

THE OTTOMAN ALGERIA'S FLEET (1518-1830): THE NAVY THAT MADE THE STATE

 Dr. RANIMA AHMED*¹

INTRODUCTION: Dealing with the history of the Algerian marine is a very hard task as often affirmed Moulay Belhamissi¹. It is a challenge too difficult to win, especially with insufficient means. However, it seems, through the numerous writings on Modern European cultural and political history from 1518 until 1830, that the subject still carries some interest and justifies the importance of one's research on the Algerian fleet during the same period.

Indeed, it is through its squadrons that the ottoman Algeria² played -during more than three centuries- a first hand role in the epic of the Mediterranean. In spite of many difficulties, and the multiple attempts to crush it, the Algerian State remained respected by the western European States, until the last moment of its existence. It is towards the sea that the government of Algiers was directed and because of it, it became a great naval power. From the 16th century onward, the importance of international trade, the political crises, the military conflicts and the tendencies of hegemony in the Mediterranean made necessary the possession of an efficient fleet. The new state's role was to extend the protection of the coastal stretch, controlling the maritime traffic and the support of the Ottoman war effort against those who had sworn to annihilate the Moriscos who fled to North Africa.

However, what intrigues us in the first time; is what distinguishes this military navy from others of its epoch? It is necessary to know how «This marine had created the Modern Algerian state»³.

The Barbarossa⁴ brothers and their successors in Algiers had put all their genius, their courage, their experience and their faith in service of this strong institution that was among the biggest military schools in the history of Islam. «They assured it the supremacy on sea, the upper hand in the fights and the efficiency on its other missions»⁵.

The study of the Algerian marine and its evolution -despite its

*-Maître de Conférence-Institut d'Histoire- Université Hassiba Benbouali- CHLEF.

lengthy treatment in western writings- does not, by any means, reflect a tendency to praise or justify its action, but to serve only one purpose which is to further understand the movement of hegemony and colonialism. My approach is an attempt towards a positive history of the Algerian marine, a moderate summary of its structures, its movements, and the consequences of a long action invested by this Institution and the reasons of so many enviable successes, then of its crises before its final fall.

While this endeavour is devoted exclusively to the military navy, it is also limited in time to the Ottoman period⁶, which goes from 1518 to 1830, year of the French conquest of Algeria. This does not mean that the central Maghreb⁷ did not have a naval institution before the Ottoman's period. Here we have the testimony of the prestigious universal historian Ibn Khaldun on the subject that the Mediterranean Sea was an Islamic Lake: «where the Christians have no place to board even a piece of wood»⁸.

What we know of the 16th century is «...a heroic period, as the century of famous battles, of the foundation of glorious institutions. It is also the century of the Piracy and the European trade hegemony around the world»⁹. It is known as the period where frequent coup palaces shook Algeria, added to the Christian crusades, Spanish Reconquista, which chased the Moriscos even those who settled away from Spain. Then, the Spaniards occupied some strategic points on the Maghreb coasts. Therefore, by the arrival of the Ottomans, the conceiving of an organized marine in order to face the new situation was an utmost priority.

Most sources of this study remain the secret of the archives. But some Algerian studies based on collecting information and comparative analysis could alight a way to controllable facts, and reconstitute with disparate elements a homogeneous idea about this disputed institution.

The sources of this study:

Unfortunately, to profit of such study on the Ottoman Algeria is often very disappointing. The sources that one solicits are very rare in Arabic, because of the systematic distraction just after the conquest of Algiers. Though they exist in Ottoman language, but they are much dispersed in space. There were in fact many efforts on the part of several researchers at the Algerian universities in recent years. They had begun a vast project of inventory and cataloguing of manuscripts,

especially those which treat the institutions of Ottoman Algeria state. Yet, whole chunks of the Marine history remain blurred.

The Islamic period was very rich. Many writings relate the first Muslim adventures on the sea, the conquest and also the trade efforts in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean.

«The first Umayyad Caliph, Mu'âwiya (660-680) organized a naval expedition against Byzantium. The Muslims conceived a marine by constructing some vessels named "Shawânis". Since the conquest of Maghreb, Abou Abdullah ibn al Habhab founded the arsenal of Tunis (732-733). The Caliph 'Umar ibn Abd al Aziz (717-720) ordered Hassan ibn al Nu'mân to build more vessels in Efriqiya, that permitted the conquest of Sicily under the command of Assad ibn al Furât. At the epoch of Abd Rahman III al Nassir (912-961), the Andalusian fleet reached 200 ships, and the most Mediterranean islands became Islamic»¹⁰.

The Fatimids of Egypt (969-1171), the Almohads of the Maghreb and Andalusia (1147-1269), the Zirids (973-1160), then the Hafsids (1228-1574) in Tunisia and Algeria had opposed the European Christians on sea victoriously from the 10th century to the 15th.

The most important arabic sources which give some details about the maritime life in the Maghreb during the Ottoman period were the "*Gazawat Arruj wa Khair-Eddine*" "*the Arruj and Khair-Eddine Conquests*": this document is a contemporary chronic related to the life and the activities of the two Barbarossa Brothers. There are some details about the fleet and its organisation, the zones of operations; with some commentaries etc. At the end 16th century, a Moroccan traveller called Al Tamagrûti¹¹, in a mission to Istanbul, stopped in Algeria and recorded briefly his observations and his impressions on the capital Algiers, its port, sailors and the drama on the sea. At the beginning of the 19th century, two Algerian writers: Hamdan Khûdja and Hadj Ahmed al Chârif al-Zahhâr, gave valuable details and indications in their memories on the pre-colonial period (before 1830) with some details on the activities of the Algerian fleet in Mediterranean during the same period¹².

Unlike the Maghrebean historians, and their writings with limited documentary value, their counterparts in the West were less neglectful. They wrote a lot on the naval construction, the navigation and the instruction of the officers. We can cite for example; Le Père

Hoste (1652-1701) author of « L'art des armées navales »¹³.

Since the 16th century, a succession of events changed the political life in the Central Maghreb; and made it come out of its isolation and start to play a role in the Mediterranean Sea. This new situation intrigued the European nations and awakened a growing attention against the government of Algiers.

Thanks to trade, diplomacy, ransom of the captives, journeys of study and spying activities, the Europeans had innumerable opportunities to know the region, to describe it in every aspect, to relate facts about it, notably its coast, capital and port. In the sum of their publications, the marine of Algiers seems to have been the subject of particular attentions. We find that special messengers, secret agents, diplomats, religious persons. Almost everybody has approached this topic, most often with great passion and less objectivity. Indeed, the military marine and its activity were a major worry and a permanent preoccupation for their governments.

However, these writings disappoint the researcher on many points. « The "Barbary costs library" —as it is referred to- is only rich in appearance. The importance of its sources falls short from making the historian's day even though on the quantitative plan. It outclasses the local sources »¹⁴.

Salvatore Bono indicated in the forward of his very interesting study "Corsari nel Mediterraneo" the problem of the European writings and their neglect of many historical facts concerning the Christian Piracy:

« This reality remains unknown. Especially what relates to the Christian piracy against the ships of the nations of Islam in particular, the presence of Moslem captives in Christian countries, especially in Italy, Spain and Malta »¹⁵.

De Grammont himself said: « Most historians of the Regency of Algiers were satisfied with copying one on the other, they all rely on the first historian Haëdo¹⁶ whose appreciation on the Maghreb are very hard and with a total dismissal of bad example on the coasts of the Maghreb »¹⁷.

Here are some examples:

Algiers was the stream of the uttered injuries and it is very difficult to contain « Republic of thieves »¹⁸, « Nest of pirates and den of brigands »¹⁹, « Lair of thieves, hell of the Christians and cave of

African monsters [...] heap of corsairs... whose inhabitants are demons... »²⁰

It is not so easy to find yourself in front of a double problem: a rare, much dispersed documentation in the south strand of the Mediterranean, and a rich one in the north but very hostile and so heavy by ideology and subjectivity.

Privateering

Basing on an epistemological view, we are between two points of view, two attitudes and two theses. In this case I think that it better to talk about Privateering and not about Piracy, in spite of the practice of these acts. No one can assert that all the Muslim “Jihads” of this period were piracy, in the other hand, not all the Christian actions on the sea were crusades or a piracy.

This permanent problem²¹ was a universal pain. The kings, the Popes, the princes, the rich and least rich men lived by it or took advantage of it. The Muslims did not have such activity before the 16th century. Europe had known how to exploit this general phenomenon to preach the crusade against Maghreb and to reconcile Protestants and Catholics in Europe, as well as the writers who have done with their pens.

« Renaudot wrote that: “the existence of the Algerians results from robbery and the misfortune of the desolation of other peoples [...] they enjoy the pains of others...” We meet the same idea everywhere among the professional of exotics: “The Natural position of the powers of Barbary costs was hired in the war, their hate of all honest industry and their natural greed push them to the Piracy [...] this innate love of the depredation is encouraged by the Barbaric religion”. P. Boyer goes farther in the path of the unlikely: “without the Piracy, the Regency of Algiers would never have existed”. Albertini found that “the real fortune of the Ottomans was on the sea [...] and that the privateering against the Christians represented for them a national industry or, it’s better to say an institution of state” »²².

The opinions that contradict these currents of thought are unfortunately rare. But one of Mas-Latrie deserves to be mentioned here:

« We believe that the statistical of the forfeits to which the Mediterranean was a theatre from the 12th to the 16th century, would put on the whole of the Christians a very heavy quantity of depredations

and maritime devastations that we reject too easily on account of the Barbarians »²³.

One day, whereas 'Arrûdj came back of a journey of Tripoli (Tarabulus al Châm, "Syria") he was surprised by the Christian corsairs of Rhodes island. A rough fight began between them and ends with the death of Iliyâs (one of the three brothers) of Arrûdj and many his crew. Arrûdj and the survivors were captured and their boat taken by the adversaries. In 1518, an Algerian embassy went back from Istanbul. They must have a permit from the Venetian consul of one station in the Ottoman capital, in order to be protected by the Pirates of the oriental Mediterranean Sea. The book titled "Ghazawât 'Arrûdj wa Khayr Edîne" gives many details on the pirates who pursued the Muslims²⁴. Yet these events were just before the foundation of the Regency of Algiers.

In the west, the sultan Sa'âdien Abu 'Abd Allah had to solicit on two occasions the king of Portugal Manuel (1469-1521), for a mediation to his corsairs to let pass two of his ships bound for Algiers and Tunis -but vainly. We may also remember that in France the royal edicts prescribed the tenth of the holds to the profit of the big admiral and the fifth for the King! « Beneditto Cotrugli, the merchant of Ragusa in the 15th century said that "all Genoese who were impoverished by the reverses of fortune were pirates"»²⁵ Therefore the role of the Christian was not only the one of the victim.

« The privateering against the Muslims based in Sicily, La Valette, Livorno, Pisa, Palma, Almeria, and Valencia had its big part in the unhappiness of the navigation. Every year the Order of Malta armed a dozen of big galleys, reinforced in the 17th century of three or four vessels or frigates in order to operate with more efficiency against the Muslims' trade in the sea. They practiced some raids in the non protected inshore villages... »²⁶. « For a long time, the Maltase piracy had maintained a permanent insecurity on the Maghreb coasts »²⁷.

Therefore, the privateering was not solely a Muslim activity. « It is necessary to reject these historic prejudices that put only the Arabs in the range of depredate corsairs of the Mediterranean »²⁸. In the 16th century, Deschamps had written: « The nurseries of the pirates are two riparian nations of the Ocean; France and England »²⁹. Privateering was prescribed by the Christian and by the Muslims reciprocally.

However, if the Muslims' privateering propagated in the 16th

century on the North African coastline, the Christian one of Tuscany, Naples, Provence, Spain was more active. Moreover, if the Muslim danger had disappeared on the European coastline since more than one century, the Christian danger always existed on the African strands at the end of the 18th century. Until the French Revolution, the States of Italy and the whole Spain were in continual war with the powers of the Maghreb.

Therefore the Mediterranean Sea was a very conflicted space, usually a theatre of battles, not between two great political states, or legal against non legal powers, but it was another stage of a struggle between two cultures and two religions, dramatically interpreted by conquests, crusades, inquisition and privateering, then colonialism.

A military navy, it was a priority

During, the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, the Algerian government attached a great importance to military marine, sometimes more than the army on the soil did. The reasons of this choice were very strong at that epoch. The Eastern and the Western borders were less threatened than the Mediterranean coasts. It is sufficient to compare the European expeditions from the 16th to 19th century with the few skirmishes with the Moroccans or the Tunisians. As for the South, the extent of the Sahara was a sufficiently efficient natural gate that an aggression on this side was unthinkable. Therefore, the real danger came from the sea. The anti-Maghrebean military expeditions had become almost permanent since the fall of Grenada (1492). The danger watched the coastline and in particular the capital Algiers.

The Europeans began exploring the coasts under many motives, curious tourists or businesspersons. When they arrived to Algeria, they marked the strategic places, elaborated some plans, and then collected big sums of money. They also organized the privateering modestly proclaimed against the Barbary Piracy. They got ready « to pierce the abscess of Algiers »³⁰. But it was very rarely for the Algerian or the Muslims, to have some sufficient tolerance to visit or explore the European costs.

It would be interesting to review a few passages of this propagandist literature destined to revive the Europeans' and to incite them to conquer Maghreb. Haëdo said: « If this earth belongs to the Christians, who worked it by their own hands, there would be no more fertile country in all over the world »³¹.

« Marmol in his “Description of Africa” glorifys the Saint League Alliance of 1573, and praised the conquest of a so beautiful country. It is why he introduces in his book so many precisions documents and sources about this region. It is necessary to mention that the “Description of Africa” of Marmol which was published on the following day of Lépante (1571) and shortly after the failure of the revolt of the Andalusian. The book was translated in French in 1667 in a same intention: to preach for the crusade»³².

The projects of occupation were very clear. Lanfreducci³³ said: « The easiest place to give the assault and to seize Algiers is the one of Bebeluet (Babaloued),i after having taken the Burchio of the Uccialiii because in this point the army would protect the other Burchis and the Alcazabaiiii that we could attack the hills and the small mountains easily, then we can dominate the city with cutting water sources for the army»³⁴.

Of all inshore cities of the Mediterranean coastline, Algiers was the main target.

« There is no doubt that once Algiers had been shaven, the whole of the Ottoman house powers would collapse easily, in Barbary costs and in Egypt. There is no doubt too, that all unfaithful corsairs will disappear and the cities of the Barbary will be taken easily. By the way, not all the coasts of Spain but the whole Christendom will be saved. The missing of Algiers’s help will be so faraway and uncertain for all the Levant (Orient). It would be very easy to the Christians to eradicate the other corsairs of Tripoli, Djerba, Monastir, Sousse, Bizerte, Bône (Annaba) and the other... »³⁵

There is nothing astonishing to meet in the archives of Spain and Italy the descriptions of many Algerian ports made by captain corsairs in view of a landing or a raid. They noted the possibilities of landing and coming back. They cited the sources of soft water, the possibilities of restocking; they joined the sketches and legends there³⁶.

Since a very long time, as noted before, the Algerian coast had been constituted, as the more coveted region of the Mediterranean Sea. The hold of this coast was the dream of several powers in the old continent.

These many plans of conquests were known by the leaders of the country in Algiers. That is why they had put all their hopes in an efficient military navy, capable to make fail so many plans and to raise

so many challenges. This is why this marine should be also the better machine of the Algiers Regency.

The structure of the fleet

The Algerian marine was composed of locally constructed ships or taken from the enemies in sea, things that permitted to reinforce the fleet in a very efficient manner. Concerning ship building, the persons responsible of the yards had to take into account some options of the Regency. It required having very fast and very armed ships ready at any moment and to many missions.

The Regency sought to select and improve some types of ships capable of the privateering or the protection of the coasts. Perhaps, it was the reason why the Algerians never put on sea very big vessels, since -in their view- they were too slow and bad manoeuvred in naval fights. We can understand also why the most valued ship was the galiote; it is a small galley alleviated holding the sea better, more able to use the sails. « The opinion of some contemporaries was that the galiote was from the most successful of this creation. The admiral Uldj Ali had carried it at the time of Lépante to its highest degree of perfection. Its offensive capacity in men and in arming had to be very superior to the one of the enemy »³⁷.

Such was the general conception before the constructors achieve their realization. Many ships were constructed in Algeria in spite of some political and economic vicissitudes and that until the last moment of the Regency. The authorities used to this effect the excellent woods of oak and pine of the region of Cherchel. Moreover, when these woods were exhausted toward the middle of the 17th century, they turned to the forests of Bejaia in the east. In order to have wood on favourable conditions, they dealt with the Amokrane (tribute chief) of Médjana, who took the engagement to cut down and to produce the shaft of his region according to the cuts and dimensions received before.

In the domains between Sétif and Wadi Zenati, there was a specialized institution named the “service the Karasta”³⁸. It functioned in Bejaia as a base for the marking, and the embarking. The regions of Jijel and Collo were also associated to the operation³⁹.

The pieces of wood received in Algiers were classified in wood of hull, pieces curves of the stem and the sternpost, framework of the flanks and of the hull, belt or beam, contiguous timbers bordering the

ship of a flank to another and serving to consolidate the hems, masts, beams and boards... All these pieces were treated by local technicians or the specialized foreigners (carpenters, locksmiths, coopers, etc...) ⁴⁰

The first industry of the capital (Algiers) was ship building. All specialists, captives, Europeans who came under contract and the natives in general were anxious to win money in that industry. In Bâb El Wâd they manufactured the important units, in Bâb Azzûn those of least measurements. But some difficult problems remained to solve: some supplies missed there as the nails, the anchors, hemp, the veils, the ropes, some bowls necessary to every piece of the beech, the walnut-tree, the elm or the larch. These materials made defect.

The sale of wood to the Algerians was forbidden by papal bubbles and royal orders. Spain put the embargo on everything that could serve as equipment for the marine of the Regency: apparatus, saltpetre, accessories of cockle, sailcloth, munitions and weapons...

Next to these yards, there was the foundry where the biggest number of cannons was manufactured. The factory was named Dâr al barûd (the house of the gunpowder), and was close to Bâb al Wâd. It was a wide building of:

«Thirty meter long and a big enough height; there was only one furnace very well constructed. The mold of melting was placed in a grave just in front of the opening, which flowed out and which was placed over to withdraw the massive piece. This one was drilled [...] On the other side of the street were the workshops of the molds, the gun carriage, several forges, and furnaces to make projectiles, which were manufactured in big quantities... » ⁴¹

The government of Algiers suffered from a lack of provision of many necessary materials. The products of the holds in sea permitted to surmount some obstacles. They recovered a large part of the material. The precious cargos brought them what they had needed.

«There were the tributes versed regularly by the Christian nations anxious to live in peace with the Regency. During long years, Sweden and Denmark provided the woods of the North, and Holland provided the pieces of frameworks, the veils and different equipments» ⁴².

We can find in the reports of consuls in Algiers, an interesting detail on the indispensable supplies. In 1680, Holland provided to Algiers 8 pieces of cannons of 50 pound of bullets with accessories, 40

masts, 500 barrels of gunpowder, 5000 cannonballs and a vessel full of cables and various apparatuses. Also in 1711, Holland sent to the Regency 8 bronze cannons, 16 of iron, 24 gun carriage, 7000 cannonballs, 600 barrels of gunpowder, 800 rifles, 400 blades of swords, 25 masts and 8 big cables [...] Sweden rushed in 1731, 800 barrels of gunpowder, 8 big cables, 50 masts, 800 rifles, 40 pieces of cannons, 6000 cannonballs⁴³.

In 1746, the “Etats Généraux” of France sent three ships escorted by vessels of lines with different presents of which, 60 mainmasts, 140 big pieces of wood for hem, 400 other of 4 inches, 60 thousands barrels of gunpowder, 80 thousands of lead, 35 big cable, 600 pieces of canvas for veils [...] In 1749, four Dutch ships unloaded the presents from the “Etats Généraux”⁴⁴.

In the same year, 1749, Denmark, in application of the treaty signed in Algiers, committed to provide: 20 cannons of iron with 20 pounds of cannonballs, 20 other of 12 pounds, 8000 cannonballs, 4 mortars of melting, 4000 bombs of 100, and 150 pound, 100 thousand of powder, 2000 tables of 4 inch thick for hem, 50 mainmasts, 10 cables of 10 inches, 30 of 5 to 8 inches and 500 quintals of stringing for the manoeuvre.

The Danish King also committed himself to send annually 50 thousand barrels of gunpowder, 25 big cable, 8.000 cannonballs, 25 yards, 10 cables and as many antennas. The agreements of 1747, 1748 and 1749 stipulated identical supplies. In 1747, He (Danish King) had offered some mortars to the Regency; the Dey sent them back, noting that these weapons are in melting. He informed him that they would accept only mortars of bronze, and gave him 6 weeks to repair this mistake.

In 1751, the City of Hamburg was committed to send annually to the Regency, 34 thousand barrels of gunpowder, 56 thousand of stringing, 34 thousands of lead, 100 pieces of canvas for veils, and 10 cables and as much of big cables, 10 masts of Vessels, 30 antennas and 800 cannonballs of different calibres. Sweden also sent in 1747, 70 masts, 903 cables for Hems, 170 laths, 294 barrels of pitch, 50 thousands of powder, 19 cables 80 big cables, 200 barrels of tar, 20.000 cannonballs of 6 to 12 inch⁴⁵.

England proposed all sorts of apparatus, iron, steel, sulphur and the saltpetre. The traders of Marseille and Livourno provided the

material that had been asked. The contraband permitted to surpass the obstacles. The French services knew it, and an order of Louis XIV to Tourville in date of 17th January 1682, prescribe that:

« His Majesty had been informed that the Dutchmen carry several contraband goods to the so-called corsairs of Algiers in order to equip their vessels and to arm them even of cannons, and as it is important to prevent them, He wants that He (Tourville) must inspect all the Dutch vessels that he will meet in sea »⁴⁶

In his memorials, the French captain Fouques Guillaume had discovered «French complicities with the marine of Algiers. He denounced, at Marseille, the quick growth of contraband of weapons and strategic products in destination to the Barbary costs and its naval workshops »⁴⁷.

The Jewish of Algiers had specialized in the import of the weapons from Holland. The trade with Europe allowed importing from Algeria, hemp, horses, wax, copper, leather, coral, and especially wheat. On the other hand, the French and the English could sell in Algiers produces of their privateering, some times near the Algerian costs, where they usually receive the aids when they were in difficulty⁴⁸.

A Knight of Avrieux affirms in his memorials that on the 11th of January 1676, the vessel of the corsair Samson and the one of Mezzo Morto⁴⁹ came back from Marseille. They had escorted the Ship of Captain David and other merchant ships that came from Syria, very richly loaded. For fear to fall in the hands of the Spanish corsairs, they had adapted with these two Algerians to escort them. The magistrates of Marseille had received these corsairs very well. They had given them provisions for their return [...] another accident happened; the vessel of the Captain Jérôme Michel of Marseille had perished near Ténès in 29th October 1727. A marabou (Muslim saint) helped the crew and came with the sailors from Ténès to Cherchel by sea and then from Cherchel to Algiers overland with four knights⁵⁰.

« In 1727, The Captain Maillet de Marseille declared that he gave to Omar Raïs⁵¹ 50 pilaster and 4 peaks of tip and over 2 pieces of stringing of 4 hundredweight, 3 axes and 14 oars, as recompense to the services that he had received with his crew in Jijel after his Vessel named “la Fortune de la mer”, had been aground there»⁵².

The grants of the Ottoman Sultan or the chiefs of Muslim states also arrived to the Regency. Some Big Lords, in return of their presents of the Dey, never failed to send some materials for the Algiers fleet with the representatives of the Dey.

In 1706, a French ship "Nolisé" had transported from Constantinople to Algiers a quantity of pieces of wood for construction, gun carriage for cannons, six rudders, and twenty six keels of ships, one hundred ninety three big oars and two hundred fifty small oars, twenty two masts, five hundred cannonballs, many hemsps and iron ...⁵³

However, the holds of sea, the grants of the governments and the contraband were not sufficient. The needs were greater. Then, there were other transactions. Laugier de Tracy wrote that in 1725 "the English consul in Algiers was the lonely merchant of his nation". He provided, to the government of the Regency munitions of war and instruments of navigation and received in return oil, wheat and other goods. These commodities were destined to the provision of Gibraltar⁵⁴.

In 1778, an English ship arrived from England bringing 50 cannons made of iron, bought by Mohamed Pasha for the government's account: 28 cannons of the heavy caliber 12 each, 64.565 pounds in all, 6 cannons weighing, or 7961 pounds in all, 16 cannons 34.950 pounds in all. "In payment of these cannons, He had been given 5 measures of wheat for each quintal of iron. He had also bought from the Captain of this ship 3 anchors at the cost of 5 measures of wheat by quintal of iron⁵⁵.

Laugier de Tarcy wonders how a country nearly without wood, without masts, without stringings, without veils, without wax, without anchors, could maintain a great number of vessels with very little fees⁵⁶.

Thanks to all these efforts, these continuous and creative initiatives, the persons responsible of the marine managed to construct «some vessels, good sailboats, fast and very armed»⁵⁷. However, the better testimony of this is Le père Dan: « On 7th August 1634, I saw a fleet of 28 ships, the most beautiful and most armed that it was possible to see»⁵⁸.

When the construction of a ship was finished, the launching will be celebrated in a feast. The crowd of Algiers ran to the port, a Marabou slaughter a sheep and threw it overboard. When the ship was vigorously pushed and put in the waters, it would be blushed by immolation blood.

The holds of the sea contributed extensively to the backing of the fleet. The wars between Algiers and its numerous enemies served the Regency, but loot of war often consisted of the ships which needed some time for a global renovation. Indeed, the catch of boats was sometimes by great score⁵⁹ « 28 Biscayans at a stroke near Malaga in 1556, about fifty ships in one season in the vicinity of Gibraltar »⁶⁰

« Some official reports affirm that between 1613 and 1621 more than 800 ships⁶¹ fell in the hands of Algerians of which 447 are Dutch, 193 French, 120 Spanish, 60 English, 56 German [...] other than small crafts. Other documents indicate that between 1630 and 1634, 80 ships were taken from France with 1331 captives. After the peace of the Pyrenees in 1659, (between Spain and France), the squadron of Toulon rake in the Maghreb costs and bombarded Tripoli, Tunis and Algiers. The Raïs brought back to the port hundreds of ships in order to weaken the marines which intended to destroy the Regency. In the year of 1681, they captured about thirty French ships and 300 men of crew »⁶².

In the 18th century, the hunt of the European ships continued. Between 1765 and 1799, 376 holds came to enrich the Algerian fleet⁶³. The ship named "Augustus III Rex Polonaie" was arranged among the gigantic boats of the time. It belonged to the ship owner J. Ph Schultz of Gdansk. He declared that he was captured by four Algerian xebecs on 16th October 1749⁶⁴.

If the captured ships did not interest the admiralty of Algiers, they were sold in Europe through the intermediary of the Jewish of Algiers and Livournos Merchants or by Consuls (businessmen) wheeler-dealers. However, the holds were not acquired through a unique way. It some times arrived to the Algerians to lose a part of their fleet.

« In 1620, Beaulieu Persac captured 4 Algerian vessels, and in 1621 he sank three of them. A substantial number of ships were burnt from time to time in the port of the capital. In 24th August 1665, the Duke of Beaufort sank 2 ships in Cherchel and took 3 that he incorporated to the royal marine»⁶⁵.

The "Rose of Algiers" of 40 canons was taken by the Marquis d'Affreville on the outskirts of the Cape Corsica [...] The treaty of peace between France and the Regency, signed in 1689, stipule in its article 6 that "the Emperor of France will agree to the restitution of the Vessel

“the Sun” and the caravels “le Parrot” and the “Dragon” taken by vessels of his Majesty with their tackle, cannons, effects and crews⁶⁶

Problem of the appellation

Usually, the Algerian ships only took their commander's name. For example: “xebec” of Raïs Hadj Ali, etc. Sometimes, the designation was preceded of a qualifier: the new brig of such Raïs. The origin of the ship also served as distinguishing name. For example, the frigate called “Amriquiya” (the American) named thus because it was offered by the United States of America, and another called “Alburtughalia” (the Portuguese) because it was taken from the Portuguese by Raïs Hamidou.

It is only in the 18th century and in the last years of the Ottomans presence that the ships had assigned some names: “the Rooster of the fort”, “the Green wing”, “the victorious”, “the victory of Islam”, “the thing of the divine providence”, “the key of Jihad”, “the virtuous Iskander”. These two last ones escaped from the defeat at Navarino in 1827, and were in Alexandria port at the time of the French conquest of Algiers in 1830⁶⁷.

The sterns of the ships didn't carry any names, but there was a representing figure for example: a “rose tree”, a “pearl”, a “lemon tree gilded”, a “sun flower”, “two cypresses”, “seven stars” and “two antelopes”, etc... The Europeans gave to the Algerian ships the name of these figures and there was some ships named “the White lion”, “the Golden rose”, “the Big Gazelles”, “the Golden lemon tree”, “the Crescent”, “and the Pearl”⁶⁸. And there were other names according to figures on the sterns of the ships.

Blanchi who accompanied the Count of Bretonnière in Algiers in 1829 affirms that for the first time, in 1825, the Algerians gave particular names to their ships of war. It was an imitation of the Europeans.

The names were Arabic, Ottomans or Persian, here are some examples⁶⁹:

Type of ships	names	Number of cannons
FREGATES	Miftahi-djihan (the key of the world)	62

	BEN-el-ghavvâs (the son of the diver)	50
	Neferi-Iskender (the Alexander)	35
CORVETTE	Mezaheri-Istavfié	36
	Fassia	36
BRIGS	Nimeti-Khouda (the donation of the God)	18
	Mudjerés (the carrier of good news)	36
GOELETTES	Feth-El Islâm (the conquest of Islam)	24
	Djeiran (the Roebuck)	16
	Tongarda	14
	Sureia (Luster)	Without cannons
	Chahini-Deria (the fulcrum of the sea)	Without cannons
POLACRE	Zaghar	20
CHEBEC	Majorca	20

The problem of the property

It is not astonishing to ask: who shared in the property of this strategic institution, not only for Algeria, but for all the Maghreb? Did the Regency of Algiers have a national marine or a private one?

Actually, everyone took part in privateering: the Government, its entourage, the Beys, the notables, the Jews and even the ordinary people. Sometimes an association of several persons was necessary; the expenses and the costs of the prolonged missions required important funds. These financial necessities explain why the Government could not have alone the monopoly of the privateering. Laugier de Tracy affirmed that:

« In 1722, Dey Mohamed made appropriate a Dutch boat to make it a vessel of the state. All other ships belonged to individuals.

Their stores are always well provided. “When a ship had just perished or to be taken by the enemies the owner was held to replace it by the purchases or construction of another. “By this wise maxim”, wrote Laugier de Tracy, the Republic (of Algiers) never suffered of reduction in its powers»⁷⁰.

However, towards the end of the Ottomans period, the government's control on the affaires of the marine became nearly exclusive. For many years, wrote Rozet, all ships belonged to the Dey; the individuals could not arm their own boats⁷¹. Although individuals were allowed to arm and to choose their ships, some restrictions limited this liberty. Indeed, they were obliged to serve the state in the transportation of garrisons and provisions. They were forced to conform to the Dey's orders at the time of their missions and to be always ready to serve the Ottoman Sultan. Weather private property or state one, the ship was severely protected by the laws of the Regency. The least of damage in sea could lead to a conflict.

« In 1788, De Kercy the consul of France loaded for the affaires of his Majesty -the very Christian- to the Kingdom of Algiers, wrote; “an Algerian corsair, having been drown on the rating of France by the Vessel “le Partenope” the Dey of Algiers wanted that France was responsible, and threatened the consul to declare the war on his nation, if he didn't immediately replace this vessel. M. de Kercy offered money but the Khasnadji (finance minister) rejected this offer requiring a similar vessel. The minister of France, considering the circumstances, was obliged to agree to this requirement, in the interest of the peace that was threatened in every instant »⁷².

CONCLUSION

I attempted to talk briefly about the dynamics that had characterized this navy army and through it, I tried have a look on the long maritime past of Algeria. It was so brief that I was not able to cover all important parts of this long history. Political life, the international relations, economy, trade and military institutions are some annexes of this study, but the composition of Algerian fleet, and its evolution, the Raïs (prices of sea), and the life of the sailors in sea, and also on the mainland, training and real assault, famous battles and last struggle, all these subjects deserve new approaches basing on the new manuscripts discovered recently.

We must not ignore this marine that gave so much to Algeria: an

international prestige, a maritime experience, and necessary means for an independent politics. It was not the instrument or a hideout for pirates as some often wrote and said. It was a weapon whose base was Algiers to riposte and to attack. It went to assault on the seas and did not linger to carve itself an enviable place to fight against great powers.

It was a religious marine that fought for freedom and protection of “Dâr al Islam”, the national territories for all Muslims. It stopped the Spanish impulsions, then the arrogance of their allies. Marine of war, it was present on a numerous theaters of battle, alone or with Ottomans, facing the squadrons of the Christendom or facing convoys of ships. It provided real treasures from the waters, while the Maghreb was deprived of vital means, living a long crisis. Above all, it could stop a hostile and aggressive expansionist Europe at least for a while.

However, when the weight of the interior and outside difficulties became crushing and the obstacles were impassable, in spite of shy starts, this marine was vanished in 1830 completely from the Mediterranean Sea. Any people possessing a powerful marine can pretend, otherwise to the universal domination, or may be just a respect from the neighbors and enemies. A strong naval army was and remains again the indispensable helper of a political independence and a powerful lever that can raise the weak nations to the level of the strong nations...

Notes et Bibliographie:

*- The linguistic revision was done by Prof. DAHOU FAGHROUR.

1- MOULAY BELHAMISSI, (1930-2009), historian from Algeria, He specialised in the maritime history of Ottoman Algeria, teacher at the University of Algiers, He wrote: *l'Europe et la guerre secrète (1518 -1830)*, Alger, Dahleb, 1999, ISBN 9961-611-73-X/ *Les captifs algériens et l'Europe chrétienne (1518 - 1830)*, Alger, ENAL, 1988/ *Histoire de la marine algérienne (1516 - 1830)*, Alger, ENAL, 1983.

2- At this period the Europeans called the Algerian political system: the Regency of Algiers, the Kingdom of Algiers, the Republic of Algiers and the Algerian State..., however the states of the Maghreb were called; the Barbary costs in most sources. In Fact the Algerian rulers were called Sultans of Algeria in both Algerian and Ottoman official documents and statements.

3- BELHAMISSI M., (1986), *Histoire de la Marine Algérienne 1516-1830*, ENAL, Alger, p7. (215 pages)

4- BARBAROSSA was a name given to the four brothers sailors; Arrudj (1474-1518), Khayr al-Din (1476-1546), Elyas and Isaac. The name of Barbarous may come from the word “Baba”; “father” in Turkish. They were four sons of a Greek potter of Mitilini. They practiced the war on sea (*Jihad bahri*) in the name of the sultan of Istanbul, against the Catholic conquests in the Mediterranean Sea. The eldest, Arrudj, get to the service of the Emir of Algiers to fight against the Spaniards installed in the Peñon (a small Island in front of Algiers) in (1515). He invaded the city and submitted the hinterland. His brother, Khayr al-Din, followed him on the North African coasts; he also fortified the city of Algiers. He attacked the Italian coasts and Nice (1543), and He struggled against the Roman Catholic emperor Charles V.

5- MERCIER E., (1891), *Histoire de l'Afrique septentrionale, t. III, 1515-1830*, Paris, p145.

- 6- The *Ottoman Period* is the name of the modern part of the Algerian History; it begins in 1518 and ends with French colonialism, in 1830. The national state after 1962 was founded on the same geography and the same human factors.
- 7- The Arab nomination of El-Maghreb (Occident) "North Africa and Andalusia" in the opposite of El Mashreq (Islamic Orient), and also the Maghreb was divided on three parts; near Maghreb (Tunisia or Ifriqiya), central Maghreb (nearly Algeria) and the Far Maghreb (Morocco).
- 8- ... وأساطيل المسلمين قد ضربت عليهم ضراء الأسد على فرسته وقد ملأت الأكثر من بسيط هذا البحر عدة وعدنا واختلفت في طرقه سلما وحربا لم...
«شبح للنصرانية فيه الواح...»
- 9- IBN KHALDUN, (2003), *El Muqadima*, Dar el Fikr, Beirut, p244;1- HUBAC P., (1949), *Les Barbaresques*, Paris, pVII.
- 10- BELHAMISSI M., *Histoire*, op. cit. p13.
- 11- AL TAMAGRUTI (ABU L-HASAN ALI IBN MUHAMMAD), an author of a journey to the Orient (1584-1595) titled: «الفتحة المسكية في السفرة التركية». The part related to Algeria had been published by M. BELHAMISSI in: *Algeria seen by the Moroccan travelers at the Ottoman period*, SNED, Algiers, 1979.
- 12- HAMDÂN KHUḌJA, (1981), *El Mir'at, (the mirror)*, Algiers, (in Arabic), pp 117-118.
- 13- BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit. p14.
- 14- IBID., p15.
- 15- BONO SALVATORE, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, (Milano, 1993,1997), Tr. Fr. *Les corsaires en Mediterranee*, par Ahmed Somaï, Éditions Paris Méditerranée, Paris, 1998, p8. (255 pages)
- 16- HAËDO, Spanish Benedictin abbot, from Fromestra, he had stayed in Algiers from 1578 to 1581, author of three books on the Regency of Algiers, exploited extensively by the European historians. It is necessary to notice that a number of information given by Haëdo is obviously improper. Cf. BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, 15.
- 17- DE GRAMMONT, (1887), *Histoire d'Alger sous la domination Turque (1516-1830)*, Paris, p 51.
- 18- AVRIEUX CHEVALIER D', (1735), *Mémoires du chevalier*, Paris.
- 19- RENAUDOT, (1830), *Tableau du Royaume de la ville d'Alger et de ses environs*, Paris.
- 20- ABELLY L., (1891), *La vie de Saint Vincent de Paul*, Paris; cited by BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit., p 15.
- 21- A privateer was a private ship (or its captain) authorized by a country's government to attack and seize cargo from another country's ships. Prior to the development of international law among European nations, there was no legal recourse for minor grievances. Privateering was a form of covert operation used to resolve these matters without open warfare. The government of a country provided a letter of marque and reprisal to a ship owner that allowed him to arm his ship and attack other ships sailing under a particular flag. In return, he received a share of the seized cargo, while the rest went to the government as payment for the grievance. To the target country, a privateer looked very much like a pirate (which at times privateers would convert to piracy), and indeed this was the intention. The only difference was that pirates were considered outlaws by all nations, while privateers had immunity from the country that commissioned them, and were considered as prisoners of war if caught by other countries. [...] European powers renounced privateering in the 1856 Declaration of Paris. Other countries (including the United States) renounced it later under the Hague Conventions (1899/1907). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the WIKIMEDIA Foundation, Inc. This page was last modified 07:52, 23 July 2006. The Muslims of that time (Ottoman and Barbary) considered privateering as a legal religious defense (Jihad) against the Reconquista and crusades.
- 22- BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit. 18.
- 23- MAS-LATRIE, LE CONTE DE, (1866), *Relations et commerce de l'Afrique septentrionale (ou Maghreb) avec les nations chrétiennes au Moyen-âge*, Fermin-Didot & Cie, Paris.
- 24- Cf. ANONYM AUTHOR, *Gazawât Arrûdj wa Khaiyr Eddine*, (In Arabic), studied and edited by Belhamissi.
- 25- SAINT LOPEZ ROBERT, (1958), *Le Marchand Gênois*, A. E.S.C., Paris, p 501.
- 26- MATHIEUX, « Trafic et prix de l'homme en Méditerranée aux XVII et XVIII siècles », *les Annales E.S.C.*, IX, 1954, pp 157-164, Paris.
- 27- BELHAMISSI, op. cit. p 19
- 28- MAS LATRIE; op. cit. p 149
- 29- DESCHAMPS, *Pirates et flibustiers*, PUF, Paris, 29.
- 30- Cf. the writings of NICOLAS de NICOLAY, VALLEY, BRIEF, F. LA NOUE, HERAULT and PANANTI.
- 31- HAËDO, « Topographia e historia general de Arge », tr. De esp. par MONNEREAU et BERBRUGGER, in *Revue Africaine*, (1870), 369, pp 364-373.
- 32- BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit. 25.
- 33- LANFREDUCCI and BOSIO, two knights' spies of the Order of Malta, come to Algiers in 1587.
- 34- One of the great gates of Algiers.
- 35- They mean the tower of Uldj Ali (Bordj 'Uldj 'Ali).
- 36- ALCASSABA: the name of the fortified city of Algiers in the ottoman period.

- 36- LANFREDUCCI, F. AND BOSIO O., «Costa e discorsi di Barbaria», in *Revue Africaine*, 1925, pp 35-165.
- 37- Ibid. p 35-165.
- 38- Among the archives of the former Italian States, there was in Florence (ASF 2077) a voluminous sheaf, of 1542 to 1695, where they talked about some Algerian ports: Gigeri (Dalles), Cercelli (Cherchell), etc. cited by Belhamissi, op. cit. p 26.
- 39- BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit. 49.
- 40- Karasta means the wood of building and carpentry.
- 41- The treaty of 1702 between the government of Algiers and the Morqânis of Bâni Abbâss. Cf. BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit. 50.
- 42- HAËDO, (1880), «Epitome de los Reyes de Argel», in *Revue Africaine*, p 41; According to C. VALLIERE; the wood of Bejaia served to construct the body and the members of the boat, but the forests did not produce an appropriate tree to the masts.
- 43- BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit. p 50. According to W. SHALLER., (1830), *Esquisse de l'Etat d'Alger*, Trad. Bianchi Ladvocat, Paris, p52. There is an Arabic translation of this document, done by Ismail Al Arabi, ed. SNED, Algiers, 1982.
- 44- LACOSTE, L. (1931), *La Marine Algérienne sous les Turcs*, Paris, p 304.
- 45- BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit. 51.
- 46- Ibid. pp 51-53
- 47- Cf. BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit. p 51, more details are in; VALLIERE J.A. ; (1979), *Observations sur le Royaume d'Alger*, publiées par Chaillou in «Textes pour servir à l'histoire de l'Algérie au XVIIIème siècle», Paris.
- 48- Cf. BELHAMISSI, op. cit. 52.
- 49- TURBET DELOF (GAY), *Bibliographie Critique*, p 74, cited by Belhamissi, *Histoire*, 52.
- 50- Cf. BELHAMISSI, op. cit. 52.
- 51- The Raïs Hadj Hussein, he becomes Dey after 1682.
- 52- Cf. DEVOULX, A., «le registre des prises maritimes», in *Revue Africaine*, 1871, p 346.
- 53- Raïs: an Arabic surname, means the "head or president" given to the Admirals of the Algerian Navy, in the Ottoman period.
- 54- Cf. BELHAMISSI, op. cit. p52-53.
- 55- Ibid., p 53.
- 56- LAUGIER DE TRACY, *Histoire du Royaume d'Alger*, (Amsterdam, 1725), cited by BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit., p 53.
- 57- Cf. BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit. p 53.
- 58- Ibid, p 53.
- 59- VOYARD, (1951), *Chez les Pirates Barbaresques. Les écrivains par mer dans la littérature et l'histoire*, in Bulletin de la Section de géographie du comité des travaux historiques et scientifique, Paris, p 104.
- 60- DAN LE PERE, (1636), *Histoire de la Barbarie*, Paris.
- 61- As a little comparison, the city of Saint Malo (France) could catch by privateering; between 1688 and 1697, 200 ships, about 3500 boats of trade and 375 corsairs.
- 62- MONLOÛ J., (1973), *Les Etats barbaresques*, PUF, Paris, p 93.
- 63- DE GRAMMONT talked about 936 ships.
- 64- BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit. 54
- 65- DESFEUILLES ; «Scandinaves et Barbaresque, à la fin de l'Ancien Régime» in *Cahiers de Tunisie*, N° 15, 1956, Tunis, p330. pp 327-349
- 66- CIESLAK, «Les Pirates d'Alger et le commerce maritime de Gdansk au milieu du XVIII^e siècle» in *Revue d'histoire Economique et Sociale*, N° 1, 1972, p 111.
- 67- BELHAMISSI, op. cit., p 55
- 68- Ibid., p 55
- 69- Ibid., p 55
- 70- TURBET-DELOF G.; «Noms de navires algériens au XVIème siècle», in *Revue Internationale d'Onomastique*, N° 3, 1970, 213-219.
- 71- BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit. 56
- 72- Ibid., p 57
- 73- ROZET M., (1833), *Voyage dans la Régence d'Alger*, t. III, Paris, p 379.
- 74- DE KERCY M., (1927), *Mémoires sur Alger*, Esquer, Paris, cited by BELHAMISSI, *Histoire*, op. cit., p 57.