

# Current Legacies of Colonial Violence and Racialization in Tunisia

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This special section deals with the important question of what connects racialized brutality in various places and times across former colonial entities. In contexts where colonial and imperialist interventions persist, for example in Palestine or Iraq, it is easy to make sense of the systematic brutality and violence against local Arab populations through references to past norms of exception. For example, in Palestine, the British laws of exception (the so-called Military or Defence Emergency Regulations) are continuous with Israeli practices in historical Palestine.<sup>1</sup> Old colonial mapping and intrusions, with their overemphasis on “sectarian” differentiation, for example in Iraq after the US intervention in 2003 and the extraordinary power of the Provisional Authority, are here to haunt our present.<sup>2</sup>

It is harder to draw these direct connections in countries that gained independence decades ago and have ascertained “legitimate” authority over their population after formal decolonization. This short article tries to build the historical record in the case of Tunisia. As a French protectorate (1881–1956) Tunisia managed to obtain its autonomy without having to pay the enormous price of a war of independence like its Algerian neighbor. Yet the historical process, which I call the uneven distribution of violence—a historical processes that connects the colonial past to current practices of military repression and symbolic violence—is also at play in Tunisia. The uneven distribution of violence refers to three different processes. The first instance resides in the actual use of violence and repression by coercive institutions (police, army) in a given country: some political subjects are more exposed to physical violence than others. The second component deals with the so-called legitimate use of physical force (or legitimate means of coercion)—“legitimate” because it is exercised by the state, to use Max Weber’s famous definition. There as well, colonial authorities were spread unevenly across the territory, and postindependence authorities perpetuate such practices, consolidating thereby past forms of marginalization. The third meaning of the uneven distribution of violence deals with symbolic forms of violence, and the continuous existence of “a pyramid of petty tyrants,” with groups of powerful Tunisians oppressing some of their peers,<sup>3</sup> and generating a new sense of cultural superiority along geographical identification and the bracketing of regional identities, or *lieux de mémoire*.

Following Sarah Ghabrial’s approach of “writing back” the colonial exception in Agamben’s theory of exception, I will argue that the social life of racialization in Tunisia can be traced back to colonial norms. Yet, one needs also to look beyond juridical exception and examine everyday life and in the administration of the legitimate means of coercion to understand how exclusion and racialization have persisted after independence in 1956. In this text, a multiplicity of “exceptions” will be discussed: differently from the other articles of this section, I will not trace a clearly tangible or institutionalized legal exception. Rather, I will show a diversity of mechanisms (capitalist extraction and its protection, the geographically differential presence of forces of coercion, uneven political development,

cultural marginalization) that have led to the survival of racializing forms of marginalization against people of southern parts of Tunisia.<sup>4</sup>

This text belongs more to the category of an interpretative essay: marginal empirical material related to the history of recent protests in post-Ben Ali Tunisia will be offered to show how colonial legacies of physical violence morphed into symbolic violence carried out by the post-independence governments.<sup>5</sup> The connection between the modality of capitalist encroachment, that is, the differentiated territorial focus by colonial entities, and the impact of colonialism is central here. It helps understanding the geography of exclusion and racialization and how, relationally, certain tropes of governance between center and peripheries are still reproduced more than sixty years after independence. As we will see, the historical context for the cultural and institutional marginalization of certain parts of the country explains the origin and emergence of the leadership of a very important Tunisian institution born at the time of colonialism, the *Union générale tunisienne du travail* (UGTT, or Tunisian General Labor Union). Additionally, by better understanding this particular history of marginalization, we might better understand different memories of past colonial violence and the current handling of protests in the south of the country as residues of colonial practices.

### **The Impact of European Capitalist Expansion in Tunisia, or the Generative Force of Territorial Fragmentation**

By and large, it is well established that behind European colonialism resided economic motives leading to extreme forms of territorial encroachment that started in the sixteenth century and peaked in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> As a result of these colonial encounters, European elites created a worldview and justifications for the exploitation of racialized subjects (labor force in the colonies) and criminalized subjects (Europeans forced to resettle there) whose role was to feed the process of raw material extraction and surplus production.<sup>7</sup> The development of penal colonies to punish dissenters in the metropolises was synchronous with the incorporation of the peripheries in the new order of (agrarian, later industrial) capitalism.<sup>8</sup> Following Etienne Balibar,<sup>9</sup> one can suggest that an excess of (racialized) violence in the colonies has been necessary for the spread of capitalism. From there, one can argue that postindependence order has reproduced symbolic violence and contempt against certain social groups of the colonies.

Let us see how one can argue that French colonial encroachment in North Africa, first in Algeria in the 1830s and later in Tunisia, from the 1880s onward, replicated this pattern of racialization as a response to intensified economic exploitation. A largely unrecognized complication for Tunisia (and Algeria) was the specificity of North African religions, with large arrays of Muslims (divided between Arab and Berber/Amazigh in Algeria) and Jews coexisting with Christians, of whom the vast majority were European settlers. All this facilitated the classical colonial rule of difference, combining racial, religious, and class components.

Manipulating religious differences evolved into racialized distinctions, with some groups on par with French citizens, while others were demoted to lower ranks. French colonialism heightened cultural divisions between the metropolis and the colonies, and inside the latter it placed “indigenous” Muslims at the bottom of the social hierarchy, with Jews elevated to an uncomfortable middle category, or on par with French citizens, after the Crémieux decree of 1870.<sup>10</sup> Proto-racial forms were fundamentally religious and later consolidated into race, alongside the rights of “man” and liberalism, with a long-lasting impact on the quality of citizenship in the Arab worlds.

How then did capitalism and colonialism contribute to racialized violence in Tunisia? Let us look at three cases from the colonial era.<sup>11</sup>

The first instance of violence is apparent through an application of Frantz Fanon’s famous statement of a world divided into two, with the “frontiers shown by barracks and police stations.”<sup>12</sup> Martin Thomas’s detailed story of police and gendarmerie forces in Africa shows that the location of these barracks and police stations were not random, but followed capitalist interests in defending private investments and sites of surplus extractions: the map of exaction of colonial violence in Tunisia overlaps quite directly with that of mines, industries, and large agricultural properties. In Tunisia, most of these barracks were placed at the heart of the phosphate mines, in the interior southern province of Gafsa and in its administrative seats such as Qasserin.<sup>13</sup> Albert Memmi, in his seminal text analyzing relationally power imbalances in the colonies, also highlights the readiness of the colonizers to use disproportionate violence against any possible threat of the colonized subjects.<sup>14</sup> A last example of class differential and gradually racialized unequal treatment is the so-called colonial third, a measure introduced by France after World War I, which granted a 30 percent higher

salary to French workers based in the Tunisian protectorate.<sup>15</sup> Tunisian workers not only did the hard work (e.g., in the mines), but they were also facing stricter police control and were paid less than their coworkers from European origins.

Second, the central authority of the Tunisian state exacted violence through uneven territorial encroachment. During the protectorate years, the Bey, the formal ruler in the region and a deputy of the Ottoman Sultan, had to foot the bill of the security expenses incurred by French police forces.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the police and the *Garde républicaine mobile* had no Muslims listed on their payroll. This repressive apparatus worked in collaboration with the roughly 200,000 settlers to police and prevent mobilizations in the productive areas of the country, notably around the phosphate mines in the center of the country, and in the coastal areas.<sup>17</sup> These regions, between Bizerte and Tunis, and south all the way to Mahdia in the Sahel region, and the immediate Hinterland were considered in French colonial time *la Tunisie utile* (“the useful Tunisia”). The rest was quipped as “la Tunisie inutile”—the “useless” part of Tunisia, in particular the southern territories along the Libyan border, left pretty much untouched by capitalist transformation, and the western parts of the protectorate. The French took on themselves an earlier neglect by the Beylical authorities toward the south of the country, which was only a worry for action twice a year, when it led semiannual expeditions in these marginal areas to collect tax and tributes.<sup>18</sup> Important for the argument of this article is that these punitive campaigns were carried out by the army, rather than by a police force, that is, an executive arm connected to the implementation of legal measures targeting equally all citizens.

Third, the colonial discourse of a *Tunisie utile* deepened a fragmentation of the territory, with unequal access to state and police protection long after the end of colonialism. France saw little benefit in expanding its direct rule over the south of the country and along the Libyan border. This “non-useful Tunisia” was presented as the territory of the *fellagah* (“bandits”), a term to describe local, often rural, fighters that resisted French colonial policies. France did not believe these low-density population areas with low economic potential could be incorporated into agrarian capitalism or systematic economic exchanges. Thus, rather than extending a unified rule over the entire protectorate, or sending settlers deep into the south, Tunis cemented alliances with tribal groupings living on these borderlands in exchange for mutual alliances (the right to commerce

along caravan routes for the Jefara tribes and the creation of buffer zones as border protection for the colonial regime).<sup>19</sup>

So far, these cases of racialized demarcation have produced mostly structural violence and systematic discrimination against (Muslim) Tunisians. One specific episode of the colonial period illustrates the deepening of a regional fault line near the town of Sfax. This is the Sfaxi rebellion against the military takeover of Tunisia in 1881. It is not by chance that this unique act of resistance to the French military takeover of the country in 1881 took place in Sfax, the first town along the coast excluded from the *Tunisie utile* and the gateway to the deep south and the land of the *fellagah*. Interestingly, this episode is generally ignored in historical analyses produced in the capital city, where no resistance to the French military campaign took place. Lisa Anderson only refers to the July 1881 events as a moment where “Sfax was bombarded” and eventually “taken by the French naval forces after a major battle.”<sup>20</sup> Memories of the event, which left eight hundred to nine hundred dead, are still vivid and used politically to this day as an important *lieu de mémoire*, but in Sfax only. No one in the Sahel and Tunis seem to remember that episode, while locals insist on preserving a memory of this tragic encounter as a paramount act of resistance to colonial violence.<sup>21</sup> For Sfaxis, recollection of this event is also a way to remind authorities of the existence of uneven development in present-day Tunisia.<sup>22</sup>

Before we turn to how ideas of race and class are still enmeshed in the use of legitimate violence by postindependence Tunisian authorities, let us point out the heterogeneity of approaches by which colonial powers have produced racialized others. Violence to safeguard economic interests went in hand with access to policing and protecting “useful” parts of Tunisia. Those resisting these logics were persecuted with extreme brutality, as in the case of Sfax. Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, in his study of French racial discrimination, notes that colonial regimes entertained and structured “a culture of brutality” by the colonizer whose body (wrapped in fine pieces of clothing) and language (use of the French “*tu*,” as opposed to the formal “*vous*” to address the native population in an asymmetric manner) were indirect reminders to the local population of the French, allegedly innate, superiority.<sup>23</sup> What is striking is to see how certain colonial habits have morphed into new forms of violence in contemporary Tunisia.

### How the Present Carries Legacies of Racialized Violence, Cultural and Institutional Differences

The more or less indirect forms of racialization within contemporary Tunisia are still related to capitalist extraction of surplus, and to the colonial divide between center and peripheries. Concentrating on urban cities of the coast and the north to favor the exploitation of richer agricultural land, the French protectorate generated a split that imagined Tunisia as two regions. The French used the town of Sfax as a bridgehead to colonize the interior and southern parts of the country, inviting local bourgeoisie to purchase land and large olive tree plantations in the south. Still today, Sfax is dubbed “the capital of the south” and absorbs surplus workers of tedious manual labor in the southern olive fields. To this day phosphate from the central regions of Gafsa or Rdayyef is shipped by train to Sfax, leaving miners in these central regions asking why they could not benefit more from the hard labor of extraction. Moreover, Sfaxis are also upset about the pollution that the main site of phosphate transformation, the SIAPE (*Société industrielle d'acide phosphorique et d'engrais*), generates locally, while the capital city, Tunis, reaps the benefits from this extractive and transformative process.

The 2011 revolution, which saw the departure of Ben Ali, is often associated with large protests outside the Ministry of Interior in Tunis. But it is well known that protests started in late December 2010 in the central areas of Tunisia discussed above. These places include the agricultural town of Sidi Bouzid, which is close to Tunisia's main administrative center, Qasserine, and the mining region of Gafsa. The spread of protests to Sfax on January 11, and from there to other cities just north, in the Sahel, home of most political elites of the Tunisian Republican era, was equally important for the revolutionary dynamic. Sfax continues to be (or feel) marginalized by the *tunisois* (inhabitants of Tunis, the capital) and Sahelian elites, who have run the country since independence.<sup>24</sup> Only the period from 2011 to 2014 saw a shift in the political elite, with some prominent political figures and groups (like former president Moncef Marzouki and his party CPR (Congrès pour la République [Congress for the Republic]), or Ennahda, the Islamic party that has shared power since the 2011 uprising) coming from the south. The revolution has been dubbed the “vengeance of the *gaf*,” a rendering of the Arabic letter *q* (pronounced *qaf*) pronounced in these central mining regions and in the south with a softer *g* (hence *gaf*) instead of the guttural *q*.<sup>25</sup> The recalling of the brutal episodes of 1881, described above,

serves as a reminder to the central authorities of Tunis that Sfaxis feel victim of underdevelopment, and that different iterations of cultural differences within Tunisia (the sound of a letter, recollection of the 1881 massacres) can be a way to claim equality or an equal share of the (political or economic) pie.

Another central actor in the 2011 revolution is the UGTT, the main national trade union. Since its formation in 1946, the UGTT has been very strong in the south. Most of its historical leaders, Ferhat Hached or Habib Achour, to name two, are from the Sfax area (the island of Kerkennah, to be precise). These leaders continue to hail from southern regions, liminal areas where capitalism has only partially encroached and where the trade union earned its historical credibility by fighting French colonialism.<sup>26</sup> The UGTT grew in spaces involved in capitalist extraction (e.g., with the phosphate of the mining region brought by train to Sfax, where it is refined at huge environmental cost), as well as spaces on the fringes of French control. Thus, and with a paradoxical historical twist (the return of the south to the fore, in a way), the UGTT benefitted from the loose direct control in the south of the protectorate granted by the colonial authorities. It is well known that the UGTT was later largely co-opted both by Habib Bourguiba, president from independence until 1987, and by Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, his forceful successor, and thus unable to criticize the regime for its lack of development in the southern and western parts of the country.<sup>27</sup> Yet, the historical hub of the UGTT has remained in the south of the country and in peripheral sections, sections that were instrumental in spreading the protests in December 2010 and January 2011.<sup>28</sup>

This discussion of the UGTT's historical role demonstrates that direct racialized violence (the 1881 Sfax massacre for the town's refusal to accept the French protectorate; the inconsistent presence of “legitimate means of coercion” during the colonial era, with mixed policies targeting the *fellagah* resistance while granting privileges to the few tribes living in the southern and eastern borderlands; etc.) turned into *indirect* violence. From an overtly racialized violence, the postindependence state moved to a more structural and symbolic form of violence that targeted the same marginalized layers and denied them a role in building a modern Tunisian state, a reality that contradicts the Bourguibian myth of a unified and homogenous country.<sup>29</sup>

Let us give four quick examples of this new (quasi-racialized) violence toward the south and the east of the country. First, Sahelian and *tunisois* elites repeated

colonial discourses of a *Tunisie utile* after independence. In practice, political recruitment was often conditional on being a citizen from the coastal areas, from Bizerte to Mahdia.<sup>30</sup> Second, the south was punished for its support of Youssef Ben Salah, the other historical leader from Djerba, who was assassinated in Frankfurt in August 1961 with Bourguiba's permission. When Moncef Marzouki and his party the CPR won the presidency after the October 2011 elections, it was generally interpreted as a victory of the southern and central regions, thanks to the revolutionary aura they carried in the months following the toppling of Ben Ali for having initiated the first protests at the end of 2010. Third, municipalities were established in a vast majority of the territory at the time of independence (replacing the colonial system of local *qā'idis*).<sup>31</sup> Yet a large quantity of southern Tunisians still lacked a local structure of authority, remaining thus under the direct control of the Ministry of Interior for a long period after independence, a problem that some call the absence of a universal municipalization.<sup>32</sup> Fourth, France's strategy of differentiated state formation and economic integration was continued by Bourguiba.<sup>33</sup> Policing tasks over the southern territories delegated to "local tribes" turned into a privileged role played by the *ḥaras waṭani*, or *Garde nationale*. In exchange for recognition of their political grip in the rest of the country, presidents Bourguiba and Ben Ali made turning a blind eye over informal trade (smuggling) in these parts of the country de facto official policy. Both presidents, who originated from the Sahel region and were therefore quite socially distant from the southern constellations of authority,<sup>34</sup> were also happy with this compromise, granting near autonomous rule in the south in exchange for a pacified south. This, over time, cemented a deep fragmentation of the national territories, with some regions treated better than others.

The fifth and last example is, in my view, a more direct return to the colonial type of repression. After the 2011 revolution, it has become common practice for Tunisians to organize collective sit-ins, protests, and (hunger) strikes. Careful not to antagonize social relations and aware that excessive forms of police repression are not acceptable anymore, all post-Ben Ali governments have been adamant to show an ability for negotiation. Typically a ministerial delegation is sent to the place of protest and an amicable solution is found. That pattern did not work in the March to May 2017 cycle of protests in the south, near Tatawine. Local protests erupted over the control of oil production in

the el-Kamour region, demanding more jobs and a better redistribution of the oil resources. Despite promises for decentralization and more financial resources for the regions, the oil bonanza has continued flowing only to the capital city. The protests in Tatawine and the encampment in the desert in el-Kamour disrupted the flow of oil toward refineries.<sup>35</sup> Peaceful protests were based on the 2011 methods of sit-ins and collective deliberations. This time, the government refused to negotiate and instead sent the army to crush dissent. What is peculiar in this repression is not the refusal of the government to negotiate, but the fact that the army, and not a police unit, was sent to shut down the protests. The army, whose mission is to protect the borders of the country, refused to support Ben Ali in January 2011 and has since been seen as a bulwark for gradual political reform and undoing the dictatorship. Yet, in this case, Prime Minister Youssef Chahed sent the army on a punitive campaign, just like in the Beylical and colonial times. El-Kamour ought to be seen in light of a tendency to stigmatize the population of the deep south as unruly, antipatriotic (as they are said to be infiltrated by Libyans)—in brief, as *fellagah* or as a national threat that only the army can tackle. But one could simply see these episodes as localized protests for uneven access to resources.

Some might claim that the exceptional use of the army to crush the protest was justified by the "national interest" (restore the flow of oil revenues). However, when set in relation with patronizing comments heard in the capital around that time against people of the south presented as *gu'r* (in French, *les bouzeux*, the dirty peasants, as opposed to the people with a *baladī* background, i.e., urban and educated),<sup>36</sup> one can suggest actually a continuity in the arrogant attitudes of current Tunisian authorities all the way back to the diminishing comments on "useless Tunisia" in colonial times.

## Conclusion

This article has tried to show the many roads that have allowed colonial racialized violence to persist and survive into the present. It makes little sense to speak of racialization in isolation from class differentials and from divisions from colonial times that pitted the same economic centers against the peripheries. These processes of racialization are historically specific and ought to be seen in a relational manner, that is, in a way that connects both colonial and postindependence times (argument of continuity), and different social groups and territorial units (argument of a gradual condescendence

from center toward peripheries, or in Memmi's images, as a "pyramid of small tyrants" ruling over their peers with the same discrimination that they used to suffer themselves from a higher tyrant).<sup>37</sup>

From a direct form of racialized violence leaving Muslim Tunisians on the low end of the colonial social ladder of worth, salaries, and the right to life, we moved to a more symbolic form of violence, with the south of the country quasi-racialized as less valuable than the urban coastal areas around Tunis and the Sahel. This shift was made gradually following independence and suggests that the supplanting of a colonial flag by a postcolonial independent one does not mean the end of these age-old practices. Historical center-periphery divisions, which existed well before the colonial era, acquired a new meaning—racialized—with the French takeover of the country. Class antagonisms developed later through regional fractures that became recognizable as a stark north-south divide that continues today. To paraphrase Ann Laura Stoler, the traceable systemic violence that emerged in the colonial era turned in symbolic violence with lasting impacts for present day Tunisians from the southern and western parts of the country.<sup>38</sup> The written Tunisian history often misses violent episodes of colonial atrocities, in particular in the south, with marginal reference to the Sfax 1881 massacre. It is time to think about these absences and to rewrite a theory of violence that places its uneven distribution at center stage, and in connection with processes of class formation.

On a more abstract level, the material presented here suggests that even if we try to "write back" the colonial exception in Agamben's theory of emergency, we would only get half of the story. To be sure, French colonial power exercised juridical forms of exception to capture and domesticate the various parts of Tunisia. But it also relied on a mixed application of law (some protected by the laws, others not), uneven administrative measures (e.g., the lack of universal municipalization), and cultural measures diminishing the actual experience of resistance to colonialism in parts of the country (e.g., the oblivion of the Sfaxi 1881 rebellion). It is therefore necessary to decenter Agamben's idea of emergency, and to combine this approach with an analysis of everyday practice, cultural politics, and economic motives behind the exclusion or marginalization of postcolonial subjects. For that matter, Fanon's nuanced studies in the interplay between economic and cultural factors (language, accents, embodied dispositions as evidence of racial

inequalities) remain an essential complement to the study of exception.

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## Notes

1. Hajjar, *Military Courts*, 44.
2. Ould Mohamedou, *Theory of ISIS*.
3. Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 17.
4. Western and central parts of Tunisia, along the border with Algeria, have also suffered from similar discriminatory and violent impacts. Yet, because of the empirical material collected in South Tunisia, I will only speak of the marginalization of the south.
5. Fieldwork was done in July 2015, January 2016, and over nearly a month between May and June 2016, with about fifty interviews done with actors involved in the 2011 "revolution" and living between the regions of Bizerte in the north and Tatawine in the south.
6. Cooper, *Africa in the World*; Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*.
7. Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Free dom," 263–69.
8. Ross, *Emergence of Social Space*, esp. 93–97 (colonial expansion).
9. Balibar, *Violence and Civility*, 9.
10. On the Crémieux Decree, see Hannoum, *Violent Modernity*, 131; or Saada, "Nation and Empire in French Context," 333.
11. Even if it was a protectorate, Tunisians speak of the period under French control as colonization (*isti'mār*).
12. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 37.
13. Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order*, 41, 89–140.
14. Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 90 or 93.
15. See Anderson, *State and Social Transformation*, 148.
16. Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order*, 114.
17. Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order*, 119–20.
18. See Anderson, *State and Social Transformation*, 79.
19. Kartas, "Tunisian-Libyan Border Space of the Jefara." This uneven reach is not only territorial: it is also expressed in unequal legal protection between European settlers (benefitting from consular protections) and the native population. See, e.g., Memmi, *Colonizer*, 14. Memmi notes that the common religion of these European settlers, even if not all of them are economically well off, e.g., poor Italian or Maltese settlers, provide the common, racialized basis for discrimination against Tunisian natives.
20. Anderson, *State and Social Transformation*, 121.
21. Resistance celebrated in the form of a monument that was erected just outside of the *qasbah* in Sfax, in Sāhat al-Muqāwamah ("Place de la Resistance"). The epigraph on this monument commemorates "a large number of free Sfaxis citizens who fell martyrs in resisting French occupation in 1881" (my translation, from the

Arabic: “istishshada ‘adad min ahrār Sfāqs ithnā’ muqāwamat al-iḥtilāl al-faransī sanat 1881”).

22. Interview with H. K., leader of a civic platform calling for the closing of the main site of phosphate transformation, the SIAPE, in Sfax, June 5, 2016.

23. See Le Cour Grandmaison, “Violences symboliques et discriminations raciales,” e.g., 32.

24. On the notion of marginalization in Tunisia, see al-Salhi, *Al-isti‘mār al-dākhli*.

25. Interview with F. B., civil society activist, Sfax, January 8, 2016.

26. Yousfi, *L’UGTT, une passion tunisienne*, 20.

27. On how asymmetric development between different parts of Tunisia is “exemplary” of marginalization, see al-Salhi, *Al-isti‘mār al-dākhli*. The book (whose title can be translated from the Arabic as “Internal Colonization and Asymmetrical Development: A Treatise on Exemplary Marginalization in Tunisia”) encapsulates this reality of uneven economic development and marginalization, or *tahmish*.

28. Yousfi, *L’UGTT, une passion tunisienne*, 61–90.

29. Ayari, *Le prix de l’engagement*, 29. It is not by coincidence that the very critical work of al-Salhi (*Al-isti‘mār al-dākhli* [Internal Colonization]) was researched after the “revolution” of 2011. According to Ayari, such a book could not be published anymore in the current context of presidential elections at the end of 2019. Personal communication with the author.

30. Ayari, *Le prix de l’engagement*, 29, and ICG, *Tunisie : justice transitionnelle*, 26–29. An additional example of this imbalance can be found in university student distribution. In current administrative language, the historical *Tunisie utile* corresponds to the combination of the Greater Tunis area (“Iqlīm Tūnis,” for “Region of Tunis”) with the region “Center East” (“wasat al-sharqī”). The *Tunisie inutile* would cover the rest of the regions of the south and of the west. In 2013–14, there were a total of 221,000 university students in these two macro-regions of “Iqlīm Tūnis” (“region of Tunis”) and “wasat al-sharqī” (“center east”), as opposed to 56,000 students in the universities of the “western” and “southern” regions, i.e., counting the student population in Kairouan, Jendouba, Gabes, and Gafsa. See al-Salhi, *Al-isti‘mār al-dākhli*, 557, table 1. However, in this administrative categorization, Sfax appears with Sousse and Monastir. If we add Sfax to the “west” and “south” (as it was the “capital of south” during colonial times), recreating the *Tunisie utile* vs *Tunisie inutile*, then we have an imbalance of 193,000 vs. 94,000 students, thus a 2:1 ratio, when the total population for these two large regions are more or less 1:1 (5,243,000 vs. 5,740,000) based on the 2014 data of the Tunisian Statistic Institute ([www.ins.tn/fr/themes/population](http://www.ins.tn/fr/themes/population)).

31. Anderson, *State and Social Transformation*, 79–80.

32. With the 2014 constitution, all Tunisians now have the right to be represented in municipal structures. It is estimated that before this reform implementing decentralization, 20 percent of the population was not “municipalized,” and thus did not have access to the same services of the state (right to interact with a local police, to elect municipal delegations, etc.).

33. Kartas, “Tunisian-Libyan Border Space of the Jefara,” 6.

34. Bourguiba also had personal reasons for keeping the south at arm’s length: his main rival during the struggle for independence and after was Salah Ben Youssef (1907–61), a nationalist leader from Djerba.

35. See Nawaat, “Timeline.”

36. I am grateful to Michael Ayari for pointing to these derogatory comments against the people of south Tunisia. See also his *Le prix de l’engagement*, chap. 1, for a description of the various stigmata reproduced after independence against the rural population.

37. Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 17.

38. See Stoler, *Duress*, 113, where she claims that “imperial modes of confinement, resettlement, and recruitment were not separately conceived.”

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