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United States Department of State

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

Case No.: 200701753

**MAR 25 2010**

I refer to your letter dated March 11, 2007 regarding the release of certain Department of State material under the Freedom of Information Act (Title 5 USC Section 552).

We searched for and reviewed the self study guides that you requested and have determined that all except one of them may be released. They are on the enclosed disc. One of the guides is being released with excisions.

An enclosure provides information on Freedom of Information Act exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made excisions, the applicable exemptions are marked on each document. With respect to material withheld by the Department of State, you have the right to appeal our determination within 60 days. A copy of the appeals procedures is enclosed.

We have now completed the processing of your case. If you have any questions, you may write to the Office of Information Programs and Services, SA-2, Department of State, Washington, DC 20522-8100, or telephone us at (202) 261-8484. Please be sure to refer to the case number shown above in all correspondence about this case.

We hope that the Department has been of service to you in this matter.

Sincerely,



*for* Margaret P. Grafeld, Director  
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures:  
As stated.

**63934 Federal Register/Vol. 69, No. 212**  
**Rules and Regulations**

Subpart F – Appeal Procedures

§171.52 Appeal of denial of access to, declassification of, amendment of, accounting of disclosures of, or challenge to classification of records.

- (a) *Right of administrative appeal.* Except for records that have been reviewed and withheld within the past two years or are the subject of litigation, any requester whose request for access to records, declassification of records, amendment of records, accounting of disclosure of records, or any authorized holder of classified information whose classification challenge has been denied, has a right to appeal the denial to the Department's Appeals Review Panel. This appeal right includes the right to appeal the determination by the Department that no records responsive to an access request exist in Department files. Privacy Act appeals may be made only by the individual to whom the records pertain.
- (b) *Form of appeal.* There is no required form for an appeal. However, it is essential that the appeal contain a clear statement of the decision or determination by the Department being appealed. When possible, the appeal should include argumentation and documentation to support the appeal and to contest the bases for denial cited by the Department. The appeal should be sent to: Chairman, Appeals Review Panel, c/o Appeals Officer, A/GIS/IPS/PP/LC, U.S. Department of State, SA-2, Room 8100, Washington, DC 20522-8100.
- (c) *Time limits.* The appeal should be received within 60 days of the date of receipt by the requester of the Department's denial. The time limit for response to an appeal begins to run on the day that the appeal is received. The time limit (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) for agency decision on an administrative appeal is 20 days under the FOIA (which may be extended for up to an additional 10 days in unusual circumstances) and 30 days under the Privacy Act (which the Panel may extend an additional 30 days for good cause shown). The Panel shall decide mandatory declassification review appeals as promptly as possible.
- (d) *Notification to appellant.* The Chairman of the Appeals Review Panel shall notify the appellant in writing of the Panel's decision on the appeal. When the decision is to uphold the denial, the Chairman shall include in his notification the reasons therefore. The appellant shall be advised that the decision of the Panel represents the final decision of the Department and of the right to seek judicial review of the Panel's decision, when applicable. In mandatory declassification review appeals, the Panel shall advise the requester of the right to appeal the decision to the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel under §3.5(d) of E.O. 12958.

## The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

### FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Withholding specifically authorized under an Executive Order in the interest of national defense or foreign policy, and properly classified. E.O. 12958, as amended, includes the following classification categories:
  - 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
  - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
  - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
  - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
  - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
  - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
  - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
  - 1.4(h) Information on weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
  - ARMEX Arms Export Control Act, 22 USC 2778(e)
  - CIA Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g)
  - EXPORT Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 App. USC 2411(c)(1)
  - FSA Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4003 & 4004
  - INA Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f)
  - IRAN Iran Claims Settlement Act, Sec 505, 50 USC 1701, note
- (b)(4) Privileged/confidential trade secrets, commercial or financial information from a person
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Information that would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
- (b)(7) Information compiled for law enforcement purposes that would:
  - (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
  - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
  - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
  - (D) disclose confidential sources
  - (E) disclose investigation techniques
  - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

### Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request, excised with the agreement of the requester

# Self-Study Guide: Tunisia



NATIONAL FOREIGN AFFAIRS TRAINING CENTER  
School of Professional and Area Studies  
Foreign Service Institute  
U.S. Department of State

The *Self-Study Guide: Tunisia* is intended to provide U.S. government personnel in the foreign affairs community with an overview of important Tunisian issues related to history, culture, politics, economics, security and international relations. This guide should serve as an introduction and a self-study resource. Tunisian affairs are far too complex and broad to be covered in any depth using only the text in this guide. The reader is encouraged to explore the questions and issues raised in the guide by referring to the books, articles, periodicals and web sites listed in the appropriate sections. Most of the referenced material can be found either on the Internet or in the Foreign Service Institute or Main State Libraries.

The first edition of the *Self-Study Guide* to Tunisia was prepared by L. Carl Brown, Garrett Professor in Foreign Affairs Emeritus at Princeton University

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## Table of Contents

[Maps & Illustrations](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Physical & Cultural Geography](#)

[Questions](#)

[Tunisia in History](#)

[From Carthage to the Arrival of Islam](#)

[The Muslim Period to c. 1800](#)

[Themes for Study & Discussion](#)

[Tunisia in Modern Times](#)

[Questions](#)

[The Protectorate Period 1881-1956](#)

[Questions](#)

[Tunisia since Independence](#)

[Domestic Politics](#)

[Questions & Issues](#)

[Foreign Policy since 1956](#)

[Questions & Issues](#)

[Governmental & Political Institutions](#)

[Economic & Social Indicators](#)

[Questions](#)

[Readings for Self-Study](#)

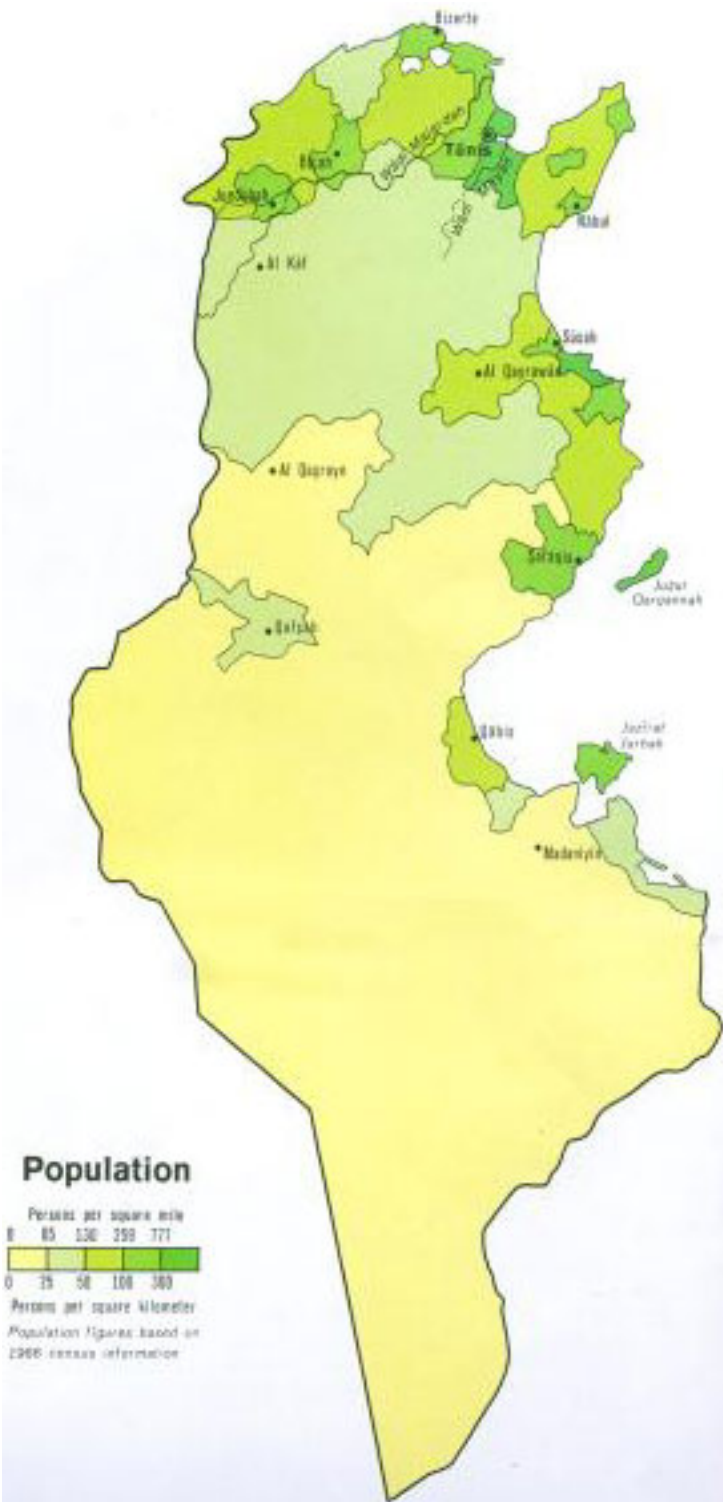
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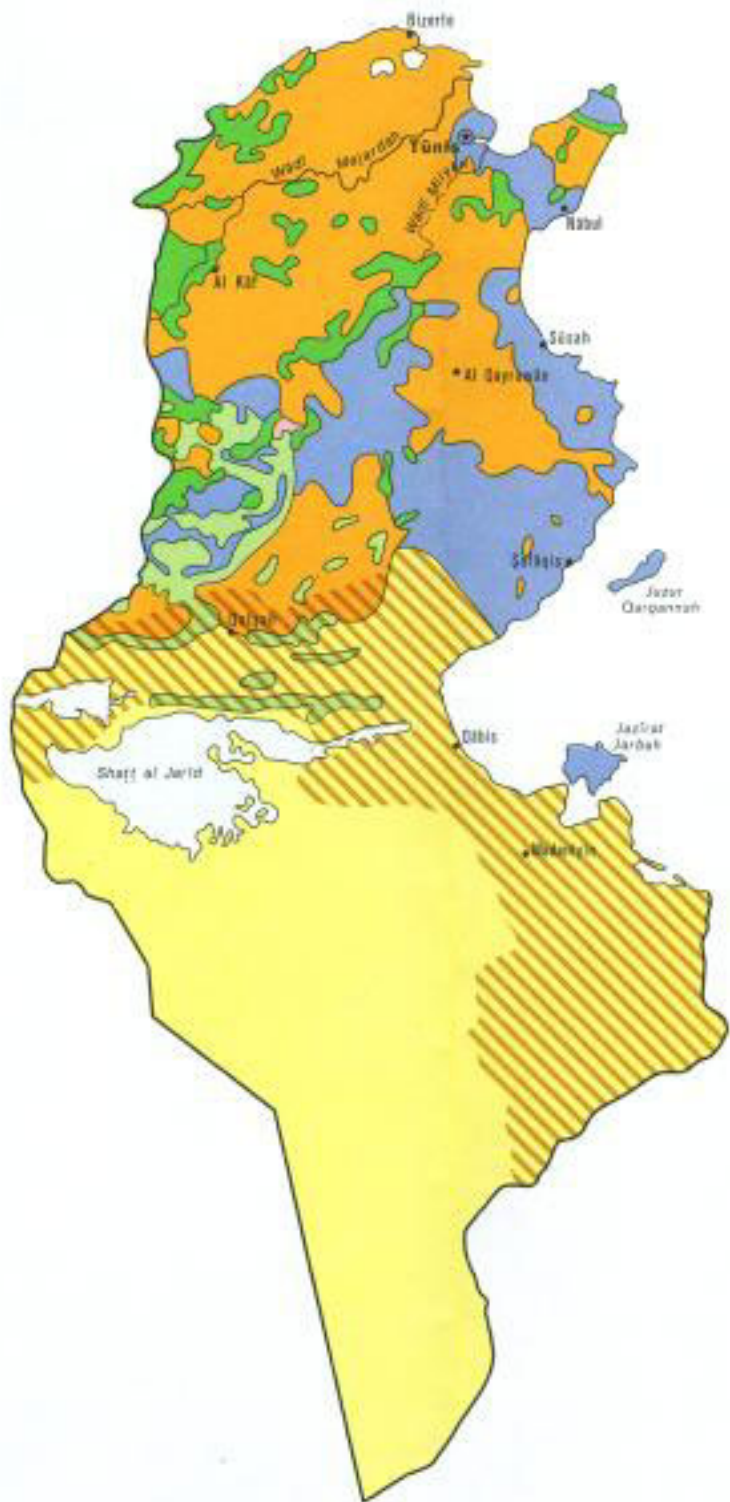
## Maps











### Land Use and Natural Vegetation

- Forest
- Esparto grass
- Grains (primarily wheat and barley)
- Mixed cultivation
- Grazing
- Desert vegetation
- Salt marsh



### Economic Activity

#### INDUSTRY

- Tourism
- Petroleum refinery
- Petroleum pipeline
- Natural gas pipeline
- Steel mill
- Olive oil processing plant
- Superphosphate plant

#### MINING

- Oilfield
- Gasfield
- Phosphate deposits

#### COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE

- Significant olive-growing area
- Significant vineyard area
- Date palm
- Citrus



Street Scene: Sidi Bou Said





Tunis Madina: Zitouna Minaret



Street Scene: Modern Tunis

## Introduction

Tunisia is Muslim, Arab, Mediterranean and African (MAMA). Its population today is almost 100% Muslim and Arabic-speaking. Located in the southcentral Mediterranean area, Tunisia has played a role in Mediterranean history from the time of Carthage to the present. Tunisia is also African or more precisely the easternmost portion of that distinctive geographical area -- the Maghrib.

With an area of 63,378 square miles (164,150 square kilometers) the Republic of Tunisia is slightly smaller than the state of Missouri. Its population of 9,593,000 is somewhat less than that of Michigan. Of the world's 217 states Tunisia ranks 91st in size and 80th in population. In other indices Tunisia fits in the category of developing countries. It has a young population (63.3% under the age of 30), but its present annual population growth rate (1.3%) is fairly low for the developing world (it was 3% in 1966). Tunisia's 1998 per capita gross national product (gnp) was \$2,060 (or \$5,169 in the more meaningful purchasing power parity measure) which places it above its neighbors, Algeria and Morocco but well below oil-rich states such as Libya and the states of the Arabian peninsula. Life expectancy has climbed from 45 years in 1960 to 55 years in 1970 and now, in 2000, 72.6 years.

## Physical & Cultural Geography

Tunisia as a distinctive territorial and cultural entity has been in existence centuries longer than the name. To early Muslim geographers this was Ifriqiyya, an adaptation of the term the Romans used to designate this land -- Africa. It was only from the 16th Century that the usage "Tunisia" began. When the Ottomans definitely wrested this territory from the Hapsburgs in 1574 they established a province that became, somewhat later, the Beylik of Tunis. From this it was but a short step in European languages to speak of Tunisia. As Africa or Ifriqiyya or Tunisia this country is part of the larger geographical landmass, including Algeria and Morocco, that medieval Arab geographers dubbed *Jazirat al-Maghrib* (the Westernmost island). In modern usage this is the Maghrib or North Africa (a confusing usage, Northwest Africa would be more accurate).

The Maghrib thus defined is bounded by the world's largest desert, the Sahara, on the South, by the Atlantic on the West and the Mediterranean on the North and East. Within these bounds a defining feature is the great Atlas mountain chain that forms an obtuse angle extending from the southernmost parts of Morocco in a northeasterly direction through that country, then turning Eastward across northern Morocco and Algeria in two separate chains, the Tell Atlas and the Saharan Atlas. Upon reaching Tunisia, however, these mountains have subsided to become less imposing hills, ending entirely before reaching Tunisia's eastern coastal region. In Morocco the difference in fertility and accessibility between the lands lying northwest of the Atlas chain and those in the southeast shading into the Sahara was such that French specialists during the time of the Protectorate bluntly labeled the former "useful Morocco" and the latter "useless". No such stark contrast is needed to describe Tunisia where mountains only occasionally reach the height of 4,000 feet (1,219 meters). Moreover, in Tunisia the mountainous areas lie mainly in the western part of the country and the more desert-like areas in the south. Although its northern and eastern areas are distinctively "Mediterranean" as contrasted with its drier steppe and desert hinterland, Tunisia's mountains and deserts do not chop up the country into discrete areas poorly controlled from a central point as is the case with Algeria and Morocco.

All three countries have long coastlines, but in Algeria and Morocco the few good natural harbors offer only limited access to the hinterland. Tunisia's almost 900 mile coastline, by contrast, is blessed with several good natural harbors that open to an accessible interior. This is the core area that has provided throughout the centuries, indeed, millenia the matrix for successive political and cultural communities. This core area is the territory lying east of the Atlas mountains that have at this point become hills, north of the Sahara, and open to the seas both northward toward Europe (a scant 90 miles separate Tunisia from Sicily) and eastward to the Middle East. Distances within this Tunisian core area were manageable even in pre-modern times. From Le Kef near the Algerian border to Tunis/Carthage is 280 km. Tunisia's second major city, Sfax, is 270 km from Tunis and readily reached by either sea or land following Tunisia's long coastal area facing east, the Sahil (Arabic = coast). The small town of Bin Gardane, a scant 26 km west of the Libyan border, is double that distance from Tunis (539 km), but Tunisia's core area ends well north of Bin Gardane.

Tunisia's manageable size and geographical configuration helps to explain why throughout history it has been politically organized around a single major city. During most of its long history that city has been Carthage or Tunis (the former now a suburb of the latter). For several centuries following the Muslim Arab conquest beginning in the mid-7th century Qairawan replaced Carthage as the political capital, and



for clear geopolitical reason. The Muslim Arabs, coming from the Arabian peninsula and Egypt, took the desert route avoiding the coast and created Qairawan as their desertport, just as the seagoing Punic invaders, also from the East some 1600 years earlier, made Carthage their principal seaport. The Muslims moved on to raze Carthage, denying it as a base for a possible Byzantine counterattack coming from the sea and established Qairawan (Arabic for "garrison camp") sufficiently far inland (57 km from Sousse on the coast) to be immune from Byzantine naval power. It was only in the 10th Century that the Fatimids moved Tunisia's political center back to the coast, establishing Mahdiya in 912 on a site that had once been a Carthaginian and thereafter a Roman port. By the 12th c. the strategic site in which both Carthage and Tunis are located was restored as the political center of the country, a status that Tunis has maintained ever since.

Tunisia today is a country of considerable uniformity when compared with the rest of the Maghrib or the countries of the Middle East. Its population is for all practical purposes totally Arabic-speaking and 99.5% Muslim. Moreover, except for a small minority of Ibadites (descendants of that earliest schismatic group in Islam, the Kharijites) located in the extreme south and on the island of Jerba, Tunisia's Muslim are all Sunnis. The once significant Jewish minority (perhaps 4-5% of the total population at its peak) has been reduced to a few hundred. The native Christian population that had long existed before the coming of Islam in the mid-7th Century disappeared by the 13th century (unlike the situation in Egypt and the Fertile Crescent where Christian Arabs have remained an important presence, still accounting for as much as 30% of the population in Lebanon and from six to ten percent in the other countries). What might have been a demographic change in modern times with the influx of European Christian settlers coming with French colonialism (1881-1956), peaking at almost 8% of the population, was quickly dismantled following Tunisian independence. Europeans now account for a miniscule 0.3% of Tunisia's population. The descendants of Blacks brought to Tunisia as slaves from across the Sahara amount to only a few thousands in the North, somewhat more in the southernmost areas.

If Tunisia provides a significant geographical and cultural uniformity when compared with the rest of the Maghrib and the Middle East it is not lacking in conditions that hamper unity. No natural geographical boundaries separate Tunisia from its neighbors to the West and East, Algeria and Libya. Tunisia's border with Algeria stretches more than 500 miles. The route following towns lying close to the Algerian border proceeding southward from Tabarka on the Mediterranean to Le Kef, Gafsa and finally Tozeur adds up to 275 miles. From Tozeur southward through the Sahara to Ghadames is almost the same distance, the latter half of that political border being quite literally no more than a straight line across the Saharan sands. The only border that offers any ecological or, for that matter, strategic significance is not that North-South political line dividing Algeria and Tunisia but rather the East-West natural frontier separating the area of hills, plateaux and forests to the north and the arid Sahara to the south. It is, accordingly, not surprising to find that from at least Roman times much of the Eastern Constantinois area of Algeria has often been linked to what was described above as the core area of Tunisia. The political boundaries of the Roman Africa Proconsularis in, for example, the 4th century C.E. extended as far West as Hippo Regius (now Annaba in Algeria), where St. Augustine (354-430) served as bishop. Born in nearby Thagaste (now Suq al-Ahras, in the Algerian interior 68 km from the Tunisian border) Augustine spent many of his formative years in Carthage.

A roughly similar geographical consistency characterizes Tunisia's border with Libya. It is a coastal plain shading into the Saharan emptiness where (until the age of fossil fuels) precise borders were undrawn and unnecessary. Indeed, throughout most of its history what is now Libya has been divided politically and culturally into a western portion (Tripolitania) linked to Tunisia and an Eastern portion (Cyrenaica, or Barqa to the medieval Arabs) that gravitated toward Egypt and the East. Tunisia's political borders as they now exist have, however, remained largely fixed since the 16th Century when the several Maghribi beyliks or deyliks loosely tied to the Ottoman imperium were established.

A geographical contrast within Tunisia is produced by a mountain range, the Tunisian Dorsal, extending from the Kasserine region just north of Gafsa northeasterly across Tunisia to taper out in Cap Bon (Tunisia's northeastern peninsula east of Tunis). The Dorsal, this last, tapering leg of the great Atlas mountains is a chain of hills, not lofty by Moroccan or Algerian standards, but sufficiently high to divide Tunisia into a rainfed North and an arid, semi-desert region to the South. The former, only some 20% of Tunisia's total area, produces more than two-thirds of the country's agricultural product.

Another major geographical region is the long coastal plain facing eastward, the Sahil, extending from north of Sousse to somewhat south of Sfax. This is an area with adequate moisture for olive cultivation and ready access to the sea for fishing and trade. The Sahil was not so fertile as to tempt French agricultural colonists, and the inhabitants of the Sahil with their small holdings almost completely resisted loss of their lands to the *colons*. A scholarly French Protectorate official, Henri de Montety, advanced the theory that the Sahilians, as olive cultivators had learned the economic lesson of delayed gratification, for some 12 to 14 years must pass before olive trees produce their first crop. Although this theory may not appear plausible when applied to the many olive cultivating areas world-wide, it is certainly true that Sahilians, more than any other group of Tunisians, took advantage during the Protectorate of French educational and cultural opportunities and also led the nationalist movement. The Tunisian George Washington or Kemal Ataturk, Habib Bourguiba, was a Sahilian born and buried in Monastir, and most members of Tunisia's first post-independence cabinet were Sahilians as well.

The lack of natural borders dividing Tunisia from its neighbors and the several regional differences within the country only modify slightly the larger comparative theme: With its small size, compact core area and welcoming coastlines Tunisia is more easily governed from within and more open to invasions and ideologies coming from abroad than the rest of the Maghrib or, for that matter, most of the Middle East. Tunisia in past centuries was more quickly and effectively integrated into the Roman world than either Algeria or Morocco, more thoroughly Christianized and then later more readily Arabized and Islamized. To this day the percentage of native Berber speakers in Morocco and Algeria is estimated to be respectively almost 40% and 25%. Tunisia has only miniscule pockets of Berber speakers found, not suprisingly, in the remotest southern pre-Saharan reaches of the country.

Tunisia has impressed observers throughout the centuries as being more civilized (in the measurable sense of being more urban and more settled) than its neighbors. A 14th century Egyptian Muslim traveller wrote "The inhabitants of Ifriqiyya are to be distinguished from the inhabitants of Morocco and all of the Maghrib lands by the gentleness of their character." And in commenting on this passage the French scholar, Georges Marcais insisted, "These are the psychological traits of long-established city

folk, the heirs of societies going back more than 2000 years, belonging to a country where the Carthaginian, Roman, Byzantine and Islamic civilizations have been successively superimposed, a country which owes to these successive rulers the framework, many times retouched, of its urban life." In the early 18th Century a perceptive observer, the Englishman Thomas Shaw, wrote "The Tunisians are the most civilized nation of Barbary. They have very little of that insolent and haughty behavior which is too common in Algiers.... " And the Frenchman Dr. Louis Frank who served the Bey of Tunis in the early years of the 19th Century and wrote one of the most perceptive accounts of that country observed that "of all the Barbary peoples the Tunisians are, in general, the most gentle and the most humane."

Questions:

What geographical factors distinguish Tunisia from its neighbors, Algeria, Morocco and Libya?

It is often observed that states in Africa and the Middle East emerged from the colonial experience with far from "natural" political boundaries. Is this true for Tunisia?

Why has the area of greater Tunis served as the country's political and cultural center during most of Tunisia's history? Under what circumstances did Tunis lose this distinction?

## Tunisia in History

In this sketch of Tunisian history "Africa", "Ifriqiyya" and "Tunisia" will be used as appropriate to the period covered.

From Carthage to the arrival of Islam:

### **Before the Common Era (B.C.E.)**

c. 10th c. Phoenicians founded Utica (village and ruins 33 km from Tunis on the road to Bizerte).

9th c. Carthage (Qart Hadasht - "new city", i.e. as distinguished from the older Utica) founded by Phoenicians coming from Tyre (in modern Lebanon). Legend has it that Carthage was founded in 814 by the Phoenician Princess Dido.

6th c. Carthage's maritime empire controlled the Western Mediterranean from Spain to Western Sicily.

5th & 4th c. Period of Carthaginian conquest and colonization of the Tunisian hinterland and warfare with Greek colonists settled in Eastern Sicily.

The Punic (from Roman name for Phoenicians) Wars between Rome & Carthage:

1st 264-241 Carthage lost remaining hold on Sicily

2nd 218-201 Marked by Hannibal's daring march across Northern Africa, Spain and on to attack Rome (crossing the Alps in 218), but internal divisions in Carthage and Roman generals Fabius and Scipio brought ultimate Roman victory. Scipio defeated Hannibal at battle of Zama in 202 (central Tunisia c.30 km north of Maktar. Precise location of both the battle and the city, Zama, uncertain).

3rd 149-146 Urged on by Cato's ringing demands that *delenda est Carthago*(Carthage must be destroyed) Rome sent its armies to defeat the Carthagians, raze Carthage and establish their capital at Utica.

Early 2nd c. Numidian Masinissa established kingdom posing a threat to Carthage.

112-105 Grandson of Masinissa, Jugurtha, challenged Romans but was eventually defeated. Roman army veterans given lands in Africa.

46 Julius Caesar annexed Numidia and created a Roman colony at Carthage which soon became the capital of Roman Africa. Roman policy of military colonization continued.

### **The Common Era (C.E.)**

1st to early 3rd c. Prosperity for Roman Africa with increased urbanization of sites that had once been Punic cities, e.g. in addition to Carthage, Bulla Regia (160 km west of Tunis), Dougga (110 km west of Tunis), Mactar (157 km southwest of Tunis) and Sbeitla (Sufetula, 165 km south of Tunis).

170 Tertullian b. Carthage. His rigorous interpretation of Christianity presaged later Donatism.

180 First known Christian martyrs in Africa

189-199 Victor I, first pope from Africa

202-203 Septimus Severus first Roman Emperor born in Africa

203 Martyrdom Saint Perpetua and others at Carthage.

248-258 Saint Cyprian bishop of Carthage

4th c. Donatist schism. Donatists hard-liners challenging Church leadership by those Christians who had knuckled under to Roman persecution (under Diocletian, 303-305), even surrendering the Scriptures (*traditores*).

411 Council of Carthage: Saint Augustine prevailed against Donatists

429-543 Vandals invade Africa, seizing Carthage in 439. Although they embraced the Arian doctrine and thus presented yet another schism the century of Vandal rule actually brought enhanced public order and prosperity for a time.

543-mid 7th c. Byzantine General Belisarius led campaign to defeat the Vandals and establish Byzantine rule in Africa.

595 Heraclius appointed exarch of Africa. In 608 he sent his son, also named Heraclius, from Africa to overthrow the usurper to the throne in Constantinople (and release from captivity his cousin and fiancée, Eudocia, and her mother).

608-641 Reign in Constantinople of Heraclius (the son). Hard-pressed by the Persians, Heraclius considered moving imperial capital to Carthage. Church in Africa strongly resisted adoption by Heraclius of the monothelite doctrine and many in Africa tempted to secede from the empire.

641 Constantine succeeded his father as emperor and sought impose Orthodoxy on the now staunchly Catholic Africa. This policy was then reversed following his short reign by his successor.

646 Exarch of Africa, Gregory, proclaimed himself Byzantine Emperor but remained in Africa.

The Muslim period to c. 1800:

647 1st Muslim Arab incursions into Africa. Army of Abdullah ibn Sa`d defeated Gregory who died in battle at Sufetula (Sbeitla). Gregory's captured daughter committed suicide by throwing herself off her camel.

655 2nd Muslim Arab incursion into Africa.

670 3rd Muslim incursion under `Uqba ibn Nafi`. Founding of Qairawan.

681-698 Resistance to Muslim Arab control from areas west of Ifriqiyya by Berber chieftains, first Kusayla (defeated 686) and then the mysterious al-Kahina (the priestess, who may have led a Jewish or Christian tribe). She held out from the 680s until her defeat in 698. Thereafter, Berbers joined forces with the conquering Muslim Arabs, e.g. Tariq and most of the soldiers crossing from North Africa to Spain in 711 were Berbers (the point in Spain where they landed called Jebel Tariq = Gibraltar).

698 Muslim Arab expulsion of Byzantines from remaining (northern) areas of Ifriqiyya.

c. 8th Century Consolidation of Qairawan as capital of Muslim Maghrib. Deemed by many the fourth holiest city of Islam after Mecca, Madina and Jerusalem. Kharijism, a rigorous and egalitarian doctrine and the first major schism in Islam, appealed to Berbers in North Africa causing revolts (c.740-771).

800-909 Period of Aghlabids, a dynasty of autonomous rulers accepting suzerainty of Abbasid caliphs ruling from Baghdad. Aghlabids adapted Abbasid administrative as well as urban and architectural practices to Ifriqiyya. Increased urbanization in Tunis as well as Sousse, Monastir and Sfax. Building of coastal fortresses (*ribat-s*) along the Sahil, remains of which seen today in Sousse and Monastir. Aghlabids achieved conquests in parts of Sicily and Sardinia and raided Rome itself in 846.

909 Fatimid conquest of Ifriqiyya and ouster of the last Aghlabid ruler. The Fatimids (legitimists claiming descendants of Muhammad, his daughter Fatima and son-in-law Ali, should lead the Muslim community as caliphs) had organized a revolutionary movement against the Abbasids in the mountainous Kabylia area (Algeria, c. 100 km east Algiers) and moved from there against the Aghlabids in Ifriqiyya. This was the first leg of their campaign to challenge the Abbasids in Baghdad.

911 Fatimid leader, `Ubayd Allah, founds Mahdiyya.

935-948 Berber resistance to Fatimid rule, at times under banner of the earlier Kharijite movement.

969 Fatimids, moving from Ifriqiyya to conquer Egypt and found Cairo (al-Qahira, "the victorious") left the Berber Zirids to rule the Maghrib from Ifriqiyya (from 972).

972-1050 Zirid rule. In 1050 the Zirids having faced numerous Berber challenges often under the banner of anti-Fatimid Sunnism, renounced their Shi`i overlords, returned to Sunnism and offered allegiance to the Abbasids in Baghdad.

1050 Beginning of the nomadic Bani Hilal and Bani Sulaym invasion of the Maghrib. Muslim historical account assert that the Fatimid ruler in Egypt "unleashed" these bedouin tribes against the Zirids in retaliation for their treason. This westward movement was in reality a great migration that continued over the next century. The introduction of these many Arabic-speaking bedouin accelerated the Arabization of Ifriqiyya. The bedouin also brought a sharp rise in nomadism and a concomitant decline of urban life. Qairawan, sacked by these bedouin, lost its preeminence to Tunis after c. 1057.

1134 Norman King Roger II in Italy and Sicily conquered the island of Jerba. In the following years Normans seized most of the coastal areas from Tunis to Tripoli.

1159 Almohades, Berber dynasty arising from mountains of Southern Morocco, conquered Tunis. The Almohades, with a rigorous, puritanical and messianic doctrine (the founder, Ibn Tumart, was deemed the *mahdi*, the divinely guided), ousted the Normans from their coastal holdings, and reined in the power of the Arab nomads. Almohade rule in North Africa, including Ifriqiyya, lasting until the mid-13th Century, brought the end of native Christianity in North Africa.

1229-1574 Hafsid dynasty in Ifriqiyya. The Almohades gave a member of the Moroccan Berber Abu Hafs clan the governorship of Ifriqiyya in 1206. A Hafsid successor in 1229 declared his autonomy from

the Almohades.

1270 Crusading French King Louis IX (Saint Louis), landing at Tunis/Carthage to seize Ifriqiyya before undertaking a second campaign against the Mamluks in Egypt, died and was buried in Carthage. (During the French Protectorate period the hybrid Byzantine-Moorish style Cathedrale Saint-Louis, on the hill of Byrsa overlooking the Punic ports of Carthage was completed in 1890. Following independence the Tunisian Government, in an accord with the Vatican, converted the cathedral into a museum.)

14th c. Moroccan Berber Merinid dynasty threaten Hafsids in Ifriqiyya twice occupying Tunis (1348-50 & 1357), but Hafsids prevail.

1336 Ibn Khaldun, eminent scholar and historian born in Tunis. His celebrated *Muqaddima* (Prolegomena) is deemed the most impressive interpretation of Muslim history and culture. He died in 1406.

15th c. Peak of Hafsids prosperity. Great building and expansion of Tunis.

16th c. Decades-long struggle between Hapsburgs and Ottomans based on the Western and Eastern peninsulas flanking the Mediterranean, Iberia and Anatolia. For Ifriqiyya the principal events were:

1492 Expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Spain, many of whom came to Ifriqiyya joining those earlier immigrants from Spain who had begun to arrive since the beginning of Muslim decline there in the early 13th century.

1534 Khayr al-Din (Barbarossa), who had taken control of Algiers and proclaimed his allegiance to the Ottomans, wrested Tunis from the Hafsids ruler who then appealed to Emperor Charles V for help.

1535 Army of Charles V expelled the Ottoman Algerian forces and restored the Hafsids ruler (henceforth essentially a puppet). The Spanish built an imposing fortress at La Goulette, remains of which survive to this day.

1569 Ottoman Algerians again conquered Tunis

1573 Don Juan of Austria reconquered Tunis.

1574 Definitive capture of Tunis and incorporation of Ifriqiyya into the Ottoman Empire as an Ottoman province.

1574-17th c. Ottoman Tunisia soon became autonomous. At first the Ottoman-appointed governor (pasha) lost effective control to the Turkish *jund* (army) led by its designated leader, the dey. The 17th c. saw the rise to power of another official, the bey, especially during the period of one Murad (a renegade, i.e. convert from Christian lands, from Corsica) and his son Hammuda (1613-1666). It was Hammuda



who built the Bardo Palace, the official residence of the beys thereafter. From the time of Hammuda's sons and successors it had become the rule that the officer selected as dey must be approved by the bey. The dey's powers declined to become essentially the official in charge of security in Tunis. Both "dey" and "bey" were Ottoman titles.

1609 Many of the Moriscos, expelled from Spain by Philip III came to Tunisia. These years also brought Jews who had settled in Leghorn (Livorno, Italy) after having been driven from Spain during the Spanish Inquisition. Active in Mediterranean trade these new Jewish immigrants to Tunisia came to be called *Grana* (from Livorno) as opposed to the native Jews ( *twansa*- Tunisians).

1705 Husayn b. Ali became the founding bey of the Husaynid dynasty continuing until the beylik was abolished in 1957. Husayn's father was from Crete, his mother Tunisian.

18th c. Succession crises, harsh rule of Ali Basha (1740-1756) and invasions from Algeria, 1735 and 1756, the latter producing as well the sack of Tunis.

1759-1814 Greater stability and prosperity under Ali Bey (1759-1782) and Hammuda Basha (1782-1814).

### **Themes for Study and Discussion:**

1. Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Muslim Arabs, Fatimids, Zirids, Almohads, Hafsid and Ottomans -- all were outsiders who conquered Tunisia. At the same time the capacity of Tunisia to absorb the ideas and institutions coming from outside by contrast with its neighbors (with higher mountains, greater deserts, more nomadism and more isolated territorial enclaves) is manifest. The Phoenicians became Carthaginians. Roman Africa was the portion of the Maghrib most integrated with Rome and, for that matter, more integrated than many Roman provinces in Europe. Christianity was more deeply rooted in Tunisia than elsewhere in the area. The same for Islam and the Arabic language.

Tunisia throughout history has often been able to emerge from its conquered status and achieve autonomy. This happened with the Aghabids in the 9th c. and again when the Zirids renounced the Fatimids and Shi'ism, returning Tunisia to Sunni orthodoxy. The Hafsid, a Berber clan from outside became sufficiently rooted to produce Tunisia's longest dynasty in the Islamic period -- almost three and a half centuries. The "Tunisification" of the Husaynids (1705-1956) followed this pattern.

The extent to which Tunisia in pre-modern times was a proto-nation must not be exaggerated. The nation-state is, after all, a modern phenomenon in Tunisia as elsewhere. The clear difference between rulers and the ruled was eroded only slowly and unevenly in the modern period.

2. Ibn Khaldun's classic interpretation of the rise and fall of states posited less "civilized" folk in the countryside endowed with great group solidarity ( *asabiyya* - a French scholar translated it *esprit de corps*) and brought to a fervor by a religious message overthrowing dynasties ruling in the cities where

they have become effete. This interpretation explains amazingly well much of pre-modern Muslim history and especially Ibn Khaldun's own Maghrib. Tunisia, however, provided not the hinterland base for new dynasties but the settled and urbanized area conquered by the outlander. Thus, the Kharijites and the Fatimids coming from the mountains of Algeria, the Almohades from the mountains of Morocco or the earlier Almoravids (whose conquests stopped just short of Ifriqiyya) from the Moroccan Sahara. Even the Donatist schism, although clearly present in Tunisia (Africa) as well as beyond, was to some extent a challenge by the native population in the countryside to the Roman and Romanized people in the urban areas. No great hinterland challenge creating a new polity arose within Tunisia.

3. Piracy: Tunisia from the Ottoman period until the early 19th c. was one of the states known to the West as the "Barbary Pirates". Tunis, just like Algiers, Tripoli, and Sale in Morocco (the Salee Rovers), did shelter and sponsor piracy, or more accurately privateering. Captives seized in such maritime raids were taken to Tunis to be ransomed or held as slaves who were absorbed into Tunisian society. The mother of Tunisia's Westernizing Ahmad Bey (reigned 1837-1855), for example, was captured in 1798 as a young girl in a corsair raid on Sardinia.

Mediterranean piracy in its heyday from the 16th c. to the early 19th c. was an international relations "system" with its distinctive rules. Piracy in the Mediterranean (and beyond, many of the more notable pirates being from Britain) had existed for centuries. Even Julius Caesar was captured by pirates and had to be ransomed. Piracy was sponsored from both sides of the Mediterranean. The Knights of Malta preyed on Barbary shipping, and in one bumper year (1780) seized 240 Muslim vessels. Pirates from Malta also captured in the last two decades of the 18th c. almost one thousand Tunisians, especially from raids against Jerba, and the gulfs of Hammamet and Tunis. European piracy plus European efforts to bar Muslim merchant ships from access to European ports (often in violation of existing treaties) was part of the system which, on balance, disadvantaged Tunis and the Maghrib more than Europe.

Piracy existed along with trade. Tunis had resident European merchants as well as Christian captives awaiting possible ransom. Treaties with the several different European countries secured immunity of that country's ships from pirate attacks. Often, lesser outside states paid tribute in order to obtain such protection. Such was the case of the early United States.

Piracy or privateering was a form of pre-modern warfare before governments created and supported regular navies. Barbary piracy had a brief final resurgence when Europe was preoccupied with Napoleon, but it was already an anachronism. Thus, Napoleon's defeat of the Knights of Malta in 1798 (while en route to invade Egypt) is of a piece with Lord Exmouth's imposition of the abolition of corsairing on the Barbary States, including Tunis, in 1816. (A footnote to the fate of privateering: Following the Crimean War the states assembled at the Paris peace conference in 1856 agreed to abolish privateering and pressed other states to concur. One state, pleading the possible need to commission and arm merchant ships in time of war, refused to sign this international convention -- the United States.)

## Tunisia in Modern Times

Tunisia at the beginning of the 19th c. had a population of perhaps one million to at most one and a half million. Of this number from two-thirds to three-fourths were sedentary, the remainder nomadic or transhumants. The capital, Tunis, had a population of perhaps 85,000. This was over four times larger than the second city, Qairawan, with 20,000. Sfax may have had 10,000, Sousse and Bizerte possibly 6,000. The great difference dividing the nomad from the settled is illustrated by the *mahalla*, the annual tax collection foray into the remoter countryside which took the form of a military expedition. A scarcely less important cleavage divided the urbanites from the rural population. The inhabitants of the capital were the *baldiyya* (roughly, the bourgeoisie) who superciliously regarded the country folk as *Uffaqi* ("from beyond the horizon").

Ruling Tunisia was a governmental establishment offering a small provincial replica of its suzerain, the Ottoman Empire. The classic Ottoman idea of government sharply distinguished rulers from the ruled. The former were soldiers (men of the sword) and administrators (men of the pen). The latter were *ra`aya* (literally sheep). This clear distinction between rulers and the ruled held sway in Tunisia. Almost all of the ruling class were non-Tunisians. The founder of the dynasty of autonomous rulers, Husayn b. Ali, had, admittedly, been the son of a Turk (from Crete) married to a woman from a local tribe, but the mother of his son and successor was a Genoese slave. And the next three generations of rulers were also sons of either slave mothers or a cousin. So, too, for the army (*jund*). It was largely "Turkish" which meant recruits from outside of Tunisia or their offspring plus a number of recruits from the Berber *Zwawa* (Zouaves) tribe whose homeland was the Kabylia region of Algeria.

The elite of the ruling class were the mamluks. These were Christians taken while young from all over the empire or beyond (e.g. the Greek islands, Georgia, the Caucasus). Later converting to Islam, they were raised to be rulers. Perhaps about 100 in all from "toothless" children to the elderly, the mamluks made up virtually all the military commanders and cabinet ministers throughout the 19th c. even as the "recruitment" of new mamluks ceased early in the century.

The few native Tunisian members of the ruling class were some, but by no means all, of the local governors (*qaid-s*), the scribes (*kuttab*, sing. *katib*) and the local cavalry (*Spahis*). Even the Muslim *ulama* ("learned", i.e. in religious studies) were divided. Although most of the native Tunisians followed the Maliki legal system, the Ottoman Empire adopted the Hanafi system and its *ulamawere* favored as well in Tunisia. (Maliki and Hanafi are two of the four accepted Islamic legal systems -- or, roughly, "codes" for implementing religious law -- in Sunni Islam. Maliki mosques in Tunisia tend to have four-sided minarets, Hanafi mosques octagonal minarets).

Tunisian history in modern times is marked by the slow and sporadic move away from the classic Ottoman pattern sharply separating rulers from ruled -- largely provoked by the threats and attractions coming from Europe. Tunisia was a minor player in that great diplomatic confrontation known as the "Eastern Question". At the turn of the 19th c. neither the Ottoman Empire nor its autonomous parts (such as Egypt and Tunisia) were sufficiently strong to withstand the growing might of Europe, and it was only because the several European states could not agree on an orderly division of the Ottoman Empire that it lasted until after the First World War. Even so, dismemberment proceeded apace -- Greece, the Balkans, Algeria (French conquest beginning in 1830), the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 and the French

Protectorate over Tunisia beginning the previous year, 1881.

Responding to this challenge the Tunisian rulers used the weapons of the weak. The beylik sought to remain loyal to its Ottoman suzerain while guarding against any effort by Istanbul to assert direct control over its Tunisian province (as happened in 1835 to neighboring Tripolitania). At the same time the beylik needed to balance off the contending European powers. Most of the time this involved a cautious acceptance of French support in order to offset the British who in championing Ottoman integrity had no interest in an independent Tunisia. At the same time, the Beylik tried to keep French ambitions within bounds.

Tunisia's rulers also, like their contemporaries in Cairo and Istanbul, felt the need to strengthen their states by adapting European institutions and ideas. This strategy of "defensive modernization" followed a similar trajectory in all three places:

Efforts to Westernize the military, including conscription of the native population and enlarging the military establishment plus bringing in European military advisors, sending student missions to Europe, and working to achieve more self-sufficiency in producing military materiel.

These and other efforts at centralization enlarged government budgets and led by mid-century to a policy of deficit financing by means of European loans at usurious rates. When this brought governmental bankruptcy, the Europeans imposed debt commissions on these countries. These were the penultimate stage before outright European colonial rule, from 1881 in Tunisia and 1882 in Egypt.

More than ideas of military Westernization seeped in during these years. Certain members of the ruling establishment began to think in terms of limiting arbitrary rule with constitutionalism and of strengthening the state by getting the populace involved.

## Principal Dates:

1811 & 1816 Revolts of the Turkish *jund*. In response belik began to decrease size and importance of the *jund*.

1816 Lord Exmouth and British fleet demonstrate before Tunis

1819 Anglo-French naval demonstration before Tunis

1830 Beginning French conquest of neighboring Algeria

1831 Creation of first Westernized military, the *nizam* forces

1835 Re-establishment direct Ottoman control over Tripolitania

1837-1855 Westernizing reign of Ahmad Bey -- Major Events:

1840 Establishment of westernizing Bardo Military School

1840-1855 French military mission to Tunisia. The following years saw a major buildup of Tunisian military at great expense.

Abolition of Slavery:

1841 Closing of slave market in Tunis

1842 Children of slaves declared free

1846 Liberation of slaves

1853 Ahmad Bey radically reduced military to avoid bankruptcy 1854 Ahmad Bey, at great expense, sent troops to join Ottomans and allies in Crimean War against Russia

1857 "Fundamental Charter" (*Ahd al-Aman*). Strong European reaction to summary execution of a Tunisian Jew obliged bey to issue a decree offering basic rights and promising a constitution.

1861 Tunisian Constitution (offering modest but innovative forms of representation and limitations on authoritarian rule)

1864 Revolt throughout much of Tunisia led by Ali bin Ghadhaham protesting increased taxation. Constitution suspended.

1867 State bankruptcy

1869 Anglo-French-Italian financial commission imposed on Tunisia

1873-1877 Reformist ministry of Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi achieved some progress but he was forced out by cabal of European consuls and favorites of the bey.

1881 Having received the green light from European powers earlier (Congress of Berlin) France seized on a pretext to invade Tunisia and impose Protectorate. (Treaty of Bardo)

1883 Convention of La Marsa extending and formalizing French Protectorate

**Questions:**

1. What does the institution of the *mahallat* tell us about the nature of Tunisian government in this period?
2. What strategies were used by the Tunisian government to withstand pressures from Europe and the Ottoman Empire?
3. What is the meaning of the assertion that Tunisia in these years was a part of the Ottoman system in the process of "Tunisifying"?

## The Protectorate Period 1881-1956

Although the formal structures of beylical government remained, France implemented what amounted to direct rule. The French Resident-General controlled the bey, the Tunisian ministers in the cabinet were outnumbered by French ministers and were, in any case, monitored by the French Secretary-General, and alongside each provincial governor was a French *contrôleur-civil*.

Tunisia under the Protectorate attracted many European settlers who came to account for almost 8% of the total population. The early years brought more Italian than French settlers, and it was only in the late 1920s that the French settler population outnumbered the Italian (and then only because many Italians acquired French citizenship). Settlers perforce intensify the colonial experience anywhere. They obtain land and create small family farms or large agribusiness holdings. They open businesses. They demand schooling, housing, medical care, and -- all in all -- a standard of living such as exists in the *metropole*. And as citizens of the *metropole* they have political clout to influence policy. In Tunisia the existence of a large settler population did help to produce economic development, a modern transportation and communications network, good schools and hospitals -- but available mainly to the settler society.

All Tunisians were strongly marked by the Protectorate period. For example, French came to be widely used even by semi-literate Tunisians, but the cultural impact was uneven. A tiny fraction of Tunisian society received a first-rate, French-style education, but at the end of the Protectorate only 26% of the primary school age children and a mere 3% of the secondary school age were in schools. Considerable modernization took place in agriculture, but the modernized sector was not labor-intensive. Thus, only a limited number of Tunisians were involved.

Tunisians responded to the Protectorate along lines similar to what their ancestors had done in the face of earlier invasions. Little resistance was offered to what was rightly seen as overwhelming force, and what little armed response occurred was confined to the remoter southern regions. "Pacification" (that colonial euphemism), a matter of decades in both Algeria and Morocco, was in Tunisia a matter of months.

Thereafter, late in the second decade of Protectorate rule a small group, dubbed the "Young Tunisians" began to campaign for a more liberal Protectorate policy. This small group, more a club than a party, was made up largely of younger members of the pre-Protectorate elite that had rallied around the reformist efforts of Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi. They created in 1896 the *Khalduniyya*, honoring Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), which served as a kind of adult education facility and debating society. In this, they received the

support of the French Resident-General, Jules Cambon, one of the finer examples of a Protectorate effort to win over the native society. Later, from 1907 to 1912 the Young Tunisians presented their ideas in the newspaper *Le Tunisien* (n.b. in French, not Arabic, but an Arabic edition was begun in 1909). The Young Tunisians were at most only proto-nationalists. Favoring the adoption of French language ("instruct in French, teach the Arabic language" one Young Tunisian proclaimed) and methods they challenged the Protectorate authorities to honor their commitment to modernize Tunisia while exhorting their fellow Tunisians to break out of the "intellectual torpor".

The Young Tunisian organization was suppressed by the Protectorate authorities in 1912, and it was only after the First World War that the next Tunisian political movement emerged. This was the Destour, Tunisia's first nationalist party seeking a mass following. Leading the party was Abd al-Aziz al-Tha`albi who had been editor of the Arabic edition of *Le Tunisien*. The clarion call for this new movement was a short pamphlet he wrote published in 1919, *La Tunisie Martyre*. The book took the position that Tunisia was already fit for self-government and had been well embarked on appropriate modernization before being interrupted by the French Protectorate. That the party, organized in March 1920, adopted the name, Destour (more correctly, Dustur, Arabic for constitution) evoked the earlier short-lived Tunisian constitution 1861-1864 which was, indeed, the first written constitution in the Arab world or the Middle East.

Within a few years the Protectorate authorities estimated that the Destour Party had some 45,000 registered members organized in about 60 branches throughout the country. It was an impressive organizational feat, but the Destour remained rather tame, declining to identify with an abortive Tunisian effort in trade unionism in the 1920s, eschewing actions that might spark violence and repression, staying safely within the scope of petition and protest while offering conservative socio-economic positions. The party reflected the traditional values and interests of the *baldiyya* (the bourgeoisie).

Beginning in the late 1920s a group of provincials, especially from the *Sahil*, under the leadership of Habib Bourguiba (1902?-2000) began to challenge the Destour, and by 1934 they had created a break-away party that came to be called the Neo-Destour. Significantly the organizing meeting was not in Tunis but in the small village of Qasr Hillal in the *Sahil*. Theirs was a much more populist vision. They spoke out against the deplorable position of the Tunisian peasantry made even worse by the Great Depression. They supported the more successful effort at trade union organization in the 1930s. And they took risks in confronting the French Protectorate. Bourguiba himself spent eight years off and on in French jails from the 1930s to the 1950s. By the late 1930s the Neo-Destour had emerged as the strongest nationalist party.

Yet, Bourguiba (and here, as often, it is proper to let the man represent the movement) avoided the "all or nothing" tactical trap adopted by many radical colonial nationalist movements. He was willing to move in stages, and early on he worked to win over French opinion by lauding French values and insisting that the Protectorate authorities, the *preponderants*, were out of step with French interests.

Most surprisingly, even after the defeat of France in World War II and well before it looked like the Allies would defeat the Axis Bourguiba from his jail in France smuggled out instructions to party leaders predicting an Allied victory and demanding cooperation with France and the Allies ("Our support of the



Allies must be unconditional"). This was in August 1942.

It would be another 14 years before Tunisia attained independence. Those years witnessed a number of developments. After the Allied forces had ousted the Axis from North Africa ("Operation Torch", November 1942 to May 1943) the French authorities forced the abdication of Moncef Bey, making him the martyred hero. Had he lived he might have been able to lead Tunisia to independence, thereby reducing -- but not eliminating -- the Neo-Destour dominance, but he died in exile in 1948. Bourguiba in the years after 1943 sought support from the British and, even more, the Americans and for a time in 1945 and after looked for help from the newly formed Arab League. The U.S., however, while nudging the French toward reforms was reluctant to play a major role, and Bourguiba found even less help from the Arabs of the East caught up in their own problems and the looming crisis and war over Palestine.

The denouement leading to independence revealed again the Bourguibist capacity to proceed in stages. From 1954 to 1956 independence was achieved through various devices evoking such terms as "autonomy" and "interdependence". The French strategy after 1954 (when the Algerian revolt began) of scaling down other colonist commitments in order to concentrate on Algeria also aided Tunisia as well as Morocco. Algerians and certain of the more radical nationalists in Morocco and Tunisia championed a strategy of a unified Maghribi resistance until all three countries obtained independence. Bourguiba's Tunisia, as well as Morocco, opted to take the independence offered and then pressure France to move toward independence in Algeria. This decision occasioned the break between Bourguiba and his until then principal lieutenant, Salah bin Yusuf. The latter tried to organize armed resistance in the South and thereafter escaped to Egypt where he and his policy received Nasser's support.

Independence in 1956 was not complete. The issues of the large French landholdings and, even more, the continued existence of French troops in Tunisia as well as a major French base in Bizerte would not be worked out until several years later.

## Principal Dates:

1896 Founding of the *Khalduniyya* and beginning of the Young Tunisians proto-nationalist movement

1907-1912 Young Tunisian newspaper *Le Tunisien*

1912 Suppression of Young Tunisian movement

1919 *La Tunisie Martyre* by al-Tha`alabi and Ahmed Sakka

1920 Founding of the Destour Party

1934 Founding of breakaway Neo-Destour Party in Qasr Hillal

1938 Major Neo-Destour-led riots against Protectorate. Bourguiba again jailed.

1940 Vichy French rule in Tunisia following Nazi defeat of France.

1942-1943 American and British troops landed in Morocco and Algeria (Nov) & advanced eastward toward Tunisia. British 8th Army, following victories against Rommel's Desert Korps at El Alamein move westward from Egypt. Surrender of Axis at Cap Bon, Tunisia in May 1943.

1942 Following Anglo-American landings in North Africa in November, Axis occupied all of France (and Tunisia) and released Bourguiba and colleagues from French jail.

1943 Jan-April Bourguiba in Rome. Eluded Italian attempts enlist his support. Returned to Tunisia in April.

1943 May 14 Newly installed Free French administration deposed Moncef Bey.

1944-1945 Ferhat Hached organized *Union Generale des Travailleurs Tunisiens*(UGTT). Nationalist and anti-communist, the UGTT later worked closely with AFL-CIO (especially American union leader, Irving Brown) in organizing the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

1944-1948 Fleeing possible re-arrest Bourguiba left for Egypt, returning in September 1948.

1952 Jan: Bourguiba arrested again. Dec: French vigilante extremists assassinate Ferhat Hached.

1954 May: French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, Indochina. July: Mendes-France governments offers Tunisia autonomy. Nov: beginning Algerian war.

1955 May: Franco-Tunisian agreement on autonomy. June: Triumphant return of Bourguiba from exile. Oct: Salah bin Youssef, opposing autonomy accord, expelled from Neo-Destour.

1956 Following earlier French agreement independence for Morocco France granted same to Tunisia. 20 March: Tunisian independence.

## Questions:

1. Tunisia, like the other North African states -- Algeria, Libya and Morocco, experienced intensive settler colonization. What was their impact?
2. Did the existence of settlers make decolonization easier or more difficult?
3. What distinguished the Neo-Destour from the Old Destour?

## Tunisia since Independence

**Domestic Policies:** The newly independent Tunisian government lost no time in implementing measures that might well be compared in their modernizing boldness to the earlier program of Ataturk's Turkey in the 1920s. A law was passed offering a broad spectrum of rights to women. Polygamy was abolished and divorce was to be regulated by the courts eliminating the man's arbitrary ability to divorce his wife. Moreover, the separate personal status courts presided over by qadis chosen from the ranks of the ulama were merged into a unified judicial system. The venerable religious seminary, Zitouna, and its many feeder secondary religious schools were incorporated into an equally unified national school system. All this clipped the wings of the ulama, viewed by Bourguiba as the spokesmen of a traditionalism that would derail efforts to create a modern state and society.

In the same vein Bourguiba, who had in the early 1930s championed wearing the female veil and the male chechia (or shashia, the distinctive Tunisian soft fez) as symbolizing authentic Tunisian culture, advocated modern dress after independence. Even more challengingly Bourguiba sought to wean Tunisians away from fasting during the Muslim month of Ramadan. Since fasting during daylight hours followed by feasting and celebrating throughout the night reduced productivity for a full lunar month, Bourguiba advanced the ingenious argument that Islamic law excused those engaged in *jihad* (holy war) from fasting and Tunisians, fighting a *jihad* against underdevelopment, were thereby exempt and should put in a full day's work. Fasting during Ramadan, however, proved to be too deeply embedded in the Tunisian's religious and cultural identity. Even Bourguiba's most progressive followers resisted. Bourguiba, ever the realist, backed down.

Impressive steps were taken in education, both qualitatively and quantitatively. A plan was adopted to attain universal primary education within 10 years with an equal push for expanding secondary and higher education. Fully one-quarter of the Tunisian national budget was devoted to education, and it was to be a modern education modelled on that of the French. Independent Tunisia also opted for a de facto bilingualism. The language of instruction in the primary years amounted to a seven to six ratio of Arabic to French, and in the secondary education roughly two-thirds of the instruction was in French. The leadership's drive to modernize, to avoid a lapse into traditionalism, was so strong that not only was Zitouna schooling merged into the unified national system but at a time of acute teacher shortage over 800 Zitouna-trained teachers were released as sub-standard.

A works project somewhat akin to the WPA of America's New Deal days was undertaken, financed in part by US aid. Also, the early post-independence years brought the dissolution of Tunisia's *habous* (the usual term in the Maghrib for *waqf*-- a religiously sanctioned system of mortmain placing the endowed property beyond the hands of either the state or individuals). A *habous* could be public or private. The former was designated for a public charitable purpose (e.g. creation or upkeep of a school, mosque or hospital). Proceeds of the latter went to the founder's heirs, thereby circumventing the fissiparous Islamic inheritance laws. The private *habous* reverted to a public purpose only when all beneficiaries died, and since inheritance could pass on from generation to generation this reversion might well be deferred indefinitely. A case can be made for the institution of *habous* serving the public interest (witness the role

of tax-exempt charitable foundations in the US), but the reality in Tunisia was that *habous* properties were poorly exploited. Their being returned to state control or private ownership did offer an economic incentive.

The abolition of the *habous*, like most of the other projects set afoot soon after 1956 all fit into the clear pattern of implementing party and state control over Tunisian society. In addition to their developmental impact these many radical reforms checked forces in the larger society that might sooner or later pose a challenge to the Bourguibist program. Thus, just as the secularizing nationalization and the unified judicial system undercut the social standing and prestigious job opportunities for the ulama the abolition of the *habous* hit not only the ulama (often earning fees as administrators of *habous* properties) but the middle and upper-class Tunisians who were more likely to seek such shelters.

Even more draconian was the *Haute Cour* that brought to trial not only the followers of Salah bin Yusuf but others who could be branded as having been collaborators during the Protectorate period. Established as early as April 1956 the *Haute Cour* continued in existence until October 1959. Its harsh revolutionary justice (but mild by 20th c. global standards - some 16 executions and several times that number of long prison sentences) might be justified against the Yusufists who were openly at war against the Tunisian government. Less excusable, however, was the deliberate design to humiliate and impoverish those whose major crime was not having toed the Neo-Destour line in the years leading up to the independence. Those so charged and sentenced included three former Tunisian prime ministers serving during the Protectorate years. In any case, the *Haute Cour* did serve to eliminate or cow opponents, present or potential, to the new Bourguibist regime.

Authoritarian centralization was also demonstrated in the tight control that came to be exercised over the several different organizations of youth, students, women, farmers, merchants and the trade unions (UGTT). The latter had the most potential to maintain some autonomy, having achieved considerable organization strength under the leadership of Ferhat Hached. Had he lived he might have been able to withstand Bourguiba's effort to control the UGTT. His successors had no such luck, although they put up more of fight than did the other different organizations brought under the broad umbrella of the Neo-Destour. Such centralizing control did not require all that much pressure or intimidation. Most of these several different groupings of Tunisian society had been created by Neo-Destourians. Their leaders as well as the rank-and-file were ardent supporters of the party and the Bourguibist program.

In this atmosphere the abolition of the beylicate in 1957 and the establishment of what amounted to a "presidential monarchy" was an easy step. Bourguiba moved from being prime minister to become president. The prime minister and the other members of his cabinet were from the beginning essentially subordinate to President Bourguiba, not answerable to the National Assembly. The years 1958-1959 also brought party reorganization that facilitated greater control from the top.

Independent Tunisia did not at first apply centralized control over the economy. This came only in the 1960s and is associated with Ahmad Bin Salah whose rollercoaster political career exemplified Bourguiba's method of defeating would-be rivals but then bringing back into power as chastened subordinates. Bin Salah, as secretary-general of the UGTT in 1956, had sought a more independent line

but Bourguiba handily managed to force him out. Thereafter, deemed broken, Bin Salah was brought back into power as Minister of Health. Then, in 1961 he was appointed Minister of Planning, a newly created position. Bourguiba had been won over to Bin Salah's radical notion of creating a centrally-planned Tunisian economy. Bin Salah seized upon the opportunity offered by the 1964 nationalization of the remaining French-owned agricultural lands to push through a scheme of state-controlled agricultural cooperatives. By the end of the 1960s these cooperatives accounted for about one-third of Tunisia's cultivable land and also one-third of its rural population. Never popular, however, the *dirigiste* venture into agriculture confronted further setbacks brought by a venerable Tunisian phenomenon -- bad weather which produced poor harvests from 1964 to 1968. Ben Salah persisted, even planning to move toward eventual state control over all cultivable lands, but mounting discontent proved overwhelming. The ministry backed down in 1969 and even allowed farmers to opt out of the cooperatives which almost all of them immediately did. Bin Salah was dismissed from office in September 1969, later brought to trial and imprisoned. He escaped prison in 1973 and went into exile.

Hedi Nouira, appointed prime minister in 1970 and serving for a full decade until incapacitated by a stroke in early 1980, brought in a more liberal economic policy. He was succeeded by Muhammad Mzali who served until dismissed in July 1986. Later in September Mzali, fearing a reprise of the Bin Salah affair, fled the country. Bourguiba's shuffling of posts thereafter continued erratically. Less than a year later in May 1987 Bourguiba replaced Mzali's successor, Rachid Sfar, and chose as prime minister Zayn al Abdin Bin Ali who also was the first person of military background to hold this top position. Only four months later, just when it seemed that Bourguiba would dismiss Ben Ali, the latter struck first. In a bloodless coup Bourguiba was declared incompetent to rule. Bourguiba lived on under mild house arrest in his native Monastir until his death on April 6, 2000.

The long reign of Bourguiba was terminated not so much because of poor economic performance. Although there were ups and downs and a few serious riots against the regime (especially in January 1984) Tunisia's economic performance over the long period compares not unfavorably with that of other developing states.

In the last few years of Bourguiba's tenure a few tentative steps away from single party domination were taken, but they proved to be largely window-dressing. More significant was Bourguiba's adamant stand against the small but growing body of Islamists. The Islamist party, for example, was denied the legal status granted several other parties in the early 1980s. The confrontation with Islamists reached a climax in 1987 which brought the breaking of relations with Iran (accused of supporting an Islamist coup against the Tunisian government), Islamist demonstrations and attacks at several sites, and then a trial of 90 Islamists. When the judgments against those accused were handed down in September Bourguiba deemed them too mild (he apparently sought several executions) and was planning for retrials when he was removed from power by the Bin Ali coup of 7 November. Although many observers believe that the Islamists were not a threat and could have been coopted, there is evidence to suggest that by 1987 at least some of the Islamists were planning a coup. The relations between government and Islamists in Tunisia bears comparison with developments in Turkey -- both secularizing regimes whose leaders, Bourguiba and Ataturk, opposed all Islamist tendencies.

Bourguiba had ruled too long, and his radical modernizing program which commanded considerable support in the early post-independence period gradually lost its luster. The man who aspired to make Tunisia a progressive, secular state and Tunisians active citizens, not passive subjects, was clearly better at preaching the message and imposing change by fiat than fostering the institutional development necessary for a functioning democracy. Elected president for life in 1974, Bourguiba became as autocratic as any bey had been. Behind the veneer of a mass party plus the organizations of students, farmers, businessmen, workers, women and many others was a patrimonial ruler who would make or break subordinates at will. And just as with the earlier beylicate an official losing favor might well face fines and imprisonment. Or, fearing worse, he might choose exile.

Bin Ali began his tenure promising moves toward multi-party democracy and liberalization. Over the next few months after November 1987 hundreds of political prisoners were released, including the Islamist leader Rachid Ghanouchi. Steps thereafter were again taken toward a multi-party system, and a small quota of seats in local and national assemblies was reserved for the opposition parties which did not fare well in elections still dominated by the highly organized governing party. Still, the Islamists were kept at bay. Their party *Al-Nahda* (renaissance), which replaced the *Mouvement de Tendance Islamique* (MTI), founded in the early 1970s, was not granted official status.

The governing party received a new name. The Neo-Destour that had become *Parti Socialiste Destourien* (PSD) in 1964 during the heyday of Ahmad Bin Salah was renamed in 1988 the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique* (RCD).

Most of those high officials closely linked to Bourguiba were dropped, and a new leadership emerged made up of technicians and those close to Bin Ali. Steps were taken to prevent another long hold on power such as Bourguiba had achieved. The title of president for life was abolished, and the maximum age for a president was set at 70. A president could be reelected for no more than two additional five year terms. Bin Ali regularized his presidency first in the 1989 election. His two reelections stipulated by the constitution have now taken place in 1994 and 1999 (with over 99% of the vote each time). Now, moves may be afoot to modify the constitution permitting an extension of Bin Ali's rule.

Bin Ali soon developed a very Bourguibist approach to wielding power. The structures of a functioning democracy were in place with assemblies, elections, courts, political parties and many professional organizations, but after the good beginning of releasing so many political prisoners Bin Ali reverted to a pattern of arbitrary arrests. The Islamists were especially targeted, and their leader Ghanouchi who in 1988 had issued the optimistic declaration that the era of injustice was over prudently chose voluntary exile the following year. Secular leaders and human rights advocates were also harassed or arrested, and outsider reports by Amnesty International, among others, present a somber picture. By the early 1990s the number of political prisoners (perhaps as many as 10,000) released by Bin Ali soon after November 1987 was probably matched by almost that number again in jails and often undergoing torture. Even in the late 1990s, after some improvements in response to outside pressures (e.g. the European Union and the US), Amnesty International claimed that Tunisia held at least 1,000 political prisoners.

The Tunisian government's response to its critics is that Tunisia is taking the realistic steps necessary to

stifle disruptive and even terrorist challenges from Islamists, is making steady progress toward greater democracy, and achieving good results in both economic development and social justice. The economic performance overall during the Bin Ali years, with modest steps toward privatization, has been impressive. Many years since 1987 have brought increases in gross domestic product (GDP) of five, six and even seven percent, and the years of lower growth stemmed largely from events beyond the control of the planners, especially that venerable blight affecting all North Africa - a fickle weather that brings sharp declines in agricultural productivity. Unemployment is high -- an estimated 15% of the economically active population, but no more than in many developing countries.

Thus, any evaluation of whether the government is stable and perhaps even popular with the majority of Tunisians must weigh a relatively good economic picture and high participation in local and national elections against the negative factors of Islamist agitation, student protests and the harassment of the regime's critics.

### **Questions and Issues:**

1. Can Bourguiba rightly be dubbed the Tunisian Ataturk?
2. Has Ben Ali merely brought Bourguibism with a new face?
3. Who are the Tunisian opposition forces? Are they united? Are they a threat to the regime?
4. Sketch the different economic policies adopted since independence and evaluate their results.

### **Foreign Policy since 1956:**

Tunisia in 1956 confronted foreign policy challenges not all that different from those facing the Tunisia of past centuries. Tunisia was, as in the past, a small state surrounded by more powerful states. And certain of the states looming large in Tunisia's foreign policy calculations were old familiars. This included France and Tunisia's immediate land neighbors, Algeria and to a lesser extent Libya. The Ottoman Empire was no more but the pressures for regional and religio-cultural loyalty now took the form of Nasserist pan-Arabism. The major new player in Tunisia's international relations game was the U.S.

Independence for Tunisia, and Morocco, was accelerated because France sought to concentrate on the revolution in Algeria (launched the last day of October 1954). The Algerian nationalists (FLN), who would face eight years of war 1954-1962), had wanted a united Maghribi front against France. So, too, had Tunisia's Salah bin Yusuf who had split with Bourguiba and the Neo-Destour on this very issue, rallied an armed resistance in the South, and when that failed fled to Cairo. Thus, Tunisia faced the prospect of regional neighbors who might at least seek to impose changes in Tunisian foreign policy and at most threaten the regime itself. This situation only increased with Algerian independence in 1962 and the advent of Qaddafi's pan-Arabist regime in Libya in 1969. Indeed, the assassination of Salah bin Yusuf



in August 1961, made feasible by a brief period of detente between Bourguiba and Nasser (following the July Bizerte crisis pitting Tunisia against France) was deemed necessary lest, as one Tunisian official starkly put it, "we see Salah bin Yusuf returning to Tunisia in an Algerian tank."

Bourguiba's regime thus sought to demonstrate that an independent Tunisia was better positioned to support the Algerian struggle for independence, and this required diplomatic pressure on France. Tunisia, however, could not afford to alienate the former colonial power. France was needed as a potential counter to Nasserist and other regional forces. Moreover, Tunisia still had to negotiate such issues as continued French forces in Tunisia, the naval base at Bizerte and the status of the agricultural lands owned by French *colons*. And Tunisia relied heavily on French foreign aid and technical support (e.g. some 20,000 French teachers) in those early years, for unless independence could bring in its wake a certain level of improvement the siren song of Nasserist or Yusufist radicalism might well attract significant numbers of Tunisians. The several crises noted in the chronology (Sakiet Sidi Yusuf, Bizerte, etc.) reveal the Bourguibist step-by-step tactics and his occasional miscalculations (as at Bizerte in 1961).

Bourguiba's Tunisia also sought close relations with the United States as well as other Western states. This was a natural extension of the Neo-Destourian tactic since 1940s of seeking to enlist US support in the decolonization campaign. All three parties, France, Tunisia and the US, were caught up in a complex diplomacy: Tunisia solicited American support as a buffer against pressure from France even while working to maintain good relations with France. France was concerned to protect its preeminent position in Tunisia against real or perceived incursion by the US. The US, consistent with its overall policy of insuring that decolonized states of the area would remain within the Western camp, sought to strengthen Tunisia while assuring France that it did not seek to challenge France's position in Tunisia and the Maghrib, even though the overall balance of forces in the area necessarily entailed a decline of French influence. All this took place during the first six years of Tunisian independence in the context of the continuing war in Algeria, the 1956 Suez crisis, and the heyday of both Nasserist and Soviet influence in the area.

Tunisia's pro-Western orientation made for rocky relations with Nasser's Egypt. Tunisia broke relations with Egypt in 1958, claiming to have uncovered a Nasserist plot to assassinate Bourguiba and overthrow the government. Relations were restored after the Bizerte crisis, but another break in relations followed Bourguiba's rash venture into Arab politics concerning the problem of Palestine. In a March 1965 speech given before Palestinian refugees in Jericho Bourguiba claimed that the Arabs should accept the UN 1947 partition resolution and proceed from there in Bourguibist step-by-step fashion to attain the best possible terms for the Palestinians. This created a firestorm throughout the Arab world. Although it is claimed that Bourguiba had received Nasser's support for such a proposal in Cairo before proceeding the Jericho, Nasser was quick to take the lead in repudiating Bourguiba.

Diplomatic relations with Egypt were restored at the time of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, and since Nasserism never recovered from that crushing defeat the old Egyptian-Tunisian tension was removed. By the time Nasser's successor, Anwar al-Sadat, signed a peace treaty with Israel (March 1979) the Arab world in its boycott of Egypt decided to move the headquarters of the Arab League from Cairo to Tunis. Tunisia since has become much more in step with the Arab world. Later, Tunis become the headquarters

of the PLO after it was forced from Lebanon following the 1982 Israeli invasion.

Egypt and the Arab East are, in any case, physically at some distance from Tunisia, and although swaying of public opinion or organizing coups can come from afar more tangible foreign policy challenges come from immediate neighbors. Both Algeria and Libya have been charged with organizing coup attempts against Tunisia, in 1963 and 1980 respectively. Tunisia's relations with Morocco can be seen in part as a balancing against pressures from Algeria. Or, on the other hand, when Morocco agreed in 1984 to union with Libya (never implemented and cancelled by Morocco two year later) Tunisia quickly lined up with Algeria and others to counter the move.

Tunisia had its own brief and abortive flirtation with Libya when Bourguiba, surprisingly, had agreed to a merger with Libya in January 1974. The deal, arranged by Tunisian Foreign Minister Muhammad Masmudi while the prime minister, Hedi Nouira, was out of the country was dismantled upon the latter's return. This set in motion a period of tense relations between the two countries that peaked in the 1980 incident.

Bourguiba's sudden acceptance of union with Libya, often explained as a deviation due to his poor physical and psychic health at the time, does, however, illuminate another theme. Bourguiba desired a role larger than Tunisia's resources permitted. This explains his earlier proposal for a bloc of Francophone African states or his ill-fated 1965 venture into the Palestine problem. And the Tunisia of Bourguiba did achieve a certain cachet (usually quite positive in the West, usually negative in the Arab world) that began to dissolve during the last years of the aging, ill and perhaps senile Bourguiba.

A dramatic foreign policy position taken by Tunisia under Bin Ali was Tunisian disapproval of the US-led actions taken in 1990-1991 to expel Iraq from Kuwait. This stance was popular with the Tunisian public that strongly supported Iraq. As a result, the US cancelled military aid to Tunisia and reduced economic aid from \$12.5 million to a mere \$3 million, and Kuwaiti investments in Tunisia ceased. In the following years Tunisia worked to re-establish damaged relations with Kuwait and the several other Arab states that had supported the actions against Iraq, with some success.

Throughout the Bin Ali years the regime's harsh repression of the Islamists and equally the few liberal critics become a foreign policy issue with human rights organizations and Western governments criticizing these actions. At the same time, however, Tunisia has been able to move forward in its economic ties with Europe. An agreement signed with the European Union in July 1995 provided for a 12 year transition period leading to Tunisia's integration into the European economic area as regards industrial goods with future negotiations planned to cover the agricultural and service sectors. This agreement came into effect in March 1998.

### **Principal Dates:**

1956 March: Independence

1956 Personal Status Code

1956-1959 Period of the *Haut Cour*

1957 Abolition of the beylicate. Tunisia becomes Republic.

1958 Tunisia breaks relations with Egypt

1958 French bomb Tunisian village Sakiet Sidi Yusuf. Anglo-American mediation overtaken by developments in France bringing De Gaulle to power

1961 July: French troops attack Tunisians at Bizerte

1961-1969 Period of Ahmad bin Salah's centralizing socialist efforts

1963 Algeria coup against Tunisia alleged

1965 March: Bourguiba's Jericho speech sparks fierce Arab reaction

1967 Jun: Six Day Arab-Israeli war

1974 Jan: Libyan-Tunisian merger agreement, soon abandoned

1974 Bourguiba designated president for life

1978 General strike severely repressed

1979 March: Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Headquarters of Arab League moved from Cairo to Tunis

1980 Jan: Libya coup against Tunisia alleged. Tunisians trained in Libya attack Gafsa

1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon ousting PLO which moved its headquarters to Tunis

1984 bread riots

1987 7 Nov: Bin Ali replaces Bourguiba in bloodless coup

1988 Socialist Destour Party becomes *Rassemblement constitutionnel democratique*(RCD)

1989 Tunisia joins Algeria, Libya, Mauritania and Morocco to form the Arab Maghrib Union (UMA).

1990-1991 Tunisia opposes U.S. led effort to expel Iraq from Kuwait

1995 Tunisian economic agreement with European Union

2000 6 April Bourguiba dies and is buried in Monastir

### **Questions and Issues:**

1. How have Tunisia's relations with the Arab states of the Mashriq changed since independence?
2. Does Tunisian foreign policy demonstrate a considerable continuity over time not just since independence but since the 18th Century if not even before?
3. Tunisia since independence has been generally well-regarded in the West, less so in the Middle East. Why? Is that image of Tunisia changing and, if so, why?

### **Governmental and Political Institutions:**

Tunisia's formal structures, as set out in the 1959 constitution with subsequent amendments, are those of a representative democracy -- a president presiding over the executive branch, a single chamber legislature, and an independent judiciary.

The reality, however, can at best be called a "guided democracy" in which a strong president, who also controls the monopoly political party, provides top-down governance. The president and the 182 members of chamber of deputies are elected by universal suffrage for five year terms. The president may be re-elected for two additional terms for a total of 15 years. Thus, Ben Ali must either step down in 2004 or push through a constitutional amendment permitting him to gain another term or more. In the last presidential election (1999), the first to have more than a single candidate, Ben Ali won a whopping 99.44% of the vote with the meagre remainder divided between two other contenders.

The president appoints the prime minister and the cabinet, the senior civil and military officials, including the judges, and the governors of the 23 regions. He has the power to dissolve parliament, propose legislation and legislate by decree when the parliament is not in session.

A constitutional provision specifies that the prime minister is responsible to parliament, but in practice both he and his fellow cabinet ministers, many of whom are technicians, are appointed and dismissed by the president.

The steps Ben Ali took after ousting Bourguiba in 1987 to make the governing system more democratic have had slight impact. Another effort to permit a multi-party system (as had been started in the early 1980s) was made, but the only significant opposition, the Islamists, remained expressly barred. The

ruling party, now renamed the *Rassemblement constitutionnel democratique*(RCD), has continued to dominate in all subsequent elections. The six small parties granted legal status under the new dispensation never managed to win all together as much as 10% of the total vote. No opposition candidate has won a seat outright, and these small parties have slight representation in parliament only because legislation has been passed setting aside 34 seats to be distributed among them. All 148 contested seats were won handily by RCD candidates. RCD dominance at the local level is equally secure. In the May 1995 municipal elections opposition candidates managed to win only six of the 4,090 seats cumulatively available and fared only slightly better in 2000 -- 243 of 4,128. The RCD controls all municipalities.

The RCD boasts almost seven decades of institutional history since it was formed in 1934 as a break-away party from the older Destour. As the Neo-Destour from that date until 1964 when it became the Socialist Destour Party (PSD) in 1964 and since 1988 the RCD this party has been a dominant force in Tunisian political and social life. It remains very much a mass party with a membership estimated at between 1.8 and 2 million divided into 7,800 cells which may be either territorial or professional. The last general congress of the party in 1998 (a party congress is usually held every five years) had over 2,000 delegates of whom 20% were women. Moreover, the party has established a loosely implemented series of quotas to facilitate membership of women and youth. Three out of five party members have entered the RCD since 1987.

What might be called the parliament of the party is the Central Committee with 89 members and the executive is its eight member *Bureau politique*. This party organization, in fact, mirrors that of the government in its "top-down" orientation. The central committee and the *bureau politique* are chosen subject to the approval of Ben Ali who is both president of the party and the Republic. The corporatist intertwining of party, government and professional organizations is well revealed in the central committee membership which includes, in addition to the president and the prime minister, all RCD cabinet members (excluding the two non-RCD cabinet ministers), other top government officials and the heads of the several different professional organizations such as the *Union nationale des femmes tunisiennes*.

Tunisia has avoided the burden taken on by the Middle Eastern countries of heavy military expenditures and equally heavy military involvement in politics. Its military expenditures have ranged between 3.6% (1985) and a low 2% (1995) of GNP and its armed forces total a modest 35,000 of whom 23,400 are conscripts. This amounts to 3.7 soldiers per 1,000 population, the lowest ratio in the Maghrib and much lower than in most Middle Eastern states (e.g. Egypt 7, Iran 8.8, Jordan 21.5 and Israel 29.2 per 1,000 respectively). The Tunisian official policy calls for conscription for all 20 year old males for one year of military service, but this can be avoided readily by pleading education, health or family concerns. Bin Ali, as noted, was the first military officer to play a leading role in politics.

Such a small military establishment can not be expected to do more than hold out for a limited time against any potential outside threat until other powers supportive of Tunisia can act. Domestic security forces, on the other hand, are numerous: 12,000 in the National Guard, a force directly responsible to the Minister of Interior, and 13,000 police. This amounts to one police officer for every 380 inhabitants

(compared to one for every 840 in Algeria and Morocco, 580 in Egypt and 318 in the US.)

### **Economic and Social Indicators:**

Governmental and political institutional rigidity over the years since 1956 can, however, be contrasted with considerable change in the Tunisian economy and society. The economy, where once agriculture predominated and phosphates were the largest export, has become more diversified. Today, an active population estimated at three million has:

25% in agriculture

33% in industry

40% in services

Of that total work force 800,000 (27%) are women. As with most developing countries unemployment is a problem. An official estimate puts unemployment at 15.4% of which half are under the age of 25. The actual rate is believed to be higher.

Agriculture now accounts for 25% of the working population but garners only 15% of the GNP. Most agricultural holdings are too small for economies of scale: 80% of the holding are under 20 hectares and only 3% are over 50. Olive cultivation, concentrated in the Sahil, continues to be important accounting for roughly one-third of the cultivated land. Tunisia ranks in most years as the world's fourth largest producer of olive oil.

Tunisia is also the world's fourth largest producer of phosphates, and for a brief time Tunisia has been able to profit from another natural resource -- oil, but only in a modest fashion when compared to neighboring Libya or the states of the Arabian peninsula. Oil was produced beginning in 1966 in the south and during most of the 1970s oil was the principal foreign currency earner, but none of these wells have been major strikes. It is estimated that Tunisian oil reserves may last only about another decade.

The most imposing change has been the rise of manufacturing which is now by far the major export item, especially textiles which in recent years have accounted for roughly one-third of total manufacturing and employs 280,000 workers.

These sector shifts got underway decades ago but received a major impetus following the economic crisis of the mid 1980s and the resulting efforts at moving toward a liberal, market-oriented economy (stimulated by pressures and inducements from outsiders, e.g the World Bank and the European Union). Involved in these plans have been efforts at privatization of state owned enterprises, but this has been slow. The public sector continues to employ 25% of the work force.

These moves toward a more diversified and developed economy have brought in their wake sharply

increased urbanization. Whereas in 1950 urbanites accounted for 25.9% of the total population they are now a sizeable 63%. Much of the change has taken place in the more "Mediterranean" north and east of Tunisia exacerbating the age-old problem of a less prosperous South.

As with all of the Maghrib (and Turkey) Tunisia has a considerable population living and working abroad -- some 610,000 of whom 450,000 (74%) are in Europe (350,000 or 57% in France) and 133,000 in other Arab countries (of which 97,000 in the Maghrib).

Another significant economic and social factor is tourism. Tunisia in the last five years has received annually a low of just over four million tourists to a high of almost five million. The tourist industry provides jobs for some 70,000 Tunisians and brings in as much as 16% of total foreign exchange earnings. Here, just as with manufacturing, the tourist sites are mainly those in the "Mediterranean" part of the country.

Education continues to rank high in governmental expenditure claiming 21% of the budget (6.1% of GNP). Almost universal primary school attendance has been achieved, and some 10% of the university age group are enrolled. Slightly more than 50% of those in higher education are women.

About 3% of Tunisia's GNP is devoted to health, and the decline in infant mortality offers a striking success story: From a tragic 132 infant deaths per 1000 births to 69 per 1000 by 1980 and down to 24 per 1000 in 1999. Tunisia has one doctor for every 1,280 inhabitants.

Tunisians are more mobile, healthier, wealthier, more urban and better educated than in the past. In comparative terms Tunisia ranks above the mean for all Arab states in all such indices (the low ranking of such states as Sudan, Yemen and even Egypt offsetting the higher rankings of the oil rich states), and falls in the middle of the "medium human development" states according the human development index produced by the UN Development Program (2000). Tunisia ranks quite high in estimates of recent developmental progress and in gender issues.

In sum, Tunisia gains a fairly high rating in basic social and economic indicators. As for democratization and advancement of human rights Tunisia presents a much less positive picture.

## **Conclusion: Tunisian Culture**

Here we return to the acronym MAMA with which we began. Tunisia has been a part of the Muslim world since the earliest days of Islam. Tunisians over the centuries have participated in the elaboration of Muslim culture, the mosque-university of Zitouna having played for centuries a role in the Maghrib equivalent to that of Egypt's al-Azhar throughout the Muslim world.

The Tunisian population is not only almost totally Arabic in speech and culture but has been for centuries. Even in the period of the Husaynid dynasty, nominally an Ottoman province, Arabic began to replace Ottoman Turkish as the language of government in the 19th Century. Ahmad Bey (r. 1837-1855),

for example, wrote to the Ottoman sultan in Arabic, pointing out that he wanted to be able to understand the message he was sending.

Yet, in today's Tunisia, in the fifth decade after independence, French is widely spoken, and many of the educated class (especially those born before independence) are likely to express their more serious thoughts and write their scholarly books in French. Tunisia's experience during the 75 years of French colonial rule was of an intensity that belies the usage "protectorate", and although much has faded since much remains. Add to this the many examples of Tunisia's orientation across the Mediterranean to Europe which remains physically and psychologically close. Tunisian emigrant workers go mainly to Europe returning with European ideas and artifacts. Europeans constitute the majority of tourists visiting Tunisia each year just as Europe accounts for most of Tunisia's foreign trade.

As for its African vocation the cultural evidence situates Tunisia within the larger region of the Maghrib, and the Maghrib while sharing much of the history and culture of the Mashriq, the Middle East, is distinctive. The spoken Arabic dialects of Tunisia and the rest of the Maghrib are to be distinguished from those of the Middle East. Architecturally, the Muslim mosques and public buildings carry on the Umayyad tradition as transferred to the Maghrib and Muslim Spain. The traditional Tunisian dress (now often superseded by Western modes) offers subtle differences, and in cuisine Tunisia shares with the Maghrib such dishes as cous-cous and tajin.

At the same time Tunisia's long history plus its striking linguistic, religious and cultural homogeneity make it very much an entity in its own right. Differences of class and region exist, but they are less than are to be found in most countries of the region. Moreover, these differences are largely worked out or fought out in the Tunisian context. The extremes of revolution and violent regime changes are less often to be found than in many other countries of the region, not just in past decades but in past centuries.

Tunisia's authorities like to boast that the majority of Tunisians are middle class, and that is presumed to be a source of stability and even a potential for democratic development. Such a high estimate cannot be accepted, but one interesting indicator merits mention: 78% of the Tunisian population own their own home.

Who are the opinion-molders and culture-bearers in today's Tunisia? Here is a mixed picture. From the earliest days of Bourguiba's long domination of political culture a relentless top-down informational program has accompanied political and social activity. This Bourguibist ideology obviously influenced Tunisians just as its moderation, good sense, absence of conspiratorial thinking, consistency of message to both friends and foes, and overall progressive pitch charmed outside observers. Bourguiba, like Ataturk, sought to be school teacher to the nation. For many years after 1956 Tunisian radio carried daily five minutes excerpts from Bourguiba's speeches addressing all manner of subjects, great and small, intended to guide Tunisians to modernity. A massive effort at the same time to write the history of Tunisian nationalism (which tended to become a hagiographical treatment of Habib Bourguiba) was also afoot.



In the first decades after independence this top-down informational program successfully matched the aspirations of many leaders in the arts and letters who also sought modernization in all its forms including a break with traditionalism, Western-style liberalism, women's liberation. Later, however, daily political life revealed increasing demands for political orthodoxy and Bourguiba's homilies paled, but the habit of controlling the message continued.

Tunisian radio and television are both government operated and controlled. The several French and Italian television programs that are retransmitted are occasionally stopped if they do not meet government approval. Tunisian national television is deadly dull, providing large doses of voice-over depictions of President Ben Ali addressing one or another gathering. Newspapers usually place a prudent governmental spin on their reporting. This makes it all the more important for the outside observer seeking to understand values and ideas to pay attention to those Islamists and others in exile, gauge the extent to which Tunisians follow European media or such interesting Arab media as the Al-Jazeera television in Qatar, and monitor the influence of the internet.

Beyond this, Tunisia today has a small movie industry, several well-regarded artists and writers, and a number of impressive historians and social scientists. A reasonably good effort to revive the traditional arts and crafts has been set in motion without lapsing into artificiality. The same holds for the traditional Tunisian (or Andalusian) music, but in both cases the strong commercial temptation to present kitsch to the tourist trade poses a threat.

That the Tunisian cultural effort continues to be split between French and Arabic may have a diluting effect, but on the other hand the exposure to those ideas from across the Mediterranean sparked some of the most exciting Tunisian intellectual effort starting as long ago as the modernizing political treatise of Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi written in 1867, and continuing with such works as the liberating break with older forms of Arabic poetry championed by Abu Qasim Chabbi (1909-1934, surely the modern Tunisian poet best known throughout the Arab world) or the existentialist play Al-Sudd (the Dam) written by Muhammad Messadi who also served as Tunisia's Minister of Education in the early years after independence.

## Questions:

1. The Tunisian Government would win applause and tangible support from Western governments if it could present a better human rights record. Why don't they work to that end? Do they truly see Islamists and the few other dissidents as a security threat? Are they haunted by the strife in neighboring Algeria since the late 1980s? Or does the legacy of top-down control still dominate their thinking as well as their actions?
2. Assuming the Tunisian ruling establishment is likely to consider only slow, staged moves toward democratization what kinds of steps might be acceptable?
3. How can an outsider most effectively evaluate public opinion and basic societal values in today's

Tunisia?

## Readings

A good self-study rule is to begin with the more general and interpretive sources, moving on from there to the detailed studies. A useful first step, accordingly, would be the country study on Tunisia by Kenneth Perkins.

Several general surveys include Tunisia within the context of the larger Maghrib. Two such histories of North Africa in the Islamic period are those by Charles-Andre Julien and Jamil Abun-Nasr. They are reliable chronological political histories, good to check facts but hardly the kind of book the non-specialist will read through.

More summary accounts, stronger on interpretation and with fewer details can be found in the books by Charles F. Gallagher and Richard B. Parker (who earlier served as US ambassador to Algeria and Morocco). Note also the strongly interpretative history of the Maghrib by the Moroccan Abdallah Laroui. Even more concise overviews are Gallagher's "A Note on the Maghrib" and the chapter by Michel Le Gall. Lisa Anderson has written a fine comparative study of state development in Tunisia and Libya in modern times (1830 to 1980). This is a book that should appeal to both historians and political scientists.

All these books, however, have been published more than a decade ago, some several decades ago, and cannot serve for the most recent times. Two more recent books also deserve mention. One, *Polity and Society in Contemporary North Africa* edited by I. William Zartman (several chapters in this work are cited below). Even more recent and confined to Tunisia is Emma Murphy's *Economic and Political Change in Tunisia*.

As for the basic data on contemporary Tunisia two good reference works updated and reissued each year are the Economic Intelligence Unit's *Tunisia Country Profile* (available on the web) and Europa Publications's *The Middle East and North Africa*. The year 2000 marked the 46th edition, and the editors have this reference work down pat -- Tunisia is covered in 49 small print, double-column pages, presenting a historical summary and especially detailed treatment of recent political and economic developments.

Nor should one overlook the utility of a good guide book. Two can be recommended -- the updated Baedeker and the Rough Guide. The pictures, the maps and the historical information keyed to each site covered should cause either of these books (preference to the Baedeker) to be dog-eared by the end of your tour of duty in Tunisia.

On Tunisia foreign policy see the interesting article by Mary-Jane Deeb on "Inter-Maghribi relations...", a splendid exposition of Maghribi-style balance of power diplomacy, and also the chapter by Deeb and Ellen Laipson. Nicole Grimaud's book covers the period from independence to 1995.

Mary-Jane Deeb also has a useful chapter on the Arab-Maghribi Union, and William Mark Habib treats Tunisia's relations with that other union, the EU.

For coverage of Tunisia's confrontation with the Islamists there is much to choose from including articles by Michael Collins Dunn, Abdelbaki Hermassi (two, one a general view of Islam in recent Maghrib history and the other specifically on Islamism in Tunisia), Henry Munson, and Susan Waltz. Mohamaed Elhachmi Hamdi's book offers an insider's view of Tunisian Islamists and also argues that the Islamists were preparing a coup in 1987 preempted by Bin Ali's ouster of Bourguiba.

A good study of that 1987 "constitutional coup" is Louis B. Ware's article. Ware offers in a second article one of the few studies of the role of the Tunisian military in politics.

Scholars of the Arab world given considerable attention to the issue of civil society, testing the theory that the existence of many thriving non-governmental organizations and associations facilitates democracy. Eva Bellin covers well the case of Tunisia, and in another article she treats relations between industrialists and the state in Tunisia.

As for the general pattern of politics and the role of the Neo-Destour/PSD/RCD the older study by Clement Henry Moore, *Tunisia since Independence* remains useful and can be updated by his later article on Maghribi political parties.

Not surprisingly, Bourguiba is the subject of several works. Two articles by Jean Lacouture, one in French and the other in English, provide a perceptive and highly favorable account, and I "revisited" Bourguiba in a recent article. A Tunisian team, Sophie Bessis and Souhayr Belhassen, offer a complete and more critical biography in two short volumes in French. Derek Hopwood has a biography in English. One interesting insider's view of Bourguiba is in the memoirs of Cecil Hourani.

On US-Tunisian relations in addition to the Gallagher and Parker books one can read the short essay by John Damis. The US became seriously involved in Tunisia only as late as during the Second World War. This early history can be recaptured in two solid articles in French by Juliette Bessis and Hassine Raouf Hamza. My essay on this subject, not yet published, is available in manuscript. It concentrates on the role of Hooker Doolittle, American consul-general in Tunis from 1941 to 1943. A street in Tunis is named for Doolittle, and the above three references will explain why.

This leads to the delicate Franco-American diplomacy concerning not only Tunisia but all of formerly French North Africa. A thorough treatment of this subject during the years 1943-1956, relying largely on available French public records, is the book by Annie Lacroix-Riz.

The above listing exceeds what even the most diligent student of Tunisia will find time to cover, and readers will necessarily be selective. What follows are a list of even more works on subject that may appear peripheral to immediate interests and needs but may, it is to be hoped, be just what some are seeking:

Two books on Carthage, one by B.H. Warmington and the other by David Soren et. al.

Susan Raven's *Rome in Africa* offers a readable survey of this subject.

The celebrated work of Tunisia's Ibn Khaldun is available in English translation by Franz Rosenthal but in three fat volumes. A one volume abridgement is more realistic, but even more economical of time and better presenting Ibn Khaldun's major ideas about Muslim politics and society is the short book of selections translated by Charles Issawi.

Lucette Valensi's engaging essays collected into a small book describe North Africa on the eve of modern times (including a good account of piracy).

*My Tunisia of Ahmad Bey* seeks to reconstruct Tunisian state and society as it existed in the middle years of the 19th century and to show the early Tunisian responses to Western threats and attractions. Lucette Valensi in her book, *Tunisian Peasants in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* offers a rich history-from-the-bottom-up account.

The Tunisian statesman, Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi, wrote in 1867 a political tract arguing the need for Westernization. He is rightly seen as precursor of the Young Tunisians and thereafter Bourguiba's Neo-Destour. This little work is available in English translation.

Henri de Montety (cited above p.4 for his theory of how being cultivators of olives shaped the upwardly mobile orientation of Sahilians) also wrote a stimulating article showing how the French Protectorate stimulated class mobility in his "Old Families and New Elites."

Tunisian architecture from Roman times (not enough remaining from the Carthagian period) to the present is an attractive subject, and so, too, is the morphology of its cities throughout the ages. In Tunis, itself, the old madina offers one of the most attractive and best preserved examples of classical Islamic urbanism. Read on this general subject the chapters by Richard Ettinghausen and Hasan Fathy in my *From Madina to Metropolis* (and note the figure on p. 29 showing the juxtaposition of Western new and Islamic old in Tunis). Also beautifully done covering major cities but giving considerable attention to Tunis is the book by Andre Raymond. Those who would really wish to study Tunisian urbanism should contact Ms. Jamila Binous of the Society for the Preservation of the Madina and consult as well (even just studying the illustrations if the French text is too forbidding) the several studies of Tunisian architecture by Jacques Revault.

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