

Influential Families And Ottoman Authority In Southern Constantine: Balances Of Power And Conflict During The 18th-19th Centuries

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between influential families and the Ottoman central authority in the Southern Beylik of Constantine during the 18th and 19th centuries. It examines the balance of power, influence, and conflict that shaped political and social life in the region. The study highlights how local notable families relied on tribal, economic, and religious influence to strengthen their authority, making them both partners and rivals of the Ottoman administration. It also analyzes the strategies adopted by the Ottoman Authority to control the region through alliances, administrative appointments, and military interventions. The research concludes that the relationship between both sides was dynamic, fluctuating between cooperation and conflict according to political and economic circumstances, which significantly influenced the political and social structure of Southern Constantine during the late Ottoman period.

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Introduction

During the Ottoman era, the southern region of the Beylik of Constantine was one of the most important areas that witnessed complex political and social interactions, due to its unique geographical, tribal, and economic characteristics. It formed a vital space where the interests of the central Ottoman authority intersected with the influence of local families and leaders. The Ottoman administration often relied on these families to ensure stability, collect taxes, and secure trade routes. However, this cooperation was not always harmonious; rather, it was marked by various forms of competition and conflict over influence, power, and control of the Saharan region.

Some influential families emerged as local forces that, thanks to their tribal connections and economic and religious standing, were able to assert their presence in political and social life. This made them, at times, key partners of the Ottoman authority, and at other times, a source of threat, especially given the weakness of central oversight and the vast geographical expanse of the Beylik. Furthermore, the political and economic transformations that Algeria experienced during the 18th and 19th centuries contributed to reshaping the balance of power between the two sides, leading to a relationship governed by a logic of cautious equilibrium between cooperation and conflict.

From this perspective, this study aims to examine the nature of the relationship between influential families and the Ottoman authorities in southern Constantine, revealing the mechanisms of influence employed by each side and their impact on the political and social structure of the region during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The central question: To what extent were influential families in southern Constantine able to assert their political and social presence in the face of Ottoman authority during the 18th and 19th centuries? How were the balances of power and conflict between the two sides shaped by the specific characteristics of the desert environment and the evolving political and economic conditions? With the fall of Algiers and the beginning of the French occupation in 1830, and its subsequent incursion into the interior, particularly after the fall of Constantine, the colonial authorities hastened to reorganize the entire country through laws and decrees. Among the most important of these was the Vallée Decree, issued on September 30, 1830, which abolished the title of Sheikh al-Arab (Sheikh of the Arabs) due to its considerable influence, replacing it

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with the title of Khalifa (Caliph). This Khalifa was granted to Farhat bin Said al-Dhawadi over the Ziban region, and later to Bouaziz bin Qana, both of whom had previously held the title of Sheikh al-Arab, though with significantly reduced powers. This decree comprised ten articles.

The Most Influential Families in the Southern Beylik:

The established families that formed the tribal or clan structures in the Rif region gained influence over the Beylik's authority. This influence reached its peak in the 18th century due to the weakening of the central Beylik authority. The Beylik could no longer rely on the army, which had become a powerful political rival and whose numbers had dwindled. The theory of monopolizing power by excluding others became obsolete, whereas previously it had been a condition for stability. The actual influence of the authority was linked to the level of its relations with these sheikhdoms; it could strengthen itself through their favor and weaken it through their displeasure, without bypassing their mediation or establishing direct relationships with individuals. Consequently, the Beylik could no longer maintain security and ensure its continuity except by sharing tax revenues with the heads of these families and major clans. Furthermore, to expand its influence, the Beylik relied on the principle of marriage as a fundamental socio-political factor for linking the fate of local leaders to the ruling power. This manifested in the marriage of Turkish governors to women from the families of prominent clans and tribes.

The ruling power began to take this factor into account when appointing Beys. On the one hand, this self-serving openness led these families to see themselves as represented in the Beylik's power structure through their in-laws.

The Bouakkaz-Dhawawda Family:

The Dhawawda tribe is considered one of the most important tribes in the Beylik of Eastern Algeria due to several factors, including geographical, economic, and political considerations. They played a pivotal role in consolidating Ottoman rule in the Beylik, thanks to their influence in the region and the strength and shrewdness of their rulers, despite the conflicts between them and their neighbors, the Hanansha, Awlad Jallab, and Awlad Abd al-Nur.

The origins of this family trace back to the Hilali Dhawawda tribe, specifically the Riyah branch. They are the descendants of Dawud ibn Mardas ibn Riyah, whose leader during the Almohad era was Mas'ud ibn Sultan ibn Zamam ibn Wardiqi ibn Dawud, nicknamed "al-Balt" for his strength and resilience. When al-Mansur transferred the Ryyah to Morocco, he settled Mas'ud and his people in the Habt region, where they established themselves in 1176 CE. At that time, the tribe was at the height of its political, military, and economic power under Mas'ud's leadership. Mas'ud played a leading role alongside the Almohads in the jihad in Andalusia. After returning to Constantine, he consolidated his power, as Ibn Khaldun described: "The Ryyah gained strength through their rule in Ifriqiya and controlled the outskirts of Constantine. Their sheikh, Mas'ud ibn Zamam, returned to them from Morocco, and the Dhawada tribe gained power over the princes and states."

After Mas'ud ibn Sultan's departure, his son Muhammad succeeded him. Muhammad allied himself with Yahya ibn Ghaniya—a branch of the Sulaym and Ryyah tribes—against the Hafids. His influence expanded, and according to Ibn Khaldun, he and his people held "the leadership of the Bedouin in the outskirts of Ifriqiya, including Constantine, the Zab, Kairouan, and Msila." When the Banu Ghaniya tribe came to power in 631 AH (1232 CE), and Abu Haf's authority grew, the latter fought them until he drove them out of Ifriqiya to its western borders. They then ruled the areas surrounding Constantine and Bejaia, including the Tell Atlas, the Zab region, the Righ, Ouargla, and the surrounding deserts.

Thus, the influence of this tribe continued under the leadership of the descendants of Muhammad ibn Mas'ud. This influence remained strong until the leadership of al-Sakhri ibn Ya'qub ibn Ali, who controlled the entire region between Constantine and Ouargla until the arrival of the Ottomans. From the beginning of their rule in Algeria, the Ottomans worked to gain the loyalty of this powerful tribe, cultivating close ties with its sheikhs. It appears that the first contact between the Ottomans and this tribe was during the reign

of the Beylerbey, Khair ad-Din Pasha. According to a document summarized by a descendant of the Dhawada, as cited by Professor Jamila Maashi, Sheikh Muhammad Khair ad-Din issued a public proclamation in 1529 CE, calling upon the imams of mosques to deliver the sermon in the name of the Ottoman Sultan. He addressed this proclamation, in the Sultan's name, to all the Arab tribes of the Riiyyah, urging them to submit to the Sultan's authority. They responded to this call with conditions, the most important of which were:

- That their existing lands, rights, and privileges granted to them by the Hafsids would not be infringed upon.

- That their right to choose their own leaders would be respected, meaning that the Ottomans would not interfere in the appointment of their leaders, and that their tribal laws would be respected. By accepting their conditions, Pasha Khair al-Din entered into a new era with the Ottomans under the leadership of the “Bu’akkaz” family. The Pasha issued an order to endorse any prince appointed over the tribe and grant him the title of “Sheikh of the Arabs.” The first prince of the tribe to bear this title was “Ali bin al-Sakhri,” nicknamed “Bu’akkaz,” from whom this family took its name.

-Its Capabilities:

Political and Military:

It was renowned for its horsemanship and its massive armies, which al-Wazzan estimated at 5,000 well-equipped horsemen at the end of the Hafsid era. This force prompted the Hafsid sultan to grant them all the lands they had conquered, recording this in official deeds to solidify their legitimate rule over the region stretching from the plains of Constantine and Annaba in the east to Setif and M'Sila in the west, and from the Aurès Mountains to the Zab and Ouargla in the south, and some say even as far west as Mendes (Tiaret). All these lands were gifts from the Almohad and Hafsid rulers in exchange for the military services the tribe provided them.

At the beginning of the Ottoman era, the tribe's forces numbered approximately 1,700 horsemen in the Sahara and 10,000 in the Constantine region, according to Féraud. While it is impossible to give the exact number of the Dhawawda forces, their effectiveness can be confirmed. Thanks to them, these Arabs were able to impose their influence on the region and maintain their control. Their independence. They became known as the "Military Aristocracy" or "Noblesse d'epil" (Nobles of the Sword), and their powerful armies instilled fear in the tribes and ruling authorities. Belonging to them was considered as prestigious as belonging to a noble lineage.

Economic:

The military strength of the Bouakkaz family led the Hafsids to confiscate all their possessions, and compelled the Ottomans to acknowledge their control and grant them all their holdings. They thus ruled a third of the eastern Beylik. As previously mentioned, their nomadic lifestyle, characterized by constant movement and settlement, meant they undertook two migrations between the Ziban and the High Plateaus in search of pasture for their herds. They spent the winter on the banks of the Wadi Djedi and the summer in the High Plateaus, sometimes reaching the outskirts of Constantine. The vastness of this family's lands, particularly the R'oubeh region, indicates the large number of their livestock. This made the tribe The Zawawda were the main suppliers of meat to Constantine and its surrounding areas, a fact confirmed by the French researchers Admant and Mart Gouvian, who stated: "The head of the family, Sheikh Ali bin Sakhri Bouakkaz, would single-handedly slaughter approximately 140 camels during holidays and festivals." However, this family did not cultivate these vast lands but rather converted most of them into pasture for their livestock.

We can say that the military power and political standing of these influential families in the Beylik of the East earned them the attention and respect of the Ottoman authorities. In addition to the financial

exemptions and privileges they received from the authorities, they were also able to secure control of the largest economic event: the annual fair held every year in Wadi al-Uthmaniya, west of Constantine.

The activities of these families were diverse and not limited to herding. They also played a significant role in agriculture in the regions under their control, an activity that was largely characteristic of the rural and desert populations within the Beylik of the East. This activity is predominantly subsistence-based, meaning the harvest is intended for livelihood rather than export, unlike the activities of countries that export certain agricultural products. Furthermore, some members of these families, scattered throughout the southern regions of the Beylik, are involved in foreign trade through markets such as those in Tunisia and neighboring African countries.

Their Sheikhs and Leaders:

After the death of Issa ibn Muhammad ibn Yaqub in 1481 CE, he was succeeded by his son, al-Sakhri ibn Issa ibn Muhammad. His authority extended over the nomadic populations spread between Constantine and Ouargla, and over the lands of Ferdjioua and Medjana, reaching as far as M'Sila and Laghouat.

His entourage and companions would spend the winter with him in the Ziban region and the surrounding expansive pastures in the south, on both sides of the Wadi Djedi. In the summer, they would migrate with him to the north, where they would stay at his summer residence near the sources of Wadi al-Rimal, which originate in the plains of al-Bala'a, adjacent to the Awlad Abd al-Nur tribe. Traces of this practice remain to this day.

The leadership of the Arabs was passed down during the Ottoman era. Thirteen sheikhs from the Bouakaz Al-Dhawawda family, starting from Ali Bouakaz bin Al-Sakhri in 1541 AD to Farhat bin Said in 1826 AD, when it officially passed to Ben Qana. Below we will try to introduce the most important Bouakaz figures who held the sheikhdom during this period, as follows:

Ali Bouakkaz ibn al-Sakhri al-Dhawadi (1541-1581 CE):

He is considered the first to be honored with the title of Sheikh in 1541 CE. His rule coincided with a period of transition from Hafsid to Ottoman rule and the abolition of the title of Emir of the Arabs – as previously mentioned. Among his first actions in this new context was his protection of the Turkish mission that entered Constantine, followed by the protection of the mission of Turkish officers to Biskra in 1550 CE, and then to Touggourt and Ouargla in 1552 CE.

After Saleh Rais assumed the position of Beylerbey in the years 1552-1556 CE, he launched a military campaign against southern Constantine, seizing control of Ouargla and Touggourt and eliminating the Emirate of the Bani Jallab in Touggourt. Among those who assisted him in this was Sheikh of the Arabs, Ali Bouakkaz.

Some sources indicate that Sheikh Ali Bouakkaz participated in the campaign against the cities of Touggourt and Ouargla alongside Bey Saleh Rais and Abdelaziz al-Muqrani in the same year. The year, and the same account states that the two cities offered no resistance to the campaign thanks to the peaceful interventions of Sheikh Ali Bouakkaz.

He held considerable influence in the regions stretching from Wadi Souf to the Aurès Mountains, and his forces comprised numerous tribes, including the Sharfa, Awlad Aqab, Sahari, Bani Ibrahim, Bani Ali, Bahman, and Salmiya.

One of the first actions undertaken by the Sheikh of the Arabs in connection with his new relationship with the Ottomans was protecting the Turkish mission that entered Constantine via Annaba after the Hafsid prince left the city and returned to Tunis. This mission consisted of two hundred Turkish soldiers and officers.

Sheikh Ali Bouakkaz ibn al-Sakhri died in 1581 CE and was buried in the Sidi Masoud cemetery in El Eulma, where his tomb still stands.

Farhat ibn Said:

Farhat ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad, known as Farhat ibn Saad, was born in 1786 CE. Ibrahim Bey appointed him Sheikh of the Arabs after forcing Ibn Qana relinquished his sheikhdom in 1821, becoming the last of the Bu'akkaz family to hold the position. However, upon Ahmed Bey's ascension to power in 1826, he deposed Ibn Qana and reinstated his maternal uncles, Ibn Qana. This reignited the conflict between the Bu'akkaz and Beylik families, a conflict that persisted throughout the French occupation, which exploited Ibn Qana as part of its divide-and-rule policy.

Despite his disagreements with and resistance to Ahmed Bey, the latter described him in his memoirs as "a man of gunpowder and strength. He fought me for seven years, facing a hundred men alone in battle, and Bouaziz was considered a woman by his side." The French colonizers dubbed him "The Viper of the Desert" for his courage and daring. He was "...an example of the early Muslim heroes...and his admirable qualities attracted many followers...to the point that people began to attribute extraordinary qualities to his character." Hamdan bin Othman Khodja described him as "a unique personality seeking responsibility." That's all. But he was courageous and ambitious." Perhaps Hamdan Khouja was right about that, for his love of responsibility and his ambition to reclaim the leadership of the Arabs drove him to seek the help of the French.

The Ben Gana Family

The Ben Gana family is considered the last of the local ruling families to emerge in the Beylik of Constantine. Researchers have differed in determining the origin of this family due to the lack of official documents indicating its precise lineage, and due to the historical neglect it suffered before its emergence during the reign of Bey Ahmed al-Qali (1756-1771).

Some other writings indicate their Berber Kabyle origins, after which they settled in the Constantine region. Bouaziz Ben Gana documents the noble family tree, tracing it back to the first Arab sheikh of the Ben Gana family, Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Sulayman, through forty-five generations, reaching back to Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (may God honor his face). This is a phenomenon associated with ancient and influential families in Islamic scholarship.

According to their sheikh, Bouaziz Ben Qana, their lineage is noble, as evidenced by a genealogical tree. He based this assertion on the book of genealogies by Sheikh Ahmed Ben Mohammed Al-Ashmawi, tracing it back to the first Arab sheikh of the Ibn Qana family, Sheikh Mohammed Ben Ali Ben Suleiman, and through forty-five generations to Imam Ali Ben Abi Talib. This is the same lineage confirmed by the family's early sheikhs to French researchers, to whom they provided family documents, including a written account given to Commander Seroka. He witnessed the occupation of Zab and Touggourt and wrote about the region's history during this period. This is the view held by both researchers, Mart and Admandqovian, who relied on the aforementioned account on the one hand, and on the family tree reconstructed by the family members based on their ancestors' narratives on the other. However, researcher Féraud strongly criticized this document, stating that it confused the Beni Slimane, the family's first ancestor, with Haj Slimane bin Qana, the son-in-law of Bey Ahmed al-Qali. He proposed several possibilities, such as that they were from the Dhawawda or that they belonged to the Awlad Sidi Slimane, the owner of the Zawiya of Rejass near Mila. However, after questioning several tribal elders, he concluded that the family traces its lineage to a woman named Qana who lived in the Djurdjura Mountains in the village of Koukou. As a result of a dispute among the village's young men over her, she was expelled and sought refuge in the village of Flissa, accompanied by her son, Yahya bin Qana. Upon his death, her descendants dispersed. One of them, named Mahmoud Rejass, settled in Mila and, practicing blacksmithing, became known as al-Haddad (the blacksmith). When a son was born to him, he named him Slimane. Ben Qana, who became the son-in-law of Ahmed al-Qali. As soon as Ahmed al-Qali assumed power in the Beylik of Constantine, he did everything in his power to elevate his in-laws to the status of ruling families within the Beylik. Indeed, he succeeded in

securing a place for this family in history, making them rival the most prestigious families in the region, such as the Bouakkaz family, the sheikhs of the Arabs and rulers of the Sahara.

Professor Abdullah Hashlaf suggests that the origin of their name, "al-Kanawat," stems from the fact that at the time of the Berbers' conversion to Islam, they were called "al-Kanawat." These people would patrol their homes in all directions, watching them closely, fearing their apostasy and return to disbelief, given their recent conversion. When questioned about them, they would respond with the phrase: "It was and it was." However, with the passage of time and the evolution of dialects and speech, they came to be known as "al-Qanawat."

Some researchers believe that the status of this family predates the leadership of Ahmed al-Qali. The Ben Qana family archives preserve a letter from Bey Hussein Zarq Aynu to the governor of Biskra, Si Mustafa, in 1752 CE, ordering him to appoint Haj Ben Qana to... The scribe's position was not reached by the latter from Touggourt. This is what al-Wartilani reported: that during his travels, he passed through the Zab region in 1762 CE and met al-Hajj ibn Qana, whom he described as having "a word that was accepted and obeyed by the Turks."

What is known about the Bouaziz ibn Qana family is that it was largely cohesive and united. It consisted of: Muhammad, Ali ibn al-Qaydoum, Ahmad ibn Balmasai, al-Hajj ibn Qana, and, in addition to his sons, his nephews who strengthened the family: al-Hajj ibn Ahmad ibn Qana, al-Arabi ibn al-Hajj ibn Qana, Si Ahmad ibn al-Hajj, Si Muhammad al-Saghir, and his nephew Ahmad ibn Bouzid, as well as his other nephews, Bou Lakhra ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hajj, and Si Ibrahim.

The influence of the Ibn Qana family in the Sahara:

It is considered that Bey Ahmad al-Qali (1756-1721 CE), the grandfather of al-Hajj Ahmad Bey, the last Bey of Constantine, was behind the Ibn Qana family's move to the Sahara, as he was keen to ensure their continued influence. His in-laws were connected to the political prominence enjoyed by some local families in the Beylik. His first act in this regard was to marry his wife's sister, "Mubarka," daughter of Ben Qana, to the nephew of the Arab sheikh, "Ali Bouakkaz." In this way, he was able to link his in-laws to the largest family in the Sahara, the Bouakkaz family of the Dhawawda tribe. The second step in the Bey's plan was the frequent visits of Muhammad Ben Qana, Mubarka's brother, to the Sahara under the pretext of visiting his sister. This allowed the guest to establish relationships with the region's inhabitants. He had a clear policy of fostering harmony among the people of the region and tried to eliminate all rebellions in the Constantine region. He worked to establish security, encouraged farming, tree planting, and the development of economic life in the Beylik. The sheikh maintained this relationship by distributing alms to the poor among them, which earned him an important position in the hearts of the Arabs. The Bey quickly exploited this by appointing a sheikh over them, which ignited the flames of war between the old Arab sheikhs of the Bouakkaz family and the Arab sheikhs of the Ben Qana family. But the question that must be asked in this context is: Is it true that the influence of the Ibn Qana family only emerged in the Sahara during the reign of Bey Ahmed al-Qali? Or are there those who doubt this?

Many historical accounts suggest that the presence of the Ibn Qana family in the Sahara predates the reign of Bey Ahmed al-Qali in Constantine. Among these is the account of Sheikh al-Husayn al-Wartilani, who passed through the Zab region in 1175 AH/1762 CE, where he met the Arab Sheikh, al-Hajj Ibn Qana, and wrote the following about him: "On this day, we met the son of the good Sheikh, in whose hands the affairs of the Arabs were in his hands, and whose word was accepted and obeyed when al-Hajj Ibn Qana left. He was a wise and self-assured man, dignified and generous, and thus his efforts were not thwarted, nor was his opinion exposed. He enjoyed continued protection and well-being throughout the succession of rulers in Constantine, as was their custom. When a new governor came, he was not the original ruler, but perhaps he was one of his own. He was, praise be to God, well-regarded and beloved by every ruler."

The traveler, by saying this, confirms that the presence of Sheikh Ibn Qana in his position was prior to the era of Bey Ahmed Al-Qali, which was also indicated by the French historian Gouvion, who said, "The influence of the Ibn Qana family reached as far as Touggourt and Ouargla, and the rulers of Constantine

respected the sheikhs of the family and negotiated with them on an equal footing. He cited as evidence some of the letter of Bey Hassan Zarq Aynu (1167-1170 AH/175-1756 AD) that he had addressed to Sim Mustafa, the leader of Biskra.” This indicates the presence of the sheikhs of this family in the Sahara before the arrival of Bey Ahmed al-Qali to power in 1170 AH (1756 AD). However, this does not necessarily negate that Ahmed al-Qali's influence was what brought his in-laws to rule the Sahara, whether before or after he assumed the Beylik. Ahmed al-Qali held many positions that enabled him to achieve his and his family's goals without reaching the throne, including the position of Pasha Siar, then Agha al-Qali, then Khalifa of Bey Zarq Aynu. Perhaps the family's move to the Sahara was during his succession to the aforementioned Bey and not during his rule of Constantine. As for the date of this family's entry into the Sahara, if they were able in a short period to become a powerful ruling family administratively, politically, and militarily, and to control most of the Zab lands, even though their influence in the region remained nominal and supported by the Ayatollahs of Constantine until the end of the Ottoman era. The military character of the Ben Gana family:

The Beys of Constantine were not content with the Ben Gana family's rise to the leadership of the Arabs and their rule over the Sahara; they also sought to support them with significant military forces, enabling their sheikhs to control the region, despite the population's rejection of their rule and the war waged against them by the Bouakkaz family, the legitimate sheikhs of the Arabs. The military garrison stationed in Biskra supported the family and was under the command of its sheikhs, backed by general forces from the Sahara tribes. The Sahari tribe was the most important military tribe for the Ben Qana family, comprising the personal guard of the Arab sheikhs and being the most subservient to them. The Beys also incorporated into Ben Qana's forces several tribes known for banditry and highway robbery, including the Chaamba tribe. It can be said that the Ben Qana family inherited the region from the Bouakkaz family, which is what the Beys of Constantine sought to achieve in order to break the power of the Dhawawda. This process would have a significant impact on the region, leading to bitter conflict between the tribes, as will become clear in the chapter on the relationship between the Beylik authority and the tribes. If the Ben Qana family secured the position of Sheikh of the Arabs at the end of the Ottoman era by removing the Bouakkaz family at the behest of the Ottoman authorities, this clearly explains the nature of Ottoman rule and its relationship with the tribes of the Constantine countryside. To what extent were the Ottoman rulers in the Beylik of Constantine able to win over the spiritual authority represented by its sheikhs, institutions, and followers to their side? Or was it a tacit alliance between them, united by shared interests but divided by material and moral demands and privileges?

Ahmed al-Qali's eagerness to elevate his in-laws to political prominence, coupled with his attempts to weaken the Bouakkaz family from within (which had become a threat to them) and break the power of the Arab sheikh, who was proud of his strength, led him to link the latter to his in-laws from the Ben Qana family by marrying his wife's sister, Mubaraka, daughter of Ben Qana, to Farhat, the nephew of the Arab sheikh, Ali Bouakkaz. To implement his plan to wrest control of the Sahara from the Bouakkaz family, Muhammad Ben Qana sent Mubaraka's brother to his sister under the guise of a visit. These visits became frequent, allowing the latter to cultivate relationships with the region's inhabitants. With the Bey's help, he was able to transform this into political dominance encompassing many tribes, thanks to the financial aid, alms he provided to the poor, and the economic and developmental projects he implemented.

The Ben Ali tribe was the first to break away from the Bouakkaz family, encouraged by Ibn Qana. Bouakkaz retaliated by killing several of their notables, prompting the Bey to intervene politically. The Sheikh of the Arabs considered this an interference in his affairs. The situation was further complicated by the Bey's appointment of Sheikh Ibn Qana to lead the Hajj caravan for the 1762 season. This angered the Sheikh of the Arabs, who declared a revolt against the Bey. However, the Bey disregarded this and proceeded with his plan, appointing Haj Ibn Qana as Sheikh of the Arabs upon his return from the Hajj. He was the first Sheikh of the Arabs from the Ben Qana family and the first rival to Sheikh Bouakkaz. During the same period, and perhaps with the encouragement of Bey Ahmed al-Qali himself, several high-ranking officials of the Turkish Beylik married daughters of the Ibn Qana family. Ibrahim Bousbaa, the leader of the Zamala, married one of Sheikh Ibn Qana's daughters, and Hussein Ibn Bouhankhou Khaznaji, who would later become Bey, married her sister from Algiers. Her third sister married Khaznaji from Algiers. Thus, thanks

to Bey Ahmed al-Qali of Constantine, the Ibn Qana family established a network of familial ties with high-ranking state officials, propelling them to the pinnacle of power in the Beylik of Constantine in particular, and the Regency of Algiers in general. Their influence even extended to affecting the Pasha's own decisions regarding the appointment of Constantine's Beys. The appointment of their two sons-in-law, Ibrahim Bousbaa and Hussein Ibn Bouhankhou, as Beys of Constantine after the overthrow of Saleh Bey is sufficient proof of this.

According to what Al-Sharif Al-Zahhar mentioned in his book, Abdullah Bey (1219-1221 AH / 1804-1806 AD) was married to Al-Daykha bint Muhammad bin Qana, as he said: "When the Emir received news of the death of Othman Bey, he summoned the commander of Al-Khashna, who was married to Al-Daykha bint bin Qana (sic), the sheikh of the Arabs, and he was in Constantine. When the commander (sic) Abdullah appeared before him, he appointed him Bey of Constantine..." The arrival of the sons-in-law of the Ibn Qana family to the position of Bey is attributed to the strong influence of the daughters of the Ibn Qana family on their husbands, before their influence on the decisions of the Pasha. Rather, Saleh Al-Antari confirmed the participation of one of the daughters of this family, who is Al-Daikha bint "Muhammad Ibn Qana", the wife of Abdullah Bey, in the rule of the Beylik of Constantine, saying: "Abdullah Bey was a man of war and courage, but his wife shared with him in the rulings, and that is an ugly matter among the Arabs and non-Arabs. For this reason, the Pasha dismissed him and ordered his killing, and he died in the year 1806."

According to Sharif al-Zahhar, this Bey relied on his in-laws to strengthen his influence, and he praised the strength and fortitude of his wife, saying: "...Then Abdullah al-Arab corresponded with his in-laws and all the subjects, and his affairs were settled. He appeased the Arab leaders, and the people of the Makhzen gathered around him... The Bey's reward was that the princes of Algiers killed him after the death of Prince Mustafa Pasha, and they tortured his wife until she died under torture, in order to reveal Abdullah Bey's wealth. It is said of this woman that she was one of the most beautiful women of her time, and she possessed great courage."

The leaders of the Ibn Qana family possessed the ability to mobilize and gather a considerable number of horsemen during times of war, given their power and influence over those under their control. This is corroborated by Hamdan ibn Uthman Khouja, although he somewhat exaggerates the figures and statistics of the time, stating: "...Sheikh Ibn Qana can rely on ten thousand horsemen, and I don't believe this number is exaggerated, as the total number of tents exceeds ten thousand. If we assume that each tent can equip one horseman, we can easily find the required number... This is due to the abundance of horses owned by these inhabitants and their great passion for riding and engaging in warfare. Furthermore, there are many sheikhs known to Ibn Qana who reside in these areas."

During the reign of Bey Abdullah in 1805, the family's standing increased significantly. Abdullah was also related to Ibn Qana by marriage. With this power, they were able to extend their influence over the entire region between Biskra and Constantine, despite the lack of military competence among their sheikhs and their unpopularity among the desert inhabitants.

As for the military capabilities of the Ibn Qana family... The Qana tribe was composed of the Awlad Rahmoun and Bouazid tribes, who supplied the Sheikh with 800 infantry and 900 cavalry. The Sahari tribe provided the Sheikh with 200 cavalry. In reality, the Sheikh could rely on 10,000 cavalry, and this number could be doubled if needed.

It is also worth noting that it was not only the Turks who sought to intermarry with this politically and financially influential family in Constantine. The sons of the Ibn Qana family frequently sought to marry Janissary daughters, as evidenced in several contracts, including: "Mansour bin Haj Ahmed bin Qana married Hanifa bint Ismail al-Inkashari as a virgin. The dowry was 500 riyals. [The text abruptly ends here.] Her husband was Mr. Ibrahim bin Si Wali al-Inkashari (Jumada II 1241 AH)." This demonstrates the extent to which one of the sons of this influential and prestigious family sought to marry the daughters of... The Janissaries: We note from the same contract the appointment of a Janissary to the daughter of Ibn Qana, which suggests that this family's relationship with the Turks was no longer limited to those with influence.

Thus, it can be said that the intermarriage between the Ibn Qana family and Turkish elements transcended material and political purposes, transforming into a purely social relationship.

Their Economic Capabilities:

As a result of their marriages to some Beys and high-ranking officials in the Beylik, as well as other influential families, the family transformed into a family of high standing and a vastly wealthy feudal dynasty. This wealth stemmed from the significant material privileges they gained through their administrative and political positions, particularly the position of Sheikh al-Arab, which entitled them to a substantial portion of the taxes collected from the tribes. Furthermore, the Beys granted them extensive fiefdoms upon appointing a new Sheikh al-Arab in exchange for military and administrative services, either through ownership or dismissal.

Thus, they owned most of the agricultural lands of Rejass and many oases in the Sahara, as well as lands owned and dismissed in the Tell region, in addition to numerous livestock herds. Their wealth played a significant role in their acquisition of power. The rows. This is what Hamdan Khouja confirmed to us, saying: "...Among the owners of these houses or heads of families, there are some who appear wealthy. I was personally invited to eat at the home of one of these owners, and he offered me a silver ewer to wash my hands in the Eastern style, and served the meal on Chinese porcelain plates..."

Prominent Sheikhs:

Haj Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Sulayman ibn Qana (1662-1664 CE):

He is considered one of the first to hold the position of Sheikh of the Arabs from the Banu Qana clan. He was chosen by Bey Ahmad al-Qali in 1762 CE to lead the Hajj caravan. As part of a policy aimed at breaking the power of the Bu'akkaz clan and removing them from the Sheikhdome, and elevating his in-laws to its ranks, he appointed him Sheikh of the Arabs upon his return from the Hajj. The latter then supplied the Ottoman army with reinforcements in its encampment on the eastern desert. However, he was killed in the campaign against Flissa in 1764 CE.

Bu'aziz ibn Bulkhras Ben Gana

Bouaziz Ben Gana grew up in a family of high social and political standing. His grandfather, Muhammad al-Hajj ibn Ali ibn Sulayman, was the first to assume the position of Sheikh of the Arabs in 1762 CE, following the appointment of Ahmad al-Qali as Bey of Constantine (1756-1771 CE). His father, Bu Lakhra, led the Hodna region, while his brother, Muhammad Belhadj, was appointed Sheikh of the Arabs between 1819 and 1826 CE. His sister, Ruqayya, married Muhammad al-Sharif ibn Ahmad al-Qali, who ruled the Beylik of the East for many years during the Ottoman era. Their marriage produced Ahmad Bey, the last Bey of Eastern Algeria. The family continued to hold the position of Sheikh of the Arabs until 1839 CE.

Describing his character, Sheikh Muhammad Khair al-Din said: "He possessed a personality marked by considerable cunning and resourcefulness." Hajj Ahmad Bey also described him in his memoirs, saying: "He was not a brave man...for he used every means to achieve his goals." His goal is...

Bouaziz Ben Gana held the position of Sheikh of the Arabs in 1830, during the reign of Hajj Ahmed Bey. As a result, Bouaziz enjoyed numerous material privileges, which significantly impacted his life. Describing the social and economic conditions he led, Hamdan Ben Othman Khodja, upon visiting Sheikh Ben Gana's tents in the Ziban region, wrote: "I can say that they are spacious and elegantly and magnificently erected. At every entrance, beautiful horses are tethered. I inquired about the number of horsemen who could be mobilized at a moment's notice, and the answer was that Sheikh Ben Gana could rely on ten thousand horsemen. I don't believe this number is an exaggeration, as the total number of tents exceeds ten thousand. If we assume that each tent could equip one horseman, we would easily find the required number."

He was the last of the Sheikhs of the Arabs, Ahmed Bey's maternal uncle, and his ally who remained by his side until the fall of Constantine in 1837, at which point he abandoned him and joined the French. Sheikh Muhammad Khair al-Din considered him to be: "The one who established the foundations of this house and strengthened its pillars. He was the direct reason for its existence and survival under French rule, from the first day of the occupation of the Sahara until the last day of this French colonial rule... He possessed a personality characterized by considerable cunning and resourcefulness... With these qualities, he was able to play both sides with ease, extending his right hand to his nephew... and at the same time extending his left to the French invaders to forge relationships with them, paving the way for himself and his family to prepare for dominance and rule over the Arab tribes in the Sahara..."

After the removal of Farhat bin Said, the Sheikh of the Arabs and Emir Abdelkader's representative in the Sahara, and after the defeat of Hassan bin Azzouz's army, Emir Abdelkader's representative, by the French army and their ally Bouaziz bin Qana, and in light of the services he had rendered to France, he believed he had the right to demand that France appoint him Sheikh of the Arabs with the same broad authority that the Zawawda Arab sheikhs had enjoyed. He also requested that France place a contingent of its armed forces under his command to establish stability and consolidate French power throughout the Sahara. However, the occupying authorities rejected his request and instead implemented a plan that involved appointing Dhabah bin Sakhri from the Zawawda tribe as leader of the Zab Oulad Jalal and the Arab Gharaba, and appointing Ali bin Farhat bin Said as Bey of Souf, Touggourt, and the surrounding vast, barren desert.

By adopting a divide-and-rule policy among Algerians, French colonialism and its foreign collaborators ultimately succeeded in eliminating the historical title of Sheikh al-Arab, which had symbolized the leadership of the Hilalian Arabs in North Africa for over ten centuries. They also eliminated the title of Khalifa, which symbolized the succession of Emir Abdelkader.

The Conflict Between Influential Families:

The Beys of Constantine deliberately adopted what they considered a more effective method for maintaining and perpetuating their rule: a divide-and-rule policy among the influential tribes. This was intended to weaken the local ruling families and subject them to central authority. The direct result of this policy was a fierce conflict that arose between these various families, ultimately tearing apart their political and military ties. Contributing to the success of this policy was the prevailing law of force among the tribes and the personal interests that played a significant role in hindering the efforts of the family sheikhs to maintain the cohesion of the alliances that had long bound the tribes under their rule. This fragmentation was not limited to different families and tribes but extended even within the same family, leading to the demise of their influence in the Beylik.

Despite the importance of economic motives in the ongoing conflict between ruling families, the role of the rulers themselves in fueling and encouraging this struggle for power cannot be overlooked. This was especially true after Ahmed al-Qali assumed the Beylik of Constantine in 1756. He managed to install his in-laws from the Ben Qana family in the leadership of the Saharan Arabs, alongside the Bouakkaz family, the legitimate rulers. This led to a fierce conflict between the two families, ultimately resulting in Sheikh Bouakkaz retaining the chieftainship, while the Ben Qana family obtained the nominal leadership.

The conflict between the Bouakkaz and Ibn Qana families:

The Dhawawda tribe was initially associated with the Hafsids, maintaining significant influence in the Sahara. Upon the arrival of the Ottomans, they entered their service, preserving their status and confirming their leadership of the Sahara. Khair ad-Din Barbarossa appointed their sheikh, known as "al-Sakhri ibn Ya'qub ibn Ali Bouakkaz." This sheikh, the last leader of this family during the Hafsids era in 1481 CE, held sway over most of the Saharan regions, reaching as far as the plains of Constantine. This situation persisted under Ottoman rule until a third of the eastern Beylik fell under the influence of the Dhawawda.

The chieftainship of the Arabs remained hereditary within their tribe. After the tribe agreed on the selection of a sheikh, the Bey bestowed upon him a distinctive ceremonial garment called a "kaftan," in a formal ceremony. Following the death of Sheikh al-Sakhri ibn Issa ibn Yaqub in 1541 CE, the position passed to Ali Bu'akkaz ibn al-Sakhri, the first to hold the title of sheikh over the Zab region. This occurred during the transition from Hafsid to Ottoman rule. He was nicknamed Bu'akkaz because he was always carrying a staff.

After Haj Ali Bu'akkaz, the sheikhdom passed to his sons until it reached Sheikh Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Sakhri, who died in 1790 CE. Afterward, the position remained vacant due to the inability of the senior sheikhs of the family to nominate a successor, until Farhat ibn Said assumed the role, followed by his son, Ali Bey. Although the Bouakkaz family enjoyed considerable influence, it began to lose its position in recent times with the rise of the Ben Gana family. The Ben Gana family's relationship with the Ottomans began during the reign of Ahmed al-Qali, the Bey of Constantine, in 1756 CE, who married a woman from this family. Through this marriage, he was able to insert his in-laws from the Ben Gana family into the leadership of the Saharan Arabs, alongside the Bouakkaz family, who were the legitimate rulers. This led to a fierce conflict between the two families, resulting in Sheikh Bouakkaz retaining the leadership, while the Ben Gana family obtained the nominal leadership.

Perhaps the most significant direct clash between the two sides was

The conflict transcended its traditional nature as a rivalry between two families, deepening into internal strife within the family itself. Consider the Ben Gana family: after Sheikh Mohammed bin al-Hajj Ben Gana was promoted to the rank of minister, the position of Sheikh of the Arabs remained vacant. The Bey sought the most capable sheikh from the family to fill the post and found no one other than Mohammed al-Saghir bin Mohammed bin al-Hajj. However, upon hearing of this appointment, Sheikh Boukhras, in the Sahara, was enraged and rushed to Constantine to protest, believing that Ibrahim Ben Gana was more deserving of the position. He persuaded the Bey, who then stripped Mohammed al-Saghir of the title and bestowed it upon Ibrahim, thus igniting a war within the Ben Gana family itself.

The dispute intensified among the members of the Ben Gana family until it transformed into a bloody conflict between brothers, as Mohammed al-Saghir resolved to take revenge on his uncles to wrest the sheikhdom of the Arabs from him. He saw an opportunity after the death of Bey Hassan Pasha, who had worked throughout his reign to maintain the family's unity. He declared a revolution against his uncle Ibrahim and those within the family who supported him. Faced with this situation, the new Bey, "Ingliz Bey" (1803), had no choice but to turn to the rivals of the Ben Gana family, the Bouakkaz family, at the suggestion of his successor, son-in-law, and ally of the Bouakkaz family, "Ibn Zakri." He officially reinstated the title of Sheikh al-Arab to Dhibah Ben Bouakkaz and decided to eliminate the sheikhs of the Ben Gana family.

The same thing happened with the Bani Jallab family. After Sultan Farhat bin Jallab assumed power, he managed to calm the region with his strength, but he soon died, leaving behind a conflict more bitter than before, as his son Al-Khazin had not yet reached the age of majority. So his son Ibrahim bin Ahmed took over temporarily until he came of age, but he refused to give up the temporary position. Here another party entered the conflict, which was Farhat bin Said bin Bu'akkaz, along with his son-in-law Al-Khazin and their ally Muhammad bin Ahmed. They were able to overthrow Ibrahim, and Al-Khazin took over the rule. However, the ally Muhammad also betrayed him and took his position in 1805 AD. The family became embroiled in a bloody internal power struggle. In this context, the last of the Banu Jallab sultans contacted the French administration. Sulayman ibn Ali al-Jalabi approached the French governor seeking his allegiance. The letter included the following: "...This is an old story from the time of our ancestors. No sultan in our land ascended to power except through murder. We will recount to you the story of our ancestors. When Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Jallab grew old, he killed his two brothers, Sheikh Ibrahim and Abd al-Rahman, and his cousin al-Khazin. Then his son, Sheikh Umar ibn Muhammad, succeeded him, killing his brother, Sheikh Ahmad, and his cousin, Mahmud. Then Sheikh Ibrahim ibn Muhammad succeeded him, only to be killed by his brother, Ali... This is what we witnessed, and so did our forefathers..."

This letter reveals that this family, and others in Algeria during this era and others, were driven by the pursuit of power and its benefits, leading to a constant and desperate struggle within the family to seize the position and authority. The essence of this fierce conflict within the same family lay in the assertion of independence by each ruler belonging to these families. Each individual contributed to fueling the conflict based on their own interests, within a power struggle to maintain their presence and preserve their entity. Therefore, we can say that the military capabilities possessed by each faction within these families were prerequisites for survival and continued rule. This characterized this period in the southern regions of the Beylik of Constantine and the surrounding countryside of the Beylik's capital.

It cannot be overlooked that the policies of the Beys played a significant role in exacerbating the conflict between the influential families and tribes in the southern Beylik of the East. According to them, this was part of a divide-and-rule strategy, aimed at preserving their sovereignty and authority over all parts of the Beylik of the East. We can learn from the policies of the successive Beys who ruled the Beylik of the East during the period under study.

The Relationship Between the Ruling Authority and Influential Families:

When the Ottomans extended their rule over eastern Algeria, they found influential families dominating its rural areas. These families included: the Bouakkaz family, the Dhawada family, the Beni Jellab family of the Beylik of Constantine, the Ahrar al-Hannasha family, and the Bouakkaz Ben Achour family. At the beginning of the 18th century, the Ben Qana family emerged in southern Constantine. This local ruling family in the Constantine countryside is referred to by Féraud as "the noble families." The Ottoman rulers recognized the independence of these families, who possessed vast, independent principalities and emirates, to the point that one could say each family's leadership constituted a state within a state.

The relationship between the Ottoman rulers and these families fluctuated between peace and war. In times of peace, the rulers benefited from this relationship, using it to consolidate their rule in the Beylik of Constantine and leveraging the families' influence to suppress rebellions and uprisings. However, this relationship was sometimes characterized by tension, with the leaders of these families sometimes infiltrating the rulers' ranks and joining local revolts and various rebellions. Some Ottoman rulers even chose to forge marriage alliances with the leaders of these families. For example, Saleh Bey of Constantine (1771-1792) married one of the daughters of Bey Ahmed al-Qali (1756-1771), whose wife was from the al-Muqrani family. The last Bey of Constantine, al-Hajj Ahmed, also forged a similar alliance with the al-Muqrani family.

The Policy of Rapprochement and Intermarriage:

Since their arrival in Algeria, the Ottomans maintained the local laws governing Algerian society. They also pursued a policy of rapprochement and respect for the authority of tribal sheikhs and influential families in the country. This is evident in the Ottoman correspondence with the Turkish governors of Algeria, and was expressed by Sultan Selim II (1566-1574 CE) in a firman to the Beylerbey Ahmed Chaouch Bastanji (1563-1576 CE) in 1574 CE, ordering him not to infringe upon the sovereignty of any of the tribal sheikhs in the east of the country.

He did not stop at these recommendations, but went further, as Ibn al-Attar reported, stating: "When the Bey receives the robe of office from Algiers, he wears it himself and then sends it to the Sheikh of the Arabs, and after him to the Sheikh of the Hanansha. The Hanansha's position is known as the position of the caftan because their authority is equivalent to that of the Bey."

These sheikhdoms served as the long arm of the central authority in the region.

Marriage was a crucial means of forging alliances and achieving political and economic interests between parties. In such societies, marriage was considered an ideal way to ensure the success of the alliance and the achievement of its various objectives. However, marriage alone is insufficient unless the interests of both parties are shared and linked to the extent to which the tribes can gain from this alliance. Perhaps the Ibn

Jalloul family, into which Saleh Bey married, is the best example of this, as they inherited his political position and property.

Marriage between the ruling class and influential families takes on a political character. It is an important tool, in the view of rulers, for maintaining and perpetuating their rule. The ruling authority aims, through it, to pit families against each other, export conflict to the countryside, and subdue opposing tribes to the central authority by using the power of allied tribes. When examining the policies used to subdue certain influential tribes, we find in this context Bey Saleh's attempt to marry into the sheikh of the Hanansha tribe to bring them under his authority. As Al-Adwani described this tribe, it was "a tribe of great strength and impregnable to enemies."

Despite the success of intermarriage policies at certain times, they created a kind of political imbalance in some regions, even leading to fierce wars between certain families, as was the case with the Awlad Ibn Qana and the Awlad Bu'akkaz. Their conflict over leadership of the Sahara lasted for a long period. This was also practiced by the Bey of Constantine, Haj Ahmed Bey, during the final years of Ottoman rule in Algeria, who would intervene from time to time to consolidate the power of his in-laws and relatives, the Ibn Qana, and to support them against all their enemies.

The Appointment of Makhzen Tribes to Important Positions:

One of the pillars of the Ottoman presence in Algeria was the continuous alliance between influential families and the ruling authority, in exchange for the gains each party obtained from this relationship. We find the Makhzen tribes and the military and administrative role they played alongside the official Ottoman armies in the Beyliks, subjugating the tribes, extending the state's influence and prestige, and collecting taxes from the countryside. Without these allied and Makhzen tribes, the state would not have been able to perform its duties so effectively.

The importance of the tribes cooperating with the ruling authority in the Beylik is emphasized by Esterhazy when he says: "The Makhzen tribes are a force among the Algerian tribes that provide unpaid services, yet they are exempt from paying taxes, like the Douayr and Zmoul tribes."

In return for their administrative and military role, these powerful tribes were granted lands suitable for agriculture and grazing, enabling them to guard important mountain passes in the southern part of the Beylik, including the Belzma region and the Sahari granary, which guarded the northern and eastern flanks of Biskra.

In the Ain M'lila plain, the Zamala unit was located, to which Saleh Bey granted vast tracts of arable land estimated at around 4,000 hectares. In addition, there were the Douars (districts), including the Khalifa Douar, consisting of 200 horsemen and active in the Constantine region; the Douars of El Khroub and Ouled Rahmoun; the Douars of Agha, spread across Ferdjioua and comprising 1,000 horsemen; and the Zwara units, residing in the Djurdjura region. The Zwara received half the Janissary's pay for their services, with the ceremonial authorities stipulating that their fee was one Zayani for every two Zayanis paid to a Janissary. We also find that the Makhzen of the Harakta and Qaid al-Awassi were among the most important Makhzen forces in the Beylik, with their numbers reaching up to 4,000 horsemen. They were deployed at fortified points along the eastern route towards Constantine, where Makhzen tribes such as the Zawatna and Ibn Harun were concentrated in some of its rugged areas.

The main objective of establishing these Makhzen units was to assist the Beylik authority in subduing rebellious tribes and extending the influence of the Ottoman authority throughout the country. This included collecting taxes and monitoring the movements of the tribes and their sheikhs to prevent any rebellion against the ruling power. This approach was one of the reasons that prolonged the Ottoman presence in various parts of the country, reaching the furthest reaches of the Beylik's territory. 2- The Divide and Rule Policy:

One of the most important methods used to consolidate the Beylik's power was to create an atmosphere of instability within the Beylik by any means possible. When powerful and widespread tribes existed throughout the Beylik, and given their moral authority over the tribes, the Beys had to adopt a policy of infiltrating these tribes, sowing discord among them, and employing a divide-and-rule strategy to maintain their power.

There are many examples of this policy being implemented. For instance, the rulers of the Beylik of Constantine employed this tactic. Saleh Bey dismissed Sheikh Abdullah Belabbas in El Kala and appointed his son, Ali Bey, in his place. Similarly, Bey El Hadj Ahmed dismissed Sheikh Maqoura Ben Achour in Ferdjioua for failing to meet his financial obligations and appointed his cousin in his stead. He then eliminated Sheikh Maqoura, considering him a rebel against his authority.

The Beys also resorted to sowing discord and cultivating strife between tribes, both within and between neighboring tribes, by granting privileges to one tribe over another. This tactic was also employed within individual tribes to incite rivalries, especially when the Beys found it difficult to subdue them. Bey Mustafa al-Waznaji implemented this strategy during his campaign against the Awlad Bu'un in the Aurès Mountains. The author of the manuscript "The Beys of Constantine" recounts this, stating: "The Bey arrived with a large army, including soldiers, men, and hordes of men, and surrounded the mountain from all sides, but he could not defeat them. When he realized he could not overcome them, even if they remained there for two or three months, he resorted to trickery... He entered a nearby tribe called the Halimiya and gave them generous gifts. Afterwards, they agreed to betray them at night, saying, 'We and your fathers are friends. What harms you harms us. This Bey has surrounded you and intends to kill you and plunder your wealth. If you want victory, we will send you two hundred men to assist you in patrolling and repelling attacks.' They agreed to this and expressed their gratitude." Their favor, and when night fell, the two hundred men went to them, and after dawn they opened the village gate for the Bey .

Launching punitive campaigns against rebellious tribes:

Perhaps one of the most important factors that contributed significantly to the long Ottoman presence in Algeria was the availability of economic resources, most notably the taxes levied on the subjects. Regarding the relationship between the ruling authority and the people, we find tribes that were reluctant and rebellious, failing to meet their financial obligations. This forced the Beys to launch punitive military campaigns against them. These campaigns were supported by some influential tribes allied with the ruling authority in exchange for privileges. This resulted in the small Turkish garrison being reinforced by cavalry, sometimes exceeding 1,000 horsemen, led by the Bey and the Agha. This proved an effective tool for carrying out confiscations and acquiring spoils, from which each participant received a limited share: the commander of the garrison or the Bey received two-thirds, and the remaining third went to the cavalry, in addition to the incentives they received for the results achieved. According to the French traveler Peyssonnel, the Bey's army consisted of 300 Turkish infantry and 800 Sipahi (cavalry) stationed there, in addition to detachments sent from Algiers to participate in tax collection. These detachments numbered between 60 and 100, totaling approximately 2,500 men. He also states that the Bey camped with about 600 Turks, comprising 25 detachments, in addition to the forces sent to him by the Diwan, estimated at 104 detachments from the regions of Stora and Jijel, and 10 detachments from the Kabylie and Hanancha regions.

Many sources agree that the Douaïr and Zmala tribes played a significant role in the military campaigns for which the Bey's army was known. This generated intense resentment between the local population and these tribes. The participation of the sheikhs of the ruling families in these campaigns, alongside the Bey's army, was no less dangerous than that of the Zmala and Douaïr. The sheikh of the family would join the army with his forces whenever it reached his territory, as occurred during the 1818 attack by the Mamluk Bey Ahmed on the tribes. The eastern border of the Beylik, where the sheikh of the free Hanansha tribe participated with his forces in that invasion, and the actions of his forces were no less horrific than those of the Bey's forces. One need only consult the report submitted by the sheikhs of these tribes from the city of El Kef to the Bey of Tunis, detailing the losses suffered by their tribes, to grasp the enormity of these acts.

This report stated that the army had been divided into several groups to surround each tribe from all sides, preventing its members from escaping. Furthermore, the Bey's forces had chosen the early hours of dawn to attack the tribes, leaving the inhabitants no opportunity to smuggle their livestock or store their grain. This resulted in the loss of everything they owned, while the Bey's army amassed enormous spoils. The report included a tally of the losses suffered by each tribe or clan. For example, the losses suffered by the Bu Ghanem clan, which was attacked by the Bey himself, were:

- 170 dead, men and women.
- 1,800 camels.
- 30,000 head of livestock. From sheep.
- 5,000 goats.
- 130 horses.
- 200 mules and 300 donkeys.
- 2,600 cows.
- 200 tents with their contents of food, weapons, and cash, placed in boxes, estimated at: 2,000 gold coins, 1,500 Tunisian dinars, and 5,000 Tunisian dinars.

As for the losses inflicted by the sheikh of the free Hanansha tribe on one of the clans of the Kef region, the report specified them as:

- 30 dead.
- 1,000 camels.
- 800 sheep.
- 2,000 cattle.
- 200 horses.
- 200 mules.
- 180 donkeys.
- 150 tents worth 12,000 dinars and 1,000 qafiza of grain, half of which was wheat and barley, taken from the clan's granaries. This was confirmed by some of the clan sheikhs in their report. The Bey had attacked three times consecutively, while the Sheikh of the Free Men of the Hanansha attacked them four times, and the Sheikh of the Harakta twice. Their total losses were:
- 300 dead.
- 130,000 sheep.
- 30,000 cattle.
- 10,000 camels.
- 900 horses.

- 500 mules.
- 100 donkeys.
- 36,000 Tunisian riyals.
- 12,000 qafiz of grain.
- 1,000 tents.

These forces played a crucial role, not only in assisting the Bey's men in collecting taxes but also in maintaining security and stability throughout the Beylik. To achieve this, they were deployed across various strategic locations in the Beylik's countryside, such as towers, fortresses, mountain passes, difficult terrain, bridges, the main markets of the Beylik, and the points along the seasonal caravan route. However, it should be noted that these forces were not always Loyal to the central authority, its relationship with the latter was governed by the nature of its sheikhs' relationship with the Bey. Therefore, it frequently clashed with the Ottoman forces, engaging in fierce battles that often resulted in victories for the local forces.

The first campaign was led by Saleh Rais in 1552 CE. The reason behind this campaign was the tyranny of the Bani Jallab in their emirate of Touggourt and their refusal to pay taxes and fines.

The second campaign was led by Yusuf Pasha in 1647 CE against Touggourt due to a rebellion. Its results were more stable and lasting over time than its predecessors. The summary of the tax imposed by Yusuf Pasha on the region's inhabitants after this campaign is as follows:

- Touggourt: 16 Sudanese slaves; Tamacine: 4 slaves; Ouargla: 25 slaves; totaling 45 slaves paid annually.

As for the campaign The third campaign was led by Saleh Bey in 1785 CE, along with Muhammad ibn Uthman al-Kurdi, Bey of the West, to bring the southern regions under Ottoman rule. They succeeded in this with the exception of the Emirate of Bani Jallab in the Wadi Righ, where Saleh Bey was defeated by its Sultan, Farhat ibn Umar al-Jalabi, and returned to Constantine. In 1788 CE, Saleh Bey decided to punish Farhat al-Jalabi and launched his campaign in October to Touggourt, laying siege to it for several months. The siege ended with a peace treaty under the following conditions:

- * Payment of all campaign and war expenses.
- * Payment of a financial penalty of 300,000 riyals.
- * Payment of a further penalty in the form of livestock, horses, and slaves.

The fourth campaign was led by Ahmad al-Mamluk in 1818 CE. This campaign did not differ from its predecessors in terms of circumstances and events, as it was limited to the city of Touggourt. Ouargla, and the occurrence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study reveals that the relationship between influential families and the Ottoman authorities in southern Constantine during the 18th and 19th centuries was neither one of absolute submission nor perpetual conflict. Rather, it was based on a delicate balance imposed by the nature of the desert landscape and the intertwining of political, economic, and social interests. Thanks to their tribal, religious, and economic influence, local families were able to play a pivotal role in administering the region, controlling trade routes, and maintaining security, making them a fundamental element in the equation of Ottoman rule in southern Constantine.

Conversely, the Ottoman authorities sought to maintain their influence through policies of alliance and containment, and sometimes resorting to military force to reassert their authority and regulate local balances. This fluctuating relationship resulted in a continuous interaction between the center and the periphery, characterized at times by cooperation to achieve stability, and at other times by conflict due to competing influence and interests.

The study also reveals that the weakening of the central authority during the late Ottoman period contributed to the growing role and expanding influence of local powers, reflecting the nature of the political and social structure of Ottoman Algeria, which was based on a balance between the central authority and local leaders. Therefore, understanding these interactions contributes to clarifying the nature of Ottoman rule in the desert region, and highlighting the role of influential families in shaping the political and social history of southern Constantine.

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