

NOTES  
ON THE  
REGENCY OF TUNIS

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GENÈVE  
IMPRIMERIE DE JULES G<sup>me</sup> FICK  
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## Cities and various localities of Regency

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In the territory of the Beni-Zid Or Beni-Isied, whose tribes often revolt, one also finds the El-Guaseur and Kalaa tribes.

The bey of Tunis extends his strong authority into the interior of the Sahara, and as far as the gates of Gadamès.

Zarzis, a small town on the border of Tripoli, is a seaport, located on a large peninsula which projects towards the island of Djerbi or Jerba, which is populated and fertile, although it has neither cities nor villages.

Close to a strong castle one still sees the Tower of Skulls, built with the skulls of 20,000 Spaniards who under the reign of Philippe II, and under the command of prince Doria and the duke of Médina-Cœli, had come to attack Djerbi, after having failed off of Tripoli in 1561. The fleet was dispersed, and the Spaniards who were submitted to all kinds of cruelties and depredations in the island, could only escape in very small numbers, two thirds of them having been massacred.

It was Okba, whose tomb is in Kaïrouan, who seized Djerbi from the Byzantines, in the 42nd year of the Hegira, under the reign of Mohawiah.

Gabes or Gabeus, the ancient Tacape, gave its name to the gulf of Gabes, the small Syrte of old, Syrtis minor. Gabès is eighty miles from Tunis, and two from the sea and from its own port. One finds hot springs in the surrounding region, which is feverish during the summer.

Sfax, a seaport and rather important city surrounded by high walls. Among its fifteen or twenty thousand inhabitants approximately four hundred are European, and have been there since the capture of Tripoli by the Turks. They trade in oils, wools, waxes, dates, cumin, henna, manufactured cotton, and other items, such as soaps, burnous, blankets wool, rush mats, and earthenware crockery which is made in Djerbi. Sfax which has several European vice-consuls has a Roman Catholic church. The numerous gardens which surround this city produce an abundance of olives, figs, almonds, pistachios, grapes, pomegranates, pears, apples, apricots and many other fruits, without counting many beautiful flowers, among which it is necessary to mention a strongly-scented jasmine, from which is manufactured the famous scent of this name. - At Sfax and in the Kerkena islands (Circina of the Romans), they devote themselves to a productive fishing industry which brings a large variety of fish. - In the surroundings one notices the ruins of Inchilla.

El-Mahadia, the ancient Africa and the Aphrodisium of Ptolemy, has a port which passes for one of the best of the kingdom. This city contains vast ruins, as well as broad and deep cisterns. - Close to Mahadia is Cape Africa. This locality which belonged to the Roman possessions, gave its

name to the part of the world in which it is located. At Cape Dimas, a few miles away, one finds many ruins of Roman towns, castles, circuses, cisterns, etc

El-Djemm is remarkable for its amphitheatre, which, according to Sir Grenville Temple “is one of the most beautiful constructions, the grandest and most perfect of ancient times.” One does not notice there all the pomp and splendor of the Coliseum; but, by other reports, the amphitheatre of El-Djemm yields nothing to that famous monument. The amphitheatre of Pola in Istria, that of Verona or that of Arles could not be compared with it. But this beautiful work, raised by Gordian the great, deteriorates each year, the natives almost daily removing some stones for constructions. Moreover, approximately a century ago, the Arabs of the place being in rebellion against the reigning bey and being cut off there, they almost entirely demolished the upper floor from which they launched stones on the besiegers. Once the insurrectionists had surrendered, the bey set about the amphitheatre, that is to say, that he made a breach in it by demolishing three arches in height, so that this monument could not be useful any more in a similar occurrence. This building which may be a hundred feet high had four stages or lines of arcades and of superimposed columns, each stage having at least sixty arches with their pillars. The columns are in a composite style, somewhere between the Doric order and the Egyptian order. It appears, according to the inhabitants of the country that an underground tunnel led from El Djemm to Sfax from which it is distant by approximately ten miles.

El-Djemm was the ancient Tysdrus whose remainders cover a great extent of land. Amongst the objects discovered there are included utensils and currencies of many species, antiquities, statues of invaluable marble, sculptures and bas-reliefs of all kinds.

In the vicinity of this immense necropolis one finds many ruins at Caraga, Elalia, Lempta, Sursaff, Medugara.

Kairouan. Historical references to this city date from the year 647 AD. The Arabs, under the caliph Omar, had made it the seat of an opulent empire, though Moslem, and it had, during the first centuries of the Hegira, preserved its Berber character.

This splendid capital was the center of an immense traffic. It is there that the roads converged from Egypt, Morocco and Tombouctou, and where the sultans of Kairouan held their court with a great magnificence.

This city, considered holy, is the third in line after Mecque [Mecca] because of one of the disciples of the Prophet, who is buried in his splendid mosque with five hundred priceless marble and granite columns, in green, red and yellow. Entrance to this city is prohibited to Christians and Jews without an express order from the bey. Currently the town is inhabited by a personage who

enjoys a reputation as a great saint: this is an old man, named Sidi Hammouda Abèda, whose miracles have a great reputation. Here is one which deserves to be mentioned:

The saint declared in 1855 that Sébastopol would be taken only when two guns that he had sent to the bey from Kairouan had arrived in front of the Muscovite city, these two holy guns leading to produce a marvelous effect and to bring about the fall of this city. The guns once in Tunis, the bey purposely sent a vessel to transport them to Constantinople. The whole people of the faithful, in all Regency and in Tunis in particular, were delighted already in advance by the capture of Sébastopol which was infallibly going to take place; they even calculated the date of it after the day when it was supposed that the guns had arrived to their destination. - From Constantinople the sultan dispatched them to the Crimea, and, by a striking coincidence, Sebastopol was really taken at the same time, so to speak, as the arrival of the guns. Also the joy was great in Tunis when this news was learned, having been envisaged and impatiently awaited by all the faithful of the sect of Islam.

Vegetation is not very considerable in Kairouan which is surrounded by large plains of which some are covered with cereals. The city is quite populous and does an active trade with Sfax and Souza. There are factories of leather and morocco. They exports considerable quantities of tar to Tunis. - Scorpions are abundant there, while in other nearby cities one does not find any at all, because there are localities where this animal dies almost at once as it arrives. - This country has no culture, but the ruins that one finds everywhere, as on the entire coast, prove the degree of splendor and richness that it had under the rule of Rome and under that of Byzance.

Not far from Kairouan one notices Trudsa, the ancient Usalitanus, close to the ruins of Aque Regiœ.

Monastir, an old Roman colony four miles from Souza, took its name from a convent of Augustins which was nearby. They manufacture fabrics and soap, and grow an incredible quantity of olive-trees. The English steamers coming from Malta call in there sometimes, to deposit the Maltese passengers who go on to Sfax.

Souza [Sousse], an important city thirty-two miles S.E. of Tunis, is built on a rock. Its bay offers a good anchorage, its port is excellent; its inhabitants are industrial, tradesmen, and offer great courtesy to the foreigners; its well cultivated surroundings abound in pastures, cereals, fig trees, but especially with immense forests of olive-trees which give an excellent oil. – The English steamers call there.

Souza was formerly a big city, believed to be Adrumentum of the Romans, but Marmol claims that it is Siagul as described by Ptolémée. It was in front of this city that prince Philibert of Savoy met with defeat.

More than fifteen Christian nations are represented by some of their nationals in the States of Tunis. The European population, if the Maltese are included, can be as many as twelve thousand people.

Here is the table of births, deaths and marriages which took place in 1856 among the Roman Catholic Europeans and in the various cities of the Regency. The Greeks and Protestants are not included. If the number of the deaths was as high as 293 people, it is because of the cholera that reigned in August and September 1856, and took approximately two hundred Christians.

Localités.	Naissances.	Décès.	Mariages.	Localités.	Naissances.	Décès.	Mariages.
<b>MALTAIS.</b>				<b>TOSCANS.</b>			
Tunis .....	148	109	25	Tunis .....	5	2	2
Souza .....	23	22	3	La Goulette ...	2	—	—
La Goulette ...	7	9	4		7	2	2
Sfax .....	22	8	7	<b>AUTRICHIENS.</b>			
Djerbi .....	14	6	4	Tunis .....	2	2	—
Méhédia .....	7	2	—	La Goulette ...	1	1	—
Bizerte .....	2	5	1		3	3	—
Porto Farina ..	—	2	—	<b>ESPAGNOLS.</b>			
	193	163	44	Tunis .....	1	4	4
<b>NAPOLITAINS.</b>				Souza .....	—	3	—
Tunis .....	39	43	8	La Goulette ...	—	—	4
Souza .....	2	3	—		1	4	2
La Goulette ...	21	29	3	<b>ANGLAIS.</b>			
Sfax .....	2	2	—	Souza .....	1	4	—
Djerbi .....	4	3	1	Sfax .....	1	—	—
Méhédia .....	4	—	—		2	1	—
	66	80	12	<b>SUISSES.</b>			
<b>SARDES.</b>				Tunis .....	—	—	4
Tunis .....	14	14	8	<b>PRUSSIENS.</b>			
Souza .....	3	3	—	Tunis .....	—	1	—
La Goulette ...	4	3	—	<b>LOMBARDS.</b>			
Sfax .....	4	—	1	Tunis ... ..	4	—	—
Méhédia .....	4	—	—	<b>GRECS</b>			
Bizerte .....	—	2	—	catholiques-romains.			
Porto Farina ..	1	—	—	La Goulette ...	—	—	1
	24	22	9	<b>ÉGYPTIENS</b>			
<b>FRANÇAIS.</b>				catholiques-romains.			
Tunis .....	7	11	2	Tunis .....	—	—	4
Souza .....	2	4	—				
La Goulette ...	2	3	—				
Sfax .....	4	4	1				
Bizerte .....	4	—	—				
Porto Farina ..	—	4	—				
	13	47	3				

Les ROMAINS n'ont eu ni naissance, ni décès, ni mariage. — Dans une famille catholique-romaine de JÉRUSALEM, établie à Tunis, il y a eu une naissance. Il y a eu donc dans la Régence en 1856 parmi les catholiques-romains 311 naissances, 293 décès, 75 mariages.

p257-258 Here is a table relating to the Roman Catholic worship which will give an idea of the European population of each city of Tunisia, number of their priests, as well as their churches or chapels.

<i>Localités.</i>	<i>Population européenne.</i>	<i>Prêtres.</i>	<i>Eglises.</i>
Tunis . . . . .	9150	12	1
Bardo . . . . .	160	»	»
La Goulette . . . . .	680	1	1
Souza . . . . .	600	2	1
Méhédia . . . . .	196	1	1
Sfax . . . . .	500	1	1
Bizerte . . . . .	100	1	1
Porto Farina . . . . .	48	1	1
Nébel . . . . .	40	»	»
Soliman . . . . .	20	»	»
Monastir . . . . .	150	1	1
Tebourba . . . . .	27	»	»
Djerbi . . . . .	239	1	1
Rasdjébel . . . . .	15	»	»
Galipia . . . . .	39	»	»
Diverses localités.	100	»	»
	12,064	21	9

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**Note:** Jean Henri Dunant (May 8, 1828 – October 30, 1910), aka Henry Dunant, was a Swiss businessman and social activist. During a business trip in 1859, he was witness to the aftermath of the Battle of Solferino in modern day Italy. He recorded his memories and experiences in the book *A Memory of Solferino* which inspired the creation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1863. The 1864 Geneva Convention was based on Dunant's ideas. In 1901 he received the first Nobel Peace Prize together with Frédéric Passy. (Wikipedia, Nov. 15, 2010.)