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THE INNER CIRCLE:  
SOME ASPECTS OF THE CITY OF ALGIERS  
AND ITS ROLE IN PRE-COLONIAL ALGERIA

by

Barry E. N. Reid

B.A. (Hons.), Simon Fraser University, 1971

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS  
in the Department  
of  
History

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December 1984

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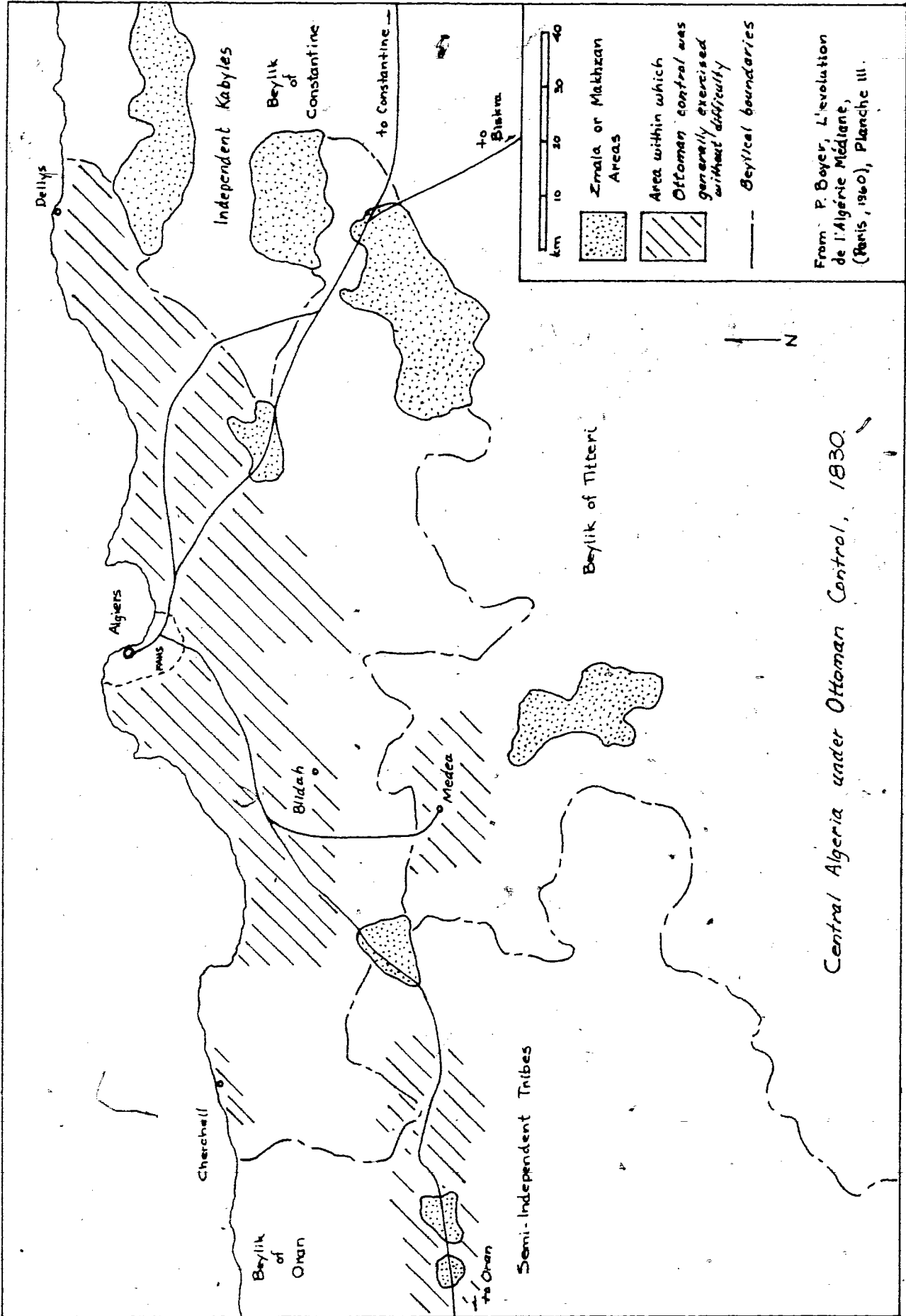
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## ABSTRACT

Until the 1960's most studies of pre-colonial Algiers were based on preconceptions established as a result of the French Conquest of 1830. The eighteenth century city was portrayed as suffering from political anarchy, social chaos, and overall economic distress; it was considered to have been rescued from these conditions by the French occupation. This picture of Algiers requires a considerable amount of modification in the light of recent historical research which shows that the people of Algiers found their city to be a viable urban unit. If history is to reflect reality, then new interpretations must be produced from the available data and re-evaluations of older studies must be presented without the overwhelming European bias which has coloured earlier scholarship. Thus, aspects of life in and around Algiers need to be re-examined in order to build a more satisfactory picture of the pre-colonial city during the half-century preceding the Conquest. Algiers was a viable political entity with a high degree of social cohesion and a sound economic base. The city was not simply a haven for pirates and an establishment dedicated to enslaving Christians; it was developing an identity based on its connections with the Muslim world, its location within the Mediterranean region, and its relationships with the rest of North Africa.

This study focuses on pre-colonial Algiers from 1780 to 1830, and presents the city as an independent, developing urban region, with some difficulties which were in the process of being resolved when the Conquest occurred. Algiers was much more like other Mediterranean Islamic towns than like the decaying, oligarchic mosaic portrayed in the literature of the past.

The major sources for this study include recent works by North African and French specialists, earlier French historical literature, relevant new studies in English on North Africa, and selected British Foreign Office material. The major contribution of this thesis rests with its re-interpretation of standard materials and its integration of early literature with the new perspective provided by recent scholarship.



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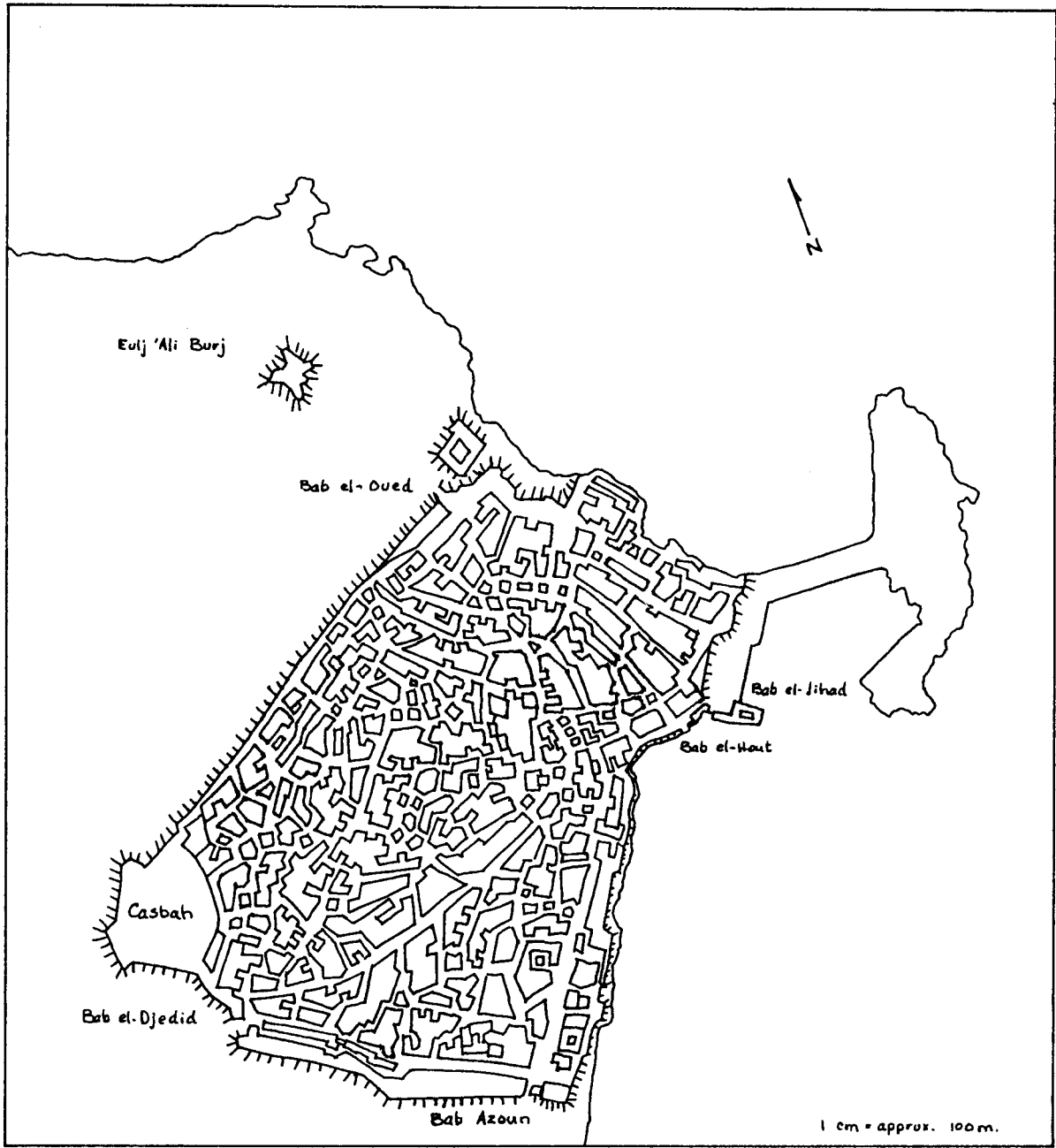
Zmala or Makhzan Areas

Area within which Ottoman control was generally exercised without difficulty

Beylical boundaries

From: P. Boyer, L'évolution de l'Algérie Médiane, (Paris, 1960), Planché III.

Central Algeria under Ottoman Control, 1830.



Ottoman Algiers

From Charles A. Julien, History of North Africa (London, 1970), p. 289.



## GLOSSARY OF OTTOMAN ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

- Agha Ottoman dignitary; in the Divan at Algiers, a minister responsible for administering the military affairs outside of the fahs.
- Amin Local dignitary within the various harah (quarters) or person in charge of a specific corporation; an urban notable.
- Beit el-maldji Dignitary responsible for filling vacant positions within the administrative hierarchy.
- Bey Ottoman administrative head of a beylik (province), appointed by the dey.
- Cadi A Muslim judge involved with civil law and usual religious practices.
- Caid An administrative officer within the lower level bureaucracy; in the hierarchy, between an amin and khodja.
- Dey Ottoman governor of Algiers; generally selected from within the Algiers administrative system.
- "Gardien-bashi" Captain of the port.
- Khalifa Administrator within the beylik, under the bey.
- Khaznadar Treasurer; second position in the Divan.
- Khodja Deputy ministers responsible for carrying out the decisions made within the Divan. There were at least six Khodjas on the Divan.
- Khodja el-Kheil Receiver-general of taxes and tribute.
- Mufti "Jurisconsultant" entitled to interpret and expound Islamic law. There were two within the Divan at Algiers.
- Muhtasib Local officer responsible for the orderly operation of corporations, markets, and other services.
- Nakib el-ashraf Member of the Divan in charge of habous and related topics.
- Oukil el-Khardj Representative of the marine interests on the Divan.

- Pasha Ottoman term denoting person of high rank. In early Ottoman Algiers, the equivalent of the dey, appointed by the Porte.
- Rakamdji Accountants.
- Sheikh Respected, even venerated man, selected as the chief of a tribe or brotherhood.

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## INTRODUCTION

Several relatively independent city-states developed along the North African littoral during the years prior to the European expansion of the mid-nineteenth century. These city-states were unique urban conglomerations with networks of social, political, and economic relationships which tied them to the Islamic world, the Mediterranean world, and the North African hinterland. One of the most distinctive of these sea-port cities was Algiers, a political centre in the Maghrib which was also an important factor in Mediterranean trade, and an intense, colourful complex of social and cultural patterns. Algiers was not a capital city in the modern nationalistic sense, but it did exert an influence which seemed to transcend its size and rather limited power in many areas. In the half-century before the French conquest, the city had its patterns of urban relationships disrupted by diverse phenomena, yet it continued its development because of the "network of interrelationships which held together the segments of medieval Islamic urban society," while at the same time the city went through several "periods of social and institutional transition."<sup>1</sup> These characteristics make Algiers a fascinating subject for historical analysis because of its position

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1. W. L. Cleveland, "The Municipal Council of Tunis, 1858-1870: A Study in Urban Institutional Change," International Journal of Middle East Studies, IX (1978), p. 33.

in time and space, its cultural diversity, and its specific methods of dealing with change. Cities, such as Algiers, also provide students with parameters which are reasonably defined. This is not intended to imply that cities are more satisfactory fields for study than nations, individuals, or civilizations, nor is there an intention to overstate the importance of city dwellers. However, as Elbaki Hermassi has observed in his conceptual model of North African society, the city does form an essential part of the whole, and it is necessary to understand the individual parts before attempting to understand the sum of the parts.<sup>2</sup> This study, therefore, will focus on Algiers during the last years of its political independence from Europe, that is, from the 1780's to 1830.

A student of urban history has many obstacles to overcome even though the subject may appear to be delimited in time and space. He

must learn from the geographers the factors of site and situation and the general morphology of the city as it stands. Next he must take possession of whatever the political, economic, industrial and social historians can give him. After that, he must master the whole corpus of topographical material - not only maps, but prints, drawings, photographs and descriptions of lost buildings. Last, he must know the city . . . .<sup>3</sup>

This is an immense task, and it is not the intention of this study

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2. Hermassi's model of North African society involves three concentric circles: the inner circle represents the political and social centres, the cities; the second circle represents the Makhzan tribes (those who are subject to the control of the inner circle); the third circle stands for the tribes which choose not to give allegiance to the political order - "the dissident and semi-dissident tribes." See Leadership and National Development in North Africa, (Berkeley, 1972), pp. 8-9.
  3. Sir John Summerson, "The City as Artifact," in The Historian and the City, ed. by Oscar Handlin and John Burchard (Cambridge, 1966), p. 165.

to satisfy all the demands noted above. Indeed, the existing state of historical and geographical research on pre-colonial Algiers is so emaciated that Summerson's requirements will not likely be met for some time. It is the intention of this study to examine previous research on pre-colonial Algiers, to suggest the errors and misconceptions of that research, and to offer new interpretations of the life of the city and its relationship to its hinterland based on a re-evaluation of the sources.

A brief review of the existing literature will reveal the justification for this paper. In 1976, William Spencer overviewed three hundred years of Algier's history, concentrating on some relatively minor aspects: the role of piracy in the development of the city; and the importance of Europe, without considering the available evidence which shows that neither Europe nor pirates played a continuous, significant role in the city.<sup>4</sup> Other recently published studies continue to restate historiographical approaches which have been criticized by North African specialists for their narrowness in outlook and their lack of focus on important internal issues.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the initial problem which arises when attempting to write a history of a precolonial North African city concerns the materials which are available for use. Most of the scholarship is French both in language and outlook, and many of the studies are

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4. William Spencer, Algiers in the Age of the Corsairs (Norman, 1976).

5. See, for example, John B. Wolf, The Barbary Coast (New York, 1979). For other comments on recent scholarship see Michael Brett, "Problems in the Interpretation of the History of the Maghrib in the Light of Some Recent Publications," Journal of African History, XIII, 3 (1972), pp. 489-506; and Edmund Burke III, "Towards a History of the Maghrib," Middle Eastern Studies, XI, 3 (1975), pp. 306-323.

not well documented. For example, in Boyer's La vie quotidienne à Alger, a valuable monograph for students of this period, he writes in a conversational style which helps to facilitate understanding, but he keeps his specific sources a secret.<sup>6</sup> We are forced to rely on his reputation as a historian. In John Wolf's The Barbary Coast and in Spencer, we have the same problem to some extent: reference is made to archival research - British, French, and Ottoman - but there is little evidence to suggest that these sources were used in formulating the hypotheses found in the texts. In any case, these archives may not be the best places to look for evidence regarding North African society.

European archives generally present the researcher with perspectives which need to be avoided if accurate presentation of non-European countries is an objective. As Lucette Valensi has written, Consuls

were restricted to the cities in which they lived, travelled only rarely, and were preoccupied with their duties . . . . Few of them spoke Arabic . . . . They were never permitted to enter the homes of the city . . . . They were as uninformed about the day-to-day urban life as they were about the peasantry.<sup>7</sup>

Fortunately, this was not always the case. When the British Consuls at Algiers wrote of their experiences, their letters were not even touched with the sights, sounds and smells of the city, but only with the dry, dusty prose of Foreign Office jargon. Consuls wrote to inform bureaucrats, not historians. Nevertheless, apart from the social and cultural aspects, it is still possible to glean bits of relevant information and insight

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6. Pierre Boyer, La vie quotidienne à Alger à la veille de l'intervention Française (Paris, 1963).

7. Lucette Valensi, On the Eve of Colonialism (New York, 1977), p. xxiii.

from some of these documents.<sup>8</sup> For example, Consular papers can help to verify dates and personalities, as well as give us some idea of economic concerns and the effect of Europe and European ideas on Algiers. A specific example concerning the exportation of grain to Europe may serve to illustrate this point. Several observers have noted that the Dey (ruler) of Algiers held a personal monopoly on this commerce. However, we get a slightly different view on this subject from a British consul, Charles Logie, who writes:

From the prospects of the crops this year, there will remain a greater quantity than the last for exportation, but no contracts are permitted before the different provinces make a return to the Dey and Diwan of the quantities collected, that a judgement may be formed of the quantity they will grant License to export, after leaving sufficient for home consumption.<sup>9</sup>

This statement indicates that the "monopoly" was not simply a means to provide revenue for the Dey, but that the administration of the city was also concerned with providing sufficient food for its citizens. Thus, there is an evident need for a considerable amount of research into pre-colonial Algeria so that an "acceptable foundation of factual statement [including] some measure of continuity with the modern period . . . . be established."<sup>10</sup>

This points to another problem which confronts students of Algerian history: the concentration of scholarly effort on the colonial

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8. The British perspective is found in the Public Record Office (London). See Series FO 3, which is a file of correspondence between the various consuls at Algiers and the Secretary of State for the South (later, the Foreign Office) from 1760 until the 1830's.
  9. FO 3/7, Charles Logie to W. W. Grenville, 27 April 1790.
  10. Brett, "Problems," p. 492.



and national periods, a concentration which has impeded the development of a coherent history of Algeria.<sup>11</sup> This trend has not been totally negative because it has caused intensive and informative debate between the various "schools" of writers and their interpretations of evidence. In the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century in France, where most research concerned with Algeria was centered, the most prevalent historiographical approach could be termed "colonial apologist." The objective of this approach was to promote the idea that pre-colonial Algeria was in a state of near anarchy and almost complete chaos, a situation well suited to "la mission civilatrice." Later, a "revisionist" or "reconstructionist" school appeared which was divided into two main groups: those who were oriented towards a Marxist interpretation of history, with its emphasis on class struggle, mode of production, economic problems, and a dialectical approach; and those who were more nationalistic in outlook.<sup>12</sup> Of course, at times these schools were neither separate nor distinct, but their main idea - that there was a need to "decolonize"

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11. The recently published histories by Abdallah Laroui (The History of the Maghrib, Princeton, 1977) and Jamil M. Abun-Nasr (A History of the Maghrib, Cambridge, 1975) are welcome additions to the English oriented audience which had only Charles-André Julien's History of North Africa (London, 1970) to rely on before their publication.
  12. See D.C. Gordon in Self-determination and History in the Third World (Princeton, 1971), who outlines three historiographical approaches to third world history. The "futurists" are those who attempt to underplay the role of history in the development of nations and national character. The "apologists" are those who tend to negate the role of the west - the colonizers - relying on their pre-colonial history to provide them with models as they strive to develop their identity. The final group, the "reconstructionalists," are those who attempt to revive the past, "but who at the same time realize . . . the inadequacies of this past in face of the challenges of modernity." (p. 50)

Algerian history - was a constant theme in their scholarship.<sup>13</sup>

Part of this decolonization must be a re-examination of the pre-colonial period in order to get away from the constant reiteration of the "fact that the period of Ottoman Algeria still is mainly one of Turks, pirates, Spanish and French, still largely external and elitist."<sup>14</sup> As Kenneth Perkins has observed: "To argue that colonialism altered essential patterns of life in the Maghrib is pointless, even if true, unless substantial evidence can be produced to illustrate conditions in the precolonial Maghrib."<sup>15</sup>

Other problems relative to sources are discussed by A.A. Heggoy and Edmund Burke III.<sup>16</sup> Both authors note the role which oral traditions played in the sense of history felt and understood by pre-colonial Algerians, and both regret the loss of a great deal of this important data due to the differing cultural traditions of west and east with regard to the place of oral history in the academic world.

Robert Mantran in L'Annuaire de l'Afrique du nord chastizes historians for concentrating on classical and modern studies and for neglecting the Ottoman period in Maghribi history. He observes that there are volumes of documents relative to "des revenus des deys, des

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13. See John Wansbrough, "The Decolonization of North African History," Journal of African History, IX, 4 (1968), pp. 643-650.
  14. Peter Gran, "On Modern Maghribi History," Revue d'Histoire Maghrebine, nos. 13-14 (1979), p.58.
  15. K.J. Perkins, Foreword in Lucette Valensi, On the Eve of Colonialism, p. ix.
  16. A.A. Heggoy, "The Sources for Nineteenth-Century Algerian History: A Critical Essay," Muslim World, LXIV, 4 (1964), pp. 292-299; and Edmund Burke III, "Towards a History of the Maghrib," Middle Eastern Studies, XI, 3 (1975), pp. 306-323.

impôts payées par les tribus, des biens des fondations pieuses (habous) de la Mekke et de Medine à Alger, des taxes auxquelles étaient soumis les Juifs, du recrutement des Janissaires, (et) de la course . . . ." 17

Mantran goes on to argue that orientalists capable of reading Arabic or Ottoman Turkish must begin to translate and record the contents of these archives so that this information can be utilized by other historians and social scientists interested in obtaining an understanding of North Africa's recent past. Unfortunately, even though this article was written more than twenty years ago, there has not been much response to Mantran's suggestions, and we are still relying, for the most part, on European documents and interpretations.

Abdallah Laroui carries on this criticism in his The History of the Maghrib. He reviews the cyclical nature of western scholarship on North Africa, with one study making reference to another; ideas being "verified" by unproven or poorly researched hypotheses offered by students who have picked up an interpretation in someone else's study; and then, further significance given to the previous studies by these repeated references to them. "The consequence is a conspiracy which puts the most adventurous hypotheses into circulation and ultimately imposes them as established truth." 18

The student or researcher who does not have a working knowledge of either Arabic or Ottoman Turkish is faced with a dilemma: does he continue to build hypotheses which may in the future be seen as faulty?

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17. Robert Mantran, "Les données de l'histoire moderne et contemporaine de l'Algérie et de la Tunisie," Annuaire de l'Afrique du nord, (1962), p.247.

18. Laroui, History, p.3.

Does he take up a study of a region in which no further language study is necessary? Or, does he take the evidence at his disposal, temper it with sources which utilize the available contemporary materials, and then evaluate it with the knowledge that very few conclusions are ever immutable? Of course, the obvious goal should be to become familiar with the languages relevant to scholarship, but the process of historical investigation need not stop simply because that has not yet been achieved. It is important that informed hypotheses be put before the intellectual community in order to better progress towards the common goals of understanding and awareness.

The final problem to be addressed at this point is one of classification. Where does Algiers fit in the continuum of urban studies? How is it similar to or different from other cities? The first and perhaps most important point is that Algiers was a part of the Muslim world. It was an Islamic city and such it held certain features in common with other cities of the Islamic world: mosques, markets, casbah, walls and quarters, to list just a few. Thus it is important to investigate the literature related to Islamic cities and to place Algiers in the context of urban studies generally. Obviously, a comparative study is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is essential to indicate the areas of similarity and difference between other cultural regions and Algiers.

Cities have long been a source of curiosity, inspiration, and debate for historians. The literature is extensive, and ranges from broadly theoretical to intensely specific, from studies on the

origins and meanings of urban areas and urbanization, to case studies of individual towns and cities or aspects of towns and cities. From this vast expanse of literature there emerge many important ideas and impressions, not the least of which is the concept of the city as an entity with a "personality," an identity. As Oscar Handlin has observed concerning medieval and pre-industrial cities: "(these) earlier communities possessed an individual life of their own in a sense that their modern successors do not."<sup>19</sup> However, sometimes there are difficulties in discovering the sources of a city's identity. Gideon Sjoberg has observed that:

Certain aspects of [the city dwellers] life-ways lie forever beyond our grasp. The only reasonable alternative is extrapolation to the past from data on more recent . . . cities, utilizing in the process, recent advances in the social scientist's knowledge of social systems.<sup>20</sup>

Fortunately, there are also many similarities between various cities within the Islamic cultural realm, and it is possible to compare and contrast Algiers with cities such as Fes, Salé, or Tunis, cities on which much more research has been done.

Recent literature on Islamic towns presents us with a pattern which is relatively consistent. First, there were few - if any - municipal institutions, such as councils, corporations or codes.<sup>21</sup> However, this statement must be qualified with the understanding that there were varieties of checks, balances, and patterns which did not conform to

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19. Oscar Handlin, ed., The Historian and the City, p.2.

20. Gideon Sjoberg, The Preindustrial City (New York, 1960), p.333.

21. S.M. Stern, "The Constitution of the Islamic City," in The Islamic City, ed. by A.H. Hourani and S.M. Stern (Oxford, 1970), p.26.

the western concepts of "municipal institutions," but which existed in different forms in the Islamic cities. Second, the basic unit of the town was the family, which resided in an inward-looking house, separate from the commercial and manufacturing world. Each family lived within a quarter (harah) - a region of cultural, ethnic, or tribal affiliation - inside the walls of the city. There is evidence which suggests that quarters were not delimited by economic or social status and that some quarters could be secured from the rest of the city during times of unrest or disruption by doors or gates.<sup>22</sup> Each quarter was almost self-contained and self-reliant: there could be a local mosque, small markets (suweqahs), schools (medrasas), baths (hammams), and even small workshops.<sup>23</sup> Third, economic organization was based on a relatively free-market system of trade, manufacturing, and commerce which was not monopolistic as European medieval systems were, but which had systems of control in which the central authority of the city retained a great degree of economic power.<sup>24</sup> Fourth, the central authority was based on a form of social contract in which the rulers found it necessary to pay attention to the needs and wishes of the governed, and while there were few institutions designed to ensure that this relationship was maintained, there was a general attitude among the various urban groups which aided in the

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22. A.A. Ismail, "Origin, ideology and physical patterns of Arab Urbanization," Ekistics, XXXIII, 195 (1972), p. 116.

23. G.E. von Grunebaum, "The Structure of the Muslim Town," in Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition (London, 1955), p. 147; and Ismail, "Origin," p. 117.

24. G.E. von Grunebaum, "Structure of the Muslim Town," pp. 150-151.

fulfilling of the "contract."<sup>25</sup> Fifth, Islamic cities were not "unique, bounded, or self contained institutions" which existed without both positive and negative relationships with their hinterland. It was also necessary for them to exist in the wider world - the world outside of Islam - to some extent.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the major influence which prevailed over the city, its hinterland, its internal and external relationships, and its culture was Islam. Almost every observer of Islamic societies has noted that not only was Islam an urban religion, but also that "l'Islam a besoin des cités," that "chaque ville est avant tout une citadelle de la foi."<sup>27</sup> On an individual basis, "to the Muslim, a town was a settlement in which his religious duties and his social ideas could be completely fulfilled."<sup>28</sup> The cement which held the city and its hinterland together, the municipal institution which existed where there were no municipal institutions, was Islam.

This study will attempt to explain how Algiers, in a given half-century, fits into the structural framework of the Islamic city. It will also evaluate and analyze the social, political, and economic facets of the city in order to demonstrate that with a perspective which allows for consideration of Algeria and Algiers as viable entities before the arrival of Europe, it is possible to come to conclusions

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25. A.H. Hourani notes: "More generally, the ruler and his subordinates could not lightly ignore the wishes of those groups in the city with which their interests were bound up." "The Islamic City in the light of recent Research," The Islamic City, p. 19.
26. I.M. Lapidus, "Muslim Cities and Islamic Societies," Middle Eastern Cities, ed. by I.M. Lapidus (Berkeley, 1969), p. 73.
27. G. Marçais, "La conception des villes dans l'Islam," Revue d'Alger, 2 (1954-55), pp. 524-525.
28. G.E. von Grunebaum, "Structure of the Muslim Town," p. 142.

which are quite different from much of what is extant in current scholarship. It is evident that, because of the destruction of most of the physical city as it was during the pre-colonial period, it is difficult to determine specific locations, precise numbers, and exact names or descriptions. Nevertheless, it is both necessary and possible to hypothesize about certain important aspects of the city and its role because of the comments and observations of early writers and the work of other historians and social scientists. The major deficiency has already been noted: the lack of a contemporary native Muslim observer who recorded the scene as he saw it. There is no Algerian representative of the Bin Diyaf school of political and social observation. We are without the services of a competent reporter, without an adequate synchronal description of the city, its functions, and its functionaries.

Algiers was not a city full of blood-thirsty pirates, neither was it a North African garden of plenty and prosperity. Algiers was a city with its own identity, based on many factors: its function as a port; its style of government; its cultural mix; its situation on the Mediterranean coast; its site; its relationships with Europe, the Middle East, and its own territories; its Islamic heritage; and other variable qualifiers. Thus, the real Algiers will not be understood simply in the context of its ruling classes, its corsairs, or its European connections. It will be the history of all components of the city which will eventually provide us with a more balanced picture of life in Algiers before the Conquest. It is necessary to attempt to provide an analysis



of pre-colonial Algiers in order to be able to observe the areas where further primary research is essential and to show where re-interpretation of currently published data may result in new directions.

## CHAPTER I

## A HISTORICAL OUTLINE

It is apparent that the character of a city is a result of several constant, inter-related factors including site, climate, culture, and situation. One of the most influential determinants of civic style and form is history. Since any city is a product of its past, it is essential to establish the historical pattern which leads from the past to the period under study. Some aspects of a city's future are evident from very early formations and these structures tend to lock a city into certain patterns. For example, the layout of Algiers has been described by some writers as a "crossbow aimed at the heart of Europe" or "a bent bow, perhaps an appropriate symbol for an Ottoman forward base pointed towards Christian lands."<sup>1</sup> Regardless of this rhetoric, the "shape" of the city bears no real relationship to its purpose; the layout of Algiers was established long before Europe was the "enemy," a result of Roman, not Islamic influence. Thus an understanding of Algiers' past is important for understanding its total urban environment at the turn of the nineteenth century.

In antiquity Icosium, the most likely original name of Algiers, was a small, unassuming place where Punic sailors from Carthage and

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1. Spencer, Algiers, p. 29

other large centres pulled their boats onto shore during the frequent storms in the area.<sup>2</sup> During these stops it is probably that the Phoenicians traded with the local people - olives, dates, and hides - in exchange for the more luxurious goods of more developed Mediterranean cities. Fresh water was also always available there, as well as other agricultural products from the hinterland. After the fall of Carthage, as Roman influence expanded throughout Africa, the town became a colony of Rome, whose role was to provide the capital with as much grain as possible. Even at this early date, the city's future layout was evident: the triangular shape with the fortress at the apex; the major street patterns; and the port location, were all fixed from Roman times.<sup>3</sup> With the decline of Roman power, North Africa was left to the Berber tribes who had to contend with both occasional Vandal invasions and efforts by the Byzantines to establish hegemony over Ifriqiya, which they claimed as part of their empire. Over all these years there is little evidence to suggest that the city ever attained anything higher than a mediocre reputation: the port was too small and open to wind and waves to be of much consistent use, especially when other ports such as Bougie, Anaba, and Oran gave more secure anchorage to larger fleets.

Very little information about Algiers is available from the medieval years either. The city changed hands frequently during the Islamic invasions, being taken first by one group, then by others -

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2. Evidence of Punic trading from the first and second centuries B.C. has been uncovered in Algiers. See Paul MacKendrick, The North African Stones Speak (Chapel Hill, 1980), p. 186.
  3. René Lespès, Alger. Étude de géographie et d'histoire urbaines (Paris, 1930), pp. 99-100.

Arabs following Berbers, Almoravids, Almohads, and then further Berbers and Arabs - with very little continuity or stability. During this same period Algiers was described by Ibn Haukal as a city with many bazaars which exported honey, butter, figs and other fruits to several Mediterranean ports.<sup>4</sup> He also noted that the harbour had been improved but gave no indication of where the changes had been made.<sup>5</sup>

Ibn Khaldun ranked Algiers in the "third order" of urban areas: Fes being his "first order" type; Bougie, Tlemcen and Ceuta representing "second order" cities; Oran and Algiers in the third section; with the continuum extending to those places which "cannot be considered cities . . . (which) belong to the category of villages and hamlets."<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, Algiers exhibited all the characteristics necessary for the development of a strong, urban centre except for one major deficiency: the strong central government necessary for the establishment of personal

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4. Ibn Haukal was a tenth century Arab traveller and geographer who was familiar with Spain, North Africa, and the Sahara. He was both a missionary of Islam and a merchant who recorded his impressions of economic concerns, especially the production of manufactured and agricultural goods. A. Miguel, in the Encyclopaedia of Islam (Vol. 3, New Edition (Leiden, 1971), p. 787), notes that Haukal's "constant care to depict a region precisely in the state and at the date that he himself had seen it . . . give to his text . . . undoubted value for the historian."
  5. Cited in Lespès, Alger, pp. 100-101.
  6. Ibn Khaldun, The Muqaddimah, trans. by F. Rosenthal (Princeton, 1967), p. 274. Ibn Khaldun lists the conditions necessary for "sedentary civilization" as climate and geographic conditions; constant re-population; secure situation; wholesome air; ample fresh water; suitable agricultural areas close to the city; sources of fuel; proximity to the sea in order to facilitate trade; a unified spiritual establishment; a reasonably profitable and secure business climate; a wide variety of crafts and skills; and the "existence of group feeling." Over all these characteristics he notes the necessity of a dynastic authority, capable of long term planning and continued direction to the city and its citizens. See pp. 263-295.

security and economic stability. Thus, throughout the medieval period in Algiers' history, the city never attained a very high level of advancement or importance in comparison with other North African cities. In fact,

. . . it is notable that Algiers - probably now the most familiar city name in Africa, except that of Cairo - designated in the Middle Ages a spot of very little consequence. Bougie, insignificant today, was then incomparably more important. 7

Algiers entered its most dynamic phase of development in the early sixteenth century. A.C. Hess notes that the city was on the frontier of two empires: the Ottoman and the Iberian, and as a result, once the city became a focal point, it remained a dominant feature of Mediterranean civilization for the next three hundred years - long after the conflict between the empires had ceased to be of current importance.<sup>8</sup>

In 1510 the conflict between the Ottoman and Spanish empires brought Pedro Navarro to Algiers. At this time the city was under the control of the Arab Tha'alibi tribe which, from the fourteenth century, had been manipulating the territory and people around Algiers by taking advantage of the diversity of cultures and tribes in this central Maghrib region. This diversity is a key to understanding the background of the city and the ability of its future rulers to maintain control over areas which were previously very difficult to control. In essence, pre-Turkish Algiers and its surrounding territory consisted of several factions: the original Berber inhabitants, subdivided into several

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7. G. Welch, North African Prelude (New York, 1949), p. 300.

8. The Forgotten Frontier (Chicago, 1978). Unlike the Turner hypothesis which assumed that the frontier was "the meeting point between savagery and civilization," Hess's frontier involves the conflict between civilizations of relatively equal sophistication which were based on extreme cultural opposites.

tribal groups; sedentary Arabs like the Tha'alibi; nomadic and semi-nomadic Arabs; and many other groups such as the Andalusians expelled from Granada after 1492, people from other small towns, blacks from central Africa, and so on.<sup>9</sup> In all, Hermassi has noted seventy-three different "ethnopolitical units" in the Algiers region in the pre-colonial period. He divides these units into four categories: Makhzan tribes, that is those who co-operated with the government of the day; subject tribes; semi-independent units; and the dissident groups.<sup>10</sup> The political sophistication required to function within the parameters set by this diversity would have been considerable.

When the frontier war came to Algiers in 1510 the diversity of the region was a reason for local cultural despair. However, underneath the fragmentation there was one unifying factor, Islam. When Islam was under siege, diversity and independence lost some of their importance - the frontier war was between Islam and Christianity - and as long as tribal or group independence was held to be more important than the feeling of identity with a larger cultural group (asabiyah) there was little hope of success against the Christian invaders. As Pedro Navarro took Mers-el-Kebir, Oran, and Bougie, then demanded tribute from Tenes, Dellys, Cherchell, and Mostaganem, it became obvious that

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9. The Andalusian (Morisco) population at Algiers amounted to about 60,000 by the end of the expulsions in 1609. Both Hess (Forgotten Frontier, p. 154) and E.G. Friedman ("North African Piracy," International History Review, I, 1 (1979), p. 11.) note that over 250,000 Moriscos were expelled from Spain. Friedman states that 60,000 settled in Algiers, forming a considerable cultural group whose role in the development of the city has never been examined.
10. Elbaki Hermassi, Leadership, p. 47.

Algiers was also in the line-up. Up to this point the city's low status had contributed to its defence, but when the Spanish forced the city to give them one of the small islands just three-hundred yards from the Marine Gate in order to build one of their presidios, the people of Algiers were forced to overcome their cultural diversity in favour of a unified response to this threat to their way of life. The response took the form of an invitation to Aruj and Kheir el-Din Barbarossa, two Ottoman privateering brothers who were busy in the western Mediterranean contributing to the frontier war effort against Spain. Up to this point their exploits had been daring but peripatetic, involving a guerrilla style naval warfare campaign against the coastal settlements of Spain. Their answer to the Tha'alibi request was a major turning point in Algiers' history, bringing the city into a much closer working relationship with the Ottoman Empire.

The saga of the Barbarossa brothers has been written and re-written many times since their ascendancy over Algiers between 1516 and 1529. It would be pointless to go over the details of the brothers' role in the establishment of Ottoman hegemony over Algiers. It should suffice to note that both brothers were competent sailors, administrators, builders, politicians, and periodically, soldiers as well. Aruj was eventually killed in a battle between Spanish and Algerian<sup>11</sup> forces near Tlemcen in 1518, while Kheir el-Din, as a result of his naval expertise

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11. "Algerian" will be used throughout to denote mixed groups of people who could hardly be called anything else. It is not intended to imply that there was or was not an Algerian "nationality," it is simply a term of convenience.

demonstrated in the west, was appointed commander of the Ottoman fleet in 1533.<sup>12</sup> In 1516, however, the Barbarossas and their small fleet of ships were the most powerful agents of the Ottoman Empire in the western Mediterranean, and they rapidly gained a reputation among the Muslim leaders in the coastal communities (who were slowly being overwhelmed by Spanish power) as the best hope for the future of Islam in North Africa. The construction by the Spanish of the Penon at Algiers and the subsequent forced payment of tribute to Spain by the city caused the leaders of the tribal groups at Algiers to negotiate with the Barbarossas: control and concessions in the city in exchange for the ejection of the Spanish. This task began in 1516 and was finally accomplished in 1529. The Penon, which had formerly controlled access by sea to the city was destroyed and the rubble was used to connect the four islands and then join the new island to the mainland with a causeway: the Mole of Algiers.

The Spanish attempted to overcome the Ottoman expansion by counter-attacking from Oran at Tlemcen, while Kheir el-Din countered with an envoy to the Sultan requesting "that the territories (they) had taken be included within the boundaries of the lands protected by the Ottoman Sultan."<sup>13</sup> The name of the Sultan became a part of the Friday prayers at Algiers, and coins were minted in his name also. In this way Algiers entered the first phase of Ottoman control in the central

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12. The most recent evaluation of the Barbarossa story is included in Hess, Forgotten Frontier, p. 61 ff.

13. Hess, Forgotten Frontier, p. 65.



Maghrib. This first stage set the pattern for future governments in Algiers, with its oligarchic style, its use of military power to maintain control, and its chauvinistically foreign attitude towards local groups and their leaders.

During this "beylical period" the Sultan appointed the bey from among those at his court. The bey would be sent to Algiers where he would take over political control of the city, relying on the major power groups for support. At this time there were two groups to consider: the taifa of the rais (the partially organized privateers and corsairs); and the janissary corps (odjak), who were Ottoman troops sent by the Porte to Algiers to aid in the frontier warfare being carried on from the city. At times the various factions at Algiers refused to recognize the authority of the Sultan's designate, and this also helped to establish future tendencies. Almost from the very beginning, Algiers began to establish its independence from the Porte. When the various factions at Algiers could not accept the authority of their designated ruler, they were not slow to make changes in the administration. One of the first examples of this aggressively independent spirit occurred in 1557 when the odjak assassinated the bey, Mehmet Pasha, with their intention being that their agha (leader) would take over the position and be recognized as bey by the Porte. They were only a little premature at this point.

The frontier period at Algiers existed throughout the sixteenth century, with Spain attempting to overcome the Ottoman influence in the western Mediterranean by implementing several attacks on Algiers. In 1530 the Spanish admiral Andrea Doria attacked, but was driven from

Algiers; Charles V mounted a large attack in 1541, coming close to success but eventually contributing to the idea which was becoming extant throughout parts of Europe - that Algiers was invincible. As Spain began to realize the futility of attempting to deal with Islam in Africa at the same time as she had to come to terms with other powers in Europe - especially France - the frontier period came to an end and the second stage of Algiers' development began: a period of change and consolidation combined with continued separation from the control of the Ottoman Empire.

To most observers the city attained its highest level of power and prestige in the seventeenth century. This was the period of Algiers' restricted renaissance, when the city was establishing its identity based on two important indigenous factors: the Ottoman nature of the ruling class; and the Islamic nature of the entire society. The other factor in this renaissance was the inability of Europe to respond to the growth of the city, and Algiers took advantage of this inability by expanding its attacks on European shipping wherever possible. Unfortunately, many observers have focused their attention on the secondary results of these changes: specifically, the piracy and slavery issues.<sup>14</sup> During this period the city's style of government was altered also, from the beylical to the more independent pashalic. The pashas after 1587 were appointed by the Porte for a three year term, and during the early years of this system the Regency government brought Algiers into a more mainstream position - into line with previously established Ottoman provincial policy. Algiers "ceased to be a bastion of the Turkish

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14. For example, John B. Wolf takes more than half of his book to discuss these two issues during the years 1600 to 1714.

Empire against the Spanish Empire: (it) became (an) ordinary province, only more remote."<sup>15</sup> As the rais and the odjak became more powerful their government came to control not only the city but also the surrounding territory which, in turn, allowed them to expand in economic and political terms. Under this system the city reached the zenith of its power and prestige.

In spite of rhetoric intended to downplay the positive role of the Turks at Algiers by most nineteenth and twentieth century colonial apologists, the Turkish period was to make Algiers one of the most important, feared, misunderstood, and secretive cities in the Mediterranean region. It was the Turkish influence which gave the city its monuments, its reputation, and its special atmosphere, and yet the Turks never really established more than a second-class city state with somewhat tenuous links to the interior. Their power base was originally linked to their use of the new "powder technology," but even when this advantage declined in importance their control continued. Their economy was based on trade, commerce, and the practice of privateering, yet even though there is substantial evidence to suggest that much of the profit was filtered through foreign middlemen, their civic economy did no worse than any other comparable Mediterranean city. The Turks used the diversity of "ethno-political units" to their own advantage, and in so doing they built a city based on a range of cross-cultural values which was out of step with the rest of the Muslim world. They produced no Khaldunian dynasties; only a little literature and monumental art; and the present

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15. Julien, History of North Africa, p. 302.

cultural leadership of Algeria hardly acknowledges their contribution to their society. Yet for three hundred years the Turks maintained their position and generally increased the quality of life, security, stability, and future prospects of the citizens of Algiers.

The city did not stay at its zenith for very long. As technology developed newer ships and weapons; as European states became more centralized and sophisticated in their response to smaller countries; as trade routes shifted with the discovery of new sources of supply; and as capitalism replaced the older economic orders in Europe, the role of cities like Algiers changed also. Instead of being a participant in the Mediterranean, the city became even more of an "outsider." Cut off from the rapidly developing northern states by cultural differences, the city was left on its own to adapt and respond to the larger changing world which increasingly exploited the region for whatever would supply Europe's avaricious demands. At the same time the lack of a wider perspective from within caused narrowness to increase; a regrettable but understandable result of cultural isolation. It has been noted, for example, that there was no printing press in all of Algiers before the Conquest, and this fact is usually intended to support the idea that the Algerians were somehow lacking in their desire for greater information. This is not the only interpretation of this data. Technologically, the printing press belonged to Europe, and there is no evidence to suggest that any Europeans attempted to bring the press to Algiers. In any case, a printing press operated by Europeans could hardly fill the needs of such a culturally diverse city as Algiers. It also would have put many of the elite

group of professional scribes out of work.

It is quite possible that the idea of the invincibility of Algiers, which began with the defeat of Charles V, was carried on in the eighteenth century not so much by reality as by lack of interest on the part of Europe. The city was not significant enough to warrant a major attack by any European power, yet it was significant enough as a secondary trading centre and as a depot for European navies operating in the Mediterranean - where food, water, and other provisions were generally available - to allow the city to maintain its role.

Algiers' third and final pre-Conquest phase therefore, was one of apparent decline when compared with the growth and development of many other Mediterranean towns. Nevertheless, there is much more to "decline" than appearances as seen from Europe. Many earlier authorities on Algerian society seem to have been basing their histories on the premise that continued progress was not only a sign of advanced civilization, but also providential reward for services rendered. Thus, the "decline" of Algiers was an indication that the city's era had run its course; that the age of progress was about to overtake Africa. Unfortunately these ideas do not always stand up to careful scrutiny. It may be true that the city declined in some ways: if, for example, population is considered, there was a definite decline between the seventeenth century and the French invasion;<sup>16</sup> however the reasons for the decline in population have very little to do with the political or economic factors

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16. Lespès, Alger, p. 129, reports a decline from 100,000 in 1634 to about 30,000 in 1789. Valensi (On the Eve of Colonialism, p. 36) estimates the population of Algiers as approximately 50,000 in 1830. See Chapter 5 (below) for a more detailed discussion.

which early observers have stressed.

Several authors have observed that the size of the Algerian "fleet" declined as the nineteenth century began. This observation is also based on selected sources, and seems to have been presented in order to establish a pre-determined objective; that the Conquest "saved" the city from total economic collapse. There is evidence which contradicts this evaluation. André Devoulx notes that there were continuous changes in the size and quality of the Algerian fleet.<sup>17</sup> If a year is selected which has a low total number of ships, it may be possible to extrapolate far different conclusions from a year in which the number of vessels is greater. For example, in 1826 only three ships are listed, while in 1827, a total of sixteen ships are included. This only serves to illustrate the obvious: since the "navy" was essentially composed of prizes, the size of the fleet says more about the success or failure of "la course" than it does about the status of the city. The two aspects are not necessarily completely integrated.

Further, there are very few statistics available which would support the contention of economic decline - the evidence seems to be based on some relatively inaccurate observations. As was the case in most other Mediterranean cities, Algiers went through periods of difficulty and prosperity, but there does not seem to be any pattern which would indicate continuous, uniform deterioration of trading systems. The decline of Algiers seems actually to have been more hope on the part of European merchants than reality at Algiers. Yet, there were certainly

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17. "La Marine de la Régence d'Alger." Revue Africaine, No. 77, (1869), pp. 381-420.

some reasons for the city to feel somewhat overwhelmed by events beyond its control. In fact, it is quite accurate to state that the city must have had a stable administration and a secure economic foundation during the so called period of decline in order for the city to exist in strength as long as it did. Consider, for example, some of the natural and not so natural disasters which the city had to contend with in the half-century prior to its conquest.

Between 1784 and 1787 a series of devastating plagues ravaged the city. During these four years alone, almost 17,000 people died at Algiers.<sup>18</sup> It is almost impossible to comprehend the effect which this calamity had on the people of the city. Even in contemporary terms, the numbers are staggering, yet when we consider the problems which the plague must have caused in the various quarters, it once again becomes evident that the city must have had considerable resources for dealing with the difficulties. The logistics of care, collection, and disposal of corpses alone would have been a formidable task. Some observers would argue that the Algerians used slaves to take care of the problems, overlooking the fact that the lower city - where most of the slaves lived - was the area where the most devastating results of the epidemic were felt. At this same time, the Algerian fleet was reduced to ten relatively mediocre ships by 1788, and the Spanish were actively attempting to regain some of the territories on the coast, attacking Algiers - however ineffectively, in the summers of 1783 and 1784.<sup>19</sup> Thus, very few slaves were being taken during this period, and very few ships

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18. Valensi, On the Eve of Colonialism, pp. 87-89.

19. Julien, History, p. 320.

would have called at the port while it was known that the plague was there. The stability of the Algerian administration was further demonstrated by the Spanish cession of Oran to Algiers in 1791, about the same time that one of Algiers' most imposing architectural edifices, the Grand Mosque, was built.

In 1794 a hoard of locusts descended on the city, consuming almost everything green within several miles, leading to food shortages and a reduction in the amount of grain available for export to Europe.<sup>20</sup> Ten years later a more severe famine caused a massive revolt against the Jews of the city who were popularly seen as responsible for the shortage of food because they were also seen as the controllers of grain exportation. This revolt caused a change in leadership, yet the city's administration continued to function. The British Consul, Richard Cartwright, reported to his superiors that the decline of the Jewish influence at Algiers (a result of their close connections with the former Dey, Mustapha Pasha, who had been assassinated by the odjak during the revolt) would be beneficial to the British and disastrous to the French.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, there was an almost orderly transition of power which indicated a depth of administration which has generally been unnoticed.

Between 1815 and 1825 there were no fewer than seven major reverses faced and overcome by the people of Algiers. In 1814-15 more

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20. Boutin, "Reconnaissance des villes, forts et batteries d'Alger," in Esquer, Collection de documents inedits sur l'histoire de l'Algerie apres 1830 (Alger, 1927), p. 68.

21. FO 3/10, 19 March 1805 and 30 August 1805.



plagues of locusts devastated crops;<sup>22</sup> 1816 brought about structural devastation by the Anglo-Dutch actions of Exmouth and Van Capellan; 1817 saw the return of the plagues, when up to five hundred people per day were dying during the worst periods, with a total of over 16,000 deaths at Algiers.<sup>23</sup> These plagues continued to the end of winter in 1818, leaving a heritage of dislocation, poverty, economic hardship and personal despair in their wake. The next few years were relatively calm, with a minor ineffective bombardment by the British Admiral Neale in 1824, and a rather more destructive series of earthquakes in 1825, when fifty-three shocks in two weeks caused extensive damage to the city.<sup>24</sup>

The point of this short chronicle is simple: if the government and administration of the city was as hated and as inefficient as most observers would contend, there was ample opportunity for revolt against the ruling class. The Turks were not a majority; they were not the only military power; they did not control the commerce of the city; and there were several outside groups which would have been quite happy to run them out of the city. There were also opportunities to do so. For example, when the earthquakes of 1825 damaged Algiers, the town of Blidah - about forty miles south of Algiers - was almost completely destroyed. As a result, the dey of Algiers sent 3,000 troops - about

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22. William Shaler, Sketches of Algiers (Boston, 1826), p. 66 and Valensi, On the Eve of Colonialism, p. 5. Valensi notes that since wheat was in such short supply ". . . the dey forbade its export . . . and even imported some to provision the capital. State storehouses were also opened in an unsuccessful attempt to avert unrest, and serious shortages continued in 1816."
23. R.L. Playfair, The Scourge of Christendom (London, 1884), p. 284.
24. J.R. Morell, Algeria (London, 1854), p. 72.

one-half of his total armed force - to Blidah to protect the town from pillaging by the dissident Kabyle tribes who tended to use this type of situation to their advantage.<sup>25</sup> This was hardly the reaction of the type of government which earlier authors would lead us to believe existed in pre-colonial Algiers.

It is, therefore, necessary to re-examine some of the major points outlined in the introduction. First, it is essential to attempt to establish some aspects of the "personality" of the city; to re-construct the physical elements which were present before European colonialism began to alter the course of the city's history. It is important also, to determine what the city was like for the people who lived there; to describe the setting which in later chapters will be the background to more academically oriented studies of administrations, politics, economics, religion, and other functions of the city.

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25. See FO 3/27, 7 March 1825.

## CHAPTER II

## A DESCRIPTIVE SYNTHESIS

As Kabyles from the mountain villages east of Algiers approached the city, heading for the major road in the Regency,<sup>1</sup> their first indication of the city was the suburban farms and villas which were spread out haphazardly over the Sahel area of the Mitidja.<sup>2</sup> Almost every nineteenth century observer remarked about these picturesque, fertile masarcas:

The hills and vallies round about Algiers are all over beautified with gardens and country-seats, whither the inhabitants of better fashion retire, during the heats of the summer season. They are little white houses, shaded with a variety of fruit-trees and ever-greens . . . .

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1. Known as the Trik el-Sultan. The Regency was served with a network of roads connecting the various central places. These roads were narrow, kept in very poor repair (except in the Dar el-Sultan), and were only suitable for foot traffic, horses, or mules. See Marcel Emerit, Algérie à l'époque d'Abd-el-Kader (Paris, 1951), pp. 195-197. See also Pierre Boyer, L'évolution de l'Algérie Médiane, (Paris, 1960), pp. 65-67.
  2. The mitidja region of Algeria has been described by Shaler, (Sketches, p. 83) as "probably one of the most valuable expanses of territory, its climate, position, and the fertility of its soil considered, that exists on our globe." It was (and still is) capable of producing all the agricultural requirements for Algiers. In the Turkish period the common difficulties were periodic drought (1787, 1805), pestilence - such as locusts (1794, 1815), and razzias by Kabyles or dissident tribes from time to time. Its area is close to one thousand square miles.
  3. Thomas Shaw, Travels and Observations (Edinburgh, 1808), V. 1, p. 86.

These farms were owned by wealthy Turks, Kouloughlis, and Arabs; a few rented by the occasional European consul or merchant. From the road it was possible to see the Bay of Algiers on the right, and the many batteries and fortifications built over the years since 1541 at intervals along the coast to prevent a recurrence of the invasion which had endangered the early Turkish efforts to establish the city and its hinterland as their territory.<sup>4</sup>

After crossing the Oued el-Harrach on one of the four bridges in the Regency,<sup>5</sup> the city gradually become more visible; the irregular forty foot high crenellated stone and brick wall extending up the hill for just over one thousand yards.<sup>6</sup> At the lower end of the wall, just went of the battery on the water's edge, was the major land-gate of the city, Bab Azoun. Outside the gate was a large open space where animals were butchered for food; where people from other regions waited to be hired as day-labourers; a mosque which came to be known as the

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4. Charles V of Spain, after his sack of Tunis (1535), determined to eradicate the Muslim threat to the west which had been established at Algiers in 1530. His hopes were smashed by resistance from all segments of Algerian society combined with horrible weather which destroyed most of his ships. See Wolf, Barbary Coast, pp. 17-30.
  5. Boyer, L'évolution, p. 66.
  6. The aspect of the city as presented to those arriving by land was far different from the view described by the Europeans arriving by ship. Almost every European description contains words like: "pyramid," "triangular," "amphitheatre," "white," and so forth. They then go on to contrast the beauty of the city from a distance with its reality from up close. However, to the people arriving by land, the combination of military power, productivity, and political reality were apparent from the first view of the city. For "typical" European responses see: Lespes, Alger, p. 166 for a summary of French observations; Shaler, Sketches, pp. 47-48 for an early American reaction; and G.A. Jackson, Algiers (London, 1817), p. 16 for an English point of view. Both Spencer (Algiers, p. 4) and Wolf (Barbary Coast, p. 93) echo these sentiments.

"Berber mosque;" Muslim cemeteries; a kouba for Sidi Mansur; and a small general market place where goods from the interior could be sold without infringing on the commercial areas within the walls. Up the hill were tents and poorly constructed houses where the underemployed lived while waiting either for an opportunity inside or for a chance to return to their villages. Over all this activity was the constant reminder of the authority of the city, Bab Azoun: the actual gate was composed of two massive, reinforced wooden doors with defensive bastions on either side. The walls extended over the doors, and embedded in the masonry were the "crochets de fer" onto which were thrown those whom the authorities chose to use as examples of what happened to people who broke the laws of the city.<sup>7</sup> Bab Azoun was the most impressive of the land-gates since it not only confronted the source of most of the indigenous opposition, Kabylia; but also was the beginning of the Trik el-Sultan.

Immediately inside Bab Azoun were several important areas, including the barracks of the spahis de l'agha, those Turkish troops whose duty it was to collect the taxes from the countryside during the annual periods of mahalla.<sup>8</sup> These soldiers lived on the upper floor

7. Condemned Muslims were executed outside Bab Azoun; Jews and Christians outside Bab el-Oued. (Marcel Colombe in "L'Algerie Turque," Initiation a l'Algerie (Paris, 1957), p. 113) Paul Crombet, writing in 1817, just after the revolt of the Janissaries, notes with distaste the execution of two Jews on the "crochets de fer" at Bab el-Oued, and the "murailles couronnees de tetes de morts symmetriquement arrangees comme des pots de fleurs . . . ." at Bab Azoun. Paul Crombet, "Alger au temps des Turcs," Revue de Paris, 65, 6 (1958), p. 82.
8. These expeditions have been described as "expeditionary columns which pillaged the countryside" (Julien, History, p. 293); however, the amount of "pillaging" which occurred is subject to controversy. Laroui (History, pp. 268-9) notes that the success of the mahallas depended on the relationship between the beys and Algiers, not the force of the expeditions.

of a funduq, a large two story building surrounding an open courtyard, which served as a combination hotel, marketplace, and workshop. In the funduq, traders and artisans from the interior could dispose of their goods while purchasing necessities within the city. Bab Azoun was the major hide tanning area of the city - close to the meat markets, close to water, and downwind from the residential quarters for most of the year - as well as the centre of the fabric dyeing industry. An official of the dey (Khodja el-kheil) was stationed close to the gate in order to collect taxes from those wishing to trade inside the walls and to monitor the traffic from the countryside.

The most important market area at Bab Azoun was the olive oil funduq where Kabyles and townspeople alike could buy the essential cooking material. In the oil funduq buyers would find large pottery jars of oil along the walls, while sellers - usually Kabyles - would bring their oil from their villages, staying in the funduq until it had been sold. Business in this market usually took a much shorter time to complete than in the other markets, mostly because of the foul smell emanating from the manufacturing process which took place in the same market.

From Bab Azoun to the other main land-gate, Bab el-Oued, was the principal market street of Algiers, the Souk el-Kebir, a narrow, twisting avenue running more or less parallel to the port until it connected with the streets going to the port, where it veered westward towards Bab el-Oued. Boyer notes that even though this was the major commercial artery "trois badauds discutant ferme suffisent à obstruer la

voie et cinquante passants donnent l'impression d'une marée humaine."<sup>9</sup>

Along the Souk el-Kebir were many small shops built into the main floor of the houses which lined the street. Other streets led off the Souk and on these were the artisans and food-sellers. The lower status manufacturing and mercantile areas were generally closer to the gates, and as pedestrians neared the central part of the town - the area where the streets from the port met the Souk el-Kebir - the principle buildings became evident. In this central region were the consulates of France, Great Britain, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, the U.S.A., Holland, Naples, and Sardinia, side by side;<sup>10</sup> many cafes, and the more highly regarded artisans: jewelers, gold and silver smiths, scribes, perfumers, booksellers, and manuscript writers.<sup>11</sup> The air here was considerably improved from that of Bab Azoun.

In this area was also the small open area (maydan) which served as a focal point for civic and public events; a fountain in the centre of the square added to its charm. Off the maydan was the Djenina, the palace of the deys until 1816 when Ali Khodja (1816-18) moved his residence and the state treasury to the fortified casbah in the uppermost section of the city. The palace was one of the more impressive structures, although from the outside there was little indication of its natural beauty or authority except for the marble benches outside the door and

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9. Boyer, La vie, p. 51. Other observers had similar impressions: see for example H.G. Barnby, The Prisoners of Algiers (London, 1966), pp. 29-34.
10. Boyer, La vie, p. 56.
11. There is no evidence to suggest that there were any printing presses in Algiers before the Conquest. See M. Renaudot, Alger (Paris, 1830) p. 18; and Boyer, La vie, p. 60.

the two Janissary guards who maintained watch over the arched entrance.<sup>12</sup> The upper story of the palace contained the mint which produced the local currency. Close by was the bakery which supplied the Djenina, the eight Janissary barracks, and the bagnios (the slave barracks which, prior to 1816 were used to house the captured Europeans kept in the city) with their daily bread and biscuit. Adjacent to the maydan were the two main mosques of Algiers: one, the Djama Djedid, a sixteenth century Turkish styled multiple-domed structure, facing the city with the rear of the building overlooking the port. The seaward side of the mosque was actually built into the sea wall just south of the main port fortifications.<sup>13</sup> The smaller Jami el-Sayyida mosque,<sup>14</sup> opened onto the maydan, close to the hammam known as the "Bagne du Roi" (1550).<sup>15</sup> Both the hammam and the fountains in the Djenina and the maydan were supplied by the aqueduct which entered the city at Bab el-Djedid, just below the casbah. "Badestan," the slave market during the earlier days of the Regency, was a second, smaller open area close to the civic centre.

As the Souk el-Kebir continued north past the Djama Kebir, the numbers of Jewish houses increased as did the more militaristic

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12. The undistinguished facade was in keeping with the Muslim attitude towards ostentation: "Islamic ideology is fundamentally hostile to luxurious dwellings and to lofty ones, which are symbols of pride and arrogance." (Ismail, "Origin," p. 115). For a complete description of the interior of the palace see "Alger en 1830 d'après un contemporain," (unsigned article) Revue Libérale, XXIX (1960), pp. 46-48.
  13. Today the mosque is about fifty yards from the sea because of rebuilding and expansion of the port facility which took place during the French occupation.
  14. Destroyed shortly after the conquest. See Julien, History, p. 323.
  15. Lespès, Alger, p. 175.



aspects of the city. Fort Neuf, helping control access to the port; a caserne of Janissaries; and, within five hundred yards, the low, irregular Eulj Ali fortress (1568-69) known as the "Fort of the Twenty-four Hours," were all intended to protect the northern approaches to Bab el-Oued.<sup>16</sup> The actual gate was a low, vaulted, curving passage through the wall, closeable by two large doors. Outside the gate were the Dar el-Nehas;<sup>17</sup> brick and pottery ovens; Jewish and Christian cemeteries; and the tomb of the "patron saint of Algiers" - Sidi Abd al-Rahman al-Tha'alibi. A small ravine led up the hill to the crest, the wall on the southern bank extending to the citadel where it met the wall from Bab Azoun, forming the rough triangle so often commented on by early observers.

The citadel of Algiers, the casbah, was one of the least accessible parts of the Turkish city to Europeans. Even Boutin, who visited, recorded, and mapped every military installation he could find, did not penetrate the casbah: he observes that "2/3 de la ville sont interdits aux Européens; c'est une espèce de merveille que de passer par la Porte Neuve."<sup>18</sup> This citadel, theoretically, was the site of the central authority; the military presence there was intended "à protéger la population citadine des envahisseurs étrangers d'une part, et des incursions des tribus nomades

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16. Boutin, "Reconnaissance," pp. 36-7.

17. The gun powder factory and cannon foundry. See Lespès, Alger, p. 153n2 and FO 3/7, 21 October 1790, (Consul Logie to Grenville). Logie notes that the powder manufactured at Algiers is "in strength little inferior to ours, but not so well ground." He also notes that one or two thousand barrels of powder were imported in tribute each year.

18. Boutin, "Reconnaissance," p. 33.

d'autre part."<sup>19</sup> In reality, it was not until 1817 that the casbah, originally built as part of the main fortifications of the city in the sixteenth century, came to be a "fortresse dans la fortresse." Separated from the main city by a wall two to three metres thick and ten to twelve metres high, made of every local material including blue limestone;<sup>20</sup> armed with fifty cannons facing the city; and entered by only one well-protected gate near Bab el-Djedid (Porte Neuve), it was truly a distinct entity. The casbah was supplied with fresh water by an aqueduct from Ain Zeboudja<sup>21</sup> which flowed into the area to supply numerous fountains, and filled the hammam. After use the water was carried by underground sewers down through the town into the sea. The spiritual needs of the residents were fulfilled in at least three mosques, including the Safir,<sup>22</sup> while educational needs could be met at the École de l'Agha, which received fifty measures of barley from the government each year to help with expenses.<sup>23</sup> The dey's palace, a three storey, open courtyard building provided comfort to the dey and his entourage, while barracks provided a slightly less comfortable existence to the troops stationed there.<sup>24</sup> As in the lower town, narrow winding streets culminating in steep staircases, dead ends, and occasional gates or chains were normal, while flat-roofed

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19. Stambouli and Zghal, "La vie urbaine dans le Maghrib Précolonial," Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord (1972), p. 196.

20. See Boyer, La vie, p. 37 and Lespès, Alger, p. 119.

21. Lespès, Alger, p. 176.

22. Julien, History, p. 323.

23. Boyer, L'évolution, p. 70n29.

24. See the engraving in Julien, Histoire de l'Algérie Contemporaine (Paris, 1964), facing p.32.

houses provided occupants with views of the entire city. Included in the casbah were many military installations including the main arsenals for the city, powder magazines and small stables for the horses of the dey and his troops.<sup>25</sup> In short, the casbah was "une véritable ville fortifiée au sein de la capitale."<sup>26</sup>

The city was divided into two major regions: El-Djebel (the heights), including the casbah and the more exclusive residential quarters of Arabs, Turks, and Kouloughlis; and El-Outha (the plain), which included most of the mercantile areas and the quarters below the Souk el-Kebir. Each of these major regions was sub-divided into harah (quarters) which were capable of separation from each other by gates which were closed each evening at sundown.<sup>27</sup> Each quarter was self-contained, and included fountains, hammams, shops built into houses, mosques and schools.<sup>28</sup> This pattern of self-containment repeated itself in the organisation and design of the houses in the city. Shaler, Lespès, and others all agree on the basic design of the houses and on the ideology of the residential unit.<sup>29</sup>

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25. Boyer, La vie, p. 37. The main stables were located about four hundred yards west of Bab el-Djedid, outside the city.
26. Stambouli and Zghal, "La vie urbaine," p. 197.
27. Shaler, Sketches, p. 74.
28. Each house had a small vestibule built immediately inside the door. This sqifa could be used either as a waiting room for visitors or, in the lower quarters, as a shop for selling whatever the owner was making or trading. Most of the merchandising went on in the el-Outha region, away from the more residential quarters. See Lespès, Alger, pp. 171-2.
29. Shaler, Sketches, pp. 71-73 and Lespès, Alger, pp. 171-73. Guiauchain (in Lespès, Alger, p. 120) notes: "Alger semble avoir été bâti tout d'une pièce par la même équipe d'ouvriers."

The inward looking maskan [house], open to the calm of the sky, made cool by the element of water, self-contained and peaceful, the deliberate antithesis of the harsh public world of work, warfare and commerce, is the place where the . . . Arab family found its sakinah [tranquility].<sup>30</sup>

This "tranquility" was not a common part of the lower city.

From the Souk el-Kebir to the port was the commercial centre of Algiers; an area of noise, movement, business and pleasure. Nevertheless, even within this milieu were two separate harah: the Jewish quarter, with its synagogue, low houses, dark narrow streets, and aura of uncertainty;<sup>31</sup> contrasted to the quarter of the corsairs (taiffa el-raï), with its palatial houses built close to their source of power, the port. In the raï quarter were the cafe and tavern areas, including the Zenkat s'ba Tabaren - the street of seven taverns.<sup>32</sup>

The main street leading from the city to the port was called Trik Bab Djezira; the gate was known as Bab Djezira or Bab Djihad, while a secondary street leading to a fifth and smallest gate, Bab el-Hout (Gate of the Fishery), was mostly used by fishermen and local traders who dragged their boats up onto the shore just south of the main port. The entrance to the port through Bab Djezira was a vaulted

30. Ismail, "Origins," p. 115.

31. M. Rosenstock, "Economic and Social Conditions among the Jews of Algeria, (1790-1848)," Historia Judaica, XCIII, Part 1, April 1956, p. 17.

32. It seems as though the Islamic restriction on alcohol was not strictly enforced in Algiers, at least among the Turks, raï, and others in the lower city. See Boutin ("Reconnaissance," p. 68) who complains that the locust plague of 1794 severely damaged the vines to the extent that "la qualité du vin a beaucoup diminué." Paul Crombet ("Alger," p. 87) also remarks on the excellence of the wine and the propensity of some Algerians for drinking.

passage way leading under the wall to the causeway which connected the original group of islands to the mainland. Between the islands, which were joined together by rocks and an exterior wall, and the city was the harbour. Algiers was not a natural port; it was only through the efforts of generations of both slave and hired labour that the city was able to connect the small islands (el-Djaza'ir) together and then to the mainland. The harbour was calm, with fifteen to twenty feet of water in close to the docks, protected by a series of batteries and a combination arsenal and lighthouse. The port facility was capable of constructing or repairing ships as large as frigates, and Shaler reported three schooners being built at the same time in 1822.<sup>33</sup> The port's arsenal was supplied with everything necessary for the "construction, armament, equipment, and repairs" of ships; some of the material from the hinterland, the rest received as tribute from European states.<sup>34</sup> The port did not appear to be too large, perhaps capable of holding fifty vessels, but it was certainly of adequate size for Algiers. During the British action against the city in 1824, Lord Clarence Paget noted:

The strange thing was that out of this little Mole there came daily hundreds of fine galleys fully armed, and no one could understand how they could find room for them, besides several large frigates and corvettes inside.<sup>35</sup>

Even during the time when the city was "in decline" the government continued to rebuild and maintain this facility. After the bombardment of 1816 which resulted in "the destruction of nearly half Algiers,

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33. Lespès, Alger, p. 136 and p. 44.

34. See Dubois-Thainville, "Sur Alger," p. 148.

35. Cited in Playfair, Scourge, p. 301.

and . . . the burning of the whole Algerian navy,"<sup>36</sup> refortification continued to the extent that in 1822 Shaler could observe that:

All the approaches by sea to Algiers are defended by such formidable works, mounted with heavy cannon, as to render any direct attack by ships a desperate undertaking . . . so that it seems certain that a similar attack to Exmouth's would not again succeed . . .<sup>37</sup>

In all these aspects Algiers exhibited the characteristics of the Islamic city, fulfilling the organisation and site-pattern tendencies noted in recent studies. Its most interesting attributes were those which distinguished it from the "norm:" the multi-ethnicity of the lower city; the leadership of a foreign but related elite; the setting, which while facing Europe was an integral part of the Muslim world; the symbiotic relationship between the land and the sea; the interdependence of city and hinterland; and the unique "personality" which made Algiers a fascinating place for so many observers - citizens as well as strangers. pre-colonial Algiers was a place where thirty thousand people lived; some were successful in achieving their objectives, others were not; some observers enjoyed the city, some did not. In 1791, Consul de Kersey wrote: Alger est la seule ville du monde qui ait mérité d'être écrasée par une machine infernale."<sup>38</sup> In 1817 Paul Crombet wrote: "on y trouve partout des sites pittoresques, parsèmés de bosquets romantiques et animés par une quantité prodigieuse de rossignols que remplissent l'air de leurs chants mélodieux."<sup>39</sup>

36. Admiral van Cappelán in Jackson, Algiers, p. 305.

37. Shaler, Sketches, pp. 46-47

38. "Memoires," p. 111.

39. Crombet, "Alger," p. 87

This dualistic attitude seems to have been a key factor in pre-colonial Algerian life: even in the Muslim institutions there were two rites, which created a much more tolerant society, a more flexible approach to life, a greater freedom of choice and action for the citizens. Nevertheless, the foundation of the society, the Muslim family unit, remained of paramount importance: the public buildings, monuments, and institutions were minimal; the city was built around family houses and it managed to preserve the integrity of this unit throughout its pre-colonial existence. The centre of the inner circle was neither the souk, the mosque, the port, nor the palace, but the maskan.

One of the important threads which ran through these circles was the administrative system - the system of government which was attempting to keep diverse cultural groups together while other forces were attempting to push them apart. While discussing governmental characteristics of Algiers, it is essential to realize that the city was not isolated from the rest of the rural community; it was the centre of administration, but it was not a capital city in the modern sense. Algiers was a part of a greater community and thus, in the next chapter the focus shifts from a description of the inner circle to an investigation of the outer circles - the dissident and makhzan tribal groups and the beylical governments of Oran, Titteri, and Constantine. Throughout, however, the emphasis is on the role of Algiers and the way its ruling groups responded and reacted to the processes which were at work in other regions.

## CHAPTER III

## THE FRAMEWORK OF GOVERNMENT

Administratively, pre-colonial Algeria was divided into several sub-sections, each with separate but limited authority within its region. The structure begins at Algiers, spread into the immediate hinterland, the fahs, and then to a more diverse region, the Dar el-Sultan. The rest of the country was divided into three provinces (beyliks) each with its own "capital" and administrative structures. As proximity to Algiers decreased the trend was for control and authority to decrease also. There was never a time when the government of Algiers controlled the entire countryside, yet, this same government was somehow capable of extracting taxation and providing a reasonable degree of security and justice for the areas which were under the administrative umbrella of the Algiers' authorities. In order to understand this juxtaposed order and disunity it is necessary to examine the various administrations, their connections, and their behaviours; it is also necessary to clarify the confusion which has resulted from over a hundred years of scholarship generally built upon an insufficient data base.

In 1964, Douglas Johnson called for a re-evaluation of the role of the Ottomans in Algiers, noting the contradictions which existed



between the evidence and the conclusions.<sup>1</sup> Johnson was aware of the more flexible aspects of the Algiers government, observing that the system "was trying to respond to the realities of the situation; in places it was changing and developing" and it varied its use of authority in time and space.<sup>2</sup> In spite of this call to action the response has been minimal. The pragmatic nature of the government has been ignored, and restatements of earlier, narrow - sometimes ethnocentric - hypotheses based on observations from times which were very different from the latter years of the Regency have continued.

To most observers, the central problem which determined the philosophical basis of the government was simple: it was necessary ". . . to assure the flow of tax money from the Arab and Berber tribes to the beys . . ." and from them to Algiers.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the collection of taxes became the rationale for the entire structure of government, a completely one-way system. Marcel Colombe agrees with this sentiment, noting that the Turks used Algeria as a source of wealth to be exploited without consideration for the well-being of the people.<sup>4</sup> Julien states that the "government of the Turks was an industry from which they made every effort to derive the maximum profit."<sup>5</sup> Danziger summarizes the entire overview: ". . . the Turks took no interest in the well-being

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1. "Algeria: Some problems of modern History" Journal of African History, Vol. 2, 1964. pp. 221-242.
  2. Johnson, "Algeria," p. 224.
  3. R. Danzier, Abd al-Qadir and the Algerians, (New York, 1977), pp. 15-16.
  4. M. Colombe, "L'Algerie turque," p. 118.
  5. Julien, History, p. 324.

of their subjects . . . . Their relations were based solely on two things - obtaining the largest possible amount in taxes . . . and maintaining sufficient law and order to ensure . . . collection . . . . "6 These observations must cause considerable scepticism because the obvious anomaly still exists: How were so few Ottomans able to maintain this one-sided relationship over so many other groups? Hermassi explains that the solution is to be found in the number of small tribal groups and their inability to combine against the Ottoman authorities, but this explanation begs the question given the completely negative, one-sided interpretation of Algerian administrations.7 There must have been some positive characteristics of the government which enabled it to function and which gave it legitimacy and at least the minimal consent of the people of Algeria. Abun Nasr hints at - but does not elaborate on - this necessity: "The administration of the country was a military one, whose main purposes were to preserve peace, administer justice, and collect taxes."8 This statement demonstrates that the goals of the government may not have been as one-sided as had been generally supposed - in fact, these goals are surprisingly similar to governmental objectives in almost any other nineteenth century society. Therefore, considering the difficulties in collecting and interpreting evidence, it is essential to examine the structures of government in order to comprehend the reasons why there was such a level of successful government in Algeria.

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6. Danziger, Abd al-Qadir, p. 16.

7. Hermassi, Leadership, p. 46.

8. Abun Nasr, History, p. 175.

The first - though certainly not the most important - component of Algiers' government concerned the relationship between the Porte and the Regency. This relationship encompasses a rather short continuum from nominal to insignificant during the latter years, but in the earliest stages of the Regency it was important that the Porte recognise the legitimacy of the pashas of Algiers since the city was the western terminus of the jihad against Spain. As time passed, the recognition became less important because the government built its own legitimacy on the basis of its ability and strength. Some observers note that the Porte desired to maintain some level of control over the nineteenth century governments, but there is little evidence to support this contention. It appears as if the Porte was actually content to let the far west of Islam run its own affairs as long as there was token recognition of the role of the Sultan in the affairs of state - in the Friday prayers, in the minting of coinage, and in the sending of annual gifts and tribute, for example. This attitude is more understandable given the state of affairs in the provinces closer to the capital of the Ottoman Empire, where during the period under study the Porte was beginning a series of reforms which entailed a trend towards greater centralization. The Maghrib was not included in these centralizing plans.<sup>9</sup> It appears as if the Porte was not greatly interested in the problems of Algiers as there were enough difficulties dealing with reform in and around Anatolia. The Sultan expressed his sympathy with the goals of the Algerian government, but there was little substantial help given. This evaluation is summarized

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9. See Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, (Oxford, 1968), pp. 89-90.

in an 1827 letter from the last dey of Algiers, Hussein Pasha (1818-1830) to the Porte in which the dey outlines the continuing dispute with France and notes that: "Depuis plusieurs années, l'Odjak . . . n'a pas reçu de troupes du côté de l'Anatolie. L'Odjak ayant, de toutes façons, besoin de troupes turques . . . ." <sup>10</sup> The Grand Vizier added a note to this letter, stating that before this request could be granted it needed imperial authority. <sup>11</sup> The Sultan indicates his solicitations, but there was no change in the policy which previously had supplied Algiers with Anatolian recruits. From 1827 to 1829 only seventy-six new recruits are listed as arriving at Algiers, none of them, apparently, from Anatolia. <sup>12</sup> Thus, scholarly understanding of the relationship between the Porte and Algiers remains somewhat ambiguous and, until further research provides us with more data, the term "nominal" seems to be the most appropriate designation of the relationship. <sup>13</sup>

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10. E. Kuran, "La lettre du dernier dey d'Alger au grand vizir de l'Empire ottoman," Revue Africain, 1er - 2eme trim. (1952), p. 192.
  11. Kuran, "Lettre", p. 125.
  12. M. Colombe, "Contribution à l'étude de recrutement de l'Odjak d'Alger dans les dernières années de la Régence," Revue Africain, Tome 87 (1943), p. 183.
  13. Areas for further study include the role of Algerian ships and troops in the Greek War of Independence, given that there was some Tunisian association with Ottoman forces (both Shaler, Sketches, p. 164 and H.D. de Grammont, Histoire d'Alger sous la domination Turque (Paris, 1887), p. 386, hint at Algerian participation) and a thorough analysis of correspondence between Algiers and Europe, and Algiers and the Porte. A cursory evaluation indicates that there was a much higher level of respect and honour given to the Sultan than to European kings - even during times when Europe was in a more powerful position regarding Algiers. See Document 78, (SP 102/I 206) in Letters from Barbary, ed. J.F.P. Hopkins, (Oxford, 1982) pp. 97-99; E. Kuran, "Lettre", pp. 188-195; and A. Temimi, Recherches et documents d'histoire maghrébine . . . de 1816 a 1871, (Tunis, 1971), especially documents nos. 1 to 10, pp. 221-239.

One of the most important components of the pre-colonial administration of Algeria concerned the structure of government in the three beyliks. This is the area which has caused the most difficulty for the colonial apologists who are unable to explain why, if the Ottoman presence was as unpopular as their school has argued, a few thousand militarily inferior troops and bureaucrats were capable of administering an area which the colonial power of France was unable to control. The secret of the success demonstrated by the central authority in Algeria is closely connected to both cultural values and the philosophy of government: culturally there were several similarities between the Ottomans and other ethnic groups; politically, the ruling class did not require allegiance or loyalty from the people. It was sufficient for the administrators if the people were prepared to pay their taxes, obey the essential laws, and allow the economic system to function. Their pragmatism in administrative affairs enabled them to maintain their position without alienating the people of the countryside or requiring them to identify with the central authority. The governmental structures reflect this pragmatic approach.

The basic framework of government consisted of several distinct but related sectors, each with sub-divisions and flexible affiliations and groupings. The common source of authority rested in the government of Algiers, although the level of authority varied in time and space. The immediate environs of the city - the fahs - were administered as part of the city. The next area of administration, the Dar el-Sultan, was administered through tribal sheikhs or Ottoman caids, who reported

directly to the officials at Algiers. These areas consisted of the more submissive tribes - the raia - whose people found it more beneficial to work with the central power than to risk upsetting the balance between governed and government by attempting to join the more independent tribes outside the areas of direct control. The third circle of administration was composed of those tribes known as makhzan, meaning those who contributed taxes - either voluntarily or because of coercion - to the central authority. These tribes usually were semi-independent, but it was usually in their best interests to pay the necessary taxes in order to gain the advantage from the policies of the Ottoman administration. The areas outside these "circles" of authority were completely independent, neither paying taxes to the government nor partaking in the benefits of the governmental policies. These were mostly mountainous, remote, and almost inaccessible Berber regions where fiercely independent tribes maintained their ways of life long after the Ottoman authority had disappeared from Algeria.

It is necessary, therefore, to attempt to analyze the various levels of administration not only in order to show how the system functioned but also to demonstrate that there were positive benefits to people and that the system actually did function as it was intended to. It was never intended that the government at Algiers rule the entire country; it was never intended that the people of the mountains and deserts would be forced to comply completely with the central authority; neither was it intended that all those living within the territory controlled either directly or indirectly by the government at Algiers should have to demonstrate loyalty to that government in any other

way than by paying taxes and allowing the economic system to function freely. The key was the measure of independence granted even to those who, while relatively close to Algiers, were not constrained to have very much to do with either the city or its people.

Of the various levels of administration to be considered, the three beyliks were emblematic of the pragmatism so evident in Algerian politics. Each beylik was similar in structure, but there were several differences in practice. The beylik which was the poorest, smallest, and closest to Algiers was centered in Medea, but known as the Beylik of Titteri. Medea itself was not far from Algiers, only sixty kilometres southwest, but the territory extended south into the Sahara, an area where independence was not only prized but also possible. An incident in 1820 demonstrates the prevailing attitude between the Ottomans and the Algerians. Once or twice a year, depending on need and circumstances a military and commercial convoy (mahalla) was sent either from Algiers or the provincial "capitals" to collect the taxes and tribute from the various tribes. These taxes were usually collected by the sheikhs of the makhzan tribes and then passed on to the authorities of the beyliks, who in turn relayed the taxes to Algiers. If, however, some of the tribes refused to produce the required tribute, the bey of the area would have to forcibly collect the taxes. A refusal like this occurred in 1820 at Ain Mahdi - located some 350 kilometres southwest of Algiers - in an inhospitable mountainous region, the Djebel Amour, where a Tijani brotherhood had come to control the town. The Tijanis legitimized this lack of respect for Ottoman authority by noting

that the Ottomans "were not true Muslims any more since they relinquished the Sharia and adopted secular laws."<sup>14</sup> Abun-Nasr also notes that the central authorities could have allowed the Tijanis to control the town, if they had paid regular tribute, but without tribute, the authorities were **compelled to adopt a military solution.**

The bey of Titteri was in one of the most precarious positions as far as his continued relationship with Algiers was concerned. The region was not very wealthy, and there seems to have been considerable pressure on the bey to provide more regular deliveries of taxes; also, the diversity of the region both ethnically and geographically caused Algiers to consider the region as a potential source of revolt.<sup>15</sup> Many areas within the beylik were not under the control of the bey or the caids of the various makhzan tribes - the concentric circle model is not just appropriate to the country and Algiers, but to the provincial capitals and their hinterlands also. The beylik of Titteri was subdivided into three major regions: the Tell, the "Tell meridional," and the "caidat el-Kirah." Each of these was further divided into watans under the indirect control of the bey. In the south of the beylik was the area of independent tribes, the nomads who only needed access to weekly markets for their necessities on an irregular basis, but who otherwise were almost completely free of Ottoman influences. The administration of the entire beylik was, therefore, subject to several

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14. Abun Nasr, The Tijaniyya (London, 1965), p. 62. Of course, this comment most likely refers to happenings in the central Empire, not Algiers, and demonstrates that even in the Sahara there was a lively and current interest in affairs outside of the local area.

15. P. Boyer, L'évolution de l'Algérie médiane (Paris, 1960), pp. 20-22.



particular considerations: it was close to Algiers and thus the bey was controlled more strictly in case disputes with the capital emerged; it was a relatively poor area, where collecting taxes was difficult; and the ethnic diversity of the area tended to make the relationships between the various levels of authority somewhat tenuous. This diversity did not make life miserable for the Ottoman authorities alone - after the Conquest, the French experienced the same problems, being welcomed by some groups and fought by others.

The beyliks of Oran and Constantine were slightly more orthodox in their administrations. They tended to allow their beys to last for the usual three years, and since the provincial centres were far from Algiers, there was generally very little interference in their affairs. The beys had to present themselves at Algiers with gifts and explanations every third year, and frequently a new bey was selected at this time, but the reason was usually not connected with beylical politics but with the avarice of the government of Algiers which tended to sell the position to the highest bidder. Nevertheless, both beyliks had their difficulties with tribes which desired independence and there were several instances of attacks on Ottoman settlements relatively close to Algiers. After the Conquest, the centres of opposition to the French occupation came from the tribes in the beylik of Oran, the city of Constantine, and the Kabyle mountain regions. This has usually been interpreted to mean that these regions wanted to maintain or develop independent status, but it is also quite possible that the administration of the Ottomans was more tolerable than that provided by the conquerors. It is not

necessarily true that the establishment of the French in Algeria was simply "la substitution de la domination française à la domination turque." 16

The outer circle of administration, therefore, was not a clean concentric sphere of influence but rather a pock-marked disputed territory where shifting coalitions of independent and semi-independent tribes attempted to pursue their own interests and advantages as best they could. There were some tribes which remained loyal to the Ottomans for most of the three hundred years of their power. Other tribes lived close to these makhzan regions, but because of their own specific ethnocentricity, wavered in their response to the authority from Algiers or the provincial capitals; sometimes allied to the makhzan tribes, sometimes seeking greater independence. There were also the completely independent tribes who rarely - if ever - recognized the suzerainty of the Ottomans. The authorities, however, only rarely attempted to force these groups to submit or even pay tribute. This has led many observers to the conclusion that the authorities were incapable of controlling the tribes; that the regime was weak; that there was constant animosity between the tribes and the authorities; and that the tribes were always looking for chances to escape from whatever control the Ottomans possessed. However, it is also possible - even probable - that the Ottomans were far more clever at managing the economic and political intrigues of this outer circle. They did possess a form of leverage which enabled them to control the widest possible area with a minimum of troop strength; they extracted the maximum in benefits

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16. Gsell, Marçais, and Yver, Histoire d'Algérie (Paris, 1929), p. 191.

with a minimum of effort.

The structure of the Ottoman administration of the beyliks was not static, but it is possible to discern how the various governments functioned. The typical pyramid model does not fit this system, as power tended to be diffused, not direct; and in many areas real power seemed to reside not in the bureaucratic hierarchy of the bey and his staff, but in the caids and other middle level officials who were closer to the sources of rural, tribal power. Nevertheless, the most prominent position of authority was the bey, who along with his chosen lieutenant (Khalifa) was granted by Algiers the rights to the disbursement of the azel lands within their jurisdiction. This land, amounting to about one million hectares, was let to those tribes which agreed to the payment of the hukr tax - regular payment indicating co-operation with the beylik.<sup>17</sup> Within the beylik the financial organization was under the control of the Khaznadar (treasurer) "qui conservait le Trésor du Bey et pour cette raison était un des principaux dignitaires du Beylik, sinon le plus important."<sup>18</sup> This official was assisted by a Khodja (Deputy Minister) with several assistants, usually Jews. The military organization of the beylik existed parallel to the fiscal organization, and was modelled after other Ottoman types, involving a corps of janissaries in the capitals, other troops raised from local makhzan tribes when and if necessary, along with the bey's personal guard and the spahis (cavalry) which

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17. Ruedy, Land Policy in Colonial Algeria (Berkeley, 1967), p. 9. Ruedy notes that by 1830 most of this land "had been inhabited by the same tribes from time immemorial" an indication that there was a certain degree of stability in the beyliks.

18. Boyer, L'évolution, pp. 20-22.

formed the local "reserve" forces. There were many other administrative functionaries in the beylik towns, and almost all of them were Ottomans or their descendants.<sup>19</sup> Outside of the capitals, outposts (zmala) were established at strategic military and economic points. To past observers these zmala were interpreted as indications of general dissatisfaction with Ottoman rule, as signs that the rural populations were in constant need of policing in order to prevent revolts against the unwelcome authority. It is more likely that these zmala were the cornerstones of beylical strength. The government established these control points at places where weekly markets were held, and along the main routes of the pilgrimage and trade caravans.<sup>20</sup> Thus, when any tribes wished to trade, they had

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19. See Boyer, L'évolution, pp. 27-33 for a more complete description of these functionaries and their roles.

20. At this time there are only scattered references, not systematic research, to support this hypothesis relative to Algeria. In Morocco, for example, weekly markets were an important rural tradition involving not only the economic spheres but also the social and judicial aspects of life. These markets were located at places which were, for six days, completely empty, but on the market day, became the central place for many different groups. These rural souks gave the people an opportunity to settle disputes, since qadis were present; to settle legal issues, since courts were sometimes in session; to catch up on news from other regions, since they were usually located at transfer points or along common routes; and to get services which were not readily available in some villages, since artisans, entertainers, and specialists were also present. It is reasonable to conclude that when the Ottomans noted the importance of these markets and the strategic value of their locations, they would choose to use them as part of their system of rural political, social, and economic management. They also chose not to leave the locations as "empty space" but built permanent structures there in order to advance their purposes. On the general role of tribal markets, see M.W. Mikesell, "The Role of Tribal Markets in Morocco" (Geographical Review, XLVIII, No. 4, 1958, pp. 494-511); and the works of Walter Fogg, including "The Economic Revolution in the Countryside of French Morocco" (Journal of the Royal African Society, Vol. 35, No. 139, 1936, pp. 123-129); and "The Suq: A study in the human geography of

to come to the markets where control was relatively simple and where collecting tax was a part of the procedure. Furthermore, to attack the zmala could, in a cultural context, be interpreted as anti-social by all the various groups because the troops were also protecting the pilgrimage routes which every one hoped to travel on at some time in their life.

In the beyliks, then, government was diffused, with the structures being flexible yet consistently in place. The subjects of this administrative system were left very much to the control of their own sheikhs within their douars. The villagers were allowed to harvest their crops and herds, practice their particular cultural customs, travel, trade during the weekly markets, and feel relatively secure from attack by other groups for the greater part of their lives. It is true that the higher levels of government were inaccessible to them, and that they were run by foreigners, but to many nineteenth century people, villagers a few miles away were foreigners. The Ottoman presence was not colonial except to the extent that retired troops and government officials had access to land, but there was no immigration policy which took land from the tribes and used it for Ottoman settlements; further, when Ottomans left their position in government they usually chose to live in the Dar el-Sultan, some even returning to their original homes.

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Morocco" (Geography, XVII, No. 98, 1932, pp. 257-267). The article by Johnson, ("Problems," p. 226) mentions the possible role of these markets: ". . . it was possible for the Turks . . . to supervise important roads and markets, and by controlling communications and the movement of populations to exercise a political control . . . . If a particular tribal grouping had offended the Turks in some way, then they could be forbidden the use of certain markets . . . ." Danziger (Abd-al-Qadir, p. 23) mentions the same utilization of these markets.

The Dar el-Sultan, that is the region outside of Algiers which was under the direct control of the dey and government of Algiers, was the most fertile and productive land in the central coastal area of Algeria. It was a region of farms and summer houses owned mostly by Ottomans and wealthy merchants, with residences for foreign consuls also located there. In this region the government had little difficulty exercising complete control, as those tribal groups which lived in the region tended to benefit from proximity to Algiers: they could work in the city; trade in daily markets outside the gates; gain security from the presence of troops nearby; and generally exist without interference in their daily affairs. Besides these factors, the local people were sometimes related to the Ottomans, since intermarriage between the Algerians and the Ottomans was common. There were no makhzan tribes as such in the region since there was no need to organize the area on this basis. Administratively, the region was divided into smaller districts under the jurisdiction of the agha of Arabs at Algiers who was a member of the dey's cabinet (divan).<sup>21</sup> There were four regional centres each with small permanent garrisons: Blidah; Colea; Cherchell; and Dellys; and these, along with Algiers, provided the main source of military protection. The several watans were headed by Ottoman caids who worked with tribal sheikhs to keep the area as free from disputes as possible. In general, the people on the plains were Arabs while those in the mountains were Berbers, but there seems to have been an almost constant mutual

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21. Boyer (L'évolution, p. 19) states that there were seven subdivisions, while Emerit ("Les tribus privilégiées en Algérie," Annales E.S.C., XXI, No. 1, 1966, p. 53) notes that there were eleven.

desire to maintain the tranquility of the region.<sup>22</sup> The Ottoman rulers fostered these attitudes by making sure that the groups on the edges of the Dar el-Sultan had lands "composés moitié de territoires de plaine, moitié de territoires montagneux. Ainsi des populations différentes . . . se surveillaient mutuellement, échangeaient leurs produits, et le Gouvernement turque exerçait son arbitrage en cas de conflit."<sup>23</sup>

The success of Ottoman policies in this region was attested to after the conquest when the Arabs of this region refused to accept the transfer of land and power peacefully when agreed to by the government. When they proved incapable of resisting the French from their own lands, they immigrated to the west where they formed a strong pocket of resistance, while the Kabyles of the more mountainous areas fought against French incursions around Blidah and on the eastern fringes of the Dar el-Sultan.<sup>24</sup>

It would be both convenient and accommodating if, as Spencer has claimed, "Algiers had its own mayor and city council."<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, there is no evidence which would suggest that this was the case, and therefore, it is necessary to examine the structure of the government at Algiers on more than one level: as it applied to the city, and as

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22. There was a major Kabyle revolt in 1773-74 when the Berbers cut the aqueduct from Blidah to Algiers and interfered with the transportation of grain to Algiers. (See FO 3/5, 5 April 1773 and FO 3/5, 21 August 1774, Consul Fraser to F.O.) Fraser notes that the cause of the revolt was the desire "to redress themselves for the violence of a Government which - being unable to plunder at sea now employ a set of rapacious officers that plunder the Provinces." De Grammont reports revolts in 1790, 1815-16, and in 1825, after the earthquake at Blidah, there were reports of attacks by Kabyles on the town. See also FO 3/27, 7 March 1825.

23. Emerit, "Tribus en Algérie," p. 54.

24. Emerit, "Tribus en Algérie," p. 54

25. Spencer, Algiers, p. 54

it applied to the wider world. It is helpful to note that all of the functions of government were united in one large group, but there is some controversy as to the roles and responsibilities of individuals within the group. It is difficult even to get agreement among the authors about the composition of the various levels of the divan, let alone the titles, names, and duties of those who held office. The one aspect of government which almost everyone agrees on to some extent concerns the office of the dey.

Until 1817, the dey of Algiers, theoretically the most powerful person in the country, was actually no more influential than the sources of his position wished him to be. The real power was divided among the odjak, the taifa of rais, and the system of allocating the public domain. The first was military strength based on the abilities of the janissary corps to overbalance any other military group; the second was a monetary power, based on the results of corsair activity; the third was both social and economic, derived from the relationship between the land and the people - both urban and rural. The difficulties involved in maintaining a position of leadership given this diffused power base are obvious, and until 1817, when the dey Ali Khodja moved his residence from the lower town palace - the Djenina - to the casbah, the dey tended to be at the mercy of the most powerful group - the odjak. The transition which took place at this time began an important new trend in Algerian politics and is one of the reasons for many of the misconceptions which are so evident in some scholarship.

Immediately prior to 1817, the dey was selected from the odjak by the odjak, and was responsible only to the odjak for his position.



He was, as most observers agree, relatively powerful but completely expendable. Thus, when there were economic or military difficulties during the later years of the Regency, the dey was the first to go. From 1791, on the death of Mohammed ben Osman (1766-1791) - who died a natural death - there were nine other deys who were selected: three died natural deaths; six were deposed and assassinated; while Hussein, the final dey, was sent to exile in the Middle East. The depositions occurred between 1805 and 1815 when the government was going through the last stages of its military oligarchic period. This was the period when the odjak was the most powerful group in the city, but because of its inability to compromise with other power sources, became concerned only with affairs relating to its own members and thus deteriorated into a pocket of anarchy within the city. It is important to note that while this disorder was taking place around the deys and the odjak, the rest of the city was essentially unconcerned with the difficulties because they did not affect other groups within the city to any great extent. However, when European observers took their notes, they tended to concentrate on the highest office and to interpret the state of affairs based on this one factor, not regarding the fact that the city continued to function around these events, hardly concerned with the changes at the top. Thus, when Shaler wrote his commentary, observing that a member of the odjak could not refuse the position of dey if chosen; that the divan "may be regarded as a dead letter in their constitution;" and that "it is by mere accident if [the dey] dies a natural death;"<sup>26</sup> he

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26. Sketches, pp. 16-19.

was wrong on all three counts because he evaluated the entire structure of government within the city on the basis of his perceptions of the role of the dey. Further, since the government was in a period of transition it is essential to understand that the last years of Ottoman rule in Algiers cannot be evaluated on the basis of the disorder caused by shifting power sources over a relatively short period of time.

The disorder did, on at least one occasion, spill over into the city, and has been the topic of a great deal of discussion - usually as an example of the declining ability of the dey to govern the city. In 1798 the dey Mustapha, named a Jew, Naphtali Busnach, as his Khaznadar (supervisor of the treasury).<sup>27</sup> This move was taken because the Livornese agents, Busnach and Joseph Bacri had, through their commercial connections with France, sold many tons of grain to the French and had become major brokers and sources of export revenue to Algiers.<sup>28</sup> By 1800 the monopoly on exports of grain, traditionally an exclusive domain of the dey, was controlled by this Jewish connection, and in order to maintain the income, the dey allowed the situation to continue even though there was a general outcry against this condition on the part of other sectors of the ruling

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27. De Grammont, Histoire, p. 355.

28. The Bacri-Busnach coalition aroused a great deal of consternation in the British Consuls at Algiers because the Jews were seen to be partial to the French at the expense of the British. Consul Falcon (FO 3/10, undated, pp. 73-79) wrote an essay in 1803 in which he charges that Bacri and Busnach are "capable of aiding the French in getting possession of the country . . . without firing a gun." The most comprehensive treatment of Bacri and Busnach from a French point of view is by Paul Masson, "À la veille d'une conquête, concessions et compagnées d'Afrique - 1800-1830," Bulletin de Géographie . . . (1909), pp. 48-124; especially pages 48-60. Wolf (Barbary Coast, pp. 328-30) also summarizes the situation.

classes - not so much because of the change in tradition, but because the main beneficiaries appeared to be the Jews. In 1801 an unsuccessful revolt against the dey occurred, led by disillusioned members of the odjak; in 1804 the dey was attacked by two Janissaries, but escaped; however, on 28 June 1805, Busnach was assassinated and the Jewish quarter of the city was pillaged, with forty-two deaths. Eventually, on 30 August 1805, the dey and his Khaznadar were both strangled. This began the ten years of power struggle which preceded the ascendancy of a new balance between the ruling groups.

This new balance involved the decline in power of the odjak, the continued low prestige of the taifa of rais, and the emergence of a coalition of notables as the countervailing force. The shift took place in 1816 when Ali Khodja became dey. He must have had some indication that he was to be selected because he certainly was prepared - and determined not to suffer the fate of his six immediate predecessors. It is even possible that some members of the odjak were becoming aware of the impossibility of allowing the disorder to continue while maintaining the benefits of their position. Regardless, when the selection of the new dey was announced, Ali Khodja was prepared with 2,000 Kabyle troops to make sure that recalcitrant members of the odjak would not be able to depose him. He then set out to alter the city's political systems and to reform some of the more obvious abuses. He began by moving the public treasury and its contents to the casbah where it would be more secure; he then imprisoned and executed those members of the odjak who were known to be agitators or malcontents. His first power-sharing move occurred when he armed the Kouloughlis (offspring of marriages between

the Ottomans and Algerians) - previously not admitted into the system - and allowed those members of the odjak who could not be loyal to him free passage back to the Levant. Social reforms included the expulsion of women from the odjak barracks and the closure of the taverns. All of these items caused concern among some members of the military, and several of them escaped to zmalas where they began to organize the deposition of the new dey. Ali sent emissaries to the Kabyles asking them to hinder the passage of troops to Algiers, but it was not until 29 November 1816 that the anti-dey forces arrived outside Bab Azoun.

It is obvious that in order to gain the respect and loyalty of the Kabyles, Ali must have offered them something, and perhaps it is no accident that the Kabyle revolts of 1815 continued, and in some cases, spread during 1816. It is most probable that the dey offered to alleviate the food shortages which were currently causing havoc in the less productive regions. It is also likely that the withdrawal of troops to Algiers and the concomitant weakness of the beys allowed those regions which were more volatile a chance to demonstrate their unhappiness with the current regimes. In any case, Constantine and its region were suffering from Kabyle attacks and poor administration, but it is significant that while the beylik system was under considerable pressure at this time, it did not disintegrate, but it actually became more acceptable and in some cases, even stronger, after the difficult years were over. It must also be recalled that there were other serious problems confronting Algiers at this time: in August 1816, the town had been almost completely devastated by the military actions of Exmouth and

Van Capellan; war with Tunis continued from time to time; poor harvests in 1815-16, combined with severe locust attacks brought the country close to famine; and finally, a new outbreak of the plague struck during the winter of 1816-17. Militarily, the war with the United States and the subsequent loss of a large part of the Algerian fleet, along with the death of rais Hamidou, the most successful of the later corsairs, did nothing to help the ailing economy. If ever there was a time when the government of Algiers was in a position of weakness, under duress from so many directions, it was during the days of the "véritable révolution" during 1816-17; yet once again the resilience and flexibility of the system allowed it to bend and change as the difficulties proceeded.

Ali Khodja's difficulties were apparent, however, as he was confronted with the odjak troops from the interior who were not pleased with the new dey's handling of his responsibilities. Ali was prepared. He had 6,000 loyal troops composed of Kouloughlis, loyal odjak members, Kabyles, and Arabs waiting inside Bab Azoun, while the artillery of the Fort l'Empereur and Bab Azoun were loaded. When the leaders of the odjak troops refused to withdraw, the artillery opened fire, then the gates opened and the dey's troops charged. When it was over 1,200 odjak soldiers and 150 of their leaders had been killed; many others were executed later, while the remainder were sent back to the Levant. Ali then allowed the city to celebrate by financing three days of public rejoicing.

Ali Khodja has not been accorded the role of reformer or rebuild-er of the political system at Algiers. In fact, he has been

seen as "the greatest tyrant and libertine,"<sup>29</sup> and "as foul a monster as had ever soiled the earth," who during his "short but horrible and awful reign,"<sup>30</sup> did little to help the cause of the people of Algiers. This, however, was a European reaction, caused mostly by an incident involving two young European girls who had somehow found their way to Algiers, only to be introduced into the dey's harem. The incident was resolved without destroying the honour of either the dey or the girls, but the European public was not to forget or forgive the event. On the other hand, Shaler credits Ali with being "a man of intelligence and good natural abilities, but . . . principally remarkable for his presumption and temperance of character."<sup>31</sup> Some of the decrees signed by him demonstrate the contradictions of his character: during the time of famine, he imposed an arbitrary tax on the wheat sold in the markets; he kept a large seraglio for himself, but he intended "de jeter à la mer toutes les filles de joie."<sup>32</sup> Overall, his intentions appear to have been to control the excesses of the undisciplined odjak; rebuild the city's defences;<sup>33</sup> restore some measure of security to the position of dey; and maintain a reasonable degree of financial control within his office. Whatever his plans for the future were, then ended on 1 March 1818, when he died of the plague.

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29. Playfair, Scourge, p. 281.

30. FO 3/23, 8 February 1821, McDonell to F.O.

31. Shaler, Sketches, p. 156. Shaler also reports that some foreign consuls had to "stumble over scores of murdered carcasses in their way to the hall of audience," but there is little first hand evidence which would suggest that this blood-thirsty depiction of the dey is entirely accurate.

32. De Grammont, Histoire, p. 382.

33. Completed on 2 March 1817, six months after the Exmouth attack. Playfair, Scourge, p. 281.

His successor - chosen by himself, not the odjak - was his Khodja el-kheil,<sup>34</sup> Hussein, who immediately proclaimed a general amnesty and withdrew some of the more unpopular decrees of his predecessor. Hussein was the last dey. He was not similar to Ali in either style or temperament. He desired to remain in the casbah, perhaps out of fear, but also out of choice; he did experience one unsuccessful assassination attempt early in his term of office, but after that he was free from the threat of untimely death. The British consul Thomas described him as dignified, with a "mild character for which he was remarkable."<sup>35</sup>

If the political structure of Algiers was based on a hierarchical model, immediately below the position of dey was the divan. During Ali's tenure it consisted of fourteen "ministers" and the dey, each position with various functions relating to the important aspects of life; Omar (1815-16) had a divan of fifteen while in 1809 the divan included approximately twenty-five individuals. It always seemed to have a flexible number of positions, with members being selected on the basis of skill in specialty areas and current needs. The portrayal of the two hundred member divan described by some earlier observers was a gathering for show, not a working administrative group. The five or six principal "ministers" were usually chosen by the dey, but there is no evidence to suggest that those replaced were harmed in any way, except on the rarest occasions when mob violence overtook more people

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34. This position seemed to combine some aspects of justice (Julien, Histoire, p. 6), finance, and military responsibility - especially regarding the cavalry (spahis). (Dubois-Thainville, "Sur Alger," p. 128). In sum, probably the second or third "minister" in the divan, responsible for several key areas.

35. FO 3/29, 21 May 1827.

than usual. It was more common that the retired officials moved to their country houses, took other jobs in the administration, or in some cases, returned to the place of their birth. In most cases it seems that the divan remained relatively stable from dey to dey with the exception of the principal ministers from time to time. The actual role of the divan needs clarification also: some observers note that the deys "ont envahi toute la puissance;"<sup>36</sup> or that "the dey was an autocrat, for it was only in theory that his authority was limited by his . . . divan;"<sup>37</sup> but this was obviously impossible given the complicated structure of government and the multitude of duties implicit in running the city and its beyliks. It is not realistic to assume autocracy given the diversity of the people, the slowness of communication, the diffused nature of the entire structure, and the sheer numbers of officials - each of whom had some power or influence - between the governed and the government. The charge of tyranny was usually a label applied by those observers who could not get close enough to the system - or who did not really care to investigate it - to decipher its complications.

It is possible to discern some aspects of the role and functions of the divan by examining its membership and comparing its duties before and after the "revolution" of 1816. Both Omar and Ali wrote letters to the Sultan, Mahmud II (1808-39), which were signed by their entire divans.<sup>38</sup> A comparison of these two documents along with a correlation

36. Dubois-Thainville, "Sur Alger," p. 130.

37. Julien, History, pp. 321-322.

38. Tememi, Documents, pp. 229-233 and pp. 237-239.



with earlier analyses, such as that by Dubois-Thainville in 1809 helps to demonstrate that the divan did function both administratively and as a control and management body, fulfilling its major role: regulating and directing the affairs of the government both locally and internationally.<sup>39</sup>

The first item of interest concerns the relatively stable size of the various divans. Secondly, each of the divans under consideration had a common core of six ministers, exclusive of the dey; a Khaznadar (treasurer); the Khodja el-kheil (receiver-general); agha (military leader); oukil el-khardj (port, or marine representative); beit el-maldji (in charge of filling vacant positions); and at least one cadi (Muslim judge). Other representatives seemed to be admitted as there was a need or desire. For example, prior to 1817 there was a second agha from the odjak; and during the times when the taifa of rais was an important economic contributor, this group was represented also. Other members who participated from time to time, but whose positions were not common to the three examples were accountants (rakamdji); envoys to or from the Porte; a member in charge of habous (goods or lands left to religious foundations) usually called a nakib-el-ashraf; chief justices (iki-el-aghasi); muftis, that is, either one or two interpreters of Islamic law; and several others whose titles seem to be untranslatable.

Along with the inner divan there were several other levels of administration which demonstrated the ability of the Ottoman system to relate to its governed, and to look after its own. Secretaries and bureaucrats communicated both ways, and most of the routine affairs were handled without the advice or interference of the divan. One

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39. Temeni, Documents, pp. 127-131.

of the most important secondary levels of the divan concerned the role of Khodjas (Deputy Ministers) who "forment l'aristocratie de cette administration."<sup>40</sup> These bureaucrats, along with the caids and others formed the actual connection between the governing classes and the people. They could, apparently, attend some meetings of the divan, and were reported to be in a very lucrative position regarding the exploitation of the country's resources as they were, in some cases, the middle-men between the taxpayers and the government. Their positions were granted to them on the payment of a fixed sum to the public treasury, and most of them were Ottomans in the high echelons, with Kouloughlis and Arabs forming the lesser ranks in both the beyliks and the city of Algiers. Boyer lists several of these positions at Algiers:<sup>41</sup>

1. Khodja makhzan el-zra - who received the taxes on grain from the interior;
2. Khodja el-aioun - who was in charge of fresh water supplies to the city and the habous which financed most of them;
3. Khodja el-rahba - who received the tax from grain brought to the urban markets;
4. Khodja el-melh - controller of the salt monopoly;
5. Khodja el-djeld - controller of the leather monopoly;
- and 6. Khodja el-goumerek - the customs agent in charge of imports from Muslim countries.

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40. Boyer, La vie, p. 98.

41. Boyer, La vie, p. 98

He then observes that there were several other Khodjas who performed other tasks for the right to withhold one-tenth of their collections for their own use.

The next rank of bureaucrats - who also purchased their positions - were the caids, of whom it has been said: "L'Arabe est un coffre dont le caid est la clef." It has already been noted how these functionaries filled roles in the beyliks and among the tribes, and therefore it is necessary at this point to discuss the urban caids and their duties. In Algiers the caids were in charge of daily operations within the city: the caid el-fahs was responsible for the local policing; the caid el-zebel was in charge of cleaning the city; the caid el-chouara was responsible for the proper functioning of the sewage system; the caid el-aioun was accountable for the delivery of fresh water supplies to the fountains and hammams and apparently there were other caids who performed other duties.<sup>42</sup> Caids did not attend meetings of the divan, but were an important intermediary between the people of Algiers and the upper-level bureaucrats. It is evident that the Khodjas were responsible mostly for receiving taxes and duties on monopoly items while the caids were in charge of the actual services - delivering those facets of urban life which were necessary for the peace and security of the city.

Thus, far from being a "dead letter," the divan and its bureaucracy were an integral part of the system of government which was flexible enough to allow changes to take place within the system

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42. Boyer, La vie, p. 99; and Lespès, Alger, p. 177.

without the disruptions which would be the result of massive purges. That is, the government of Algiers had the ability to function continuously, to monitor and adjust as circumstances dictated, without reference to the sometimes chaotic results of interference by special interest groups. When necessary, however, practicality could prevail: after the death of Omar it is interesting to note that the entire divan was changed - not one "minister" remained on the divan who had been involved with decisions made during the more turbulent years, and this is another indication that there was a definite desire to alter the direction and style of government. Obviously, the government should not be portrayed as a model of decency and efficiency but neither should it be condemned as totally incapable of reform or positive actions. Some authors have appreciated the responses of the government to the difficult situations:

It is not so much that the Turkish rulers created or encouraged anarchy, as that they themselves were caught up in the complications of indigenous politics and were compelled to take account of these conditions. . . . And it must be noticed that once Turkish rule was removed by the French there was no diminution of tribal unrest. On the contrary, the disappearance of Turkish rule was followed by a period which could well deserve the title of anarchy.<sup>43</sup>

Pierre Boyer, not an advocate of any aspect of Ottoman rule, has admitted that there may have been a certain validity and direction to the efforts of the ruling classes:

Le règne du dernier dey semble avoir été celui d'une lente mais sure remise en place de l'État. L'arrivée de Français en 1830 allait mettre fin prématurément à une évolution qui eut, peut-être, abouti à la constitution d'un État "national" semblable à celui de Tunis.<sup>44</sup>

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43. Johnson, "Problems", p. 228.

44. "Introduction à une Histoire intérieure de la Régence d'Alger," Revue Historique, t. 235, no. 2 (1966), p. 311.

The next task is to attempt to analyze the way the city itself was administered given the nature of the senior levels of government. There has been very little specific research done on Algiers, and there are very few sources which can be drawn upon by those not capable of examining the Ottoman archives, but there has been enough general examination of the subject to allow the clarification of several misconceptions. The first concerns the role of the dey and divan in the affairs of the city: it is almost certain that they never interfered or in any way attempted to "rule" the city. The person on the divan who was responsible for the urban aspects of politics was the agha of Arabs, whose urban function seemed to be to make sure that the lower level administrative positions were filled. The caids were the actual links between the city and the divan, through the Khodjas who did not really affect the ordinary operations of the city.

As has already been noted, the city was divided into three main regions: the casbah, the upper town (el-Djebel), and the lower town (el-Outhan). After 1816 the casbah cannot be considered to be a part of the town for normal administrative purposes, since it was almost entirely cut off - except for government officials and the military - from other areas, and became a self-contained administrative quarter. Each of the other sections was sub-divided into harah, and these were the most important factors in the development of a stable municipal government. Obviously these quarters were not the result of Ottoman policies, but rather reflect the Islamic nature of the town and its people. They do show, however, that the Ottoman rulers were not attempting

to overcome the inherent nature of the society, but were prepared to build on a basis of Islamic cultural values, and were allowing the people to develop their local institutions on generally accepted Islamic principles, as free from external influences as was possible.

One of the key individuals in the system of urban government at Algiers was the amin, a civic notable who was usually one of the most respected men in his residential area, as well as a skilled worker in his craft or an influential merchant. It is interesting to note that the amin was not necessarily chosen for his wealth, but for the general leadership qualities he possessed. He generally had responsibilities on three levels: socially, he was expected to consider the welfare of families in his harah who might be in financial difficulty; commercially, he could act as an intermediary between his craft or trade and the people - to ensure fairness and arbitrate disputes; and politically, he was a liason between the harah, its concerns and problems, and the caids who were responsible for specific duties.<sup>45</sup> In other parts of the Maghrib there is evidence for the existence of councils of amins which met periodically to discuss matters of common interest, but in spite of repeated references to this body, there is no evidence to suggest that this was the case at Algiers. Another related area concerns the existence of craft or trade guilds - corporations of allied workers - under the control or leadership of a muhtasib who mediated between clients and masters, set and monitored fair prices, and checked weights and

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45. R. Le Tourneau, Les villes musulmanes de l'Afrique du nord (Alger, 1957), pp. 51-52.

measures within his corporation. Until further research has been completed it is impossible to state definitively the political role which corporations may have played in pre-colonial Algiers, but it does appear to be likely that their role was mostly social and economic, not political; and that there were more important collectivities which need to be examined in greater detail also.

If the political system at Algiers was to be summarized, the conclusion once again would be that the basic unit of the society was the family - urban or rural; agricultural or craft; Arab or Berber; Ottoman or Kouloughli; or otherwise. This unit differed in space and prestige within the various harah or douar, but can rightly be termed the foundation of the society. These groups paid for their security through taxes and a low degree of political participation, but in return they were generally free from disruption - unless the extraction of wealth by taxation can be considered a disruption. Within the several harah, amins played the major administrative role, reporting to the caids if there were serious difficulties, but were usually - along with the local religious hierarchy - capable of maintaining law, order, justice, security, and public services in their quarters. As this network extended throughout the city, the inter-relationships between the various harah were regulated by the caids, who in turn were responsible to the Khodjas for the proper fulfillment of their duties. Once again, the system tended to diffuse power so that within the walls authority was present but relatively unobtrusive to the citizens, with the more closely supervised areas being the souks, funduqs, the port, and other non-residential

areas where people from outside the city tended to congregate. The relationships between these various sections of the city, their people, and their roles will be dealt with later. Outside the walls the same philosophy applied: govern the country with as little interference as possible; attempt to administer justice, collect taxes, and provide security within the tribal framework which had existed before the Ottomans took over; and maintain the economic and social systems with their Islamic values intact. At present the task is to stress the Islamic nature of the city since it was not entirely unlike other Muslim towns; the diffused nature of the power structure which allowed local characteristics to develop within reasonable guidelines; and the unique attributes, the result of the Ottoman influences which created a distinctive environment. Algiers did not function like either Fes or Tunis; its quality of life and particular style were, to a great extent, caused by the Ottoman presence and gave the city a flavour which is lacking in other North African communities.

The Ottoman government at Algiers was based on military power, and was essentially a foreign presence, but this did not make it the oligarchic, despotic government dedicated only to piracy, extortion and cruelty described by so many. When the role of the city as the western extremity of the  Jihad , interfacing the Muslim east with the Christian west, is considered; when comparison with other governmental attitudes and styles in European countries is made; and when account is taken of the political possibilities open to Algeria, it becomes evident that the system actually provided as reasonable a political



presence as existed almost anywhere else. It is true that there are many reports of cruelty, prejudice, harassment, and general obnoxious behaviour on the part of the Ottoman ruling class, but considering that in Europe during the same period there are also many examples of the same intolerance and injustice, it should be difficult to be too judgemental.

At this point it becomes necessary to investigate one of the other threads which connected the various circles of Algerian society - the economic system. While discussing economic and commercial characteristics it is again essential to recognize that Algiers was not independent from the rest of the society, but it was the administrative centre where most of the economic activity - as far as production, manufacturing, distribution of almost everything but agriculture - took place. It was also the major exporting and importing location for the country and thus it was the place where most of the relations between Europe and Algeria were developed. Algiers was an important Mediterranean city which had a specific economic life which complemented the political framework outlined above.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

It is difficult to recreate the economic environment in and around Algiers from the sources which are currently available. This is one of the major academic problems discussed in the Introduction. It is necessary, therefore, to attempt to draw together evidence from diverse and wide-spread sources - some of which may not be as reliable as could be wished. The problem is not with the authors of the evidence but with the scarcity of both primary and secondary sources. One of the more important secondary sources relating to the economic situation in Algeria prior to the Conquest was written by Marcel Emerit in 1952.<sup>1</sup> His summary - just over three pages long - seems to have become the basis for most of the later scholarship. His thesis is that because of the "indolence du gouvernement turc" and the impossibility of controlling or developing trade, the country was "condamnée à une vivre dans la misère . . . L'impression qui domine est celle d'une routine et d'une pauvreté que le gouvernement ne se soucie jamais de combattre."<sup>2</sup> Emerit arrived at these conclusions without revealing how he determined the economic health of the Regency or the basis for the comparison which

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1. "La situation économique de la Régence en 1830" Information Historique, Nov./Dec. (1952), pp. 169-172.
  2. Emerit, "La situation," p. 170.

he must have had in mind; and, since he has not given the sources on which he based his thesis, they are obviously open to question.

Pierre Boyer, another of the foremost scholars in North African history, has also spent a great deal of time and effort attempting to prove a basic hypothesis: that Algeria in 1830 was in a state of decline in all areas, that the economic sphere was the most debilitated, and since it was also the most important, it therefore stands to reason that the entire society was becoming less and less viable as the years progressed - mostly because of the Ottoman presence. Further, Boyer notes that the cities of Algeria "ne sont pas profondément intégrée dans l'économie générale du pays, qui peut fonctionner sans elles," and that since the cities contained only seven to ten percent of the total population, more attention should be paid to the rural people than the city-dwellers.<sup>3</sup> This last point certainly deserves intensive study, but it is impossible to ignore Algiers as a completely unimportant factor in pre-colonial Algeria.

In order to build a overview of the economic structures of Algiers and its hinterland it is first necessary to examine the production of goods and services; the relationships between Algiers and its beyliks; the commercial connections between Algiers and Europe; the various sources of revenue; and the alterations which were taking place as the government attempted to compensate for changes in income and outlook. The first change concerned the fact that the taifa of rais was no longer able to take prizes where it wished. One reason for this change was that

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3. Boyer, L'évolution, p. 61.

European technology, developed by navies which had been fighting large scale naval battles during the Napoleonic Wars, forced the Algerians to withdraw from the Atlantic and even the European shores of the Mediterranean. This severely reduced the revenues which formerly came from the sale or use of captured vessels, the redemption of captives, the skills of sailors, and the disposal of merchandise. At this point, another discussion begins: how necessary to the city were the revenues from "la chase?" During the height of Algerian power, there is no doubt that the income from the activities of the rais was considerable, so much so that it was possible for the government of the city to maintain an incredibly large treasury even after building new edifices, improving defences, maintaining armed forces, and accounting for the sometimes expensive tastes of some of the ruling classes. This treasury was not seen as the private property of the dey and his administrators, but was kept in order to provide for recurring deficits during the years when the corsair activities were unsuccessful. The total sum was enormous, and even after years of deficits in the nineteenth century the Algerian treasury amounted to over one hundred million francs when it was transferred to Paris after the Conquest.<sup>4</sup> Thus, while the results of the corsair activities were substantial, their reduction did not mean that the city

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4. Julien, Histoire, p. 57. Shaler (Sketches, pp. 79-80) notes that in 1822 the deficit between imports and exports was approximately \$1,000,000 and that the deficit was paid annually out of the public treasury with gold and silver. Danziger (Abd al-Qadir, p. 27) observes that the 1829 deficit was about Fr. 700,000. Danziger has converted the amounts into 1975 U.S. dollars: the 1822 deficit would have been equal to about \$4,500,000, while the 1829 amount would have been approximately \$600,000. He also calculates the value of the public treasury in 1830 to be equivalent to \$117,000,000.

was ripe for economic disaster.

The activities of the Algerian corsairs have been a major subject in almost every work on the region. Their practices have been described, the results of "la chase" have been examined, and they have been compared and evaluated with respect to European privateers and other Muslim groups. Nevertheless, the key to their role at Algiers has not usually been emphasized. The taifa of rais was not an integral part of the nineteenth century city. They existed on the fringes, providing some skilled labourers and foreign merchandise through their seizures, but they were not integrated into civic life. They lived close to the port, separated from the city to a great extent; were a mixture of Muslims and renegade Christians; they were allowed to function outside of Islamic codes of behaviour because of their position; and they seemed to be in regular conflict with the members of the odjak which provided troops for the ships. They continued to exist because they were necessary: as long as Europe controlled the trade routes and kept its ports closed to Muslim ships, the only way the Algerians could receive the necessary goods was to either take them by force or attain them through treaties. Thus, when Stephen Decatur defeated the rais Hamidou in 1815, the result was not continued warfare, but a peace which allowed for all "the advantages resulting from a friendly intercourse with a rising nation."<sup>5</sup> These advantages were trade for the Algerians, and a friendly Mediterranean port for the Americans. In short by the nineteenth century the taifa of rais at Algiers had declined in power

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5. Shaler, Sketches, Appendix D, James Madison to the Dey of Algiers, 12 April 1815.

and significance. Treaties with the major powers, many northern European states, and the United States provided Algiers with most of its imports without recourse to "la chase," and the rais became expendable.<sup>6</sup> No doubt there was loss to the public treasury, but the benefits were important enough to render this loss secondary. Thus, there was an economic decline at Algiers, but the results of diminished corsair activity were not a significant factor. The new difficulties in dealing with the loss in revenue were resolved by attempting to revise the civic life-style, but a far greater difficulty was dealing with European powers who had formerly been using their military capabilities against one another, but who now were turning this same energy towards places like Algiers. Imperialism did not die with the Emperor.

In many ways, increasing revenues by collecting more in taxes from the interior was just as difficult as dealing with the declining sea-based revenue, but on land there were certain advantages held by the government. First, almost all manufactured imports came through Algiers and were liable for import duty before being distributed to interior or civic markets. These imports were usually of either the "luxury" or mass-produced variety, with France and Britain being the two major suppliers. Second, distribution of these items necessitated the use of roads, and caused the tribes to consider connections with the political power structure to be reasonably worthwhile because of

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6. For an analysis of the taifa of rais see: Wolf (Barbary Coast, pp. 113-150) for the "Golden Age" description; Peter Earle, Corsairs of Malta and Barbary (London, 1970) for a comparative study of Mediterranean "pirates;" and Valensi, (On the Eve of Colonialism, pp. 47-55) for a short but balanced account.

the ensuing availability of goods in their markets. Third, and probably most important to the beyliks and tribes, the interchanges which occurred as they brought their products to market were not completely one-sided as there were the usual benefits from trading. It would be incorrect, however, to extrapolate from these advantages the impression that the rural people were lining up to seek materials from Europe. In most cases the evidence leads to the conclusion that the European luxury goods were mostly purchased in Algiers, while some of the more practical items were in some demand in the interior, but that generally, the country was self-sufficient.

The most important economic activity in the country was agriculture. This statement would no doubt be challenged by the supporters of the "pirates and plunder" alliance, but their complaints could not change the facts. Except in the infrequent years of drought, or after the occasional locust plague, Algeria was not only capable of feeding its own millions but also of exporting large amounts to Europe.<sup>7</sup> This fact is attested to by the debt which was built up by France during the Napoleonic Wars, and which eventually caused the dey to lose his temper when Deval was incapable of sorting out the problem, eventually

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7. Shaler (Sketches, p. 12) estimates the total population of Algeria at "rather under than over a million," but other estimates have ranged as high as five million. X. Yacono ("Peut-on évaluer la population de l'Algérie vers 1830?" Revue Africaine, 3eme Trim. (1954), pp. 277-307) notes that a more reasonable estimate would be closer to three million. He also comments on the urban-rural breakdown of population, observing that a 1:10 ratio was quite realistic for the period - not only in Algeria, but also elsewhere. Most authorities now consider the population of Algiers to have been approximately 50,000 before the Conquest.

leading to the blockade of Algiers and the Conquest. The problem was that Algiers had sold over eight million francs worth of wheat to France through the brokers, Bacri and Busnach. Dey Mustapha (1798-1805) wrote to Napoleon, asking him to resolve the difficulties: "Je vous prie en grâce de donner les ordres nécessaires pour qu'on termine les affaires de Bacri et de Busnach," but there was no action until 1819 when the French government finally approved in principal the sum of seven million francs - which was never paid because of severe opposition within France.<sup>8</sup> The point of all this is simply to indicate that the agricultural sector in Algeria was not a subsistence industry, but one with export potential which regularly produced surpluses.

The major agricultural regions in Algeria were the areas known as the Sahel and Mitidja, both in the Dar el-Sultan. It is obvious that the Ottoman government was aware of the potential in this region because they kept it under the direct control of Algiers. The most important products in the region from the government's point of view were wheat and barley, but other fruit and vegetable crops were just as important to the local people. The list of products and the extent of production noted by both Shaw (1738) and Shaler (1826) are impressive in variety and value. Other agricultural areas which were less productive were in Kabylia and the northern edges and oases of the Sahara. In Kabylia, the main products were olives and figs, and since these were not substantial enough to provide a regular diet, it was necessary to trade their surpluses for the grain from the Dar el-Sultan. In the

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8. Masson, "Concessions", p. 61.



south, the products were either livestock - goats, camels, and sheep - or dates, and therefore the southern tribes needed to exchange products with the coastal regions as well. Once again the importance of the market place is made evident.

René Gallissot has interpreted the rural life in Algeria as being part of a pre-capitalist society built on the exploitation of the peasant classes by a military and social aristocracy based at Algiers, but extending throughout the country by means of the administrative devices described earlier.<sup>9</sup> He notes that the rural populations were also subjected to exploitation on the basis of land tenure. The entire structure of land use and possession needs to be examined before it is possible to comment on Gallissot's theory.

In pre-colonial Algeria there were five broad categories of land. The near equivalent to private property was known as milk, of which there was about 4.5 million hectares. The public domain, that is the land under the control of the dey or beys, called beylik land, was further subdivided into four categories: apanage - land granted to officials in return for services; khamisat - land owned by these officials, but let to tenant farmers; azel - land let out to tribes in exchange for payment of the hukr tax; and tuwiza - land worked by corvées. There were about one million hectares of beylik land. The third category, makhzan land, was the land granted to those tribes who chose to serve the dey and his agents in some capacity. There was about one-half million hectares of makhzan land. Arsh was tribal lands

9. "Precolonial Algeria," Economy and Society, IV, 4 (1975), pp. 418-445.

which were held by the community on the basis of historical rights. There were about five million hectares of arsh, including the mawat sub-category which was traditionally used for collective grazing of herds and flocks. The final category was habous, which was land which had been donated to a Muslim foundation for the purpose of either escaping confiscation or taxation, or for spiritual reasons, to benefit the ummah. Habous were generally more urban than rural, and many of the marabouts, mosques, and fountains of Algiers were operated by them.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, when Gallissot describes the exploitation of the peasants of Algeria by the ruling classes, he is mostly concerned with makhzan and beylik lands - that is about one and a half million hectares of land under the authority of the dey, granted to officials or to allied tribes. These same tribes also possessed arsh lands of their own to a far higher degree, and thus it seems unlikely that the deys could absolutely control makhzan tribes simply through the allocation of relatively small amounts of land and immunity from some forms of taxation. It needs to be reiterated that some of the taxes were in the domain of Islam, not the dey - that is, they were seen as part of the whole idea of submission - the kharadj and ushr taxes fit this category, and while it is probable that some of these funds found their way into the public treasury, they were not paid because of land grants or services, but because of Islamic tradition. Gallissot, from his Marxist perspective, denies the reality of a spiritual dimension, and fails to see that

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10. From Reudy, Land Policy, pp. 4-12.

religious institutions may not be completely exploitive, but voluntary. He states, for example, that habous, were "collective forms (of ownership which) actually mystified the exploitation which operated from inside by monopolising the product of the labour of group members."<sup>11</sup>

Disagreement with Gallissot is not intended to be a denial of exploitation, but it is meant to underline the necessity of examining closely the economic structures and of analyzing them without preconceived opinions about their effect on the people who live within the system. In spite of exploitation, archaic means of production, and feudal techniques of whatever variety, life in the agricultural sector of Algeria's economy continued. With a minimum of technological development, a certain amount of exploitation, and uncertain harvests due to geographical, social, or political difficulties, this sector was still capable of producing all the requirements of the country - and more. Further, the feudal dimension is difficult to countenance since there were few landless tenant farmers, few large estates, and no real rural, military aristocracy which took on the leadership at the expense of other local elites. When Gallissot states that the "Turkish regime reserved, in so far as it was able, the political functions and fiscal powers to a new military caste which was superimposed on other aristocratic bodies . . . (and) rigidified command feudalism into a ranked system of hierarchies, however discontinuous, oppressing the countryside," he is overstating the case on at least two points.<sup>12</sup> One concerns

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11. Gallissot, "Precolonial Algeria," pp. 422-423.

12. Gallissot, "Precolonial Algeria," pp. 437-438

the rigid, ranked hierarchies, which does not fit with the more flexible, pragmatic model described earlier; the second concerns the level of oppression, which seems to have been much less than that described by Gallissot.

It would be as great a mistake to describe the agricultural sector of Algeria's economy as an idyllic mix of Ottoman policies, Islamic values, and unconcerned rural residents happily producing the necessary commodities to keep the whole operation functioning. The objective is to find a balanced view which accurately assesses the situation. The evidence leads to some reasonable conclusions. First, since production was generally high even with the low level of technology, there must have been some degree of efficiency in the system. Oppressed and exploited peasants could disrupt the agricultural processes in a variety of ways, but they usually chose not to do so. Second, the rural people had access to markets, and this indicates that there was probably some chance of profiting by selling or trading surplus products. In most feudal systems the first objective was production for the ruling classes, then production for existence - peasants were not given free access to markets. Third, there was tribal (arsh), private (milk), and collective (mawat) lands available, which provided the farmer with the security to meet the basic needs of his family without recourse to the central authority, and it was the fulfillment of these basic needs which enabled the rural collective to exist without undue consideration for that authority. The relationship between the land and the people could not be controlled or legislated by a central power:

The bond which unites the fellah to his land is mystical rather than utilitarian. He belongs to his fields much more than his fields belong to him. He is attached to his land by deeply affective ties . . . .<sup>13</sup>

Finally, during the times of revolt, plague, drought or pestilence, there is evidence that the agricultural sector looked to the central authority for help in alleviating the distress. In 1819, for example, 50,000 bushels of wheat were imported to Algiers; at other times, government troops would be sent to help protect those douars which were under attack.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, that sector of the Algerian economy which provided all classes with food and which brought currency into the public treasury through exports, was functioning very well prior to the Conquest. The Ottomans did not try to manipulate the agricultural sector, but rather adapted their methods of administration to the traditional society. As Douglas Johnson has noted " . . . there was a pattern of landholding, which corresponded to historical and geographical influence, which could not easily be overthrown or disregarded, and which fitted into the rhythm of economic life."<sup>15</sup> Part of this traditional rural society involved the family unit as the most basic element, and this factor has to be considered when examining the rural economy which can only be understood with "reference to the specific mode of relationship existing between man and the soil. Indeed, if this civilization is inseparable from a particular type of economy . . . the economy itself can be

13. Pierre Bourdieu, The Algerians (Boston, 1962), p. 103.

14. Shaler, Sketches, pp. 78-79.

15. Johnson, "Problems," p. 227.

understood only in terms of this civilization, because of the fact that it is closely tied to the social structures whose cohesion more or less guarantees a balance between man and his natural environment."<sup>16</sup> The natural environment of Algeria provided the people with their needs; the political environment provided cohesion and security to a reasonable degree; the economic environment provided the means by which the families could survive and grow within their tents, douars, towns, or cities. However, there were more aspects to the economic environment than agriculture.

Algeria was not blessed with large amounts of other resources which the people and government could use to support the agricultural sector. Some timber was produced from local forests, but it was not sufficient to meet the needs of the city and the port, therefore much - especially large timbers - had to be imported. Iron and lead were mined and refined in Kabylia, and the products were carried to Algiers in the form of small bars.<sup>17</sup> Salt was mined and used to trade with Saharan tribes; and salt-petre, the basis for the gun-powder industry, was also available in considerable quantities.<sup>18</sup> There may have been some small quantities of other minerals - silver, copper, and gold - since the mint at Algiers used these in its processes, and there is no evidence to suggest that the metals were imported.<sup>19</sup> Other than these, there

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16. Bourdieu, Algerians, p. 102.

17. Jackson, Algiers, p. 3.

18. FO 3/7, 21 October 1790

19. Rosenstock, "Economic and Social Conditions," p. 4. Boutin ("Reconnaissance," p. 77) notes the existence of gold, silver, lead, tin, and copper.

were no abundant resources to assist the government in augmenting its income. This was a major deficiency which no government of Algeria had been able to overcome until the twentieth century when oil began to add a new dimension to Algeria's resource economy.

When ships entered the port of Algiers the character of the city was immediately evident. The military aspects were confirmed by the walls and armaments which almost surrounded the port; the nature of the government was revealed by the customs agent (caid el-marsa) who assessed taxes on all imports, and the presence of the gardien-bashi (Captain of the port); and not infrequently, the Oukil el-hardj would be in attendance also, with the contingents of troops or workers, planning or re-building. The industry of the city was also represented in the form of shipbuilding. At the docks and along the beaches underneath the walls, ships were being repaired, constructed or launched,<sup>20</sup> while exports were being transferred from the city to the ships by carriers<sup>-</sup> usually Biskris<sup>21</sup> - and imports were moving through the Marine Gate (Bab el-Jihad) into the warehouses or souks. Ship building was one of the most sophisticated industries at Algiers, utilizing the skills of many of the captive seamen, especially before 1816. In the earlier days, European tradesmen who had skills in any of the marine arts were considered to be very valuable, and if they so desired, they could join

20. Shaler Sketches, p. 44) noticed three schooners being built at the same time during 1825.

21. Most of the porters in the city were from Biskra (325 km S.E. of Algiers). Biskris also operated most of the bakeries and served as household servants. They had their own amin. (Shaler, Sketches, pp. 86-87).

the ranks of renegades who tended to assume leadership roles in the marine or the rais, after they had proved their abilities by working on the docks of the dey. Many of the dockyard supervisors were Europeans who worked with both Algerian and captured labourers, although as the nineteenth century advanced, fewer and fewer captives were taken.<sup>22</sup> The marine yards and the related industries - rope and sail makers, blacksmiths, coopers, and so forth - encompassed part of the docks and most of the beaches, and were capable of working on many ships at the same time. The port was also shared with the fishermen who pulled their boats up onto the beach below the Fish Gate - Bab el-Hout - where European cargoes had to pass through customs.<sup>23</sup> Other secondary industries connected to the port and its functions were the Dar el-Nehas and the stone quarry, both close to Bab el-Oued. The foundry - also supervised by Europeans - produced most of the large weapons and shot for the marine, while the quarry produced the rocks for the walls and docks. The quarry had been the principal working area for unskilled captives, but with the decline of "la chase," the dey tended to commute death sentences or other harsh punishments to labour in the stone works.<sup>24</sup>

Inside the walls manufacturing and commerce were the two ways

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22. For the period under study, Boyer (La vie, pp. 184-185) lists a Maltese engineer who had worked in the French Naval Yard at Toulon; Geoffroy, a Frenchman "mis à la disposition d'Hassan" (1791-98); a Spaniard, Maestro Antonio, who constructed two frigates; and, in 1815, Gozel, an engineer from Marseilles.
23. Lespès, Alger, p. 120n2.
24. Boyer, La vie, p. 185.



open to most urban groups to earn their living.<sup>25</sup> These occupations were organised on the basis of corporations of workers, usually known as guilds,<sup>26</sup> which controlled access to the market place, established fair prices, mediated disputes, and set standards of workmanship within the particular craft. Unfortunately very little research has been done on this subject within Algiers, and it is impossible to make definitive statements about the extent of their collective operations at this time. Nevertheless, some forms of craft organizations did exist, but because of the nature of the government, it seems that they never attained the independent role of organizations in other jurisdictions.

The city was capable of producing almost everything it needed for survival and development within the pre-industrial world. Along the Souk el-Kebir, around the two main gates, and even within some of the harah there were places where manufacturing took place. The major industry - as in most North African towns - was textiles. Raw wool from the interior entered the city through Bab Azoun, close to where

25. Manufacturing, in the traditional sense, includes all the skilled crafts which implied the use of the hands - thus, writers and other "professional" groups are included. Commerce includes all the varieties of buying and selling which took place within the city, the Regency, and the Mediterranean.
26. Ottoman guilds did not function the same way as European guilds did. There was no guildhall and therefore, unlike Europe, the guildhall could not become the town hall. There was no open political role for the guild within the administrative structures of Algiers. This was different from the roles of the guilds in Istanbul, which had as their principle duties the establishment of "an administrative link between the ruling institutions and the town population, and . . . a means of supervision and control of this population by the rulers." (Gabriel Baer, "Administrative, Economic, and Social Functions of Turkish Guilds," International Journal of Middle East Studies, I, 1 (1970), p. 49.)

most of the spinning and dyeing were done; then the wool was sent to the various markets or fundugs where it was resold to merchants, woven into whatever fabric was needed, or converted into tapestries or carpets. Algerian carpets were exported - they were known for their beauty and softness<sup>27</sup> - and sold in the souks, along with the leather goods, embroidered cloth and tapestries which were also made in the city.<sup>28</sup> The major manufactures of the city were in the textile sector - wool, linen, leather, and silk (imported from the Levant) - but all of the craftsmanship was not for export or trade with the interior. Each household tended to provide the textile needs for itself, and looms were a common object of furniture in the houses where the women wove the fabric for the haiks, djellabas, tapestries, and other items which were to be used by the family.

The fabrication of leather into shoes, belts, suitcases, and tack for animals was also a major urban industry. Tanning and dyeing took place close to Bab Azoun, near the meat markets. Leather was also a major export industry to Europe and the Ottoman Empire, as leather from Algiers "dressed and coloured in the Morocco style, appear(s) to approach very near to the perfection of the art."<sup>29</sup> The corporation of shoe makers was included in the ranks of "les métiers les plus estimés dans ce pays" along with jewellers, druggists, perfumers, booksellers, and the chechia manufacturers. These hats, common apparel in most of

27. Renaudot, Alger, p. 158.

28. Crombet, "Alger," p. 83.

29. FO 3/9, 3 July 1802, reports "4 or 5 Cargoes of Wool, as many of Hydes" exported from Algiers, and "30,000 hydes" exported annually "as nearly as can be ascertained" from Bona; and Shaler, Sketches, p. 71.

the Islamic world, were made by means of a sophisticated manufacturing process which divided the operations into specific tasks, and were exported throughout the Ottoman Empire: "La quantité de bonnets qu'on envoie dans le Levant est extrêmement considérable."<sup>30</sup>

Other urban trades such as carpentry, masonry, bricklaying, and pottery fulfilled the necessary functions in the lower city, but these workers never attained the status of the higher profile corporations which had their souks closer to the centre of the town. Watch and clock-makers, mostly Europeans, were also in this area. In this location seamen from the port, consuls, European merchants, and other visitors could purchase their articles, "see the town," and drink coffee or wine without coming close to the real centre of the city - the residential El Djebel - or the more prosaic but functional working areas near the gates. It is almost possible to discern the area which early observers visited by reading the accounts of their impressions: some describe the areas around Bab el-Oued or Bab Azoun, while most tended to see the maydan around the Djenina and the port as typical of activities within the city. Thus, without access to the area above el-Outha (the lower town) - and there are very few reports of Europeans in this area - the impression of the city would be far different to that in the quieter, more domestic, cleaner harah of the upper town. This single fact

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30. Renaudot, Alger, p. 157. A document in Valensi (On the Eve of Colonialism, pp. 98-100) - a cargo manifest of a vessel bound for Smyrna - notes the importance of this product to North African cities. She also cites the "acute division of labour" which characterized the production of this commodity - an example of "early industrial capitalism." (pp. 40-41).

is one of the most important reasons why the city was so misunderstood by Europeans: they could see the port, the walls, the arsenal; they could experience the souks; they observed the variety of people; they heard the muezzin; they thought they had detected the heart of the city when they had only seen the arms and legs.

The general overview of the North African city - at least in its relationship to economic life - presented by Le Tourneau seems to fit the situation at Algiers when specific aspects are considered.<sup>31</sup> He observes that the city is composed of various groups - some based on profession or trade, others on ethnic background. In Algiers there were some corporations of workers within a trade, and there were some ethnic groups who looked after the more distasteful jobs: Biskris were porters, Kabyles or itinerant workers cleaned streets or sewers. Nevertheless, each group had an amin who looked after the interests of the corporation no matter what the status of the work. Le Tourneau describes the corporation as a focus of identity for the worker - there was neither unemployment nor individual initiative outside of the collective - and the dignity of the worker.

L'artisan maghrébin a si peu l'impression d'une infériorité quelconque qu'au contraire il éprouve un certaine fierté d'être un homme compétent en quelque chose: il a le sentiment de tenir une place dans la cité ou le travail manuel n'est pas considéré comme une activité inférieure, mais bien comme une activité sur le même plan moral que les autres.<sup>32</sup>

Le Tourneau also describes the structure of the corporation: a patron

31. Le Tourneau, Les villes, pp. 47-67.

32. Le Tourneau, Les villes, p. 66.

(m'allem), whose "position sociale est supérieure à sa situation pécuniaire;" workers who were similar to journeymen; and apprentices who had to demonstrate skills before advancing. All of the m'allem within a corporation could meet with the amin when or if necessary, and the muhtasib patrolled the souks making sure that the marketplaces were functioning as intended. He could sentence serious criminals to punishment like the bastinado, or for minor offenses he could have the offender paraded around the streets facing backwards on a donkey while criers told the population about his activities.<sup>33</sup>

Economic life at Algiers involved many different sectors: corporations of workers baked bread, milled wheat, swept streets, attended at the hammams, and performed all other functions which were necessary in a city of 50,000. At night the wealthy and middle classes went to their secure homes in the upper town where at sundown, heavy doors made their harah even more remote from the lower town. Itinerant workers went to caravanseries or funduqs close to Bab Azoun; and in earlier days, slaves went to the bagnios close to the port. After the morning call to prayer, the city started again; gates and shops opened, and business began - hours fixed by custom, not the clock.

Le rythme de la vie économique est très lent et calme: le terme de productivité n'a point de sens dans cette économie qui cherche à satisfaire les besoins, mais point à les créer ou à les développer.<sup>34</sup>

Slow and peaceful it may have been, but European observers have had

33. Boyer, La vie, p. 125.

34. Le Tourneau, Les villes, p. 55.

difficulty understanding the whole concept of economic life in an Islamic pre-industrial capitalist society. To the Europeans - especially in the "liberal age," when many analyses of Muslim communities were written - the lack of progress which they observed was attributed to overall backwardness and a lack of initiative. To the Muslims of Algiers the traditional life was far more inviting than the chaos which seemed to typify European society. Progress - at least in the "liberal" sense - was an alien attitude to those who were more or less content with most aspects of life the way it was.

Another aspect of economic life at Algiers was the trade which took place between the city and Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and the interior. The most prominent set of import and export figures was compiled by Shaler in 1822, and has been picked up by several other authors as being "made up from authentic documents (giving) a fair view of . . . trade," as Shaler stated.<sup>35</sup> This is in spite of the obvious deficiencies in the statistics; they only include exports to Europe, and they do not include grain. It was in 1822 when the French Maison Paret re-established cordial relations with Algiers and began to export from Bona under the jurisdiction of a manager (probably a Khodja created for the position) selected by the dey.<sup>36</sup> This agreement obviously

35. Shaler, Sketches, p. 79. Other authors who use Shaler's figures include Boyer, Renaudot, Lespès, and Danziger.

36. Julien, Histoire, p. 18. The most thorough study of the relationship between Algiers and France in the economic sphere is Masson's "Concessions et compagnies d'Afrique (1800-1830)." This article reviews the stormy commercial arrangements which preceded the Conquest. The specific role of Marseilles in this relationship is outlined by Julien in "Marseilles et la Question d'Alger à la veille de la Conquête," Revue Africaine, 1er trim. (1919), pp. 16-61.

added to the value of exports, but was not included by Shaler. Thus, when Danziger evaluates the trade of Algiers and comes to the conclusion that "it is clear that the Regency of Algiers was in a position to sustain even larger deficits for years to come,"<sup>37</sup> he is missing the essential point: it may very well have been the case that considering the missing elements in Shaler's figures, there was no deficit at all in 1822. This should not disguise the other obvious trade difficulty: Algiers had no merchant fleet, and therefore all exports were carried in "Christian" ships, but this problem has not been sufficiently researched at this time. It is possible to conjecture about the effects of this situation and the fact that the Marseilles' Chamber of Commerce made it very difficult for Muslims to set up warehouses or brokerage firms there, but until more basic investigation of these difficulties has been undertaken, no conclusive hypotheses can be formed. Nevertheless, European trade was a vital - and legitimate - source of revenue for Algiers, and the "tribute" paid by some nations was essentially a two level commitment: one, that the ships of treated countries would be free from attacks by the rais; and two, that the treated nations had access to the port of Algiers for both provisions and trade goods. Sweden, Denmark, Venice, and Holland usually paid their "tribute" in the form of military or naval supplies; Portugal was required to pay "nearly half a million dollars, an annual tribute of \$24,000, and the usual biennial consular presents;"<sup>38</sup> while the United States, France, and Britain concluded treaties on separate terms. These sums declined somewhat in the years

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37. Danziger, Abd al-Qadir, p. 27.

38. Playfair, Scourge, p. 248.

just prior to the Conquest because of the destruction of the Algiers fleet by Exmouth and Van Capellan in 1816, and the resurgent trade patterns in the Mediterranean after the Napoleonic Wars.

Trade with the Ottoman Empire is another poorly documented field. There was regular passage of ships to the Levant carrying trade goods and passengers involved in the hadj, but the lack of documentation in this area is lamentable. Some independent entrepreneurs combined the pilgrimage with commerce, buying goods in Cairo and Alexandria for re-sale at Algiers, and this could hardly be considered an isolated case given the size of the caravans traversing the North African routes - sometimes as many as three thousand people with more than ten thousand camels.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, this individual initiative was not as important to the Algiers' economy as the trade in olive oil, hides, chechias, and other merchandise would have been. It is known that there were two major caravans headed for the eastern Empire each year: the hadj, which left Taza in Morocco and passed through southern Algeria before heading towards Mecca; and the "caravanes des Maghrébines" which left Salé, following a coastal route through Algiers and Tunis. The former was primarily religious, with secondary commercial aspects; the latter was a purely commercial caravan.<sup>40</sup> There seems to be no data available on the extent and value of these caravans. It is quite possible that the North Africans got around the European control of the Mediterranean

39. André Raymond, "Tunisiens et Maghrébines au Caire au dix-huitième siècle," Cahiers de Tunisie, nos. 26/27 (1959), pp. 337 and 340.

40. R.L. Lawless and G.H. Blake, Tlemcen: Continuity and Change in an Algerian and Islamic Town (London, 1976), p. 60.



through utilization of their own cultural history, keeping away from European interference, by "deserting" the Mediterranean routes. Trans-Saharan caravans were also a source of some trade, but Algiers was not - and apparently never had been - a major depot of north-south commerce. Algiers was linked to the major routes (which separated at In-Salah and went towards either Tunis or Fes) through Ourgla, but did not benefit a great deal from the proceeds of the African caravans.<sup>41</sup> It also needs to be recalled that the Saharan caravans suffered from the arrival of European merchants. It was far simpler to ship merchandise from the newer depots in western African by sea than by caravan. The two month journey by caravan could be halved by the caravel. One other problem seems to be that since the ships which did carry the merchandise across the Mediterranean were neither Ottoman nor Algerian, the trade data has been lost in the greater amount of commerce flowing between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. It is important to realize that the problems of Algiers - no merchant fleet, no co-operation from European merchants regarding setting up firms and "houses" in Europe, and no industrialization - were even more of a problem to the Ottoman Empire which was even further restricted by the use of "capitulations" and excessive intervention on the part of the "Great Powers."

Within Algeria, trade patterns remained relatively consistent over the years, with Algiers as a focus for most commerce in manufactured trade goods from Europe and local artisans. There is general consent among the academics about the positive aspects of this trade: Julien

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41. E.W. Bovill, Golden Trade of the Moors (Oxford, 1970), pp. 236-238.

notes that "Algiers had active local industries which distributed their products in the provinces and were still in operation in 1830."<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, within North Africa, Algiers never approached the city of Tunis as an entrepôt for trade, and Europe had too much commercial strength to challenge. Thus, internally, Algeria had a rather limited market, and this, combined with the fact that most tribes were relatively self-sufficient, allowed the balance between producers and consumers to remain constant: there was little growth, and conversely, there was no massive importation of manufactured goods from Europe. When goods did arrive at Algiers they were sent to the markets where they were either purchased for use within the city, or bought by traders for sale in the interior or along the coast.

The Principal Importations are . . . made into the Port of Algier. Merchandise is afterwards conveyed along the coast by means of small Trading Vessels - The interior is supplied by small Caravans or companies of Moors, who come to Algier in order to make their purchases.<sup>43</sup>

Shaler notes that there was a "very doubtful" internal trade pattern and that Algiers had "less cultivated an intercourse with the interior . . . than any other of the Barbary states," but he then goes on to describe the funduq outside Bab Azoun where the caravans from the interior arrived.<sup>44</sup> It is most likely that these small caravans arrived and departed Algiers at reasonably regular intervals, stopping at the towns and periodic markets in their regions to trade with the local populations.

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42. Julien, History, p. 321.

43. FO 3/9, 3 July 1802, Consul Falcon to F.O.

44. Shaler, Sketches, p. 30.

It is also likely that the mahallah, the military column sent from Algiers periodically, was more than just an expedition designed to extract wealth by force. Shaler, in his "Account of the Receipts into the Treasury in 1822"<sup>45</sup> does not even include the extractions of the mahallah in the revenue, while Robin<sup>46</sup> describes a caravan including six hundred mules loaded with figs and olive oil heading out, and returning with grain and livestock as part of the mahallah. Obviously this was more than a military expedition. In spite of these references, there is no solid evidence which would permit an evaluation of the role and value of internal trade to the city of Algiers. Once again, there is the space in scholarship which can only be filled with the efforts of scholars who are prepared to search the archives and sources in France and Algeria for the necessary information. Nevertheless, there was some - perhaps a considerable amount of - revenue derived from trade in all its facets, and the works of Shaler, Boutin, and Danziger seem to have overlooked some of the more important sources of revenue to the government, relying instead on European trade and obvious items such as treaties, beylical tributes, customs duties, returns from "la chase," and more prosaic details like taxation.

The ordinary revenues of the Regency included several forms of taxation on various groups. From outside the city, the total taxes on the population (gherama) amounted to about forty-six percent of the

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45. Shaler, Sketches, pp. 34-35.

46. "L'organisation militaire et administrative des turcs dans la Grande Kabylie," Revue Africaine, nos. 98/99 (1873), pp. 201-202.

total revenue reported by Shaler. These taxes would include the ushr and kharadj on land, usually paid in produce to the bey who could then pay Algiers the cash; the zakat (alms tax) which was also based on property, but was also an obligation within Islam paid to the state; and whatever djizya (poll tax) was levied by the government. Most of the urban taxes were collected by the amins of the various groups. Julien notes that "Les citadins étaient redevables de taxes variables appliquées aux métiers que versaient les amin des corporations sous forme de taxes ou de produits artisanaux."<sup>47</sup> The remainder of internal revenues came from customs duties, rents on beylik land within the city, and returns from exports and monopolies. External revenues from "tributary nations" and the connected export monopolies accounted for about forty percent of total revenues.<sup>48</sup>

It is evident that in the fiscal arrangement at Algiers there is a considerable amount of research to be done before definitive conclusions can be reached. The system tended to allow some measure of discrimination - the Jews were forced to pay double import duties and a regular poll tax<sup>49</sup> - and unfairness, since it was based on the "tax farming" method, whereby important fiscal posts were purchased from the government. Boyer states that: "Le système fiscal de la Régence

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47. Julien, Histoire, p. 14.

48. These figures are taken from Shaler (Sketches, p. 34) who has divided the revenue of Algiers into two categories: internal and external. The percent figures are based on the internal sums. While it is unlikely that these sums provide a completely accurate picture, they are the only available data from which to extract information about the extent of taxation at this time.

49. Rosenstock, "Economic and Social Conditions," p. 4; and Shaler, Sketches, p. 65.

apparaît donc comme effroyablement complexe et terriblement lourd, plus peut-être par les abus qu'il entraîne que par les sommes exigées à la base; en tout cas il est profondément injuste."<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, criticism of the fiscal system must be balanced against a comparative analysis of other domains if "fairness" and "justice" are to be judged. In this respect it would appear that Algiers was no more discriminatory than, for example, England, where customs duties "along with the assessed taxes, fell on all sections of the community, but . . . hit the poor . . . far harder than they hit the consumers of luxuries;" where Peterloo followed Waterloo; where child labour was still endemic in the mines and factories; and where some Manchester magistrates believed that "cutting down and trampling down the people was no different from cutting and trampling furze bushes on a common."<sup>51</sup>

The economic system functioning in Algeria was based in Algiers on a philosophy of utilizing the strengths of the country without excessive interference in social affairs. The secondary policy of keeping a distance from the rural taxpayers enabled the government to withdraw revenue without completely alienating the people. Furthermore, the benefits of trade allowed the government to demonstrate that co-operation could be helpful to both parties and that access to open markets could provide for needs which the traditional rural people could not fulfill on their own. In the city, the collection of taxes was the duty of the amin,

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50. Boyer, La vie, p. 115.

51. From Asa Briggs, The Making of Modern England (New York, 1958), pp. 170 and 213.

whose role was not primarily fiscal but social. In these ways the central authority in Algiers collected the revenues of government which were then re-distributed on various projects: the maintenance of the port, preparation of defensive works, payment of the odjak, ship building, other public works like mosques and fountains, and the building of individual fortunes within the administration. There is no doubt that a more equitable system could be found, but a comparison with other regimes indicates that the government at Algiers was probably no better and no worse at its fiscal policy than most others of its era and position. Danziger states that "the heavy tax burden had disastrous consequences," and then goes on to blame this system for rural depopulation, the decline of towns, and other difficulties: "A vicious circle resulted from the need for more oppression in order to achieve ever-larger amounts of taxes from the dwindling population and deteriorating economy."<sup>52</sup> He does not treat the other possible causes of population movement seriously - plague, infertility of the soil, traditional trans-humance - and ascribes to the Ottoman government the same vices described by the French when they were attempting to justify the Conquest to a curious world. It is unfortunate that repetitions of traditional arguments are still continuing in modern scholarship: Douglas Johnson criticized this approach in 1962, when he wrote concerning pre-colonial Algeria:

There is evidence to suggest that taxation was far from crippling, and although generalizations are difficult because conditions varied greatly from place to place, yet there was a certain

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52. Danziger, Abd al-Quadir, p. 25.

prosperity. Both the economy and the society of Algeria under the Turks possessed their own harmony, which could be disturbed in years of crisis but which normally returned. The French conquest, however, destroyed that harmony completely.<sup>53</sup>

It is therefore very important to analyze the political, economic, and social aspects of Algiers as they related over time - neither in the periodic years of crisis nor in the extraordinary years of abundance. The balanced picture of Algiers' society demonstrates prevailing harmony.

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53. Johnson, "Problems," p. 230.

## CHAPTER V

## THE SOCIAL NETWORK

Compare Algiers to an incomplete tapestry. The loom could symbolize the Ottoman administrative structure; the warp could be emblematic of the economic nexus which linked the various sectors to both the loom and the fabric. Together, these elements form the foundation of the society, providing it with stability, strength, and flexibility. The visible surface of the carpet is the result of interactive craftsmanship on the part of the various social groups, each contributing some different coloured or textured wool. The entire "coup de maitre," built up over a few hundred years, but relying on traditions which go beyond those years, is in the process of becoming a beautiful and utilitarian representation of the society which created it. It would be counter-productive to pursue this analogy too far, but the use of an Algerian carpet as a symbol of the society is quite appropriate. Jacques Berque has stated that "entre la pleine nature et la vie familiale, le tapis interposait l'élégance humaine et ses blasons distinctifs," and this combination of distinction and elegance fits pre-colonial Algerian society to a high degree.<sup>1</sup> In the design of Algerian carpets, the most prevalent

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1. "Remarques sur les tapis Maghrébin," Études Maghrébines (Paris, 1964) p. 14.



stylistic feature was the diamond, which seemed to find its way into almost every tapis in some way. If "le losange est roi de ce style," it would be appropriate to use this feature as indicative of the role of Islam in Algerian society.

As in Islamic cities throughout the Middle East and North Africa, at Algiers Islam dominated the structure and organization of the physical and social elements within the city, then tied the city to the immediate hinterland and the greater ummah. The physical features of Algiers have already been cited, so at this point it is necessary to consider the social implications of Islam. At Algiers, there were two separate but generally parallel threads forming the spiritual dimension of the society: the first was the "official" Islam of the mosques, qadis, and khotbas; the second was the more populist Islam of saints, marabouts, and brotherhoods. These were not single-strand threads, but multi-plied combinations of religious expressions which interacted and were never completely separate, distinct, or unified.

The first of the "official" Islamic aspects concerned the major role of the Maliki madhhab (rite, school of law) in Algiers. This rite had been dominant in North Africa ever since the end of the eleventh century when the Almoravids subjected the western Maghrib to a single religious and political authority. Malikite theology involved at least three elements in the lives of Muslims: the "preaching of moral reform and ascetism . . . dogmatic teaching which opposed over-exclusive ideologies and aimed at a communitarian consensus; and . . . the juridico-political aspect of their work, their contribution to the organization of public

life."<sup>2</sup> Thus, before the Ottoman presence was introduced to Algiers, the Islam of both the city and the interior was similar, but with the arrival of the military power from Anatolia, a new element was introduced into civic life, the Hanafi madhhab. The religious life of the Hanafis has been called into question by authors who, observing the behaviour of some of the Ottoman residents, decided that "the Anatolian peasants and the renegades of various origins who made up the greater part of the Turkish occupiers were not zealots in religious matters, if they even practiced the faith at all . . ." and therefore, saw conflict between the two madhhabs.<sup>3</sup> There is evidence for this conflict in other Islamic cities, but there has been no documentation which would suggest that this was the case at Algiers.<sup>4</sup> In fact, all the evidence points to the conclusion that the two rites coexisted with a minimum of conflict. Within the city there were two muftis (most eminent scholar; chief justice), one for each madhhab, each with jurisdiction over his own rite, but the Hanafi mufti was considered to be superior in position over the other, probably because this was the case throughout the Ottoman Empire when two or more schools existed coincidentally. The Hanafi mufti was apparently selected by the Porte but as yet, there is no evidence to suggest how the Maliki mufti was chosen, although it is most probable that he was selected by the dey.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, there is a striking lack

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2. Laroui, History, pp. 164-165.

3. Le Tourneau, "North Africa: Rigorism and Bewilderment," ed., G.E. von Grunebaum, Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization (Chicago, 1955), p. 235.

4. See Lapidus, "Muslim Cities," p. 54.

5. Valensi, On the Eve of Colonialism, p. 78.

of information on the role of Islam in Algiers. Laroui has noted that "there is not a single book about the development of Malikism in North Africa," and this complaint is even more evident at Algiers where the social institutions have been largely ignored, especially during the Ottoman period.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the following practice seems to have prevailed: within the cities, the muftis presided over their jurisdictions on a regular basis, issuing fatwas concerned with jurisprudence and the overall interpretations of Islamic law as related to the members of their madhhab. The more prosaic daily administration of Islamic law - and the normal cases of civil and criminal law - were left to the two Qadis (judges), who "hear and decide upon all cases of law and equity that may be brought before them."<sup>7</sup>

The quality of spiritual life in any community cannot be quantified by external factors, yet these same factors can give an indication of some aspects of the spiritual dimension. Thus, at Algiers, the numbers of marabouts and mosques may not determine the quality, but can help to define the existence and extent of Muslim spirituality. In all, many mosques and koubas (tombs of saints) existed for the spiritual benefit of the people and the religious elite were among the most

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6. Laroui, History, p. 106 n3.

7. Shaler, Sketches, p. 22. Shaler notes that the muftis held courts twice a week, while qadis met daily, except Fridays. Most Europeans spent a great deal of time outlining the "barbaric" results of this judicial system. Nevertheless, most cases were decided without mutilation or death sentences. The reason why Europeans thought that the system was so savage was that it was both quick and public. They did not see the other cases, and therefore seemed to assume there were none.

prestigious ayan (notables) of the city.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately - once again - this is an area where there is no documented evidence about those who formed the ulama (recognized scholars) or the roles they played, but it is likely that their prestige and social standing were similar to the ulama at Tunis, where "their advice was accepted with due respect or at least not openly flouted. The ulama were deemed models of proper social behaviour. Their habits of speech, dress, and behaviour were accepted as the ideal especially by the nongovernmental classes."<sup>9</sup> The ulama, however, were not the only guides to proper social behaviour, since the entire city was regulated by the practices of Islam. Five daily prayers organized the hours of waking, working, and family life; festivals brought the entire community together on regular occasions; fasts and other religious responsibilities were seen as duties to be performed by all Muslims; and the khotba (sermon), said in the name of the Sultan, was an expression of the identity which Algerians had with the ummah. Thus, when it was time for the salat el-djama'a (Friday prayers), the city gates were locked, all the souks closed, and every male Muslim "who has reached years of discretion" goes to his own mosque. After performing ablutions, he enters the mosque, repeats the salat with the imam and then hears the khotba, after which the gates and

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8. Shaler (Sketches, p. 75) noted nine large mosques and "a great number of minor places of worship;" Renaudot (Alger, p. 75) states that there were ten large mosques and fifty small ones, while Boyer (La vie, p. 74) notes "13 grandes et 109 petites." Whatever the number, the fact remains that within Algiers, Islam played a dominant role in the daily life of the people.
9. L.C. Brown, "The Religious Establishment in Husainid Tunisia," ed., N.R. Keddie, Scholars, Saints and Sufis (Berkeley, 1972), p. 51.

shops open and commercial life recommences. This spiritual exercise, repeated consistently over the years, becomes a focal point - not just for the week, but for the purpose of identification - all Muslims whether they prayed at the Hanafi Djama'a Djedid, the Maliki Djama'a Kebir, or one of the "petites mosquées d'Alger se révèlent de pauvres édifices, nus et froids, aux murs passés au lait de chaux, et dont les nattes constituent le seul luxe," were united in their religious heritage.<sup>10</sup> Over all this activity, the ulama presided, recognized by the central authority, acknowledged by the people,<sup>6</sup> and assured of their position by general consensus. Did they play a role in government? Were they of Andalusian, Arab, or Ottoman extraction? How many were there, and where were they educated? All these questions cannot be answered yet. Even in Tunis, where Bin Diyaf described the people and events so essential to understanding this period, L.C. Brown has written that "the issue will not be resolved until more circumscribed studies of the religiously trained and their relations with government for specific times and places are forthcoming."<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, there are some general guidelines which can be stated regarding the role of the ulama at Algiers. The first is that they were among the most prestigious of the ayan, regardless of their economic status. Secondly, they were not parochial in their background: that is, many received their education in Islamic law and principles not only in Algiers, but also in other Middle Eastern centres, such as the Al-Azhar, where many Maghribi scholars studied

10. Boyer, La vie, p. 77.

11. The Tunisia of Ahmed Bey (Princeton, 1974), p. 168.

Islamic law.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the ulama at Algiers, along with the civic marabouts, reflected the flexibility of Ottoman policies: "Les Turcs adapteront en effet leur politique religieuse à la situation. Dans les zones soumises et particulièrement dans les villes, Oulema et Marabouts jouiront d'une situation confortable en échange de leur neutralité. Ils ne se mêlent plus d'affaires publiques, sinon pour approuver le gouvernement."<sup>13</sup> The exchange of comfort for compliance is probably too simplistic to fit the circumstances; it would undoubtedly be more accurate to describe the situation in terms of mutual respect than in terms of material trade-offs. Thus, within Algiers, the religious hierarchy - muftis, qadis, and ulama - worked along with the central authority to provide the people with social and spiritual guidelines which were consistent with the goals of the political elite and Islam generally.

The second aspect of Islamic life was the "unofficial" religious expression of spirituality as practiced by marabouts and brotherhoods. The first of these movements, maraboutism, concerns the role of holy men and the tombs where walis (saints) were buried. These tombs were places of prayer and pilgrimage, and were found throughout Algeria. The brotherhoods were groups of people organized under the direction of a sharif (descendent of the Prophet) or his successor. These sufi orders were well-known throughout the Muslim world and have been the subject of many volumes. In relationship to Algiers during the immediate

12. See Andre Raymond "Maghrébines au Caire," pp. 351-357.

13. Pierre Boyer, "Contribution à l'étude de la politique religieuse des Turcs dans la Régence d'Alger," Revue de l'Occident Musalman et de la Méditerranée, no. 1 (1966), p. 27.

pre-colonial era it is necessary to make two specific points regarding their roles: the first is that there was a definite division in importance between the rural and urban aspects of their influence; the second is that over most of the period under Ottoman rule the central authority and the sufi orders co-existed peacefully to a great extent. Concerning the first point, within Algiers, the marabouts and brotherhoods were part of the normal civic life, and a high level of co-operation existed between the central authority and both the "official" and "unofficial" aspects of Islam. This co-operation is evident in the case of Sidi Abd-al Rahman al-Tha'alibi, the patron saint of Algiers, whose tomb became an object of pilgrimage. His kouba was just outside Bab al-Oued, where "le Dey régnant, Hassan Pasha, s'empessa de lui faire construire un magnifique mausolée."<sup>14</sup> Other evidence for the high level of co-operation includes the existence of zāwiyas (lodges operated by brotherhoods) within and around the city; habous of many types administered by the religious hierarchy; ulama who participated in the brotherhoods along with some of the Ottoman ruling class, and the fact that many members of the ulama were also administrators in the civic aspects of government.<sup>15</sup> Given, therefore, the high level of co-ordination between religion and politics at Algiers, there is an evident paradox between the governmental policies inside and outside the city: general co-operation

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14. Boyer, "Contribution," p. 40. Al'Tha'alibi was known as "Bou Qubrin" - the man with two tombs - since a second kouba attributed to him is located at Ait Smail in Kabylia.
15. Reudy, Land Policy, p. 7. L.C. Brown (The Tunisia of Ahmed Bey, p. 28) notes that "most members of the ulama class looked with a favourable eye upon Sufism and were themselves members of one or more brotherhoods." See also Boyer, "Contribution," p. 28; and Stambouli and Zghal, "La vie urbaine," p. 205.

inside, with some conflict outside. This paradox has been used by many observers to explain that the Ottomans never were able to control the interior, and that there was open hatred between the tribes and the Ottomans. It is important to seek an explanation for the differences which existed.

Relationships between the Ottomans at Algiers and the tribes went through several stages. The first stage was ambivalence. During the pre-Ottoman period Algeria was divided into many small tribal or maraboutic "states" which did not necessarily agree with the need for an aggressive anti-Christian stance as they were not greatly affected by Spanish intrusions into their territory. Nevertheless, as some coastal areas were subjected to Spanish aggression, several marabouts actually assisted the Ottomans in the establishment of their hegemony over Algiers, and "dans les années suivantes les marabouts algérois mirent volontiers leurs influence au service des Pachas."<sup>16</sup> This set the stage for the second period, alliance, when both the ulama and marabouts worked together to benefit from the  Jihad. This was the period when several marabouts participated in financing "la course" and established zawiyas on the returns of their investments. In some cases marabouts also collected taxes for the government and generally supported its tribal policies.<sup>17</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century there was a dramatic change in this policy of co-operation. Frequent revolts by brotherhoods against the Ottomans began to occur, and Ottoman beys began to be much more demanding regarding taxation. Thus, the era of alliance gave way

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16. Boyer, "Contribution," p. 17.

17. Boyer, "Contribution," p. 31.



to a period of antipathy which, while neither complete nor overwhelming, was evident in many tribal areas. Thus, at the turn of the century when the Derkawi brotherhood, under its sharif, Hadj Mohammed ben el-Arrach, attempted to benefit from "la course" without the consent of Algiers, Rais Hamidou was sent to Djidjelli to put an end to this activity.<sup>18</sup> Several other brotherhoods and marabouts revolted from time to time, and even attacked the mahallas with some success. These instances have been seized upon by the colonial apologists to support their contention that Algeria was in a state of anarchy and chaos prior to the Conquest. The apologists attribute the revolts to excessive taxation, hatred of "Turks" in general, Berber-Arab differences, the decline of piracy as a source of income, and "oppressive and tyrannical" rule by the deys and beys. In other words, all these factors united to arouse the population against Ottoman rule.<sup>19</sup> The real essence of the paradox is more prosaic, but also more realistic, and involves the one area where Ottoman policies did not reflect the true values of the society it governed - that is, its Islamic policy.

In order to understand Ottoman Islamic politics it is necessary to go back to the "frontier hypothesis" - that is, Algiers was the

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18. Boyer, "Contribution," p. 41.

19. Even as recently as 1980 this attitude continued: "By the end of the eighteenth century, political and social stagnation in the Maghrib was so advanced that it set the stage for the full-blown intervention of the European powers . . . ." (J.P. Entelis, "The Maghrib: An Overview," in The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa, ed. by D.E. Long and B. Reich (Boulder, 1980), p. 383). It appears as if the "stage hands" were the people of North Africa, who by their social and political actions were inviting the real "stars" to appear on their set - not a realistic interpretation.

western outpost of the  Jihad . It was under these conditions that the Algerian population accepted Ottoman suzerainty, and as long as the threat from Spain continued, the people of Algeria tended to support Ottoman policies as a necessary extension of the war against Spain. In this context, when Oran fell to the  dey  of Algiers in 1791, the immediate threat to Islam was over, and this released some of the more truculent tribes from their allegiance to Algiers. There ensued a struggle for power and identity within Algeria which the Ottomans were not prepared for. In fact, they acted in ways which tended to increase the alienation from the central authority, and instead of their usual policies of pragmatism and flexibility, they became dogmatic and rigid in their attitude towards religious politics. It is as if the Ottoman ruling classes expected that because all the people were Muslims, they would concur with their policies, yet this was obviously not the case. Therefore, the paradox referred to above - that there was co-operation within Algiers among the various religious factions, but conflict outside the city - demonstrated one major deficiency in Ottoman politics and came to be one of the more important reasons for the eventual failure of Ottoman authorities to rally the tribes around the defense of Algiers.

Although religious variations were probably the most important social aspect of life at Algiers, there were other factors which contributed to the social fabric. One of these factors was ethnic diversity. In some cases, ethnic differences coincided with religious differences, but there were other great variations in the socio-ethnic background of the people of Algiers. The major groups can be divided into six

broad classifications: those born in Anatolia or the Levant - usually referred to as Turks, although many were of different extraction; Kouloughlis; Arabs, the majority of the city's population; Berbers; Jews; foreigners, including renegades; and, prior to 1816, slaves - both European and black. Each of these social groups has contributed in some way to the development of the urban lifestyle and each community had its roles and responsibilities.

The character of the Ottoman ruling class has been the topic of a great deal of discussion and in most cases there has been little sympathy for its roles. It is generally assumed to be the case that the "Turks" were obnoxious, ignorant, and overbearing regardless of their low status background - with nothing but ill-feeling between them and the other inhabitants of the city. In spite of this generalization, there are many instances of kindness, generosity, and intelligence,<sup>20</sup> and while there would be a certain amount of tension between the ruling elite and the local ayan, regardless of the impression given by observers, the fact remains that in 1829, after two years of naval blockade by France, 3,661 armed Ottoman troops were able to maintain power not only in Algiers, but throughout a great deal of the interior as well. "Et cependant la faiblesse numérique des dominateurs prouve que leur pouvoir était d'ordinaire accepté sans opposition grave (sauf dans certaines

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20. See Barnby, Prisoners, pp. 7, 28, and 80, for example, which give some positive observations regarding the Ottomans at Algiers from the viewpoint of American captives. For an indication of the more traditional approach: "Les Turc sont fiers, hautains, féroces, portés au brigandage, insolents surtout quand ils sont élevés en dignité ou qu'ils n'ont rien à craindre, bas et rampants quand ils tombent en disgrâce." (Dubois-Thainville, "Memoires," p. 135.)

régions montagneuses) par l'ensemble de la population arabe de l'Algérie." 21

Thus, in spite of the complaints that the Turks "n'avaient aucune souche dans le pays" 22 and Dubois-Thainville's prediction in 1809 "que ce pays est au moment d'éprouve la plus affreuse révolution, dont le massacre de tous les turcs, odieux à tous les indigènes, sera la résultat," 23 the Ottoman presence at Algiers remained until European intervention on a massive scale forced the withdrawal of this ruling group. Part of the problem with the "Turkish" element at Algiers concerned their distance from the "heart" of the city. It has already been shown how family life in the residential harah was the key point for understanding the society, yet the odjak members did not fit into this category. The odjak, recruited as single men from various parts of the Ottoman Empire, arrived at Algiers with a low position in the hierarchy. They lived a life in the casernes (barracks) which was essentially military, without - in most cases - family or friends in the city. As they rose through the ranks by seniority, their allowance and their chance for advancement increased; many participated in "la course;" some became wealthy; but most seemed to live their lives within the confines of the lower town or the provincial zmala or beyliks. Thus, there was little identification between the corps of odjak and the people. Language and religious differences added to the alienation, and this seems to be the cause of most of the prevailing European observations. Since most authors

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21. Marcel Emerit, "Les tribus privilégiées," Annales: E.S.C., no. 1 (1966), p. 45.

22. d'Aubignosc, "Alger" (deuxième article), Revue de Paris, t. 23 (1831), p. 5.

23. Dubois-Thainville, "Sur Alger," p. 132.

only saw the lower town, their alienation was as obvious as their observations of the odjak. In spite of this life in the casernes, taverns, and military exercises, some of the Ottomans did find that Algiers was a pleasant place to live. Many married local women - providing their families with a measure of added security - began to build houses and raise families in various centres around Algeria, and in this way, were integrated into Algerian society. Others remained at Algiers until they had enough capital to return to their original homes, while some remained in the odjak until they retired. It is therefore, not too surprising that there would be some instances of disturbing behaviour on the part of three to eight thousand single military men, living in barracks at the base of a populous city. The most evident surprise, however, is that there were so few instances of revolt against authority, or attacks against citizens by this group, and this simply adds to the evidence that supports a more balanced conclusion: that the Ottoman presence at Algiers was not a negative, despised occupation, but a generally accepted and acceptable faction within the city.

In spite of the fact that when odjak members married they lost some of their privileges, many did desire to "fonder un foyer" in the city, and many of the Ottomans became originators of respected families within Algiers. The problem with the development of this phenomenon was that the children of the relationship were neither "Turk" nor members of Algerian social groups, and they therefore formed a separate social classification - Kouloughlis. This group never grew too large - no more than fifteen thousand in all Algeria in 1830 - and because

of restrictions on their roles at Algiers, most did not choose to live in the city.<sup>24</sup> However, in the provinces, many attained high administrative positions in the beylical governments, some as beys,<sup>25</sup> others as important officials, and their presence was an important factor for the government of Algiers to consider: ". . . sans les Kouloughli, il est difficile aux Deys de tenir les provinces, avec seuls 16,000 Turcs, rassemblés en majorité à Alger . . . ." <sup>26</sup> In cities like Tlemcen, they played a dominant role in both the economic and political spheres, while maintaining good relationships with the local tribes, and at Algiers, those who did remain in the city, "jouaient, dans l'économie en particulier, un rôle prépondérant."<sup>27</sup> With the "revolution of 1817, when the Kouloughlis helped the dey overcome the power of the odjak, and again with the French blockade of Algiers in 1827, the role of the Kouloughlis was expanding, especially at Algiers. Outside the city, they continued to be one of the more consistently anti-Ottoman groups apparently because of the alienation they experienced since they were never completely accepted by the ruling elite: they were anti-Ottoman, but when Abd al-Qadar became the emir in their territory, they did not work with him either. Thus, the Kouloughlis were an intermediary group essential to the preservation of Ottoman power, but generally closer to the local population in influence and circumstances.

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24. Pierre Boyer, "Le problème Kouloughli dans la Régence d'Alger," *Revue de l'Occident Musalman*, no. Speciale (1970), p. 91.
25. During the nineteenth century, Kouloughlis became beys at Oran (1805-1812) and Constantine (1803-1807, 1812-1815 and 1826-37).
26. Boyer, "La problème," p. 91.
27. A. Adam, "Les classes sociales urbaines dans la société Musulmane du Maghreb," *L'Afrique et L'Asie Moderne*, no. 137 (1973), p. 25.

It is much more difficult to evaluate the roles and positions of the local Algerian groups who formed the ruling elite of the city before the Ottoman assumption of power. Very little basic research has been done on these groups, and their role has generally been overlooked because they seemed to lack political power. Nevertheless, these classes formed the most important social group in the city: their leaders were the ayan who acted as intermediaries for the government; they were the amins and muhtasibs who set the examples for and policed the mores of the society; they formed the Maliki ulama who monitored the religious aspects of the city; they were the "middle class," the artisans, merchants, and officials whose activities provided for most of the important daily functions within the city. Essentially, this classification was subdivided into two major groups: those who were more or less "native" to Algiers; and those who were of Andalusian origin.<sup>28</sup> The Arabs of Algiers, mostly from the al-Tha'alibi tribe, were pushed by Ottoman policies into the political background where they lived more or less unmolested by the government. Their quarters of the city were secure and separate from other harah, and they, along with their compatriots of Andalusian extraction, owned and operated most of the commercial ventures in the city. Some participated in "la course" during the periods when it was operative, but generally speaking they did not have much in the way of social contact with the Ottomans and their government, except that periodically, they allowed their daughters to marry one

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28. The Andalusian population was further divided into Mudejarés and Tagarins, depending on their Spanish background. See Hess, Forgotten Frontier, p. 174.

one of the odjak. The Andalusian quarters were also separate, but together the Arabs and Andalusians formed the major urban population - the most important, but as yet almost unknown factor of the city.

Other populations of Algerians lived within and close to the city, but their quarters were not in the upper town, and their commercial roles were generally confined to small family operations. Each group had its own amin who was responsible for the behaviour of the people, and they generally had their own mosque, hammam, and leadership. All of these groups were Muslim, mostly Maliki, and this was the essential link which allowed them access to the lower city's economic life. It seems that each group was from a specific geographic area, and tended to be responsible for a specific set of occupations. One of the most notable of these groups was the Mzabites, who controlled and operated many important functions within the city including the public baths, butcher shops, mills, and small vegetable operations.<sup>29</sup> They also played an "intelligence" gathering role for the deys, since their people inhabited almost every city in Algeria, and they seem to have had an almost universal reputation for hard work, fairness and business acumen.<sup>30</sup> In most cases, only male Mzabites emigrated to the northern towns, living and working there for periods of time before returning to the Mzab to visit families and friends. Perhaps the most notable features of the Mzabites were that they were Berber city dwellers and were not Maliki, but Ibbadi Muslims, and this strict, rigid sectarianism caused them to be somewhat

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29. For an analysis of the role of the Mzabites at Algiers see D.C. Halsinger, "Migration, Commerce and Community: The Mizabis in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Algeria," Journal of African History, XXI, 1 (1980), pp. 61-74.

30. Halsinger, "The Mizabis," p. 69.



isolated from the general society, although it is apparent that they never really wanted into the mainstream in any case. All Mzabites desired to be buried in their home cemetery, and most left the north for the Sahara when they "retired" from their business life.<sup>31</sup>

Two other groups of itinerant workers from the south who came to Algiers in order to work were the Biskris and Laghouatis. Both these groups lived in funduqs in the lower city or close to the souks in which they worked. The people from Laghouat had become the majority workers at the funduq el-zit, the oil market, where they purified and sold the product brought to the city by Kabyle countrymen; they also worked in the souk el-Azara, where most of the leather products were manufactured.<sup>32</sup> As has already been noted, Biskris were porters, water carriers, and watchmen - in fact they seem to have worked at most of the least desirable jobs, although they also were responsible for some of the essential public bakeries which supplied the odjak and other groups with their daily rations of bread. Blind Biskris were used as night watchmen throughout the city, and were supervised in this role by a mezouar (overseer) from their own city. These watchmen slept near the gates that separated the quarters. Most of the Biskris were temporary workers, but some, by organizing trade with the South - especially Ghadames - became able to live comfortably at Algiers or return to Biskra with sufficient

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31. The characteristics described still apply - in almost every aspect - to the Mzabites in Algeria today. E.F. Gautier has said that "The Mzabite is a shrewd business man from the Tell who - at ruinous expense - keeps a country house in the Sahara." (Quoted in E.A. Alport, "The Mzab," Arabs and Berbers, ed. by Ernest Gellner and Charles Micaud (London, 1972), p. 150).

32. Lespès, Alger, p. 181 and Julien, Histoire, p. 13.

capital to raise their families there.<sup>33</sup>

It seems that very few Kabyles settled at Algiers. Two reasons for this are that since they were basically mountain village people, they did not enjoy city life; and the Ottoman authorities would not permit them to live with their families at Algiers. Shaler noted that Kabyles "are strongly attached to their native homes: they can rarely be persuaded to remain [at Algiers] six months at a time, without revisiting their mountains."<sup>34</sup> They did not have an amin, and they were not incorporated, thus, they had no official right to stay in the city. Even so, many did become day labourers, domestic servants, and small produce merchants, but because they were not accepted members of the city's social network, they had to live in funduqs close to the gates or outside Bab Azoun in temporary shelters.

One other unincorporated group was the black population, which tended to labour as servants, ~~white-washers~~, and basket weavers. Their role in the society of the city has not been studied to any extent, but it seems that while they originated as slaves from south of the Sahara, their situation was not for a lifetime. Dubois-Thainville reported that "ils sont en assez grand nombre et obtiennent assez ordinairement leur liberté après un certain temps de service, à l'occasion d'une naissance, d'une ~~m~~ mariage ou de quelque événement heureux ou extraordinaire arrivé dans la famille où ils servent."<sup>35</sup> Those blacks who were not domestics were required to share the living facilities of

33. Shaler, Sketches, pp. 86-87.

34. Shaler, Sketches, pp. 94-95.

35. Dubois-Thainville, "Sur Alger," pp. 133-134.

other unincorporated groups.

The Jewish community at Algiers was both numerous and important, numbering about 5,000 persons whose major contribution was in the commercial life of the city, as intermediaries between Europe and the Algerian government, and as brokers between the various wealthy civic classes and investment opportunities.<sup>36</sup> The community was under the jurisdiction of Mosaic laws in normal circumstances, while the responsibility for managing the harah was given to a moqaddem nominated by the dey. This "chief of the Jews" was responsible for collecting the djizya and other taxes, from which he could extract his own percentage, but he had no influence outside the Jewish community in normal circumstances. The Jewish harah was like a self-contained town within the city, containing houses, synagogues, shops, and every necessity for life, as the Jews were not normally allowed into the Muslim areas of the city, and were subject to many prejudicial excesses.<sup>37</sup> The Jews divided themselves into two main groups: those who were "original" occupants; and "European" Jews, generally from Livorno; but there was an even greater division between the rich and poor: The Jewish harah "was far from clean, and

36. Shaler, Sketches, p. 65. Morton Rosenstock ("Jews of Algeria," p. 16) suggests that about twenty percent of the city's population was Jewish - that is, about 6,000 people.

37. For example, Jews were required to wear black or dark clothes outside their own quarter; they could not ride horses or carry weapons; they were "not permitted to resist any personal violence" from a Muslim; and they could be subject to corvée within the city. Shaler reports that in 1815, with an "incredible swarm of locusts," Jews were "ordered to protect the Bashaw's gardens, where they were obliged to watch and toil day and night . . . ." (Sketches, p. 66).

its low houses . . . lined narrow streets and alleys where the sun never penetrated. The homes of the rich were clean and elegant, but for the great majority life in the Hara was terribly overcrowded and unhealthy."<sup>38</sup> This overcrowding was a negative factor in the health of the community also, since it made them more susceptible to the recurring plagues. In all, the Jewish community lived a relatively separate life from the rest of the city: its upper classes were confidants of the ruling classes, but the middle class merchants and artisans performed the same functions as their Muslim counterparts, while the poor worked for the wealthy. Their skills in investment, artistry and creativity were well-known, exceeding "their Muslim competitors both in industry and in skill," but in spite of these skills, "the great majority of them lived plunged in the utmost depths of poverty."<sup>39</sup>

As far as the community life at Algiers is concerned, there are two generalizations which can be made. The first is related to the overwhelming role of Islam in the city. The second was the hierarchical social structure with the Ottoman ruling elite (el-khassa) at the top of the continuum; the local ulama, and wealthy Muslim merchants (el-ayan) in the middle of the society; the al-amma, or working class artisans and labourers closer to the bottom, who formed the majority of the civic population; and finally, the unincorporated groups whose role was indeterminate but essential to the proper functioning of the city. Together these groups existed in a relatively orderly and peaceful

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38. Rosenstock, "Jews of Algeria," p. 17.

39. Rosenstock, "Jews of Algeria," p. 9. See also Boyer (La vie, pp. 169-177) for an overall description of the Jewish community.

fashion, with a political system which, while neither responsive nor receptive to abrupt change, was capable of providing the type of administration which ensured the existence of the society. There were obvious flaws in the carpet: slavery, the treatment of Kabyles, blacks, and Jews; and prejudicial attitudes among the odjak created tensions; but in the context of the time, these flaws were not as dramatic as some modern authors would suggest. Thus there was a certain symbiosis among the various groups which enabled the city to function, develop, and change to some extent - the inter-relationships formed a relatively cohesive civic society.

Other aspects of social life which need to be considered include cultural factors, the role of women, and other institutions such as medersas which played significant roles in the city. It is difficult to develop analyses of some of these items, however, because of a serious lack of evidence in most cases. Islamic art, architecture, music and theatre from the Ottoman period of Algerian history is very poorly documented, and in most cases, excluded from general studies on the area. Architecture, for example, has been described as "mediocre,"<sup>40</sup> and most architectural overviews of North Africa show few examples of structures from the Ottoman city. Algerians were said to "a people without literature, and without arts,"<sup>41</sup> yet this is really more a reflection on the qualities of the observer, than on the quality of the arts. As has already been noted, very few Europeans ever visited the

40. Lespes, Alger, p. 174n2.

41. Shaler, Sketches, p. 64.

homes of Algerians, and were generally not very interested in Islamic culture in any case.<sup>42</sup> Obviously it would be difficult for most observers to describe Algerian music, although it is known that at least one of the nineteenth century deys had a twenty-seven piece orchestra and the music produced was "à peu près semblable à celle des grands de l'empire ottoman."<sup>43</sup> In the theatrical arts, it would be necessary to include the public story-tellers and poets who entertained citizens in the homes, zawiyas, and streets of the city, as well as the jugglers and wrestlers who entertained on the beaches outside Bab el-Oued on Friday afternoons.<sup>44</sup> Probably the most sophisticated theatrical event would have been the garaguz, or shadow theatre which had been introduced to the Maghrib from the Ottoman Empire sometime in the seventeenth century.<sup>45</sup> This entertainment was generally confined to the cities controlled by the Ottomans, and was performed at the end of Ramadan and during other festive occasions. Other forms of amusement were also present in pre-colonial Algiers, but most of the observers only noticed the more severe aspects of life, and the Algiers presented by these authors reflect this narrowness. Even though Algiers was called "the warlike city" and "well-guarded," it did not entirely rule out laughter

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42. In the past few years Air Algérie has been producing calendars containing reprints of art and literature from Algeria's past, including the Ottoman period. In some cases, art and literature are combined in poetic forms. There has also been interest on the part of Algerian artists to return to their historical roots by producing "Turkish" miniatures and "illuminated" pages from the Quran.

43. Renaudot, Alger, p. 98.

44. Jackson, Algiers, pp. 160-162.

45. Arlette Roth, Le Théâtre Algérien, (Paris, 1967), pp. 13-15.

as at least a part-time pastime.

The role of women at Algiers is not difficult to imagine but is difficult to document. Most observers never saw women except as the "shadow-like figure disappearing into a doorway" and most likely only got a chance to meet those who were not typical of the overall society. Yet, in spite of this, every traveller has an account of the various clothing, duties, and life-styles of the women. It is most likely that their descriptions of clothing were gathered by looking around the souks, as it is impossible to imagine a Muslim male in nineteenth century Algiers describing to a foreigner the habits of his wife. It is probably most accurate to note that the role of women in Algiers conformed to the roles of their counterparts in other areas of the Islamic world, but it has only been recently that studies of this nature have been produced.<sup>46</sup>

One of the more underestimated systems of pre-colonial Algiers was education. To those observers who did not have access to Algerians, education was seen as a very basic, narrow program of memorization which developed elementary skills of reading and writing only. Renaudot described a system that ended when the student "est parvenue à lire

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46. See D.C. Gordon, Women of Algeria: An Essay on Change, (Harvard, 1968) for an introduction to the problem, while Amal Rasan, ("Unveiling Arab Women," in Middle East Journal, XXXVI, 4 (1982), pp. 583-587) reviews some current literature which, unfortunately, is not directly related to Algeria. She notes that the sampling of new books in her review "constitutes a first step" in the study of women in Islam, and that generally, "we are still only at the threshold" of possible comprehension. (p. 587).

et à répéter cinquante ou soixante aphorismes du Coran,"<sup>47</sup> while Shaler speaks of numerous common schools with a course of studies "confined to the Koran" which is completed when, "having learnt to read and write the Koran, he is duly instructed by the same preceptor in the forms and modes of prayer."<sup>48</sup> This system was not exactly as described by the above observers. While it would be incorrect to read too much into the available evidence, there was a viable program which allowed for the education of a significant number of young Algerians. The schools were usually provided through habous as a part of their public function, and the facilities were traditionally a means of ensuring continued learning, although habous also served other purposes: "beaucoup de fidèles protégeaient . . . leurs biens en les rendant sacrés, inaliénables, insaisissables par l'autorité des pachas."<sup>49</sup> Thus, attached to every mosque, marabout, or holy place, there was a school at one of three levels. The first level - primary instruction - was intended to teach the subject material observed by Shaler and Renaudot as well as basic computation skills. Every male child could attend these msid which were operated by mouadab (instructors) who were paid by the pupils' family for the instruction offered. Each msid comprised fifteen to twenty pupils, who usually attended at least four years before they were considered to be instructed in the basics of Islam and the necessary

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47. Renaudot, Alger, p. 18.

48. Shaler, Sketches, pp. 57-58.

49. Marcel Emerit, "L'état intellectuel et moral de l'Algérie en 1830," Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine, No. 1, (1954), p. 200.

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skills.<sup>50</sup> When the primary level was completed it was possible for students to continue their education at the medersas. There were six of these secondary schools at Algiers, and many more throughout the country, where moudares instructed their students in grammar and introduced them to Quranic commentaries. When this level was completed, students were given an oral diploma (idjaza) which was an indication that they were now a taleb (scholar) who was competent to read the Quran in the mosques or become a Khodja or mouadeb.<sup>51</sup> If the teacher of a secondary school was recognized as a superior teacher with extensive knowledge, it would be possible for his students to become alem when they completed their studies in nahou (syntax and comprehension of holy books); fiqh (religious, civil, and criminal law); tasfir (theology); hadith (traditions of the prophets); ilm el-hisab and ilm el-Falak (arithmetic and astronomy); as well as familiarization with such authors as Ibn Khaldun and Avicenna.<sup>52</sup> Obviously, the number of students who progressed beyond the msid was quite small compared to the population of the city, and Algiers never developed a centre for learning like Zaitouna, Qarawiyan, or Al-Azhar. Even Tlemcen had a higher reputation for advanced learning than Algiers. The probable causes of this deficiency were the dual-rite situation within the city, whereby the tension between the two madhhabs would not allow the unity

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50. Emerit, "L'etat intellectual," pp. 201-203. Emerit notes that this instruction was not confined to Algiers: Constantine had eighty-six primary schools with 1,350 pupils; Tlemcen had fifty schools; and even the large douars had their schools operating out of tents (cheria).

51. Emerit, "L'etat intellectual," pp. 203-204.

52. Emerit, "L'etat intellectual," pp. 204-205.

necessary for the development of a higher institution; and the overall cultural diversity of Algiers. Further, the city did not have a reputation for intellectualism. Algiers' history was a frontier history of  Jihad; Algiers was aggressive, not academic. Thus, when students desired learning beyond that available at Algiers, they had to go elsewhere. Many studied in places like Cairo and Tunis, while a few even went to Europe: "J'ai vu à Alger, plusieurs Maures qui avaient réellement de l'instruction . . . ils parlaient plusieurs langues et connaissaient assez bien la géographie; ils avaient même étudié l'histoire. Quelques-uns avaient fait leur études à Paris."<sup>53</sup> There was no teaching of the sciences at Algiers, but many other areas were considered to be important, and almost every male was instructed in some basic areas, especially Islam - and this instruction reiterates the theme of the society. Almost all of the social functions in place at Algiers were based on Islam and had legitimacy because the people were aware of their culture. Most European observers did not know the cultural history of Algeria and described the society in terms of Europe. When they ascribed a lack of civilization to Algiers, they were comparing the city to their own idea of civilization; when they described the negative aspects of Algerian society and culture, their touchstone was a Europe of cultured, civilized, middle-to-upper class diplomacy and politics. It is unfortunate that most Europeans smelled the tanneries, not the spices; heard the arguments, not the story-tellers; and saw the squalor, not the tapestries.

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53. C.A. Rozet, (1830-1833) quoted in Julien, Histoire, p. 10.

## CONCLUSIONS

It was during the time of Ottoman rule that Algiers developed from an insignificant town into a functioning city. It is therefore somewhat ironic that the Turkish period, with its social, political and economic networks is not very highly regarded in current Algerian historical circles. The Ottoman era of Algiers' history is a period which very few Muslim scholars choose to identify with, and it has also been largely ignored or denigrated by European scholars. It is probable that to Algerians, the idea of their capital city being developed by foreign powers, has a negative connotation, while to Europeans, there is the cultural bias which sometimes tends to obstruct reality. Nevertheless, it is impossible to deny history: Algiers is the capital of Algeria, and this role has resulted from the city's past. Algiers played a major role in pre-colonial and colonial Algeria; it continues to dominate the country in the present. This study has demonstrated that the Ottoman period in the history of Algiers contributed a great deal to the composition of the city. The overall purposes have been to show that it is both possible and necessary to re-evaluate life in and around Algiers in the half-century prior to the Conquest; to confirm the premise that the city was a functioning entity with a particular identity and a reasonable degree of hope for the future; and to illustrate that with empathy and concern for historical reality it is possible to re-appraise

the evidence and draw some important conclusions.

The first of these concerns the role which Algiers played in the Islamic world. As an Islamic city, Algiers was part of a wider community, but because of its diverse character, it was neither singularly Maghribi, Middle Eastern, nor Ottoman. Algiers was a distinctive place which exhibited patterns which were unlike other Islamic cities, but in the overall context, it also displayed all the functions of a "typical" Islamic city. The Ottoman element was the factor which gave the pre-colonial city its unique character, but it was also the element which kept the city from developing a more North African outlook. It must be recalled that Algiers was the most important Muslim frontier garrison in the western Mediterranean, and that as such its purpose was neither educational nor religious. Algiers was built as a defence against Christianity, and it retained much of this tendency through the colonial period to the present day.

A second conclusion which departs from traditional scholarship is derived from the perspective of the contemporary observer. It has been shown that most European authors have viewed the city from a point of view which at best is narrow, and at worst, verging on the inaccurate. The division of the city into upper and lower regions, separate in function and purpose was overlooked by the vast majority of observers who drew their conclusions from a very restricted data base, never expressing the family oriented and gentler aspects of the city's inhabitants, preferring to dwell instead on public executions, inter-faith rivalry, and the coarser aspects of the lower town.

In the political area, the pre-colonial government of Algiers

has been described as tyrannical, avaricious, and cruel; as being despised by the majority of the population in both the city and the countryside; and as inept, inefficient and archaic, in the traditional literature. While it would be inappropriate to suggest that all the above charges are completely without foundation, there was actually a much broader positive consensus within Algiers regarding the role of government than has previously been expressed. Evidence presented in this study confirms that the political structures of Algiers were acceptable to the majority of the population; were proficient at achieving the goals of the ruling classes; and were capable of providing for the needs of other classes. It has also been shown that the pragmatic nature of the government allowed for a wide diversity in both response and attitude towards various provocations or difficulties. In this way, relatively few Ottomans were able - with the consistent aid of native Algerians - to govern a diverse physical and cultural region with a minimum of overt aggression, something which the colonial power was never able to achieve. However, it has been suggested by several colonial apologists that the government was on the verge of collapse when the French arrived, and these authors point to the collaboration between some brotherhoods and the French, and the lack of cohesive resistance to the Conquest as evidence to support their contention: that even Muslims were prepared to struggle for a new political order in Algeria because of their intense hatred of the Turks. A more viable conclusion would take into consideration the cultural history of the area. It is quite conceivable that the Algerians outside of Algiers and Oran had no idea that the French were going to extend

their rule into the interior. Initially, the Algerians felt that the French were essentially anti-Turk and anti-Algiers, and that they intended to use Algiers in much the same way as the Spanish had used their presidios in North Africa. This attitude would explain why the Arabs and Berbers outside of Algiers did not concentrate on defeating the French immediately after Algiers was attacked, and why it took until 1832 before organized resistance developed. Thus, the immediate reaction to the French takeover was not acceptance, but disorganization, based on the removal of the political structures which had been put in place by the Ottomans and which had also been widely accepted by the population. The power struggle which occurred between Abd al-Qadar and the Tijani brotherhood was not based on anti-Ottoman or pro-French sentiments, but was rather an attempt to fill the vacuum which was left when the power structure was destroyed by the French.

The economic systems built by the Ottomans were also designed to fit the society. Markets, tax-gathering techniques, manufacturing, industries, and agriculture all functioned remarkably smoothly under the Ottoman system which allowed for diversity within the economic structures. It has been shown that Algiers was not simply the centre of piratical activity in the Mediterranean, but an economically diverse urban area within a productive agricultural region. Thus the connection between the political and economic spheres was quite highly developed, and showed an understanding for the needs of the people both inside and outside the city. Europe was not an overly important factor since there was little importation of European goods, although there was considerable export of agricultural products. It is clear that the city was not

close to economic collapse, but that the difficulties which were evident throughout the colonial period were a result of the destruction of a viable economy. It was neither the Turks, piracy, nor backwardness which devastated the Algerian economy, but the effects of colonialism which did away with the former culturally logical economic arrangements.

Finally, Islam was the dominant social force at Algiers, yet unlike most other Islamic cities, there was no centralized religious hierarchy. At Algiers, the dichotomy between the two rites combined with the various marabouts and brotherhoods produced a diversity which was far more pronounced than in most other Islamic urban centres. This diversity permeated the social classes and related structures. In the "typical" Middle Eastern city, there were two levels of urban society: the elite, and the masses; but in Algiers the Ottoman elite was essentially political, the lower classes performed their usual roles, but there was also a middle group of urban notables who led in both the economic and social spheres. These three groups worked together to provide a different, exciting, but relatively unknown environment within North Africa which has been very poorly understood.

The people of Algiers - despite their racial, religious and cultural differences - were in the process of creating a city-state based on mutually shared concerns and interests. It is apparent that the trend towards power-sharing and reform would have continued if there had not been the massive disruptions of the Conquest. The resistance led by Abd al-Qadar showed the inherent unity of the people while the long struggle to regain independence demonstrated the overall desire of Algerians to develop their own institutions. The roots of Algerian

nationalism draw from the pre-colonial past as well as from more recent eras, and an understanding of the Ottoman period is an essential element in the comprehension of Algeria today.



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