

Trapped in the “Nest of Corsairs”. A Brief Historiographical Overview of Sixteenth Century Ottoman Algiers

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ملخص :

محاصرون في «عش القرصنة». لمحة تاريخية موجزة عن الجزائر العثمانية في القرن
السادس عشر

منذ القرن الثامن عشر، تم كتابة عدد كبير من الكتب والمقالات النقدية عن القرصنة الجزائرين والدور الذي لعبته مدينة الجزائر في أوائل العصر الحديث للمتوسط، ولكن كقاعدة عامة، ظلت فرضيات البداية للمؤرخين راسخة في تعريفات صارمة وخاطئة جزئيًا مثل "عش القرصنة" أو "جمهورية القرصنة" أو "الدولة البربرية". من خلال إعادة تقييم تاريخ الجزائر في القرن السادس عشر، يناقش هذا المقال الحاجة إلى تجاوز مثل أنماط التفكير هاته لتجنب الوقوع في فخ المركزية الأوروبية. بعيدًا عن السعي لتقديم مراجعة شاملة لجميع المنشورات عن الجزائر العثمانية، فقد اخترت في القسم الأول من هذا المقال عددًا من الأعمال التي توضح كيف انتشرت الصورة النمطية لـ «عش القرصنة» في التاريخ الأوروبي عقود قليلة مضت فقط، عندما قام عدد من المؤرخين، من خلال الجمع بين المصادر المسيحية والإسلامية والنظر في وجهات النظر البحثية الجديدة، بتقديم صورة أكثر موضوعية لمدينة الجزائر، ليس فقط باعتبارها مركز لنشاط القرصنة في المتوسط، ولكن أيضًا كعاصمة لإقليم جزائر الغرب.

ومتابعة لأحدث المنشورات التي أصدرها العثمانيون والمستعربون، سأبحث في الفرع الثاني الدور المعقد الذي اضطلعت به القرصنة الجزائرية وممثلها خلال القرن السادس عشر.

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الكلمات المفتاحية :

الجزائر العثمانية؛ قرصنة؛ تاريخ التأريخ؛ دراسات متوسطة؛ المركزية الأوروبية؛ دراسات ما بعد الاستعمار.

Abstract:

Since the eighteenth century, a vast number of articles, books and critical essays have been written about the Algerian corsairs and the role played by the city of Algiers in the early modern Mediterranean, but as a rule the historians' starting hypotheses have remained firmly lodged in rigid and partly erroneous definitions such as «nest of corsairs», «pirate republic» or «Barbary state». By reassessing the historiography of sixteenth-century Algiers, this article argues for the need to go beyond such categories to avoid the trap of Eurocentrism. Far from aiming to present an exhaustive review of all the publications on Ottoman Algiers, in the first section of this article I have selected a number of works that illustrate how the stereotype of the «nest of corsairs» pervaded European historiography until only a few decades ago, when, by combining Christian and Islamic sources and considering new research perspectives, a number of historians have presented a more rational image of the city of Algiers, not only as the epicentre of the Mediterranean corso, but also as the capital of the province of Cezayir-i Garb.

Following on from the most recent publications by Ottomanists and Arabists, in the second section I shall examine the complex role played by the Algerine corso and its protagonists during the sixteenth century.

Keywords:

Ottoman Algiers; Corsairs; History of Historiography; Mediterranean Studies; Eurocentrism; Postcolonial Studies.

Introduction

On 22 May 1813, a young Gioacchino Rossini first staged *L'Italiana in Algeri* in the San Benedetto Theatre in Venice. Described by Stendhal as «the perfection of the *buffo* genre», the

opera was inspired by real events: a Milanese woman, Antonietta Frappoli, had been captured by Muslim corsairs in the waters off Sardinia and taken to the harem of Mustafa ibn Ibrahim, then leader of Algiers. After a series of vicissitudes, the woman was finally freed and helped to escape from North Africa back to Italy.

The opera's *dramatis personae* includes Christian captives, Italian renegades and a multitude of corsairs crowding the narrow streets of the city of Algiers. Following the text written by Angelo Anelli and set to music by Rossini, it is quite easy to spot the cultural stereotypes about the Maghreb which, by that time, were more than firmly set in the European worldview. Among them, the cliché of Algiers as a “nest of corsairs” clearly stood out¹.

While audiences in many European and American theatres were still enjoying *L'italiana in Algeri*, a diplomatic treaty was signed within the framework of the Congress of Paris (1856), which, among other things, declared the abolition of letters of marques and signalled the end of piracy². However, this did not occur in real life, and certainly not in Mediterranean historiography, as works dedicated to portraying the tale of the Barbary corsairs multiplied since the first stage of Franco-English colonisation of North Africa came to an end³.

¹The «nest of corsairs» cliché is already expressed at the beginning of scene IV of *L'italiana in Algeri*, when a ship loaded with newly captured Christian slaves arrives to the Algerian port. A crowd of vehemently shouting corsairs awaits it there: «Quanta roba! Quanti schiavi! | Buon bottino! Viva, bravi.| Ci son belle! |Non c'è male. | Starà allegro Mustafà»: *L'italiana in Algeri. Dramma giocoso per musica da rappresentarsi nel teatro d'Alessandria la primavera del 1822*, Alessandria, dalla stamperia di Luigi Capriolo, 1822, 11-12. On the stereotyped image of the Muslim world in early modern and modern Europe, see: **SOYKUT (Mustafa)**: *Image of the “Turk” in Italy: a History of the “Other” in Early Modern Europe*, Berlin, Klaus Schwarz, 2001; **FORMICA (Marina)**: *Lo specchio turco: immagini dell'Altro e riflessi del Sé nella cultura italiana dell'età moderna*, Roma, Donzelli, 2012; **BLAKS (David R.)** and **FRASSETTO (Michael)** (eds.): *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Perception of Other*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

²**RONZITTI (Natalino)** (ed.): *The Law of Naval Warfare: a Collection of Agreements and Documents with Commentaries*, Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff, 1988, p. 61-75.

³**PANZAC (Daniel)**: *Barbary Corsairs: the End of a Legend, 1800-1820*, Leiden, Brill, 2005. About historiographic production in the 19th century see **LAMBERT**

Since then, a vast number of articles, books and critical essays have been written about the Algerian corsairs and the role played by the city of Algiers in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean, but as a rule the historians' starting hypotheses have remained firmly lodged in rigid and partly erroneous definitions such as «nest of corsairs», «pirate republic» or «Barbary state». These labels, which have become interpretative paradigms on which the black legend of Algiers in the early Ottoman period rests, rely on a partial and limited use of the sources; this can be blamed either on the difficulties posed by local sources written in Ottoman-Turkish or in Arabic, and on the heuristic processes that led to and guided research⁴.

By reassessing the historiography of sixteenth-century Algiers, this article argues for the need to go beyond the categories mentioned above in order to avoid the trap of Eurocentrism. Far from aiming to present an exhaustive review of all the publications on Ottoman Algiers, in the first section of this article I have selected a number of works that illustrate how the stereotype of the «nest of corsairs» pervaded European historiography until only a few decades ago, when, by combining Christian and Islamic sources and considering new research perspectives, a number of historians have presented a more rational image of the city of Algiers, not only as the epicentre of the Mediterranean corso, but also as the capital of the province of Cezayir-i Garb⁵. Following on from the most recent publications by Ottomanists and Arabists, in the second section I shall examine the complex role played by the Algerine corso and its protagonists during the sixteenth century.

PLAYFAIR (Robert): *Supplement to the Bibliography of Algeria from the Earliest Times to 1895*, London, John Murray, 1898.

⁴**MEROUCHE (Lemnour)**: *Recherches sur l'Algérie à l'époque ottomane. II-La course: mythes et réalité*, Saint-Denis, Bouchène, 2007, Introduction.

⁵Cf. **MASTERS (Bruce)**: «Algiers», in *The Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, eds. **MASTERS (Bruce)** and **ÁGOSTON (Gábor)**, New York, Facts on File, 2009, p. 33-34; **KAHRAMAN (Kemal)**: «Cezayir: Osmanlı Dönemi», in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, on-line: <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/cezayir#3-osmanli-donemi> (Consulted online on 01 April 2022); **HOEXTER (Miriam)** and **SHUVAL (Tal)**: «Algiers», in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, on-line: http://dx.doi.org/pros1.lib.unimi.it/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_0017 (Consulted online on 01 April 2022).

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During the early decades of the contemporary era, Mediterranean history was revised through the filter of a «supposed historicism» that sought to examine problems and phenomena looking for their origins in the not-too-distant past⁶.

In this way, between the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, political and military history was given priority, which resulted in aseptic descriptions of the great battles and their protagonists. These research perspectives favoured the colonialist discourse elaborated by the European powers which had occupied most of the southern shore of the Mediterranean, giving the colonisers the possibility of rewriting the history of their new colonies⁷.

Within this historiographical framework, the main publications on Algeria were marked by a clearly Eurocentric vision, which is reflected in the choice to investigate only certain periods, phenomena, and sources. While the period corresponding to the European Middle Ages was hardly taken into account, several studies delved into the Early Modern age, with two clearly ideological aims in mind: first, the Ottoman conquest of Algeria was presented as a violent process that deprived Maghrebians of their freedom; and second, the role of Christian converts to Islam (the so-called renegades) was presented as that of promoters of technical-military development in the backward Muslim societies of North Africa⁸. In both approaches, the starting point was invariably the arrival of the Barbarossa brothers to the Maghreb, their seizure of power in Algiers after the elimination of the local sheikh, and the

⁶**BUNES IBARRA (Miguel Ángel, de)**: «La investigación histórica sobre el Mediterráneo en la Edad Moderna: ¿Un estado de la cuestión?», *RiMe: Rivista dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea*, 18, 2017, p. 195-206.

⁷**BURKE III (Edmund)**: «Theorizing the Histories of Colonialism and Nationalism in the Arab Maghrib», in *Beyond Colonialism and Nationalism in the Maghrib: History, Culture, and Politics*, ed. **ABDULLATIF AHMIDA (Ali)**, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000, p. 17-34.

⁸**BROSSELDARD (Charles)**: *De l'origine et de la domination turques en Algérie*, Paris, 1839; **DEVOULX (Albert)**: *Recueil de notes historiques sur l'administration de l'ancienne Régence d'Alger*, Alger, 1852; **DEVOULX (Albert)**: «La marine de la Régence d'Alger», *Revue Africaine*, 13, 1869, p. 384-420; **WATBLED (Ernest)**: «Etablissement de la domination turque en Algérie», *Revue Africaine*, 17, 1873, p. 287-299 and 352-363.

foundation of a corsair state placed under the authority of the sultans of Istanbul. In this view, the Ottoman Empire became the only true colonising power in North African history. Furthermore, the exclusion of members of the Algerian society from any political or administrative office, their depiction as a group under the colonial thumb of the Ottomans, consolidated the idea that Algiers was hopelessly under the rule of a corsair government at the service of the Barbarossas⁹. Rejecting the veracity of local sources and relying almost exclusively on documents preserved in French and Spanish archives, the vast majority of studies on early modern Algeria were thus dominated by anecdotal accounts of various events linked to the Mediterranean corso, including raids against Christian coastlines; the attempts of the Spanish Monarchy to keep the Ottoman presence away from North Africa; and, finally, the succession of local conflicts, revolts and mutinies caused by the rivalry between janissaries and corsairs¹⁰.

The interest in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean Muslim corso was not based on a critical analysis of the sources or a wish to understand the complexity of this phenomenon. Conversely, colonialist historiography used the corso to reinforce rhetorical discourses about the cruelties perpetrated by the Turks during Ottoman rule over Algeria. In Stanley Lane-Poole's monograph, the author noted in his conclusions that the Turkish-Berber corso had sullied North Africa's past, heralding the day when: «the hold haunts of the Barbary Corsairs, within the pale of civilization, it may someday be possible to bury the unhappy past, and describe upon the tombstone the optimistic motto: finis coronat opus»¹¹.

⁹**RANG (Sander)** and **DENIS (Ferdinand)**: *Fondation de la Régence d'Alger, histoire des Barberousse*, Paris, J. Angé éditeur, 1837.

¹⁰**BERBRUGGER (Louis Adrien)**: *Le Pégnon d'Alger, ou les origines du gouvernement turc en Algérie*, Alger, 1860; **DEVOULX (Albert)**: «La première révolte des janissaires d'Alger», *Revue Africaine*, 15, 1871, p. 1-6; **DEVOULX (Albert)**: «Assassinat du Pacha Mohammed Tekelerli», *Revue Africaine*, 15, 1871, p. 81-89; **WATBLED (Ernest)**: «Documents inédits sur l'assassinat du Pacha Tekelerli (1556-1557)», *Revue Africaine*, 15, 1871, p. 335-340; **WATBLED (Ernest)**: «Négociations entre Charles Quint et Kheir-Eddin (1538-1540)», *Revue Africaine*, 15, 1871, p. 138-148; **GRAMMONT (Henri-Delmas, de)**: *Relation de l'expédition de Charles Quint contre Alger, suivie de la traduction du texte latin par Pierre Tolet*, Paris, Aubry, 1875.

¹¹**LANE-POOLE (Stanley)**: *The Barbary Corsairs*, London, 1890.

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This view was soon compounded with the idea that the corso was an exclusively Muslim phenomenon, as is best illustrated Vice Admiral Jurien de La Gravière's 1887 works. An initial publication on the attacks launched by *Les corsaires barbaresques*, was counterbalanced with an account of the defence of the Christian Mediterranean by *Les Chevaliers de Malte*¹². The Algerine corso had thus become one of the main factors with which to validate a binary perspective of Mediterranean history, divided between civilised Christians and Muslim barbarians, whose only point of contact was a military conflict disguised under the veil of the religious categories of crusade and jihād.

In the preface to his *Histoire d'Alger et de la piraterie des Turcs dans la Méditerranée à dater du seizième siècle*, Charles de Rotalier claimed that, at the beginning of the Early Modern age, the Maghreb had fallen into the darkness of barbarism owing to the arrival of the Barbarossa brothers in Algiers and the subsequent Ottoman domination, while in Europe a new stage marked by civilisation was beginning. His narrative, therefore, was not intended to tell the «histoire d'une nation», but that of a «ville célèbre de corsaires», in which there were «douze mille corsaires» defined as «amas honteux de brigands»¹³.

These premises remained firmly in place for a long time. While many French historians devoted themselves to an embryonic analysis of the commercial and diplomatic relations between European powers and North African polities¹⁴, Henri Delmas de

¹²**JURIEN DE LA GRAVIÈRE (Jean-Pierre Edmond)**: *Les Corsaires barbaresques et la marine de Soliman le Grand*, Paris, Plon, 1887; **JURIEN DE LA GRAVIÈRE (Jean-Pierre Edmond)**: *Les Chevaliers de Malte et la marine de Philippe II*, Paris, Plon, 1887.

¹³**ROTALIER (Charles de)**: *Histoire d'Alger et de la piraterie des Turcs dans la Méditerranée à dater du seizième siècle*, Paris, chez Paulin libraire-éditeur, 1841.

¹⁴**CHARRIÈRE (Ernest)**: *Négociations de la France dans le Levant, ou Correspondances, mémoires et actes diplomatiques des ambassadeurs de France à Constantinople et des ambassadeurs, envoyés ou résidents à divers titres à Venise, Raguse, Rome, Malte et Jérusalem, en Turquie, Perse, Géorgie, Crimée, Syrie, Egypte, etc., et dans les États de Tunis, d'Alger et de Maroc*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1848-1860, 4 vols.; **PLANTET (Eugène)**: *Correspondance des deys d'Alger avec la Cour de France, 1579-1833*, Paris, Félix Alcan, 1889, 2 vols.; **BOUTIN (Abel)**: *Les traités de paix et de commerce de la France avec la Barbarie, 1515-1830*, Paris, Pedone, 1902; **MASSON**

Grammont's analysis of the Ottoman model of territorial conquest and management again prioritised the role of privateers in the Algerian government¹⁵. A close reading of his *Histoire d'Alger sous la domination turque*, in fact, clearly exposes that the French historian reread the history of Ottoman Algeria as that of a "corsair state" subject to the Sublime Porte, in which the ta'ifa (the corsairs' corporation) represented a third pole of power - «un troisième pouvoir dans l'Etat» - capable of influencing the policies of the governors chosen by Istanbul¹⁶.

While the main Maghrebi historiographical trends limited themselves at the time to treat history from a patriotic point of view, in which the corso was a mere expression of the holy war against Christian foreign powers¹⁷, in twentieth-century Europe, the continued Anglo-French colonialist vision of Mediterranean studies crystallised in the aforementioned view on Ottoman Algiers¹⁸.

Research on Mediterranean political and naval history did nothing but reaffirm the legend of Algiers as a «great pirate nest», a

(Paul): *Histoire des établissements et du commerce français dans l'Afrique barbaresque (1560-1793)*, Paris, Hachette, 1903.

¹⁵**GRAMMONT (Henri-Delmas, de)**: *Relations entre la France et la Régence d'Alger au XVII^e siècle. 1^{ère} partie: Les deux canons de Simon Dansa (1606-1628)*, Alger, A. Jourdan, 1879; **GRAMMONT (Henri-Delmas, de)**: *Etudes algériennes. La course, l'esclavage et la rédemption à Alger*, Paris, Daupley-Gouverneur, 1885.

¹⁶**GRAMMONT (Henri-Delmas, de)**: *Histoire d'Alger sous la domination turque (1515-1830)*, Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1887, p. III-X.

¹⁷**EPALZA (Mikel de)**: «Tres historiadores y políticos de Argelia presentan la política de Carlos V con la naciente Argelia moderna: Az-Zahhar (m. 1872), Zavala (1886) y Al-Madani (m. 1983)», in *Carlos V. Los moriscos y el islam [Congreso Internacional, Alicante 20-25 de noviembre de 2000]*, ed. **RUBIERA MATA (María Jesús)**, Alicante-Madrid, Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 2001, p. 233-267. In particular, see the view of the Algerian historian El Madani: **EL MADANI (Ahmed Tawfik)**: *La guerre de trois cents ans entre l'Algérie et l'Espagne (1492-1792)*, Alger, Société Nationale d'Édition et de Diffusion, 1976.

¹⁸**GRANGAUD (Isabelle)** and **OUALDI (M'hamed)**: «Tout est-il colonial dans le Maghreb? Ce que les travaux des historiens modernistes peuvent apporter», *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 2, 2016, p. 133-156; **MARTÍN CORRALES (Eloy)**: «Descolonizar y desnacionalizar la historiografía que se ocupa de las relaciones de Europa con los países del Magreb y Oriente Próximo en la Edad Moderna (siglos XVI-XVIII)», *RiMe: Rivista dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea*, 18, 2017, p. 167-193.

perspective emerged from a partial analysis of chronicles and sources held in European archives¹⁹. Moreover, this problem was made worse by the absolute reverence in which Grammont's study was held by the next generation of historians, who regarded it as the definitive work on the subject. However, the French historian's vision was based, as far as the sixteenth century was concerned, on a series of texts which, for different reasons, lay undue stress on the Algerine corso. Among them, as Grammont himself stated in the introduction to his work, were:

«Pour la première période (1510-1587), il a fallu consulter, chez les Espagnols, Gomara, Sandoval, Mariana, La Fuente, et surtout Marmol et Haëdo; chez les Italiens, Léon l'Africain et Paul Jove; en France, de Thou et les Négociations diplomatiques dans le Levant. [...] Mais à aucun moment, on ne peut faire fonds sur les chroniques indigènes. Elles sont d'une extrême rareté, et l'on n'a guère à le regretter, quand on voit combien celles qui ont été conservées sont diffuses et remplies d'erreurs, d'exagérations, et de mensonges souvent voulus. La seule d'entre elles qu'on puisse consulter avec un peu de fruit sur la fondation de la régence est le Razaouat Aroudj we Kheïred-Din, et encore, il est prudent de ne pas trop se fier aux allégations qui y sont contenues²⁰.»

As for Christian sources, Spanish records are clearly predominant, beginning with Diego de Haedo's *Topographia e historia general de Argel*, written with the express aim to condemn the torments that Algerian corsairs inflicted on the poor Christians who were taken captive at sea and then chained in the local *baños*²¹. Although rich

¹⁹**GUGLIELMOTTI (Alberto)**: *La guerra dei Pirati e la marina pontificia dal 1500 al 1560*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1876, 2 vols.; **MANFRONI (Camillo)**: *Storia della marina italiana dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla battaglia di Lepanto*, Roma, Forzani, 1897; **FERNÁNDEZ DURO (Cesareo)**: *Armada española desde la unión de los Reinos de Castilla y de Aragón*, Madrid, Est. Tipográfico Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1895-1903, 9 vols, here vol. II; **CHABOD (Federico)**: *Storia politica del Mediterraneo*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2014, p. 120-131.

²⁰**GRAMMONT (Henri-Delmas, de)**: *Histoire d'Alger*, p. XIV-XV.

²¹**HAEDO (Diego, de)**: *Topographia e historia general de Argel, repartida en*

in useful data with which to reconstruct the history of Algeria in the early Ottoman period, the chronicles cited and used by Grammont were a mix of what was already known about Islam in the sixteenth century, owing to religious coexistence in the Iberian Peninsula during the Reconquista, and the accounts of former captives and soldiers who had come into contact with Maghrebi society as a result of the military expansion of the Spanish Monarchy in North Africa. As pointed out by Bunes Ibarra, these texts consolidated a stereotypical and negative image of Islam in the early modern Iberian mindset, in which the Muslim was the antithesis of the good Catholic²².

The tendentiousness of Christian sources did not concern Grammont as much as that of Arab and Ottoman-Turkish ones did. The French historian, like many of his contemporaries, believed that the «indigènes» chronicles were full of errors and lies. The only source he took into account, yet cautiously and without relying too much on it, was Seyyid Muradi's *Gazavât-ı Hayreddin Pasha*²³. Although the work gave an almost year-by-year account of the history of the Barbarossa brothers and their deeds in the Maghreb, Grammont did not know that Seyyid Muradi had written it on the orders of Suleiman I to celebrate Hayreddin Barbarossa as a gazi (warrior of the Islamic faith)²⁴.

Thus, while Haedo's work emphasised not only the predominance of corsairs and renegades in the government of Algiers, but also their greedy behaviour towards Christian captives, the *Gazavat* merely praised Muslim corsairs in the service of the sultans of Istanbul. Based on these views, the French historian produced the idea of the nest of corsairs by simply putting his

cinco tratados, do se verán casos estraños, muertes espantosas, y tormentos exquisitos, que conviene se entiendan en la christiandad: con mucha doctrina, y elegancia curiosa, Valladolid, por Diego Fernández de Córdoba y Oviedo, 1612.

²²**BUNES IBARRA (Miguel Ángel, de)**: *La imagen de los musulmanes y del norte de África en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII: los caracteres de una hostilidad*, Madrid, CSIC, 1989.

²³**GALLOTTA (Aldo)**: «Gazavât-ı Hayreddin Paşa», in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, on-line: <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/gazavat-i-hayreddin-pasa> (Consulted online on 01 April 2022).

²⁴**ÖZCAN (Abdülkadir)**: «Muradi, Seyyid», in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, on-line: http://dx.doi.org/pros1.lib.unimi.it/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_40239 (Consulted online on 01 April 2022).

research agenda before the exegetical criticism of his sources.

As a result, Algiers became the queen of corsair cities for European historiography on the history of piracy and privateering in the early modern Mediterranean; a «Barbary state» at the service of the Osmanli from which attacks and raids were launched against the main Christian polities²⁵.

The lack of local and Ottoman-Turkish sources in these studies continued, however, to cause serious misunderstandings concerning the Algerian polity, its administration, its economy, and even its society and culture. Although Fernand Braudel already realised that not all the inhabitants of Algiers had to be involved with the corso²⁶, his view of North Africa was always marked by the use of sixteenth-century Spanish records²⁷. Braudel presented a cosmopolitan Algiers at the centre of a Mediterranean without frontiers, but whose stages of historical evolution were determined by the European origin of its corsairs and governors. According to this view, which emphasised the preponderance of Christian converts to Islam at the helm of the Maghrebi city, there was the Greek-Levantine Algiers of the Barbarossa family, followed by the Italian Algiers of the Calabrian renegade Uluç Ali and, finally, the Anglo-Dutch Algiers of Siemen Danziger²⁸. Braudel's Algiers, in short, was a city of «renegades, privateers, painful and heroic

²⁵**GOSSE (Philip)**: *The History of Piracy*, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1932; **HUBAC (Pierre)**: *Les Barbaresques*, Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1949; **FISHER (Godfrey)**: *Barbary Legend. War, Trade and Piracy in North Africa (1415-1830)*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1957; **IBAÑEZ DE IBERO (Carlos)**: *Carlos V y su política mediterránea*, Madrid, CSIC, 1962; **BONO (Salvatore)**: *I corsari barbareschi*, Torino, RAI, 1964; **SPENCER (William)**: *Algiers in the Age of the Corsairs*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1976; **WOLF (John B.)**: *The Barbary Coast: Algiers under the Turks, 1500 to 1830*, New York, Norton, 1979.

²⁶**BRAUDEL (Fernand)**: «Les Espagnols et l'Afrique du Nord de 1492 à 1577», *Revue Africaine*, 59, 1928, p. 184-233 and 351-410, here p. 356: «cet Alger des corsaires se confond avec l'Alger des renégats».

²⁷**HEYWOOD (Colin)**: «Fernand Braudel and the Ottomans: the emergence of an involvement (1928-50)», *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 23/2, 2008, p. 165-184, here p. 167-168: «Braudel's North Africa [...] is a country seen through sixteenth-century Spanish eyes».

²⁸**BRAUDEL (Fernand)**: *El Mediterráneo y el mundo mediterráneo en la época de Felipe II*, Madrid, FCE, 2015, 2 Vols. [ed. original: *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen: à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1949].

captives [...] a whole world that lives and works in Africa»²⁹.

Hence, as pointed out by Pierre Boyer in 1966, the history of Ottoman Algiers was being presented in pretty much the same terms since Grammont's work³⁰. This is why Boyer, an experienced archivist in Algeria and later the first director of the Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer in Aix-en-Provence, joined several professors and intellectuals who shared the ambition to develop a new research avenue for the Maghreb³¹. Focusing on the «histoire intérieure de la Régence» of Algiers, he departed sharply from the prevailing historiographical traditions. In some ways, his contribution can be critically pitched against some of Braudel's points. First, concerning the idea of the renegades as a human group capable of transferring a range of cultural and technical knowledge to the Maghreb, Boyer showed that the contribution of Muslim neophytes to the development of the Algerian fleet had been fairly limited throughout the sixteenth century, and perhaps even less than that by the Morisco emigrants from the Iberian Peninsula³². Second, he reversed the classical perspective of analysis of Algerian history: instead of focusing solely on the military exploits of the city's leaders, Boyer reinterpreted political events from a religious point of view, highlighting the importance of the marabouts. In his re-examination, the marabouts were not the ringleaders of the revolts against Ottoman power in the Maghreb as they were portrayed in Braudel's narrative, but they were presented as a local power group that had supported the policy of the Barbarossa brothers from the beginning³³. Finally, again in response - or so it appears

²⁹**BRAUDEL (Fernand)**: «Les Espagnols», p. 410.

³⁰**BOYER (Pierre)**: «Introduction à une histoire intérieure de la Régence d'Alger», *Revue historique*, 478, 1966, p. 297-316.

³¹**DELMAS-BARTOLI (Marie-Claude)**: «Pierre Boyer (1918-2008)», *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des chartes*, 171/2, 2013, p. 613-617.

³²Cf. **BRAUDEL (Fernand)**: *El Mediterráneo*, II, 273; **BOYER (Pierre)**: «Les renégats et la marine de la Régence d'Alger», *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 39, 1985, p. 93-106. On this topic, see also: **EPALZA (Mikel de)**: «Papel político de los moriscos en el nacimiento de la Argelia moderna en tiempos de Carlos V», in *Carlos V. Los moriscos y el islam*, p. 201-232.

³³Cf. **BRAUDEL (Fernand)**: *El Mediterráneo*, II, p. 661-662; **BOYER (Pierre)**: «Contribution à l'étude de la politique religieuse des Turcs dans la Régence d'Alger, XVI^e-XIX^e siècle», *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la*

retrospectively - to Braudel's idea of the three European epochs of Algiers, Boyer gave a first coherent political chronology of Algerian history: the period of Sultan-appointed Pasha (1571-1659) was followed by a government controlled by the local janissaries (1659-1671), and this, in turn, by that of the Dey of Algiers (1671-1830)³⁴.

In this way, under the influence of historians such as Pierre Boyer, who analysed the available sources critically and no longer interested in pursuing a colonialist or nationalist vision, things began to change from the 1970s onwards. While in Algeria, after the war of independence, a series of cultural institutions were set up to reorganise and catalogue the documents kept in local archives³⁵, the need to trigger a common process to decolonise history gained momentum at a global level. The Postcolonial Studies paradigm proved therefore key in filling in the gaps left by previous perspectives and revising most of their errors³⁶.

Within this framework, the important work of the Tunisian historian Abdeljelil Temimi is worth mentioning. Temimi heralded a turning point in the historiography of Ottoman North Africa precisely because of his aim, as recognised by Boyer, to «décoloniser l'Histoire du Maghreb»³⁷. As one of the first North African researchers to visit the archives in Istanbul and to travel around Europe, Temimi explored the history of the Maghreb through the Ottoman-Turkish sources he had found during his

Méditerranée, 1, 1966, p. 11-50. On this topic, see also: **TOUATI (Houari)**: *Entre dieu et les hommes: lettrés, saints et sorciers au Maghreb (17^e siècle)*, Paris, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1994.

³⁴**BOYER (Pierre)**: «Des Pachas Triennaux à la révolution de Ali Khodja Dey», *Revue historique*, 495, 1970, p. 99-124.

³⁵**TERKI HASSAINE (Ismet)**: «Historiographie et nécessité de la recherche historique sur l'Algérie du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle», in *Actes du séminaire international sur les sources espagnoles de l'histoire algérienne. Oran: 20-22 avril 1981*, Alger, Archives nationales, 1984, p. 45-52.

³⁶**FISCHER-TINÉ (Harald)**: «Postcolonial Studies», in *European History Online*, on-line: <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/fischertineh-2010-en> (Consulted online on 01 April 2022).

³⁷**BOYER (Pierre)**: «Temimi (Abdeljelil) : Recherches et documents d'histoire maghrébine», *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 12, 1972, p. 160-161.

travels abroad³⁸. As noted by Temimi, since «l’histoire se fait avec les documents»³⁹, historians began to give more and more priority to the study of local archives, cataloguing their collections and reviving the history of North Africa before the French colonial period⁴⁰.

2.

According to Tayeb Chentouf, the decolonisation of Algerian history was to be brought about by a triple rupture: «rupture dans les objets de l’histoire, rupture dans les méthodes et techniques, rupture dans les sources sans lesquelles il n’est pas d’histoire»⁴¹. In this way, a new wave of research on sixteenth-century Ottoman Algiers largely dissolved the «nest of corsairs» and «barbary state» clichés by merging political studies with socio-economic analysis and interweaving Christian sources with Arab and Ottoman-Turkish records. In 1978, Charles Andrew Hess, analysed the orders given by the sultans of Istanbul to the beylerbeyi (governor general) and thus relativised the effective power of corsairs in the local administration. In fact, the city of Algiers was presented as the capital of the first Ottoman province in the Maghreb (Cezayir-i Garb), whose government followed the directives coming from the Sublime Porte. Within this administrative system, the corsair members of the ta’ifa played a marginal role in decision-making, acting as maritime police on behalf of the sultan-appointed governor and cooperating with the Ottoman fleet during naval

³⁸On the importance of these early research missions in Istanbul in Temimi’s historiographical production, see: **TEMIMI Abdeljelil**: «Trois lettres de Hadj Ahmed Bey de Constantine à la Sublime Porte», *Revue de l’Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 3, 1967, p. 133-152, here p. 133.

³⁹**BOYER (Pierre)**: «A. Temimi, Sommaire des registres arabes et turcs d’Alger», *Revue de l’Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 30, 1980, p. 149-151.

⁴⁰See, for instance: **GAÏD (Mouloud)**: *L’Algérie sous les Turcs*, Alger, Société Nationale d’Ed. et de Diffusion, 1974.

⁴¹**CHENTOUF (Tayeb)**: «Décolonisation et problème des sources. Les sources locales, étrangères et espagnoles de l’histoire de l’Algérie du XVI^e au XIX^e siècle», in *Actes du séminaire international sur les sources espagnoles de l’histoire algérienne*, published in *Archives Nationales* (Algiers), n^o spécial, 10-11, 1984, p. 9-32., here p. 10.

campaigns in the Mediterranean⁴².

Despite the obvious difficulties involved in reading, understanding and interpreting the Ottoman-Turkish sources, the publications of several Ottomanists in the closing decades of the twentieth century highlighted the importance of this documentation in reconsidering some of the pending historical problems concerning the Ottoman Empire, as well as in resolving some of its aporias⁴³. In order to present a series of examples that illustrate the change in perspective brought about by the use of Muslim sources, I have decided to focus on three closely-knit topics: the corso, the society, and the economy of sixteenth century Ottoman Algiers.

On the subject of the corso, in contrast to Salvatore Bono's studies, in which the idea of the «Barbary state» as a political entity that was almost autonomous from the Ottoman Empire and ruled by corsairs continues to dominate⁴⁴, Moulay Belhamissi's three-volume work describes a group of Algerian sailors who simply acted in defence of the city of Algiers against European powers, while Lemnouar Merouche's critically moves away from both the black legend of the «nest of corsairs» and the myth of the «invincible Algerian navy» to understand the role that privateering played in the local economy and politics⁴⁵.

⁴²**HESS (Andrew C.):** *The Forgotten Frontier: a History of the Sixteenth-Century Ibero-African Frontier*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 169-170.

⁴³On the importance of Ottoman-Turkish sources and the new Ottomanist historiography: **SHAW (Stanford J.):** «Archival Sources for Ottoman History: the Archives of Turkey», *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 80/1, 1960, p. 1-12 **FAROQHI (Suraiya):** *Approaching Ottoman History: an Introduction to the Sources*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999; **PEIRCE (Leslie):** «Changing Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire: The Early Centuries», *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 19/1, 2004, p. 6-28; **PEDANI (Maria Pia):** «Note di storiografia sull'impero ottomano», *Mediterranea-ricerche storiche*, 34, 2015, p. 445-458.

⁴⁴**MANTRAN (Robert):** «Course et Corsaires», *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 22/5, 1967, p. 1133-1135.

⁴⁵**BELHAMISSI (Moulay):** *Marine et marins d'Alger (1518-1830)*, Alger, Bibliothèque nationale d'Algérie, 2003, 3 vols.; **MEROUCHE (Lemnouar):** *Recherches sur l'Algérie à l'époque ottomane. I- Monnaies, prix et revenus 1520-1830*, Saint-Denis, Bouchène, 2003; **MEROUCHE (Lemnouar):** *Recherches sur l'Algérie à l'époque ottomane. II- La course: mythes et réalité*, Saint-Denis, Bouchène, 2007.

To this research, we must add the worthy contributions by Colin Heywood and Joshua White. Although Heywood's articles have focused more on the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Algerine corso, he has shown that the religious stimulus of jihād was only an ideological trope that sought social support; the real drive behind privateering was economic rather than military or political profit. Indeed, according to Heywood, «to succeed, the corso had to be profitable»⁴⁶. For his part, in addition to illustrating that the terminological distinction between piracy and corso is primarily a European issue, Joshua White's *Piracy and Law in the Ottoman Mediterranean* has stressed the fact that the Algerian corsair fleet was not only an auxiliary tool of the Ottoman Empire in its attempts to consolidate its position in the Maghreb, but also the source of a number of legal conflicts at the imperial and international level. However, White's most interesting conclusion for us is that the image of Algiers as a corsair city was also used in the Ottoman literature to describe other maritime enclaves within the Empire, including the fortress city of Santa Maura, labelled by the traveller and chronicler Evliya Çelebi as «Little Algiers» because of the presence of a large number of corsairs there⁴⁷.

However, this fact should not be misinterpreted and used to emphasise the Christian vision and the «nest of corsairs» paradigm. As Farid Khiari has suggested, the misunderstanding of an Algiers totally controlled by privateers, a republic of pirates, as it were, stems from the fact that the main administrative figures in charge of the local Ottoman government were heavily involved in corsair activities during the Early Modern age⁴⁸.

This misinterpretation, resulting from the conflation of the public and private spheres, can only be overcome by the close examination of Ottoman-Turkish administrative sources. Following

⁴⁶**HEYWOOD (Colin)**: «Ideology and the Profit Motive in the Algerine Corso. The Strange Case of the Izabella of Kirkcaldy, 1709-14», in *Anglo-Saxons in the Mediterranean: Commerce, Politics, and Ideas (XVII-XX Centuries)*, eds. **VASSALLO (Carmel)** and **D'ANGELO (Michela)**, Msida, Malta University Press, 2007, p. 17-42.

⁴⁷**WHITE (Joshua)**: *Piracy and Law in the Ottoman Mediterranean*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2017.

⁴⁸**KHIARI (Farid)**: *Vivre et mourir en Alger. L'Algérie ottomane aux XVI^e-XVII^e siècles: un destin confisqué*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2002, p. 79-80.

Khadir's valuable analysis of the imperial orders sent to the Algerian governors during the sultanates of Suleiman I and Selim II, it is clear that the Ottoman government in Algiers had to control the activity of local reis to prevent their expeditions from harming the commercial interests of Ottoman allies, such as the French Monarchy or the Republic of Venice⁴⁹. Moreover, the use of these same sources has led to the demystification of the idea that Algerian governors were all privateers. Erdim Taş, tracing the political history of the first beylerbeyi-s sent to rule the province of Cezayir-i Garb, has made it clear that many of them were not involved in privateering before they arrived to Algiers. In fact, the appointment of these governors was not based on their maritime skills, but simply responded to the patronage logic with which different power groups at the Sublime Porte sought to control the neighbouring areas of the Empire⁵⁰.

Concerning Algerian society, the thesis of the cosmopolitan city, which according to Christian chronicles reached a population of nearly 100.000 in the late sixteenth century, has been debated and criticised in various studies; the fact that the city could not possibly house such a large population has repeatedly been pointed out⁵¹. A similar change of attitude can also be detected in works devoted to the economic history of Ottoman Algiers. While Ciro Manca, supporting his arguments on the records of a Roman congregation that redeemed Christian captives in the Maghreb, argued that the Algerian economy was based exclusively on the corso⁵², Miriam Hoexter, drawing on sources preserved in the National Archives of Algiers, has shown that the matter was much

⁴⁹**KHADIR (Abderrezak)**: *Mühimme defterlerine göre Kanuni ve II. Selim döneminde Cezayir'e ait hükümler*, unpublished MA Thesis, İstanbul, T. C. İstanbul üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tarih Anabilim Dalı, 2016.

⁵⁰**ERDEM TAŞ (Abdullah)**: «Cezâyir-i Garb Vilâyeti'nin Kuruluşu Meselesi ve İlk Cezâyir Beylerbeyileri», *Aralık*, 5/2, (2020), p. 250-284.

⁵¹**MISSION (Sakina)**: *Alger à l'époque ottomane: la médina et la maison traditionnelle*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 2003; **CRESTI (Federico)**: «La population d'Alger et son évolution durant l'époque ottomane: un état des connaissances controversé», *Arabica*, 52/4, 2005, p. 457-495; **BEN HAMOUCHE (Mustapha)**: *Dar es-sultân. L'algérois à l'époque ottomane: gestion urbaine et aménagement du territoire*, Alger, Dar el-bassair, 2009.

⁵²**MANCA (Ciro)**: *Il Modello di sviluppo economico delle città maritime barbaresche dopo Lepanto*, Napoli, Giannini editore, 1982.

more complex than that. According to Hoexter, the corsairs' booty was only one asset among many for the local economy: «Les revenus les plus importants de la Régence provenaient des impôts fonciers, des droits de douane, du butin des corsaires, des paiements versés par certains états pour garantir la protection de leurs bateaux des corsaires algériens, ou pour les monopoles commerciaux»⁵³.

Finally, in order to conclude this brief historiographical overview, I must mention that, in addition to the sources, new historiographical trends are also helping to undermine the “nest of corsairs” cliché. Two issues are especially worthy of consideration: politics issue, concerning the role of Algiers in the Ottoman imperial administration; and diplomacy, concerning the relations of Algiers and its corsairs with other Mediterranean actors.

Regarding politics, by analysing the administrative history of Algiers during the sixteenth century, Idris Bostan has noted that it is only from 1545 that the province of Cezayir-i Garb features in the Ottoman sources. Before this date, Algiers seems to have been part of the maritime province created by Suleiman I when he appointed Hayreddin Barbarossa as Grand Admiral in 1534⁵⁴. In the light of this research, therefore, the idea of the «Barbary state» founded by the Barbarossas should only apply to Algiers for the 1510s and 1520s⁵⁵.

Moving from an imperial to a local scale, recent studies reflect the close links between the province and the centre of the empire under the perspective of political sociology. Looking at the patronage networks established between the Algerian elite and members of the government in Istanbul, Tal Shuval speaks of the process of Ottomanisation undergone by dignitaries and governors in the Maghreb, which helps us to understand the integration of the Algerian elite in the power groups that operated around the Sublime Porte, and their aim to climb up the ladder of the Ottoman

⁵³**HOEXTER (Miriam)**: «Taxation des corporations professionnelles d'Alger à l'époque turque», *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 36, 1983, p. 19-39.

⁵⁴**BOSTAN (Idris)**: «The establishment of the Province of Cezayir-i Bahr-i Sefid», in *The Kapudan Pasha: his office and his domain*, ed. **ZACHARIADOU (Elisabet)**, Rethymnon, Crete University Press, 2002, p. 241-252.

⁵⁵**VATIN (Nicolas)**: «Note sur l'entrée d'Alger sous la souveraineté ottomane (1519-1521)», *Turcica*, 44, 2012-2013, p. 131-166.

administration⁵⁶. From this perspective, the concept of household (tr. kapı; ar. bayt) adopted by Shuval to support his thesis becomes a fundamental heuristic tool to revise Algerian political history in the sixteenth century: our analysis must no longer be guided by the alleged ethnic struggle between corsair renegades and Turkish janissaries, but a competition between political families for the key government positions in Algiers⁵⁷.

Still within the framework of this centre-periphery debate, several studies have also noted the importance of Algerian corsairs in the Ottoman Mediterranean strategy. Evrim Türkçelik and Emrah Safa Gürkan have pointed out that the corsair galleys were a rich source of intelligence for the Algerian government, which was then directly conveyed to the Sublime Porte, as well as important assets for the supply of the Sultan's fleet and the city of Istanbul itself⁵⁸.

With regard to the relations between the city of Algiers and other Mediterranean powers, the most recent scholarship on Mediterranean studies have challenged the notion that no commercial and diplomatic contacts between Christian and Muslim polities existed during the conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Spanish Monarchy⁵⁹. In particular, following the long trail of studies on the rescue of Christian captives in North Africa⁶⁰, Daniel

⁵⁶**SHUVAL (Tal)**: «Households in Ottoman Algeria», *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 24/1, 2000, p. 41-64.

⁵⁷**CAPRIOLI (Francesco)**: «Conflits socio-politiques dans l'Alger des Barberousse (1518-1562)», *Rives méditerranéennes*, 61, 2020, p. 231-250.

⁵⁸**GÜRKAN (Emrah Safa)**: «The Centre and the Frontier: Ottoman Cooperation with the North African Corsairs in the Sixteenth Century», *Turkish Historical Review*, 1, 2010, p. 125-163; **TÜRKÇELİK (Evrin)**: «Estambul y las provincias en el tránsito de los siglos XVI al XVII», in *Orán: historia de la corte chica*, eds. **BUNES IBARRA (Miguel Ángel, de)** and **ALONSO ACERO (Beatriz)**, Madrid, Ediciones Polifemo, 2011, p. 173-194.

⁵⁹**DURSTELER (Eric R.)**: «On Bazaars and Battlefields: Recent Scholarship on Mediterranean Cultural Contacts», *Journal of Early Modern History*, 15, 2011, p. 413-434; **CAPRIOLI (Francesco)**: «Negoziazione alla Sublime Porta. Nuove prospettive di ricerca su diplomazia e relazioni interculturali nella prima età moderna», *Riforma e Movimenti Religiosi*, 10, 2021, p. 269-296.

⁶⁰There is a vast bibliography on the rescue of Christian captives in North Africa in the early modern period. See especially: **MARTÍNEZ TORRES (José Antonio)**: «Europa y el rescate de cautivos en el Mediterráneo durante la temprana Edad Moderna», *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma. Serie IV, Historia Moderna*, 18-19, 2005-2006, p. 71-85; **BOSCO (Michele)**: «Schiavitù e

Hershenzon and Guillaume Calafat have emphasised the economic nature of the corso over its political and religious dimensions. This has made it possible to review the corsairs no longer as mere persecutors of the Christians chained in the Algerine *baños*, but as skilful brokers active in the commercial circuits of the early modern Mediterranean, and as useful intermediaries in the dialogue between European consuls and merchants, on the one hand, and the North African authorities, on the other⁶¹.

Conclusion

In the light of the brief historiographical overview presented in these pages, Tal Shuval's suggestion, about the need to bring Algeria back into Ottoman history, still seems relevant and necessary⁶². Indeed, the idea of Algiers as a nest of corsairs and capital of a Barbary state is still applied today by those studies that pay little attention to the publications of Arabists and Ottomanists.

Beyond the problem of Muslim sources and their inaccessibility for non-experts, new research on sixteenth century Ottoman Algiers should therefore take into account the recent production of Algerine and Turkish historians, but above all read the Christian sources of the period «against the grain» so as not to present a biased and Eurocentric view on the subject⁶³.

This attention to the sources and their interpretation must, however, be combined with an analysis that understands and explains the complexity of the facts, making it possible to highlight

conversioni religiose nel Mediterraneo moderno. Un bilancio storiografico», *Daedalus*, 5, 2014, p. 9-36.

⁶¹**HERSHENZON (Daniel)**: *The Captive Sea: Slavery, Communication, and Commerce in Early Modern Spain and the Mediterranean*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018; **CALAFAT (Guillaume)**: «A 'Nest of Pirates'? Consuls and Diplomatic Intermediaries in Algiers during the 1670s», *Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni*, 84/2, 2018, p. 529-547.

⁶²**SHUVAL (Tal)**: «Cezayir-i Garp: Bringing Algeria Back into Ottoman History», *New Perspective on Turkey*, 22, 2000, p. 85-114.

⁶³**GINZBURG (Carlo)**: *History, Rhetoric, and Proof*, Hanover, NH, University Press of New England, 1999, p. 24: «To "brush history against the grain" [...], as Walter Benjamin urged, one has to learn to read the evidence against the grain, against the intentions of those who had produced it. Only in this way will it be possible to take into account, against the tendency of the relativists to ignore the one or the other, power relationships as well as what is irreducible to them».

the reciprocal nature of the phenomena that characterised the early modern Mediterranean⁶⁴. Along these lines, following Jocelyne Dakhlia's critique, it seems that a new generation of historians is following the right path. Recent research no longer displays Algiers as a unicum in the early modern Mediterranean, pointing out the presence of other corsair hubs in both Muslim and Christian coasts⁶⁵.

Returning to our case study, we can finally point out two other ways to rescue historians from some of the clichés born in the Early Modern age and consolidated during the colonial period. The first path, which has been travelled little to date, even by North African scholars, is the study of the relations between the Ottoman province of Cezayir-i Garb and the Algerian hinterland. Indeed, as noted by Colin Heywood, we must focus on this historiographical gap and fill it with research, and thus avoid looking at Algiers solely through the lens of its maritime dimension⁶⁶. Although some research about Algerine contacts with the Kabylia tribes or the Kanem-Bornu Empire has been carried out, they are still at an incipient stage⁶⁷.

A second path, which has already been partially explored, is

⁶⁴**DAKHLIA (Jocelyne)**: «L'impensable métis en Méditerranée?», in *Construire la Méditerranée, penser les transferts culturels. Approches historiographiques et perspectives de recherche*, eds. **ABDELLATIF (Rania)**, **BENHIMA (Yassir)**, **KÖNIG (Daniel)**, and **RUCHAUD (Elisabeth)**, Munich, Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012, p. 45-57.

⁶⁵**ROZEN (Minna)**: *The Mediterranean in the Seventeenth Century: Captives, Pirates and Ransomers*, Palermo, Associazione Mediterranea, 2016; **GÜRKAN (Emrah Safa)**: *Sultanın korsanları: Osmanlı Akdenizi'nde gazâ, yağma ve esaret, 1500-1700*, Istanbul, Kronik Kitap, 2018.

⁶⁶**HEYWOOD (Colin)**: «A Frontier without Archeology? The Ottoman Maritime Frontier in the Western Mediterranean, 1660-1760», in *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 493-508, here p. 507-508.

⁶⁷**GAÏD (Mouloud)**: *Les Berbères dans l'histoire. Tome III : Lutte contre le colonialisme*, Alger, Editions Mimouni, 1979; **ROBERTS (Hugh)**: *Berber government: the Kabyle polity in pre-colonial Algeria*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2014; **DEWIÈRE (Rémi)**: «A Struggle for the Sahara: Idris ibn 'Alî's Embassy to Aḥmad al-Manṣūr in the Context of Borno-Morocco-Ottoman Relations, 1577-1583», *The Annual Review of Islam in Africa*, 12/1, 2013-2014, p. 85-91; **FLYNN (Sébastien)**: *The Relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Kanem-Bornu during the Reign of Sultan Murad III*, unpublished MA thesis, Ankara, Ihsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, 2015.

the socio-political analysis of the protagonists of the Muslim corso. By focusing on the group of Christian converts to Islam, some scholars have tried to avoid the traditional historiographical perspective according to which membership of the corso was the only option for these neophytes to climb the Ottoman political system in Algiers. A detailed analysis of the story of some renegades has demonstrated the need to contextualise their lives and extraordinary careers within Maghrebi society, pointing out that their access to key posts in the local administration was dependent on their position in the imperial patronage networks⁶⁸. Beyond these specific examples, the vision of the rich and powerful corsair who seizes authority in the city of Algiers is another cliché that needs to be revised and replaced by that of a common man who toiled daily to survive with his family in the turbulent Algerian society of the sixteenth century. Following Fatiha Loualich's suggestions, perhaps what remains to be done in this field is to launch new research to uncover the «human side of the Algerine corso»⁶⁹.

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⁶⁸**DAKHLIA (Jocelyne)**: «Turcs de profession? Réinscriptions lignagères et redéfinitions sexuelles des convertis dans les cours maghrébines (XVI^e-XIX^e siècles)», in *Conversions islamiques: identités religieuses en islam méditerranéen*, ed. **GARCÍA-ARENAL (Mercedes)**, Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001, 151-171; **CAPRIOLI (Francesco)**: «I 'Mühtedi' di Algeri, ovvero l'altro volto dei rinnegati. Conversioni all'islam nel Mediterraneo della prima età moderna», *Studi Storici*, 4, 2019, 939-964.

⁶⁹**LOUALICH (Fatiha)**: «In the Regency of Algiers: the Human Side of the Algerine Corso», in *Trade and Cultural Exchange in the Early Modern Mediterranean: Braudel's Maritime Legacy*, eds. **FUSARO (Maria)**, **HEYWOOD (Colin)**, and **SALAH OMRI (Mohamed)**, London, I.B. Tauris, 2010, 69-86.

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