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An Eco-critical Approach to John Lewis Burckhardt's *Notes on The Bedouins and Wahabys*

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to shed light upon the interaction between man and environment in John Lewis Burckhardt's *Notes on The Bedouins and Wahabys*. The study shows how the environment could determine the social, economic and political activities of the tribes of Najd and Hejaz, underlining the fact that some of the Orientalists' travel writings could be considered as eco-critical or environmental studies. Although Burckhardt as an Orientalist has explored and written about the environment of Najd and Hejaz as well as the incidents that took place in that part of the Arabian Peninsula, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, to pave the way for the European colonizers to grasp some geopolitical facts about the region and its inhabitants, he could incidentally reveal that unique relationship between the Arab Bedouins and their environment. Thus, Burckhardt's *Notes on The Bedouins and Wahabys* is also considered as an example of the interdisciplinarity of some colonial-environmental studies despite of the divergences between the aims of colonialism and eco/environmentalism. The anthropocentric view of the colonizer and the eco-centric living of the Arab Bedouins have been exposed.

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I. Introduction

The Orientalists' travel writings have been considered major sources of knowledge to historians, sociologists, politicians, geographers, and literary critics. Travel writings had significantly flourished in the eighteenth century. They have been "one of the key features in the culture of the Enlightenment" (Sztachelska 3). Western travellers at that time had many reasons to travel and explore the Arab world either for political reasons or religious interests. They travelled to that exotic world as colonial masters, explorers, or pilgrims, but in all of these cases they have observed and analyzed the place as well as its inhabitants. The Arab peninsula has been one of the destinations that many European travellers have reached, investigated and written about. Rutkowska affirms, "As a travel destination, deserts occupy a special position, since they function in Western culture as a space that is quintessentially 'the other': an absolute opposite of the settled, tamed, civilized spaces most of us inhabit" (166).

The literary critics and scholars have underlined the relationship between travel writings and colonialism as well as post colonialism. Many of the early travel writings have been analyzed in the framework of colonialism, contributing to the theory of post colonialism. Edward Said, in his book *Orientalism*, has affirmed that Orientalism is the Western style for "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). As the European culture endeavored "to manage- and even produce- the Orient, politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post- Enlightenment period," (Said 3) the European Orientalists had to report, in detail, mainly to their governments on the settings they have explored. Said explains how the West that has sought to perpetuate its stereotypical privileged image has accumulated references about "human material" and "material wealth" of the Arab world to deepen its imperial powerful position (44). Further, in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Said has declared that he has been trying to make a "geographical inquiry into a historical experience," drawing attention to the role of geography in human history. Said has suggested that "Everything about human history is rooted in the earth, which has meant that we must think about habitation, but it has also meant that people have planned to *have* more territory and therefore must do something about its indigenous residents" (7). Although, Said has mainly focused upon the images that the Orientalists and Western writers have created for the orient, he indirectly referred to the fact that the Orientalists have been studying the geography, human beings, material wealth, and earth. In other words, they have been studying environment.

Like many other non-fiction writers, some Orientalists while writing and reporting on the Arab world have been examining environment and people. "Environment", according to Encyclopedia Britannica, "is the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors that act upon an organism

or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival." ("Environment"). Discussing mainly the non-fiction works that examine environment has emerged with the second wave of eco-criticism.

The term "eco-criticism" was first used in William Rueckert's 1978 article "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-criticism," the beginning of eco-criticism was in 1980 when the experiences of non-fiction nature writing, non-human nature, and wilderness were tackled (Barry 161). The most cited definition is Glotfelty's that refers to ecocriticism simply as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii).

Buell affirms that ecocriticism movement had been established during the 1990s, revisiting British romanticism with concentration on the genre of poetry in Anglo-American literature and then the American writings about nature. He labelled the first two phases of eco-criticism as the first and second waves of eco-criticism. The first wave has zoomed in the ecocentric environmental ethics while the second wave has stressed the sociocentric environmental ethics. He suggests,

First-wave studies resonated with its preservationist edge as traditionally understood both by historians and by activists: environmentalism equals nature protection in thinly populated remote areas. Second-wave ecocriticism, by contrast, affiliated itself more closely with the other main historical strand of environmentalist thinking: public health environmentalism, whose geographic gaze was directed more at landscapes of urban and/or industrial transformation rather than at country or wilderness, and whose environmental ethics and politics were sociocentric rather than ecocentric. (94)

Moreover, a more global view has been added in Slovic's concept about a new third wave of ecocriticism, "which recognizes ethnic and national particularities and yet transcends ethnic and national boundaries; this third wave explores all facets of human experience from an environmental viewpoint"(4). That wave emerged shortly after 2000 and was labeled as a third wave after 2009. No doubt, eco-criticism is an interdisciplinary field through which various theories might be woven together.

The discussions of environmental issues with those of imperialism and colonialism emerged in the late 1970s. Mukherjee could give more details to the relationship between colonialism or imperialism and eco-criticism when he refers to the major characteristics of both theories that may intersect:

Surely, any field purporting to theorise the global conditions of colonialism and imperialism (let us call it

postcolonial studies) cannot but consider the complex interplay of environmental categories such as water, land, energy, habitat, migration with political or cultural categories such as state, society, conflict, literature, theatre, visual arts. Equally, any field purporting to attach interpretative importance to environment (let us call it eco/environmental studies) must be able to trace the social, historical and material co-ordinates of categories such as forests, rivers, bio-regions and species. (144)

In fact, the interdisciplinarity of studying environment represented by land, habitat, and water on one hand and the state and society as a major feature of colonialism on the other hand, which Mukherjee could accentuate, has been clearly shown in Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys*. In Burckhardt's book, readers can notice Burckhardt's interest to write, in detail, about the places he visited to the colonizing British government which at that time did not hide its interest in exploring many African and Middle-Eastern countries to exploit their resources. As colonialism is mainly interested and involved in exploring, studying, examining, and exploiting the lands of other nations, one cannot ignore the fact that the colonizers and their correspondents have explicitly studied the essentials of land represented by place, resources, and inhabitants. John Lewis Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* tackles the environment of the Bedouins including land, humans, animals and politics. As Burckhardt has portrayed the Bedouins' habitation in his book, I argue that Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys*, which has mainly been written to serve the aims of the European colonizers, may be considered as an environmental study that sheds light upon the relationship between the Arab Bedouin community and its environment. Although Burckhardt's writing has revealed the anthropocentric goals of the colonizer, the eco-centric beliefs of the Arab Bedouins have been explicitly displayed. The Arab Bedouins did not try to conquer environment or nature, but they have been integrated by their environment when they have done their daily activities, complied with its conditions, had some bioregional areas, and formed a developed political system. Burckhardt's book also stresses the fact that some Orientalists' travel writings may refer to the connection between eco/environmental studies and colonialism.

II. John Lewis Burckhardt and the colonial identity between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism.

In 1839 Edward Ruppel wrote an important review about Burckhardt's travels to Africa. That article was written to praise the contributions and services that the late Burckhardt had done to serve the growing British Empire. John Lewis Burckhardt, who was born at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1784, had been a prominent travel writer. According to Ruppel, Burckhardt reached London in July 1806, becoming acquainted

with some members of the African Association that had accepted to employ him in 1808 to discover and report about some African and Middle-Eastern nations. To be perfectly disguised as an Arab traveler, he studied the Arabic Language and allowed his beard to grow. In the following narration, the colonial discourse, which is clearly shown, reflects how the mission of the Orientalist has been created to serve colonialism:

Burckhardt remained nearly a year in Upper Egypt. During the tedious interval he continued to wear his usual disguise of a poor Mohammedan trader, taking care to be as little noticed as possible. Among the jealous, treacherous and cruel Mussulman nations through which he passed, after leaving Daraou, it was difficult for him to find opportunities of continuing his journal. Still less was it in his power to transmit any intelligence to the Association until after his arrival at Souakin, a port of considerable traffic on the African coast of the Red Sea, whence he crossed over to Djidda in Arabia. (Ruppell 478)

From the above mentioned quotation, it is clear that Burckhardt's task is to send "intelligence" reports to the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior of Africa, and being disguised is another proof that he wants to hide his real identity for some reasons that are associated with his work with the British intelligence. The belief that the British colonizer represents the superior smart "self" while the Arabs and Africans are "the treacherous and cruel Mussulman nations" that represent the inferior "other" shows the colonial discourse and ideology which has associated with colonization to justify colonialism. Ruppell's sense of supremacy has diverted his attention from discussing the real reasons that led Burckhardt to stop his travels in Africa and cross over to Hejaz; instead, Ruppell preferred to blame the "cruel" Muslims.

That colonial discourse and European sense of supremacy is underlined in Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* when he considers himself a representative of the European thinking of enlightenment which depends on observation and testing to gain knowledge, declaring that he cannot admit the stories mentioned by some Bedouins about their camels' abilities "until they can be ascertained beyond doubt, and proved to be facts"(78). He indirectly ridicules the Bedouins' tendency to exaggerate by creating that juxtaposition between his aforementioned statement that displays his scientific method of search, and their sentence about their Oshary camels' strength that enables them to "travel in one day a ten days' journey," (78) putting himself in the upper stage of intellectualism. That parallels Said's analysis about the psyche of the American or European Orientalist:

He comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. And to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer. (Orientalism 11)

Not only has Burckhardt's writing shown his colonial psyche in some rare statements but also it has vastly displayed the anthropocentric view of the colonizer that comes to contradict the eco-centric tendencies of the Arab Bedouins. According to Cocks and Simpson, anthropocentrism "is a perspective that human beings are the most significant species on the planet, while nature is valuable only insofar it is valuable to human beings" (217). On the contrary, ecocentrism is a perspective that "human beings are not the center of the planet's reason to be and the environment is intrinsically valuable" (218). The European colonizers who have applied the colonizing strategies to increase the flow of the raw material that is chiefly coming from the natural resources of the colonized countries have adopted the anthropocentric politics. Conversely, the Arab Bedouins have followed the eco-centric strategy of living. Burckhardt, as an Orientalist travel writer, had to explicitly examine the places he should write on. In other words, he observed environment represented by soil, water, air, plants, and animals, society represented by people and communities, and politics represented by ruling class and regime. In other words, he wrote an eco-centric study to serve an anthropocentric colonizing aim. So, the intersection of colonialism, environment, and society is the first characteristic that might be noticed. That intersection parallels Sweets' statement that The European colonizers "value the physical environment for what it produces naturally as well for what it could be made to produce" (405). Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* may materialize and historicize the interest of the colonizers in the lands of the colonized as well as the eco-centric relationship between the land and its native owners. Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* did not apply all of Love's project by putting "eco" to replace "anthro". In his ecocritical manifesto "Revaluing Nature: Toward an Eco-logical Criticism," Love has advocated the eco-centric approach that entirely rejects the anthropocentric concerns of the vast majority of literary writings. He has also criticized the narrow "anthropocentric view of what is consequential in life" (205). Yet, Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* could mirror both anthropocentric as well as eco-centric aspects, and that echoes Branch's point that "ecocriticism also needs to look more closely at works that express what seems an anthropocentric or even a destructively

instrumentalist approach toward nature" (7). In other words, a mere anthropocentric study may also shed light on some eco-centric aspects. John Lewis Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* is a clear example of that literary work which serves the anthropocentric aims of the colonizers who believed in using nature for human benefit by analyzing the eco/environmental habitation of the Bedouins who believed in the interactive relation with earth community. The European colonizers who have been focusing on the importance of commodity to increase the rates of welfare for the European man have shown interest in studying the environment of the expected colonies. While the European colonizers have been studying the environment of these colonies to assess the expected revenues, they could document the relationship between man and earth in such places. That strong bond and interdependence of Bedouins and environment has been shown in the first part, nearly one third, of Burckhardt's book which describes the Arab Bedouin tribes and their environment.

III. Environment and society

Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* represents that non-fictional writing which highlights "nature and natural elements (landscape, flora, and fauna, etc.) as self-standing agents, rather than support structures for human action in the world" (Huggan and Tiffin 13). Nature in Burckhardt's book is the motivating factor of the writer and Arab Bedouins. While Burckhardt writes about nature, people, and environment to serve the anthropocentric goals of colonialism by submitting an authentic and comprehensive study to the British government, his writing reveals that bond between nature and Bedouins showing their eco-centric interests. Burckhardt's and Bedouins' main concerns are exposed when the former describes the habitation of Najd and Hejaz including tribes and animals. Burckhardt did his best to mention the geopolitical and social facts about place (including landscape, flora, and fauna) and population while population (Arab Bedouins) could acclimatize themselves to the conditions of their natural environment, cope with the requirements of some bioregional areas, and elevate their animals to become, in some aspects, on equal terms with human beings.

Burckhardt began his book by informing his readers of the most prominent tribes in the desert of Arabia such as: Beni Harb, Meteyr, Howeytat, Djeheyney. Burckhardt who gives his readers a detailed account about each tribe's activities and resources focuses upon the horsemen and matchlocks. For example, he writes about Beni Harb that inhabited the chain of mountains near the Red Sea as follows:

The *Beni Harb* reside upon those mountains, and westward of them, towards the sea. To the east of that

chain are the plains inhabited by the powerful tribe of *Ateybe*, whose territory extends as far south as Tayf. Their pasturing grounds are excellent. They possess great abundance of camels and sheep: they have also horses, and are in good reputation for bravery, being constantly at war with their neighbours... Their force cannot be less than six thousand matchlocks, and may amount to ten thousand. (38-39)

The interest that Burckhardt shows towards the quality of soil, the numbers of sheep, camels, and horses, and matchlocks leads us to reach two results. First, colonialism has always paid much attention to the environmental resources of the expected colonies serving their anthropocentric and materialistic colonial goals. Such attitude becomes clear when Burckhardt just glosses over the news of the Bedouins of the poor areas such as Tor and Yembo: "In general the Bedouins on this side of the Red sea are poor, because their land does not afford good pasturage; and they live at such a distance from towns, that no advantage can be derived from any intercourse with the inhabitants" (22). As the land does not provide its inhabitants with rich pasturage, they have become very poor and do not deserve to be studied because there is "no advantage" of doing that. Second, the natural resources have reinforced the connection between environment and Bedouins. Such resources classify the social status of the tribe; therefore, that powerful tribe of *Ateybe* is feared by others because of its abilities and qualifications which mainly depend on the environmental supplies: fertile soil, abundant sheep and horses, and strong horsemen with matchlocks. That wealthy environment defines the relationship between land or nature and people, motivating them to defend it and identify themselves with its name or characteristics:

Among pastoral nomads, among whom a systematic use of their territory begins to appear, and therefore a more definite relation between land and people, we find a more distinct notion than among wandering hunters of territorial ownership, the right of communal use, and the distinct obligation of common defense. Hence the social bond is drawn closer. The nomad identifies himself with a certain district, which belongs to his tribe by tradition or conquest, and has its clearly defined boundaries. (Semple 57)

Moreover, the environment and land could determine the economic and social level of its inhabitants as well as their activities. The Lahhyans, "the Bedouins about Mekka are all poor, from the sterility of the ground which they inhabit, and the high price of all commodities and provisions in that country" (Burckhardt 39). So, that barren place has been considered as an obstacle that impedes an easy lifestyle. While another poor tribe like the

Zebejde that possessed the coast from Yembo to Jeddah could count on other environmental resources to earn its living, and the Zebeydes became fishermen and sailors. There were other Bedouins, like El Owf, who had used their horsemen and matchlocks to "follow the hadj upon its return by night ... in hopes of cutting off the stragglers" (Burckhardt36). Certainly, one can notice that the environment or nature could have the upper hand in the life of the Bedouins of Najd and Hejaz. "In this harshest place on earth, it is nature that has an absolute power over human beings and not the other way round"(Rutkowska 168). It is noted that the nature and environment could impose the communal and everyday living, the social and economic rank, and the ways of earning living. The man is controlled by environment not vice versa.

Besides, some tribes could follow the pattern of life that qualifies them to form what is now labeled as a bioregional community. Thayer Jr. defines "bioregion" as follows:

A bioregion is literally and etymologically a "life-place"—a unique region definable by natural (rather than political) boundaries with a geographic, climatic, hydrological, and ecological character capable of supporting unique human communities. Bioregions can be variously defined by the geography of watersheds, similar plant and animal ecosystems, and related, identifiable landforms (e.g., particular mountain ranges, prairies, or coastal zones) and by the unique human cultures that grow from natural limits and potentials of the region. Most importantly, the bioregion is emerging as the most logical locus and scale for a sustainable, regenerative community to take root and to take place.

(3)

An example for the bioregional community is embodied by the Bily tribe that inhabited the country between Moeyleh and the castle of Wodje which was situated on the mountain three miles distant from the sea. "In Spring time many of these Arabs cross with their sheep and goats in small boats over to the islands within the sight of the shore, where the winter rains have produced vegetation, and continue there as long as they can find rain-water-remaining in the rocks of these islands" (Burckhardt 19). That bioregional place that the Arabs of Bily lived in represents the authentic bioregional community that has been localized in a defined specific geographical place with natural resources and boundaries to survive in harmony with their environment and animals. The Arabs did not challenge the place or try to change its physical properties; on the contrary, they preferred to cope with environmental conditions.

Furthermore, Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* has also shown the relationship between human beings and local animals. Buell et al affirm that eco-criticism is interested "in redefining humans' relationships to other species" (434). While Burckhardt reports about the living conditions of the Arab Bedouins and their "primitive" lifestyle with their animals, he unintentionally pointed to that harmony and interdependence between human and animals. Despite the fact that Arab Bedouins at that age had not recognized today's animal rights theory which "states that the whole nature and the component parts of nature have intrinsic value or inherent worth," (Yan 170) they believed that animals have had such respectful inherent value. The relationship between Bedouins and animals could be condensed in the Bedouins' expression: "Go and wash the feet of your mare, and drink up the water," (Burckhardt 64) to show their great love to their mares and their sense and appreciation of the sacrifices which these mares have done.

Feder suggests, "If evolutionary thought and the ecological sciences have taught nothing else, surely it has taught us humans are not the world"(4). In fact, one of the main goals of ecocriticism is to draw our attention to the importance of recognizing the rights and the cultural existence of other biological or non-human subjects. Feder adds that ecocriticism must "challenge the anthropocentric orthodoxies of the humanities," and explains that ecocriticism radical challenge lies not only in "recognizing the ecological interconnectedness of biologically diverse subjects, but in recognizing that the relations between them are *political*-they are life and death relations" (5). It is well known that Bedouins' travels and consequently lives have been entirely based on horses, mares, and camels. Burckhardt informs readers that the absolute maximum that the Arabian camel can travel without drinking is five days and that during emergency as the camel shows signs of fatigue after the third day of being without water. The traveller who knows very well that his camel is a matter of life and death for him during his travel in the desert prefers to continue his journey with the last stage of thirst rather than sacrificing his own life by "killing his serviceable creature" (75). Thus, on such occasions the importance of animal may be on equal terms with or precedes human beings. That ecological interconnectedness between human beings and animals has been realized by the Arab Bedouins who have applied that strategy of mutual benefit with their mares and camels, like contemporary political relations between modern communities, and they have never underestimated the value of their animals.

The Bedouins did not separate themselves from their animals or objectify them, they elevate animals to the level of human beings; specially, when they give them the titles of human beings like "Om el Bel" or "the mother of camels" (Burckhardt 69). It is also noted that there has been an association between the signs of affluent living and the Bedouin's

possession of and dealing mercifully with horses or camels. In Hejaz, Burckhardt explains, there are a few numbers of camels because of the scanty of pasture; on the contrary, Najd is very rich and abundant with camels, so "it furnishes Syria, Hedjaz, and Yemen with camels, which in those countries are worth double the price paid originally for them in Nedjd" (69). Besides, the Bedouins of high social rank, like the Wahaby chief, who "never allows his mares to be mounted until they have completed their fourth year," (Burckhardt 67) prove that dealing warmly with animals is a sign of the elegant life of smart people. The Arab Bedouins, "never allow a horse, at the moment of its birth, to fall upon the ground: they receive it in their arms, and so cherish it for several hours, occupied in washing and stretching its tender limbs, and caressing it as they would a baby" (Burckhardt 65). Here the Arab Bedouins treat their young horses like their own children giving them the same advantageous position of human beings. The western culture has lacked that appreciation for non-human subjects.

Burckhardt, who was trying to prove his excellence as a reporter, could show an extreme concern over the maximum abilities of the animals to be strained to the utmost. "I believe that the rate of twelve miles an hour is the utmost degree of celerity in trotting that the very best hedjein [a type of camels] can accomplish, it may perhaps gallop at fullest speed eight or even nine miles in half an hour, but it cannot support so violent an exertion for any longer time" (Burckhardt 80). Burckhardt reflects the Western capitalistic and colonizing view that considers animals like any other commodity that should be exploited to the maximum by the European colonizers. Burckhardt considers the camel a mere "serviceable" means and a valuable article of trade when he mentions that some camels in Hejaz were "estimated at the price of sixty dollars" (Burckhardt 69).

Yet one cannot separate Burckhardt's interest to examine and analyze the environment of the Bedouins in Najd and Hejaz away from the colonizing concept of Eurocentrism which is mingled with anthropocentrism to justify the European colonization that sees the natives' cultures as primitive and closer to animals and nature. As Plumwood argues, "the western definition of humanity depended – and still depends – on the presence of the 'not-human': the uncivilised, the animal and animalistic. European justification for invasion and colonization proceeded from this basis, understanding non-European lands and the people and animals that inhabited them as 'spaces', 'unused, underused or empty' " (Plumwood 53).

One can easily notice the divergence of views between the Bedouins and the narrator, Burckhardt. While Burckhardt describes the places when he records what he sees, his tendency to display natives and animals in a very materialistic rigid way is evident. That attitude of mentioning the numbers of horsemen, matchlocks, and livestock as well as their prices reveals how he concentrates upon environmental resources as an available

commodity that Europeans may later benefit from. The interdependence between the Arab Bedouins and their environment is another theme that might be extracted from Burckhardt's writing when readers note how the Bedouins' lifestyle, daily activities, and social status have been drawn by their environment which provided them with some bioregional communities and deep appreciation for animals.

The rich soil leads to abundant pastures that result in abundant horses, camels, and sometimes sheep, which are fundamental for human's existence and survival in desert leading to form, to some extent, a settled developing community. "In short, plant and animal domestication meant much more food and hence much denser human populations. The resulting food surpluses, and (in some areas) the animal-based means of transporting those surpluses, were a prerequisite for the development of settled, politically centralized, socially stratified, economically complex, technologically innovative societies" (Diamond 92).

IV. Environment and politics

Burckhardt devoted nearly the two thirds of his book to provide a great deal of information about the Wahaby movement. The environment that has defined and controlled the routine, economy, and survival of human beings in general and Bedouins in particular has been playing a vital role in the political life of the Arab Bedouins of Najd and Hejaz. The abundance of food that counts mainly on the environmental resources has had a direct correlation with the growth, settlement, development, and progress of any society leading to an organized political system. The following statement refers to that interdependence between man and environment:

Food is the urgent and recurrent need of individuals and of society. It dictates their activities in relation to their land at every stage of economic development, fixes the locality of the encampment or village, and determines the size of the territory from which sustenance is drawn. The length of residence in one place depends upon whether the springs of its food supply are perennial or intermittent, while the abundance of their flow determines how large a population a given piece of land can support. (Semple 60-61)

Therefore, the barren land and lack of resources in vast areas of Najd and Hejaz have imposed a specific routine upon their Bedouins. The daily routine which the Bedouin tribes had to follow were pasturing flocks, cultivating some small areas of land, passing the pilgrim caravans or robbing them, robbing other tribes, and invading some others. So, such circumstances had impeded the existence and growth of bureaucracies or a real political system and motivated some Bedouins to deviate from the right rules of the civilized settled community and the concepts of their religion, Islam.

The relationship between environment and political system has been tackled by Diamond's *Guns, Germs and steel: The Fates of Human Societies* and shown in Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys*. Diamond who examined the relationship between the density of population and food production on one hand, and the stability and development of communities on the other hand, has classified the development of human societies and political systems into three types and phases. First, the band that includes a few numbers of people who are almost relatives by birth or marriage and are mostly nomadic hunter gatherers. Second, the tribe that has the virtue of its settled residence and larger numbers of people consists of many kinship groups and termed clans, and each particular clan possesses a specific piece of land. Third, chiefdoms that have tens of thousands of people who are not related by marriage or kinship, is ruled by a chief who represents a permanent centralized authority and is supported by one or two bureaucrats. In the cases of band and tribe, there are no bureaucracies, police, or taxes, while in the case of chiefdoms, there are more layers of bureaucrats and tribute. To reach the most recent form of the modern state the various chiefdoms should come under the sovereignty of one chief. Diamond refutes Jean-Jacques Rousseau's point that states are formed by a social contract which people rationally reached because of their self-interest as well as their agreement that they would be better off in a state than in their simpler societies. He affirms that "observation and historical records have failed to uncover a single case of a state's being formed in that ethereal atmosphere of dispassionate farsightedness. Smaller units do not voluntarily abandon their sovereignty and merge into larger units. They do so only by conquest, or under external duress" (283).

In fact, Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* has included a great part about the emergence of the Wahabys in Hejaz and Najd. Burckhardt could define the Wahaby movement and its relation with religion: "The religion and government of the Wahabys may be very briefly defined, as a muselman puritanism, and a Bedouin government, in which the great chief is both the political and religious leader of the nation, exercising his authority in the same manner as the followers of Mohammed did over his converted countrymen" (96). Burckhardt's definition of the emergence of the Wahabys and its relation with the Bedouin political order corresponds with the aforementioned second and third stages of diamond's classification of the human societies that include tribes and chiefdoms. Ibn Saud, the chief of one of the tribes, was trying to change the condition of chiefdom to initiate one state by gathering the various tribes and chiefdoms under his sovereignty using the powerful effect of the religious call of Mohammed Ibn Abdel Wahab. According to Burckhardt, Abdel Wahab, who had observed during his travels that "the primitive faith of Islam had been abused and corrupted" (96) by some people's deviation from the right principles of

Islam, regarded the people of the East and Turks as heretics. Mohammed Ibn Saoud, the leader of Derayah, was the first one that accepted Abdel Wahab's convention and married his daughter. (It is noted that the identity of Burckhardt as a colonizer emerges once again when he describes the religion of Islam as being "primitive," a term that is always used by the colonizers to justify their colonization of many nations).

By using power and the religious tenets of Wahabism, Mohammed Ibn Saud could establish his sovereignty. Mohammed Ibn Saud could attain power according to the patterns of the environment "which are daily occurring in the Desert. A tribe is fortunate, rises into power, takes booty, and extends its influence, over its neighbours" (Burckhardt 98). Not only did the tribe use its power in that case, but it has also used the influence of religion to perpetuate its authority. According to Diamond, the states' and chiefdoms' triumph over the simpler entities is achieved not only by the advantage of weaponry and larger population but also by the other two advantages of centralized authority and official religion. "First, a centralized decision maker has the advantage at concentrating troops and resources. Second, the official religions and patriotic fervor of many states make their troops willing to fight suicidally" (281). Without that severe environment of the desert which imposed certain ways of habitations upon Bedouins and stirred the tendencies of delinquency among some others, neither Ibn Saoud nor Ibn Abdel Wahab would have thought of their movement. The dispersed tribes and corrupted Bedouins paved the way for the emergence of the powerful supremacy of Ibn Saoud accompanied with that puritanical doctrine of Ibn Abdel Wahab. Although the Saouds were defeated by Mohammed Aly troops in the beginning, they met success later and Wahabism became the doctrine of Najd and Hejaz, and now of Saudi Arabia. The geographical environment made its print when it produced the historical Wahaby movement that mainly came as a reaction to poverty, ignorance, and corruption which grew in some remote isolated geographical areas.

The Wahabys did not resist their environment; on the contrary, they could comply with and respond to the rules of their environment creating an appropriate economic and political system that is based on it. For example, "from fields that watered by rains only, Saoud takes a tithe of the produce; from fields fertilized by the water of wells or fountains, which it is laborious and expensive to draw, he takes out but one twentieth of the produce" (Burckhardt 153). Here the revenue of the government has come as a response to the environmental circumstances and produce. According to Buell et al., "Societies that understand and adapt themselves to this state of nature, it was thought, are or become freer, fairer, and more sustainable" (422). Besides, that preliminary government had established a system by which "every tribe was rendered vigilant in protecting its neighbours, as well as strangers passing through their territory," could achieve high

standards of safety and security; therefore, "a single merchant might traverse the Desert of Arabia with perfect safety, and the Bedouins slept without any apprehension that their cattle would be carried off by nocturnal depredators" (Burckhardt 137).

If Egypt has been considered the gift of the Nile, one may safely say that Saudi Arabia is the gift of the desert environment- that desert which made some parts of Najd and Hejaz unattractive places to the European colonizers in the early nineteenth century and later endowed them with oil. The environment of Najd and Hejaz could decide the past, present, and to some extent the future of the Arab Bedouins.

V. Conclusion

To put it in a nutshell, the non-fiction travel writings of some Orientalists have reflected the colonial-environmental fusion. Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* is considered an obvious example of the amalgamation of travel writings with colonialism and environmentalism. Burckhardt who wrote his book to report to a British association about Najd and Hejaz was serving the growing colonizing British Empire that later could colonize large parts in Africa and the Middle East. Although Burckhardt was reporting to the European colonizers to assist them, he recorded an environmental study that sheds light upon the relationship between environment and human beings, revealing the anthropocentric colonial aims of the European colonizer and the eco-centric living of the Arab Bedouins.

Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* also informs readers about the effect of environment upon society and consequently politics. In Burckhardt's book the human being is affected by environment not vice versa. The environment of Najd and Hejaz could define and decide the activities, life style, evidence of luxurious life and power, legal and illegal actions, and later political system that may comply with that wide desert. The Bedouins of Najd and Hejaz could grasp and cope with the rules of their environment. The sterility and fertility of the soil could distinguish the poor tribe from the rich one, determine the livestock of each tribe, and impose a peaceful co-existence between human, environment, and animals. Horses, mares, camels, and sheep could be the invaluable creatures which have been always appreciated by Bedouins. The Arab Bedouins who did not hierarchize between self and nature have shown enough respect towards their animals. The significant difference between the ways of approaching environment of the European colonizer and the Arab Bedouins has reflected how Burckhardt has objectified animals as well as environmental resources while Arab Bedouins have elevated them to the level of protected beings.

The emergence of the Wahaby doctrine came as a result of the illegal deeds and sinful conducts of some Bedouins who were driven by

necessity and stimulated by the barren wide desert to rob the pilgrims or invade other tribes. Those vast areas of land with harsh living conditions have necessitated the unity between authority represented by Ibn Saoud and religion represented by Ibn Abd el Wahab as an inevitable solution to gather the scattered tribes under one unified authority of the Saouds and one religious doctrine of Wahabism. Thus, the environment could illustrate the living of the Bedouins and draw their future, becoming the first in the power hierarchy.

Burckhardt's *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* refers to the fact that some colonial writings could show the interaction between human and environment and points to the interdisciplinarity of (post) colonialism and eco/environmental studies. The intersection of geography, politics, society, and environment in the non-fiction writings of some Orientalists may offer a new way of seeing travel literature, environment, politics, and geography.

الملخص

التناول البيئي لكتاب جون لويس بيركهاردت مذكرات عن البدو والوهابيين دعاء سيد عبدالعظيم

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى القاء الضوء على التفاعل بين الانسان والبيئة في كتاب جون لويس بيركهاردت مذكرات عن البدو والوهابيين . تعرض هذه الدراسة كيف استطاعت البيئة ان تحدد الانشطة الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والسياسية لقبائل البدو في نجد والحجاز وتؤكد حقيقة ان بعض كتب اسفار المتشركيين يمكن ان تعد بمثابة دراسة بيئية ونقدية. وكواحد من المتشركيين استطاع بيركهاردت ان يجوب ويكتب عن بيئة نجد والحجاز والحوادث التي جرت حينذاك في الجزيرة العربية في بداية القرن التاسع عشر ممهدا بذلك الطريق للمستعمرين الاوروبيين. ولهذا فأن كتاب جون لويس بيركهاردت مذكرات عن البدو والوهابيين هو بمثابة مثال للتداخل بين التخصصات في دراسات البيئة والاستعمار على الرغم من تنافر اهداف الاستعمار عن اهداف دراسات البيئة. الدراسة تكشف عن نظرة المستعمر لتي تتمحور حول الانسان فقط وطريقة معيشة البدو العرب التي تتركز حول البيئة.

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