

## The French colonial settlement movement in Tunisia: A Study of Real Estate Structures and Methods of Expropriation According to the Theorist Charles Monchicourt

TIFOURA Asmaa\*<sup>1</sup> , SAIDI Meziane<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ali Lounici University Blida\_02 (Algeria)

Email: asmatifoura2626@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>ENS Bouzereah (Algeria)

Email : smeziiane68@yahoo.fr

Submitted

02/06/2022

Accepted

20/10/2022

Published

01/12/2022

**Abstract:** The French administration sought to study Tunisia carefully and at several levels, including mentalities, customs, and traditions, either through organizations and associations or some people with a broad cultural and knowledge of the Arabic language and Tunisian customs and traditions, perhaps the most prominent of all, Bernard Roy, who was among the active planners in the French policy aimed at consolidating the French presence in Tunis. However, after entering the country, France encountered cases of a new type based on the strategy of controlling and dealing with the field, necessitating the use of specialized personalities with experience with various laws to legitimize the extortion operations. His policy aimed to triumph over the French element in Tunisia and stabilize the centenarians, particularly between the end of the nineteenth century and the first third of the twentieth century, when mechanisms for stabilizing the French colonial project emerged through the settlement movement in Tunisian countries.

**Keywords:** French administration; Tunisian country; Bernard Roy; planners; French politics; strategy; the field; Charles Monschor; centenarians; colonial project; settlement movement.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

France was able to subjugate and control Tunisia without having to repeat the costly Algerian experience, thanks to Aoun's policy, which included the telegrapher Bernard Roy preparing the country and preparing it to accept French protection. In 1889, he was promoted to the French government's Secretary-General position. However, the new stage at the turn of the century necessitated

---

\*Corresponding author



**The French colonial settlement movement in Tunisia:  
A Study of Real Estate Structures and Methods of Expropriation According to the  
Theorist Charles Monchicourt**

---

new policy and planners. because issues have evolved, and goals and ambitions have expanded.

He believed that there were only two ways to deal with the Italian threat. The first is to promote naturalization in all of its forms, whether automatic, individual, or otherwise, in order to change the country's population for the betterment of France. It is a prerequisite for France's presence in the country to be recognized as legitimate. The second option is to fund Tunisia's settlement policy, which entails granting fertile lands to centenarians after legal and infrastructure preparations. Monschor developed a new concept in this way, which he emphasized in his writings: the concept of the field to be subjected to the benefit of centenarians. He saw the field as a cohesive and integrated unit that encompassed both external and internal benefits, assisting in the activation of financial and investment settlements. If the agricultural lands do not lead to numerical superiority, the mines will lead to the revival of villages and urban gatherings in which the French world is raised and its culture reigns supreme, and the appropriate framework for France will be, just as the cities were in the past, the cities. The French government's search for justifications, justifications, and legal arguments to carry out this policy without upsetting Tunisians or confronting the Tunisian Free Constitutional Party.

We ask the following questions in light of the foregoing: What role did Charles Monchcour play in laying the groundwork for settler colonialism in Tunisia? And what are the pillars of his strategy, particularly the concept of space, for the French to win in Tunisia? What techniques are used to keep the field under control?The following elements will provide the answers to these questions.

## **2. Charles Monschor's field theory and the politics of his French**

Because of his specialization as a geographer and historian, Charles Moncourt's<sup>1</sup>policy was based on the exploitation of the field, its French, and their employment for the benefit of the French. The Tunisian field was thought to be suitable for settlement, as it facilitated movement and thus contributed to the

---

1- Charles Félix Mönchcourt was born in 1873 AD and died in 1973 AD. A seasoned researcher, anthropologist, politician and administrator. He lived during his childhood in the Italian city of Milan, and studied there in his elementary school. He learned the Italian language alongside his native French. In his studies, he came into contact with the sons of Italian merchants. Licensed in Law in 1896 A.D. After obtaining a postgraduate degree in history and geography from the Sorbonne University, he joined the Civil Control in Tunisia in 1898 A.D. as a public residency officer before being appointed head of the Kairouan Postal Center in the period between 1907-1916. He obtained a doctorate rank from the Sorbonne University in 1913. He worked as an assistant civil observer from 1923-1927. He continued his career as a civil observer in Tunisia from 1923 until 1934. He authored many books about Tunisia. He was elected as a Corresponding Member of the Academy of Colonial Sciences since its founding in 1923.

rapprochement and homogeneity of the communities where they settled. This field diversification does not necessitate an exorbitant cost of control. With simple means, France can subjugate him. The French, for example, make up only 7000 people out of 235,000 in the upper hill region, accounting for only 3% of the population in 1911 AD, and accounting for less than half of the Italian community, which accounts for 65 percent of foreigners. However, when considering the jobs held by the French in this region, this numerically insignificant weight becomes significant. In the public sector, the French are dominant, and the majority of them work in industry. In the Tabrosuk region, they control the transportation and agricultural sectors, while the majority of Italians work as miners(MONCHICOURT, 1913, p. 423).

In Charles Monchkur's mind, the field goes beyond the current academic definition and rises to that linguistically and culturally unified and homogeneous space. Or the entire framework of various mentalities. But this should only happen in a purely French context, where the colonizer's culture prevails as a natural way of life rather than as a colonial policy. The Frenchman has a financial and moral priority that is not met with criticism, and resentment is not directed against him. Many French people have obtained agricultural concessions to raise livestock and grow various crops on thousands of hectares in this context, despite public opposition(MONCHICOURT, 1913, p. 424).

### 3. Real estate structures and control mechanisms

The land has a sacred status in Arab culture, transcending its origin as a material benefit to its reality as a symbolic value. The land is no longer a tool for production and a place to save wealth in the Arab and Tunisian imaginations. Rather, with the passage of time, it has evolved into a metaphysical dimension. It's all about the show, the honor, the history, the glory, the ancestors, and the roots. As a result, it is impossible to assign a monetary value to it. And Ibn Khaldun had this to say about it: "... its fruit is to take food and grain from the earth by excavating it. It is responsible for its own plant cultivation and treatment, as well as watering and development until it achieves its goal. Then harvesting its spike and extracting its grain from its cover... and this is the oldest of all wrongdoings, as it is the result of human life's sustenance"(ابن خلدون ، 1992 ، صفحة 406). As a result, man's strong bond with the earth prevented him from neglecting or ignoring it. It isn't the land. And, unlike the Berbers, family ties are stronger than land ties, as the land is a common denominator that unites them.

"There is a clear difference between the barbarian and the Arab, for the first is united by the land, while the second is united by the family," said French demographer Vidal de La Blanche(Vidal , 1911, p. 212).However, because Tunisian

**The French colonial settlement movement in Tunisia:  
A Study of Real Estate Structures and Methods of Expropriation According to the  
Theorist Charles Monchicourt**

---

Arabs had strong patriotic feelings and were aware of the country's "homeland" and "land" issues, this classification remains controversial and cannot be confirmed. Most of the epics, songs, and popular poems used the term "homeland," which meant "land" to Tunisians at the time (العجيلي ، 1937 ، صفحة 127).

As a result of this examination, we are convinced of the importance of the land, known by various names, to Tunisians. What makes real estate structures unique? What kinds of land are available in the country? And what role does it play in colonial settlement? The phenomenon of vastness and abundance in comparison to the population, which did not exceed two million inhabitants, distinguishes the Tunisian field in the pre-protection period. Agricultural lands have been expanded in most areas, particularly in the north and center-east, and are classified as follows:

### **3.1 Endowments lands**

These are lands that are either not fully owned or are close to being fully owned (الأمين ، 1994). These lands have been occupied by people who settled there with their fathers and grandfathers for a long time. property or something similar. The French administration will find it easier to transfer these lands to the centenarians as a result of this. In Tunisia, Charles Moncheur was the most knowledgeable about the real estate situation. As a result, the majority of the settlement committees, as well as the Office of the Resident General's Office, referred him to look into most real estate issues<sup>2</sup>.

The plural of endowment is al-ahbas, or endowments. It is based on a person, entity, or family endowing land for the benefit of charitable projects. The land was originally set aside for a charitable project, which is usually represented in public benefits. For example, vast lands were allotted in most parts of the Kingdom for the Sadiqiyah School, which was estimated to have 234 withholdings (الهادي التيمومي ) according to the last inventory. The endowment hopes to accomplish the following through this action:

- Getting closer to God and making amends for sins through ongoing charity that praises him in his life and death.
- A small percentage of those who endow their property are motivated by boasting, hypocrisy, and the appearance of doing good. Typically, these properties are located on public roads, bear the person's name, and become publicized for his person, as it was said, "I passed near the endowment of

---

2- Tunisian National Archives, Series E, Box 252, File 3, Correspondence from the Office of the Resident General to Charles Mouchcourt.

the person named"<sup>3</sup>

- The proclivity of a large number of landlords to endow their lands for charitable purposes in order to protect themselves from the greed and greed of the bey's agents. And what might be attached to it as a result of confiscation. Because confiscated lands are not sold, bought, or mortgaged, and they are not assignable. As a result, the French government has no way of controlling it. Because these lands are religious in nature and have a divine component. However, due to the vulnerability of this type of property, France will look for ways and pretexts to seize it under various names.<sup>4</sup>
- By granting these lands to the endowment administration, some owners attempted to deprive their disabled children of inheritance. The most important of these formulas and cases have spread throughout the north, particularly the south. The sons object to agricultural work as they accompany their parents to cities to work in ports. This phenomenon dates back to the second half of the nineteenth century and was reinforced in the 1920s, coinciding with the official agricultural colonialism. Some property owners have been devastated by this phenomenon.

There are three types of endowments: public endowments, private endowments, and joint endowments(72 صفحة ، 1982 ، تيمومي). Others categorize it as general or private. There are also those who include common endowments, which are religious school endowments(101 صفحة ، 1993 ، لخضر و الطريقي)، in the public endowments. The Endowments Association is in charge of managing public endowments in general. It is the total of the lands whose descendants were severed and returned to the Awqaf Society, which was founded in 1874 AD. Private endowments are those whose beneficiaries are still alive and are managed by someone who is frequently descended from the descendants of an owner known as al-Muqaddam(72 صفحة ، 1982 ، تيمومي).

### 3.2 Joint lands, religious schools and roads lands:

It is the sum of the lands belonging to the schools and religious roads. It is the most fertile lands, the most productive and the best located. The confiscated land is based on two considerations, both of which explain the value of this land:

The first point to consider is the religious aspect of jurisprudence, as Islam forbids giving charity with items of little value.

The second consideration is religious in nature. Because the person who endows

---

3- It was mentioned in the lecture of the Sadiqiyah School session on November 14, 1930 AD, when a land endowment agent in the Majaz al-Bab area intervened for the benefit of the Sadiqiyah School, explaining to the meeting some of the difficulties it was facing.

4- "Morshid al-Ummah" newspaper, dated May 27, 1920 AD.

**The French colonial settlement movement in Tunisia:  
A Study of Real Estate Structures and Methods of Expropriation According to the  
Theorist Charles Monchicourt**

---

the property is afraid of the guardian's wrath and the wrath of religious schools, he will not endow a property, believing that the curse will befall him or his descendants after him, and these endowments have spread to irrigated and fertile areas such as the coast and the north-south corridor. And the suburban south, the majority of which is represented by productive lands dominated by fruit tree plantations. The Qadriya School of Tozeur is at the forefront of the second category of major owners, having owned 1127 palm trees in the second half of the nineteenth century AD(30-29 الصفحات ، 1977 ، بن النوري).

What we are concerned about in this survey of endowment lands is the search for cases of weakness and flaws in them, both in terms of area and the legal real-estate formula. These are the formulas that Charles Monchkur used to find the most efficient and least expensive ways to transfer these fertile lands to the benefit of the French administration. By virtue of his position as a civil observer, he was in close contact with the sheikhs of religious orders, whether the loyal Qadiriyya or the more hostile Rahmaniyya. And he was familiar with the tribes that supported these roads. And he could study this student's ways of thinking and their interactions with one another, taking advantage of their differences. Among these is the rivalry between the Qadiriyyah and Rahmaniyyah schools for control of the city of El Kef. And Charles Monchkur had extensive and accurate knowledge of what was going on inside the schools, taking advantage of Bernard Roy's prominent role in subduing these roads and bringing them under his control. As a result, he continued to investigate the mechanisms that would allow him to transfer these vast lands under his control to the benefit of the centenarians without jeopardizing France's relationship with these schools. Monschor understands the importance of road leaders in society (MONCHICOURT, 1913, p. 318).

What we see in French policy is not only the good selection of its administrators and employees in the country, but also the research into these people's talent and ability to win over the civil element, as well as the adoption of a policy of normalization with them rather than a policy of confrontation. As a result, Charles Monchkur's performance is more than just being an observer. As a civilian, he carried out his administrative duties in a routine manner, but he had the ability to research the people's pasts, study their relationships, their ways of thinking, and their way of life, to discover the flaws that would represent for France the foundations that would ensure the presence and focus, and Charles Moncourt was able to benefit from what Bernard Roy accomplished and prepared to limit the French presence and focus on the foundations of this building.

### **3.3 Collective lands / lands of tribal thrones:**

The thrones of Tunisia have vast lands at their disposal, and ownership of these lands is not attributed to an individual. In most cases, it does not give an individual any advantage over others, but in some cases, it may give an advantage to a few professional families who monopolize the most fertile part of the land, so it is true that we call it semi-collective or family exploitation(Monchicourt, 1806, p. 120).

These lands correspond to the tribal position map as well as the movement of these thrones in relation to the seasons and activity. And they're lands of average, if not poor, worth. The land is mostly devoid of vegetation. The majority of it is located to the south of Tunisia's Dhaheriya, where the most numerous tribes, the Humama, Jallas, and Farrashish, are dominant. Because of the nomadic lifestyle, the value of these lands lies in their ability to provide water and food, as well as strategic points for protection from danger.

According to the order of January 14, 1901 AD, which allows tribes the right to benefit but not own property, these lands are known by many names, such as "Arab land," "the dead land," or "collective land." According to this order, because these tribes are unable to make any changes to these lands or establish any activities of future benefit, such as bridges or houses, this land has been illegally transferred to the state's ownership. It is classified as favorable land, and the state has the right to revive it. For the state, it represents not only a reserve for settlement but also a supportive area for the economy because it may contain hidden wealth, such as mines, or superficial wealth, such as the extension of allies and forests (Yazidi, 2005, p. 229).

The Bey had taken many lands from the tribes and annexed them to his possessions, totaling approximately 45 thousand hectares. As for the Bey's policy toward the tribes, it confiscates their lands and restricts their movement as a punitive deterrent. Or he imposes fiscal constraints, or he appoints an authoritarian leader. When they opposed his policy, he confiscated vast and extensive lands that were useful and exploited (دقي، 1997، صفحة 77).

As a result, France was able to divide the people of various tribes into small partitions. In relation to the numbers that France assigned to each divider, these lands were associated with the population with "the science of the nomads." Following this procedure, it was observed that the tents spread widely for the benefit of the huts and primitive houses known locally as "Al-Maamra," and the French sociologist Paul Al-Sabbagh mentions that the huts and perennials indicate the extreme poverty faced by Tunisians (الطيب، 2004، صفحة 218), but in fact, France was able to achieve many goals, including the eviction of the fertile plains' original inhabitants. Furthermore, the provision of a reserve labor force near the centenarians' lands did not raise the social ladder, and its position remained similar to that of the fifth<sup>5</sup>. France was also able to halt the displacement movement, which would have spread masses and loose groups that the party could have used against France. Do not be afraid to reclaim farmers' lands who violate

---

5- Archives of Majaz al-Bab District Court, Justice Muhammad bin Saleh al-Shawashi, Book No. 228, pp. 9-12.

**The French colonial settlement movement in Tunisia:  
A Study of Real Estate Structures and Methods of Expropriation According to the  
Theorist Charles Monchicourt**

---

these terms(73 صفحة ، 1982 ، تيمومي).

#### **4. French administration and legalization of extortion operations**

The French administration's real estate policy and laws can be traced back to the policies of Paul Combon, the architect of France's colonial project in Tunisia. Its goal was to ensure Europeans' and the French's ownership and disposal rights in lands that came into their possession, including the enactment of real estate legislation. It had 14 titles and 379 articles on July 1, 1885 AD. It allowed endowments and religious schools to open up frozen lands to European settlement. The Mixed Real Estate Court was established as a result of this legislation, and it is a device specifically designed to transfer land ownership to the elderly in a legal manner, by empowering them with forged contracts that authorize them after a dispute with the people. The operative's argument in Tunisia was stronger than the written, especially given that Arab civilization is primarily oral, including the real estate issue, because the people do not have any title to the property. Tunisians did not seek ownership certificates because land is plentiful in comparison to the population(75 صفحة ، 1997 ، دقي).

The State Property Authority was also established, which is a device that facilitates the process of transferring public lands to centenarian custodians despite their scarcity, and a large number of civilian observers were assigned to strategic areas with plenty of fertile agricultural lands to pass and implement this policy. Several methods were made available to legitimize the expropriation process. such as the Landing Law or the February 1892 Law, which allowed senior citizens to purchase public endowment lands through the Endowment Association. The state's property was entitled to dead lands under the law of January 15, 1896 A.D., which was based on Islamic jurisprudence. Another law allowed for the expropriation of lands that had been neglected or half-neglected(Cavé, 1929, p. 91).

Extortion methods have been criticized by Charles Monchkur, who believes that this policy violates the principle of "protection." Because of the policies of its effective administrators and institutions, France avoided losses and established its presence within the country(59 صفحة ، 1982 ، تيمومي). As a result, Mönchkur's policy is based on a trade-off between France's interest as a protectorate and the need to keep the people under control. And imagine them as a viscous substance that must not harden to the point of breaking and must not decompose by going too far into the soft. Rather, it will continue to be treated as a raw material that will be adapted as needed(Cavé, 1929, p. 41).

#### **5. CONCLUSION**



Our research has yielded a set of conclusions that can be used in the future to benefit the countries of the world's south, whether independent or colonial, particularly the French colonies, as follows:

- No French policy ignored the importance of land in the colonial administration's settlement and reconstruction, as well as the process of controlling it, particularly in the fertile areas. It was a source of resistance because it represented a tribes' offer in exchange for the religious schools and leadership abandoning it at the same time.
- Charles Monckur developed his strategy on the ground, discussing the methods and mechanisms for transferring land ownership from natives to centenarians, particularly the French, and the exclusion of Italian centenarians who attempted to concentrate in strategic areas.
- The colonial countries seek to establish their presence in their colonies even after granting them independence, and this is done within the framework of post-independence arrangements by establishing organizations that claim to work to establish peace, cooperation, and exchange of interests, but in reality, it is a mechanism for passing their colonial policy through. In a variety of fields, they put their own interests first, as well as those of their affiliated countries. The French Francophonie Organization, for example, has served the interests of French civilization in French colonies, including Tunisia, until now.
- The control of the field, according to Charles Monschor, cannot be effective and beneficial unless it is linked to the concentration of mechanisms and potential ways to subjugate and control the field.
- To control the field, Charles Monckur employed a phased approach, focusing first on the fertile lands near the capital and the outskirts of the major cities, and then on the lands extending throughout the country in the second stage.
- According to Mönchkur, a field is a field that is filled and not vacant, regardless of its value, and thus it does not exclude the control of high areas because they serve as control points that ensure security and stability in the occupied area.
- The establishment of villages and settlements was aided by agricultural settlement, but it was not the only factor determining their existence. Their unification was aided by a number of factors.
- In addition to its experience, France benefited from its agents and administrators, who ensured that France remained in Tunisia for more than

**The French colonial settlement movement in Tunisia:  
A Study of Real Estate Structures and Methods of Expropriation According to the  
Theorist Charles Monchicourt**

---

three-quarters of a century, as it was able to focus its presence on it through Monchicourt, who established the largest wave of settlement during his reign.

### **Bibliography List**

Cavé. (1929). *Sur Les Traces De ROD BELEK, Les problèmes Tunisiens après 1921*. Paris: édition du comité de L' Afrique Française.

dfgf. (fgf). gdf. fdg: dfg.

Monchicourt. (1806). *La Steppe Tunisie, chez Direction De L'agriculture Du Commerce Et De La Colonisation*. Tunis.

MONCHICOURT. (1913). *La Région De Haut En Tunisie Essai De Monographie Géographique*. Paris: (K.T.M.T) Armand Colin.

Vidal , D. (1911). Les Genres De Vie Dans La Géographie. *Annales de géographie* , 289-304.

Yazidi , B. (2005). *La Politique Coloniale Et Le Domaine De L'Etat En Tunisie*. Tunisie: Edition Sahar.

الهادي التيمومي وآخرون. (1999). *المغبيون في تاريخ تونس الاجتماعي*. قرطاج: بيت الحكمة.

نور الدين دقي. (1997). *المغرب العربي و الاستعمار الفرنسي*.

الهادي تيمومي . (1982). *نقابات الاعراف التونسيين 1932م-1955م*. تونس: دار محمد علي الحامي.

تليلي العجيلي . (11, 06, 1937). *الطرق الصوفية و الاستعمار الفرنسي بالبلاد التونسية*

1881م/1939م. كل شيء بالمكشوف.

رضا الأمين . (1994). *ملف معطيات سكانية وإقتصادية حول البلاد التونسية*. تونس: دار سراس

للنشر .

عبد الرحمان ابن خلدون . (1992). *مقدمة ابن خلدون*. بيروت: دار القلم.

علي الطيب . (2004). *الملكية العقارية و استراتيجيات الاستيطان الاستعماري الفرنسي بجهة مجاز*

الباب من 1860م-1936م. صفاقص: مطبعة التفسير الفني.

لطيفة لخضر ، و الاسلام الطريقي. (1993). *دراسة في موقعه من المجتمع*. تونس: دار سراس للنشر .

محمد الطيب بن النوري . (سبتمبر, 1977). *الوضع الاقتصادي و الاجتماعي في قوز خلال النصف*

الثاني من القرن 19م 1856م-1880م. *شهادة الكفاءة في البحث مخطوطة كلية الاداب و العلوم*

الانسانية. تونس .