

History of Colonization of Tunisia

INTRODUCTION

History of the mankind is a rather interesting matter for study. Every nation in the world has its own history, and at the same time all nations are interconnected in the history in this or that way. All the events of the world's history are recurrent and people of today should study history so that not to repeat the mistakes of past generations and avoid the difficulties they experienced. History of every nation in the world possesses its own tragic and glorious episodes. History is the combination of political, economic, social, military and religious events and processes that form the direction in which this or that nation develops. In this paper, the history of one country of African continent will be considered – the history of Tunisia and of colonization of this country by various nations (Balout vol. 1).

The history of Tunisia is very complicated and filled with tragic moments of decline and glorious moments of power and influence. The epochs of Berber nation, Phoenician establishment of the first city-states on the territory of the modern Tunisia, Punic Wars and Roman conquest, Vandals, Byzantines and Ottomans, French colonization and, finally, the Independence of the country – all these stages of development of Tunisia are very important and influential for the shaping of the modern country (Balout vol. 1). The current paper will focus on all the most significant periods of the history of Tunisia with special attention paid to the political, social and military processes that affected the territory of the modern Tunisia in this or that way. The paper will also aim at finding out the reasons and consequences of the most important events in the Tunisian history and trace their consequences for the modern Tunisia.

PHOENICIAN COLONIZATION AND CARTHAGE

The actual history of the territory where the modern Tunisia lies began in the times that are considered to be pre-historic by the scholars. In other words, the first settlers in this area in the northern Africa appeared in the Mesolithic period. There are numerous caves with various paintings on their walls. These caves are considered to be the legacy of the Berber people who inhabited Tunisia in the pre-historic era. Development of this people was rather complicated as they had to fight the conquest attempts by other peoples and interact with other civilizations of Africa. Among them, the most influential one was the ancient Egypt that was much more developed than Berbers. Nevertheless, in the tenth century BC the so-called Libyan dynasty started ruling in Egypt. However, the first colonization of the territory of Tunisia happened in that period. To be more exact, it took place in the early ninth century BC, when the famous sailors and traders from the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, Phoenicians, arrived to Africa (Mones 120).

Phoenicians were rather famous all over the world in those times as they were the most skillful sailors and successful traders. It goes without saying that their trade demanded more and more new markets and they found them along the Mediterranean coast in Asia and Africa. People of the Semitic origin, Phoenicians founded numerous city-states like Tyre, Gades and numerous colonies in Sardinia, Sicily and other parts of Europe. Thus, having reached the northern part of Africa, Phoenicians established another city-state and named it "Kart Hudesht" meaning the "new city" in the Semitic language. Further on, the city became a powerful country under the name of Carthage. The Phoenicians gave their culture and religion to the new city as well as the free, almost republican political order. The state of Carthage was ruled by the council of 104 judges who dealt with the social and economic

issues, while the questions of military character and of the foreign affairs were handled by the specially elected Generals from among the most talented and influential members of the society. This way of life of the city-state allowed the citizens to have no concern in their foreign and military affairs because, moreover, the army in Carthage was mercenary (Soren 35).

Thus, Carthage was developing in the direction of the world wide influence and domination in politics and economy. But the appearance of another powerful player in the international arena became the insuperable obstacle for Carthage – the Roman Republic was quickly developing and increasing its military forces. The territory of the country grew very fast and soon the interests of the Roman Republic and Carthage confronted in Europe. Carthage as one of the most powerful states of those times at first had no problems with fighting Rome, but soon, exactly in the fourth century BC Rome became an equal rival to Carthage and the war between the countries was inevitable. The war, and to be more exact three wars, between Rome and Carthage were called Punic Wars due to the origin of the people that inhabited Carthage and the areas where the war took place. The leader of Carthaginian army was the famous general Hannibal Barca (Soren 48).

This period was very difficult for Carthage, as the country had to wage war on another continent, in Europe. The interests of Carthage and Rome were in conflict because of the territories in Spain and Sicily, as well as because of the control of seas. The first Punic War (264-241 BC) took place in Sicily and was actually won by Carthage but the peace treaty was signed and Rome could continue its development that resulted in the second Punic War (218-201 BC) in which the army of Carthage was commanded by Hannibal Barca (247-183 BC). The war started successfully for Carthage that won battles of Trasimeno in 207 BC and Cannes in 206 BC. But the

final battle of Zama in 202 BC ended with the victory of Rome. All lands of Carthage were annexed and the state was limited by the boundaries of the city of Carthage. The third Punic War (149-146) ended with the same result and Carthage was destroyed. Thus, the epoch of the greatest power of the nation that lived on the territory of Tunisia was ended, and the epoch of subsequent colonization by Rome, Vandals, Ottomans and France started (Mones 1-16).

ROMAN COLONIZATION, VANDALS AND BYZANTINE EMPIRE

As result of three Punic Wars, the city-state of Carthage became the province of the Roman Republic, and further Empire, under the name of Africa. Thus, the territory of the modern Tunisia underwent another case of colonization in its history. Basically, under the Roman rule in the times of late Republic the territory of Tunisia was the arena of battles and wars with other rivals of Rome. Marius, the famous Roman general and Consul, waged war against Jugurtha of Numidia. Julius Caesar won the civil war against Pompey's army in Africa where he defeated also the King of Numidia Juba I. But all this changed when Augustus came to power and established the Roman Empire in 31 BC. From this date the two-century period of revival of Carthage begins (Balout vol. 1).

At this period the Province of Africa was understood as the rich source of the natural minerals, fertile soil and consumer goods. This fact attracted rich and powerful Romans to the province where they could develop their businesses. Africa became the leading supplier of gold, marble, wood as well as grapes, wheat, olives and olive oil for the whole Roman Empire. The agriculture developed greatly and this fact found its reflection in numerous farms built in Africa and numerous ordinary Romans, who were mostly the retired veterans of the Roman Army, who decided to

settle in this province because they were promised the land for their personal disposal. At the same time the province of Africa became the center of the development of the new religion – Christianity. The situation in the polytheistic Empire was rather unstable and only the decision by the Emperor Constantine the Great calmed the religious events in the country. He proclaimed Christianity to be the official religion and became a Christian himself. This fact gave impulse to another period of Carthage revival when numerous scholars and Christian theologians lived and worked in that area. Among them, the most famous are Tertullian who spent his whole life in Carthage, St. Augustine who was born in Africa and returned there after getting educated in Rome, and many others. All this made the Roman province of Africa the center of the cultural and theological life of the Empire. Moreover, numerous emperors were of African origin and this fact also demonstrates the revival of the Tunisian territory at that period. Among them there were such emperors as Septimius and Alexander Severus, Caracalla and many others (Mones 50-63).

But by the middle of the fifth century the Roman Empire witness a decline that resulted in its collapse and wide spread of Germanic tribes who migrated to all the provinces, including Africa where the tribe of Vandals headed by Gaiseric became the dominant force. The kingdom of Vandals on the territory of the modern Tunisian existed for 94 years and was marked by the great rise in economic and social quality of life as the agriculture and trade were highly developed. But the refusal of Vandals to acknowledge the native customs of Berbers and descendants of Romans resulted in numerous rebellions and the final collapse of the Vandal Kingdom in Africa. Thus, in the middle of the sixth century, in 534, the African possessions of Vandals were conquered by the Byzantine Empire that was the descendant of the Eastern Roman Empire. At that period the Byzantine power spread only on the coast cities of Africa

while the major territory of Tunisia was controlled by Berber tribes and their unions. Nevertheless, fortified castles and military forces of the Empire managed to subjugate the African territory and by the end of the seventh century AD the whole Tunisia was controlled by Byzantine Empire. However, this control was constantly violated by different conflicts of the state with Persia and various Arab caliphates. African people and generals of African origin, like Flavius Geraclius Augustus in 610, helped the Empire in its wars and saved from the collapse. Nevertheless, this saving did not teach Byzantines anything and already in 636 the Arab army destroyed the forces of the Byzantine Empire in the battle of Yarmuk near the Sea of Galilee. Thus, the epoch of Arab rule over Tunisia began (Balout vol.1).

MAGHRIB, OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND FRENCH PROTECTORATE

Another colonization of Tunisia and its city of Carthage took place in the seventh century. The first invaders among Arabs were the armies of Umayyad Caliphate. These troops marched through the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and finally subjugated Carthage in the period of 685-705. Soon, however, the Byzantines regained control over Tunisia but were defeated by Muslims once again. In 705, Caliph Hassan al-Numan captured and destroyed Carthage and several other Tunisian cities and founded the naval city of Tunis on this place. After this, the Emirate of Abbasids was founded on the territory of Maghrib and existed there till the end of the eighth century AD. This emirate was followed by the foundation of the Fatimid's Empire that lasted through the tenth – eleventh centuries and was substituted by the Empire of the United Maghrib in the late eleventh century. Finally, the thirteenth century faced the Hassid's Caliphate as the form of the political

organization of the country but soon the Ottoman expansion to Africa and Europe began and Tunisia was affected by it very much (Jamil 30).

The conquest of Tunisia by the Ottomans started in the fourteenth century when the Turks invaded the country and had constant battles with the Arab rulers. Finally, the advantageous circumstances were formed in the fifteenth century when the Ottoman Empire was already quite powerful. Spain developed its influence overseas and occupied several ports in the northern Africa. However, caliphs of Hassid State considered Spain as their partner and joined Spain in the war against Turks. This war ended with the sure victory of Ottomans who established their direct rule over Tunisia in 1574. The rule was carried out at first by the Janissary Deys who were of non-Turkish origin, but then they were substituted by Beys from the clans of Muradids and Husaynids. During their rule the economic and political life of the country developed quickly, and the social sphere was modernized by numerous reforms, among which special attention was paid to education, culture and preserving national identity. However, the events of the French revolution that took place in the late eighteenth century shook the stability even in Africa. Tunisia tried to use for its advantage while the European rulers were concerned with their own problems. But soon, in 1820 the Vienna Congress proclaimed to help Tunisia in developing the international trade which turned out to ruin Tunisian domestic economy and deprived nation of Independence as the result (Jamil 168-87).

The poor state of economy caused by its being controlled by foreign entrepreneurs and the failing reforms of Husaynid Beys made Tunisia one of the poorest Provinces of Ottoman Empire. Finally, in 1869 Tunisia proclaimed its bankruptcy and addressed European countries for help. United Kingdom, France and Italy expressed interest in having Tunisia as colony and investing money in it

(Perkins 1-5). Initially, Italy was to control Tunisia but Great Britain supported the pretension of France for this position, and to avoid the establishment of the Italian rule France carried out the military invasion motivated by Tunisian invasion to Algeria. This forced the Bey of Tunisia acknowledge French protectorate and sign the Treaty of Bardo in 1881. Although protested by Italy, the French rule in Tunisia turned out to be rather progressive. France guaranteed the international debt of Tunisia and reformed its economy eliminating corruption in it (Perkins 1-5). The social sphere and industries were also developed together with railroads, naval ports and roads all over the country. The number of French citizens who immigrated to Tunisia reached 144, 000 by the year 1945 and was constantly increasing since. Nevertheless, the supporters of Tunisian independence and patriots more and more often expressed the idea of sovereignty of Tunisia. Numerous demonstrations and even armed revolts took place throughout the country and finally resulted in Tunisian Independence on March 20, 1956 (Perkins 1-5). Nowadays, Tunisia is the republic with the first constitution in the Muslim world, but this is already another topic that has nothing to do with the history of colonization of Tunisia.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this paper, it would not be out of place to say that the history of Tunisia is the history of colonization because Tunisia has always struggled for its independence but was subjugated by other nations. Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals, Ottomans and the French ruled Tunisia and took advantages of it. The times of colonization were both hard and progressive to some extent, as despite the fact that Tunisia was a colony its economy and industry developed and made a modern state out of it by the time when the long-awaited independence was gained in the middle

of the twentieth century. The struggle of Tunisian people resulted in the Republic of Tunisia being one of the leading African countries in economy and living standards.

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