



The state of Ottoman-Algerian relations during the 16th century

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Abstract

Many Arab and western historians have written about the Ottoman era in Algeria, and their opinions and views have varied in many events, Influenced the reality of the Ottoman-Algerian relationships, those historical events wrote in the books and works of historians in circumstances which changed according to the kind and tendencies of its authors, but it is certain that, in that era, Algeria had an important political and military status in the Mediterranean sea. That was obviously appear in the liberation of its territory with taking control of the southern bank of the Mediterranean Sea, this gave Algeria international high position. Algeria have taken its own interior governance from the Ottomans on stages till the step of the Firman is no more needed for the Dey appointed in Algiers even the Firman didn't released yet by the Ottomans. Algeria also was independent completely about the decisions for sign or reject the agreements with European countries, with considering of course respect the Ottoman's interests and its predominanc

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Introduction:

The civilized relations between Algeria and the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the sixteenth century constituted an important turning point in the West Bank of the Mediterranean, and established the beginning of strong political relations in which Algeria will have a pivot.

1. The state of Ottoman-Algerian relations during the 16th

1.1 The status of the Mediterranean Sea at the beginning of the 10th century AH / 16th century CE.

The Mediterranean Sea at the beginning of the 10th century AH / 16th century AD gained importance as a civilized region, nurturing sophisticated civilizations on its shores: Amazigh, Greek, Phoenician, Roman, and Islamic Arab. It served as a global route for trade and international transit between the old world atmospheres in the ancient and middle ages, and between them and the new world in the modern age. Thus, it has been and still is the link between different parts of the world and their peoples, hosting fleets of famous naval powers throughout various historical eras up to the present day⁽¹⁾.

Northern Shore:

Europe found itself in a new situation at the end of the Middle Ages, with the Church dominating the reins of power, managing internal affairs. The Church sought to unify the ranks of Christian kingdoms through intermarriage, aiming to place several kingdoms under the control of a unified monarch. Meanwhile, Arabs established various Mamluks, such as those created by the Kings of the Taifas. This led to the fall and disappearance of Al-Andalus in Spain, encouraging Spanish raids on the Moroccan coast and shifting the battleground from the Iberian Peninsula to Moroccan territories, where forts were established⁽²⁾.

Amidst these circumstances, Ferdinand V, King of Navarre and Aragon, ascended to two-thirds of the Spanish throne after marrying the Queen of Castile. This resulted in a strong Christian union that posed a threat to Muslims in Al-Andalus. One of its consequences was the occupation of Granada in 1492 CE and the expulsion of its king, Abdullah ibn Abi al-Hasan ibn Saad from the Banu al-Ahmar dynasty⁽³⁾.

Ferdinand issued a law prohibiting the Islamic religion in Al-Andalus and imposed strict surveillance to monitor Andalusian Muslims, coercing them to convert to Christianity or leave Spain. This encouraged a movement of migration from Spain for persecuted Muslims towards the lands of the Islamic Arab Maghreb⁽⁴⁾.

As a result of the Spanish Christians tracking fleeing Muslims to North Africa, a widespread process of occupation of Moroccan cities by the Spanish Christians intensified. It began with nearby cities such as Melilla and Al-Marsa al-Kabir in 1505 CE, followed by Oran in 1509 CE, Béjaïa in 1510 CE, and Dellys, Cherchell, and Mostaganem in 1511 CE⁽⁵⁾.

Thus, the Spanish occupied strategically important locations in North Africa, especially after King Charles V ascended to the throne of the Spanish Empire.

In parallel with the changes occurring on the northern shore, the Ottoman Empire witnessed expansion in Anatolia at the expense of Christian emirates⁽⁶⁾. It achieved significant victories and extended its influence over vast territories in Asia and Europe, transforming into a great power in the East carrying the banner of Islam. This plunged it into conflict with European Christian powers within the framework of the Crusades and competition for control over the Mediterranean basin to dominate the maritime and trade routes passing through it, which were considered the lifeline of the region despite the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope route and the exploration of the American continent.

"The East Bank"

This led to the emergence of colonial movements led by Spain and Portugal, which vied for control over the North African region in an attempt to colonize it. The conflict concluded with the signing of the Treaty of Tordesillas, which divided spheres of influence between the two countries. The treaty drew an imaginary line, with the western part, west of the Line of Badajoz, assigned to Portugal, and the eastern part, east of the Line of Badajoz, to Spain in 1509 CE.⁽⁷⁾

The Spanish and Portuguese colonial movements were characterized by brutality and ferocity as they fell within the framework of the Crusades, which Europeans attempted to revive after failing in the Islamic East during the 11th and 12th centuries. The success of the Spanish in expelling Muslims from Al-Andalus and the expansion of the Ottomans into Eastern Europe contributed to this revival. These raids also occurred within the context of privateering, which European governments endorsed as a source of profit and gain, as a means to weaken Muslims, humiliate them, and pave the way for the colonization of their countries thereafter. Over time, European privateers became increasingly adept at practicing these tactics⁽⁸⁾.

2. The southern shore:

The lands of the Islamic Maghreb had united under the leadership of the Almohad Caliphate, even until the 13th century AD. Under the Almohad state, which had unified various regions, including Al-Andalus, considered one of the greatest treasures of the Islamic medieval era, the Almohads were dominant in their lands. There was no European power standing against them or challenging their authority.⁽⁹⁾

What can be said about the chaos experienced in the Arab Maghreb at the beginning of the 16th century is the inevitable situation, at a time when three states were building their glory on the achievements of the Almohads. By this, we mean the Hafsid state in Tunisia, stretching from Tripoli in the east to eastern Morocco, the Zayyanid state in the central and western parts of Algeria, and the Marinid state in the far west of Morocco.⁽¹⁰⁾

Internal and external conflicts and divisions plagued the three dynasties. The Hafsid state in Tunis faced the threat of the Spanish, especially from Sicily and

Naples. In the far west of Morocco, the Watersides were in conflict with the Saadians over the city of Fez. Consequently, the city lost its glory and became preoccupied with internal chaos and dynastic disputes. The Zayyanid state suffered from long-standing weakness and decline, with Arabized Berber chieftains engaged in conflict and strife, each seeking to weaken the other. In the face of these conflicts, the port of Algiers became an easy target for Spanish seizure.⁽¹¹⁾

Many tribes in various regions of the Arab Maghreb formed emirates, principalities, or petty kingdoms, resulting in a lack of defined borders for states or established territories for emirates. The people suffered from the ravages of crimes despite the presence of notable figures, scholars, and writers in the land. It was worthy for Morocco to establish political and economic unity, making it formidable like the Almohad state.⁽¹²⁾

The kings of the Banu Abd al-Wad dynasty relinquished their control over much of central Morocco, while their authority was significantly manifested in the west, leaving most of the country vulnerable to Spanish attacks. The land was divided between them and the Barbarian Hafsids. As a result, numerous tribes and emirates emerged, along with mobile groups under the influence of local leaders. The tribal lands came under the rule of Emir Muluk Kuku, while the Hafsid Sheikh controlled the region between Annaba and Al-Qala. The Dawwadah controlled the Zab and Hadnah, and a state emerged in the oases of the Wadi Ridd.⁽¹³⁾

During this time, as the spirit of European Crusades grew and the strength of Muslims waned, the balance of power between the forces of southern Europe and North Africa shifted. European powers intensified their raids and wars on the ports of Morocco continuously and ferociously. The expulsion of Muslims from Al-Andalus contributed to this, and these attacks also became intertwined with piracy, which Europe adopted as a means of profit and gain.⁽¹⁴⁾

Since the first century of the Islamic calendar, the waters of the Mediterranean Sea have been the stage for Islamic fleets. However, Muslims did not fully engage in naval expeditions and battles until two or three centuries later when the great fleets emerged in Egypt, Africa, and Al-Andalus. Islamic forces began to roam the waters of the Mediterranean, both eastward and westward, during which maritime adventures and acts of piracy emerged.⁽¹⁵⁾

So piracy⁽¹⁶⁾ is a refusal to recognize any authority and a rejection of distinguishing between the ships of different states. There is a distinction between piracy and maritime jihad practiced by Muslims. During the 16th century, the Knights of St. John practiced piracy on the island of Malta, and the Knights of St. Stephen in Tuscany, while the Spaniards ventured into the eastern Mediterranean.⁽¹⁷⁾

During those turbulent times, piracy was one of the lucrative trades, as despite its inherent risks, it bestowed upon its practitioners the honor of bravery and valor.⁽¹⁸⁾

Muslims were active in maritime piracy on both fronts, particularly in the east, where the Ottomans, during their peak of power and ferocity, fought against European states situated on the shores of the Mediterranean.

On the other hand, in the West, this profession was not a new practice. For centuries, both Muslims and Christians engaged in it. During the 15th and 16th centuries, the number of Christians involved in piracy was considerable. However, Christian piracy gradually declined, while Muslim piracy in North Africa became more aggressive after the expulsion of Muslims from Al-Andalus.⁽¹⁹⁾

Europeans labeled Algerian naval activity as piracy and described its men as pirates, which is a biased claim far from the truth. The Europeans were the first to engage in piracy and expanded its application with brutality and ferocity following the Crusades and the beginning of Islamic retreat in Al-Andalus.⁽²⁰⁾

It's worth noting that this profession evolved, bringing returns to both the government and the people. For instance, ransom was imposed for the release of prisoners, who remained in detention until redeemed. This income continued for three centuries.⁽²¹⁾

By the beginning of the 16th century, Portugal owned cities like Ceuta, Tangier, Asilah, Azemmour, Essaouira, and Safi, along with the entire Doukkala region extending to the mouth of the Oum Er-Rbia and Tensift rivers on the Atlantic Ocean. Spain owned territories including Peñón de Vélez, Peñón de Alhucemas, Melilla, and they embarked on a war against Algiers.⁽²²⁾

The primary motive for attacking the North African coasts was the fall of Granada and the migration of the Moriscos. Since 1505, Spanish squadrons set out to act before the migrants made contact with strong states, particularly the Ottoman Empire.⁽²³⁾

The weakness of the dynasties of the Maghreb had a detrimental effect on the political, economic, social, and even military conditions. This significantly encouraged the Spanish amidst this decay and weakness, making it easier for them to invade Mediterranean ports and cities, especially in the Arab Maghreb in general⁽²⁴⁾.

"The annexation of Algeria to the Ottoman Empire".

Amidst the intensification of Spanish attacks on the coasts of the Islamic Maghreb in general and the Algerian coast in particular, the Barbary brothers emerged on the stage of events. They would play a decisive role in directing the course of history in the western Mediterranean basin.

With the emergence of these brothers, the Islamic Maghreb region witnessed rapid developments, leading to the birth of the modern Algerian state⁽²⁵⁾. This state firmly established itself as a new power in the Mediterranean basin for three and a half centuries.

The first contact of the Barbary brothers with the Ottoman Empire occurred in 1518, after their return from successful maritime raids. They sent a message to Sultan Selim I along with a significant gift. In response, the Sultan sent a military force as a reward for their gift. This force marked the first official military intervention in Algeria by the Ottomans, encouraging the Barbary brothers to engage in maritime raids rather than representing them directly in Algeria.⁽²⁶⁾

Initially, Khair ad-Din Barbarossa anticipated that the Spanish would turn their attention to Algeria, and he did not possess sufficient strength to confront them, especially since the Tha'labah tribe in Matija, which could have recruited thousands of knights before being dispersed by the Turks, was waiting for the opportunity to attack. However, neither the Tha'labah nor Khair ad-Din launched any attack on the city. When Khair ad-Din saw the Christians returning to Oran after installing their governor Abu Hamu on the throne of Tlemcen and sending parts of their forces to Spain, he changed his mind and decided, along with his companions and the majority of scholars and supporters, to stay in the city to protect it and repel aggression.⁽²⁷⁾

The situation in the central Maghreb and the political decay and lack of a strong authority were turbulent and deteriorating⁽²⁸⁾, especially after the Battle of Tlemcen. Sultan of the Hafsids requested recognition from Khair ad-Din and his rule. Additionally, revolutions erupted in several regions such as Zuwarah, Tenes, and Cherchell. The victorious Spaniards were inevitably going to advance forcefully towards Algeria to eliminate Khair ad-Din, who aimed to control North Africa .

This precarious situation, combined with external ambitions, led Khair ad-Din to pledge allegiance to Sultan Selim I, who was at the peak of his power, controlling a significant part of the Islamic world⁽²⁹⁾. In fact, Khair ad-Din decided to seek assistance from the Ottoman Empire to acquire the necessary financial and military power to confront the imminent danger, especially since Spain led the Christian world and considered the dominant force in North Africa and southern Europe.

To achieve this goal, Khair ad-Din built a naval fleet equipped with light and fast-moving naval units. Moreover, the internal leadership's fear of losing its authority hastened Khair ad-Din's move to solidify this relationship with the Ottomans.⁽³⁰⁾

Before these preparations, Khair ad-Din had decided to travel to the Ottoman Empire to confront these dangers from there. He gathered the people of the land and said to them, "I have decided to travel to the presence of the Sultan, and I have secured your country from the enemy with what I have left for you of jihad, and with what has come to you from the people of Andalusia, and what I have left for you of equipment. I have left in your country more than four hundred cannons, and there was not even one cannon in your country."⁽³¹⁾ When the people addressed him, they said, "O prince, we do not accept your departure, and we will not allow it. O Allah, O Allah, the nation of our master Muhammad, for Allah will question you about them." Among what the scholars addressed him with was that they said, "O prince, it is

necessary for you to stay in this city to protect it and defend its weak people. You have no permission to leave them and expose them to the enemy." At that point, Khair ad-Din said to them, "You have seen what has befallen the cursed infidels, and their agents cannot be trusted. It has become clear to me that we must obtain the obedience of the greatest Sultan, our master Selim, so that he may provide us with money, men, and all the tools of jihad that we need. This can only be achieved by directing the sermon to him and aligning the path with him".⁽³²⁾

The people of the city accepted Khair ad-Din's proposal, and they wrote a letter as he instructed them. He also wrote another letter himself. He appointed four emissaries to deliver the letter to the Sultan, and a man named Al-Hajj Hussein, who was highly esteemed by his associates, represented them. They presented a magnificent gift, including four prominent Christian leaders, to the Sultan as part of their delegation. The emissaries from the Muslims of Algeria reached Sultan Selim when they arrived in Constantinople. They were received at the Sultan's palace, where they traditionally fired many cannons. They then presented their gift to the Grand Vizier, who informed the Sultan of their arrival and conveyed what they had brought with them.⁽³³⁾

Khair ad-Din's goal was to officially tie the fate of Algeria to the Ottoman Empire. The message was directed in the name of all classes, including judges, preachers, imams, merchants, dignitaries, and all residents. This demonstrated their strong desire to rid themselves of the humiliation and Christian dominance that had begun to fade from the ports of the Maghreb.⁽³⁴⁾

The following was stated in the text of the letter: "The people of the city of Algiers are the servants of the Ottoman Sultan, with no one else to turn to in times of dire need. They have benefited from the favors of Baba Aruj in combating the infidels, for he was a supporter of the faith and a militant defender in the path of God, until he fell as a martyr in the siege of the Spanish city of Tlemcen. His brother, the mujahid Khair al-Din, succeeded him, and he had a better successor. He defended us, and we only knew justice and fairness from him, following the noble prophetic law. He looks up to your esteemed position with reverence and admiration, dedicating himself and his wealth to jihad to please the Lord of all beings and elevate the word of God, fulfilling their high hopes. We stand firm with him, along with the prince and the servants of your high rank, and the people of the region of Bejaia, as well as the West and the East, all in service of your exalted position. I, the undersigned bearer of the message, will present to Your Majesty the events and convey peace in this land".⁽³⁵⁾

Upon analyzing this letter, we can discern Khair al-Din's orientation towards the Ottoman state. Khair al-Din, as the official ruler of Muslims in North Africa, relied on the Quran and Sunnah. His activities were focused on leading naval operations, and his loyalty to the official state and its Sultan, Selim, was evident.

Furthermore, the internal cohesion and understanding among the Algerians as a whole became apparent.⁽³⁶⁾

Sultan Selim granted Khair al-Din the position of Beylerbey, making him the supreme commander of naval and military forces in his province, representing the Sultan. Thus, Algeria came under Ottoman rule, and any external aggression against its territories was considered an attack on the Ottoman state. The Sultan supported this decision with executive orders, sending artillery units and two thousand Janissaries to Algeria since 1519. The Janissaries began to appear in the political and military life of the Ottoman provinces in North Africa, and the Sultan issued other decrees, officially incorporating Algeria under the banner of the Ottoman Empire.

Sultan Selim was invited from the pulpits of mosques, and currency was minted in his name. These measures were taken to ensure that the state became an integral part of Istanbul, signifying that the Turks' entry into Algeria was not an invasion or conquest but rather a response to the locals' desire for rescue, considering them saviors. Thus, Algeria became the first province of the Islamic Maghreb to come under Ottoman rule, becoming a cornerstone for jihad in the Mediterranean. It was keen on extending its influence to all North African provinces to unite them under the banner of Islam and work towards liberating the Muslims of Al-Andalus from the brutal acts perpetrated by the Spaniards against them⁽³⁷⁾.

During this period, the foundations were laid for building the character of this region and expanding its influence and authority over the internal regions from Algeria to the oases of Touggourt and Ouargla. The Turkish rule stabilized, thanks to the efforts of the Aruj brothers and Khair al-Din. It culminated in the removal of Al-Ajal Ali from the reins of power. This can be attributed to the evolution of the governance system that Algeria experienced under Ottoman rule, influenced by the international and local conditions that the Algerian state was undergoing.

The flourishing of maritime raids and the proliferation of booty from the beylerbeyliks enabled them to support their rule and intervene in the affairs of neighboring territories. This increasing influence of the rulers of Algeria, who were more naval leaders than rulers, prompted the Ottoman state to compensate them with governors (bashaws)⁽³⁸⁾.

2.1 First Subtitle: The Political System in Algeria before the Deys' Era.

By the year 1519, Algeria entered a new era historically known as the Ottoman period, which began with the appointment of Khair ad-Din Barbarossa as the representative of the Ottoman Empire by a decree issued by Sultan Selim I in 1519. (Here marks the beginning of the emergence of the modern Algerian political entity under Ottoman influence).⁽³⁹⁾

The governance system in Algeria during the Ottoman era was characterized by the succession of several political systems over specific historical periods. The first of

these was the period of the Beylerbeyis, which began in 1519, and the last was the period of the Deys, which ended with the French invasion of Algeria in 1830.

2.2 -The Era of the Beylerbeyis: 1519 - 1587.

The rulers of Algeria came to be known as the Beylerbeyis starting from the year 1519, which marked the official establishment of Algeria as an Ottoman province. The first to hold this title was Khair ad-Din Barbarossa, based on the decree (law) issued by the Ottoman Sultan Selim I.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Some historians consider this period to be the zenith of Ottoman rule in Algeria due to the country's economic and urban development, with contributions from Andalusian immigrants.⁽⁴¹⁾

- The main features of governance during the era of the Beylerbeyis include:

- The governor of Algeria was appointed by the Sultan through a decree.
- Establishing security within the province after quelling rebellions against Ottoman presence, such as the rebellion of the tribes and Touggourt.
- Confronting and thwarting numerous European military campaigns, such as the campaign of Charles V in 1541.
- Development of the Algerian naval power with the dominance of the corsairs over authority.
- Achieving regional and political unity during this period.
- The laws enforced during this period were derived from the Quran and Sunnah, in addition to the Maliki and Hanafi schools of jurisprudence, each with its own judges and jurists.⁽⁴²⁾

During this period, Algeria also distinguished itself with economic prosperity attributed to the country's agricultural richness and the diversity of financial resources supplied to the state treasury. In the military field, Algeria witnessed the introduction of a new army and military forces system, represented by the influx of Turkish forces. These forces included a variety of troops, including the navy, known as the "Riyas", consisting of naval soldiers, and the infantry, or the "Janissaries", who were sent by the Ottoman Sultan to assist Khair al-Din. These forces continued to grow and expand thereafter. However, tensions and rivalries between the two factions were prevalent.⁽⁴³⁾

- 02The Era of the Pashas: 1587 - 1659.

This system emerged with a decree issued by the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (1574 - 1595). The change in the governance system (from Beyliks to Pashaliks) occurred because the Ottoman Empire observed that the rulers of Algeria were

governing the territory independently and interfering in its affairs freely, despite acknowledging the sovereignty of the Sublime Porte. Some of the provincial governors even aspired to establish a kingdom encompassing the Maghreb region.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Among the notable features of this era:

-The appointment of the Pasha was done by the Sublime Porte, and during this second phase, governors were appointed for three years before returning to their place of origin.⁽⁴⁵⁾

-Increased disturbances and chaos.

-The rise of naval power to the extent that Europe began to fear Algeria and sought to establish cooperative relations with it. Additionally, the conflict between the two factions, the Rias and the Janissaries, intensified.

It can be said that the system of Pashas carried the seeds of its demise from the beginning. The Pashas considered themselves outsiders to Algeria, and their role was limited, with their focus shifting towards accumulating wealth whenever the opportunity arose. This was due to the short duration of their rule.⁽⁴⁶⁾

The Pasha was a government official sent by the Sublime Porte for a period of three years to govern the country without having a fundamental or local mandate between the powers controlling the country. The Pasha in Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers acted as agents of the Sultan and had absolute authority due to the distance of their jurisdiction from the capital, Istanbul. The events after 997 AH / 1588 CE in the three Ottoman provinces of Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers indicated the dominance of soldiers and naval personnel over the authority of the Pasha. However, the nature of power relations within the province, coupled with the Ottoman Empire's control over the issuance of fines, ensured the achievement of Ottoman objectives in governance. This included delivering speeches in the Sultan's name, collecting annual revenues, contributing to state wars, and accepting the incoming Pasha from the Sublime Porte as the Sultan's representative in provincial governance. All of these were symbols of the official Ottoman sovereignty.⁽⁴⁷⁾

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Ottoman-Algerian relations during their initial phase from 1518 to 1588, marked by the rule of the Beys of Algiers, laid the groundwork for the establishment of a modern Algerian state with authority over its internal regions. This period witnessed a degree of stability under Ottoman rule, attributed in part to the Algerian navy led by the Barbarossa brothers, and concluded with the removal of Ali al-Arjal from power. This was due to the evolving governance system experienced by Algeria under Ottoman rule, influenced by both international and local conditions. The flourishing of maritime jihad and the increasing wealth from spoils empowered the Beylerbeys to assert their rule and intervene in the affairs of neighboring territories.

However, the growing influence of the Algerian rulers, more as naval leaders than as governors, prompted the Sublime Porte to sideline them and replace them with Pashas. The incapacity of the Pashas to develop a governance system and their repeated failures to implement reforms contributed to the deterioration of conditions in their respective regions. This led to the exacerbation of societal divisions, mistrust in authority, and the eventual demise of the Pasha system. The control shifted to the military leader, the Agha, for executive authority, while legislative powers were vested in the Divan, relegating the Beylerbeys to a secondary role in governance affairs.

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