

Algerian Migrations to the Levant during the mid-19th and early 20th Centuries

الهجرات الجزائرية إلى بلاد الشام خلال منتصف القرن التاسع عشر وبداية القرن العشرين

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• Abstract:

This study examines the migration of Algerians to the Levant during the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century as a result of colonial policies, particularly following the suppression of popular resistance in 1847. In its initial phase, migration was mainly limited to religious, political, and cultural elites. However, it expanded with the uprising of Al-Muqrani in 1871 and the transition to civilian governance, which saw settlers impose their dominance and monopolize power. This migration extended across all social classes in Algeria and was not confined to a specific region; rather, it encompassed the entire country—east, west, and south—both individually and collectively, with one of the most notable waves being the Tlemcen migration of 1911. The Algerian community in the Arab East, particularly in the Levant, had a significant political, social, and cultural impact on the local society, especially in the fields of education, journalism, and the establishment of associations. Additionally, Algerians in the Levant remained closely connected to the issues of their homeland, Algeria.

Keywords:

Migration, Levant, Resistance, Elites, French Colonialism

المخلص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة هجرة الجزائريين إلى بلاد الشام خلال النصف الثاني من القرن التاسع عشر وبداية القرن العشرين، كنتيجة للسياسات الاستعمارية، ولا سيما عقب قمع المقاومات الشعبية سنة 1847. في مرحلتها الأولى، اقتصرت الهجرة أساساً على النخب الدينية والسياسية والثقافية، لكنها اتسعت لاحقاً مع ثورة المقراني سنة 1871 ومع الانتقال إلى نظام الحكم المدني الذي شهد هيمنة المستوطنين واحتكارهم للسلطة. وقد شملت هذه الهجرة مختلف الطبقات الاجتماعية في الجزائر، ولم تقتصر على منطقة بعينها، بل امتدت إلى الشرق والغرب والجنوب، سواء على نحو فردي أو جماعي، ومن أبرز موجاتها هجرة تلمسان سنة 1911. كان للجالية الجزائرية في المشرق العربي، ولا سيما في بلاد الشام، أثر سياسي واجتماعي وثقافي بارز في المجتمع المحلي، تجلى في مجالات التعليم والصحافة وتأسيس الجمعيات. كما ظلّ الجزائريون في بلاد الشام مرتبطين ارتباطاً وثيقاً بقضايا وطنهم الجزائر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهجرة، بلاد الشام، المقاومة، النخب، الاستعمار الفرنسي.

• Introduction

During the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, Algeria experienced profound demographic shifts due to French colonial policies. These policies imposed repressive measures that led to radical transformations in the socio-economic structure of the population. Among the most significant were land confiscation, compulsory conscription, and the implementation of exceptional laws, which further widened the divide between Algerians and French settlers. As a result, many Algerians sought alternative means to survive and safeguard their religious and cultural identity.

In this turbulent context, the phenomenon of Algerian migration to the Levant emerged—not merely as a transit movement but as a strategic response by the elite against colonial policies. These migrations originated in Tunisia and the Far Maghreb, where Sufi orders, religious *zawiyas*, and commercial networks played a crucial role in facilitating migrants' passage to Ottoman provinces. Occurring between 1847 and 1920, these migrations were part of a broader movement that spanned various regions of Algeria. They were not confined to a single social group but encompassed scholars, sheikhs, and political leaders, alongside revolutionaries, peasants, and intellectuals.

Essential Question

To what extent did political, economic, and social factors drive Algerians to migrate to the Levant? Why was this region particularly attractive compared to other destinations? How did their presence influence the cultural, social, and political structure of the local community?

Sub-Questions

- How did the French colonial administration respond to the phenomenon of Algerian migration to the Levant?
- Who are the most prominent Algerian figures that left a lasting impact on the religious, cultural, and political landscape of the region?
- How did Algerian-Levantine ties contribute to the development of nationalist thought in the region during the studied period?

Importance of the Study

This study highlights a significant episode in the history of Arab migrations, reflecting the mutual interactions between Algeria and the Levant within diverse political and cultural contexts. It also explores the role of Algerian immigrants in establishing local institutions such as schools, libraries, and mosques. Their contributions fostered cultural and intellectual independence while influencing social, political, and cultural dynamics within Levantine society.

1. Reasons for Algerian Migrations to the Levant

A- Religious Reasons:

The migration of Algerians to the Levant was partly inspired by historical precedents, particularly the early Muslim migrations to Abyssinia (الحبشة) and later to Medina, which were undertaken to preserve religious identity in the face of persecution. For many Algerians, emigration became a necessity to safeguard their faith from colonial forces that had invaded their homeland,

desecrated its sacred sites, and disrupted its religious and cultural traditions. In addition to these motivations, Sufi orders played a significant role in facilitating migration. Cheikh al-Mahdi al-Saklawi, leader of the Rahmani order, was instrumental in sending dozens of Algerian families to the Levant as soon as French colonial intentions to occupy Kabylie became evident in 1847. According to some accounts, the Cheikh advised his followers to leave Algeria, which he described as a land where Islam was under threat, and encouraged them to seek refuge in regions that remained firmly within the Islamic sphere. Consequently, he himself departed for Syria in late 1847. This migration included wealthy individuals and scholars, and it was observed that a significant proportion of migrants from Kabylie were influential figures within their communities. At the time, many French colonial officials interpreted this migration through a narrow lens, attributing it primarily to religious intolerance and hostility toward Christians. They argued that Algerian Muslims abandoned their properties and relocated due to their unwillingness to coexist with Christian settlers. However, this perspective overlooks the broader socio-political and economic factors that contributed to the migration, including colonial repression, land dispossession, and the search for a more stable religious and cultural environment¹.

B- Economic Reasons:

One of the primary economic factors driving Algerian migration was the gradual abolition of collective land ownership and the division of tribal lands into individual properties. This process was formalized through legislation such as the 1851 Law and the Sénatus-Consulte Decree of 1863, which significantly weakened the authority and status of tribal leaders. As a result, Algerians lost the traditional social structures that had previously provided them with security and stability. The consequences of these policies were severe, leading to widespread famine and epidemics that devastated Algerian society between 1866 and 1869. The deteriorating economic conditions, coupled with the erosion of communal protections, forced many Algerians to seek refuge and better opportunities in the Levant.

C- Social Reasons:

One of the key social factors driving Algerian migration was the transformation of the Islamic judicial system between 1856 and 1860, which required Algerians to present their legal cases and pleadings before French courts. This shift undermined traditional legal structures and contributed to a growing sense of alienation among the local population.

Abu al-Qasim Saadallah argues that the reasons behind Algerian migration were numerous, making it impossible to pinpoint a single primary cause. However, French archival documents present a different perspective. Among them is Luciani's report, commissioned by the Governor-General to investigate the true causes of migration between 1898 and 1899. The report states that Sufi orders played only a minor role in this migration, while the most significant influence was external, both religious and political. According to Luciani, Algerians viewed the Ottoman Sultan as a spiritual leader and were highly responsive to rumors and calls for migration that reached them through newspapers. However, Luciani appears to have overestimated the role of Ottoman propaganda, as external factors—no matter how influential—only become effective when they

¹ - طرشون، نادية، الهجرة إلى بلاد الشام خلال القرن التاسع عشر، الهجرة الجزائرية نحو المشرق العربي، أثناء الاحتلال، منشورات المركز الوطني للدراسات والبحث في الحركة الوطنية وثورة أول نوفمبر 1954، دار هومة، الجزائر، 2007، ص 217.

align with internal conditions. Revolutions and social movements, he argues, arise due to the accumulation of multiple causes, rather than being solely driven by external influences

2. Factors Influencing Algerian Settlement in the Levant :

Algerians were drawn to the Levant, particularly the Ottoman provinces, due to long-standing historical ties dating back to the early 16th century. Additionally, the migration of Emir Abdelkader played a crucial role in supporting the initial waves of migration and expanding the nucleus of Algerian settlements in the region during the 1860s and 1870s.

The Levant gained the reputation of "**Sacred Sham**" due to its association with the Prophet's companions, prominent scholars, and warriors, which imbued it with a sense of sanctity and made it a desirable destination for migrants from various regions. Furthermore, Ottoman rule in the Levant provided a more accommodating political environment for Algerians compared to French colonial rule in Algeria, facilitating their settlement. Additionally, Sufi networks and trade routes played a pivotal role in organizing migration and offering support to migrants. Sufi orders provided spiritual and social guidance, while commercial networks helped ease the transition and integration of Algerians into the region. Arab journalism also contributed to encouraging migration, with newspapers such as "*Al-Ma'loumat*" (المعلومات), published in Constantinople, playing a significant role in promoting settlement opportunities¹, according to issue 123, published on July 7, 1899, funds were allocated to support the settlement of migrants in the Levant. A portion of these funds was specifically designated for purchasing agricultural equipment and constructing housing for new arrivals². Furthermore, Prince Ali and Prince Abdullah, the sons of Emir Abdelkader, who resided in Syria, played a significant role in encouraging migration. Likewise, Prince Mohammed, another son of Emir Abdelkader, had a notable influence due to his official position. Moreover, postal correspondence between Algerians settled in the Levant and their relatives back home played a crucial role in maintaining connections. Alongside this, the movement of individuals, merchants, and artisans contributed to strengthening ties between Algeria and the Levant.

3. Phases of Algerian Migration to the Levant :

This study focuses on analyzing the phases of Algerian migration to the Levant, beginning with the migration of elites and dignitaries (1847–1860), followed by the gradual settlement phase and the influence of Emir Abdelkader (1860–1883). It then examines the organized popular migrations, which were shaped by political and economic conditions both within Algeria and beyond (1883–1900). Finally, it explores the intensification of migration due to French land confiscations and forced conscription (1900–1920). The study aims to understand the various

¹ - بلعزوز، العربي، هجرة سكان منطقة الشلف إلى الشام، سنتي 1898-1899 من خلال تقرير لوسباني، مجلة الأكاديمية للدراسات الاجتماعية والإنسانية، المجلد 12، العدد 1، 2020، ص 06.

² - نفس المرجع، ص 06.

motivations behind this migration, as well as its political and social consequences in the receiving region.

A- The First Phase (1847–1860):

The first phase of migration began with the departure of elites and dignitaries, responding to fatwas issued by certain scholars, which declared that resistance would lead to the destruction of the nation. This sentiment was particularly reinforced following General Bugeaud's use of artillery in the massacres of Flissa in 1845¹. This migration occurred as an escape from colonial rule, with Ahmed Al-Tayeb Ben Salem, Emir Abdelkader's Khalifa in Bordj Hamza (Bouira) and Agha of Flissa, emerging as a key historical figure in initiating Algerian migration to the Levant. Ben Salem requested French authorities to allow him and his followers to seek refuge in the Levant in exchange for halting armed resistance, a request that was approved by Governor-General Pélissier.

For the Sheikh and his followers, migration was perceived as a form of jihad, inspired by the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ migration to Medina. Consequently, the Governor-General facilitated their relocation, dispatching a ship to Dellys on September 24, 1847. On that occasion, Ahmed Ben Salem gathered his followers and addressed them, saying: "The enemy has become ruthless and is determined to burn the land and its people. Neither health conditions nor the dire state of the tribes allow us to stand against them... Remaining under these circumstances would mean the destruction of the nation." Among the prominent supporters of migration and his followers were: Cheikh Mohamed El-Mehdi Seklawi, leader of the Rahmaniyya Sufi order, His disciple, Cheikh Mohamed El-Mubarak Dellisi, Cheikh A'rab, leader of the resistance in the Aït Arathen tribe, Faqih El-Hajj Ouamer, Sidi Bouzid, Khalifa of the Sidi Abdelrahman Bouqabrin Zawiya, Agha Askar, Emir's representative in Kabylia, Charif Mohamed Bouchareb. Reports indicate that more than 300 Cheikhs, including jurists and theologians, sought to migrate from Kabylie². Ahmed Ben Salem traveled to Beirut, heading toward the Levant, accompanied by 500 individuals. Upon their arrival, they were welcomed by the town's dignitaries, theologians, merchants, and prominent figures.

Migration from Sebo and the Djurdjura Mountains continued as a result of repeated military campaigns that affected Kabylie, following fourteen successive military operations. The largest wave of migration to the Levant occurred between 1851 and 1857, coinciding with the uprising led by Mohamed Ben Abdallah El-Majjad and the resistance of Lalla Fatima N'Soumer³. Algerians established themselves in the Khidiriya, Haiwatia, and Souiqa areas within the Midan district of Damascus. Eventually, the Ottoman state responded by granting them agricultural lands in Hauran, south of Damascus, as well as in its Ghouta region, Latakia, Aleppo, and the Palestinian Galilee⁴. Upon the arrival of Ahmed Ben Salem, Cheikh Seklawi, and Cheikh Mubarak, they began spreading news of Emir Abdelkader's expected arrival in the Levant. At the same time, they launched a media campaign against France and sought to build connections with the people and leadership of the region⁵. At the time when Ahmed Ben Salem issued a call from Damascus to the residents of Dellys and its surroundings to join him in exile, around 80 individuals responded and moved to Beirut. In early 1860, Mohamed Ben Abdallah El-Khaldi, Emir Abdelkader's Khalifa in

¹ - فيلالي، كمال، الهجرة القبلانية إلى بلاد الشام وفلسطين على إثر ثورات المقاومة وأثرها الثقافي والحضاري، سلسلة أعمال الملتقيات مخبر الدراسات والأبحاث حول الرحلة والهجر، الحراك، النفي وآثارهم على الصعيد الثقافي، جوان 2010، سلسلة مطبوعات الملتقيات السنوية، الجزائر، 2010، ص14.

² - فيلالي، كمال، نفس المرجع، ص 15.

³ - فيلالي، كمال، ص 15.

⁴ - الخالدي، سهيل، الإشعاع المغربي في المشرق، دور الجالية الجزائرية في بلاد الشام، شركة دار الأمة، الجزائر، ط1، 1997، ص32.

⁵ - الخالدي، سهيل، نفس المرجع، ص33.

Majana (Bordj Bou Arréridj Province), traveled to his tribal domain in Oued El-Bardi, which was then under Sour El-Ghozlane's jurisdiction, aiming to convince several tribes from this region, particularly those surrounding Sidi Khaled, to migrate to the Levant. In May 1860, a ship departed carrying members of his tribe, including the Ouled Sidi Khaled, the Oumeirat, and Sidi Aissa, leaving behind 2,600 hectares of agricultural land, which was subsequently seized by settlers. The number of individuals willing to migrate from this region reached 577, accounting for 72% of its total population¹. Emir Abdelkader played a prominent role in leading the Levantine society during this period. It is noted that when he learned about Dar al-Hadith al-Ashrafiyya, which had been purchased by a Jewish man named "Banko" with the support of the Ottoman government and converted into a tavern, tensions almost erupted into a major conflict in the Levant, as people protested against the Ottoman governor's solidarity with the Jewish owner. In response, Emir Abdelkader summoned the man, purchased the property for a sum far exceeding its revenue from alcohol trade, and restored it as an Islamic endowment and religious school².

B- The Second Phase (1860-1883) :

During this period, the Algerian question emerged as a political issue for both the Ottoman Empire and France. Upon Emir Abdelkader's arrival in Damascus in 1856, he attracted a diverse following from various religious and social groups, prompting the Ottoman authorities to allow Algerians to settle in the countryside of Akka rather than in the city itself. Starting in 1860, the so-called Maghrebi villages began to appear in Upper Galilee and Safed, including Akrad Khait, Dishum, Amouqa, Al-Husseiniya, Al-Talil, Marous, and others. It is noted that the inhabitants of these villages were primarily from Ahmed Ben Salem's group, originating from Dellys, Blida, and Tigzirt, and these villages remained exclusively Algerian settlements. Additionally, some Algerians settled in Alma, Al-Ja'una, Dalata in Lower Galilee, Tiberias, Oulam, Ma'adhir, Kafr Sabt, Sha'ara, and other locations. The majority of the population in these areas belonged to tribes from Oued El-Bardi, Ouled Sidi Aissa, and Ouled Younes, who had migrated from Hamza, an area stretching from Sour El-Ghozlane and Bouira, including Ain Bessem and Bir Ghbalou. Later, Algerians settled in Samakh and Tiberias itself, as well as Safed. In Haifa, the village of Housha emerged, and Algerians also inhabited various towns and villages in Jerusalem and Nazareth³.

During this period, four major events took place in 1863, the first of which was:

- In 1860, Emir Abdelkader, his followers, and the Algerian community faced violent sectarian strife in the Levant, where intense clashes erupted between Muslims and Christians. As the local authorities struggled to protect fleeing Christians, the Emir called for arming Algerian Maghrebis to rescue Christians and Europeans, and he opened his home to shelter those affected. As a result, several Algerians were killed during the confrontations. Once security was restored in the region, Fuad Pasha recognized the bravery of the Maghrebis, noting their strength and courage in battle. He then negotiated with Emir Abdelkader to form a battalion of Algerians to serve the

¹ - طرشون، نادية، الهجرة إلى بلاد الشام خلال القرن التاسع عشر، الهجرة الجزائرية نحو المشرق العربي، أثناء الاحتلال، منشورات المركز الوطني للدراسات والبحث في الحركة الوطنية وثورة أول نوفمبر 1954، دار هومة، الجزائر، 2007، ص 215.

² - الصلح، عادل، سطور في رسالة، تاريخ حرمة استقلالية في المشرق العربي، ط1، 1966، مطابع دار العلم للملايين، بيروت، ص 100.

³ - الخالدي، سهيل، نفس المراجع، ص 35.

Ottoman state. The Emir agreed to the proposal, selecting 400 cavalrymen, and appointed Omar Ben Friha, one of his relatives, as their leader¹.

- A clash occurred between Emir Abdelkader's men in Tellil (Safed) and the British-Zionist Fund for the Exploration of Palestine, which attempted to establish the first settlement. As a result, three Algerians were martyred. Emir Abdelkader intervened, successfully thwarting the Zionist project to build a settlement in the Akka region².

- The Algerians in these villages successfully halted internal conflicts (raids) between rural communities and Bedouins in northern Palestine.

- In 1877, the Arabs of the Levant secretly pledged allegiance to Emir Abdelkader, intending for him to become their king and lead a movement to separate from the Ottoman Empire. The Emir then embarked on a journey through Lebanon and Palestine, visiting Algerian villages before establishing a headquarters in the village of Aoulam, near Tiberias and Nazareth, which became known as "the Emir's Palace"³.

It is important to highlight that the most significant event Algeria witnessed during this period was the Mokrani Revolt of 1871*, which was followed by the destruction of villages and tribal settlements in the Djurdjura Mountains by colonial forces. As a result of these events, the Levant experienced a new wave of migration, characterized by the movement of farmers and combatant soldiers toward the region.

D- Third Phase (1883-1900):

During this period in the 19th century, the popular classes witnessed a significant wave of migration to Syria, known as the "Year of the Levant." In 1886, approximately 169 Algerians settled in the villages of Al-Husayniyah and Al-Talil, while in 1892, 150 Algerians—mostly from Ouled Arghis (Oum El Bouaghi)—arrived in Houcha village. Migration through Tunisia played a key role, as in 1894, about 150 individuals moved to the Levant and settled in Aoulam village. Similarly, in 1888, around 116 people arrived in the region. Researcher Amar Helal elaborates on this phase, stating: *"Regardless of the circumstances, the migration of 1888 was not limited to those granted permission by the French administration. Rather, it extended significantly to include small farmers who had suffered from drought and famine, especially in the eastern regions of the country."*⁴

In 1892, entire families from Algerian tribes reunited with their relatives in Syria. By 1896, records indicate that around 105 families, totaling 403 individuals, migrated from Tizi Ouzou, Dellys, Azefoun, and Béjaïa. French settlers and their collaborators played a significant role in this migration, aiming to distance Algerians from their homeland to consolidate their political and

¹ - محمد بن الأمير عبد القادر، تحفة الزائر في مآثر الأمير عبد القادر وأخبار الجزائر، شرح وتعليق، ممدوح حقي، ج1، ط1، الإسكندرية، 1903، ص 636.

² - الخالدي، سهيل، نفس المرجع، ص 35.

³ - الخالدي، سهيل، نفس المرجع، ص 35.

* : Emir Abdelkader was linked to the Mokrani Revolt of 1871 through his son, Muhieddine. Historian Yahia Bouaziz notes that the Emir publicly distanced himself from the uprising on an intellectual level, yet he may have secretly supported it through networks in Tunisia and Istanbul.

See :

بوعزيز، يحيى، الأمير عبد القادر رائد الكفاح الجزائري، الدار العربية للكتاب، تونس، 1983، ص 288.

⁴ - هلال، عمار، نفس المرجع، ص 11.

economic dominance. This coincided with the enforcement of the Indigenous Code and Civil Status laws, which stripped Algerians of their personal identity. The 1898 migration extended beyond Algeria, affecting residents in Tunisia as well. According to reports from the French Governor-General of Algeria, 38 families, consisting of 176 people from Yakouren (Tizi Ouzou), embarked on a journey to Damascus after spending three to eight years in Tunisia. This migration was facilitated by British and Italian steamships, which assisted Algerian migrants for political reasons, transporting them to Tunis and Beirut, often without passports. A 1898 report from the French Governor-General of Tunisia confirmed that more than 237 Algerians left Tunisia illegally, heading to Syria aboard British steamships.

D-Fourth Phase (1900-1920):

This period witnessed an escalation in land confiscations targeting Algerians. In late 1904, France enacted a law separating the state from the church, while settlers spread propaganda claiming that France intended to take control of mosques in Algeria for non-religious purposes, particularly in Tlemcen and its surroundings. As World War I (1914-1918) approached, the February 28, 1911 decree imposed mandatory military conscription, initiating the registration of young Algerians deemed fit for service under the French flag. This posed a direct threat to Algerian families, prompting a renewed wave of migration, especially in urban areas such as Tizi Ouzou, Birkhda, and Oum El Bouaghi. Many Algerians sold their homes, lands, and possessions at extremely low prices, most of which ended up in the hands of French settlers. Consequently, Algeria experienced successive migration waves in 1909, 1910, 1911, and 1912, with migrants traveling eastward by land toward the Levant or departing from Moroccan coasts, passing through Melilla and Tangier, via Berkane, before reaching Lebanon by sea.

Tlemcen served as the primary hub for Algerian migration in 1911, with the number of migrants exceeding 1,200 individuals. This migration was notably characterized by the participation of French administration employees and financially well-off individuals, who were not subject to the exceptional laws imposed by the colonial government. Archival documents indicate that in 1910, Kaid (قايد) Lakhdar left Douar Oued Chouli, Sebdou District, accompanied by all 27 members of his family, after selling all his properties and lands to his relatives. This decision had a profound impact on the local population, prompting many to migrate in his footsteps¹. This migration encompassed various Algerian social classes, including bourgeoisie, intellectuals, scholars, religious figures, businessmen, and politicians. French officials described it as a significant migration, as noted by Dupont and Cappolani. However, this movement resulted in a substantial depopulation of Algeria, particularly during 1909 and 1912. On September 14, 1911, a group of 100 individuals traveled to Syria via Morocco, led by Sheikh Mohamed Ben Yelles, a distinguished figure in the Darqawi Sufi order. Upon his arrival, the Ottoman governor entrusted him with the neglected Samadiyya Zawiya, which he meticulously restored to its former status as a religious school. This endeavor earned him both religious and social prominence, alongside his disciple, ultimately establishing them as influential figures within the community. Later, Sheikh

¹ - هلال، عمار، نفس المرجع، ص140.

Ben Yelles played an active role in resisting the French occupation of Syria in 1920, further cementing his legacy in the struggle against colonialism.

4. The role of the Algerian community in the Levant:

The Algerian migration was predominantly elitist, consisting of a continuous influx of scholars and dignitaries that persisted beyond World War I¹. Among the influential figures was Mustafa ben Tahami, the son-in-law of the Emir, his successor in the military camp, his companion in exile in Amboise, and the tutor of his children abroad. Ben Tahami was a literary scholar and had a collection of poetry in manuscript form. He was also one of the instructors at the Umayyad Mosque, alongside Ahmed ben Al-Tayeb ben Salem². These people rejected any ties with France, preferring to align themselves under the Ottoman banner. Their connections with their homeland remained unbroken, as they were among the founders of the 'Protected Algerian Province' association in the 1870s, aimed at supplying arms to the Mokrani uprising. They successfully devised methods to deliver weapons and funds to Mokrani, who at one point declared his connection to Emir Abdelkader³. They also established neighborhoods in the Levant, strategically located within historic cities. Their influence extended to the toponymic landscape, as evidenced by the names of these quarters—such as Al-Souayqa, Bab Al-Jabiya (mirroring Bab Al-Jabiya in Constantine), and Al-Marja⁴. They worked in various commercial trades. Pierre Bordin states that in 1861, the number of men of Kabyle origin in the Maghrebi Quarter alone was estimated at 95, most of whom were from Aït Irathen. One-third of them were engaged in teaching, another third in apprenticeships, while the remaining third were enlisted in the Ottoman army⁵. Luciani stated in 1861 that, in the various industrial workshops of Damascus alone, there were 95 tailors and embroiderers, 35 carpenters, 7 high-level merchants, 5 master craftsmen in the Souayqa district, 5 bakers, 6 tobacconists, and 5 public scribes. Additionally, Algerian migrants in Palestine, most of whom were from the Kabyle region, established seven villages, the most notable being Dishum, Kafr Sabt, and Moula, among others, where they introduced olive cultivation⁶. They resided in the outskirts of Damascus, acquiring agricultural plots that had been allocated to them in exchange for accepting Ottoman citizenship.

Given that these migrations were elite-driven and originated from scholarly households that were at the forefront of the resistance movement, they played a significant role in shaping the cultural framework and social fabric. One of the most prominent figures was Tahar Al-Jazairi, the son of Saleh ben Ahmed Al-Sam‘uni Al-Waghlisi from the Sam‘un tribe near Bejaia. In Damascus, he was entrusted with issuing Maliki jurisprudential rulings. His father had migrated to Damascus following the migration known as the 'Migration of the Cheikhs,' which occurred after Bugeaud's campaign in Wadi Al-Sahil in 1847. Cheikh Saleh was among the distinguished scholars of the Zwawa region⁷. His son, Sheikh Tahir, was among the founders of the Linguistic Academy in Syria.

¹ - فيلالي، كمال، نفس المرجع، ص 16.

² - الخالدي، سهيل، نفس المرجع، ص 13.

³ - الخالدي، سهيل، نفس المرجع، ص 45.

⁴ - فيلالي، كمال، نفس المرجع، ص 16.

⁵ -Pierre, Bourdin ; Algériens et Tunisiens dans l'empire Ottomanes de 1848 /1914, Ed, Paris, CNRS, 1978, P :11.

⁶ -كمال، فيلالي، نفس المرجع، ص 19.

⁷ - كمال، فيلالي، نفس المرجع، ص 20.

He also established the Al-Zahiriyyah Library in Damascus and the Khalidi Library in Jerusalem. Twentieth-century historians take pride in Sheikh Tahir Al-Jazairi, who, in the nineteenth century, successfully convinced the Ottoman governor, Midhat Pasha, to rely on him and the Charitable Society in Damascus to open schools. Midhat Pasha, who served as Grand Vizier to Sultan Abdul Hamid and was known for his significant reformist vision, responded by initiating the establishment of schools in Syria and Palestine. With his political acumen and swift action, he overcame opposition from those who benefited from ignorance and resisted his project. He reclaimed neglected buildings or repurposed former schools that had been used for other purposes, restoring their original function and opening new educational institutions¹. His brother, Salim Al-Jazairi, was one of the founders of the Qahtaniyyah Association and the Covenant Association². The Algerians also contributed to the spread of Zawiyas in the Levant, where Cheikh Siklawi, the leader of the Rahmaniyya order in Kabylie, managed to gain followers even within the corridors of the establishment, including Ahmed Izzet Pasha³. The Zawiya of Cheikh Ben Yelles Al-Samadia also played a role in resisting the French campaign against Damascus in 1920⁴. The Algerians also contributed to the establishment of schools, most notably Al-Rihaniyya School, founded by Cheikh Abdelkader Al-Mubarak from Dellys, a descendant of Muhammad Al-Mubarak. Additionally, his father, Muhammad Abu Muhammad Al-Mubarak, established Al-Nahda Scientific School, while Cheikh Al-Hashimi founded Al-Irshad School. In recognition of the role of the Algerian community, several academic institutions were named after its members. The Algerians also entered all Ottoman institutions, including the military and schools, where they were represented at all levels as engineers, doctors, officers, and writers. The official translator at the Ottoman court for an extended period was the nephew of Emir Abdelkader⁵.

Muhammad Shatta Al-Aghwati also founded the newspaper "Al-Muhajir", which emerged in Damascus in 1912 but ceased publication following the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Dedicated to Algerian migrants, its financial affairs were managed by Emir Ali, son of Emir Abdelkader. The newspaper consistently denounced France's colonial policies in Algeria and advocated for the rights of Maghrebis⁶. Until the mid-20th century, many Damascene families would adopt a religious figure as their spiritual guide and follow him as disciples. Often, this sheikh was Algerian, ranging from Emir Abdelkader to Cheikh Muhammad Al-Hashimi, passing through Cheikh Al-Mahdi Siklawi, Ibn Yelles, Al-Tayyib Al-Mubarak, Al-Ya'qoubi, Al-Yanawi, and others. Many of them were highly revered by Damascene families and held in deep esteem .

Conclusion :

The Algerian migration to the Levant was closely linked to political, economic, social, and religious conditions resulting from colonial policies. Every time a revolution erupted or failed, or

1 - الخالدي، سهيل، الإشعاع المغربي في المشرق، دور الجالية الجزائرية في بلاد الشام، دار الأمة، 2016، ص 310.

2 - كمال، فيلاي، نفس المرجع، ص 21.

3 - الخالدي، سهيل، الإشعاع المغربي في المشرق، دور الجالية الجزائرية في بلاد الشام، دار الأمة، 2016، ص 33.

4 - الحافظ، محمد مليح، تاريخ أعلام دمشق في القرن 14، دمشق 1986، ص 47.

5 - سعد الله، أبو القاسم، الحركة الوطنية، ج2، عالم المعرفة، الجزائر، 2011، ص125

6 - هلال، عمار، الهجرة الجزائرية نحو بلاد الشام 1847-1918، دار هومة، الجزائر، 2007، ص 16.

political changes occurred—whether internal or external—a major wave of migration would follow, as people fled the sanctions imposed by the colonial administration on its leaders and participants. These groups moved to the Levant carrying their material, intellectual, scientific, and artisanal capabilities. However, the majority of them were political and religious migrants rather than economic ones. Their migration was not confined to specific regions but encompassed all areas of Algeria, particularly between 1871 and 1891, when migration peaked due to the transition from military rule to civilian governance, the concentration of power in settler hands, and the implementation of exceptional laws such as the Indigenous Code and the Forest Code.

This migration was neither temporary nor limited to individuals; it included wealthy, middle-class, and poor groups and persisted for more than a century. Yet, it was marked in many cases by fluctuations toward Ottoman provinces, especially the Levant, influenced by various factors and causes that were often unclear and did not follow a logical pattern in their developments. It did not solely affect farmers but also reached a significant number of intellectuals, notables, religious figures, and some indigenous Algerians who had long served in the Ottoman administration—not in search of livelihood, but rather to ensure their children were raised in an Islamic environment, seeking refuge in what they considered a land of security. The French authorities paid attention to the phenomenon of Algerian migration to the Levant, initially believing it to be temporary. However, pressure from the press and public opinion led them to establish investigative commissions, including the Luciani Report in 1899, the Warnier Report in 1910, and the Barbedette Report in 1911.

Algerians in the Levant, whether at the level of political and religious leadership or among the popular masses, continued to raise the voice of Algeria and the Maghreb, demanding independence. Moreover, Algerians who settled in Syria during the first decade of the twentieth century experienced social and cultural advancement, as their children found open doors to schools—something they had long been denied in their homeland. However, due to the Ottoman state's inability to provide for their needs—despite its interest in them between 1882 and 1899—the situation changed after this period, as migrants began moving from Damascus to various regions. Many eventually returned to Algeria, carrying with them numerous ideas related to liberation, nationalism, and other ideological currents that later influenced the emergence of the national movement, this opens further avenues for research into migration, particularly its impact on the national movement in Algeria.

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