

HISTORY

OF THE

BARBARY STATES

WHICH PRACTISE

PIRACY

*By an author that resided there for several
years as a public character.*

Jacques Philippe Laugier de Tassy

Translated from the English

SECOND VOLUME

PARIS

M DCC LVII

With approval and privilege from the king

Chapter VI.
(p169) .

The Trade of Tunis.

Trade, though heard little from people, is the conversation of everyone. Those which live on the coasts have a superficial understanding of it, but to help those who live far from the sea with to form some idea, I will give a short description of the different vessels that visit the harbour & port of Tunis. I will speak then about their manner of traffic. The ships can be divided into ordinary vessels, Pataches, Polaques, Caiches, Barques, Pinques, Tartanes, & Canots. All these ships which have each their particular advantages, different in their ropes & in their operation. The -170 - ordinary vessels have four masts: as follows: the mainmast, the foremast, the mizzen, & the bowsprit. The Patache does not differ from the vessel except that it does not have a foremast. The Polaque has square sails on its mainmast, there is a lateen sail on its foremast, & a very small mizzen. The Caiche has several lateen sails on the front; its mainmast is higher than in the others ships: but its foremast, & that of the bowsprit are the ordinary length. The only difference between the Barque & the Pinque consists in their bow, which is rounded on the first, & pointed on the second. They both have a mainmast, a foremast & a mizzen furnished with lateen sails. The majority of Tartanes & Caiches have only one mast, & they differ little in their sails. [HERE]

The harbors in the -171 - State of Tunis are those of La Goulette, Biserte, Oporto-Farina, Gallipe, Suse, Monester, & Esfaque [Sfax]. The latter is the best, because the tide rises there. With the repairs and improvements required by Oporto-Farina, it would admit the largest vessels. But one cannot for wait for these kinds of repairs to be done by the Government: it affects the economy too much, though often against its own interests. In the State of ruin in which we find this Port at present, a Frigate of forty guns could not enter there except with very great precautions. The Government vessels nevertheless maintain their base there. Oporto-Farina also has an Arsenal, but very minimally provided with the necessary ammunition.

The Port of Biserte guards the situation of the Galiotes [offshore islands]; but it will admit only the small trading vessels. -172 - The Government only has four vessels, and even those are only poorly equipped. The strongest is armed only with forty guns. There is one of them, in truth, built in [eighteen-]seventy: but its constructional defects will make it always unsuitable for the sea. The Regency has approximately thirty

Galiotes, with from twenty to a hundred and twenty crew. They are mainly commanded by Renegades. The four vessels go in pursuit twice a year; the Bey provides them with oil, butter, vinegar & biscuit. But as these provisions are not enough for their forty or fifty days of cruising, the Captains supplement them with the help of four piastres that they require each Turk to have on board. The crews of these vessels are mainly made of Turks, *Coulolis* & renegades. These are only employed to fight -173 - while the Christian slaves do the manual work. The crew of each ship taken from Europeans, with half of its cargo, belongs to the Bey, with a deduction for all the expenses of the armament. The other half is shared between the Pilot & the crew. The Captain has six shares, the Subalterns, four, the Pilot & the Gunner as much; the Writer three, the Quartermasters & the director of the small boat, two; & each other individual, a half-portion. As for the slaves, to start with, the Bey takes half of them, & enjoys the privilege of buying the others for a hundred piastres each one, which he can hardly fail to resell for three or four hundred piastres. Each tenth slave belong to the Diwan. The other Galiotes are equipped by private individuals; who meet all the expenses of equipment, & paying the crew at fixed wages, also have between themselves the ownership of the prizes. -174 - If vessels of the Regency meet a trading vessel, the Master of this last is obliged to go on board their ship, & produce his passport; or if the Captain goes himself to the Christian vessel, he can only have one person with him. Any European ship which enters the harbor of Tunis, raises his flag, & greets the castle of La Goulette with three shots of a gun. The Captain will then greet the Aga of the fortress, & inform him of the place from where he comes. The Christian men-of-war drop anchor a little further away than the trading vessels. La Goulette begins by greeting them, & they return its salute with a similar number of cannon shots. During their time in the harbor, the flag remains deployed on the house of the Consul, & all the trading vessels of the same nation have their signs deployed. At the departure of a man-of-war, the Government -175 - sends it a gift of oxen, sheep, poultry, & other refreshments. Each Consul is directed to inform the Bey at once of the arrival of the men-of-war of his nation. At this news, all the slaves are contained in the prison. If one of them found the means of escaping on one of these vessels, one could not reclaim him.

All the ships which take, or bring their cargo into the Kingdom of Tunis, are made to pay four taxes; Some pay thirty-five piastres for anchoring, & others seventeen & half. This sum is divided, though unequally, between the Aga of La Goulette, the

Chiaoux, & the interpreter of the Consul. The duties of the Government on the vessels, belonging to the public revenue, rise or fall according to the needs of the State. They were so pressed -176 - in 1733, that any ordinary ship which brought or left its cargo, paid twenty piastres; Pataches, Polaques, Caiches & Canots eighteen of them; Pinques & Barques, fourteen, & Tartanes ten. Each one of these ships which reloaded, paid double these sums. Finally all vessels which load in Tunis pay the Consul & other Officers of his nation a right of two percent. A merchant of recognized integrity, receives this tax, & renders his accounts annually in front of the Consul, the Chancellor & four merchants. [HERE]

The vessels which traffic with the Levant by Caravans, are only subject to the Government for half of the taxes above. Some Captains however like to do better, for some merchants, having journeys separated in quality between Factors or Supercargos. -177 - They exchange their cargo for barley & wheat, which they will resell advantageously in Spain or in the South of France. The Captains of the Caravans rent their vessels by charter partly to the Turks & the Moors. They live extremely hard, & are not distinguished in this respect from the crew; Conformity which much flatters the latter. Those do not have fixed wages: but each one takes part in the profits of the voyage, according to rank. The Caravans are a great benefit for the State, as much because of the number of people that they attract, as for the tax imposed on the passports. The English vessels which are among these Caravans, need fewer people than the others; an advantage which they put to the provision of their ropes. The passports of the French Captains are limited to three years, at the request even of the Court of Versailles, At the end of this term, -178 - they cannot renew them, without being presented before a French Admiralty Court. If they omit this formality, they expose themselves to the confiscation of the vessel & cargo, & to a fine of so much per month since the transgression. If a French Captain loses his ship, he is obliged to give his passport to the Consul of the nation, & and to get a new one, when he equips another vessel. The English, natural enemies of discomfort, want their passports to remain in force for ten years. They are not even compelled to follow the formalities which we have just described.

Tunis provides to France oil, corn, broad beans, lentils, wax, wool, leathers, & Moroccan [leater?]. It receives in exchange; wool from Spain, cloths from Languedoc, vermilion, sugar, pepper, cloves, -179 - wine, brandy; paper, hardware, iron & steel.

All the trade from Italy is in the hands of the Jews. They send the same goods as to France, & they bring some cloths from Spain, some Damas, various types of wool fabrics, silk, gold & silver. They provide these goods to the house of the Bey. They are paid a handsome price in paper to farm the rights of leathers & wax. The French pay three percent, for both the goods imported and exported, & the Jews ten percent for those that they bring from Italy.

The Turks & Moors annually carry to the Levant wool fabrics, lead, powder gold, & a quantity of bails of caps. They return with silk fabric, cotton fabrics, iron, alum & vermilion.

-180 - To Egypt Tunis exports oil, soap, bonnets, gold powder, & piastres of Seville. As most of this oil is intended for the Mosques of Mecque & Medina, the Arabs always transport it in earthenware jars, & never in barrels. They have the idea that this liquor in would be soiled, if these vases had previously contained wine. The Tunisians also take to Egypt fabrics, coffee, rice, hemp & cotton.

The number of English vessels freighted in Tunis is dubious, but that of the French ships that the Jews, Turks & Moors freight every year for the Levant, goes up to 150, in addition to 50 others loaded for France or Italy.

The Caravans from Sale & Gademes are rich branches of commerce in Tunis. That from Sale arrives annually in Tunis three -181 - weeks before Ramadan. It distributes in this percent city a thousand pounds of gold powder, or of sequins. The Caravans from Gademes which make two voyages there every year, transports Negros & gold powder. In exchange they take cloths from France, paper, Venitian mirrors, wire, & coral jewels. The people of Gademes are to the south of Tunis, & one month's walk from this city. All those of this nation live in only one city, which has only two streets, but of an extraordinary length. They appear nevertheless to form two people different peoples by their names, as by the difference of their chiefs, their habits, & their perfect separation from each other. I believe I should not omit the way in which these people & the Negros trade together. They go ones & the others to a mountain of Nigratie. Those from Gademes -182 - on one side, & the Negros on the other. The first arrange their goods in the middle of the mountain, & then withdraw. The others advance to examine them. After this examination they place under each item the quantity of gold powder that they are ready to give, and return to their place. If, on their return, those of Gademes find the gold powder left by the Negros, equivalent to the price that they marked on their goods, they take the powder, & they

leave. But if it is not equivalent to their value, they do not touch this powder until the Negroes have made a suitable addition. Here are two nations, which we treat as barbarians, showing a frankness & probity, worthy of the golden age so pompously celebrated, by the Poets. But History, more inaccurate in its portraits, represents for us the men of every age as always being similar.

HISTOIRE
DES
ETATS BARBARESQUES
QUI EXERCENT
LA PIRATERIE

*Par un Auteur que y a réfidé plusieurs
années avec caractere public.*

Jacques Philippe Laugier de Tassy

Traduite de l'Anglois

TOME SECOND

A PARIS

M DCC LVII

Avec Approbation & Privilége du Roi.