

CHOSSES ET GENS DE TUNISIE

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DICTIONNAIRE

ILLUSTRÉ

DE LA TUNISIE

PAR

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SFAX (in Arabic Sfakès). City and caïdat of thls name. Head of the line B.-G. Tunis (283 km) to Sfax, 64 km from El-Jem and 133 km from Sousse, 142 km by road from Gabes, 250 km from Kairouan.

Port on the Mediterranean. A city (1884), vice-consulates or consular agencies of France, Britain, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Justice of the Peace, District Court, rabb.[Rabbinic] court, Inspectorate of upper primary schools, boys and girls, nursery schools, Franco-Arab schools. ☒ Sub-inspection and receipt of tax payments, the security office, Monopolies warehouse, sub-inspection, and [267] customs revenue, Public Works Department center (Engineering), chief town of the Survey Department district, Controller of Mines, Harbour Master, jail, police, gendarmerie, the 4th Squadron Spahis, the 4th Infantry Companies, doctors, pharmacists, military and civilian hospital, lodging house "The Thyna Lighthouse" Italian lodge , theater, museum, Catholic church, Protestant chapel, Orthodox church, synagogues, Grand hotels, vehicle transport.

The city of Sfax had 111,350 inhabitants in 1910), including the suburbs: (81,350 inhabitants in the town and urban area, 30,000 for the suburbs). The native city has 2,520 homes and 9,800 native households. The European town has 417 houses and 1,750 households, and the suburban perimeter, 1,000 houses and 4,500 households.

Originally the inhabitants of the city and its suburbs included 8,600 Europeans, of which about 2,000 were French and 103,250 natives, including about 5,000 Jews.

M. Joselyn [sic. actually *Jocelyn*] Bureau was willing, on our request, to send us a very interesting and complete monograph on the city of Sfax, of which lack of space forces us to give only some excerpts:

"Some authors claim that our city is built on the site where Taphrura once stood; others believe that Sfax of today is built on the ruins of Thebena, which, according to the Roman general Hirtius, was located at the perimeter of the coastal states of King Juba.

"Doubts are permitted regarding the construction of Sfax on the ruins of one Roman city or another, because we do not find any trace of this town of old. Taphrura should be further north-east towards today's small native village of Sidi-Mansur. As for Thebena, nothing is known for certain about its location.

"Sfax is the continuation of an ancient city destroyed by the Vandals. Sfax is most likely of Saracen origin. Turn and turn around it fell under the domination of Arabs, then the Sicilians. Retaken from these by the Muslims, it was conquered in the sixteenth century by the Spaniards, to whom we owe the wall flanked with bastions around it. Before the French occupation, this encircling wall was pierced by only two gates: Bab Diwan, giving access to the sea, and Bab-Djebli, opening to the north, leads out to the countryside.

About ten years ago, the Bridges and Roads Department opened a new gate, Bab-Djedid, west of the city, near the sea, near the Kasbah, opposite the covered market.

"After the fall of Spanish rule, Sfax again became a purely Arabic city and its sailors, the best on the Tunisian coast, were involved in piracy with galleys that were constructed on location in Sfax, going as far as the coasts of Provence to seize captives, which they sold at auction on their return to their homeport, as well as cargo from which they derived a large profit.

"The people remained entirely Muslim Sfaxien from the expulsion of the Spaniards until the mid eighteenth century, and Sfax had such a reputation for being inhospitable that it was with concern that some Jews of Djerba, the descendants of

Jews expelled from their homeland after the capture of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD, came to settle and engage in commercial activities. For a long time they formed there a very small settlement in the city, hostile to any non-Muslim infiltration.

"The first European who, after the destruction of Spanish rule, came to live in Sfax, disembarked there about 1830. This was a Sicilian doctor whose family multiplied rapidly and became, in the world of commerce and banking, one of the most influential and powerful in the region.

"Soon, along with this daring doctor – because he had, indeed, the audacity to come and live there for 88 years, in this fanatic and xenophobic country – were added some Sicilians, many Maltese and a very few French. Our compatriots there were still so few in 1881, during the capture of Sfax, that it would be difficult, even including the employees of the Post and Telegraph Office, to find even a score of French, almost all of whom were natives of French Corsica.

"The construction of the original French quarter (*Quartier Franc*) was due to these first Europeans; it was originally enclosed by a wall, demolished after the events of 1881, of which there are still a few meters near the Military Circle .

This wall was pierced by three doors: one, facing Bab Diwan, at the southern end of Central Street, today Rue de la République, allowed traders to go to the sea shore where there were at that time some markets of alfa, oil, sponges, etc., etc. The other two doors gave access onto the countryside and were placed east and west of the European city, at the end of Rue Pasteur and Rue Tissot. Early in the evening, the doors were closed for shelter from the incursions of the marauding tribes of the interior.

"During the first ten years following the French occupation, Sfax remained almost exactly as it was in 1881.

"In 1888 we conquered from the sea a few thousand square meters, which formed the narrow platform where [368] the first houses built in Sfax since the European occupation were constructed.

"After 1890, Sfax began to soar, which has still not yet stopped and will only reach its climax in a few years, when the major works in progress and those planned will be completed. Since 1890 Sfax has grown in leaps and bounds, overflowing, filled with the desire to live, from the cramped European quarter of before the European occupation, for so many years the center of its business with Europe".

And Jocelyn Bureau lists all the monuments built since that time: the Post Office, Civilian Control building, Tax Contributions Office, schools, theater, Town Hall, etc., etc.

"In 1897, he continues, the inauguration of the port took place, the work having been begun in 1895.

"Currently the figure of 1,000,000 tonnes is exceeded regarding the movement of our port (imports and exports).

"Also in 1897 the line from Sfax to Gafsa and Metlaoui was opened for business, extended as by the end of 1907 as far as Redeyef, thus having a length of nearly 300 km. (see the article on the Compagnie des Phosphates and Gafsa Railway.)

"Sfax is surrounded by a veritable belt of gardens, which number, it is said, more than 10,000, and also the beautiful and famous forest of olive trees. (See the article that follows the word Sfax.)

"Sfax has a commercial trade going back a very long time because Sfaxiens are, more than all Tunisians, except the Djerbans, the people most ready to assimilate more quickly any new business methods and to the use of systems created to facilitate trade between countries and the payment of sales and purchases. A long time ago, for example, before the occupation, ships from Marseilles moored in our waters, loading oil, sponges, almonds and other goods. British ships also anchored there, taking full loads of alfa to Liverpool and other ports of England. Other sailboats, Italian, Greek and Ottoman, loaded there, destined for Italy, the ports of the Levant, of Egypt, Tripoli, Greece, etc., cargoes of

octopus, oil, soap, wool, dates and imports of wood, iron, cotton fabrics and other exotic products.

"Each day the commerce of Sfax develops encouragingly, and our oils, our sponges and our alfas are still highly sought after and in demand.

"But it is mainly the Gafsa phosphates of lime that have been the cause of the truly American development taken by our city from more than ten years.

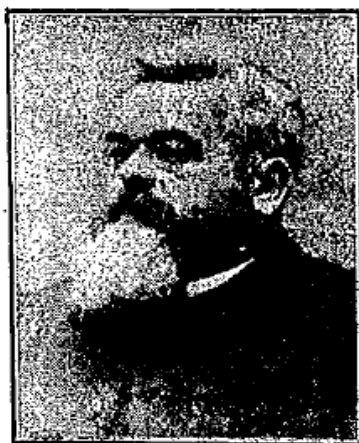
"The years of rain brought to Sfax and the region abundant harvests of wheat and barley.

"Sfax, since this year, has been linked to the rest of the Regency by the railway

inaugurated by President Fallières which passes, coming from Sousse, in front of the famous amphitheater of El-Djem.

"Visitors have their curiosity satisfied when they visit our Arab city, which has retained its local color, so Eastern, with its narrow streets, its souks, its Arab and Jewish merchants who, seated cross-legged in their small shops, waiting so calmly for a buyer needing a burnous, a gandourah, a pair of shoes made of red or yellow leather, which are the delight of lovers of exotic things, eager to procure them to take them home as souvenirs of the country visited " JOCELYN BUREAU.

BUREAU Jocelyn-André, 19 juillet 1859, Cholet (Maine-et-Loire). Off. de l'Instruction publique; Médaille d'or de la Mutualité, off. du Nichan - Iftikhar.



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sident de la Société de Secours Mutuels «L'Union Française» de Sfax, R. U. P. Président du Comité sfaxien de l'Alliance Française, président du groupe sfaxien de la S. P. A., secrétaire du Comité de Patronage de la Bibliothèque Populaire, secrétaire général de la Société d'archéologie et des Beaux Arts de Sfax, président fondateur de la Société Française de Bienfaisance de Sfax, trésorier-adjoint de «l'Harmonie Sfaxienne», mem-

bre fondateur de l'Institut de Carthage. TRAVAUX : collaboration à la «Feuille Populaire» de Marseille, au «Signal de Paris», au «Messager de la Famille», à «l'Echo de Tunis». Rédacteur en chef en 1891-92, de «Sfax-Journal», rédacteur au «Courrier du Dimanche», au «Courrier d'Alger», à «l'Eglise Libre» de Montpellier, au «Protectorat» de Sousse, à la «Dépêche Sfaxienne», à la «Revue Tunisienne», rédacteur-correspondant à la «Dépêche Tunisienne, a écrit également sous divers pseudonyme : André Moreau, O. B. F., Sfaxianus, Job, Pierre de Thyra, etc., a publié diverses brochures sur des questions d'histoire et autres. Médailles d'argent de la Société Protectrice des Animaux et de la Société Académique d'Histoire Internationale, Médailles de bronze d'honneur à l'Exposition de Nancy, 1909 et au Concours de Sousse, 1910.

Illustrated Dictionary of Tunisia : Things and People of Tunisia. 1912.
Ed. Lambert, Paul (member of the Consultative Conference of Tunisia).

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