
The French Colonial Policy of Monitoring the Eastern Borders and its Impact on Communication between Algerians and Tunisians 1881-1954

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Abstract:

The eastern borders of Algeria have played an important role in the process of communication between the Algerian and Tunisian peoples throughout history. Relations between the border tribes were linked by kinship and marriage, religious affiliation (Sufi orders and sheikhs), and economic activities such as pastoralism and trade. The border regions also served as a refuge for rebellious tribes opposed to French occupation.

However, the French colonial administration recognised the importance of the border regions and built watchtowers along the borders to monitor and track the movement of people, tribes and trade caravans between the two countries in order to limit the threat they could pose to its stability and security.

Keywords: Borders; Tribes; Trade; Relations; Surveillance.

Introduction:

The tribe has remained one of the fundamental constants in the history of the countries of the Maghreb, especially Algeria and Tunisia, and represents an important element in the economic, social and cultural structure. It plays different roles depending on the historical circumstances. The eastern borders of Algeria have played an important role in the process of communication between the Algerian and Tunisian peoples throughout history, although the two peoples did not know the language of the borders that divided them in their political, legal and administrative forms until the establishment of the colonial system on both sides (Algeria and Tunisia) in the 19th century.

The question of the borders between the provinces of Algeria and Tunisia during the Ottoman era was at the heart of the conflict between the two countries, as it was one of the sensitive issues that often aggravated relations between them, due to the natural and tribal overlap between them. Given the political, economic and social stakes involved, each party defended the borders of its province to ensure its territorial sovereignty. These crises negatively affected the political relations between the two provinces and led to the outbreak of wars and confrontations at various times, especially towards the end of the Ottoman era.

Despite the signing of a treaty between the provinces of Algeria and Tunisia in 1614, which established the dividing lines between the two countries, the conflict between the two provinces flared up again due to the movements of tribes on both sides. The two countries renewed the treaty in 1628, but the border issue was not finally resolved and the conflict continued until 14 March 1821, when the Ottoman Sultan threatened and forced the two provinces to sign a peace treaty and respect the dividing lines between them. The point here is that the treaties signed between the two countries to demarcate the dividing lines between them were not respected (see comment no. 01).

Given the importance of the borders between the two states, the French colonial administration placed them at the forefront of its concerns. It set up permanent and temporary watchtowers, fixed or mobile, to monitor the movement of people and trade convoys and anything that could affect their stability and security. The border posts did not affect the lifestyle or perceptions of the tribal groups, as they shared the same way of life and culture as the other internal groups in the Tunisian or Algerian provinces. However, there are tribes living on both sides of the border strip between the two countries, where historical circumstances have forced them to communicate and live together.

This leads us to the following question: To what extent did the French colonial administration's control of the eastern border affect communication between Algerians and Tunisians between 1881 and 1954?

2. The nature of relations between the inhabitants of the Algerian-Tunisian eastern borders

The social relations between the inhabitants of the two Ottoman provinces of Algeria and Tunisia reflected the degree of communication and interconnection between the peoples of the two provinces, which was further strengthened and consolidated by the blood ties that mixed them, especially among the border inhabitants. This phenomenon of intermarriage led to the emergence of the so-called "children of so-and-so", referring to the homeland of this or that family spread along the borders between the two countries, such as the children of Yaqoub, the children of Mouamin, the children of Radwan and the children of Sidi oubayd (al-Mashrafi, n.d., p. 16; al-Majri, 2013, p. 12), the Banu Soulayn and their dispersion (Ahmida, n.d., p. 61), and many others who make up the social fabric, such as the inhabitants of Wadi Souf and the people of the Tunisian Jérid (n.d., 1848). The most prominent examples are:

1- The children of Jeddidi: those attributed to Muhammad al-Jeddidi al-Qayruwani al-Salimi, the owner of a famous zawiya (Sufi lodge) in Qayrawan. As for their intermarriage with the people of Souf, it is due to their ancestor who entered the Souf valley and settled with the Awlad Youcef, marrying a woman called Masaouda and thus joining them.

2- The children of Haddad: They are from the Awlad Abidi and their origin is from Sidi Abid, the inhabitants of Nefta. Abu al-Qasim al-Haddad joined the Sufis after marrying Mas'uda, the daughter of Sidi Mastour.

3- The Mothers: They are attributed to a place called *oumayya* near *Nafousa* in *Qabes*. Their ancestor, the *Umayyi*, is the one who came from this place to the valley of the *Souf*. This *Soufian* *‘Umayra* has five original branches and five affiliated branches, including the *Awlad Midani* of the nobility of *al-Bahmah* (now *Hassani Abd al-Karim*), whose origins are in *Nefta*.

4- The *al-Nawabiliyya* branch:

They are from the *Awashir Oumayra* and their name is derived from the town of *Nabeul* in *Sousse*.

5- The *Oumayra* of *al-Shararda*: They came from *Tawzar* in *Tunisia*.

6- The *Awamir*: They come from the *Bujdid ‘Umayra* and are originally attributed to *Mouhammad*, who came from *Sousse* and is the son of *Sidi Amir ibn Salih ibn Mouhammad ibn Ahmad ibn al-Hasan al-Mouthanna ibn al-Hasan al-Sibt ibn the Lady Fatima al-Zahra*, daughter of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him). This is in addition to the *Awlad Jamia* (*Awamir*, 2007, p. 377) who came to the *Souf* valley from the *Tunisian* province, and the same applies to the *Tharud* tribe.

Among the forms of tribal intermarriage is also the new village located 7 km from the village of *Sidi Abid*, where this village has integrated into a heterogeneous social fabric, as a large part of its population is of *Tunisian* origin, such as *Durayd*, *al-Hamamah* and *al-Shabiyya*, while parts of it are of *Algerian* origin, such as *Awlad Maafi* in *Biskra*, *al-Namamsha*, *Awlad Sidi Abid* and *al-Sawafa*. These groups were linked by marriage, alliances and common interests.

The *Oulad Sidi Abid* tribe embodies this model to a greater extent. In the founding phase of this tribe, which begins from 1400 AD to before 1830 AD, it existed as a limited number of *Maraboutic* families around the *Qantis* region (*Kastel*, 2010, p.87), *Mount Foua* (*Al-Majri*, 2013, p.22) and *Bir El-Ater*. Over time, through the phenomena of integration and intermarriage, the existing groups around *Mount Qantis* and the incoming elements from *Algeria* and *Tunisia*, such as the *Chabiya*, *Hammama*, *Sawwafa*, *Tarodd* and *Namamsha* tribes, transformed them into an influential tribe in the history of both countries (*Al-Majri*, 2013, p.30-31).

The *Oulad Sidi Abid* tribe, with its dual allegiance, with one part residing in *Tunisia* and the other in *Algeria*, played an important role in the history of both countries in its efforts to reconcile and mitigate the discord between the border tribes, especially between the *Namamsha*, *Hammama*, and *Farrachich*, who lived in a state of looting and plundering. Culturally and religiously, *Sheikh Sidi Abid* tried to spread knowledge and learning among the children of the border tribes, and religious leaders were trained under his guidance in both provinces, such as *Ahmad Al-Talil*, who went to the *Aures*, *Ziban* and the desert to call for adherence to the *Sunnah*, and in *Tunisia*, *Sheikh Balghith Al-Qashash* (*Qasim*, n.d., p.75).

As found in *Algeria*, there were tribes of *Tunisian* origin, such as the *Abadna* tribe (*Castald*, 2010, p:293) and the *Khanafsa* (*Al-Zoubayri*, n.d., p:161) (*Castald*, 2010, p:293). The political marriages that united certain groups from the two countries also fall within this context. These

political marriages were intended to expand the sphere of influence and increase the amount of material and military support to achieve common goals for the two allied parties through this form of marriage, such as the marriage that united Ali Bey and the daughter of the Sultan of Bani Manser, the chief of the Hannasha. The latter's daughter was considered the mother of Murad Bey, who considered himself a descendant of the Hannasha. This Bey was the one who opened the eighteenth century with a conflict and a war with the regency of Algiers during his attack on Constantine in 1700 (Mercier, 1903, p:237).

In addition to religious ties (tariqahs and shaykhs), the mosques, zawiyas and shrines of saints, whether in the Tunisian Jerid region in particular or on religious occasions, were among the most important factors in increasing communication between the tribes on both sides ((Charle), 1874, p:468), making them a single social fabric that rejected separation and variation and tended towards unity and integration. (Beer Brougger) cites as an example of these relations the continuous movement and migration of the Tarrud tribes from Souf to the Tunisian Jerid region and the spontaneous arrival of Tunisian tribes in Souf, according to the interests of both parties, without feeling any form of barrier ((A), 1860, p:12).

The second link relates to the economic activities of the groups, such as grazing and trade, where the border areas between Algeria and Tunisia, whether in their rural or urban areas, experience intense economic activity open to both sides. The people of the Souf valley have many economic exchanges with the people of the Tunisian Jerid, and the latter have several commercial establishments in the town of Tebessa. The Tunisian town of Kef was also an active trading centre, where five roads from Algeria converge, the most important of which are the roads from Tebessa, Constantine and El Kala. In this town, a weekly market was held every Thursday, attended by both Tunisians and Algerians ((A), 1860, p:309). This link is also found in the northern regions of the Tunisian and Algerian governorates, such as Arouche Khmire and Raqba, which used to frequent the markets of El Kala and the neighbouring market of Souk Ahras.

The Tunisian presence in Algeria in the modern era dates back to the Ottoman period and was manifested in the migration of some scholars and Sufi sheikhs from Tunisia to Algeria due to the bad policies of the Beys of Tunisia and their repression of some Sufi sheikhs, such as Sheikh Sidi Ali Al-Nafhati in the Touzer region of southern Tunisia in the late 18th century. He died and was buried in 1792 in the south of the Aures, in the village of Gouffi (one of the current communes of the province of Batna) (see comment No. 02).

The followers of the Sufi order used to come from southern Tunisia to the village of Ghoufi to perform their religious rituals and visit the tomb of their Shaikh until the 1930s. The Tunisian migration to Algeria, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries, was very rare. The reason for this was the political situation in Tunisia, which was an independent province and did not come under French rule until 1881, when the French protectorate was established.(Zeroual 2013.p147)

3. The French occupation's control of the borders between Tunisia and Algeria

It should be noted that the establishment of checkpoints, military watchtowers and the construction of advanced military barracks along the entire length of the border, from north to south and east to west, had a serious impact on freedom of movement between the two countries. In 1847, the Bey of Tunisia, “Marshal Ahmed”, placed four cannons in the town of Kef to tighten control over the country and the tribes. This policy was continued by the Bey Mohammad al-Sadik (1859-1882), who ordered the renovation and construction of military towers and barracks in Massar, Borj al-Himma, Borj Haydara, Borj al-Nafidha and Al-Arad(sahraoui 2013.p174)

The Bey of Tunisia, Mohammad al-Sadiq, even travelled to Algeria to meet Napoleon III, informing him of the reforms that had been carried out in Tunisia and presenting him with a copy of the Tunisian Fundamental Pact (Constitution). However, the rebellious movements within Tunisia, especially the movement led by Ali bin Ghadhahum in 1864, were a cause of instability and chaos, as they led to the suspension of the constitution, the cessation of the work of the municipal councils, and the country was plunged into a civil war that caused famine and serious diseases for six full years, leading to the migration of the population from the interior to the mountainous areas and the border areas with Algeria (Abdullah, 1990, pp. 21-22). Perhaps the most important factors that contributed to the construction of watchtowers and military barracks for security and surveillance along the borders of the state were

The new development after 1881, however, was the French supervision over the construction of the watchtowers, forcing the Bey to hand over these sites to the French army under the Protectorate Treaty signed by the Bey on 12 Jumada al-Thani 1298 AH, corresponding to 12 May 1881 (Al-Wahab, 2001, p.151). Article 9 of this treaty stipulated that: “In order to protect the property of the French Republic in the Algerian region from the smuggling of arms and ammunition, the State of His Highness the Bey undertakes to absolutely prevent the introduction of arms and war materials into the island of Jerba, the port of Qabes and the other ports of the Tunisian Kingdom” (Darmuna, n.d., p.143) (Ziyada, 2002, p.183). From this we can conclude that the French occupation was aware of the importance of the border region for the smuggling of arms and ammunition, as well as for the movement and refuge of rebellious Algerian tribes into the Tunisian regency.

1. The desire of the Beylik (Tunisian) state to monitor the movement of border groups towards the Western Province (Algeria) after 1830.
2. The participation of the border tribes in the 1864 revolution and their role in smuggling the leader of the revolution, “Ali bin Ghadhahum”, into Algeria.
3. The participation of the Farashish, Awlad Bu Ghanim and Awlad Sidi ‘Ubayd tribes in the Algerian resistance against the French occupation (Saadawi, 2004, p.126).

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One form of surveillance was to require the Bedouin and urban population to obtain a travel permit (*permis de voyage*) from the French authorities in order to tighten the noose on the rebels, who could not obtain these permits, and to control the movement and trade of the population. In this context, the Bey of Tunisia issued a decree on 6 April 1877 requiring Algerians entering Tunisia to carry a French travel permit.

In this context, one of the French reports mentions the arrest in Constantine of a group of Tunisians whose only crime was not carrying identity papers (*sons pappies*). The agent of the Ouled Nadjis from Frachiches also informed the French authorities about the flight of Tunisians to Tebessa without a travel permit.

The movements of Sufi sheikhs from Tunisia to Algeria and vice versa were also monitored. To this end, laws were enacted specifying the procedures to be followed and carried out prior to movements that were prohibited without a permit. Circular No. 03 of 9 January 1913, for example, clarified the legal procedures that the sheikhs of the Sufi lodges and their deputies had to follow before leaving the districts where they lived. Circular no. 13 of August 1921 regulated the movement of Sufi lodge sheikhs from Algeria to Tunisia and vice versa, stating that the district authority was responsible for informing the governor general of Algeria or the resident general in Tunisia of these movements in order to obtain their opinion and take the necessary decision.

As the publication issued on 13 November 1934 became more explanatory and comprehensive, the colonial authority was able to tighten its control over all outlets under the pretext of security. As a result of these measures, the sheikhs of the Sufi orders lost their freedom of spontaneous movement, and the sheikhs were legally obliged to apply to the relevant authority before travelling. The colonial authority considered any unauthorised movement a punishable offence and forced these sheikhs to comply with the procedures.

The colonial authority’s control over the sheikhs of the Sufi orders did not stop at forcing them to submit applications, but also demanded other measures, the most important of which were

1. The regulation and clarification of the itineraries, by mentioning the places where they would stay during the journey and sometimes giving the address. The sheikhs were required to report to the authorities as soon as they arrived at their destination. In this way, the colonial administration seized all the channels that enabled it to monitor the sheikhs in their movements and travels. (Al-Ajili, 1992, pp. 90-91)

2. Clarifying the reasons and the purpose of the movement, in order to understand the real objectives behind it, I have sometimes resorted to verifying them through research, and eliminating them whenever it becomes clear that the reasons given - by the party concerned - are not genuine, but rather conceal objectives that have not been openly declared. An example of this is the refusal by the civil inspector in Tozeur of the application submitted by Mohamed El-Kebir ben Azzouz, sheikh of the Rahmaniyya order in the Tamghezat Zawiya, for permission to travel to El-Naâmès and El-Dair in Algeria. He claimed that he had crops, cattle and mules. However, after verification with the Governor General of Algeria, it was found that “he has absolutely no agricultural interests in the Tebessa region and the real purpose of his trip is to collect visits...”. It was therefore impossible to grant him a travel permit. On the other hand, Abdelkader ben Mohamed El-Hafnaoui, the sheikh of the Qadiriyya order in Tamghezat Zawiya, was granted a passport to Tunisia after it was established that he did have agricultural land there. In this way, the colonial authorities were able to prevent a significant number of sheikhs from emigrating, sometimes using flimsy pretexts and allowing them to emigrate on the condition that they did not visit Tunisia. The colonial authorities were quite strict with almost all the sheikhs in this respect, citing the economic situation of the population, while their real aim was to enable the population to pay the taxes due to them and to settle the outstanding debts owed to the French occupation authorities. (El-Ajili, 1992, pp.92-93)

When the Tunisian armed resistance to the French occupation weakened around 1889, following the establishment of military garrisons, the occupying administration concluded an agreement with the Ottoman state in 1910 to demarcate the Tunisian-Libyan border. This agreement allowed France to organise the regions between Gafsa and Ghadames, up to 265 km south of Dhehiba. The French then built towers in Bir Qasira, Dhehiba, Gafsa and Foussana (1923-1924).

At the end of the First World War, the Tunisian protectorate authority and the French occupation authority in Algeria (the term “Algerian authority” refers here to the geographical, not the political, affiliation, as the rulers of Algeria at the time were the French, or more precisely the colonists, who had been given financial autonomy in the management of their affairs by the decree of 19 December 1900 under the civil administration system) agreed to set up a joint system for maintaining security in the Sahara. These towers were able to communicate with each other and with the various regions of the country, especially the capital, by means of a wireless telegraph system. (Al qasab .1986.p.403-404)

4. Demographic conditions after the imposition of the protectorate on Tunisia in 1881 o.c.

The general demographic conditions from the beginning of the protectorate in 1881 until the end of the First World War were characterised by stability. Sources differ in their estimates of the total population, but it is likely that Tunisia had between one and a half million inhabitants in 1881. This population was insufficient to meet the needs of the developing colonial economy. It seems certain that the stability of the demographic situation was one reason for the recruitment of foreign labour from neighbouring countries (Tripoli, Algeria and Italy).

More importantly, the low population density allowed the expansion of French settlement and motivated the protectorate authorities to attract and concentrate settlers in rural areas.

The Tunisian population was regularly censused (1911-1921-1926-1931-1936-1946), but all these statistics were only estimates at regional and national level, as the majority of the Muslim population was illiterate and some populations were not settled, especially in the south and in the Sahara. It is known that the demographic growth rate began to rise at the beginning of the 20th century, reaching 1,740,000 inhabitants in 1911 and 2,000,939 in 1921. This increase is mainly due to two factors: the decrease in the mortality rate and the increase in the proportion of migrants among the foreign settlers.

It can be said that Tunisian society did not face any major demographic challenges until 1930, apart from the natural disasters and epidemics that periodically struck the country.

At the beginning of the 1930s, a new demographic phase began in Tunisia, coinciding with the aggravation of the economic difficulties caused by the world crisis of 1929. It should be stressed that the demographic transition and the resulting changes in the population and age structure were the result of previous developments, the most important of which were: the stabilisation - or even escalation - of migratory movements and a steady increase in the birth rate (2.7% in 1926, 3.6% in 1936 and 4.1% in 1954). Accordingly, Tunisia experienced a remarkable demographic vitality in the inter-war period, as reflected in the official statistics, which showed a population growth rate of 6.08% between 1919 and 1923 and 15.7% between 1944 and 1945. Despite the relatively small total population, Tunisia began to suffer from overcrowding due to the mismatch between population density and economic resources, and was faced with a growing number of unemployed people, having previously experienced a shortage of labour.

The most significant impact of the colonial reality was the acceleration of social mobility and the restructuring of society, in parallel with the development of modern economic sectors. It is well known that the change in the rules of economic engagement hastened the impoverishment or marginalisation of many Tunisian strata. At the forefront of this group was the traditional class (landowners and some municipal notables), who were deprived by the colonial power of the means of political influence and consequently of control over sensitive economic positions. Social decline also affected the urban middle classes, namely groups of artisans, small traders and landowners who were unable to adapt to the new economic conditions or who went bankrupt as a result of competition from colonial production and distribution structures.

5. The Tunisian community in the province of Constantine

In the rural areas of Tunisia, especially in the arid regions with a pastoral economy, various segments of the peasantry were subjected to various forms of extortion and marginalisation after their lands and pastures were seized and made the property of the settlers. The tightening of the noose around the transhumant tribes led either to their dependence on the resources of the arid regions, the transformation of some of their men into wage labourers with the settlers,

their migration to the cities or even their emigration to neighbouring countries (Algeria - Libya) in search of better living conditions. (Al-Shatir et al., 2005, p. 47)

Some reports issued by the General Government of Algeria, especially between 1884 and 1902, provide us with some details on the census of the Muslim (Tunisian-Moroccan) community that came to Algeria, particularly to the province of Constantine, especially in the various municipalities, districts and years covered by the census: 1884-1892-1897-1902. With regard to foreigners in 1884, it is noteworthy that no distinction was made between European and Muslim foreigners (Tunisians, Moroccans and Libyans), so that the total number of foreigners in the entire province exceeded 39,722. While the statistics for the remaining years specified the number of Muslim foreigners (Tunisians and Moroccans) in some detail, the number of foreigners in the civil municipalities of the province of Constantine was estimated at 38,857 foreigners in the fully empowered municipalities on 30 September 1884, while their number in the mixed municipalities for the same period was estimated at 807 foreigners. The statistics also recorded 58 foreigners in the native municipalities in the military regions, distributed in seven (07) native municipalities as follows: (G.G.A, 1884, pp. 56-80.)

- Batna (3 municipalities) had a total of 33 foreigners.
- Annaba (2 localities) had 11 foreigners.
- Constantine (1 municipal district, Tebessa) had 13 foreign citizens.
- Setif (1 commune, M'Sila) had 1 foreign national.

The total number of foreign citizens in these 7 districts was 58. These were probably Tunisian nationals who, after the imposition of the French protectorate over Tunisia, had moved to Algeria, particularly from the north-western border regions, either by land or via the railway network set up by the colonial authorities. This included the "Batignolles-Bône-Guelma" railway complex, which extended the railway lines between Tunisia and Algeria along the route (Tunis-Ghardimaou-Annaba-Guelma-Constantine) (G.G.A, 1884, pp:82-85). Henri Derrueu was President of the East Algerian Railway Council, President of the Industrial and Commercial Credit and Director of the Marseille Company (El-Mahjoubi, 1986, p:93). This new rail link between Tunisia and Algeria helped to increase the volume of trade between the two countries. In addition, after the law of 1890 came into force, Tunisian goods transported to Algeria by land were exempted from customs duties (El-Qassab, 1986, p:246).

The statistics of 1892 began to distinguish between foreigners, whether Europeans or Muslim communities, especially Tunisians and Moroccans. The 1892 census of Tunisians and Moroccans in the 71 full municipalities was estimated at 1,869 Tunisians and 1,361 foreigners in the 34 mixed communes. In the 4 native municipalities of Brika, Biskra, Khenchela and Tebessa, the statistics recorded about 9 Muslim foreigners. The total number of Muslim foreigners in the Constantinople governorate in 1892 was about 3,239.

The statistics of 1897 recorded around 2,666 Muslim foreigners, distributed as follows: in 72 fully empowered municipalities, 2,257; and in 34 mixed municipalities, 351.

In the native communities, the number of Muslim foreigners increased to 58, distributed in 5 native communities: Brika, Biskra, Khenchela, Tebessa and Touggourt (created by a decision of the Governor General in December 1892). All these indigenous communities became part of the Batna Division, which was part of the Military Region.

In 1902, the Muslim community in the Constantinople governorate was estimated at 2,657, distributed as follows among 112 fully empowered, mixed and native communities: 1,972 in 73 fully empowered communities; 645 in 34 mixed communities; while in the native communities, the number of Muslim foreigners decreased to about 40, distributed among 5 native communities.

The following table summarises the evolution of the Tunisian community in the Constantine governorate between 1892 and 1902.

The City	Years		
	1892	1897	1902
Constantinople	717	1053	1187
Batna	165	112	120
Annaba	1471	546	303
Béjaïa	20	21	20
Guelma	759	764	875
Skikda	45	43	62
Setif	53	69	50
Number of Tunisians in indigenous communities	09	58	40
Total	3239	2666	2657

Source: Prepared by the researchers on the basis of:

G.G.A. General Survey of the Communes of Algeria, 1892, 1897, 1902.

The most striking observation from the table is that the census of the Tunisian community generally showed a decline throughout the period from 1884 to 1902. The main towns in the province of Constantine that attracted a number of Tunisians were the districts of Constantine, Guelma and Annaba. In the latter, however, the number of Tunisian inhabitants fell from 1,471 in 1892 to 303 in 1902 (G.G.A., 1892, 1897, 1902). This decline may have been due to

the fact that the town of Annaba had a colonial character with a majority European population. This overall decline can be explained by the return to stability and calm following the end of the armed resistance by Tunisians against the French occupation, which ended with the death of Qaid Nafat (Al-Tamawmi et al., 1999, p. 649) Ali ben Khelifeh in late 1884. This may have encouraged many Tunisians who had fled to neighbouring Arab countries (Libya - Algeria) to return to Tunisia (Al-Mahjoubi, 1986, p:55).

We can also interpret this decline in the number of Tunisians in eastern Algeria perhaps as a result of the improvement in the economic situation in Tunisia, especially after the discovery of mineral resources, especially phosphates, in the south-western regions on the Algerian border, the exploitation of which began in early 1897 with the establishment of the Phosphate and Railway Company (Sfax - Gafsa) (Al-Shater et al., 2005, p. 54).

The railway line was also extended to southern Tunisia over a distance of 250 km, allowing the colonial presence to penetrate the rural areas of Gafsa (Redeyef, Métlouï, Om El Araïes) through mining operations, which marked a turning point in the transformation of the previous lifestyle of the Bedouin nomadic society, whose natural and social space was restructured according to the engineering of the colonial companies and under the impact of the new economic reality.

In this context, it should be noted that on 1 January 1916, the French authorities set up a department within the Ministry of War responsible for recruiting workers from the colonies. This department managed the affairs of some 500,000 workers from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria who were employed in the French national army, in industrial factories and in the agricultural sector. From the early 1920s, the process of employing and exploiting these migrant workers in various sectors in the French colonies, especially in mining, was intensified. The colonial authorities in Tunisia were forced to import Moroccan and Algerian labour, which led to the opening of mining operations in the south-western regions of Tunisia, as the local population was reluctant to engage in wage labour in mining. (El-Tayeb, 2008, pp. 36-38)

Conclusion:

The political differences between the rulers of the Algerian and Tunisian provinces did not affect the continuous communication and links between the two peoples through the economic, social, cultural and religious ties that persisted even after the French occupation of Algeria.

The violent economic transformations brought about by the French occupation along the borders between the two countries, through the confiscation of land and restrictions on the movement of tribal and pastoral populations, led to profound changes in the living patterns of the population in general and the nomads in particular.

The spatial restrictions and systematic controls, as well as years of drought, contributed to a gradual and steady weakening of the effectiveness of tribal structures and traditional forms of

solidarity and organisation, represented by the institution of the Tariqah (Sufi order) and the institution of the notables.

The continuation of communication between the inhabitants of the border areas of the two countries, despite the restrictions imposed by the occupation administration, as acknowledged by the occupation authorities themselves, who confirm in their reports the phenomenon of smuggling, which they describe as insolent and impossible to resist or prevent.

The discovery by the occupying administration of mineral resources in the border area, particularly phosphate mines, has led to the transformation and migration of many members of the tribes to work in these mines under tragic conditions.

7. Comments

01 - The reign of Mourad III (1699-1702): The last of the Muradid Beys, Mourad Bey III, who expelled Mohammad bin Shoukr, the author of the dynasty's downfall, was known for his tyranny, his crimes against the people and his boundless cruelty. It is said that he liked to carry out and supervise bloody tortures. The Tunisians gave him the title "Mourad Boubala" (Boubala is the broad Turkish sword). He used to go out with the army, confiscate people's food, commit crimes and supervise them himself. Ibn Abi al-Diyaf mentions the following about the behaviour of Mourad the Third: "He has a sword called the boubala with which he spills human blood. And when he does not kill anyone, he says, 'The Bubalah is hungry,' and he goes out with it and kills whoever confronts him, which is why he was known as Murad Abi Boubala". According to the same writer, "He respected no one, and even the scholars he used to despise, saying: 'He would play with the scholars and humiliate them, and perhaps he would invite some of them to his drinking session and ask them about his biography. Whoever praised and flattered him, he would humiliate and make him drink wine, and whoever told him the truth, he would threaten and force him to drink wine'".

He later turned his enmity against the Algerian rulers of the Ottoman Turks. In early 1112 AH/1700 AD, Mourad III sent envoys to the Dey of Algiers (Moutafa Ahshi: he was Baba al-Hajj Moustafa Dey, who ruled in 1700-1705) with a gift, which the Dey refused, and he showed him hostility. Murad III was furious and decided to wage war against the Algerians. After besieging Constantin, Mourad Bey was defeated by the Algerian army on 3 October 1700 and many of his soldiers were killed.

The Ottoman Sultan Moustafa II (1695-1703) tried to intervene to resolve the internal situation and stop the fighting between Algeria and Tunisia, but Mourad III did not heed the Sultan's orders.

The Sultan then ordered Ibrahim al-Sharif Agha al-Sabahiyah to get rid of Murad III, which he did in 1702. With the killing of Mourad III, the Muradid experiment and dynasty came to an end.

02 - Ghouffi: A village south-east of the Wilayah of Batna, in the Ghasira community, Takout district, on the regional road from Biskra to Batna via Arris, 45 km from Biskra. A village southeast of the wilayah of Batna, in the Ghasira community, Takout district, on the regional

road from Biskra to Batna via Arris, 45 km from Biskra. A village southeast of the wilayah of Batna, in the Ghasira community, Takout district, on the regional road from Biskra to Batna via Arris, 45 km from Biskra.

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