

Erica Heinsen-Roach, *Consuls and Captives. Dutch-North African Diplomacy in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2019, 243 pp., ISBN 978-1-58046-974-6).

Erica Heinsen-Roach, professor of history at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, has written a dense work on the activities of consuls from the Dutch Republic in Northern Africa and on captivity and subsequent ransoming of crews from ships under the Dutch flag from the Maghreb states in the 130 years from 1596 until 1726. This is the time span from the first official attempt to ransom Dutch captives from North Africa until the conclusion of a stable peace treaty between Algiers and the United Provinces.

Heinsen-Roach's *Consuls and Captives. Dutch-North African Diplomacy in the Early Modern Mediterranean* fills a gap that has been strongly felt in the field of historical studies on the relations between Christianity and the Muslim world in the early modern Mediterranean. In the last two decades, research on the fate of Christian captives and slaves in Northern Africa in the Early Modern Era has flourished to a hitherto unknown degree. For obvious reasons most publications come from South European historians. Their countries have experienced and felt the historical problem to a far higher degree than Northern Europeans and thus much more documentation is available in the South European archives. Nevertheless, Northern European shipping was of high importance in the Mediterranean from at least 1590 onwards. Thus, their home societies and states were also affected by the problem of slave taking from the Northern African side since North European ships got captured by the Barbary corsairs in vast numbers. Probably the greatest lacuna in research on the topic remained until now the case of the Dutch Republic, certainly the most affected Northern 'actor' in the Mediterranean of the seventeenth century.

Hitherto information about the Dutch relations to the Northern African Regencies was almost exclusively provided by the publications of Gerard van Krieken.¹ He concentrated on the political and economic relations between the Dutch Republic and the North African regencies while the consuls as well as the organisation and practices of ransoming remained slightly in the background. Heinsen-Roach focuses mainly on these aspects with a study that makes intense use of the documentation available in the National Archives of The Hague as well as of many regional archives of the Netherlands. This allowed her to provide a profound picture of the manifold levels of the complex problem of ransoming and how it affected large strata of Dutch society.

Her book is arranged both chronologically and thematically. The time span is divided into four overlapping sections, which leave out some years in the second quarter of the seventeenth century ('Part One. Encountering "Barbary," 1596-1622', 'Part Two. Transformations, 1616-30', 'Part Three. Confrontations, 1651-83', 'Part Four. Normative Relations, 1679-1726'). This periodisation is well chosen since it represents markedly different conditions that dominated the relations of the Republic with the Regencies.

The first chapter of the book, titled 'Encountering "Barbary"', consists of two subchapters. In the first one the focus is on the political overtures of the Dutch Republic towards Morocco and the Ottoman Empire. In the second one, Heinsen-Roach highlights the relations to Algiers and Tunis, which were very complicated due to the captures of Dutch ships and the resulting captivity of the sailors as well as the fact that Dutch ships often transported merchandise of the (mostly Catholic) enemies of the Regencies.

In the second chapter 'Transformations', Heinsen-Roach thoroughly examines the experiences of Wijnant de Keyser, the first Dutch consul in Algiers, and the many difficulties he encountered – including being thrown into a prison three times and once being publicly flogged. His consulship was marked by complicated relations between The Hague and Algiers that oscillated between open warfare and an alliance; he himself intensely bore the brunt of such changes. In contrast to a 'normal' consul, who was usually just charged with commercial matters, De Keyser became de facto the representative of the state and thus was the symbol of the reciprocal recognition. The problems of Dutch diplomats in redeeming Protestant slaves are laid out by the author in great detail. The author sketches in great detail how the Dutch diplomats tried to redeem Protestant slaves and the concomitant problems that arose. The unwillingness of the authorities back home to pay for the liberation and the immense pressure upon the diplomats to free their compatriots and sailors from the Hanse towns put the representatives of the Dutch Republic in Northern Africa under great strain.

The Dutch recourse to naval operations against the North Africans is discussed in Chapter Three. The eventual failures of these campaigns forced the Dutch to give in and agree in principle on the duty to ransom all their captives from Northern Africa after the conclusion of a peace treaty, a duty that was left in practice to consuls and Jewish intermediaries. The money for the redemption of captives, however, was very hard to come by, as Heinsen-Roach shows in the last subchapter of this section. The payment was mostly

1 Especially his fundamental studies on the relations with Algiers and with Tunis: Gerard van Krieken, *Kapers en kooplieden. De betrekkingen tussen Algiers en Nederland, 1604-1830* (Amsterdam 1999); Gerard van Krieken, 'Tunis – La Haye:

Relations diplomatiques et consulaires d'après les archives néerlandaises (1607-1884)', in: *Revue de l'Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes* 71:2 (2008) 201-277.

made by the relatives, villages and regions, aided by some 'General Collections' on specific occasions.

'Normative Relations', the last part of *Consuls and Captives*, looks on the last half century before a lasting peace between Algiers and the Dutch Republic was concluded in 1726. The Dutch situation deteriorated markedly vis-à-vis the Maghreb states since England/Great Britain, under protection of stable peace agreements with the Maghreb states, was now making great profits in freighting, and the Republic's naval power in the Mediterranean declined in the years of general European warfare (1672-1713). Therefore, the Dutch had to agree to the giving of substantial and punctually delivered tributes instead of occasional gifts as the precondition of peace.

The book's conclusion offers an overview on the subsequent development of the relations between the Dutch Republic and the Maghreb states during the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century and sums up the special aspects of this contact in the early modern period. The author again emphasises the importance of the consuls in North Africa as representatives of the state and points out the centrality of slave freeing and tributes in the bilateral exchanges. The agreements reached between the Dutch and the North Africans show an important facet of early modern diplomacy, which appears here to have been less the outcome of European traditions and more the result of cross-cultural interactions.

The new insights *Consuls and Captives* provides to the field of European captivity in Northern Africa are manifold. An impressive aspect is the presentation of a rich variety of actors and institutions with some responsibility for buying back Dutch captives within a framework of a state which itself did not engage intensely in this area. Heinsen-Roach is able to outline the system of ransoming in the Dutch Republic and to sketch the complex structures behind the flow of money from the Republic down to Northern Africa. The analysis of the role of the Dutch consuls and their problems, the nuanced view upon the North African actors and their goals, the cultural ambiguities and difficulties in the contacts between the two societies and states and the necessities and subtleties of gift- or tribute-giving give fresh insights into the history of contact between a Northern European republic and the Northern African regencies in the Early Modern Age. Heinsen-Roach's work thus substantially enriches the understanding of the difficult and complex relations between Early Modern Europe and the Barbary states.

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