

# Intercommunity Violence in Ghardaia between Heavy Fire and Compromise. Meanings and Mechanisms<sup>\*</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** The city of Ghardaia in Algeria has experienced violent incidents, in recent years. As a result, this resulted in a deep fissure in the social fabric that had proved far from homogeneous, while the two religious communities of the local society, the Sunni Arab Maliki and the Ibadi community had coexisted for centuries in good intelligence. It can be seen from the course of events that the issue is far from being a simple conflict between the parties concerned; and we can not deny the involvement of a third party, namely political power and this through local authorities. In this tripartite equation, the precarious calm resulting from an interindividual and inter-communal compromise remains a subject of debate. From there we could apprehend the related meanings of discourses advocated by the actors of both parties, both at the individual and collective level. It is a question of exploring the places of confrontation and its observation following the verbal exchanges as well as the speeches marked, the paths taken by the two communities, in order to reach a compromise based on concessions previously considered as intangible principles. Also, the interventions of the security and political authorities to try to fill the differences and to bring closer the visions give rise to an analysis because by their responsibilities in the preservation of the security of the goods and the people, bring various justifications to guarantee an existence while maintaining the compromise in order to preserve the economic and political interests of the Mozabites.

**KEYWORDS:** pragmatic sociology, conflict, compromise, justification, violence

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## Introduction

Algeria, like the other countries of the Maghreb, brings together a few different ethnic groups, particularly on the doctrinal level, which make up its population. The media tries to commercialize the image of a doctrinaire and identitary harmony of the social fabric, however, the political and economic practices of the authorities in the management of the public life led to the emergence of centers of tension and their expansion. In other words, let's say that their strong emergence does not serve the community project, and reflects the consequences of a treatment based on the absence of justice and a horizon of hostilities between two groups opposing the linguistic plans. Doctrinaire. However, the events that took place over the last decade followed another course. Disputes over pastures between tribes and Berber spring, the uprising of the population of southern Ouargla through the events of Brian Ghardaia are a perfect illustration. They exposed the fragility of social cohesion produced by the country's political elites.

The characterization of these events conveyed by official circles does not reflect the reality of events. In fact, these circles do not talk about it until the foreign media or the Social Media seize it, describing these events as protests, or even teenagers' hiccups, attributing to the outside hands who blame themselves for them, to destabilize the country and thereby undermine the peace and tranquility of the region.

Speaking of the events that occurred in the city of Beriane and whose causes persist, research leads us in this area to analyze the speech of citizens and dignitaries of the two communities to understand the reasons for each other, their justification in this trial of strength as well as the arguments of both parties in the negotiation and search for the compromise.

## Research methodology

On the basis of the above, we have tried in this article to stick to the most important alternatives offered to the actors to build after the dispute a level of compromise within the urban perimeter of the city of Berian Ghardaia. The urban fabric of this city suggests the existence of structural differences, both social and economic, between neighborhoods. It can be seen through this, and as the common-sense vehicle, that the Mozabites are organized

and have developed proven business skills, far more than the Arab chaanba. Indeed, the Mozabites scrupulously ensure the maintenance of the cohesion and integration of their community, its component, its symbols and this through a division of roles, leaving the decision to a centralized level embodied in the djemaa, religious essence, Elazzabah, concerning the settlement of disputes that the daily life of the Mozabites carries with it. El Azzaba meets at the mosque from which it draws its strength, but its action also extends to secular spaces.

Religious fervor is a primary characteristic of society in the M'zab Valley. This society has been able to respond, in terms of inter-individual relations, and social in general, to the physical constraints and the adversity of geography and climate. In this society, the group of dignitaries represents is depositary of a power whose spectrum spreads from the management of the interindividual disputes to the political affairs, the development of the region among others. This group ensures political dialogue and eases tensions during conflicts with other parties. In addition, he appoints representatives of the people in local and legislative elections. In fact, the discourse produced by the majority of individuals, common sense, within Mozabite society can not leave the circle of the discourse held by Elazzaba. "But the social dynamics that remains relative despite its inevitability feeds on the enthusiasm of although El Azzaba does not allow them to negotiate or decide, but their point of view is taken into account. The compromise is sought between maintaining the economic interests of the Mozabites deemed to be great traders, "people of dirhams" and the preservation of Amazigh identity that considers the challenge one of the most important for its viability and that brings the modernization.

In their struggle for survival, the Mozabite Amazighs act in a closed circle as a united bloc to protect their interests, unlike the chaanba Arabs who arrived later, and found themselves too weak to compete with the Mozabites on the economic plan. Therefore we find some social plagues in their communities and find them in order to hold a Doctrinal and ideological discourse.

Some studies on the subject of the Ghardaia events have been subjected to different approaches, but they have been analyzed as a whole, whether economic, political or anthropological, but have not relied on elements of

rhetoric and linguistic connotations. in the conflict circle. and on this basis we have tried to approach this subject with a pragmatic sociological perspective and what it offers in this field of tools.

## **Research field**

Through the individual and collective interviews of some of the dignitaries who participated in the reconciliation process, as well as some security and intervention officers who experienced the events closely, our contacts with some university students in the area, some sentences have reproduced in a way that binds us to carefully analyze their speech.

The field research in the city of Ghardaia, with all its contradictions, is a sensitive and complex process that needs means that are different from those we use in empirical research in other phenomena, it is not always easy to get the information, especially from the mizabites because of the knowledge that we are Arabs, so we contacted colleagues we knew in the university, and as well as national symposia held at the University of Tlemcen and summer camps and modest commercial relations with them, unlike we received an answer from the Sunni Arabs, who extended to talk about the conflict and its causes and the means that can solve the problems, of course, according to their views, but the language of blaming others still dominates in the discourse of both community “in the lawsuit the gen they raise criticisms and provide justification (Nachi 2006, 85).

## **Violence in Ghardaia. Causes and manifestations**

One of the most rigorous studies at the research center in social and cultural anthropology on this topic has been addressed by the non-side of the subject we are studying. The question was why do community-based conflicts occur in Ghardaia (the region)? The undeclared question of this project, and builds its study on the procedural dimensions of the concept of community can give an image of the objective elements that cause all conflicts of a community nature in this region. The objective causes can be classified in three elements, One of them is enough to mobilize the local society with all its components, And these elements are :

### *Strike “territory” as a factor of violence*

It is enough to attack the “territory” to be the main factor of a violent (not to say bloody) communal conflict, and here we mean that the territory is the cartier or the “qseur” the store or the housing, the cemetery or the mosque as a place of worship. The aggression does not include the physical aggression of attempting to acquire or damage the property of others in areas of community nature, but even betting of competition to name these areas (conflict over the refusal of a name of a middle school or secondary school for a local character, conflict to impose to name a street in the name of a community figure, conflict to name the university in Ghardaia , ....).

The recent attack on the “Qseur” of Malika and the local Ibadites cemetery has been the direct cause of the renewal of bloody conflicts in Ghardaia since January 2014. Before that, the land (the lands of Al-Yidr), which separates the Tanniya (Arabic) and “Qseur Béni-isguen” the cause of the conflict that took place in 1974. It is sufficient for a local group to attack areas that the community system considers an attack on one of its components. the basis of the machine of violence, especially when we know very well that the Ghardaia regions are essentially communal, that is, the Arabs live in their own neighborhoods and others live in their own neighborhoods / “qseur” and that the spaces of meeting between the two communities leave the frame of the residence.

### *Aggression on “memory” as a factor of violence*

Attacks on memory are among the three causes of violence. Doubting participation in the Revolution (1954-1962) is on the list of aspects of the conflict between the two different collective memories, it is enough to publish an article or book raises this question or tries to answer it to bring about violence, and this is the case of Garara events (DEC 2013), which has extended For some of the municipalities of Ghardaia, which know domain contact between the two groups. there is a difference between the two collective memories in the region, as the Ibadite group seeks to consolidate its presence in the region through urbanization dating back more than seven centuries. The rival memory seeks to consolidate its presence by recalling the sacrifices of his people (of the people of the region) and his martyrs of liberation revolution. Attacks on the near or distant past are a direct factor

of community violence, by naming streets, schools, universities, airports or ... can be an opportunity to trigger rivalries or local community violence.

*Aggression on one of the elements of the affinity system “women”*

Brian's events began with the attack of the Ibadhite girl, The slowness of public intervention, local administration or security administration (the state of all conflicts) was a catalyst for the spread of violence and tension between the two Berian communities. This conflict did not stop, like other recurring conflicts among the inhabitants of the municipality itself, but moved to all the municipalities that knows a contact between the two groups. The affinity system is almost entirely closed at the local level, mixed marriages are almost impossible, and if that happens requires drastic measures that begin with the exclusion of housing in the Mozabite “Qseur”. Aggression against women as a structural element of the community affinity system is one of the direct causes of manifestations of inter-communal violence. In general, this attack does not occur in community territories, but often occurs at the points of contact between the two distinctly different urban spaces or in the common spaces.

Blaspheming the Mozabites and describing them as living in sin and accusing them of Khwarijs was evident in the speech of the Arabs, especially the young, they are sometimes described as Shiites and sometimes as “Almotazila” historical works have referred to the community of Bani Mzab with several denominations, like Spenser, for example, which says: “They are refugees from the Ibadite Kharijites who founded a league of religious doctrinal cities in the depths of the Sahara in the tenth century” (Oukad 2009-2010, 58).

When the Arab accuses his Mozabite opponent of approving the temporary marriage and taking some fatwas from the Ibadi clerics, he selectively disputes his filiation and his descent and his right to be on this earth. These charges are directed against the Shiite community, which is rejected by the majority of Algerian society, especially after the broadcast of the media. And the social networking sites that represent them as an entity that wants to dominate the Arab and Islamic worlds. These representations have intensified after the Arab Spring wave, these events that we will mention later.

During our conversation with the respondents, who were affected by the spark of violence, one of them said that the Mozabbites were treacherous and treacherous for a long time and that they did not answer the call. Of the liberation revolution when Sunni Arabs offered regiments of martyrs. France did not force them to serve in the army and was not exposed to them, they sold them, unlike the Arabs and until now they continue to follow the same approach. At the same time, Mr. Yousef the student faces who is not right: the Mozabites financed the revolution and fed the revolutionaries, they supported the Arabs and exploited the confidence of the French to support the revolution far from the eyes of the enemy, and these are great secrets that only Ibadi can bear that they are known for their secret, and to keep the information within the group only, they saved many families and protected the villages against the extermination. He also adds that the spark of violence was the result of the recent attack on the Quiseur de Malika and on the Ibadite cemetery, and before, the attack on one of the women of the Quseur. The Arabs are attacking our holy sites and our honor

The justice system is strongly in this conflict, which is in itself a search and a proof of itself, and get recognition from the other, each community seeking a presence, the Arabs justify their behavior as the oldest tribes and welcoming martyrs, and they sacrificed for this country, on the other hand, the Mozabites consider themselves the oldest inhabitants of the region, being the Berbers, who are the indigenous peoples of the region. They close to protect their entity as they consider themselves marginalized and socially excluded at all levels, there is no alternative but to maintain the identity and economic model of the community. Thus, the distance taken by the Mozabites from the Arabs, and the question of Taqiyya increase the tension of the Sunnis who “generally treat the Taqiyya with great circumspection, being convinced that this practice, despite its legitimation in the Qur’an and hadith has been largely abused by all kinds of heretics, in order to hide their heresies and to deceive orthodox Muslims” (De Smet 2011,150-151). This distance, both in its symbolic level and in its spatial level, is considered as the first dimension of marginal life: for them, their living conditions and social existence may be opposed to what they regard as the true standard of living.

According to the sociologist Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, the incompatibility between the situations in which the actors themselves

are based on their representations of their actions in which they try to emphasize the concept of justice or rather the concept of city. To model the kind of operations in which, in the disputes between them, the actors are engaged when confronted with an imperative of justification “ (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999, 62).

Through our interviews with young actors from both communities, both parties try to apply justice to them by organizing a justification of the magnitude test, forcing the actors to go from strength to strength. The test of greatness in the context of the orders of magnitudes “which, so to speak, are the scales of value that actors mobilize to judge, to calify justify the attribution of states to people and things according to the variety of situations, in accordance with pragmatic requirements of justice and order” (Nachi 2006, 104).

Whether notable or young, the Sunni Arabs say that what drives him to compromise is to ensure the stability and safeguarding of the country’s assets and the gains of independence as well as the establishment of the foundations of the revolution of independence. Moreover and despite the overthrow of which they were victims, the Mozabites recognize the gravity of the situation by trying not to train for an Algerian popular revolution from Ghardaia that will be a replica of the current of the so-called “Arab Spring” that many Arab countries know. They plead for the maintenance of state institutions and the application of institutional and security laws in order to safeguard citizens and their property. Indeed, it is about not amalgamating morale and the legal. It is a beginning for the preparation of a compromise on the main values that should govern the action (Dortier and Cabin 2010, 342).

## **Trade areas and the common domain**

### *The media space:*

All the witnesses of the dramatic events that overthrow the city of Ghardaia and the way in which the media covered them will know that the problem is hardly easy to dissect. Despite the presence of journalists and Arab and foreign channels in the conflict, the opacity of the scene and the accusations exchanged between the two parties and the contradiction that appeared from one moment to another in the actors conflict or media professionals,



suggested that the case goes beyond apparent causes. In fact the ideological presence is so important that objectivity has been spared in the media coverage of events. This has been noted in the alignment of some channels on the side of the Mozabite Clan by giving him more space to express himself on the grounds of the violence and suggesting that it is an oppression of a minority under a cover of state security institutions. However, other chains, especially so-called Islamist channels took the part of the Arabs by showing that the Ibadī doctrine is deviant.

To this end, they have given free rein to the statements advocating the Arabs' vision that accused the Mozabites of having created this problem to attract the attention of public opinion by posing as a victim in order to be entitled to territorial cessation of Algeria, invoking as proof the repeated victory of the Kabyle FFS. They also claim that the majority of its Mozabites want to separate from Algeria and establish an independent state and hide behind the claims of political activist Ferhat Mhenni. These chains mobilized themselves by adopting a vision which falls on all the accusations on the backs of Mozabites.

In addition, there are other channels that align themselves with the Mozabites by accusing the Arabs by the publication of images of acts of vandalism suffered by businesses and property of the Mozabites. They also show the police as spectators of violence such as the attack on Molotov and stone throwing, attributed to the Arabs. Through media programs devoted to this subject, these channels try to shape the scene to give it a dramatic form in order to acquire the sympathy of the listener and to play on the feelings of other Amazigh tribes both in the country and in the country. Elsewhere. As we have already mentioned, the relationship between secondary identities remains tense, easy to degenerate.

The selectivity that marked the media coverage of the events of Ghardaia will have its motives if we resume the analysis of ideologies that has prevailed on television programs and newspaper articles. However, this does not hide the will of the opponents to conclude an agreement that will preserve the common interests of all parties through a speech by which they try to propose alternatives against violence and a return to "cohabitation" and ending the bloodbath. This is indicated in the work of Mohammed Nachi

“The compromise brings together people and objects belonging to different worlds; its purpose is the common property” (Nachi 2006, 119).

During a televised debate between specialists of Ibadite and Mozabite doctrines, the speakers tried to give an image of each doctrine by demonstrating existing convergences between the two doctrines. Among other things, one of the pillars of the Association of Muslim Ulema, which has never ceased to defend the Malikite doctrine, has claimed that “the Ibadi doctrine does not differ from that of Malikite with respect to the foundations that can reach 98 %. Differences, on the other hand, only affect subsidiary questions, such as raising one’s arms in prayer. This is confirmed by Mr. Mostéfa Rachoum, philologist at the University of Constantine, in the daily El Khabar (Flouri 2013).

On the other hand, Sheikh Bayoudh Sheikh of Ibadi doctrine during and before the Revolutionary War was going to Ghardaia to lecture Malikites on Malikite doctrine. In addition, the Malikite Mosque included both Malikites and Torokia. It is a temptation to reach a compromise based on the common interest in this case the Islamic Union. It shows how the Ibadi doctrine managed to preserve the union of the state and the participation of the Ibadites in the Revolutionary War by citing examples.

We note that most of the parties to the two parties in conflict have tried to reach a compromise concluded by a truce that remains precarious given the referential multiplicity. This stability is closely linked to even partial concessions for the general interest. In this regard, Olivier Abel indicates that “the compromise remains the precarious result of a practice, with its unique actors, in a here and now singular. It is the mark of a social, political or legal coherence capable of reinventing itself in new contexts, by reinterpreting figures of past compromises.”

### *The religious space:*

The mosque is the center of all social, political and social interactions in addition to religious interactions in Ghardaia which is a religious city par excellence. Indeed the majority of statements made on the minbar are considered social laws that must be respected. Thus religious discourse has been spared by social rule and the circle of conflict. This is hardly excluded if Islamic history is called “the birth of the Umayyad dynasty, religious conflicts

in the first century AH, the overthrow of this dynasty by the Abbasids. As a result, this new approach to ideological and ethnic forces has led to the end of the reign of Arabs on the historical stage (Djaït 2000, 5).

By taking a historical look at the Umayyad and Abbasid era until the modern era we find that each dynasty coming to power will make the mosque a place to hinder the other dynasty. As already quoted, the circle of "Azzaba" advocated the Ibadi religious space so it framed the verbal clashes in a conflict with the Arabs who pledged themselves to adopt the statements their notables. The latter are often permanent members in religious associations of mosques. In this context, the two adversaries try to preserve their being. The concern of the Mozabites and their discourse is centered on the safeguarding of the identity threatened according to them as well as their doctrine which is in a critical situation within a society adopting the Malikite doctrine. They claim that their social classification is the fruit of sacrifices and patience a very rigorous social discipline as well as respect for religious teachings; which distinguishes them from the Arabs. In fact, their discourse is analyzed in an investment axiom, ie "knowing that because of their common humanity that identifies them as human beings, all men have equal power of access to higher states, we do not understand [...] why all the members of the city are not in the highest state. The solution to this contradiction lies in the reference to an investment formula that links the benefits of a higher state to the cost or sacrifices required to access it".

While the Arabs, the majority of whom are economically marginalized, adopt a discourse that privileges security, the rejection of violence and terrorism in favor of social justice, which is the essence of the creation of the universe. The lively religious discourse among the Sunni Arabs places them in a lower class within the axiom of the classification of greatness.

In conclusion, each party is obliged to judge the situation, but the principle of the common good in religious discourse remains the bridge over which the two parties would gain a safe place.

One of the axioms is that the common life requires compromise to materialize, Islamic societies are not excluded from this rule, as evidenced by the historical events that took place after the death of the Prophet and the conflict that took place. Took place around authority and the caliphate. This step goes through arbitration and chura. "Even if it is one of the first situations

of” compromise“of the young Muslim state, dictated by the politico-religious situation of the moment, it can not be considered however as a “founding moment” in the field of compromise because it floats above these events far too much suspicion and distrust. On found nevertheless, in the Qur’anic text, an occurrence of this lexeme carrying a much more positive value.“

## Conclusion

While it is difficult to overcome the structural or functional analysis of the phenomenon of sectarian conflict in the city of Ghardaia due to the interaction of political, historical, economic and social factors, the sociological analysis of the pragmatic approach of the phenomenon and the direct treatment of common sense. Different systems, trying to delve into the depth of the problems posed by individuals spontaneously or artificially each party based on its position to justify its actions and involve them in multiple worlds allow it to negotiate and dress as much justice

The situation in which all parties are present, be it Sunni, Mozabite or political, has held the question of the common good as a point of intersection to achieve reconciliation, despite its fragility, peace rather than violence.

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