation; the time of the novel, which is represented by historical time, and we will suffice with studying it, as it represents the real time on which the events of the novel are based. The novelist defined it at the beginning of the novel, when Ahmed stood in front of his house door "as if he were discovering it for the first time: the house of the poor servant of God, Haj Baba Abdul Rahman Al-Mazabi 1870⁹," which is the time of the French occupation. He then added, "Do you think you can endure more?" If you were aware, I would have asked you to endure for ten more years beyond the hundred you lived¹⁰.

We conclude that the age of the house is approximately one hundred years after 1870; that is, the time of independence. After adding one hundred years to 1870, it becomes 1970, which is the post-independence era.

Abdel Wahab Aissaoui chose the period of the French occupation as the first time frame for his novel, and the period of independence as the second time frame. The first time frame represents Ahmed's youth, and the second represents Ahmed's life at the age of fifty in his grandfather Haj Baba Abdel Rahman's house. Abdel Wahab Aissaoui was able to return to the past represented by the historical time of the French colonization by recalling historical characters and events.

Abdel Wahab Aissaoui tried to remind us of the repression and French occupation of Algeria through the events he narrated in the novel "Circles and Doors," in order to draw parallels between the past and the present, and the erasure of the Arab identity that Algeria suffered during the French occupation.

Abdelwahab Aissaoui mentioned some of the popular resistances carried out by Algerian horsemen who rejected the occupation in all its forms. This excerpt from the novel illustrates that: "In your absence, a group of resistance horsemen attacked the northern tower, killing the officer in charge. The new officer prohibited all gatherings, regardless of their nature, even weddings, out of fear¹¹." The writer aims to instill a spirit of resistance in the hearts of Algerians at that time. Despite the lack of equipment and planning, they strongly demonstrated their rejection of the occupation.

As Abdel Wahab Aissaoui pointed out, France attempted to erase the Arab and Islamic identity through its policies, as it halted everything that nurtured and instilled the spirit of Arab Islamic identity. This scene illustrates that: "What happened, and where are the students?" Two months ago, the soldiers came and expelled them after beating them thoroughly¹².

In the above clip, French army soldiers expelled the students from the house built by Hajj Baba Abd al-Rahman for the purpose of memorizing the Quran.

The novelist also pointed out the remnants of colonialism in religious landmarks related to Christianity, "and he walked until he came across the church pulpit where Father François Dufflari sat reading a book in her garden.¹³" This indicates that France made great efforts to harden the Algerian people and change the Islamic religion.

The novel also addressed how France controlled the Algerian people, seizing all their lands. No one could build on a piece of land without permission from the French authorities. "The truth is, our house needs a permit from the French center commander, and I don't think he will agree¹⁴." Here, we see that France did not leave the Algerian people the freedom to manage their own properties.

Abdel Wahab Aissaoui was able, through his novel, to reveal some truths that France aimed for, and this is embodied in some passages of the novel: "Listen, Ahmed, do you see those towers over there?" He looked through the window of his room; they were ablaze at their tops, and thick black smoke was billowing from them, gathering over the mountain in large clouds. Then the translator spoke to him again, saying, 'We extract oil from the ground using them and sell it at high prices.¹⁵' He also says, "I work as a translator in this French oil exploration company.¹⁶"

These facts were embodied in the goal that France pursued through the military occupation that spread across the Algerian territory. Its primary and ultimate goal was to exploit Algeria's resources, especially the Sahara, extract its oil, and utilize it for its own benefit while taking advantage of Algeria's wealth. Abdel Wahab Aissaoui did not overlook the contribution of the fighters in Algeria's independence and their belief in its liberation, and this is embodied in this narrative excerpt; where the character of the narrator says: "The horsemen followed me to the eastern mountains, then turned back, and I remained alone for days until I encountered a patrol of fighters passing by. They took me with them after hearing my story, and I believed in what they believed in and completed the journey with them until independence.¹⁷" This narrative excerpt demonstrates the will and determination that the Algerian people possessed in order to regain national freedom.

V- Forms of Utilizing History in the Novel "Circles and Doors":

Abdelwahab Aissaoui employed history in various forms that represent the Djelfa region and some neighboring desert areas, which are manifested in:

1. Folklore: Folklore represents "the popular knowledge accumulated from the traditional practices of the entire region's inhabitants throughout history¹⁸"; that is, it is what the practices of ancient peoples leave behind in terms of knowledge for the region's inhabitants over time. And this is what

Abdelwahab Aissaoui embodied in his novel "The Circles and the Doors," as he conveyed the popular heritage of the Djelfa region through his literary work, employing three forms of it:

A. The folktale: It is "a narrative characterized by popular imagination and transmitted orally from generation to generation¹⁹"; this means it is an oral story passed down through generations, woven from the people's imagination.

Among the stories narrated by the novelist is the tale of the miracle of Haj Baba Abdel Rahman, which was passed down by the people of the city of Djelfa: "He was a righteous man and the blessing of the zaouia, he lived as a servant and had many miracles²⁰."

The villagers passed down this tale after the pilgrim came to them for trade and found them suffering from drought. After mingling with them and sensing their wisdom and chastity, they asked him for help. He accepted their request and gave them time to think. When they woke up in the morning, he pointed them to the location of water, which was indeed correct, even though they had previously dug there and found it salty. The narrator, speaking on behalf of the pilgrim Baba Abdel Rahman, said: "Here will be the well, God willing and with His help." They did not believe him at first, as their wells were scattered not far from there²¹.

To add to the story of the pilgrim's miracle, the novelist mentioned that a voice called him from the top of the mountain to build a house next to the well for the memorizers of the Quran, and the townspeople helped him. One day, when they woke up, they found a mountain of stones piled up by the well. From that day on, they began to seek blessings from it. "He walked up to the high ground behind the strange call that had summoned him since he first approached the place from the Mount of Hawaas. The call inspired him to build a house for the memorizers of the Quran.²²"

As the characters of the novel recounted another folk tale about Lalla Turki, who was given by her family to Hajj Baba Abdel Rahman as a concubine, he returned her to them in a manner that elevated her status, and she became revered for curing infertility and granting wishes. The narrator says: "He returned her to her family in a manner befitting her and gifted her a green turban, which became effective in healing the sick and granting children to those who had long awaited them. She would dance to the rhythm of the drums, calling for help from the righteous man until she fainted, and when she regained consciousness, she would dictate her wishes to those around her to fulfill their needs²³."

B. Folk song: The folk song holds an important place in the heritage of the people, as it is "a true standard for recognizing the taste and civilization of nations, being a direct reflection of social emotions and the collective sentiment of the people. It is also a fundamental source of literary folk heritage²⁴." From this, we can conclude that the folk song reflects the feelings and sentiments of the people. Azouza, the heroine of the story, often sang a song in the courtyard of the house, hoping

that the virtuous Turkia would hear it and grant her wish after her long marriage. The song was "O Lady Turkia, I heard the bendir, no health, no offspring, if you would help me with goodness²⁵." This song reflects Azouza's feelings of loneliness.

The novelist spoke about a song that Ahmed learned from the Bani Aidas, which they sing for rain: "Tomorrow it will rain and we will run on the sand, the sun is our guardian and the wind will not carry the dust."²⁶ This song depicts their longing for rain and their love for it.

T. The proverb: The proverb is a concise saying that carries "the essence of people's experiences, distinguished by its unique characteristics, with an educational purpose and a special language that elevates it above everyday speech²⁷"; in other words, it is a brief saying that summarizes a human experience. Among the proverbs used by Abdelwahab Aissaoui in the novel, we mention: The first proverb the novelist used in the novel "Circles and Doors" is: "Grow up, Mr. Ahmed, did your ships sink²⁸?" Where the "Sufi" said it to the "Mazabi" during their conversation, and this proverb is said to someone who carries a burden and thinks about it. He also added during their conversation - the Sufi and the Mazabi. The Mazabi said: "In the name of God, we begin, Mr. Sufi, you know the year from its autumn²⁹," meaning you know the end of things before they begin.

Moreover, this proverb was employed in the same dialogue that took place between the Mozabite and the Soufi, where the Mozabite says, "This is a new tune³⁰"; meaning this is something new. He also added another proverb, which Al-Ghawati said: "What do you have to do with the camel³¹? You have neither need nor interest in it." This proverb is said to someone who interferes in matters that do not concern them. The novelist added another proverb: "How could you not hear about it, while the Sufi is digging under your head for it³²?" This is said to someone who harbors ill intentions towards you.

In the end, we notice that the proverbs used by Abdelwahab Aissaoui in his novel "The Circles and the Doors" summarized the human experiences lived by the characters of the Djelfa region throughout history, expressing them with concise sayings that replace those experiences.

2. The fantastical tale: Among the forms employed by Abdel Wahab Aissaoui in his novel is the fantastical tale, which represents "that narrative type based primarily on what is astonishing, filled with supernatural events and extraordinary feats, among other things that provoke wonder in the soul, as it is a significant example of astonishing supernatural factors³³"; and its essence is that it is a narrative art form based on extraordinary fictional events that evoke astonishment in the readers' hearts.

Abdel Wahab Aissaoui unleashed his imaginative energy in the novel "The Circles and the Doors," producing wondrous tales that added excitement and thrill to the narrative, compelling the

reader to continue and feel enjoyment and suspense. This is attributed to the novelist's artistic taste. Among the stories narrated by the author, we find: the story of the enchanted bird, the story of the abandoned houses inhabited by the jinn, and the story of the Tarqo, the desert monster.

Perhaps the first fantastical story that Abdelwahab Aissaoui employed in his novel was the tale of the enchanted bird, which Haj Baba Abdelrahman used to tell Ahmed when he was young. "Ahmed had never seen the enchanted bird before; he imagined it from the stories of his grandfather, Haj Baba Abdelrahman³⁴."

The story goes that "a type of bird sings to the shepherds and lures them to follow it towards the marshes. By the time they awaken from the enchantment of the song, they find that the mud has risen past their knees. They scream for help, but the bird has cast its spell and left the salty shore after stealing their souls³⁵." Here, he wove a tale that evokes astonishment and wonder in the reader, as he gave the bird the gift of magical singing.

As for the story of the abandoned house inhabited by the jinn, it was "there for your protection. You entered a house that does not belong to you, and if you continued to visit it, its owner would harm you. When the elder knew you wouldn't stop, he went there, imprisoned the jinn in a jar, and buried it in the marshes to ensure it wouldn't follow your trail³⁶."

He also mentioned the story of the "Tirku," which is known as a spirit that appears in deserted places and deserts. The novelist said, "But when I spoke to him about the Tirku, his voice changed, and even the features of his face changed from fear. He said, 'When the Tirku appears, it takes the form of a beautiful woman, like a princess of the desert. It haunts the wilderness and blocks the path of a person if he is walking alone. As soon as he sees her, he becomes enchanted by her.'" (...) And when she realizes she has captured his heart, she jumps towards him and starts tickling him until he dies laughing³⁷. These were the most remarkable fantastical stories mentioned in the novel "Circles and Doors," which added a certain narrative pleasure.

3. Gypsies: The word "Gypsies" in the Al-Moheet Dictionary is defined as "a rough people spread across all continents, who cling to their own customs and traditions, and rely on trade for their livelihood³⁸"; meaning that Gypsies are scattered tribes around the world, differing from one region to another, each with its own unique characteristics, but they share one common trait, which is nomadism and mobility.

After reading the novel "Circles and Doors," we find that its author relied on the gypsies of the Bani Aidas tribe, who roam the Algerian desert in search of oases, where they played an active role in the events of the novel. Their characteristics did not differ from those of gypsies around the world, such as:

- **The life of mobility and travel:** The novelist says, "The Banu Aidas were not accustomed to mingling with the inhabitants of the oases, and like desert gypsies, they built a high barrier between themselves to practice their rituals of wandering³⁹."

- Their strange marriage customs begin with a fertility dance where the male seeks the female's approval, followed by the wedding ceremony at the full moon. "He remembered the fertility dance he performed with her, then her satisfied face at the end of the rituals," which Ahmed danced with Gala, where he feigned strange movements like "raising his hands up and starting to stomp his feet on the ground, scattering sand around him, then jumping several times forward and backward (...) She moved closer to him, raised her hands like him, their faces met, and their chests touched⁴⁰."

- Their reliance on hunting for food was clearly evident in the novel "Circles and Doors," where the novelist says: "The feasts that the Bani Aidas hold after hunting trips, which sometimes last for days, return loaded with game, deer, rabbits, and sometimes wolves or foxes⁴¹."

- The traditional knowledge of herbal medicine, exemplified by the elder's treatment of Ahmed during his illness: "He took a small pouch from his camel, opened it, and began mixing herbs that were not discernible to Agali from his place; after boiling them in water, he applied the mixture to Ahmed's back⁴²."

- Dancing and singing, as the novelist pointed out in his novel, "He wondered about that and the desires that overwhelm the Bani Aidas, who only excel in dancing, singing, and wandering in the desert⁴³."

- Their persecution by the oasis inhabitants, the narrator says: "Lalla Zahra Beni Aidas did not know them well, but she looked at them with suspicion like her husband, in addition to the allure of their women to the oasis men⁴⁴."

4. The space of identity: Identity expresses the traits and characteristics shared by a group of individuals in a single region. It is "a type of ideology determined by the connection of actions to specific references that distinguish its actor from others, and in terms of existence, it is a process that changes with the temporal, spatial, and cultural determinants⁴⁵." This means that identity is defined by the behavior of an actor that distinguishes them from others, and it changes with the passage of time, space, and culture.

As researchers point to the components of identity, Youssef Hussein Mahmoud Hamdan says: "And if individuals' feelings towards these features transform into belonging, identity begins to form its elements, which means that the components of identity are multiple, including language, religion, ideology, color, and geography.⁴⁶"

There is no doubt that "the novel has an extraordinary ability to highlight cultural identity and compare it with others until it becomes a key to culture and a symbol of it"⁴⁷; thus, it can be said that the novel is a means of conveying cultural identity and a symbol of it.

Abdelwahab Aissaoui relied on his novel "Circles and Doors" and made it a channel through which he conveys the identity of the Djelfa region, and among the most important elements he focused on:

- **Religion:** Religion represents the first pillar in defining a person's identity, as it expresses their beliefs and intellectual and mental orientations. Abdel Wahab Aissaoui, through his novel "Circles and Doors," attempted to embody Islam and instill a religious spirit and commitment in the reader's soul through the characters of the novel, such as the Aghwati and the Mozabite. The novelist says: "He saw the old Aghwati sitting, performing ablution for the noon prayer. He approached him and sat beside him." (...) Until he completed the prayer and began reciting the litany in the Tijani way, which he had been accustomed to doing for more than fifteen years⁴⁸. He also added, "The absence of the Sufi during the pilgrimage added to the happy things⁴⁹," as well as "the days he neglected the Fajr prayer in the mosque."⁵⁰

Through the above, we conclude that the symbols he employed are symbols of the Islamic religion such as: prayer, ablution, the Holy Quran, the pillar of pilgrimage, the mosque, and the Tijaniyya lodge.

- **Historical sites and landmarks:** Each region is distinguished by its historical sites and places. Abdel Wahab Aissaoui mentioned some of the historical sites and landmarks that characterize the Djelfa region, including: the wall surrounding the city of Djelfa, the Forkaforli barracks, the Dar El Baroud, the Jacob Cinema, the church, and Mount Hawaas. The novelist says: "He walked a few steps and turned left, the tall powder house faced him⁵¹," and he said: "He passed them and walked until he reached the church building (...), and continued his journey to the Forkaforli barracks⁵²."

- **Customs and Traditions:** Customs and traditions hold great importance. Customs "express a pattern of behavior accepted by the individual or the group for themselves⁵³," while traditions "represent the spirit of the nation; they are important in managing their daily lives and provide them with laws and systems for that purpose." (...) Because it provides the individual with a set of agreed-upon behavioral patterns to follow in order to meet human needs⁵⁴; that is, it is a behavior agreed upon by the group for the individual to follow in order to facilitate their daily life.

The novelist Abdelwahab Aissaoui sought to incorporate the customs and traditions of the Djelfa region in order to express the agreed-upon behavioral patterns, passed down from generation to generation, and how they managed to preserve them during the French colonization. Let us mention some of the customs and traditions that the novelist employed:

Holding banquets when going to Hijaz, for when the Sufi goes for Hajj, he holds a banquet: "The Sufi is going to Hijaz and people are bidding him farewell." (...) And for the first time, the Mozabite entered it, even though he did not accept invitations and did not attend any of the feasts. (...) And after moments of waiting, people were gathering around the dish⁵⁵.

One of their customs is to veil girls at a certain age, and this was embodied in the character of Aisha, whom Baba Abdelkader betrothed to Ahmed. "For a moment before that, he tried to imagine Aisha's face as a young woman, but he could only picture the face of a little girl he had seen several times with her father, and then they veiled her⁵⁶."

Also, their trading traditions, where caravans would go from the city of Djelfa to Algiers. "And when his father saw that brilliance and integrity in him, he chose him for his trade and the trade of some of the oasis chiefs who could not bear the journey to the eyalet of Algiers.⁵⁷"

Also, one of their customs and traditions is memorizing the Holy Quran under a palm tree by an elderly sheikh, where they form a circle around him and recite the Quran. The novelist says: "Finally, the path opened up to a courtyard under a great palm tree. They gathered around it, repeating what the old man recited to them from the Quranic verses⁵⁸."

- **Clothing:** Clothing expresses the culture of peoples, varying from one region to another. This is clearly illustrated by the way the people of Djelfa dress in the novel: "He opened the door of his wardrobe, took out the new woolen djellaba and a different cap than the one he usually wore, put them on, and rubbed his hands with a piece of musk⁵⁹." The cap is considered part of the Arab heritage that reflects the culture, customs, and traditions of ancient societies.

VI- Conclusion:

Abdelwahab Aissaoui adopted a unique approach through which he was able to highlight the identity of the Djelfa region in a charming and eloquent manner, utilizing fictional historical narrative spaces that contributed to shedding light on the history of Djelfa in various forms. Abdel Wahab Aissaoui relied on history to build his fictional and creative world, thanks to the structural formation of the novel. The novelist relied on the historical timeline to convey the events of his novel during the French occupation of Algeria. Abdel Wahab Aissaoui employed history in various forms, aiming to shed light on the identity of the Algerian desert hinterland, and some historically marginalized tribes such as the Beni Aidas tribe. He also relied on some evocative forms such as identity, gypsies, and popular heritage... Etc.

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