

**Brigandage, Captivity, and Piracy on the Barbary Coast: Britain and the Barbary
Corsairs, 1577-1704**

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Piracy was a common practice in the Mediterranean Sea well into the nineteenth century. The lack of resources elsewhere and opportunities for upward social mobility, along with the vast amount of wealth that could possibly be accrued, appealed to the coastal inhabitants and merchant sailors of both North Africa and Europe. With numerous ships carrying trade goods, resources and bullion regularly passing through the Mediterranean straits, piracy was highly appealing. In addition to opportunities for material advancement, the Mediterranean Sea was home to numerous archipelagos, such as the Aegean Islands, which helped facilitate piracy by providing many hiding places and bases of operation. While piracy has always been a part of world history, it becomes vital in the study of history when used to understand state building and cultural interaction. Piracy as a tool for advancing and developing nation states was most evident during the seventeenth century. As a result of the economic crisis in Europe and the Mediterranean during the late sixteenth century,¹ piracy became the dominant economic stimulus in North Africa. Additionally, North Africa was lacking in natural resources and fertile land, limiting economic development and causing many inhabitants of the region to turn to piracy. A handful of city-states emerged along the Barbary Coast,² all of which became major players in Ottoman and European foreign, political and economic affairs.

My thesis will analyze the relationship between the Barbary Coast and Britain, focusing on the practice of captivity and its effects on the domestic and foreign affairs of both regions, while shedding light on the similarities between the British navy's pirating enterprise and that of the Barbary Corsairs. I have chosen Britain in this examination because during the seventeenth

¹ For a full explanation on the economic crisis in Europe and the Mediterranean during the late sixteenth century, see Peter Clark, ed., *The European Crisis of the 1590s*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), 3-22. Europe faced political and religious upheaval, financial collapse due to inflation and droughts, which saw the collapse of a long-term agrarian boom. All of these factors in the crisis had a spill over effect into North Africa. As Prof. Frangakis-Syrett always says, "When Europe sneezes, North Africa and the Middle East catch a cold and vice versa."

² The term Barbary Coast is used for most of North Africa, excluding Egypt. See map in Appendix A.

century, Britain emerged as one of the most dominant naval and economic powers in Europe, challenging Barbary Corsair aggression. Britain was also among the first European nations to open up trade and diplomatic links in North Africa. Britain and much of Europe viewed the Barbary Corsairs with disdain due to their pirating activities along the Mediterranean, but the British navy behaved in a similar manner. This is very much evident, for example, during King Charles II's acquisition of Tangiers in 1662 as part of the marriage settlement of Catherine of Braganza.³ Charles II instructed his navy to attack any Barbary vessels that would not pose much of a challenge, and, if successful, take the prisoners on board and sell them (Charles II would come to the conclusion that he could profit more from the sale of captives than using them to augment Tangiers' labor force, which was quite small).⁴ The years I will be studying will be from 1577, the year in which Britain opened up diplomatic relations with Morocco, and 1704, the year my final primary source narrative was published.

Some of the current historiography on the Barbary Corsairs advances the notion that the Barbary Corsairs are akin to extremist organizations such as Al-Qaeda, due to their commitment to a *sea-jihad* (the literal meaning of the word *jihad* is struggle)⁵ with the purpose of thwarting European incursions into North Africa. A comparison with the present-day pirates along the Somali coast has also been drawn in some of the literature on the Barbary Corsairs.⁶ While the Somali comparison has some merit, key elements do not match: there was greater depth and

³ Kenneth Parker, "Reading 'Barbary' in Early Modern England, 1550-1685," *Seventeenth Century*, Vol. 19, Issue 1, (Spring, 2004): 88.

⁴ G.E. Aylmer, "Slavery under Charles II: The Mediterranean and Tangier," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 114, No. 456 (Apr., 1999), 379.

⁵ Adrian Tinniswood uses this term in his book *Pirates of Barbary: Corsairs, Conquests, and Captivity In the 17th Century Mediterranean* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010). Tinniswood also mentions a link between the Barbary Corsairs and the jihadi rhetoric espoused by present day Somali pirates and al-Qaeda.

⁶ See Tinniswood, *Pirates of Barbary* and Alan G. Jamieson in *Lords of the Sea: A History of the Barbary Corsairs* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012). While Jamieson dispels the comparison of the Barbary Corsairs to the Somali pirates, he does put an emphasis on the religious zeal of the Barbary Corsairs, making them out to be holy warriors against Christendom.

organization of the institution of piracy in North Africa. Whereas the Somali pirates have not been recognized or utilized by any sovereign nation, the Barbary Corsairs were very much a part of the governing establishment in North Africa, helping to facilitate treaties and arrangements with nations throughout the Mediterranean and Northern Europe. Some historians have deemed the Barbary Corsairs the “scourge” of Mediterranean shipping, mainly focusing on their taking of European captives, undermining trade security, forcing religious conversions, and dishonoring treaty commitments. The burden of violence and terror is attached to the Barbary regencies without much attention to similar violent European activity in the region. However, newer secondary sources shed a different light on the Barbary Corsairs. These sources demonstrate how they engaged in activities not unlike their Christian counterparts, and illustrate just how significant the Barbary Corsairs were to North Africa’s economy.

One of the first works to challenge some of the prevailing conclusions regarding the Barbary Corsairs during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was *Barbary Legend* by Sir Godfrey Fisher, published in 1957.⁷ Fisher, a British consular officer with experience in the Mediterranean, examines the many complexities regarding the history of the Barbary regencies in North Africa during Turkish domination; he also includes the Empire of Morocco within this, even though it was independent of the Ottoman Empire, because it is also recognized under the term “Barbary”. In his introduction, Fisher states, “to a large extent the regencies have been victims of history in a singularly unscientific form,”⁸ and sets out to expose misconceptions and discrepancies that have traditionally painted the Barbary regencies of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli as states formed with the sole intent of wreaking havoc on Western European commerce. Fisher draws his conclusions by utilizing primary and secondary sources available in Europe, but more

⁷ Sir Godfrey Fisher, *Barbary Legend* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1957).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

importantly, tapping into the plentiful Ottoman chronicles and archives, which had not been previously put to great use. He questions the scholarship's exclusive reliance on writers whose experience with Barbary was limited, such as Paulus Jovius, Father Pierre Dan, and Phillip Rycaut. Fisher blames the lack of proper research with regards to sources that offer richer accounts of the Barbary Coast for the inconsistencies and misunderstandings in the historiography of the Barbary Corsairs up until the 1950s.⁹

Barbary Legend is structured in two parts. The initial chapters of the book discuss the emergence of the Barbary Corsairs and the consolidation of the Barbary regencies under Ottoman rule during the course of the sixteenth century. Fisher writes an excellent account of this, along with a detailed examination of the most celebrated figures in Barbary history, the Barbarossa brothers (especially Kheir-ed-din).¹⁰ According to Fisher, Kheir-ed-din has been unfairly portrayed as barbaric, bloodthirsty and cruel. "Comment is unavoidable on the tendency to ignore completely the sympathetic references or, at times, surprisingly generous tributes from contemporaries, who might have been expected to be hostile to them [the Barbarossa brothers], alike on religious and political grounds."¹¹ Fisher's research indicates that Kheir-ed-din was far from being an ignorant pirate. He was a good linguist and devoted most of his wealth to founding

⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰ The Barbarossa brothers, Oruç and his brother Hizir (who would come to be known as Kheir-ed-din) rose to become the most dominant figures in Barbary piracy. They challenged the might of Spain and the hostility of local leaders in North Africa, turning Algiers into the most formidable pirate city-state in the Mediterranean. They were known in Europe as the Barbarossas because of their red beards and gained employment as privateers for the Ottoman Empire. The Barbarossas also worked in partnership with local leaders in Tunisia and the rest of North Africa to repulse Spanish attacks during the 16th century. After the death of Oruç, Hizir, or Kheir-ed-din, was appointed as governor of Algiers, which became a regency of the Ottoman Empire. From there he consolidated his power in North Africa, gaining control of Tlemcen and Tunis and was eventually appointed admiral of the Ottoman fleet and chief governor of North Africa.

¹¹ Fisher, *Barbary Legend*, 41.

a university in Istanbul. Additionally, many European diplomatic agents and chroniclers of the sixteenth century spoke highly of him not only as a great naval officer, but also as a statesman.¹²

Barbary Legend also offers insight on the city of Algiers, which became the most powerful and aggressive city-state on the Barbary Coast during and after the Elizabethan era. Fisher writes reflecting Britain's experience with Algiers, emphasizing that the city was not a "bloodstained anarchical center" maintained solely through piracy, contrary to prevailing accounts. He points out the Levant merchants' selection of Algiers for their headquarters on the Barbary Coast.¹³ Algiers was a prosperous and well-governed town that possessed such amenities as a theological school, public baths and a hospital. The city-state also demonstrated lively legitimate commercial activity.¹⁴ Fisher draws this conclusion from narratives of eyewitnesses from different nations and walks of life, dispelling Father Dan and H.D. de Grammont's claims that the people of Algiers were living "rich and happy in a welter of riot, bloodshed, famine, and disease."¹⁵

The latter chapters of *Barbary Legend* focus primarily on the relations between Britain and the Barbary Coast. Fisher contributes valuable new findings regarding views in Europe toward the Barbary Corsairs. Fisher writes, "Among the surprises that emerge from a perusal of Christian records and narratives of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are testimonials to the Turks as highly civilized people, from both a moral and practical standpoint."¹⁶ The final six chapters of Fisher's book deal extensively with the relations, both political and economic, between Britain and the Barbary regencies. Fisher focuses a great deal of attention on the

¹² Ibid., 41.

¹³ Ibid., 96.

¹⁴ Ibid., 97.

¹⁵ Ibid., 96.

¹⁶ Ibid., 9.

seventeenth century, as it was the period when England began its foray into the Mediterranean and primarily North Africa in order to trade textiles. It comes as a surprise, for example, to find out that the Barbary regencies, at times, furnished supplies to British naval forces in the Mediterranean. Many scholars acknowledge *Barbary Legend* as the first work to go far beyond any other in analyzing the interplay of trade, naval activity, diplomacy, and piracy with regards to Britain. In addition to Fisher's wonderful contribution to the study of the Barbary Corsairs, he lists a comprehensive bibliography, filled with manuscripts written by former merchants and consular officials of Britain.

Another influential work that delves into the history of the Barbary Corsairs and their relationship with Britain is Nabil Matar's *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689*.¹⁷ Published in 2005, Matar's work is a more recent study on British-Barbary relations, undertaken by a scholar whose background is in English literature. Matar is known for expanding our understanding of the confusing relationship between Europe and the Middle East in his other books, such as *Islam and Britain, 1558-1685* and *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*. *Britain and Barbary* focuses particularly on the seventeenth century. Matar argues that the relationship Britain had with the Barbary Coast changed on the basis of Britain's position, both militarily and economically, in regards to the Barbary regencies. Like Fisher, Matar shows that attitudes towards the Barbary Corsairs were not entirely negative. The British were quite awestruck by the Moors, and Matar asserts that the Moors ended up being an important part of their popular culture (he uses plays such as *Othello* as examples) because of their diplomatic and economic initiatives in North Africa.¹⁸ He goes on to show that British portrayals of Barbary Coast inhabitants became more and more negative due to the constant harassment merchants

¹⁷ Nabil Matar, *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

encountered from the Barbary Corsairs, and as Britain's naval prowess grew and her citizens became less and less threatened by the Barbary regencies. Matar also notes the significance of Queen Elizabeth I's death and a civil war in Morocco (both events occurred in 1603) as signaling the end of all cooperation between England and Morocco (Britain's main partner in North Africa at the time), ushering in an era of uncertainty and tension over Barbary captivity and piracy.¹⁹

Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689 breaks down the relationship between the Barbary regencies and Britain into two different phases in the seventeenth century. The first is before Cromwell's expansion of the navy, when many Britons were anxious about the Barbary Corsairs and their rampant captivity raids along vulnerable coastal towns in Britain and Ireland.²⁰ In 1641, Parliament admitted to being overcome by the Barbary Corsairs and asserted that countless unransomed Britons were converting to Islam.²¹ This represented a major turning point in the relationship between Britain and Barbary. The second phase was after Cromwell's naval expansion, which saw a reversal in relations between the Barbary regencies and Britain.²² By the 1660s, Britain had engaged in piracy similar to that of the Barbary Corsairs, capturing and enslaving North Africans and establishing dominance of the sub-Saharan and North African slave trade.²³ They justified this because of the religious differences between the British and the

¹⁹ Ibid., 36-37. Cooperation between Britain and Morocco came to an end because with the assumption of King James I to the throne in 1604, Spain and Britain would end hostilities, ending the importance of the Moors who worked in conjunction with the British against Spain. Under King James, Britain separated itself from the Barbary.

²⁰ The Barbary Corsairs were effective at raiding certain coastal towns in Britain and Ireland because the British navy did not properly protect them. This was especially the case in Ireland where the British did not commit too many naval resources, leading to many towns and villages in Ireland becoming restocking ports for British privateers and pirates. Another reason for the effectiveness of the Barbary Corsairs was their speed and ability to maneuver using galleys. This was very important for the kind of shock tactics in which the Barbary Corsairs excelled.

²¹ Parliament issued an ordinance for collections to be made for the relief of captives and setting forth a fleet of ships for suppressing Barbary pirates. The ordinance was issued on April 25, 1643. See Daniel J. Vitkus, ed., *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 367.

²² Matar, *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689*, 45.

²³ Ibid., 111.

North African population, as well as because the Barbary Corsairs were holding Britons as captives. Additionally, they found the practice of captivity to be quite profitable.

Matar discusses captivity at great length – both the enslavement of Britons by the Barbary Corsairs and then the enslavement of North Africans by Britons and other Europeans. He analyzes captivity narratives of both groups, Britons and Moors, and sheds light on some of the negative activities in which Europeans were involved. Matar compares the treatment of slaves on both sides of the Mediterranean, gauging, like Ellen G. Friedman²⁴ before him, that the Barbary Corsairs treated their slaves much better than Europeans, offering them many opportunities for manumission and upward social mobility. Matar offers evidence that explains the way in which Christian captives were more likely to convert to Islam than Muslim captives were to convert to Christianity. One can conclude that this is a result of favorable treatment on the part of the Barbary Corsairs, as well as a result of the many opportunities for upward social mobility since there was a shortage of skilled labor.

Many of Nabil Matar's writings come with appendixes containing documents translated from Arabic into English, as well as copies of the primary source documents he uses to make his analysis. This offers readers and researchers alike the opportunity to read the proof for themselves and make their own conclusions. In *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689*, Matar also provides an extensive bibliography and relevant primary source documents, such as the Parliamentary act that levied taxes in order to ransom captive Britons from North Africa. Nabil Matar does an excellent job telling the story of the evolution of Britain and the Barbary Coast's relationship during the seventeenth century; this, along with his non-Eurocentric view of Barbary

²⁴ Ellen G. Friedman, "Christian Captives at 'Hard Labor,' 16th-18th Centuries," *International Journal Of African Historical Studies* 13, No. 4 (October 1980).

history, makes his writings critical in researching the Barbary Corsairs and their connection with Britain.

British pirating activities along the Mediterranean are discussed further in G.E. Aylmer's "Slavery under Charles II: The Mediterranean and Tangier."²⁵ Aylmer's 1999 article discusses how England took to piracy and slavery as a means for generating income in a similar fashion to the Barbary Corsairs and the Knights of St. John. When Charles II acquired Tangier through his marriage with Catherine of Braganza in 1662, the English navy both acquired a home base in the Mediterranean and became more exposed to the activities that went on in the region. Piracy and slavery had huge potential for riches, and both Muslims and Christians commonly practiced it. According to Aylmer, the English followed suit and turned a blind eye to piracy because it was of great benefit to them.²⁶ Slavery was profitable, and Aylmer stresses that the Barbary Corsairs were not the only practitioners of piracy in the region. Slavery only became an issue to the British, and most of Europe for that matter, when it was directed toward them, not necessarily because they opposed it. Aylmer writes, "The shocking affront which this practice [slavery] was felt to constitute, and the abhorrence in which it was held, owed more to the seizure and enslavement of English men (and some women too) by Muslim Turks and Moors than to a total opposition to slavery as such."²⁷

The article discusses the parallels in the slave trade between Mediterranean Muslims and Christians, and points out the enslavement of non-Christians by Europeans in the Mediterranean, which is less well known. The British took captives to work as oarsmen in the galleys, which remained the standard type of warship in the Mediterranean Sea well into the eighteenth century.

²⁵ G.E. Aylmer, "Slavery under Charles II: The Mediterranean and Tangier," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 114, No. 456 (Apr., 1999): 378-388.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 378.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 379.

What is important about Aylmer's essay is his explanation of the evolution of Britain's piracy and slave practices in the Mediterranean. There is also an emphasis on the decision in 1678 by the British Admiral of the Royal Mediterranean fleet to allow war ships to be used for piracy and accruing captives, which would make Britain just as much of "scourge" to Mediterranean commerce as the Barbary Corsairs. "Emphasis had changed from taking captives in order to augment the labour force at Tangier, to a policy of capture and sale on the best possible terms."²⁸

As we can see, the slave trade was important to the Mediterranean economy, but just how important was it to the Barbary regencies, and were there differences in the way it was instituted between Europeans and North Africans? Ellen G. Friedman's 1980 article, "Christian Captives at 'Hard Labor' in Algiers, 16th-18th Centuries," examines just that. She explains that Europeans saw Barbary captivity as inhumane and barbarous, all while much of Europe itself engaged in the West African slave trade. According to Friedman, captivity in the Barbary States was actually more humane compared to the treatment of prisoners and slaves in Christian societies.²⁹ She stresses, the Barbary Corsairs focused on business, not religious zeal, as seventeenth century piracy was all about profit.

Friedman explains in detail how they went to great lengths to ensure the well-being of their captives. In contrast, Europeans did not see the value of ensuring the welfare of their slaves in the Americas, for instance, because they were constantly replenishing their slave populations from Africa. Friedman writes of a Moroccan slave who complained in a letter to the Moroccan sultan that he and his fellow captive Muslims were forced to work night and day, poorly fed and dressed, and were constantly beaten to make them work harder.³⁰ She adds that while cruelty

²⁸ Ibid., 382.

²⁹ Friedman, "Christian Captives at 'Hard Labor,' 16th-18th Centuries," 618.

³⁰ Ibid., 628.

among captives in the Barbary Coast did occur, it was consistent with Mediterranean practice and fairly more benign than captivity in Europe. British, as well as other European, slaves in the Barbary States had considerably more freedom compared to European captives. They were allowed to worship freely (their masters set up churches for them in the slave quarters, or *bagnios*), set up their own businesses, send letters to their families (sometimes they were given permission to go back to their home country in order to raise funds and buy their freedom), and drink wine or brandy in the Barbary States where alcohol was otherwise prohibited under Islamic law.³¹

Friedman paints a different picture of Barbary captivity and the Barbary Corsairs. Her work is important in that it outlines the importance of captivity and ransoming to the Barbary economy, stating that, in the case of Algiers, the institution accounted for an average of 14 percent of the total amount raised in the city-state. The Barbary Corsairs were less concerned about religion and more concerned about making money. They rarely ever exchanged captives, which increases our awareness of the measure of their concern for their captive co-religionists, and took care of their European captives because they understood their value was based not only on their labor output, but also on their ability to generate ransom payments from Europe.

While the subject of the Barbary Corsairs has many rich secondary sources to help develop an understanding of the relationship between the Barbary regencies and Britain, the same cannot be said with regards to primary source material. Finding translated documents is quite difficult and primary sources on the North African experience of piracy are rare. This may be due to the high rate of illiteracy in comparison to Europe during the seventeenth century, or the fact that Muslim captives were hardly ever ransomed and awarded manumission while in

³¹ Ibid., 621-623.

Europe.³² A great deal of what we know about the Barbary Corsairs come from published narratives of ransomed captives. While these narratives are biased because they were published by redemptionist organizations intent on portraying the “Mohammetans”³³ as vile and wretched, they do offer insight on how the Barbary Corsairs, along with the inhabitants of North Africa, lived and operated.

The main primary sources I will use for my thesis come from a book called *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* compiled and edited by Daniel J. Vitkus.³⁴ This book collects seven published captivity narratives from the seventeenth century, as well as an appendix that includes letters, government documents and petitions. In these narratives we find that captivity on the Barbary Coast was not as harsh as many Europeans believed. One of the narratives called *Ebenezer; or, a Small Monument of Great Mercy* by William Okeley, a British crewmember whose ship was seized by corsairs from Algiers, explains the loving treatment he received from his North African masters: “I found not only pity and compassion but love and friendship from my new *patroon*. Had I been his son, I could not have met with more respect nor been treated with more tenderness. I could not wish a friend a better condition than I was in, except my bonds.” Okeley continues, “And indeed the freedom that I found in servitude, the liberty I enjoyed in my bonds was so great that it took off much of the edge of my desire to obtain and almost blunted it from any vigorous attempt after liberty that carried hazard in its face, till at last I was awakened upon this occasion.”³⁵ It should be noted that William Okeley did not have kind words for his two previous owners because they

³² Ibid., 631.

³³ A term used for Muslims, which is found in many narratives and documents of the seventeenth century.

³⁴ Daniel J. Vitkus, ed., *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

³⁵ William Okeley, “William Okeley, Ebenezer; or, A Small Monument of Great Mercy, Appearing in the Miraculous Deliverance of William Okeley (1675) in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*, 168.

treated him harshly. What also stands out in this narrative is an instance where Okeley's second master gave him a loan to set up a business, which was not uncommon, as some captives were encouraged to operate for-profit enterprises to earn income.³⁶ He wrote, "I acquainted my *patroon* with my design, pleaded I wanted stock to set up with. He lent me a small modicum, and with another pittance that I had privately reserved of my own, I began to trade."³⁷ It seems that Barbary captivity offered William Okeley opportunities for material gain, which, from what we know of European captivity, would have been unthinkable. European captivity practiced in the Americas, for instance, did not allow much opportunity for advancement. Africans were treated as chattel to be used only in the service of their master, not themselves.

Joseph Pitts, a British captive in Algiers from 1678 to 1694, explains in his narrative, *Religion and Manners of the Mohammedans*, the way in which booty was dispensed and shared by the Barbary Corsairs, giving insight into how highly organized and formalized piracy in North Africa was. He wrote, "At their return from the sea, if they have gotten any prize, then all the slaves and cargo are sold by way of auction; and all sorts of people, whether Turks, Moors, Jews, or Christians, have their liberty to advance in bidding; and after the money is paid which is bid, then every person receiveth his part or parts."³⁸ Pitts also points out the customary tribute given to the ruler of the Barbary regencies, which was one-eighth of the booty. Upon his capture, Pitts wrote, "The next morning (as their custom is) they drove us all to the king's, or *dey*'s, house; where the *dey* makes his choice and takes the *pengick*, i.e., the eighth part of the slaves, for the

³⁶ Stephen Clissold, *The Barbary Slaves* (New York: Marlboro Books, 1992), 60.

³⁷ Okeley, "William Okeley, Ebenezer; or, A Small Monument of Great Mercy, Appearing in the Miraculous Deliverance of William Okeley (1675) in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*, 168.

³⁸ Joseph Pitts, "Religion and Manners of the Mohammedans," in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*, 232.

public use, as also the eighth part of the cargo.”³⁹ Pitts’ narrative sheds light on many of the inner workings of the Barbary Corsairs and the inhabitants of North Africa, as he converted to Islam and was allowed considerable access to North African society. Pitts is also one of the first Englishmen to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, which he did with his master.

Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption also contains a pamphlet published in 1642 called “News from Sally of a Strange Delivery of Four English Captives from the Slavery of the Turks.” This is one of many brief printed texts from the seventeenth century that offered “news” from the sea about exploits, successes, and misfortunes experienced by English vessels throughout the world.⁴⁰ This specific pamphlet explains the fate of a crew that was captured in Salé and sold to merchants in Algiers, demonstrating how the Barbary slave trade involved a cooperative economy linked by various trading posts throughout North Africa. This pamphlet also explains the daring escape of the four English captives, which is both interesting and makes us aware of what possibilities there were for escape.

The Famous and Wonderful Recovery of a Ship of Bristol, Called the Exchange, from the Turkish Pirates of Argier (1622) by John Rawlins is another primary source I will be using. Rawlins, a sailor captured by Algerian Corsairs, mutinied with his fellow captives, regained his ship and escaped captivity.⁴¹ His narrative depicts the struggle for freedom as a struggle between good and evil, of Christian “power and goodness” bravely and violently opposed to the inhumanity of Turks and Moors. Rawlins describes Muslim culture as superstitious, while

³⁹ Pitts, “Religion and Manners of the Mohammetans,” in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*, 238.

⁴⁰ “News from Sally of a Strange Delivery of Four English Captives from the Slavery of the Turks (1642)” in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, 121.

⁴¹ John Rawlins, “The Famous and Wonderful Recovery of a Ship of Bristol, Called the Exchange, from the Turkish Pirates of Argier (1622),” in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*, 98.

putting emphasis on cruel practices such as forced conversions. But what stood out is his dedication of this book to George Villiers, marquis of Buckingham, King James I's favorite aide and lord high admiral. This dedication alludes to the royal government's neglect of common seamen, an issue often raised against James I by those who wished to see more support for the Royal Navy to protect British trade and make greater efforts to ransom poor sailors from captivity. Rawlins' narrative also sheds light on the renegade corsairs of the Barbary Coast when an English renegade named Henry Chandler purchased an English ship taken by Algerian Corsairs and also bought English and Dutch slaves who had the skills necessary to man the ship. With this narrative we get an idea of how North African customs were perceived, the position of renegade corsairs within Algeria, and an idea of how captives and former captives saw the British monarchy and its lackluster attempt to thwart Barbary piracy.

Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption is rich with government documents related to the British response to the capturing of their countrymen and the nuisance the Barbary Corsairs were to British trade. The seizure and enslavement of Britons played an important role in Britain's foreign policy and domestic affairs. Captivity compounded the conflict between the monarchy and London merchants, as both James I and Charles I were viewed as incapable of protecting their subjects by sea merchants, sailors and the families of captives. These same groups also saw the monarchy as ineffective at spending the ransom money raised through customs, which was supposed to be utilized in the fight against Barbary piracy. This led to support among merchants, families of captives and trade companies like the Levant Company for the monarchy's opponents in Parliament. These opponents spearheaded the effort to free captive Britons in North Africa

and helped spur the English Civil War.⁴² Parliament issued an ordinance for collections to be made for the relief of captives in Algiers in 1643. This document, which is included in the appendix of *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, states that Parliament would organize collections that would “be made in the several churches within the City of London and Westminster and the borough of Southwark, and the suburbs and liberties of the said cities, of the charitable benevolences of well-disposed Christians for and towards the relief of the said captives... for and toward the redemption of the said captives.”⁴³ Along with the many letters included in this primary source collection from families pleading with the King to help in freeing their loved ones from captivity, one can observe just how important the Barbary threat was to Britain in the 1640s.

On the flipside, we can gauge North African reaction to European aggression and their instituting of the slave trade in North Africa from the collection of primary sources in Nabil Matar’s *Europe Through Arab Eyes*.⁴⁴ Matar offers a collection of letters and historical accounts of Muslims in Europe translated from Arabic to English. One insightful source in this book is a letter from a reformer and Genoese convert to Islam named Radwan al-Janawy. In this letter addressed to the Moroccan sultan, al-Janawy angrily criticizes the sultan for allowing Christian captives to be ransomed: “How can all those infidels return to their lands, and our brothers, the Muslims, are still their captives in dire suffering and humiliation? We are able to leave not a single captive in their hands. Ransom is a religious duty upon us to be dispensed from the treasury and from the moneys of all the people. Not a single Muslim should remain [in

⁴² Nabil Matar, “The Barbary Corsairs, King Charles I and the Civil War,” *Seventeenth Century* 16, No. 2 (September 2001), 239.

⁴³ “Parliamentary Ordinance for Collections to be made for the Relief of Captives in Algiers (Issued April, 25 1643) in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*, 368.

⁴⁴ Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

captivity].”⁴⁵ Radwan al-Janaway urged the Moroccan sultan to make more use of the wealth of the nation to free Muslim captives in the same manner the Europeans had done, which was not commonly practiced in North Africa. Al-Janway’s letter also shows that some inhabitants of the Barbary Coast, considering the conditions of North African captives in Europe, viewed allowing European captives to be ransomed as inappropriate. Another factor this letter highlights is the importance of ransom money to the inhabitants of the Barbary Coast, as they seemed to have put profits over helping their captive co-religionists in Europe.

Other translated primary sources in *Europe Through Arab Eyes* include a letter written in 1635 by Moulay al-Walid, grandson of the Moroccan sultan Moulay Ahmed al-Mansur, describing the capture of his nephew and his nephew’s subsequent conversion to Christianity. This letter shows the level of anxiety regarding Muslim Christianization and the dangers it posed, offering a parallel to the same anxiety Christians had regarding renegades.⁴⁶ There is also a letter from Bentura de Zari, a Moroccan Ambassador who was put under house arrest in London for the deeds of Moroccan Corsairs who were not under the control of the sultan. This episode would not have occurred one hundred years earlier when Queen Elizabeth was appealing to Moroccans for financial help, but Bentura fell victim the growing imbalance of power between the Islamic Mediterranean and Britain during the second half of the seventeenth century. This would mark the beginning of European imperial ascendancy.

As the sources I will be using for my thesis demonstrate, Britain and the Barbary Coast had an unsteady relationship in the seventeenth century, but the one constant is they both

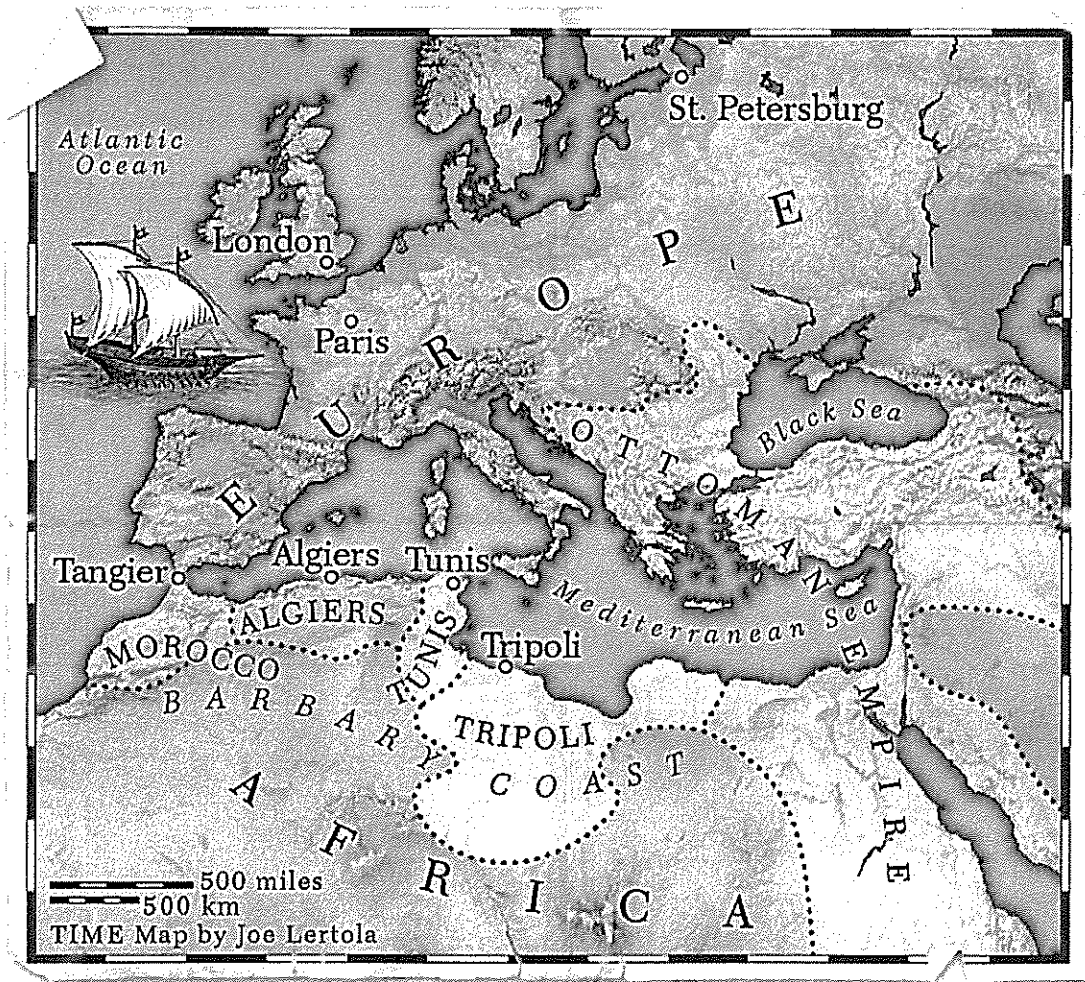
⁴⁵ Radwan al-Janaway, “Letters of Radwan al-Janaway on Muslim Captives, in Tuhfat al-Ikhwan, Rabat National Library, MS KAF 154, FOLS. 423-424 and 427-428,” in *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 143.

⁴⁶ Muly al-Walid, “Letter About Muslim Captives Converted to Christianity, Rabat National Library, MS JIM 223, 101-102,” in *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 192.

engaged in piracy and the slave trade. This is important to note because some lazy scholarship has painted the Barbary Corsairs as terrorists and a curse against Christianity, leading to their comparison with Islamic terrorist organizations in the current day. As the sources I have discussed show, the Barbary Corsairs were in fact less interested in a religious war than garnering wealth. Historians have placed much of the blame for piracy and slavery in the Mediterranean squarely on their shoulders, when in reality they were mainly engaging in activities normal for the period. Furthermore, Barbary Corsair *rais*' (captains) were mainly Europeans (many of whom did not convert to Islam) who had become pirates, which further dispels the notion that the Barbary Corsairs were anything like Al-Qaeda. In short, the Barbary regencies were less a bunch of pariah states along North Africa intent on attacking Christianity, then a network of sophisticated states who utilized an accepted and commonly practiced form of revenue generation before, during, and after the seventeenth century.

Appendix A

Map of the Barbary Coast



Joe Lertola, *Barbary Map*. Source: Joe Lertola. 2004, Digital Image. Available from: http://www.joelertola.com/grfx/grfx_new/chrt_barbary.html (accessed May 20, 2015).

Outline

- **Introduction**
 - The origin of piracy and privateering in the Mediterranean Sea.
 - The difference between piracy and privateering or corsairing.
 - Who are the Barbary Corsairs?
 - Mediterranean captivity in relation to piracy.
- **The Emergence of the Barbary Corsairs**
 - The rise of the Barbarossa brothers and corsairing in North Africa.
 - Oruç Barbarossa
 - Hizir Barbarossa (Kheir-ed-din)
 - Barbary connection to the Ottoman Empire.
- **Organization of the Barbary States**
 - Examination of the Barbary States.
 - Algiers
 - Morocco
 - Tunis
 - Tripoli
 - Analysis of administrative and social structure of the Barbary Corsairs and the Barbary States.
 - Renegades
 - Captain John Ward
 - Murat Reis

- Relations of the Barbary States with other European nations, primarily England (treaties, etc.)
- Utilization of the Barbary Corsairs by both the Ottoman Empire and Europe.
- **Britain in Relation to Piracy**
 - Examination of the historical relationship between the Barbary States and England during the late sixteenth and seventeenth century.
 - British piratical activities in the Mediterranean.
 - Institution of captivity by Britain.
- **Institution of Captivity on the Barbary Coast**
 - How important was captivity and ransoming to the Barbary economy?
 - Analysis of the economic data and information with regards to the institution of captivity in North Africa.
 - Opportunities for captives in North Africa in comparison to Europe.
 - The importance of captivity in European politics, as well as North African diplomacy.
- **Conclusion**

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