

The French Forest Administration And Population In The Department Of Constantine Through Archives- Souk Ahras¹ And Sefia² As A Model-

Dr.Meddour Khemissa

Contemporary History of Algeria

University of 8 Mai 1945 – Department of History - Guelma.

History Laboratory of Maghreb Research and Studies - HLMRS-
Algeria,

meddour.khemissa@univ-guelma.dz, Meddour16khem@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This scientific research paper aims to study the French forest policy towards the fires witnessed in the department of Constantine. specifically the two mixed municipalities Sefia and Souk Ahras of the arrondissement of Guelma, which experienced a series of serious fires in 1890 that left heavy losses in the forest cover of this region and severe damage suffered by pastoral forest tribes. This was done through analyzing the archival documents

¹- Mixed Municipality **Souk Ahras**: Created by a decree issued on December 29, 1884, it consists of the following roundabouts and tribes: Douar Wilan, Douar Kh dara, Douar Ouled Moumen, Douar Hdada, Awlad Khiyar tribe, Awlad Dahia tribe (without Kasanla branch), For more details about this decision and its most important articles, see:

- bulletin officielle de gouvernement général de l'Algérie, numéro 955, déc. 1884, p.631.

²-The mixed municipality **Sefia** was established in the summer by a decree issued on March 11, 1879, consisting of: 13 divisions and 03 settlement centers: "Laverdir, oued Cham, and Ain Seinur. To view the decision of establishment and administrative division, see:

-bulletin officielle de gouvernement général de l'Algérie, numéro 743, 11mars 1879, p.120.

found in box GGA, 86.108, which contained an important collection of reports of the French gendarmerie teams (gendarmerie), as well as the correspondence of the forest guards (les gardes champêtres). Which proved that the French forest exploitation was extensive. That is by expropriating large forest properties from the Algerian population after the French administration accused them and held them responsible for the fires in most cases.

Keywords: Forest administration, fires, department of Constantine, Sefia, Souk Ahras.

Introduction:

The forest regions in Algeria during the colonial period¹ gained great importance as they occupy large areas of the Algerian country, and play a key role in the lives of the Algerian rural population in particular, which was pointed out by the French historian Charles Robert Ageron. who stressed that "the mountainous people take it as a pasture for their sheep from the beginning of the rainy season in the autumn to the end of spring, and when the heat intensifies and the summer is prolonged, the nomadic shepherds take it as a refuge and a hotbed for their herds. Among the tribes there are pastoralist farmers who have taken shelter and residence in the forest, and in addition to their pastoral functions, which are the most important, they have significant areas suitable for agriculture, and produce various wood products, and many food products.²

¹- The truth is that the forest is a very important natural resource for man through the ages, which falls on the Algerian man, who realized the importance of the forest and dealt with its products and the exploitation of its spaces, especially for grazing long before the French occupation. to see important details about the exploitation of the Algerian forest in different historical stages, see:

- Imène BENHAFIED, Aida GASMI et Sahraoui BENSALID, Les forêts d'Algérie de Césarée la romaine à ce jour, forêt méditerranéenne t. XXVII, n° 3, septembre 2006.

²-see:

—شارل روبري أجرون، الجزائريون المسلمون وفرنسا (1871-1919)، ج1، دار الرائد للكتاب، الجزائر،

2007، ص 195.

The historian Plarier Antonin¹ asserts that by the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a rural economy led by a large number of actors around the Algerian forests. These forests provide many rural needs in terms of pastures, crops, firewood supplies, cooking and handicrafts.

Therefore, the forest sector in Algeria became a central sector for the local population and the colonial administration with the beginning of the occupation directly², which is translated by the forest colonial policy pursued to exploit forest areas and employ their products for the benefit of the settlers³.

In the same context, this study comes to demonstrate the importance of forest regions in Algeria, specifically in the Annaba subdivision, which is administratively affiliated to the Constantine department, and to reveal the colonial forest policy against the population, especially with regard to fires, which are the first danger threatening the forest cover.

This research paper aims to answer the following general question: What is the French forest policy followed in the Annaba subdivision in eastern Algeria? How did the French forest services deal with the fires that affected the region, specifically the arrondissement of Guelma, which is administratively affiliated to the Annaba subdivision and the department of Constantine?

¹- see : Antonin Plarier, Populations et administration forestière en Algérie (1830 - 1914) : Des usages forestiers entre persistance et reconfiguration. Cahier du GHFF forêt, environnement et société, <https://hal.science/hal-03449046>, Submitted on 25 Nov 2021.

²- The first decision issued regarding forests in Algeria was on September 4, 1831, issued by General Berthezène (in Arabic and French) prohibiting the cutting of tall trees in Algeria.see:

-Charles robert Agéron, Le gouvernement du général berthezène a Alger en 1831, éditions Bouchéne, 2005.

³-see : Jean-Yves Puyo, Grandeurs et vicissitudes de l'aménagement des suberaies algériennes durant la période coloniale française (1830-1962), *Forêt Méditerranéenne*, 2013, XXXIV (2), pp.129-142. (hal-03556217).

To cover the aspects of this central problem, we pose a number of sub-questions as follows:

- What is the forest area in Algeria according to the statistics of the French administration?
- What are the areas in which the forest area is distributed in the departement of Constantine?
- What are the most important forest areas in the Hnansha sector? During the period 1830-1890?
- What were the most important fires in the area before 1890?
- How did the colonial forest administration deal with the forest fires of 1890 in the mixed towns of Sefia and Souk Ahras?

This study required the use of the historical method to collect historical facts related to forest management in the departement of Constantine, specifically the two mixed towns of the arrondissement of Guelma. And to analyze the information extracted from French archival documents - obtained from the archives of Aix-en-Provence -. In addition to counting the forest areas and the number of fires in the region based on the statistical method through French official sources.

First: The forest area in Algeria according to the statistics of the French administration:

1. Public forest area in Algeria:

The French colonial administration began to direct its attention to the forest sector in Algeria at the beginning of the occupation when the French Forest code of 1827¹ became officially in force since 1830.

¹-The "French Forest code" was not the only law applied in Algeria, as several decrees were issued that made some metropole legislation applicable in Algeria, including:

Decree of May 1, 1861: Imperial Decree of December 16, 1810 on the rules to be taken for the sowing, planting and cultivation of plants known to be the most effective in stabilizing sand dunes is applicable in Algeria see:

-Robert Estoublon, Adolphe Lefébure, Code de l'Algérie annoté, t. 1 (1880-1895), Alger, Jourdan, 1896, P. 254.

However, this French legislation was developed for forests with a completely different composition from the Algerian forests, which made it inapplicable in Algeria¹ as it greatly restricted the rights of use, especially when compared to the customs of the Algerians.

The colonial administration has translated its interest in the forest issue by directly estimating the size of forest property, which constitutes the main wealth of the population, as it initially counted forest regions with about two million hectares, of which the department of Constantine alone owns more than half. The forest area of this departement can be estimated at about 40,000 hectares, and individuals own about 160,000 hectares. These impressive forest riches, worth billions of francs, will be a source of significant revenue for the state and individuals. Mr. Barris Du pencher² says: “«The area of forest areas in the colony can be estimated at three million hectares, and of this figure 2,400.00 h belongs to the state, 440.00 h belongs to municipalities, and 160.00 h belongs to individuals..”

The forests are located mainly in the Tell and the atlas, as well as in the mountainous area that separates the highlands, and the largest huge masses are located in the Constantine Tell, reaching the highest rate of afforestation in the Jijel region and in the Tunisian border. It seems that the Roman historians wanted to create a legend

Decree of July 21, 1862: The decree of April 29, 1862 regulating the competences of the Department of Bridges, Roads and the Administration of Forestry with regard to fishing, control of watercourses and cultivation of sand dunes is applicable in Algeria.see:

-Robert Estoublon, Adolphe Lefébure. Ibid, P 263.

-(For the original text of the French Forestry Code (Le Code Forestiere) see:

<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGISCTA000006184064>

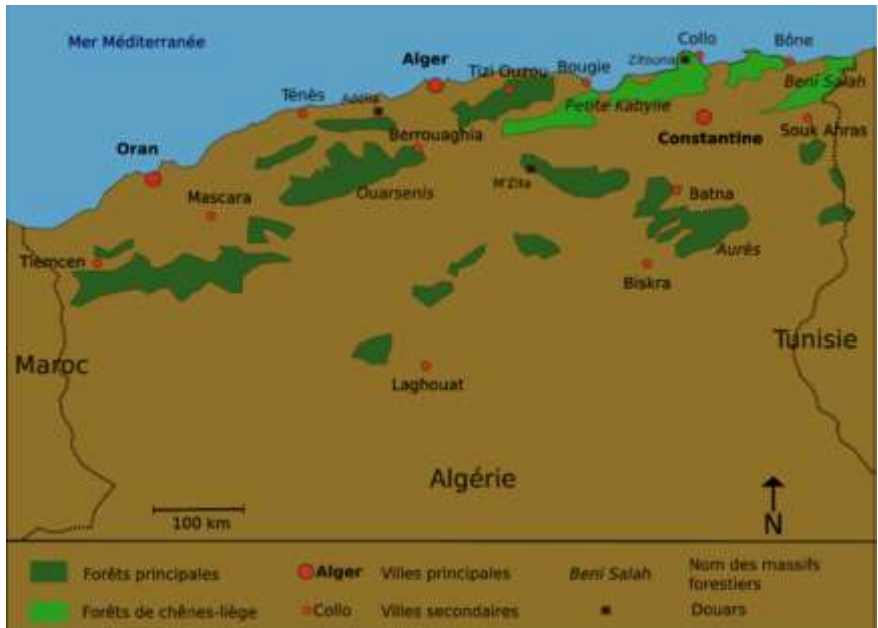
¹-see : Émile Larcher. *Traité élémentaire De Législation Algérienne*, Tome 2, Adolphe Jourdan, Alger 1903, P. 500.

²- A financial delegate and centenarian in the city of El Kala from 1909-1945, and interested in the forest sector, he established a company for forest products with his family members for more information about this character, see:

[-https://www.entreprises-coloniales.fr/afrique-du-nord/Forets_de_La_Calle.pdf](https://www.entreprises-coloniales.fr/afrique-du-nord/Forets_de_La_Calle.pdf)

about the beauty of the dense forests that cover Africa “(Roman Algeria)”, and the fertility of its beautiful plains that resemble a flower garden.¹

The following map, completed in 1866, shows the distribution of forest cover in Algeria:



This importance of eastern Algeria was not lost on the sight of all those who settled in Algeria, whether the Turks or the first French observers, who reconnoitred the forest areas before December 31, 1862, as follows²:

¹- M. Barris Du Pencher, les incendies de forêts en 1992, rapport imprimerie administrative Victor Heints, rue Mogador 41, Alger, 123, p.04.

²-see : André Nouschi, Notes sur la vie traditionnelle des populations forestières algériennes, Annales de géographie Année 1959 / 370 / pp. 526.

Area in hectares	Region
1.100.000 hectares	Constantine
440.000 hectares	Oran
260.000 hectares	City of Algeria

The census of forest cover continued, especially after the great development the Water and Forest Service¹ (Service Des Eaux et Forêts), which was created specifically to regulate the forest area and the greater exploitation of the various forest products that abound in the forests along the Algerian coastline.

According to the statistics of the General Government in Algeria, the forest area in 1881 was estimated at about 2,045,062 hectares, then according to the census of 1884 it rose up to about 2,785,186 hectares², bringing the total area to about 3,247,692 hectares in 1887³.

This increase in the total forest area is due to the resort of the colonial administration to the annexation of new forest areas after

¹-For more details about this important French forest institution see:

-GGA. Tableau de la situation des établissements français en Algérie 1838, Imprimerie Royale, Paris 1839, P 145.

-Georges Lapie. La Sylviculture française dans la région méditerranéenne. Annales de l'École Nationale des Eaux et Forêts et de la Station de Recherches et Expériences Forestières, 1928.

²-GGA. Statistique générale de l'Algérie 1882-1884, Imprimerie de L'Association p. Fontana, Alger 1885, P 156.

³-GGA. Statistique générale de l'Algérie 1885-1887, Imprimerie Typographie Bouyer, Alger 1889, P 268.

-The increase in forest area between 1881 and 1884 was due to the strengthening of the Service des Eaux et Forêts with new staff and thus increased the identification of new forests, increasing the area from 2 million to 2.7 million. See:

-GGA. Statistique générale de l'Algérie 1882-1884, Op Cit, P 156.

-An area of 79,314 hectares of forest in Constantine (including the forests of the Akfadou Mountains, the Auras, the Tebessa Mountains...) was determined in 1883 by the efforts of the Survey Commission set up to implement the Law of Warnyi. See:

-GGA. Procès-verbaux des délibérations Du Conseil supérieur de gouvernement : session 1884, Imprimerie Administrative Gossojo, Alger 1884, P 258-259.

the application of the real estate legislative system, specifically the law of Senatus Consult of April 22, 1863¹. in addition to the expansion of the powers of the Forestry Department and the increase of its staff, which leads to the expansion of new forests to the ownership of the state, in addition to the wooded areas after the application of the law of July 26, 1873².

In general, this forest area is distributed as follows:³

Owner	Area in hectares
State Property	1,754,256 hectares
For municipalities	280,685 hectares
Dealers(private individuals)	468,395 hectares
Military power	744,356 hectares

It is clear that the French colonial administration in Algeria, represented by the General Government, controls about three-quarters of the total forest area (counting state property and areas protected by the army), while municipalities and private individuals share the remaining quarter.

On the other hand, the statistics completed on December 31, 1894, carried out by the Colonial Administration of Forest Areas, show that the area became: 3,057,656 hectares, 36 Ares and 69 centiaris, distributed as follows⁴:

¹- Estoublon et Adolphe Lefébure, Code de l'Algérie annoté, t. 1 (1880-1895), Alger, Jourdan, 1896, p. 280-288.

²- M. Eugène Robe. La propriété immobilière en Algérie : commentaire de la loi du 26 juillet 1873, Juillet Saint Lager Imprimeur De La Ville, Alger 1875, P 270.

³-GGA. Annuaire statistique de la France 1890, Imprimerie Nationale, Paris 1890, P 448.

⁴-Jules Cambon, gouverneur général de l'Algérie, Exposé de la situation générale de l'Algérie, Publication. impr. de Gojosso, Alger, 1895, p278.

-The fluctuation can be observed in the French statistics of the forest area according to sources, as is the case between the census of 1887 and 1894, and this is due to several

- 1- State forests are regularly subject to the forest regime." 1,457,829".
- 2- Forests maintained by the arrondissement under the assumption of ownership registered in favor of the State in Article. 4 § 4 of the law of June 16, 1851¹: "298,429".
- 3- Forests under the supervision of the military authority: "744.356".
- 4- Community forests under the forest system "76,919".
- 5- Afforestation of companies or individuals. "480.123".

These forest areas constituted a new resource for the occupation administration and the settlers at the same time. As they exhausted all methods of exploitation and protection of the forest by monopolizing it and removing the Algerian population from it, under a tight and complex legislative system that falls within the policy of real estate expropriation pursued by the administration starting from the issuance of the law of June 16, 1851.

2. Distribution of forest area in the department of Constantine:

2.1 Total forest area in the entire department:

The percentage of forest areas in the department of Constantine of the total area was estimated at 49.3% in 1877, 49.1% in 1882, and then decreased to 42.2% in 1884. Moreover, despite the decline, the department of Constantine is the richest province in terms of forest

factors, which I think include the application of expropriation laws, fires, popular resistance, and the interests of the person in charge of the census.

¹-The law was promulgated under the title: Reorganization of the Property System - Nouvelle constitution de la propriété. Included 23 articles, distributed on 5 axes "Titres", The fourth paragraph of Article IV states: "State property (Domaine De l'état)shall consist of forests and regularly acquired timber, taking into account the rights of ownership and before the promulgation of this law".

See :

-Rodolphe Dareste. De La Propriété en Algérie, Deuxième édition, Challamel Ainé, Paris 1864, P40.

wealth, and this is shown by the statistics of general government publications:

Forest area by departments for the years 1877¹, 1882² and 1884³

Total	departments			Year
	Constantine	Oran	City of algeria	
2,360,748 h	1,165,118	647,800	547,821	1877
2,045,065 h	1,005,134	580,414	459,517	1882
2,785,186 h	1,180,872	808,202	790,112	1884

The area of forests of the department of Oran continued to develop and rise, unlike the department of Constantine, whose area remained almost constant for nearly a decade, to reach the area in Constantine in 1887 to 1,208,511 hectares, while the area of the forests of Oran reached 1,243,503 hectares⁴. However, these figures do not reflect the forest potential of the whole province, because the area is linked to the surveys carried out by the Water and Forestry Service, as the land surveys in Oran in application of the 1863 law establishing real estate ownership were completely completed in 1901, but they were not completed in the province of Constantine. Where the lands of 13 tribes (including the Ouled Khiair tribe in the mixed municipality of Souk Ahras, the tribe of Tréat in the mixed municipality of Idugh, the tribe of Beni Fogal in the mixed

¹- GGA. Annuaire statistique de la France, 1880, Op Cit, P 517.

²- GGA. Annuaire statistique de la France 1885, Imprimerie Nationale, Paris 1885, P 624.

³- GGA. Annuaire statistique de la France 1886, Imprimerie Nationale, Paris 1886, P 667.

⁴- GGA. Statistique générale de l'Algérie 1885-1887, Op Cit, P 266.

municipality of Tabaport...) are waiting for surveys, and all lands Almost includes forest areas¹

What increased the value of forest cover in the department is the diversity in the varieties of trees from cork trees, green oaks, Aleppo pine, and cedar trees². Specifically the economic value³, which constitutes the priority of the French colonial administration, according to one of the statistics for the year 1884-1885, the forest cover in the province consists of the following:

Year	percentage	Total area in Algeria	Area in the department of Constantine	Forest type
1885-1884	% 88,58	454,912 h	402,971 h	Cork forests
	% 45,39	/	335,039 h	Green oak forests
1885	/	/	227.401 h	Aleppo pine forests

Based on the statistics of the general government for the year 1885-1887, it is clear that cork forests are the largest wealth in the province of Constantine. With an area estimated at 402,971 hectares out of a total of 454,912 hectares in Algeria. Meaning that Constantine occupies 88.58% of the cork forests (le liège), followed by green oak forests (Chêne liège) (335,039 hectares), which represents 45.39% of the total area of this type of forest in the country. Then the Aleppo pine forests (Pin d'Alep) with an area of

¹- GGA. Exposé de la situation de l'Algérie 1902, Imprimerie Du Gouvernement Général, Alger 1902, P 169.

²- For more details about the types of forests, specifically the most prevalent oak trees in the province of Constantine, see:
- L. Saccardy, Le Chêne-Liège et le Liège en Algérie, Revue de botanique appliquée et d'agriculture coloniale, 18^e année, juillet 1938. pp. 488-497.

³- bulletin n°203, juillet 1938. pp. 488-49.

227.401 hectares, despite the small area of forests Cèdres, but Constantine dominates 81.14% of the total area¹.

Types of forests in the department of Constantine for the year 1887

total	Other types	Varieties							Property Owner
		Thuja	Cedar	Maritime pine	Alpine pine	Oak beech	green oak	corke	
856.880	133.740	/	30,713	1,475	143,405	38,086	283,717	225,744	State Property
35.716	8,028	/	50	301	4,565	183	9,244	13,343	Municipalities
174,385	956	/	/	3,595	346	4,754	830	163,884	private individuals
141,530	20,617	/	/	/	79,085	/	41,828	/	Under the protection of the military authority
1.208.511	163.341	/	30.763	5.371	227.401	43,025	335.039	402.971	Total area in

¹- GGA. Général Statistique de l'Algérie 1885-1887, Op Cit, P 266.

									Const antine
3.24 7.69 2	988 .42 1	157 76. 6	37. 91 0	5.39 1	811 05. 5	54. 16 1	738 .07 6	454 .91 2	Gener al Total Area

GGA. Statistique Général de l'Algérie 1885-1887, Op Cit, P 266.

Second: The most important forest areas in the province of Hanansha¹

1. Forest areas and their distribution:

1.1 Forest areas:

After the issuance of the first law regulating forest and real estate ownership in Algeria on June 16, 1851, Napoleon III considered forests to be vacant properties and therefore owned by the state, which could dispose of them.

Hereby, the following areas were counted according to importance in the Annaba subdivision, whose forest area was estimated at 127,000 hectares, distributed as follows:

The municipality	Forest area in hectares
Annaba	20.000h
Idugh	27000h

¹- Hanancha territory: Leading for a long time the border areas in eastern Algeria, its influence extended from beyond the Tunisian borders in the east to the east of Constantine and from El Kala in the west and Annaba in the north, formed a coherent political unit ruled by a sultan, contributed to the resistance to the French occupation, the influence of the region decreased after the end of the resistances and its unity was fragmented after the application of expropriation laws: The law of June 16, 1851 and the law of the Senatus consult of April 22, 1863. The Hanansha roundabout became part of the mixed municipality of Sefia. For more information about the origins of the tribe and its geographical boundaries. see:

-جمال ورتي، تطور نظام الإدارة الفرنسي في عمالة قسنطينة خلال النصف الثاني من القرن 19 سوق أهراس
-انموذجا رسالة مقدمة لنيل شهادة الدكتوراه في التاريخ الحديث و المعاصر، جامعة قسنطينة، 2011، ص 40-45.

El Kala	30.000h
Guelma	10.000h
Hanansha	40.000h

1.2 Its distribution:

This forest area is distributed as follows:

Forest Territory	tribe	Area / h
	Hanansha tribe	5605 h
	Sefia tribe	1550 h
	Bani Mezlin	241 h, 19 Ares and 46 centiares belonging to the municipal properties 2381 h and 04 Ares and 07 centiares belonging to the state property.
	Nador tribe	3289 h and 50Ares
	Ouled Khiyar tribe	1612 h and 50 Ares
	Mahatla tribe	3229 h
	Ouled Diaa tribe	15841h and 80 Ares
	Whelan tribe	2778 h ¹

Third: The most important forest fires in Algeria and in the region before 1890:

The forest territories in Algeria, including the forests of the two mixed municipalities Sefia and Souk Ahras (Beni Salah forests), knew

¹- Important details about the forest areas of the forest territory of Nador, Ouled Khiyar, El Mahatla, Ouled Diaa and Whelan are in the records of the General Government of Algeria. see:

- bulletin officielle de gouvernement général de l'Algérie 1890-1892.

a series of successive fires from 1863-1866 and then the second series from 1870-1890¹. These fires posed a real danger that threatened the forest wealth owned by the population, which is their first source of livelihood. And it also constituted an obsession for the French administration, which considered it a kind of resistance that the population resorts to take revenge - as it claims - from settlers and private exploiters who controlled large forest areas after the application of expropriation laws 1851 and 1863.

In this context, we cite the following official statistics, which mentioned the number of fires during the year that wiped out thousands of hectares of forest.

1. Forest fires in Algeria during the period 1876-1884:

The forest territories witnessed a series of fires that wiped out large areas of forests and bushes, and inflicted significant economic losses on the population² and the French administration, in addition to the damage to the pastoral tribes that occupy or exploit these forest areas. The attached table shows that³:

year	Number of fires	Area	Losses in francs	Number of affected tribes
1876	120	55.172 h	441.884 francs	22
1877	134	40.538 h	1.807.061 francs	27
1878	164	8.156 h	617.324 francs	12
1879	218	17.663 h	625.087 francs	34
1880	137	20.881 h	353.245 francs	07

¹- Ouahiba MEDDOUR-SAHARI, Rachid MEDDOUR² & Arezki DERRIDJ, Historique des feux de forêts en Algérie Analyse statistique descriptive (période 1876-2005), Revue Campus N°10.

²- This refers to the Algerians who own forest property as well as the private exploiters of the settlers who have obtained great concessions for the exploitation of forest products.

³- see : Gouvernement générale civil de l'Algérie, statistique générale de l'Algérie, année 1882-1884, imprimerie de l'association ouvrière Fontana, Alger, p.159.

1881	244	169.056 h	9.042.440 francs	53
1882	130	4.018 h	188.751 francs	02
1883	148	2.461 h	102.339 francs	02
1884	147	3.231 h	205.185 francs	01

It is quite clear from the statistics of the table - which is the statistics of the French administration - that the number of fires took a dangerous upward trend and caused significant damage to the property of the population and forest areas. Where the year 1881 knew the peak where the total fires reached 244 fires left losses of millions of francs and eliminated large forest areas.

2. Forest fires in the forest territory of the two mixed municipality of Souk Ahras and Sefia before 1890:

The important forest territory that the two towns occupy has known a series of forest fires at successive intervals, which destroyed large areas of diverse trees that abound in the forests of Beni Saleh, Ouled Bchiah, Ouled Moumen, ... and others, especially cork trees, Aleppo pine and oak. The French forest administration in the region has reported important statistics on the number of fires and burned forest areas, as well as the size of the losses resulting from this negative phenomenon that threatened the dense and diverse green spaces in the forest region of the two towns.

In the following table, we list the most important fires and the area of burned forests during the period 1866-1877

These statistics show that the forests of Beni Saleh, which represent the largest forest areas, with an area of 32.000 h, were the most affected by fires, as the burned area in 1877 was estimated at 26.000 h of the total area, which is a very large number that embodies the heavy losses suffered by this forest.

Fourth / fires of 1890 in the forest territory of Sefia and Souk Ahras:

The year 1890 is a decisive year in the history of fires in the department of Constantine, specifically the forests of Beni Saleh and

the forests of Ouled Bchayeh. As evidenced by the intensive follow-up of the French forest services in the region, which tracked this series of fires by directing reports and correspondence¹ to the concerned authorities to take the necessary measures. Which is what we stood on in the Overseas Archives in the city of Aix-en-Provence in southern France, from which we obtained important files related to the department as a whole and its arrondissements specifically and In particular the region of Souk Ahras, Guelma, El Kala, Annaba.

1. Forest fires of 1890 in the mixed municipality of Sefia: (La Séfia):

The French Forestry Administration in arrondissements of Annaba subdivision administratively affiliated to the Constantine department. Monitored the fires of 1890 with great interest and considered them to be among the most dangerous fires known to the region by virtue of the large losses of burned forest areas and the serious damage incurred by the pastoral forest tribes as well as the private exploiters of the settlers.

This is what we have observed through the archive documents in box of the GGA, 86.108, which contained an important collection of reports of the French gendarmerie (gendarmerie), as well as the correspondence of forest rangers (les gardes champêtres), the correspondence of pastoral tribal sheikhs (elders). In addition to plans of the burned forest areas carried out by the forest services in these areas.

The following are examples of the most important fires and their occurrence areas during the year 1890, based on French archival data², specifically the forests belonging to the mixed Sefia municipality's forest territory.

¹- A.N.O.M ,GGA ,86.108.

²- This box contained the reports of the gendarmerie teams of the arrondissement of Guelma and its region, as well as the correspondence of forest guards and pastoral tribal sheikhs, see:

1.1 Ain seynour forest fires August 24, 1890:

The fire broke out on August 24, 1890 in the forest "Fedj Mecta" in Ain seynour, a forest belonging to state property. The fire wiped out a forest area estimated at 2 hectares¹.

This fire spread during the following days August 25, 26, 27 and 28 to include:

- Djebel Resgoun Forest: is also affiliated to the state property, where the area of fire reached 407 hectares.
- A forest belonging to the settlers' lands of Ain seynour, the area of the fire was 700 hectares.
- A forest belonging to the private exploiters, namely Mr. Curiel, the area of the fire was 210 hectares.
- Forest belonging to Mr. Lambert in Fedj Mecta, the burned area was estimated at 1040 hectares.

The municipality's gendarmerie squad was able to determine the place from which the fire started as well as the cause of it².

The following map, prepared by the Commander-in-Chief of the Forest Service, shows the exact burned areas³.

-ANOM G.G.A. boîte 41/86.108, forêts, incendies de 1890, rapports sur les incendies de l'arrondissement de Guelma, 1890.

¹- ANOM G.G.A. boîte 41/86.108, direction des forêts, procès verbal de incendie, c.m. séfia, ,aout 1890, p.01.

²- ANOM G.G.A. boîte 41/86.108, direction des forêts, op-cit, p.02.

³- ANOM G.G.A. boîte 41/86.108, croquis de l'incendie de 24aout1890 dans les forêts domunales de djebel Resgoun,fedj macta, dans la foret particuliere de fedj macta appartenant à m. Lambert et m. curel ainsi que dans les terrains des colons d'Ain séynour.



1.2 Fire of August 23 in the private forests of Fedj Mecta and in the territory of the settlement center of Verdure¹:

One of the largest fires that the region knew during the summer of 1890, specifically on August 23, where the flames devoured large areas of cork forests, Aleppo pine, green oak and others that abound in this forest region, as follows:

- Forest of private exploiters, Fire area 324 hectares.
- The forest of lands belonging to the settlement center of Verdure in the sense that it belongs to the settlers, area of 250 hectares. This is shown in the attached plan²:

¹- The settlement center of Verdure: The municipality of Al-Mashrouha is currently affiliated with the wilaya of Souk Ahras For more information about the mixed municipality of Sefia in general and the settlement centers of Verdure and Oued Cheham see:

- جمال ورتي ، آثار العامل الإداري الفرنسي على القبائل الجزائرية قبيلة الصيفية نموذجاً 1843 – 1900. مجلة الدراسات التاريخية والحضارية، المجلد 11 العدد 38، كانون الثاني 2019، العراق، ص 383.

²- ANOM G.G.A. boîte 41/86.108, croquis de l'incendie de 23aout1890 dans les forêts, dans la forêt particulière de Fedj Macta appartenant a m. Curel, et dans les terrains de colonisation de centre de la verdure.



1.3 Forest fire of the settlement center of Oued Cheham¹:

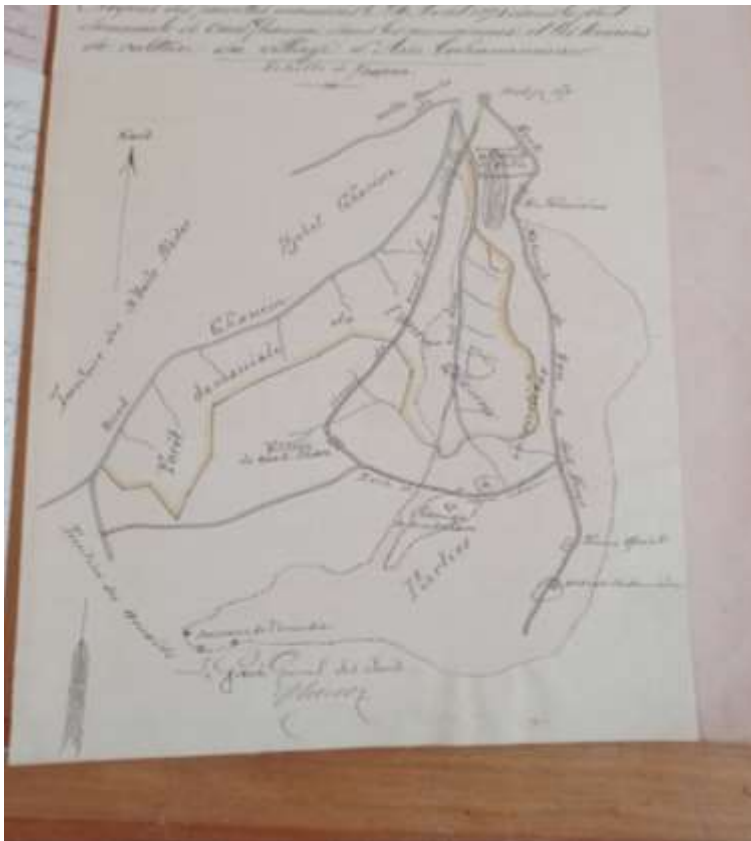
This important forest area with its dense and diverse trees experienced serious fires on August 24, 1890, which affected forest areas belonging to the state in this center in addition to the agricultural lands of the village of Ain Tahmimine. The fire started in the middle of the night and was reported by the residents of the area. According to the Commander-in-Chief of Forests and what was stated in the report, the burned forest areas were as follows²:

¹- The Oued Cheham settlement center resulted from the confiscation of the lands of the Meganaa roundabout and their ownership by European settlers. including 11 urban plots, 35 industrial plots and 32 farms For more details about this center see:

- جمال ورتي ، آثار العامل الإداري الفرنسي على القبائل الجزائرية قنبيلة الصافية نموذجاً 1843 – 1900 ، مرجع سابق ، ص 381.

²- ANOM G.G.A. boîte 41/86.108, croquis de l'incendie de 24aout1890, direction des forets, procès verbale de l'incendie d'oued acham.

- The burned area is 350 hectares in the forest of Oued Cheham.
- 800 hectares in Ain Tahmimine.



In fact, there are very important details in the archival file that we have obtained about all the fires that took place in the forest territory, of the mixed municipality of Sefia. Whether they were forests belonging to the state, the forests of the exploiters, or the

forests of the Algerian population and settlers in particular. And we have allocated examples of them to indicate the danger of the phenomenon to the population and forest management at the same time.

The reports attributed the causes of these fires in most cases to the Algerian population and considered them the first cause of the fires and costing the forest administration millions of francs in losses, which is a kind of Arab revenge, as they put it. Although it is clear from tracking the series of fires, according to the same reports, that they extended for days in a very hot atmosphere punctuated by strong winds, which means that the natural factor had a major role in the outbreak of these fires, not only the human factor.

2. Forest fires of 1890 in the mixed municipality of Souk Ahras:

The mixed municipality of Souk Ahras similar to Sefia witnessed a series of forest fires during the year 1890, and approximately, during the same period in August, which indicates that the flames spread in the adjacent forest regions, helped by climatic conditions, extreme heat and strong winds.

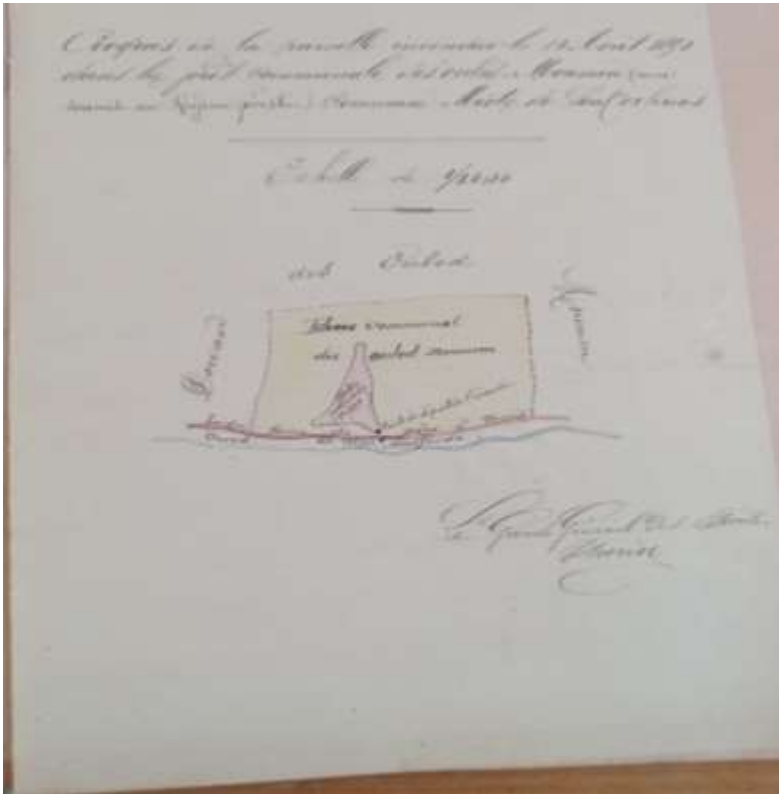
Below we show the most important fires that this region witnessed, of course through the French gendarmerie reports in the municipality and through the reports of the Forestry Services Administration in the region.

2.1 Ouled Moumen forest fire:

According to the statement of the forest ranger mentioned that during a periodic inspection tour he was carrying out on August 15, 1890 at eleven o'clock in the morning, he was informed of a fire that broke out in a place called "Sidi Hamisi", belonging to the Ouled Moumen forest in the mixed municipality of Souk Ahras, by an Italian worker - 40 years old - working for the Annaba-Guelma railway

company; which resulted in huge losses of trees, animals, and timber¹.

And the attached map of the burned area shows that²



2.2 Ouled Bechah forest fire:

¹- ANOM G.G.A. boîte 41/86.108, croquis de l'incendie de 24 aout1890, direction des forêts, procès verbale de ouled moumen, commune mixte de souk Ahras 15aout1890.

²- ANOM G.G.A. boîte 41/86.108, croquis de l'incendie de 24 aout1890, direction des forêts, procès verbale de l'incendie,

The Ouled Bechaih forest, which sits on an area estimated at 4060 hectares, has known, like the Ouled Moumen forest, forests of the mixed municipality of Sefia, the forests of the Souk Ahras arrondissement and the Guelma arrondissement, as a whole, terrible fires in the period from August 24 to 28, 1890.

The details of this fire date back to August 24, 1890 at about six o'clock in the evening. Where the report of the commander-in-chief of the forest (Le Garde Général des forets), showed that, the fire moved from the neighboring forest which is a property of one of the private exploiters. Where the fire advanced to touch about 1800 cork trees, and 500 beech trees, so in general the fire devoured an area estimated at: 600 hectares, -estimated losses of 3000 French francs¹-

The report indicated that the fire extended over two full days, and was not extinguished except with the help of the residents of the roundabout of Ouled Bechaih led by the sheikh of the tribe, in addition to the forest guards and the gendarmerie squad. Which explains the size of the fires that were enormous, what helped in its ignition, and extension is the natural factor (high heat and wind)².

The following map³ shows the size of the burned area in this forest:

¹- ANOM G.G.A. boîte 41/86.108, direction des forets, incendie de 24 Aout 1890, ouled béchiah , comune mixte de souk ahras .p.01.

²- Ibid. p.02.

³- ANOM G.G.A. boîte 41/86.108, croquis de l'incendie de 24aout1890 dans les forêts domaniales de Ouled béchiah.

Fifth: The French forest administration holds the population responsible for the forest fires of 1890:

In the Mediterranean region, particularly Algeria, as in metropolitan France, forests suffer from fires, the same causes leading to the same effects: climatic conditions, summer drought, violent winds, especially flammable species, not forgetting weed fires by indigenous people, or settlers, to clean the edges of the forest and to create land for agriculture and grazing¹.

However, the French forest administration in Algeria mostly held the Algerian population responsible for the forest fires, and considered them the primary enemy causing this danger that destroys the forest wealth and threatens life in it, and incurs private European exploiters and the state as well millions of losses in francs².

Conclusion:

At the end of this study, the following results were reached:

- Algeria has large forest areas extending along the Algerian coast and includes the three departments "Algeria, Constantine and Oran", which took the attention of the French colonial administration from the beginning of the occupation in 1830.
- The department of Constantine has the largest percentage of diverse forest cover, which exceeded one million hectares of cork, green oak, beech, Aleppo cedar and other evergreen trees.
- The forest territories in Algeria witnessed a series of fires that wiped out large areas of forests and groves. And inflicted significant economic losses on the population and the French

¹- Jacqueline DUMOULIN, Les relations entre l'armée et l'administration forestière en Algérie *Du début de la colonisation au début du XXe siècle, forêt méditerranéenne t. XXX, n° 3, septembre 2009.p.271.*

²- M.Treille, Incendies des forêts du département de Constantine, août 1881.

administration. In addition to the damage to the pastoral tribes that occupy or exploit these forest areas.

- Forest fires destroyed large areas of diverse trees that abound in the forests of Beni Saleh, Ouled Bchiah, Ouled Momen, ... And others, especially cork trees, Aleppo pine and oak.
- The French forest administration in the region reported important statistics on the number of fires and burned forest areas, as well as the size of the losses resulting from this negative phenomenon that threatened dense and diverse green spaces in the forest territory of the two municipalities.
- The year 1890 is a milestone year in the history of fires in the department of Constantine and the two mixed municipalities “ Sefia and Souk Ahras”. Where the fires destroyed large areas of cork forests, green oak, Aleppo pine and beech.
- The General Directorate of Forests has completed plans to limit the burned areas and determine the size of the fires and the affected areas.
- The French forest administration often accused the Algerian population and forest tribes and held them responsible for the fires that took place in the region in 1980.
- The French colonial authorities took arbitrary and repressive measures against the population and harsh punishments, most of which ended with the dispossession of their forest property and preventing them from exploiting and benefiting from it.