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Muslim Slaves in the Christian Lands

The Legacy and Experience of Moors in Europe from 15th to 19th Century

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مقتضب

الأسرى المسلمين في بلاد النصارى أوائل العصر الحديث

مدفوعين برغبة جامعة في حفظ كبرياء أوروبا وإسترجاع هيبتها التي تأثرت أيما تأثر بفعل تواجد المسلمين في الأندلس لقرون طويلة، لم يأل الأوروبيين جهداً أوائل العصر الحديث لخلخلة الموازين و مناقشة علاقات القوة مع الآخر المسلم بغية رد الاعتبار للذات المهزومة. في هذا السياق، ستتجدد و تحتد ظاهرة أسر و خطف المسلمين في عرض البحر و بدرجة أقل في البر. المحرك الأساس لهذا النشاط لم يكن عقدياً خالصاً، بل تحكمت فيه أيضاً عوامل إقتصادية، عسكرية و جيوسياسية. و هذا ما يفسر بالضبط انغماس رجال السلطة من ملوك و أمراء جنبا إلى جنب مع رجال الدين و القراصنة في أسر عشرات الألوف من المسلمين عرباً و عجماً و أتراك أوائل العصر الحديث. و هو ما يدفع العديد من الدارسين إلى اعتبار سبي المسلمين حلقة من حلقات اللقاء الجدلي و المعقد بينهم و بين المسيحيين، بل إن منهم من إعتبره إستمراراً لروح الحروب الصليبية. هذا الطرح قد يجد سنداً في رد الفعل اللافت لأهل الحل و العقد من علماء و سلاطين المسلمين لإفتكك أسراهم من ربقة العبودية.

و بقدر ما حظي به هذا الموضوع من إهتمام من لذن المسلمين حينها، بقدر ما تجاهله الدارسين الأوروبيين المختصين في دراسة الأسر أواخر العصر الحديث. في هذا السياق، تهدف هذه الأطروحة من خلال إعتقاد مقاربة ميكرو تاريخية تهتم بأدق التفاصيل التي توفرها رسائل الأسرى، سجلات السفراء، برقيات الأمراء، آراء الفقهاء بالإضافة إلى بعض الأعمال الأدبية و الفنية إلى دراسة تجربة المسلمين في الأسر. من خلال إستقراء كل هذه التفاصيل و المعطيات ستحاول إقتراح فهم أفضل للسياق التاريخي و الجيوسياسي لإستعبادهم. و إعتباراً لكونهم تابع مهمشين محكومين بالخضوع لإرادة المتبوع - السيد- ستتبع هذه الأطروحة تفاصيل اليومية في حياتهم لإستجلاء أساليبهم في المقاومة و طرق مناقشتهم لعلاقات القوة. و على نفس المنوال، ستحاول الإسهام نقدياً في فضح أنوية المؤرخ الغربي المتمحورة حول مركزية الذات الأوروبية و إقصاء روايات الهامش. بمعنى أدق، ستتبع مجالاً أوسع للسرديات القادمة من الهامش لتقويض روايات المركز الإقصائية، ما سيمكنها - سرديات الهامش- من إعادة كتابة التاريخ من تحت بعيداً عن نظم المعرفة الغربية و من السرديات النخبوية التي تلغي الأصوات المهمشة.

الكلمات المفاتيح: المسلمين؛ النصارى؛ الصدام؛ الإستعباد؛ تابع مهمشين؛ روايات المركز؛ سرديات الهامش؛ كتابة التاريخ.

Abstract

Throughout the early modern period, European privateers, corsairs, and brigands were sailing the Mediterranean and, with a lesser degree, eastern Atlantic seashores in search of ill-defended Muslims. Their piratical sorties were so traumatic that the natives became so anxious and terrified. This menace represented the underbelly of maritime trade and voyage: it was a risk for passengers, traders, and fishermen as well as pilgrims on their way to Mecca. Evidence confirms that the normal course of the lives of thousands of them was interrupted and they were humiliatingly hauled off to slavemarkets scattered all over Christendom where merchants and brokers bargained over their prices. Such hostile motion was, in every respect, a vestige of the on-going clash between Crescent and Cross. All indications confirm that before long, it turned out to be a continental crisis that continued to dominate much of the political, religious, military, and social connections between Muslim lands and the so-called *Abode of war*. Yet surprisingly, we find that the more this issue obsessed Muslim communities, the less consideration it received from contemporaneous Western historians studying slavery in the Mediterranean basin, who, semi-consciously if not well-intentionally, turned a blind eye to the agonies of Muslim slaves in the hands of the Christians.

Given this lack of critical academic attention to the stories of these enslaved Muslims, this dissertation seeks to explore their journeys of servitude in Europe during the early modern period. It aims at unravelling the historical circumstances behind the unprecedented outbreak of this hostile motion and how it has led to the creation of small-scale communities of Muslim subalterns in different regions in Christendom. The significance, however, of this topic does stem neither from counting how many Muslims were seized nor from describing how they negotiated power relations. The relevance of the exploration of their stories of despair lies, in fact, in the articulation of counter-hegemonic narratives, which do forcefully challenge contemporaneous Western scholarship and historiography about the encounter between Muslims and Christians. Following on from this, the main contention of this study is to bring to the fore these slaves' "*small récits*" to remedy the imbalance of Western macro-historical texts which dispersed their legacy and (hi)stories into the shadows of history. It intends to revisit their history to de-enslave it from the effects of the Eurocentric exclusionary trend adopted by modern grand vocal narratives; it seeks out to impair the ideology of silence imposed on them and allow them, in reverse, to rewrite "history from below."

Key words: Muslims; Christians; Slavery; On-going clash; Historiography; Euro-centric narratives; Subalterns; De-enslave; Rewrite.

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NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND THE USE OF SOME TERMS

All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

I use the word “Maghreb” to refer to the region of North Africa bordering the Mediterranean Sea and I use Turkey to refer not necessarily to contemporary Turkey, but to the Ottoman Empire.