

Craft Activity and the Tax System in Ottoman Algeria during the Period of the Deys (1671–1830)

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Abstract:

During the period of the Deys, the craft sector in Algeria occupied a prominent position in economic life, which made it a focus of interest for the authorities, who sought to regulate it and benefit from its financial revenues. For this purpose, craft communities were subjected to a range of taxes and duties, which varied between periodic taxes and others linked to commercial activity and markets. Certain crafts were also burdened with in-kind obligations, represented by the provision of various products and services to state institutions. These revenues contributed to strengthening the financial resources of the authorities and ensuring the continuity of their administrative and military institutions. However, the multiplicity of fiscal burdens affected artisans to varying degrees. While some crafts managed to maintain their activity and prosperity, others were affected by rising costs, which in turn led to an increase in the prices of certain products. Thus, the fiscal system represented one of the most important mechanisms adopted by the authorities to control craft activity and employ it in the service of their economic interests.

Keywords: Craft activity; tax collection; period of the Deys; crafts; craft communities.

Introduction:

During the period of the Deys, Algeria witnessed a diverse and flourishing craft activity, which constituted one of the most important pillars of economic and social life at the time. Various crafts and industries spread across both urban and rural areas, ranging from productive crafts responsible for manufacturing goods and products, to service crafts that met the daily needs of the population, as well as commercial and marketing-related crafts that contributed to the distribution of products and the stimulation of trade exchanges. This diversity led to the emergence of organized craft communities that undertook the supervision of artisans, defended their interests, and regulated their professional affairs.

This craft activity was not isolated from the intervention of the Ottoman authorities, who were keen to organize, monitor, and benefit from its financial resources. For this purpose, they established an administrative apparatus comprising a number of officials responsible for collecting various taxes and duties, as well as supervising markets and artisans. In this context, we will seek to identify the most important crafts and craft communities that became widespread in Algeria during the period of the Deys, while also examining the principal taxes imposed on

artisans and their role in revitalizing the financial treasury of the authorities. This will be done while highlighting the officials who supervised their organization and control.

First: The Most Important Crafts and Craft Communities in Algeria during the Period of the Deys

To identify the most important crafts practiced by the inhabitants of Algeria during the period of the Deys, we relied on a set of local and foreign sources that addressed craft activity at the time. It is noticeable that these sources sometimes referred to the names of the crafts themselves, and at other times to the craft communities to which their practitioners belonged. This was a result of artisans organizing themselves within professional communities that brought together those working in the same craft.

Accordingly, we will present the most important crafts and craft communities that became widespread in Algeria during this period, which may be divided into three main categories: productive crafts, service crafts, and commercial and marketing-related crafts. Moreover, the multiplicity of branches within certain crafts and the diversity of their specializations require that each craft be examined separately, with a brief definition and an explanation of its most important characteristics.

1. Weavers (Weaving):

This craft was widespread in both cities and rural areas. It consisted mainly of producing carpets and rugs used as floor coverings by the population, regardless of their social affiliation. Numerous local and foreign sources described the process through which various types of furnishings were woven¹.

Simon Pfeiffer praised the Algerians' mastery in producing woollen covers, which were distinguished by their quality, stating: "... they were characterized by their softness and lightness, and they used to send them to Tunis..."². Heinrich von Maltzan also mentioned that the eight Beni Abbas tribes inhabiting the region of Djurdjura were renowned for the manufacture of burnouses, and that they had shops in the city of Algiers where these products were sold³.

2. The Manufacture of Gunpowder and Rifles:

Algerians paid particular attention to this type of manufacture because of their military needs. Several historical writings indicated that the Sebaou region was famous for producing gunpowder and rifles. In this regard, Wendelin Schlosser wrote: "... they make gunpowder themselves... It is coarse and does not have evenly sized grains, because they do not know how to purify saltpetre from its earthy components; therefore, it has little strength...".

¹ Abu al-Eid Doudou, *Algeria in the Writings of German Travellers*, National Publishing and Distribution Company, 1975, p. 11.

² Simon Pfeiffer, *Algerian Memoirs on the Eve of the Occupation*, translated into Arabic and introduced by Abu al-Eid Doudou, SNED, Algeria, 1974, p. 167.

³ Heinrich von Maltzan, *Three Years in North-West Africa*, translated by Abu al-Eid Doudou, Vol. 2, SNED, Algeria, 1976, p. 159.

In addition to the manufacture of gunpowder, this region was also famous for making rifles, to the extent that the inhabitants preferred them to European rifles. Many foreigners even praised the precision and mastery of this craft. This is clearly reflected in the description provided by Wendelin Schlosser, who stated: "... the Kabyles are distinguished by the manufacture of good rifles..."⁴

3. Shipbuilding:

Shipbuilding workshops were present in coastal areas, where small and large ship basins were constructed. The shipbuilding yard in the city of Algiers received large quantities of wood for building and equipping ships. It was also responsible for repairing warships of all kinds, from large battleships to the smallest vessels⁵.

4. Arms Makers:

These were craftsmen who produced luxurious daggers and swords, as well as manufactured and repaired rifles⁶. The distinctive feature of this craft was its strong concentration in the Kabylia region, owing to the abundance of iron extracted from the mountains located there. The craftsmen extracted this iron, smelted it, and shaped it into various swords and daggers⁷.

5. Carpenters (Carpentry):

They were known for producing various types of furniture from wood, such as doors, cupboards, and tables⁸. Simon Pfeiffer confirmed that carpenters in Algeria were distinguished by their artisanal skill, which was evident in the furniture they produced, characterized by precision and careful workmanship⁹.

6. Tailors (Tailoring):

They produced different types of clothing for men and women. This craft was practiced both in homes and in workshops. Heinrich von Maltzan informed us about the way this craft was organized and practiced. He also mentioned that tailors were well liked by people because they provided the best services to their customers in their shops. Heinrich von Maltzan further noted that the competition among tailors over who could offer better goods and services to customers contributed to the quality of their products¹⁰.

It is noticeable that most foreign writings agree on the high quality of these products, which made them sell at higher prices compared with foreign goods. This can be inferred from William

⁴ Wendelin Schlosser, *Constantine in the Days of Ahmed Bey, 1832–1837*, translated and introduced by Abu al-Eid Doudou, Algeria, 2007, pp. 94–95.

⁵ William Shaler, *Memoirs of the American Consul William Shaler, 1816–1824*, translated into Arabic, annotated, and introduced by Ismail al-Arabi, SNED, Algeria, 1982, p. 68.

⁶ Simon Pfeiffer, Op. cit, p. 150.

⁷ Wendelin Schlosser, Op. cit, p. 93.

⁸ William Shaler, Op. cit, p. 95.

⁹ Simon Pfeiffer, Op. cit, p. 167.

¹⁰ Heinrich von Maltzan, Op. cit, p. 113.

Shaler's statement: "... there is no European merchandise that surpasses Algerian products in this field..."¹¹.

7. Builders (Construction):

They were responsible for constructing houses, mosques, and roads. Construction was generally carried out using brick and stone. William Shaler informed us of the builders' mastery of their craft, stating: "... they had reached a degree of practical perfection..."¹². What distinguished this craft was its influence by Turkish engineering and design, which the wealthy people of Algeria brought back with them after visiting Constantinople and being influenced by the designs of its buildings¹³.

8. Goldsmiths and Silversmiths:

They produced various forms of jewellery from gold and silver. They also plated weapons, such as swords, as well as women's headwear, with gold and silver. Jews were well known for practicing and monopolizing this craft, especially in major cities¹⁴.

9. Coppersmiths:

They were craftsmen who produced various copper products. Among their most important products were household utensils and copper tables, which took different forms and were used to decorate homes¹⁵.

10. Tanners:

They tanned different types of leather, especially since Algeria was known for the abundance of this material. Two types of leather can be identified: ordinary leather intended for the middle class, and luxurious leather intended for the wealthy class¹⁶.

However, this craft soon began to decline toward the end of the period of the Deys as a result of the increase in taxes on rural production¹⁷. This negatively affected the craft, after the tanning industry of the city of Bejaia had previously been highly sought after among Italian shoemakers¹⁸.

¹¹ William Shaler, Op. cit, p. 93.

¹² William Shaler, Op. cit, p. 96.

¹³ William Shaler, Op. cit, p. 62.

¹⁴ Simon Pfeiffer, Op. cit, p. 172.

¹⁵ Wilhelm Schimper (1804–1878) was a German scholar and traveller who undertook several journeys in southern France, Algeria, and Egypt. After returning to his homeland, he published a book entitled *Wilhelm Schimper's Journey to Algeria in the Years 1831–1832*, in which he described the city of Algiers. See: *Algeria in the Writings of German Travellers*, p. 11.

¹⁶ Simon Pfeiffer, Op. cit, p. 167.

¹⁷ Lucette Valensi, *The Maghreb before the Fall of the City of Algiers, 1790–1830*, 1st ed., translated by Elias Morcos, Dar al-Haqiqa, Beirut, 1980, p. 57.

¹⁸ William Spencer, *Algiers in the Age of the Corsair Captains*, translated into Arabic by Abdelkader Ziyadia, Dar El-Kasbah Publishing, Algeria, 2007, p. 31.

11. Silk Workers and Silk Merchants:

The term *harrar* was applied to makers of silk fabrics as well as to silk merchants. Many craftsmen combined both occupations. The Andalusian element played a distinctive role in the flourishing and spread of this craft¹⁹. Shaler spoke of the Algerians' interest in this craft, stating: "... among the most important Algerian industries were the manufacture of silk, wool, and tanned leather..."²⁰. However, toward the end of the period of the Deys, this craft experienced a decline due to several problems, the most important of which were natural disasters, which were a major cause of the decrease in the number of silk workers, particularly in 1817²¹.

12. Porters:

They carried various types of goods in the markets²². These porters relied on simple tools to carry out their activity, such as ropes, sticks, and baskets. They were known for their calmness and good conduct among themselves. The German scholar and traveller Wilhelm Schimper described them and compared them with European porters, stating: "... they are the opposite of European porters in view of the commendable qualities possessed by Algerian porters..."²³.

13. Dyers:

They were craftsmen specialized in dyeing different types of fabrics. There were also dyers specialized in painting houses. Pfeiffer described the dyers, stating: "... their appearance seems pleasant as they move across the rooftops, their bodies and clothes covered with lime...". The fact that they were described by foreigners reflects the spread of this craft across various Algerian cities²⁴.

14. Sweepers:

They swept and cleaned the streets in return for a sum of money paid to them by homeowners at the end of each month. They were supervised by the *qa'id al-zibl*, the official appointed by the government to oversee street cleanliness²⁵.

15. Brokers and Itinerant Sellers:

They were itinerant sellers who went to the markets and called out loudly to introduce their goods. These goods were often taken from craftsmen and merchants in return for receiving a percentage of the price of the merchandise²⁶.

However, what must be mentioned here is that the crafts that spread throughout the rural areas and urban centres of Algeria during the period of the Deys cannot be limited to the crafts

¹⁹ Aïcha Ghattas, *Crafts and Artisans in the City of Algiers, 1700–1830*, ANEP Publications, Algeria, 2007, p. 299.

²⁰ William Shaler, Op. cit, p. 93.

²¹ Aïcha Ghattas, Op. cit, p. 229.

²² Heinrich von Maltzan, Op. cit, p. 79.

²³ Abu al-Eid Doudou, *Algeria in the Writings of German Travellers...*, Op. cit, p. 13.

²⁴ Simon Pfeiffer, Op. cit, p. 167.

²⁵ Simon Pfeiffer, Op. cit, p. 171.

²⁶ Hanifi Halayli, "Economic Activity in Ottoman Algiers," *Emir Abdelkader Journal of Islamic Sciences*, Issue 62, Dar al-Huda, Constantine, 2008, p. 252.

mentioned above. There were, in fact, other crafts referred to by numerous local and foreign sources.

Second: Types of Taxes Imposed on Artisans

The authorities imposed a specific tax system on artisans specialized in various productive, service-based, and marketing-related crafts, as part of their effort to diversify Algeria's financial resources during the period of the Deys. During this phase, the artisan was obliged to pay financial dues to the treasury of the authorities. This is what we will attempt to examine by shedding light on the most important taxes imposed by the authorities on artisans, as well as on the officials who had the authority to supervise the tax system. Among the most important taxes imposed on artisans were the following:

1. The Fine Tax:

This consisted of sums of money imposed on craft communities. The amins of these craft communities were entrusted with collecting them and submitting them directly to the treasury of the authorities, or through the mediation of the Sheikh al-Balad, who in turn was responsible for delivering them to the treasury. This is what we find mentioned in the manuscript of the *Law of the Markets* concerning the taxes imposed on craft communities. However, this source does not provide information on the method of their collection, nor does it specify whether they were collected weekly, monthly, or once a year, except for the reference it contains concerning the taxes imposed on craftsmen: "... the register of taxes collected from the craftsmen of the city from one salary period to the next²⁷ monthly..." From this, it can be inferred that the collection period of this tax took place at the end of each month²⁸.

The manuscript of the *Law of the Markets* also mentions the fine imposed on certain communities, such as the tailors: "Praise be to God, this is the record of the agreement concluded at the Mosque of al-Sayyida, which brought together the amins, both senior and junior, with the Sheikhs al-Balad Ibn al-Ahrash and Sayyid Ahmed ibn al-Fasiya, and the amin of the tailors... They agreed to impose three and a half taxes..."²⁹.

The authorities often imposed a single tax on two craft communities. An example of this is the tax imposed on the community of fruit sellers and the community of *sharbadjiyya* — those who prepared soup, broth, and other foods, or those responsible for preparing coffee and tea — in 1697, which was estimated at four and a half riyals³⁰. The fine tax was imposed on twenty-eight craft communities.

²⁷ Professor Djamel Guenane argued that the phrase "from one salary period to the next" means once every two months, by analogy with the system applied to the Janissary army. For further details, see Djamel Guenane, *Texts and Documents in the History of Modern Algeria, 1500–1830*, p. 150.

²⁸ Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Shuwayhid, *The Law of the Markets of the City of Algiers, 1695–1705*, edited, introduced, and translated into Arabic by Nacereddine Saidouni, 1st ed., Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, Beirut, 2006, p. 113.

²⁹ Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Shuwayhid, Op. cit, p. 120.

³⁰ Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Shuwayhid, Op. cit, p. 135.

2. The Night-Watch Fine:

The question of security received considerable attention from the authorities within craft institutions, especially the markets, where craft and commercial activity was concentrated and where a large number of workshops and shops were located. Alongside the official employees appointed by the authorities to ensure security, such as the police, the authorities also sought to involve artisans in maintaining security. This was done by compelling artisans and merchants to participate in the night watch of the markets and by determining the number of men assigned to this duty. This is mentioned in the *Law of the Markets*, which established a special guard system for each profession by specifying the appointed time for each individual to perform the watch duty required of him³¹.

This was also achieved by involving artisans in bearing the financial burden of guarding the markets, to which they contributed on a monthly basis. The rate of financial contribution differed from one market to another according to the importance and location of each market. The artisan remained liable for his financial dues even after his death, as they were deducted from his estate³². If artisans were unable to pay, the amin of the craft community often assumed responsibility for paying the financial dues owed by the artisans, as occurred in 1699, when the amin of the community of *maqfuljiyya* — shoemakers — paid the financial dues on behalf of an artisan belonging to his community³³.

3. The Watq Tax:

This tax was imposed on all craft communities; indeed, it specifically affected certain craft communities³⁴, such as the charcoal sellers, the potters, and the brokers. It was also imposed on ovens prepared for baking bread³⁵. The manuscript of the *Law of the Markets* includes some agreements concluded among craft communities concerning the assessment of this tax, such as the agreement reached in 1699 among the community of fruit sellers, which included a precise allocation by each of those responsible for tax collection³⁶.

4. The Hospitality Tax:

This was a monetary or in-kind amount collected by the Sheikh al-Balad from artisans through their amins. Part of it was paid to the treasury of the authorities, while another part was retained by him to purchase his position and to organize the banquets he was required to host. According to what we have examined in the manuscript of the *Law of the Markets*, this tax was collected annually at the beginning of the new year: "... the register of the hospitality tax, at the beginning of the year, which the Sheikhs al-Balad collect from the owners of professions and crafts"³⁷.

³¹ Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Shuwayhid, Op. cit, p. 111.

³² Aïcha Ghattas, *Crafts and Artisans...*, Op. cit, pp. 184–185.

³³ Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Shuwayhid, Op. cit, p. 128.

³⁴ *Al-Watq*: the plural is *wataqat*. It is a Turkish word meaning "tent," and the *wataqat* were established outside the cities. See Aïcha Ghattas, *Crafts and Artisans*, Op. cit, p. 197.

³⁵ Aïcha Ghattas, *Crafts and Artisans*, Op. cit, p. 184.

³⁶ Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Shuwayhid, Op. cit, p. 135.

³⁷ Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Shuwayhid, Op. cit, p. 115.

5. The Appointment Tax:

This was a tax imposed on the amins of craft communities upon their appointment. It was not imposed on all craft amins, but only on some of them, such as the amin of the sailors, the amin of the Kabyles, and the amin of the people of Jijel³⁸.

6. Tax on Goods Brought into the Markets:

The authorities imposed a duty on goods entering the markets. This tax is mentioned in the manuscript of the *Law of the Markets* with regard to certain artisans who were obliged to pay it in order to be allowed to bring in their merchandise, such as the fig sellers and the dyers engaged in dyeing fabrics and leather³⁹.

In addition to these taxes, the authorities imposed compulsory contributions on craft communities in service of the Beylik. These contributions consisted mainly of craft products, especially at the port of Algiers. One example is the community of butchers, which supplied two and a half sheep weekly to each mess of the military garrison, half a sheep to the cooks, and one sheep to the agha's mess every Wednesday. The amin of the tanners' community also supplied leather to the Beylik for making special tables for the premises and for shipbuilding.

Likewise, the blacksmiths' community provided services to the Beylik in everything it required in the field of blacksmithing. This system was not limited to the city of Algiers; rather, the authorities also applied it in many other cities, such as Constantine, where the community of *bashatmiyya* — those who prepared the bread known as *bashmat*, intended for army consumption — was required to prepare bread for the military garrisons. The tanners' community also contributed by providing leather water bags and sacks for the Bey's residence and for the Beylik garrison.⁴⁰

Artisans also contributed by providing many of their products, such as woollen covers, to the Dey, to be offered as part of the annual gift sent by the ruler of the Regency to the Sublime Porte. This was mentioned by Hamdan Khodja: "... he carries with him [meaning here the envoy] a gift consisting of... and a number of woollen covers manufactured in Algeria. The main purpose of the gift... was to present a sample of the Regency's products..."⁴¹. The authorities also resorted to artisans for the construction of public facilities, such as roads and city walls, as well as for the repair of water channels and the cleaning of streets⁴². Other craft communities contributed sums of money for the purchase of horses to supply the military establishments affiliated with the Beylik, as clarified in the manuscript of the *Law of the Markets*⁴³.

From the foregoing, it can be said that artisans were subject to a dual system of obligation, administered by the craft amins and the Sheikh al-Balad. However, the role of the latter became

³⁸ Aïcha Ghattas, *Crafts and Artisans...*, Op. cit, p. 184.

³⁹ Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Shuwayhid, Op. cit, p. 59.

⁴⁰ Aïcha Ghattas, *Crafts and Artisans...*, Op. cit, p. 187.

⁴¹ Hamdan ibn Othman Khodja, *The Mirror*, introduced, translated into Arabic, and annotated by Mohamed Larbi Zbiri, SNED, Algeria, 1982, p. 132.

⁴² Op. cit, p. 109.

⁴³ Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Shuwayhid, Op. cit, p. 120.

increasingly prominent toward the end of the period of the Deys, while the collection of taxes by craft amins came to be limited to certain communities rather than others. Moreover, the revenues generated from taxes imposed on artisans constituted an important source of income for the treasury of the authorities. In addition, the tax system to which craft communities were subjected varied from one community to another, depending on the importance of each craft and its financial revenues.

Third: The Most Important Officials Responsible for Tax Collection:

The authorities relied on a group of employees and officials who were entrusted with the collection of taxes and the supervision of markets. They formed a link between the Ottoman authorities and the craft corporations. After examining a number of historical sources, we identified the most important officials responsible for tax collection, each of whom had specific duties related to the supervision and collection of taxes:

1. The Amin al-Umana':

The *Amin al-Umana'* of the craft community was considered the highest position within the hierarchy of craft corporations. He was regarded as the contractor and guarantor responsible for the payment of the taxes imposed on the artisans of the community under his supervision. The amins were entrusted with the task of extracting and collecting taxes directly from artisans, from craft workshops, and from the markets where artisans carried out their professional and commercial activities, before handing them over to the treasury of the authorities.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, we found that many local and foreign sources overlooked the details related to this position, especially writings concerning the period of the Deys. Many of these sources merely mentioned the title of the position without providing details about the duties performed by its holder. It appears in the manuscript of the *Law of the Markets* in relation to market fees and the dues paid by the owners of certain crafts: "... the *Kahiya* of the Beylik, the *Amin al-Umana'*, and the *muhtasib*..."⁴⁵

From what is stated, we may infer the importance of this position in the eyes of the authorities, since it is mentioned immediately after the *Kahiya* of the Beylik. The *Amin al-Umana'* of the craft community had a direct relationship with the Dey, as he served as the intermediary between the community he supervised and the authorities. In addition to overseeing tax collection, he also supervised the government registers related to craft activity in the cities.⁴⁶

What can be observed is that, despite the importance of this position in the administration and organization of craft and industrial activity, its role declined toward the end of the period of the Deys. This can be inferred from the silence of many chroniclers who lived during this period, including Hamdan Khodja, who, when discussing the organization of craft communities, stated that each craft had an amin or inspector known as the Sheikh al-Balad. This indicates that the

⁴⁴ Lucette Valensi, p. 66.

⁴⁵ Abdullah ibn Muhammad Shuwayhid, manuscript of the *Law of the Markets*, p. 127.

⁴⁶ Abdullah ibn Muhammad Shuwayhid, manuscript of the *Law of the Markets*, p. 84.

position of amin of the craft community gradually disappeared and was replaced by the office of Sheikh al-Balad.⁴⁷

2. The Amin:

This position occupied the second rank in the hierarchy of the craft community after the *Amin al-Umana*. After examining numerous historical sources, we found that this position predated the Ottoman presence in Algeria. This is confirmed by the letter addressed by the notables of the city of Algiers to the Ottoman Sultan Selim I in 1519: "... the letter of the judge, the preacher, the imams, the jurists, the merchants, and the amins..."⁴⁸ Several sources also used the term "bash" instead of "amin," a point confirmed by the researcher Aïcha Ghattas on the basis of records from the Sharia court contracts.

He was selected from among the master craftsmen of the same craft in each city, and his appointment took place after approval by the authorities, represented by the Dey in the city of Algiers and by the Bey in the major cities, with confirmation by the judge. This reflects the important status enjoyed by the craft amins in the eyes of the authorities during this period.⁴⁹

The craft amins were among the most important officials entrusted with coordinating relations between the members of the craft community and the authorities, especially in matters related to taxation and the collection of dues. The amin performed essential financial duties, represented by collecting the taxes and fees owed by the members of his craft and ensuring their transfer to the state treasury. This made him a connecting link between the Ottoman administration and the members of the craft.

The importance of this role reached such an extent that some researchers reduced the function of the amin almost entirely to it. Lucette Valensi indicated that his task was essentially confined to tax collection, given its significance as an important resource for the treasury. Thus, the amin represented an effective instrument through which the authorities monitored craft activity and ensured the regularity of fiscal revenues, alongside his role in organizing the affairs of the craft and defending the interests of its members.⁵⁰

3. The Muhtasib:

The *muhtasib* was an administrative and judicial official entrusted with the task of supervising markets and ensuring the application of the laws and regulations governing commercial and craft activity. His most important duties consisted of monitoring prices, weights, and measures; verifying the quality of goods offered for sale; preventing fraud, deception, and monopoly; and maintaining public order within the markets. He also supervised artisans and merchants and monitored the extent of their compliance with professional customs and the instructions issued

⁴⁷ Hamdan Khodja, p. 125.

⁴⁸ Abdeljelil Temimi, "The First Letter from the Inhabitants of the City of Algiers to Selim I in 1519," *Moroccan Historical Review*, Issue 6, 1976, p. 120.

⁴⁹ Aïcha Ghattas, *Crafts and Artisans*, Op. cit, p. 143.

⁵⁰ Lucette Valensi, Op. cit, p. 103.

by the authorities. This made the institution of the *hisbah* one of the most important mechanisms of economic and social control in the Islamic city.

Although the principal function of the *muhtasib* was supervisory and regulatory, he sometimes exercised certain financial responsibilities connected with the collection of market fees and taxes, or with overseeing their collection. He also played a role in determining the value of duties imposed on goods imported from outside the country, as confirmed by Abdullah ibn Muhammad Shuwayhid in the manuscript of the *Law of the Markets of the City of Algiers*. This reflects the overlap between administrative and financial functions in the management of markets and craft activity during the period of the Deys⁵¹. The relationship between the *muhtasib* and the artisans was also characterized by mutual solidarity, as confirmed by one of the documents of the *Bayt al-Mal*, which indicates that the *muhtasib* used to lend them sums of money: "... Sayyid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Fakhkhar testified against himself that he had received from the honoured Sayyid Ahmed al-Muhtasib the amount of one hundred riyals..."⁵²

Conclusion:

- _ The study showed that craft activity during the period of the Deys constituted one of the most important pillars of the urban economy in Algeria. Crafts varied between productive, service-based, and commercial activities, and contributed to meeting the needs of the population and stimulating economic movement.
- _ Craft communities were characterized by a well-structured professional organization, embodied in the presence of amins, *Amin al-Umana*, and other officials who supervised the affairs of artisans and represented them before the authorities.
- _ The Ottoman authorities adopted a diversified tax system that included several taxes and duties, such as the fine tax, the night-watch tax, the *watq* tax, the hospitality tax, and others. This reflects the diversity of taxes and methods of collection, as well as the authorities' keenness to exploit the financial resources provided by the craft sector.
- _ The role of artisans was not limited to paying taxes alone; rather, it extended to providing various services and contributions to the authorities, whether by supplying military institutions with craft products or by participating in the construction and maintenance of certain public facilities and services.
- _ This system led to the emergence of social and economic disparities among artisans. Some crafts benefited from their proximity to the authorities or from the high demand for their products, while other crafts were exposed to financial and administrative pressures that affected their activity and continuity.
- _ The abundance of taxes and duties imposed on certain crafts also contributed to the rise in the prices of craft products and services, which was reflected in the purchasing power of the population and in the conditions of some craft groups.

⁵¹ Abdullah ibn Muhammad Shuwayhid, Op. cit, p. 51.

⁵² Algerian National Archives. *Bayt al-Mal*, Box 36, Register 375, year 1171 AH / 1757 AD.

- Thus, the relationship between the authorities and artisans during the period of the Deys was based on the principle of mutual benefit. The authorities benefited from the financial resources and services provided by the craft communities, while artisans preserved their professional organization and economic standing, despite the tax burdens and social disparities they faced within the craft milieu itself.

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