

Social reforms in Tunisia during the reign of Ahmed Bey 1837-1855 (The phenomenon of slavery causes and consequences of abolition)

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Laboratory name: Mediterranean Historical Studies Laboratory through the Ages,
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Received: 28/07/2023

Accepted: 14/05/2024

Published: 31/01/2025

Abstract:

Tunisia, like the rest of the countries of Africa, has known the phenomenon of slavery since ancient times, and slavery was brought from sub-Saharan Africa through commercial caravans, but the phenomenon of slavery in Tunisia during the 19th century AD took a new turn due to the reforms that Tunisia witnessed, where slavery was abolished during the reign of Ahmed Bey due to external repercussions and internal reasons, so we will address this topic to know the conditions of slavery and search for the causes and consequences of its abolition

Keywords: Tunisia - reforms - slavery - abolition of slavery - Ahmed Bey.

1. INTRODUCTION

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Despite the cessation of a caravan that stopped bringing slaves due to the French occupation of Algeria, and the shift of the Ghadames caravan route, which now passes through Tripoli directly, and despite the transformation of global trade routes across the seas and the control of the Europeans over them, and the decline of this trade in the 19th century AD, slaves continued to be sold in the markets of Tunisia.

The blacks worked in the cities as domestic servants, while they worked in the interior regions of the country, especially in the oases of the south, mainly in agriculture.

The ownership of slaves was firmly established in Tunisian society and was considered one of the manifestations of prestige in it, so Ahmed Bey worked to abolish slavery in it in stages.

What are the stages of abolishing slavery and what are its causes? What were the results of this decision?

2. SOCIAL REFORMS:

There have been slaves in Tunisia since the ancient times of the Carthaginian* era, and their liberation was the most important achievement that Ahmed Bey† achieved during his reign *in the social field during the

* -Mohammed Abid, **Imperial slaves and freedmen in proconsular Africa under the high empire**, volume 1, Thesis of Doctorate in ancient history, Tunis, July 2008, p12, p27.

† -Ahmed Bey: He is Abu al-Abbas Ahmed bin Mustafa bin Mahmoud bin Muhammad al-Rashid bin Hussein bin Ali Turki. He was born on December 2, 1806. Raised by Mustafa Sahib al-Tabaa, he assumed power and was sold on October 10, 1837 AD. Sultan Mahmud II sent him the firman of the Tuliyyah and the Meshiriyya, and he carried out several reforms, including collecting more than 30 thousand soldiers, building ties and towers and charging them with weapons and cannons. Books and volumes at Al-Zaytouna Mosque. He sent aid to the Ottoman Empire in its war with Russia. He died on June 1, 1855. See Muhammad bin Othman Al-Senussi, **Musamarat Al-Zarif with Good Definition**, under the name of Muhammad Al-Shazly Al-Naifer, Part 1, Edition 1, Dar Al-Gharb Al-Islami, Beirut, 1994 AD, pp. 137-145.

19th century AD.. Slaves were used to serve in the homes of the wealthy, the palace of the Bey, or farming, and slaves were offered for sale every Friday in the Al-Baraka market in the same way that animals[†] are sold.

The decision to abolish slavery was a risk because it would confront a large part of the Tunisian society, which considered slavery as part of its natural system,[‡] in addition to the economic harm that would result in the loss of people's money,[§] which explains the way to deal with the issue, as the gradual abolition of slavery^{**} was adopted.

2.1.THE STAGES OF ABOLISHING SLAVERY:

The first procedure is to abolish the habit of raising the manumission newspapers on reeds behind funerals since 1837 AD on the occasion of the death of Bey Mustafa, as many were manumitted and their names^{††} were removed. He took the initiative to prevent the export of slaves from Tunisia in^{‡‡} the year 1841 AD,^{§§} then he abolished the trade in them on September 6

* - Leila TemimeBlili, **Under the Roof of the Empire Days and Beys of Tunis 1666-1922**, Volume 2, Editions Script, Tunis, 2018, P214.

† - Hussein Jabbar Ibrahim, **((The Eyalet of Tunisia during the reign of Ahmed Pasha Bey, a historical study))**, The Arab Future, Volume 40, Issue 464, 2017 AD. pp. 74-75.

‡ - NouredineDokki, **((Slavery in Tunisia between Prohibition and Permissibility 1846-1890 AD))** eud/30625177/,//www.academia: http, time: 9:14 am, on 5/13/2023 AD, p. 3.

§ - A group of researchers, Tun Al-Hadi Al-Taymoumi, **The Disappeared inTunisia's Social History**, House of Wisdom, Carthage, Tunisia, 1999 AD. p. 400.

** - Nur al-Din al-Diqqi, the previous article, p. 3. See also a group of researchers, Tan al-Hadi Al-Taymoumi, the previous reference, p. 400.

†† - A group of researchers, Tan Al-Hadi Al-Taymoumi, previous reference, p. 399.

‡‡ - Nur al-Din al-Diqqi, himself, p. 3.

§§ - Ali Al-Mahjoubi, **The Modern Renaissance in the 19th Century, Why Did It Fail in Egypt and Tunisia and Succeed in Japan**, Siras Publishing, Tunis, 1999, p. 90.

of the same year in all the markets of al-Iyala, which means closing the Baraka* slave† market permanently. And he ordered the demolition of the shops designated for their sitting.‡

In April 1842 AD, they were banned from importing, and every newborn born in Tunisia is considered free, §including the children of slaves who are born after this date. They are considered free and may not be bought or sold.

However, Ahmed Bey narrated before the final abolition of slavery in Tunisia, in compliance with the prevailing traditions. He commissioned the writer Ahmed bin AbiDiaf to prepare the letter emphasizing the liberality of Islam regarding the emancipation of slaves, indicating that this corresponds to the requirements of politics, that is, the international context.**

Ahmed Bey was also keen to involve senior religious scholars†† and the people of the Sharia Council in implementing the decision, so the scholars wrote and all the slaves in Tunisia‡‡were emancipated. And that was on January 26, 1846§§ AD, and that was before he visited France,* so

* - Nour al-Din al-Diqqi, the previous article, pg. 3, and see also Ali al-Mahjubi, the previous reference, pg. 90.

† - Hassan Hosni Abdel-Wahhab, **Summary of the History of Tunisia**, 3rd edition, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Arabiya, Tunis, p. 168.

‡ - Al-Hadi bin Yunus bin Muhammad Al-Janshari, the **Hussainian state from 1705-1855 AD**, the official printing press of the Republic of Tunisia, W D, W P, p. 39.

§ - Ali Al-Mahjoubi, previous reference, pg. 90.

** - NouredineDokki, the previous article, p. 3.

†† - A group of researchers, Tun Al-Hadi Al-Taymoumi, previous reference, p. 400.

‡‡ - ShawqiAtallah Al-Jamal, **The Great Arab Maghreb in the Modern Age (Libya-Algeria-Tunisia-Morocco)**, 1st edition, The Anglo-Egyptian Library, Cairo, 1977 AD, p. 114, and see Hassan Hosni Abdel-Wahhab, the previous reference, p. 168.

§§ - Ahmed IbnAbiDiaf, edited by a committee from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, **Ahl al-Zaman's Association with the news of the kings of Tunisia and**

the state appointed an attorney in the most important corners in the areas where slaves reside. They write for each slave his liberation document, which the Bey himself signs.[†]

And this is part of the message: **((...that he decided to prevent people from this permissible...for fear of harming their brothers whom God has placed under their hands...and appointed an adula in the corner of SidiMahrez, the corner of Bakria and the corner of Sidi Mansur, they write for everyone who came for protection an argument in our ruling for him to free his master, which is submitted to us for sealing...)).[‡]**

This message received a great response from the representatives of the state, and the responses of the Hanafi and Maliki sectarian sheikhs showed their pleasure with this decision. And also the foreign circles, especially England.[§]

2.2 THE REASONS FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN TUNISIA:

1- According to IbnAbiDiaf, to satisfy the Ottoman Sultan, who asked Ahmed Bey to implement the regulations. Where the latter commands freedom. IbnAbiDiyaf said: **((...and in January 1846 CE, the order of the Bey was issued in the rest of his kingdom to free the Mamluks...and for this Bey, in the appearance of his condition, there is something of a tendency by nature to civilization whose foundation and command is freedom. **))**

the era of security, , vol 3.Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabiya, printed in the basic press, Tunis,W D.

*-Al-Sahrawi Qamoon, Taq Al-Shazly Al-Qalibi, **The Movement for Reform and Modernization in Tunisia**,Barq for Publishing and Distribution, Tunis, 2012 AD, p. 14.

[†]-A group of researchers, Tun Al-Hadi Al-Taymoumi, previous reference, p. 400.

[‡]- Ahmed IbnAbiDiaf, previous source, p. 87.

[§]- A group of authors, Tun Al-Hadi Al-Taymoumi, p. 401, and see Ahmed IbnAbiDiaf, the previous source, p. 88.

^{**}- Ahmed IbnAbiDiaf, previous source, p. 86.

2- The people of the Kingdom do not treat the slaves well, whom they placed under their protection in the legal manner that was commanded by the Islamic Sharia, where God Almighty commanded kindness to the slaves, considering them of the weak. *And the Almighty said:

"AND WORSHIP God [alone], and do not ascribe divinity, in any way, to aught beside Him. And do good unto your parents, and near of kin, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the neighbor from among your own people, and the neighbor who is a stranger, and the friend by your side, and the wayfarer, and those whom you rightfully possess. Verily, God does not love any of those who, full of self-conceit, act in a boastful manner[†]"

3- The interest necessitated that, and that is why people should be pushed to it by the Almighty's saying: ((Indeed, this Qur'an guides to that which is most upright, and give glad tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that they will have a great reward))[‡] as God honored the sons of Adam in the Noble Qur'an by the Almighty's saying: "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference.[§]"In this position, the slave and the free, the rich and the poor, male and female, are equal.

4- Ahmed Bey's interaction with a humanitarian campaign.

5- Ahmed Bey's understanding of the inferior situation that slaves were in in Tunisia, especially since his mother was a slave woman from Sardinia.

6- Tunis keeping pace with the external situation, especially the development in Europe and the reforms in the Islamic world.

7- Insofar as the slave trade was popular, there were organized campaigns led by human rights and humanitarian organizations to reduce this

* - Nasr Al-Juwaili, ((**The Liberation of Slaves in Tunisia in the Nineteenth Century**)), Al-Zaytouna University Journal, p. 3, 1994, p. 275.

[†] - The Holy Qur'an, Surat Al-Nisa, verse 36.

[‡] - The Holy Qur'an, Surat Al-Isra, verse 9.

[§] - The Holy Qur'an, Surat Al-Isra, verse 70.

phenomenon, including the French ^{**†}Association for the Abolition of Slavery and the British Foreign [‡]Anti-Slavery Association,[§]At the official level, Britain led the movement to abolish the bringing and enslavement of black slaves,^{**} where the ruler of England in 1841 sent a messenger to Ahmed Bey asking him to abolish slave ownership, as he wanted reform, slavery in their view is corruption and the sale of slaves in the market is very insulting to humans,^{††} and the British consul in Tunisia supported the campaign to sensitize the Bey in the human sense of the liberation of slaves^{‡‡}.For example, since the 29th of April 1841AD the British consul Thomas Reed^{§§}transferred his government's regret for the facilities granted by Tunisia to export slaves to the Ottoman Empire, so the Bey in August 1841 AD prevented the export of slaves^{***}, as the British government

*-There are those who say that the abolition of slavery came after Ahmed Bey's visit to France and his influence on what he saw there. See Fathi Al-Muaifi, ((**The Tunisian Elite and the National Reform Movement during the Nineteenth Century**)), Maghreb Journal of Historical and Social Studies, Volume 10, No. 2, 2019 AD, p 168, but this is not true because the decision to abolish slavery was issued before Ahmed Bey's visit to France. See Ahmed bin AbiDiaf, previous source, pp. 86-96.

†- NouredineDokki, the previous article, p. 2.

‡- The deputy of the Association ((Anti-British Slavery)) came to Tunisia in the year 1842 to urge the Tunisian authorities to complete what they started and returned again in the year 1845 AD, see KhalifaShater, Ibrahim Belkacem, Mur Ahmed Al-Khashosi, **Dependency and the pre-colonial transformations of the Eyalet of Tunisia from the year 1815 AD-to the year 1857 AD**, Sinatra House, Tunis, 2015, p 506.

§- KhalifaShater, previous reference, p 504.

** - NouredineDokki, the previous article, p 2.

†† - Muhammad bin Salama, Taqwah Ahmad al-Tawili, **The Composed Contract in the News of Marshal al-Basha Ahmed**, 1st Edition, The Tunisian Company for Publishing and Development of Graphic Arts, Tunisia, 2020 AD, p 284.

‡‡- NouredineDokki, the previous article, p 2.

§§- KhalifaShater, previous reference, p 504.

*** - Hussein Jabbar Ibrahim, the previous article, p 75.

rushed to congratulate him in June 1841 AD and the British Queen presented him with a gift to celebrate this event.*

It is noticeable that the pressures exerted on Ahmed Bey were peaceful and did not reach the level of threat exerted by the British fleet, led by Lord Exmouth in 1816 AD, to abolish piracy and abolish the enslavement of Christians[†]. That is why the abolition of slavery was more a matter of conviction for Ahmed Bey than submission and the appearance of a civilized ruler.[‡]

8-Blocking the door of the pretext represented by the slaves sheltering in the consuls, and on the other hand, gaining the admiration and respect of the Europeans for the Bey[§].

9-The decline of the desert trade, which relied mainly on the slave trade.

10-The need for them diminished because of the mechanical power provided by the industrial revolution, which replaced human power in many countries, but Tunisia did not use slaves as an economic force, but rather they were servants for families or guards for houses, with the exception of agricultural areas that depend on slaves.**

The number of slaves in Tunisia ranged between 50,000 and 70,000, and caravans brought until 1848 AD from 200 to 300 people. Then it all backed off.^{††}

2.3 THE RESULTS OF THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY:

1-the decision to abolish slavery proceeded very slowly due to the opposition to the decision. IbnAbiDiaf says that those who opposed the

* - KhalifaShater, previous reference, p 505.

† - NouredineDokki, the previous article, p 2.

‡ - KhalifaShater, previous reference, p507.

§ - Muhammad al-Hadi al-Sharif, **((The problem of reforms in Tunisia and its connection to the issue of Tunisian-Ottoman relations around 1840 AD))**, Reform and Moroccan Society in the Nineteenth Century, Study Days, Mohammed V University, Rabat, 1983 AD, p 139.

** - NouredineDokki, previous article, p 5.

†† -Nouredine Al-Dokki, himself, p 5.

decision were: ((...some scholars.*..the people of Djerba, the majority of Arabs and the people of agriculture...)) †The rich who own large numbers of slaves resented this decision. And traders who ended this decision on their profitable activity. The clergy opposed it because, in their opinion, it contradicts the provisions of religion. Even the French residents of Tunisia criticized the decision.‡

2-Many freed slaves became dependent on their masters, doing what servants do for little pay.

3-The opposition of a large number of slave owners to Ahmed Bey's decision to abolish slavery, as it was not mandatory except with regard to human trafficking, in addition to that it did not criminalize slave owners and did not stipulate any punishment for violators, so society persisted in considering slavery a normal practice.

4-Even the senior officials in the state, and even Muhammad Bey himself, wanted to back down from the decision and did not implement it in his palace.

5-The reluctance of many tribes to free slaves who are under their sponsorship.

6-The slave trade has turned into a parallel trade that is practiced without the attention of the authorities, §and this is confirmed by Ahmed bin Salamah by saying that buying and selling remains until now, but it is not a market.**

7- Enslavement did not disappear, but rather transformed into a new form. It worked by attaching female slaves to maids, sometimes by taking them

* - Here, many great scholars pleased and blessed the decision, such as Sheikh Muhammad Bayram, the head of the Hanafi fatwa, and Sheikh Ibrahim Al-Riahi, the chief of the people of fatwa in the Malikiyah, Nasr Al-Juwalli, the previous article, pp 283-285. And see Ahmed IbnAbiDiaf, the previous source, p 88.

† - Ahmed IbnAbiDiaf, previous source, p 89.

‡ - Hussein Jabbar Ibrahim, the previous article, p 75.

§ - NouredineDokki, the previous article, pp 6-8

** - Ahmed bin Salama, previous source, p285.

as wives, or by accepting the principle of formally emancipating them without demobilizing them or giving them emancipation deeds.*

8- The rest of the status of blacks is subject to follow-up by the British Consulate until it signed a treaty with Tunisia on July 19, 1876 AD on combating slavery.†

Hence, Tunisia was a pioneer in this decision, as France is in its colonies. Denmark did not abolish slavery except in the year 1848 AD. As for the Netherlands, it did abolish slavery except in the year 1862 AD. The slave trade continued in the Arab region until the beginning of the twentieth century.‡

The number of Mamluks coming from the East was decreasing, and after the Exmouth campaign and the independence of Greece, bringing the Mamluks from the Mediterranean countries became a risky venture, so they turned towards the Circassians. They were reduced to less than 500 in Ahmed Bey's army. But their position in the palace and their supremacy in the country did not end. The ministers of the Bey, the commanders of the soil, and the commanders of the army, with the exception of some, were all Mamluks, as carrying out responsibilities in the government was the prerogative of the Karaghla, Turks, Mamluks, Circassians,§ and Europeans such as Khazandar, who arrived in the ministry during the era of Ahmed Bey.**

However, the abolition of slavery did not include the Mamluks who continued to be brought from the east as slaves owned by the Bey, and the matter was limited to black slaves, and the Mamluks coming from Turkey and other countries were free in their work and movements, and they had a

* - Nur al-Din al-Diqqi, himself, pp 6-8

†- Nur al-Din al-Doqqi, himself, p 9.

‡- Nur al-Din al-Diqqi, himself, p 3.

§-KhalifaShater, previous reference, pp 500-501.

** -Mrad Dali lnes, **((Questions and problems of the phenotype in the comparative approach to slavery for Tunisia in the 19th century))**,<https://www.academia.eud/37049956/21:33,h,5/17/2023p14>.

subordinate relationship with their masters, as they were not slaves, and they were emancipated after the death of the Bey.*

4. CONCLUSION

-The implementation of the Bey order took place gradually, with the exception of remote areas that are not subject to the control of state agents.

- However, there was difficulty in implementing the decision to oppose the peasants and landlords because of their loss.

-The slave trade became a parallel trade.

-Emancipation included blacks only and did not include the partnership Mamluks.

-Tunisia was a pioneer in taking the decision to abolish slavery before the Ottoman Empire and the rest of the Arab and Islamic countries.

-The European influence, especially the British Association, appears clear on the Bey in the decision to abolish slavery, but it was more diplomatic influence than European pressure.

-Among them is the opinion of IbnDiaf that Ahmed Bey abolished slavery to please the Ottoman Sultan, as the abolition of slavery has freedom for slaves and freedom is one of the foundations of charitable organizations, and this is not true, as Ahmed Bey has always evaded the application of regulations because they are not valid for the Tunisian country and it takes a lot of time, and he was admired and close to Europeans, especially the French. But in his last days, he began to doubt the intentions of the French, rearranged his foreign policy, and began to approach the Ottoman Empire.

-Therefore, Ahmed Bey's abolition of slavery was more of his conviction than his submission, in order to appear as a civilized ruler.

*-NoureddineDokki, the previous article, p 4.

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