International Journal of Research in Social Science and Humanities (IJRSS)

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

E-ISSN : 2582-6220

Vol. 6 (10) October - 2025

Representing Victorian Britain: Moroccan Ambassadorial Occidentalism in the Nineteenth Century

Dr. Salaheddine Bekkaoui

Faculty of Law, Economics, and Social Sciences,

University Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah,

Fez, Morocco

ABSTRACT

This article examines Ibn Idris Jaaydi's travelogue, Ithaf al-Akhyar bi-Ghara'ib al-Akhbar (1876), as a pivotal instance of Moroccan Occidentalism focused on Victorian Britain. Combining ceremonial politics, gendered perception, and technological inquiry, the London chapters reveal how sovereignty was staged while being translated into a Moroccan idiom of honour that magnified Sultan Moulay Hassan. Jaaydi's ethnographic eye extends from transport, prisons, and the Mint to the Crystal Palace and Woolwich arsenal, where he measures, times, and explains, adopting a documentary tone that registers British civilizational and military superiority without surrender. His portrayals of English women—at elite salons, theatres, circuses, and Madame Tussaud's—oscillate between admiration and moral containment, casting women as key indices of modern urban life and of Islamic norms of modesty. The article situates Ithaf within earlier rihla traditions (al-Fasi, al-'Amrawi) and broader debates on Arab perceptions of European secularism (Abu-Lughod), arguing that Jaaydi acknowledges Britain's civilizational and military power yet contains it within Islamic-Moroccan categories. His text exemplifies a late-nineteenth-century "confidence effect": an Occidentalism that frames European modernity less as a threat than as a theatre of foreign marvels that could be observed, catalogued, selectively appropriated, and translated for the edification and entertainment of a Moroccan readership eager to encounter Europe on its own terms.

Keywords: Diplomacy, Jaaydi, Modernity, Moroccan Occidentalism, Travel writing, Victorian Britain.

1. INTRODUCTION

Driss Jaaydi's *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi-Ghara'ib al-Akhbar*, composed after his 1876 embassy to Europe, stands as the second Moroccan ambassadorial travelogue to feature England, following Mohamed al-Fass's *Rihlat al-Ibriziya ila Addiyar al Ingliziya* of 1860. While both works document encounters with Victorian Britain, their historical contexts differ markedly. Al-Fassi's narrative was shaped in the aftermath of Morocco's double defeat, first by France at Isly (1844) and then by Spain (1859-60). The trauma of these defeats infused his *Golden Journey* with an anxious, religiously charged lens, interpreting Britain with religious framework as Dar al Hab, the house of war.

By contrast, Jaaydi's account reflects a Morocco in the process of recovery under Sultan Hassan I, who sought to stabilize the state, modernize its institutions, and reconfigure its diplomacy with Europe. This sense of cautious yet optimistic vision shapes his travelogue to Europe, projecting Britain as both a land of marvels and a site of intellectual inquiry. Jaaydi's descriptions balance wonder with critical detachment, casting Europe less as a threat to religious and moral order—as in al-Fassi's account—and more as a realm from which valuable knowledge might be drawn. In this way, his narrative is less burdened by the anxiety of defeat and more attuned to the practical and intellectual dimensions of modernity.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE EMBASSY

Jaaydi's journey took place during the reign of Sultan Hassan I (1873-1894), a period when Morocco faced mounting pressure from European powers and sought to safeguard its sovereignty through both reform and diplomacy. The French conquest of Algeria in 1830, Morocco's defeat at Isly in 1844, and the Spanish-Moroccan War of 1859 had exposed the weakness of the Makhzan's military and left the country vulnerable to foreign intervention. Treaties such

as the Anglo-Moroccan Treaty of 1856, the Spanish Treaty of 1861, and the Béclard Convention of 1863 which further expanded French economic and legal privileges, particularly consular protections. (Pennell, 2000, p. 85)[1]

When Moulay Hassan I ascended the throne in 1873, he launched large-scale diplomatic missions across Europe aimed at reinforcing Morocco's independence, safeguarding its interests, and consolidating its international standing. At the same time, he embarked on an ambitious programme of military and administrative modernization, seeking to strengthen the state against external pressures while laying the foundations for renewed engagement with the modern world. Having successfully paid off the heavy indemnity imposed by Spain, he also restored a measure of financial independence, which gave his reign greater stability and allowed Morocco to present itself once again as a sovereign actor in international affairs.

Under Sultan Hassan I, Morocco invested heavily in modernizing its army by importing European weapons, establishing local arms factories, and sending Moroccan youths abroad for training. Yet such initiatives, while necessary for strengthening the state, required religious legitimacy in order to be widely accepted. To this end, the Sultan sought the support of the religious establishment,

> Ten important *'Ulama* were asked to give fatwas declaring whether it was licit to adopt European weapons, tactics and methods of training the troops. …. One of them, Muhammed al-Mahdi bin Suda, wrote that gunpowder, which was unknown to the prophet, had been a praiseworthy innovation because it had allowed Muslims to extend their rule. Logically, when the *Dar al-Islam* was in danger, other innovations were permitted. (Pennell, 2000, p. 72)

With the religious sanction secured for his reforms, Moulay Hassan set about building a modern army.

2.1 Students to Europe and Britain

Soon after his succession to the throne, Moulay Hassan sent several young Moroccans to receive military training in Gibraltar. (Rogers, 1971, pp. 185-186; Jean-Louis Miège, 1996, vol. 3, p. 225).

In February 1876, the British Government agreed to receive a contingent of twenty Moroccan soldiers in Gibraltar "to be taught military drill in the British fashion, so that they could return to Morocco as instructors." (Rogers, 1971, p. 186) They were accompanied by a young Moroccan who was to receive training in medicine at the military hospital. Colonel Cameron, who oversaw their instruction, reported enthusiastically to Sir John Hay that the men were "behaving admirably" and that the British troops had "taken quite a liking for them." In his correspondence to Hay he wrote,

> I assure you it is quite a pleasure training the minds and bodies of these fellows - they are eager to learn, and seem so happy and contented… The officer and non-commissioned officers we have here dined with our sergeants at their mess the other day, and seemed to enjoy themselves right well. (Rogers, 1971, p. 186)

Later that same year, a further group of eight Moroccan youths was dispatched to Gibraltar to be trained as buglers and medical assistants, underscoring the broader scope of this Anglo-Moroccan military cooperation.[2]

Moulay Hassan also dispatched three students to Britain as part of his modernisation programme. The delegation, composed of Muhammad al-Gabbas, Idriss ibn ʿAbd al-Wahid al-Fasi, and Zubeir Skirej, was enrolled at the prestigious School of Military Engineering in Chatham. Prior to their departure, they had spent two years in Tangier (1873-1875) studying foreign languages and accounting, in preparation for their training abroad. The British Consul-General, Sir John Drummond Hay, an enthusiastic advocate of the Sultan's reforms, warmly praised the initiative, emphasising its importance for Morocco's engagement with European expertise and modern institutions.

> The young Sultan is evidently desirous of introducing reforms and improvements in his dominions; but he has a very difficult task as he is surrounded by ignorant and fanatical advisers … I trust that every reasonable facility may be afforded by Her Majesty's Government to the young Sovereign, to aid him in moving forward in the path of reform. (Rogers, 1971, pp. 185-186)

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

In his autobiography, Zubeir Skirej proudly recalls that, after completing three years of study at Chatham and receiving their diplomas, the young Moroccan students were "favoured with an audience by her Majesty Queen Victoria." ("Mudakirat Zubayr Skiraj," 1985, pp. 28-32)

As Mostapha El Chabi affirms, "The true reformer of the Makhzan's establishment was Moulay Hassan. He made it his concern to devote greater effort to supervising government work, which led to the establishment of new ministries. Among these were the Ministry of War, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance." (El Chabi, 1995, p. 25.) C. R. Pennel further notes the scope of Hassan's military modernization, writing that "Moulay Hassan bought most of his weapons from Britain and France, but agents from many countries flocked to proffer their wares and the Sultan also bought shoulder arms from Austria, the United States, Germany and Belgium, to avoid offending any particular government. He also converted his father's powder factory into a cartridge factory, supervised by a Belgian, and built a rifle factory, the Makina in Fez, to make copies of Martini-Henry rifles."(Pennel, 2000, p. 73)

Taken together, these initiatives show that Hassan I's military reforms were not limited to purchasing new technologies abroad but extended to the creation of local manufacturing capacity, institutional modernization, and investment in human capital through foreign training. They demonstrate a ruler who, conscious of Morocco's vulnerabilities, sought to combine diplomacy, technology transfer, and institutional innovation to strengthen the state and preserve its sovereignty.

2.2 Moulay Hassans' Ambassadors to Europe

When Moulay Hassan ascended the throne in 1873, he became one of the most prominent sultans in Morocco's history to advocate for reform and modernization. In an unprecedented initiative, he sent numerous expeditions of young Moroccans to study sciences in Europe[3] and dispatched a significant array of ambassadors to various European capitals to cultivate diplomatic relations. The list of ambassadors during his reign includes seven embassies to Spain,

- Ibn Abdallah Bin Ahmed, March 1877
- Sidi Abdesslam Suissi, November 1877
- Bouchta Ben Baghdadi, 1883
- Abdessadak Bin Ahmed Rifi, November-December 1885
- Abdelkrim Brichain 1886
- Haj El Maati al Madani al Mzamzi, October 1889
- Caid Abderrahman al Rahmani, June-July 1891

To Germany, Morocco sent three embassies,

- Taybi Bin Hima, May 1878
- Ali Al-Mesfioui, December 1879
- Abdeslam Bin Rachid Chaoui, 1889. (Simou, 2003, pp. 486-488)

Four ambassadors visited France,

- Mohamed Zbidi, 1876
- Ali Al-Mesfioui, December 1879
- Abdelmalek Bin Ali, May 1885
- Haj El Maati al Madani al Mzamzi, spring of 1889.

To Britain, which marked a remarkable shift in Moroccan diplomacy, there was one ambassador only: Mohamed Zbidi in 1876.[4]

In addition to his mission to France and Britain, Zbidi's embassy to Europe in 1876 included Belgium and Italy. His embassy was followed by four more ambassadors to Italy,[5]

- Haj Laarbi Frej, June 1879 [6]

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

- Bouchta Al-Baghdadi, November 1885
- Mohamed Torres, to the Vatican, January 1888
- Haj El Maati al Madani al Mzamzi, Rome, June 1890,
- Abdeslam Bin Rachid Chaoui, 1892[7]

The decision to send a Moroccan ambassador to Europe was driven above all by the need to address the thorny and destabilizing question of consular protection, which had long undermined the Makhzan politically and financially. (Rogers, 1971, p. 188, Ma'aninu, 1973, vol. 1, p. 57-59). Jaaydi himself explains

> It was required by the sound judgment and rightly guided opinion of our master to dispatch send to these nations, who had come to his noble presence, an ambassador from among his closest and most devoted servants.... the ambassador would explain to their rulers the conduct of some of their deputies, namely their violation of certain treaties and rejection of some of the conditions which had been well established in treaties. *Ithaf,* (Jaaydi, 1876, p. 100).

At the same time, the embassy was conceived as an opportunity for the Moroccan delegation to observe Europe directly, particularly in the realm of military and technological innovation.

The Sultan's chamberlain, Musa bin Ahmed, conveyed Hassan's expectations in a letter to Zbidi while he was in Europe 'to bring with you samples of the new and innovative products that have not yet reached Morocco and have not been brought by anyone so far? This includes those that have not reached Morocco, such as the latest inventions from distant lands. If it is feasible for you, please do so and provide a detailed report of their prices." (Ibn Zaydane, 1929, vol. 2, p. 291). This request highlights how the embassy was not merely a ceremonial mission but also an intelligence-gathering initiative. By seeking to acquire modern inventions and military innovations, Sultan Moulay Hassan was aligning Morocco with a broader nineteenth-century pattern of non-European states actively observing, studying, and selectively adopting aspects of Western modernity.

3. ZBIDI'S EMBASSY TO EUROPE

a. Haj Mohamed Zbidi in Europe

In 1875, Sultan Moulay Hassan initially planned to send an embassy to France, but he later changed his mind. By the summer of 1876, the scope of the mission had been expanded to include not only France, but also Belgium, Britain, and, for the first time, Italy.[8]

Zbidi's embassy stands out as one of the most lavish in the history of Moroccan diplomacy. Determined to display both generosity and grandeur, the Sultan ordered his ambassador to carry large sums of money to distribute among the poor and to charitable institutions in Europe, along with an array of opulent gifts.

The Sultan selected Haj Mohamed Zbidi, then seventy-three years old, as his ambassador, valuing his exceptional political skill despite his advanced age. He was accompanied by Nasser Ghanem al-Rabati, a thirty-year-old entrusted with managing the financial affairs of the mission, and Driss bin Mohamed Jaaydi, a forty-three-year-old former judge from Salé and an accomplished scholar in mathematics, astronomy, and related sciences. Jaaydi served as secretary of the embassy and later recorded the journey in his narrative *Ithafo al-Akhyari bi Ghara'ibi al-Akhbari* (*The Entertainment of the Elite with Wonderful News*). The entourage also included five guards and servants.[9] Contemporary British newspapers described the embassy as a "numerous suite," accompanied by musicians, interpreters, and aides, an image that conveyed both ceremonial splendour and diplomatic weight.

On 31 May 1876, the Moroccan envoy departed Tangier aboard the French frigate *Cassard*. Spain, still resentful after the War of Tetouan (1859-1860) and excluded from the mission, sought to obstruct the embassy by staging military manoeuvres near the Moroccan border. Nonetheless, the delegation continued unhindered and landed at Marseilles on 4 June, before travelling by train to Paris.

In the French capital, the Moroccan delegation was received by the President, Patrice de Mac Mahon. During the audience, ambassador Zbidi handed him a letter from the Moulay Hassan "stressing his concern about consular protection and the need for a review thereof in order to preserve the good relations between the two countries."

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

(Khalid Ben Srhir, 2005, p. 176). The Moroccan delegation participated in various entertainments, toured museums, the mint, the zoo, the national printing press, and the national library, gaining exposure to Europe's cultural and scientific achievements. From there, the mission proceeded by train to Belgium, where they were formally welcomed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In Liège, they were received by King Leopold II and visited weapon factories, as well as glass and textile workshops, later extending their journey to the industrial centre of Charleroi.

Following their stay in Belgium, the Moroccan delegation continued its journey to England. On 13 July 1876, after crossing the English Channel aboard the *Parlement Belge* steamer from Ostend, the embassy disembarked at Dover. The reception was elaborate: Captain Bruce, R.N., Major-General Parke, C.B., and a Guard of Honour from the 78th Regiment with a military band and pipers welcomed the party. A French liaison, Colonel Dufour, representing the King of the Belgians, and the British diplomat W. Forster, Consul for Morocco, were also present—an indication of the mission's international significance. A salute was fired both upon the delegation's arrival and their departure from the port.

From Dover, the party travelled by South-Eastern Railway to London, where Robert Drummond Hay, British Consul at Mogador (Essaouira), was officially assigned to accompany them throughout their visit. The ambassador and his suite were accommodated at the Alexandra Hotel, a prestigious establishment befitting their status.

British newspapers followed the visit with interest. The *South London Observer* noted with mild disappointment that "the Morocco Ambassador, who, disappointing many, did not fly about the ground on horseback, his white burnous streaming in the wind." (*South London Observer*, 21 June 1876) The comment reflected both a fascination with and a stereotype of exotic spectacle in public diplomacy. During their time in England, the delegation toured banks, the mint, and attended a theatrical performance before travelling to the Isle of Wight, where they were granted an audience with Queen Victoria. On the morning of 5 August 1876, after spending eighteen days in Britain (from 13 July to 5 August), the Moroccan embassy departed from Charing Cross Station by train to Folkestone, where they boarded a ship bound for Calais. In France, the delegation spent a few days visiting weapon factories and military schools, then departed by train to Italy, where they arrived on 13 August 1876. Their itinerary included, Rome Firinze, Turin, where they were received in audience by King Victor Emmanuel II, and Milan. The mission concluded with a stay in Genoa until 6 September, after which the delegation prepared for its return to Morocco.

b. Moroccan Delegation in London

On 13 July 1876, the Moroccan envoy arrived in London and took up residence at the prestigious Alexandra Hotel, Hyde Park Corner. The choice of accommodation reflected both the importance of the mission and Britain's desire to accord it due recognition within the ceremonial life of the capital.

The highlight of the embassy came on 27 July, when Ambassador Haj Mohamed Zbidi and his suite were formally received by Queen Victoria at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. Introduced by the Earl of Derby, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Zbidi presented a letter from Sultan Hassan I, reaffirming Morocco's commitment to peace and commercial cooperation with Britain. *The Times* and the *Illustrated London News* reported on the audience with admiration, noting the dignity of the Moroccan ambassador in his traditional attire. With Robert Drummond Hay serving as interpreter, the exchange unfolded smoothly, and the Queen was said to be pleased to receive the Moroccan mission.

The encounter was marked not only by words but by material gestures. Sultan Hassan had prepared a lavish suite of gifts for Queen Victoria, including silk brocades, embroidered cloaks, slippers, belts, brass trays from Fez, pottery from Souss, and finely worked travelling bags (Ibn Zaydane, 1929, vol. pp. 292-295) These items, carefully curated with the likely counsel of Drummond Hay, showcased Morocco's craftsmanship and wealth. To Victorian observers, they were at once a spectacle of Oriental splendour and a statement of sovereignty: Morocco was not a peripheral state but a civilised interlocutor capable of engaging the great powers on its own terms.

Beyond the royal court, the delegation engaged with British society through a mixture of formal and cultural encounters. Zbidi paid a farewell call on Lord Derby at the Foreign Office, accompanied once again by Drummond Hay. He also received a deputation from the Anglo-Jewish Association, to whom he promised to investigate reports of discriminatory practices against Jews in Azemmour—evidence that the mission's remit extended beyond diplomacy to matters of soft power and moral suasion.

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

The embassy's presence in London also entered the fabric of Victorian cultural life. On 29 July, they visited the Crystal Palace, touring the exhibition halls before attending a performance that drew public attention and respectful coverage in the press. They also visited Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, where they expressed their fascination at the wax effigies of European monarchs and statesmen. The *South London Chronicle* reported that the ambassador, "accompanied by a numerous suite," spent time inspecting the wax effigies of European monarchs and dignitaries and "expressed themselves highly pleased with what they saw." (*Morning Advertiser*, 17 July 1876). These excursions, reported widely in the London press, framed the Moroccan envoys as active participants in the cultural sphere rather than distant outsiders, reinforcing their image as sophisticated representatives of a historic and sovereign kingdom.

Throughout their stay, the delegation also toured key institutions of British modernity, including banks, the Royal Mint, military arsenals, and the theatre. Such visits symbolised Morocco's willingness to observe and learn from Europe's industrial, financial, and cultural achievements, while at the same time presenting itself as a partner in global diplomacy.

Perhaps the most striking dimension of the embassy's London sojourn was its policy of philanthropy. Acting under the Sultan's instructions, Zbidi distributed substantial sums of money to charitable institutions and to those who had served the delegation. The most notable donation, £600 to London hospitals for the care of the blind poor, was formally acknowledged in a letter from Lord Derby, Britain's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on 3 August 1876, who wrote the Moroccan envoy "I have the honour to acknowledge your letter dated the second of this month, in which you informed me that you have transmitted through the Second Secretary of your Embassy the sum of six hundred pounds, bestowed upon the blind poor treated in hospitals. It gives me the greatest pleasure to inform you that I have conveyed this benefaction to the various hospitals in accordance with your wish, and I take this opportunity to express my sincere joy in fulfilling such a duty." (Ibn Zaydane, 1929, vol 2, p. 298)

Other donations included sums to the staff at the Queen's residence, Foreign Office attendants, Windsor Castle staff, the artillerymen who fired the salute, soldiers who escorted the mission, carriage drivers, hotel staff, Dover musicians, the ferry captain, and sailors who later carried the delegation back to France. (Ibn Zaydane, 1929, vol 2, p. 286) These gestures extended across every layer of society, from the humblest service providers to the highest ceremonial offices, creating an image of Moroccan diplomacy that combined grandeur with generosity.[10]

In this way, the embassy's presence in London was both spectacular and strategic. It projected Morocco as a civilised and sovereign nation, sensitive to the codes of European diplomacy and responsive to Victorian values of charity, ceremonial propriety, and cultural engagement. Zbidi's embassy thus left behind more than the memory of audiences and entertainments: it offered a carefully orchestrated vision of Moroccan diplomacy in which splendour, philanthropy, and political intent were woven together to secure respect and recognition on the European stage.

Taken together, these acts of largesse transformed the Moroccan embassy into a spectacle of generosity that resonated deeply with Victorian values of charity, discipline, and ceremonial propriety. The long list of donations—to hospitals, the poor, and to all those who facilitated the delegation's stay—was not merely incidental but formed an integral part of Moulay Hassan's diplomatic expression. By extending generosity across every social stratum, from the staff of royal residences and the soldiers who fired salutes to the humblest carriage drivers and musicians, the Moroccan ambassador projected an image of his country as both sovereign and civilised. In this way, Morocco demonstrated its understanding of the intricate social codes of European diplomacy and engaged with them through a language of gifts. Such actions enhanced Morocco's international image, presenting it not only as a political ally but also as a culturally sophisticated nation attuned to the moral and ceremonial expectations of nineteenth-century Europe.

4. JAAYDI'S RIHLA: TRAVEL ACCOUNT

In his chronicle *al-Istiqsa*, the nineteenth-century Moroccan historian Khalid al-Nasiri provides a concise account of Zbidi's ambassadorial mission and the composition of al-Jaaydi's *rihla sifariya*. He writes:

> The Sultan—may God exalt him—appointed his loyal and distinguished servant, Abu ʿAbd Allah al-Haj Muhammad ibn al-Haj al-Ṭahir Zbidi al-Ribaṭi, as his envoy and ambassador to the nations of the Franks, such as the Kingdom of France, the Kingdom of England, the Kingdom of Italy, and the Kingdom of

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

> Belgium. He set forth bearing precious gifts and great sums of money, which he carried with him on this mission. Accompanying him on this embassy was the most trustworthy steward, al-Sayyid Bin Naṣir, son of al-Sayyid al-Haj Ahmad Ghannam al-Ribaṭi, appointed to oversee matters of stewardship and administration. Also with him was our learned companion, the erudite scholar and accomplished intellectual, the astronomer of his age and noble accountant, Abu al-ʿAlaʾ Driss ibn Mohamed Jaaydi al-Salawi, entrusted with the secretary duties. They reached the people of those kingdoms, accomplished their mission in the best and most complete manner, and returned joyfully at the end of Shaʿban of that year. During this mission, our companion Abu al-ʿAlaʾ, aforementioned, recorded his splendid journey in a work entitled *Ithaf al Akhyar bi Gharaib al Akhbar*, which encompassed every rarity and marvel, and revealed the arts and the astonishing devices of the Franks. (Al Nasiri, 1997, vol. 8, p. 169)

Jaaydi's *Ithaf al Akhiyar bi Gharaib al Akhbar* which extends over four European countries, is among the longest Moroccan ambassadorial travelogues to Europe. Copied from a manuscript of 256 folios and published in Maʿanuni's edition in 304 pages, (Maʿanuni, p. 12) it offers one of the most extensive Moroccan accounts of a nineteenth-century diplomatic mission. It is also only the second Moroccan rihla to provide a sustained description of Britain, following al-Fasi's *al-Rihla al-Ibriziyya*.

Unlike earlier embassies, whose travel accounts were explicitly commissioned by the throne, Jaaydi 's work arose from a different impulse. For example, Ahmad ibn al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal explains in his *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Muhadana wa-l-Jihad* (1766), composed after his mission to Spain, that Sultan Sidi Muhammad b. ʿAbdallah himself ordered him to write a comprehensive account of everything "I heard, saw, apprehended, and learned on this fortunate expedition; to narrate all that I witnessed of the cities and villages; and to make sense of all that I observed during my stay and journey." (Ghazzal, 2017, p. 57) Abdul Salam Heimer has argued, such intelligence gathering continued into the nineteenth century, when *rihlat sifariyya* (embassy travelogues) remained one of the principal means by which the sultan and his entourage acquired knowledge about the European states with which they dealt. In Heimer's words, "There is no doubt that travel reports were useful to the sultan in the second half of the 19th century for they provided him with information about Europe he desperately needed to know." (Heimer, 2008, p.195).

This certainly applies to Ahmad al-Kardudi, who explains that he began recording an account of his mission to Spain in 1844 of his own initiative. During his visit, he contacted the royal chamberlain in Fez to seek the Sultan's approval to continue:

> Our brother and chamberlain of our Master, we have started recording the rihla to emulate the previous ambassadors of Muslim monarchs. We are not sure whether the Sharifian sovereign consents to the recording. When the first piece reaches you, we would like you to present it to our glorious Master and have his opinion about it so as to act accordingly. (Al Kardoudi, 1963, p. 13, footnote 13).

The Sultan's reply was encouraging: "he did well, he did well, let him proceed with his work." (Ibid)

By contrast, the composition of I*thaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al Akhbar*, was quite different. Jaaydi explains that when historian Ahmed Nasiri learnt the news of his journey to Europe, he eagerly urged him to record his observations and "write a travel account …where I gather every strange news, and what we see in those countries of every curious matter, and other things that are unfamiliar to the mind, so that it becomes an entertaining companion." (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 102). A similar suggestion to record his travels was made to Jaaydi by Abdelkader Rounam, treasurer of the port of Tangier, and Nasiri wrote to him earnestly reminding him to keep up his promise. Jaaydi then says,

> I was convinced that I had to help, and there is no escape from recording what I saw… Then I embarked on this work, asking God to help me attain the objective and obtain hope, and I set about recording what I witnessed … in a comprehensive document of every extraordinary thing, whether near or far, small or big and I have I called *it Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Ghraraib al Akhbar*, *Entertaining the Best of Men with the Strangest of News*. (Jaayd, 2004, p. 103)

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

Jaaydi 's narrative had a markedly different purpose. His *Ithaf al Akhyar bi Gharaib al Akhbar,* which can be translated as *The Gift of the Virtuous with the Marvels of News,* was not an official state document but rather a text intended for entertainment and edification. These titles themselves reveal the confrontational stance that characterised much of early modern Moroccan travel writing to Europe. Works such as Ahmad b. Qasim al-Hajari's *Kitab Naṣir al-Din ʿala al-Qawm al-Kafirin* (1611-1613), Muhammad b. al-Wahhab al-Ghassani's *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir* (1690-1691), Ahmad al-Ghazzal's *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Muhadana wa-l-Jihad* (1766), and Muhammad b. ʿUthman al-Miknasi's *al-Iksir fi Iftikak al-Asir* (1779-1780) and *al-Badr al-Safir li-Hidayat al-Musafir ila Fikak al-Asra min Yad al-ʿAduww al-Kafir* (1781-1783) frame Europe explicitly as *Christian* or *infidel* lands and foreground the patriotic and religious duty of rescuing Muslim captives. The rhetoric of *jihad*, *fikak al-asir* (ransom of captives), and the triumph of Islam (*Naṣir al-Din*) reflects a worldview in which travel was inseparable from religious confrontation and national sovereignty. Against this backdrop, Jaaydi 's *Ithaf al Akhyar bi Gharaib al Akhbar* marks a striking departure: rather than emphasising polemics or captivity, it adopts a tone of curiosity and marvel, seeking to describe Europe's wonders for Moroccan readers. His work is thus less about confrontation and more about observation, signalling a shift from militant patriotism to cultural reportage in nineteenth-century Moroccan Occidentalism.

Its tone suffused with marvels, curiosities, and descriptive detail, designed to capture the imagination of a broad Moroccan readership rather than to serve as a sober diplomatic record for the sultan's archive. Unlike al-Fasi, whose travel account frequently framed European practices through a religious and moral lens, Jaaydi adopted a more neutral tone, allowing his readers to encounter Europe's strangeness and wonders directly through his eyes, without the constant mediation of didactic commentary. In this sense, his *rihla* reflects the blending of diplomacy and spectacle, showing how Moroccan Occidentalism could both record political encounters and serve as literary entertainment for Moroccan audiences.

Another aspect distinguishes Jaaydi's Occidentalism. At one point, he explicitly distances himself from Moroccan travellers who expressed excessive admiration for Europe, declaring that he "dissociates himself from the common people who roam in the land of the Rum (Christians) and speak with admiration about their conditions, praising their laws and taking pride in that." (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 104). In doing so, he set his account apart: not celebratory, not polemical, but marked by a deliberate neutrality that resisted both condemnation and uncritical fascination.

Ibn Idris Jaaydi 's *Ithaf al-Akh'yar bi-Gharaʾib al-Akhbar* was translated into French by Samira Sbiti (2020) under the title *Des curiosités de l'Europe qui émerveillent les honnêtes gens : Rihla d'Idriss al-Guaydi as-Salaoui en France, en Belgique, en Angleterre et en Italie*. It must be stressed, however, that some elements of this edition are problematic: notably, Sbiti's French translation unjustifiably omits the section on Jaʿidi's voyage to Britain.

Maʿninu remarks on this new paradigm of Occidentalism in Moroccan travel writing

> His method of writing differs from the documentary style that was prevalent among the educated class of his time. He avoided digressions and refrained from filling his work with citations from others. Instead, his style was marked by speed, movement, and interwoven transitions. It also displayed precision in describing events, though like his contemporaries he encountered linguistic obstacles when confronted with modern European civilisation—especially in rendering scientific innovations into Arabic. To fill this gap, Jaaydi, like other nineteenth-century writers, resorted to incorporating foreign terms and Moroccan colloquialisms in order to express what they observed in Europe. …. The very nature of the journey required him to treat a wide range of topics, which attests to his broad erudition, for he engaged with many of the issues that preoccupied Moroccan thought in that era. The rihla thus functioned as both a key for raising these questions and a vehicle for exchange and self-representation. (Ma'aninu, 2004, p. 37)

This observation highlights how Jaaydi 's *rihla* broke with older scholarly conventions, blending colloquial expression, foreign vocabulary, and literary devices in order to capture the novelty of Europe for Moroccan readers, while simultaneously positioning the text as a medium of cultural dialogue.

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

5. POLITICS, DIPLOMACY, AND OCCIDENTAL ENCOUNTERS

One of the aspects of Victorian Britain that attracted Yaaydi's attention were political institutions and ritual displays of British sovereignty. As secretary to the Moroccan envoy, his task was not merely to observe but to record the ceremonial, diplomatic, and political protocols of Britain during the mission. The narrative thus reveals how Moroccans encountered European political power in its ritualised forms—receptions, ministerial visits, and meetings with the monarch—while also offering insight into how the envoy understood sovereignty and diplomacy through his own cultural lens.

From the moment the delegation arrives in Dover, al-Jaʿidi underscores the political weight of hospitality. The streets were "covered with carpets," soldiers stood in formation, and cannons were displayed, all signalling honour for the Moroccan guest. Such ceremonies highlight how Britain projected its imperial dignity through public display, much as Morocco did in its own courtly rituals.

This theme of hospitality and symbolic display in British diplomacy takes place in Jaaydi's description of the Moroccan delegation reception by the Queen's son. Jaaydi's writes

> When we entered this garden, the ambassador met the son of the Queen, and we were with him. He displayed such politeness and humility that it was a matter of wonder. He stood like any other man, wearing the dress of his people… With him were four of his younger brothers, not yet of age… they now study the sciences of the sea and served therein for a known period, then entered the army to serve there also, then passed on to other sciences, so that they might be prepared in all branches of knowledge, seeing what hardships people endure on land and sea. After that they travelled about the lands east and west, by land and sea, thereby gaining greater maturity of mind. (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 279)

What is significant here is the way Jaaydi frames British hospitality not only as ceremonial honour but as a window into the training of imperial elites. The spectacle of a prince mingling humbly among the people, alongside brothers being educated in naval and military sciences, revealed to him a society that cultivated its ruling class through discipline, mobility, and exposure to hardship. For Abdelmajid Kaddori, the prince's reception itself was an occasion for Jaaydi "to find out about some of the differences among the peoples of this continent. Thus we notice his admiration for the depth and solidity of English civilization, especially in the diplomatic sphere, where protocol was precise and scheduling strictly regulated." (Kaddouri, 1995, p. 5)

Perhaps the most symbolically charged moment of the mission was the delegation's audience with Queen Victoria. When the Moroccan envoys arrived in England, the Queen was away from London, residing at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight to tend to her ailing son. It was customary that ambassadors wait for her return before being received in the capital. Meanwhile, Drummond Hay's son tried to occupy the delegation with touristic outings. Yet Jaaydi proudly records the ambassador's refusal:

> It is their custom that when she (the sovereign lady) leaves the city, she does not meet with anyone who comes to her until she returns. We found there other ambassadors from the Turks and from India who had preceded us by about two months, yet they had not met with her until now. This distressed us greatly. The son of the English ambassador requested of our ambassador that he go out often for excursions and to meet with people, but he refused, replying: 'We did not come for excursions nor to socialise with foreign people. I have no purpose in that until the noble aim for which I came is accomplished.' He remained steadfast in this position until their sovereign lady permitted us to ascend to her, and this was by the grace of our master, the one made victorious by God. (Jaaydi, 2004, pp. 286-287)

This passage not only emphasises the ambassador's sense of duty but also frames the eventual audience with Queen Victoria as a special privilege accorded to Morocco—one denied to the envoys of the Ottomans and Indians, who had waited in vain for months. Jaaydi presents this outcome as proof of the superior esteem enjoyed by the Moroccan delegation and attributes it to the greatness and divine favour of Sultan Moulay Hassan. The rhetoric of "grace" and "manifest blessings" turns a routine diplomatic encounter into an episode of self-glorification, projecting

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

Morocco's monarch as a ruler whose prestige could command exceptions to European protocol. Jaaydi then narrates the encounter with careful detail:

> At nine o'clock on the aforementioned Thursday, we boarded a land steamer heading towards the island where she resides. We travelled in it for three hours, then boarded a sea steamer which carried us for an hour and a half. We arrived at this island, called by a name meaning the Green Island. We mounted carriages, which conveyed us to the courtyard where their sovereign lady's residence is located. … We passed from one hall to another until we reached the hall in which the sovereign lady was seated. At this point the Minister of External Affairs stepped back, and the ambassador advanced with the interpreter and his secretary of trust on his right-hand side. I first gestured a greeting, which she returned, and then the ambassador began to deliver his address in words suited to the occasion. …. When his address was complete, the interpreter translated it, while she continued smiling, her joy evident upon her. She did not fall short in offering welcome and delight. Then she asked the ambassador about the condition of our master—may God exalt him—and he replied with fitting words. He then introduced to her our names and ranks, to which she signalled her welcome. (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 289)

This ceremonial exchange symbolised Morocco's recognition as a sovereign partner and underscored the blending of ritual, diplomacy, and spectacle. For Victorian observers, the scene was one of exotic dignity; for Moroccans, it affirmed their Sultan's honour in the eyes of one of Europe's most powerful monarchs.

In this sense, Jaaydi's *Ithaf* is not merely a travelogue but also a record of Occidental diplomacy, where politics, honour, and representation intersect. The narrative reveals both fascination with and suspicion of European political order, an ambivalence that would define Moroccan-European relations throughout the nineteenth century.

6.WOMEN IN AL-JAʿIDI'S NARRATIVE OF BRITAIN

Al-Jaʿidi's *Ithaf* offers a valuable, if ambivalent, window into how a Moroccan observer at the turn of the twentieth century perceived gender relations in Europe. His representations of women combine admiration, curiosity, and moral reflection, filtered through the lens of a Muslim scholar-diplomat navigating Britain's modernity. Unlike European Orientalist travel writers who exoticised Moroccan and Muslim women as silent and veiled inhabitants of the harem, al-Jaʿidi inverts the gaze: he turns his attention to English women in the public sphere, the private spaces of elite households, and in spectacles of entertainment. In doing so, he participates in what has been called Occidentalism, a discourse in which the West becomes the object of non-European scrutiny, admiration, and critique.

One of the most striking passages occurs in his description of the reception organised by the wife of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in India, Lord Derby. Here, Jaaydi is attentive to women's beauty and ornamentation and modesty:

> The men wore coarse turbans and had their heads uncovered, while the women wore silk garments trailing about three yards on the ground, most of which were adorned with diamonds, including on their necks and heads. I saw that the diamonds were treated as if they were the happy or the unhappy ones, with the happy ones decorating the heads, necks, and chests, and others on the silk garments, appearing like gardens or palaces, while the unhappy ones seemed imprisoned in layers of torment. (Jaaydi, 2004, pp. 281-282)

This depiction is reminiscent of As-Saffar's portrayal of Parisian women in his travelogue *The voyage of Muhammad As-Saffar*.[11] Moroccan travel writers have often remarked that British women appeared more modest than their French counterparts.[12] Jaaydi shares this view, noting, "We observed great modesty among the women as they would lower their gaze when we looked at them, and this was the case for most of them." (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 282)

Yet his representation of British femininity is paradoxical. On the one hand, women appear as luxurious, almost regal figures, clothed in silks and adorned with diamonds—an image reminiscent of Orientalist depictions of harem splendour. On the other hand, Jaaydi emphasises their modest comportment, particularly the act of lowering their gaze,

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

a gesture resonant with Islamic ideals of hayaʾ (modesty). His narrative thus fuses two registers: English women are admired for their elegance but validated through values familiar to the Moroccan author.

This ambivalence reflects Jaaydi's negotiation between attraction and cultural boundaries. He admires beauty and splendour, yet frames women's behaviour within the hierarchies of Islamic morality. In this sense, Jaaydi interprets English women through a moral lens that ultimately reaffirms his own cultural framework. Yet even as he seeks to appropriate the foreign female body to the Islamic gaze, Ṭayyib Biyad identifies within this act a subtle sensual voyeurism, noting: "The jurist's amorous gaze lingered, and the woman cast down her eyes in modesty." (Biyad, 2016, p. 142). At the same time, however, Maʿninu offers a different reading, arguing that "Jaaydi di does not hesitate for a moment to express amorous admiration for the ladies of European society; this amorous discourse is undoubtedly a reflection of his admiration for the progress that European women were experiencing at that time." (Maʿninu, 2004, p. 75).[13]

Jaaydi also notices the disciplining of female behaviour in English social contexts. At the diplomatic reception, women lower their gaze when observed. In the theatre or at the rugby match, they appear as spectators, their presence unremarkable yet regulated within the norms of polite society. In the circus, women riders take part in daring performances, racing horses while standing upright on their backs "Next, horses ridden by girls appeared, each on a single horse. They raced while standing on the horses' backs, and their races continued with both standing and sitting."(Jaaydi, 2004, p. 303) Jaaydi presents English women as public performers, active participants in spectacles of entertainment. Their athleticism contrasts sharply with Orientalist tropes of Eastern female passivity, yet even in this context Jaaydi frames the scene as wonder and spectacle rather than as evidence of women's social agency.

What seems to have impressed Jaaydi most, however, was the involvement of young women in the spectacle. After the male riders, "other horses appeared, ridden by girls, each one on a single horse." These young women not only rode but also raced while standing on the backs of their horses, repeating the contest both standing and sitting. For Jaaydi, steeped in the gender norms of nineteenth-century Morocco, the sight of women publicly performing acrobatic feats before a mixed audience was nothing short of extraordinary. His narration remains factual, avoiding overt commentary, but the mere act of recording their participation signals his awareness of its cultural significance.

Female presence in British culture of public entertainment is equally illustrated in a young girl who performs with five little dogs to create a carefully choreographed show. Jaaydi notes that "little girl began to speak to them," highlighting her role as both guide and partner in the performance. She directs the animals' tricks, holds the ribbon for them to seize, and times her gestures to produce moments of surprise and delight for the audience. (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 302)

Critically, Jaaydi representation of women reflects an ambivalence of Occidentalism. His gaze oscillates between admiration (for their beauty, elegance, and public roles) and critique (seeing them as displays, artificial, or bound by codes of modesty). This ambivalence mirrors the tension in Moroccan society itself at the fin-de-siècle, caught between reverence for tradition and fascination with European modernity. Women thus become symbolic markers in his text, embodying both the allure and the moral limits of Europe.

Jaaydi's representations of women in Britain are layered and contradictory. They range from opulent figures of luxury and modesty, to waxworks of display, to athletic performers in public arenas. Rather than reproducing a single coherent image, his text produces a spectrum of representations that reveal the complexity of the Moroccan Occidentalist gaze. Women become central to his negotiation of difference: they are mirrors, spectacles, and symbols of Europe's modernity, yet also refracted through Islamic and Moroccan moral categories. His account thus invites us to rethink the politics of representation not only as a colonial imposition but also as a field where non-European voices crafted their own visions of the West.

His tour of the prisons also brought him face to face with questions of gender, as he observed young girls and boys confined for petty offences and noted the presence of female wardens supervising women and children. He writes

> we found a young girl imprisoned in a room; it was said she had thrown a stone at another in the street. In another room there was a girl who had quarrelled with another…. Each prisoner was confined in a room, with a paper placed outside stating the crime committed and the length of imprisonment decreed. There

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

> were also female wardens (*ʿarifat*) who oversaw the affairs of the imprisoned women and girls. (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 278)

This passage offers a revealing glimpse into how Jaaydi perceived European penal practices through the lens of gender. He describes with vivid detail the confinement of young girls and boys for minor offences, each isolated with a written record of their crime, a bureaucratic touch that underscored the severity of European discipline. Most striking for a Moroccan observer, however, was the presence of ʿarifat—female wardens supervising women and children. Their authority unsettled conventional Moroccan expectations, where policing and carceral duties were overwhelmingly male, and where women in custodial or labour roles were often associated with servitude rather than institutional power. In his narration, therefore, girls appear doubly visible—as subjects of punishment and as part of the custodial order—illustrating a gendered dynamic that blended vulnerability and authority, and highlighting the cultural shock of encountering European models of discipline that incorporated women as agents of social control.

At Madame Tussaud's there was among these figures "the image of a woman seated on a chair, with a candle burning on a candlestick beside her. The flame of the candle was the colour of a real flame when lit, and it was close to her face, but she had turned toward another woman as if holding her head. The light of that candle fell upon her left cheek, making it shine as though it were itself the candle, while the shadow of her nose extended toward her right eyebrow." (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 293) Jaaydi lingers over this tableau with striking precision, noting the interplay of light, shadow, and gesture as though he were describing a living body rather than a wax figure. His fascination lies not only in the realism of the waxwork but also in its theatrical illusion, where wax, flame, and human likeness converge to blur the boundary between artifice and life. This minute description underscores the sense of wonder Moroccan travellers felt before European spectacles of representation, where the wax body seemed uncannily animated by light and shadow.

When representing British women, al- Jaaydi remains emotionally detached—rarely commenting on their beauty, avoiding personal encounters, and withholding any sign of attraction. This stands in contrast to writers such as al-Hajari or al-Miknasi, whose accounts reveal a fascination with European women that borders on distraction.[14] Yet al- Jaaydi restraint wavers in Rome, where his *Ithaf* recounts a theatre visit that led to accusations from one of his companions of succumbing to the allure of Italian female performers, warning that he had "trespassed boundaries, removed [his] modesty, planted the seeds of passion in the soil of [his] heart, and found pleasure in the dance of those maidens" (Jaaydi, 2004, 327). He even threatened to denounce him before a judge to destroy his reputation. Jaaydi, in turn, defended his virtue in verse:

> *They urged me to enter the house of Teyatro,*
> *Then placed me in suspicious situations…*
> *Then they came, fully intent,*
> *To oppress me with false accusations.*
> *And unjustly claimed I found joy*
> *In the dance of the girls* (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 329).

The episode underscores the fraught interplay of reputation, morality, and cultural boundaries in the context of travel. On one level, his companion's reproach reflects the rigid expectations surrounding masculinity and virtue, and the anxiety provoked by exposure to foreign femininity. On another, Jaaydi's own telling frames the incident not as a moral crisis but as a light-hearted anecdote, recounted for the amusement of himself and his fellow travellers during their long journey.

7. BRITISH MODERNITY IN JAAYDI'S OCCIDENTALISM

If Jaaydi's account lingers on women as symbolic figures of English society, his most sustained reflections concern modernity: its institutions, technologies, and spectacular displays of progress. Britain in the late nineteenth century presented itself as the workshop of the world, an empire whose power rested on industrial innovation,

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

scientific knowledge, and bureaucratic order. Jaaydi's descriptions capture this with a mix of awe, fascination, and ambivalence, producing a Moroccan Occidentalist discourse on European modernity.

a. Marvels of Transportation

One of the most striking emblems of modern life for Jaaydi was the new world of transportation he encountered during his embassy. Coming from a Morocco where mobility still relied largely on animals, the encounter with British industrial infrastructure, steamships, trains, carriages, and roads, signalled to him an entirely new conception of modernity.

Jaaydi provides detailed descriptions of the moments when the delegation shifted from one modern vehicle to another. On their arrival in England, the Moroccan envoys disembarked from the steamship and boarded a train. The sheer size, decoration, and efficiency of the carriages impressed him: "of great size and splendour, richly decorated, with multiple seats and canopies at the corners." (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 272) His eye for detail suggests not only admiration for the machinery but also an awareness of the aesthetics of modern transport, where utility and spectacle converge.

Equally impressive to Jaaydi was the speed and organisation of British trains. He records with precision the time it took to travel from Dover to London: "the duration of the train's journey from Dover to London was two hours and a few minutes, at a powerful pace, without stopping at any station along the way." (Jaaydi, 2004, pp. 272-273) For Jaaydi, the ability to cross such a distance in just over two hours was not only a technical achievement but also a marker of Britain's modern social organisation. The seamless movement of people and goods across space spoke to a new rhythm of life unimaginable in Morocco. He also notes the infrastructure of circulation and order that supported these movements. When describing the arrival of carriages, Jaaydi remarks: "we found the road divided into two lanes, with soldiers standing in the middle, each about twenty steps apart. Those leaving the estate used the road on their left, while incoming carriages used the right side to avoid congestion." Jaayadi was aware how technological advancement was accompanied by strict regulation of space and traffic, revealing to Jaaydi a society in which discipline and system extended into the very fabric of daily management of traffic.

This sense of wonder was not Jaaydi's alone. As al-Mnasour observes, "Moroccan envoys to Europe could not conceal their astonishment over what they saw. They were impressed with the state of roads and the communications infrastructure. The network of railroads and the rapidity of transport they permitted captured their imagination more than anything else." (El Mansour, 1989, p. 39) Jaaydi's account therefore fits within a wider pattern of Moroccan travel writing in the nineteenth century, where the marvel of railways and roads came to symbolise European modernity in its most visible and transformative form.[15]

For Jaaydi, transportation was thus more than a mechanical marvel: it was a cultural phenomenon. The velocity of trains, the grandeur of carriages, the regulation of space all became outward signs of a modern civilisation. His precise notes on times, distances, and procedures reflect the documentary impulse of travel writing, casting the traveller as both observer and chronicler of modernity. Yet his tone remains measured and analytical rather than awestruck—until his return to Calais, when his impressions of British technology surface more openly. There he prays that God might send "the English demons (al-ʿafarit al-ingliziyya) to dig beneath [the sea] a tunnel (ṭariqan dahaliziyyan), through which people might pass underneath"—a striking anticipation of the Channel Tunnel that, for him, symbolised British superiority in mastering nature and controlling transportation routes.[16]

b. Gardens and Urban Modernity

Jaaydi's encounter with Britain in the summer of 1876 revealed a vision of modernity that went beyond factories and machines to encompass the very fabric of urban life—its gardens, pavilions, and the ordering of space for leisure and display. In his *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Ghara'ib al-Akhbar*, he devotes long passages to the gardens and to the famous "House of Bilar" (the Crystal Palace), recording with remarkable precision the dimensions, arrangements, and spectacles he observed. For him, the mastery of nature, the integration of flowers and architecture, and the art of illusion and entertainment were as telling of Britain's advancement as its steam engines and industries.

On one evening excursion, the Moroccan delegation visited an orchard, and Jaaydi was immediately struck by the order and refinement of the gardens: "many elegant gardens and unusual ponds … flowers arranged by colour … ponds with decorative patterns and inscriptions in different colours." What impressed him was not utility—he makes no mention of fruit—but ornament: flowers grouped into rugs, circles, and intersecting patterns, their beauty derived

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

from symmetry and design. For a traveller used to Moroccan gardens that were enclosed and primarily functional, these open, ornamental landscapes suggested a society that had succeeded in disciplining nature itself into spectacle.

This impression deepened at the Crystal Palace, which he described as "about five hundred yards in length," its walls and ceilings composed of glass and iron. To him, the building epitomised industrial modernity: monumental yet transparent, a marriage of size and delicacy. Inside, he found gardens, palms, pools, and technologies of preservation—flowers kept alive in winter by glass shelters with iron containers of hot water beneath them. Such details impressed him as much for their scientific ingenuity as for their beauty. He also noted illusionary displays: mirrors and images that mimicked reality, such as the figure of a woman lit by candlelight, her cheek glowing and shadow extended across her brow. His fascination here was with representation itself—the manipulation of light, glass, and reflection into a spectacle of life.

The gardens surrounding the Crystal Palace offered yet another stage. He described them illuminated with coloured lights, bordered by iron balustrades, overlooking London's orchards and rivers. They were spaces of beauty but also of performance: horseback riders entertained spectators by standing astride galloping horses, turning the garden into a theatre where leisure, entertainment, and order converged.

What emerges from these descriptions is a nuanced picture of urban modernity. Jaaydi writes not with mystical awe but with careful observation, cataloguing how Europeans ordered not only machines but also nature, light, and leisure. His account reflects what Mohammed Maʿninu identifies in his style: a willingness to admire Western technical and aesthetic innovation without idealising European culture itself. (Ma'aninu, 2004, p. 39) For Jaaydi, the Crystal Palace and its gardens exemplified modernity as spectacle and harmony, concrete images his Moroccan readers could grasp without scientific training. By recording them, he offered his audience a vision of British progress in which beauty, order, and technology converged as markers of civilisation.

c. The Prison and Discipline

One of the earliest encounters with modern institutions was his visit to a London prison. His description is remarkably detailed, stressing architecture, order, and discipline. The prison cells were well lit and

> In each cell there was a raised bed of bedding and, at its door, a table with a bell. There was also a large kitchen in which food was cooked for the prisoners—of the finest quality. We found there cups filled with thickened *harira* soup, from which the cook scooped two large ladles into a bowl, together with a piece of bread weighing about half a *ratl*, and a piece of meat of about two *uqiyyas* or less with a small amount of sauce. The interpreter said: "This is what the prisoners are fed every day." (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 277)

Jaaydi 's notes that there was even a large hall furnished with chairs and music, as well as a spacious courtyard, where prisoners could relax. The description of British prisons is striking for its tone of astonishment at the relative comfort and organisation of these institutions. He notes with emphasis the glass windows that bring in light, the raised bedding, the regular and plentiful meals—complete with soup, bread, and meat—and even the provision of a hall for prayer and music, alongside a daily period of recreation in the open air. For a Moroccan observer accustomed to more punitive and austere forms of incarceration, such details transform the prison into a space that seems paradoxically humane. His narrative reflects both curiosity and admiration, underscoring how nineteenth-century travel writing often turned carceral institutions into sites for comparing cultural values: British prisons appear not merely as places of punishment but as embodiments of discipline, order, and even welfare. His account implicitly reflects a desire for the reform of Moroccan prisons, aligning with a broader discourse of the nineteenth century, when European powers persistently urged the Makhzan to modernise its penal institutions. [17]

8. JAAYDI'S ENCOUNTER WITH BRITISH TECHNOLOGY

Zbidi's embassy to Europe in 1876 opened for Morocco an unprecedented window into the heart of industrial modernity. For Jaaydi, the mission was not merely diplomatic but also intellectual—a pilgrimage for knowledge. In his *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi-Ghara'ib al-Akhbar* he records his astonishment at Britain's technological and scientific achievements. What emerges is an ethnographic gaze—half in wonder, half in perplexity—directed at the engines of

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

Victorian modernity: the Mint, the Crystal Palace, the Bank, and the military factories that revealed the scale of Britain's power.

a. House of the Mint

Perhaps the most striking passages are those describing the House of the Mint, where Jaaydi witnesses the printing of money and the weighing of coins:

> We saw machines in operation and young boys who were not yet of age, working with a printing wheel. … The four boys worked incessantly, with the wheel and cloth moving in sync with their work. They could not afford to pause or delay because if they stopped for even a minute, the wheel would turn, and a gauge would measure the printed paper, which would then be the responsibility of the chief.

Here modernity appears as mechanised labour, synchronised with machine rhythms rather than human pace. His description of children at work, relentlessly tied to the turning wheel, frames it more with wonder than critique: he emphasises the precision of the process, the staggering output of "one million coins every day," and the almost miraculous ability to detect forgeries. Modernity here is not simply industrial but also bureaucratic and epistemic, built on surveillance, calculation, and control. One of his most detailed accounts concerns the British Mint and the banknote printing house. Jaaydi was struck by the sheer size of the institution and by the mechanical discipline that structured its work:

> On Wednesday the 4th, we went to the house of the Bank—the house where coin is struck and its papers are printed. It was a vast establishment, like a city in itself, with streets and houses, its beams of iron, and its arches also of iron, for fear of fire.[1]

The image of a bank-as-city signals Jaaydi's perception of the institution not simply as a building but as a microcosm of an industrial society, organized, metallic, fireproof, and fully rationalised. He describes workers weighing thousands of coins, clerks numbering in the thousands, "3,000 clerks and 1,000 other staff," and the ceaseless rhythm of machines. Most fascinating is his description of the printing press operated by young boys:

> We found machines turning, and boys not yet of age attending the wheel… On each turn a sheet of paper was seized, pressed against the engraved letters, and printed. The boys had no rest, if they delayed even for a minute, the machine would continue turning and the dial would reveal the deficiency. (Jaaydi, 2004, pp 241-242).

Here, Jaaydi notes that each wheel produced thirty sheets per minute, amounting to a million banknotes daily. His observation is not passive: he times the rotations, counts the sheets, and records the statistics. This is the curiosity of a scientist, fascinated by human labour and mechanical precision. Yet he also perceives the dehumanising aspect: the boys cannot pause, cannot look away, for the machine dictates their rhythm.

b. *Dar al-Ballar* : The Crystal Palace

Equally striking is Jaaydi's visit to the *Dar al-Ballar* (the Crystal Palace), the great symbol of Britain's exhibitionary culture. He describes its architecture with almost mathematical precision:

> Its length was near five hundred yards, square in form, its corners twelve yards high, and at the centre higher still, roofed with domes of thick glass set between iron beams, as glass is set between wooden bars in the windows of houses.

Inside, he marvelled at gardens, fountains, and "mirrors hung with paintings that from afar seemed like bodies." He notes wax figures so realistic they could not be distinguished from the living, and optical devices that created moving shadows of people, soldiers, and factory smoke. His travelogue demonstrates how Moroccan observers

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

struggled to translate this order into their own cultural categories, often oscillating between admiration and incomprehension.

c. Military Technology and Industry

It was customary in British diplomatic practice, particularly with envoys from non-European or "colonisable" states, to include a tour of Woolwich, the great military-industrial complex where Britain produced its weapons. Both al-Fasi and al-Ghazzal visited the site and recorded their impressions, and Jaaydi was taken there as well. Like al-Fasi, he gives detailed descriptions of the production of bullets (*al-khafîf*), cannonballs (*al-kur*), and massive artillery pieces:

> We found men in a machine producing the great cannons… They heat plates of alloy in a long furnace, join them, twist them upon iron shafts, hammer them with a mass of eighty tons, until they fuse as one piece… Thus they produce the body of the cannon—sometimes its base, sometimes its middle, sometimes its neck. (Jaaydi, 2004, pp. 268-269)

He even records dimensions with precision: a cannon "seven yards long, six yards around at its base, weighing eighty tons." Yet unlike al-Fasi, who wrote with palpable anxiety about British industrial might and the vulnerability of Morocco, Jaaydi 's tone is strikingly detached.

Another invention that attracted his attention is the technology of destruction and submarine warfare, undealt with by other Moroccan ambassadorial travel writers. One of the most extraordinary passages describes a new English invention: a self-propelled torpedo. Jaaydi calls it a *huta* (a fish), describing it as a hollow cylinder filled with gunpowder:

> It was said that it is sent in war against a ship; it travels under water until it strikes the vessel, then explodes inside like a mine, destroying it and all within. They told us that this is among the inventions of the English sages, not found among other nations. (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 267)

Here Jaaydi encounters a weapon that epitomises the technological asymmetry of the age: an invisible, unstoppable force of destruction. His metaphor of "a fish" reveals both his struggle to translate the unfamiliar and the way Europeans themselves often named the device. This highlights the semiotic labour of travel writing: Moroccan envoys acted as translators of both technology and cultural meaning.

Unlike earlier Moroccan envoys such as al-Fassi, al Kardoudi, and al Amrawi, who often framed their observations in moral or religious terms, Jaaydi maintains a strikingly neutral tone. He rarely passes judgment; instead, he invites his readers to share in his sense of wonder. Thus, after describing the torpedo, he notes only its novelty rather than condemning its destructive power or the threat it posed to *Dar al-Islam*. And, as Kaddouri affirms, in Jaaydi's *Ithaf*, "England emerges superior both at the civilizational and the military levels." (Kaddouri, 1995, p. 66).

This neutrality reflects his purpose. *Ithaf al-Akẖyar bi-Ghara'ib al-Akhbar* was not a commissioned state chronicle but a book of marvels, designed to entertain and inform. It allowed his readers to experience foreign lands directly, without heavy authorial mediation. In this sense, Jaaydi's travelogue represents a shift in Moroccan travel writing—from didactic moral commentary to observational ethnography.

Jaaydi's representation of modernity and technology in Britain reveals a remarkable scientific detachment. Unlike other Moroccan envoys who often wrote with moralising tones or religious warnings, Jaaydi underscores the importance of science and technology without falling into either mystical fascination or cultural anxiety. As the editor Maʿninu observes:

> Jaaydi speaks of Western civilisation in his travelogue with a positive tone that suggests adoption rather than mystical wonder. At the same time, however, he distances himself from those who glorify Europe as a whole and considers such admiration a deviation from the straight path. The author distinguishes between modern inventions, which he values, and the European way of life as Christians, particularly

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

> their reliance on secular laws instead of Islamic law. He praises the former while denouncing the latter, seeking God's protection from those who are dazzled by such things. (Maʿninu, 2004, p. 39).

This distinction is crucial: Jaaydi does not reduce his impressions to either blind celebration or wholesale rejection. He recognises the practical utility of Western technologies, printing presses, coinage systems, gas lighting, and weaponry, yet he separates these from cultural or religious imitation. His narrative therefore straddles two registers: a curiosity-driven, almost empirical observation of machines and institutions, and a cautious reaffirmation of Islamic values when confronting European lifestyles.

Al-Jaaydi's scientific curiosity was not confined to passive observation; he persistently solicited information from his hosts and the translators attached to the embassy. One phenomenon that especially intrigued him was the presence of ice in the heat of summer. During an official luncheon, attended by several army officers stationed in colonial Algeria who spoke Arabic and were seated beside the Moroccan delegation, Jaaydi seized the opportunity to inquire into this mystery.

"I said to the one beside me: 'This ice ought to melt when left in the air, so how is it that in your country it has not yet melted, whereas when it descends near our lands it melts immediately?'" The French officer explained that ice was stored during the winter in underground pits, insulated with straw and earth, and retrieved in the summer for use.

Yet the answer did not satisfy him. The puzzle of ice continued to occupy al-Jaaydi's mind until, on the embassy's return voyage from Genoa to Tangier aboard an Italian vessel, he pressed the matter further. "One day I requested the captain to show me its working, and he obliged, bringing me to his cabin where I saw the machine." Jaaydi then proceeds to describe this invention in detail for his readers, eager to communicate not merely its mechanics but also the codes of modern civilisation it represented. As Azz al Maghrib Maʿninu concludes, al-Jaaydi's quest for knowledge "undermines claims that Moroccans rejected European progress merely because it came from unbelievers." (Maʿninu, 2003, pp. 97-98) His account reveals instead an active effort to investigate, comprehend, and translate European technologies into a Moroccan intellectual framework.

9. ENTERTAINMENT, SPECTACLE, AND THE CULTURAL FACE OF MODERNITY

If banks, transportation, prisons, mints, and weapon factories revealed Britain's disciplinary and industrial modernity, entertainment and leisure spaces offered al-Jaʿidi another window into English society. His narrative devotes considerable attention to games, theatres, circuses, gardens, and museums, presenting them as stages upon which Europe displayed its cultural supremacy. These spectacles fascinated him as much as military machinery, for they demonstrated not only wealth and order but also the ability to channel art, play, and illusion into collective experience.

In London immediately after their arrival the Moroccan envoy, they were invited to watch a rugby match in a stadium. He says:

> the interpreter accompanied us with the ambassador to a public spectacle held in a spacious place without buildings or trees. When we arrived, we found a great crowd encircling the area, with people seated in carriages and others on foot—men and women alike—watching a group of people playing ball in the middle of that open ground. We entered among the spectators and remained in our carriages, circling around them until we reached the same place where we had first entered; then we departed and returned. (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 273)

Jaaydi's editor Maaninou describes that game but Jaadi does not name this foreign game , unknown in his country. (Jaaydi, 2004, pp. 273-274) Interestingly, he devotes a short description to the game without further inquiring about its name or rules.

a. The Tiyatro: The Architecture of Wonder

Among the most remarkable passages in al-Jaaydi's *Ithaf al-akhyar* is his description of the London theatre, which he designates with the transliterated term *ṭiyaṭru*. On Monday, the second of Rajab, the Moroccan delegation

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

was led to what he calls "a grand palace" (*qaṣr ʿaẓim*), circular in form and designed for nocturnal entertainments. Jaaydi is meticulous in rendering its physical proportions: "its circumference was one hundred and eighty-six steps, its walls seventeen spans in width, and houses [galleries] stacked one upon another, all filled with mats." (Jaaydi, 2004, pp 284-285) He notes with amazement that the building could contain between twelve and thirteen thousand spectators on a single evening, an architectural feat capped by a vast dome covering the structure. His impulse to measure and quantify demonstrates both his astonishment at the theatre's immensity and his attempt to translate a foreign phenomenon into familiar Arabic categories of space.

Yet what captivated Jaaydi most was not only the theatre's architecture but the spectacle it contained. He describes performers suspended from the ceiling, cleaning or touching the walls while being raised and lowered by ropes; musicians playing instruments of "extraordinary length, some six cubits, narrowing down to the thinness of a reed"; and orchestral arrangements that filled the building with sound. Such observations reveal both wonder and bewilderment, an effort to grasp the novelty of a cultural institution with no equivalent in Morocco at the time. The *ṭiyaṭru*, for Jaaydi, epitomized a fusion of art, technology, and collective entertainment that exemplified the modern character of British society.

In this sense, Jaaydi participates in a broader Moroccan discourse on theatre that had been developing since the mid-nineteenth century. Muhammad as-Saffar, in his *Rihla ʿilawiyya* (1845-1846), famously described the theatre as "seriousness in the form of levity" (*jidd fi surat hazl*), praising its ability to combine laughter with moral instruction, "edifying the spirit and refining conduct." (As-Saffar, 1989, pp. 112-113). Similarly, Idris Al Amrawi in his *Tuhfat al-Malik al-ʿAziz* (1860), situated theatre within a hierarchy of European arts, remarking that it encompassed music, poetry, dance, acrobatics, and storytelling, while also serving as a space for satire and social critique (Amrawi, 1987, pp. 142-145). Jaaydi's account belongs to this lineage but is distinctive in its stress on scale and spectacle: his repeated references to dimensions, numbers, and the vastness of the crowd betray both fascination and a desire to domesticate the experience through quantification.

It is also important to highlight Jaaydi's sense of strangeness (*gharaba*). Moroccan travellers were drawn to what was foreign and marvellous, and Jaaydi is no exception. His description of the *ṭiyaṭru* is framed less as an evaluation of dramatic content—he says little about the actual plays—and more as a catalogue of *ʿajaʾib*, wonders that suspend disbelief: ropes that raise and lower men like birds, instruments so large they defy normal classification, and an audience whose sheer number produces awe. In this way, Jaaydi inscribes the theatre within the tradition of the *ʿajaʾib al-makhluqat* literature, while simultaneously recognizing it as a marker of European modernity.

What is striking, however, is how Jaaydi interprets this experience in relation to Morocco. He notes that such spectacles contribute to the refinement of British urban life and considers them worthy of recording for the Sultan's knowledge. His narrative thus oscillates between astonishment and didacticism: the theatre is not only a marvel to be admired but also an institution to be studied, a sign of the social cohesion and technological sophistication of Britain. This is precisely the dynamic that Abdelahad Sebti and others identify as Maghribi Occidentalism, a mode of writing in which Moroccan observers both admire and domesticate Europe, making it legible within their own epistemic frameworks.

Jaaydi's attention to entertainment also complicates our understanding of the embassy's mission. While officially diplomatic, the delegation's visits to theatres, wax museums, and gardens reflect an effort to acquaint Moroccan elites with the totality of European life, not just its politics or military power. By recording the *ṭiyaṭru*, Jaaydi signals that modernity was not only a matter of weapons and industry but also of culture, leisure, and mass entertainment.

Not all Moroccan travellers shared this interest. As scholars note, Ahmad ibn Khalid al-Naṣiri, despite his encyclopaedic curiosity, omits theatres altogether in his writings, perhaps considering them unworthy of scholarly commentary. That Jaaydi devotes attention to them underscores both his personal curiosity and his recognition of their symbolic value. The theatre, in his eyes, was a monument of European modernity, a collective institution embodying both technological mastery and cultural creativity.

In sum, Jaaydi's representation of the London theatre demonstrates the entanglement of wonder, cultural translation, and Occidentalist curiosity. He renders the unfamiliar in terms accessible to his Moroccan audience, while at the same time conveying the magnitude of Europe's cultural institutions. His account exemplifies how Moroccan

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

travellers of the 19th century grappled with the spectacle of modernity, translating it into their own idiom without diminishing its strangeness.

In the circus, al-Jaʿidi witnesses feats that blur the line between human discipline and animal subjugation:

> They brought large elephants and performed amazing tricks. The elephants danced and matched their movements to the music. … One elephant stood on its hands and head, raising its legs and trumpeting as if asking for relief from the effort (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 302).

Jaaydi's description of the London circus reveals both astonishment and analysis. The *ṭiyaṭru dar al-bilar* (literally "Theatre of Glass") is presented as a space of wonder, yet he carefully records its dimensions and structure—the diameter of the arena, the twelve tiers of benches, the five tiers of private compartments, the velvet upholstery, the crowning glass dome. Such precision is characteristic of Arabic *rihla* writing, where unfamiliar spectacles are tamed by the order of measurement and enumeration. By translating the foreign scene into numbers, steps, and cubits, Jaaydi reinscribes the unfamiliar into a recognizable rhetorical frame.

His account of the acrobats and horses is particularly striking. The Moroccan diplomat marvels at the feats of balance and coordination, describing vaults over increasingly large numbers of horses and pyramids of men standing across their backs. Yet Jaaydi does not simply register wonder; he rationalises. He notes how their tight clothing enabled agility by reducing air resistance, showing his effort to explain European spectacle in terms of practical knowledge. This mixture of amazement and rationalisation situates him between the discourses of *ʿajaʾib* (marvels) and the pragmatic gaze of a diplomat charged with learning from Europe.

Even more revealing is his pride at discovering Moroccan performers among the troupe. He identifies one as Marrakshi and two as men from the Sous, connected with the famous Sufi master Sidi Ahmad and Musa, whose disciples were renowned for acrobatics. This moment reclaims a Moroccan presence in what might otherwise appear an entirely foreign spectacle, suggesting that Morocco too contributed to global circuits of performance and entertainment. The circus thus becomes a site where Jaaydi recognises both Europe's marvels and Morocco's hidden imprint upon them.

The climax of the narrative lies with the elephants' performance. To a Moroccan audience, elephants themselves were exotic and rare, associated with distant India and Africa. Here they appeared as disciplined actors, dancing to music, balancing precariously on barrels, and even climbing onto smaller barrels nailed on top. Jaaydi interprets their movements anthropomorphically: one elephant standing on its head and forelegs "cried out as if asking for relief." Such anthropomorphism reflects both his empathy and his sense of the uncanny—the spectacle blurred the line between training and cruelty.

Finally, the image of a European trainer placing his head inside an elephant's mouth encapsulates Victorian circus culture's fascination with danger and mastery over nature. Jaaydi registers the act in astonished terms, presenting it as a *ʿajib* (marvel) but refraining from judgment. For him, the event dramatized both the ingenuity and the excess of European modern entertainment.

Jaaydi's representation of the London circus illustrates how Moroccan envoys perceived Europe through the lens of marvels, discipline, and curiosity. On one hand, he portrays London as a city of wonders where even animals are subjected to extraordinary training. On the other, he analyses details—architecture, clothing, movement—with the careful eye of a diplomat seeking to extract knowledge from spectacle.

This duality reflects the Occidentalist perspective of Moroccan travel literature. Just as European Orientalists exoticized Morocco, Jaaydi exoticizes Europe—rendering its circus as an *ʿajaʾib* display, at once strange, fascinating, and morally ambiguous. His pride in finding Moroccan acrobats, moreover, inverts the colonial gaze: far from being merely spectators of Europe, Moroccans were also participants shaping its culture.

The circus thus served as both entertainment and allegory. It dramatized European mastery over bodies and animals, echoing the imperial order of the 19th century. Yet it also provided Jaaydi with a language of comparison, where Moroccan traditions of acrobatics and spirituality intersected with Victorian spectacle. His account reveals less about the circus itself than about the cultural negotiation of perception: how a Moroccan envoy translated London's marvels into the familiar idiom of numbers, morality, and the *rihla*.

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

b. Jaaydi's Impressions of the Dog Games and Garden Spectacles

In his *Ithaf al-akhyar*, Muhammad Jaaydi describes with painstaking detail the variety of entertainments presented to the Moroccan embassy in Victorian London. After witnessing the daring feats of acrobats and elephants in the circus arena, the delegation was brought to another section of the *Dar al-Bilar* (House of Glass), where they encountered what Jaaydi terms *laʿbat al-kilab*—the "game with the dogs." His narrative here reflects both his amazement at the ingenuity of European entertainments and his effort to translate a wholly foreign phenomenon into a cultural language comprehensible to Moroccan readers.

Jaaydi begins by noting the stagecraft: five small benches placed inside the central circle, with two cushions positioned at either end. Into this arena were led a series of small dogs, each one mounting a bench and waiting for instruction. Then a little girl appeared, and—most remarkably for Jaaydi—it was she who directed the animals. At her command, each dog would descend, run, tumble, and even balance on its hind legs before returning to its place. The performance unfolded in sequence, with the dogs taking turns to display their tricks, guided by the child's gestures and voice. Later, the girl held one end of a ribbon while a dog gripped the other in its mouth; as she raised and lowered it, the animal followed her movement, sometimes joined by a second dog who leapt gracefully over the ribbon as it touched the ground.

The Moroccan envoy emphasizes the strangeness of the spectacle, admitting that what he has recorded is but "a small portion" (*nuzr yasir*) of what could be described. Yet this fragment is enough to convey the ingenuity of the entertainment: animals trained with such discipline and intelligence that they seemed to mimic human performers. For Jaaydi, who was accustomed to a cultural world where dogs were largely associated with impurity rather than amusement, the very idea of dogs as actors in a staged performance was remarkable. His writing betrays a mixture of curiosity and restrained astonishment, as he carefully translates the unfamiliar into familiar categories, referring to the "cushions" (*shawali*) and "benches" as if to anchor the novelty in recognizable objects.

From an Occidentalist perspective, Jaaydi's account demonstrates how Moroccan travellers interpreted Europe through the dual lenses of admiration and estrangement. The circus and garden entertainments revealed to him a society where order, discipline, and spectacle were woven together to create marvels for public enjoyment. Yet his astonishment at the use of dogs, the elaborate stagecraft, and above all the participation of women also highlights the cultural distance he felt from Victorian modernity.

For Jaaydi, these spectacles were not trivial amusements but windows into the organization and ingenuity of British society. They displayed discipline, artistry, and technological mastery, qualities that he associated with the broader strength of the nation. At the same time, they challenged his cultural expectations, especially in the domain of gender. The presence of women performers signalled to him that the boundaries of propriety in Europe differed sharply from those in Morocco, offering both fascination and unease.

Jaaydi's impressions of the circus and garden spectacles at the *Dar al-Bilar* thus illuminate more than his personal wonder at Victorian entertainments. They reveal how a Moroccan diplomat sought to interpret and translate the cultural codes of a foreign society for his readers at home. His detailed descriptions of dogs, horses, and elephants, his astonishment at the sheer scale of the architecture, and his careful note of women's involvement all point to a narrative shaped by the tension between curiosity and difference. What emerges is not simply a record of amusements but a meditation on the order, ingenuity, and unfamiliar freedoms of British society—an Occidentalist mirror to the Orientalist fantasies that Europeans projected onto Morocco.

c. Madame Tussaud's: Between Wonder, Unease, and the Struggle of Translation

Al-Jaaydi's account of his visit to Madame Tussaud's in London is remarkable not only for what it describes but for how it describes it. He enters the famous wax museum and encounters an unfamiliar spectacle: lifelike figures "standing upright without support, dressed in their traditional attire with their heads uncovered and their hair parted as usual." The precision of their appearance was so striking that he admits it was "difficult to distinguish between the figures and the living beings, except by movement or lack thereof." (Jaaydi, 2004, p. 282).

This type of artistic museums fascinated Jaaydi in the sense that the perfection of the artistic artifacts kept him amazed. The fact that travellers are always attracted by all that is strange urged the Moroccan traveller to report on this artistic place. It also shows that Jaadi is interested in all that contributes to the British modern life.

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

This sense of confusion already signals the cultural dissonance he experiences. Coming from a Moroccan Islamic context where figural representation—especially of humans—was often restricted or approached with caution, Jaaydi struggles to render this phenomenon into Arabic terms intelligible for his audience. His language falters between literal description ("a sick woman in the throes of death with closed eyes") and metaphorical attempts to capture the uncanniness ("her necklace moved slightly as if her remaining breath was causing the motion"). These linguistic hesitations are not flaws but part of his testimony: they expose how he grapples with translating a spectacle alien to his cultural frame of reference.

What struck him most was the way power, death, and morality were staged. He lingers on Napoleon's effigy—"lying on his back, a crown decorated with pearls and gems next to him, and a sword at his side"—a tableau that merges imperial glory with mortal fragility. Nearby, wax figures of Prussian leaders "who had fought against the French and were still alive" collapsed the distance between history and present, showing him how Europeans used museums as theatres of political memory.

Perhaps most foreign to him, however, was the exhibition of criminals and their punishments. He describes with both fascination and unease "the knife said to have been used to kill over twenty-two thousand criminals." For Jaaydi, this display was deeply strange: not only did it dramatize violence, but it transformed instruments of death into objects of public instruction and entertainment. His description betrays astonishment, as if unsure whether to interpret this as moral pedagogy or grotesque spectacle.

In this way, Jaaydi's account reveals a double movement: he carefully records the European phenomenon for Moroccan readers, but his language also reveals the limits of cultural translation. What to a Victorian audience was a familiar form of spectacle—wax figures, tableaux of rulers and criminals—appears to Jaaydi as an uncanny mixture of life and death, art and punishment. His rihla captures this liminal space of encounter, where wonder, unease, and the struggle for words coexist.

The collection included Napoleon, criminals, executions, and instruments of punishment. Such exhibitions exemplify nineteenth-century Europe's fascination with knowledge through display, turning history, crime, and morality into public education. For al-Jaʿidi, however, the effect is uncanny: a world of illusions that confuses life and artifice, blurring reality with representation.

CONCLUSION

In the end, Jaaydi 's *Ithaf al-Akh'yar bi-Gharaʾib al-Akhbar* may be read as a distinctive exercise in Moroccan Occidentalism—an attempt to negotiate a modern Moroccan identity in the mirror of British otherness. His meticulous descriptions of institutions, technologies, and spectacles register both admiration and restraint: England emerges as superior at the civilizational and military levels, yet never as a model to be uncritically emulated. By lingering on the marvels of modernity while maintaining a measured, almost scientific neutrality, Jaaydi frames Europe as powerful but also containable within Moroccan categories of meaning. His Occidentalism thus serves a dual function: it highlights the civilizational power of Britain while simultaneously resisting the pull of Europeanization, reinforcing Morocco's own claim to dignity and agency in a century of imperial imbalance.[18]

In this way, al-Jaʿidi participates in what we might call Occidentalist ethnography of entertainment. He turns the European gaze back on itself, cataloguing its spectacles much as Western travellers catalogued Moroccan harems or souks. Yet his writing remains ambivalent: the English appear both as ingenious masters of technology and art, and as a people who turn cruelty, illusion, and domination into collective pleasure.

As Abu-Lughod observes, the early Arab encounters with Europe were framed not around politics or culture but around religion. Arab travellers were disconcerted by what they perceived as Europe's lack of spirituality because, "rather than being attracted by [Europe's] secularism they failed even to perceive it … Perhaps the concept that any society could be secular was too bizarre to be comprehended." (Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery*, 164). In contrast, Jaaydi's 19th-century *Ithaf* reflects a subtle shift. He does not rail against Europe's Christianity so much as he recognises and documents its civilizational power in diplomacy, military technology, and urban order. Yet he still contains this recognition by separating technological modernity—which he esteems—from European secular ways of life, which he views with suspicion. In this sense, Jaaydi both confirms Abu-Lughod's insight about the difficulty of grasping secularism and departs from it, producing an Occidentalism that negotiates admiration without capitulation.

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

This pattern resonates with what Abu-Lughod identifies as a broader intellectual tendency in the Arab and Muslim encounter with Europe: the idea that the East is spiritual while the West is materialistic. As he notes, this dichotomy became an integral part of the defensive reaction to European civilisation among Arab and Muslim intellectuals (*Arab Rediscovery*, 152-154). Jaaydi's text can thus be situated within this trajectory: it acknowledges the material achievements of Europe while simultaneously reaffirming a spiritual and moral distance that preserved Moroccan identity.

In his book *ʿUruba fi Mirʾat al-Rihla*, Saïd Bensaïd Alaoui identifies three crucial stages in the Moroccan encounter with Europe through travel writing: the "moment of power and self-confidence" in the eighteenth century, exemplified by al-Miknasi's *al-Iksir fi Fikak al-Asir* (1779-1780); the "moment of defeat and discovery" in the nineteenth century, represented by al-Fasi's *al-Rihla al-Ibriziyya* (1860); and the "moment of power and recovery of awareness" in the twentieth century, most clearly articulated in al-Hajjui's *al-Rihla al-Urubiyya* (1919). Yet, it may be argued that this third stage—the "moment of power and recovery of awareness"—is already anticipated in al-Jaʿidi's *Ithaf*. His scientific gaze, his precise delineation of European power, and his refusal to be overawed by its intimidating display, all demonstrate a renewed sense of Moroccan self-confidence. This confidence, in turn, must be read in the broader context of Sultan Moulay Hassan's accession to the throne, which marked the beginnings of a more assertive Moroccan engagement with Europe (Alaoui, 1995, p. 27).

REFERENCE

[1] On the issue of European consular protection in Morocco, see, Mustafa Boushara'a, *Al Istitan wa al Himaya bil Maghrib: 1863-1894* (Rabat: Al Matbaa al Malakiya, 1984) and Mohamed Kenbib, *Les protégés : contribution à l'histoire contemporaine du Maroc* (Casablanca : Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, 1996).

[2] As part of his modernisation programme, Moulay Hassan sent Moroccans to various European countries to be trained as doctors, engineers, and captains.

[3] On the Moroccan study missions to Europe, see Jamal Haymar, *Al-Ba'that al-Ta'limiyah fi 'Ahd al-Sultan Mawlay al-Hassan* (Rabat: Manshurat Azaman, 2015) and Yahya Boulahya, *Al Bathat al Talimiyah fi al Yaban wa al Maghrib: Min Arba'iniyat al Qarn Taasia asharilaarbainiyat al qarn al ishrin Tabayoun al-Mouqadimat wa ikhtilafnataij* (Beirut: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2016).

[4] For further details on Moroccan ambassadorial missions to Europe in the second half of the 19th century, see Abdel-Hadi Tazi, *Atarikh al-Diplomasi al-Maghrebi min Aqadami al-Ussuri ila al-Yawmi: Aad al-Alawiyin*, vol. 10 (Mohamedia: Matb'atfdala, 1988).

[5] For an insightful discussion of Moroccan ambassadors to Italy, see Bahija Simou, *Al Alaqat al Maghribiya al Iṭaliya, 1869-1912*.

[6] On his embassy, see "L'Ambasciata Marocchina," *L'llustrazione Italiana*, 3 August, 1879.

[7]Interestingly among the activities ambassador Chaoui conducted in Italy was a meeting with the 24 Moroccan students who were studying in Turin at the Instituto Internazionale Italiano. See, Ahmed Maaninou, "Mudakkirat Talib Maghribi Ursila fi Bi'atha Maghribiya ila Italia Mundu Thamanin Sana," *Dawat al Haq*, vol. 1, year 12 (November, 1968), pp. 143-148.

[8] According to Moroccan historian Azz al Maghrib Maaninou, this change was prompted by the arrival of an Italian embassy to Morocco. Jacques Caillé, "Ambassades et missions marocaines en France," *Hespéris-Tamuda*, 1: 1 (1960), pp. 70-71.

[9] The Italian newspaper *L'Illustarazione Italiana* states that in addition to Driss Jaaydi and Nasser Ghanem, Zbidi's "entourage includes five officers and about ten other individuals, including servants, cooks, and the butcher," *L'Illustarazione Italiana,* 27 August 1876.

[10] According to Yahya Bouyahya, the lavish gifts and donations reveal a deeper *chaos* in Moroccan diplomatic thinking, which sought to resolve the thorny issue of foreign protection through strategies that were fundamentally incompatible with the prevailing European mentality of the time. Instead of adapting to the changing structures of international politics, the Makhzan relied on symbolic gestures and ceremonial display. The Sultan adopted a conciliatory tone in order to regulate treaties and reduce the number of foreign protections, while simultaneously dispatching an experienced delegation of weight and prestige whose primary role was to project royal pomp and grandeur. Boulahya, Yahya. *Al Ba'atat al Ta'alimiya fi al Yaban wa al Maghrib: Min Arba'inat al Qarn al Tassi'*

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8

Achar hata Arba'iniyat al Qarn al Ichrine: Tabayoun al Moukadimat wa Ikhtilaf al Nataij. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2016, p. 118.

[11] Mohamed as-Saffar describes women at a royal ball as "wearing jewels and gowns that defy de- scription. Their bare necks and shoulders, dainty waists, ponderous backsides, and ample bosoms were lovely enough to make the sun and the moon blush. Their naked upper arms flashed like lightning. They dazzled the senses with their honeyed curls, graceful shapes, rosy cheeks, lithe limbs, and clinging folds." Saffar, *The voyage of Muhammad As-Saffar,* p.185).

[12] In his *Rihla al-Urubiyya*, Hassan al-Hajwi praises English manners of modesty towards women. He particularly admires the English for their decency and propriety. When he embarked on an English ship bound for Britain, he was struck by the gendered division of space: men were not permitted to enter the section reserved exclusively for women. He observed:

"Concerning the difference in morals between the English and the French is that this ship had a section reserved for women, which was the best one onboard, forbidden to men. And this was also the case with English trains. This we never observed with the French, and we only heard about it with the Ottomans. Isn't it deserving of Muslims to uphold such custom at sea as well as on land, since they have to wear the veil and cherish chastity? And the English are well-known for their strong modesty and propriety, and for being less lewd towards their women and men, unlike other nations." (Hajwi, 2004, p. 114)

Not only does al-Hajwi contrast English and French standards of modesty, but he also suggests that English good morals should serve as a model for the Muslim nation. This reflects the reformist dimension of al-Hajwi's thought: he sought to identify positive aspects of foreign cultures encountered during his travels and consider their applicability to his own society. Later, he reiterates this point, noting that "the English are well-known for their strong modesty and decency, and for being less abusive towards their women and men, unlike other nations" (Hajwi, 2004, p. 114). In this regard, al-Hajwi echoes Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq's favorable portrayal of English women in his travel narrative to Britain, *Kashf al-Mukhabba ʿan Aḥwal Urubba*.

[13] Maʿninu discusses Jaaydi's perception of European women in ʿIzz al-Maghrib Maʿninu. "Al-Raḥḥala al-Jaʿidi wa-ʿAwalim Madinat Baris: al-Naẓafa, al-Niẓam, al-Iḥsas bi-l-Jamal," in al-Riḥla wa-l-Tarikh, ed. al-Bashir Abrzaq (Agadir: Manshurat Jamiʿat Ibn Zahr, 2020), pp. 352-354 full article 341–358.

[14] See Nabil Matar "Ambassadors and European Women," in Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727* (New York, 2009), pp. 106-113.

[15] Moroccan travellers, bewildered by European technology and inventions, often attributed them to supernatural beings. Thus, Amrawi writes of the railway that it "was one of the astonishing inventions of their time. It was among the marvels of the world that God revealed to them [Christains] at this time. It bewildered the minds, and any onlooker would be compelled to conclude that it was the work of jinn, for it was not of human making." Amrawi, p. 44.

[16] Jaaydi "expressed wonder at the electrical bulb, invented by those *shutar* (intelligent ones) in Rome." Nabil Matar, "Arabic Travel Writing, to 1916," *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Carl Thompson, 2016, p. 147.

[17] Susan Gilson Miller argues that European powers used issues such as slavery and prison reform "as a convenient lever for intervention in Moroccan affairs," *A History of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press , 2013), p. 46.

[18] Aisha Al-Omary stresses "the importance of Arab Occidentalism as a tool of containing Westernisation," *Representing the West in the Writings of Rifaʿah Rafiʿ Al-Ṭahṭawi, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and ʿAbd Allah Al-Nadim*, PhD dissertation UCL, 2021.

DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS.2025.10.8