

French colonization and its impact on the inhabitants of the Tiaret region

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Abstract: Following the invasion of Algeria, the occupying authorities prioritized European settlement as a key strategy to consolidate control. Settlement in the Tiaret region intensified after General Lamoricière's capture of Tagdemt and Tiaret in 1843. The region's geography—comprising the fertile Tell Atlas, expansive highlands for livestock and esparto grass, and the Sahara Desert—offered settlers significant opportunities. Lamoricière established the Tiaret camp at the Roman city of Tingartia, a strategic link between the Tell Atlas and the steppes, prompting the creation of settlement centers, particularly in the agriculturally and commercially valuable Sersou Plain. General Bugeaud, a member of the National Assembly, criticized partial occupation as ineffective, advocating settlement as essential for subjugating the local population. Consequently, the Tiaret region attracted opportunistic European settlers who acquired land through speculation and extortion, creating a wealthy class at the expense of indigenous landowners, who faced poverty and suffering. Settlement thus became a central tool of colonial policy, reinforcing military and political domination in Algeria.

Keywords: Colonial settlement; History; Tiaret region; 19th century; Lamorcière, Kabylia, land confiscation

Introduction:

The Tiaret region is one of the most significant areas in Algeria. Its diverse topography and expansive plains, such as the Sersou and Tat plains, have always been a priority for occupying forces since the early days of invasion. This region is characterized by fertile soil, diverse vegetation, abundant water resources, and a temperate climate. These elements have created a suitable natural

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environment that has attracted human settlement since antiquity, allowing communities to establish themselves.

Numerous physical remnants still testify to this historical legacy, including the defensive lines and fortifications built by the Romans, which further highlight the region's geographical and economic importance. The appeal of Tiaret has consistently impressed those who came to it.

While many writers have explored the issue of settlement or the French construction policy aimed at confiscating local lands for settlers, most have primarily focused on coastal areas, which attracted large waves of immigrants. This focus has garnered significant attention from historians. However, studies on the settlement processes in high plateau regions, particularly in Tiaret, are notably scarce. There is only one master's thesis that attempts to highlight the settlement issue as an important phenomenon, yet it falls short in discussing the methods and means employed by colonialism to achieve its goals. Additionally, it does not adequately consider the geographical specificities and strategic dimensions of the region or the objectives laid out by the occupying army for carrying out settlement operations, which encompassed military, security, and demographic dimensions.

1. The geographical context of the Tiaret region

1.1. Geographical location:

Tiaret is situated 350 km southwest of Algiers, within the western High Plateaus. Its strategic location has made it a crossroads for trade routes from various directions, allowing it to dominate a significant portion of the vast steppe region, which is known for its high-quality pastures and serves as a wintering ground for shepherds.

Tiaret is bordered to the north by Tissemsilt and Relizane, to the west by Mascara and Saïda, to the south by Laghouat, to the southwest by El Bayadh, and to the east by Djelfa. The area of Tiaret is approximately 20,673 km²¹, resulting in diverse topography, varied climates, and a range of vegetation.

¹ Marc-André - Fabre. Monograph of the indigenous mixed commune region of Tiaret-Aflou, B,S,G,A, of the province of Oran, T XXII, p262

French colonization and its impact on the inhabitants of the Tiaret region

1-2 - Surface Features:

Two regions can be distinguished based on surface features:

2-1- The northern and north-western sections:

The region consists of a series of low, discontinuous mountains covered with cedar forests, including the Qazoul Mountains and Mount Sidi El Abed. To the southeast of the Sersou Plain are the Nador Mountains, which reach a height of 1,530 meters at the summit of Ras Fertas. This area was where Emir Abdelkader sought refuge after losing his capital, Zmala².

To the west, low, hilly mountains surround the Tat Plain, including the Frenda Mountains (the Qada and Bougchoua Mountains), which do not exceed 1,332 meters in height. To the south, relatively wide, high inland plains extend across the river basins, valleys, and mountain foothills, ranging in elevation from 400 to 500 meters. The most prominent of these is the Sersou Plain, which is rectangular in shape, bordered to the south by the Nador and Koujila Mountains and to the north by the Ouarsenis Mountains. It stretches from east to west, from Bougara to Tiaret and Frenda. The Tat Plain attracted settlers who established their farms there.

1-3 - Plains:

The Sersou Plain is a highland region with an average elevation of 950 meters. It has a low population density and expansive grazing lands, which have attracted settlers since 1880. Within this area, three distinct agricultural models were established: Mahdia (Bordeau), Tissemsilt (Vialar), and Tiaret. Following the administrative reforms of 1957, most of the land in the Sersou Plain came under the jurisdiction of Tiaret Province. The plain covers an area of over 2,121 km²³, extending more than 100 kilometers in length and varying in width from 35 kms in the east to 20 kms in the west. It borders the Chehbounia Plain to the east and the Chott

2 Aguila-Clément. Tiaret of my youth, Nice, edition: Jacques Gandini, 2002, p. 35

3 R-Perrin. Le Sersou: A study in human geography (First article). In: Méditerranée, 1st year, no. 2-3, 1960, p. 63

Chergui Depression to the southwest and is separated from the Tissemsilt Basin by the Oued Oussel River⁴.

1-4. Climate:

The northern part of Tiaret experiences a semi-humid climate, with annual rainfall ranging from 400 mm to 700 mm⁵. There are two distinct regions regarding precipitation: the western region, which includes Mellakou, Tiaret, and Mahdia, receives significant rainfall during the winter months, while the eastern region, represented by Sougueur, generally receives less rain, except for occasional spring floods. This climate has fostered dense vegetation and evergreen forests, as well as extensive cereal cultivation⁶.

In the southern region of Tiaret, a steppe climate predominates, serving as a transition between Mediterranean and desert climates. Rainfall in this area ranges from 300 mm to 500 mm annually. The plant life consists of dense or sparse clusters of grasses, short herbs, and shrubs, particularly in regions that are unsuitable for agriculture. This vegetation is crucial for grazing and serves as a renewable natural resource for important livestock, especially sheep. Additionally, the plant cover plays a vital role in protecting the environment and preventing soil erosion⁷.

1-5- Waterways:

There are two types of valleys: closed valleys, which are surrounded by mountains and collect a small amount of water to form river basins, and perennial valleys that connect to the Chelif Valley. The most significant rivers in this category are the Oued Oussel and Oued Mina⁸.

2. Economic capabilities:

The Tiaret region has significant agricultural and livestock potential, which has historically provided livelihoods for the tribes living in the Sersou plain, particularly the Ahrar and Beni Maida

4 R-Perrin, op. cit., p. 63

5 Mohamed El Hadi Laarouk, General Atlas of Algeria, p. 18

6 R-Perrin, op. cit., p. 69

7 Mohamed El Hadi Laarouk, same reference, 18

8 O'Niel. Geography of Algeria, T, 1, Bône, 1876. pp. 84, 85 See: Ahmed Tawfiq Al-Madani, Geography of the Algerian Country for Young Muslims, Arab Press, Algeria, p. 22

French colonization and its impact on the inhabitants of the Tiaret region

tribes. Tiaret encompasses an area of approximately 1,155,000 hectares⁹. Approximately 14,700 hectares are dedicated to cereal cultivation, which includes both wheat and barley. Annual wheat production is estimated at 12,000 quintals, while barley is cultivated over approximately 24,000 hectares. Additionally, 287,000 hectares are suitable for grazing, while 776,800 hectares remain uncultivated. The region also features 76,500 hectares of forested land, primarily covering Mount Nador and Mount Chebka. This forest is home to various wildlife, including wolves, wild boars, herds of gazelles found in Ain Dahab, hyenas, wild pigeons, and partridges.

The total population of the area is approximately 22,848¹⁰ individuals, distributed as follows:

- Around 22,198 residents live in tents;
- 559 European migrants;
- 21 soldiers stationed to defend the military post in Ain Dahab;
- 70 individuals from the M'zab Valley are involved in trade.

The population is composed of three main groups:

A. The Free Men of Sharaga: This group includes the descendants of Sidi Khaled Sharaga, Zawawi, Bouafif, Kaabera, Chaouia, and Belhassen.

B. The Free Men of Gharaba: This group consists of the descendants of Ziane Sharaga, Ziane Gharaba, Haddou, Dahalsa, and Murabitin Gharaba.

C. The Descendants of Khalif: This group includes the descendants of Bournan, Kharroubi, Sahari Sharaga, and Qanadza¹¹.

3- French occupation of Tiaret region:

After eleven years of repression, brutality, and genocide aimed at quelling the resistance against the occupying leaders, Bugeaud¹²

9 Marc-André-Fabre. Op. cit., 262

10 Marc-Andre-Fabre. op. cit. 70

11 Ibid.P262.

12 General Bugeaud (Thomas-Robert Bugeaud) was the Governor-General of Algeria, born in Limoges on October 15, 1781. He was commissioned as a corporal during the Battle of Austerlitz in December 1805 and was promoted to lieutenant the following year. He was then transferred to Spain, where he rose to the rank of colonel. After being exiled by the Bourbon dynasty, he worked in

implemented a policy of permanent expansion in 1840. He sought to isolate the loyal tribes from Emir Abdelkader using two main strategies¹³. The first involved political tactics, where he established alliances with certain local leaders and won over tribal leaders by granting them significant privileges.

The second method involved deploying large numbers of destroyers that decimated and burned crops, prevented Arabs from farming, cut down trees, isolated the population, and starved them, all in an effort to completely subjugate the region. This approach was explicitly stated by Bugeaud himself in 1840 when he was a member of the National Assembly, asserting that the policy of partial occupation was futile. One of Bugeaud's objectives within this strategy was to target the Emir's strongholds, including forts and castles. He proceeded to blow up the city's fortifications, destroy what remained of the infrastructure, and force the tribes into submission.

On February 25, 1842, General Lamoricière¹⁴ besieged the Bouziri tribe, which comprised 59 villages, in an attempt to subdue them. However, the Bouziri people refused Lamoricière's offers of surrender, leading to a battle. The occupying army ultimately defeated the locals in this unequal contest, resulting in the death of

agriculture until 1830. In 1836, he agreed with Emir Abdelkader and implemented a scorched-earth policy. He relinquished his post on September 11, 1847, to the Duke of Aumale and passed away on June 10, 1849. For further details, see Narcisse-Faucon, **Livre d'Or de l'Algérie**, Tome 1er, Paris, 1889, pp. 140-141.

13 Larbi Bouanani, *Popular Resistance in the Tiaret Region, 1830-1908, and the Position of Tribal and Religious Leaders on Colonialism*, thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Modern and Contemporary History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of History, University of Tlemcen, 2018-2019, p. 116.

14 Lamoricière (Christophe-Louis-Léon de Lamoricière): Born on February 5, 1800, in Nantes, he graduated from the École Pratique de Metz. He learned Arabic, which allowed him to communicate directly with the locals, who nicknamed him Bouhraoua. On June 21, he was given command of the army in Oran. He managed to subdue the Hachem tribe and control the Ghrib plain. Narcisse Faucon. *Golden Book of Algeria*. Paris 1889.

French colonization and its impact on the inhabitants of the Tiaret region

80 men and the capture of their livestock¹⁵. In 1843, the Emir regained his influence in the Tiaret region by encouraging the tribes to continue their resistance, prompting Lamoricière to establish a permanent base there. The French military presence among the tribes became essential to prevent rebellion. After occupying Tiaret, a strategic link between the Tell Atlas and the Sahara, he built a permanent military outpost.

In 1864, Hadj Kaddour Ben Sahraoui¹⁶, the leader of the Ahrar tribe, joined the Ouled Sidi Cheikh¹⁷ revolt, participating in the Battle of Aouinet Boubekeur, which resulted in the death of the supreme military commander of Tiaret, Beau prêtre¹⁸.

15 Camille Rousset: "The Conquest of Algeria, 1841-1857." Vol. 1. Paris 1889. P98

16 Charles André Julien, History of North Africa, translated by Mohamed Mezali and Al-Bashir Salama, Taoult Cultural Foundation, 2011, p. 334

17 Haj Qaddour bin Sahrawi: Belonging to the Ouled Sidi Khaled al-Gharaba, he enjoyed broad political and religious influence among the Ahrar tribe. He inherited this position after the death of his father, Si Safi bin Ahmed, the family leader, along with the last Bey of the Oran region. Emir Abdelkader entrusted him with religious leadership among the Ahrar tribe, which supported him, and appointed him leader of the Ouled Sidi Khaled. He contributed to supporting Emir Abdelkader when he besieged Ain Madhi. France accused him of being behind the killing of Colonel Boubrater in the Battle of Aouinet Boubekeur. He was also accused after investigations conducted by France proved his support for the Bouamama revolt, which ultimately led to his arrest. See: C.A.O.M.10H56

18 Beau prêtre: He came to Algeria as a young man whose father was a stonemason. He joined the ranks of the Zouave regiment, knowing little of reading and writing, yet he rose through the military ranks and responsibilities until he earned decorations. He took an interest in Arab affairs, which enabled him, as a young man, to learn a little about them in Douira. He took charge of the Arab Bureau in the city walls and pursued and suppressed the Ouled Nail revolt in Boussaâda. After the Castoula revolt, General Randon appointed him to N'zliwa in Draa El Mizan in 1851 after he displayed unprecedented violence in punishing the rebels. He was promoted to captain in 1852, and in 1855 he was appointed to the Tizi Ouzou post. From there, he participated in suppressing the 1857 revolt in Zouaoua and forced its inhabitants into submission. He was then transferred at the request of the foundling Youssef to Ghazaouet in the west. He was then sent to Tiaret and became a colonel, until the 1864 uprising. See: Bossuet in the African Journal, 1870, a brief account of Colonel Boupratre, pp. 440-444. See also: Pierre de Buire, La dernière Insurrection en Algérie, Paris, 1864, p. 12

The tribes of Tiaret also supported the Bouamama revolt of 1881¹⁹. Although the period was relatively short and effectively ended in late 1882, the colonial administration took advantage of this time to seek revenge against the military and expand their land holdings for further colonial efforts. The 1880s saw a significant influx of immigrants to the Tiaret region, which resulted in the establishment of many settlements in the Sersou plain.

4- Stages of European settlement in the Tiaret region, 1843-1904

4-1- First stage: 1843-1880

- Construction of the Tiaret centre:

After the fall of Tagdemt to the occupying army in 1843, General Lamoricière continued his military operations eastward, assigning Major Maissiat the task of occupying Tiaret. Maissiat set out on April 23, 1843, leading a force of 1,200 soldiers from the Army of Africa. He demonstrated a strong determination to subdue the region by force due to its strategic location, which allowed for further penetration southward. Maissiat successfully subdued Tiaret on April 27, 1843, and began preparing the area for settlers.

Although the idea of settlement was officially adopted by the colonial authorities²⁰ in 1845, practical implementation began earlier with the establishment of a military post instead of a settlement centre²¹. For this purpose, the post was equipped with specialized administrative and health personnel, bakers, a detachment of thirty-six soldiers, and an equipment depot²². The military post expanded after 1844, eventually housing 628 soldiers, including 300 artillerymen, along with 70 cavalrymen and 27 administrative staff²³.

19 Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, *The Algerian National Movement*, Vol. 1, Dar al-Basair, Algeria, 6th edition, 2009, p. 215

20 Saleh Farkous, *The Management of Arab Offices and the French Occupation of Algeria*, Al-Basair Al-Jadida for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 1st Edition, 2013, p. 141

21 R-Perrin. *Op. cit.*, p. 97

22 Historical Service of the Ministry of Defense. GR1H189. C-Trumelet. *The French in the desert*, Paris, 1863, pp. 417, 418

23 Aguila- Clement. *Op. cit.*, p47

French colonization and its impact on the inhabitants of the Tiaret region

The primary goal of the post was to provide a secure environment, isolate the free tribes from supporting Emir Abdelkader, and serve as a link between the military units stationed in the Tell and those in the southern regions. This environment encouraged European and Moroccan elements to settle in the area, supported by the local administration. They began constructing houses and farms, with the population consisting of only 12 French, 4 Spanish, and 3 Italians residing in the "Lardoud" neighborhood.

By 1847, the center began to expand, and its population grew to 140, including 30 French, 20 foreigners, and 82 Algerians²⁴. They occupied approximately 1,500 hectares out of the total 4,517 hectares that had been seized. Thus, the establishment of the first European settlement near the military centre began, receiving significant encouragement from the occupying authorities. The authorities supplied the centre with drinking water, built service institutions, and constructed roads, facilitating connections from Tiaret to Aflou and Thénia El Had and westward to Relizane and Ammi Moussa.

At its founding, Tiaret was the center of a military district encompassing Tiaret, Nador, and Aflou, in accordance with the decree of January 21, 1869. It was later established as a separate municipality, and the local commune of Tiaret-Aflou was created by government decree on November 13, 1874, taking effect on January 1, 1875.

While the French authorities sought to consolidate their occupation by settling colonists, General Bugeaud, among whom was this individual, asserted that occupation and colonization were inseparable: "Colonization without occupation is futile," and "occupation without colonization is not only costly but also pointless."

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²⁴ Ibid., p. 47. See Mohamed Belil, Colonial Expansion in the Interior Regions and High Plateaus and its Impact on Algerians between 1840 and 1900, *Al-Khaldounia Journal*, Special Issue, October 2009, Ibn Khaldoun University, Tiaret, p. 253.

by government decree on November 13, 1874, taking effect on January 1, 1875²⁵.

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Therefore, the period during which Bugeaud took over the reins of power is considered one of the most fruitful stages of military settlement, as the French administration issued a set of legislations to give legal legitimacy to the lands that were confiscated from the Algerians, including the law of 1844 and the law of July 21, 1846, which authorized control over lands not exploited by the Algerians²⁷.

4.2. The Second Phase (1880-1904)

The Tiaret region experienced relative calm in the early 1880s, following the Battle of Chlala on May 19, 1881. After intense battles fought by the occupying army against Bouamama and his followers, the situation in the region was brought under control. This encouraged the French authorities to welcome European immigration in order to solidify their occupation and accelerate settlement, particularly in the areas between Flita to the east and Saddama to the west, and between the Hachem tribe to the west and Bordj to the north. The involvement of immigrants in local affairs was significant, and thus it needed to be managed carefully²⁸. The dire social and economic conditions made the local population more susceptible to revolution, a concern expressed by Governor-

25 Marc-André-Fabre. Op. cit., p. 258

26 Baron de L'étang. Means of ensuring French domination, examination by Doctor Warnier, Paris, 1847, p. 6

27 Charles Robert Ageron, Contemporary History of Algeria, translated by Issa Asfour, Paris Publications, in agreement with French University Press, 1st edition, 1982, p. 43. See also: Souafi, Zahra. The Development of European Settlement in the Oran Region between 1830-1954, Department of History and Archaeology - Faculty of Humanities and Islamic Sciences, University of Oran 1 Ahmed Ben Bella, New Eras Journal - Volume 9 - Issue 2 - Special Issue September 2009, p. 117.

28 Baron de L'étang. Op. cit., p. 22

French colonization and its impact on the inhabitants of the Tiaret region

General McMahon in June 1869 when he stated: "Algeria is subdued by force, but its inhabitants have not surrendered, and any incident perpetrated by France against them will drive them to revolt."²⁹ To speed up the settlement process, France allocated a budget of 296,600 French francs to provide free land for settlers, construct a canal, and build roads. Additional funds were designated for public facilities, including a town hall, a church, a courthouse, a girls' school, a boys' school, a gendarmerie post, and a public laundry³⁰. At the request of the governor of Oran, the municipal council of Tiaret approved the allocation of 12 hectares of land located between the Mascara road and the Tiaret valley for a settlement project aimed at establishing a new neighborhood near the village of Sidi Khaled³¹.

On August 23, 1871, the construction of a residential complex in Tagdemt was approved. This decision involved the appropriation of approximately 187 hectares of land belonging to the Ouled Cherif El Gharaba, as well as 1,120 hectares owned by the Beni Medine, bringing the total expropriated land to around 1,307 hectares. European settlers who arrived in the region utilized this land to build their homes, establish industrial workshops near the Mina Valley, and construct a road aimed at contributing to the economic and social development of the area³².

On December 16, 1871, Jamelin submitted a petition to the Tiaret Municipal Council. In this petition, he requested the relinquishment of 10,000 hectares in the Sersou Plain. This land would be used for the construction of service institutions and for allocating areas for raising livestock. Jamelin argued that this land should be obtained from the local people, claiming that they owned vast areas exceeding their needs.

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29 A.M.G.H. 238

30 2M181, General Secretariat 2nd Bureau Correspondence No. 1193

31 2M181, report relating to the project to create a civil annex in Tiaret. August 10, 1869

32 2M181, Registration and Domains Service, Tiaret office, project for the creation of the hamlet of Tagdemt, August 23, 1871

population, was intended for the construction of service facilities and for livestock grazing. The justification for this request was that the inhabitants already owned extensive tracts of land that exceeded their actual needs. Additionally, there was a second petition, initiated in 1852 and approved by the government, which proposed the establishment of settlement projects in the Sersou Plain. This project aimed to construct 31 agricultural villages in strategically selected locations, with the goal of connecting Tiaret to the coastal region via a railway line. The reasons for transforming the plain into a settlement area can be summarized as follows³³:

1. The plain features high-quality soil and extensive agricultural land, providing a livelihood for 40,000 European immigrants at a rate of 10 hectares per person.

2. Most of the land on the plains is controlled by the Free Galicians, a rebellious and unruly group led by Haj Qaddour bin Sahrawi. To subdue and control this group, settlements must be established on their land.

3. The construction of settlements must not extend beyond the boundaries of the Nador Mountains.
4. The plain contains important valleys that can be utilized for irrigation, including Wadi Mina, Wadi Souslem, Wadi Nador, and the Wasel River. The Sersou region saw its first wave of official settlement under the 1878 law. Concessions granted to settlers formed the basis for the establishment of the following settlement villages: Palat was founded in 1888 after the expropriation of approximately 3,530 hectares of tribal land in exchange for financial compensation. The original holdings, totaling 1,878 hectares, were located in the Douar of the Ben Aflou municipality, while 1,652 hectares were situated in Tagdemt. The expenses amounted to approximately 365,000 francs. By 1901, the population had reached approximately 668, which included 546 French, 16 indigenous people, 22 Moroccans, and 84 foreigners. In terms of agriculture, 2,000 hectares were allocated for cereal cultivation, 138 hectares for vineyards, and 50 hectares for

33 2M181. Resolutions presented to the General Council during the 1871 session and to the Tiaret Municipal Council requesting implementation. Meeting of December 16, 1871. Resolutions presented by M-Jamelin.

French colonization and its impact on the inhabitants of the Tiaret region

other crops. The livestock population comprised 112 head of cattle, 850 head of sheep, and 105 head of horses and mules³⁴.

Tissemsilt (Vialar) was established in 1890, covering an area of 2,526 hectares and comprising 53 farms. It originally belonged to the Beni Maida tribe. Of this land, 1,190 hectares were purchased by a European for 95 francs per hectare, while 1,336 hectares were confiscated from the inhabitants of Beni Maida village in exchange for partial compensation, with the remainder paid in cash. The estimated cost of constructing the village was approximately 346,000 francs. In 1901, its population consisted of about 394 inhabitants, including 288 French residents, 75 indigenous people, and 31 foreigners. The villagers cultivated 2,115 hectares of grain, 21 hectares of vineyards, and 12 hectares of orchards. The village also had a soft wheat mill. The livestock included 203 cattle, 2,500 sheep, and 226 horses and mules³⁵. In 1895, the village of Sougueur (Trézel) was founded following the confiscation of 5,359 hectares of land belonging to the region's tribes. This land was taken as follows³⁶:

- 190 hectares from the Ouled Sidi Khaled Cheraga tribe,
- 200 hectares from the Ouled Ben Attif tribe,
- 230 hectares from the Chaouia tribe.

The Ouled Bournan tribe owns 80 hectares of land, while the Ouled Aziz tribe possesses 4,659 hectares.

In 1901, the population of the area was approximately 582, comprised of 444 French citizens, 66 local inhabitants, and 72 foreigners, including two Moroccans. Due to its strategic location between the Tell Atlas and the steppe region, a weekly market was established for the sale of various agricultural and livestock products.

To the south, the El Ousakh military post was set up to monitor the movements of Bedouins³⁷ during their summer and winter migrations. This post accommodated 21 soldiers. In the

34 M. de Peyerimhoff. Inquiry into the results of the official colonization of 1871-1895, T1, 1906, Algiers. P198, 199

35 M.de Peyerimhoff .Op.cit. .P76,77

36 Ibid. Op. cit., 277

37 - Marc-André-Fabre. Op.cit. ,272

surrounding area, Jewish residents built homes and engaged in trade with the local population.

4-3 The Third Stage: This stage was grounded in the legislation that governed official colonization, which was revised by the law of September 13, 1904. The French authorities confidently set out to drive rapid development by targeting beneficiaries who already possessed capital and were keen to exploit farms acquired through their own resources. They decisively chose to sell plots of land designated for colonization, either at a fixed price or via auctions. Consequently, concessions for colonization expanded significantly, ranging from 60 to 100 hectares in the steppe regions³⁸. The Sersou Plain was strategically designated for the establishment of settlement centers, including Ain Zrit and Mahdia, with the clear objective of constructing a significant market that would encompass approximately 646 farms in the Sersou.³⁹

4- The repercussions of the settlement policy on the people of Tiaret:

This is one of the most serious negative effects that accompanied the colonial presence in Algeria in general and Tiaret in particular, because it directly affected the lives of the inhabitants in various aspects of life. According to Nouchi, the people knew nothing of settlement except its negative aspect, as they left their lands willingly or unwillingly and without receiving compensation for that. The truth is that the people did not leave their lands willingly but were expelled from them unjustly so that elements foreign to this country could benefit from them, brought by colonialism from different regions of Europe, the “cradle of civilization, human rights, justice, and equality”??!⁴⁰

The expansion of settlements in the Sersou Plain has led to a reduction in the grazing land traditionally used by local tribes, resulting in conflicts between the settlers and the indigenous population. These disputes often escalate into armed clashes, prompting intervention from the military commander of Ghardaia

38 Charles Robert Ageron, previous source, p. 136

39 R-Perrin.Op,cit,p, 105

40 Nouchi-A. Survey on the standard of living of the rural populations of Constantine from the conquest until 1919. Essay in economic and social history, thesis, Paris, 1961

French colonization and its impact on the inhabitants of the Tiaret region

and the head of the Aflou district. They have allowed nomadic herders to graze their livestock in designated areas, including Chellala, Aflou, Djelfa, and Nadhor mountain⁴¹.

Additionally, the occupying authorities have prohibited tribes from carrying weapons without a permit from the relevant authorities. Camel caravans are also not allowed to leave their grazing lands to obtain supplies or to trade with the settlers without first submitting a request to the authorities. This request must include all relevant details about the caravan's route, the number of participants, the destination, and the expected duration of the journey⁴².

The construction of settlements significantly restricted the freedom of movement for nomadic Bedouins, leading to conflicts between herders and settlers. Settlers often prevented the Bedouins from using traditional migration routes that they had relied on for centuries, necessitating the intervention of horsemen to protect the settlers' farms. The closure of these routes forced the nomads to seek alternative paths.

Inhabitants of villages belonging to the Bani Maida tribe, surrounded by settlements, were compelled to travel long and arduous distances to reach their homes. Many had to abandon their lands or sell them at incredibly low prices to the settlers. Additionally, the settlers took control of local water sources, depriving the local population of access to this vital resource.

⁴³The expansion of formal settlements, along with settlers controlling water sources and grazing lands and closing off migration routes, created a tense atmosphere that made armed conflict almost inevitable. In 1912, a settler killed three local men, and there were casualties on both sides at times.

Due to these incidents, the governor-general had to take action by implementing strict measures to protect the settlers' farms. He ordered a series of interventions against the nomadic Bedouin, which included the establishment of observation posts as follows⁴⁴:

41 Léon-Lehuraux. Nomadism and colonization in the high plateaus of Algeria, Paris, 1931. p. 105

42 Léon-Lehuraux. Op,cit, p119

43 R-Perrin.Op,cit,p, 105

44 Léon- Lehuraux.Op,cit,p121

- In the mixed municipalities of Chehbounia and Bougari, caravans were prohibited from crossing Wadi Wasel or using it as a passage in the northern part of the mixed municipality of Ain Boucif.

- In Chlala, caravans were banned from crossing the southern part of the mixed municipality of Ain Boucif and the northern part of the Djelfa annex.

- An observation post was constructed near Hammadi to prevent caravans from using the road that connects Chlala and Taguine.

- In Taguine, early crossing of Wadi Tawil was forbidden, and in El Ouskh, any infiltration of caravans between El Ouskh and Taguine was stopped.

- A permanent observation post was established in the municipality of Medrissa, situated between Djebel Khrouf and Tarada Mountain⁴⁵.

The settlers exploited the Bedouin by renting out harvest remnants at excessively high prices, sometimes more than ten times their actual value, taking advantage of years of drought and the Bedouin's desperate situation. In 1922, the price per hectare ranged from 8 to 30 francs, and by 1928, it surged to between 10 and 200 francs per hectare⁴⁶.

By order of the High Commander of Oran, the Ahrar tribe was forbidden from venturing beyond its designated territory within the mixed municipality of Djebel Nador. Crossing the administrative boundaries that separated the Ahrar from the Ouled Ziad was prohibited. As a result, colonial authorities restricted the tribes' freedom of movement, ensuring their control and surveillance of the nomadic Bedouin.

The settlers displayed an extreme form of selfishness and theft of people's rights through plunder and pillage, actions encouraged by their government, which was eager to push the settlement process to its fullest extent throughout the Tiaret region. This sentiment was echoed by the newspaper Al-Sayyub, which stated: "In our opinion, there is only one respectable interest in

45 Léon- Lehuraux.Op,cit,p121

46 Ibid.121

French colonization and its impact on the inhabitants of the Tiaret region

Africa, which is the interest of the colonizer, which is our interest, and there is only one legitimate right, which is our right.”⁴⁷

Conclusion:

France faced strong resistance from local tribes allied with Emir Abdelkader. In response, it developed a new strategy to secure its territorial gains by establishing settlements in the conquered areas. These settlements were vital for the French administration to consolidate its control over the rebellious tribes, which continued to threaten colonial expansion in the Tiaret region.

To support this settlement process, the French administration enacted several decrees and laws, such as those in 1848 and 1851, which legitimized the acquisition of land by settlers, often allowing them to obtain land at no cost.

France's development policy in the Sersou Plain aimed to exploit the fertile land for vineyards and grain cultivation, reviving what they considered the agricultural glory of ancient Rome, which they viewed as an inexhaustible granary.

Additionally, France aimed to weaken the power of the rebellious tribes and disrupt their communication with neighboring tribes. To achieve this, they transformed the Sersou Plain into a buffer zone by creating settlements that separated the Tell region from the south. This policy served as a form of retaliation against those tribes that had supported resistance, as it involved forcibly dispossessing them of their lands and allocating those lands to newcomers for settlement and farming.

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