

D A K A R

THE ALGERIAN SOCIAL FORMATION ON THE EVE OF COLONIZATION

CHAPTER I

EXTRACT FROM: FORMATION DU SOUS-DEVELOPPEMENT EN ALGERIE: ESSAI SUR

LES LIMITES DU DEVELOPPEMENT DU CAPITALISME

1830-1962

by

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CHAPTER I

The Algerian social formation on the eve of colonization

An analysis of the Algerian social formation in 1830 poses two types of problems:

- That of identifying the dominant economic system within that social formation.
- That of relating that social formation to the international economic circuits of capitalism in full expansion.

SECTION I The dominant economic system in the Algerian social formation.

An economic system is dominant when it subordinates to its own logic of extended reproduction the other economic systems with which it is interlinked in the social formation.

As we know, the principal identification of an economic system involves the analysis of the ownership relation which characterizes it, and hence the answer to the two following questions:

Who allocates the means of production and the products?

How are the means of production and the products allocated?

Thus we identify successively the type and the form of ownership (1).

(1) For all these concepts, see A. Benachou: Introduction à l'Analyse Economique.

In precolonial Algeria the means of production were the land and the instruments for working the soil in the countryside; the urban means of production consisted of handcraft tools, the public workshops, and a few means of production in manufactures.

1. Who owns the land?

This concerns the real ownership, i.e. the capacity to allocate the means of production and the products. Here we must immediately bring in the ideological factor, the Moslem religion. In an Islamic country, the land belongs only to God and secondarily to the Moslem community. Therefore the head of the Moslem community exercises a right of eminent domain over all land in an Islamic country.

In precolonial Algeria, this Moslem community was administered by the Bey, representative of the Sublime Porte, a Moslem dynasty.

Under this ideological fiction, did the Bey of Algiers and his administration actually have the capacity to allocate the means of production and the products?

We must distinguish here between several categories of land corresponding to several levels of intensity of ownership by the Regency (1)

A. THE LANDS OF THE BEYLIK

These were generally good lands around garrison villages. They were cultivated by means of corvées or labour service (Touizias) imposed on the neighbouring tribes, or directly by Khammes who received from the State ploughs, beasts of burden, seeds and, as remuneration for their work, 1/5 of the product.

(1) Our analysis is based mainly on the books by A. NCUSHI Enquête... (copy), Y. LACOSTE.... (copy). See especially chaps IV and V written by A. PRENANT.

The production was subsequently centralized by the Regency in public stores and silos (1).

On this category of land, it was in fact an economic system with real ownership by the Regency, a system of productive forces and a system of relations of production dominated by it.

B. THE AZEL LANDS

These were lands confiscated or bought from the tribes by the Bey. They were conceded either to:

High dignitaries of the Regency who had them cultivated by a clientèle of peasants.

Or to tribes called Azelas who agreed to raise troops for the Bey or to swear allegiance. The latter paid over part of the product but less than the part paid by other tribes.

Or to individual tenant farmers who paid dues in kind.

It is obvious that the "eminent" owner of the land no longer had the right to allocate the means of production and the product. Nevertheless he retained over these lands a right of eminent domain which hampered the allocation of the means of production by the real owners: they could be alienated by cession for example.

What was the nature of the ownership of these lands? If we exclude the azelas tribes, this was clearly a private ownership of the land (since both the dignitaries and the tenant farmers used exploited direct producers) and the allocation of the means of production and of the product was made to their advantage. It was of course unstable ownership, since the eminent owner could in certain circumstances put an end to it. The social contradiction opposed the exploited and the exploiters (2).

(1) "The State budget expenditure goes mainly to pay the janissaries, to equip them, and also to sustain their fidelity and the submission of the peoples amongst whom they are encamped" A. NOUSHI, Y LACOSTE and A. FREMANT, op. cit p. 144-5

(2) We shall see that the owners of these lands pay a taxe to the State, but it is small: it is the simple hokos or ground rent.

C. THE TRIBAL OR VILLAGE LANDS

Let us take a minimum definition of the tribe taken from A.

Noushi: "the members of the tribe feel themselves linked to each other: they have a certain territory in common within which they conduct their activities; herding, shifting or fixed agriculture, achaba; all the work and the displacements take place within a given area... the lines or zones are not crossed except for good reasons (raids, war)" (1) Apart from that, within the "perimeter" the ownership of the land was exercised differently depending on the geographical environments.

On the high plateaux for example, the capacity to allocate the means of production fell to the tribal chiefs. The latter distributed the land to the family heads according to their ability to have it cultivated. The size was proportional to the ploughing capacity, and the periodic redistributions had that capacity as a criterion. It can be considered here that the ownership was collective as regards the allocation of the means of production, and family ownership as regards the allocation of the product. In no case can one speak of private ownership, since the workers were not excluded from ownership of the means of production. However, there were three possibilities of separating the workers from their means of production:

1- In a case where the increase in the population was not reflected in a proportional redistribution of the land. (2)

2- A case where the political leadership of the tribe became stratified.

(1) NOUSHI; Espace et vie politique au Maghreb.

(2) A. WARNER wrote "The communal lands of the tribes are so vast in relation to the population they carry, that it is rare for an increase in the population to necessitate a further general division on a narrower basis" quoted by A. NOUSHI op. cit. p. 149.

We will see later the modalities of that stratification.

3- When the tribe was destroyed or dispersed. In the valleys or foothills, in Mitidja or Kabylia, on the "Arch" lands of the tribes, tribal ownership seemed less effective, to the advantage of family but not individual ownership.

The plots there were actually separated by low walls, for example in Kabylia. The right of ownership was legally certified by the Tolbas, men of religion and of law. The land was transmitted by inheritance and gift.

Nevertheless this family ownership was limited in two respects. Firstly, the institution of joint ownership operated within the family. This is a rule of inheritance in Moslem law which lays down the perpetuity of real estate in the case of the death of the titular owner. Hence individual ownership never appears within family property in the wide sense. Of course this institution involves a prodigious interweaving of ownership rights over real estate, so that no individual can alienate the land because it remains in indivisum.

Secondly, the ownership of land was limited by the rights of the tribal fraction, or tribe, to which the family belonged. The tribes could exercise a right of pre-emption in case of alienation of the property by the family. This is the law of cheffâa (1). In the last analysis there was an ultimate ownership by the tribe but which had largely deteriorated through the mechanisms of family holding.

(1) The cheffâa is a mechanism of Moslem law which ensures the survival of the community and its superstructures: it aims at excluding outsiders. The cheffâa is by definition contrary to the spirit of the code Napoléon. It excludes the free circulation of the land. The challenging of the cheffâa law was to constitute the weapon of capitalism against the communities or the families.

There was no redistribution of land (1).

However two important factors should be noted:

-the ownership of land was linked to the work of the direct producer. In that sense there was no private ownership of the land. The direct producer was not separated from his means of production (2).

-Nevertheless the mechanisms of inheritance could entail a de facto exclusion of certain joint owners.

For example, on the occasion of an inheritance. Some people became holders of means of production. They organized the production process, but the allocation of the product was still determined by the type of ownership, since every co-owner retained rights over the product which were in proportion to his joint ownership rights. But the development of the holding induced some co-owners to buy out the other co-owners provisionally, by means of a rent in kind calculated in proportion to each

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- (1) As PRENANT writes: "The melk, a family appropriation, which avoided the danger of fragmentation with the maintenance of inheritance in indivisum, did not indeed exclude the tutelary intervention of the arch when the social ties had not been broken up by the "feudal" domain, in connexion with work on community facilities, the regulation of irrigations, or in case of difficulties (food shortages) the effects of which were also mitigated". Op. cit p. 122.
 - (2) As Marx writes: "The individual notes as a prior datum that he is a member of a family, of a commune, of a tribe etc. As a natural member of the commune, he participates in the collective ownership and possesses his own part of it; his property, that is the relationship to the prior natural conditions of his production as being his own, is mediatized by his capacity as a natural member of a commune".

one's rights. This separation between ownership and actual holding was an important factor in the emergence of social antagonisms between those concerned. It was subsequently used to favour the individualization of ownership.

Can we try to identify the economic system on the tribal lands? One would be inclined to suggest the concept of a communal economic system. We can compare this system to what Marx wrote concerning labour in common or directly associated labour: "In the patriarchal industries of a peasant family, that produces corn, cattle, yarn, linen and clothing for home use, these different articles are, as regards the family, so many products of its labour, but as between themselves, they are not commodities. The different kinds of labour, such as tillage, cattle tending, spinning, weaving and making clothes, which result in the various products, are in themselves, and such as they are, direct social functions, because functions of the family... (in its own) division of labour. The distribution of work within the family, and the regulation of the labour-time of the several members, depend as well upon differences of age and sex as upon natural conditions varying with the seasons. The labour-power of each individual, by its very nature, operates in this case merely as a definite portion of the whole labour-power of the family, and therefore, the measure of the expenditure of individual labour-power by its duration, appears here by its very nature as a social character of their labour". ... "The total product of a community is a social product. One portion serves as fresh means of production and remains social. But another portion is consumed by the members as a means of subsistence. A distribution of this portion amongst them is consequently necessary. The mode of this distribution will vary with the productive organization of the community, and the degree of historical development attained by the producers." (1)

This being so, can we immediately say that there are two economic systems, one based on the private ownership of the means of production, and allocation of the product for the purpose of political

(1). Karl Marx, Capital. Vol I p. 82-3, Lawrence & Wishart.

and social consolidation of the owner, and the other based on non-exclusive ownership of the means of production and geared to the satisfaction of the needs of the producers? This is to overlook the fact that these two systems are interlinked in a social formation whose reproduction produces distorting effects on both of them.

To understand this interlinking, we must analyse where it develops, i.e. the machinery of tax collection organized by the Turkish administration in Algeria.

§ 2. Turkish taxation and the conditions of dominance of the state economic system over the communal economic system.

It has been mentioned that the Turkish State and the Regency of Algiers as heads of the Moslem community had a right of eminent domain over all land in the countries of Islam. This eminent ownership, in the case of tribal lands, does not mean the allocation of the means of production and of the product. The Turkish state did not intervene in the organization of production. It could not even oblige the tribes to produce certain types of crops. Its intervention was connected with the allocation of the product, through the levying of a fraction of the product in the form of a tax, mainly in kind. It is in this connexion that we must analyse the categories of taxes, their volume and the forms in which they were enforced so as ultimately to analyse the possibility by this means of one economic system dominanting another or their relative balance.

A. The CATEGORIES OF TAXES

The main types of taxes (1) paid by the tribes to the Turkish State were the following:

1- The tax on harvest

This was mainly the Djabri: it was a composition tax on the land; a certain proportion was paid by each producer. That tax was replaced round 1830 by the Achour, tax proportional to the harvest and not to the number of producers. Its rate was negotiated between the members

(1) A. NOUSHI Enquête p. 96 - 116.

of the tribe and the officials of the Beylik, although the Bey retained the possibility of an arbitration, always to further his interests. The Gharama was also a tax on products levied on the nomadic or less accessible tribes, and paid in head of cattle. But it was a tax in proportion to the fires or the tents.

2- The tax on cattle

This was mainly the Zekkat levied on the herds.

3- The tax on land

This is mainly the Hokor paid by the Azelians but also by the tribes in which the deterioration of tribal ownership was not advanced.

4- The tax on market transactions

this was a form of tax intended to siphon off a part of products of tribes difficult to coerce, such as the mountain or Saharan tribes.

It should be noted that most of these taxes were levied in kind: "the people who pay them do not have the impression of being impoverished because the tax depends on the harvest and the cost, which are eminently natural factors".

This being the case, was this taxation or levy on the produce a heavy burden? According to A. Noushi, "The taxation of the beylik was much less burdensome than has sometimes been thought; logically it could not be too heavy because if he crushed the peasant, the Bey would have ruined the source of his incomes and the main agent of economic activity".

B. THE MODALITIES OF TAX COLLECTION

These modalities must be precisely described because they are the locus of the interrelation between two economic systems and the cause of the distortion of the dominated economic system by the dominant economic system.

There were two ways of levying taxes: the first involved the agents of the Turkish State; the second involved the political authorities of the tribes themselves.

1. Levying by the Turkish administration. All the observers (1) of Algeria during the Turkish period stressed the venal nature of public offices: the officials paid their tax quotas to the sovereign and received in exchange a domain attached to that function. A fraction of the proceeds of the levy was then retained for their own needs and the rest granted to the higher level and so up to the Dey of Algiers. One essential feature must be noted: the tax farming offices were not hereditary and in that way a minimum of centralization of the fiscal power of the Turkish state was ensured.

2. Levying by the political authorities of the tribe. In this case the tribal chiefs were empowered to collect taxes for the Turkish authorities. Similarly certain tribes were, as such empowered to collect taxes. This gave some tribal chiefs or tribes an opportunity for enrichment at the expense of others. Tax-collecting was a source of social stratification either within the tribe to the advantage of the "big tents" or between tribes, some of which thereby became dominant.

C - THE DOMINANCE OF THE STATE ECONOMIC SYSTEM OVER THE COMMUNAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM

An economic system dominates another system when the first system manages to subordinate the second to its own logic of reproduction and extension of the relations of production. The decisive question is therefore whether the reproduction of the state economic system functioned through an extension of the basis of private ownership of the means of production or not. This question can be answered by considering the contradictory process of this reproduction.

1. The economic contradiction

According to A. Prenant, the exercise by the Turkish State of its right of eminent domain over the lands, through the levying of taxes, was reflected in an expansion of "feudal" relations within the Algerian social structure. This assertion, like others to which we shall return,

(1) See A. Prenant, op. cit. p. 146 et suivantes.

stems from ignorance of the economic contradictions underlying that social formation.

Firstly, the Turkish power did not control, either directly or indirectly, all the tribes located on the territory. Just as there was a Maghzen "bled" (hinterland) subject to taxation, there was a Siba bled which was not taxed. The decisive criterion of the subjection consisted of armed force. Either the Beylik and its agents had the possibility of subjecting the tribes or they did not. From this point of view, as Y. Lacoste recalls: "Far more than in Europe and in a large part of the Middle East, most of the men in the Maghreb, especially those of the "bled", have more or less remained warriors... The warlike aptitudes of all the populations reinforce the tribal structures and prevent the army leaders from extending their authority, which they could have done over a disarmed population". (1).

Hence it is not surprising to note that, where the military power stopped, the possibility of extracting the product also stopped.

"It has never been easy for the Bey of Constantine to collect contributions from the part of the population called Cabails... nothing can be obtained... except by force, ruse, surprise or the yataghan (sword)" (2)

Because of this contradiction, therefore, the dominance of the state economic system of which the tendency was to turn all the tribes into direct producers separated from their means of production, far from becoming gradually established, was unstable. But the instability of the

(1) Y. Lacoste: Ibn Khaldoun, naissance de l'histoire, passé du Tiers Monde p. 33-4.

(2) A. Turkish official quoted by A. Noushi, op. cit p.100. Indeed, a fraction of Algerian territory constituted what was called "bled siba", dissident territory.

dominance did not exclude the dominance itself. The latter was not manifested by a gradual separation of the producers from their means of production (increasing private ownership of land) but by a distortion in the logic of their reproduction. This distortion, itself contradictory, was manifested, at three levels:

- at the economic level, it brought about a weakening of the economic base of the tribes. The historians show how the tribes, in order to escape the excessive extortions of the Turkish administration or its agents, frequently abandoned their farmlands and engaged in animal husbandry, where it was easier to avoid tax assessment. This led to an extension of the land directly administered by the Beylik and hence to an increase in the private ownership of land to its advantage (1).

- at the political level, there was greater social stratification within the tribes. The very machinery of the levy led to the emergence of a social category whose role was to distribute the tax burden among the tribal fractions and who could thus appropriate a share of the proceeds, so aggravating if not creating the inequality in levels of living. In view of this, can one speak of a movement towards private ownership of the means of production, in the sense that the producers would no longer control the allocation of the means of production and the product? To suppose that is to overlook two fundamental facts to which A. Noushi has drawn our attention.

- the first is political. According to A. Noushi "One never sees the land tenure position increase in relation to the role of the

(1) See A. Prenant, op. cit: this movement illustrates the idea of Gallissot according to whom "on the basis of the town there was a gradual dissolution of communal forms, a detribalization" in *le Feodalisme*, CERM, p. 238-239.

Beylik representative. I have rather the impression that it is all the more difficult for the chiefs of the Makhzen tribes to aggrandize their rural position because they are under the eye of the Beylik and easy available to it: their situation does not seem to undergo any change" (1). We must not forget that the private economic system is at the same time a state one in that its dominant class reproduces itself at the political level: no hereditary public offices, appointments mainly among the Turks etc... Now, from the point of view of this Turkish dominant class, private ownership of the means of production in the hands of the Makhzen tribal chiefs or others is ruled out because it does not correspond to its logic of class domination. No dominant class deliberately commits suicide (2).

- The second fact relates to the tribal organization. The traditions of egalitarianism and independence, defended by force of arms, prevented the tribal chiefs from establishing a base of individual private land tenure. According to A. Noushi, what seem to be vast landed estates do not really correspond to fiefs of the European type but rather to an occupation of vacant lands under the leadership of valorious chiefs.

In sum, the state tributary economic system does not inexorably tend to dominate and to eliminate the communal economic system. In C. Bettelheim's words, there is reproduction domination and not dissolution-domination (3). And that does not exclude economic struggles. This being so, we must now examine the nature of the urban economic system and its interrelation with the system we have identified.

§ 3. Economic struggles and social systems.

Here we should recall Rey's position (4)

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- (1) A. NOUSHI in le Maghreb précolonial, CERM, pp. 183 - 184.
 - (2) Indeed the political activity of that class consisted in perpetually setting tribe against tribe and maraboutic sect against their sects.
 - (3) See A. Prenant.
 - (4) p.p. Rey, les alliances de classes p, 194. Maspero 1973

"In the feudal societies and in the various forms of "Asiatic" systems, the economic struggles always directly take a political and military form; this is because the process of reproduction does not take place inside the economic sphere. The direct workers have no possibility of halting reproduction momentarily at the level of circulation by refusing to sell their labour power. If they halt the reproduction, they are immediately calling into question a political and legal relation. And the dominant class cannot respond either by a lock-out or by negotiation at the level of circulation: it always responds by force of arms".

It has in fact to be accepted that in precolonial Algeria, this domination was unstable and bound up with the result of armed force.

An additional proof of the unstable dominance of the state tributary economic system is provided by the fact that the ideological educational apparatus remained in the hands of the tribes: at the time of the conquest, the tribes and the towns had a completely autonomous educational system, not controlled by the Turks; maintained by the mortmain property of the religious foundations (zaouiat), this system was remarkably efficient because about 40% of the male population could read and write. It was estimated that at the same time there were 2,000 to 3,000 pupils pursuing secondary studies in each province and 600 to 800 attending courses of Law and Theology (1)

§ 4 The corporative (guild) economic system and the conditions of its domination by the dominant economic system.

In precolonial Algeria, according to the authors, the urban population formed 5% to 10% of the total population. They note that this population was regressing. The towns were places of garrisons, trade and handcrafts. If it is accepted that the Turkish administration in the wide sense had no reason to vary in number, it must also be accepted that

(1) From Y. Turin: *Affrontements culturels en Algérie, 1830-1880*
Maspéro P. 127 et suivantes.

the decline in the urban population was related to the decline of hand-crafts and trade. That decline was the effect of the dominance of the Turkish political class over the corporative economic system.

A. THE CORPORATIVE ECONOMIC SYSTEM

In the towns, the artisans were organized in "corporations" (guilds). There were guilds of tanners, shoe-makers, harness-makers and saddlers, weavers of wool, cotton and silk; coopers, carpenters, joiners, furniture makers, blacksmiths, gunsmiths, jewellers embroiderers etc...

The artisans were organized in guilds. That organization was rather similar to that of Mediaeval Europe: the master craftsman supervised the work process and initiated the journey-men or trade apprentices. The number of masters was fixed by the guild according to criteria of skill, seniority, and the size of the market. It was a simple commodity system of production. However, the production intended for exchange was only a production of use values. Hence the development of that system was bound up with the extent of the markets, which determined the number of master craftsmen.

B. THE CONDITIONS OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE SYSTEM

The craft guilds arose for the needs of the political class which dominated the countryside, either directly or through tax-collecting.

Moreover the craftsmen were able to provide the tribal communities with the goods which they could not acquire directly or through exchange. Therefore we must first analyse the conditions of development of the urban market. They were mainly related to the size of the levy on the produce of the land. The most prosperous craft guilds were connected with the most important beylik estates.

However, two important factors hampered the expansion of the urban market. Firstly, the dominant class had for a long time been able to obtain by corsair operations (capture of enemy merchant ships) a whole series of goods which it required. Hence it did not constitute a market for the urban artisan class which was created for it; secondly it must not

be forgotten that, from the 17th century, Algeria had been importing European goods. These imports slowed down the expansion of the urban markets for the craftsmen of the towns and were the reason for their decline.

The rural markets for their part did not flourish greatly. The tribal communities were self-sufficient entities: for they all engaged in non-agricultural activities which met the needs for housing, clothing, domestic and agricultural implements. Local markets enabled the tribes to exchange their products. The basis of the exchange was use-value and not the acquisition of money. This ability of the tribes to satisfy their own needs, together with the bad state of the roads, hampered the extension of the rural markets. Moreover imported goods seemed to be preferred by the tribes: sugar, tea, cloth, arms, haberdashery, jellery. Jewish pedlars brought to the tribes the products of the emergent capitalism in Europe.

C. THE DOMINANCE OF THE TURKISH POLITICAL CLASS OVER THE CORPORATIVE ECONOMIC SYSTEM.

The stagnation is not decline of the markets brought about a stagnation or even regression of the guild system. This stagnation was also reflected in a drop in the numbers of craftsmen in the case of a growth of labour productivity within that system.

It must be noted that this stagnation of the markets was merely the effect of the economic and political dominance of the Turkish administrative class. That dominance hampered the extension of the markets in several respects.

- firstly, the corsair booty and the trade agreements concluded by the Turkish state with the European powers entailed the dominance of the Turkish administration. The former for obvious reasons, and the latter

because they enabled the dominant class to acquire concession and export duties which consolidated its financial base and hence its political power.

- secondly, the form of the Turkish domination over the tribes was, as we have said, unstable; so the markets depended on the level of exploitation of the tribes and on how far that exploitation was non-commercial in form. The tribes only marketed a small part of the product and paid their taxes in kind.

This was not conducive to an extension of the markets.

- thirdly, the system was dominated by the levying of part of the output for "the needs of the Beylik".

On this point a more qualified stand is taken by Lucette Valensi who, after demonstrating the emergence of an "indigenous capitalism" in Tunis, confines herself to thinking that "the flourishing textile industries of Algeria or Morocco were probably of the same type as the Tunisian headgear industry", but the author acknowledges further on that at the beginning of the 19th century the trade was insufficient to create a powerful industrial or merchant bourgeoisie (1).

That is why it seems to us that the corporative system had little chance of developing into a manufacturing system through the factory system and the intervention of merchant capital. According to Gallissot: "The workshops are practically controlled by the merchant bourgeoisie, it is the factory system. The wholesaler provides the supplies, he buys the wool and hence controls the peasants' sales; he becomes in a way the middleman between the town and the countryside. This commanding position was extended by the marketing of the output" (2).

(1) I. Valensi: *le Maghreb avant la prise d'Alger*. Flammarion, 1969, p. 60.

(2) on feudalism op. cit p. 235.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, the economic base of this "bourgeoisie" could not be extended. As Noushi notes "this bourgeoisie only had a weak influence throughout Algeria... I think that is connected with the existence of a poorly developed communications network... and also with the mediocre quality of Algerian handicrafts and commerce" (2).

In this controversy, we have to side with Noushi against Gallissot Galissot. The latter under-estimates the political class domination of the Turkish administration: for only a political alliance between local commercial capital and the Turkish dominant class could have managed to protect the markets, to transform rent in kind into money rent etc. (2). Now, for reasons of political hegemony, we witness on the contrary an alliance between the dominant Turkish class and European merchant capital. This is what we should now consider.

(1) Ibid. p. 185.

(2) this would have implied a European-type class alliance bringing about a transition to capitalism. On this point see A. Benachenhou, op. cit. esp. chapter "la Genèse du capital".

SECTION 2.THE FORMS OF INTEGRATION OF ALGERIA INTO CAPITALIST WORLD TRADE

At the time of the Turkish domination in Algeria, the transition to capitalism in France and England was considerably advanced, in the sense that the contradictions of the feudal social formation had brought about the presuppositions of Capital. We have seen elsewhere that this realization of the presuppositions of Capital required an expansion of the export markets of the European capitalist countries and an increase in the sources of supply of raw materials and foodstuffs. From the point of view of European capitalism, the Algerian social formation, like others (Latin America, India) was the place where the presuppositions of Capital were manifested: first the extension of the market, of the sphere of circulation.

The question which arises is whether this dominant class within this social formation is, from the point of view of the bourgeoisie, an ally for the extension of the sphere of circulation or whether the class alliance (1) is impossible. We can see quite quickly why this class alliance was ephemeral by analysing the forms of Algeria's foreign trade.

§ 1. The forms of Algeria's foreign trade.

There are two essential characteristics of foreign trade which reveal the ephemeral nature of the class alliance. Firstly, Algerian foreign trade was administered. The Turkish dominant class granted commercial concessions to European commercial capital. Thus the Marseillers merchant Thomas LENCHE obtained in 1520 the monopoly of the maritime trade

(1) We refer to P.P. REY's analysis of the class alliance which, in Europe, accelerated the transition to capitalism. He writes: "But the contradiction between landowners and capitalists was throughout this period quite secondary with respect to the primary convergence of their interests. For the expulsion of the rural population operated by the landlords was the condition sine qua non of the recruitment of a labour force by the capitalist class. Symmetrically, the increase in the volume of industrial business and the number of workers to be fed required... an increase in the total quantity of agricultural products going through the market and, consequently in the total absolute rent extorted by the landlords from the peasants and the small tenant farmers." P.P. REY. Les alliances de classes, p. 77-78. Maspero 1973.

of the Constantinoss. In exchange for a due paid to the Dey, he obtained the monopoly of the imports and exports for the region. The Marseilles merchants obtained, throughout the 17th century, the establishment of a large number of trading posts on the East coast. That trade concession culminated in 1700 in the establishment of the Compagnie d'Afrique.

That form of trade was the foundation of an objective class alliance: the Turkish dominant class increased, through its export duties and royalties, its financial basis and its political supremacy in the social formation. For their part, the merchant capitalists found there an opportunity for fruitful operations, and more generally, capitalism found there the bases of its development. As Marx noted, the adaptation between the scale at which the goods of "the most diverse modes of production" are produced and the scale at which these goods are consumed by the capitalist system is ensured by "merchant or commercial capital".

The goods exported were commodities such as cereals, wool, wax, and coral; among those imported were sugar, coffee, iron, paper, Sedan cloth hats and Lyons silks, and German cloth.

A. PRENANT, regretting the absence of a specifically Algerian commercial capital, analysis this objective class alliance: "Thus a semi-colonial control by the great capitalist powers, made possible by the defence of the selfish interests of the feudal ruling class with the support of the independent Jewish financiers, was a constant factor in the decadence of Algeria, and a temptation for these powers to ensure this domination more completely" (1).

Indeed this class alliance between the Turkish aristocracy and commercial capital was ephemeral because trade, being administered, was negotiated. Involved here were the rivalries between the different powers

(1) Andre Prenant, op. cit p. 191.

which made this form of trade highly unstable (1). Similarly, because of the contradictions

Within the Algerian social formation, the volume of trade was limited: the rent extracted from the communities was still fairly small - access to the markets of the tribes was geographically difficult - and economically limited by the handcraft production in the communities themselves. The Turkish dominant class did not permit a social relationship conducive to the penetration of capitalism in the Algerian countryside; the class alliance was impossible.

§ 2. The class struggle and the military conquest.

From the point of view of capitalism, the Turkish dominant class was not functional. The unstable form of its dominance in the Algerian social formation was inadequate to achieve the expansion of the sphere of circulation within that social formation. There was then a class struggle for the destruction of that unstable form of dominance. That led to colonization. As A. Prenant notes: "the mercantilist circles and particularly those of Marseilles were to greatly influence the orientation of the government".

Similarly, As A. Noushi reminds us "long before the taking of Constantine (not till 1837), the Constantinois had given rise to many hopes in French commercial circles. The country had a proverbial reputation for prosperity and it was expected that cereals, fodder, animals, wool and oil would supply large quotas to French trade, not to speak of

(1) We must note for example that the products of the industry of Central Europe and England came to Algeria through Morocco and above all Tunisia at the very time when the trade balance with France showed a surplus. That situation contradicted the principles which POLIGNAC expounded for the Mediterranean as early as 1834, (1824) in connexion with the expedition against the Barbary states: "It can bring to France, if she conducts this expedition skilfully, immense commercial resources, and open for her one day the road to Egypt. The latter point is worthy of particular attention; a number of motives induce us to form establishments in Africa." quoted by ch. Roux, France et Afrique du Nord avant 1830. Paris 1832, p. 502.

coral, a traditional export. Later, in the "Report on the Customs" by the Commission d'Afrique, instituted by an Ordinance of the king on 12 December 1833, we find in an official record: "For France, the main goal in colonizing a part of northern Africa, is to open up markets for our manufactures, to seek new resources for our trade and our merchant fleet; it would be going against that goal and letting foreign competition outstrip us if we allowed it free access to our African possessions without reserving some advantages there for our flag, the products of our soil and our industry" (1)

On this objective basis it is clear that the Turkish dominant class could not offer serious guarantees to capitalism.

Conclusion: the contradictions within the Algerian social formation.

On the eve of colonization, three essential aspects characterized the Algerian social formation.

Firstly, within the communal economic system, access to the means of production (particularly the land) through money was practically impossible, because the reproduction of that system excluded individual or collective alienation of land.

Secondly, that economic system was only dominated in an unstable way by the state tributary economic system. Because of this, the Turkish dominant class did not completely control the means of production of the dominated economic system. Consequently, the destruction of that dominant class did not ipso facto entail access to all the means of production. The French colonizers took fifty years to achieve that.

(1) Quoted by A. Naushij; Enquete... p. 186. The author is referring to a note on the occupation of Algiers.

Thirdly, the class alliance between capitalism and the Turkish dominant class was ephemeral for the reasons analyzed. These three essential aspects, which were nothing but the effect of class contradictions within that social formation, were to determine both the colonial phenomenon and the formes of "primitive accumulation" in Algeria.