

From the Tribes of the Province of Mauretania Caesariensis: The Quinquegentanei Alliance

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Abstract:

This scientific paper aims to shed light on the tribes of the Quinquegentanei Alliance, which became very famous in the province of Mauretania Caesariensis during the third and fourth centuries AD, by focusing on what is mentioned in the contents of literary and archaeological texts, especially regarding the geographical map of this human formation, which was mainly spread in the eastern part of the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, and particularly in the region of Greater Kabylia. This tribal bloc formed a strong entity within the social system of the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, especially with its broad formation, which played a major role in the military events that the region witnessed during the third century AD.

Keywords: *Quinquegentanei tribes; Province of Mauretania Caesariensis; Third and fourth centuries; Literary and archaeological texts*

Des tribus de la province de Maurétanie Césarienne : l'Alliance des Quinquegentanéens

Résumé :

Cet article scientifique vise à éclairer la question des tribus de l'Alliance des Quinquegentanéens, devenues très célèbres en Maurétanie Césarienne aux III^e et IV^e siècles de notre ère. Il s'appuie sur les éléments mentionnés dans les textes littéraires et archéologiques, notamment la carte géographique de cette

formation humaine, principalement répartie dans la partie orientale de la province, et plus particulièrement dans la région de Grande Kabylie. Ce bloc tribal constituait une entité forte au sein du système social de la province de Maurétanie Césarienne, notamment grâce à sa large structure, qui joua un rôle majeur dans les événements militaires que la région connut au IIIe siècle de notre ère.

Mots-clés : *Tribus des Quingegentanéens ; Province de Maurétanie Césarienne ; IIIe et IVe siècles ; Textes littéraires et archéologiques*

Introduction

The region of ancient Maghreb knew social systems of a tribal nature, starting from the third century BC, where political entities appeared that played major roles on the stages of political and military events, such as the Massyli and Masaesyli in the Kingdom of Numidia. These entities formed tribal alliances among themselves imposed by the lived reality in the region, in order to defend their lands and adhere to their authenticity, away from the influences of Roman policies in the region in their various forms.

The province of Mauretania Caesariensis in its internal and mountainous part also witnessed a strong social and political structure formed by a group of tribes that controlled with their wide movements a large part of the lands, and formed confederate alliances among themselves that imposed their logic to a large extent. Among the most prominent of these tribes, we mention the Quinquegentanei Alliance, which became famous in literary and archaeological sources during the third and fourth centuries AD, through its major roles in the military events that the region witnessed. Accordingly, we pose the following problematic: What is meant by the Quinquegentanei Alliance? What is its formation? And where were they geographically centered?

1. The Tribes of the Quinquegentanei Alliance in Literary and Archaeological Sources

The term Quinquegentanei tribes¹ is defined as a reference to an organization or gathering that includes five tribes

¹ The researcher Mohamed Arabi Akoun believes that the name "Quinquegentanei" refers to the historical background of what is currently called Kabylia. See:

or clans, and usually the Romans gave this name to such an organization¹, to indicate a tribal bloc or alliance, consisting of five tribes², as anthropologists also call it the division into five clans. These tribes bear a Latin name that has no relation to the ethnic name despite their authenticity³. This alliance is also known among some modern researchers and historians, led by Courtois (Courtoit .Ch), as what is termed the confederate union⁴, and this refers to the existence of tribal ties that distinguished the social and political structure of these tribes.

The pyramid of power within this tribal union was the share of the royal family, which had the right to alternate in leading the tribes and organizing their affairs, where the latter had their own systems, customs, and internal laws, whether within a single tribe or among them; and this allows us to say that they enjoyed a type of self-independence and were not included in settlement, especially since the latter were positioned in places far from the vital space controlled by the Roman authority, where they inhabited the mountains and steppes, which is what the researcher Mo-

-Mohamed Arabi Akoun, *Economy and Society in Ancient North Africa*, University Publications Office, Algiers, 2008, p.161 .

¹ :According to the research conducted by some researchers such as Gabriel Camps, this organization was not the only one in the Maghreb during ancient times, but there are other examples of such tribal organizations consisting of five tribes or clans, and according to a study he conducted based on about sixty Latin inscriptions, he concluded that there was an alliance consisting of five tribes or clans whose names were as follows: NNDRMH and NBIBH and NFZIH and NSFH and CRMMH. As for the first three names, they express names of known sites or ethnicities: Nedroma, Nababas, Nefzawa. See:

-Camps (G.), *Cinq* , Enc.Ber, 13, 1994, p.1959.

² Ibid, p.1959.

³ Hamdoune (Ch.), *L'expédition de Maximien en Afrique*, in : *An.Af*, 46-48, 2010, P.186.PP.185-199.

⁴ Courtois(Ch.), *Les Vandales et L'Afrique*, Paris, 1955, p. 120.

hamed Bachir Cheniti expressed as relatively independent political units¹.

Talking about the tribes of the Quinquegentanei Alliance as an important part of the tribal composition within the province of Mauretania Caesariensis and attempting to define them and draw a complete picture of them puts us in front of a difficult research task, because the literary sources did not provide us with enough to know much about this tribal alliance, and they contained only light references that do not satisfy the researcher's curiosity, as evidenced by the fact that they were mentioned only by the historian Ammianus Marcellinus during the fourth century AD, and the geographer Julius Honorius during the fifth century AD, which makes us wonder about the reason for this absence in literary sources, especially those dating back to the third century AD, especially since these tribes knew great activity and wide mobility throughout the province of Mauretania Caesariensis during this period, so it is assumed that they would be of great interest to contemporary historians.

And unlike literary texts, in contrast, we find that epigraphic texts mentioned these tribes on many occasions, the latter were found in different places in the territory of the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, the most important of which is the Lambaesis inscription², in which the Quinquegentanei tribes were mentioned for the first time, and according to the effort of the historian Michel Christol, he

¹ Mohamed Bachir Cheniti, *Algeria under Roman Occupation - A Study in the Military Control System (The Mauretanian Limes) and the Resistance of the Moors*, Vol. 2, p.216.

² C.I.L, VIII, 2615.

dates it to between 253 AD and 256 AD¹, in addition to the inscriptions of Saldae (Béjaïa)² and Ticlât (Tupusuctu)³ and another near Tizi Ouzou currently⁴.

And if we try to determine the time frame for these tribes, we find ourselves in front of a complete absence of texts that specify that with the necessary accuracy that the researcher seeks, but we were able, through what was available to us from discovered epigraphic texts, to determine the time frame between the middle of the third century until the first third of the fourth century AD; and this perhaps confirms the strong presence of these human groups in the region, especially since the strength that this entity reached during the third and fourth centuries AD, and its resilience against the Roman authority and its policies makes us assume that its existence - the entity - dates back to earlier time periods, even if not with that organization that appeared during the last three centuries of the Roman presence in the region.

This tribal bloc formed a strong entity within the social system of the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, and was able to impose its logic on the Roman authority without allowing Romanization to infiltrate it. According to what is available in the inscription found near Tizi Ouzou, the historian Courtois believes that the alliance of the five tribes had submitted to the authority of a *prefectus* and that was after the victories achieved by Maximian (Maximien)⁵, and the

¹ Khadija Mansouri, Tribes of Mauretania Caesariensis (1st Century/4th Century), *Journal of Maghreb Studies*, Maghreb Network for the Integration of Sciences and Technology in Development, Oran, 1998, p. 182.

² C.I.L, VIII, 8924.

³ C.I.L, VIII, 8836.

⁴ C.I.L, VIII, 9010.

⁵ Desanges (J.), *Catalogue des tribus africaines de l'entiquité classique a l'ouest du nil*, publications de la section d'histoire, Dakar, 1962 , p.67.

task of leading this alliance was assigned to one of the leaders of the five tribes called "Faraxen" (Faraxen)¹.

2. The Formation of the Quinquegentanei Alliance (Hypotheses of Modern Historians).

Deciding on the determination of the tribes that formed this bloc or confederate tribal union is a task almost impossible, because the researcher who seeks to reach this truth finds himself facing historical and archaeological texts that lack the necessary and accurate data that qualify him to decide on the matter, and on this basis it was incumbent upon us to inform the reader of the reality of literary and archaeological sources, through which we did not find sufficient evidence or indications to know the composition of this entity, and therefore they do not provide us with a census of these tribes and their identification, so the absence of accurate historical data that the researcher seeks is likely to make it difficult for him to draw the final picture of the five tribes that represented this alliance, and this perhaps led to provoking some modern researchers such as Cagnat R, Courtois, and Desanges, so they tried to strive and research the subject according to what was available to them from different data, which is assumed to be mainly related to the geographical and military aspect, and as a result, a kind of disagreement prevailed among these researchers, and their opinions varied regarding the tribal composition that falls under this alliance, although their hypotheses sometimes intersect regarding some tribes.

And according to the historian Cagnat, the Quinquegentanei Alliance included the Masinissenses, Tyndens-

¹ Mohamed Arabi Akoun, previous reference, p. 161.

es, Isafenses, Iesalenses, and Jubaleni¹, while the historian Courtois mentioned only three of these tribes: the Masinissenses, Tyndenses, and Nababes², while Desanges suffices by adding only two tribes to those mentioned by Courtois, namely the Toulensi and Baniouri ³, and in turn we will try to define these tribes as follows:

2.1. The Masinissenses:

Also known as the Msisna or Imsisen tribes, they are located today on the right bank of the Sahel River (Soummam) between Beni Aidel and Beni Himmel in the Kabylia region⁴. They were mentioned for the first time during the fourth century AD by the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, in the midst of his talk about the revolt of Prince Firmus (372-375 AD) against the Roman authority, where he counted them among his followers who, along with him, attacked the Sahel River, starting from Tubusuctu (Tiklat) around 373-374 AD. This historian also informs us of geographical data about this tribe indicating that they were neighbors to the Tyndenses, and that both were residing near Tiklat⁵, while the historian Paul Albert Février confines this tribe geographically to the area extending between the Sahel River and the Aqbu River⁶.

¹ Cagnat (R.), *L'armée romaine d'Afrique et l'occupation militaire de l'Afrique sous les empereurs*, tome1, paris, 1913, pp.55-56 .

² Courtois (Ch.), *op.cit.*, p.120.

³ Desanges (J.), *op.cit.*, p.67.

⁴ Poulle (M A.), .), *A travers la Maurétanie sitifienne*, Extraits du Becueil des notices et mémoires de la société archéologique de la province de constantine, 1862 et 1863, Vol VI, p.137.

⁵ Ammien marcellin, XXIX, V, 11.

⁶ Poulle (A.), *op.cit.*, p.137.

2.2. The Tyndenses:

This tribe was mentioned by the historian Ammianus Marcellinus during the fourth century AD, but we do not know much about it except what came in the narrative of the latter that it played, along with many other tribes, a major role in the events of the Firmus revolt¹. Desanges points out that it is not unlikely that it is close to the Toulensi tribe mentioned by the historian Ptolemy, as they are neighbors to the Masinissenses tribes, and he also adds that it belongs geographically to the eastern side of the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, as its location can be determined according to what came in literary texts at Tiklat, and it is a tribe assumed to have inhabited the Djurdjura Mountains².

2.3. The Isaflenses:

It was also mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus on many occasions³ without specifying its location precisely, and the name of the latter has been linked to Flissa or Iflissen. The historian Desanges sees that if this hypothesis is correct and there were no many movements made by this tribe over the centuries, then it can be confined geographically between the Isser River and Tizirt, while the researcher Khadija Mansouri says that it can be placed in what is currently known as the Majjana plains⁴.

2.4. The Iesalenses:

This tribe was mentioned by the historian Ammianus Marcellinus during the fourth century AD, and he specified

¹ Ammien Marcellin., XXIX, V, 11.

² Desanges (J.), op.cit, p.71.

³ Ammien Marcellin, XXIX,V.

⁴ Khadija Mansouri, previous reference, p.184.

its homeland near the city of Auzia (Sour El-Ghozlane currently)¹, while the historian Courtois sees that it is most likely that it belongs to the inhabitants who were residing in the mountain chain adjacent to Auzia².

2.5. The Jubaleni (Iubalena Natio):

The historian Ammianus Marcellinus mentions that the Nubel family³ had strong authority over this tribe and various tribes of the region⁴, and many modern historians such as Gabriel Camps also mentioned that the Nubel family belonged to it and that the father "Nubel" was a leader or president over it by appointment from the Roman authority⁵.

Regarding the origin of the tribe's name, the information about that is conflicting, and there are no definitive evidence on this matter. According to the historian Desanges, the inhabitants of this tribe were called Nubaleni in reference to King "Nubel", the father of Firmus⁶, while some other researchers go to say that the name is derived from the name of the Numidian king Juba, and by adding the latter to the name of the clan Lubaleni, the full name became Jubaleni, and there are also those who see that it is derived from the name of the Roman god Jupiter, who represented the local gods that call for the cohesion of society and the unification of worship in the region⁷.

¹ Ammien Marcellin, XXIX, V, 44, 47, 50 .

² Desanges (J.), op.cit., pp. 55-56.

³ For more details about the Nubel family, refer to the third chapter of the thesis.

⁴ Ammien marcellin, XXIX, V, 46.

⁵ Camps (G.), Firmus, Enc.ber, vol, 19, 1998, pp.2845-2846.

⁶ Desange (J.), op.cit,p.56.

⁷ Hamdoune (Ch.), les point de ralliement des gentes, An.Af, vol, 37, 2001, p.99.

This tribe - the Jubaleni - was centered in difficult geographical territories, and occupied the mountain chain of the Babors region, and its people inhabited the winding valleys and steep passages¹, which is confirmed by the historian Gabriel Camps who sees it as a mountain tribe, and specifies its location near the city of Auzia, either the upper Isser Valley or the Babors Mountains².

2.6. The Nababes:

The mention of the Nabab tribe in literary sources dates back to the third century BC by the historian Pliny the Elder, specifying its geography after the Isser River, which separates it from the Macurebi tribe³. As for epigraphic sources, this tribe was written on two Latin inscriptions, the first was found in Bida and the second in Castellum Tulei, which is surrounded by the Toulensi tribe. According to the researcher Khadija Mansouri, what confirms the instability of the Nabab in these two sites is the presence of the name of one of its members accompanied by the name of the tribe, and this indicates that he is an outsider to the area where the inscriptions were found. We can notice through the data available in the Peutinger Table also that the homeland of this tribe is not far from Bida and Castellum Tulei, so it is confined to the area located between the Sibaou Mountains above and the road linking Béjaïa and Tigisi⁴.

¹ Desange (J.), *op.cit*, p.56.

² Camps (G.), *firmus...op.cit*, p.2845-2846.

³ Plin L'Ancien., *Histoire Naturelle*, V, 21.

⁴ Khadija Mansouri, previous reference, p. 184.

2.7. The Toulensi (Les Toulensi):

According to the historian Ptolemy, the Toulensi tribe is located south of the Makhurebi tribe¹, while the historian Desanges sees according to epigraphic data that the inhabitants of this tribe were residing in Castellum Tulei².

2.8. The Baniouri:

According to the historian Ptolemy, the Baniouri tribe is likely to have belonged to the coastal area of Greater Kabylia or perhaps in the Soummam Valley, and it may be closer to east of Bougie, and we must distinguish the name Baniouri from names of similar tribes such as Baiurae, Baniures, and Bantourarii³.

3. The Geographical Domain of the Quinquegentanei Tribes.

3.1. According to Literary Texts:

Every attempt we make to determine or draw the geographical map of the Quinquegentanei tribes is met with a scarcity of data provided by classical literary sources, especially those dating back to the fourth and fifth centuries AD, and they are characterized by a lack of accuracy that the researcher seeks, and this makes it difficult to reach the final picture of the geography of these tribes, especially in light of the wide movements they practiced throughout the province, which makes the researcher try to strive according to what is available to him from data to determine their geography in an approximate manner only.

¹ Ptolémée., IV, 2, 5

² Desanges (J.), op.cit, p.70 ; C.I.L., VIII, 9005 - 9006.

³ Ptolémée., IV, 2, 5 ; Desanges (J.), op.cit, p.59.

The geographer Julius Honorius is among those whose writings included geographical references specific to these tribes, as the latter positioned them in the area extending between Saldae (Béjaïa) and Rusuccuru (Dellys), and mentions them in another place after each of the following tribes according to a direction from east to west as follows: Feratenses, Rusuccenses, Barzifulitani, Fluminenses¹, and starting from this geographical determination brought by Julius Honorius, we can say that the Quinquegentanei tribes were generally centered in the Djurdjura Mountains².

In addition to Julius Honorius, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus also provided us with considerable data, as the latter, in the context of his talk about the events and proceedings of the battles that took place between the Roman army led by Theodosius and Prince Firmus, mentioned to us many tribes that allied with the latter, some of which formed this alliance according to the hypotheses of some modern researchers, where he refers in the midst of that to many places and cities where these tribes had settled, such as Tiklat, Auzia, Majjana plains, Babors Mountains, and Soummam Valley³.

All these data can help us know the geographical domain in which these tribes roamed, even if incompletely, as through that we can place them in the area extending from the eastern side of Tiklat to the western side of Saldae, and this would lead us to confirm the hypothesis that the Quinquegentanei tribes settled in the eastern part of the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, and particularly in the region of

¹ Iulius Honorius., A 44, p.47 ; B 48, p.54.

² Khadija Mansouri, previous reference, p.182.

³ Ammien Marcellin., XXIX, II, 6. 11. 21 ; V, 2 . 11 .14 .50.

Greater Kabylia, which is the opinion supported by many modern researchers and historians, relying on some data mentioned in epigraphic texts that confirm that.

3.2. According to Epigraphic Texts:

The possibility of determining the geographical framework of the Quinquegentanei tribes in light of what Latin inscriptions brought is considered more accurate compared to what came in literary texts, because the data contained in the latter allow us to determine the area where these tribes settled, even if incompletely, as they can be generally confined to the eastern side of Kabylia, and it is very possible that the extension of their lands reaches the outskirts of Tizi Ouzou¹, and there is evidence that confirms this hypothesis, through the presence of the name of this tribal union mentioned in both the Saldae inscriptions² and Tiklat³, the latter of which represented an important center for the military operations led by the Roman army against these tribes⁴, and from that standpoint, this place, even if they did not settle there specifically, they were undoubtedly very close to it, in addition to the inscription found near Tizi Ouzou⁵.

But in fact, if we want to rely on the locations of the archaeological texts that mention these tribes as a basic criterion to which we resort to determine their geographical domain, then that will require us to take all the inscriptions, including those discovered outside the province of Mauretania Caesariensis as evidence proving their presence and

¹ Khadija Mansouri, previous reference, p.182.

² C.I.L., VIII, 8924.

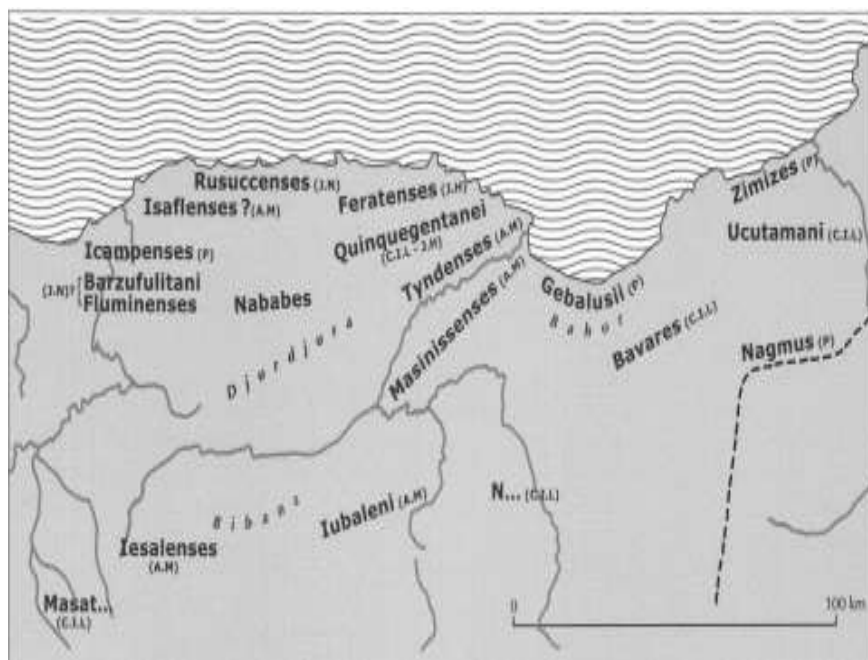
³ C.I.L., VIII, 8836.

⁴ Khadija Mansouri, previous reference, p.183.

⁵ C.I.L., VIII, 9010 .

settlement there; accordingly, if we accept this hypothesis, then the geographical domain of these tribes will certainly expand to include other places belonging to the province of Numidia, such as the city of Lambaesis (Tazoult currently) where an undated inscription mentioning these tribes was found¹, and this will raise many questions in the researcher about the reality of this geographical dimension, which pushes us to say that the act of movement that accompanied the Quinquegentanei tribes and became like a phenomenon that intensified a lot among the local tribal elements, especially the mountainous ones, during the period that knew the Roman presence in the region was one of the most important main reasons that led to the expansion of the geographical domain, and this would confuse the calculations of researchers and historians in their study of the geographical map and drawing the boundaries of this branch of the local population in a complete and accurate picture.

¹ C.I.L., VIII, 2615.



Map No. 01: Centering of the Quinquegentanei Tribes and Other Tribes According to Literary and Epigraphic Texts.

Source: Laporte (J-P.), « Kabylie : La Kabylie antique », Enc. Ber, 26, 2004, p.4006

Conclusion

Eventually, the Quincuvantine alliance, or five tribes, was a strong political and social power rather than only a temporary tribal band. In the history of Mouratania Caserences. Mostly based on Greater Cabilia, this confederation showed great ability to influence political and military events during the third century AD. The literary record and archaeological inscriptions confirm the central role of both, so it is a special

pattern to reduce mobility between Roman Authority and local social structures. Studying this tribal alliance helps to clarify the degree on which indigenous people can plan themselves and affect their surroundings. Therefore, the past of Quincuvantine is a main component of North Africa's story and rich heritage rather than just one footnote.

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