

Received Date: 22 February 2026**Accepted Date: 14 March 2026****Published Date: 2 April 2026**

The Problem of Historical Writing in the Contemporary Arab World

Brahim El ABBASSI and Dr. Ahmed CHAIKHI

1. Ibn Zohr University of Agadir

Abstract

This study analyses the issue of writing history in contemporary Morocco within the broader context of Arab historiography. It examines the evolution of Moroccan historiography through two major phases: the colonial period and the post-independence era. During the colonial period, European researchers, particularly French ones, produced significant works on Morocco by introducing new methodologies, expanding documentary sources, and adopting an interdisciplinary approach. However, these writings were often influenced by colonial agendas aimed at portraying Morocco as a politically unstable, socially fragmented, and historically backward region, in order to legitimize foreign domination. After independence, Moroccan historians set out to deconstruct these representations and reconstruct a national history based on an internal reading of Moroccan society. Two major intellectual orientations then emerged: the nationalist school, centred on the restoration of historical sovereignty and identity, and the school of social history, inspired by modern scientific methods, notably those of the Annales School and the social sciences. The study highlights the contributions of major figures such as Mohammed Daoud, Mohammed Al-Mukhtar Al-Soussi, Germain Ayache, and Abdallah Laroui, whose work has contributed to the renewal of Moroccan historiography. It concludes that the writing of Moroccan history remains dependent on methodological renewal, the critical use of sources, archival development, and the reconciliation of national identity and scientific objectivity.

Keywords: Moroccan historiography; colonial historiography; writing of history; national history; social history; Abdallah Laroui; Germain Ayache; historical methodology; Morocco; post-independence.

Introduction:

The problem of writing and studying the history of the Arab world is one that troubles intellectuals, those working in the field of history, and those interested in Arab issues in general, as this problem relates to several aspects.

The first aspect is the Arab mindset's attitude towards historical experience: do we in the Arab world today view our historical experience as a resource that propels us forward in the present and towards the future, or does the Arab mindset still regard historical heritage and historical experience merely as tales of the past, topics for idle conversation and entertainment?

The problem with writing and reading history in the Arab world is one beset by many obstacles, the most significant of which is the division of historical periods. There is the problem of focusing on national history and prioritising the prominence of national figures at the expense of the history of the Arab world as a whole; and the problem of failing to acknowledge the cultural roots that predate even the spread of Islam and Arabisation across many parts of the Arab world.

Another problem we must recognise is that we have long lived in a state of cultural dependency, and at present it does not appear that we are making a serious attempt to break free from this dependency, particularly with regard to historical studies.

These are all issues in historical writing across the Arab world, and Morocco is an integral part of this region; consequently, it is not immune to these problems. We are therefore entitled to ask: where does the problem of historical writing manifest itself in Morocco? This question, in turn, leads us to examine historical writing during the colonial period and the problems it raises, both quantitatively and methodologically.

1. Historical Writing on Morocco during the Colonial Period.

Morocco was among the countries subjected to imperialist colonisation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This colonisation was not limited to the military and political spheres, but also extended to the field of scientific research, and to the historical field in particular. Those interested in the history of Morocco find themselves faced with a vast body of colonial writings, which are added to traditional Moroccan writings. In this context, we find that some Moroccan historians distinguish between these two types of writing: 'the old' and 'the older'. The older is represented by traditional Moroccan scholarship, which continued unchanged in style throughout the centuries, from **Rawd al-Qirtas** to **Al-Istiqsa...**, extending even into the colonial era with Abd al-Rahman ibn Zidan and continuing after independence with Muhammad Daoud. As for the 'old', this refers to the abundant output dedicated to Morocco by European writers from the late nineteenth century, which has continued uninterrupted to the present day..."¹

This statement makes it clear that the history of Morocco in the nineteenth century was shaped by two distinct—and arguably conflicting—currents: a traditionalist current and a new colonialist current. The former is considered traditional in its stance and approach. Indeed, it remained tied to the royal courts, to the extent that the prevailing writings in the intellectual sphere of the time continued to draw their titles from the names of prominent cities, such as the historian Abd al-Rahman ibn Zidan in his book **Ithaf al-Alam al-Nas bi-Jamal Hadrat Maknass** and the Marrakchi judge al-Abbas ibn Ibrahim, author of **Al-Alam bi-Man Hal bi-Marrakesh*....* and the author Ahmad al-Zahrani in his book **‘Umdat al-Rawin fi Tarikh Tataouine** and the historian Ahmad al-Nasiri in his book **‘Al-Istiqsa’ bi-Akhbar Dawl al-Maghrib al-Aqsa**.

Hence, the historians' focus on the history of cities leads to the neglect of the history of the countryside, despite the prominent role it played in political events in Morocco. As for methodology, it can be said that the annalistic approach was predominant during this period, as most traditional writers adhered to a narrative style whilst giving priority to political events and prominent figures. Despite the vast abundance of

such writings, they fail to satisfy the reader's thirst for the history of contemporary Morocco. As for the second type, we shall dwell on it at length given the significance it has acquired in the history of Morocco, namely colonial writings, which most scholars regard as a new form of writing in contrast to traditional writing. Hence, several questions must be raised: to what extent has colonial historiography been able to reconstruct the events of Morocco's past? To what extent are these Western writings connected? What methodology is employed in reconstructing events relating to Morocco's past? And to what extent can this type of writing be accepted or rejected? These are indeed a series of questions and issues that arise in relation to this type of writing on the history of Morocco. How could it be otherwise, when we know that the nineteenth century was the century of colonial studies for Morocco? Before addressing this issue, it is worth presenting to the Moroccan reader, as well as to readers across the Arab world, a picture of Morocco's past as reflected in these diverse foreign studies.

The nineteenth century constitutes an important phase in the context of historical research in Morocco, and this period has been addressed by a significant number of foreign scholars. These studies primarily emerged within the context of the intellectual renaissance experienced by Europe, which broadened the concept of history. Most contemporary historians note that the history of Morocco, whether before or after the Protectorate, was a vast field for far-reaching and innovative foreign studies in terms of both quantity and scope. This is what Abdullah Al-Aroui referred to when he said: 'In the nineteenth century, Europeans threw themselves into this work and treated it as raw material'² The reasons for this European interest in Morocco lie in the fact that the latter had a history spanning a thousand years as an established state; moreover, it possessed historical literature³. These, then, were a number of factors that prompted foreigners to take an interest in Morocco's past, particularly from the beginning of the eighteenth century. It is within this context that European exploitation of Morocco—particularly by the French—comes into play.

Hence, numerous studies emerged, which are not limited solely to the field of history that we are currently examining, but extend beyond it to cover other fields, such as geography, archaeology, geology and sociological studies, in an effort to shed light on the mystery that had long shrouded Moroccan history. The reason for this European interest in Morocco lies in the fact that the latter has a history spanning a thousand years as an established state, and, moreover, possessed a

historical literature¹. These, then, are the factors that prompted foreigners to take an interest in Morocco's past, particularly from the beginning of the 18th century. It is within this context that European, and specifically French, interest in Morocco emerged, giving rise to numerous studies that are not limited solely to the field of history we are currently studying, but extend beyond it to encompass other fields related to geography, archaeology, geology and sociological studies, in an effort to shed light on the mystery that had long shrouded Moroccan history. In this context, the French collected a series of scattered documents, studied them and verified them on the basis of their translation, subsequently publishing them².

These writings are distinguished by their focus on renewing what had been written about Morocco in the aforementioned traditional works; hence, most scholars have noted that they embody a form of innovation in terms of their subjects and methodologies. In this regard, Abdullah Al-Aroui states: 'Colonial scholarship is characterised by an expansion of the concept of the document. European researchers embarked on excavations, recorded accounts and collected foreign documents, whether official or literary, and then sought to renew the concept of the event by redefining the meaning of the state'³

This history does not merely reconstruct events in a new way according to modern Western methodologies, but simultaneously attempts to return to the traditional Arab historical heritage in order to subject it to a form of critique. In this regard, Al-Aroui states: 'He practised a critique which was, in fact, a collection of observations derived from those principles and applied in his own way to the traditional corpus.'⁴ This hypothetical critique led to the formulation of negative judgements about the history of Morocco, and these colonialists arrived at a single conclusion: that the history of Morocco is an incomplete and faltering history, a history of chaos and backwardness, and a history of tribal strife. This explains why colonial writings were driven by objectives linked to the policy of European expansion. Ibrahim Boutaleb observes that the European invasion was driven by three resolves: "Firstly, the determination to invade and plunder whenever circumstances permitted; secondly, the

determination to conquer markets, whatever the hardships involved; and thirdly, and no less importantly, the meticulous study of the conditions of our societies and the investigation of their history, past and present."⁵

To illustrate these three elements that drive colonial writings, it is necessary to review some of what has been achieved in this field, through which we can distinguish between a number of stages. Foreign interest did not begin until around 1880, after the importance of science in facilitating the process of European conquest became clear; science thus became one of the weapons that the architects of the colonial mindset called for its use, as we find Thomas saying: "Science is one of the weapons and the first remedy that must be employed, for it is what will pave the ground upon which we must march."⁶

Thus, European interest in Morocco, particularly that of the French, remained marginal, with their intelligence efforts limited to relaying and repeating what was found in Moroccan books.⁷

Another period followed, linked to Emir Abd al-Qadir al-Jaziri's appeal to the Moroccan Sultan Abd al-Rahman ibn Hisham, during which French interest in Morocco increased, leading to the publication of a series of Islamic books on Morocco. We shall focus on two of them: the first, published before the Battle of Asli, is the book **Dama** () on the Algerian Sahara, in which the author discusses, in the third chapter, the oases of Tuat and south-eastern Morocco. The second is a book by Rono () entitled *A Geographical Description of the Empire of Morocco*. This book, in itself, contains nothing new, as its author merely summarises what has been written in both ancient and modern books⁸

Ibrahim Boutaleb says: "In this situation, European accounts were somewhat taken aback by the defeat of the Moroccan armies at the Battle of Isly, and intelligence officers, travellers and consuls—whether they spoke Arabic well or not—set about searching for the reasons behind the Moroccans' decline. They began, with one voice, to express their

¹ - Jermain Ayash, *Studies in the History of Morocco*, Moroccan United Publishers, 1st edition, 1986, p. 11

² - Jermain Ayash, *Studies in the History of Morocco*, op. cit., p. 12

³ - Abdullah Al-Aroui, *A General History of Morocco*, op. cit., p. 11

⁴ - Abdullah Al-Aroui, *A Comprehensive History of Morocco*, op. cit., p. 11

⁵ - Ibrahim Boutaleb, *Colonial Research on Maghreb Society during the Colonial Period: Results and Evaluation*, Rabat, Faculty of Arts Publications, Seminars and Debates Series, No. 14, p. 108

⁶ - Raymond Thomas Sy: *Morocco: France's Relations with this Empire*, 3rd ed., Paris, 1859. *France's Political and Commercial Relations with Morocco*, 2nd ed., cited in *Studies in the History of Morocco*, p. 13

⁷ - Ibrahim Boutaleb, op. cit., p. 18

⁸ - Ibrahim Boutaleb, *Colonial Research on Maghreb Society during the Colonial Period*, op. cit., p. 111

astonishment at the decline of civilisation, productivity and knowledge in the lands of Islam...”⁹

Based on this statement, it is clear that there was a new shift in European writing, where geographical roots became more prevalent and the focus shifted to searching for the deep-rooted causes of the Moroccans’ backwardness. European writers reached a single conclusion: that this backwardness was due to internal factors, thereby justifying their policy aimed at invading Morocco. On this, Germain Ayash says: “Many are undoubtedly relieved by the state of utter chaos, even attributing to it a catastrophe of proportions it has never reached, whilst overlooking its causes, stating or implying that it is an inherent and innate internal product. By doing so, they can distort the facts, making this chaos the root cause, whilst European pressures become the necessary alternative ¹³.

As a result, a number of research papers and studies were published dealing with these events. A series of reports were issued by various consulates, and there were numerous exploratory expeditions, such as that of the German Barth, who toured the Central Desert in 1845, and his compatriot Rohifs, who undertook a journey to the Moroccan Desert in 1864. There were also numerous surveys by writers and journalists, alongside the writings of merchants and officers with broad intellectual horizons, such as the merchant Mackenzie (Mackenzie), all of whom were directly intent on carving up Moroccan territory from its eastern and southern desert borders¹⁰. There is a new observation within the framework of colonial research on Morocco, spanning some twenty years from the early 1880s to the dawn of the 20th century, which most scholars consider a new phase - Given the vast number of substantial books authored in Morocco, we can observe that this research served as a purposeful and well-founded survey of the Moroccan nation—its land, people, visible resources and capabilities—exhibiting a degree of precision, depth and rigour that went beyond mere documentation, taking the form of comprehensive endeavours.

After the officers set out to conquer the regions of Morocco bordering Algeria and Senegal...¹¹

At the beginning of this century, France intervened through the ‘Colonial Party’, which in turn established the ‘Scientific Mission in Morocco’, which would undertake the publication of Moroccan documents in 1904 (12). Following Morocco’s

fall into French hands, the task of historical research on Morocco would intensify, particularly as the colonial administration would find itself compelled to organise the region into a colony of its own. Subsequently, both the ‘Directorate of Indigenous Affairs (Direction des Affaires Indigènes)’ and the ‘Information Service’ would come to the fore. Regarding these, Germain Ayach states: “These are the two bodies that will jointly undertake the task of promoting research in the future, even at the highest level. In doing so, they have replaced the private institution represented by the ‘Scientific Mission’, lending it an official character. This was not kept secret, as Moroccan documents ‘will henceforth be published under their supervision’.”¹³

As a result of these developments and shifts in knowledge, colonial research on Morocco has witnessed a significant leap forward, acknowledged by most scholars. This is evident in the words of Ibrahim Boutaleb, who states: “One of the clearest indications of the progress of colonial research in terms of quality is the objective familiarity of certain specialists in historical research with certain aspects of Morocco’s past, as evidenced by the purely historical works published during the first decade of the twentieth century, such as Oueïssier’s book on the values of the noble families of Morocco and their rivalry with the Turks of the Algerian Eyalet, 1509–1830—published in 1904—and Massignon’s book on the state of Morocco in the nineteenth century, published in 1906, as well as Masson’s book on trade relations between France and North Africa in the modern era, published in 1903, and the works of Rouard de Card, in which the author included a series of treaties and agreements concluded between Morocco and European states prior to the Protectorate (14).

It is worth noting that these books are significant in the field of historical research and have rendered obsolete some earlier works that distorted many facts of Moroccan history.

During the Protectorate period, colonial writings underwent a significant transformation “from a weapon of conquest—sometimes employing methods such as improvisation and expediency—to a functional sector. All tools were harnessed for this purpose, and all resources were mobilised to assist the

⁹ - Ibrahim Boutaleb, *op. cit.*, p. 111

¹⁰ - Ibrahim Boutaleb, *Colonial Research on Maghreb Society during the Colonial Period*. *Op. cit.*, p. 112.

¹¹ - *Ibid.*, p. 116

¹² - Germain Ayach, *Studies in the History of Morocco*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹³ - Germain Ayach, *Studies in the History of Morocco*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁴ - Ibrahim Boutaleb, *Colonial Research on Maghreb Society during the Colonial Period*. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

internal authorities in paving the way for the invasion and enabling them to establish their influence” (15).

During General Leliouchi’s tenure, a higher school for the teaching of Arabic and Berber was established to facilitate the work of French officials in Morocco. After the First World War, it was decided to strengthen the European intelligence network, and thus, in 1920, the Higher School of Languages was transformed into the Institute of Moroccan Higher Studies. The level of the periodical was also raised to an expanded journal known as *Hesperis*. Regarding this institute and its mission, Boutaleb cited the following from the first chapter of the French ministerial decree establishing the institute: “Pursuant to this decree, an Institute of Moroccan Higher Studies is hereby established, entrusted with the task of promoting scientific research in Morocco, encouraging and coordinating such research, and compiling its findings”¹⁶ .

Judging by what foreign authors wrote in the aforementioned **Hesperis** journal, it is clear that history took centre stage among all the research carried out on Morocco, whilst other fields—such as geography, linguistics, ethnography, sociology, folklore, literature, jurisprudence, customs and archaeology... It is worth noting that the majority of foreign historians have focused on writing the history of Morocco out of a sense of charity and without prior preparation.¹⁷

Examining these colonial writings does not in any way imply rejecting them outright, but rather necessitates caution and a re-evaluation of the preconceived positions and ideas that have persisted to this day, which have only served to distort research if left unchallenged; For the history of Morocco has suffered significant distortion, particularly in the recent period following its independence, and this image has even emerged among some distinguished authors. The picture painted of Morocco to this day is linked to a state of chaos and poverty, which necessitated the intervention of European states. This vulnerable position of Morocco in comparison to the Europeans was described by Al-Nasiri, who states: “How, then, can one justify rushing into war with the Franks? We and they are like two birds: one has two wings with which it flies wherever it pleases, whilst the other has its wings clipped, lying on the ground, unable to fly or find its way. Do you think

that this wingless bird, which is but flesh and blood, should fight the one that flies wherever he pleases?”¹⁸

It is worth noting that this situation in Morocco is described as utter chaos, a characterisation found in the works of many authors, where phrases such as ‘impotence’ and ‘successive upheavals’ are repeated. Among such writings, one finds certain European authors who, despite the fame of their works, have sought to distort certain historical facts about Morocco. Among these are the writings of Charles André Julien (CH. A. Julien), which, at their core, aim to serve colonialist purposes in Morocco. This is because they put forward several erroneous theories about Moroccan history, such as the theory of Morocco’s innate inability to enjoy independence. Thus, as we leaf through his famous book – **History of North Africa** – we encounter harsh theories about Western Morocco: ‘However deeply we probe the depths of African history, we cannot help but notice that things proceed as if this country suffers from an innate inability to enjoy independence’ (19).

We note in these words a kind of accusation against the Moroccans of their inability to maintain independence. Charles-André Julien sought thereby to attribute an inherent deficiency to the Moroccans, with the aim of justifying European colonialism in Morocco and thus presenting the subjugation of the Moroccans as a natural state of affairs. In another part of his book, he attempted to divide the Moroccan country into two contradictory blocs: on the one hand, there is what is known as the ‘Land of the Makhzen’, through which the Sultan’s rule is embodied and through which all decisions relating to various aspects of Moroccan life are implemented; and on the other hand, there is the ‘Land of the Sabiya’, the region outside the rule of the Makhzen which seeks to achieve self-determination. In this context, Charles-André Julien states: ‘It is generally believed that the Berber kingdoms were formed in this way before the states associated with the history of Carthage or Rome... The king undoubtedly imposes his authority in the ‘Land of the Makhzen’, which comprises the inhabitants of urban areas and those living on the plains; however, the ‘Land of the Sebia’, which includes the mountains and a section of the nomads, often tends to evade his authority²⁰ .

¹⁵ - Ibrahim Boutaleb, *Colonial Research on Maghreb Society during the Colonial Period*.

Ibid., p. 112

¹⁶ - *Ibid.*, pp. 122 and 123

¹⁷ - Ibrahim Boutaleb, *Colonial Research on Maghreb Society during the Colonial Period* *Ibid.*, p. 125

¹⁸ - Al-Nasiri, *Al-Istiqsa*, Casablanca 1956, Vol. 9, p. 190.

¹⁹ - Ch. A. Julien: *History of North Africa: Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco from the Origins to the Arab Conquest (647 AD)*, Paris, 195, p. 49

²⁰ - Opeit, pp. 61–62

It is the issue of the division of Morocco into a group of separate regions and its characterisation as politically unstable that another researcher sought to illustrate and emphasise; this concerns Alfred Le Chatelier, who notes in his book **Morocco's Barrier and European Mines**

that the aforementioned tribes of the Sabiya were not independent in the true sense of the word, but rather tribes that, as a result of specific social circumstances, became associated with this state of lawlessness which lasted for more than twelve centuries, until it became the norm.²¹

In his discussion of the Amazigh tribes, he highlights a fundamental characteristic of the Amazigh people, namely their refusal to submit to the Makhzen, as well as their preservation of their vitality and their own way of life. Abdelhamid Ahsain noted that Al-Farid Loushatouli drew upon what Ahmed Al-Nasiri had reported regarding the conflict between the Amazigh tribes of Fazzaz and Moulay Slimane in the early nineteenth century, to emphasise that the Masmuda, Sanhaja and Zanta tribes, who embodied the organic state of 'tsib' experienced by all Amazigh tribes or peoples, did not accept submission to any authority not originating from themselves, and that when a Berber tribe finds itself faced with an organised authority, it is compelled to seize it or resist it in order to avoid annihilation.²²

Conclusions:

Among the observations that can be drawn from these colonial writings are the following:

1 - It may be noted that Morocco, as an integral part of North African history, has attracted the attention of most studies dealing with the region.

2 - We also note that colonial writings represent an advanced stage in historical research in Morocco, particularly when compared to the works of traditional historians; this has led to a qualitative revolution in our traditional perceptions and the conventions of historical writing.

3 - Despite the negative aspects and colonial objectives that shaped European historiography, it reflects the extent of European interest in the academic field and its desire to address and uncover historical truths.

4 - European interest in the history of Morocco has driven national historiography forward, instilling in Moroccans a sense of the importance of national history, which led to the emergence of the Moroccan historical renaissance, particularly after independence.

5 - Colonial writings have made us realise that history is not limited to narrating events and dwelling on the superficial, nor does it prioritise political history; rather, they have given political history a broad concept, for it is a science that transcends all of this to encompass society, the economy, ideology and politics, relying on a method of objective scientific analysis and in-depth explanation.

2. Historical Writing after Independence

Historical Schools after Independence:

In the first section, we examined historical writing on Morocco during the colonial period and noted that Morocco attracted numerous foreign studies which focused on all aspects of Moroccan life, particularly as Europeans used scholarship as a means to pave the way for colonial conquest.

As we have noted, historical knowledge during the colonial period was primarily based on traditional writings; the question now is: what is the status of such writings in post-independence Morocco? But before that, we note that the historian of this period is faced with a set of issues relating to what the coloniser wrote about Morocco: should he proceed by criticising and refuting what the Orientalists wrote and the theories they constructed, so as to have liberated his country's history from colonialism just as he liberated its politics? ... Or does he take a fresh approach to the available documents and sources, re-reading and interpreting them according to Arab-Islamic national standards and criteria?²³ . Furthermore, which fields and periods remain neglected, and why? What are the factors (both encouraging and hindering) that shape historical research and production in Morocco and beyond?²⁴.

These are a set of issues and questions raised by Moroccan historians, particularly contemporary ones, which are primarily linked to the trajectory of historical writing during the era of independence. As Mohamed Mansour has argued, two main phases can be distinguished, differing in terms of intellectual and methodological approach:

²¹ - A. Le Chatelier, 'Berber Morocco and European Mines', *Revue du Monde Musulman*, February 1910, p. 146.

) Quoted from Abdelhamid Hassain, *Amal* magazine, Issue 1, Year 1, 1992, p. 24)

²² - *Ibid.*, p. 150

²³ - Mohamed Mezine, *Towards a National Vision for the Writing of Arab History*, op. cit., 1988, p. 59

²⁴ - Abdelmajid Al-Qadouri, *The Role of Moroccan Universities in Historical Scholarship on Saadi Morocco: A Reading, Preliminary Observations, Assessment and Evaluation*, in *Symposium on Research in the History of Morocco*, Rabat. Publications of the Faculty of Arts, 1989, pp. 60–61

- The first phase, which he termed 'national history', spanned the years 1956 to 1975²⁵. This researcher highlighted the defining feature of this phase, namely:

The paucity of Moroccan historical output, attributable to the colonial power, which did not encourage Moroccan writing, as it recognised the importance of history in fostering a sense of national identity; consequently, this field remained the preserve of foreign historians. Serious Moroccan attempts to rewrite 'Moroccan history' did not emerge until 1967, when the book **History of Morocco** was published by a group of authors. Although the majority of the book's authors were Europeans, it is nonetheless regarded as the starting point for Maghreb research into reconstructing the events of Morocco's past.²⁶

During this period, historians began to realise the significance of the progress made by Western methodologies in the field of historical research, which was primarily linked to the expansion of the concept of history beyond the traditional understanding we have referred to. There was thus a call to move beyond traditional approaches, which were confined to the political sphere, towards an approach open to various other disciplines. In the book **History of the Maghreb**, there is an emphasis on studying the underlying transformations of civilisations, economic currents, and the cross-fertilisation of ideas and the arts, rather than focusing on political history or the history of ruling dynasties.²⁷

It is worth noting that historical writing during this period faced a number of obstacles, primarily linked to a lack of qualifications enabling the application of Western historical schools' methodologies, and the need to liberate the history of Morocco from colonial residues before drawing upon Western methodologies (the Annales School), as well as the need to undertake partial studies, or so-called monographs, as a first step towards constructing a comprehensive history of Morocco²⁸. The same historian also points to another factor: the view of society and the state that history is an unproductive sector, at a time when the battle for development (the 'Greater Jihad') monopolised the attention of officials. Mohamed El Mansour adds another problem related to the documents and records necessary for the completion of various historical

works. There is a lack of organisation, arrangement and indexing, as well as a lack of custodians for the documents, and researchers are prevented from accessing and making use of them. This problem is highlighted by a number of other researchers; for instance, Germain Ayash states: Let us turn a blind eye to the difficulties common to all documents, whether Moroccan or from any other country: the faded ink erased by the hand of time, the poor handwriting, and the disjointed composition if the author of the document had a superficial education. It should be noted that these material difficulties take on a more general and severe character in Morocco. This is because the preservation of documents has mostly involved piling them up, folded away in an unsuitable place. Consequently, the documents have been subject to deterioration over time, gnawed away at the edges, and a large portion of their text has been lost, the gaps in which must be filled...'²⁹.

As for the historical approach to this period, it is noted that it remained linked to what is known as the approach calling for the establishment of the first phase (national history), which aims to establish national identity by liberating national history from colonial orientations and ideas, in addition to other objectives, where Muhammad Muzain provides us with a series of observations on the history of the dawn of independence. In his view, it is "a history that attempts to remove colonialism from the perception of Morocco's past by highlighting the shortcomings of this type of writing"³⁰. Among the most prominent historians who have focused on this field is the researcher Germain Ayash, to whom a comprehensive and detailed study will be devoted, examining his approach to defining Moroccan historical writing; he is considered a distinguished historian for his orientation and thought in the historical field. Then there are such as Abdullah Al-Aroui, Mohammed Al-Manouni and many others.³¹

To summarise this phase – the phase of national history – we pause at the conclusion reached by Mohamed El Mansour that the national phase undergone by historical writing in Morocco was a historical necessity; it is a phase that other Third World countries have passed through at various times. This phase was necessary to critique the colonial school of thought and to

²⁵ - Mohamed Al-Mansour, *Historical Writing after Independence: General Observations, Summary and Evaluation*, Symposium on the History of Morocco, Rabat, Publications of the Faculty of Arts, 1989, p. 17.

²⁶ - Ibid., same page.

²⁷ - J. Brignon et al., *Histoire du Maroc*, Paris, Casablanca, 1967, p. 2

²⁸ - Mohamed El Mansour, op. cit., p. 19.

²⁹ - Germain Ayash, *A Study in the History of Morocco*, op. cit., p. 67.

³⁰ - Mohamed Mezine, *Towards a National Vision of Arab Historiography*, op. cit., p. 60.

³¹ - Abdullah Al-Aroui, *A General History of Morocco*, Cultural Centre for Publishing and Distribution, 3rd edition, 1992, Casablanca.

- Mohamed El-Manouni, *Aspects of Modern Morocco's Awakening*, Rabat 1973, Part One; in 1985 the book was published in full in two volumes (Rabat: Moroccan Association for Authorship, Translation and Publishing [])

pave the way for history to enter a new phase in which historians would undertake the task of writing the history of Morocco 'from within'. The nationalist direction taken by historical writing was linked to the country's political and social conditions at a time characterised by national cohesion and a focus on national identity. It was natural that the intense nationalist fervour, which was reflected in historical writing, led to an exaggeration in countering the colonial portrayal of Morocco's history; We rejected everything the colonial historians said, in its entirety, and held the Europeans responsible for our misfortunes. The dangers of exaggeration in this field and the distortion of historical truth to which it may lead are no secret; moreover, the veneration of official documents and the adoption of their perspective alone may also lead to the same result ³²

- Then the second phase, which he termed the phase of social history from 1976 to the present ³³ :

This phase saw a development in the methodology of historical writing in Morocco, moving beyond the nationalist tendency that characterised the first phase to a more advanced stage in which young historians sought to lay the foundations that would later allow for the writing of a scientific and comprehensive history of Morocco, a history that would go beyond traditional political history to focus primarily on society, drawing on its openness to the various social sciences.³⁴

Regarding this development in Moroccan historical writing, with its transition from the phase of national history to that of social history, Abdelahad Sabti says: 'The reader will witness the emergence of a social history, and perhaps this trend will come to be regarded as the driving force spearheading the process of modernising collective memory. This is an observation that remains with us when we take stock of published and unpublished research, what has been achieved and the extent of that achievement; there is a beginning of an accumulation that expresses a desire for renewal, manifested in the broadening of the concept of history, the development of the field of sources, and engagement with the humanities.'³⁵

³² - Mohamed El Mansour, op. cit., pp. 22–23

³³ - The same classification adopted by Mohamed El Mansour: Historical Writing after Independence: General Observations.

Ibid., p. 23

³⁴ - Ibid., same page.

³⁵ - Abdelahad Sabti, Social History and the Question of Methodology: Preliminary Observations, Summary and Assessment within the Symposium

As for the general conditions in which historical writing emerged during this phase, Mohamed al-Mansour identifies three key factors:

Firstly: the maturing of a group of young historians more than twenty years after the start of history teaching at the university.

Secondly: The opening of the archives, particularly those of Category E and the manuscripts, as well as the tangible progress made regarding the documents, alongside the training of researchers specialising in the collection and organisation of documents. In this context, in addition to the contribution of some researchers to the publication of documents by the Directorate of Archives, the establishment of the journal 'Al-Tarih' (History) and the process of collection and bibliographic classification.

Thirdly: Improved communication between researchers through the organisation of academic seminars and the emergence of several journals and periodicals, some of which specialise in history (Journal of the History of Morocco, Dar al-Niyaba). Furthermore, the facilitation of the publication process contributes significantly to raising awareness of national output and disseminating it widely³⁶ . As for historical writing at this stage, it emerged as a reaction against the characteristics and methodologies relied upon by traditional historians, as the new historians recognised the importance of social groups, which cannot be ignored in the shaping of historical events, given the clear interconnection between history and the social sciences in general. Radwan Mubarak notes that the historical defence of these sciences was a reaction against the traditional style of historical writing, which was limited to recording events without paying much attention to the structures and aspects of the daily lives of groups.³⁷

We find that Moroccan historians were influenced in the field of social history not only by the Annales School, but also by the ideological currents present in the field of historical research during the 1970s ³⁸ . As the historian Mohamed Mansour noted, some Moroccan researchers produced work

on Research in the History of Morocco, Rabat, Publications of the Faculty of Arts, 1989, p. 43.

³⁶ - Mohamed El Mansour, Historical Writing after Independence: General Observations, op. cit., pp. 24 and 23

³⁷ - Radwan Mubarak, 'History and Social Sciences', Amal magazine, Issue 1, Year 1, 1992, p. 94

³⁸ - Mohamed El Mansour, op. cit., p. 25

that reflected this development in the trajectory of historical writing in Morocco.³⁹

Among the characteristics that distinguish historical writing at this stage – in addition to what has already been mentioned – we also pause to consider what Mohamed El Mansour highlighted: the belief among Moroccan researchers in the necessity of starting from micro-level ethnographic study with the aim of writing a comprehensive history of Morocco ⁴⁰ . In this context, Abdelahad El Sabti states: “Monographs and knowledge derived from the content of sources are set against synthesis and theorisation. It is true that historical writing gains in stature as the study of details increases, and that theoretical writing improves in credibility as the volume of documented knowledge rises; yet, conversely, the monograph contains a degree of theorisation and synthesis.⁴¹

Most of the research conducted during this period focused on the nineteenth century and the pre-protectorate era.

The openness of new historical studies to other social sciences, particularly sociology and economics, with Al-Mansour adding that new historians recognise the importance of methodologies used in other social sciences, such as anthropology, in the study of tribal societies, as well as the realisation that history cannot be scientific in the true sense of the word unless it relies on figures—that is, unless it becomes quantitative history. He gave us, as an example of this, the study conducted by Professor Omar Ana on the issue of currency in Morocco during the nineteenth century⁴²

The reliance of new historians on national sources with the aim of revealing the country’s history from within.

Caution and prudence, particularly when it comes to interpretation and theorising, in order to convince new historians that this phase requires a scrutiny of our historical understanding of Moroccan reality, and that the high-quality monographic studies currently being carried out are partial and limited in time and place, and therefore do not allow for interpretations at the level of the nation as a whole or over the long term ⁴³

³⁹ - A. Laroui, *The Social and Cultural Origins of Moroccan Nationalism*, Vol. 1 (1830–1912), Paris, 1977.

⁴⁰ - Mohamed, *Historical Writing after Independence: General Observations*, op. cit., p. 21

⁴¹ - Abd al-Ahad al-Sabti, *Social History and the Question of Methodology: Preliminary Observations*, op. cit., p. 57

⁴² - Omar Aqa, **The Issue of Moroccan Currency in the 19th Century**, a thesis for a postgraduate degree, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Rabat, 1985, recently published by the Faculty of Arts, Agadir (1988)

Some leading figures in historical renewal in Morocco:

Having reviewed the stages of Moroccan historical research since independence and examined the methodology of historical writing during this period, Moroccans have come to recognise the importance of rewriting and liberating national history from the distortions of colonial writings, in order to achieve a comprehensive account of Moroccan history and to reconstruct the facts of the past in accordance with the lived reality of Morocco. In this regard, Mohamed Waqidi states: “Nationalist historians seek to re-examine the writing of Moroccan history on several levels, and they seek—sometimes expressing this clearly—to restore epistemological balance in the humanities that deal with their society, whether this concerns the image of Morocco presented by foreign studies, the reconstruction of historical facts, or the critique and reconstruction of methodology.⁴⁴ He also points out that there are two levels of thought regarding writing on the history of Morocco which are both intertwined and distinct: epistemological critique on the one hand, and epistemological foundation on the other; in other words, the construction of new knowledge in the light of a critique of previous knowledge. ⁴⁵

Wakidi also notes that the works produced within the framework of Moroccan historical writing represent “a critique of the knowledge produced by writers of the colonial period or by Western writers on the non-Western world in general. These works mark the beginning of the restoration of epistemological balance in the study of Moroccan society; the fundamental objective of this research must first and foremost be based on national researchers, and their output must form the quantitative and qualitative foundation for all work relating to that society.”⁴⁶

Through all this, we shall attempt to review some examples of Moroccan historians who, through various studies, have sought to rewrite Moroccan history and purge it of the impurities of colonialism. We shall address the perspectives of the classical school, of which Mohammed Daoud is considered the most prominent figure alongside the historian of Souss, Mohammed al-Mukhtar al-Susi, as well as the New

⁴³ - Mohammed Al-Mansour, *Historical Writing after Independence: General Observations*, op. cit., pp. 127, 26

⁴⁴ - Mohamed Waqidi, *Writing National History*, Dar Al-Aman for Distribution and Publishing, 1st edition, 1990, p. 68,

⁴⁵ - Ibid. , p. 60

⁴⁶ - Mohamed Waqidi, op. cit., p. 66.

School, focusing briefly on Ahmed Tawfiq and Abdullah Al-Aroui, and on Jermain Ayash, who is the focus of this research.

The Classical School: The Model of Mohammed Daoud.

To speak of the classical school does not mean referring to a school with fixed and unchanging rules and laws adhered to by its historians, but rather an attempt to examine the stages of development in historical research and to distinguish each stage from the others in terms of content and methodology. The writings of Mohammed Daoud are considered a model of traditional Moroccan historical writing that sought to write a history of Morocco free from colonial influences. Despite his attempts to renew the history of Morocco, he nevertheless remained faithful to the economic sphere. Mohammed Daoud declared his affiliation with this school in the preface his book **Tarikh Tetouan**, where he highlighted certain traditional historians such as the jurist Ahmad al-Rahuni, author of **Um Samada al-Rawin fi Tarikh Tetouan**, and the historian Ahmad al-Nasiri, author of **Al-Istiqsa...* and the historian Ibn Zidan, author of **Ithaf al-'Ilam al-Nas bi-Jamal Hadrat Madinat Meknes** (The Gift of Knowledge to the People on the Beauty of the City of Meknes), and the Marrakesh historian, Judge al-'Abbas ibn Ibrahim, author of "Al-Alam bi-man Hal bi-Marrakesh wa-Aghmat min al-Alam" (47). Mohammed Daoud's interest in historical writing is primarily directed at colonial schemes aimed at undermining national identity; in this regard, he is dissatisfied with what has been written in the field of Moroccan history (), noting that Moroccan history has not yet been written as it should be. In this context, he states: "Much of Morocco's history – past and present – remains scattered across works of literature, biographies and accounts of miracles; perhaps there are writings still hidden away in the world of manuscripts, and perhaps what remains undiscovered far exceeds what we have uncovered...48

This statement echoes Daoud's view that history is scattered across books; it is an indirect call to attempt to collect and classify Moroccan history, as well as to uncover the hidden aspects of Moroccan writings. He believes that Morocco is rich in historical writings, yet not everything that has been written has been identified. After compiling Moroccan historical writings, he will launch a project to reconstruct a national history. Mohammed Daoud points to some of the

⁴⁷ -- Mohamed Ben Aboud, Notes on the Introduction to the Book History of Tetouan, by the jurist Mohamed Dard, The National Movement in the North and the Cultural Question, Union of Moroccan Books, Tetouan, 1989, p. 80.

⁴⁸ - Mohamed Daoud, History of Tetouan, Part 15, Crimades Press, 1959, p. 301

fundamental obstacles facing researchers of Moroccan history: 'There are things about which I know very little, for in this world there are noble and honourable people, but there are also the lazy and the arrogant who have not allowed me to consult the documents and records. Indeed, they did not give me any information at all.... 49

Characteristics of historical writing in the work of Mohammed Daoud:

Mohammed Daoud discusses the approach to writing he adopts, particularly in his book **The History of Tetouan**. He states: 'I did not confine myself to any particular style employed by historians, whether of earlier or later generations. Nor did I allow myself to be constrained by verbosity, florid language, or the inclusion of anecdotes that occurred to me after gathering and compiling the material.'

I wrote it in the style that came naturally to me: no unnecessary commitments, no restrictions, no affectation, and no pretence. In addition to this, the characteristics of Sheikh Daoud's historical writing are defined by Muhammad bin50 Aboud as follows:

Scholarly integrity: Muhammad Daoud distinguishes between two types of historians. On the one hand, there is the impartial historian who is not driven by greed and who places scientific truth above all else. On the other hand, there is the biased historian who serves his own personal interests or those of others.

Reliance on multiple sources: letters, legal documents, contracts, etc.51

In addition to this, there is his focus on regional history, where he emphasises the need to specialise in specific regions as a fundamental step towards writing a comprehensive national history: "I say this knowing

that for a single person to write the history of an entire nation across its various eras and from all angles is not usually impossible, but it is at least as difficult as it was, especially if the history of a nation has been marred by the loss of many of its documents or records. For this reason, I consider it a national duty for everyone who is able to write to do so on the aspect they know, on the subject they excel in and in the style they master or prefer. From among these various writings and styles—which may range from the trivial to the profound—

⁴⁹ - Ibid., Introduction.

⁵⁰ - Mohammed Daoud, History of Tetouan, Part I, pp. 226 and 227

⁵¹ - Amhamed Ben Aboud, op. cit., pp. 88 and 89

information should be gathered to write a comprehensive national history covering political, military, scientific, literary, economic and social aspects.” 52

Finally, it can be said that the scholar Muhammad Daoud is considered one of the most prominent historians of the historical school within the context of ‘Al-Istiqsa...’ (The Moroccan Classical School), given his fundamental contributions to this movement, as he followed in the footsteps of groups of Moroccan historians who lived in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. and some of these historians, such as Al-Nasiri, the subject of criticism from certain Moroccan historians who specialised in Moroccan history during the nineteenth century, such as Dr Abdullah Al-Aroui, and during the 1960s, ‘The History of Tetouan’ ” by the scholar Daoud was the subject of a strongly worded methodological critique penned by a Moroccan economic intellectual, namely Fathallah Oulou, in the pages of a Moroccan daily newspaper⁵³

Alongside the historian Daoud, we cannot overlook the role of our historian Mohammed al-Mukhtar al-Susi, and his efforts to rewrite the history of Morocco, focusing in particular on the history of his region, Souss (regional history). In this context, we can highlight works such as *Al-Ma’soul*, *Souss al-‘Alama*, *Khulul Jazoula* and *Iligh: Past and Present*. All these works chronicle the Souss region in its various aspects—social, economic and religious—discussing the tribes inhabiting the region, their origins and some of their customs, as well as the region’s economic products⁵⁴. He also discusses the traditional crafts for which the region is renowned and the commercial activity fuelled by certain local festivals such as the Sidi Hamad or Musa festivals, as well as various social groups and occupational groups⁵⁵. From an intellectual and religious perspective, he attempts to review the various religious sciences for which the region is renowned, and he focuses on the most prominent ancient schools in the region and certain families renowned for their scholarship and jurisprudence. He also discusses some Souss authors and their works⁵⁶. Furthermore, he addresses the role of the zawiyas in the Souss region in spreading Islam and mediating various tribal conflicts in the area.

In this way, Muhammad al-Mukhtar al-Susi contributed to the rewriting of Morocco’s history, beginning with his reliance on regional histories as a first step towards a comprehensive national framework, drawing on a diverse range of sources.

⁵² - Mohamed Daoud, op. cit., p. 25.

⁵³ - Ahmed bin Aboud, op. cit., p. 80.

⁵⁴ - Mohammed al-Mukhtar al-Susi, Al-Asul, Part One, Al-Najah al-Bayda Press, 1960, pp. 34 and 35

He drew upon works on history and geography, books on legal rulings and jurisprudence, literary works, and letters and decrees. In addition to this local heritage (), he also relied on foreign sources; in his book *Ibligh Qadima wa Haditha* (The Eloquent: Past and Present), he drew upon unpublished sources on the history of Morocco by Count Henri de Ducastel. He also relied on oral tradition, endeavouring to record and preserve it from loss and oblivion. Thus, Al-Mukhtar Al-Susi, alongside other historians of his era such as Muhammad Daoud—previously mentioned in the history of their regions—contributed to the creation of a unified Moroccan historical narrative, with the aim of countering various colonialist ideas intended to distort the history of Morocco.

The New National Historical School: The Model of Abdullah Al-Aroui

1- Abdullah Al-Aroui: Critique of Colonial Writings: Abdullah Al-Aroui is considered one of the

in the field of new historical writing; he is one of the researchers calling for a renewal of national historical writing, based on practical and objective data more closely linked to the Moroccan reality. In this context, we find Al-Aroui calling for a form of critique within the historical field, which he defines on two fundamental levels: on the one hand, a critique of colonial writings, and on the other, a critique of traditional historical writing. Regarding this critique, Mohamed Waqidi notes, “We find, alongside Abdallah Al-Aroui, that the field of history is occupied by a set of social and historical theories that serve epistemological and ideological objectives differing from those sought by the national writer who wishes to write the history of Morocco. Therefore, Al-Aroui expresses his desire to reconstruct the structure of the field in which he works, namely the history of Morocco⁵⁷. Al-Aroui believes that the works produced on nineteenth-century Morocco by Western colonial researchers sought to serve colonial interests in Morocco, which led to the distortion of Morocco’s past. However, Abdullah Al-Aroui does not stop there; he also attributes responsibility for the distortion of Morocco’s past to the Moroccan youth themselves, who are preoccupied with the problems of the present - the economy, sociology, politics... - so that the study of the past appears to him to be a negative, long-term entrapment; they delegate this task to foreigners without asking themselves whether the picture these foreigners paint of their past might, in the long run and despite

⁵⁵ - Ibid., pp. 37 and 38

⁵⁶ - Mohammed al-Mukhtar al-Susi, Sars al-‘Alama, al-Mohammadiya, 1960, p. 210

⁵⁷ - Mohammed Waqidi, op. cit., p. 58

themselves, influence the shaping of their present. This, combined with other factors, leads to the realisation that history—and particularly the history of the pre-nineteenth-century era—remains one of the few fields in which we feel the lingering effects of the end of colonialism. Economists, sociologists, urban planners, geographers and even writers and artists have incorporated into their visions and approaches this pivotal event of the mid-twentieth century, namely the end of the colonial empire. However, most Moroccan historians, particularly those specialising in periods prior to the modern crisis, have lagged behind in this regard; one need only attend any conference organised in a Mediterranean country to confirm this. There is no doubt in my mind that the fault here lies more in the lack of interest on the part of Moroccans than in any misunderstanding on the part of foreign historians.⁵⁸ And despite the criticisms levelled at colonial writings, Al-Aroui believes that it is not easy to overlook this colonial research, given the wealth of information it contains about Morocco.

In this context, Mohamed Waqidi, speaking of Abdallah Laroui's experience, notes: '... Nevertheless, Laroui emphasises that it is not easy to disregard this research merely by criticising it for its connection to the practical conditions in which it was produced and for highlighting its sometimes prominent ideological character; for, thanks to the conditions that facilitated the work of these researchers, such studies managed to gather a wealth of information on Morocco that no Moroccan researcher today can easily disregard; and through this, they have established themselves as essential sources in the history of Morocco and in the analysis of society in general.'⁵⁹

Abdullah Al-Aroui does not stop at this positive aspect of colonial historical writing, nor does he call for it to be taken entirely into account; rather, he sees the need to examine it and subject it to a rigorous critical process. This is what Mohamed Waqidi noted about him, arguing that Al-Aroui advocates a selective and critical reading of all historical writings produced during the colonial period, , because neglecting these writings will not prevent them from influencing researchers who are eager for knowledge but insufficiently equipped to formulate their own ideas. The hypotheses put forward by these writings—which their authors themselves may present as partial and provisional—may appear to the

researcher who is not sufficiently prepared to be an established and definitive truth.⁶⁰

In his critique of colonial historiography, Waqidi consistently points out that Al-Aroui is among the historians who have called for a critique of this type of writing and the establishment of an alternative to it. This approach holds that necessity demands the urgent construction of a historical narrative, which attempts to interpret the history of Morocco in accordance with new questions that differ from those posed by colonial writers, in order to subsequently present a new picture of Morocco's history. According to Waqidi, this is one of the fundamental tasks he considers essential for the contemporary Moroccan historian⁶¹.

From this perspective, Al-Aroui focused on critiquing colonial writings that dealt with 18th-century Morocco, and in this context sought to examine three fundamental concepts: the Makhzen, the zawiya and the tribe. Each of these elements was distorted by the colonisers and assigned meanings designed primarily to serve colonial purposes. As a result, Al-Aroui emphasises the need for Moroccans to take charge of writing their own history and to rid it of colonial biases, even if they do not contribute anything new in terms of historical research.

2- Abdullah Al-Aroui and his critique of traditional writings: What is notable about Abdullah Al-Aroui's historical critique is its dual nature. On the one hand, there is his critique of colonial writings, which has already been discussed; and on the other hand, there is his critique of traditional writings. Al-Aroui's tendency to critique the latter type of writing stems primarily from the importance of these historical sources in understanding Morocco's past; he believes they cannot be transcended as long as their limitations remain in place, and those limitations lie in the concepts they employ: the era and the event. "Document: if we study the same subjects within the same chronological sequence, relying on the same document, how can we organise the information acquired in a manner that differs from the pattern that has been customary for centuries?"⁶²

Despite the importance of the foundations upon which traditional writing is built, Al-Aroui calls for the need to subject it, in turn, to critical scrutiny, given the traditional framework within which it remains confined. In this regard, he says: "There is a well-known idea in the body of work produced by official historians of the colonial era of Moroccan

⁵⁸ - Abdullah Al-Aroui, *History of Morocco: An Attempt at Synthesis*, Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing, p. 7

⁵⁹ - Mohammed Waqidi, *op. cit.*, p. 59

⁶⁰ - *Ibid.*, same page.

⁶¹ - Muhammad Waqidi, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁶² - Abdullah al-Aroui, *A General History of Morocco*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

history, namely that of misfortune: its misfortune in failing to appreciate the preparatory value of the Roman conquest; its misfortune in having to accept Islam; its misfortune in suffering the invasion of the Hilalians; and its misfortune in becoming a base for Ottoman piracy... But are there not other reasons to speak of yet another stroke of bad luck? Namely, that Morocco has always been fortunate to have historians of the occasion: geographers with brilliant ideas, officials with scholarly ambitions, military men passionate about culture, and art-savvy historians who reject specialisation and are undoubtedly of a higher calibre. Historians without linguistic training or foreigners, and archaeologists without historical training; some refer to others, and these rely on the strength of the others' arguments, thus forming a kind of collusion that circulates the most dangerous working hypotheses, ultimately imposing them as established facts."⁶³

Through this critical approach, which Abdullah Al-Aroui applies to colonial writings on the one hand and traditional writings on the other, he nevertheless sees the fulfilment of the methodological programme he has outlined, which will simultaneously provide the means to establish a school of historical renewal in the Arab world. To better understand the methodology of historical writing, one must take into account the ideological background underlying his intellectual and historical analyses; this background can be summarised in two fundamental points : First: to examine the backward conditions of the Arab crisis at all levels—social, economic, political and cultural (He attributed the crisis partly to ideology and culture.) Second: to examine the methodological framework within which Professor Abdullah Al-Aroui operates.

As for his sources of historical research, it is notable that he draws upon what he deems significant in colonial writings, particularly those that correspond to the Moroccan reality, whilst not neglecting traditional writings. In this context, the works of Muhammad Daoud, Al-Nasiri and Muhammad Al-Mukhtar Al-Susi are regarded as edited documents indispensable to the contemporary historian. He also draws upon and relies on certain writings composed outside the historical framework, particularly literary works and works of jurisprudence, which enable the historian to approach political and social realities.⁶⁴

⁶³ - Abdullah al-Aroui, *An Attempt at Synthesis*, op. cit., p. 5.

⁶⁴ - Abdullah Al-Aroui, *A Summary of the History of Morocco*, op. cit., pp. 20–21.

⁶⁵ - Abdullah al-Aroui, *History of Morocco*, French edition, Maspero Press, Paris, p. 27.

3- Abdullah Al-Aroui and the Writing of National History: Mohamed Waqidi points out that, through this dual critical approach, Al-Aroui raises the question of the project of writing the history of Morocco, for understanding any present requires us to look to the past, and since this past has, for the most part, not been written by those qualified to do so—namely, foreigners—and since the image they have constructed of Morocco, driven by the ideology that guided their research, must be challenged. It is from this perspective that Abdallah Al-Aroui's endeavour emerged, through which he aspires to rewrite the history of Morocco in accordance with contemporary scientific methods. In this regard, he emphasises how he has, with humility, highlighted a very ambitious project. The simplest way is to demand of myself the very freedom enjoyed by those foreigners who showed no sympathy for Morocco, yet wrote at length and without hesitation about its affairs.⁶⁵

Wakidi considers that the project of writing the history of Morocco, in Al-Aroui's view, is an ambitious one because the construction of knowledge therein requires the dismantling of other bodies of knowledge, the refutation of their hypotheses, and their discussion in the light of facts and documents that are not easily gathered and organised in the near future⁶⁶ , He also points out that the general framework defined by Al-Aroui for the completion of his project to write the history of Morocco, and in this regard Al-Aroui asserts: "If we had an institute where researchers from various disciplines gathered, possessing precise knowledge of the natural environment and local documents, and endowed with the rigorous critical mindset and enthusiasm that characterise advocates of the comprehensive—I mean the likes of Professor Fernand Braudel in France—it would be the responsibility of that institute to provide Moroccans with a comprehensive work summarising the research and findings that have been produced, and to judge each individual work in advance."⁶⁷

Mohammed Waqidi adds that Abdullah Al-Aroui does not write the history of Morocco in order to restore a lost true image, and this is what may represent a difference in historical knowledge between him and the writings of the colonial period; in his view, he writes history in order to answer questions posed to the researcher at the present time, These questions differ from those that colonial writings sought to

Quoted from Muhammad Waqidi, op. cit., p. 79.

⁶⁶ - Mohamed Waqidi, op. cit., p. 79.

⁶⁷ - Abdullah Al-Aroui, *History of Morocco*, French edition, op. cit., p. 128, quoted from Waqidi, op. cit., p. 79.

answer, and they represent the legitimate ideological dimension of writing the history of Morocco.⁶⁸

Within the framework of this new historical writing, Al-Aroui sees the need to address the dangers facing the new historian, which Mohamed Waqidi identifies as two fundamental risks: either an excess of imagination and the construction of theoretical constructs regarding the history of Morocco, which may lack strong support from facts, documents and archaeological evidence, or writing history within a mindset dominated by absolute relativism, which sees no possibility of moving beyond the facts indicated by the documents towards any possible interpretation. In the face of these two dangers, a form of epistemological vigilance must be adopted, This is what leads Mohamed Waqidi to argue that Al-Aroui leans more towards an excessive reliance on imagination than on the description of documents and facts.⁶⁹

In his historical project, Al-Aroui focuses on two fundamental characteristics that distinguish contemporary historical writing. The first characteristic is that of which he says: 'The subject of the history of Morocco is the historian's engagement with the document rather than a direct description of past events.'⁷⁰

As for the second characteristic, he states that, for the historian, the document is ultimately the result of analysis rather than the primary artefact.⁷¹

Regarding this approach, Waqidi states: 'The historical reconstruction cannot do without the document, for it does not wish to be mere biased imagination with no connection to historical reality, as attested by documents and artefacts; yet this reconstruction does not treat the document in the same way as the traditional historian, for it does not take it as a given but as a result'⁷² . '

Finally, Al-Aroui believes that the renewal of Moroccan history, in the broadest sense, amounts to a change in the historian's mindset, based on the use of contemporary research techniques with the aim of reconstructing Morocco's past⁷³

He outlines these requirements as follows:

Fostering a contemporary mindset among Moroccan historians through the expansion and generalisation of methodological and epistemological studies.

2 - Establish a national school of archaeology to carry out systematic and planned work covering all periods

3 - The study of dialects, according to their geographical distribution and chronological development

4 - Deepening the level of understanding of electronics⁷⁴

⁶⁸ - Mohammed Waqidi, op. cit., p. 80.

⁶⁹ - Mohamed Waqidi, op. cit., p. 80.

⁷⁰ - Abdullah Al-Aroui, History of Morocco, p. 17

⁷¹ - Ibid., p. 16

⁷² - Mohamed Waqidi, op. cit., p. 81.

⁷³ - Abdullah al-Aroui, A General History of Morocco, op. cit., p. 21.

⁷⁴ - Abdullah al-Aroui, A Summary of the History of Morocco, p. 20

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