

*The reality of the administration in Algeria during the Ottoman era
between the positives and negatives*

-Reading and commentary-

واقع الإدارة في الجزائر خلال العهد العثماني بين الإيجابيات والسلبيات

- قراءة وتعليق -

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Abstract

This study is interested in providing a reading and commentary on the reality of the Ottoman administration in Algeria during the Ottoman era between positives and negatives. This is done through revealing some of the hidden aspects that characterized the management of Algiers' regency affairs at the central (Dar al-Sultan) and local levels (Beylik, Cities, Rural). In particular, we know that this administrative practice has gone through several political stages that have directly and indirectly affected the administrative organs of the regency, employees, and decision makers in general. On the other hand, it has also affected the relationship of the authority (Turks) to the local population and other well-known populations in Algerian society on the other hand.

Keywords: Administration, Algeria, Ottoman era, Positives, Negatives.

الملخص:

تتتم هذه الدراسة بتقديم قراءة وتعليق عن واقع الإدارة العثمانية في الجزائر خلال العهد العثماني بين الإيجابيات والسلبيات، من خلال الكشف عن بعض الجوانب الخفية التي ميّزت إدارة شؤون الإيالة الجزائرية على المستوى المركزي (دار السلطان) والمحلي (البابلك، المدن، الأرياف)، خصوصاً ونحن نعلم أن هذه الممارسة الإدارية قد مرّت بعدة مراحلٍ سياسيّة أثرت بصفةٍ مباشرة وغير مباشرة على الأجهزة الإدارية للإيالة وعلى الموظفين وأصحاب القرار بصفةٍ عامة، كما أثرت من جهة أخرى على علاقة السلطة (الأتراك) بالسكان المحليين وبقية الفئات السكانية المعروفة في المجتمع الجزائري من جهة أخرى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإدارة، الجزائر، العهد العثماني، الإيجابيات، السلبيات.

Introduction:

The administrative system of Algiers' regency carried with it the features of the national state formation in the modern legal sense. During the Ottoman era, the features and foundations of the modern Algerian state emerged by uniting the various political entities in which they are politically and administratively present within an organized administrative body at both the central and local levels. The Algerian state has been transformed into an impregnable fortress that has prevented Europeans from taking over its cities and coasts despite their repeated attacks on it (Almadani A. T., 1980). However, this does not mean that the Turkish administration in Algeria was empty of negatives and weaknesses, on the contrary, it carried several contradictions within its organs and institutions. Just as the Ottomans had many strengths in their administration in the regency of Algiers, they also had several disadvantages and flaws (weaknesses). So, what are the pros of the Ottoman administration in Algeria? And what are the cons of the Ottoman administrative system in Algeria

Hayreddin Barbarossa (see comment 01), since he took the emirate of regency (see comment 02), has begun to establish the rules of the country's public policy after the martyrdom of his brother Aarouj (Oruc) (see comment 03), taking Algiers as the capital and center of governance. Dellys and Cherchell formed important coastal provinces as part of his administration's plan for the regency. The characteristics of Algeria's administrative reality are in fact due to the beginning of the Ottomans' stability, especially after their liberation of many important coastal cities, in addition to the extension of their power to most of the country. They drew Algeria's borders as they are now, and accordingly set the name Algeria instead of Middle Maghreb (William, 2006). In general, during the Ottoman era, Algeria's administrative body has developed significantly, from the stability of Turkish rule in Algeria to the completion of its organizations and the stability of its organs at the end of the 18th century. However, the practice of administrative work has been characterized by a range of positive and negative characteristics (Samarrai, 2017).

1. The advantages and positives of the Ottoman administration in Algeria (strengths):

During the Ottoman era, Algeria experienced several political and administrative variables that were unknown before the 16th century AD. It is the variables that have contributed to the crystallization of the character of the Algerian national state and its growing role at both the regional and international levels (Mohamed, 2011). There is no doubt that this political situation in Algeria with the arrival of the Ottomans was a direct result of the tight administrative policy that characterized the central and local administrations of Algiers' regency, which was characterized by a series of positives (strengths), mainly:

- The administrative body relied on a set of foundations and principles that essentially formed the pillars of the modern Algerian state, such as the choice of the capital, the division of the regency to local administrative units (provinces or regions), the development of administrative institutions, the enactment of economic systems, the establishment of social conditions, and the adoption of foreign political relations that suited the situation of the Algerian state at the time, where Algeria's regional identity has emerged clearly (Alwanissi, 2005). Algeria has also enjoyed an internationally recognized entity and exercises real independence, even within the scope of the Ottoman League, which is based on mutual interest and spiritual ties (Saidouni & Bouabdli Sheikh, 1984).

- Tight distribution of administrative functions within central and local administrations. The administrative system of Ottoman Algeria was based on the principle of respect for the gradual hierarchy of administrative positions, in which the powers of the workers and the quality of their administrative functions were taken into account. It is therefore rare to find an employee's work similar or opposite to another employee's work, thereby taking the administrative body into a firm hierarchical structure. At its top, there is the Dey (Supreme Ruler), then the high officials that enjoy the highest administrative ranks, while the official writers of the state (Hocabasi), military leaders (Aghwats), and regional rulers (Beys) form its basic structure. Finally, its base consists of the Shawash group and junior employees (Khawaja) (Saoud, 2015).

- The flexibility and effectiveness of the administrative body in the regency of Algiers was simple in its organizations, practical in its procedures. It relied mainly on the distribution of staff powers to various tasks as needed (Saidouni & Bouabdli Sheikh, 1984). The Turkish regime preferred the central administration when possible, which was effectively embodied in

the area of Dar al-Sultan and some of the Titteri areas, which are one of the first areas where the Turks settled. In such cases, it is sufficient to put a Turkish official at the top of the administrative hierarchy, leaving the country's people fully free to conduct their internal affairs. There is no doubt that it was the flexibility of the Turkish administration that enabled Algeria's territorial unity (without moral unity); within borders that the French found during the colonization (Al-Mili, n.d). The administration's flexibility has also helped strengthen Ottoman rule in Algeria for more than three centuries (Saidouni N. , 2008).

- Discipline and dedication to administrative work, reflecting the state's development experienced by the Ottoman administration in Algeria. French orientalist Venture de Paradis praises the reality of the organized and firm administration: "The administrative life in The State of Algeria is a life of hard work, in which things go with amazing accuracy. Interestingly, the accuracy of the administrative work appears in the fact that each of the administration's employees only works his job, and those who occupy the major positions in the government are more active than others, even mild illness never prevents them from completing their duties..." (Venture de Paradis, 1983, p. 68).

- The seriousness of the security apparatus and the vitality of its interests at the central and local levels, where members of Algerian society enjoyed security and tranquility across the regency of Algiers. William Charles praises the reality of security: "... I believe that there is no other city in the world (Algiers) where the police are more active than the Algerian police where crime can barely escape its surveillance, in addition, there is no other country in the world where citizens and their property enjoy greater security than in Algeria." (Charles, 1982, p. 78). If this shows anything, it shows the success of the security apparatus in establishing security and peace within the administration, which is considered one of the most important organs of the Ottoman administration in Algeria (Almadani A. T., 1980)

- The Ottoman rulers maintained their relationship with tribal elders, scholars and Almoravids, suggesting that the administration is close to the population even through their representatives from the sheikhs and leaders. We find that some tribal elders or scholars and Almoravids were more influential and with higher status among the ruling authority and the population than the Beys who rule the provinces (Rinn, 2005). The rulers would give them the respectable status, take their opinions, and often even bow to them when necessary. The country's governing body often made decisions to review the Beys' orders if the sheikhs rejected them (Cathcart, 1982). The gap between the Ottoman rulers and the citizens was not so great; rather, everyone stood as one man for the benefit of Algeria (Pfeiffer, 1974).

- The Ottoman administration was keen with its various organs to take into account the conditions of the parish, follow its news, and consider its complaints in order to preserve the stability that everyone wanted (Chater, 2005-2006). The Turkish rulers committed themselves to embodying justice among all in accordance with the laws of Islam, respecting the customs and traditions of the population, and working hard to stay away from anything that would harm their presence in the land of Algeria. In this context, Hamdan bin Osman Khoja praises the behavior of the Ottoman rulers: "... It is rare to find a thief or a murderer among them..., and they were very careful to respect the country's customs so that the people of the regency love them. Those who had some flaws were working to fix them, or hide them accurately because their future was based on their good conduct" (Khoja, 1982, p. 135).

- The Ottoman administration relied on a group of organs and institutions that contribute to maintaining the state treasury and preventing the waste of public money, such as the House of Money and Ways of Charity Foundation, in addition to other institutions that played a significant role in maintaining the cohesion of Algerian society, and instilling the spirit of solidarity and cooperation among its members (Mohamed, 2011).

- Working with the provisions of the two doctrines, Hanafi and Maliki, with the Ottoman administrations related to the judiciary and endowments throughout the Ottoman era in Algeria. The Administration of the Turks in Algeria did not impose the Hanafi doctrine on the rest of the population at the expense of the Maliki doctrine, on the contrary, the citizens remained on their doctrine in their daily, doctrinal and social transactions of buying, selling, marriage, divorce, rent, disputes, etc. The Algerians took the Hanafi doctrine only with regard to the endowments, transactions and methods of Wakf property exploitation (Nafti, 2016). The regency of Algiers also had sharia courts based both on Hanafi and Maliki doctrines, leaving the

citizens with full freedom to sue according to the doctrine they wanted without interference by the ruling authority (Venture de Paradis, 1983).

In addition to the above-mentioned pros, the creation of a single central administration, the concentration of powers in the hands of the Diwan that appoints or elects the Dey, the dealings of European countries and America with the Dey, and the treaties between them and Algeria, indicate that Algeria developed in its administration during the Ottoman era until it became a State in the modern sense of the word (Al-Mili, n.d).

2. Disadvantages of the ottomans' administrative practice in Algeria (weaknesses):

Despite the great role played by the Ottomans in managing the Algerian regency affairs within a firm administrative system, the practice of the administrative work was not without flaws and disadvantages, whether at the local or central levels. The most prominent flaws within the Ottoman administration in Algeria are:

- Monopoly of positions and senior ranks in the governing bodies of Algeria by the Ottomans. Since they came to Algeria, they have kept the local element away from any serious contribution to the governance affairs (Muammar, 2009-2010). This matter led the historian Abu al-Qasim Saadallah to call their regime and resemble the various administrative bodies by the closed military republican system. It is a Republican because the governor's position is electoral, not inherited, and military because he belongs to the military. As for the phenomenon of closure, it lies in its limitations to the Turkish element, where only the *Ocak* (military unit) are allowed to exercise power, knowing that the job of *Ocak* required celibacy for life. If they marry from the people of the country, their product (child) is considered inferior to them, so the product cannot reach power and responsibility (Abu al-Qasim, 1998)

There is no doubt that the policy of depriving local elements of positions of administration and governance has existed from the very first moment of Ottoman settlement in Algeria, fearing its indigenous people. This fear has evolved to hysteria, as Turks no longer even trust the *Kouloughlis* (see comment 04) which they considered them to be more Algerian than Turks (see comment 05). On this basis, they continually recruited soldiers from abroad (from Izmir and Kerman), making the ruling military class renew with every generation (Al-Mili, n.d).

- The recruitment of key soldiers to the central administration from abroad made the Turks forced to adopt flexibility in their administration in order to avoid angering the people. It is the flexibility that prevented the moral unity of the Algerian regency as a society, making it hard for Algeria to develop in harmony with its entity as a country of significant international weight. The recruitment of soldiers from abroad has also limited their number to such an extent that they are unable to impose their authority by force on Algeria as a whole (Al-Mili, n.d).

- The Ottoman administration was unable to place the entire Algerian country under the hands of one ruler, considering that there were Algerians who were against Turkish rule (Khamssa, 2016). The Beys were unable to impose their authority on all areas of their territories, for example, the inhabitants of the southern regions of the west Beylik, who were under the rule of the leaders of Ouled Sidi Sheikh Tribes (The fine Almoravids) did not acknowledge the Bey authority (Rinn, 2005). Moreover, the inhabitants of the mountainous regions of Kabylie, who were subject to the group's regime, did not recognize the authority of Constantine's Bey (Kannan, 1987)

- The administrative system reflected the reality of social class and marginalization in Algerian society during the Ottoman era, in which high-income positions were confined to the Turkish era, and middle-income positions were unique to the *Kouloughlis* community. Low-income positions were shared by *Hadhar* (ancient citizens of ancient cities), while heavy services were provided to other urban communities (Al-Baraniya). Perhaps the most notable proof of this is that the infamous profession of *Mazwar* (police) was limited to the *Hadhar* without the Turks despite its great returns (Saidouni & Bouabdli Sheikh, 1984). The rest of Algerian society was marginalized, and even the laws and legislation enacted by some rulers were unfair; it was cruel and served only a certain segment (Muammar, 2009-2010).

- The policy of administrative domination practiced by the Ottoman rulers in Algeria, Alantari says in this context: "...the Turks at the beginning, they were fair to the people and they did not oppress anyone, and when they were capable, they started to oppress people, shed their blood and take their money unjustly, they promised and did not fulfill their promises... Their injustice continued to increase until they crossed the limit..." (Ben Alantari, 2009, p. 130)

In addition to the policy of discrimination applied by the rulers between the Ottoman Turks and the local population, especially with regard to the issue of the prisoners or the captured, in which they were interested in saving the Turks prisoners compared to others from the inhabitants of Algerian society during the Ottoman era (Meknasi, 1965).

- The policy of administrative authoritarianism practiced by the Janissary community, who separated from Algerian society and despised the rest of the constituent categories of the regency in an attempt to preserve their political and military privileges (Kdadra, 2016)

- The reality of stratification that was enhanced by the administration of the judiciary in the regency of Algiers. The military judges in Algeria secretly pronounced the sentences against the soldiers in the Janissary Agha House. It is the same for the sentences against the Turks by Hanafi judges or even Maliki judges, which were of a secret nature in order to preserve their dignity. Whereas the sentences against Algerians were made publicly by the city's al-Barah. Furthermore, Algerian litigants are carried on donkeys' backs, and roam the streets of the city to insult them for what they have done. This is in addition to the right of appeal in mixed cases between the Hanafis and the Malikis, enjoyed only by the Turkish party (Hanafi) (William, 2006).

- Beys' policy of administrative authoritarianism at the regional level, particularly with regard to tax collection, which has generated many rebellions and revolutions (Muammar, 2009-2010).

Conclusion:

At the end of this study, we can say that the Ottoman administration in Algeria has developed significantly, and its organs have carried a number of positives that reflect the crystallization of national state independence under the Ottoman rule. However, the Ottoman rulers' exercise of power within the governing bodies was characterized by a series of negatives resulting from their exclusion and marginalization of the local element, which contributed to deepening the gap between the ruler and the governed, especially with the late Ottoman era in Algeria.

Explanations:

Comment 01:

Hayreddin Barbarossa (1470-1546): Born in 1470 on the Ottoman island of Medellí and he is the third son of Yaakoub Ben Yusuf. His original name is Khader Ben Yaakoub and his surname is Hayreddin Pasha (Khaysarouf). He is known for the European by Barbarossa, i.e. the red-bearded. He grew up in a Islamic family of an Islamic origin and he had the courage and nerve that drew the attention of the world in his time. Hence, he was very active in the field of maritime jihad with his brothers, carrying the banner of jihad against the invaders pursuing the Andalusians and calling for the Wars of Reconquista. He also commanded many Ottoman fleets, and under his command, the regency of Algiers was formed with the blessing of the Ottoman Sultan, who gave him the title of Beylerbey (Bey of Beys) in 1518. Hayreddin died in Istanbul in 1546 (Ivanov, n.d).

Comment 02:

Regency: Administrative term for the state or a government of a regent. In its sense, it indicates those major administrative units of the Ottoman Empire, which were under the rule of the Ottoman Sultan (Inaljek, 2002).

Comment 03:

Arouj or Oruc in Turkish (1474 - 1518): this name means rising and going high, and according to Almadani Ahmed Tawfiq, he was born on the night of Mi'raj, thus his father named him Abu Arouj after that great event. He was born in 1474 on the Ottoman island of Medellí near the Archipelago Sea. He grew up solid in the midst of the overwhelming Islamic jihad when the epic was generally overwhelming by land and sea between Christianity and Islam. Then, he chose the sea as a field of jihad until he became famous in the western basin of the Mediterranean during the 16th century AD. Thanks to his, several cities on the Algerian coast were liberated from the control of the Spanish occupation such as the city of Jijel and Algiers, he died in 1518 (Almadani A. T., 2009).

Comment 04:

Kouloughlis are the product of the affinity between the Ottomans and the indigenous people of Algeria. The name was given to the children of Turkish parents and Algerian mothers, who were second most important after Turkish minorities in Algeria (Shuval, 1998).

Comment 05:

Hassan Pasha Ben Kheireddine was from an Algerian mother (Kouloughlis). However, he reigned three times in the regency of Algiers(Ibn Mufti, 2009).

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