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| Changing power relations between Europe and Algiers: |
| How a captive’s story relates to broader historical change. |
| Het dagboek van Metzon is gedrukt in 1817. Het originele manuscript is helaas verdwenen |

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Introduction

The famous historian Fernand Braudel once called slavery a structural feature of the Mediterranean society. This statement may seem bold, but validates itself when one looks at the history of the Mediterranean region. Throughout the ages warfare and piracy were recurrent characteristics of life in and around the Mediterranean Sea.[[1]](#footnote-1) Both war and privateering often resulted in the captivity and enslavement of people. This, over the ages, generated a whole body of literature. European slaves, freed by ransom or force, wrote down stories of their captivity, and artists made good use of these for their depictions of faraway lands and their inhabitants. Some of these slave-stories were published and exerted influence on popular opinion, as far away worlds sprung into vision by the grace of their narrative powers.[[2]](#footnote-2) This essay will focus on one of these stories, and place it into its broader historical context. The story with which we are concerned here is written by the Dutch ship captain Gerrit Metzon, who was a captive in the city of Algiers between the years 1814-16.

The question which this paper aspires to answer is; *how does Gerrit Metzon’s tale of captivity in Algiers relate to the broader change in power relations between Europe and Algiers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century?* With this question I want to analyse how Metzon’s story weaves into the fabric of a broader historical framework. Metzon’s tale is part of a greater narrative: that of the shifting balance of power between Europe and the Barbary States of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli in the Early Modern period. To come up with a satisfying answer to this research question I will, first of all, provide some historical context on Algerian privateering. Secondly, I will give a critique of Metzon’s story. Who was Metzon? What does Metzon’s narrative tell us about the European perception of the Algerian corsairs? Thirdly, I will relate the text to its historical context and lay bare the connections between the two. How can his story be related to the changing perceptions on privateering? How does Metzon’s story fit into the broader historical events that took place during the time in which it was written?

By providing an answer to these questions I will show how Metzon’s experiences relate to the broader historical changes which were taking place during the times in which he lived.

# 1. Historical background to the Algerian privateering

During the year 1621 Dutch merchants wrote a letter to the ‘Staten Generaal’ complaining about the excessive damage which was being done to their maritime trade in the Mediterranean Sea, and urging the Staten Generaal to take action. The problem to which the merchants referred was the hijacking of Dutch ships by Barbary Corsairs, operating from the cities of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli on the North African coast. The buccaneers, after capturing a ship, would sell the goods and enslave the crew, often trying to ransom them, and making a handsome sum of money by doing so.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Several hundred years after this letter was written, the problem of piracy still existed. Stretching from the 16th to the 19th century the Barbary corsairs operated all over the Mediterranean Sea. During this period they exerted an important influence on the flow of trade in the Mediterranean basin.[[4]](#footnote-4) To provide some necessary historical background we should first of all ask ourselves why the Algerians resorted to privateering on such a large scale. Several reasons for this can be distinguished. First of all, the arid soil and hot climate made agriculture an unprofitable undertaking, thereby forcing the Algerians to search for other means of sustenance. Secondly, Algiers became a vassal state of the expanding Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth century. Although Algiers maintained a high state of autonomy, the sultan’s authority was indisputable, and a regiment of his elite troops, the Janissaries was permanently stationed within the walls of Algiers. This proved to be a mutually beneficial relationship. The Janissaries served as fighters on the Algerian ships used for privateering and in return the sultan was provided with a base of operations for skirmishes with the Spaniards and Portuguese at sea.[[5]](#footnote-5) However, having a regiment of Janissaries at hand meant they also had to be paid. For a large part this was the responsibility of the *Dey*,the official ruler of Algiers, and raiding and ransoming were his means to this end. Effectively, the support of the sultan thereby –partly- ensured the ongoing existence of privateering. Without privateering Algiers wouldn’t be able to pay its troops and a rebelling force of soldiers would endanger the Dey’s precarious position.

Another reason why the Algerians focused on piracy was their lack of trade. Algerian merchants and their ships weren’t welcome in European cities, while the opposite remained true for European merchants who came to Algiers. This guaranteed a very limited merchant fleet, further driving the Algerians into other means to keep their economy alive.[[6]](#footnote-6)

A last incentive which should be noted is revenge. The hundreds of thousands of Moriscos expelled by Catholic Spain at the end of the fifteenth century, Christian renegades with a grudge against their homelands, Muslims who hadn’t forgotten about the crusades in days long past. All of them could carry personal motivations for taking part in the privateering business.[[7]](#footnote-7) The Moriscos particularly had a powerful impact. Many amongst them developed a sense of hostility towards their former homelands and turned their navigational skills against their former allies.[[8]](#footnote-8) Revenge should however not be be seen as a main incentive. ‘The upsurge in Mediterranean slaving was not just about ideology or revenge, (…) there were other, more pragmatic forces involved (…). Slaves were, for Christians as much as for Muslims, a commodity, and a particularly valuable one at that.’[[9]](#footnote-9)

In conclusion we can state that personal (religious) motives, the unprofitable climate, the lack of trade, the lure of riches and the support of the sultan, -thereby effectively including Algiers in the struggle between empires-, were the most important reasons for Algerian privateering.

# 2. Reading between the lines

## 2.1 Gerrit Metzon

Now that we have established some necessary background we should ask ourselves; who was Gerrit Metzon? Very little is known about the man. Metzonwas born on the 28th of August 1769 in Vlaardingen as a son to Andries Metzon and Trijntje Stam who both adhered to the Protestant faith. On the third of the following month Gerrit was baptized in the Dutch Reformed Church. Metzon came from a family of sailors and during the course of his life he became a captain for a shipping company.[[10]](#footnote-10) On the 25th of June 1814, Metzon and his crew had been captured and enslaved by Algerian corsairs when they boarded his ship ‘de Twee Gebroeders’ (the two brothers) after it had set sail from the port of Cadiz in Spain. For over two years Metzon was a captive in the city of Algiers, but, he became a free man again. Metzon is set free after a squadron of Dutch and English ships bombard Algiers in 1816. Upon his arrival home in Vlaardingen he wrote down his experiences and publishes them under the title: ´*Dagverhaal van mijne lotgevallen gedurende eene gevangenis* *en slavernij van twee jaren en zeven maanden te Algiers*´ (‘Day-to-day story of my vicissitudes during a captivation and slavery of two years and seven months in Algiers’).[[11]](#footnote-11) His story is published in 1817 and sold by the publishers N. Cornel and J. van Witzenburg in Rotterdam and Vlaardingen. After this we don’t know much about what happened but a census register provides us with the knowledge that he lived together with his mother and sister in Westnieuwland, a town close to the city of Rotterdam, in 1830. His profession is shown to be seaman. Ten years later, in 1840, he lives there alone, a profession is missing. On the 27th of October 1845 he dies at the same address. Alone, unmarried and, as far as we know, without children.[[12]](#footnote-12) What can we make of this? Although we do not know much about Metzon’s life we can deduce a general picture. A Christian, a captain tried and tested at sea, literate, quite adept at writing, unmarried and probably childless, at least no officially registered children. From here on no claims can be made or we would travel into the realm of the unknown. Therefore we should go on and take a look at the story he has written. What does Metzon’s narrative tell us about the European perception of the Algerian corsairs, and what about his own? How are the two related?

## 2.2 What Metzon’s tale tells us about European perceptions

First of all it’s important to note that a good part of Metzon’s report is concerned with the everyday life. He describes the prison in which he and his fellow slaves were housed, the food they got to eat, the punishments which they received, the weather, the surroundings and the habits of the Mores; a term often used in the early modern period to refer to people of Islamic belief. This however is not which is of interest to us here, since I would like to focus more on religion, depiction of the ‘Turks’, and the way in which Metzon’s report is imbedded in his religious beliefs. Secondly, the source is too large to give adequate attention to all of its various aspects.

Let’s start at the beginning of Metzon’s book. Here we encounter a foreword in which Metzon explains his reason for writing down and publishing his experiences. Summarized it comes down to this; ‘After the resplendent victory of the Dutch and British fleet on the Algerians which caused my freedom as well as the freedom of all Christian slaves and the abolishment of slavery altogether there is no better way to let this memorable triumph be known than from the vicissitudes of the poor sailors who had the misfortune to be taken by these robbers. It is for this reason that this story is published.’[[13]](#footnote-13) Metzon continues thereafter by ensuring the reader of the truthfulness of his account, and appealing to the reader’s indulgence. Since his whole life has been spent at sea, he is not well traversed in the arts of writing for a public. Apart from the valuable insight into Metzon’s motivation for writing down his experiences we should take note of the fact that Metzon talks about the ending of slavery in the Mediterranean and the freedom of all Christian slaves. We will get back to this later. First let’s take a look at the story itself.

The tale starts with the takeoff of the ‘Twee Gebroeders’ from the port of Cadiz in southwestern Spain. The ship is carrying salt, cork and some other unspecified goods. On the early morning of Saturday the 25th of June three ships are spotted, two frigates and a brig. Shortly thereafter they set course for the Twee Gebroeders. When the ships sail into sight turbans and stark-naked rowers spring into view at which a small panic breaks out. The sailors on deck wake the sleeping crew and exclaim: ‘get out of bed, the Turks are on board!’[[14]](#footnote-14) This of course was not true, since the corsairs were Algerians. But throughout the text Metzon refers to them as Turks. This should be seen in light of the struggle between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers. The Ottoman Empire, which reached the pinnacle of its power during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, controlled the Barbary States of Algiers, Tripoli and Tunis. So naturally, for the Europeans, all corsairs were considered Turks. How are these ‘Turks’ depicted in Metzon’s narration? What’s fascinating here is that their descriptions are infused with religious rhetoric. Metzon writes how two ‘Turkish officers’ during the capture of the ship told him ‘roppi roppi christiana’, meaning; give us your goods Christian.[[15]](#footnote-15) One may wonder whether or not they ever used the word ‘christiana’. On another page he mentions how the crew told him that the Turks look more like devils than humans. When shortly thereafter the corsairs make a promise as not to sell the crew as slaves Metzon dismisses this as unreliable since the Turks are so untrustworthy and faithless. ‘They were even during the voyage so thievish (…) they touched them (i.e. the crew) while they were sleeping’.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Metzon displays a deep distrust towards the Turks and their religion and claims that they live in the deepest ignorance.[[17]](#footnote-17) When he notes that the Koran is the determining factor in their behavior, it is immediately followed by the claim that, in spite of the guidance of the Koran, they’re false, thievish and cruel. ‘A Turk who during the evening wins someone over with apparent friendship would rob him the following morning and drive him away. With a little money they can be made to do anything.’[[18]](#footnote-18) Elsewhere he notes that the Turks have an innate hate against everything that is Christian.[[19]](#footnote-19)The way in which Metzon depicts the Algerians is infected with a smell of religious fervor. A vivid example for this is his description of a Turkish overseer: ‘Down the stairs we were met by the chief with a stick in his hand; he roared like a bear and his eyes burned with resentment and malice.’[[20]](#footnote-20) Phrases like this are oddly reminiscent of a preacher describing pagans. It seems plausible that Metzon is projecting his religious ideas on the Turkish overseer. This should be put into context.

Since the Barbary States were Islamic, and their victims Christians, the conflict was often portrayed as a clash between religions, a clash between civilizations. From the Ottoman point of view the pirates were considered to wage a holy war against the Christian influences while the Europeans oftentimes interchanged the concepts of Islam and piracy indiscriminately.[[21]](#footnote-21) The religious conflict was taken very seriously. When the English pirate John Ward converted to Islam the English satirist Samuel Rowland wrote:

‘Thou wicked lump of only sin, and shame,

(Renouncing Christian faith and Christian name),

A villain worse than he that Christ betray’d.. (..)

(…) Perpetual flames is reprobate’s reward.[[22]](#footnote-22)

The historian Adrian Tinniswood claims in his book ‘*Pirates of Barbary’* that this framework of a (religious) clash between cultures should be seen as little more than a façade. The true purpose of the pirates was nothing more than to make a living, to earn money, as was the purpose of the European nations. The religious framework was only used as the means to an end, a concept by which piracy could be justified, reminiscent of the religious framework in which the crusades had been embedded in days long past.

The flimsiness of a framework which considers religion as the primary motive in the slave trade is made clear when we look at the sheer amount of European corsairs; John Ward was not the only convert. A substantial part of the corsairs was from Dutch, English, Spanish, Irish or any other European descent. For example the Dutch captain Simon Danseker, ‘the devil captain of Algiers’ was one of the most notorious ‘Turks’.[[23]](#footnote-23) Another point which supports this view is the Dutch policy towards Algiers. The States General didn’t necessarily want to eradicate privateering; they just wanted to keep it in check. The Algerians were, first of all, considered to be corsairs, not Muslims. With the Muslims peaceful coexistence was possible.[[24]](#footnote-24)

However, not all historians seem to downplay the role of religion as much as Tinniswood does. Professor of early modern Mediterranean history Robert C. Davis, for example, seems to take the role of religion more serious. Davis states in his book ‘*Christian slaves, Muslim masters’* that‘In Barbary, those who hunted and traded slaves certainly hoped to make a profit, but in their traffic in Christians there was also always an element of revenge, almost of *jihad* – for the wrongs of 1492 [Davis refers to the expulsion of the Moriscos from the Iberian peninsula here], for the centuries of crusading violence (…), for the ongoing religious struggle between Christian and Muslim.’[[25]](#footnote-25) He also suggests that this spur of vengeance might be the defining factor which made the Islamic slavers so much more aggressive and successful than their Christian counterparts.

A similar sentiment can be found with Nabil Matar, a researcher on Anglo-Islamic relations. In a piece on Mediterranean captivity he mentions that in many African Arabic writings the word *nasare* -meaning European Christians-, was invariably followed by *damarahum Al-lah* – may God destroy them. In these writings the Barbary corsairs are also consequently described as defenders of the Islamic faith.[[26]](#footnote-26) What do we have to make of this apparent contradiction? Considering the dependency of Algiers on privateering and slave trade, -and the reasons behind this as explained in the first chapter- it seems plausible that, although religion certainly played its part, it was rather one of several reasons than the main incentive. As we have seen, the weight contributed to religion by Davis and Matar does not seem to be shared by Tinniswood. Nevertheless, this does not have to be a battle between different points of view. Rather I would propose to perceive of them as the same story written from a different perspective. For the common man, whether a Christian from Europe, or a Muslim from Algiers, religion might reasonably be conceived of as a conviction of the utmost importance. Davis seems to focus more on the personal level while Tinniswood is more concerned with the application of religion in policy making. While religion was a significant aspect of day-to-day life, it was also used as a tool to validate certain policies, to motivate people, to get things done.

When we switch back to Metzon, we see the effect on the personal level. Ever Since Constantinople had fallen to the Ottomans in 1453, a sense of fear had permeated the European states. Clergyman from Rome to Amsterdam had warned their flock that the Turk ‘is an enemy who not only robs us of money and possessions, wife and child, and maltreats people in the most horrible manner, but whose whole purpose and intention is to root out the name of Christ and put his own devil Mahomet, in His place.’[[27]](#footnote-27) This sense of fear, of xenophobia, of othering, presents itself in Metzon’s tale. Metzon seems to express a sentiment felt not only by him, but by sailors from all over Europe. A fear of the unknown Turk, a fear for a religion which was not their own, a fear that just beyond the horizon a many-headed monster was stirring in its sleep, ready to launch itself on any weary Christian who would be foolish enough to travel into its reach.

Therefore Metzon’s account of captivity reflects the religious challenges that non-Europeans and non-Christians posed to early modern Europe. This does not mean that there is no truth to Metzon’s story. As the historian Daniel Panzac writes: ‘The Dutch Capta**i**n Gerrit Metzon’s description of his capture in his *Journal of Captivity in Algiers* (…) is certainly representative of the experience of most of the victims of the Barbary corsairs during this period.’[[28]](#footnote-28)

# 3. How a captive’s story relates to broader historical change.

## 3.1 The legal and moral status of piracy - changing perceptions-

As mentioned earlier, Metzon describes in his foreword how the victory of the British and Dutch fleet ended slavery in the Mediterranean. ‘(…) The resplendent victory of the Dutch and British fleet on the Algerians (…) caused my freedom as well as the freedom of all Christian slaves and the abolishment of slavery altogether.’[[29]](#footnote-29) Apparently something big was happening. How can we relate Metzon’s statement to broader historical change? To provide an answer to this question we should first take a look at the changing perceptions on privateering.

During the Medieval period one of the defining features of the European law system had been the existence of legal pluralism. This concept can be defined as ‘the operation of competing systems of law throughout a common region.’[[30]](#footnote-30) Professor of history Emily Sohmer Tai argues that ‘the simultaneous operation of competing systems of law (…) allowed medieval piracy to lie in the eye—or, rather, with the law—of the beholder.’[[31]](#footnote-31) This means that privateering could be considered legal and illegal simultaneously. The concept of legal pluralism can be further explained by taking a look at the treaties during the medieval period, which, in essence, embodied an early form of international law. Treaties between European States and between Europe and Algiers determined whether or not the theft of a ship or the enslavement of a crew should be considered legal or illegal. Moreover, in case of inappropriate seizure restitutions had to be made, as stipulated in the treaty.[[32]](#footnote-32) In practice this meant that when a state had conducted a treaty with Algiers, it could henceforth ‘guarantee that ships and cargo subject to allied, or ‘friendly’, polities would be spared seizure.’[[33]](#footnote-33) However, if a neutral ship carried sailors or goods from a nation with which the Algerians were at war, the corsairs could still confiscate the goods and enslave these men. This basically meant that these treaties had only a very limited functionality. During the early modern period this would change.

Until the second half of the seventeenth century no nation had been able to extract a ‘free ship – free goods’ treaty from Algiers. This altered in 1662 when England managed to extract this right based on their superior naval power. England subsequently introduced unforgeable and obligatory Algerian passports for its southbound merchant ships, henceforth enabling them to freely sail the – Mediterranean- waters and providing them with a critical advantage over their competitors; exempli gratia the Dutch. Several breaches of the accord in the years thereafter proved to be detrimental for the Algerians and hastily made them revoke the agreement.[[34]](#footnote-34) What this intends to show is that there was no real sense of togetherness. Privateering during Medieval times was considered a legitimate activity, based on the existence or lack of a treaty. If sailors, Christians that is, were enslaved by the Algerians this was not considered a problem. ’We can conclude with some certainty (…) that before 1730 no Protestant nation cared very much about the slavery of its nationals when they got caught while serving on foreign ships.’[[35]](#footnote-35)

During the 18 and 19th century this conception became compromised. The historian Magnus Ressel elaborates on this change of attitude in his article ‘Conflicts between Early Modern European States about rescuing their own subjects from Barbary captivity.’ Ressel states that ‘It is in the last 20 years of the first half of the 18th century that the liberty of Protestants from slavery became regarded as an absolute and unquestionable right, a human right after which every other right of states had to be put in second place.’[[36]](#footnote-36) Before 1730 sailors who sailed on a ship of a friendly state would be left out when the state tried to ransom its subjects. For example, when a Danish sailor would serve on a ship from Hamburg which got captured by corsairs, the city of Hamburg would ransom its own subjects from the ship, but leave the Danish behind. This was only the case for the important people on the ship, for ‘normal’ crewmembers would oftentimes be left behind anyhow. After the mid to late-18th century this practice virtually ceased to exist. From then on the rights of individuals were put before the sovereignty of individual states and their treaties. To explain this profound change in attitude Ressel refers to the concept of ‘imagined empathy’ as coined by the historian Lynn Hunt. Imagined empathy is defined as ‘(…) imagining that someone else is like you (…).’[[37]](#footnote-37) According to Hunt, novels and accounts of torture and slavery were the driving forces behind the growing sense of empathy in the European States. They reinforced the notion of a community existing of autonomous empathetic individuals who could relate beyond their family or nation.[[38]](#footnote-38) This change in attitude deeply affected the slave trade in the Mediterranean Sea. The enslavement of citizens of state was no longer considered an acceptable practice.



Martinus Schouman, Bombardment of Algiers in 1816, (1823).

The transition can be highlighted by looking at a statement made by the English admiral Sidney Smith in 1814: ‘The Algerian privateering is morally reprehensible, a brake on progress, and Europe has a duty to take to the fate of the white slaves’[[39]](#footnote-39) Smith’s plea was published in the Netherlands and its view was echoed and taken up, inter alia by the influential French writer and politician Chateaubriand. In the wake of the Napoleonic wars Smith and Chateaubriand urged the European statesmen at the Congress of Vienna to abolish slavery. Although this request was not granted they did manage to exert influence on the British government. In 1816 a fleet of twenty frigates under the command of Admiral Lord Exmouth was send to Algiers. Together with six frigates under the command of the Dutch vice- admiral Frederik van Capellen the English negotiated the release of European slaves and an end to the enslavement of European subjects.[[40]](#footnote-40) When the negotiations failed to accomplish anything they bombarded the city. Almost the entire fleet of Algiers got destroyed and it would never be able to recover thereafter.[[41]](#footnote-41) After the bombardment, over 1000 slaves were set free. One of these slaves was Gerrit Metzon.

We started this chapter with asking ourselves how Metzon’s tale can be related to broader historical change. In answer we can conclude that Metzon’s captivity happened during a period in which the European perception on the enslavement of their citizens changed drastically. The second half of the eighteenth century saw an observable growth of human rights, and the captivation of Christians was no longer considered a tolerable custom. According to Hunt this was partly due to accounts of torture and slavery likes Metzon’s. This proves that a seemingly peripheral issue like the enslavement of Christians in Algiers relates to a much larger historical change in perception.

## 3.2 The end of the Barbary Corsairs.

Another important historical change is highlighted by Metzon’s story; the shifting balance of power in favour of Europe. The bombardment of Algiers by the Anglo-Dutch fleet was the culminating point in a story of several hundred years of strife between Europe and the Barbary Coast. Although their power had gradually eroded over the past century, the years before 1816 had still been good for the corsairs. However, the winds of fortune were about to change direction permanently and at the start of the nineteenth century the golden age of piracy was all but over.

Since the eighteenth century the Islamic world had been in steady decline while the European countries and especially England had been gaining ever more momentum.[[42]](#footnote-42) After the congress of Vienna the English were left in charge of Malta and the Ionian Islands which further strengthened their power in the Mediterranean Sea. This did not trouble the Algerians since they had been at peace with the English before and expected a continuation of the old situation; peace with England and France, and war or a paid-for-peace with other states. They were dearly mistaken. In 1815 the Americans had enforced peace with Algiers by killing the legendary corsair Hamidu and capturing several Algerian ships. The English and Dutch were disgruntled. They wouldn’t accept that the Americans had received preferential treatment over them. The Dutch government wanted peace without payment, and an end to the enslavement of Europeans. The English, ever since admiral Smith had made his statement, were much of the same mind. Henceforth they wanted Europeans who had fallen into the hands of Algiers to be treated as prisoners of war, effectively entailing that no payment should be made to set them free when peace would come. They also wanted Algiers to enforce peace with the Dutch.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Metzon was an eye-witness of the overwhelming power of the Anglo-Dutch fleet over Algiers. Improvements in the rigging of ships and the introduction of heavy mortars had rendered the oared galleys and cannon boats of the corsairs all but obsolete.[[44]](#footnote-44) Metzon writes how he and his fellow slaves heard a fierce cannonade from three o’clock in the afternoon till eleven o’clock in the evening.[[45]](#footnote-45) Within this time an astonishing amount of round shots and shells rained down on Algiers. It is estimated that the English alone fired around 40,000 of them.[[46]](#footnote-46) By utilizing their superior naval strength, the English and Dutch managed to force their conditions upon Algiers, enforcing their status as members of a continent that would dominate the world in the century to come. When Algeria in 1830 was invaded by 37.000 French soldiers their power was permanently broken.

Metzon’s story therefore relates to a crucial event in the history of Europe and the Mediterranean, the gradual shift in power from Algiers to Europe. In the past Algiers had always managed to keep piracy alive by cleverly siding with some, and defying others. Now they couldn’t longer keep up with the superior technology of their foes. The shells which rained down on Algiers heralded the beginning of a new era, and the Dutch ship captain Gerrit Metzon witnessed it all.

# Conclusion.

This inquiry started off with asking how Gerrit Metzon’s tale of captivity in Algiers can be related to the broader changes in power relations between Europe and Algiers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. To provide some necessary historical background to the story we first looked at the underlying motives for the Algerians to resort to privateering on such a large scale. Here we concluded that a lack of normal trade, personal motivations, a harsh climate for agriculture and the temptation of easy money all played their part. We also highlighted the role of Algiers as a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire which effectively included it in the struggle for power between empires.

In the second chapter we provided information about Gerrit Metzon and looked at the relation between Metzon’s narrative and the European conceptions on the Algerian corsairs. What stood out here was the similarity between them. Europe’s fear of another world, another culture and religion, was seen to be reflected in Metzon’s descriptions of the ‘Turks’. Metzon’s account of captivity therefore provided us with a personalized description of the religious challenges that non-Europeans and non-Christians posed to early modern Europe at large.

In the first part of the third chapter we looked at how Metzon’s tale fits in with the changing perceptions on privateering and the enslavement of -Christian- Europeans. Here we noticed that the Medieval outlook on privateering was characterized by indifference towards the enslavement of citizens of state, and that each state, if they took responsibility at all, only did so for its own subjects. During the eighteenth and nineteenth century this notion came under pressure. By referring to the concept of imagined empathy an explanation was given as to how novels and accounts of torture or slavery like Metzon’s connect a seemingly peripheral issue like the enslavement of Europeans in Algiers to a much larger change in perception on the acceptability of privateering and the rights of European citizens.

The second part of the third chapter showed how Metzon witnessed a crucial event that highlighted the shift in power from Algiers to Europe. Here we saw how Algiers could no longer keep up with power of the European states and how Metzon was a witness to this.

When we put together the puzzle an answer to our question is provided. First of all, the religious rhetoric in Metzon’s narrative reflects the religious challenges that Algiers posed to Europe. Secondly we saw how stories like Metzon’s fueled a changing perception on the moral acceptability of the enslavement of European citizens and thus how accounts like Metzon’s played an important role in the changing attitude of the Europeans towards the Algerian privateering. Lastly we saw how Metzon’s freedom was attained by a display of the overwhelming power of –mostly- the British fleet. This highlighted the definitive change in the balance of power between Europe and Algiers. The golden age of piracy was over and soon Algeria would lose its autonomy to the French.

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