

From the Adriatic to the Western Mediterranean: Albanians and Dalmatians in Algiers during the 16th Century

Muhaj Ardian[♦]

Institute of History, Tirana

e mail: ardian300@yahoo.com

ملخص:

من البحر الأدرياتيكي إلى غرب البحر الأبيض المتوسط: الألبان و الدلماسيون في مدينة الجزائر خلال القرن السادس عشر

يعتبر القرن السادس عشر العصر الذهبي الأخير للبحر الأبيض المتوسط. و قد تقاسم الناس الذين يسكنون هذا "البحر العظيم" روعته. في هذا القرن، يُنظر إلى البحر الأبيض المتوسط على أنه فضاء بحري متنازع عليه بين قوتين متنافستين: إمبراطورية هابسبورغ والإمبراطورية العثمانية. تطور التنافس بين الهابسبورغ و العثمانيين في الجزء الغربي للبحر الأبيض المتوسط، في حين ظل الجزء الشرقي و الأوسط من البحر العظيم تحت سيطرة الدولة العثمانية دون منازع. في خضم هاته الروعة و التنافس المتوسطي، لا ينبغي التقليل من أهمية و دور نشاط العديد من الناس و المجتمعات المحلية.

تهدف هذه الورقة إلى تسليط الضوء على وجود البحارة و الجنود و التجار الألبان و الدلماسيين في مدينة الجزائر، و التي كانت بلا شك واحدة من أهم مراكز البحر الأبيض المتوسط، مع تجارة نابضة بالحياة و مكان سياسي و ثقافي و تجاري مهم للروابط و التأثير. كان الناس من الساحل الشرقي للبحر الأدرياتيكي، و خاصة الألبان و الدلماسيون (أي الكروات و البوسنيون، إلخ) حاضرين بشكل متزايد في مدينة الجزائر و كذلك في شمال إفريقيا البحر الأبيض المتوسط بمقياس لم يسبق توثيقه من قبل. بصرف النظر عن الزيادة في الأعداد، في القرن السادس عشر، تغير أيضاً جودة وجودهم في غرب البحر الأبيض المتوسط.

[♦] Corresponding Author

الكلمات المفتاحية:

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Abstract:

The sixteenth century is considered as the last golden age of the Mediterranean. This splendor of the Mediterranean was shared by the people inhabiting this “Great Sea”. In this century the Mediterranean is seen as a maritime space contested between two rival powers: the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman Empire. The rivalry between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans developed in the Western fringe of the Mediterranean, while the eastern and central part of the Great Sea remained uncontested dominions of the Ottoman state. In this Mediterranean splendor and rivalry, the role and agency of many people and local communities should not be undervalued. The aim of this paper is to highlight the presence of the Albanian and Dalmatian sailors, soldiers, and traders in Algiers, which was undoubtedly one of the most important centers of the Mediterranean, with a vibrant trade and an important place of political, cultural, and commercial links and impact. People from the Eastern Adriatic shore, especially Albanians and Dalmatians (i.e., Croats, Bosnians, etc.) were increasingly present in Algiers as well as in North African Mediterranean in a scale never documented before. Apart from the increase in numbers, in the 16th century also changes the quality of their presence in the Western Mediterranean.

Keywords:

Albanian and Dalmatians; Algiers; Western Mediterranean; 16th century.

Introduction

In the Middle Ages, Albanians, as well as Dalmatians, Bosnians and Greeks, generally were employed as rowers or as sailors, not as merchants in the maritime fleet of Venice¹. This was

¹On the rise of other Adriatic cities that challenged the Venetian supremacy in the Adriatic in the 16th century such as Ancona, Dubrovnik and Trieste see: **BRAUNSTEIN (Philippe)**: « À propos de l'Adriatique, entre le XVI^e et le

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because before the 16th century Albanians and Dalmatians were driving force employed in the Venetian galleys in the Mediterranean and even in the Venetian galleys of the Flanders route².

The sixteenth century is generally considered as the “golden age” of the Ottoman state and more specifically the period of Suleyman the Magnificent³. It was also the last golden age of the Mediterranean -which does not mean that the Mediterranean lost all importance after the 16th century-. At that time, the rivalry between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans developed in the Western fringe of the Mediterranean, while the eastern and central part of the Great Sea remained uncontested dominions of the Ottoman state. In this transformation process the role and presence of the Albanians and Dalmatians that in demographic terms shared the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea increased benefiting from this new 16th century Mediterranean context.

1. The Adriatic in the Ottoman “mare nostrum”

The Ottoman “mare nostrum” or the Ottoman hegemony in the sixteenth century Mediterranean was built in less a century and bloc after bloc. In this maritime expansion, the key moments were the conquest of Vlore in the Adriatic (1417), of Thessalonica in the Aegean Sea (1431), the conquest of Constantinople in the Marmara Sea and in the contact point between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Seas (1451), the conquest of the Trabzon Byzantine state (1461), the incorporation of the Crimea as an Ottoman protectorate (1475)⁴, the conquest of the Peloponnese (1479), of

XVIII^e siècle », *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 26^e année, N. 6, 1971, pp. 1270-1278, where he states: « ...le conflit se situe sur le terrain plus modeste d'une rivalité entre des partenaires qui s'affrontent de longue date; Raguse et Ancône au XVI^e siècle, Ancône encore, puis surtout Trieste au XVIII^e siècle, connaissent une fortune qui ne se nourrit pas seulement du recul commercial et politique de Venise. », p. 1270.

²*Port Books of Southampton for the Reign of Edward IV*, edited by D. B. Quinn and A. A. Ruddock, vol. II, pp. 1477-1481, Southampton, Cox & Sharland, 1938, p. xviii.

³**EMECEN (Feridun)** : « From the founding to Küçük Kaynarca », in Ihsanoglu, Ekmeleddin, ed. *History of the Ottoman State, Society and Civilisation*, vol. I. Istanbul, Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 2001, p. 32.

⁴With this dynamic expansion in the Black Sea from the conquest of Istanbul in

Egypt (1517), the incorporation of Algiers (1520), and the conquest of Tunis (1574). The seizure of Belgrade in 1521 and the taking of Rhodes the following year (1522) were the keys to the military successes of the Ottomans⁵. Another diplomatic trophy was the request of the French to help them against the Habsburgs under Charles V. This was followed with the victory at Mohacs in 1526 and the rise of Hayreddin Barbarosa, a development that followed the Ottoman expansion and successes on land against the German wing of the Habsburgs. The French played an important role in that struggle, supporting the activities of the Ottomans in the Mediterranean against the Spanish wing of the Habsburg Empire⁶.

The Ottoman Empire from the Kanuni Sultan Suleyman onward covered about two thirds of the Mediterranean proper, and the whole of the Black Sea; the Eastern part of the Mediterranean controlled by the Ottomans in the sixteenth century was twice the size of the western part that can be considered a shared maritime space between several states, and where again the Ottoman state was the biggest player⁷. In the sixteenth century the Ottomans came to dominate the main regions where non-Mediterranean and non-European goods were traded, especially the Middle East and Northern Africa.

1453 to the incorporation of Crimea in 1475 together with domination of Moldavia, the Black Sea was to become a Turkish lake and the Black Sea commerce fell entirely under Ottoman control. **EMECEN (Feridun)**: *Art. cit.*, p. 23.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 32-33.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁷In the Strait of Sicily, a shallow ridge at 400 m depth separates the island of Sicily from the coast of Tunisia and divides the sea into two main subregions: the western (area=0.85 million km²) and the eastern (area=1.65 million km²). Coll M, Piroddi C, Steenbeek J, Kaschner K, Ben Rais Lasram F, et al. (2010) The Biodiversity of the Mediterranean Sea: Estimates, Patterns, and Threats. PLoS ONE 5(8): e11842. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0011842; for a general view of the Mediterranean see also **BRAUDEL (Fernand)**: *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Vol. I. Transl. Sian Reynolds, University of California Press, 1995. While for the specific case of the Eastern Adriatic which relates to the Albanians and Dalmatians see **IVETIC (Egidio)**: *Adriatico orientale. Atlante storico di un litorale mediterraneo*, Rovinj, Centro di Ricerche Storiche, 2014.

2. The Eastern Adriatic and Algiers as maritime borderlines

In the Western Mediterranean, Algiers was the most active and powerful centre of activity of the Ottoman navy. North of Africa was divided in spheres of influence as early as the end of the thirteenth century. The Convention of Soria between Castile and Aragon in 1291 divided the zone of influence to be conquered from the Muslims in Africa and, in the fourteenth century, the European trade of North Africa was exclusively in the hands of the Catalans and Genoese⁸. This seems to be the reason why the economic, social, and political situation of North Africa follows the same downward dynamic of other Central Mediterranean states in the later Middle Ages⁹.

This should not surprise us, because religious identity rarely determined the nature of relations on the ground, and the merchants adapted responses to conflict based on context, personal motivation, and gain, not on religious or political rhetoric. This points to a general Mediterranean merchant culture that involved shared cultural norms and expectations of behaviour. In the fourteenth century there were colonies of merchants from Pisa, Florence, and Genoa in all the major North African ports from Safi in Morocco to Tunis. There were also colonies of Catalan merchants in at least some of them, like Bougie and Tunis¹⁰.

All the three major areas where the Ottoman expansion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries happened were going through difficult times in the previous two centuries. To these should be added also the Balkan peninsula that shared similar or probably more dramatic dynamics with the general decline of the Mediterranean in the later Middle Ages¹¹.

⁸**BISSON (Thomas N.):** *The Medieval Crown of Aragon. A Short History*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 170.

⁹**ABULAFIA (David):** «Catalan Merchants and the Western Mediterranean, 1236-1300: Studies in the Notarial Acts of Barcelona and Sicily», *Viator*, 16, 1985, p. 216.

¹⁰**SPUFFORD (Peter):** *Power and Profit: The Merchant in Medieval Europe*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2002, pp. 20-22.

¹¹**MUHAIJ (Ardian):** *Nga Ballkani në Mesdhe. Shqiptarët nga mesjeta në agimin e kohës së re*, Tirana, Akademia e Studimeve Albanologjike, Instituti i Historisë, 2019, pp. 19-20.

Territorial expansion can be expressed through the conquest territories of other states, or through colonization and conquest of new spaces. The monolithic, dynamic empire of the Ottoman stood out in increasingly stark contrast with this downward economic dynamic. Not only Venice and the Ottoman state, but also the maritime republic of Ragusa, met from the fourteenth century and until the seventeenth century, the greatest development period, making it one of the richest and most prosperous cities in the Mediterranean¹².

The 16th and 17th centuries are the period of blooming of slavery, piracy, and captivity of people in the Mediterranean. But above all, these two centuries have seen the boom of navigation in the Great Sea. The particularity of the Mediterranean navigation in these two centuries is that apart from the volume of trade also increase the geography of navigation. Due to the closed nature of the Mediterranean and the medium or subtropical climate, without a steady stream of winds, sailing on this great sea that joins three continents depended on the human labour that in some respects was the motor power of the ships. The political reconfiguration of the Mediterranean in the 16th century more than the development of trade made necessary the even-wider use of human power for the movement of ships through rowing. The demand for rowers multiplied compared with the 15th century. Before the 16th century no Mediterranean state was transcontinental or stretched on both shores of the Mediterranean. But the occupation of Ceuta, Tangiers, Alcácer Quibir, by the Portuguese in Morocco, and of Tunis, Oran, Melilla by the Spanish in North Africa, the occupation of Egypt and the expansion in Algeria of the power of the Ottomans, made each of these states stretch simultaneously on two or more continents, on two or more shores of the Mediterranean. This increased the need for communication by sea and, consequently, the need for manpower to sail the ever-increasing ships.

The confrontation between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Mediterranean in the 16th-17th centuries creates an atmosphere of continuous maritime warfare, which occasionally unfolded in open sea battles such as that of Lepanto in

¹²CARTER (F. W.): «The Commerce of the Dubrovnik Republic, 1500-1700», *The Economic History Review*, 24, no. 3, 1971, pp. 370-394.

1571, Preveza, Goleta, but finds its most striking form in the uninterrupted war of sea piracy and constant reprisals on the shores of the adversary.

The enslavement of people to be used by the fleets of the Mediterranean quickly transformed into a real industry without which contemporaries saw the impossibility of retaining marine fleets. For various reasons but mainly religious ones the enslavement of co-religious was a practice that happened very rarely compared with the enslavement of people of other religions. However, there were exemptions even in this.

Sea piracy and fierce reprisals against coastal lands produced dozen and maybe hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war sold in Muslim and Christian markets. On one hand, we have Messina, Venice, Naples, Genoa, Malaga, Palma de Mallorca, Valencia, Sevilla, Lisbon. On the other we have, Istanbul, Thessaloniki, Smyrna, Alexandria and Cairo, Tripoli, Tunis and Bizerte, Algiers, Tetuan, Fez, Marrakesh and Sale. Muslim and Christian missionaries carried out negotiation of exchange or release of captives, some of whom, after several years, returned to their country. Some others choose the path of conversion to the religion of their masters¹³.

3. Great men for the Great Sea

The participation of Albanians and Dalmatians in this industry and market of forced labour increased with the same pace of the increase of their participation in navigation in the Mediterranean. It was in the 16th century that the contacts of the Albanians and the Dalmatians with the seas around them increased more and more and we may say that the 16th-17th centuries constitute the period where Albanians, but also Dalmatians can be found everywhere in the Mediterranean. Hence the presence and role of Albanians and Dalmatians as captives, pirates and privateers in this sea becomes increasingly significant.

The geography of Albanians' presence reached Algiers in the West and up to Yemen and India in the East. In the 16th century, Algiers became one of the most important cities in the

¹³**BENNASSAR (Bartolome), BENNASSAR (Lucile):** *Les Chrétiens d'Allah, l'histoire extraordinaire des renégats XVI-XVII^e siècles*, Paris, 1989, pp. 18-19.

Mediterranean, certainly the most important Muslim port-city in the Western part of this sea. The predominance of Algiers as a port started during 1516-1520 when the brothers Oruç and Hayreddin Barbarossa settled there and established the regency of Algiers. The history of Algiers in the 16th century cannot be complete without the story of two Albanians that left their mark not only in Algiers but in the entire Western Mediterranean: Muhammed Arnaut and Murat Reis.

Muhammed the Albanian (Memi Arnaut) was a prominent figure not only as a sailor but also as a state diplomat¹⁴. He kept regular correspondence with European statesmen of the time, exchanging various gifts with them, such as the Medici's of Florence¹⁵. A particular episode of his life was the capture of the soldier and future writer Miguel de Cervantes¹⁶. Cervantes mentions Muhammed Arnaut several times as a fictional character in his works, since he knew him well personally¹⁷.

Muhamed the Albanian or Arnaut, in 1582, when he was in the office of governor, on one occasion, ordered all privateers of Algiers to gather and told them openly that they were all a bunch of incapables, apart from his friend Murat the Albanian. After that he led the captains of 22 galleons and galleys toward Sardinia where

¹⁴**HAEDO (Diego de):** *Topografía e Historia General de Argel, repartida en cinco tratados, do se veran casos estraños, muertes espantosas, y tormentos exquisitos, que conuine se entienden en la Christiandad: con mucha doctrina y elegancia curiosa*, Valladolid, 1612, p. 90.

¹⁵« Et per non havermi al presente corso altro che mandar a Sua Altezza Serenissima per Giacobbo Brangia scrivano del nostro capitano Arnaot Memi bei, mando Geronimo Salvino polsano et Sebastiano de Paula pisano sudditi di Sua Altezza Serenissima con doi cavalli et doi leoni et uno struzzo ». Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Mediceo del Principato*, busta 4279, fl. 36, 20 October 1586.

¹⁶**CERVANTES (Miguel de):** *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha*, Madrid, Iuan de la Cuesta, 1605, parte primera, capitulo XLI, p. 244. This statement of Cervantes seems to support the opinion of Navarrete who thinks that Cervantes was not captured from Memi Arnaut. According to this author Cervantes knew very well Memi Arnaut, but this does not mean that he was his slave. Cf. **NAVARRETE (Martín Fernández de):** *Vida de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. Escrita e ilustrada con varias noticias y documentos inéditos pertenecientes a la historia y literatura de su tiempo*, Madrid, Real Academia Española, 1819, p. 356.

¹⁷**MUHAJ (Ardian):** « Rreth pranisë së shqiptarëve në Mesdheun Perëndimor në shekujt XVI-XVII », *Univers*, nr. 7, Tiranë, 2005, pp. 198-212.

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he landed 1.500 soldiers that marched to a city around 40 miles inland. There they kidnapped around 700 people, which were sent in a small island near the coast where they raised the ceasefire flag and invited inhabitants to release their fellow citizens against the reward. Near Barcelona he captured around 50 people and continued further West. There he stopped near Alicante, from where some Spanish Muslims had written to help them go to Algiers, since after the fall of Granada in 1492, Spanish Muslims and Jews were forced to convert to Christianity. Shortly thereafter, many soldiers landed on the shore to protect and assist over two thousand men, women, and children, who escaped along with their possessions¹⁸.

Another famous and important Albanian in Algiers is Murat Reis, the Great¹⁹. A brave and adventurous captain, which Philip Gosse considers as one of the most famous sailors of all time²⁰. Based on the evidence of Diego de Haedo, in his *Topografía e Historia de Argel*, the most famous and most important source about Algiers of the late sixteenth century, we can see that the captain which the writer Castillo Solorzano called "the biggest corsair among Muslims" is Murat Rais, the Great. Haedo writes: "On the number of galleons of the corsairs and their boats in Algiers in 1581: ... 5. Murat Rais, the Great, Albanian Muslim, two galeots, 24 banks ... 7. Murat Rais, Matrapillo, Spanish Muslim, one of 22 banks ... 11. Rais Murat, the youngest, Greek Muslim, one of 18

¹⁸**GOSSE (Philip):** *Histoire de la Piraterie*, nouvelle édition, Paris, Payot, 1952, pp. 55-57.

¹⁹**HAEDO (Diego de):** *Topografía e Historia General de Argel*, p. 84, states that he was, "de nación que nosotros llamamos albanés". In the same way that in a report on the corsairs of Algiers, Mourad Reis is mentioned as Albanian, as well as Mohamed the Albanian: « Arnaut Mami, capitán de la mar de Argel y cabeza de los corsarios, renegado esclavón de los Arnautes... Morat Arráez, que dicen el Grande, renegado esclavón, Arnaut ». British Museum, *Add.* 28.366. fl. 148; **HERRERO GARCÍA (Miguel):** « Morato arráez », *Revista de Filología Española*, Madrid, 1926, pp. 181-182. In 1588, the 35 galleys in Algiers "were commanded by eleven Turks and twenty-four renegades, including nations of France, Venice, Genoa, Sicily, Naples, Spain, Greece, Calabria, Corsica, Albania, and Hungary, and a Jew". Cf. **LANE-POOLE (Stanley):** *The Story of the Barbary Corsairs*, London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1890, pp. 201-202.

²⁰**GOSSE (Philip):** *Histoire de la Piraterie*, 1952, p. 57; **COINDREAU (Roger):** *Les corsaires de Salé*, Paris, Institut des Hautes Etudes Marocaines, 1948, p. 25.

banks²¹". Haedo goes confessing his maritime feats year after year until 1595 when he ends his chronicle²².

His whole life is full of adventure and campaigning at sea, but the boldest was the expedition of 1585 when Murat Reis realized the most famous enterprise of his life by doing what no Ottoman sailor had ever done before: crossing of the Strait of Gibraltar and raiding in the Atlantic Ocean. Until then, the most prominent Ottoman sailors sailed close to the shores except when they had to cross the Mediterranean. The squadron of Murat crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and sailed all the distance needed to reach the Canary Islands. A space that it was unknown to the Ottomans as it was a century ago for Europeans²³.

Murad had taken a prisoner by the Canary Islands saying he knew the route, but when after many days of arduous rowing, the Canarian pilot said to Murat that he was afraid that they had lost the orientation and had passed Canaries, Murat's answer surprised everyone: "even though I've never been there, I am sure that what you say is impossible. So, go in that direction." Murad was right. A short time later, they spotted one of the islands of the archipelago, the Lanzarote.

After about 250 soldiers landed at night, they took about 300 captives, including the mother, wife, and daughter of the governor of the archipelago. The next day, Murat raised the ceasefire flag and started the negotiation for the liberation of the captives.

Although Murad did not hesitate to take the return trip, the news of the attack had arrived in the Spanish royal court before he arrived in Gibraltar. Near the Straits of Gibraltar was the Great Admiral of Spain, Don Martin de Padilla in charge of a squadron composed of 18 galleys, waiting for him. But it came to pass through the strait on a foggy night, and even he took some time to

²¹**HAEDO (Diego de):** *Topografía e Historia General de Argel*, p. 18.

²²Haedo says that he is Albanian "de nacion que nosotros llamamos albanes". Cf. **HAEDO (Diego de):** *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

²³"Duro in expressing the view that the Barbary corsairs had no leaders of the quality of the overlooked the lack of contemporary evidence that any of the Barbarossas ever entered the Atlantic or inflicted any great damage on the coasts of Spain." **FISHER (Godfrey):** *Barbary Legend. War, Trade and Piracy in North Africa 1415-1830*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1957, p. 129.

fire with artillery, in defiance of the Spanish admiral²⁴.

The fact that Murat Rais was so sure in the trajectory of its fleet when others had lost orientation is clear evidence that the Great captain possessed accurate cartographic information about the location of the Canary Islands even though he had never sailed in those waters. The possibility that Murad was in possession of exact geographical mapping of some African coast and the Atlantic Ocean, to overcome the empirical information of local seamen we can see clearly from the dialogue with the Canarian seafarer. The work of the Ottoman seafarer Piri Reis, *Kitâb-ı Bahriye*, dated 1521 and based in Columbus original maps on the configuration of the Atlantic and the newly discovered territory of America is monumental evidence of geographic information possessed by the Ottomans²⁵. We can consider this expedition of Murat Rais in the Atlantic as the first one of the few cases where detailed mapping information of the *Kitâb-ı Bahriye*, had practical application²⁶.

His figure was also one of the most prominent literary characters of the Spanish literature of the "golden age"²⁷. But literary commentators have been puzzled in that it is a real or fictional character²⁸.

According to data provided by Haedo, captain Murad the Albanian was born to Christian parents²⁹. At the age of 12 fall into

²⁴**HAEDO (Diego de):** *Topografía e Historia General de Argel*, p. 90: “le dixo el piloto que dudava no huuiessen passado muy adelante y errado el biaje, pero el Morato le respondió que no era posible, y siguiendo adelante descubrieron tierra en la Isla del Lançaloto”.

²⁵**SOUČEK (Svat):** «Piri Reis and Ottoman Discovery of the Great Discoveries», *Studia Islamica*, vol. 79, 1994, p. 134.

²⁶**MUHAJ (Ardian):** «Ottoman Corsairs in The Atlantic During the 16th Century: Murat Rais, The Albanian and The First Ottoman Expedition to The Canary Islands », in *Uluslararası Piri Reis ve Türk Denizcilik Tarihi Sempozyumu, Istanbul 26-29 September 2013*, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014, pp. 261-269.

²⁷**LOPE DE VEGA Y CARPIO (Félix):** *Fiestas de Denia*, Valencia, 1599, cap. II, pp. 59-61.

²⁸**SCHEVILL (Rodolfo) and BONILLA (Adolfo):** *Obras completas de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. Comedias y Entremeses*. Tomo I, Madrid, Imprenta de Bernardo Rodríguez, 1915, pp. 241-242.

²⁹**FISHER (Godfrey):** *Barbary Legend. War, Trade and Piracy in North Africa*, p. 89, notes “The career of this remarkable man, who soon helped to restore Turkish naval supremacy in the Mediterranean at the expense of Spain and

the hands of prominent seafarer of Algiers, Kara Ali, who saw his talents in the exercise of the art of navigation. Ph. Gosse, says that Murad was the first among independent Ottoman captains that sailed more for their own account rather than included in the navy³⁰.

In the siege of Malta in 1565, after the defeat of the Ottoman fleet, he was tired of the monotony of discipline and service in the Ottoman fleet and left without asking anyone to navigate on their own account, with the galleon that Kara Ali had given to him. When he returned to Algiers, he had to face the wrath of Kara Ali, who took from him the rowers and did not give him another vessel. But Murad, still young, attracted by marine life, could not give up, until he found a galley of 15 rows and left towards the coast of Spain. After 7 days returned bringing three Spanish bergantins and 140 prisoners. This successful incursion gave him great reputation. Then he started to work under the orders of the Calabrian Uluxh Ali, an old and well-known captain in Algiers. At this time, he carried another successful action, completed with the capture of three Maltese galleys on the coast of Sicily. In January 1578 he could have a fleet consisting of several galleons owned by him and begins to act as Captain or Rais already. The most important action of this year was when he took the galley Santangel, in which was traveling to Spain the Duke of Terranova, former vice-Roy and general captain of Sicily.

That was nothing compared to a year after which made his name as famous as that of the English seafarer Francis Drake, who had just returned from his expedition around the globe³¹. In April 1580 he sailed from Algiers with only two galleons, then he sailed smoothly off the shores of Tuscany when he finds two large galleys which were owned by Pope Gregory XIII, and one of them named *La Capitania* was the papal admiral ship. Although the papal galleys were equipped and well-armed, the ingenuity and ability of Murat triumphed, becoming master of the two galleys. Although the main papal officials managed to escape, Murad did not go without

appears to have been a good friend of England, has been strangely neglected by historians”.

³⁰GOSSE (Philip): *Op. cit.*, p. 57; COINDREAU (Roger): *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

³¹GOSSE (Philip): *Op. cit.*, p. 58; CASTILLO SOLÓRZANO (Alonso): *Tiempo de regocijo y Carnestolendas de Madrid*, Madrid, 1627, p. 164.

anything, because the ships were left filled with treasures and people. Hundreds of Muslims and many Christian prisoners, a good portion of them church officials, who for various reasons were detained by the papacy were released³².

Murat the Albanian continued his feats, protected, and supported by his friend, seafarer and great diplomat, Muhammad Arnaut. Two years after his first incursion in the Canary Islands, he undertook another incursion organized with 18 galleons and seemingly in collaboration with Queen Elizabeth³³.

Murat the Albanian took office as admiral of Algiers in 1595. According to Godfrey Fisher: «His official career was, however an honourable and eventful one, which brought him into contact with French ambassadors, eminent London merchants, the governors of Marseilles, and even James I and his successor »³⁴.

It seems that since his expeditions in 1585 and 1587 in the Canary, and since the appointment as admiral of Algiers in 1595, his career resembles a pilgrimage to his homeland, Albania, which he visited frequently, probably taking opportunity of the fact that there could find shelter not only from the winds, but also from the enemies³⁵.

Thus, after Algiers, in the years 1603-1607 seems that he moved to Tunis as admiral or beylerbey³⁶. In 1607³⁷ or in 1608 he was appointed beylerbey of Morea. According to the testimony of

³²**HAEDO (Diego de):** *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

³³«In 1587 he was reported to be making another voyage to the Canaries with eighteen galleys to annoy Spain in concert with Queen Elizabeth.» Cf. **FISHER (Godfrey):** *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

³⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 89, 315.

³⁵Letter of Murad III to the Beylerbey of Algiers stating that the Venetians had complained that Murad Reis had captured in the Adriatic a ship from the Dalmatian city of Split with 15 thousand ducats worth in money and merchandise, in addition to a ship from the other Dalmatian cities of Perast and Kotor and another one from Budva. Cf. ASV, *LST, busta 8*, 1591; **PEDANI FABRIS (M. P.)** Ed.: *I «Documenti turchi» dell'Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Inventario della miscellanea*, Roma, Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, 1994. doc. 1018, p. 258; **PUST (Klemen):** «Beneško-osmanski pomorski spopadi na Jadranu v 16. Stoletju », *Povijesni prilozi*, 38, 2010, pp. 117-118.

³⁶**PIGNON (Jean):** «Gênes et Tabarca au XVIIème siècle », *Les Cahiers de Tunisie: revue de sciences humaines*, vol. 109-110, 1979, doc. 67, pp. 82-83.

³⁷**FISHER (Godfrey):** *Op. cit.*, p. 316.

Knight he died in 1638 in Vlora, Albania, at the age of 104 years³⁸.

4. The Albanian coast as a shelter for Algerian ships

The presence of Algerian sailors and captains in the Adriatic was also an important aspect that increased hugely the interaction between the Adriatic and the Algerian shores. The Albanian coast in the Adriatic and especially the port of Vlora were the mostly frequented places in the Adriatic from Algerian sailors. Vlora was also the centre of Albanian navigation in the 16th century, until in the 17th century the baton gradually passed to Ulcinj. One of the most important moments to be noted is the incident that happened in the harbour of Vlora in 1638 when the fleet of Algiers and Tunis composed of 16 galleys entered the Adriatic while the Venetian fleet was sailing towards Crete. When the Venetian fleet returned to the Adriatic the Algerian fleet found shelter in the harbour of Vlora. The Venetians while besieging the castle of Vlora attacked the Algerian fleet. The war between the Ottoman state and Venice was very eminent, but because the Sublime Porte was engaged in a campaign against Persia, it was postponed³⁹.

Likewise, the Croatian Uskoks who in the wake of the conflict between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs attacked with no distinction not only the Ottoman ships and shores of the Adriatic, but also of those of Christian states, especially of Venice and Ragusa⁴⁰.

³⁸Knight witnessed the end at Valona in 1638 of 'Murate a renegade of the Corsica nation, a person of great honour in Algiers, lieutenant general of the armada... a man of 104 years of age, whose desire was to die in the face of the Christians fighting the battle of Mahomet'. Cf. **OSBORNE (Thomas)**: *A Collection of Voyages and Travels, consisting of authentic writers in our own tongue, which have not before been collected in English, or have only been abridged in other collections. And continued with others of note, that have published histories, voyages, travels, journals or discoveries in other nations and languages, relating to any part of the continent of Asia, Africa, America, Europe, or the islands thereof, from the earliest account to the present time*, vol. ii, London, Thomas Osborne, 1745, p. 477.

³⁹**LANE (Frederic C.)**: *Venice. A Maritime Republic*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1973, p. 408.

⁴⁰**BARTL (Peter)**: « Die Dulcignoten. Piraterie und Handelsschiffahrt im Adria-raum (18. Jahrhundert) », in *Südost Europa unter dem Halbmond. Untersuchungen über Geschichte und Kultur der Südosteuropäischen Völker*

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The change of the political situation from war to peace and vice versa was immediately reflected in the change of sailors from pirates to privateers and vice versa. Any times there were war clouds on the horizon sailor of both sides wouldn't hesitate to transform from sailors into privateers and undertake action to capture prisoners of the adversary of third parties. This animosity of the authorities against pirates sailing independently sometimes put both parties on the same side against them as in the case of November 1608, when the cadi of Preveza through a document certified that the Captain of the Golf, Augusto da Canal, had arrived with four or five galleys in Preveza and handed to the cadi, in fulfilment of a request by the Sultan, 33 slaves, of which 30 still in chains, captured a year ago in the galley of Algerian reis Murat the Spaniard in waters around Paksos⁴¹.

Another aspect to be noted is the slavery and slave trade between the Adriatic and the Western Mediterranean. Slaves were freely sold in the European and Ottoman markets just like in the African, American or Asian markets. At the fairs that took place in the Albanian territories and in the Balkans, such trade took place as well. The price in average reached two thousand akce, or three time the average price of a good horse that cost 600-650 akce⁴². Thus, the number of slaves sold in one of the most known fairs in the Balkans, that of Moskullur was usually around 200 people for each fair, coming from everywhere in the Mediterranean, including North Africa⁴³.

Conclusion

The rise of Algiers into prominence in the Western Mediterranean happens parallely with the unfolding of the

Während der Türkzeit, Prof. Geog Stadtmüller zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet, München, Rudolf Trofenik, 1975, p. 18.

⁴¹29 november 1608. Hüccet of the kadi of Preveza. **PEDANI FABRIS (M. P.)**, *Op. cit.*, nr. 1165.

⁴²**INALCIK (Halil)**: « Servile Labor in the Ottoman Empire », in *Studies in Ottoman Social and Economic History*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1985, vii, pp. 43-44.

⁴³In April 1626, in the Albanian coast arrived three ships loaded with slaves from North Africa (*Barbaria*). Cf. **FAROQHI (Suraiya)**: « The Early History of the Balkan Fairs », *Südost-Forschungen*, 37, 1978, pp. 57-59.

importance of the Eastern Adriatic in the maritime developments of the Adriatic and of the Mediterranean. Dubrovnik and Vlore emerge as dynamic centers of maritime activity while the presence of Albanian and Dalmatian sailors, soldiers, and traders in Algiers became more and more significant.

The political reconfiguration of the Mediterranean in the 16th century, the development of trade and the confrontation between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy creates an atmosphere of continuous maritime warfare, that fuels piracy and captivity of people in the Mediterranean.

The participation of Albanians and Dalmatians in this industry and market of forced labour increased apace with their participation in the Mediterranean trade and communication. Hence the presence and role of Albanians and Dalmatians as captives, pirates and privateers in the Mediterranean becomes increasingly significant. Muhammed the Albanian (Memi Arnaut) as a prominent figure not only as a sailor, but also as a state diplomat in Algiers at the end of the 16th century and Murat Reis, are remarkable examples of this continuous relationship between the opposite shores of the Ottoman Mediterranean.

The presence of Algerian sailors and captains in the Adriatic was also important for the increased interaction between the Adriatic and the Algerian shores.

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