

## **The Economic and Financial Reality in Ottoman Algeria: Evidence of Social and Political Changes in the Eastern Beylik as a Model**

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### **Abstract:**

During the Ottoman period, Algeria was divided into three major Beyliks: the Eastern, Western, and Titteri Beylik. Each Beylik played an essential role in economic management.

The Eastern Beylik was notable for its agricultural and commercial resources, as well as its craftsmanship industries. It also had a unique currency system composed of local and foreign currencies, with Ottoman coins playing a prominent role alongside limited European currency circulation in Algeria. This raises several questions: To what extent was the local currency in the Eastern Beylik affected? Were there unified economic policies? How did the Ottoman tax system support the local economy?

Did the introduction of the French franc impact the value of the Algerian rial? These questions will be addressed through a documentary study tracing currency changes and values in the court records from 1827 to 1845.

**Keywords:** Bailek East, Currency, Economic Policy, Money Deed House, Tax System, Economic Diversity.

### **First: Introduction:**

During the Ottoman era, particularly towards its end, Algeria experienced profound economic transformations influenced by complex internal and external factors. Agriculture relied heavily on traditional, rain-fed methods, which led to reduced output and a reliance on basic food crops like wheat, barley, and other grains. In industry, traditional crafts such as carpet weaving, textiles, and leather dominated, while trade was heavily linked to the Mediterranean. Algeria exported

grains, wool, and leather, and imported manufactured goods and consumer products. Several factors influenced the economy, including a centralized financial policy that collected taxes to send to the capital, affecting local production incentives. Additionally, wars and global trade had significant effects on the economy of the Eastern Beylik.

Currency also played an essential role in the Ottoman economy over its long history, influenced by many internal and external factors, facilitating both domestic and international trade. However, currency value was also impacted by the aforementioned factors. This raises the following question: How did the role of currency change over time in Ottoman Algeria? What were the main features of the economic reality, and how did currency affect daily life and political authority in the Eastern Beylik? This study employs a descriptive, analytical, and statistical historical methodology.

### **Second: The Beginnings of Currency Circulation in Ottoman Algeria:**

The Ottoman successors, from the establishment of their state until the early stages of World War I, minted their coins in gold, silver, and copper. In the early periods, these coins were small and simple in design, later becoming larger, more attractive, and purer in quality. In the 16th century, Algeria became nominally part of the Ottoman Empire, mentioning the Sultan's name in Friday sermons and minting coins in his name. In the initial Ottoman rule, known as the "Beylerbey period," Algeria witnessed significant prosperity across various fields and was permitted to mint its coins, provided they bore the Ottoman Sultan's name. This is confirmed by the accounts of "Aruj and Khair ad-Din," with Khair ad-Din stating to the city's people: "...It has been decided to rely on God Almighty to protect this city, linking our allegiance to the Grand Sultan, our Lord Sultan Selim, may God grant him victory, who will provide us with money, men, and all we need for the defense." The first recorded instance of Ottoman currency in Algeria was mentioned by Hasan al-Wazzan, who noted that in 1516, after Salim Al-Tha'alibi's death, currency was minted under new leadership. The oldest Ottoman dinars minted in Algeria include two pieces in the Istanbul Museum, dated to Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in 1520, marking the beginning of his rule.

Regarding the "silver mansouria" coins in Algeria during the Beylerbey period, which became the primary unit in Algerian currency with unique artistry not found in gold and copper coins, these had a high silver content. Algeria minted several types, including the double rial, the boujou (pair boujou), the rial boujou, and the quarter rial. Only 30 silver pieces remain from the era of Sultan Selim I and Sultan Murad III.

During Hasan Pasha's rule in 985 AH/1577 AD, trade monopolies were established, taxes on tribes were increased, and coins were collected, as Silver was

removed from the market, melted down, and re-minted as currency before being sent to Constantine due to high demand. New silver coins were minted after mixing with copper. Among the copper coins minted at the Algiers mint (known as Al-Kharruba) were small coins, double-dirhams, and five-dirham pieces. These were well-crafted copper coins, including a dirham that came in two types: round and square, each featuring inscriptions and floral and geometric designs.

### **Third. Circulating Currencies:**

#### **1. Local Currency**

Since the financial system of the Algerian Regency was subject to monetary transaction laws, it is necessary to address the status and various systems of currency, which was central to all financial transactions at both the local and foreign levels. However, not all currency used in the Algerian Regency during the late Ottoman period was locally produced; there were two types: local and imported foreign currency.

The Algerian Regency minted various types of gold coins, such as the dinar and the sultani, along with their subdivisions of halves and quarters.

**Dinar:** This dinar, with its multiples and subdivisions, was minted in the Zayyanid style in terms of appearance and content, weighing between 4.47g and 4.7g.

**Sultani:** Known as the Algerian gold dinar, the Sultani was named after the Ottoman Sultan. Initially called the dinar or "sultani dinar" in the early Ottoman period, it later became known as the "sultani." Among the Ottomans, it was also referred to as "altin," meaning "gold coin," while Europeans called it the "Algerian sequins."

The currency used in the later Ottoman period was not all locally produced; there was also imported currency of foreign origin.

#### **2. Foreign Currency**

Algerian currency faced competition from foreign currencies due to the rulers allowing their circulation. These included Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and French currencies, facilitated by a group of money-changers, many of whom were Jewish. The spread of foreign currencies stemmed from various factors, including Algeria's dealings with foreign companies, the receipt of European tributes in exchange for the ransom of captives, and the spoils pirates obtained at sea. However, the primary reason for this spread was Algeria's weak economy, which allowed foreign currencies to circulate in the country.

This also included Tunisian currency and coins from Spain, Morocco, and Ottoman territories in the East, like Egyptian gold and silver coins, as well as

coins from Italian states, Austria, Portugal, and France. However, the currencies that held a special place in Algerian markets were the Tunisian and Moroccan currencies due to proximity, similar political systems, and extensive trade relations.

Among the Tunisian currencies widespread in the Algerian Regency were the Nasserri dirham and the HaideriNasserri, named after "Haydar Pasha," the first Ottoman ruler of Kairouan in 1574. Later, the Tunisian silver rial and quarter-rial were minted in 1725. Significant Spanish currencies used in Algeria included:

**The Doubloon:** This is a gold dinar, known locally as the "dubloun," "doblou," or "dobnoni."

**The Ducat:** Its value was equivalent to the gold dinar.

**The Crown:** Made of pure silver, it was highly popular throughout Mediterranean countries.

**The Spanish Dollar:** Over time, its value became lower than that of the "golden mahboub."

**The Dirham or Spanish Rial:** Specialized mints produced it in Marseille, Genoa, Pisa, Montpellier, and Malaga, supplying the main North African trading centers such as Bejaia, Oran, Tlemcen, and Tunis.

Foreign currencies in the markets of the Algerian Regency served as an important source of financial and commercial exchange, with a wide variety of types and origins. It seemed that nearly every currency known at the time circulated in the Algerian Regency. This influx of foreign coins was due to Algeria's dealings with foreign companies, receiving its share of tributes and international gifts, and through the ransoming of Christian captives.

Despite their prevalence and variety, these foreign currencies were considered secondary. The Algerian currency itself experienced a period of stability from 1625 to 1815.

This stability was tied to the dominance of Spanish silver coins. Between 1725 and 1815, trade relations with France increased, providing Algeria with a steady source of silver currency.

In 1816, the period of currency stability ended, marked by a rapid decline in the value of the dirham and its denominations. According to some official documents,

a decree was issued on November 21 - December 20, 1816, reducing the currency's value by about one-quarter. Further adjustments were made in 1819, 1820, and 1822. The crisis was exacerbated by demographic challenges, plagues, epidemics, and popular uprisings, reaching its peak in 1817-1818.

#### **Fourth. Main Algerian Mints during the Ottoman Period (Mints):**

##### **The mints that produced currency in Algeria included:**

1. Algiers Mint: As the capital, Algiers housed the country's main industrial facilities, including the Military Industries, the Copper House (for casting cannons), the Gunpowder House as All these establishments were directly under the administration of the Baylik, which ensured they were supplied with necessary materials, metals, and labor.

The main mint in the Algerian Regency was originally located at the Palace of Jenina. In 1817, under the orders of Dey Hussein Pasha, it was relocated to the Casbah, where it was placed in a fortified position selected by Ali Khodja, following the advice of his advisor and successor Hussein. The treasury thus settled in a secure location, consisting of poorly lit, vaulted basements and corridors.

This mint had existed since the Zayyanid period, near the governing headquarters in Jenina. It was equipped with all the necessary tools, molds, stamps, and furnaces for melting metals and properly whitening coins. In its workshops, Jewish artisans worked under the supervision of the Amin as-Sikka (Chief of the Mint), assisted by three Muslim employees. In 1820, Dey Hussein ordered the mint to be moved to the new headquarters.

As the mint relocated, its responsibilities evolved, particularly regarding the supervision of jewelry and coinage. The role of supervision transferred from the Amin as-Sikka to the Ayyar, who oversaw the quality of gold and silver, and to the Wazzan, responsible for weighing the ingots and coins. There was also the Tabi'a (Stamp Supervisor), who checked the authenticity of the coins to ensure they were genuine.

The mint was equipped with all necessary tools, including molds, stamps, and furnaces for metal smelting and coin whitening. Approximately twenty-four workers, including Jewish artisans, operated under the supervision of the Amin as-Sikka, a high-ranking official responsible for coin inspection. This position was only given to someone fully trusted and knowledgeable, and the Amin as-Sikka would sometimes be sent by the Dey on political missions to the High Porte in Constantinople. Three Muslim employees assisted him in his duties. The Baylik

closely monitored the minting process, regulated the quantity and quality of metals used, and checked the weight of minted coins made of gold, silver, bronze, and copper.

The Algerian mint operated throughout the Turkish rule until it was demolished by the French colonialists in 1272 AH (1856 AD).

## **2. The Mint in Constantine:**

This mint, designed in the Ottoman style, was established by Ahmed Bey. It relied on resources from the region, using gold from desert mines and silver from the Sidi R'ghis Mountain on the borders of the Hrakta region. These coins bore the name of Sultan Mahmud II and were minted in Constantine, signifying the economic and political autonomy of the region. These coins, produced for nearly a decade between 1830 and 1837, followed the Ottoman style, with one side featuring the name of Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II (1808) and the other showing the date and place of minting (Constantine).

These coins were made from gold, silver, and precious metals collected from the locals and the Beys or obtained through piracy, European tributes, fines, or ransoms. The Deys also produced coins. Coins were also made from bronze and copper, and the workers would melt and mix these metals in specific proportions determined by the Algerian government. The coins bore the state's name and varied in weight and in the amount of gold or silver used in their production.

As for administrative supervision, the issuance of currency was ordered by the Dey, who had the sole authority to appoint or dismiss those responsible for minting, depending on their diligence and performance. He was assisted in his duties by the Khaznaji (treasurer).

## **3. The Mint in Tlemcen:**

The establishment of a mint in Tlemcen was supported by the city's thriving trade. Since the Middle Ages, Tlemcen held a prominent position as a central hub for trade exchanges between Europe and North Africa.

In addition, Jewish communities settled there after fleeing Andalusia, taking up various professions, notably jewelry-making and coin minting. Minting coins became one of the specialties of the Jewish community, with the Tlemcen mint producing coins in the Zayyanid style in the late Zayyanid and early Ottoman periods, especially gold coins. However, this activity ceased in the 17th century as currency production centralized in the main mint in Algiers, which became the sole mint for the Algerian Regency.

## **Fifth. The Role of Jews in Trade and Their Connection to Currency Decline:**

Jewish families, such as the Bacri and Busnach families, served as agents in most commercial cities, with representatives in Marseille, Livorno, Naples, and Genoa. Jewish merchants from Livorno benefited from trade facilities to transport their goods to North Africa and Europe.

The Jewish community played a vital role in facilitating foreign trade in cities like Livorno and Marseille. Jews from Livorno in Algeria leveraged European knowledge, navigation skills, and familiarity with European politics, which allowed some to achieve high and influential positions in Europe—a status they sought to replicate in Algeria.

The relationship between Jews and Europeans was mutually beneficial. The Jewish merchants sought wealth and profit, while the Europeans gained access to Algerian goods like wool, leather, and wheat, which supplied European markets. Additionally, there were elements of espionage and colonial schemes to occupy Algeria.

## **Jews engaged in various profit-driven activities, including:**

### **1. Currency Minting:**

Jewish involvement in Algeria's financial affairs extended to their oversight of the types of currency entering the state treasury. During the Ottoman period, they were responsible for weighing, examining, and verifying the authenticity of coins, whether they rose or fell in value according to international markets. Their expertise in this intricate field of coinage made them suitable for the role, as they were not perceived as a political threat by the authorities due to their small numbers and lack of ambitions for power. However, they were often closely monitored. Coin minting took place in the mint located near the Dey's palace, close to the Ketchaoua Mosque. In 1817, Dey Ali Khodja relocated the mint to the treasury at the Casbah.

The deep involvement of Jews in Algerian affairs is evident from their regular supervision of the currency entering the state treasury. During the Ottoman period, they weighed, inspected, and determined the authenticity of gold and silver coins. They monitored currency values according to international markets, a role for which their expertise in coinage made them highly suitable; as the authorities viewed the Jewish community as a minor group, posing no threat of rebellion or political ambition. However, they were kept under strict surveillance.

Coin minting took place at the mint, known as Dar al-Sikka, located near the Dey's palace, not far from the Ketchaoua Mosque. In 1817, Dey Ali Khodja selected a new location for it at the Casbah, adjacent to the general treasury. To

prevent any currency leaks or laxity in production, supervision of the mint was entrusted to an official called Amin al-Sikka, who was assisted by four employees, including two Jews. One was responsible for monitoring the quality of the coins and detecting counterfeit pieces, while the other checked the weight of the coins and announced their weights aloud. Besides their involvement with the treasury, Jews were also trusted by locals in transactions to avoid dealing in counterfeit currency, which became more common in the late Ottoman period.

## **Sixth. A Documentary Study from the Records of the Maliki Court in Constantine: Economic Conditions and Currency in Constantine from the Late Ottoman Era to the Beginning of French Occupation (1827–1845)**

### **1. Economic Conditions in Baylik al-Sharq**

Before discussing currency in Baylik al-Sharq and its capital Constantine, we begin with the economic conditions of the region before the city's occupation.

Baylik al-Sharq suffered from low production and harvest yields, along with a declining standard of living due to natural causes (drought, famine, locusts) and the monopolization of resources by certain groups at the expense of others, leading to widespread famine.

Constantine province relied primarily on agriculture. Rural populations lived off agricultural production, while city residents depended on traditional crafts and various administrative roles. In his memoirs, Ahmad Bey noted that the wealth of the Baylik lay mainly in wheat and wool, which were sold in the port of Annaba. Foreign trade played a minor role and did not contribute to economic progress.

The economy remained stagnant, resistant to renewal. This was due to limited internal communication between regions in the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa, which negatively impacted domestic markets. Consequently, migrations increased as industries in cities weakened due to the scarcity of internal markets and the migration of artisans. Further worsening conditions was the exploitation of Baylik resources by the Bey and privileged officials, who gained wealth at the expense of the populace.

#### **1.1 Agriculture**

The eastern Algerian region was known for various crops, primarily consumables (wheat, barley, chickpeas, lentils, and other grains), along with fruit trees like olives, grapevines, and a variety of vegetables and fruits. Essential goods like wheat, oils, and wool were often monopolized by the Dey and the Bey. This monopoly was exacerbated by the negative influence of muhafizun (officials) in

rural areas, who seized large agricultural areas in the high plains of Constantine, which remained neglected. Agriculture relied on simple, primitive methods due to the Turks' lack of interest in developing fertile lands and agricultural techniques.

Most residents engaged in three main types of agriculture: cereal farming (in fertile coastal and interior plains and some highlands), vegetable farming (in river valleys and desert oases), and livestock raising (sheep, cows, goats, horses, mules, and donkeys), which served both economic and daily life needs. The economy of pastoral areas (like the high plateaus) heavily relied on animal husbandry, the primary livelihood for those communities.

Economic interactions between the Baylik administration and locals were essential, with farmers forming the backbone of the tax system and agricultural activities.

## **1.2 Crafts**

Isolation during the Ottoman period allowed Constantine to preserve traditional structures from before Turkish rule. Craftsmen and traders were organized into guilds, each consisting of individuals practicing the same craft. These guilds functioned as semi-autonomous socio-economic units, a notable feature of society that persisted until the Ottoman era. In Constantine, craftsmanship became a defining cultural element, at times overshadowing other social identifiers, such that a person's craft could become a prominent feature of their identity.

Guilds brought together people of the same trade, including Jews, Christians, and Turks, to protect their economic interests. Muslims dominated weaving, leatherwork, grain production, tobacco processing, and tanning, while Jews specialized in precious metals, fine fabrics, and tailoring.

The cohesion of these guilds was reinforced by Constantine's organization into neighborhoods. Each neighborhood was a cluster of homes tied by family bonds, often stronger than mere proximity. By 1840, there were about seventy crafts in the city, with leatherwork (including tanning, saddle making, and shoemaking) as the most prominent. Leatherwork was well-studied, detailing each stage from tanning to production. Craftsmen faced challenges from French workshops following colonization. Estimates in 1840 reported approximately 450 tanners in Constantine, with 314 leather workshops and shoemaking facilities, indicating that most establishments were small and individually run.

Artisans lived in neighborhoods according to their trades. The city was divided into four main districts with smaller neighborhoods, reflecting the distribution of various crafts. Tanners, for instance, were spread across areas like Bab al-Jabiya,

Zalaika, Sidi Abdallah Cherif, and other locations, while saddle makers were found in Bab al-Jabiya, Tabala, and Kusha al-Zayya

Craftspeople with limited income, especially blacksmiths, are commonly found in areas such as Zanqat al-Rawamil, Halmousha, Sidi Khalil, and Sabbat Bin Flous. However, tailors do not have a designated neighborhood; their residences are scattered across different areas. Notably, there is no clear division or specialization of crafts by neighborhood, leading us to conclude that there is a clustering of crafts within households but not necessarily at the neighborhood level, as artisans are dispersed across various neighborhoods.

In the early 19th century, industries were organized around a close-knit relationship between workers and employers. Some roles could not be filled directly, which encouraged familial solidarity and solidarity within the same craft. This often meant that servants lived in their employer's home, or laborers resided in the workshop.

This arrangement did not disrupt social harmony but was a characteristic of Islamic cities, which consisted of self-contained groups with minimal overlap in activities or roles, even if geographically close.

However, these craftsmen faced challenges after the French occupation due to competition from French and European industries, which included agricultural products like mills, oil presses, leather tanning, and shoe manufacturing. This led to a gradual decline of manual industries, which struggled to compete with the machinery and the quality and price of French industrial products.

### **1-3 Trade**

Trade was a primary source of wealth, linked with agriculture and crafts. Traveling vendors facilitated trade between these sectors, and markets played a central role, operating throughout the year and week.

The weekly market system was a prominent feature of trade. Each village or small town held a market on a designated day, avoiding overlap with nearby villages, allowing rural residents to sell their agricultural products (fruits, vegetables, grains, animals, oils, honey, skins, wool, etc.) and purchase items from urban dwellers (plows, sickles, axes, fabrics, utensils, jewelry, coffee, sugar, etc.). Constantine served as a major market covering the needs of eastern Algeria, though the markets in the Kabyle regions were less developed. Goods in the city were sold through brokers, who had a symbolic role in advertising goods—a hallmark of urban commerce.

By 1840, there were 292 businesses, 314 tanneries, and 147 Jewish-owned enterprises, alongside 6 owned by the French.

Trade was divided into domestic (local) and foreign. The former took place in large villages, urban areas, and regions with daily and weekly markets, drawing people from near and far. These markets helped the economy evolve from mere subsistence to an exchange-based economy.

Foreign trade took two forms. The first was based on buying and selling, either through cash or barter, typically exchanging agricultural for industrial products. Constantine's trade was tied to caravans from Tunisia and the Sahara, importing silk fabrics and golden threads from the Arab East, and exporting copper, leather, livestock, henna, and gunpowder from Sudan and the Eastern Sahara.

The second type of foreign trade was maritime, conducted through the ports of Annaba, El Kala, Collo, and Jijel, primarily involving foreign traders with specific companies.

The French company at El Kala, also known as the "French Bastion," was a significant source of income for Algerian traders in the Constantine Beylik, especially the nearby Hanensha tribe, led by Bouaziz, who dealt directly with the company. Profits increased as the company expanded its activities, importing grains, hides, and wax from tribes and exporting them to Europe.

Merchants preferred dealing with European companies due to higher profits. The beys cultivated relations with tribal leaders by offering material incentives, encouraging them to visit Constantine, the Beylik capital, to supply goods and support their control over the tribes. This interaction fostered mutual interests between tribal sheikhs in the countryside and urban elites in Constantine, including officials and craftsmen who engaged in trade alongside the Beys.

## **2 - Currency and its Value in the Eastern Beylik**

The documents we have in hand – marriage and divorce contracts – allowed us to learn about the type of currency in circulation until it was replaced with another upon the entry and occupation of the city by the French. Here are some of the names of the currencies used before the French arrival:

The Riyal, a single Riyal, Sikka al-Waqt, Sikka al-Jaza'ir, Algerian Riyal Basit, small Dirhams, and Tunisian Sikka. These currencies appeared in the contracts we studied, starting from the year 1246 AH (1827 CE) to 1251 AH (1836 CE), during the reign of Ahmad Bey, who sought to mint his own currency to achieve economic and political independence. He minted this currency after collecting gold from the people of the desert and used a silver mine discovered in the Ragis Mountains in the Hrakta region. These coins were minted beginning in 1830, 1832, 1834, and 1837, with an Ottoman style (from gold, silver, bronze, and copper).

The coins were minted in the name of the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II, and on the other side was the date and place of minting in Constantine. The Riyal currency was the most commonly used, as it prominently appeared in contracts through the value of the dowry until the appearance of the Franc currency following the French entry and occupation of the city. By examining the transitional period through the previously mentioned currencies, we can determine when they completely disappeared and were replaced by the Franc.

It is noticeable that the Riyal remained in circulation until 1258 AH, precisely in the month of Ramadan of the same year, corresponding to 1184–1842 CE, and more accurately in contract number 21, where the French Franc currency appeared but not as a final replacement. The Riyal continued to appear in other contracts after this year, with a blending of the two currencies beginning from 1258 AH into later years (1269 AH and 1273 AH, corresponding to 1852 and 1857 CE), as recorded in the last register preserved in the state archive.

The disappearance of the Riyal currency after Ramadan of 1258 AH was noted, but it reappeared in Muharram 1259 AH, precisely starting from contract number 03, when the currency was written in the contracts. After 1258 AH, there was a mixture, as previously mentioned, of the Riyal and Franc currencies, noted as “Riyal Franquiya.”

The term “Franc” rarely appears on its own, but it began to clearly stand out from 1269 AH onward.

Example: A contract dated in the month of Rabi' al-Thani in the year 1259 AH – 1843 CE.

“The honorable Si al-Arabi ibn Umar al-Amoushi married the servant of God Fatima, daughter of Ali al-Qasim, a widow who had completed her waiting period, with a dowry of 200 Riyal Franquiya, with 150 to be paid immediately and the remainder in five years.

Her representative, the honorable Haj Zawawi ibn Ismail ibn Alawa, married her with her consent and acceptance, and the husband accepted the marriage with full knowledge between them.

From the phrase “Riyal Franquiya,” it became clear to me that the value of the Riyal at this time was equal to the value of the Franc, but the use of the Riyal currency ceased beginning in the year 1269 AH and was gradually replaced by the Franc.

To clarify some differences between the Ottoman and French periods regarding prices and the purchasing power of money, whether in Riyals or Francs, we can say that someone who did not experience the Turkish era, its economic activity,

or the standard of living, clothing, wages, and affordability, would find the changes quite significant. For example, a soldier's salary during the Ottoman period, compared to the French period, reveals that a soldier in the Ottoman era had an annual salary of 100 Riyals from the Pasha. This amount was sufficient for him to buy essentials like wheat, butter, dried meat (jerky), oil, clothing, and housing rent, and he might even save some if he managed his expenses well.

Thus, an employee in the Turkish era could meet many needs with a small amount of money. However, during the French period, prices increased significantly, and the purchasing power of 1 Turkish Riyal was no longer equivalent to even 100 French Francs; rather, it was closer to 1,000 French Francs. This depreciation of the Riyal against the Franc was due to harsh economic conditions that impacted the purchasing power of the population, who relied mainly on agricultural produce, earnings from handicrafts or trade, or their monthly salary from work in administrative or military roles.

What the population earned in cash was insufficient to cover their basic needs or achieve self-sufficiency due to the low value of Turkish currency compared to French currency, resulting from rising prices, especially for essential food items like wheat and barley, which were vital for survival.

Example: Contract No. 14, dated in the month of Shawwal, 1253 AH – 1837 CE.

“Praise be to God. The servant of God, Khadija, daughter of Belkacem Al-Amoushi, claimed that her daughter, Yamouna, daughter of Mustafa Belhoway bin Ammar Al-Turki, was ready for marriage as she was reaching maturity, and Khadija feared for her well-being and financial needs, especially during this difficult time when food, clothing, provisions, and other necessities had become so costly. She arranged for her daughter to marry her brother-in-law, Al-Arabi bin Al-Zalaki of the Sidi Moussa family, and requested permission for this marriage. When the judge heard her statement and understood her concern, he showed his support to ease her heart about her daughter’s future. She appointed her husband, Si Al-Sharif bin Al-Zalaki, to arrange the marriage of his nephew Si Al-Arabi, with a dowry of 200 Riyals, confirmed by full attestation, and the groom accepted the marriage with full understanding among them.” – Baradai Muhammad, son of the late Suleiman Al-Sharif.

### **Sixth: Impact of Currency and Prices During the Beys’ Rule**

Natural disasters, droughts, and epidemics affected the economy, causing price hikes and reduced agricultural production. During the rule of Saleh Bey, a severe famine struck Constantine and its surroundings, raising the price of wheat to 5 Riyals per unit.

In 1838, a year after the city's occupation, with General Négrier as the governor of Constantine, there was a severe drought and famine that negatively impacted grain crops, ruining the plants and destroying the harvest. At that time, French laws and regulations had not yet been fully implemented, as they were introduced only a short time after. Consequently, prices rose sharply, especially for grains (wheat and barley) and other goods such as meat, butter, honey, and dates etc...

Before the crisis, prices were low, but then rose to 80, 90, or 100 Francs per "sa'a" (unit of measure), though only for a short time. The Jewish community took advantage of the situation, seizing people's properties through sales, rentals, or pawning at very low prices. Houses that had been worth 10,000 were sold for just 1,000 or 2,000, and those that had rental values of 1,000 or 2,000 were rented for only 100 Francs.

The increase in prices was not due solely to famine and drought but also to the occupation itself, which led to the elimination of the local bourgeoisie, the seizure of properties, the decline of traditional crafts and industries, and various economic activities. Additionally, the gradual withdrawal of Turkish currency and the rising cost of living contributed to this situation. French institutional records from 1838 also show that the influx and growing number of Europeans harmed local trade and significantly reduced market activity.

As for the activities practiced by the inhabitants (whether rural or urban), they too were affected by the above-mentioned reasons, which impacted their livelihoods, along with new developments related to the French occupation and the implementation of policies that harmed them, whether directly or indirectly.

Certainly, political and economic conditions directly impact the social sphere, as these three domains are interconnected. Since the economic structure is unified and interlinked, any change, whether relative or complete, in one of these areas affects the others due to their close connection, especially in the social domain. The social conditions of the population primarily depend on their living and economic conditions, which are, in turn, positively or negatively influenced by political systems, whether in times of peace or war.

## **Conclusion**

The economy in the Eastern Beylik was marked by a considerable diversity, encompassing agriculture, trade, industry, and handicrafts. This diversity benefited from the natural resources available in the region, such as agricultural lands and natural ports.

Agriculture was the backbone of the economy. Trade played a crucial role as well, although Ottoman economic policies were unstable, impacting economic stability in the Beylik.

Currency played an important role in the politics and governance of Ottoman Algeria, closely tied to the state's financial system, international trade, and relations with other countries.

-In international trade, currency was used to pay for imported and exported goods and services.

-Algeria was a significant commercial hub in the Mediterranean, with its currency widely accepted throughout the region.

In relations with other countries:

-Currency was also used in relations with other countries for paying tribute, customs duties, and gifts.

-The devaluation of Ottoman currency in the 18th and 19th centuries weakened Algeria's standing on the international stage.

-The Algerian monetary system had a significant influence on politics and governance.

-Problems of inflation and currency devaluation led to social and political unrest.

-The Ottoman government used monetary policy as a tool to control the economy and influence political behaviors.

Currency played a central role in various aspects of life in Ottoman Algeria, intricately linked to the state's financial system, trade, politics, and governance.

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