

Algerian Efforts in Editing Literary Manuscripts: Al-Akhdari and Ben Badis as a Case Study

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Abstract:

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, and may blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of God.

This study seeks to shed light on the efforts of Algerian scholars in the critical editing of literary heritage. Manuscripts in Algeria have appeared in diverse forms and genres, and literature has had an appreciable share of this manuscript legacy. As literature represents one of the core markers of Islamic civilizational identity, Algerian scholars distinguished themselves early on in writing in Arabic.

Among the foremost early figures with a substantial contribution to literary writing is the eminent scholar *Al-Akhdari*, may God have mercy on him, who left behind a rich legacy in literature, especially in rhetoric.

Among the modern scholars stands the great Imam *Abdelhamid Ben Badis*, may God have mercy on him, whose name immediately comes to mind whenever serious, elevated literature is mentioned. He is regarded as the pioneer of the literary renaissance in Algeria.

Ben Badis stated on several occasions that one of the aims of founding the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars was to restore the Arabic language to its rightful status, as it is the foundation of religion and a source of peoples' happiness. He contributed to authorship and classification in Quranic exegesis and showed great concern for the lexical dimension in his interpretive work. The writings of both scholars initially appeared as manuscripts, which scholars later undertook to edit and publish in renewed and accessible form.

This paper will outline those efforts in the editing of their works, following a foundational approach to the science of manuscript editing. The main topics are organized as follows:

- Defining manuscripts and clarifying their importance
- Presenting the roles of *Al-Akhdari* and *Ben Badis* in literary studies
- Reviewing the efforts of Algerian scholars in editing literary heritage

Keywords: manuscript; literary heritage; *Al-Akhdari*; *Ben Badis*; critical edition.

Introduction:

Praise be to God, and may blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of God.

Within Islamic heritage, the manuscript occupies a position of great importance. The Arabic manuscript in Algeria has attracted the attention of researchers since independence and has served as a vital link between generations—culturally, socially, and scientifically.

Accordingly, it is evident that manuscripts play a significant role in shaping and preserving the distinctive identity of societies. Literary heritage, in particular, has had a notable share of this manuscript legacy in Algeria. Through this study, the aim is to highlight the efforts of two eminent figures who played a leading role in writing and classification.

Their works initially took the form of manuscripts that were later received by researchers and scholars, who engaged in editing and even annotating and explaining them.

Al-Akhdari and *Ben Badis*, may God have mercy on them both, authored in the field of literary studies, whether directly or indirectly. *Al-Akhdari* is considered one of the pioneers of rhetoric in the tenth century AH through his didactic poem “*The hidden essence within the shell of the three arts*”, in which he was able to provide a clear, well-structured vision of rhetorical studies, particularly for learners.

Ben Badis, for his part, is one of the scholars who played decisive roles in building a purely Arab Algerian civilization after a long period of French domination, both in intellectual reform and in written production. Through his works, Ibn Bādīs offered a genuine literary lesson and a refined literary model. From here, the following research questions (*problematic*) may be posed:

- What are the roles of *Al-Akhdari* and *Ben Badis* within literary studies?
- Did Algerian scholars play a role in editing the literary heritage of *Al-Akhdari* and *Ben Badis*?

Significance of the Study:

The importance of this topic lies in the fact that the science of manuscripts and their critical edition is among the most important fields for preserving scientific materials. It is therefore incumbent upon scholars and researchers to pay attention to this science, clarify its contours and methods, and especially to apply it to Algerian literary heritage.

Objectives of the Study:

The study seeks to:

- Clarify the importance of the science of manuscript editing in Arab heritage.
- Demonstrate the interest of Algerian scholars in literary studies.
- Highlight selected scholars who played a leading role in enriching literary scholarship.
- Present the efforts of Algerian scholars in editing Algerian literary heritage, particularly that of *Al-Akhdari* and *Ben Badis*.

Reasons for Choosing the Topic:

Several reasons motivated the choice of this research theme, including:

- The topic’s direct connection to Arabic literary heritage, and more specifically to two major figures in the linguistic and literary field.
- The right of Muslim generations—especially those working in literary studies—to attend to literary heritage and benefit from its abundant riches. The topic was therefore chosen

to draw the attention of researchers to the importance of studying, editing, and transmitting Algerian heritage, whether Akhdarian or Badisian.

Previous Studies:

In terms of previous research dealing with this subject, a number of studies can be mentioned, such as:

- “*The Badi' System of Abderrahman al-Akhdari*” by Naouel Ben Hadj Ziane.
- “*The Rhetorical Reformer Abderrahman*” by Omar Bougamra.
- “*Rhetorical Studies among Ancient Algerian Scholars: Abderrahman Al-Akhdari as a Model*” by Dr. Hadj Henni Mohammed.

These works focus principally on rhetorical studies and the contributions of Al-Akhdari or other Algerian scholars to rhetoric, and they provide useful background for the present study.

Research Methodology:

The study follows a descriptive-historical methodology. It employs description by presenting and characterizing the works of *Al-Akhdari* and *Ben Badis* from the perspective of their critical editing, while the historical dimension appears in tracing the history of the manuscripts of these two scholars, especially in relation to their editorial trajectories.

Research Difficulties:

Like any researcher dealing with a specialized area, this study encountered several challenges, among them:

- The difficulty of working with this topic, given that the science of scholarly editing of manuscripts is technically demanding, especially in its procedural and practical aspects.
- External obstacles related to time constraints and limited access to certain materials.

Sources and References:

The study draws on a set of classical and modern sources, including:

- Saâdallah, A. (n.d.). *The Cultural History of Algeria*.
- Mouley, A. (2009). *The Manuscript and Scientific Research*].
- Al-Akhdari, A. *The hidden essence*.
- Talbi, A. (ed.). *The Works of Ben Badis*.
- Fekdous, S. (2003). *A Concise History of Algeria*.
- Al-Nachar, A. (1997). *On Arabic Manuscripts*.
- And other works cited in the reference list.

Structure of the Study/

The research is divided into four main sections:

1. Definition of manuscripts and clarification of their importance.
2. The roles of *Al-Akhdari* and *Ben Badis* in literary studies.
3. Literary studies in the light of Badisian exegesis.
4. Algerian scholars' efforts in editing literary heritage.

First Section: Manuscripts and Their Importance

The term “manuscript” immediately evokes the notion of heritage. Scholars have frequently used this term since pre-modern times, prior to the widespread use of printed books.

Before delving into the core of the study, it is necessary to define “manuscript” and highlight its importance.

1. Linguistic Definition of Manuscripts

Classical lexicons such as *Lisān al-‘Arab* by Ibn Manẓūr and similar works did not list the word “makḥṭūṭ” (manuscript). Some writers attribute this to the fact that, in their time, there was no other form of book than the handwritten one, so the common, obvious usage obviated the need for a specific definition.

Al-Bittani defined “manuscript” in his dictionary as derived from the verb *khaṭṭa* (to write), meaning: “to shape the spoken word in alphabetical letters” (Al-Nachar, 1997, p.5).

The term also appears in the Quran with this sense in God’s saying: “And you did not recite before it any scripture, nor did you inscribe one with your right hand; otherwise, the falsifiers would have doubted” (Q 29:48).

Thus, linguistically, a manuscript is what has been written by hand.

2. Technical Definition of Manuscripts:

Technically, a manuscript may be defined as every scientific or artistic work written by hand, whether a treatise, book, or illustration, on paper or similar materials such as stone, clay tablets, or parchment—provided it was not reproduced in multiple copies by printing, and regardless of the extent of its diffusion in time and place (Mouley, 2009, p.104).

3. The Horizons and Importance of the Arabic Manuscript

The horizons of Arabic manuscript heritage are vast; through them the civilization of the Arab-Islamic ummah becomes clearly visible. Whoever studies the history of this civilization will encounter an immense corpus of books and works that range widely across knowledge and creativity: from religious sciences, language, and literature to mathematics, geometry, logic, medicine, arts, crafts, and innovations pertaining to the universe, life, and humankind (Assilet, 1994, p.13).

This rich manuscript heritage testifies to a creative civilization that left no field among those mentioned without making an important and enduring contribution.

4. The Scientific and Civilizational Value of Manuscripts

The scientific value of a manuscript lies in the meanings it preserves, the methodology it adopts, the specific field of knowledge it addresses, and the way it structures and presents its material. As *Khaled Guettich* notes, the scientific value of manuscripts also appears in their script: the aim of writing was clarification and facilitation of transmission, especially once religious knowledge, after the advent of Islam, became a necessary requirement for the community (Guettich, 1986, p.51).

Originally, some northern Arabs who inherited earlier civilizations did not excel in calligraphy, and this showed in the early Quranic codices, whose script did not reach later levels of refinement. With the spread of Islam to Kūfa, concern for beautiful writing and mastery of script grew, and the need to improve script further led to the emergence of the soft, legible naskh style, which became widespread (Guettich, 1986, p.51).

From a civilizational perspective, the value of manuscripts lies in the dimensions they embody regarding the being and continuity of this ummah. As *Ali Djouad Taher* observes, among these civilizational values is the contact and mutual influence between Arabic and other

languages, such as Persian and Greek, in Iraq, the Levant, and Egypt, especially during the establishment of administrative *dīwāns* and their translation into Arabic (Djouad, 1986, p.85).

In short, manuscripts in Arab heritage are of immense importance. In them are recorded the knowledge of the *ummah*, the Quranic text and its exegesis, the saying of the Prophet—peace be upon him—and its commentaries, the jurisprudence and scholarship of the imams, and the history and language of the community. Preserving manuscripts is therefore an obligation upon the Islamic *ummah*, for through them it preserves its identity and heritage.

Second Section: The Roles of Al-Akhdari and Ben Badis in Literary Studies

First: Al-Akhdari

1. Historical Context of Abderrahman Al-Akhdari (d. 983 AH)

It is beyond dispute that the farther Arab and Muslim lands were from the original cradle of Islam—the Arabian Peninsula—the more linguistic thought felt the need to exert special effort to maintain a strong connection with the clear Arabic tongue.

The linguistic reality of the Maghrib, with its specific geographic and historical circumstances, has always required deeper anchoring in the foundational Arabic linguistic heritage. Scholars of Arabic in the Maghrib must therefore be viewed from this historical and objective perspective, along with the strong religious motivation that pushed scholars in remote regions to intensify their engagement with religious sciences.

In Algeria, both in earlier and later periods, *zawiyas* and Quranic schools played a pioneering role in disseminating Arabic sciences. Historians indicate that scholars of the Maghrib were consistently conscious of the need to mobilize in defense of Arabic language, culture, and knowledge, even when state policies, such as those of the Ottoman authorities in Algeria, gave priority to political and economic concerns over intellectual and cultural development.

Salah Fekdous notes that this period suffered from intellectual and cultural stagnation; although urban centers may at times have attained higher levels of learning than in the Ottoman era, Ottoman neglect of culture and knowledge contributed to a marked decline (Fekdous, 2003, p.127).

Historians also point out that *Al-Akhdari* (d. 983 AH) had a distinctive and somewhat obscure biography, with divergent opinions concerning his age and life circumstances. This biographical uncertainty affected the full realization of his intellectual aspirations.

From the testimony of *Abdelkrim Al-Fakkoun* (d. 1073 AH), it appears that *Al-Akhdari* died before being able to finalize the commentary on his major work, and that what *Al-Fakkoun* later did was to utilize the author's draft and present it to readers (Saâdallah, 1998, p.173).

Abou El Kacem Saâdallah states that Abderrahman Al-Akhdari distinguished himself by his prolific writing and strong influence across the Islamic world. His works in logic, inheritance law, rhetoric, and other sciences were among the standard textbooks prescribed for students in various Islamic universities. His high standing is further evidenced by the number of scholars who devoted commentaries to his works, among them Abdelkrim Al-Fakkoun (Saâdallah, 1986, p.30).

2. The Impact of Al-Akhdari's Thought on His Contemporaries and Successors

Both the eastern and western regions of the Arab world acknowledged the positive and far-reaching impact of *Al-Akhdari*'s contributions to linguistic thought. His didactic poems and, in particular, his poem "**The hidden essence**" became widely circulated and esteemed as a major scholarly and literary reference, studied by successive generations. It is narrated that *Al-Akhdari* passed away before fully achieving the goals he had set for this work, and that students and scholars completed what he had begun.

One of the distinctive merits of *Al-Akhdari* is that he effectively launched a rhetorical school which built upon *Djaleddine Elkazouini*'s Key Summary book (d. 739 AH), a seminal work in rhetoric and literary studies that achieved wide renown. Because *Al-Akhdari*'s intellectual formation was book-centered and academic, some of his disciples took it upon themselves to complete his unfinished work. Among them was the scholar Aḥmed Ben Moubarek Al-Aṭṭar Al-Coustantini (Saādallah, 1998, p.174).

Abou El Kacem Saādallah lists a number of researchers and Algerian scholars who engaged with the manuscript of *The hidden essence* through supplementation, commentary, and critical study. Among them was the Egyptian scholar Al-Damanhourī, who published his commentary in Cairo in 1892, and Moḥammad Ben Moussa Al-Thaghri Al-Djazairi, whose commentary *The guarded secret on the hidden essence* praised *Al-Akhdari*'s mastery and excellence.

3. Abderrahman Al-Akhdari and His Literary Legacy;

As noted, *Al-Akhdari* is among the most prominent Algerian scholars of the tenth century AH who enriched rhetorical studies with two significant works:

- *The hidden essence within the shell of the three arts*
- His own commentary on *Explanation of the hidden essence in the shell of the three arts*.

Subsequent Algerian linguistic scholarship paid considerable attention to *The hidden essence*. Scholarly efforts focused on its linguistic and rhetorical content, drawing on a chain of commentaries and studies that collectively contributed to the development of the original text. The very fact that portions of the poem were missing encouraged scholars to engage in creative completions and interpretive elaborations, guided by metrical constraints and by careful reading of the extant sections in order to maintain coherence with *Al-Akhdari*'s style and intentions.

Among those who worked in this spirit was *Al-Cheikh Al-Ghazi*, who exerted significant effort in reconstructing the missing parts of the manuscript, followed by *Al-Thaghri*, who completed earlier attempts by filling gaps in meaning, implication, and rhetorical nuance. The method adopted by the scholars of this period was to read their work aloud before shaykhs, experts, and advanced students, inviting notes and comments that would improve the text (Saādallah, 1998, p.177).

4. A Glimpse into the Poem "*The hidden essence*"

This poem presents the main topics and rules of rhetorical studies in a new, pedagogically oriented guise. It omits intricate theoretical disagreements and competing opinions, focusing instead on the most accepted positions. As *Al-Akhdari* himself states, his aim was didactic and instructional. He explicitly refers to this purpose in verses 18–19 of the

poem, where he responds to students who asked him for a didactic composition that would guide them to correct understanding:

“Some students asked for a a poem would guide them to what is right, so I brought them a useful a poem, refined and carefully polished.”

The scholarly importance of *the hidden essence* is underscored by the number of scholars who cited and relied upon it, such as Abouras Nassiri (d. 1238 AH), who referred to it as “*The Statement System*.” He states: “*The Cheikh Al-Akhdari* said in his *Statement System* ...” and proceeds to quote from it (Nassiri, 1990, p.114). Elsewhere he remarks: “I have memorized Ibn Malik’s *Alfiyya* and *The Statement System*; there is no chapter or section in either of them except that I know, offhand, how many verses it contains” (Al-Akhdari, n.d., p.116).

These testimonies reveal both the pedagogical efficacy and the enduring scholarly value of *Al-Akhdari*’s rhetorical poem.

Second: Ben Badis and His Role in Literary Studies

Abdelhamid Ben Badis stands as the imam of Algerian warrior sand the spiritual father of the Algerian revolution. Through education and instruction, he cultivated a fertile ground for generations of reformers and revolutionaries, combating superstition and backwardness and preparing minds and hearts for renewal.

1. Abdelhamid Ben Badis (1889–1941)

His full name is **Abdelhamid Ben** Moḥammed Al-Moustafa Ben Al-Makki Ben Moḥammzd Kehhoul Ben Al-Ḥadj Ali Al-Nouri Ben Moḥammed Ben Moḥammed Ben Abderrahman Ben Barakat Ben Abderrahman Ben Badis Al-Ṣanhadji. He was born in the city of Constantine.

His mother was Lady Zouhira Bent Moḥammad Ben Abdeldjalil Ben Djelloul, from a family renowned in Constantine for at least four centuries. The family of Ibn Djelloul belongs to the tribe of Beni Maaf, well-known in the Aures Mountains (Talbi, n.d., pp.72–73).

2. His Scholarly Standing

Cheikh Bachir Ibrahimi wrote of him:

“He is the founder of the scientific and intellectual renaissances in Algeria, who established their foundations upon the rock of truth; the leader of their ranks advancing toward the highest goals; the imam of the Salafi movement; founder of the journal *Al-Chiheb*, the mirror of reform and the sword of the reformers; educator of two complete generations upon Quranic guidance and Prophetic direction and sound thinking; reviver of dormant knowledge through his vibrant lessons; interpreter of the Word of God in Salafi fashion for a quarter of a century in continuous sessions; Sower of the seeds of true nationalism and teacher of its principles; master of eloquence and lion of the pulpit—*Professor Abdelhamid Ben Badis*, first president of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars, and founder of clubs of knowledge and literature and associations for education and instruction. It suffices for his historical glory that he revived a nation that history and circumstance had worn down, a religion veiled by

innovations and superstitions, a tongue devoured by foreign languages, a history obscured by neglect, and virtues destroyed by imported vices.” (Ibrahimi, n.d., p. 552)

Ibrahimi further wrote:

“*Cheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis* is the most learned of the scholars of North Africa, and this is no exaggeration; he is the builder of the scientific, literary, social, and political renaissances of Algeria.” (Ibrahimi, n.d., p.278)

Cheikh Moubarek Al-MILI described him as “the great teacher and wise guide, our scholarly support and reformist pillar,” while Cheikh Tayeb Al-Okbi called him “the singular reformer and scholar, such as Algeria has rarely produced over long ages” (Ibrahimi, n.d., p.223).

Cheikh Larbi Tebessi, may God have mercy on him, said:

“Men are not recorded in humanity’s registers by their lineages, portraits, or wealth, but by the beliefs they plant in people’s souls and the works through which they lead others from social chaos to inherited order. History records the genius of those who defended humanity when it was violated by tyrants of race and despots of material power, and it records the principles to which humanity returns when scourges lash it and fires blaze over it. *Abdelhamid Ben Badis* deserves that the Algerian Muslim Arab nation commemorate him and that he be counted among those whose efforts history recognizes and whose merits it acknowledges. He offered our nation in this land much that forms the foundation of its present movement and the seed of its many branches.”

The poet Mohammed Laid Al-Khalifa praised him in a long ode upon Ben Badis’s completion of his Quran commentary; among its verses:

Your pen in writing is sharper than swords,
more decisive than judgments whenever it is raised;
Your course in exegesis is sweeter than finest fruits,
more beautiful than a blooming garden, more radiant in its light;
You have completed the Book of God as a learned reader, insightfully solving its difficult points with ease;
How often have you been granted inspired understanding of the Quran,
and how often have you produced precise, well-phrased interpretations! (Al-Khalifa, 2010, p.146)

3. His Works:

What sets Ben Badis apart from many other great scholars, for whom such abundant praise was penned, is that he did not author a large number of independent books. He justified this by saying: “We were preoccupied with composing men rather than books.” The most important legacy he left is thus the generations of great figures who filled the world with their knowledge and thought. Nevertheless, he did leave behind written works distinguished by both authenticity and innovation. He himself lamented, more than anyone else, the loss of many of his lessons and writings, saying:

“Had the students been given a share of energy and success, these lessons would not have been lost but would have been published as they were, and we would have attained a double blessing.” (Ibrahimi, n.d., p.195)

Despite these losses, a significant portion of his works has reached us, including:

- *From the Prophetic guidance, which is the gatherings of remembrance from the hadiths of the bearer of good tidings and the warner*, his Quran commentary, first printed in 1963 and reprinted several times thereafter.
- *From the Prophetic Guidance*, containing his lessons on selected ḥadīths, first printed in 1965.
- *The Men and Women of the Pious Ancestors*, a biographical work first printed in 1965 in Algiers.
- *Doctrinal Principles and the Creed of Monotheism from the Quran and Sunnah*, first printed in 1965 and reprinted numerous times.
- A large collection of political and social articles, later published together with some of the above works as *Collected Sermons and Articles of Ben Badis*, printed in 1966 (Ibrahimi, n.d., p.114).
- *Principles of Legal Theory*, edited by Ammar Ṭalbi, together with Ben Badis dictations on terminology, later versified by Moḥammed Ben Maḥfoudh Al-Chinkiti in *Jewels of Pearls in the System of the Innovator Ben Badis the Righteous*.
- *A Letter Answering a Question about a Faulty Statement*, a refutation of Ben Alioua Al-Moustaghanmi, endorsed by ten eminent scholars from Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco; parts of it were annotated by the distinguished judge and scholar Cheikh Chouaib Al-Tilimsani, and among its endorsers were Cheikh Moḥammed Al-Nakhli Al-Kairaouani, Cheikh Tahar Ben Achour, and Bellahcene Al-Nadjar. It was printed several times, one edition in the author's lifetime, and recently reissued with notes by Abou Abderrahman Maḥmoud (Ṭalbi, n.d., p.152).
- *Islamic Beliefs from Quranic Verses and Prophetic Ḥadīths*.
- Three rare treatises printed recently with editing and commentary by Laḥcene Ben Aldjia (Ben Aldjia, 2015), including:
 - A treatise on authentic ḥadīths regarding the emergence of the Mahdi at the end of times, refuting Ibn Kheldoun's denial in his *Introduction* and those who followed him (2015, p.17).
 - *The sigh of disapproval for the eulogy*, refuting an opponent who objected to Ben Badi's eulogy of Cheikh Tayeb Ben Cheikh Al-Ḥoucine (Ben Aldjia, 2015, p.38).
 - A fatwa on selling endowment property under conditions of dire need, in response to a question from Cheikh Moḥammed Ben Abi Bakr Al-Imrani (Ben Aldjia, 2015, p.80).
- His edition of *Capitals from the Qawasim* by Abou Bakr Ben Al-Arabi, with introduction, correction, and a concluding biographical sketch of the author, first printed during his lifetime in 1926.
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Third Section: Literary Studies in the Badisian Exegesis (*Majālis al-Tadhkīr*)

Ben Badis's Quranic *Commentary Remembrance Councils of Wise God* is one of the exegeses that pays special attention to linguistic analysis. Although he did not compose an independent book devoted entirely to linguistic issues from beginning to end—despite his

well-known zeal for the Arabic language and his open advocacy for its preservation—his exegesis reveals a deep and nuanced engagement with linguistic levels.

A close reading of *Remembrance Councils* shows his sustained interest in language in all its dimensions. The following are some of the main linguistic levels evident in his commentary:

1. The Phonological Level:

From his formative studies at Al-Zaitoua University and the major scholars from whom he learned; it is clear that *Ben Badis* was deeply grounded in the classical linguistic tradition. He remained faithful to the phonological sciences and their branches, approaching phonological issues much as they were treated in the works of the Quranic reciters.

For example, in interpreting the verse: “And they do not come to you with an argument except that We bring you the truth and the best explanation” (Q 25:33), he notes that the nunation of diversification and magnification, i.e., a type of great revelation” and it’s like may indicate both variety and magnification, that is, a variety of revelation of great and weighty character (Ben Badis, 1932, p.149).

2. The Morphological Level:

Ben Badis did not explicitly dwell on the theoretical debates of Arabic morphology, but he applied the morphological analyses he had adopted throughout his exegetical practice. This is evident in his handling of derived forms when he explains vocabulary and, at times, syntactic structures.

Regarding the same verse—“And they do not come to you with an argument except that We bring you the truth and the best explanation” (Q 25:33)—he notes that the expression “We bring you” suggests that the revelation of the comprehensive, synthesized truth is stronger than that of scattered details (Ben Badis, 1931, p.802).

3. The Lexical Level:

The lexical dimension is perhaps the most prominent in *Remembrance Councils*; one could even say that the commentary is, to a considerable extent, lexically oriented. *Ben Badis* frequently highlights Quranic terms, examining their linguistic roots, semantic fields, and contextual nuances.

For instance, in his commentary on the word “al-furqān” in the verse “Blessed is He who sent down the criterion (al-furqān) upon His servant” (Q 25:1), he explains: “‘Al-Furqān’ is originally a verbal noun derived from *faraqa* (to separate), in the sense of distinguishing and differentiating between truth and falsehood” (Ben Badis, n.d., p. 802).

4. The Syntactic Level:

The syntactic level appears more discreetly in his commentary. *Ben Badis* nonetheless strives to extract and clarify the grammatical relationships among elements of the verse and to employ these relationships in weaving together meaning and syntax in a tight, cohesive manner. Given the interdependence between lexicon and syntax, he often treats both under the heading of “*Words and structures*” (words and constructions), thereby analyzing vocabulary and grammatical structure together.

In his commentary on the verse: “And mustered for Solomon were his hosts of jinn and men and birds, and they were set in ranks” (Q 27:17), he explains the word “yūza‘ūn” as

meaning: “They are restrained from breaking rank in their march; the vanguard is prevented from outstripping the rear, and the rear from lagging behind the vanguard; all are prevented from straying from the ranks to the right or left, for ‘to restrain (waza‘a) someone from something’ means to hold him back from it” (Ben Badis, n.d., p. 172).

He then points to the syntactic nuance: “The conjunction of the second clause with *fa’* (‘so’) indicates the speed with which order follows upon gathering. The subject of *ḥushira* (‘were mustered’) is the commanders who assembled them, whereas the subject of *yūza ‘ūn* (‘were restrained’) is the officers who maintained their order” (Ibn Bādīs, n.d., p. 172).

This example shows that Badisian exegesis intertwines lexical and syntactic analysis in an integrated system—an approach that itself constitutes a form of literary and linguistic heritage.

Summary:

From the foregoing, it may be concluded that *Ben Badis* was one of the scholars who played a major role in enriching literary studies. He was at once a jurist, theologian, reformer, and man of letters, who struggled for the sake of the Arabic language and the Muslim Algerian society.

For him, language was the foundation of religion and the fountainhead of happiness. Although he did not compose stand-alone works in Arabic literature, he dealt extensively with literary and linguistic issues within his exegetical work, especially in *Majālis al-Tadhkīr*, which has since been the object of numerous editorial and scholarly studies, revealing its profound literary and rhetorical value.

Fourth Section: Algerian Scholars’ Efforts in Editing Literary Heritage

Algeria has produced many scholars who distinguished themselves in editing manuscripts and whose efforts have brought many foundational works of Arab-Islamic heritage into the hands of researchers and interested readers. This section highlights some contributions related specifically to literary heritage.

1. Efforts in Editing *Al-Akhdari*’s Legacy

It is an incontestable fact that Algerian scholars have left a wide range of works in literature and other intellectual disciplines. While scholars of the tenth century AH focused more on religious sciences, *Al-Akhdari* is a notable exception for his dual excellence in both religious and literary fields. He authored in jurisprudence, Sufism, logic, rhetoric, and spiritual counsel, though he became most famous as a jurist in the *Maliki* school, to the extent that he was known as “the small jurist” due to his numerous legal writings.

In the Maghrib, when the issue of the prostration of forgetfulness is mentioned, minds immediately turn to our scholar *Al-Akhdari Al-Biskri*, may God have mercy on him. In the field of literature, however, there were few scholars in tenth-century Algeria renowned for language and literature comparable to *Al-Akhdari*.

His work *The hidden essence within the shell of the trilogy of arts* gave literary and rhetorical studies new dimensions in the field of Arabic rhetoric.

This poem enjoyed wide acceptance throughout the Islamic world, both in Africa and beyond. Scholars devoted great attention to it, particularly through editing, commentary, and

annotation. Among Algerian efforts in editing this jewel, one can point to a master's thesis by the researcher *Hadj Zaafan* entitled *Clarifying the Hidden Secret in Al-Thaghri's Commentary on The Hidden Essence – Edition and Study* (Zaafan, 2010, p.3). Although this is an edition of a commentary rather than the original poem, it nonetheless provides a fresh and informative perspective on Al-Akhdari's text and brings it out in a renewed and carefully verified form.

From this thesis, several methodological features of the editorial work can be identified:

- **Inductive method:** The editor extensively examined and surveyed the manuscript tradition in order to collate and identify its textual variants.
- **Comparative method:** He treated *Al-Akhdari's* text as the core reference, comparing other commentaries and copies against it to establish the most reliable readings—an essential principle in manuscript editing.
- **Descriptive method:** He described each manuscript copy in detail, comparing their features and weighing them against one another to determine the strongest textual basis.

These efforts collectively highlight the care taken by Algerian scholars and researchers in transmitting *Akhdarian* literary heritage in a critically sound form.

2. Dr. Ammār Ṭalbi's Efforts in Editing the Badisian Literary Heritage

Dr. Ammār Ṭalbi is among the prominent Algerian figures who have played a key role in editing manuscripts, particularly those related to the legacy of Ben Badis. He is one of the major Islamic intellectuals who dedicated much of his scholarly life to Badisian heritage, diligently studying Ben Badis's manuscripts and bearing the responsibility of editing and presenting them to the scholarly community.

(a) General Editorial Approach:

In editing Ben Badis's works, Dr. Ṭalbi exerts great scholarly effort and adheres strictly to the principles and rules of manuscript editing recognized in this field. He avoids any distortion or unwarranted alteration, striving instead to transmit the text accurately and faithfully, as intended by its author—a demanding task that requires patience, integrity, and meticulous attention.

Typically, he begins by outlining his motives for undertaking a particular editorial project and then explains the importance of the manuscript in question. He identifies the extant copies and their locations, compares them carefully, and determines their mutual relationships before deciding on the base text and implementing the necessary corrections.

He himself notes:

“I spent more than three years collecting and arranging the works of Ibn Bādīs, which required me to travel to some Arab countries in search of what could not be found in Algeria because of the destructive campaigns of the colonial forces and their burning of the treasures of human thought.”

He continues:

“I sought to classify these works into sections according to their topics and aims, although the classification is not entirely precise because the subjects and purposes often overlap. Thus, the classification is approximate.”

And he adds:

“I do not claim that I have been able to find all the works of Ibn Bādīs, for he dictated many lessons to his students, some of which remain in manuscript form, scattered, or lost. Even the printed part of his works has not been fully collected, since most issues of the newspaper *Al-Muntaqid* are missing, and I have found only three issues (no. 1, 2, and 7).” (Ṭalbi, n.d., p. 96)

(b) Stages of Editing According to Dr. Ṭalbi

From his editorial practice, three main stages can be distinguished:

1. Collection Stage

He devoted more than three years to gathering and arranging Ibn Bādīs’s works. This involved travel outside Algeria to recover texts that had survived colonial destruction and to consult scattered or rare materials. At this stage, he states that he was able to access the complete runs of the newspapers *Al-Sunna*, *Al-Sharī’a*, *Al-Şirāṭ*, and *Al-Başā’ir*, as well as all the issues of the journal *Al-Shihāb* (Ṭalbi, n.d., p. 96).

2. Presentation and Attribution

In this stage, he presents the collected texts and distinguishes between material authored by Ben Badis and material by others that Ben Badis chose to reproduce and sometimes annotate. He acknowledges: “I have intentionally included some articles that are not by Ben Badis but that he quoted, selected for publication, and commented upon...” (Ṭalbi, n.d., p. 96).

3. Classification Method

He then explains how he classified the various works: “We have arranged his works as follows: Volume One comprises two sections: (1) Quranic exegesis, and (2) ḥadith commentary. Volume Two comprises fifteen sections...” (Ṭalbi, n.d., p.96).

These stages show the rigor and comprehensiveness of Dr. Ṭalbi’s editorial work. Thanks to his efforts, the ummah has been able to access a substantial portion of Ben Badis’s legacy, and students of literature, language, and reformist thought have gained a rich corpus from which to learn and on which to build.

Conclusion

In light of this brief journey through the science of manuscripts and the particular cases of *Al-Akhdari* and *Ben Badis*, the main findings can be summarized as follows:

- The science of manuscript editing is one of the essential sciences needed for both academic and practical life. It arose for multiple purposes, notably to safeguard Arab heritage from loss and protect it from distortion. It is closely and organically connected to literary studies in general and cannot be neglected.
- Algeria has long been one of the countries most engaged with Arabic literature, as illustrated here through the examples of *Al-Akhdari* and *Ben Badis*, may God have mercy on them both.
- Both *Al-Akhdari* and *Ben Badis* showed profound interest in Arabic literature. This study concluded that *Al-Akhdari* expanded the horizons of rhetorical studies, whereas *Ben Badis* aimed to restore an Arab awakening in Algeria, and literature was one of his key tools in this endeavor.

- The *Akhdarian and Badisian* heritages, particularly in the realm of literature and rhetoric, still require further editing, refinement, and detailed commentary.
- Algerian scholars have indeed undertaken significant efforts to edit literary manuscripts, as exemplified by Dr. Ammar Talbi's work on Badisian manuscripts. Nonetheless, there remains a pressing need to intensify efforts in editing other literary manuscripts and to multiply critical editions.

Recommendations

Based on the above, this study offers the following recommendations for those working in the field of literature:

- Greater attention should be devoted to the Badisian and Akhdarian literary heritages. These corpora deserve renewed, detailed study and critical editing.
- There is a need to revisit and deepen the practice of manuscript editing. The more frequently a manuscript is carefully re-edited on the basis of new discoveries and comparisons, the less room there will be for omissions and distortions.
- Researchers in Arabic literary studies, especially in Algeria, are encouraged to devote theses and projects to the editing, annotation, and study of Akhdarian and Badisian texts, thereby strengthening the link between contemporary scholarship and national literary heritage.

And God knows best. May He grant benefit through this work and enable further service to the heritage of this ummah.

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