

The most important Civilizational Centers and Cities of the Cirtean Confederation

Dr. Benbouzid Lakhdar¹, Dr. ATTIA Samira²

¹University Mohamed Khider .Biskra (Algeria)

²University Echahid Hamma Lakhdar . Eloued (Algeria)

Email : l.benbouzid@univ-biskra.dz, atia-samira@univ-eloued.dz

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Abstract:

The Cirtean Confederation, a broad alliance of interconnected cities and regional areas, is renowned for its dynamic economic features. Within this union, several urban centers emerge as major influencers and vital contributors to the economic landscape, exerting significant influence on the overall economic prosperity of the confederation. This paper delves into the most important urban centers within the union and explores how their economic vitality deeply influences the capital, Cirta. Among these are the cities of Rusicade, Chullu, and the centers of Tiddis and Thibilis, which serve as powerful drivers of economic growth. Each city boasts its own strengths and unique features, and their economic vitality directly impacts the capital, Cirta, which acts as the focal point for the confederation's economic activities. Understanding the interconnectedness of these urban centers is essential for comprehending the overarching economic mechanism and development of the ancient Cirtean Confederation during the Roman era.

Keywords: Cirtean Confederation, Cirta, Rusicade, Chullu, Arscal, Thibilis, Tiddis, Sila.

Introduction:

The Cirtean Confederation was a political and social coalition of the Cirtean peoples in North Africa during the Roman occupation. The Cirtean tribes formed an alliance or confederation to resist Roman domination and to preserve their unique identity and culture. The Cirtean Confederation symbolizes the Cirtean resistance against the Romans, with various tribes and communities uniting under one banner to confront Roman forces. The Cirtean Confederation had an organizational and leadership structure, including tribal leaders and commanders. Despite their efforts to resist, Roman occupation continued, successfully conquering many Cirtean areas. After a period of resistance, the Cirtean Confederation was eventually dismantled and dispersed under Roman pressure, with some of its members being recruited into Roman service.

In the first century AD, the African provinces were of great significance within the Roman Empire. Within its boundaries, the Cirtean Confederation emerged as a prominent political entity, comprising

many cities and centers that played a critical role in the social, economic, and cultural fabric of the province. This research aims to shed light on the most important cities of the Cirtean Confederation, with a particular focus on the urban centers within Cirta, emphasizing the cities' roles as points of exchange through economic relations.

I. The Cirtean Confederation: Exploring Regional Centers in Africa in the First Century AD

1-The Cirtean Confederation:

The Cirtean Confederation was a coalition of cities and tribal communities located in the main Cirta region of Africa, encompassing parts of what is now northeastern Algeria. This confederation held significant strategic importance due to its proximity to the Mediterranean coast and vital grain supply routes, even before Roman occupation. (Ghanem, 2008, p. 180). The origins of the Cirtean Confederation can be traced back to 25 BC, when Octavius united the two African provinces into one known as Africa Proconsularis. (Agoun, 2019, p. 52). Cirta transitioned from being the capital of a kingdom to a major colony within the confederation, eventually becoming isolated due to the dissolution of the confederation in the latter half of the third century AD (Reynolds, 1959, p. 177).

Classification of Cities in the Cirtean Confederation Based on Their Legal Status:

- Colonies (Coloniae):** Sicca, Maxula, Cirta, Urhina, Thuburbo Majus.
- Roman Towns (Civitas Romanorum):** Simitthus, Utica, Tabraca, Assuras.
- Free Towns (Oppida Libera):** Hadrumetum, Thyadra, Clupea, Curubis, Neapolis.
- Forts or Small Towns (Oppida):** Rusicade, Chullu, Hippo Diarrhytus (Carpis) (Agoun, 2019, p. 43).

These are some additional examples of cities that were part of the Cirtean Confederation (Critean Confederation). Specific dates for the beginning and end of its existence are not precisely defined in historical sources. However, the approximate period of the Cirtean Confederation's existence can be inferred based on historical events related to the Roman occupation of Africa. It is believed that the Cirtean Confederation emerged and unified during the second century BC and continued throughout the Roman period in Africa. During this time, the Cirteans formed alliances to maintain their autonomy and culture.

2- Cirta, the Capital of the Cirtean Confederation:

Cirta, also known as Kirta or modern-day Constantine (Ghanem, 2008), was the capital of the Cirtean Confederation. Located in the north-central part of modern Algeria, Cirta was a thriving urban center and served as a vital hub for trade and Roman administration during the first century AD.

2 -1 Economic Significance of Cirta:

Cirta's strategic location made it an important trading center. The city's proximity to major trade routes facilitated the exchange of goods, including agricultural products, textiles, and metals, especially olive oil (Favereau, 2014, p. 40). Cirta's economic prosperity contributed to its growth and attracted traders from various parts of the Roman Empire (Agoun, M., 2008, p. 118). Known for its fertile lands, Cirta was a major center for grain and wine trade. The cities of Rusicade, Chullu, and Milev were annexed to Cirta, which retained its role as the regional capital, and the area gradually came under the control of the Third Augustan Legion (Briand-Ponsart, 2006, p. 111).

2-2 Political and Administrative Significance:

As the capital of the Cirtean Confederation, Cirta held significant political and administrative authority. It served as the headquarters for the confederation's leaders and was responsible for managing the confederation's affairs and maintaining relations with Rome. The city's political and administrative institutions played a vital role in governing the surrounding areas (Briand-Ponsart, 2006, p. 106). From Cirta, with its administrative autonomy and control over a vast region, the colony was established by the state, settling a certain number of peasants there. The fact that the lands allocated to them were taken from local tribal communities cultivating the remaining land formed the basis or concept of the colony (Larbi, 2008, p. 63).

II- The most important Urban Centers Within the Cirtean Confederation:

Apart from Cirta, several other cities within the Cirtean Confederation were of significance during the first century AD. These centers played crucial roles in regional trade, as they were connected by a network of roads, with Cirta serving as the hub (Mesrati, 2009, p. 129). Cities such as Rusicade, Chullu, and Cirta (Larbi, 2008, p. 58), along with Castellum Celtianum, Caldis, and Castellum Tidditanorum (Reynolds, 1959, p. 177), were integral parts of this network. Administrative changes in Cirta occurred at the end of the first or the beginning of the second century, with the cities of Rusicade, Chullu, and Milev being annexed to Cirta, which retained its role as the regional capital, and the area gradually came under the authority of the representative of the Third Augustan Legion. However, many clues suggest that this development happened slowly over several decades (Briand-Ponsart, 2006, p. 111).

1 -Rusicade (Rusicada) – Skikda:

The city of Rusicade stands out as an economic powerhouse within the confederation, boasting a diverse and robust economy characterized by thriving industries such as finance and manufacturing. The city served as a major hub for international trade towards the northern Mediterranean, with its main seaport located at Stora in Rusicade (Briand-Ponsart, 2006, p. 106). Rusicade's economic output significantly contributed to the confederation's GDP (Beshary, 2015, p. 241). Its port, located 65 kilometers inland from Stora at Rusicade (Picard, 2020, p. 85), was a center for a vast rural settlement area and estates that attracted significant investments. As the region developed to supply Rome with grain, timber, and other foodstuffs, the presence of a port with industrial port facilities in Rusicade

and Stora, bustling with grain and particularly marble transportation, was notable (Stone, 2014, p. 578).

2- Chullu (Chullu) – El Kala:

The city of Chullu, known for its extraction of purple dye from sea shells and the boat and shipbuilding industry (Alexander Graham, 1902, p. 18), played a vital role in the confederation's economy. Chullu served as an attraction point for individuals, experiencing a steady influx of dye and ship merchants, generating significant revenue. Additionally, Chullu's industries contributed significantly to the confederation's economy (Achi, 2019, p. 403).

3 -Hippo Regius

Located near the coast of modern Annaba in Algeria, Hippo Regius was a significant city in the Syretic Union, serving as a center for maritime trade and renowned for its skilled artisans. Hippo Regius is also famous as the birthplace of the prominent theologian Augustine. The city gained a notable reputation as a key center within the union, characterized by its thriving ecosystem, which promoted the growth and development of agricultural products such as grains and olives. Additionally, its supportive infrastructure, most notably the port of Hippo Regius, had a profound impact on the economy of the Syretic Union (Achi, 2019, p. 403). Fishing was also significant, as depicted by the mosaic of an early pair of fishermen from Hippo Regius (Place, 2020, p. 17).

4 -Milev

Milev was a major industrial and agricultural center within the union, housing extensive artisanal manufacturing facilities that produced a wide range of goods for local and Roman markets. This contributed significantly to the country's export capacities. The industrial production of Milev greatly influenced the overall economic stability of the union, alongside its vast agricultural lands, which produced the finest grains, especially wheat (Kolendo, 1991, p. 14).

5-Cuicul (Djémila)

As the Syretic Confederation gathered under its wing, including the city of Cirta; the three cities of Rusicade, Chullu, and Milev, along with the fifth city Cuicul (Djémila) (Julian, 1983, p. 236) were added to the previous four cities (Duncan-Jones, 1974, p. 69). Cuicul's association with the Syretic Union was brief during the reigns of Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius (Aqoun, 2019, p. 40) and was dissolved shortly before that, as it was no longer mentioned from the time of Alexander Severus (Mercier, 1830). This occurred after Numidia was divided into a military zone and civilian lands, rich in agricultural activities such as grain production, particularly the highly sought-after quality wheat (Beshary, 2015, p. 245).

Among the many villages that would become part of this group, including the area of Castellum Celtianum, was one of the numerous cities that formed part of the Syretic Confederation. After the union of the four Syretic colonies (Cirta, Mileu, Rusicade, and Chullu) (Julian, 1983, p. 235), the Romans seized the agricultural lands and redirected their produce to the capital, Rome (Cheniti, 1985, p. 130).

6 -Thibilis

The city of Thibilis, known today as Announa, was a city within the Syretic Union, flourishing particularly at the end of the Antonine era and the beginning of the Severan era (Aounallah, 2019, p. 63). It was rich in fertile fields dominated by grain cultivation, while olive groves occupied the slopes of the region (Bowman & Wilson, 2013, p. 178).

7 -Tiddis

The city of Tiddis is located near Constantine, about 27 kilometers northwest. The Romans called it Castellum Tidditanorum, and the city had water reserves used for fertile lands (Boughera, 2015, p. 123). Tiddis was rich in natural resources, making it an important part of the grain-producing region within the Syretic Union (Boughera, 2015, p. 124). This city also contributed to Cirta's economy with various crafts, including dye vats spread throughout the city, similar to those used in preparing clay for pottery (Amraoui, 2020, p. 130).

Tiddis and Cirta were interconnected through shared commercial and economic activities during the Roman Empire. Cities like Tiddis contributed to the overall economic prosperity of the region by engaging in activities such as agriculture, mining, and the production of various goods. Trade networks and routes connected Tiddis with larger urban centers like Constantine, facilitating the exchange of goods and resources. The Roman road system and infrastructure facilitated this economic integration, as did the presence of a Roman administrative apparatus overseeing taxation, trade, and resource management. Thus, Tiddis and Cirta were economically linked as part of the broader Roman economic system in North Africa, participating in the exchange of trade and resources and contributing to the region's economic prosperity during Roman occupation (Fadel, 2014, p. 37).

III- Economic Revival with the Joining of Other Cities to the Syretic Union (Confederation Cirtienne)

On the southern side of the Syretic Union, a city known in 209 AD as Civitas Natabutum emerged. Numerous inscriptions discovered in Thubursicu Numidarum (Cheniti, 1984, p. 53) indicate its union with the cities of Cirta. It appears that this city, which was promoted to the rank of a municipality under the rule of Trajan, and later became a colony before Claudius II, was part of the union.

A similar effort was made in the high plains and mountains to the east of the Syretic Union, evidenced by the municipalities of Calama and Thubursicu (Cheniti, 1985, p. 130), along with the Thubursicu region belonging to the Syretic Union (Beshary, 2015, p. 245). The city of Thibilis, another member of the Syretic Union, flourished particularly at the end of the Antonine period and the beginning of the Severan era (Bertrand, p. 23). There were also several other cities and centers that were part of the Syretic Union, among which the following places can be mentioned by their Latin names: Sufes, Saldia (Picard, 2020, p. 85), Tucca, Bagai, Thibilis, and Thysdrus, the latter known as the capital of olives (Beshary, 2015, p. 305; Fabre, 2014, p. 40; Picard, 2020, p. 78). Ammaedara is also worth mentioning (Hegazi, 2008, p. 241).

Conclusion :

The Syretic Union in the province of Africa during the 1st century AD was a political entity comprising a group of cities and centers. Among these, Cirta stood out as the capital of the union, holding significant political, administrative, and economic importance. Other prominent cities contributed to the cultural diversity of the union, regional trade, and overall prosperity. Exploring the Syretic Union provides valuable insights into the complex mechanisms of the development of the provinces of Africa in general.

Within the union, several urban centers emerged as vital contributors to the economic landscape. The cities of Rusicade, Milev, and Chullu stood out as strong drivers of economic growth, each with its unique strengths and industries. The economic vitality of these urban centers directly influenced the capital, Cirta, which served as the focal point for the union's economic activities. Understanding the interconnection and synergy between these urban centers is crucial to grasping the overall economic health and development of the union during the Roman occupation of Africa.

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