

Research and Studies on Tiaret

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Abstract:

The city of Tiaret, or Tihert, is considered one of the historical cities that had a distinguished presence, which made it possess a significant historical past alongside its important geographical location. It was also the first capital of Central Morocco, where thought flourished and civilization experienced comprehensive urban development. Many of its men excelled in thought, politics, and culture. However, the lack of archaeological research has led to the region being forgotten and marginalized. All existing studies were conducted during the colonial period. Therefore, it is necessary to reevaluate the available data and give due consideration to this historical and archaeological area. From this perspective, it is imperative to introduce Tiaret city historically and geographically, highlighting its most important archaeological landmarks. Hence, we relied on the historical method to deduce and gather historical and geographical data about the region, and the descriptive approach to identify and describe the city's most significant archaeological features. The region has suffered neglect in terms of archaeological and historical research, despite its tangible artifacts that indicate a diverse and rich civilization.

Keywords: Tiaret, Tihert, historical, archaeological, Tiaret city, research, artifacts.

1- Introduction:

Tiaret, or Tihert, is characterized with a rich and diverse cultural heritage, and its material aspect contains various forms that indicate a deep history and geographical diversity that greatly contributed to the adaptation of human groups. The oldest forms of human settlement in Tiaret date back to over a million years ago, as evidenced by the stone tools extracted from numerous sites in the region. This settlement continued during the later stages in the prehistoric period until the emergence of the first Berber and Roman dynasties. These ancient civilizations left behind tangible artifacts, such as the walls, which are considered remarkable artistic masterpieces in the history of North Africa. With the advent of Islam, Tiaret witnessed the succession of great dynasties, most notably the Rustamid state, which left behind material remains that Tiaret proudly showcases today.

2- The Geographic Location of the Tiaret Region:

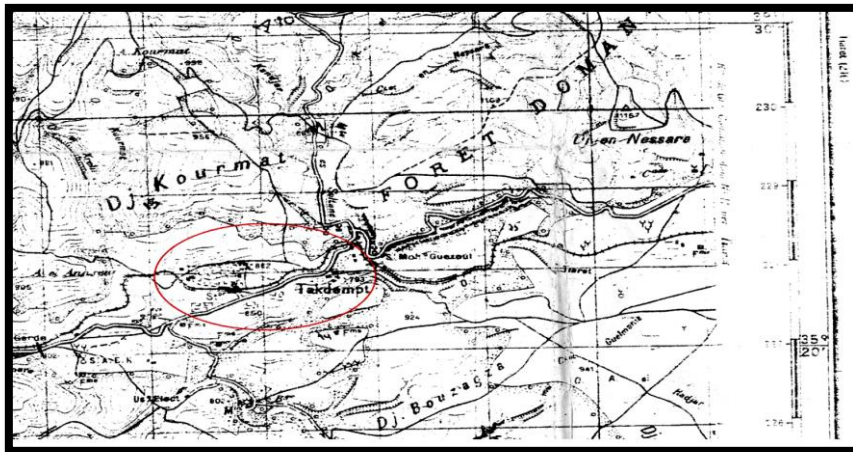
Tiaret, or Tihert, is located west of the Algerian capital and is approximately 270 kilometers away from it. It is bordered by Guelma and Tissemsilt to the north, Djelfa to the east, Mascara and Saïda to the west, and El Bayadh and El Oued to the south (see Map 01). It is characterized by the presence of a mountain range known as the Tiaret Highlands, which are confined between 1000 and 1200 meters above sea level (Barlette Henri, 1912, p. 317). They consist of a series of hills that extend to

the Nador Mountains and the Frandah Highlands, with plateaus stretching from the Nador Mountains to the Amoura Mountains (Rabert Fossier, 1951, p. 37). Its area is estimated to be 20,673 square kilometers (Marc André Fabre, 1902, p. 261), placing it in a central position between the hills and the desert. This position has granted it dominance over a significant part of the vast Saharan region. Additionally, it overlooks the road that runs from the hill region down to the Chelif Valley leading to the sea and opens southward towards the desert (Bouanani Arabi, 2018-2019, p. 13).

3- The Astronomical Location of Tiaret:

Tiaret is astronomically situated in the fourth region, with a latitude of thirty-eight degrees (Ya'qub al-Hamawi, 1997, p. 08). In this position, it lies between the hills and the desert. It benefits from the fertility and mildness of the climate from the hills and the healthy atmosphere and semi-arid climate from the desert. Its location between the Atlas Mountains and the fertile hill regions has enabled it to dominate the lands of Morocco from all four directions. It is neither too extreme in the south nor in the north. Additionally, its geographical location places it in the middle between the Farthest Morocco and the Lowest Morocco (Al-Hassani Mukhtar, 2007, p. 289) (see Map 02).

Map 01: Topographic location of Tiaret.



Source: Land Survey Department of the Wilaya of Tiaret.

4- Surface Features and Topography of Tiaret:

The Tiaret region can be divided into two parts in terms of surface features:

1. The mountainous area in the north and northwest, which includes a winding mountain range with low elevation, including Jebel Sidi El-Abid and the Nador Mountains. The Nador Mountains reach a height of 1530 meters at the summit of Ras Fertas. This area served as a refuge for Emir Abdelkader when he lost his capital, Zemala (Aguila Clément, 2002, p. 35). In the western part, there are plateau mountains that overlook the high plains. Some parts of these mountains experienced minor fractures and twists, resulting in an increase in their elevation. This is the case with the Frandah Mountains, which reach an elevation of about 1332 meters.
2. In the southern direction, there are plains and interior basins that extend from the southwest to the northeast, following the terrain's direction. These plains are confined between the internal mountain range to the north and the high plains to the south, with elevations ranging between 400 and 500 meters (Perrin René, 1960, p. 63). To the south of the Wanshuris Mountains, there is the Sersou Plain, which is an extension of the plains and interior basins. It forms part of the high plains located between

the Nador Mountains to the south and the Wanshuris massif to the north. It is bordered to the south by the Kujila and Chellala mountains and extends from the east to the west from Bougar to Tiaret (Jules Oget, 1971, p. 28).

From the eastern side, it is connected to the village of Al-Shahbouniya, and from the southwest, it is connected to the eastern shore. It covers an estimated area of 2121 square kilometers and stretches for a length of up to 100 kilometers with a width ranging from 35 kilometers in the east to 20 kilometers in the west (Perrin René, 1960, p. 63). To the south of the interior plains, there are the high plateaus, which are interspersed with concave and convex folds. These plateaus are an extension of the Saharan Atlas Mountains, which separate them from the desert in the south. This discontinuity in the surface of these plains has prevented their water from reaching the sea, resulting in stagnation and the formation of salt marshes such as the eastern shore.

5- Climate:

The climate of the Tiaret region tends to be more arid than humid, except for the plains and interior basins. This area is considered one of the wettest regions in the area, with an average annual rainfall ranging from 400 mm to 667 mm (Ahmed Tawfiq Al-Madani, 1948, p. 28). These climatic conditions have enabled the growth of permanent green forests on the region's highlands. As for the high plateaus, their climate is characterized by high temperatures in summer and extreme cold in winter, with an average annual precipitation ranging from 200 mm to 250 mm. In these plains, steppe grasses thrive. Tiaret, or Tihert, is known for its foggy and rainy weather to the extent that the sun is rarely seen. The site on which the city of Tiaret was established has specific characteristics that are widely recognized. These characteristics can be summarized as follows:

5.1 Abundance of Water Resources:

Two types of valleys can be distinguished in the region. There are closed valleys that are enclosed by mountains and interrupted by discontinuities in the surface of the plains, resulting in the non-reachability of their waters to the sea. These waters gather, stagnate, and form salt marshes such as the eastern shore. There are also perennial flowing valleys that connect to the Chelif Valley, which originates from the Amour Mountains, stretches for 700 kilometers, and flows into the sea near Mostaganem. One of the most important rivers in the region is the Wadi Wâsul, located near the village of Al-Shahboubiya. This river originates near the modern Tiaret Al-Rustamiyah or Tiaret Al-Haditha, and its sources consist of seventy springs, which are the main branches of the Chelif River. Its length reaches 170 kilometers (Jules Oget, 1971, p. 31) and (Ahmed Tawfiq Al-Madani, 1948, p. 22) and (Aguila Clément, 2002, p. 3).

The largest of these valleys is called Wadi Mina, located near the city of Medrissa, with a length of 195 kilometers (Ahmed Tawfiq Al-Madani, 1948, p. 22) and (O.Niel, 1876, p. 85). It passes through the city of Guelma and flows north into the Chelif River. From it, Wadi El-Abd branches off near Tkhamart as well, flowing north and meeting Wadi Mina near Fratasah (Ahmed Tawfiq Al-Madani, 1948, p. 22).

The site on which the city of Tiaret was established is characterized by rivers, valleys, and springs that exhibit abundance and diversity simultaneously. It is situated on the Minas or Mina Valley, from which numerous springs emerge. This valley is considered one of the most important valleys as it originates from Ras Mina and flows from south to north, then westward, passing through Taqdimt. It runs parallel to both Radouach and Jebel Louz, passing by Jebel Mouchir Essafa before reaching Guelma and finally joining the Chelif River near Mostaganem, as described by Ibn Khaldun in his

book "Al-'Ibar." He states, "...it passes through and by the Bataha until it reaches the Chelif Valley..." (Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, 2001, p. 159). The latter is mentioned in most sources by the name of Wadi Mina, which is located to the east of Tiaret, as well as another one to its west. There is also a third river that flows from springs called Tatch, located in its eastern part (Ya'qoubi Ahmed, 1890, p. 149). Consequently, the city is surrounded by rivers. These water sources, along with the springs, are essential for providing the city's residents with drinking water. The people of Tiaret drink from rivers and springs, some of which originate from the desert and others from the Qabli mountain, known as Djazoul (Ya'qoubi Ahmed, 1890, p. 149). Additionally, there is the Sousselem Valley that springs from the Nador mountain range. Its course is irregular, and it is considered one of the tributaries of the Wadi Oued Isser. The latter is also a direct tributary of the Chelif River, with its source located near Tiaret, connected to the valleys of Ouad Bouna and Oued Bouchkif. There is also the Wadi Tiqist, a tributary of the Wadi Rahiou, located near Sidi Lahcen. It receives numerous tributaries on both sides and passes close to Wadi Lila (Cornet André, 1952, p. 05). Moreover, the region is surrounded by numerous springs and wells, such as Ain Ban, Ain El Gharab, Ain El Beyda, and Ain Mansour (Lahcen Rabah, 2007, p. 142). However, most of them have dried up due to the recent years' drought in the area (Rachid Mahouz, 2020-2021, p. 10).

5.2 - Fertility of the Land:

Tiaret is known for the fertility of its land, which results in abundant cultivation and high-quality crops. This fact is mentioned in historical and geographical sources. Al-Yaqoubi describes it by saying, "This land has never failed to produce crops unless affected by wind or frost" (Al-Yaqoubi Ahmed, 1890, p. 140). Al-Bakri enumerates various types of fruits found in Tiaret, stating, "It contains all kinds of fruits, and its quince is as beautiful, tasty, and fragrant as the quince of the heavens, and it is called 'Al-Faris'" (Al-Bakri Abu Ubaid, n.d., 67).

The cultivated area in the Tiaret region is estimated to be approximately 14,700 hectares (Marc André Fabre, 1902, p. 270). The region is dominated by the fertile plains of El-Tat and El-Sersou, known for their fertile soil (Jacqueton Augustin Bernard and Stéphane Gzell, 1909, p. 167). This makes it suitable for grain cultivation, particularly wheat, which has gained fame and popularity in the global markets. A notable reference to this comes from Herodotus, who stated, "...the inhabitants of Africa, by whom the people of ancient Mauretania are meant, are cultivators and consumers of wheat" (Mohammed ibn Abd al-Mou'min, 2010, p. 39). The significance of African wheat is emphasized by Pliny the Elder, who said, "...African wheat was among the world's grains," adding that African wheat ranked third among known varieties and was the best for producing semolina (Mohammed ibn Abd al-Mou'min, 2010, p. 39). This is further supported by the American Consul William Schaller, who noted, "...this wheat is famous in Italian markets, and traders prefer it over other types of wheat due to its quality for making various pastries" (William Schall, 1882, p. 30). Algeria, particularly during ancient times, was referred to as the "granary of Rome" (Mohammed Bouchenaki, 2015, p. 42). Alongside wheat, barley cultivation also received significant attention. This can be deduced from a report by Butan in 1808, stating, "...the agricultural yield of various types of grains ranges between eight and sixteen quintals per hectare in the western region during the reign of Muhammad ibn Othman, the first Bey of Oran, who was rumored to cultivate for his private account" (Mrozet, 1830, p. 292).

5.3- Air Quality:

The city of Tiaret is characterized by its cool climate, abundant rainfall, and snowfall (Mrozet, 1830, p. 67) and (Ibn Azzari Al-Marrakushi, 1993, p. 196). It is said that when some of its inhabitants were

asked about the number of winter months in a year, they answered, "thirteen months" (Ibn Azzari Al-Marrakushi, 1993, p. 198). Furthermore, some sources describe the harshness and severity of its cold weather (Al-Bakri Abu Ubaid, n.d., p. 67).

5.4- Proximity to Grazing and Pastoral Centers:

Tiaret has benefited from its location overlooking the desert, which combines two essential characteristics. Firstly, the gathering of water, allowing abundant vegetation growth and dense foliage. Undoubtedly, this feature contributed to making it an important center for stockpiling. Secondly, it is connected to the nature of pastoral deserts, which has made it suitable for livestock breeding. Tiaret has become renowned for its production of camels and horses, as well as having a significant number of cattle and sheep (Al-Hamairi Mohammed ibn Abdelmounim, 1984, p. 126).

5.5- Natural Security Protection:

Tiaret is centrally located among the neighboring cities of the Islamic Maghreb, positioned in its heart without being at its farthest east or west. The distance between Tiaret and Kairouan Al-Aghlabah is approximately thirty-two stages, while the distance from Tiaret to Fes, where the Adarisah are located, is fifty stages. Moreover, from Tiaret to Bani M'drar, the inhabitants of Sijilmasa, it is around fifty stages (Al-Istakhri Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad, 1870, p. 46). Therefore, Tiaret is situated in an interior region, which primarily implies its distance from the focal point of political tension during its prosperous days (Lakhdar Sefer, n.d., p. 10).

In addition, its location between the mountains and the desert (Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, 2001, p. 126) keeps it distant from the Byzantine threat coming from the northern coast (Lakhdar Sefer, n.d., p. 40). On the other hand, it facilitates the establishment of control over the neighboring desert Bedouin tribes (Ibrahim Bekir Bahaz, 1993, p. 89).

With its positioning between mountains and valleys, reaching Tiaret becomes arduous and challenging due to difficult paths. On the northern slope of one of these mountains, the city is nestled, fortified by a natural wall that is difficult to breach (Al-Yaqoubi Ahmed, 1890, p. 140). In various sources, it is referred to as Jazoul (Al-Bakri Abu Ubaid, n.d., p. 66) or Kzoul (Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, 2001, p. 159), and sometimes as Qarqal (Unknown author, n.d., p. 178) or Qzoul (Al-Hamairi Mohammed ibn Abdelmounim, 1984, p. 126). It is a mountain connected to the Sousse range, known by its inhabitants as "Darn," and Tiaret itself is sometimes called Jazoul (Al-Yaqoubi Ahmed, 1890, p. 146). Similarly, it is referred to as Zab Ouarsis. The designation of Jazoul, according to the people of Tiaret, enhanced the city's security, and its solid fortress served as a stronghold against enemy attacks (Jaljal Fatima, 2012-2013, p. 12).

In addition to being located at the center of Berber tribes, around the Jazoul mountain, there were Berber tribes strongly associated with the Ibadi doctrine, led by the Lamayah tribe. Among them was a great community residing on the outskirts of Tahert, facing the qibla direction. They inhabited the valleys of Minas, situated between a mountain to the east and Warcelif to the west (Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, 2001, pp. 153-154) and (Mohammed Issa Al-Hariri, 1882, p. 86). Thus, Tiaret became the central point of the Berber lands (Georges Marçais, n.d., p. 121), surrounded by the Luwatah and Hawwara tribes to the north, the Zawagha to the west, and within it, there were the Matmata, Meknasa, and Zenata tribes. The city's location was owned by oppressed people from the Murasa and Sanhaja tribes, who reached an agreement with Abd al-Rahman Ibn Rustam to pay taxes to the markets in exchange for permission to build their dwellings (Al-Bakri Abu Ubaid, n.d., pp. 67-68) and (Al-Hamairi Mohammed ibn Abdelmounim, 1984, p. 126).

6- The origin of the name "Tiaret" and its significance:

Tiaret derives its name from "Tihert" or "Tahert," which is a Berber word meaning "lioness." Yaqut al-Hamawi explains the word "Tahert" as follows: "...Tahert, with a fatha on the ha and a sukun on the ra, and a tā' with two dots above it, is the name of two opposing cities in the far west, one called Tahert al-Qadima (Old Tahert) and the other Tahert al-Muhdatha (Modern Tahert). They are separated by six stages between Tlemcen and Qal'at Bani Hammad, formerly known as 'Iraq al-Maghrib" (Yaqut al-Hamawi, 1997, pp. 87-88).

Most explorers and historians agree that the city of Tiaret served as a station and meeting point for trade caravans coming from various directions, from Tunis in the east to Fes, Tlemcen, and others in the west, and the Sahara in the south. Based on this, the meaning of "Tahert" or "Tiaret" can be understood as "station" or "residence." It is commonly believed that the origin of the name is a Zenati Berber word meaning "lioness" (Mohammed bin Ramdhath Chaouch, 1966, p. 18), which was the prevailing Berber dialect in the region during that period (Joudat Abd al-Karim Youssef, 1984, p. 10).

Regarding the variation in the names "Tahert," "Tihert," and "Tiaret," several historians have mentioned these different forms without them having any impact on the meaning of the word. The renowned scholar Ibn Khaldun, in the 8th century AH/14th century CE, referred to it as "Tahert" without commenting on this form. The historian al-Taherti, from the 3rd century AH/9th century CE, used the form "Tahert" multiple times. The same form was used by Sheikh Abu al-Abbas al-Darjini in the 7th century AH/13th century CE, as well as by Emir Abdelkader in most of his writings, except for two instances where he used the name "Tiaret." It appears that this name emerged during the colonial period.

The researcher Ibrahim Bahaz, a contemporary scholar from the 15th century AH/21st century CE, has a valuable study in his book "The Rustamid State," where he argues that the correct form is "Tihert" with a ya replacing the alif, and it was distorted over time (Ahmed Bouziane, 2006, pp. 12-13).

Tiaret was known as "Tihert al-'Ulya," which was an ancient Roman fortress. Its remains were visible until recently, and the French colonialists used it as a base from which their armies launched to control the region. This designation distinguished it from "Taqqadumt" or what was known as "Tihert al-Sufla," which was the capital of the Rustamid State founded by Abd al-Rahman ibn Rustam in 160 AH/776 CE (Abd al-Rahman al-Jilali, 1983, p. 165).

7- Description of the Tiaret region through geographic and historical sources:

The capital of the Rustamid dynasty, Tiaret, has garnered the attention of Arab historians and geographers, who dedicated careful attention to describing its cityscape and urban development. They recorded its news in both geographical and historical works, giving them the advantage of being the frontrunners in introducing Tiaret and its civilization. This necessitated their reliance on these sources to acquaint themselves with the city's location and examine the arrangement of its buildings and the composition of its population.

Al-Yaqoubi described it by saying, "Tiaret, the magnificent city of considerable stature, is of great importance. It is referred to as 'Iraq al-Maghrib,' and it is populated by a mixture of people who are dominated by a group of Persians known as the descendants of Muhammad ibn Aflah ibn Abdul Wahab ibn Abdul Rahman ibn Rustam the Persian..." (Al-Sayyid Abdul Aziz Salem, 1981, p. 543).

Al-Muqaddasi described it as follows: "Tiaret is the name of the citadel, and it is the date palm of the Maghreb. Rivers surround it, trees flourish around it, gardens conceal it, springs flow around it, and the region takes pride in it. Strangers find solace in it, the discerning prefer it over Damascus and Cordoba, and it is a land abundant in goodness, spacious, gentle, with lively markets, abundant water, hospitable inhabitants, ancient in its standing, precise in its description, and wondrous in its portrayal..." (Shams al-Din Abu Abdullah al-Muqaddasi, 1906, p. 229) (Ismail al-Arabi, 1984, p. 143).

Furthermore, in the book *Al-Istibsar fi Ajayib al-Amsar* by Al-Marrakushi, Tiaret is described as follows: "Tiaret, a famous ancient city, large in size, surrounded by rocky walls. It has a formidable citadel, and its market is called Al-Ma'sumah. It is located at the foot of a mountain called Qurqal, and it is situated on the banks of a large river that flows to it from the west, called Mina. It also has another river that springs from converging sources called Tans. Its land and orchards are nourished by this river, and it had numerous gardens that bear all kinds of fruits. It is known for its abundant and exquisite persimmons that surpass those of other regions in beauty, taste, and fragrance..." (Al-Marrakushi, 1981, pp. 66-67).

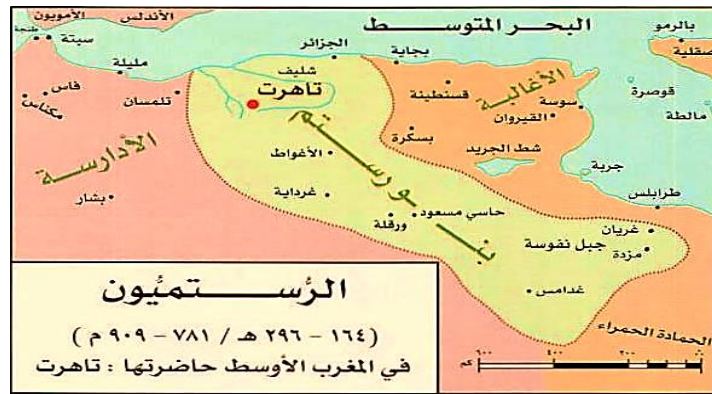
Al-Sharif al-Idrisi described it as follows: "Tiaret was, in ancient times, two cities, one old and the other recent. The old city had walls, and it was a small summit. It was inhabited by a mixture of Berbers engaged in trade, possessing goods and bustling markets. Its land was adorned with farms and vast expanses, producing wheat, horses, honey, butter, and various crops. In the city of Tiaret, there are flowing waters that reach most of their dwellings, and they make use of them. They have gardens and trees on these waters, bearing various types of fine fruits. In general, it is a beautiful place..." (Al-Sharif al-Idrisi, 1989, p. 154).

According to Yaqut al-Hamawi's description: "Tiaret, as described by Yaqut al-Hamawi, is a fortified city with four gates: Bab al-Safa, Bab al-Manazil, Bab al-Andalus, and Bab al-Matahin. It is situated on the slopes of a mountain called Jazul. It features a prominent citadel overlooking the market, known as Al-Ma'sumah. This is the modern Tiaret, located five miles away from ancient Tiaret. It is said that when they intended to build ancient Tiaret, they would construct during the day, but by nightfall, they would find their structures collapsed. Therefore, they built the lower Tiaret, which is the modern one..." (Yaqut al-Hamawi, 1997, p. 88) (Refer to Map No. 03).

As for Al-Hamiri's account: "...and the modern Tiaret is oriented towards Lawata and Hawara in its suburbs, with Zawaghah to the west, Matmata, Zanata, and Meknassa to the south, and the old Tiaret fortress to the east..." (Al-Hamiri, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Mun'im, 1984, p. 143).

Additionally, Muhammad al-Wazan al-Fasi, who visited Tiaret between 1516 and 1520, added: "...Tiaret, an ancient city, known as the capital of Tiaret, was founded by the Romans, according to some, and it was given the name Tiaret by the Afarikas, which means 'ancient.' Its perimeter measures ten miles, as evident from tracing the foundations of its walls. It still contains the remains of two large temples where idols were worshipped..." (Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Wazan al-Fasi, 1983, pp. 40-41).

Map No. 02: Location of the city of Tiaret, the capital of Rostamidin, in the central Maghreb:



<https://www.google.dz>

8- Historical Overview of the Tiaret "Tehart" "Tahart" Region:

The region of Tiaret, with its distinguished strategic location, has been a historical crossroads where no historical link has been severed. It encompasses more than 453 archaeological sites, and it has been inhabited by humans since the Lower Paleolithic period, around 8800 BCE. A significant testament to this is the site of Kulmanta in Sidi El Hassani. Then came the dawn of history, represented by the mosques site in Mashrae Al-Safa. The ancient period is evidenced by sites such as Ain Sbiba and the remains of a wall in the outskirts of Frenda. The Islamic period is represented by the medina of Ibn Khaldun in the outskirts of Frenda. The modern period is witnessed by Takhadamt, the capital of Emir Abdelkader, and the ancient mosque in the city center (Rachid Mahouz, 2020-2021, p. 13). We will delve further into these historical stages, starting with:

8.1. Prehistoric Period:

Tiaret has been an integral part of the Islamic Maghreb and North Africa, witnessing the succession of several civilizations since prehistoric times, including the Middle and Late Neolithic periods. These periods extend from 8000 to 3000 BCE, as evidenced by numerous archaeological sites in Tiaret, such as the site of "Kharba Ouled Bouziane" and the site of "Kulmanta" in the Dhroum district (Fouzia Saad Boujelaba, 2016, pp. 77-78). Other ancient remains dating back to the Neolithic era have also been discovered, including rock engravings located kilometers east of the city. These engravings resemble those found in Fezzan, southern Morocco, depicting extinct animals or those that migrated to other regions. They also depict human settlements reflecting primitive religious rituals. In the Qartoufa region, on the road to Mostaganem, one of the most important archaeological sites can be found. It consists of a flat rock with three interconnected basins through channels, known as the Sacrifice Rock or the ancient stone monument (Khenfar Habib, 2007-2008, p. 4). There are other sites that have not been studied, leading up to the Metal Age and the subsequent civilizations of the Phoenicians, Numidians, and Romans, some of which are still represented by archaeological centers to this day (Fouzia Saad Boujelaba, 2016, p. 78).

8.2. Ancient Period:

The Romans took advantage of the strategic location of the region and established a fortress or citadel in the highlands of the city, which was called "Tingartia." Several researchers believe that this site was an episcopal province between the 4th and 5th centuries CE. The Romans controlled these areas and sensitive sites as a launching point for their military expansions (Fabre M, 1902, p. 46). After the unification of Mauretania in 40 CE, the region remained outside the Roman control until the beginning of the 3rd century CE during the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus. Septimius Severus

was a Roman emperor who ruled from 193 to 211 CE. He was known for his legal and military reforms and defined the powers of the parliament and the influence of the aristocracy (Fabre M, 1902, p. 46). He organized the border roads, extending the boundaries to the south of the city, where a Roman military fortress was built. Currently, there is a military barracks in that location, established since the colonial period in the highlands of the city. A stone inscription confirms this, expressing dedication to the Roman deity by Lucius Verus, who was the adopted brother of Marcus Aurelius and entrusted with leading the war against Parthia. This fortress was initially small, measuring 80 meters in length and 50 meters in width, reinforced with towers and gates. It served as the first nucleus of a residential settlement that gradually expanded, surrounded by pentagonal-shaped walls. Its remains were still present until recently, and the city transformed into a commercial center, housing a public market, as indicated by another archaeological inscription.

Thanks to its favorable climate, fertile soil, and spacious plains, the city expanded towards the southeast slopes of Mount Ghazoul. During the Byzantine era, the city walls reached a length of 400 meters and a width of 200 meters. The metal baths were located outside the city walls, and to the east, there were ancient tombs whose exact historical dating is unclear, but they are likely from this period. In the year 428 CE, the Vandal invasion of North Africa occurred, and their rule lasted for a century. Although there is no evidence of the invasion in this specific region, it is certain that this transformation was not without destructive and damaging effects on the region. Christianity had been spreading in the area for a long time, evidenced by archaeological artifacts such as a rock panel engraved with an image of Jesus Christ in one of the religious structures, as well as another stone panel honoring a priest who passed away in 461 CE.

In the year 533 CE, the Greeks managed to expel the Vandals during the reign of Belisarius. Belisarius was a Byzantine general who led the army under the rule of Emperor Justinian I. He was sent on a military campaign in 533 CE to North Africa against the Vandals (Fabre M, 1902, p. 321). However, the Greeks did not fully establish their control over the region, allowing the emergence of Berber kingdoms. Some of these kingdoms remained loyal to the Romans, while others were powerful and independent from their rule. During this period, remarkable and monumental urban achievements were accomplished, which still exist in good condition despite the destruction and neglect they have faced. One of these achievements is the Berber funerary mausoleums in the vicinity of Ladjdar, located 15 kilometers east of the city of Frennda. There are 13 mausoleums divided into two groups: the first group consists of three mausoleums on Mount Al Akhdar, designated with the letters a, b, and c, while the second group comprises 10 mausoleums designated with the letters d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, and m, located on the peaks of Mount Arwi. This numbering system was adopted by R. Lepelley (Fatima Kadaria Kadra, 1983, p. 08).

9- Overview of Historical and Archaeological Research on the Tiaret Region During the Prehistoric Period:

Tiaret is a vast and diverse terrain area, as it separates between the Tell and the steep upper plateaus. However, the geological aspect has only been studied in recent years. The old research was conducted by Professor J. Walsh in 1890, where he studied the lands surrounding Tiaret and Frenndah during the second geological epoch (Qalmawi Omar, 1995, pp. 73-80). This was followed by another study by M. Kiéken and J. Mani in 1956 on the geology of the plains in the Minah area of the Oran Plateau (Qalmawi Omar, 1995, p. 73).

As for the prehistoric period, it remained largely unknown, and the limited information was in the possession of researchers such as Pallary in 1891-1893 and Fort in 1908. They discovered some

pieces of obsidian material in the Tiaret region. Subsequent explorations took place on-site, and researcher D. Estonié in 1916-1917 managed to identify some small sites that were not mentioned until 1941 (Fatima Kadaria Kadra, 1983, p. 08).

The research field in the prehistoric period in the Tiaret region presents some key features that need to be addressed to understand the depth of the issues in this archaeological area. The nature of its archaeological sites, their difficulty of access and climbing, has been among the factors that did not allow for systematic research with extensive use of modern scientific methods (Qalmawi Omar, 1995, p. 73).

Anthropological studies have confirmed the presence of human beings in this region since ancient times. Several remains have been left behind during the Stone Ages that it went through. From the pre-Acheulean stage, where some typical assemblages of spherical-shaped elements were collected on the banks of the Wadi Oued El Hassani near Sidi El Hassani, to the Acheulean stage, especially those found along the Wadi Merguejja and Wadi Bou Guerara, and then the Atérien stage, particularly those in the Kodiat Bou Guerara and Qertoufa areas. The Moroccan Iberian industry and its evidence were found in Keloumnahta near Sidi El Hassani and Ain Kheda near Qertoufa, along with Dhemouni and some other suburbs. These latter stages represent advancements compared to what was found in Kaf El Karam near El Nadour. Finally, the modern stage was represented by surface stations and others in rock shelters with polished stone and bone industries (Qalmawi Omar, 1995, p. 76).

Inasmuch as human remains are concerned, they have been found to a significant extent, especially those dating back to the post-Old Stone Age period at the Ain Kheda site, the Cubitus-Zend station, Ain Cherita, which belong to the Homo sapiens species known as the Arab Bedouin (Qalmawi Omar, 1995, p. 77). A list of some animal remains was organized by Doumergue F in 1937, recording 20 species of mammals, two bird species, and a reptile. The study conducted by Professor Y. Chaid-Saoudi focused on the remains of local equines, representing two new species: Caballine and Asinienne (Qalmawi Omar, 1995, p. 77). In general, it can be said that most of the studies conducted previously in the Tiaret province or other regions were limited to the establishment of normative lists devoid of systematic scientific analyses. Such analyses, which are essential, provide data based on more than just the relative frequency of various types of tools collected from the sites (Qalmawi Omar, 1995, p. 75).

10- Historical Landmarks and Archaeological Sites in Tiaret through Field Studies and Research.

The historical landmarks and archaeological sites in Tiaret, through field studies and research, represent official documentation that illuminates human life in ancient times. They stand as witnesses to the cultural heritage left by civilizations that still stand to this day. They serve as a vessel containing pristine images that express the various pillars of past life, encompassing political, social, economic, cultural, and religious conditions.

The research conducted by contemporary scholars, guided by the existing artifacts and discoveries, has yielded valuable insights. One of these researchers, Dr. Rachid Bouraiba, concluded in his observations that the Sersou region, where Timgad is located, has been inhabited since ancient times. The fortification wall at Caf Boubekeur, the artifacts and structures discovered in Sidi El Hassani and the Megalithic cemetery of Merâa Es-Sefa, indicate their occupation in prehistoric times. On the other hand, the discovery of ancient remains and Latin inscriptions reveals Roman occupation of this

region. The presence of funerary buildings like the walls also signifies the existence of an advanced local civilization. Finally, the battle fought by Okba Ibn Nafi near Tiaret is noteworthy.

Tiaret has flourished throughout the ages with manifestations of civilization and urbanization, including facilities, hotels, markets, gardens, and abundant sources of water that reached every household. It offered a wide range of products, including fruits, crops, livestock, and horses. Among its most significant material remains, in chronological order, we find:

9.1 Prehistoric Sites:

Humans have inhabited the Tiaret region since the ancient Stone Age, approximately 10,800 years ago. The best evidence for this is the archaeological site of Kolmata, located near the municipality of Sidi El Hassani. Its remains are found on the banks of the "Oousel" River, 30 kilometers east of the city of Tiaret. This is one of the ancient archaeological sites, discovered by the French researcher Pierre Cadenat in 1937. From that time until 1961, several excavations took place, during which more than 118 skeletal remains of men, women, and children were extracted (Marie-Claude Chamla, 1966-1980; p. 1849). The site includes two archaeological stations, the first classified as prehistoric remains, while the second dates back to the ancient period, representing an industrial stage in prehistoric times.

Station 1: Numerous remains dating back to the period after the ancient Stone Age have been discovered at this site. These include skeletal remains of Homo sapiens, the oldest known human in ancient Morocco (Gabriel Camps, S-D, P 24-25). The remains include stone platforms and burial remnants found in the municipality of Sidi El Hassani.

Kaf Boubakar Archaeological Site: Located north of the village of Ouled Mezab in the municipality of Dhemouni, east of the city of Tiaret, this site is a station for rock art that showcases the artistic genius of prehistoric humans. It dates back to the prehistoric period, between 6000 and 1000 BCE, according to the technical documentation of this site (Fatima Kadaria Kadra, 1983, P05).

The site contains a station for rock art, which is one of the most magnificent and richest decorative stations reflecting the artistic brilliance of humans in that region. These rock art drawings are distributed across a series of murals, with the first ones located at the bottom of one of Kaf Boubakar's shelters. They measure 21 meters in length and 1.6 meters in width, depicting human and animal motifs (Cdénat .P, 1956, 1956). This site comprises four distinct murals within a rock shelter spanning 25 meters, representing four periods: "Cattle," "Shepherds," "Horses," and "Simple Techniques," according to the same documentation. This archaeological site faces natural and human factors that have caused the disappearance and erosion of many of these engravings.

– **Wadi Sefalu Petroglyph:** These engravings were discovered by R. De Bayle des Hermens in 1956. They are located on the right side of the valley, between Jebel Sefalu and Jebel Azwaniah. The site comprises three shelters where various human and animal engravings, geometric shapes, Libyan inscriptions, and symbolic drawings were found. These engravings are attributed to prehistoric humans (De Bayle, Rd.H.R, 1955; P 327-342).

– **Columenata Castle:** This memorial monument is situated in the heights of Rawawa in the municipality of Sabet. It was built on a high mound and may have served as a defensive structure surrounded by defensive walls from various directions. Its proximity to water sources indicates the long-standing human presence and civilization in the area.

9.2. Tiaret during the Prehistoric Period:

There is a unique archaeological site that bears witness to human presence in the area. It is the site of Souamaa or Dolmen, located in the outskirts of the municipality of M'Serfa, specifically in the northwest of the Tiaret province, approximately 40 kilometers away.

M'Serfa Site: It is situated on the outskirts of Wadi Mina and occupies vast areas divided into four cemeteries, three of which are main cemeteries consisting of funerary monuments and tombs. It is one of the largest megalithic cemeteries, characterized by massive flat stones erected in the form of sturdy rectangular bases. Its history dates back to the Middle Stone Age, and inside, pottery vessels and Latin inscriptions have been discovered (M.R de Blanchère, 1882; P 391).

Qatufa Site: Qatufa is located west of the city of Tiaret, approximately 8 kilometers away. The site features massive stones with thickness ranging from 1.7 meters to 4 meters, with its upper facade measuring up to 10 meters in length and 6 meters in width. It is known as the "Qayid Chamber" and is supported by a 30° inclined base. It contains three interconnected basins, forming an uneven waterfall-like structure that becomes deeper as it descends. On the right side, there are three circular excavations, while on the left side, there are three square excavations. It is likely that it was used as a primitive altar where offerings were presented to deities (M.R De la Blanchère, S-D; P 42).

9.3 - Ancient Archaeological Sites:

Among these sites, some date back to the Roman period, which seems to coincide with the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century AD, concurrent with the construction of the second defensive Limes Line, completed around 201 AD during the rule of Septimius Severus. It passes through Tawkirt Sidi El Hassani Columnata, Tiaret, Thennaya, Sbeïba, and Takhmart (Prokoryon Caves), which are key centers (Mohamed El Bachir Cheniti, 2003, p. 124). The rectangular-shaped Cohor Breucorum camp, with dimensions of 145x90 meters, features circular towers with a diameter of 4.8 meters at each corner. The walls of the camp were constructed using large stones supported by stones, with a thickness ranging from 1.9 to 2 meters.

The Romans also focused on constructing roads and placing military landmarks, which are carved stones with inscriptions found in the outskirts of Takhmart. They are flat stones measuring up to 1.53 meters in height, 0.55 meters in width, and 0.20 meters in thickness, dating back to the year 270 AD. Other stones in the same location date back to 282 AD, with a height of 0.90 meters and width of 0.5 meters (Abdelkader Sahraoui, 2011, p. 56). In Ain El Hadid near Frenda, a military monument carved from white limestone was discovered on August 19, 1959. It is rectangular in shape, measuring 1 meter in length and 50 centimeters in width (Cadénat Pierre, 1970, p. 119).

- **Tangartia:** These are remains of walls of castles and fortifications that surrounded a Roman-Byzantine city. The thickness of these walls reaches 2.50 meters. Roman bronze and gold coins were also found in the area (Canal .J, S-D; P 03).

- **Taougzout Castle:** Located south of the city of Frenda, about 6 kilometers away, it was built on a rocky prominence overlooking the Taat plain (M.R de Blanchère, 1882; P 32). The archaeological site includes a collection of caves, some of which date back to prehistoric times and were used by humans as hiding places, while others served as ancient Berber dwellings (Mahdi Mohammed, 2012-2013, p. 34). The Romans also built a military fortress there to monitor rebellious tribes from the south. During the Islamic era, Salama bin Ali bin Nasr, the sheikh of the Bani Yadatan tribe during the reign of Abdul Qawi bin al-Abbas, fortified it. His descendants from the Buhadah tribe succeeded him, and they were known as the Bani Salama (Al-Mili Mubarak Mohammed, 2004, p. 471). In 1375

AD, a refugee settled with the Ouled Arif tribe and established his castle there, using it as a place to write poetry (Al-Hajari Mohammed Taha, n.d., pp. 123-124).

One of the most important excavations and discoveries in this area was conducted by French lieutenant Ford in 1883, which resulted in the discovery of jewelry, earrings, bracelets, and geometrically decorated pottery similar to those found in the current Kabylia region (Fatima Kadaria Kadra, 1983; P 08).

- **Ain Sbeïba:** In Arabic, it means "the spring of raisins." It is located 7 kilometers south of the city of Frenda and is known for its abundant water sources, considered to have some of the best water in the world (M.R de Blanchère, 1882, p. 38). The Romans built a military fortress there, which has a rectangular shape with dimensions of 500 x 340 meters. In the center of the site, there is a forum, from which three main roads lead: one towards Taougzout, another towards Saïda, and the third towards Ain El Dorham in the east. In addition, there are scattered structures believed to be Berber buildings constructed during the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus (113-211 AD). He oversaw military expansion operations, penetrating deep into the Limes to monitor the movements of rebellious tribes and those opposed to Roman settlement (Mohamed El Bachir Cheniti, 2003, p. 24).

- **Al-Ajdar:** It is an Arabic word that means "wall" or "enclosure." In colloquial usage, it refers to funerary tombs and graves. These structures were built by Berber Mamluks before the year 544 CE. They consist of a collection of massive buildings located 15 kilometers east of the city of Frenda and 30 kilometers south of Tiaret. There are thirteen monuments in total (M.R de Blanchère, 1882, p. 79; Fatima Kadaria Kadra, 1983, p. 07; Mohamed El Bachir Cheniti, 1991-1992, p. 17).

They are symmetrical and divided into two groups: three of them, A, B, and C, are located on the summit of Mount Lakhder, while the remaining ten are near the Ternaten area, forming a cemetery situated on the top of Mount El Aroui. The walls are based on a rectangular foundation topped with a pyramidal crown with four angles, made of carved stone. Each wall has external extensions with a length of 34.60 meters and a height of 4 meters. Additionally, there is a pyramidal crown covered with carved stone blocks, reaching a height of about 13 meters. The funerary monument itself has a height of approximately 17 meters (Lahcen Rabah, 2007, p. 150). Tiaret was part of the Kingdom of the Ouarsenis under the rule of King Mastigas, who, according to several researchers and historians, was a powerful kingdom that lasted until the arrival of the Muslim conquerors in North Africa (Clavenard, P, 1888, p. 58).

- **Medrousa, or Medghassen,** is an Amazigh word meaning "a city surrounded by walls." It is one of the municipalities in the Tiaret province of Algeria. It is located on National Road No. 14, between the cities of Tiaret and Frenda (see Map 04). The city is home to a group of tombs belonging to the Numidian kings.

Map 03: Location of the geographical study center compared to the Laghdar and Ferndah regions.



Source: Google Maps

The origin of the municipality of Medghassen is the current municipality of Sidi Bakhti, which was established during the administrative division of 1984. All administrative records and related documents were transferred to the new headquarters through the efforts of the municipality's president, Andak Hattab Ahmed. At that time, even the directional sign indicating the location of the municipality had to be removed and relocated to its current position.

The city of Medrousa is located approximately 7 kilometers away from the landmarks of Lajdar. Some researchers, such as Camps, believe that the shrine located in Aurès has preserved its Berber form as "Medghassen." Therefore, it is possible that the names Medrousa or Medghassen are derived from it (Gabriel Camps, 1973, pp. 472-473; Rachid Mahouz, 2020-2021, p. 24).

The term "Al-Jidar" (wall) was used by the local population to refer to funerary tombs. It means "wall" or "enclosure." It can be given the term "Amadghassen" (Medracen), which in Amazigh means "tombs." From there, the adjacent area to the tombs' remains got the name "Medghassen" or "Madrissa." These names can be found in the western upper plains region, heading west, surrounded by fertile plains known for grain production and abundant water thanks to the Mina River (Chamakh Moussa Ismail, n.d., p. 18).

The name "Medghassen" in Aurès has preserved its Amazigh form, while it has been Arabized to become "Medrousa" in the Arabized regions. Ibn Khaldun mentions that the name "Medghassen" was historically used to refer to the legendary ancestor of the Batri branch. Therefore, it is not unlikely that it was also used for the tombs in which prominent figures, princes, and members of this branch were buried. This is indicated by the ancient name carried by the tomb of Medghassen, according to the Bakri text (Fatima Kadarria Kadra, 1983, p. 08).

If future studies confirm the validity of this theory, it is highly likely that the tombs of Al-Jidar were originally named "Medghassen" or "Madaghassen" and later transformed into "Medghousa" (Fawzia Saad Boujelaba, 2016, p. 10).

- Tounina City: The municipality of Tounina is located in the south of Tiaret, the capital city of the province, and is approximately 37 kilometers away. It occupies an important location, bordered by the municipalities of Melakou in the north, Sougueur and Naama in the east, Medrissa and Shehaima in the south, and Medrousa and Frenda in the west (see Map 05).

Map 04: Location of the historic municipality of Tounina.



Google Earth

In the past, it was considered the capital of the kingdom of the Wansharis, with a collection of ancient tombs built in the style of Egyptian pyramids, most likely dating back to the 4th century AD (Mohamed El Bashir Cheniti, 2003, pp. 305-311). Both adjacent municipalities to the site of Al-Jidar or within its geographical area contain a number of funerary tombs, totaling 13 graves, divided into two groups:

- The first group: located on the Green Mountain and arranged according to the Latin letters a/b/c.
- The second group: approximately 6 kilometers away from the first group, consisting of 10 tombs located on Mount "Aroui." These are less significant pyramids that have almost disappeared due to natural and human factors (Cadenat, P, 1957, pp. 77-103).

Concerning these two groups, the tomb labeled as "a" in the first group is the most important and largest. It is called the "Kaskas" tomb due to its shape, with 80 rooms, a length of 48 meters, a width of 45 meters, and a height of 17 meters. It is situated at an altitude of over 1200 meters above sea level, with the entrance facing east (Chamakh Moussa Ismail, n.d., p.19). It is believed that these tombs belonged to the rulers of the Moorish kingdom (Chamakh Moussa Ismail, n.d., p.19).

These tombs were built between the 4th and 7th centuries AD (Chamakh Moussa Ismail, n.d.). They were constructed with a square base made of large stones, topped with a stepped pyramid arrangement of stones, resembling a shrine. The construction materials used included sandstone and limestone. The largest and oldest shrine had 80 burial chambers, and its doors faced east, indicating a connection to the sun. Decorative elements on the exterior walls included plant and animal motifs such as horses, ostriches, and fish. There were also symbols in the form of stars within squares, triangles, and crosses, which could potentially be Christian symbols. These decorations were sometimes raised and at other times recessed, in addition to the presence of Latin letters (Chamakh Moussa Ismail, n.d., p.20).

9.4 - Islamic Period:

Islam reached the region through the leader and esteemed companion, Uqba ibn Nafi', around the year 62 AH / 682 CE. Sheikh Dabbagh, in his book, states, "There was an ancient Byzantine fortress where Arabs, Romans, and Africans fought, but the Muslims emerged victorious. Tāhart was opened, and the esteemed companion Uqba ibn Nafi' stayed there before moving towards Tlemcen and the farthest Maghreb" (Dabbagh al-Ansari al-Asidi, 1968, p. 35).

Ibn al-Raqiq al-Qayrawani recounts the events of the Islamic conquest of the city of Tialet, saying, "When the Romans learned about it (referring to Uqba ibn Nafi's advance), they sought the assistance of the Berbers, who supported and aided them. However, they were unable to withstand their fight

and fled, resulting in their widespread killing. The Romans evacuated the city (referring to Tiaret) and were killed wherever they were found" (al-Qayrawani Ibn al-Raqiq, 1990, pp. 43-44).

Furthermore, Tiaret is considered one of the important historical cities that were established or re-established since the emergence of Islam in the central Maghreb, similar to other cities. After the Islamic West witnessed several revolutions due to the mismanagement of the Umayyad administration in the region, such as the revolution of Abu Al-Khattab Al-Ma'afari Al-Ibadi in the Lower Maghreb. It clashed with the Abbasid state, which sought to suppress the turmoil in the Maghreb. The result was the defeat and killing of Abu Al-Khattab. Following this defeat, one of the Ibadi leaders, Abd al-Rahman ibn Rustam, who was the governor of the city of Kairouan, fled westward. Historical texts mention that he escaped with his son Abd al-Wahhab and his servant and remained in hiding, taking a difficult path until he reached a place called Mount "Sufajj," where some Berber tribes lived. He stayed with them after being besieged by Ibn al-Asha'ath for a while. Then the siege was lifted, and he returned to Kairouan, unable to overcome the mountain's resistance (Rabah Bounar, 1962, p. 197).

As a result, Abd al-Rahman ibn Rustam descended after his supporters flocked to him from all places. He headed towards the plains and founded the city of Tiaret in the year 144 AH. The Sheikh Mubarak describes this state by saying, "Islamic in its jurisdiction, Arab in its knowledge, Berber in its lineage, and Persian in its administration" (Rabah Bounar, 1962, p. 198).

Upon his arrival, Abd al-Rahman ibn Rustam received the allegiance of the tribes of Tiaret and established the Rustamid state, beginning with its capital, "Taqqadumt," located west of the current city. The renowned scholar Ibn Khaldun states, "...and he (referring to Abd al-Rahman ibn Rustam) descended upon their territory due to an ancient alliance between him and them. They gathered around him and pledged their allegiance to him for the caliphate. They entrusted him with the construction of the city, making it the seat of their emirate. They began building the city of Tiaret at the foot of Mount Kzoul. Abd al-Rahman ibn Rustam founded it and fortified it in the year 144, and it prospered and expanded." (Ibn Khaldun, 1981, p. 247).

Tiaret flourished and gained widespread fame, attracting travelers for trade, settlement, and a secure and prosperous life. It became a haven for strangers, preferred over cities like Damascus, Toledo, and Cordoba, as they did not find them comparable. This led writers and explorers to visit and praise Tiaret (Shams al-Din Abu Abdullah al-Maqdisi, 1906, p. 229; Ismail al-Arabi, 1984, p. 143). Palaces, fortresses, and buildings were constructed in Tiaret, all in a state of peace and security. Ibn al-Saghir, the historian of the Rustamid state, said, "No stranger comes to them except to settle with them, and they welcome me in their midst due to the prosperity of the land, the good reputation of their leader, his justice towards his subjects, and his guarantee of their lives and property. Thus, you will not find a house without being attributed to someone from Kufa, someone from Basra, or someone from Qura, and this is a mosque for the people of Qura and their guests, and this is a mosque for the people of Basra, and this is a mosque for the people of Kufa..." (Ibn al-Saghir al-Maliki, 1986, p. 180).

After that long period of the Rustamid state and the immense accomplishments it offered to the Islamic nation, it was attacked by Abu Abdullah Al-Shi'i, a preacher of the Fatimids, where it fell in the year 296 AH/909 CE. They eliminated its followers, and those who remained fled to the desert (Rabah Bounar, 1962, p. 197). Hassan Al-Wazzan Al-Fassi describes it when he visited, saying, "When it was conquered by the Muslims, it returned to being a highly civilized city, housing a large number of scholars and poets. The prince ruling it at the time was one of the Idrisids, the founders of the city of Fes. The Adarisa emirate lasted there for about 150 years before being ruined 'progressed'

during the wars waged against it by the Shi'i caliph of Kairouan in 365 AH, to the extent that visitors now only see the remains of foundations, as I personally observed" (Hassan ibn Muhammad Al-Wazzan Al-Fassi, 1983, p. 41).

Furthermore, after the Rustamid state, the central Maghreb witnessed a succession of several states and kings, starting with the Fatimids, then the Zirid Kingdom, followed by the invasion of the Banu Hilal in the region and its subsequent consequences. This continued until the Almohads and Almoravids, whose rule extended to the far and central Maghreb. Among them, Tahrat was reached through the Banu Tujin, who belonged to the Zenata tribe, and it did not leave any architectural remains except for the exploitation of some ancient fortresses such as the Bani Salama Fortress. During the campaign of the Hafsid dynasty in the central Maghreb and their capture of Tlemcen in 640 AH/1242 CE, they put an end to the independence of this emirate, and it became subordinate to them (Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, 1981, p. 320).

The Banu Tujin also participated in repelling the Crusades under the leadership of Sultan Al-Hafsi Abu Abdullah Al-Mustansir I in 668 AH/1270 CE. After the death of the prince of the Banu Tujin at that time, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Qawi, his sons disputed power, and the collapse of the emirate began. The wars between the Merinids, Zayyanids, and Hafsids had a significant impact on the dispersal of this emirate (Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, 1981, pp. 335-340). Among the most important remains from this period, we find:

Tagdemt: An ancient city founded by the Romans, with a perimeter length of ten miles, containing the remains of two large temples where idols were worshipped (Hassan ibn Muhammad Al-Wazzan Al-Fassi, 1983, p. 40) and (Charles Henry Churchill, 2011, p. 181). It is located west of the city of Tiaret, approximately 9 kilometers away. The site of Tagdemt is a mixture of the ruins of the Rustamids and the archaeological remnants of Emir Abdelkader. According to the accounts of J. Marçais and Dr. Lamar, the excavations conducted at the site revealed the preserved layout of the infallible Rustamid imams in 144 AH/760 CE (Marçais G et Lamar, 1949, pp. 33, 41, 42). However, some historical sources suggest that it was constructed by Emir Abdelkader. It is likely that the prince's fortress was built on the southern elevation of the Rustamid remains, which the prince chose as the new capital after the French occupation in 1935. Emir Abdelkader commenced the construction of Tagdemt in May 1936, as mentioned by Churchill (Charles Henry Churchill, 2011, p. 182). According to De France, by the end of September 1836, and based on the provided information, the latter date seems more accurate. De France was present at the beginning of the construction works. The fortress, which encompassed governmental and civil structures, was built within square walls, housing the industrial complex, the assembly hall, and the current city of Tagdemt, which stretches along the plateau slope (Colonel Scott, 1981, pp. 88-89).

9.5 - Ottoman Period:

During the Ottoman era, the Tlemcen region was under the jurisdiction of the Western Beylik, following the transfer of the second capital from Mazouna to Oran after its conquest and liberation from Spanish control at the end of 1792. Oran became the center of the Western Beylik. Typically, the mountainous areas were outside the scope of Ottoman control, as Turkish tax collectors faced significant difficulties in collecting taxes from the tribes of the Tihert or Tiaret region, who sought refuge in the southern deserts to escape the burden imposed by the Makhzan tribes and the Anqasari army.

During this period, Tiaret witnessed a decline due to various factors. Firstly, the Banu Tujin clans were nomadic tribes whose economic activities revolved around grazing. Ibn Khaldun described them in his book, stating: "...they never left their tents, the vastness of the pastures, or the movements of their journeys, except for calamities and floods..." (Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, 1981, p. 320). Consequently, they did not focus on urban development, except for some fortresses that they repaired (Cadenat, P., 1957, p. 34).

The second reason was the violent policies of the Ottomans towards the inhabitants and tribes of the region in collecting taxes, relying on force. This led the locals to flee to mountainous and southern plains areas whenever Ottoman tax collectors approached. They resorted to a nomadic and unstable lifestyle. During this period, the city of Tiaret transformed into a small village, with most of its inhabitants being Jews who were renowned for their gold and silver jewelry craftsmanship.

After that, Emir Abdelkader transferred the capital of his state to Tagdemt, taking advantage of its naturally fortified location after Mascara fell under French occupation in December 1835. He began to restore his new capital after it was destroyed starting from September 27, 1836. He constructed the grand fortress, which included the prince's residence, the administrative building, soldiers' barracks, ammunition depots, and a smaller fortress with a prison and supply stores (Ismael Al-Arabi, 1982, pp. 172-235).

The French forces, led by General Bugeaud with the assistance of General Lamoricière, advanced towards Tagdemt, the capital of Emir Abdelkader, on May 18, 1841, with an army of 12,000 soldiers. After a week of resistance, the city was ravaged by the French colonizers on May 26, 1841 (Ismael Al-Arabi, 1982, p. 121).

10. Conclusion:

The landmarks of the wall in Jabal Al-Akhdar region are administratively affiliated with the district of Medghasah, but archaeologically they fall under the municipality of Tousnina, where the archaeological site of "Kharbat Bint Al-Zahra" is located. Originally, it was named "Kharbat Bint Al-Nasara," meaning the ruins or remains of the Christians. This site is situated between Wadi Tousnina and Wadi Mina, bordered by Wadi Al-Jad to the east. It is about 1 kilometer away from the landmarks of the wall on the eastern side. This city contained many stones used in construction, both polished and irregular, such as small stones. It also contained many funerary monuments of the Bazina type (Stéphan Gsell, 1911, p. 03).

De La Blanchere mentions the existence of several Latin inscriptions on stones bearing Berber titles and Roman names. These inscriptions have not been found, and there are no images of them in specific reports by the researcher Azema de Montgravier, who mentioned the presence of such engravings. Undoubtedly, this city had many inhabitants under the rule of a Roman emperor (De Bayle, René-Marie, pp. 61-62; 1882).

There are also remnants of a wall next to the current municipality headquarters, and large stones used in a systematic manner can be seen. We had a field trip as part of our work, where the local authorities prepared the site for a cultural event using bulldozers. This led to the discovery of further remains of this wall. This leads us to conclude that the landmarks of the wall were not built in an isolated area as they appear in our present time, but rather they surrounded several ancient cities, such as Ayn Sbiba and Kharbat Bint Al-Zahra. Additionally, the site contained many water sources, such as

springs and valleys. This further confirms that whoever built these landmarks chose the appropriate location for comfort and burial purposes. Even its elevation above sea level is considered one of the highest in the Tiaret province (Rachid Mahouz, 2020-2021, p. 23).

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- * The Tahertian Historian: This distinguished scholar is credited with a significant portion of knowledge regarding the history of the Rustamid State. He introduced us to the Imams of this state and its cultural and economic life in his book "News of the Rustamid Imams." He mentioned in his book that he was contemporary with the era of Imam Abu al-Yaqzan Muhammad bin Aflah, the fifth Imam of the Rustamid State, whose rule ended in 294 AH. See: Qadur Wahrani, "Aspects of the Social and Economic History of the City of Tahert through the Book of Ibn al-Saghir al-Maliki," Al-Tharath Al-Arabi, Quarterly Journal Issued by the Arab Writers Union - Damascus, Issue 106, April 2007 / Rabi' al-Thani 1428 AH, p. 127.
- **Abu al-Abbas ibn Said al-Darjini al-Ibadi al-Tunisi: He lived in the thirteenth century of the Gregorian calendar, born in Nafzawa in Jarid, Tunisia. The exact date of his birth is unknown. He studied in Nafzawa then moved to the city of Warjilah in southern Algeria in the year 616 AH / 1220 CE, where he studied under the scholar Abu Suhayl Yahya Ibrahim. He returned to Jarid in the year 618 AH / 1222 CE, visited the island of Djerba, then settled in the city of Nafzawa, where he engaged in writing and teaching until his death in the year 670 AH / 1272 CE. He authored his book "Tabaqat al-Mashayikh bi al-Maghrib," in which he chronicled the renowned scholars of the Ibadi sect. This book is considered one of the most famous references in the history of the Ibadi sect and its prominent figures. See: Abu Imran al-Sheikh and a team of professors, "Dictionary of Moroccan Notables," Dahlab Publications, First Edition, Algeria, 2000, pp. 181-182.
- ***Kazul, derived from the term "Kazulah" or "Jazulah": A Berber tribe whose main territory is Sus, distributed among other tribes in the central Maghreb. They are associated with Mount Kazul near Tiaret. See: Bouziane Al-Draji: "The Berber Tribes," Vol. 2, Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi, Algeria, 2000, pp. 167-171.

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