MOROCCO IN THE EARLY ATLANTIC WORLD, 1415-1603

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By

Earnest W. Porta, Jr., J.D.

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Earnest W. Porta, Jr., J.D.

Dissertation Advisor: Osama Abi-Mersheh, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Over the last several decades, a growing number of historians have conceptualized the Atlantic world as an explanatory analytical framework, useful for studying processes of interaction and exchange. Stretching temporally from the 15th into the 19th century, the Atlantic world framework encompasses more than simply the history of four continents that happen to be geographically situated around what we now recognize as the Atlantic basin. It offers instead a means for examining and understanding the transformative impacts that arose from the interaction of European, African, and American cultures following the European transatlantic voyages of the 15th and 16th centuries. Though it has not been extensively studied from this perspective, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Morocco possessed geopolitical characteristics that uniquely situated it within not only the Islamic world, but the developing Atlantic world as well.

This study considers Morocco’s involvement in the early Atlantic world by examining three specific phases of its involvement. The first phase lasts approximately one hundred years and begins with the Portuguese invasion of Ceuta in 1415, considered by some to mark the beginning of European overseas expansion. In this phase Morocco faces an almost relentless assault from the earliest Atlantic powers, Portugal and Spain. After a period of roughly fifty years, this assault becomes almost exclusively an Atlantic one. Essentially confined to the Moroccan Mediterranean coast by a combination of geography and resistance, the Portuguese use the pathways of the Atlantic to proceed southward along the Moroccan Atlantic coast,
establishing trading enclaves and fortresses from which they not only support their exploratory, commercial, and conquest ambitions in sub-Saharan Africa, the Atlantic, and the Indian Ocean, but from which they also attempt to subjugate inland Morocco. With this expansion the Portuguese both undermine the legitimacy of Morocco’s existing rulers, the Wattasids, and lay the groundwork for the successor dynasty that became their nemesis.

During the second phase, which covers the remainder of the sixteenth century, Morocco begins to use the avenues provided by the Atlantic world first to resist the Portuguese assault and then to take the offensive. Capitalizing on the public support gained by opposing the Portuguese, the *sharīfian* Sa’dī dynasty rises to prominence in southern Morocco. Partially through effective use of the trade networks now offered by the Atlantic, the Sa'di trade sugar and other commodities to accumulate wealth and arms sufficient to unify the country and assert a degree of independence from external powers.

In this study’s final phase, which overlaps with the second and extends from the Moroccan victory at the Battle of Wadi al-Makazin in 1578 until the death of Ahmad al-Mansur in 1603, Morocco mirrors the conduct of other Atlantic states. First it actively engages in the complicated international political dynamics of the sixteenth century, which most importantly for the development of the Atlantic world include preventing the powerful Ottoman Empire from gaining control of Atlantic ports. Second, Morocco attempts to assert its own imperial ambitions with both an actual military adventure across the Sahara and an audacious proposal to reach across the Atlantic itself to the Americas.

Reviewing each of these phases demonstrates how examining Morocco within the context of an Atlantic world framework can provide a greater understanding of how both Morocco and the Atlantic world developed – one that could not be achieved by a traditional
examination of national histories. Not exhaustive, this study suggests that additional consideration of more fully integrating Morocco into the larger Atlantic narrative is a worthwhile pursuit.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing a dissertation can be a lengthy process during which debts of gratitude accumulate, and that was certainly so for me. Without the encouragement, support, and guidance of numerous individuals this project would have faltered and ended long ago. On the institutional side of the ledger I would like to extend my appreciation to the staffs of the Library of Congress, the Bibliothèque Nationale du Royaume du Maroc, and the Georgetown University Library. At each institution I found individuals willing to engage on my topic and assist in identifying and securing useful materials either on-site or through Inter-Library Loan requests. I also received generous financial support from the Georgetown University Department of History, which was integral to my ability to continue my studies.

The universe of other individuals who assisted me in myriad ways is voluminous. Among them are participants in Georgetown University’s Early Modern Global History Seminar, as well as the faculty and students who formed an “Atlantic Group” to discuss ideas and examine each other’s work. These interactions constantly challenged me both to explore new subjects and to reconsider familiar ones with fresh eyes. Participation proved to be one of the great joys of the graduate student experience.

I also benefited from the encouragement of many friends, both personal and professional. Their support went beyond any interest in my focus of study and instead reflected their willingness to help me in meeting whatever challenges I faced in my endeavors. Among them are Erin, Barry and Betty, Liz, Kirstyn, Gayle, Chris and Sue, Mary, Kathy, Zoe, Val, Dolores, Boyd, and Harry. My mother, father, sister, and brother also provided moral support over the years. Two have been through the process themselves in the sciences and all did their best to express interest in my work, however humorously off the beaten track it may have been for them.
My dissertation committee also provided invaluable support. Each and every one of them—Osama Abi Mershed, Alison Games, John McNeill, and Judith Tucker—contributed materially to my engagement with the topic, and I benefitted from their wisdom in the classroom over a period of years that stretches back a long way, well before I even contemplated this dissertation. Two of them warrant additional mention. Alison Games simply could not have been more supportive. She introduced me to the Atlantic World, encouraged me to test its boundaries, challenged me with salient critiques, introduced me to colleagues and fellow students whose insights fascinated me, and helped me through all the inevitable roadblocks that emerged along the way both within and outside of the academic environment. Always interesting and encouraging, much of the joy in the process was due to her involvement. Osama Abi Mershed from the earliest days encouraged my pursuit of the topic. He not only offered guidance along the way, but exhibited patience and understanding as I worked to develop a facility with the multiple languages I considered necessary. Able to move among historical time periods with ease, he opened my eyes to connections that I would have missed but for his efforts. Administrative staff within Georgetown’s Department of History also made my journey much easier than it otherwise might have been. In particular, I want to thank Carolina Madinaveitia, who always promptly, comprehensively, and cheerfully, assisted me in navigating the processes and procedures involved in completing a dissertation.

Finally, I owe my largest debt of gratitude to my wonderful wife, Barbara. Her immense reservoirs of patience, compassion, and goodwill are renowned among those who know her, and they were all evident throughout this process. Her support and encouragement were unwavering and unconditional. I could not have done this without her and it is to her with love that I dedicate this dissertation.
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NOTE ON SELECTED SOURCES

This study draws significantly on the documents concerning Morocco in European archives collected and edited over many decades by Henry de Castries, Pierre de Cenival, Robert Ricard, Chantal del Véronne and Philipp de Cosse Brissac. Conventionally, this extensive collection is shown in bibliographic entries in a format similar to that immediately below.


Part 1. Archives et bibliothèques de France (3 vols.)
Part 2. Archives et bibliothèques des Pays-Bas (6 vols.)
Part 3. Archives et bibliothèques de l’Angleterre (3 vols.)
Part 4. Archives et bibliothèques de l’Espagne (3 vols.)
Part 5. Archives et bibliothèques du Portugal (6 vols.)
Part 6. Dépôts divers

When citing these sources in footnotes, the author has adopted a particular format designed to provide as much clarity and information as seems reasonably practical for the reader. Each entry starts with the title of the specific source, which is often a letter, memoire, or account of an individual witness or participant, set off in quotation marks. These titles are typically in French, and the only adjustment the author has made to them is to capitalize proper names. If the entry is commentary identified with a particular editor, that editor’s name precedes the title.

Following the title is any date provided, with the month converted by the author into English. As continental Europe increasingly adopted the Gregorian calendar in the 1580s, English correspondents (England did not adopt the new calendar until the middle of the 18th century) began to dual date their letters, adding what they referred to as the “New Style” date as well. Accordingly, some documents in the English volumes contain a notation after the date similar to the following, with “n. st.” standing for “New Style”:

[n. st. 8 March 1589]

After the date, the footnote identifies the country source with the abbreviations set out in quotations marks below:

Part 1. Archives et bibliothèques de France (3 vols.) – “SIHM-France”
Part 2. Archives et bibliothèques des Pays-Bas (6 vols.) – “SIHM-Pay-Bas”
Part 5. Archives et bibliothèques du Portugal (6 vols.) – “SIHM-Portugal”
Part 6. Dépôts divers – “SIHM-DD”

Each entry concludes with the volume number, the pages of the document, and the specific page in the event of direct quotation.

A typical entry would look as follows:

Throughout this study, where the author has included a direct quote from a foreign language by translating it into English, the original foreign language text is included in the footnote.
NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

When transliterating Arabic words into English in the main text I have striven to comply with the guidance published by the *International Journal for Middle East Studies*. This results in the use of English terms if they exist for a word, as well as the removal of diacritical marks in most cases, particularly those involving personal names, place names, and the titles of publications. In quotations from other authors I have sought to remain faithful to their translations or transliterations and retained any diacritical marks they have employed.
INTRODUCTION

Morocco was there from the beginning. When the Iberian powers launched the process of overseas expansion that culminated in the creation of the Atlantic World they started with Morocco. As they moved southward in the early stages of Atlantic expansion, Morocco served not only as objective, but as both proving ground and supplier for the tactics and goods, respectively, that were critical to subsequent European successes. After these successes eventually resulted in domination of valuable lands in both the Indian Ocean and across the Atlantic, Europeans nevertheless continued to invest resources in Morocco, some with the intention of expanding their control within the country and others with the goal of undermining their competitors’ positions in the growing networks now available in a newly-accessible Atlantic. The result was that Morocco thus played a critical role not only in initial European expansion into the Atlantic, but in the creation of the West African component of what was to become the Atlantic World.

For its part, Morocco first experienced the Atlantic as a new frontier that brought additional conflict with old enemies. After an extended period of adjustment, however, Morocco learned to use this new frontier to its own advantage. By the end of the sixteenth century, when the Atlantic world had taken recognizable shape and sat upon the precipice of another wave of European expansion, Morocco contemplated expansion of its own in this new arena.

Out of the sources available for this period historians have produced substantial works on the Morocco of that time. Richard L. Smith and Mercedes García-Arenal, for example, have both written concise monographs on the late sixteenth-century Moroccan ruler Ahmad al-Mansur
Decades ago Abd al-Karayyim wrote a thorough history of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Sa’di dynasty. Dahiru Yahya studied Morocco’s foreign policy and international relations during the sixteenth century, and Weston F. Cook produced a military history of the European-Moroccan century-long struggle for dominance of the country. Much more recently Stephen Cory has examined al-Mansur’s attempt to revive the Islamic caliphate in early modern Morocco. These are only illustrative examples of the significant work scholars have produced on fifteenth and sixteenth-century Morocco, and there are scores of academic articles that accompany them. What has not yet been attempted in a systematic fashion is an examination of this material from the perspective of an Atlanticist. This is an intriguing proposition, or at least this study presupposes, because the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are when the Atlantic world took shape, and in the early stages of that world’s development Morocco was a relevant and important concern of the European powers that explored, opened, and, with Americans and Africans, helped construct that world.

Sources on Morocco for this period, all of which are employed to a greater or lesser extent in the works mentioned above, include not only accounts from Arab chroniclers of Morocco’s sixteenth-century Sa’di dynasty, but also contemporaneous archival documents of the Portuguese, Spanish, French, English, and Dutch, which address events in Morocco in the context of these powers’ attempts to assert their national and imperial ambitions not only in

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6 Most of the Dutch archival documents are from a period that falls outside of this study. Their earliest contributions are from the seventeenth century, when the Sa’di dynasty was crumbling after the death of Ahmad al-Mansur.
Africa, but in the larger Atlantic world that was taking shape at the time. They thus offer the potential to gain a broader understanding of Morocco’s role during the period—an understanding that is dominated neither by internal affairs in Morocco and the Islamic world, nor by European national histories. The availability of these sources also hints at the advantages in understanding that might be gained by examining Morocco from the perspective of its experience as a part of the Atlantic world and the Atlantic world from the perspective of how it was shaped by Morocco’s participation. In other words, for example, in what ways were sociopolitical and economic conditions in Morocco affected by the creation of the Atlantic world? How did Morocco respond and adapt to the challenges it faced as a result? Within these first centuries of the Atlantic world, how did European engagement with Morocco and Morocco’s response and involvement influence the construction of that world? Such questions, along with the source materials available, suggest an opportunity to at least introduce, if not integrate, Morocco into the larger narrative of the Atlantic world—a position to which Morocco alone in the dār al-Islām, it will be argued here, can lay claim. That is at the core of what this study attempts to do.

**Periodization and Sources**

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries contain the opening act of European overseas expansion that ultimately led to the creation of an Atlantic world. As we will discuss in more detail later in this study, although Christopher Columbus’s voyage to the western hemisphere in 1492 is a critical milestone in the creation of this world, also critical were the initial Portuguese

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7 *Dār al-Islām* literally means the “house or abode of Islam,” and in classical Islamic jurisprudence referred to territory ruled by Muslims where Islam is the state religion. Other interpretations have allowed for inclusion within the *dār al-Islām* of any location where Muslims are allowed to practice, consult Islamic religious authorities, and preach their faith. The *dār al-Islām* stands in contrast to *dār al-Harb*, literally the “house or abode of war”, where Muslims do not rule and Islam is not the state religion, or where the form of Islam permitted is not deemed a true interpretation. *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, ed. Richard C. Martin, Vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2016), s.v. “Abodes (of Islam, War, and Treaty).”
and Spanish initiatives along the coast of West Africa and out to the Atlantic islands. This study suggests that the West African circuits created in the pre-Columbian period constitute an Atlantic world before trans-Atlantic voyages took place. Whether or not, however, we consider these efforts actual components of an Atlantic world project or merely important precursors is less relevant for our purposes than the impact these activities had on Morocco and the role they played in how Morocco influenced the development of the Atlantic world.

Accordingly, this study focuses on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries precisely because this is when European Atlantic expansion began and because Morocco experienced this initial expansion directly and violently. Political, economic, and social disruption followed in its wake. Dynasties fell, new indigenous power centers and trade networks emerged, and Moroccans were often forced to choose between resistance and collaboration, all as a result of the opening of the Atlantic by Europeans in the fifteenth century.

This is also the time when older, conventional narratives have claimed that the Muslim world turned inward. For Morocco that was far from the case. Not only was Morocco forced to look toward the Atlantic because of European encroachment, but as the sixteenth century dawnsed, elements within Morocco began to use the pathways of the Atlantic to assert their own interests. In this Morocco benefited from the entrance of other European powers into the contest for power in the Atlantic world. Ultimately the sixteenth century witnessed consolidation of rule within Morocco, the capture or abandonment of most European holdings in the country, and a Moroccan effort to assert imperial ambitions of its own in the Atlantic world.

Of course, Morocco does not disappear from the Atlantic world during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. This study ends, however, very early in the seventeenth century because the dramatic transformations that emerged during that period constituted the
beginning of a decidedly new phase for both the Atlantic world and Morocco. The former was about to experience a significant wave of additional European overseas expansion with a plethora of new English, French, and Dutch colonies in a Western Hemisphere that up to that point had been mostly dominated by the Iberian powers. Morocco played virtually no role in this as within Morocco the hard-won consolidation of the last quarter of the sixteenth century fractured. Internecine struggles once again plagued the country and some semi-independent coastal enclaves that emerged from the chaos charted their own course in the Atlantic separate from the policy once set by a central government.

For the first century or so of the period under study our sources are limited for the Muslim west and for Morocco in particular, leaving us with incomplete knowledge of Morocco’s Marinid (c. 1244-1465) and Wattasid (c. 1472-1554) dynasties. During this period European sources dominate the available material. As the sharīfian Sa’di (c. 1549-1659) dynasty, however, emerges from southern Morocco in the first quarter of the sixteenth century and then reaches its zenith under the rule of Ahmad al-Mansur, our sources increase significantly and include extant works in Arabic of Muslim officials and chroniclers.

Any study of Morocco during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries inevitably leads the scholar to the voluminous collection of documents compiled and edited over many decades by

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8 Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, "The post-Almohad dynasties in al-Andalus and the Maghrib (seventh-ninth/thirteenth-fifteenth centuries)," *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. 2, The Western Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries, edited by Maribel Fierro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 106-143, 116. As will become evident in this study, the duration of dynasties for this period is at times a subjective determination. It is even more often divorced from the ability to exercise actual control within Morocco itself. Wattasid viziers, for example, were at times the de facto rulers of Morocco during the waning days of the Marinid dynasty.

9 Sharīfīan is the adjective derived from the term sharīf, which is in turn from an Arabic root that means to be noble or highborn. It is most commonly applied to those who are descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. Though most specifically applied to those descended through the line of the Prophet’s grandson, Hasan, some define it more broadly to include those descended through other relatives of the Prophet as well. The masculine plural, which will appear later in this study, is ashāf. *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, Ed. Richard C. Martin, Vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2016), s.v. “Sharīf.” Again, the duration of dynasties can be a subjective determination. The Sa’di dynasty effectively took significant control of southern Morocco in the first decade of the sixteenth century.
Henry de Castries, Pierre de Cenival, Robert Ricard, Chantal de la Véronne, and Philipp de Cosse Brissac, entitled *Sources inédites de l’histoire de Maroc*, première série, Dynastie saadienne (1530-1660). Consisting of more than twenty volumes, this collection contains transcriptions of documents pertaining to Morocco found in the archives of Portugal, Spain, France, England, and the Netherlands. In addition to formal correspondence between sovereigns, the collection also contains communications between the leaders of individual Moroccan communities and European leaders or intermediaries, reports of European officials, representatives or observers, and extended contemporaneous accounts of significant events. The editors preface almost every entry with an abstract in French of the document’s contents, offer critical footnotes that provide useful context and identify factual errors or potential ambiguities, and in some cases cross-reference other relevant contemporaneous or secondary accounts. Documents pertaining to major events or significant long-term processes often feature an extended critical introduction by the editors. No single collection of documents provides greater information on European activities in Morocco during this period, or the Moroccan response, than this collection.

Other eyewitness or nearly contemporaneous Portuguese documents also provide a great deal of useful information on the Morocco of this time, particularly for the earlier Marinid and Wattasid periods for which our sources are less abundant, and particularly for the Portuguese coastal enclaves that were to play a major role in Morocco’s Atlantic experience. The Portuguese *crónica* or chronicle was a common literary vehicle of the era and Morocco was the subject of a number of such works. A chronicle by Gomes Eannes Zurara, for example, is our primary source for the Portuguese attack on Ceuta in 1415 and for the city’s subsequent

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10 Henry de Castries et. al., eds., *Sources inédites de l’histoire de Maroc*, première série, Dynastie saadienne (1530-1660) (Paris: Leroux-Geuthner, 1905-1972). Subsequent footnotes citing this collection will follow the conventions outlined in “Note on Selected Sources” at ix.
governance by the Portuguese in the first half of the fifteenth century. He became keeper of the Portuguese royal library in 1451 and royal archivist in 1454.\textsuperscript{11} His \textit{Crónica da tomada de Ceuta por el-Rey Dom João I} \textsuperscript{12} is his first work of which we are aware. Being only five years old at the time of the Portuguese assault, he wrote based on the reports of others. Though useful, his account is often hagiographic, vague, and confusing. Other relevant works of Zurara include the \textit{Crónica do Conde Dom Pedro de Meneses},\textsuperscript{13} which discusses the life of the first Portuguese governor of Ceuta, and a chronicle on Prince Henry the Navigator, which in later additions was translated into English as \textit{The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea}.\textsuperscript{14}

Such chronicles continued to be written in the sixteenth century and two that are relevant to our study of Morocco in the Atlantic world include Damião de Góis’s \textit{Chronique du roi D. Manuel de Portugal}\textsuperscript{15} and the anonymously-authored \textit{Chronique de Santa-Cruz du Cap de Gué (Agadir)}.\textsuperscript{16} The first, an extract of which is available in French translation, covers a critical twenty-five year period when the Sa’di dynasty emerges in the far south of Morocco in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Its author, Damião de Góis, was a prominent Portuguese humanist philosopher. Scholarly, well-travelled in Europe, a sometime royal official, and periodically at odds with the inquisition, de Góis became High Guardian of the Portuguese Royal Archives in 1548.\textsuperscript{17} In 1558 he was tasked with writing the chronicle of King Manuel I’s (r.

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\textsuperscript{13} Gomes Eannes Zurara, \textit{Crónica do Conde Dom Pedro de Meneses} (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1997).


\textsuperscript{17} De Góis, \textit{Les Portugais au Maroc}, i-iv.
\end{flushleft}
1495-1521) reign, and a significant portion of de Góis’s work covers the corresponding Portuguese experience in Morocco.

Whereas de Góis did not witness the events he describes, we are confident that the anonymous author of the *Chronique de Santa-Cruz du Cap de Gué (Agadir)* did in fact personally observe much of what is described in his account. This chronicle details the establishment and ultimate demise of the important Portuguese trading enclave of Santa-Cruz in southern Morocco. The loss of Santa-Cruz to Sa’di-led forces in 1540 was a major blow to the Portuguese, reigniting a debate about Morocco within Portugal itself, and significantly enhancing the stature of the Sa’di. Not until the later devastating Portuguese defeat at Wadi al-Makazin in 1578 do we encounter a military engagement of surpassing consequence in Morocco. Our chronicle’s author, though anonymous, appears to be a knight or nobleman who made his military career at Santa-Cruz. Though he did not witness the founding of the post, it is believed he may have served some fifteen years there before being captured at its fall. Eventually redeemed after enduring some five years of captivity at the hands of the Sa’di, he returned to Portugal in 1546, where he experienced firsthand the competing recriminations regarding the Santa-Cruz disaster. This is what apparently led him to provide his own eyewitness account and his chronicle at times exhibits the rancor no doubt felt by those who endured both hardship and the assignment of blame.¹⁸

Accounts of European explorers, travelers, and officials sent on fact-finding journeys are another useful source of information for this period in Moroccan history, particularly as it relates to the physical geography and environment of Morocco’s Atlantic coast. One of the earliest of such accounts upon which this study draws is that of the Portuguese explorer, adventurer, and

¹⁸ Anonymous, *Chronique de Santa-Cruz*, 7-10.
government official, Duarte Pacheco Pereira, whose *Esmeraldo De Situ Orbis*\(^{19}\) is based in part on his firsthand experiences of the Moroccan coast in the late fourteenth century and early fifteenth century. It is believed Pereira was at the Portuguese capture of Arzila in 1471, presumably as a soldier. He participated in various African voyages under the auspices of Portugal’s King João II (r. 1481-1495) and appears to have been involved in the founding of the Portuguese castle of St. Jorge da Mina. Under King Manuel I, Pereira voyaged to the west and also later led military campaigns in India. Sometime after his return from the last in great honor he is believed to have compiled the *Esmeraldo* from his own personal experiences along the African coast. Pereira’s last public position was as the Portuguese governor of St. Jorge da Mina from 1520-22, which he left in disgrace amid possibly spurious accusations of fraud that resulted in his imprisonment and eventual impoverishment.\(^{20}\)

In the *Esmeraldo* Pereira discusses a variety of things useful to the mariner, including routes, landmarks, soundings, tides, and latitudes. His twentieth-century editor and translator, George H.T. Kimble, cross-references some of Pereira’s information with information contained in other roughly contemporaneous sources, as well as with the British admiralty sailing directions in editions of the *Africa Pilot* from the 1920s and 1930s. Likely finished sometime before 1509, Kimble characterizes Pereira’s work as both “the only detailed, contemporary eyewitness’s description of the African coasts”\(^{21}\) and, with the exception of some crude predecessors, the first Portuguese navigational route map.\(^{22}\)

Almost exactly contemporary with Pereira is Valentim Fernandes, a Lisbon printer, editor, translator, author, commercial agent, and courtesan, who published his *Description de la

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\(^{22}\) Pereira, *Esmeraldo*, xiii.
Côte d’Afrique de Ceuta au Sénégal in 1506-1507. It is believed Fernandes’s only African voyage may have been on a warship that participated in the Portuguese defense of Arzila in 1508—in other words, after publication of his Description. In his work he makes no substantive attempt at narrative composition, instead primarily providing what are essentially lists of information on different locations. For descriptions from at least Ceuta to Cape Bojador Fernandes’s material appears to be original. This stands in contrast to his description of the African coast beyond Cape Bojador to the island of Arguin, in which he appears to have summarized Gomes Eannes Zurara’s, The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea.

Considering the works of explorers, travelers, and fact-finding officials provides a convenient segue to a discussion of source material on the Morocco of this time originating with Arab authors, for among the most prominent contemporary Arab travelers we may draw upon for this period is Leo Africanus (1494-1554?). Born al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan in the last decade of the fifteenth century in Granada, Spain, Leo’s family fled to Fez after the Christian Reconquista. As a young man he gained employment with the Wattasid ruler, and the resulting travel required of him informed his famous work The History and Description of Africa and of the Notable Things Therein Contained, believed to have been completed in 1526. During one of his journeys in the Mediterranean Christians captured Leo and took him to Pope Leo X. His conversion to Christianity in 1519 won him both his freedom and his new Christian name, Leo Africanus. He eventually returned to Fez and Islam. Leo Africanus stands out among

24 Fernandes, Description, 2.
25 Fernandes, Description, 5.
27 For a comprehensive account of Leo’s life and works see Natalie Zemon Davis, Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006). For an examination of how translators may
chroniclers of the time in that he was methodical and empirical in his approach and relied heavily on firsthand knowledge that he had obtained during his own travels. Unfortunately, his work is also rife with historical and geographical errors (particularly for our purposes with regard to southern Morocco) that have necessitated substantial notes in edited volumes. The History nevertheless contains a great deal of useful information about the geography, environmental conditions, and agricultural production of early sixteenth-century Morocco, which when combined with the works of Pereira and Fernandes enables us to paint a reasonably vivid portrait of the physical characteristics of Atlantic Morocco for the period under study.

The Arabic source we possess closest to the reins of power during this period is the work of Abd al-Aziz ibn Muhammad al-Fishtali (1549-1621/22). As a poet and the secretary of correspondence for the Moroccan ruler Ahmad al-Mansur, al-Fishtali wrote Manahil al-Safa. Essentially designed to be the official history of al-Mansur's rule, most of its assumed content is lost, leaving us with approximately fifteen years of material from the 1580s and 1590s that includes subjects with which the author does not appear to be familiar. A significant difficulty with al-Fishtali’s work is its style. Al-Fishtali’s writing is panegyric and exceedingly flowery, which is not atypical for a court poet and historian, but which makes it exceptionally difficult to read. Nor is it consistently chronological or topical. One scholar, Stephen Cory, who has engaged heavily with al-Fishtali’s work, characterizes him as “wordy and prolix in the extreme,” and notes that “the reader must wade through a considerable amount of text to arrive at the

have altered the meaning of Leo’s work with regard to views on Islam, see Crofton Black, "Leo Africanus's "Descrittione dell'Africa" and Its Sixteenth-Century Translations" in Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 65 (2002): 262-272.


kernel of what is being said.” For Cory the panegyric style of al-Fishtali was an important rhetorical contribution to and reflection of al-Mansur’s pursuit of an Islamic caliphate; for others it significantly limits his value as a primary source. One result of the difficulty with al-Fishtali is that his work remains untranslated.

Another factor that has no doubt played a role in the diminished use of al-Fishtali is the availability of a far more accessible later work that incorporates passages not only from him, but from a significant number of other chroniclers of the time, many of whose works are lost to us today. This is Muhammad al-Saghir ibn al-Hajj ibn Abd Allah al-Ifrani’s *Nuzhat al-hadi bi-akbar muluk al-qarn al-hadi*, which has been translated into French as *Nozhet-Elhâdi: Histoire de la Dynastie Saadienne au Maroc (1511-1670)*. Al-Ifrani (1670-1747) was a court official of Morocco’s Alaouï dynasty, which succeeded the Sa’di in the middle of the seventeenth century and continues to rule Morocco today. In addition to the advantages of a more direct writing style, al-Ifrani’s position in the court of a successor dynasty and thus at a distance from the events he describes likely contributed to making him a more objective observer of the Sa’di period. His view of the latter is still generally favorable, but avoids the hagiographic excesses of al-Fishtali. The substantial amount of material al-Ifrani appears to have consulted, his extensive citation of his sources, and his generally critical and impartial evaluation of those sources makes him the main primary source in Arabic for the history of the Sa’di dynasty.

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30 Cory, *Reviving the Islamic Caliphate*, 106.
33 E. Lévi-Provençal, *Les Historiens des Chorfa*, 130. Lévi-Provençal notes that al-Ifrani cites forty-three others in his work. E. Lévi-Provençal, *Les Historiens des Chorfa*, 124-125. An example of al-Ifrani’s critical gaze is his citation and evaluation of a work sometimes consulted by scholars of the Sa’di period. This is the *Tarikh al-dawla al-Sa’diyya*, attributed to the Anonymous Chronicler of Fès. Believed to have been written in the late seventeenth century, the work contains what might be characterized today as rumor and gossip with a decidedly anti-Sa’di bent.
Another Arabic primary source is exceptionally valuable for examining the Sa’di invasion of the sub-Saharan Songhay Empire in 1591 and the subsequent Moroccan administration of the region. This is the Tarikh al-Sudan by Abd al-Rahman ibn Abd Allah ibn Imran al-Sa’di (1594-ca.1656). His work is among the earliest and most comprehensive written sources we have on the history of Africa’s Middle Niger region during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His only known extant publication, the Tarikh provides unequaled information on the internal dynamics of the Songhay Empire, and has helped make the Moroccan invasion and colonization of the Middle Niger one of the most studied episodes in the history of relations between North African and Sub-Saharan states in the early modern period.

Al-Sa’di was a native of the Middle Niger. Of Arab descent through the male line, his family had lived for several generations in Timbuktu, which before the Moroccan invasion of 1591 was one of the principal cities of the Songhay Empire. When analyzing al-Mansur’s Songhay effort we are thus fortunate to possess the work of an author unattached to al-Mansur’s court through which we have an opportunity to evaluate events presumably unencumbered by the flattering official portrayals that are so often the product of official dynastic secretaries and chroniclers. Born in 1594, al-Sa’di came of age within an environment shaped by the Moroccan conquest and the collapse of a once powerful Sudanic kingdom. Virtually his entire adult life

Al-Ifrani, in fact, at times characterizes the anonymous author’s assertions as a “diatribe” and refuses to give them credence. Al-Ifrani, Nuzhat al-hadi, 104. Al-Ifrani, Nochet-Elhâdi, 90. The Arabic word that Houdas translates as “diatribe” is “ذم”. For a concise recommendation of caution regarding the Anonymous Chronicler of Fez see Smith, Ahmad al-Mansur, 16-17. A more comprehensive examination is contained in E. Lévi-Provençal, Les Historiens des Chorfa, 131-140. Tarikh al-dawla al-Sâ’diyya is available in French translation. Anonymous Chronicler of Fez, Tarikh al-dawla al-Sa’diyya (translated as Sur la dynastie Sa’dienne du Maroc), in Extraits Inédits Relatifs au Maghreb (Géographie et Histoire) (Algers: Adolphe Jourdan, 1924), 360-457.

34 Abd al-Rahman ibn Abd Allah ibn Imran al-Sa’di, Tarikh Es-Soudan, trans. O. Houdas (1913-194; repr., Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1964). The Houdas volume has both the original Arabic and a French translation, while the relevant portion for the period under study here may also be found in English translation in John O. Hunwick, Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: Al-Sa’di’s Tarikh al-sudan down to 1613 and other Contemporary Documents (Leiden: Brill, 1999).


36 Hunwick, Timbuktu, ixiii.
passed with his native land under foreign domination. As did some, but by no means all, members of the scholar-merchant class in the region, al-Sa’di integrated himself into the new political order. Around 1626 he became imam of the Sankore mosque in the urban center of Jenne and later the secretary of the Moroccan administration in Timbuktu. Thus by virtue of lineage, class, and occupation al-Sa’di found himself throughout his life subject to the complex and conflicting conditions of collaboration and resistance that so often emerge under colonial rule. This sets the context in which we must consider his *Tarikh al-Sudan*.

Later Moroccan historians round out the sources in Arabic we have that cover the period under study. One of these is the late eighteenth-century Moroccan official and historian Abu al-Qassim ibn Ahmad al-Zayyani (1734/35-1833). Educated and well-traveled, after returning from the hajj al-Zayyani served in the Moroccan administration as a secretary, negotiator, and eventually as an ambassador to the Ottoman sultan. During his life al-Zayyani wrote fifteen books, all but two of which were on history and geography. The one of interest for this study is *Al-Tarjuman al-Mu’rib ‘an duwal al-Mashriq wa al-Maghrib* whose sections on the Sa’di have been translated into French by Roger Le Tourneau. Al-Zayyani differed substantially from his predecessor Moroccan historians. Whereas they had focused on national histories, al-Zayyani in contrast sought to compile a universal history in the vein of much earlier historical works written in Arabic, like the tenth-century *Annals* of al-Tabari. In his compilation, the chapters on the

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37 Hunwick, *Timbuktu*, ixiii. The Sankore mosque in Jenne (now Djenne) is not to be confused with the similarly-named mosque in Timbuktu.


Sa’di and the successor Alaouï dynasties are substantial and well-informed by knowledge gained through his experience with the Ottomans.

Beyond al-Zayyani we also have the work of the great nineteenth-century Moroccan historian, Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn Khalid al-Nasiri al-Salawi (1835-1897). Born in Salé to a sharifian family, he worked for more than two decades in the Moroccan central government and traveled widely throughout the country. His major work, *Kitab al-istiqla’ li-akhbar duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqsa*, consists of nine volumes that survey the entire Islamic history of Morocco. Drawing significantly on the work of prior historians he writes with particular detail on the dynasties of the Marinids, the Wattasids, and the Sa’di, seeming to rely heavily on al-Ifrani for information on the last of these. Unlike most of his predecessors writing for a Muslim audience, al-Nasiri was not afraid to acknowledge his use of European sources.

Other historians, travelers, and officials, writing in both Arabic and European languages appear sporadically in any examination of Morocco during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and they will be addressed in this study as they do so. Additionally, a significant number of secondary works also provide valuable insights when attempting to consider Morocco in the context of the emerging Atlantic world. Those by Dahiru Yahya, Weston F. Cook, Stephen Cory, Richard L. Smith, Mercedes García-Arenal, and Abd al-Karayyim have already been mentioned. Other valuable works include those of Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, E.W. Bovill, and the Kings], commonly known as the Annals or the *Tarikh al-Tabari*, covered the period from creation, as described in the Qur’an, up to 915.


Kenneth Brown,47 Vincent Cornell,48 H.Z. (J.W.) Hirschberg,49 Robert Ricard,50 and T.S. Willan.51 Together with the primary sources discussed earlier, the contributions of these scholars provide rich material through which we may examine and consider Morocco’s place in the early Atlantic world.

Organization of Study

To begin the task the first chapter of this study starts by discussing the value of the Atlantic world as an analytical framework and in particular how and why applying it to the history of Morocco in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries can provide us with a deeper understanding of both that Atlantic world and Morocco itself. This requires examining not only the different approaches for useful application of Atlantic world analysis, but also some of the framework’s alleged shortcomings. The latter add value particularly insofar as this study argues that introducing Morocco into the Atlantic narrative helps address some of the assertions of the field’s critics.

From there the second chapter proceeds to discuss two aspects of Arab and Moroccan history that are particularly relevant to further examination of Morocco from the perspective of an Atlanticist. The first of these is the long-held, though now less often explicitly-expressed, culturally-based assumptions regarding the Arab maritime experience. A review of this history is useful to lay the groundwork both for the particular challenge presented to Morocco by its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, and how and why this makes Morocco both uniquely-suited

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within the dār al-Islām for integration into the Atlantic world, as well as uniquely-situated within that Atlantic world. Following this the second chapter concludes with a geographical and environmental review of the relevant areas of Morocco using predominantly contemporaneous sources so as to present as accurately as practicable in this context the conditions that existed along the Moroccan Atlantic littoral during the period under study.

The third chapter of this study begins by examining Morocco’s initial experience with first the Atlantic on its own terms and then with the larger Atlantic world. While the former brings us up to the fifteenth-century opening of the Atlantic world, the latter covers a time when the first steps in the creation of that world amounted substantively to an Atlantic attack on Morocco. During this period the Atlantic became the vehicle by which the Iberian powers, Portugal most prominently, used the Atlantic as a tool to exploit, control, and subjugate Morocco, something these powers could not accomplish by a more traditional land-based crusade. In the process Morocco becomes an important part of the West African component of the Atlantic world. Within Morocco itself, the country’s inability to safeguard its maritime frontier led to social and political change that ultimately encouraged ascendant internal forces to seize the opportunity to assert Moroccan independence by using some of the very networks the early Atlantic world created.

This engagement of the Atlantic world for Morocco’s own purposes is the subject of the fourth chapter of this study. The traditional narrative of the “golden trade of the Moors” is a story of caravans traversing the hostile expanse of the Sahara for centuries to deliver gold and slaves. While critical components in the development of the Atlantic world, these commodities were not the only, or even main, source of value with which Morocco chose to engage the networks of the Atlantic. In what eventually emerged as a Moroccan struggle for independence

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52 Bovill, The Golden Trade of the Moors.
that importance instead belongs significantly to sugar and later to a lesser extent to saltpeter. It was these two resources that Morocco used, through the sharīfīan Sa’dī dynasty especially, to assert itself in the commercial and political arena of the early Atlantic. These two commodities, among others, gave Morocco the financial and military wherewithal to achieve first parity with the Atlantic forces attacking them and then advantage. At the same time this financial and military strength derived from Atlantic networks also buttressed Morocco’s ability to resist the encroachment of the powerful Ottoman Empire to the east. Such resistance was no small matter for Atlantic history, as the Ottomans coveted Morocco’s Atlantic ports. Given their substantial maritime resources at the time, with control of such ports the Ottoman Empire might have played a far more influential and direct role in the development of the Atlantic world than it otherwise did. In short, Morocco gained financial and military strength from its trade in sugar and saltpeter within Atlantic world networks, and this strength in turn led to military victories that dramatically affected the course of developments in both Morocco and the Atlantic world more broadly.

The fifth and final chapter of this study examines the influence of the imperial Atlantic and its impact on Morocco. With the Iberian powers having embarked on their own imperial projects, Morocco turned away from any the prospect of eastern conquest and instead pursued imperial ambitions of its own. Its leaders entertained an invasion of Iberia, conquered the sub-Saharan Songhay Empire, and then contemplated an astoundingly ambitious, if unrealistic, enterprise directed at Spanish holdings in the Americas. Neither the potential invasion of Iberia, the successful Songhay expedition, nor the still-born American dream, this study argues, can be fully examined independent of what is taking place in the Atlantic world.
Ultimately, this study concludes by discussing how the application of an Atlantic world framework assists us in developing a greater understanding of Moroccan history during the sixteenth century, as well as how the integration of Morocco into the Atlantic narrative can similarly provide us with a fuller picture of the early Atlantic world and how it subsequently took shape. None of this is to suggest that internal developments within Morocco, nor Morocco’s tensions with the Ottoman Empire to the east, are insignificant. In fact, they are a critical component of how Morocco participated in the early Atlantic world and are correspondingly examined in this study. What it is hoped this study does differently than others, however, is that it examines these events in the context of how Morocco is being affected by and is itself influencing the Atlantic world. That an oceanic network like that of the Atlantic world was taking shape and exerting its influence on those involved was not necessarily self-evident to all the participants, and almost certainly not in the manner in which we view it today with centuries of hindsight. Nevertheless, that does not make its impact any less real on the actors of the time and it is our role as historians to examine such influences to see if we can, with the benefit of that hindsight, come to a fuller understanding of what it meant in real time for those actors and how it influenced what was to come. That is one of the things this study attempts to do by looking at Morocco from an Atlantic world perspective.
CHAPTER I. MOROCCO AND THE ATLANTIC: A PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

Three Kings

Panic and confusion reigned. When it had set out but a month before in the summer of 1578, the force numbered more than forty thousand and included more than three thousand horses and seventy pieces of artillery. Just hours before its footprint had blanketed the scorched, summer landscape for miles. Now it was reduced and compressed to the size of a room, trapped between two rivers, the Wadi Loukkos and the Wadi al-Makazin. Portuguese nobles, aventureros, garrison troops from coastal fronteiras, pioneers, and poor conscripts; German and Walloon mercenaries hardened by war in the Low Countries; papal troops under the command of a notorious Catholic Englishman; Castilians loaned by the most powerful monarch in Europe; and local Arab and Berber warrior allies—all faced imminent disaster. With the blinding sun streaming over the backs of their enemies, soldiers, horses, chariots, munitions, tents, pavilions, baggage, and noncombatants collided in heaps, were trampled and smothered, some cut to pieces. Among those attempting to escape, many found that the river at their backs,

53 “Lettre de Cabrette a [Strozzi].” 18 July 1578, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 300-301. Accounts of the actual size of the force vary. Those above come from the letter of a French sea captain, Louis Cabrette, to a recipient believed to be the French infantry officer, Philippe Strozzi. An opportunist who circulated between France, Spain, and Morocco, Cabrette claimed to witness the departure of the force from Cadiz in July 1578. He may have mistaken some of the noncombatants (women, children, priests, pages, slaves, servants, etc.) for troops. Juan da Silva, the representative of the Spanish king Phillip II, reported an army of about 18,000 combatants. “Lettre de Don Juan de Silva a Philippe II”, 6 July 1578, SIHM-Espagne, III, 409-412. Early modern Moroccan sources generally provide a far higher estimate than European accounts, even adjusting for the Arab and Berber allies that joined after the army’s landfall in Morocco. The historian of the Sa’di dynasty, Muhammad al-Ifrani, writing more than a century later cited sources placing the number between 60,000 and 125,000. Al-Ifrani, Nozhet-Elhâdi, 131-132. Modern historians place the number in the range of 16,000 – 26,000 troops and at about half of the artillery that Cabrette asserts. See e.g., E.W. Bovill, The Battle of Alcazar: An Account of the Defeat of Don Sebastian of Portugal at El-Ksar el Kebir (London: Batchworth Press, 1952), 83; Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, A History of the Maghrib, 214; Cook, The Hundred Years War, 247; Smith, Ahmad al-Mansur, 29; García-Arenal, Ahmad al-Mansur, 6; Cory, Reviving the Islamic Caliphate, 9.


55 Aventureiros were Portuguese nobles who were not wealthy enough to adorn themselves as cavalrymen and volunteered to serve as infantry. Fronteiros were Portuguese who garrisoned the coastal feitorias (trading posts) and the citadels or castles that surrounded or protected them. Cook, Hundred Years War, 247, 249.

nearly dry when they had first crossed it, had now risen with the tide. It engulfed and swallowed
them as they tried to reach the far shore. Almost all those who escaped death by the sword or
drowning—allegedly some fifteen thousand—were captured, and enslaved or made hostage.57
Less than one hundred reached the Atlantic coast and safety.58

The Battle of Wadi al-Makazin on 4 August 1578 ended the Portuguese invasion of
Morocco.59 It also shocked Europe, effectively ended a succession crisis in the Maghrib, and led
to another involving the two most expansive European Atlantic states. Three kings lay dead.
Muhammad al-Mutawakkil, the pretender to the Moroccan throne who had lobbied for the
Portuguese invasion of his homeland, drowned while trying to escape, his body found near a ford
of the Wadi al-Makazin.60 Victorious Moroccan forces had his body flayed, stuffed with straw,
and paraded through the streets to ensure his supporters harbored no hope of his return.61

The victors had also lost their ruler, Abd al-Malik (r. 1576-1578), the uncle of the

58 Bovill, The Battle of Alcazar, 143.
59 This battle is known by various names in the sources. Wadi al-Makazin is the preferred name among Arab
sources and in this study. It comes from the name of the nearby river that pressed upon the Portuguese rear. Other
names include al-Qasr al-Kabir, after a nearby town, which is corrupted to Alcazar in European languages. The
most common name is the Battle of the Three Kings, derived from the corresponding deaths during the battle of the
Portuguese king Dom Sebastian, the Moroccan ruler Abd al-Malik, and the Portuguese-supported pretender to the
Moroccan throne, al-Mutawakkil. Our most accessible comprehensive source in English for the battle is E.W.
Bovill, The Battle of Alcazar. Bovill looks to be the main source for other secondary summaries, but appears to
derive his information directly from J.F. Conestaggio, The Historie. Bovill asserts that Conestaggio, who was a
Genoese in the Lisbon customs service, likely loaned his name to the work and that the real author was Juan de
Silva, the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon, who accompanied the Portuguese invasion. Bovill, The Battle of Alcazar,
188. Some other contemporary descriptions (as well as Conestaggio’s) can be found in SIHM-France, I. Accurately
citing the titles of these accounts can be tricky. The editors in De Castries entitled all of them Relation de la
battaille de El-Kasr El-Kabir. In some instances, however, the author of a particular account has given an
introductory title of his own. See e.g., Joachim Centellas,”Relation de la bataille de El-Kasr El-Kabir” SIHM-
France, I, 407-437; Fray Luis Nieto, “Relation de la bataille de El-Kasr El-Kabir,” SIHM-France, I, 438-505; Duarte
de Menezes, “Relacione la perdida del Rey Dº Sebastian de Portugal y de su esereito en Alcazar Quivir a 5 de
batalla de Alcaçer, que mandum hum cativo ao Dº Paulo Aº,” SIHM-France, I, 654-660; Unknown Italian Captive,
“Relazione di Portogallo et delle cagioni che mossero il re Sebastiano all’ impresa d’Africa 1578,” SIHM-France, I,
662-669. An excellent concise account in English, informed by knowledge of military tactics, can be found in
Cook, Hundred Years War, 241-272.
60 Bovill, The Battle of Alcazar, 142.
61 Conestaggio, The Historie, 53.
pretender. For weeks prior to the conflict he had suffered greatly. His Jewish physician reported that his charge had no appetite, was vomiting, and had eventually developed hiccups, tremors in his hands, and difficulty speaking, compelling signs to the physician of an inevitable outcome. Allegedly feeling improved the morning of battle, and fearing what his absence and news of his impending death would cause, Abd al-Malik rejected the pleas of his physician and advisers and insisted on mounting his horse to exhort his forces. It cost him his life. After he fainted from his exertions, attendants covered the face of the soon-dead ruler and feigned to give him water, keeping his death secret while the battle continued. When victory came, his brother and chosen successor, Abu al-Abbas Ahmad, who had led loyal forces in the battle, moved to consolidate control over the following months, assuming the name Ahmad al-Mansur bi Allah (“Victorious by the will of God”).

The most devastating blow struck Portugal. Its population of less than two million, with overseas possessions in Brazil, West Africa, the Indian Ocean, and the Far East, could ill afford thinning of its ranks. More than a week passed before news of the disaster reached Lisbon, and when it did officials tried hard to repress the details. Suddenly, Portugal confronted both the ignominy of defeat and an existential threat to the independence it had enjoyed since the twelfth century. A campaign waged with the blessing of the Pope and the bull of a Holy Crusade, the Morocco adventure had ravaged Portugal’s upper class. "There was scarcely a noble house in Portugal,” wrote E. W. Bovill, “which had not dead to mourn, and more than one great title was

62 Bovill, The Battle of Alcazar, 93-94.
64 Bovill, The Battle of Alcazar, 143. Although Fray Luis Nieto, a preaching friar who had been present at the battle, wrote his account in Portuguese, the defeat was too controversial and embarrassing to publish in his native tongue. One of the very first accounts of the battle, it was instead published in French in 1579. Another three hundred years would pass before it made it into print in Portuguese. For the French translation of his account see “Relation de la bataille de El-Kasr El-Kabir,” SIHM-France, I, 438-505.
65 Portugal dates its independence from 1139 when the Portuguese defeated a Muslim army at the Battle of Ourique.
extinguished by the death in battle of its holder and all his heirs."\textsuperscript{66} Even more disastrous was the loss of the country’s young, if impetuous, king, Dom Sebastian (r. 1557-1578). Unmarried and heirless, the twenty-four-year-old ruler was a grandson of the late Charles V, onetime King of Spain (r. 1516-1556), Holy Roman Emperor (r. 1519-1556), and head of the Habsburg Empire. Sebastian’s death left the crown of Portugal open to the claims of Charles V’s son, Philip II (r. 1581-1598), King of Spain and the most powerful monarch in Europe. In Lisbon, before the month of August was out, Portuguese officials quickly crowned as king, Cardinal Henry, Sebastian’s former regent and great-uncle. But all knew, including rival European powers, that the unwed sixty-six-year-old prelate could not deter the covetous aims of Spain’s Philip II for long.

The Moroccan victory at Wadi al-Makazin was not only a Portuguese defeat that rattled nerves in Europe. It also marked a transformation in Morocco’s involvement in the early Atlantic World. For almost a century, some European Atlantic states had traversed the Atlantic Ocean seeking opportunity in the Americas, first led by those on the Iberian Peninsula and in many instances using the maritime skills and ambitions of Mediterranean sailors. Their activities led to an ever increasing level of interaction among the continents of Europe, Africa, and the Americas in the fields of conquest and exploitation, trade, colonization, and migration – forced and free.\textsuperscript{67} Morocco played an important, if under-examined, role in the development of that

\textsuperscript{66} Bovill, \textit{The Battle of Alcazar}, 142. A partial list of those lost can be found in the account of Duarte de Menezes, "Relación," SIHM-France, I, 652-653 and also in Conestaggio, \textit{The Historie}, 52.

world from its earliest stages, and was in turn critically influenced by it. With the defeat of the polyglot, Portuguese-led European army in the summer heat of 1578, Portugal’s ambitions in northwest Africa effectively ended. As Portugal redirected its attention elsewhere, Morocco was about to attempt an expansion of its role in that young Atlantic World and would once again find itself profoundly shaped by the interaction.68

The Atlantic World Framework and Morocco

Over the last several decades, a growing number of historians69 have conceptualized the Atlantic world as an explanatory analytical framework, useful for studying processes of interaction and exchange, whether demographic, commercial, biological, or cultural, in a way that would otherwise sometimes be limited by a focus on the nation-state or even continents and civilizations.70 Stretching temporally from the late 15th into the 19th century, the Atlantic world

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68 There are some difficulties in using the term “Morocco” accurately at this particular point in history. European observers often referred quite correctly to what we now call Morocco in terms of constituent kingdoms that operated independently as separate states. Thus in 1561 we have, for example, a letter from England’s ambassador to France to a minister of Queen Elizabeth, which reported on a Portuguese captain who claimed to have lived in the kingdoms of “Susa [Sus],” “Marochia [Maroc],” and “Fess [Fez].” “Lettre de Nicholas Throckmorton à William Cecil,” 29 June 1561, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 28. Though historians may refer to Morocco as a single, recognizable entity with some confidence after the Sa’di dynasty’s Muhammad al-Shaykh assumes power and unifies the country around 1550, the country’s borders were still unclear and fluid. Fortunately for purposes of examining Morocco’s involvement in the early Atlantic World, the exact demarcation of boundaries among competing factions is not necessary. Within the context of this study Morocco refers to what is essentially reflected in the country’s current boundaries, excluding Western Sahara. It thus on the Atlantic coastline stretches approximately 800 miles (1300 km) from Cape Spartel near Tangier, the most northwestern point of mainland Africa, to the Dra’a River valley in the south near the modern town of Tan-Tan, on the same line of latitude as the nearby Canary Islands. Inland the borders of what this study refers to as Morocco are less clear and also less necessary for our purposes. Most important are the traditional inland capitals of Fez and Marrakech. Well into the sixteenth century observers most often referred to two kingdoms: the Kingdom of Fez, which stretched from the Oum Er-Rbia river in the south to the Mediterranean, with its capital at Fez, and the Kingdom of Maroco, which stretched south of the same river and had its capital at Maroco (Marrakech).


encompasses more than simply the history of four continents that happen to be geographically situated around what we now recognize as the Atlantic basin. It offers instead a means for examining and understanding the transformative impacts that arose from the interaction of European, African, and American cultures following the European transatlantic voyages of the 15th and 16th centuries. These impacts often extended far beyond the littorals of the continents themselves, linking and influencing disparate cultures in profound and lasting ways.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Morocco possessed a number of geopolitical characteristics that gave it a unique vantage point from within the dār al-Islām to observe and participate in the transformations that shaped and defined the early Atlantic world. Most obviously, alone among Muslim states Morocco incorporated more than eight hundred of miles of Atlantic coastline and thus possessed access to the western seas that did not depend upon navigating the sometimes-hostile Strait of Gibraltar. Additionally, for centuries prior, much of Morocco’s politics, commerce, and culture reflected connections to the nearby Iberian Peninsula, the geographical and cultural launching point for important European voyages of discovery and the metropole of the Atlantic world’s first empires. Finally, like its Atlantic European counterparts, Morocco at this time also experienced substantial political consolidation while it simultaneously became entangled in the international struggles amongst powers seeking maritime advantage in the Atlantic. In this last it was not a passive actor, but an active participant with its own aims and ambitions in the arena we now label the Atlantic world.

Despite these geopolitical characteristics, Morocco’s treatment in consciously Atlantic works is uneven. It has for the most part made scant appearances in survey texts, and when it

does it is generally mentioned only in passing. A sampling of such works written over the last two decades help illustrate the point. In M.J. Seymour’s *The Transformation of the North Atlantic World, 1492-1763*, for example, Morocco merits a one-sentence reference to the 1578 Battle of Al-Kasr al-Kebr,\(^\text{71}\) this despite Morocco having potential relevance in other sections of the text, including one section that discusses alternatives to North Atlantic expansion.\(^\text{72}\)

Undergraduate-focused survey texts on the Atlantic, such as Egerton, Games, Landers, et. al.’s *The Atlantic World: A History, 1400-1888*, reference little more.\(^\text{73}\) A later volume edited by Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts, *The Atlantic World, 1450-2000*, offers even less.\(^\text{74}\) Thomas Benjamin’s, *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians and Their Shared History, 1400-1900*, includes but a single page on Morocco in a chapter on conquests, along with a smattering of minor references related to slavery.\(^\text{75}\)

There have been exceptions. One is Susan Iwanisziw’s “England, Morocco, and Global Geopolitical Upheaval,” in the edited volume *Envisioning an English Empire: Jamestown and the Making of the North Atlantic World*.\(^\text{76}\) Iwanisziw’s selection focuses on the representations of Anglo-Moroccan relations in English literature and drama. While this subject has been prominently-covered by Nabil Matar,\(^\text{77}\) what sets Iwanisziw’s contribution apart for our purposes

\(^{71}\) As noted earlier, the preferred name for the battle in this study is Wadi al-Makazin. When referring to the battle’s treatment in modern secondary sources, however, this study typically will use the name and spelling chosen by that source.

\(^{72}\) M.J. Seymour, *The Transformation of the North Atlantic World, 1492-1763* (London: Praeger, 2004), 130-131. It was, after all, the Battle of Wadi al-Makazin that definitively closed off Portuguese expansion efforts in Northwest Africa that had been underway for more than one hundred and fifty years.


is its inclusion in a volume on the making of the North Atlantic world. More provocative is E.
Ann McDougall’s, “The Caravel and the Caravan: Reconsidering Received Wisdom in the
Sixteenth-Century Sahara,” a chapter in The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624.78 Again
intriguingly placed in a volume specifically devoted to the Atlantic world, McDougall examines
the Moroccan and Saharan connection, noting that the latter is “largely invisible” even to
Africanists.79 These outliers among Atlantic survey works do not purport to thoroughly examine
Morocco’s role in the Atlantic, or the history of Morocco from an Atlantic perspective.
Nevertheless, they offer glimpses into the possibilities for new insights that such examination
may reveal.

This comparative dearth of coverage on Morocco in Atlantic-world works should come
as no surprise. In Bernard Bailyn’s early formulation of the constituent parts of the Atlantic
world, it was clear that any reference to Africa meant West Africa and its role in the slave trade,
and excluded the Muslim-dominated northwest of the continent.80 It is also important to
recognize the breadth and scope of coverage for which survey works must strive. Many of the
authors cited above, after all, have not fallen prey to an antiquated Eurocentric worldview.
China, the Ottoman Empire, and even the Arab navigators of the Indian Ocean, make
appearances in their works. But in a field that focuses on connection, interaction, and exchange,
it is sometimes difficult to place Morocco.81 Structural impediments certainly exist in the form

78 Peter C. Mancall, ed., The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
Press, 2007), 143-169.
79 Mancall, The Atlantic World, 143-169, 144.
80 Bailyn, “The Idea of Atlantic History.”
81 It is easy to conclude when definitions of the Atlantic World refer to interactions between Europe, the Americas,
and Africa, that the last most often means sub-Saharan Africa, a region that contributed so much in population,
commerce, and culture, to the Atlantic World. As in the alternative schema of human geography used by Martin
Lewis and Kären Wigen, Morocco is more often connected to southwest Asia and North Africa, but left out of the
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
of the traditional academic separation between North African and Sub-Saharan African history.

But more tenacious reasons endemic to the Atlantic world framework also exist.

Conquest, exploitation of resources and labor, and migration are all major themes in Atlantic world studies. But unlike the societies in sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas, Morocco was never comparably exploited for labor or comparably conquered by European powers during this historical period. That is not to suggest that conquest and exploitation did not take place. In fact, as this study will detail, both were significant and critical components of Morocco’s Atlantic world experience. Nevertheless, the level and type of interaction was qualitatively different than experienced elsewhere in most of the Atlantic world. There was for Morocco no dominating conquest, no expanding colonization, no massive exploitation of resources, no pervasive imposition of labor and slave regimes, no exchange of plants, animals, and diseases that assisted European penetration, and no subsequent revolutions.82 In this sense, Morocco was never integrated into an Atlantic world system in the same way as most other non-European participants. It confronted the European Atlantic powers often on far more equal terms than civilizations and societies in the Americas, and did so without the benefit of tropical diseases that helped sub-Saharan African actors prevent European penetration of the African interior until well into the nineteenth century.

Perhaps most importantly, Morocco’s appeal as a subject of Atlantic world study suffers from the absence of any meaningful movement by Moroccans themselves across the Atlantic basin. Migration, both forced and free, is a fundamental, foundational topic for Atlanticists. John Thornton, in fact, characterizes the birth of the Atlantic world as involving “a gigantic

82 Most of these things may also be said about the West and Central African societies involved in the Atlantic World. Transatlantic slavery, however, played an immense role in these societies and thus distinguishes them materially from Morocco’s experience. For a thorough discussion of the role of sub-Saharan Africa in the Atlantic World see John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Modern Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
international migration of people . . . without precedent in the Old World and undertaken nowhere else in the field of European expansion.”

In addition to possessing no naval capabilities of their own sufficient to traverse the ocean, neither were Moroccans in large numbers substantive participants—either voluntarily or involuntarily—in transatlantic exploration or migration led by other countries. Serving as crew on transatlantic voyages or being transported as slaves would have been the two mostly likely means by which Moroccans would have physically crossed the Atlantic, but there is no evidence to suggest they did either in any meaningful numbers. Instead we are left with isolated examples like that of “Estavanico,” a Moroccan raised in the coastal town of Azammur. As a servant or slave on the expedition of the Spanish explorer Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Estavanico was among those shipwrecked near what is now Galveston, Texas, and participated in one of the earliest explorations of the American southwest. As intriguing a story as such an example might offer, it does little to

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84 It difficult to know from available information if this is a massive understatement or fails to give due respect to the comparative few who did make the journey. Though it is well-known that the Iberian powers took slaves from Morocco for service in Spain and Portugal, it is unknown how many of these may ultimately have also been sent across the Atlantic. Spain and Portugal overwhelmingly dominated the transatlantic slave trade in the first century of the Atlantic World, with the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database documenting approximately 275,000 slaves sent during that period to the Americas (a paltry sum compared to later centuries). But the database shows no voyages to or from Morocco – understandable for a location that was not a major source of slaves for work in the Americas – and nothing to suggest that a substantial numbers of slaves first taken to Portugal or Spain ended up across the ocean. Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, http://www.slavevoyages.org (for estimates and maps; accessed September 4, 2017). By the second half of the sixteenth century the slave population in Portugal appears to have been made up predominantly of people from sub-Saharan Africa. Bovill asserts that the decline of the peasant population in Portugal had resulted in their replacement by so many blacks from Africa that the southern part of Portugal had become predominantly black. Subjective evaluations of color and the multiethnic makeup of Morocco might make the assumption that these “blacks” are sub-Saharan suspect. But Bovill’s remark is consistent with Portugal having begun the importation of sub-Saharan slaves in 1444. There was also an apparent preference for sub-Saharan African slaves over North African Muslims slaves, as the former were deemed more open to conversion to Christianity, had no nearby places to which to escape, and were considered more compliant. This made them far less threatening than Muslims, the last of who were forcibly expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in the early seventeenth century. Bovill, *The Battle of Alcazar*, 5; Joachim Romero Magalhães, “Africans, Indians and Slavery in Portugal,” *Portuguese Studies* 13 (1997): 143-151, 143.
elevate Morocco as worthy of greater study within the analytical framework of the Atlantic world. Instead, without a movement of peoples, examining Morocco within an Atlantic world context easily risks becoming but one more of the numerous studies that Alison Games has characterized as being about places “around” the Atlantic, rather than “of” the Atlantic. So why examine Morocco from an Atlantic perspective and how best do so?

As dominant lines of inquiry as they may be, neither conquest and exploitation, nor the movement of populations, need be a necessary condition for useful application of the Atlantic World framework if the goal is a better understanding of a country, region, or network’s history. Multiple perspectives and frameworks have proven to be useful and not mutually exclusive in other contexts, and have expanded our understanding of what was thought to be well-trodden ground. Looking at Morocco from an Atlantic perspective in which the ocean itself, transformed by the European voyages of discovery, plays a major role, may lead us to see Morocco, and perhaps the Atlantic world as well, in new ways. In fact, this study proposes that the Atlantic World framework enunciated by Atlanticists themselves, as well as some of the criticisms of that framework, support that very notion.

David Armitage was one of the most prominent early Atlanticists to explore the “genealogy” of the field, pose the question of “what makes Atlantic history a novel approach to genuine problems”, and respond with a guiding typology. That typology consists of three parts that Armitage characterizes as Circum-Atlantic history, Trans-Atlantic history, and Cis-Atlantic history. In simplified terms the first, circum-Atlantic history, focuses on “exchange and interchange, circulation and transmission,” including the littorals that surround the Atlantic basin

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86 Alison Games, “Atlantic History,” 745.
87 An excellent example of a work that does so is April Lee Hatfield, Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Hatfield makes this very point about multiple perspectives on page 227.
only so long as they play a part in the larger oceanic exchange.\textsuperscript{89} Trans-Atlantic history prioritizes comparisons that derive their usefulness from their sharing of “some common features by virtue of being enmeshed within circum-Atlantic relationships.”\textsuperscript{90} Cis-Atlantic history focuses on specific locations that are deemed unique because of the impact of their interaction with the larger Atlantic World.\textsuperscript{91}

Though it lacks direct engagement with the powerful themes of conquest, exploitation, and migration that underlie much of circum-Atlantic history, Morocco fits particularly well into a cis-Atlantic construct because of its place as a member of the ḍār al-Islām. As the Christian \textit{Reconquista} pushed Muslim states first into the southeast corner of the Iberian Peninsula and then out of it all together, Morocco by the time of the European voyages of discovery and the advent of the Atlantic world was the only state within the Muslim world with direct access to the Atlantic and its developing connections.\textsuperscript{92} Several large sub-Saharan African states could at times lay claim to a place within the ḍār al-Islām and they too opened sustained trading contacts with the Atlantic world as it emerged. But they lacked a substantial Atlantic coastline during their preeminence, necessitating that they act through intermediaries, as was the case for the Ghana Empire and the Songhay Empire, or were in sharp decline by the sixteenth century, as was the case for the Mali Empire.\textsuperscript{93} The Ottoman Empire alone among other Muslim polities had the

\textsuperscript{89} Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” 18.  
\textsuperscript{91} Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” 23.  
\textsuperscript{93} For a discussion of early Atlantic contact and commerce between Africans and Europeans see Thornton, \textit{Africa and Africans}, 13-71. Thornton notes that African craft, though capable of repelling European attacks off the coast for a time, were designed primarily for coastal and riverine navigation and not deliberately for oceanic voyaging, a conclusion buttressed by the lack of colonization and habitation of even nearby islands groups like the Cape Verdes.
potential military, technological, and organizational capability of engaging in the Atlantic, and in fact wished to extend its conflict with the Habsburgs beyond both the European landmass and the Mediterranean, but it was consciously and effectively blocked from doing so by the Sa’di rulers of Morocco, who unlike the Ottomans controlled an Atlantic coastline. Thus Morocco stood uniquely apart from other non-European societies that surrounded the Atlantic basin as the only direct participant from the dār al-Islām.

Its geographic position and the corresponding interaction with Atlantic-world powers that this position afforded, also uniquely differentiated Morocco within the dār al-Islām. It was known within the Islamic World, after all, as the Maghrib al-Aqsa – literally “the farthest west,” where the sun sets. Much like al-Andalus, as the Muslim regions on the Iberian Peninsula had been known, Morocco’s geographic position on the great Western ocean always placed it somehow apart from the Islamic heartlands of Arabia, Egypt, Greater Syria, and Mesopotamia, and even from the rest of the Maghrib (North Africa west of Egypt). It was in many ways the “‘forgotten’ Atlantic rim of the Islamic world.”

This liminal position was long mirrored by Morocco’s fate in academic works on regional networks (a fate it shared with the shorter-lived Muslim polities of al-Andalus on the Iberian Peninsula), whether such works focused on Europe, the Mediterranean, the Muslim world, or larger systems. Braudel, for example, in his magisterial work on the Mediterranean in the age of Philip II, says comparatively little about Morocco. He refers to Spain and Portugal as

and São Tomé before the arrival of Europeans. Thornton, Africa and Africans, 21, 37. For first-hand accounts of early European encounters with sub-Saharan Africans on the Atlantic coast see G.R. Crone, The voyages of Cadamosto and other documents on Western Africa in the second half of the fifteenth century (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010).

92 For a brief discussion of the Ottoman interest in the Atlantic see Abbas Hamdani, “Ottoman Response to the Discovery of America and the New Route to India,” Journal of the American Oriental Society 101, no. 3 (Jul-Sep 1981): 323-330. The Ottoman interest in Morocco and its position on the Atlantic will be discussed at several points in this study.

93 Vincent J. Cornell, “Socioeconomic,” 419.
having “joined forces” in 1580 as “signs darkened with the first signs of Protestant privateering.” He makes no substantive mention until more than nine hundred and fifty pages later of the proximate cause of this union—the Moroccan defeat of the Portuguese at Wadi al-Makazin and the resulting Portuguese succession crisis that enabled Philip II to assume control of Portugal and its empire. Neither was Morocco, despite having been well within the confines of the dār al-Islām for centuries, included in the eight circuits of the thirteenth-century world system described by Janet Abu-Lughod in Before the European Hegemony. Even in Marshall G.S. Hodgson’s classic treatise, The Venture of Islam, Morocco merits no more than passing treatment. Morocco, the “farthest west”, stood apart, if not alone, in the dār al-Islām, exposed like no other in that world to the waves and winds of change brought by the Atlantic.

Thus both within the Atlantic World and within the dār al-Islām Morocco was unique, with potential implications for both the influence it exerted on the early Atlantic world and how it was in turn influenced by developments there. These characteristics are what offer the potential to usefully examine Morocco not simply as a place “around” the Atlantic, but as a place “of” the Atlantic.

None of this is to suggest that Morocco does not also merit examination within the frameworks that Armitage characterizes as circum-Atlantic or trans-Atlantic. Though the case is not as strong as it might be, for example, with sub-Saharan states involved in the Atlantic slave trade, Moroccan goods did play a part in the Atlantic exchange network significant enough for Morocco to be markedly affected by developments in that network, thus placing it squarely

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within the confines of the circum-Atlantic framework Armitage envisions. Sugar and saltpeter are two important such goods that were specific to Morocco’s Atlantic connection that will be discussed in this study.

The comparative aspect of trans-Atlantic history at first glance seems a far more difficult construct in which to examine Morocco, precisely because of all the assertions made earlier regarding Morocco’s uniqueness as an Atlantic-bordered member of the dār al-Islām. Although such comparisons are not a focus here, what this study does reveal is that the Moroccan experience in the early Atlantic world may in fact offer fertile material for such comparisons. Within Morocco the Portuguese faced challenges that were to be experienced later elsewhere in the Atlantic world. A number of these challenges were demographic and could not be solved by military superiority. How to direct and appropriate the product of local labor, particularly when it became necessary in order to sustain the colonial position, became a significant and early challenge for the Portuguese. They chose, or were forced out of necessity, to address it in a manner different than what would ultimately be the prevailing approach in the Western Hemisphere. Additionally, although the Portuguese were not to play as significant a role in the western circuits of the Atlantic world as some other European powers, they created and controlled for a time the West African component of that world, and in attempting to transplant a semi-feudal society into an overseas colonial context, shared the same mindset of the medieval Reconquista as the Spanish, who were to assume a dominant position in the Western Hemisphere. For their part the Moroccans faced the same decisions as other colonized peoples in the Atlantic world, forced to chose between engagements with the would-be colonizers that ranged along a spectrum from resistance to collaboration. Although Moroccans were unaffected by disease factors that hindered Americans who confronted Europeans, this made the range of
options available to Morocco different, but not necessarily easier. These considerations all suggest that Morocco may indeed offer the opportunity for useful comparisons that help illuminate both the variety and similarity of experiences within the larger Atlantic world.

Another attractive feature of examining Morocco within the analytical framework of the Atlantic world is that it has the potential to fruitfully address one of the critiques of that same framework. Peter Coclanis has argued that an Atlantic world approach is confining because it “artificially limits the field of vision of its devotees, often blinding them to processes, developments, and conditions of central importance” to the Atlantic world.\textsuperscript{99} He suggests that the Atlantic world was impinged upon by other worlds, and thus shaped not simply by Europeans, Americans, and Africans, but also by peoples outside that orbit.\textsuperscript{100}

The Coclanis critique would seem to ground its indictment on a rather narrow interpretation of the Atlantic world framework, one which views that world as hermetically sealed, which of course it was not. While the concept of a unitary world with relatively impervious boundaries might arguably have been true at a much earlier stage in the development of Atlantic-world analysis—perhaps reflecting the transition from artificially-isolated national or regional histories to a similarly-isolated, more geographically-extensive one—it is not recognizable in the field today or arguably even when Coclanis was writing. Few would argue, for example, that the Indian Ocean trade, the Manila galleon, or the Silk Road, all examples used by Coclanis, were irrelevant to goings on in the Atlantic world.\textsuperscript{101} That external inputs, whether political, commercial, or intellectual, entered the Atlantic world does not reduce the explanatory power of examining the particular nature and intensity of their exchange and interaction within that world itself. Atlanticists seemed to recognize this long ago when they reached far afield

\textsuperscript{99} Coclanis, “Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?”, 726.
\textsuperscript{100} Coclanis, “Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?”, 728-729.
\textsuperscript{101} Coclanis, “Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?”, 739.
geographically and culturally to examine what they considered to be the precursors to the eventual emergence of the Atlantic world. Consequently, Coclanis’s call for a “conjuncto-Atlantic” history would seem to be nothing more than David Armitage’s existing trichotomy with greater attention paid to the impact of outside forces on dynamics within the Atlantic world.  

Morocco offers an opportunity to explore this impact in a relatively under-examined area, for in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it sat Janus-like on the frontier between the dār al-Islām and a new regional, oceanic system under construction largely by Europeans. Felipe Fernández-Armesto has used the Janus metaphor to describe Spain at this period, asserting that “no contrast so thoroughly undermines the myth that Spain is one country than that between Mediterranean and Atlantic Spain.” Spain, he writes, was a Janus whose head “was not set rigidly upon the shoulders, but capable of swivels and nods in different directions as it faced both ways.” Regardless of underlying geographic conditions, the same could probably be said of most polities situated on the borderland separating two societies. The swivels and nods necessary for survival would be commonplace. But the concept is particularly dramatic for those Atlantic basin societies—particularly those without a maritime tradition—who with the fifteenth and sixteenth century-opening of the Atlantic world suddenly found themselves with a border that they had considered either liminal, impermeable, or nonexistent, since it once lacked anyone on the other side of it. With the advent of the Atlantic world coastal sub-Saharan African and American cultures found themselves now forcibly facing a new direction.

102 Conjuncto-Atlantic history is a concept Coclanis suggests should be added to Armitage’s tripartite schema to address the impact of outside “worlds” or forces on the Atlantic World. Coclanis, “Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?”, 739.
Morocco’s swivels and nods may have been less dramatic than those below the Sahara or across the ocean, but they were no less interesting. For more than a thousand years Morocco interacted with the societies to the north across the Strait of Gibraltar, and thus the notion of a borderland fraught with both peril and opportunity was not new. But the opening of the Atlantic world changed the dynamics markedly. European expansion in the Atlantic opened a new maritime frontier that shattered old boundaries. The resulting possibilities dwarfed those offered by the old contested sea lanes of the Mediterranean or the coastal seafaring that had aided both the Almoravid and Almohad invasions of Iberia, and that had sustained Muslim al-Andalus late into the fifteenth century. Again, Morocco alone within the dar al-Islam possessed this maritime frontier. Simultaneously it had to face east, which it was forced to do not simply to engage in the commercial exchange networks offered by the Islamic ecumene, but to guard against and resist conscious Ottoman encroachment. As we will discuss in this study, Morocco also newly faced its southern borders, reaching beyond the relative protection of the Saharan sands to extend its control south of the vast desert in pursuit of its own imperial objectives. Thus, Morocco over the course of the first centuries of the Atlantic world experienced dramatic transformations along non-traditional frontiers to the west and south, while also simultaneously facing dramatic developments on the traditional frontiers of the north and east. Those of the east

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104 The Almoravid movement in Morocco was essentially a Mauritanian Berber confederation that moved to conquer all of Morocco, capturing Fez in 1069 and a year later founding their capital, Marrakech, in an inland plain. In 1073, the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad proclaimed the Almoravid leader, Yusuf ibn Tashfin, amir al-muslimin, commander of the Muslims. By 1091 the Almoravids had spread across North Africa to Algiers and assumed control of al-Andalus. They were overthrown and succeeded by the Almohads in 1147. It is arguably from the Almoravid period that one can date the concept of a unified Islamic Morocco. J.D. Fage, A History of Africa, 2nd ed. (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 168-169. Abun-Nasr, A History of the Maghrib, 77-87. Dictionary of the Middle Ages, s.v. “Almoravids.”

105 The Almohad movement was founded by Muhammad Ibn Tumart, a member of a Berber tribe affiliated with the Masmuda confederation. He died in 1248 in the conflict with the then-ruling Almohads. His lieutenant, Abd al-Mu’min, is credited with establishing the Almohad Empire that at its peak extended to al-Andalus. The dynasty came to a formal end with the rise of the Marinids to power in 1269. For more on the Almohad movement see Abun-Nasr, A History of the Maghrib, 87-103 and Roger Le Tourneau, The Almohad Movement in North Africa in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).
and south, though involving societies and networks largely left out of the Atlantic world, nevertheless exerted a significant impact not only on Morocco but on the role it played in that Atlantic world. Not just “around” and “of” the Atlantic, Morocco at this time was thus also simultaneously “outside” the Atlantic, and so offers an opportunity to evaluate some of the very factors Coclanis argues are not adequately considered within an Atlantic world framework.

Finally, examining Morocco within an Atlantic world framework also challenges us to reconsider just what we mean by an “Atlantic” world and the analytical value we hope to obtain from applying the concept. For the most part in the Armitage typology pre-Columbian activities involving the Atlantic Ocean are considered precursors to the development of an Atlantic world rather than being representative of the Atlantic world itself. Yet, for a number of societies in Africa, these pre-Columbian activities involved significant sociopolitical and economic transformations that occurred as a result of new interaction and exchange, and that were initiated and sustained only because of new pathways created by European expansion into the Atlantic. For these communities, as well as for the Europeans who interacted with them, the new networks that were created during this period were a new “Atlantic” world, assuming that what we seek to gain from the framework is a greater understanding of societies by studying the interactions use of the Atlantic made possible. Such pre-Columbian networks dependent upon the Atlantic contained all the traditional markers of Atlantic world analysis—exploration, conquest, exploitation, migration, etc.—save one, transiting the breadth of the Atlantic Ocean. Yet the Atlantic world developed over a period of centuries, and what we characterize as this world differed significantly in the sixteenth century than it did in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as networks expanded and additional actors emerged. So it is perhaps reasonable to suggest that there were other “Atlantic worlds” that depended upon networks created by
European expansion, but that were not dependent upon the Columbian voyages and were instead later integrated into a larger Atlantic world.

Morocco’s experience would seem to fit into such a category. Particularly as the Portuguese reached southern Morocco, the Atlantic islands, and sub-Saharan Africa, new interactions occurred that could not have taken place but for the pathways the Portuguese and Spanish created in the Atlantic. The resulting new networks of exchange were transformative for all of the parties, including the Iberian powers who had initiated them. These networks, which I have characterized in this study as the West African circuit or component of the Atlantic world, eventually drew other Europeans into new interactions, and ultimately became a part of the larger Atlantic world created after the Columbian voyages. In this context, examining Morocco within the perspective of an Atlantic world framework offers the possibility of identifying “Atlantic worlds” before the Columbian voyages united all of them under one construct. At the very least it might help to identify activities typically characterized as precursors that are so important to the later development of the Atlantic world that they should be considered an integral part of that world from the very beginning.

Some existing studies on the pre-Atlantic world and on Morocco have intriguingly hinted at examining Moroccan ties to the larger Atlantic community, even if the authors at the time of writing did not recognize that world in the way we characterize it today. Fernández-Armesto, for example, long ago alluded to the potential of examining the Maghribi Atlantic, writing that “it was the north-western rim of Africa, the last area of western Mediterranean colonial activity in the late middle ages which led, in a sense, most directly into the ocean, partly because the Maghrib had an Atlantic aspect of its own and partly—and more importantly--because the
exploration of its trade routes demanded and rewarded Atlantic navigation.”\textsuperscript{106} Over thirty years ago, Dahiru Yahya published a wide-ranging work of political history on Morocco’s foreign policy in the sixteenth century, in which he claimed that the Sa’di dynasty at one time inaugurated “an ‘Atlantic’ policy”, suggesting a maritime orientation as part of a conscious effort to address the expansionist designs of some European powers.\textsuperscript{107} More than twenty years ago, Vincent Cornell argued in an article in the \textit{International Journal of Middle East Studies} that prominent scholars like Braudel and Wallerstein, unacquainted with works drawn from Arabic primary sources in both European and North African archives, missed that “important social and economic transformations were taking place” in Morocco that were directly related to challenges posed by European expansion, and “that led to a profound internal response attempting to fundamentally restructure the economic, political, and ideological bases” of the country.\textsuperscript{108} Cornell went beyond straightforward political considerations to touch upon various economic and commercial aspects of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Morocco tied to developments in the early Atlantic world. These included aspects of the Arab and Berber slave trade, reorientation of trade routes, and the impact on the Moroccan sugar industry. The latter, which will be discussed later in this study, had in part financed resistance to the Portuguese and the rise of the Sa’di dynasty, and was understandably involved in the network that included the sugar plantations of the Atlantic world.

More recently, historians examining particular aspects of Moroccan history have made at least passing reference to Morocco’s importance in the development of the early Atlantic world. In his work on slavery and race in Morocco, for example, Chouki el Hamel characterizes the Atlantic encounter between Portugal and Morocco as a training ground for European trade with

\textsuperscript{106} Fernández-Armesto, \textit{Before Columbus}, 119.
\textsuperscript{107} Yahya, \textit{Morocco in the Sixteenth Century}, 34.
\textsuperscript{108} Cornell, “Socioeconomic,” 380.
sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas. Ultimately, he concludes that “events in Morocco as they related to the dynamics of Atlantic trade were crucial in shaping and defining the path and future of a globalized Atlantic world.”

Though making intriguing references to the Atlantic or the Atlantic world, none of these historians specifically examine Morocco as a component of that world, focusing on other topics or opting for a traditional nation-state analysis of the country. Most encouragingly, however at least one historian has argued specifically for examining Morocco through the lens of the Atlantic world framework. In the 2015 edited volume, The Atlantic World, James A. O. C. Brown offers a chapter on “Morocco and Atlantic History” in which he asserts that Morocco is important to a full understanding of the Atlantic world because it “was significantly involved in the economic, cultural and technological processes that resulted in European expansion around and across the Atlantic,” and was in turn “heavily shaped by that involvement.” Brown goes a step further in proposing that Morocco’s absence from the historiography is itself potentially meaningful insofar as it points to “the nature of the relationship between the Atlantic and other regional networks” and further clarifies “some of the ambiguities and tensions with the project of Atlantic history as a framework within which different impulses simultaneously deconstruct and reinforce the West’s role as the arbiter of historical change in the modern era.”

Brown’s assertions are variations on some of the same ideas elucidated in this chapter. In particular, Brown sees Morocco’s position as “primarily defined by being between, or rather

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110 El Hamel, Black Morocco, 154.
113 Brown also suggests that Morocco is at least worthy of study within an Atlantic world framework since it helps address “residual imperial, Eurocentric biases, whether these are ultimately deemed justifiable or not.” This is an argument I am not electing to make in this study. Brown, “Morocco and Atlantic History,” 198.
part of” various worlds, “rather than wholly in one or another,” putting the “Atlantic dimension of the country’s development . . . in constant dialogue with its other faces, even as the country’s Atlantic orientation increased in importance.” But where Brown sees inclusion of Morocco in an Atlantic framework as representative of Coclanis’s “better and worse” conclusions about the application of Atlantic world analysis, this study presumes that examining Morocco’s role is demonstrably for the better.

While arguing for examination of Morocco, Brown believes that including it challenges the notion that the Atlantic system was self-contained or unitary at all levels, and thus poses difficulties for what he characterizes as the “traditional, mainstream Atlantic paradigm.” The best response to that assertion may be: “that’s fine.” The value of the Atlantic framework is in its explanatory power for improved understanding of a country, region, or network’s history. That Morocco can be better, if not fully, understood by the application of an Atlantic perspective seems to be clearly for the better. So, too, is the possibility for improved understanding of Atlantic world processes. If an examination of Morocco also offers the potential for improved understanding of the Atlantic as a recipient of influential external inputs, or as a meeting point for other exchange circuits, this too is for the better, and does not diminish the explanatory power of the flow and intensity of these inputs within the Atlantic system itself. As Brown himself ultimately concludes, adding Morocco to the equation “offers material for the development of a richer, more subtle and more sustainable successor” to what he sees as the traditional Atlantic paradigm. We could perhaps argue endlessly about whether or not that paradigm is exactly as Brown, Coclanis, or others see it. More fruitful, this study presupposes, is to instead examine

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115 Coclanis claims that Atlantic history has “transformed” early American history “for better and worse.” Coclanis, “Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?”, 725.
116 Brown, “Morocco and Atlantic History,” 197, 199.
Morocco as one “missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle”\textsuperscript{118} that is the Atlantic world, focusing on the connections and dynamics brought by participation in that world, always recognizing, as Jerry Bentley has written, that “history unfolds on different levels.”\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{118} Brown, “Morocco and Atlantic History,” 188.
\textsuperscript{119} Bentley, “Sea and Ocean Basins,” 222.
CHAPTER II. FACING THE ATLANTIC: THE SEA OF DARKNESS

Situated on the Atlantic coast of northwest Africa, Morocco faces what the Arabs once referred to as the “Sea of Darkness.” Here it stands sentinel on the southern shore of the Strait of Gibraltar, the most important conduit between that dark sea and the Mediterranean, and shares nearby oceanic sea lanes with the Iberian powers most responsible for the creation of the Atlantic world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. One of the foundational principles of this study is that this geography resulted in Morocco starting to develop an Atlantic identity before an Atlantic world took shape in the early modern period. That is to say that Morocco’s position adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean was an integral part of its distinctiveness long before what we would consider to be an actual Atlantic world emerged, and thus positioned Morocco uniquely within the dār al-Islām to influence and be influenced by that world when it did eventually emerge.

Basic physical geography is, of course, the single most important component of this assertion. The characteristics of both the Atlantic adjacent to Morocco and the coastal communities that bordered the Atlantic were critical to how Morocco developed its own Atlantic identity. By itself, however, this is not sufficient for our purposes, as it is not geography and environment alone, but also the substance of the interaction with the Atlantic and how it influenced Morocco’s position within larger communities, like the Islamic world and the Atlantic world, that we here argue is what contributes to Morocco being “of” the Atlantic rather than simply “around” it. A first step in coming to terms with this is developing an understanding of the historical context that contributed to Morocco’s position as an Atlantic country within the dār al-Islām, as well as an understanding of the geographical and environmental conditions under which Morocco operated at the time the early Atlantic world took shape. We will examine both in detail in this chapter, first assessing the preconditions established by the broader Arab and
Muslim maritime experience generally and then proceeding to a detailed description of the
geography and environment of the Moroccan Atlantic coast.

**The Sea of Darkness**

Geographers and historians have long grappled with the question of whether or not seas
constitute barriers or thoroughfares, at least when considering periods where the technology and
skill to traverse those seas has existed. Henri Pirenne, for example, saw the true demise of the
Roman Empire in the Arab expansion across North Africa, which he argued transformed the
once Roman lake that was the Mediterranean into a boundary that isolated Western Europe,
relegating it to a backwater.\(^\text{120}\) In contrast, Fernand Braudel challenged the notion of rigid
boundaries within the larger Mediterranean complex, portraying the sea as a place on which
people lived their lives integrated to a greater or lesser degree with the surrounding
landscapes.\(^\text{121}\) For Ellen Churchill Semple, of all geographical boundaries the one between the
land and the sea is most important:

The coast, in its physical nature, is a zone of transition between these two dominant
forms of the Earth’s surface; it bears the mark of contending forces, varying in its width
with every stronger onslaught of the unresting sea, and with every degree of passive
resistance made by granite or sandy shore. So too in an anthropogeographical sense, it is
a zone of transition. Now the life-supporting forces of the land are weak in it, and it
becomes merely the rim of the sea; for its inhabitants the sea means food, clothes, shelter,
fuel, commerce, highway, and opportunity. Now the coast is dominated by the exuberant
forces of a productive soil, so that the ocean beyond is only a turbulent waste and a long-
drawn barrier: the coast is the hem of the land. Neither influence can wholly exclude the
other in this amphibian belt, for the coast remains the intermediary between the habitable
expanses of the land and the international highway of the sea. The break of the waves and
the dash of the spray draw the line beyond which human dwelling cannot spread; for
these the shore is the outermost limit, as for ages also in the long infancy of the races,
before the invention of boat and sail, it drew the absolute boundary to human expansion.
In historical order, its first effect has been that of a barrier, and for the majority of

\(^{120}\) Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1939, Fourth Impression
1965).

\(^{121}\) Braudel, *The Mediterranean*. 

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peoples this it has remained; but with the development of navigation and the spread of human activities from the land over sea to other countries, it became the gateway both of land and sea—at once the outlet for exploration, colonization, and trade, and the open door through which a continent or island receives contributions of men or races or ideas from transoceanic shores. “Barrier and threshold” these are the rôles which coasts have played in history.¹²²

One of the things the views of Pirenne, Braudel, and Semple all have in common is that they subscribe to a view articulated much later by Jerry Bentley, namely that the usefulness of examining seas and oceans is tied directly to the level of human interaction in and across them.¹²³

For Morocco, up to the opening of the Atlantic world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the great western ocean was indeed almost as rigid a barrier as Semple describes—the hem of the land and its outermost limit. Weston Cook has suggested that the Atlantic-Mediterranean sub-region to the north and west of Morocco combined with the “sand ocean” of the Sahara to give the Maghrib the image of an island.¹²⁴ Indeed it does, but the Atlantic was for a long time more impenetrable, certainly, than either the Mediterranean strait to the north or the sea-like Saharan sands that stretched to the south and east, which despite their challenges had long served as pathways for commerce.¹²⁵ When in 682-683 the conquering Arab and Berber armies of Uqba ibn Nafi’ swept across North Africa, they were halted, tradition holds, only by the broad expanse of the Atlantic Ocean on the far western shores of Morocco. “Oh Lord, if the sea had not prevented me,” the Arab leader is said to have exclaimed heavenward, “I would have continued, like Alexander the Great, defending your faith and fighting the unbelievers.”¹²⁶ What

¹²⁴ Cook, *Hundred Years War*, 28.
¹²⁵ The classic work on Saharan trade is Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*.
¹²⁶ "يا رب! لو لا انَّ البحر منعنى ، لمضيتَ في البلاد الى مَسْلَك ذىِ القَرْنَيْن مقاتلاً من كفر بك مدافعًا عن دينك!" G.S. Colin and É. Lévi-Provençal, *Kitab Al-Bayan Al-Mughrib par Ibn ‘Idhari Al-Marrakushi* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1948), 27. The legend is repeated in Western sources as well. Edward Gibbon writes, “The career, though not the zeal, of Akbah [Uqba b. Nāfi’] was checked by the prospect of a boundless ocean. He spurred his horse into the
stopped the Muslim expansion westward was no fortress or army, no mountain range, no forest
primeval, no scorching desert, but instead what the Arabs had once called the “Sea of Darkness.”

Since the time of Uqba ibn Nafi’ in the seventh century at least, the waters of the “Sea of
Darkness” have been a defining characteristic of Morocco and perhaps more than any other
factor have traditionally set it apart from the rest of the dār al-Islām. Although with the
introduction of Islam Morocco remained thereafter forever culturally linked to the Muslim
world, its geographic position as Maghrib al-Aqsa or the “farthest west” made contact with
Iberia more prevalent than contacts with the larger dār al-Islām, and positioned it squarely
within what has been characterized as an Atlantic-Mediterranean sub-region. Thus within the
dār al-Islām Morocco was located at what in the time of Uqba ibn Nafi’ could have in a quite
significant sense been considered the edge of the world. Arabs had already by this time proven
their capabilities in the known seas. Within a generation they would cross the Strait of Gibraltar
to found al-Andalus in the west and in another generation to they would reach China in the east.
What Uqba ibn Nafi’ confronted, however, was recognized for a long period as something
fundamentally different than what had been encountered elsewhere.

The Atlantic Ocean as we know it today is a modern construct, comprised of what earlier
peoples saw as distinct, individual seas, later stitched together at their adjoining seams largely by
European voyages of discovery, conquest, commerce, and colonization. There is irony in the
knowledge that for medieval Arab geographers the Atlantic had a unitary identity of sorts long
waves, and, raising his eyes to heaven, exclaimed with the tone of a fanatic, ‘Great God! if my course were not
stopped by this sea, I would still go on, to the unknown kingdoms of the West, preaching the unity of thy holy name,
and putting to the sword the rebellious nations who worship any other gods than thee.’” Edward Gibbon, The
Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Great Books of the Western World (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica,

127 Cook, The Hundred Years War, 28. The idea of an “Atlantic-Mediterranean” as a training ground for more deep-
sea Atlantic mariners is a common one. Fernández-Armesto attributes the idea to French historians, among who is
presumably Pierre Chanau, who Alfred Crosby credits with the term he expresses as “Mediterranean Atlantic.”
Fernández-Armesto, Before Columbus, 152.
128 Games, “Atlantic History,” 742-743.
before this. These geographers considered the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of China (the Indian Ocean), as the names imply, seas, while the Atlantic was the all-encircling Ocean. In his work, Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Marifat al-Aqalim (typically translated as The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions), for example, the tenth-century Arab geographer al-Muqaddasi carries on an extended discussion of geographers' estimates of the seas. Beyond the Sea of China (the Indian Ocean) and the Roman Sea (the Mediterranean), they also name the Caspian, Black, Aral, and others. Challenging the conclusions of one geographer, however, al-Muqaddasi conveys the general understanding of the Atlantic's distinguishing feature. "Abu Zayd," he writes, "made the seas three in number, by the addition of the ocean, but we ourselves do not include it in our reckoning, because it, as is said, encircles the world as with a ring—having neither bound nor limit."129 Accompanying this perception of an all-encircling ocean was a litany of somber appellations that evoked both anxiety and dread—the “Sea of Darkness,” the “Dark Sea,” the “Sea of Gloom,” the “Sea of Perpetual Gloom,” and the “Great Green Sea of Gloom”.130

The somber names attributed to the Atlantic no doubt contributed over time to the persistent notion that the Arabs were more timid maritime actors than their Christian counterparts. Samuel Eliot Morison, for example, in his classic biography of Christopher Columbus, notes that it was Portuguese mariners who "dispelled the myth of mare tenebrosum,

130 There is substantial confusion as to the precise application of these terms. Pascual de Gayangos, the nineteenth century translator of the works of Ahmed Ibn Mohammed al-Maqqari believes the "Green Sea" generally referred to the Bay of Biscay, or at least the part that touched the northwestern portion of the Iberian Peninsula, while farther north it was called the "Sea of Darkness." Ahmed Ibn Mohammed al-Makkari, al-Qism al-awwal min kitab na'if al-tib, min ghusn al-Andalus al-ratib, wa-dhikr wazirina Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatib, translated in part as The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain, trans. Pascual de Gayangos (London: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1840; London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 1:546n17. Citations are to the RoutledgeCurzon edition. Al-Makkari is more often transliterated now as al-Maqqari, which is the form I have used in the body of this study. Where, however, it has been formally transliterated as al-Makkari, as in the citation for the work of Pascual de Gayangos, I have used that spelling in the corresponding footnote.
the 'green sea of gloom' of the Arabs."\textsuperscript{131} Felipe Fernández-Armesto, in reviewing early
European advances into the Atlantic, writes that "the settlement [by the Christian Spanish and
Portuguese] of small maritime communities in conquered Andalusia was the springboard of the
region's future long-range seaborne trade—something of which the Moors, \textit{more shy traffickers}
[emphasis added] than the dark Iberians, had never ventured."\textsuperscript{132} "If Arab navigators were
deterred by the Sea of Darkness," Fernández-Armesto later continues, "the mariners of Latin
Christendom seem to have evinced a more adventurous spirit."\textsuperscript{133} Barry Cunliffe, commenting
on how the fifteenth-century publication of both Strabo’s first-century C.E., \textit{Geography}, and
Ptolemy’s second-century C.E., \textit{Geography}, opened the minds of navigators to new possibilities,
nevertheless concludes that “the sense of the Atlantic as a barrier was, however, still stressed by
the Arabs.”\textsuperscript{134}

Gloomy sobriquets like the “Sea of Darkness” tie conveniently into a narrative that
assumes it would be quite natural for desert warriors bursting out of the Arabian Peninsula to
possess an innate cultural aversion to the sea. It is an assumption that George Hourani has
speculated has been reinforced at times by Arabic tales and literature. Among the former that he
credits is the oft-repeated story of the first proposed Arab invasion of Cyprus. According to
tradition, in 648 the Arab governor of Syria, Mu'awiya (later Caliph and founder of the Umayyad
dynasty in Damascus), requested the caliph's permission to invade the island. It was so close,
Mu'awiya claimed, that he could hear the barking of its dogs. The caliph consulted a lieutenant
who reportedly responded that "the sea is a boundless expanse, whereon great ships look tiny

\textsuperscript{132} Fernández-Armesto, \textit{Before Columbus}, 68.
\textsuperscript{133} Fernández-Armesto, \textit{Before Columbus}, 154.
specks; nought but the heavens above and waters beneath; when calm, the sailor's heart is broken; when tempestuous, his senses reel. Trust it little, fear it much. Man at sea is an insect on a splinter, now engulfed, now scared to death.”

Arab travelers' tales are also rife with frightening descriptions of the sea. In the preface to his greatest work the seventeenth century Arab historian of Islamic Spain, Ahmed Ibn Mohammed al-Maqqari, writes of the sea that it is a "cruel and implacable enemy; and we expect no mercy at his hands. Knowing the sea to be water, and ourselves to be made of clay; who will wonder if we suffer from its attacks?" He goes on to describe his own terrifying encounter with a storm in the Mediterranean ultimately musing that "there are three things from which no one is safe; the sea, the Sultan, and time."

Over time, historians have come to challenge the provenance and utility of all such representations. The popular story of Mu'awiya’s appeal to the caliph is one that George Hourani suggests could reflect nothing more than sound military judgment given the limited state of Arab naval capabilities in the Mediterranean at the time; it is an interpretation Hourani may have borrowed from the great fourteenth-century Arab historian Ibn Khaldun, who held similar views. Certainly, the Mediterranean at this time could hardly have been so unknown as to be

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138 Al-Makkari, The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain, 1:305n3. I translate this quote from the original Arabic. Pascual de Gayangos's translation is more poetic: "There are three things without remedy in this world, and from which nobody is safe; the sea, time, and a Sultan." Ibid., 1:4.

139 George F. Hourani, Arab Seafaring, 55. The fourteenth-century Arab historian Ibn Khaldun, in fact, writes that the true cause of Caliph Omar's (the Caliph approached by Mu'awiya before the invasion of Cyprus) alleged prohibition on Arab navigation of the sea was "that when the Arabs began their conquests they were entirely unaccustomed to that element, and unfit for navigation; while on the contrary, the Romans [Byzantines] and the Franks, through their almost continuous practice, and their education in the midst of the waves, were enabled to
considered the “boundless expanse” the caliph’s lieutenant allegedly described. Even more relevant with regard to this particular tale is Mu’awiya’s subsequent conduct. Despite the warning, he proceeded to invade Cyprus in 649 and followed it with the construction of an Arab navy (aided by experienced Syrians and Egyptians) that in 655 crushed the Byzantine fleet at the famous Battle of the Masts.\textsuperscript{140} As for Al-Maqqari’s lament a millennium later, we could easily envision it as nothing more than the cry of an inexperienced traveler confronted for the first time with the power of a storm at sea. E.G.R. Taylor, in fact, references a similar quote from an unnamed Arab writer, as support for her conclusion that one of the reasons we can say relatively little with certainty about early navigational practices is because those who wrote about the sea were primarily landsmen, who tended not to write about technical progress, but instead to deter men from the rashness of taking to the sea.\textsuperscript{141}

Even the cheerless descriptive names for the Atlantic attributed to the Arabs—the “Sea of Darkness,” the “Dark Sea,” the “Sea of Gloom,” the “Sea of Perpetual Gloom,” the “Great Green Sea of Gloom”—are suspect. One source is the twelfth century Arab geographer al-Idrisi, whose \textit{Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi Ikhtiraq al-Afaq},\textsuperscript{142} written for the Norman king of Sicily, Roger II, includes bleak and intimidating descriptions of the environment in the open Atlantic. Yet we know that al-Idrisi was not writing from personal experience, and as is the case with many medieval Arabic works of geography, it is sometimes unclear whether or not the information transmitted comes originally from earlier sources. It is possible that ancient Greeks, Romans, Phoenicians, or Carthaginians, among others, could in fact be the true sources of the desolate

\textsuperscript{140} Hodgson, \textit{The Venture of Islam}, I, 205, 212.
epithets for the Atlantic Ocean, repeated subsequently by later historians and geographers.

Whatever the sources of the long-alleged Arab timidity toward the sea, they fail to withstand the withering assault of the historical record. In the East, Arab Muslim expansion led to encounters with the Indian Ocean, what the Arabs then called the Sea of China. From bases in Bahrain they launched their first naval raids against Western India and Iran in 636-638. By 712 they had established a political presence in the Indus River Valley (Sind). From there they spread by sea to China, in 758 carrying out an assault on Guangzhou (Canton) with the Persians.

Works dating from the ninth century detail the long, arduous Arab maritime route to China, providing proof of the skill involved. Leaving primarily from the Persian Gulf, merchant ships sailed either for Sind or the Malabar Coast, depending upon their cargo needs. After then passing through the cyclone belt of the Bay of Bengal, they traversed the Strait of Malacca, entering the South China Sea. From there they followed the coast of Indochina until they reached Guangzhou. This path reveals that sailors had at an early stage learned the nautical arts necessary to undertake long sea voyages. The presence of these skills among

144 Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization*, 44.
147 The area of the current Pakistan-India border on the northwestern shore of the Indian subcontinent.
148 Southwest coast of India.
150 Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization*, 50. Chaudhuri asserts these mariners had thus mastered the arts of dead reckoning (estimating position by tracking speed, time, and course from a previously known position) and celestial navigation (estimating position using angular measurements between the horizon and a celestial object) necessary for crossing the open ocean. It is not clear, however, from Tibbetts’ translation—on which Chaudhuri seems to rely—just how early this mastery may have occurred. According to Tibbetts, the ninth century *Kitab al-Masalik wa'l-mamalik* and *Akhbar al-Sin wa'l-Hind* (see note 105) gave distances between ports and where to find water; Tibbetts makes no mention that they contained information on navigational techniques. Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation*,
Muslims settled in Guangzhou might explain their serving at one time as the maritime carriers for all the major ports of the Indian Ocean.  

The Arab Mediterranean maritime expansion, though noteworthy in its own right, was of a markedly different character than what occurred in the Indian Ocean. To participate in the existing commercial networks of the Mediterranean required coming to terms with the martial nature of its seaborne traffic, a martial nature that simply did not exist in the Indian Ocean until roughly a century after the arrival of the Portuguese, who initiated it. Shortly after the Arabs emerged from the Arabian Peninsula, a Byzantine naval attack at Alexandria convinced them that they must develop a Mediterranean seafaring capability. Thus began a back and forth struggle during the first century of Islam in which the Arabs experienced multiple setbacks at the hands of the Byzantines. But while these periodic defeats at sea continued, the Arabs conquered the North African coast, built a naval center at Tunis from which they were capable of

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2. Similarly, Tibbetts’ description of the A.D. 1000 compilation Aja’ib al-Hind’ indicates it contains some technical information on vessels, but again nothing definitive on navigational techniques. Tibbetts, Arab Navigation, 2-3. We know from Marco Polo’s observations that the Arabs were using celestial navigation in the Indian Ocean from at least the latter part of the thirteenth century, and probably earlier, and that the practice was well developed by the time it was in use by mariners assisting the Portuguese in the area. Tibbetts, Arab Navigation, 4. Just how early, however, Arab mariners made the transition from sailing landmark to landmark along the Indian Ocean shoreline remains unclear. It is perhaps worth noting that both dead reckoning and celestial navigation are sufficient for crossing an open ocean. The former was the dominant practice of Mediterranean sailors; in fact, celestial navigation was not part of the training of European navigators even in the time of Columbus. Talyor, The Haven-Finding Art, 122. Morison, Admiral of the Ocean Sea, 186-187. Much has been made of the “camel navigation” form of celestial navigation purported to have been in use by the Arabs even before the coming of Islam. E.G.R. Taylor asserts that although the Arabs later used the compass in the Indian Ocean (a traditional means of tracking course when using dead reckoning), star height—celestial navigation—was the main guide to position. Taylor, 128, 123. The Qur’an, in fact, provides some possible evidence of the use of celestial navigation by Arabs at an early stage both on land and sea. “And He it is Who has made the stars for you that you might follow the right way therein in the darkness of the land and the sea. Indeed We have made plain the signs for the people who know.” Qur’an 6:97. 

151 Chaudhuri, Trade and Civilization, 51. 

152 Archibald Lewis outlines what he sees as three phases of early Arab naval activity in the Mediterranean. The first occurs after the Arabs become convinced by the Byzantine naval counterattack at Alexandria that they must develop a seaborne capability. This period, lasting from 648-655, is defensive and indecisive, though it ends with the defeat of a large Byzantine fleet near Phoenix in the famous “Battle of the Masts.” An interregnum in naval contact between the Arabs and Byzantium, caused by internal distractions on both sides, ends with a second phase beginning fifteen years later. Arab naval forces at this time launched a variety of assaults even against Constantinople. Byzantine fleets ultimately counterattacked all along the coasts of North Africa and Syria, eventually forcing peace and tribute obligations on the Arab rulers. A third and final phase begins in 693 and ends in 752 with Byzantium crushing Arab naval power in the eastern Mediterranean. Archibald R. Lewis, Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean: A D. 500-1100 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951).
raiding islands throughout the Mediterranean, and ultimately crossed the Strait of Gibraltar into Iberia. Muslim maritime strength in the western Mediterranean, at points spurred in part by the rivalry between the western dynasties of the Umayyads of Iberian al-Andalus and the Fatimids of North Africa, became a significant force, and contributed at various times to the neutralization or occupation of Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and the Balearics, as well as parts of the Italian and French coastlines.

As impressive as these feats were, and as thoroughly as they refute vague notions of Arab reticence at sea, they involve achievements in the well known ancient arenas of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. Dismal epithets aside, the waters that washed the shores of the “farthest west” were indeed different in a variety of very meaningful ways from those to the east. The Mediterranean, for example, lacked significant tides other than along a portion of the Tunisian coast and in the northern Adriatic, and while the small tides that did exist might complicate navigation in narrow channels, they were modest compared to those of the Atlantic. Furthermore, both the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean offered predictable patterns learned over centuries of experience. In the Indian Ocean the monsoon governed maritime travel everywhere from slightly north of Madagascar. From May to October winds blow from the southwest bringing rain over South Asia, while the reverse happens from November to April, when northeast winds dominate. The ocean currents are dictated by these winds, following them and reversing course as they do. Predictability was a feature of the Mediterranean as well. Here the winds come predominantly from the northwest, with a northeastern wind in the months of December, March, and July through September. Meanwhile, the current in the sea is mostly

counterclockwise, starting with a persistent surface current of cooler Atlantic water flowing through the Strait of Gibraltar from west to east, while the warmer, saltier water of the Mediterranean flows in the other direction one hundred meters below and without effect on surface shipping.\textsuperscript{154} This prevailing pattern often forced ships, particularly those sailing from east to west, to hug the coastline, using the current and any known local conditions. Among the latter was any wind pattern coming off a mountain and the common daily land or sea breeze.\textsuperscript{155} Thus trunk routes followed the north coast of the Mediterranean while the southern shore provided comparatively few advantages, with significant implications for naval control of the sea. During the periods, for example, that Muslim forces occupied islands in the Mediterranean and some of the northern coastal areas, their maritime power was competitive, but the general Christian dominance of these land features was often determinative of the naval outcome.

Of course, familiarity with the steady, predictable breezes and currents of the Mediterranean and the seasonal patterns of the Indian Ocean provided little guidance when first confronting an open, endless Atlantic, which when stormy produced high rollers unseen elsewhere on Arab shores. Even the navigation methods of indigenous Atlantic coastal peoples were different. Indian Ocean navigators used the stars to track and verify positions; those in the Mediterranean dead reckoning. But along the shores of Europe, particularly in the northwest where Atlantic activity was more frequent, soundings were the primary means of navigation. In these relatively shallow continental shelf areas mariners emphasized tides, depths, and the nature of materials found on the sea floor—sand, shells, mud—to guide them.\textsuperscript{156} This required local

\textsuperscript{154} Cunliffe, \textit{Facing the Ocean}, 41-42.

\textsuperscript{155} This common pattern occurs due to the differential heating by the sun of land and water. The sun heats up the land more quickly than the water, causing the hotter air above the land to rise and draw in underneath it the cooler air from the water, thus creating a breeze coming from the sea. As the sun fades the land cools faster than the water so that the hotter air above the latter rises and draws in underneath it the cooler air from the land, creating a breeze coming off of the land.

\textsuperscript{156} Taylor, \textit{The Haven-Finding Art}, 130.
knowledge non-Atlantic mariners did not possess or employ.

Unlike the well-known Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, the winds and currents of the Atlantic Ocean to the south of the Strait of Gibraltar also offered particular challenges for the mariner, even one who simply wanted to travel within sight of land. Beyond the Strait one immediately encountered both the North East Trades, winds that blew consistently southward along the coast of Africa, and the Canary current, a slow, broad, wind-driven current that also flowed southward until turning toward the west and the open ocean near Senegal. Both features naturally advantaged southward travel, but the challenge was always in returning home against both the winds and the current. It was this more than any other factor that presumably long dissuaded motivated mariners from attempting to journey southward beyond Cape Bojador, where the northeast trades strengthen appreciably.

For sailing vessels the arduous task of tacking or the need to await a daily land or sea
breeze made return along the coast both time-consuming and dangerous. Oared galleys, which were the primary maritime combat vessels as late as the sixteenth century, faced their own immense challenges on such a journey. Relative to full-sail ships galleys were comparatively narrow with low freeboard (the side of the ship above the water). These were potentially life-threatening characteristics when among the high rollers of a stormy Atlantic. Equally important, to maintain the grueling work of rowing requires substantial provisions and fresh water, and with relatively little depth in hold, this limited the cruising range of galleys and required nearby, friendly landfalls for resupply.157

Ultimately both technological improvements and the growth in navigational knowledge during the fifteenth century enhanced the ability to return from south of the Strait. One of the most oft-cited and important of the former was the development and use of the Portuguese caravel. The vessel certainly made inshore northward travel along the African coast more manageable.158 In dominant use for a period of about one hundred years starting in the 1440s, with a brief renaissance in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the earlier period, fully-decked Portuguese caravels typically had two or three masts with lateen sails and a length-to-beam ratio of five to one.159 Advantage over competitors stemmed from its speed, maneuverability, and shallow draft. It used a sternpost rudder, rather than steering oars, but most importantly, unlike square-sailed vessels its lateen sail configuration allowed it to sail at a 45° to

158 There seems to be a great deal of romantic attachment to the Portuguese caravel and its role in the Portuguese voyages of discovery. Its heyday lasted for approximately one hundred years starting in the 1440s, with a brief renaissance in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Surprisingly, we know very little about the caravel’s construction.
159 Martin Elbl, “The Caravel and the Galleon: The Caravel,” in Cogs, Caravels and Galleons: The Sailing Ship 1000-1650, Conway’s History of the Ship, edited by Robert Gardiner, 91-9 (Edison, N.J.: Chartwell Books Inc., 1994), 91-93. The lateen sail was by no means a modern invention, having been used in the eastern Mediterranean at least as early as the second century C.E. It was a triangular sail mounted on a yard or crosspiece attached to a mast and angled downward so that the front almost touched the deck of the vessel and the rear of the crosspiece stuck high in the air above the rear of the vessel with line tying it down aft. Length-to-beam ratio is the ratio of the length of the vessel to its width at its widest point at the waterline.
Despite the seemingly romantic historical attachment to the vessel and its role in the Portuguese voyages of discovery, the caravel was not a panacea for the challenges of navigating the Moroccan coast. For one thing, it was not ideal for traveling downwind, a deficiency later remedied by adding square sails. Most importantly, tacking with the angled yard and lateen sail was a complicated maneuver that required tilting the yard vertical and swinging it around to the other side of the mast. This called for a larger and more skilled crew, and could still leave the vessel struggling to make headway against a contrary wind and current. While the caravel thus aided southward navigation from the Strait of Gibraltar, the real breakthrough in Atlantic navigation occurred when the Spanish and Portuguese discovered they could return home not by traveling against the wind and current, but instead by sailing away from the coast west to north through variable winds in the Tropic of Cancer (about 23°N near the southern section of modern-day Western Sahara) and then catch westerlies back to the Iberian Peninsula.

What all this highlights is that for newcomers to the Atlantic, whether traveling the coast or the open ocean, the dangers were substantial, and experience the only remedy. Thus, although Arab maritime achievements in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean give lie to an old historical prejudice regarding culturally-based Arab reticence at the sea, the Atlantic Ocean was nevertheless seen as something different than the Arab and Muslim world had previously encountered, and thus placed Morocco in a fundamentally different space geographically than the rest of the dār al-Islām. We know turn to a detailed examination of that space.

162 Cunliffe, Facing the Ocean, 37.
Characteristics of Atlantic Morocco

It is difficult to know with certainty today the environment people faced along the Atlantic littoral of Morocco in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Over time shorelines erode, rivers silt up and cut new courses, sandbars form and wash away, and towns are abandoned, fall into ruin, and disappear. We may nevertheless, however, reconstruct a reasonably useful geographic and environmental portrait of Atlantic Morocco from this time using contemporary accounts of both European and Arab geographers, travelers, explorers, and officials—particularly the previously-mentioned Duarte Pacheco Pereira, Valentim Fernandes, and Leo Africanus—and in some cases using much later naval surveys that describe prominent physical features or maritime conditions that likely have changed little over the centuries.

Four major mountain ranges dominate much of Morocco with important implications for the practicality of centralized governance and administration. In the north, close along the Mediterranean shore, the Rif Mountains run east to west and force any north-south travel through a few select valleys. At the western end of the range as it abuts the Atlantic Ocean is the saddle-horn configuration that most prominently defines the Moroccan side of the Strait of Gibraltar. With the Rif range extending right up into the top of the saddle-horn itself, this region stretches south to the Loukkos River and includes the important urban centers of Tétouan, Ceuta, al-Qsar al-Sagir, Tangier, Arzila, and Larache. Of these, only Arzila and Larache are on the Atlantic proper and none of them possessed deep harbors. Much of this saddle-horn area experiences some of the higher rainfall in Morocco, averaging from four hundred to one thousand millimeters a year.163

While the Atlantic experience is the focus of this study, as we will see it is along the Mediterranean coast and the Strait of Gibraltar that what becomes the Atlantic world arguably

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begins for Morocco. Consequently, knowledge of the geography along Morocco’s northern coast is useful in understanding the transition from a Mediterranean to an Atlantic assault on Morocco by European powers, and in particular by Portugal and Spain. One of the most important towns on the northern coast during our period was the port of Badis, approximately seventy-five miles from the eastern entrance to the Strait. Its importance centered on its use as the main Mediterranean port for Fez, located about one hundred and twenty-miles inland. The road used to travel from Fez to Badis was considered relatively safe as it rounded the Rif Mountains and avoided the sometimes-troublesome areas of Chefchaouen and Tétouan.164 Situated between two high mountains, drinking water was apparently scarce in Badis, but it did have one advantage upon which Leo Africanus commented: “Upon the mountains grow great store of wood, verie commodious for the building of ships and of galleys.”165 According to Leo the inhabitants of the mountains engaged wholly in the transportation of this wood, which was used by the governor to build galleys and other ships “wherewith they greatly molest the Christians.”166 In Leo’s time in the early sixteenth century, Fez stationed troops in the area in response to Spanish attacks, and every year or two, he reported, Venetian galleys visited a nearby island to engage in commerce.167 When Spain and Portugal reached an accommodation at the end of the fifteenth century regarding their respective areas of influence in North Africa, it was the rocky islet of Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera just offshore from Badis that marked the limit of

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164 Ricard, Études sur l’histoire des Portugais au Maroc (1955), 138. Both Chefchaouen and Tétouan often acted independently of rulers in Fez. The former was founded in 1471-72 by the Banu Rashid and was receptive to waves of refugees from al-Andalus, whether Muslim, Jews, or Moriscos. Consequently, after the fall of Granada, the rulers of Chefchaouen allowed such refugees to restore Tétouan, which had been dismantled by the Portuguese from Ceuta in 1437. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition s.v. “Shafshawan”, http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_6743, s.v. “Ṭīṭṭwīn” http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1233 (accessed October 17, 2017).
165 Leo Africanus, History and Description of Africa, II, 517-518.
166 Leo Africanus, History and Description of Africa, II, 518.
167 Leo Africanus, History and Description of Africa, II, 519.
westward Spanish activity. To the northwest of Badis more than half way up the saddle horn of Morocco and a little more than twenty miles from the eastern entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar was the town of Tétouan. Adjacent to a small river, little is known of Tétouan’s history prior to end of the fifteenth century. It was apparently destroyed by Portuguese from Ceuta in 1437, but restored at the end of the fifteenth century by Andalusian refugees.

Near the tip of the saddle horn of Morocco at the eastern entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar sits the port town of Ceuta. Much more will be said later about the importance of Ceuta, but as we move westward toward the Atlantic coast in our geographical survey a few descriptive comments are appropriate here. Ceuta sits on a peninsula that extends about three miles eastward into the Mediterranean, terminating at Mount Hacho. Less than a mile wide and extending more than six hundred feet high, some consider Mount Hacho to be the southern marker of the legendary Pillars of Hercules. The isthmus that connects the peninsula to the mountainous mainland of Morocco is in places no wider than three hundred yards, and it is on the low-lying land between Mount Hacho and the isthmus that the port of Ceuta proper lay, guarded by walls as well as by the fortifications above. A trench or moat artificially separated the isthmus from the mainland, and behind this stood a castle that guarded the landward approach to the port. When controlled by the Arab and Berber rulers of Morocco Ceuta was the principal point of distribution for goods to the interior, and contained a large and well known vaulted cistern or reservoir containing so large a supply of water that ships coming to Ceuta drew

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168 Today Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera is a Spanish possession connected to the mainland by a storm-created isthmus.
170 The other candidate is Jabal Musa, less than ten miles to the west.
from it and contributed to its maintenance accordingly.\(^\text{172}\)

Continuing westward along the coast of the Strait al-Qasr al-Sagir lies about fourteen miles from Ceuta between two mountains and at the mouth of a river with a sheltered bay that is squarely within the Strait of Gibraltar. During their period of dominance in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Almohads established a naval dockyard here and used it as an embarkation point for the Iberian Peninsula. Although a convenient landing area, it never grew to be a large port, and as the Marinid regime in Morocco declined, by the fifteenth-century it had become a base for Muslim corsairs.\(^\text{173}\) In the early sixteenth century it contained about eight hundred people according to Valentim Fernandes.\(^\text{174}\)

The last Moroccan port on the northern coast, in the western mouth of the Strait of Gibraltar and thus technically on the Atlantic, was Tangier, approximately twenty-three miles west of al-Qasr al-Sagir. Originally founded as a small trading post by the Carthaginians and passing eventually to the Byzantines, it became the home of Arab governors after the Muslim conquest in the seventh century.\(^\text{175}\) Leo Africanus claimed that Tangier had always been a “civill, famous, and well-peopled towne, and very stately and sumptuously built,” but surrounded by fields not suitable for farming, and suffering from a loss of population over time as threats from Portugal in the area intensified.\(^\text{176}\) Fernandes remarked on the wide entrance to Tangier port and the ancient edifices that marked the old pre-Muslim city.\(^\text{177}\)

All of the ports addressed thus far on the northern coast of Morocco are dominated in part

\(^{172}\) Fernandes, *Description*, 18-21.  
\(^{174}\) Fernandes, *Description*, 20-21.  
\(^{176}\) Leo Africanus, *History and Description of Africa*, 507.  
\(^{177}\) Fernandes, *Description*, 23.
by the landscape and conditions surrounding the Rif Mountain range. South of the Rif and running southwest to northeast sit the Atlas Mountain ranges. Consisting of the Middle, High (Central), and Anti-Atlas sub-ranges, they dominate the eastern approaches to Morocco, setting most of the country off from the vast expanses of the Sahara and in some cases extending all the way to the Atlantic itself.

Figure 2. Port of Tanger (Tangier). From Braun and Hogenberg. *Civitates orbis terrarium*, I, 56, http://historic-cities.huji.ac.il/morocco/tanger/maps/braun_hogenberg_I_56_1.html (accessed January 29, 2018). Published online by the Historic Cities Center of the Department of Geography, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Jewish National and University Library. This first Latin edition of volume I of *Civitates orbis terrarium* was published in 1572 and the image is from an unidentified Portuguese manuscript. Note the comparatively wide entrances mentioned by Fernandes.

The Middle Atlas is the northernmost and shortest of these sub-ranges. It experiences rainfall comparable to that of the saddle-horn region. Stretching some two hundred miles in length at a forty degree angle from west to east, the western end almost touches the range to its south at what is roughly the east-west middle point of the country. Between its eastern end and the eastern end of the Rif range to the north is the narrow corridor of the Taza gap, the primary
eastern passage into Morocco for travelers, traders, and invaders. Below the Middle Atlas is the High or Central Atlas sub-range. Much higher and longer than its northern counterpart, the High Atlas extend more than 430 miles at an approximately twenty degree angle from the Atlantic coast. Near the Atlantic they drop abruptly to the sea, while in the east they terminate in an elevated plateau on Morocco’s eastern border. Here rainfall is less, averaging one hundred to four hundred millimeters annually.\(^{178}\) Just a little farther south sits the last of the Atlas sub-ranges, the mostly dry and desolate Anti-Atlas chain. More than three hundred miles in length, it too runs from southwest to northeast at a roughly forty degree angle and anchors in the west nearly at the Atlantic. With limited rural infrastructure, these mountain ranges contributed significantly to “terrain compartments”\(^{179}\) whose local identity and self-reliance greatly complicated efforts at unified government control over the whole of Morocco.

Between the Atlas ranges and the Atlantic were the great grain-producing plains of Morocco, which became a very important part of the West African circuit of the Atlantic world the Portuguese created. The northernmost plain was the Gharb, which the traveler confronted after emerging through the Taza gap. Together with the immediately adjacent Tamasna and Dukkala regions to the south these three rich farming and pasturage regions produced sufficient wheat, barley, millet, flax, and corn for export and were responsible for Morocco’s historic reputation as a breadbasket within the larger Hispano-Maghribi ecumene. The southernmost of these grain centers, the Dukkala, bordered the Haha region, an area of hills and valleys where the High Atlas reach toward the Atlantic. South of this, between the High Atlas and the Anti-Atlas sub-ranges rests the alluvial plain of the Sus, critical to the emergence of Morocco’s first arguably Atlantic-oriented dynasty. Below the Anti-Atlas, the long Dra’a valley separates the

\(^{179}\) Cook, *Hundred Years War*, 30.
mountains from the edge of the Sahara and the oases to the south and east.

The Rif and Atlas mountain ranges produce a series of west-flowing rivers in Morocco important to any concept of a Moroccan Atlantic identity. Barry Cunliffe has written of a single Iberian-Moroccan maritime zone that reaches from Portugal’s Tagus River in the north to Morocco’s River Sus in the south, with the northern section advantaging Iberian seafaring. In the north the Tagus sits roughly three hundred miles along the Iberian coastline from the Strait. Navigable a little less than one hundred and twenty miles inland, it emptied at Lisbon, formerly

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180 The Historical Dictionary of Morocco indicates that the map is adapted from Weston F. Cook, The Hundred Years War for Morocco, 25.
181 Cunliff, Facing the Ocean, 40.
the old Roman Town of Olisipo, with ideal berthing for ships and a strong flow that prevented the formation of sandbars across its mouth. But it was following the coast south toward the Strait and rounding Portugal’s Cape St. Vincent that put one in the historically-important Gulf of Cadiz, which is what appears most likely to justify Cunliffe’s advantaging of the Iberian rivers relative to those of Morocco.

Two smaller, westward flowing rivers, the Tinto and the Guadalete, bracket this gulf. Upstream on the former were rich deposits of silver and copper, while at the mouth of the Guadalete, sat Cadiz, formerly the Phoenician trading post of Gadir, well situated to intercept vessels entering or leaving the Mediterranean. Most important in the entire zone, however, was the Guadalquivir, north of Cadiz and only about fifty miles from the Strait. It served as the gateway to the urban centers of Seville and Cordoba, as well as surrounding regions rich in olive oil, wine, silver, and copper. Navigable almost one hundred and fifty miles inland, during the time of al-Andalus a land corridor also linked it with an east-flowing river valley and the Mediterranean. Nothing comparable to the Guadalquivir existed south of the Strait along the Atlantic littoral of Morocco. Safe anchorages for large vessels were few and Morocco’s rivers did not comparably penetrate the interior or offer corridors that connected to Mediterranean-flowing companions.

In the period under study, the Moroccan Atlantic contained coastal entrepôts that fall into three main categories: urban centers at the mouth of major rivers, cities or fortifications with small harbors but no riverine passage into the interior, and small seaside villages and towns with beaches sufficient for smaller craft to land. Each played a role in how Portugal eventually sought to control Morocco and how Morocco in turn attempted to resist such control.

182 Barry Cunliffe, Facing the Ocean, 40.
183 Barry Cunliffe, Facing the Ocean, 44.
Seven notable rivers flow into the Atlantic from the Moroccan highlands and thus contributed to the rise of coastal entrepôts that fall into the first category above. In the early modern period most emerged near ports or fortifications that were to play prominent roles in Morocco’s Atlantic experience. From north to south the rivers are the Loukkos, the Sebu, the Bou Regreg, the Oum Er-Rbia, the Tensift, the Sus, and the Dra’a.184

Before encountering the first of these rivers the southbound mariner emerging from the Strait passed the town of Arzila (Asilah), built near the Phoenician site of Silis, less than twenty-five miles from the Strait on the Moroccan shore, and on average five or six hours of sailing time from the entrance to the Mediterranean.185 The Arab geographer Leo Africanus described Arzila as a “great citie . . . upon the Ocean sea shore,” with adjacent fields that yielded “graine and pulse [legumes] of all sorts in abundance,” but because it was almost ten miles from the mountains “sustaineth great want of wood.186 As a harbor it was lacking, since its roadstead187 was not ideal, with the incomplete reefs that protected it also putting vessels in peril.188 In his *Esmeraldo*, Pereira cautioned that the reef before Arzila should not be tested without a local pilot, or without following markers eventually placed by the Portuguese.189

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184 The accepted English transcriptions of the Arabic names for rivers in northwest Africa can occasionally be confusing for the reader, as there is no consistent application of one transcription standard or even consistent use of one term for the word “river”. With regard to the latter, for example, *wadi* is a common term and in English usage most accurately refers to a dry riverbed that only has flowing water after heavy rains. In northwest Africa, however, *wadi* is also used for permanently flowing rivers as well. Instead of *wadi*, Maghribi Arabic uses the term *wad*, which is often transcribed as *oued*, and in common usage this has been applied to some but not all of Morocco’s rivers. Here I am have succumbed to my own idiosyncratic preferences not only for when to use the terms *wadi* and *oued*, but also in varying from the transcription guidance referenced at the start of this study. With no commonly-accepted English transcription for the rivers mentioned, I have selected those I viscerally prefer and simply ask for the reader’s indulgence. In most cases I simply use the name of the river and omit the use of *wadi* or *oued*.

185 Sailing times vary widely among vessels and regions, but the average speed for a Portuguese caravel resulted in travel of approximately one hundred miles per day.

186 Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, 504.

187 A roadstead is a stretch of water where ships can anchor close to the shore.


Once within the bounds of the reef he noted that the harbor was only suitable for small ships of up to thirty-five tons, which should be securely anchored due to dangerous swells. Fernandes too noted the protective reef, but characterized the coast here as a place where the “sea is furious.” Despite these limitations as a port, proximity to the Strait gave Arzila strategic importance, and it was to be eagerly sought by the Portuguese as the Atlantic world took shape.

Continuing southward about twenty miles from Arzila the mariner encountered the first major Moroccan river, the Loukkos, a little more than forty miles from the Strait and one of the two rivers that played a role in the Portuguese disaster at the Battle of Wadi al-Makazin.

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191 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 39.
192 “C’est une côte où la mer est furieuse.” Fernandes, Description, 25.
Originating in the Rif Mountains, the Loukkos is the only one of the seven rivers listed above that does not begin its journey in the Atlas. Emptying in the Atlantic near the ancient Phoenician city of Lixus, and in the time under study at the coveted port of Larache, the Loukkos is also the shortest of the aforementioned Moroccan rivers, stretching only some sixty miles into the
interior. Tenth-century Arab Geographer Ibn Hawqal described it as a great river, an abundant source of drinking water, and suitable for navigation. Although Leo Africanus remarked that the passage to Larache by the river’s mouth was “very dangerous and difficult” owing to a sandbar, we know from a Portuguese expedition in 1489 that the river had nevertheless once been navigable by Portuguese caravels at least to its confluence with Wadi al-Makazin, a distance of approximately six miles by land and probably more than twelve by the winding course of the river itself. Pereira calculated the channel of the river at more than twenty-five feet in depth at high tide, and noted that off the river’s mouth there was a “clean sandy bottom” of some one hundred and fifty feet that provided a suitable offshore anchorage. This and the relatively spacious estuarine port encountered after navigating the bar gave Larache distinct advantages over Arzila to the north.

In our period Larache on the left bank of the Loukkos’s mouth drew the interest of several powers with Atlantic aspirations, including the Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, and Ottomans, and during the period of the early Atlantic world was to become the subject of repeated contest and negotiation between these powers and the rulers in Morocco. Both Valentim Fernandes and later Leo Africanus commented on the formidable Moroccan

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193 Muhammad Abu’l-Qasim Ibn Hawqal (Ibn Hawqal) was a tenth-century Muslim merchant and geographer who is believed to have travelled in Asia and North Africa for approximately thirty years, recording descriptive information useful for travelers. His famous work Kitab Surat al-’Ard (“Book of the Face of the Earth”) is believed to have been based on the work of others with new material incorporated from his own travels. Emilio Calvo, Encyclopedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures, 2nd ed., Vol 1. New York: Springer, 2008, s.v. “Ibn Hawqal.”


195 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 496, 931. It should be noted that it is possible to interpret Leo Africanus’s description of the dangerous entrance to the Wadi Luokkos in multiple ways. In the earlier passage discussing the town of Larache, Leo brackets his comments about the dangerous nature of the river’s mouth between a description of a strong garrison at the town and a heavily fortified castle, which could be interpreted as indicating that military defense of the river’s mouth is what makes it dangerous. His much later description of the river, however, also comments on the difficulty of entering its mouth, so the safest conclusion seems to be that he was referring consistently to navigational challenges.

196 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 40-41. In Esmeraldo’s descriptions a “clean” bottom generally refers to sand or mud bottoms in which it is easy to anchor. A “dirty” bottom is one with stone and rock, which makes secure anchoring difficult.
fortifications at Larache, noting the strong castle’s garrison of bombards and soldiery by which the King of Fez sought to guard the river’s mouth, with Fernandes also mentioning the presence of many fustes. During Pereira’s time the countryside surrounding Larache produced abundant corn, but was also known for widespread fever in the summer. According to Leo Africanus the area was a great producer of cotton and charcoal, which the people of the town took by ship to Arzila and Tangier. Near the town also, Leo relates, were “divers medowes and fennes where the townsmen take great store of eele and of water-fowles,” as well as “huge and solitarie woods haunted with lions and other wilde beasts.” Though better than Arzila, the port of Larache itself was also not ideal for heavy shipping. Similar to Arzila, however, interest in Larache was driven less by any notion of trade with the interior than by its proximity to the Strait, its open access to the Atlantic, and depending upon the party interested, its usefulness as a base for further penetration of Morocco.

For a long way southward from Larache the Moroccan coast was uninviting for the mariner with no river, harbor or major town to break the coastline except for an inlet to a small lake suitable only for small vessels. Some seventy miles south of Larache, however, the mariner arrived at the mouth of the Sebu. Modern Morocco’s largest river by volume and second in length, Ibn Hawqal described the Sebu in the tenth century as a great river with abundant flow. The Sebu begins its two hundred and eighty mile journey in the Middle Atlas

197 If Leo Africanus is to be believed, the soldiery grew substantially between to the time of Fernandes’s writing and his own. Where Fernandes remarks on a garrison of some fifty cavaliers, Leo Africanus lists two hundred crossbowman, one hundred harquebusiers, and three hundred light horsemen. Fernandes, Description, 24-25. Le Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, II, 496. Fustes were small, low draft coastal vessels with both sails and oars. Michael Ballard, “Coastal Shipping and Navigation in the Mediterranean,” in Cogs, Caravels and Galleons: The Sailing Ship 1000—1650, ed. Robert Gardiner, 131-138 (Edison, NJ: Chartwell Books, 2000), 135. Pereira, Esmeraldo, 41.
199 This accounted for a proverb that Leo relates, according to which a person who boasts and does not deliver is referred to as a ship from Larache, “for these ships having sailes of cotton, which make a gallant shew, are laden with nought but base coales. . . . “ Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, II, 496.
200 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, II, 496.
201 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 41.
Mountains and on its way to the Atlantic passes not far from the ancient imperial city of Fez. Here one of its tributaries has provided abundant water to the famous urban center, leading Leo Africanus to wax extensively about the river’s value. “Almost infinitely dispersing it selfe into the citie,” he wrote, through conduits and channels it entered into every “temple, college, inne, hospitall, and almost to every private house . . . and flowing into sinks and gutters, it carrieth away all the filth of the citie . . . .”202 Before reaching the Atlantic the Sebu bulges in a large loop to the north before plunging southward again and emerging on the coast at the town of Mamora.

The navigability of the Sebu is disputed in our sources. It seems clear that one could not travel upriver anywhere close to Fez. In certain places, according to Leo Africanus, the Sebu was shallow enough to be waded across in some seasons. Its mouth, however, was filled with fish, was “very deepe and broad” . . . and was “navigable for ships of great burthen,” something of which Leo noted both the Portuguese and Spanish had taken advantage.203 Pereira knew the Sebu as the Rio da Mamora and wrote that it could be identified by a “dark grey cliff” more than four hundred and fifty feet high, which also served as the landmark for the town of Mamora.204 In his accounting, while small ships of thirty tons could go well upriver, large ships needed to remain near the mouth where there was a safe anchorage of some one hundred and eighty feet.205

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202 Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, 419.  
203 Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, 930. In one of his confusing passages, Leo here also criticizes the slothfulness of the people of Fez, asserting that if the merchants of Fez used the river to carry corn through the region of Azgar, rather than traveling overland, they could sell such corn in Fez for half the price. It is unclear whether Leo is thus asserting that the river is simply navigable for smaller vessels over a larger distance than was done at the time or if he is erroneously asserting that the river and its tributaries were navigable all the way to Fez.  
204 Pereira, *Esmeraldo*, 41. Pereira also at one point asserts that small vessels could go upriver all the way to Fez in the winter. This also appears to be erroneous, however, for in contrast to Iberian rivers like the Guadalquiver, which were navigable inland to great urban centers like Seville, the Sebu was never navigable all the way to Fez. Pereira’s translator and editor, George H.T. Kimble comments, for example, that the Sebu is navigable for small craft no more than ninety miles upriver, while the distance to Fez is approximately two hundred and fifty miles. Pereira, *Esmeraldo*, 42, 42n1.
Fernandes, in contrast to both Pereira and Leo Africanus, characterized the Sebu as unnavigable.  

The area around the town of Mamora, which sat above the river’s south bank and was apparently an earlier Carthaginian site, was “sandie and barren,” according to Leo Africanus, but nearby stood “a mighty wood” with fruits sold at great profit in Fez. Apparently the area also was suitable for husbandry at one point, for Pereira noted that the country along the river supported “many flocks”, while Fernandes reported that the Arabs here took their cattle from place to place to graze. At one time, before the coming of the Iberians, Mamora was apparently a simple port town where merchants trafficked in honey, wax, wool, skins, flax, and tanning bark. We know that during the sixteenth century the fishing grounds between the Loukkos and the Sebu were sufficiently rich to attract Portuguese and Spanish fishermen and Pereira, Fernandes, and Leo Africanus all comment on the abundance of fish in and around the Loukkos and the Sebu.

Less than twenty miles to the south was the Bou Regreg, and at its mouth the most defensible anchorage along the entire Moroccan Atlantic. Originating in the Middle Atlas subrange, the Bou Regreg traveled approximately one hundred and fifty miles before reaching the ocean. Although itself not exceedingly impressive in length or resources, and offering no ports or harbors other than the river’s mouth, the Bou Regreg proved an impressive bulwark against seaborne assault and astride it emerged what were to become the important Moroccan cities of

206 Fernandes, Description, 26-27.  
207 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 409-410. These fruits may have been oranges, as Pereira commented that the countryside supported “many orange groves.” Pereira also describes an island within the river “with a plentiful supply of wood.” Pereira, Esmeraldo, 41.  
208 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 42. Fernandes, Description, 26-27.  
209 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, fn. 23, 581-582.  
210 Ricard, Etudes, 126-127.  
Salé on the north bank and Rabat on the south bank, both a little to the west of the Phoenician settlement of Sala.\(^{212}\) Kenneth Brown believes that geography placed Salé-Rabat in the path of almost all of the important political movements in Moroccan history.\(^{213}\) Situated on the main road from Morocco’s inland imperial capitals of Fez and Marrakech, it developed elements of both, but despite its position along the coast and at the southwest corner of the grain region of the Gharb, it never became a great economic center, instead, in Brown’s assessment, remaining a “marginal, frontier type city whose national role was limited to acting as an intermediate stopping-off point between the northern and southern capitals” Fez and Marrakech, respectively.\(^{214}\) This is consistent with Pereira’s description from his time of a large, but thinly-populated city, but contrasts with that of Fernandes, who characterized its population of more than two thousand inhabitants as carrying on great commerce with Fes.\(^{215}\)

What makes Salé-Rabat unique for our purposes is that more than any harbor, port, or city during the period of this study, it was to remain essentially impregnable to European conquest. As we will see, other positions on the Moroccan Atlantic littoral were regularly contested by European powers. While Salé-Rabat was not immune to European pressure, its

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\(^{212}\) The various names of the evolving urban centers at the mouth of the Bou Regreg may easily confuse the reader. In pre-Islamic times the Bou Regreg estuary supported Punic and Roman settlements, the most notable of which was Sala (the later Marinid burial site of Chella), several miles up the river’s south bank. By the beginning of the tenth century a tribe from the Zenata Berber confederation, the Banu Ifran, had captured Sala and founded the new town of Salé nearer the river’s mouth on the northern bank, where it served as the capital of a small Ifrānid kingdom. It was the Ifrānids who constructed a fortified ribat on the south side of the river as part of their long struggle with the Barghawata confederation. During Almohad rule in 1150 Abd al-Mu’min took up residence there and chose the ribat and its fortifications on the south side of the river’s mouth as the spot from which to launch his assaults on the Iberian Peninsula. By this point Salé on the northern bank appears to have been a flourishing port with a productive countryside. Under successive Almohad rulers, particularly Abu Yusuf Ya’qub al-Mansur (1184-1199), what started as a military encampment built around the pre-existing fortifications on the south bank became the major urban center of Rabat, which along with its sister city Salé across the river, took shape as the second capital of the Almohad empire and the summer residence of its rulers. *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition, s.v. “Ribāṭ al-Fath”; Joudia Hassar-Bensilmane, *Le Passé de la Ville de Salé dans tous Ses États: Histoire, Archéologie, Archives* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1992), 39-41; Kenneth Brown, “An Urban View of Moroccan History – Salé, 1000-1800,” *Hesperis Tamuda* 12, (1971): 5-106:23.


ability to resist it was effectively unmatched anywhere else on the Moroccan coast. Salé-Rabat benefited in this regard from sandbars and narrow, shifting channels, which made any attempted entry without substantial local knowledge dangerous. Leo Africanus recognized this in his day, noting that it was extremely difficult to enter the river without running aground, making it virtually impassable without a knowledgeable local pilot.\textsuperscript{216} Pereira noted two channels between which stretched “a very long line of reefs with sandbanks here and there on which the sea breaks with force.”\textsuperscript{217} In 1636, an English fleet bombarded the city, the account providing a map that shows at least in part the treacherous nature of navigating the river’s mouth even at that date.\textsuperscript{218}

In the early sixteenth century Leo Africanus wrote separately of the twin cities along the Bou Regreg highlighting the value of each to Moroccan maritime enterprise up to that time. Some, he claimed, believed that the twelfth century Almohad leader of Morocco, Abu Yusuf Ya’qub al-Mansur, constructed Rabat to enable prompt reinforcement of his forces in al-Andalus by sea. Abu Yusuf Ya’qub al-Mansur wanted to station a reinforcing army somewhere upon the sea shore and his advisers had apparently proposed that he try Ceuta on the Strait of Gibraltar. But the barrenness of the soil around Ceuta prevented him from being able to maintain an army there for three or four months, so “he caused this towne of Rebat in short space to be erected, and to be exceedingly beautified with temples, colleges, pallaces, shops, stores, hospitals, and other such buildings.”\textsuperscript{219} As additional testament to its maritime orientation, Leo Africanus writes that “on the south side without the walles he [Abu Yusuf Ya’qub al-Mansur] caused a certain high tower like the tower of Maroco [Marrakech] to be built . . . from the top whereof they might

\textsuperscript{216} Leo Africanus, \textit{The History and Description of Africa}, 929.
\textsuperscript{217} Pereira, \textit{Esmeraldo}, 42.
\textsuperscript{219} Leo Africanus, \textit{The History and Description of Africa}, 401.
escrie ships an huge way into the sea.”  

From Leo Africanus’s account, fresh water was apparently a problem for the inhabitants of Rabat since wells were brackish well inland from the coast. According to him, Al-Mansur addressed this problem through a series of conduits that brought fresh water to the town from twelve miles inland. By the early sixteenth century, however, these had fallen into decay along with much of Rabat itself.

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220 Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, 401. This is Hassan Tower, which still stands in Rabat today.

221 Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, 402.
Whereas Leo Africanus saw Rabat from a martial perspective, Salé he appears to have viewed primarily through a commercial lens. “Their temples are most beautifull,” he writes, “and their shops are built under large porches. And at the end of every row of shops is an arch,

Figure 7. Port of Salé and Rabat. From Braun and Hogenberg. Civitates orbis terrarium, I, 56, http://historic-cities.huji.ac.il/morocco/sale/maps/braun_hogenberg_I_56_5_b.jpg (accessed January 29, 2018). Published online by the Historic Cities Center of the Department of Geography, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Jewish National and University Library. This first Latin edition of volume I of Civitates orbis terrarium was published in 1572 and the image is from an unidentified Portuguese manuscript. This depiction shows the twin cities, the narrow entrance to the Bou Regreg, as well as the towers from which approaching ships could be identified from a great distance.
which (as they say) is to divide one occupation from another. And (to say all in a word) here is nothing wanting, which may be required either in a most honourable citie or in a flourishing commonwealth. Moreover hither resort all kinde of merchants both Christians and others. Here the Genowaires, Venetians, English and lowe Dutch used to traffique."²²² Sandy grounds surrounding Salé made it unfit for the growing of corn, according to Leo Africanus, but suitable for cotton; the region also was rich in wood from which combs were produced for sale in Fez.²²³ Pereira commented that the way inland from Salé to Fez revealed a country that “abounds in corn, meat, fish, honey and many other good things.”²²⁴

In the seventeenth century, as the Sa’di dynasty in Morocco disintegrated, Salé-Rabat became well-known for the Moriscos from the Hornachos region of Iberia who controlled it. Expelled from Spain in 1609, the Hornachos, along with Andalusians, were to become the pre-eminent pirates and slavers of the Moroccan coast. During the 1620s they established the corsairing Republic of Salé, which acted largely independent of central authority in Morocco until the emergence of the Alaoui dynasty at the end of the 1660s. For most of the period covered in this study, Salé-Rabat makes little appearance in European sources, in large measure probably due to the difficulties of approaching and conquering the cities by sea.

Continuing south from the Bou Regreg the coastal traveler passes from the Gharb grain region into Tamasna province. Approximately forty miles south of the Bou Regreg, mariners encountered the landmark of Cape Fedala (Fdala), a chain of projecting rocks that Pereira emphasized in his time consisted of “two islets where small vessels up to eighty tons can anchor” on a clean and sandy bottom in up to thirty feet of water.²²⁵ As they moved another fifteen

²²¹ Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, 407.
²²² Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, 408.
miles southward, mariners left behind the beaches that dominated the shore south of the Bou Regreg for what Pereira described as a coast of rocky cliffs and dirty bottoms. At the end of this stretch they reached the bay of the city of Anfa, where now sits modern-day Casablanca.

Formerly a Phoenician and later Roman city, from the twelfth to the fifteenth century Anfa was the principal port for the exportation of Moroccan wheat. It possessed what Pereira described as “a great bay with a reef of rock close to the land” and a narrow entrance on the northeast side. By the time of Pereira, Fernandes, and Leo Africanus the town was effectively in ruins, having been sacked by the Portuguese decades before. Leo, however, speaks lavishly of the city before the Portuguese assault, believing that no “towne in all Africa is for pleasant situation comparable thereto”. He writes of a civil and wealthy people, plains of abundant grain fields, temples, palaces, rich warehouses and shops, substantial gardens whose fruit ripened before counterparts inland and thus could be sold in the markets of Fez, and a populace that traded with the Portuguese and English. Fernandes, too, despite the city’s depopulated state and the difficulties of its coastline, was nevertheless impressed by Anfa’s beautiful structures and appearance.

Some forty-five miles south of Anfa the sailor reached the mouth of Morocco’s longest and greatest river, the Oum Er-Rbia. Arising in the Middle Atlas Mountains, the Oum Er-Rbia travels three hundred and forty-five miles before entering the Atlantic near the coastal enclave of

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226 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 44.
227 Robert Ricard, Études, 93-94.
228 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 44.
229 As will be discussed briefly later, the town had been sacked by a Portuguese fleet in 1468 and most of the inhabitants had fled. Pereira also credits the city’s demise in part to an earlier disaster—the Marinid defeat in Iberia at the Battle of the Rio Salado in 1340. According to Pereira, all the principal people of the city were killed in the battle and Anfa never fully recovered. Pereira, Esmeraldo, 44-45.
230 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 398.
231 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 396-397.
232 Fernandes, Description, 26-27.
233 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 44.
Azammur. The river marks the end of the Tamasna grain-growing area and the beginning of the expansive Dukkala region. In the time of Leo Africanus in the first half of the fifteenth century this marked one of the boundaries of the Kingdom of Fez, which extended northward to the Mediterranean. Below it was the Kingdom of Maroco with its capital at Maroco (Marrakech).

Figure 8. Port of Anfa. From Braun and Hogenberg, Civitates orbis terrarium, I, 57, http://historic-cities.huji.ac.il/morocco/casablanca/maps/braun_hogenberg_I_57_1_b.jpg (accessed January 29, 2018). Published online by the Historic Cities Center of the Department of Geography, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Jewish National and University Library. This first Latin edition of volume I of Civitates orbis terrarium was published in 1572 and the image is from an unidentified Portuguese manuscript. Note the rocks and the narrow entrances.

Despite its prodigious length relative to other Moroccan rivers, Leo Africanus had little to say about the Oum Er-Rbia in the sixteenth century, other than that a great deal of fish were taken from it.\(^{234}\) Pereira described the passage from Anfa to the Oum Er-Rbia as dominated by beaches and clean bottoms suitable for secure anchoring along any point.\(^{235}\) The river itself could only accommodate small vessels, according to Pereira, but well offshore there were clean sand and mud anchorages in depths ranging from seventy-two to two hundred and forty feet of

\(^{234}\) Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 928-929.

\(^{235}\) Pereira, Esmeraldo, 45.
water; nearer the shore the bottom was rocky and unsuitable. Two sandbars guarded the mouth of the river, one further out upon which the sea broke, and another closer in and approximately a league from the shore, covered at high tide by twenty-four feet of water. Shifts in these bars and in the channel itself led Pereira to warn of the need for soundings at the sandbar or for the use of a knowledgeable local pilot.

Though Leo Africanus said little about the Oum Er-Rbia itself, he wrote at slightly more length about the town of Azammur at the river’s mouth. A large, well-inhabited city in his estimation, he noted that it was peopled continually with Portuguese merchants. Legumes and corn abounded in the area, and the rich supply of fish, according to Leo Africanus, were gathered from October to April, fried to extract oil for lamps, and then sold to the Portuguese who came once a year to purchase them in great quantities to the benefit of the town’s wealth. Pereira and Fernandes similarly noted the tribute in fish, with the former also commenting on the abundance of corn and meat. Fernandes also remarked on the fine horses that could be purchased in the area, as well as the cloth garments that could be purchased here and sold to sub-Saharan Africans. When the Duke of Braganza later occupied the city for the Portuguese in 1513, he reported strong walls with eighty towers, a kasba, and no fewer than twenty-eight mosques.

About ten miles south of Azammur on the coast were the twin seaside towns of Tit and Mazagan, at the location of present-day El-Jadida. Leo Africanus did not mention Mazagan, but

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236 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 45, 46.
237 I have generally avoided citing distances in leagues provided by contemporary chroniclers because the actual length of this unit of distance has varied over time. If Pereira’s account of distance is compared to modern maps, his league appears to be somewhere in the range of 3.5 to 4.5 miles.
238 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 45-46.
239 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 46.
239 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 293. This collection of fish was apparently a residue of what was, as we shall see, a tribute in shad that the city paid annually to the Portuguese.
240 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 46. Fernandes, Description, 28-29.
241 “Relation de la prise d’Azemmour,” before 19 September 1513, SIHM-Portugal, I, 430-433.
he claimed Tit to be of ancient origin and remarked on the “large and fruitfull fields belonging unto it.” 243 The plains of the Dukkala surrounding Tit and Mazagan were rich in corn and meat, and apparently in wheat as well, for Fernandes noted that the Portuguese loaded a great deal of this grain at Tit, and when later speaking of nearby Mazagan, both Pereira and Fernandes note that both Portugal and Castile imported wheat from the region. This is all consistent with Leo Africanus’s comment on Tit’s “great traffique” with the Portuguese. 244 Pereira noted that a couple of miles north of Tit was a “bay of fair size, with room for ten or twelve small vessels,” 245 but Tit itself was apparently an example of one of the seaside towns of fifteenth and sixteenth-century Morocco with no river and no real port, but with beaches or a small bay suitable for craft to land from larger ships offshore.

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Unlike Leo Africanus, both Pereira and Fernandes take note of Mazagan, which they similarly describe as destroyed and uninhabited. As Pereira’s editor George H. T. Kimble notes, this has led some to conclude that this particular passage of Pereira’s account was likely drawn from prior to 1506, for it is in that year Kimble claims that the Portuguese built extensive fortifications at Mazagan. That date for the construction of fortifications, however, is erroneous, so it is difficult to be certain of Pereira’s time frame. Mazagan’s bay, according to him, was suitable for large ships to anchor, though it required strengthened cables as a result of a rocky and foul bottom.

After Tit and Mazagan it took almost eighty additional miles of sailing along the Moroccan littoral to reach the next coastal enclave of Safi, another former Carthaginian site. Along the way both Pereira and Fernandes mention Casa do Cavaleiro. Pereira describes this as a cove behind a great reef where ships of eighty tons may anchor, where much wheat and barley may be loaded, and where the surrounding area is abundant in meat and game. Fernandes describes it succinctly as a Moorish village that produces a great deal of wheat near a similarly-named cape suitable for fishing. The site goes unmentioned by Leo Africanus, however, and its location appears to confound Pereira’s editor George H. T. Kimble as well. From roughly halfway between Tit-Mazagan to Cape Blanc near Safi, Fernandes describes a barren, unpopulated coast. “[T]here are no villages,” he writes. “The region is sandy, white and dry.

246 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 47. Fernandes, Description, 29.
247 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 47n4.
248 It is true that in 1505 Portugal’s Manuel I authorized the construction of a fortress at Mazagan. Opposition of local tribes, however, appears to have prevented its construction, and it was not until sometime in 1514 that a fortress eventually took shape. “Lettres patentes d’Emmanuel I,” 21 May 1505, SIHM-Portugal, I, 108-113. “Les Origines de Mazagan,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 103-107, 106-107. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Brill Online Reference Works, s.v. “al-Djadida,” http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_1910 (accessed 4 March, 2018). It is also possible that the site was confused with the island of Mogador, where the Portuguese established Castelo Real in 1506.
249 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 47.
250 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 48-49.
251 Fernandes, Description, 28-29.
The land is low-lying without any one part higher than another. There are no trees or herbaceous plants."252

Like Arzila far to the north, Safi itself did not adjoin a major river and possessed only a small harbor, but it nevertheless served as an important port for the inland capital of Marrakech. Leo Africanus remarked that in the past Jews had dwelt in the town practicing diverse handicrafts, but now the inhabitants were mostly uncivil and barbarous. In fact, despite the surrounding soil being exceedingly fertile, Leo decried that because of the inhabitants “owne unskilfulnes and negligence, that they know neither how to till their ground, to sow their corne, or to plant vineyards . . . .”253 Pereira described the beach around the city as “inhospitable” and cautioned those who anchored there to beware of the west wind blowing across the harbor.254 Unlike Leo Africanus’s commentary, however, Pereira lauded the produce of the countryside in his time, commenting on its richness in corn, meat, fish, and good horses; he also noted the profitable trade in gold from Guinea, hides, honey, wax, and other products.255 Fernandes took time to describe the city of Safi itself. Populated by some three thousand inhabitants, he commented on its enclosing ramparts and two castles, and declared it the main and best city of the Muslims on the coast of the sea from the Strait to Ethiopia, marveling at its commercial success, the cisterns for collecting water in the dry region, the silos storing the abundant wheat, and the availability of fine horses, indigo, and Arab garments from the interior.256

Roughly another twenty miles south of Safi emerged the mouth of the Tensift, which springs from the High Atlas and travels in a northwesterly direction for one hundred and sixty

253 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 284.
254 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 50.
255 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 50.
256 Fernandes, Description, 34-37.
miles to reach the Atlantic Ocean. It formed the southern boundary of Morocco’s third Atlantic grain producing region, the Dukkala, and at its mouth in the fifteenth century sat the now-vanished seaside town of Goz, which Leo Africanus claims was “a famous port upon the Ocean sea” that brought great wealth to the equally-vanished inland city of Teculeth. The river itself

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Leo claimed was “for the most part of an exceeding depth, yet may in divers places be waded over . . . ”

Pereira knew the Tensift as the Rio dos Savees and described it as “very small” so that only small boats could enter it; it was so small, in fact, that unlike the other rivers he described, Pereira consciously dispensed with discussing its tides or latitude.

Another forty-five miles to the south, curiously unmentioned by Leo Africanus, is a bay sheltered by a rocky headland to the north and an island to its west. This island, known as Mogador, was about three-quarters of a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide and became home to the Portuguese fortress of Castelo Real in 1506. Pereira writes of two approaches to the harbor and anchorage associated with the island, which could support ships of one hundred tons in anchoring depths of thirty-six to forty-two feet, and where the nearby mainland provided abundant fresh water. Fernandes says very little about the island, mentioning only the presence of the Portuguese fortress and the island’s abundant birdlife.

Less than ten miles beyond Mogador the mariner encounters Cape Sim, the westernmost point in Morocco thus far reached while traveling southward from the Strait of Gibraltar. The route from Mogador to Cape Sim (Cabo do Seem), according to Pereira, is dominated by rocky shoals that encourage the sailor to steer a course south and west of the coast until reaching the Cape, where smaller ships could anchor on a clean bottom of some forty to fifty feet in depth, while larger ships were forced farther offshore.

Another twenty miles brought the traveler to one of the more curious sites along the Moroccan littoral described by Leo Africanus—what he characterized as the port and famous
market town of Tefethne. A city, “most strong both for situation and building,” according to Leo, “[h]ere ships of meane burthen may safely harbour themselves; and hither the Portugall merchants resort to buy goat-skins and wax.” The surrounding hills were rich with barley and near the town was a river into which ships could put during bad weather. Leo asserts that he stayed with the people of the town (about which he complains concerning fleas and the stench of urine and goat dung), yet neither the town nor the river exist today in recognizable form, leaving Leo’s late nineteenth-century editor Robert Brown to speculate, using various other sources, that

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265 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 243.
266 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 243.
the river Leo mentions must have silted up and the town’s location must have been somewhere near the current Cape Tafelney, which rises more than seven hundred feet above the sea almost thirty miles south of Mogador and modern-day Essaouira. Pereira also took note of what he called “Tafetana,” and by which he seemed to be referring to modern-day Cape Tafelney. He described it as a “very large cliff of rock as high as Cabo de Sam Vincente, jutting into the sea.” What understandably drew Pereira’s nautical interest was the presence behind Tafetna of a small creek, which he claimed could “give anchorage to fifteen or twenty vessels of sixty tons” in a clean anchorage of more than forty feet. It was followed in his accounting by yet another bay some five to ten miles south where “twelve or thirteen ships of sixty tons can anchor.”

 Approximately another thirty miles to the south of Tafetna sits the headland of Cape Ghir, unmentioned by Leo Africanus, but boldly extending more than twelve hundred feet above sea level, noticeable by any passing mariner, and of critical importance to navigational practices in the area. Pereira took care to write at comparative length on Cape Ghir (Cabo de Guer), describing both how to identify it and the best sailing approaches to reach it. The western end of the Atlas Mountains comes down to the sea in this location and Pereira accordingly noted that the area behind the Cape was very mountainous with peaks visible from the sea that are “so lofty

267 Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, 244, 337. Arlett, "Survey of some of the Canary Islands, and of the Western Coast of Africa, in 1835", 292. Today just south of Cape Tafelney is both a small town known as Tafedna and two watercourses, the Ighzer Ou Etas and the Ighzer Ou Rahal Talat.

268 Pereira, *Esmeraldo*, 53. Cabo de Sam Vincente is southern Portugal’s Cape St. Vincent, site of numerous well-known naval battles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.


270 Pereira, *Esmeraldo*, 53. It is unclear where this bay exists, or if it exists, today. Pereira’s editor, George H.T. Kimble, speculates that it may have been Imsouan Bay, but this would make Pereira’s distance of a “league” approximately eight miles.


that they seem to touch the clouds." Among these peaks were scattered fortified villages and
the coastal route for several leagues to the south provided clean anchorage for ships of any
size. Fernandes again says quite little, noting most prominently the establishment of a
Portuguese fort on the Cape in 1506.

Almost twenty miles south of Cape Ghir was the town of Agadir, which with the
surrounding area was to play an important role in Morocco’s subsequent engagement with the
Atlantic world. Agadir sat just north of the mouth of the Sus River, the river being the defining
feature of a fertile valley nestled between the High Atlas and the Anti-Atlas mountain ranges.
The river itself originates in the High Atlas and travels one hundred and twelve miles to empty
into the Atlantic, helping create what Ibn Hawqal described in the tenth century as the wealthiest
and most productive region in all the Maghrib.

Leo Africanus described the Sus as “mightily” overflowing in the winter time and very
shallow in the summer, but some confusion attaches to Leo’s descriptions of both the Sus and
Agadir. The latter he refers to not as Agadir, but as the castle of Gartgessem, mounted upon the
top of the Atlas in “a most impregnable place” against the part of the ocean into which the Sus
discharges. Leo’s late nineteenth-century editor, Robert Brown, explains this was one of a
variety of names for Agadir and the villages of the area, to the great bewilderment of
mapmakers. The original Agadir was apparently “the miserable fishing village of Fonte”, with
the nucleus of the town above being a late fifteenth-century, Portuguese-built structure.

Though we will not again encounter the name Gartgessem, the Portuguese fort and port of

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273 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 54.
274 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 54. The villages were referred to as castles or “ksars.”
275 Fernandes, Description, 38-39.
276 Ibn Hawqal, Kitab surat al-ard, 90.
277 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 934.
278 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 253.
279 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 346.
280 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 346.
Santa-Cruz at Agadir will play an important role in subsequent events, as it became the best port in Morocco, the entrepôt for the rich produce of the Sus valley, and the effective launching pad for the shārifīan dynasty that was to guide Morocco into the early Atlantic world.

The dramatic advantage Agadir provided was twofold. High land extending from Cape Ghir to Agadir represents the western extremity of the Atlas Mountain range, and at Agadir the end of the range forms a deep bay of moderate water depth that shelters occupants from the northeast winds. Additionally, at Agadir the strong, southward-flowing Canary Current is deflected some six or seven miles out to sea by Cape Ghir to the north.281 Along with a suitable supply of fresh water and the rich provender of the Sus Valley, these conditions made Agadir an ideal port. Pereira asserted that in the bay “any large ship can find clean good anchorage at whatever depth it requires,” and that the surrounding countryside was rich in “corn, meat, fish, honey, wax, hides, and many other commodities which yield good profit.”282 Gold too, he noted, came to Agadir brought overland from Guinea by the Moors.283 Curiously, Fernandes makes no substantive mention of Agadir.

About twenty-file miles farther south along the coast were a series of villages that came to be known jointly as Massa, near which Pereira asserted that small vessels of up to twenty-five tons could anchor in a small creek with a clean bottom of some one hundred and twenty feet in depth.284 This is one of the areas where Leo Africanus’s geography was mistaken. He placed Massa on the Sus, when it was actually situated on a smaller river to the south known as the Wadi el-Ghas.285 It is here that Leo makes the nearly identical claim that he made earlier about

282 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 55.
283 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 55.
284 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 56. Pereira here speaks of three villages at Massa.
285 This appears to be today’s Oued Massa, the estuary of which is at the southern end of the Souss-Massa National Park, which runs along Morocco’s Atlantic from the mouth of the River Sus in the north to the Oued Massa in the south.
the Sus, namely that while the river has abundant flow in the winter it “in sommer is so destitute of water, that a man may easily without peril pass over it on foote. . . .”\textsuperscript{286} In his commentary on Massa, Fernandes situated it on a great river, but one that ships could not enter because of its shallow depth.\textsuperscript{287}

Consistent with the villages not being a major embarkation point for goods from the Sus valley in Leo’s day, with one exception he makes no serious mention of any commerce between Massa and the outside world. It seems clear from his account that as one moved south in Morocco during the early modern period, limited rainfall played an important role in the flow and usefulness of the country’s rivers. All of Massa’s inhabitants, for example, Leo claims engaged in husbandry, especially in September and April, which were the fall and spring months when the “river increaseth.” If during those two months, however, “the river encreaseth not according to the wonted manner,” then the corn harvest, which takes place in May, Leo asserts is worth nothing.\textsuperscript{288}

Among the more curious observations Leo makes concerns the relative abundance of whales cast upon the shore at Massa. Having witnessed this himself he relates that there are those among the populace who believe that this was the location where Jonah was found.\textsuperscript{289} This abundance of beached whale carcasses continued to be remarked upon at least into the nineteenth century,\textsuperscript{290} and presumably stems from the combination of the rich phytoplankton in the area upon which whales feed, and the impact of local currents. Its most relevant result for our purposes was the corresponding abundance of ambergris. An excretion from the intestines of the

\textsuperscript{286} Leo Africanus, \textit{The History and Description of Africa}, 248.
\textsuperscript{287} Fernandes, \textit{Description}, 38-39.
\textsuperscript{288} Leo Africanus, \textit{The History and Description of Africa}, 249.
\textsuperscript{289} Leo Africanus, \textit{The History and Description of Africa}, 249.
\textsuperscript{290} James Grey Jackson, \textit{An Account of the Empire of Marocco and the District of Suse} (Philadelphia: Fry and Kammerer, 1810), 68.
sperm whale, ambergris was a valued commodity in the West used to stabilize the scent of perfumes. Al-Maqqari noted that during the period of Muslim control of the Iberian Atlantic coast, al-Andalus was famous for the ambergris found and collected there, which could command good prices in the eastern Mediterranean. Merchants from Portugal and Fez were apparently less generous in the prices they would pay in Leo’s day for ambergris from Massa, but it was nevertheless a source of revenue for the local inhabitants.

What most impressed Pereira about Massa (Meca) were the Atlas Mountains beyond the harbor. Referring to them as the “Clear Mountains,” he declared that “there are few countries in the world of equal beauty and height, so that they must be accounted one of the noble sights of Africa.” They were of such height, in his recounting, that for “a very considerable distance eastwards along the coast of Africa they are so lofty that they seem to be above the clouds.” In contrast to Leo Africanus, Pereira was also much impressed by the mountains’ produce, remarking that they yielded “much corn, fruit, honey, wax, and raisins and much iron, copper, hides and good fresh water and much other profitable merchandise which the inhabitants of these mountains take to the port of Meca [Massa] to sell.” Pereira’s remarks are consistent with those of Fernandes, who notes the great commerce of merchants, particularly the Genoese, with the Arabs and Berbers of the area, and the riverine traffic in gold, wax, leather, cows, goats,

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291 Ambergris is now thought to be a substance that protects the whale’s intestines from the indigestible components of some species upon which it feeds. Since the whale’s intestines can only handle small amounts of ambergris, larger pieces are regurgitated. In its fresh form ambergris is black, soft, and smells badly. However, after being exposed to the sun, air, and saltwater it hardens, turns a light gray or yellow color, and develops a pleasant odor. Subject to trade restrictions today, it is now rarely used. Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “ambergris,” https://www.britannica.com/science/ambergris (accessed October 8, 2017).
293 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 250.
294 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 58.
295 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 58.
296 Pereira, Esmeraldo, 58.
gomme-lacque, and indigo.  

A little more than thirty miles south of Massa, Pereira took note of Cape Aglou (Cabo d’Aguiloo), which presented “a massive front to the sea,” beyond the point of which there was a bay where small vessels of up to eighty tons could anchor in a dirty bottom, and where a nearby village served as a source of water, fruit, and other produce, as well as a terminus for gold brought from Guinea. The mariner then had to travel along a relatively barren coast for approximately one hundred miles before reaching the last major river in Morocco and even then the river might go unnoticed. This was the Wadi Dra’a, Morocco’s longest river. Originating in the High Atlas it travels some seven hundred miles in a southwesterly direction, now serving as a portion of the border between Algeria and Morocco. Today the Wadi Dra’a empties into the Atlantic Ocean approximately fifteen miles north of the town of Tan-Tan, but it is unclear if the southbound mariner in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries would even take note of the river, for south of the Atlas Mountains the river systems were not always navigable into the interior and the Dra’a ran dry part of the year. Leo Africanus, who described the river under various names that were again to confuse modern geographers, said that in the summer it is lost within the desert and “so dried up, that a man shall not wet his shoes in going over it.”

Just a few miles north of the river is Cape Dra’a, known at least into the nineteenth century as Cape Nun or Noon. Although its sandstone cliffs reportedly extended more than one hundred and seventy feet above sea level, similarly high adjoining cliffs and desert made it

299 Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, 934.
difficult to distinguish from a distance. Reports long erroneously highlighted the flatness of the coastline in this area, which may have been due to the optical illusions created by the surrounding countryside coupled with the red color in the water. The latter likely stemmed from sand blown into the sea on a regular basis and may also have led mariners to anticipate the presence of shoals and thus also avoid close examination of the landscape. Pereira made no mention of the Wadi Dra’a, but Cape Noon (Cabo de Nam) did capture his attention. It was from this cape in the far south of Morocco, he asserts, that “the virtuous Prince Henry began his discoveries.” Duarte Pacheco Pereira appears to have been among those deceived by the surrounding countryside for he described the cape as “largely sand” and “not very high.” Inland were villages with gardens and orchards, and what he described as a “big gold market” where the inhabitants valued burnouses, coarse handkerchiefs, and blue, red, and yellow cloths, as well as English cloths and linens.

Cape Nun does not extend particularly far out into the Atlantic relative to the surrounding countryside, and as one continues to travel south and west both Cape Juby and Cape Bojador in Western Sahara take the African continent noticeably farther westerward into the ocean. Yet, Pereira’s characterization of Cape Nun as the point from which Henry’s discoveries began exhibits a logic consistent with the surrounding landscape, for the Dra’a Valley in the far south of Morocco served as the de facto boundary between Morocco and the Saharan expanse. This expanse separated Morocco from the great sub-Saharan cultures and empires of the *bilād al-Sūdān* – “the land of the blacks.”

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304 Pereira, *Esmeraldo*, 60. Pereira’s editor George H.T. Kimble notes here that no other contemporary sources identified gold traffic in this area.
From here southward Morocco’s coastline is adjacent to the Canary Islands, the closest of which, Fuerteventura, is a little more than sixty miles offshore. Excellent fishing grounds exist in this area, as upwelling to the south brings cool, nutrient-rich waters to the surface, and the influence of the islands on the Canary Current lessens the impact of Saharan heat, generating a resulting thermal mix that feeds and attracts marine life. In contrast to the rich fishing grounds, Morocco’s Atlantic landscape here was and is definitively bleak. Traveling southward in 1835, a Royal Navy survey mission lamented that “[n]othing can be conceived more dismal than the appearance of the shore hereabouts: for many miles not a dark spot is to be seen to break the monotonous appearance of the sand; the fine particles of which mingling with the haze occasioned by the heavy surf render the coast very indistinct.” Within the Dra’a, as we will see, emerged many of the popular movements that were to assert control over parts of the Maghrib and al-Andalus, give Morocco its first unitary identity, and lead Morocco into the early modern period.

At the southward edge of the Dra’a region we come to the southern boundary of Morocco for the period under study. As the Atlantic world began to emerge and take shape in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Morocco’s approximately eight hundred miles of Atlantic coastline became the focal point of the country’s engagement with that world. In the north, the Rif Mountain range hindered southward penetration. Thus, although European overseas expansion began there, it soon shifted to Morocco’s Atlantic shore, where the geography and environment were to heavily influence the nature of interactions.

Morocco’s coastline presented a façade of seven major rivers and approximately a dozen coastal entrepôt. These latter were loosely attached to grain-growing regions sandwiched

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between the Rif and Atlas Mountain ranges and the Atlantic, and even more loosely attached to the inland capitals of Fez and Marrakech. None of the rivers penetrated the interior in a fashion reminiscent of the Guadalquivir north of the Strait, nor effectively connected to a major inland center like Seville. Though long in many instances, the unsuitability of these rivers for inland navigation was to have significant implications for both the Moroccans and the Portuguese during their Atlantic encounter. The Guadalquivir in Iberia, for example, enabled the operation of shipyards in relatively-protected inland urban centers like Seville. Moroccan rivers, however, provided no such advantages. Bereft of these shipyards and hosting coastal entrepôts with harbors of limited capacity and depth, geography certainly played a role in hindering Morocco’s ability to expand its maritime capabilities in the face of European pressure.

So too did the limited navigability of the rivers adversely affect those Europeans and offer some advantages to Morocco. Just as they were unsuitable for accessing the Atlantic from the interior, so too were Morocco’s rivers unsuitable for penetration of the country from the sea. In the ninth century Viking raiders used the pathway provided by the Guadalquivir to sail upriver and occupy Seville for more than a month. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Moroccan rivers provided no such route for Europeans, whether those Europeans were interested in conquest or trade. Travel to most inland communities, and especially to major urban centers like Fez, Meknes, and Marrakech, required overland travel in conditions that could be particularly harsh depending upon the time of year. This combination of the Rif Mountain range to the north and the limited navigability of Morocco’s westward-flowing rivers thus heavily favored the Atlantic coast as the arena in which sustained, concentrated interaction between Moroccans and expanding Europeans would take place.

The location of Morocco’s historically-productive grain regions also played a significant
role in the nature of the interaction between the country and the Atlantic world. Morocco’s major grain provinces—the Gharb, Tamasna, Dukkala, Haha, and the Sus—all sat adjacent to the country’s Atlantic coast. Their production was thus easily accessible from urban areas on the Atlantic. This became a factor of no small import to Europeans, whether they were interested in directing production for their own purposes, as the Portuguese sometimes sought, or simply participating in the local trade networks. By dominating strategically-selected coastal enclaves, Europeans could thus obtain access to Morocco’s valuable grain yields with potentially little expenditure of resources in men or material.

The state of the harbors and river mouths of these coastal enclaves also, as we shall see, played no small part in Morocco’s experience of the early Atlantic world. At first glance, coastal positions would seem to enable relatively easy reinforcement of coastal positions by sea, and this was indeed often the case. As we have seen, however, few of these coastal centers were ideal for shipping. None could harbor large fleets of large ships, and in several instances bars, reefs, and shoals made navigation tricky and sometimes impossible during periods of bad weather—as the Portuguese we will see were to painfully learn.

Finally, the wide variety of small harbors and beaches along Morocco’s Atlantic coast made absolute control of the coast simply impossible given the naval capabilities and capacity of the time. As we will see, try as they might, the Portuguese were unable to prevent contraband material from making its way to Moroccan forces through small ports and coastal villages. Thus, while the new routes of the nascent Atlantic world might disadvantage Morocco, if the latter could find allies who also traveled those routes, then Morocco would be able to use those routes for its own purposes—something we will see was in fact done to great effect, first through small ports and villages and then through major coastal entrepôt captured from the Portuguese.
We thus see in the physical geography and environment of Morocco conditions that contributed to focusing the interaction of Europeans and Moroccans on the latter’s Atlantic coastline during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These conditions could operate to the advantage or disadvantage of the parties depending upon their objectives at the time and depending upon whether or not collaboration, cooperation, or conflict dominated. As we will now proceed to examine, Morocco’s experience in the early Atlantic world not surprisingly involved all three.
CHAPTER III. FIGHTING THE ATLANTIC: THE IBERIAN ASSAULT ON MOROCCO

Morocco and the Atlantic before the Opening of the Atlantic World

The focus of this study is on Morocco’s role in and relationship with the early Atlantic world. Nevertheless, knowledge of developments within Morocco leading up to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is important to understanding the assertions this study makes regarding the country’s role in that world. Of particular relevance is an awareness of the earliest elements of Atlantic activity in Morocco, as it lays the historical groundwork for how Moroccan society interacted with the ocean environment in subsequent centuries and provides us with glimpses of a largely unspoken Atlantic-orientation before the encounter with European overseas expansion. We will return to some of these in greater detail in later chapters as they become relevant.

When Uqba ibn Nafi’ first reached the Atlantic at Tangier during his campaign of 682-683, he did not stop there, but journeyed south to the coast beyond the River Sus.\textsuperscript{307} Subsequently, the Arab governor of North Africa, Musa ibn Nusayr, also took Arab forces to the Atlantic, conquering Tangier and launching his own southern expeditions. By 714, Arab rulers had divided North Africa into a number of provinces, two of which bordered the Atlantic: Morocco, which lay along the coast south to the Oum Er-Rbia and had its capital at Tangier; and Sus, which extended from the Oum Er-Rbia to the Sahara and had its capital at the inland city of Sijilmasa (a trading city in the far east of present-day Morocco near the north-south midpoint of the country).\textsuperscript{308}

As noted earlier, within a generation of reaching the Atlantic Muslim armies turned northward, in 711 crossing the Strait of Gibraltar into Europe. This at first mostly Berber force dispatched the Visigoth army, captured the capital of Toledo, and within five years had gained

\textsuperscript{307} Mahmoud Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 3.
\textsuperscript{308} Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 4.
uneven control of most of the Iberian Peninsula.\textsuperscript{309} Within another twenty years Muslim forces had penetrated deep into France until finally halted by the Franks near Poitiers in 732. By 759 Arab and Berber armies had withdrawn behind the Pyrenees, where successor Muslim polities remained in existence for more than seven hundred years.

Muslim Iberia, known after the conquest as al-Andalus, at first operated at least nominally under the authority of the Arab Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus.\textsuperscript{310} Governors exercised local control, and were generally appointed by the Caliph in Damascus, or by the viceroys in Egypt or North Africa.\textsuperscript{311} South of the Strait Berber revolts starting near Tangier in 739–740 plagued Arab rule and spread to al-Andalus.\textsuperscript{312} Eventually Damascus sent Arab troops from Syria, who while ultimately prevailing against the Berber rebellion, soon themselves became involved in power struggles with predecessor Arab tribes from the Arabian Peninsula and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{313}

Two independent centralizing powers emerged out of this chaotic milieu on either side of the Strait. In the south, the Idrisid dynasty took shape by the end of the eighth century. Founded by Idris ibn Abdullah, an Arabian \textit{sharīf} who fled conflict in the East,\textsuperscript{314} the Idrisids built Fez off

\textsuperscript{309} Manuel Sánchez Martinez, “Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula, The Mediterranean Coast and Its Islands,” in \textit{History of Humanity, Scientific and Cultural Development, Vol. IV. From the Seventh to the Sixteenth Century}, 348-360 (New York: UNESCO, 2000), 348. The first substantive Muslim expedition across the straits is actually understood to have occurred in 710 CE, when an expedition of 400 men under the Berber Tarif ibn Muluk crossed to Iberia, established the city of Tarifa, and launched raids for plunder and slaves. Ibn Muluk’s success must have encouraged the subsequent invasion in 711 of the largely Berber force of 7,000 under Tariq Ibn Ziyad, the Berber Muslim governor of Tangier. Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 7.

\textsuperscript{310} The Umayyad dynasty was the first family dynasty of the Muslim caliphate, succeeding the \textit{Rashidun}, the four “Rightly Guided” caliphs who were successively elected to rule the caliphate after the death of Muhammad in 632. Upon coming to power in 661 the Umayyads moved the seat of the caliphate to Damascus. Various dissident groups challenged their rule, including the Shi’a and the Kharijites (the latter’s influence helped spur the Berber rebellions in the West). Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 11.

\textsuperscript{311} Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, \textit{A History of the Maghrib}, 39.

\textsuperscript{312} Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 12.

\textsuperscript{313} In 750 the Abbasid family overthrew the Umayyads, eventually founding Baghdad and in 762 moving the capital of the caliphate there. Idris ibn ‘Abdullah escaped from the Arabian peninsula after the battle of Fakh near Mecca in 786 between the partisans of Ali (the Prophet Muhammad’s assassinated son-in-law and the fourth and last of the “Rightly-Guided” caliphs) and the Abbasids. He fled in disguise first to Egypt and then across the Maghrib to
a tributary of the Sebu River. Morocco was a predominantly agrarian society in this early period, and consistent with a pattern exhibited by other agrarian societies hosted a central capital and various provincial capitals that accumulated and managed the agricultural surpluses of the hinterlands. Berber tribal groups dominated most of the Atlantic littoral and as in the example of the Barghawata confederation, whose domain stretched some 200 miles from the Bou Regreg to the Tensift, remained largely outside the Idrisid sphere of central control or interest. In al-Andalus, Berber rebellions caused disruption. Ultimately, a refugee from the overthrown and persecuted Umayyad family in Damascus, Abd al-Rahman I, made his way to the peninsula where in 756 he established the Umayyad Emirate of Cordoba—one of the earliest Muslim polities to publicly declare its independence from the Arab Caliphate in the East.

It seems reasonable to assume that in the early days of Islam’s advance toward the Atlantic the original coastal Berber tribes it encountered would have had at least some familiarity with the ocean even before the subsequent development of coastal trade centers. Actual evidence for this conclusion, however, is elusive. The Azores, Madeira, and Cape Verde Islands, for example, were all still uninhabited at the time of the later European encounter. While archaeologists believe Canary Islanders descended from earlier Berber settlers, they are less certain that this demonstrates a seafaring past. Some historical evidence, in fact, suggests that

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316 A traditional designation of three larger Berber tribal groups—the Sanhaja, the Masmuda, and the Zenata—dates to the writings of the fourteenth-century Islamic historian Ibn Khaldun. The Barghawata Confederation consisted of a coalition of tribes from the Masmuda group, who controlled the Atlantic coast of Morocco from roughly Salé to Safi for four hundred years starting in the eighth century, before the founding of the Idrisid dynasty. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib*, 12-13, 52-53.
317 Upon overthrowing the Umayyads in 750, the new Abbasid rulers began a campaign to exterminate all the surviving members of the Umayyad family.
the original Berber inhabitants of the Canaries may have been prisoners brought by the Romans.\textsuperscript{319}

We do know that Andalusians and Portuguese eventually frequented lucrative fishing grounds off the Moroccan and West African coasts,\textsuperscript{320} a resource with which it seems likely coastal inhabitants would have been familiar. For the first hundred years after the Arab conquests in the West, therefore, local fishing of the variety familiar to coastal areas the world over is probably the only type of maritime activity we may have any confidence consistently took place along the Moroccan Atlantic.\textsuperscript{321}

When the son and successor of Idris ibn Abdullah, Idrisid II, died in 828, his successor divided the nascent Moroccan state into nine principalities. During the ensuing century, with the creation of new towns and the expansion of their influence over existing ones, the Idrisids and the Arab aristocracy they nurtured expanded the reach of Islam in Morocco into the Sus region.\textsuperscript{322} A corresponding new pattern of development then emerged in the form of a trading economy that was to have a significant impact on coastal areas. The catalyst for change was the shift northward into Morocco of what had formerly been more easterly trans-Saharan gold, ivory, and slave trade routes going from Niger to Egypt. Large inland dynastic centers like Fez grew to facilitate and protect this long distance economy.\textsuperscript{323} So too did peripheral coastal trade entrepôts, generally founded by the inland dynasties, but often operating semi-autonomously and focused

\textsuperscript{319} John Mercer, “The Canary Islanders in Western Mediterranean Politics,” 160. This is a notion some view as consistent with the reported absence and general ignorance of ships among the islands’ inhabitants when encountered by the first French invaders in the fifteenth century. As evidence that the Canary Islanders’ Berber ancestors did not arrive by sea of their own accord, however, this may assume too much. That a culture is unaware of the capabilities it possessed from a millennium before is not unique.

\textsuperscript{320} Martin Elbl, “The Caravel and the Galleon: The Caravel”, 94.

\textsuperscript{321} Picard, \textit{L'Océan Atlantique Musulman}, 134.

\textsuperscript{322} Abun-Nasr, \textit{A History of the Maghrib}, 52.

\textsuperscript{323} Boone and Benco, “Islamic Settlement in North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula,” 53-54.
on transhipment activities. It is during this period that we thus begin to see a more consistent form of engagement by Moroccans with their Atlantic coastline, spurred by changes in internal trade routes.

Both the ninth and tenth centuries witnessed devastating Viking raids in al-Andalus that may have influenced coastal development in Morocco. At the time of the potential Viking threat most population centers were still inland, and those proximate to the coast moved to nearby locations deemed more secure without completely abandoning the old urban centers. Ribats grew in prominence in some places, apparently in response to the Viking attacks. In the coastal town of Arzila, for example, the Berber population increasingly congregated around a ribat constructed near the ruins of the old Roman city. Outside of Arzila, however, ribat construction along the Moroccan Atlantic appears to have a pedigree unrelated to the Viking threat. Farther south, for example, the ribat at Salé is notably linked to defense against the heretical Berber Barghawata confederation. And that of Massa, in the far south beyond the Sus, arguably was almost exclusively a spiritual center devoid of any military role. Much of this Atlantic coast, dominated by the Barghawata, continued to remain beyond Idrisid reach.

In 929 Abd al-Rahman III declared himself Caliph of the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba and the stability he provided al-Andalus generated wealth that redounded to Morocco’s

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326 The term ribat is not subject to precise definition absent chronological and other context. In early Islam it did not refer to a fortification at all, but rather to a gathering place for the mustering of military forces, particularly cavalry. Over the course of the late Medinan, Umayyad, and early Abbasid caliphates, as Islam expanded into new lands, the term began to take on connotations associated with a diverse group of structures, including observation towers, small forts, fortresses, and even caravanserais. It was principally applied to these structures in areas deemed hazardous, such as coasts, frontiers, or dangerous inland routes. It also eventually came to refer to the urban residences of the Sufis. These ambiguous associations of the term ribat variously with military muster, defensive fortifications, and Islamic mysticism no doubt contributed to its later inaccurate characterization as a redoubt or convent of sort for military monks or religious warriors. This was particularly so in the Muslim West, where Islamic mysticism often took the form of maraboutism. See *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition, s.v. “Ribât.”
329 Picard, *L’Océan Atlantique Musulman*, 142.
commercial benefit. Ibn Hawqal describes al-Andalus in the mid-tenth century in glowing terms, not just for the beauty of its public spaces, but also for its abundance of cultivation, textiles, and other manufactures.\textsuperscript{330} To him, visiting in 948, the caliphal capital of Cordoba was unequalled in the Maghrib, or even in Mesopotamia, Syria, or Egypt.\textsuperscript{331} Yet, despite its prosperity, by the tenth century parts of al-Andalus had become dependent on foreign grain,\textsuperscript{332} produced south of the Strait in abundance. This logically led the Andalusians to the western towns of Morocco.

That these Moroccan towns were receptive to Andalusian trade is evident from Ibn Hawqal’s tenth-century depictions. Moroccan cities and towns traded cotton, wheat, barley, and vegetables in abundance, their populations devoted in part to commerce and trade along the region’s Atlantic-flowing rivers.\textsuperscript{333} Ibn Hawqal notes, for example, that inland inhabitants transported their merchandise by ship on the river Loukkos, and after having reached the Ocean, turned toward the Mediterranean or wherever they wished to go.\textsuperscript{334} While it is not always completely clear on whose ships such goods were transported, the evidence seems to indicate it was the arrival of Andalusian mariners who spurred the development of this Atlantic commercial activity in the south. In fact, Ibn Hawqal highlights that it was Andalusian ships that took on goods at an inland lake that was connected to the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{335}

In this trade we can see continuity with later Portuguese activities along the Moroccan coast. As we will see, when the Portuguese established themselves on the Moroccan Atlantic grain becomes one of the most prevalent exports from Morocco to Portugal and the latter’s possessions elsewhere. The importance of securing these sources of grain led the Portuguese, in

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{330} Ibn Hawqal, \textit{Kitab surat al-ard}, 111.  \\
\textsuperscript{331} Ibn Hawqal, \textit{Kitab surat al-ard}, 107.  \\
\textsuperscript{332} Picard, \textit{L'Océan Atlantique Musulman}, 112.  \\
\textsuperscript{333} Ibn Hawqal, \textit{Kitab surat al-ard}, 81.  \\
\textsuperscript{334} Ibn Hawqal, \textit{Kitab surat al-ard}, 80.  \\
\textsuperscript{335} Ibn Hawqal, \textit{Kitab surat al-ard}, 82.
\end{flushright}
the absence of an agricultural peasantry of their own or slave labor under their direction, to impose a tribute system in the grain-producing regions of Morocco adjacent to the Atlantic entrepôts the Portuguese occupied. This system was a prominent example of Portuguese experimentation in colonial control, one of the key spheres of engagement between Moroccans and the networks of the Atlantic world, and an arena characterized by Moroccans interacting with the Portuguese along a spectrum ranging from collaboration to resistance.

As Andalusian merchants moved south in the tenth and later centuries they did not displace, but instead reinforced the interior caravan routes of Fez and Sijilmasa by providing them with an alternate route to the Mediterranean. Bringing olive oil, figs, and artisanal products, among others, for exchange, these Andalusian mariners thus opened new commercial avenues to the western Muslim world south of the Strait, and with them a renewed lease on life for some coastal enclaves. Arzila, for example, revived with the arrival of the Andalusians, who proceeded to establish quarters in it and other Moroccan cities.

It seems apparent both from Ibn Hawqal’s account, and from the fact that less than a century later the Almoravids had to rely on Andalusian transport for their crossing of the Strait into Iberia, that the capacity for maritime shipment of goods remained predominantly in the hands of the Andalusians. Yet, even though Muslims south of the Strait thus do not appear to have developed their own material maritime capability at this time, they were now nevertheless active participants in an emerging, if still modest, Muslim commercial network that took advantage of the coastal Atlantic.

A succession crisis in al-Andalus led to the demise of the Caliphate of Cordoba during the first third of the eleventh century. Andalusians, Berber mercenaries, and Christian kingdoms

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backed various rival claimants to the Umayyad throne. Cities across the Strait broke away. Despairing of an effective Umayyad restoration, in 1031, the vizier of Cordoba officially abolished the caliphate. Al-Andalus broke into some sixty principalities of varying size and strength, beginning the period known as the *Duwal al-Tawā‘if*—the period of the Ta‘ifa or Party States.\(^{338}\)

As the Umayyad caliphate in al-Andalus weakened and descended into the chaos that gave birth to the Ta‘ifa kingdoms, its control and influence over the western Maghrib evaporated as well. Berber Zenata families that had risen to prominence under the Umayyads assumed authority over various principalities south of the Strait.\(^{339}\) They were not long unchallenged, however, for during the third decade of the eleventh century, a vigorous religious movement took root south of the Dra‘a valley in an inhospitable desert coastline that stretches almost to the Senegal River. It was from here, among the Atlantic Guddala Berbers, that the Almoravid movement emerged.\(^{340}\) The Guddala were members of the Berber Sanhaja confederation, and had earlier been driven south by the Zanata and forced to inhabit the coastal desert that stretches into what is today the Western Sahara, Mauritania, and Mali.\(^{341}\) It might be hoped in an examination of Morocco’s involvement in the early Atlantic world that there is some truth to the once-accepted notion of the Almoravid movement having arisen in an island ribat off the Atlantic coast, but the evidence is not compelling.\(^{342}\) There seems little to tie these Sanhaja to the sea beyond their proximity to it. By all accounts their lifestyle was one of Bedouin

\(^{338}\) Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 47-49.

\(^{339}\) Abun-Nasr, 76. The Umayyad decline contributed to a corresponding wave of disruption across North Africa. The Zirids, a Sanhaja Berber tribe that had governed a portion of North Africa under the Fatimids, declared their independence. In response, the Fatimids in 1051 unleashed 50,000 Arab Bedouin, principally consisting of the Banu Hilal, from upper Egypt. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib*, 69.


\(^{341}\) Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 60.

pastoralism in a bleak landscape.  

During the first half of the eleventh century political conditions in this desolate region made its inhabitants particularly susceptible to influences that could unify and motivate the Sanhaja tribes. In this period these tribes found their dominance of trans-Saharan trade routes threatened by the Soninke state of Ghana to the south and a rival Zanata group in the north. When the leader of one of the Guddala performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, he returned enamored of a Malikite doctrine to which he had been exposed in Tunisia. To instruct his people in its tenets he sought out a spiritual leader who had earlier established a ribat in the extreme Sus. This ribat was known as the Dār al-Murābiṭūn, the House of the Men of the Ribat, and the followers of its doctrine as al-Murābiṭūn—or the Almoravids. They captured Fez in 1069, founded their capital of Marrakech in 1070, and were soon to impose their rule over al-Andalus and all of northwest Africa. It is from the Almoravid period that one can reasonably date the concept of a unified Islamic Morocco. 

Morocco’s Atlantic coast prospered during Almoravid rule, though the latter appeared not to have developed any particularly noteworthy naval capability. Andalusian and Mediterranean ships brought cargoes of wheat, barley, beans, chick-peas, sheep, and cows to the Atlantic coast of the Barghawata region (the Tamensa between Salé and Safi), while towns as far south as Safi

344 Ironically, the Guddala were the Sanhaja group closest to the Atlantic coast and least affiliated with the trans-Saharan trade. Abun-Nasr, A History of the Maghrib, 77.
345 One of the four schools of religious law within Sunni Islam.
also became commercial stops. With the Almoravid founding of Marrakech as their capital the products of the Atlas Mountains, the Sus, the Anti-Atlas Mountains, the Dra’a, and the Sahara came via Sijilmasa to the markets in the capital. From there much of it was exported by sea, out of Safi in particular. Produce from Fez and Meknes exited through Salé, and that originating farther north through Ceuta and Tangier. It is thus clear that by this time Atlantic coastal centers were playing an important role in Morocco’s economy, providing an alternative means for transporting goods northward without use of the older desert and mountain routes.

The Almoravid grip on al-Andalus was even briefer than that of the Ta’ifa kingdoms. By the second quarter of the twelfth century the Almoravid state was already showing signs of weakness as a result of continuous warfare with the increasingly aggressive Christian Iberian powers. Revolts popped up throughout al-Andalus and in the waning years of the Almoravid reign a second period of party states emerged. As the desert Sanhaja had been united by a religious movement, so too were the Almoravids’ successors, the Almohads (“unifiers”), who sprang from the Berber Masmuda tribes in the Atlas Mountains of the south. In 1122 the Almohads launched their revolt and in 1145 captured the Almoravid capital of Marrakech. Two years later Almohad armies crossed into al-Andalus, putting an end to Almoravid rule.

Despite their inland mountain origins, unlike their predecessors the Almohads appear to have embraced an Atlantic identity of sorts relatively early in their rise, making the first

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348 Picard, L’Océan Atlantique Musulman, 156. The Almoravids granted the Genoese, Pisans and later the Marsaillais trading privileges, and Salé was among their ports of call. E.W. Bovill, The Golden Trade of the Moors, 136.
349 Picard, L’Océan Atlantique Musulman, 158.
350 Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 67,70.
351 The Almohad movement was founded by Muhammad Ibn Tumart, a member of a Berber tribe affiliated with the Masmuda confederation. Like his Almoravid predecessor, he too traveled to the East, and upon his return experienced a religious awakening in which he came to see himself as the Mahdi—the restorer of religion and justice who some Muslims believe will rule before the end of the world. Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 69-70.
352 Fage, A History of Africa, 171.
consistent, if limited, attempts to engage the Atlantic. In preparation for the invasion of al-Andalus, for example, the Almohad leader, Abd al-Muʾmin, fortified the southern mouth of the Bou Regreg, where he mustered his forces, taking up residence in Salé in 1150. By this point Salé appears to have been a flourishing port with a productive countryside. Under successive Almohad rulers, particularly Abu Yusuf Yaʾqub al-Mansur, what started as a military encampment built around pre-existing fortifications became the major urban center of Rabat, which along with its sister city Salé across the river, took shape as the second capital of the Almohad empire and the summer residence of its rulers.

But the Bou Regreg did not become at this time simply an Atlantic military center. Commerce also seems to have flourished, with al-Mansur reportedly offering incentives for artisans and merchants to come to the cities at its mouth. While Rabat participated, Salé appears to have been at the forefront of the commercial activities in the area. Al-Idrīsī, for example, writing of Salé at this time, remarks extensively on its markets and its commerce, noting that it was rich in food and finances, with orchards, gardens, cultivated fields, and river fish. He cites it as a destination frequented by Sevillian and other Andalusian merchants who anchored offshore, paid their duties, and traded in oil. We also know that it was during this period that the Genoese began direct trade with the city via an Atlantic route.

The Almohad willingness to engage the Atlantic initially bore fruit in al-Andalus as well. As the Christians continued to move southward along the Iberian Atlantic coast the Almohads

353 While Ibn Tumart was the spiritual founder of the Almohad movement, he died in 1248 after being defeated by the Almoravids. It was thus his lieutenant, Abd al-Muʾmin, who is credited with establishing the Almohad empire.
355 Hassar-Bensilmane, Le Passé de la Ville de Salé dans tous Ses États, 41.
358 Hassar, Le Passé de la Ville de Salé dans tous Ses États, 41.
rose to meet them. Ensuing naval battles between the Portuguese and Almohads from 1177-1184 have, by at least one scholar, been deemed a veritable “Battle of the Atlantic”\textsuperscript{360} that favored the Almohads, who launched strikes against Lisbon, Santarem, and points farther north.\textsuperscript{361} In 1182 an Almohad fleet from Ceuta defeated the Christian Lisbon fleet in the harbor of Silves, avenging a loss of the year prior.\textsuperscript{362} For Islam in al-Andalus, however, success on the sea was not sufficient. By 1189 the Christians had pushed by land along the Atlantic façade to Silves, which they captured with the aid of a Crusader fleet on the way to the Holy Land.\textsuperscript{363} Then in 1212 the Almohads suffered a crushing defeat at Las Navas de Tolosa, which presaged the demise of their rule.

As had occurred with their Berber predecessors, with the first signs of Almohad weakness rebellions broke out, both among the Andalusians in Iberia and Berber competitors in Morocco.\textsuperscript{364} To the south of the Strait conflicts were commonplace after 1224, with two Zenata tribal groups emerging as the strongest, the Banu Marin or Marinids, and the Zayyanids or Abd al-Wadids.\textsuperscript{365} In al-Andalus a third period of party states began, and by 1248 the Christians had conquered Seville and the Atlantic coast as far as Cadiz,\textsuperscript{366} a naval blockade of the former by Castilian, Genoese, and Aragonese naval forces being important to Christian success.\textsuperscript{367}

Seville’s fall was a tremendous blow to Iberian Islam and a watershed event in the history of Muslim access to the Atlantic. With its capture and their expansion down the western coast of the peninsula, the Christian powers had overrun Islam’s historical source of Atlantic power. Shortly afterward the Muslims of al-Andalus were pushed back into the Mediterranean corner of

\textsuperscript{360} Picard, \textit{L’Océan Atlantique Musulman}, 125.
\textsuperscript{361} Picard, \textit{L’Océan Atlantique Musulman}, 125.
\textsuperscript{362} Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 73.
\textsuperscript{363} Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 74.
\textsuperscript{365} Fage, \textit{A History of Africa}, 175.
\textsuperscript{366} Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 76.
\textsuperscript{367} Lewis, "Northern European Sea Power and the Straits of Gibraltar, 1031-1350 A.D.," 153.
the peninsula, never again to return meaningfully to the Atlantic coast. The next generation saw Genoese ships in Flanders and the ports of England. Muslim powers’ hold on the Strait, already weakened, was over.368

In 1232, during the third period of the party states and prior to the fall of Seville, the lord of Arjona, Muhammad ibn Nasr, established a kingdom for himself in southeastern Iberia, built around the major cities of Granada, Málaga, and Almería.369 Accepting vassalage under the Christian king of Castile, Nasrid Granada, as it came to be known, was able to consolidate its power during the second half of the thirteenth century,370 employing diplomacy and force as the situation required, and cautiously allying itself with North African powers.371 Thus, despite the Almohad’s virtual abandonment of the Iberian Peninsula, and the fall of Seville to the Christians in 1248, with Nasrid Granada Islam prolonged for almost 250 years a twilight reflection of al-Andalus’s former glory on the Iberian Peninsula.

South of the Strait an Almohad caliph continued to reign in Marrakech at least in name until 1269, and in isolated kinglets until 1275.372 But by 1248, the same year as the fall of Seville in al-Andalus, the Almohad collapse south of the Strait was substantively complete, with a new Berber dynasty, the Marinids, conquering Fez and making it their capital.373 The Marinid

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368 Olivia Remie Constable notes as well that the Christian conquest of timber areas on the peninsula may have dealt a lethal blow to Muslim naval power, as timber was in relatively short supply. Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain*, 197, 238.


370 Martinez, “Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula,” 359. The Nasrids were the last major Muslim dynasty in the Iberian Peninsula. In 1246 the city of Granada became the Nasrid capital and they ruled a progressively smaller part of southern Iberia until their capitulation to the Christian forces of Ferdinand and Isabella on January 2, 1492, which was the culmination of the Christian Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula and the end of Muslim al-Andalus. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Nasrids,” http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0855 (accessed October 18, 2017).

371 Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 78.


373 The Marinids were also not the only Berber power to take advantage of the Almohad decline. In a pattern reminiscent of earlier North African divisions, another rising Berber dynasty, the Abd al-Wadids established their domain over Western Algeria from their capital at Tlemcen, and farther east yet a third dynasty, the Hafsids, controlled eastern Algeria and Tunisia from Tunis. Fage, *A History of Africa*, 175.
period proved a severe test for any Atlantic identity nurtured in Morocco under the Almohads, exhibiting both the potential promise of a maritime orientation and its dangers. If there was a time during which Islam truly turned away from the Atlantic, it began here, contemporaneous with the embryonic stages of European overseas expansion. Marinid leaders first fostered an Atlantic presence and then neglected it, setting the stage for the eventual Portuguese dominance of the Moroccan coast.

In the early decades of their rise, Marinid naval capabilities were understandably limited, or maybe even nonexistent. Perhaps illustrative of other Moroccan Atlantic cities during this period, Rabat and Salé at this point took different paths. The former had been virtually destroyed in the fighting that accompanied the Almohad decline and faded into obscurity for several centuries. Salé, on the other hand, continued as a vibrant commercial center. Its prosperity was also a lure, however, with the result that it had the misfortune of suffering the first material European assault on Moroccan soil, an ironic counterpoint to its subsequent history as the most defensible Muslim enclave on Morocco’s Atlantic coast. Prior to the capture of Marrakech and the consolidation of its power, internal dissension plagued the Marinid dynasty. In 1259 the rebellious nephew of the Marinid leader took possession of Rabat and Salé, declaring himself independent and requesting aid from Castile. Responding to the call, in 1260 a Castilian naval squadron sent by Afonso X occupied Salé for almost a month. Spaniards attacked along the unfortified southwestern coast and caught the inhabitants completely by surprise. Although the Marinid sultan led an army on a forced march to retake the city, much damage was done. Salé was sacked and burned, and some 3,000 men, women, and children were carried off as slaves.

It was now clear that the opportunities of the Atlantic to which Morocco had been

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awakening also came with a potential cost. The Marinids responded by constructing a maritime arsenal at Salé, including a fortified wet dock connected to the Bou Regreg by two canals. This ushered in what some have characterized as Salé’s golden age.\textsuperscript{377} Within eighty years Marinid naval capabilities had grown so substantially that after consolidating their position in northern Morocco, they threatened Christian Spain with what was to be its last Moorish invasion. An armada estimated to be in excess of sixty warships escorted the Marinid sultan, Abul-Hassan, and his armies across the Strait in the spring of 1340, and in April of that year they joined with other Muslim ships to almost completely destroy a combined Castilian and Catalan fleet. Each massive galley in the Muslim fleet reportedly held 300-400 men, including 200 archers and crossbowman mounted on three separate castles.\textsuperscript{378} Marinid fleet building and gathering capacity thus seems to have been substantial at that time. In the successive years of 1342 and 1343 they assembled fleets of some seventy to eighty galleys.\textsuperscript{379} Individual Christian Iberian states could not counter such naval power on their own and were forced not only to combine their forces, but to hire Genoese mercenaries as well.

These naval conflicts necessarily implicated Granada, the remaining Muslim enclave in Iberia, which given its position could not help but be drawn into the conflict being waged among the Castilians, Catalans, Mallorcans, Genoese, and Marinids for the all-important Strait of Gibraltar.\textsuperscript{380} The Nasrids had retained some maritime power in the Strait for a time, combining, for example, with the Marinids and with the Hafsids of Tunis (1229-1574) in the defeat of the Castilian fleet in 1340.\textsuperscript{381} But the combined Christian fleets of Castile, Aragon, and Genoa

\textsuperscript{379} J.A. Robson, “The Catalan Fleet and Moorish Sea-Power (1337-1344),” 406.
\textsuperscript{380} Martinez, “Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula,” 359.
consistently challenged such success.\textsuperscript{382} Most importantly, in the same year of the Muslim naval victory, 1340, the Christians defeated the combined Marinid and Nasrid army at the Battle of Rio Salado.\textsuperscript{383} This negated any dominance that the Marinids had established at sea, and their fleet assembled in 1343 was unable to break a critical Christian siege at Algeciras. Such defeats effectively ended meaningful North African interest in the Iberian Peninsula. Now, other long-term forces were at work that encouraged the Marinids to look inward and eastward.

While interest in booty or commerce might draw an inland dynasty toward the lucrative sea trade that we know was then emerging at Salé, so too might it draw them toward the far more ancient trade of the trans-Saharan routes. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries these routes had shifted eastward away from Morocco as a result of Arab tribal disruption in the Sus region and the collapse of ancient Ghana.\textsuperscript{384} Trade originating in Mali now passed through the domains of the Zayyanids of Sijilmasa and the Hafsids of Tunis, who reaped significant rewards, including growing economic and political relations with the Christian trading states of the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{385} The Marinids were well aware of the benefits of the trans-Saharan trade. Their leader Abul-Hasan reportedly exchanged several delegations with Mali during his reign, and it was under his son’s rule that Ibn Battuta was sent out to explore the Sudan.\textsuperscript{386} To recapture this profitable commerce, Abul-Hasan determined to bring the Zayyanids and Hafsids under his control, launching his initial campaign against the former in 1335.\textsuperscript{387}

This Marinid turn inward and eastward was almost certainly accelerated by their lagging fortunes in Iberia. Nasrid Granada viewed the Marinids suspiciously. In the complex

\textsuperscript{383} Makki, “The Political History of Al-Andalus,” 80. Kennedy, \textit{Muslim Spain and Portugal}, 289.
\textsuperscript{384} Abun-Nasr, \textit{A History of the Maghrib}, 112.
\textsuperscript{385} Abun-Nasr, \textit{A History of the Maghrib}, 112.
\textsuperscript{386} Abun-Nasr, \textit{A History of the Maghrib}, 112.
\textsuperscript{387} Abun-Nasr, \textit{A History of the Maghrib}, 112.
maneuvering characteristic of Iberian Islam’s twilight, the Nasrids wished for enough Marinid aid to resist the Christian reconquest, but not so much as to encourage a Berber invasion that would rob them of their independence. For their part, both the Marinids and the Christians considered the Nasrid Kingdom a useful, if temporary, buffer state. Enclaves on the peninsula passed back and forth between the three groups as alliances and interests shifted, but after the Iberian land defeats of the 1340s the Marinids abandoned any significant interest in the peninsula, and thus a significant incentive for maintenance of a maritime presence.

Contemporaneously, European Mediterranean powers were spreading noticeably into the Atlantic as Muslim power in the Strait waxed and waned in the roughly hundred years between the fall of Seville and the defeat at Rio Salado. By the late thirteenth century Genoese and other Italian merchants had begun passing through the Strait and turning north to Flanders and England. Some even more boldly turned south toward the unexplored African Atlantic, some in galleys too low and shallow for rough Atlantic waters. In the 1330s and 1340s the first recognizable steps in the European voyages of discovery began with the exploration of the Canary Islands.

As the Europeans moved south and west into the Atlantic, the Marinids moved east across the Maghrib. This eastward turn was devastating to the Marinids and Atlantic Morocco. Though successfully reaching Tunis in 1357, the Marinid achievement of a united Maghrib was fleeting, for it coincided with the beginning of a tumultuous period of more than a century that saw aggressive viziers appropriate Marinid rule. Muslim rulers in Nasrid Granada
exacerbated the situation by using the resulting confusion to meddle in Marinid affairs. Most importantly, the infighting made not just Nasrid Granada, but now North Africa proper, more vulnerable to the Christian powers. During this period the Marinids comparatively abandoned the Atlantic arsenal in which they had earlier invested, and which had effectively, if in only a limited fashion, pierced the barrier that had been Sea of Darkness. Without knowing it they had taken Morocco to the brink of the opening of the Atlantic world and left it comparatively defenseless against what that world was to bring.

**Morocco and the Opening of the Atlantic World**

The Atlantic world began for different societies at different times. For cultures farther inland in Africa and the Americas integration into the Atlantic world occurred long after that world had already taken substantive shape for others. Historians of the Atlantic world see Christopher Columbus’s first trans-Atlantic voyage of 1492 as one clear demarcation point after which we can see an Atlantic world begin to emerge. As discussed briefly earlier, however, it may be appropriate to consider some pre-Columbian connections as indicative of other worlds that are substantively “Atlantic” for their participants, as it was the new pathways created in the Atlantic that facilitated new interactions that would not have existed but for those pathways, and that evolved into networks of exchange that were transformative for those societies. Ultimately these other “Atlantic worlds” became integrated in the larger Atlantic world ushered in by European trans-Atlantic voyages. If not “Atlantic worlds” of their own, then perhaps they are at least sufficiently important precursors to be considered part of the larger Atlantic world before the Columbian voyages. Recognizing that it might be succumbing to what Marc Bloch described

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Inan strangled. This inaugurated a period lasting until the end of Marinid rule in 1465 in which most Marinid sultans were figureheads. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib*, 113.  
as an “obsession with origins”.\footnote{Marc Bloch, \textit{The Historian’s Craft} (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), 29.} if such “Atlantic worlds” or such important precursors exist, then for Morocco the Atlantic world opened on August 21, 1415. On that day, the Portuguese attacked and captured Ceuta on the Strait of Gibraltar.

The Portuguese assault on Ceuta was not the first time that European forces had invaded Morocco. As mentioned earlier, in 1260 the Castilians sacked and occupied Salé on Morocco’s Atlantic coast.\footnote{Hassar, \textit{Le Passé de la Ville de Salé dans tous Ses États}, 42.} In 1399 Castile took advantage of succession quarrels that were disrupting Marinid rule in Morocco to attack Tétouan on the Moroccon Mediterranean coast, a base from which pirates had been operating. They sacked it and killed or enslaved its populace.\footnote{With the death of the Marinid sultan Abu al-Abbas in 1393 both Castile and Nasrid Granada meddled in Morocco by supporting pretenders, with the result that the sitting Marinid sultan permitted corsairs from Morocco to raid both Christian and Muslim vessels from Iberia. Charles-Andre Julien, \textit{History of North Africa from the Arab Conquest to 1830}, edited and revised by R. Le Tourneau, trans. by John Petrie, edited by C.C. Stewart (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 207.} What makes Ceuta different from these prior expeditions is that the Portuguese came to stay. Not since the Vandals in the fifth century had Europeans successfully crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and done so. In light of subsequent events the Portuguese action ultimately came to be recognized as one, if not the first, step in European overseas expansion. Ceuta’s capture was the start of a prolonged Iberian, mostly Portuguese, campaign against Morocco that over a period of a little more than half a century moved first against Muslim fortifications in the Strait – Ceuta, al-Qasar al-Sagir, and Tangier – and then shifted to the Atlantic coast. Almost simultaneously, Portugal also embarked on maritime exploration, conquest, and aggressive trade practice in the Atlantic. In the second half of the fifteenth century both initiatives violently converged on the Moroccan Atlantic littoral.

The Ceuta campaign begins what this study asserts is the first phase of Morocco’s involvement in the Atlantic world. This phase runs for approximately one hundred years, from
Multiple developments during this period are important components of the emergence of the larger Atlantic world and thus of Morocco’s place in that narrative. Portugal during this period, and to a lesser degree Spain, simultaneously engaged in Moroccan conquests and Atlantic exploration that were intertwined in both motive and tactics. In its early stages Portuguese aggression in Morocco contained elements that were extensions of the medieval *Reconquista* on the Iberian Peninsula, features that were to be mirrored by the Spanish in the Americas. Crusading ideology mixed with economic motives to push the Portuguese across the Strait of Gibraltar and then down Morocco’s Atlantic coast. As economic motives increasingly took precedence Atlantic exploration moved hand in hand with specific Portuguese objectives on the Moroccan Atlantic littoral. Morocco served during this period as both objective and laboratory, with the Portuguese attempting to conquer the kingdoms of Morocco while at the same time experimenting in the tactics of caravel and cannon, conquest and collaboration. For Morocco, after the Portuguese had achieved their goals in the Strait of Gibraltar, the conflict became almost exclusively an Atlantic one. Morocco was in short under siege from the Atlantic. What this prompted within Morocco was a response that differed from what might have occurred if the Portuguese had remained isolated in the north along the Strait. This Atlantic assault instead generated contact with and opposition from *ashrāf* and Sufi movements in the south of the country. Opposition to the Portuguese helped spur the growth in influence of these movements, who capitalized on popular discontent with the central government in Fez and its impotence against the Portuguese. Eventually these movements were to coalesce for a time in a

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To avoid confusion it seems wise at this point to comment on Weston F. Cook, Jr.’s excellent work *The Hundred Years War for Morocco: Gunpowder and the Military Revolution in the Early Modern Muslim World* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994). Cook writes an essentially military history that focuses on the influence of gunpowder weapons and tactics in first the Portuguese assault on Morocco and then the Moroccan resistance and ultimate defeat of the Portuguese. His hundred year period, however, does not begin with the Portuguese capture of Ceuta in 1415, which he views as one of several precursors. Instead it runs from the 1460s to the Portuguese defeat at Wadi al-Makazin in 1578.
dynasty that originated in the south and sought to unify Morocco by stressing, among other things, its ability to successfully oppose the Portuguese.

The military conflict with the Portuguese also exposed Morocco to the gunpowder weapons that were to become important components of future military conflicts. First putting the Moroccans at a severe disadvantage, a handful of victories, starting with Tangier in 1437, won them cannon that they were to gradually learn to use, however ineffectively at first. A century later more substantive victories were to win them not only more supplies of such weapons, but would encourage them to seek training and expertise from outside the country to use them more successfully. At the same time as this transfer of military technology was gradually taking place, the Portuguese expansion down the Moroccan coast encouraged other European powers to do so as well, not for the purpose of conquest, but instead for commercial gain. In this instance, Portuguese efforts to conquer Morocco contributed to a lucrative contraband trade. This enabled Moroccan forces opposing the Portuguese to develop relations with other Europeans operating in the Atlantic—relations that included a trade in arms and war material for products Morocco could supply.

During these first hundred years of Morocco’s Atlantic world experience many events in Spain, Portugal, and northern Morocco were intertwined. Within the Iberian Peninsula the Christian kingdoms of Aragon, Castile, Portugal, and the Muslim kingdom of Nasrid Granada interacted sometimes in conflict and sometimes in collaboration, moving in shifting alliances with each other and with polities across the Strait. Across the narrow pathway between the Mediterranean and the open Atlantic during this time, the Marinids ruled the Kingdom of Fez, with their authority sometimes challenged by independent city-states in northern Morocco and by tribal groups in the south, each of which would ally itself at one time or another with Christian
polities across the Strait, Christian outposts on the coast, or Christian merchants plying their trade along the Atlantic and in factories inside or near major inland cities.

Weston Cook sees the Portuguese assault on Ceuta in 1415 as “one of the milestones of conflict” that “revealed a balance of forces shifting inexorably against Morocco in a staccato of attacks” that eventually led to what he characterizes as the hundred year war for Morocco.398 To the Atlanticist this hundred year war is particularly relevant because the second half of it was predominantly an Atlantic war, one waged against Morocco from an Atlantic maritime frontier and requiring an Atlantic-oriented response. This had multiple repercussions both for the emergence of the Atlantic world and Morocco’s place in it. John Vogt has written that for Portugal “hegemony over her empire hinged upon expertise with two basic tools—caravels and cannon,” with the former holding the empire together by enabling seaborne communication and the latter enabling it to defend itself against superior forces, whether on land or sea. For Portugal, he asserts, Morocco became a de facto training ground that made a major contribution to the Portuguese overseas empire through the practice it gave them in the use of artillery.399

From a Moroccan perspective, the war not only came predominantly from the Atlantic, but once the war itself had ended, the larger Atlantic world had begun to take shape and Morocco’s orientation had been so forcibly shifted as a result of the struggle that the Atlantic world for a time consistently became a factor that Morocco had to consider as it sought to preserve its own independence and pursue its own ambitions. In other words, by the end of Cook’s century of war in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, Morocco had indeed become Janus-like, facing not just the Muslim world to the east, but also west toward the open Atlantic.

As a starting point this is a great deal of historical importance for Ceuta to bear. Odd it

398 Weston Cook, The Hundred Years War, 84.
must seem at first glance. Ceuta, after all, is of course not even an Atlantic port. Rather it resides on a narrow peninsula that extends eastward into the Mediterranean. Ceuta’s capture, however, emboldened important participants among the invaders, whose influence, motives, and subsequent experience on the Moroccan mainland were to serve as catalysts for later Portuguese advances. Among these participants was the infante Prince Henry of Portugal, known to history as Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460).\footnote{As is well documented by scholars now, the sobriquet "the Navigator" applied to Prince Henry is dramatically misleading to the extent it conveys the impression that he was either a frequent or skilled seafarer. In addition, the notion that he founded a school of navigation at Sagres seems to have been discredited by modern scholars. That being said, there seems little doubt that Henry was an aggressive and persistent patron of exploration, who expressed a particular zeal for knowledge on the subject largely unrivaled in his time. See e.g., Douglas T. Peck, “The Controversial Skill of Columbus as a Navigator: An Enduring Historical Enigma, \textit{The Journal of Navigation} 62 (2009):417-425, 419.} In the middle part of the fifteenth century the Portuguese chronicler, Gomes Eannes Zurara, was to wax effusively about Henry’s bravery at Ceuta:

\begin{quote}
Now the first Royal Captain who took possession by the walls of Ceuta was this same of whom I write, and his square banner was the first that entered the gates of the city, from whose shadow he was never far off himself. On that day the blows he dealt out were conspicuous beyond those of all other men, since for the space of five hours he never stopped fighting, and neither the heat, though it was very great, nor the amount of his toil, were able to make him retire and take any rest. And in this space of time, the Prince, with four who accompanied him, made a valiant stand. For as to the others who should have followed in his company, some were scattered through that vast city, and others were not able to join him by reason of a gate through which the Infant with the said four companions had passed together with the Moors, which gates was guarded by other Moors on top of the wall. So for about two hours the Prince and his friends held another gate which is beyond the one which stands between the two cities in a turn of the wall under the shadow of the castle . . . .\footnote{Gomes Eannes Zurara, \textit{Guinea}, I, 16-17. The reference to the “two cities” reflects Zurara drawing a distinction between the citadel and the lower town of Ceuta. Zurara, \textit{Guinea}, II, 303n25.}
\end{quote}

Such laudatory portraits were the stuff of medieval, crusading gallantry, designed not just to win the author favor, but to inspire and encourage others to such deeds as Europeans soon found themselves transitioning from the world-view of the medieval period into that of the early modern age.
Just as Ceuta’s capture emboldened the medieval spirit of the *Reconquista* and the crusade for the Portuguese, it was a strong blow to the confidence of Muslim Morocco. In the opening decades of the fifteenth century Ceuta represented a military and trading center of no small importance to Morocco, whose loss not only exposed Marinid Morocco’s weakness, but a particular kind of weakness, namely an inability to defend its maritime frontier and coastal commercial entrepôts. Such a weakness mirrored on the Atlantic coast was an open invitation to exploitation by the caravels and cannon of the Portuguese.

Ceuta had long been recognized by all as an important site on the Strait. Its location made it an advantageous point from which both to surveil the Iberian coast and from which to launch assaults against it. When the Muslim army under Tariq ibn Ziyad invaded Iberia in 711 C.E., it was the Byzantine governor of Ceuta who is said to have provided the vessels.\(^{402}\) Later, as a Muslim base, it was for centuries a departure point for troops and galley fleets headed for al-Andalus or the eastern Maghrib. In the tenth century the Umayyads of al-Andalus used it to resist the rival Fatimids; in the early thirteenth century the Almohads used it in their eastward expansion across North Africa. During the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it changed hands multiple times between the sometimes-allied, sometimes-rival Muslim polities of Nasrid Granada and Marinid Morocco, who used it not only to engage in Iberian conflicts, but also as a base for corsairing.\(^{403}\)

Ceuta also had significant value as a commercial center. A large amount of the grain Morocco produced for export went through Ceuta on its way to Mediterranean markets, and was


stored in large structures built in the city in the thirteenth century to accommodate it. As a terminal for the trans-Saharan caravan trade Ceuta was also a major transshipment point for European silver, much-desired North African horses, and sub-Saharan gold, slaves, and ivory.

Leo Africanus wrote in awe of the peninsular enclave under Muslim rule, though he must have been doing so based on the reports of others since he was writing nearly a century after its conquest by the Portuguese. Since Muslims took control of it in the eighth century, he claimed it

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404 Cherif, *Ceuta*, 145.
405 Peter Russell, *Prince Henry 'the Navigator'* , 37.
“grewe so sivill and so well stored with inhabitants, that it prooved the most worthie and famous citie of all Mauritania.”  

He enthusiastically described the presence of temples, schools, men of learning, and artisans, the last of whom produced goods whose workmanship he extolled as exceeding even that of the Italians.  

Indeed, when the Portuguese took control of the city they marveled at the magnificence of the Muslim mansions.  

The now-accepted motives for the Portuguese assault on Ceuta are varied and numerous, and were to be seen again at times in Portugal’s Atlantic assaults. Weston Cook has described them as a “bewildering blend of [the] strategic, economic, and chivalric.” Strategic and economic motives centered on Ceuta’s military and commercial advantages. Christian control of Ceuta naturally complicated any reinforcement of Nasrid Granada or any renewed attempts from the southern side of the Strait to once again seek to expand Muslim-controlled lands on the Iberian Peninsula. This threat was a long-stated concern of European advocates for an aggressive stance against Morocco. Controlling Ceuta also eliminated it as a base for Muslim piracy. On the commercial side of the ledger, grain and gold were of critical importance to Portugal, where both land and manpower constraints at home necessitated importation of foodstuffs, and where a European gold shortage had existed for a generation.  

Overarching both the strategic and economic motives was a desire to precede any rival Castilian attempt to secure the city.  

The chivalric motives Cook alludes to refer to the common assertion amongst historians that after the Treaty of Ayllón formally ended conflict between Portugal and Castile in 1411,
King João I (r. 1385-1433) of Portugal needed to find something to occupy both his own sons and the country’s aristocracy.\footnote{Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415-1825*, 18-19. Ricard, *Études*, 104-105.} At the time of the Ceuta expedition, Portugal’s House of Avis was a relatively new dynasty, only thirty years on the throne, all of it under the leadership of João I. João’s victory over Castile in 1385 had effectively won him the crown with the support of the merchants of Lisbon and Porto.\footnote{Julien, *History of North Africa*, 207-208.}

Beyond all this, religious motivations were also clearly at play. The assault on Ceuta was arguably the last medieval crusade. Though launched by King João I of Portugal, his third son Henry, was an ardent and zealous participant. In a biography of Prince Henry, Peter Russell paints a portrait of a quintessentially medieval personality, whose alleged passion for exploration was exceeded by his crusading zeal.\footnote{Russell, *Prince Henry 'the Navigator'.*} Henry appears almost always, and often recklessly, willing to assume any risk in return for the opportunity to crusade, his campaign against Ceuta and later Tangier being but two examples. It seems irrefutable that this crusading spirit played a role in Henry’s later sponsorship of exploration along the African Atlantic, for he was consistently intrigued by the Prester John myth and its prospect of a strong Christian king in the East who would be an ally in the fight against Islam. For much of his life Henry believed that a large gulf, the *Sinus Aethiopicus*, leading to the domain of Prester John, existed along the Atlantic shores of Africa beyond the boundaries of the Muslim states.\footnote{Russell, *Prince Henry 'the Navigator',* 123-125.} That this path might necessitate conflict with Muslims he welcomed as part of the crusading effort and for its potential evangelizing opportunities among the heathen Africans. If we consider the Portuguese assault on Ceuta indeed to be the beginning of European overseas expansion that brought us both the opening of the early modern age and the Atlantic world, then both owe much to this medieval

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crusading sentiment.

Portuguese success at Ceuta also provided an opportunity to use these religious motivations as justification for additional overseas endeavors. Specifically, João I used success at Ceuta to take advantage of the relative weakness of the Papacy, persuading Pope Martin V to issue bulls in Portugal’s favor that covered additional activities in Morocco. *Rex Regum*, the first of these, issued in 1418, became a guide for subsequent papal pronouncements on Portuguese overseas activity. Such bulls characterized the Portuguese as engaged in the propagation of the Christian faith and the extermination of Christ’s enemies, offered crusade indulgences, called for others to support the Portuguese in their efforts, and drew no preferential distinction between converting the Muslims of Morocco and killing them.\(^{415}\) This represented total acquiescence by the Church in the face of Portuguese representations, with no accountability for the success of conversion efforts or the mistreatment of non-Christians. The intersection of Papal weakness and success at Ceuta thus combined to give a moral and spiritual gloss to Portuguese actions.\(^{416}\)

All the motives associated with the Ceuta expedition appeared in some form in the later Atlantic campaign against Morocco. Equal, if not more important, however, was how the Portuguese attack on Ceuta, at least initially, exposed particular Marinid weaknesses. One telling aspect was the lack of any contesting naval presence by the Marinids, who a little more than half a century before had fielded large fleets of galleys capable of crushing Christian forces in the Strait. Despite ample notice of a pending European maritime assault on Ceuta, no such fleet materialized. If it had, it could have challenged what had several times threatened to become a doomed venture. The Portuguese fleet that carried out the attack on Ceuta originally


\(^{416}\) Housley, *Religious Warfare in Europe 1400-1536*, 181-183. Housley notes that such acquiescence on the part of the Church had not always been the case, citing earlier thirteenth-century debates within the Church about the treatment of non-Christians, as well as later Church condemnation of Portuguese actions in the Canary Islands.
consisted of two main types of vessels: chartered vessels assigned to carry troops and twenty escorting royal galleys. When the fleet gathered in Lisbon, however, it became clear that the number of vessels was insufficient for all the troops and stores assembled. This required the addition of caravels, fishing vessels, and river craft. The last was a telltale sign of a target that could not be far distant. First stranded for a week by the lack of wind, once at sea the inexperienced mariners of the troop ships were carried beyond Ceuta toward the Andalusian coast in the direction of Málaga, the main port of Nasrid Granada, forcing the galleys to wait for them for two days off Ceuta, in full view of the city’s defenders. Then a storm forced the entire fleet to seek shelter on the Castilian shore across the Strait, with the troops of the invasion force suffering from seasickness and disease. These delays provided ample opportunity for a Marinid fleet to disrupt the operation. None arrived. Consequently, on August 21, 1415, the Portuguese landed, beat back the defenders who tried to contest the landing, stormed the heights, and captured the peninsula, apparently without having to use the siege cannon and mortars that were later to provide them with such significant advantages.

It is not entirely clear why there was no Marinid maritime response. Speculation about alternative histories is often a fruitless pursuit, but it is worth considering how a successful challenge of the Portuguese by a Muslim fleet might have altered events, for the assault on Ceuta exposed multiple weaknesses within Marinid Morocco. In addition to its inability to challenge the naval strength of the Portuguese, it also proved the dynasty unable to defend a major commercial enclave. At the same time, defeat also further exposed already-evident fault lines between the Muslim polities that still existed in the Muslim west and fault lines within those polities themselves. Until quite recently Nasrid Granada and Marinid Morocco had meddled in

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each others’ affairs, while at the same time periodically joining to resist Christian campaigns. But no Nasrid fleet or force, despite the Portuguese troopships’ off-course wanderings near Málaga, moved to assist Marinid Ceuta.\textsuperscript{419} Disease and famine may have been responsible for the lack of a coherent Marinid response, complicated as well by strife within Morocco between the then sultan Abu Sa’id ‘Uthman III (r. 1398-1420) and his uncle Abu Hassun, the governor of Meknes. Internal weakness within the Moroccan state, in other words, had left Ceuta effectively independent, but also isolated.\textsuperscript{420}

Ironically, the Portuguese experience in Ceuta after its capture may have played as important a role in shaping Morocco’s later Atlantic experience as did the original Portuguese success. The loss of Ceuta was indeed a blow to Morocco, and one possible outcome of its loss could have been a Portuguese buildup and subsequent overland crusade with Ceuta as its launching point. Such a land-based campaign would have been of a quite different type than the Atlantic maritime assault that Morocco was in fact to experience. An inland crusade from Ceuta, however, did not occur. Although apparently rarely seriously threatened with recapture, Ceuta under Portuguese control essentially became a city under siege. Upon its conquest by the Portuguese, local \textit{jaysh} forces promptly attacked,\textsuperscript{421} and then Ceuta was subjected to a more

\textsuperscript{419} It is relevant here to provide some examples of the often fraught relationship between the respective Muslim polities on either side of the Strait of Gibraltar, particularly with regard to Ceuta. In 1307, for example, the people of Ceuta revolted against Marinid rule at the urging of Granadan agents. Distracted by an ongoing conflict with Tlemcen, the Marinids could do little in response and in 1307 the Nasrid Sultan Muhammad III, who had years earlier signed peace treaties with both Aragon and Castile, declared himself overlord of Ceuta. Less than ten years later the Marinids had not only regained Ceuta, but taken control of some Granadan territory on the Iberian Peninsula. Conflict continued. A century later, just five years before the Portuguese assault on Ceuta, the Marinid Sultan Abu Sa’id Uthmann III supported a local rebellion of the Gibraltar garrison against the Nasrid ruler of Granada, Yusuf III. Harvey, \textit{Islamic Spain}, 167-179.

\textsuperscript{420} Abun-Nasr, \textit{A History of the Maghrib}, 114. Cornell, \textit{Socioeconomic}, 380. SIHM–Portugal, I, viii. Leo Africanus offers a blistering critique of the Marinid Sultan’s response, writing that “in the midst of his dauncing and disport being advertised that it [Ceuta] was lost, he would not interrupt his vaine pastime: wherefore by gods just judgement, both himselfe and his six sonsne were all slaine in one night . . . .” Leo is referencing the later assassination of Abu Sa’id Uthman III in 1420. Leo Africanus, \textit{The History and Description of Africa}, II, 510.

\textsuperscript{421} The Arabic word \textit{Jaysh} (جيش) is a generic term meaning “army.” In the context of Morocco at this time, however, it refers to local tribes (typically Arab) who were exempt from taxation on the condition that they collected
centralized, joint campaign in 1419 in which the forces of the Marinid sultan Abu Sa’id ‘Uthman III were aided by both naval and land forces from Nasrid Granada.422 The Portuguese chronicler Gomes Eannes Zurara accepted a report of an unlikely figure of one hundred thousand Muslims involved in this failed attempt to recapture the city. Perhaps more believable, however, is his assertion that Muslims came from far afield, including Tunis, Bugia (Bougie, Algeria), Maroco (Marrakech), as well as Safi, Salé, and Azammur.423 After this attempt on the city failed, some claimed that the Portuguese within its walls stayed there, and only engaged when challenged to single combat by Muslim warriors.424 Although this seems to be an exaggeration, since other sources claim that Muslim forces again assaulted the city at least in 1425,425 it does appear that Ceuta was never thereafter seriously under threat of being lost by the Portuguese.

In addition to effectively becoming besieged, Ceuta’s anticipated commercial promise was to disappoint the Portuguese. Gomes Eannes Zurara attached great economic importance to the capture claiming, “[a]nd as the profit of our world from this achievement, East and West alike are good witnesses thereof, since their people can now exchange their goods without any great peril of merchandise—for of a surety no one can deny that Ceuta is the key of all the Mediterranean sea.”426 Despite Zurara’s enthusiasm reality seems to have been more complicated. While there was a clear advantage for the Portuguese in controlling trade through Ceuta, that advantage could only yield fruit if trade continued, and the Portuguese capture of the city was disruptive to that trade.

Pisa had been the first to open trade with the Muslims of Ceuta in the twelfth century,

the taxes due from the local populace, kept order, and provided military service to the regime. It was essentially a feudal-style relationship with the jaysh being distinguished from the central government administrative and military apparatus known as the makhzan.

423 Gomes Eannes Zurara, Guinea, I, 17.
424 Julien, History, 209.
425 Weston Cook, The Hundred Years War, 90.
426 Zurara, Guinea, 16.
first through the Almoravids and then later with the Almohads. Under the Almohads, however, 
the role of the Genoese accelerated dramatically to the detriment of the Pisans, and although the 
Catalans briefly gained trade advantages in North Africa in the later thirteenth and early 
fourteenth century, it was the Genoese who had eventually become the undisputed masters of the 
city’s commerce. By at least 1306 they had established a funduk in Ceuta that upon seizing 
the city more than a century later the Portuguese found still in operation serving a substantial 
number of Genoese merchants. Discovery of the funduk was a sign of a pre-existing Genoese 
commercial presence that the Portuguese were to find matched later in various locations along 
the Moroccan Atlantic coast.

With Portugal’s merchant bourgeoisie having encouraged the assault on Ceuta, Portugal’s 
assumption of suzerainty over the city obviously did not benefit these Genoese merchants. Not 
only were they now subject to being supplanted by Portuguese traders, but after the Portuguese 
conquest Moroccans abandoned the city and the immediate area. Indications are that trade 
dropped substantially in Ceuta and remained at mediocre levels throughout the Portuguese 
occupation. This, combined with the need to resupply the garrison, was certainly a 
disadvantage for the Portuguese. Records related to the payment of taxes by Jews in Ceuta in the 
1430s “permit the conclusion that the maintenance of the bridgehead on the coast was a burden 
on Portugal, especially when the advance of the invading army was stopped and there were

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427 A funduk is a hostelry where animals and humans can lodge. Typically it consists of a courtyard surrounded on 
four sides by buildings. In Morocco this was typically used by a group of merchants to store their goods and did not 
428 Cherif, *Ceuta*, 138-140. 
429 Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, 510. 
setbacks and failures. . . .”

In short, the capture of Ceuta did not lead to either immediate additional Portuguese expansion inland from the north or substantial trade advantages. More than forty years passed, after the capture of other cities along the Strait of Gibraltar, before the Portuguese reached agreement with local Muslim leaders in the interior that enabled the former to move more freely between and beyond the coastal cities of the Strait. Accordingly, this forced, or at least helped encourage, Portuguese expansive designs in a different direction. Though they at first did indeed move westward across the southern shore of the Strait of Gibraltar, the Portuguese eventually migrated down the Moroccan Atlantic coast. Ultimately all of these developments provided the Portuguese with a laboratory in which to experiment with military, trade, and colonization techniques, while also bringing encounters with the socio-religious movements that were to emerge in Morocco’s south.

While the Portuguese were essentially bottled up in Ceuta, the ultimate failure of the joint Marinid-Nasrid attempt to recapture the city in 1419 had profound consequences for Morocco. It led to the demise not only of the Moroccan sultan, but also of the Marinid dynasty itself. Discontent, partly over the inability of the Marinids to resist the Portuguese at Ceuta, led to Uthman III’s assassination, leaving his one-year-old son, Abu Muhammad Abdul-Haqq (r. 1420-1465), as heir. It was at this moment of crisis that members of the Banu Wattas tribe effectively appropriated Marinid power by inserting themselves as viziers to the last members of the Marinid dynasty. Abu Zakariya Yahya al-Wattasi (Abu-Zakariya), the governor of Salé, took

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432 SIHM-Portugal, I, x-xi.
433 The Banu Wattas were a branch of the Banu Marin, and thus related to the Marinids. They arrived in Morocco in the eleventh century and established themselves in the Rif Mountains. By the middle of the fourteenth century they had achieved significant power within the Marinid administration.
a major step in asserting Wattasid control by supporting the one-year-old Marinid heir to the thrown against pretenders put forward by both Nasrid Granada and Tlemcen.\footnote{Julien, \textit{History}, 208. Abun-Nasr, \textit{History of the Maghrib}, 114. Tlemcen (Tilimsan) is a city in northwestern Algeria near the Mediterranean coast. It was the capital of one of three successor states that emerged in northwest Africa after the fall of the Almohad Empire in the first half of the thirteenth century. Ruled by the Banu abd al-Wad or Zayyanid dynasty, the Kingdom of Tlemcen once stretched to Algiers. In the sixteenth century the Spanish and Ottomans fought for control over the city.} Ceuta’s conquest, in short, had emboldened the Portuguese to further action, however disappointed some might have been with the ensuing commercial activity, and led to a crisis of leadership in already-vulnerable Morocco. At this moment of crisis for the latter, the Portuguese moved west and south into the Atlantic, creating the West African circuit of what was to become the Atlantic world and opening a new front in the conflict with Morocco.

\textit{The Atlantic Islands and the Moroccan Atlantic Coast}

Almost simultaneously with the Portuguese assault in the north, Europeans began aggressive forays into the Atlantic proper off of Morocco’s southern Atlantic coast. Such expeditions led to the exploration and colonization of Atlantic island groups that were to maintain demographic, commercial, and military relationships with the Moroccan Atlantic littoral over the following two centuries. The first of these forays was in 1402 by two French vassals of Castile’s Henry III (r. 1379-1406), Jean de Béthencourt and Gadifer de la Salle. Over a period of a few months their expedition conquered the island of Lanzarote in the Canary group, situated about one hundred and forty miles northwest of the Wadi Dra’a. In 1405 they also conquered the nearby island of Fuerteventura.\footnote{It is an interesting, if not terribly important, question as to whether or not this advance to the Canaries by Castile in 1402 begins the process of European overseas expansion. This is the position of Alfred Crosby, while C.R. Boxer concludes that for all practical purposes either this or the Portuguese assault on Ceuta in 1415 may be considered the start. Alfred Crosby, \textit{Ecological Imperialism}, 81-82. Boxer, \textit{The Portuguese Seaborne Empire}, 15.} Béthencourt not only strengthened Castilian claims in the process, but also instituted a practice that was to have a significant long-term
impact on labor regimes that subsequently developed throughout the Atlantic world. Driven ashore on the African mainland by a storm, allegedly south of Cape Bojador, Béthencourt traveled inland on a raid and returned with slaves, which was to effectively establish a precedent that continued throughout the fifteenth and into the sixteenth century of Canary Islander settlers obtaining slaves from the nearby African coast of Morocco.\footnote{\textit{"Le partage des conquêtes entre l’Espagne et le Portugal au Maroc et sur la côte au sud du Maroc,"} SIHM-Portugal, I, 204.}

These initial forays into the Atlantic adjacent to Morocco also served as a catalyst for the ambitions of the Portuguese, for the actions of the Frenchmen operating under Castilian auspices naturally drew the interest and envy of Portugal’s Prince Henry. During the same year that the Portuguese faced their first prolonged siege as masters of Ceuta, they were also engaged in their first voyages out into the Atlantic and along the Moroccan Atlantic coast under the auspices of the Prince. João Gonçalves Zarco, a sea-captain in service to Henry, is credited with the rediscovery in 1418 of the two islands of the Madeira group, Madeira proper and Porto Santo, about four hundred and thirty miles to the west of the Moroccan port of Safi.\footnote{It is generally believed that certainly the Canary Islands, but also possibly the Madeira island group and the Azores, were known to Roman sailors and perhaps others from the ancient world such as the Phoenicians and Carthaginians, but were lost to Europe, if not completely forgotten, after the fall of the Roman Empire. Knowledge of the Madeira Islands was recovered, though perhaps not accurately placed, long before João Gonçalves Zarco’s journey, as was perhaps the case with the Azores as well. See e.g. Crosby, \textit{Ecological Imperialism}, 71. For a discussion of the presence of the Canaries, Madeiras, and Azores on fourteenth-century maps see Fernández-Armesto, \textit{Before Columbus}, 159-166.} Henry followed this with one of numerous attempts to gain control of individual islands in the Canaries not occupied by Castile, principally Gran Canaria. His expedition of 1424 involved two thousand five hundred infantry and one hundred and twenty horses. It failed. Henry also tried and failed to acquire some of the islands by negotiation.\footnote{It is also interesting to note that the Canary Islands were arguably assigned owners before there was clarity about their rediscovery, for in 1344 Pope Clement VI granted what had been known to the ancients as “The Fortunate Isles” somewhere in the Atlantic, to a prince of Castile. In 1345 the King of Portugal protested this concession, arguing a prior claim by virtue of a Genoese and Florentine expedition in 1341 on behalf of Portugal. Zurara,} The Canaries thus provided Spain with a base
adjacent to the far southern Moroccan coast that was to play a significant role in how forcefully Portugal ultimately chose to engage that southern coast, and thus in turn influenced the nature of Portugal’s interaction with a Moroccan dynasty that was to become its nemesis.

One benefit that apparently accrued to the Portuguese out of these Canary Island failures was the creation of increased connections with Madeira, which subsequently became a frequent stopping point for Canary expeditions. Portuguese settlers first arrived in the Madeira Islands in 1420 and after successfully introducing wheat and grapes that grew well and could be profitably marketed in Portugal, diversified into sugarcane production in the middle of the fifteenth century. The Portuguese government authorized the first water-driven sugar mill on the island in 1452, and production of sugar subsequently skyrocketed. England first imported sugar from the island in 1456 and by the early 1470s Madeira was producing more than one hundred and eighty tons of sugar annually that went to England, Atlantic Europe, and the Mediterranean. Henry’s failed attempts in the Canaries, in other words, were perhaps instrumental in developing the Madeira Island group into an important sugar-producing resource. As such it was to prove significant to the subsequent work regimes developed among sugar producers in the larger Atlantic world, as well as play a role in the broader Atlantic market’s development of a commodity that was later to be crucial to Morocco.

After what were allegedly more than a dozen failed attempts by the Portuguese, in 1434 the sea-captain Gil Eanes finally rounded the much-dreaded Cape Bojador. The rounding of the

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439 Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism,* 74-77. The portrait Crosby paints of the Portuguese colonization is a depressing one of ecological ignorance and devastation that was to be frequently repeated. Rabbits were introduced to Porto Santo, for example, and quickly reproduced to disastrous effect, actually forcing the colonists to temporarily remove themselves to Madeira. Madeira itself was covered with trees, as reflected in its name, but while its timber could be profitably exported, this hindered the preferred activities of the colonists, who embarked on an aggressive burning campaign, which when followed by the subsequent introduction of pigs and cattle, some of which became feral, ensured that the forests could never recover.

440 Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism,* 82.
Cape just below 27°N latitude (in the Western Sahara today) is generally considered one of the greatest feats of the mariners operating under the direction of Prince Henry. Yet, as with Henry himself, a great deal of myth has accreted to the effort and historians are divided on its merits. What Eanes claimed was Cape Bojador may or may not have been another cape farther south already rounded by prior mariners, but the actual location and name of the cape is ultimately less relevant than the factors that unnerved the mariner and retarded his further southward progress, whatever the location. Earlier in this study, when surveying the characteristics of the Moroccan littoral, we noted that the trade winds do increase in force appreciably near Cape Bojador, which would understandably intimidate mariners concerned about a homeward route that also involved challenging an adverse current, whether at the true Cape Bojador or at another cape farther south. Other factors, however, may also have been at play along the stretch of coastline beyond southern Morocco, including perhaps the agency of Muslim communities on the African Atlantic coast. Such communities presumably feared encroachment by European powers on the desert trade routes to the sub-Saharan gold and slave entrepôts, or direct encroachment on the entrepôts themselves. In fact, this was no idle concern. Fernandes specifically links the Portuguese conquest of Ceuta to Portuguese attempts at rounding Cape Bojador, writing that “Prince Henry . . . after the conquest of Ceuta, immediately decided to explore this coast because he had learned that the Moors were obtaining gold from the coast of this region of west Africa.”

441 See for example, Fernández-Armesto, Before Columbus, 192.
442 Barry Cunliffe, for example, first repeats the traditional Cape Bojador account early in his work and then near the end of the same work dispenses with it completely, referring instead to the rounding of the nearby Cape Non in 1434 as the signature sailing achievement. Barry Cunliffe, Facing the Ocean, 98, 549.
443 Fernandes, Description, 40-41. Portuguese: “Ho Iffante Deom Anrrique . . . depois de Cepta ganada, determinou a descubrir esta costa em logo porque tinha em noticia dos Mouros que hiam por ouro contra esta parte occidental.” French: “L’Infante Dom Henrique . . . après la conquête de Ceuta, décida aussitôt de découvrir cette côte parce qu’il avait appris que les Maures allaient chercher de l’or du côté de cette region occidentale de l’Afrique.”
the Portuguese from the capture of Ceuta may have been the useful intelligence they gained regarding North African trade routes—intelligence that encouraged directing Portuguese efforts to the Moroccan Atlantic littoral.

Bojador was the subject of legendary stories of boiling seas, impenetrable fog, and other dangers. Zurara wrote that mariners said “that beyond this Cape there is no race of men nor place of inhabitants: nor is the land less sandy than the deserts of Libya, where there is no water, no tree, no green herb—and the sea so shallow that a whole league from land it is only a fathom deep, while the currents are so terrible that no ship having once passed the Cape, will ever be able to return.” It has been suggested that despite its relative bleakness, fishermen did inhabit the Saharan coastline in this area while local tribal populations and local traders regularly visited the immediate interior. Consequently, the harrowing stories of the seas and adjacent shoreline seem unlikely to have been countenanced by the local Muslim population. More likely, some historians suggest, is that “these tales had been deliberately circulated by the Muslims to deter Christian shipping from venturing into a region well served by the trans-Saharan caravan routes.” Some support for this notion exists even in the hagiographic account of Gomes Eanes Zurara.

So the Infant, moved by these reasons, which you have already heard, began to make ready his ships and his people, as the needs of the case required; but this much you may learn, that although he sent out many times, not only ordinary men, but such as by their experience in great deeds of war were of foremost name in the profession of arms, yet there was not one who dared to pass that Cape of Bojador and learn about the land beyond it, as the Infant wished. And to say the truth this was not from cowardice or want of good will, but from the novelty of the thing and the wide-spread and ancient rumour about this Cape, that had been cherished by the mariners of Spain from generation to generation. And although this proved to be deceitful [emphasis added], yet since the hazarding of this attempt seemed to threaten the last evil of all, there was great doubt as to who would be the first to risk his life in such a venture.

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444 Zurara, Guinea, 31
445 Russell, Prince Henry ‘the Navigator’,” 112.
446 Zurara, Guinea, 30-31.
It is unclear to whom Zurara is attributing deceit, perhaps Arab and Berber informers or Castilian, Genoese, or other European rivals. Nevertheless, when he was writing in the middle of the fifteenth century it seems clear that he intended to explain the prior Portuguese trepidation about advancing beyond Cape Bojador. Perhaps he did so to rationalize what in light of subsequent events seemed to be unfounded fears, but if the stories do have any genesis in deliberately misleading accounts by Arab or Berber propagandists then they show knowledge of information relevant to navigation of Morocco’s Atlantic coast and concern about the challenge the maritime access of others might entail.

As we discuss these initial Iberian forays into the Atlantic, this seems an appropriate place to address the oft-asked question about the lack of Muslim, and for our purposes more particularly, Moroccan, maritime exploration south along the Atlantic coast of Africa. Older narratives, as discussed in the second chapter of this study, often hinged on assertions of an inherent cultural reticence toward the sea—and even more so toward the Atlantic—among the desert-born Arabs. Hopefully, the review of the historical record earlier in this study adequately highlighted the dubious foundation of such assertions. The state of maritime technology may have played some role, but it too is unlikely to be definitive. As we have seen, at least when it comes to coastal navigation the Phoenicians and Carthaginians had been successful centuries before in traveling at least part of the coastline, and the Berbers and Arabs of the western Sahara were almost certainly familiar with its contours.

Maritime capacity, as opposed to technology, might have been a factor at certain times. We have seen, for example, that for whatever reason Marinid Morocco’s naval strength was insufficient to challenge the Portuguese at sea. Unable to confront an existential external threat, it hardly seems likely that there would have been naval resources to spare to engage in prolonged
southward travel along the Atlantic coast of the continent. This was obviously a far cry from the situation existing with Portugal, whose maritime strength operated on two fronts—conquest endeavors in Morocco and exploration and conquest initiatives in the Atlantic. But this deficiency for Morocco was presumably a matter of timing. It would not explain, for example, the lack of exploration activity in earlier periods when Marinid naval strength was sufficient to dominate the Strait of Gibraltar and aid Muslim forces in al-Andalus. In fact, it is possible that during this period or even earlier, Muslim vessels did travel farther along the southern coast and we simply do not have the records to document them. If this did happen, however, then the question still remains as to why these routes were not sustained.

The most likely response to all of this is that such voyages were simply unnecessary. Navigation along the Saharan coast to the south may have been dangerous, or perhaps it was not dangerous at all for an experienced mariner. In either case, its value for Morocco presumably would have rested on the link it provided to the sub-Saharan empires to the south that were the principal source of gold and slaves. But these sources had been effectively accessed for hundreds of years through the caravan routes across the Sahara. As long as the intermediaries that serviced these routes, primarily Berber Tuaregs, were not seeking exorbitant prices for their services, there was no reason to disrupt these trading networks or seek alternatives. Attempting to access them by sea, if successful, would no doubt have encouraged other participants in the trade, something the Portuguese ultimately became, and diminished the importance and value of the long-successful trans-Saharan routes. Consequently, a lack of need,

\[\text{\textsuperscript{447} It is worth noting that there are stories of Muslim seafarers braving the Atlantic between the time of the Phoenicians and Carthaginians of the ancient world and the famous expedition of the lost Vivaldi brothers in 1291. In one of these, attributed to al-Idrisi, eight Muslim sailors allegedly ventured into the Atlantic for thirty-seven days where they encountered numerous islands and man-eating monsters. After confronting stormy seas and dangerous shallows they stopped at islands believed to be Madeira and the Canaries and then landed on the Moroccan coast. Cunliffe, Facing the Ocean, 13.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{448} The Tuareg are nomadic desert pastoralists of the Sahara.}\]
more than any other factor seems the most likely explanation for why the Muslim polities in Morocco never seriously attempted, or made known, excursions southward along the African Atlantic littoral.449

It is also appropriate here to address the challenges Marinid Morocco may have faced in maintaining an adequate maritime presence, as it was shortly after the rounding of Cape Bojador that Portuguese activity along the Moroccan Atlantic littoral began to pick up noticeably and where the apparent lack of a Moroccan naval capability was thus to have profound consequences for how the country initially experienced the Atlantic world. As the fifteenth century progressed naval architecture grew particularly diverse. Earlier this study mentioned that oared galleys remained the primary maritime combat vessel well into the sixteenth century. They also long served as commercial carriers, with the Venetians travelling to England and Flanders in galleys, which was a practice that Florence was to repeat in the fifteenth century as well.450 Other types of vessels, however, also became prominent in the fifteenth century. Clinker construction, which used overlapping planks in the construction of the hull, had been a dominant feature of the sturdy northern European cog, and had worked its way into the Mediterranean during the early fourteenth century.451 But as time progressed, edge to edge planking constructed around a skeleton contributed to significantly larger and stronger hulls. This was an advantage for ships that wished to carry cannon and higher bulk cargos. Thus caravels and round ships constructed in this fashion soon showed their advantages. While the Portuguese employed artillery on the caravel, the Genoese as early as the end of the fourteenth century, exploited the capacity of such ships to carry low-value bulk cargo, requiring them to make fewer port calls and shorter journeys

449 This view is summarized in a number of works. One is Russell, Prince Henry 'the Navigator'," 129-130.
450 Fernández-Armesto, Before Columbus, 111-112.
in order to profit.\textsuperscript{452}

With these developments in maritime technology occurring, maintaining naval strength required a substantial commitment of resources that may have at times exceeded what was required to maintain an army on land. These requirements increased as the Portuguese and other maritime powers developed cannon suitable for use on naval vessels. One ship, in such circumstances, could provide a mobile platform for artillery that rivaled what was previously available to an entire army. Naturally, this increased the complexity of construction and maintenance of naval vessels. Similarly, it increased the demands on crews as well as administrative and supply personnel.\textsuperscript{453} Jeremy Black, in fact, claims that “the construction and logistical infrastructure of a fleet constituted the most impressive industrial activity of the sixteenth century, with a requirement for a commensurate administrative effort to support it and a dependence on skilled labour.”\textsuperscript{454} “The construction of large warships,” he writes, “using largely unmechanised processes was an immense task that required large quantities of wood and formidable capital investment, but ships generally had a life of only 20 to 30 years. Maintenance was also expensive, as wood and canvas rotted and iron corroded, so that the warships demanded not only, by the standards of the day, technologically advanced yards for their construction, but also permanent institutions to manage them.”\textsuperscript{455} Although at this point in the study we are only at the beginning stages of Portuguese advancements in this area, all of the factors enunciated here were to plague Marinid Morocco’s response to Portuguese coastal incursions as Portuguese maritime technology—cannon and caravels—advanced during the remainder of the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth century. Wood, naval stores, manpower, and financial resources

\textsuperscript{452} Fernandez-Armesto, \textit{Before Columbus}, 108, 111-112.
\textsuperscript{454} Black, \textit{The British Seaborne Empire}, 30.
\textsuperscript{455} Black, \textit{The British Seaborne Empire}, 30.
were all significant issues. Ultimately, once the need for the last of these—financial resources—was met, the Moroccan rulers were able to use it to partly address deficiencies in the other areas.

Assaults on Morocco bracketed the first phase of Portuguese movement into the Atlantic that culminated with the passing, either actually or virtually, of the Cape Bojador barrier. The first of these was the capture of Ceuta in 1415, which as we have seen, while not leading to immediate additional Christian expansion into Morocco, nevertheless fatally damaged the Marinid regime and fertilized Wattasid strength in the country. As the first phase of Portuguese Atlantic exploration ended, Portuguese actions on the other side of the Strait accelerated the temporary cementing of Wattasid control in Morocco.

In 1437, essentially checked at Ceuta, the Portuguese launched an assault on Tangier on the Moroccan coast at the western end of the Strait of Gibraltar. King Duarte I (r. 1433-1438) now ruled Portugal, having assumed the throne upon the death of his father, João I, in 1433. As they had at Ceuta, Duarte’s brothers, the *infantes* Henry and Ferdinand, participated in the assault and were to play significant roles. This time Prince Henry was in overall command of the expedition. An ill-planned attack with an insufficient force, the Tangier campaign was a disaster for the Portuguese. In apparent anticipation of an assault the Muslims had increased the height of the walls, rendering Henry’s scaling ladders uselessly short. Although Henry had brought cannon, they were unable to penetrate the walls, and the siege tower he constructed was beaten off. His artillery eventually captured by the Muslims, Henry and his army were stranded and encircled outside Tangier’s city walls while the Wattasid vizier Abu Zakariya’s forces cut off a relief column from Ceuta. In the ensuing humiliating bargain, Henry and his men were allowed to depart after pledging the return of Ceuta to Morocco—a pledge against which Prince Ferdinand was made hostage. King Duarte I died in 1438, however, leaving his six-year-old son

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Afonso V (r. 1438-1481) as heir under the regency first of his mother and then, at the insistence of the Portuguese Cortes, of his uncle. The Cortes refused to honor the promise Prince Henry had made for the cession of Ceuta and left Prince Ferdinand to die in captivity in Fez in 1443.457

Some historians see both Henry’s disastrous Tangier campaign as well as his attempts to challenge Castile in the Canary Islands as distractions that hindered the Portuguese progress down the African coast.458 Others, however, have argued that the Canaries were Portugal’s primary reason for the coastal adventures in the first place.

The traditional historiography of Portuguese exploration ‘has been plagued by the cape-by-cape depiction of the building of empire and the founding of innumerable havens by indomitable adventurers.’ It concentrates on the African coast and on the figure of the Infante Dom Henrique [Prince Henry]. This tradition perhaps obscures the real objectives of Portuguese Atlantic enterprise. To make sense of the story, it is necessary to reduce Henrique to human scale and see his priorities and those of his associates in a more credible order. The Canaries—such is the overwhelming probability—came first for Henrique, in terms of both time and importance; the colonization of the other Atlantic archipelagoes was an important offshoot. Coastal exploration of the African mainland was, in a sense, a sideshow.”459

After the defeat at Tangier Prince Henry and the Portuguese did indeed again resume their Atlantic island endeavors. The nine islands of the Azores archipelago lie approximately eight hundred and fifty miles west of Portugal. Uninhabited, as Madeira had been when rediscovered, they had apparently been visited by ships prior to the Portuguese arrival in 1439 since the Portuguese were to find feral sheep there.460 Climate in the Azores did not advantage sugar as it had in Madeira, but wheat and a dye plant from Europe did well enough for export.461

Colonization of Portugal’s Atlantic islands by this point involved a combination of coercion and

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457 Cook, The Hundred Years War, 86. Abun-Nast, History of the Maghrib, 114-115. Julien, History, 209. Portuguese prisoners from the assault on Tangier were taken to Arzila on the Atlantic coast of Morocco where they found a small Christian community with a church and Genoese and Castilian merchants. When in 1438 they arrived in Fez they also found a group of Genoese merchants. Ricard, Études, 117-120.

458 See e.g. Boxer, The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 26.


460 Crosby, Ecological Imperialism, 73. Fernández-Armesto, Before Columbus, 195.

461 Crosby, Ecological Imperialism, 73-74.
incentives. Minor nobles received jurisdictional rights if they could induce settlement, with the peasants that made up the populace fiscally enticed by freedom from export duties and the like.\textsuperscript{462} Henry’s chronicler, Zurara, poured praise on the Prince for his role in peopling islands in the “great Sea of Ocean”, specifically citing Madeira and noting that from it and the other islands Portugal “drew large supplies of wheat, sugar, wax, honey and wood, and many other things, from which not only our own people but also foreigners have gained and are gaining profit.”\textsuperscript{463}

Additionally, in 1445 Prince Henry established a Portuguese trading post on the island of Arguin, which Nuno Tristão had visited two years earlier in a bay off the coast of modern-day Mauritania. Within a decade it was shipping hundreds of slaves a year to Portugal.

During the first half of the fifteenth century the Portuguese had thus invaded northern Morocco while virtually simultaneously expanding westward and southward into the Atlantic in competition with Castile. Now Morocco truly had a western frontier poised for engagement with the Atlantic, for the islands the Iberians discovered, rediscovered, and conquered off Morocco’s Atlantic coast were soon to develop military and commercial relationships with Iberian communities on the Moroccan littoral and in the process play a part in how Morocco participated in the Atlantic world.

\textit{The Demise of the Marinids, the Rise of the Wattasids, and the Portuguese Assault}

With centuries of hindsight it is easier to see the growing threat to Morocco posed by Iberian expansion into the Atlantic, but as we will see throughout this study, as this new Atlantic frontier opened, Morocco would consistently find that events in the east would affect how it experienced even that new frontier. At this particular time the actions of the Ottoman Empire

\textsuperscript{462} Fernandez-Armesto, \textit{Before Columbus}, 196-197.
\textsuperscript{463} Zurara, \textit{Guinea}, 18.
toward Constantinople played a significant, if indirect, role. The Ottomans had made plain their intention toward the capital of the Byzantine Empire when in 1452 they built a fortress on the European side of the Bosporus several miles north of Constantinople. At the apparent request of the Byzantine emperor, Pope Nicholas V issued the bull *Dum Diversas*, which it is believed was intended to encourage a crusade against the Ottomans. It authorized King Afonso V of Portugal to attack and conquer Muslims wherever they might be. But the army and fleet that Afonso fashioned in response was not destined for the East. Constantinople fell to the Ottomans in 1453, and two years later Pope Nicholas V followed *Dum Diversas* with *Romanus Pontifex*. While the bull granted Portugal dominion of all the lands in Asia and Africa south of Cape Bojador, Nicholas V also wove into it glorification of the capture of Ceuta, of Prince Henry’s explorations, of the search for the mythical Prester John, and of the conversion of sub-Saharan blacks. In substance the bull supported what in the end was an authorization for the abject conquest and enslavement of Muslims and non-Christians wherever they might be.464 Now, rather than going east to face the Turks, in 1458 Afonso instead sent his gathered forces across the Strait of Gibraltar to attack the small port town of al-Qsar al-Sagir.465 Sources differ significantly on the details of the campaign. Some claim the town offered virtually no resistance, being taken by surprise.466 Others, however, suggest a far more spirited defense. Recognizing

464 Norman Housley, *Religious Warfare in Europe 1400-1536*, 184-186. Housley decries the dramatic change in the Papacy’s position. Not many years earlier Pope Eugenius IV had chastised the Iberians for their conduct against non-Christians, but the Church now seemed to acquiesce completely in the Portuguese desire for an unlimited crusade. The possible reasons for the Church’s change in position, according to Housley, include pragmatic recognition that prohibitions on raiding, slaving, and colonization would be ignored and unenforceable and that the best the Church could hope to do was to encourage the incorporation of conversion into the process. Alternative reasons include Papal insistence on promoting war against Islam, particularly given the fear instilled by the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. In doing so the Papacy drew no distinctions between Ottoman Muslims and African Muslims.

465 Julien, *History*, 211-212. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib*, 115. In the same year that Constantinople fell the French defeated the English at Castillon. The latter then surrendered Bordeaux, effectively ending the Hundred Years War between the two European powers and removing England from most of the continent (they retained Calais until 1558).

the insufficiency of the force used at Tangier, King Afonso V reportedly brought twenty-five thousand men and new guns to the assault, the first time that the latter were used significantly in offensive operations against Morocco. These weapons, in this account, drove Muslim forces from the beach and the Portuguese captured the city.\footnote{Cook, The Hundred Years War, 88.} 

Artillery from this point forward played a more significant role in the Atlantic assault on Morocco. A critical component of the defense of Ceuta, the Portuguese used artillery even more effectively after the capture of al-Qsar al-Sagir. By this time Abd al-Haqq had come of age and formally taken his place as the ruler of Marinid Morocco, though still under the influential and watchful eye of Wattasid viziers. His forces mustered two unsuccessful sieges of al-Qsar al-Sagir, including an eight-week siege in 1459 in which Muslim forces also made extensive, but ineffective use of artillery.\footnote{Cook, The Hundred Years War, 92-93.} 

Once again the impact of failure proved significant in Morocco. The six years that followed the unsuccessful second siege of al-Qsar al-Sagir witnessed tumultuous political conflicts in the north undoubtedly influenced by Muslim impotence against Portuguese assault. In the year that the Portuguese took the city Abd al-Haqq came under the guardianship of Yahya ibn Abi Zakariya, the son of his initial Wattasid vizier and the third such vizier to exercise power. For reasons that are not fully understood, in a short time Abd al-Haqq had the vizier and most of his family killed.\footnote{Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, ”The Revolution of Fās in 869/1465 and the Death of Sultan 'Abd al-Haqq al-Marīnī,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Vol. 41, No. 1 (1978): 43-66, 43. Julien, History, 212. Cook, The Hundred Years War, 93.} Two subsequent related events then proved critical to the eventual demise of Marinid rule. First, two of Yahya’s Wattasid family members escaped, one of whom, Muhammad al-Shaykh, fled to the Atlantic coastal town of Arzila. There he gathered followers of the murdered Wattasid vizier and exercised de facto control over an area within the Habt
region stretching from Tangier to Salé. This thus limited actual Marinid control to the area immediately around Fez.\textsuperscript{470} Second, so the legend goes, Abd al-Haqq appointed a Jew as his vizier and placed other Jews or \textit{muhājjīrun} (recent Jewish converts to Islam) in important positions. They reportedly acted imperiously, attempting to increase state revenue by abolishing the tax privileges of the \textit{ashrāf} and the Sufi shaykhs. In one instance, while the sultan was away from Fez, a Jewish official allegedly struck a Muslim \textit{sharīfīan} woman who had resisted paying taxes and who had invoked the name of the Prophet.\textsuperscript{471}

This study does not attempt to address in depth the competing fifteenth-century social movements represented by the \textit{ashrāf} and by the shaykhs of the Sufi brotherhoods. Nevertheless, a brief examination is warranted to better understand subsequent Moroccan reactions to their own leaders in the face of Portuguese incursions, for the Portuguese attacks on Morocco, and particularly their expansion along Morocco’s southern Atlantic coast, brought the Portuguese into direct contact with these groups. By their resistance to the Portuguese these groups not only gained popular support, but became the primary and most effective opponents in Morocco of European domination.

In 1437, the same year as the initial unsuccessful Portuguese attack on Tangier, Moroccans discovered the tomb of Mawlay Idris, the founder of Morocco’s first \textit{sharīfīan} dynasty, the Idrisids. His tomb became a shrine, and at the risk of oversimplifying its impact, the discovery contributed to the strengthening of two developing different, but overlapping, social movements within Morocco. First among these movements was the increasing acceptance of the influence and authority of the \textit{ashrāf}, the descendants of the Prophet. Second was the popularity

\textsuperscript{470} By this time the Kingdom of Maroco (Marrakesh) had effectively been independent for two decades under its own rulers, and chose neutrality in the conflict between the Banu Marin and the Banu Wattas. García-Arenal, "The Revolution of Fās," 44. Julien, \textit{History}, 212. Cook, \textit{The Hundred Years War}, 93

and spread of a growing number of powerful Sufi brotherhoods led by Sufi holy men, known as marāboutūs, organized around lodges and other networks. Sufism represents a mystical path in Islam in which adherents seek personal communion with the divine uninterrupted by intermediaries like religious scholars, judges, or clergy. Marāboutūs, imbued with baraka, sometimes become recognized as saints upon their death, and Sufi communities often organize their lodges, known as zāwiyas, around the tombs of such saints. Both the ashrāf and the marāboutūs in Morocco benefited and drew power in part from the notion of baraka since it could be inherited, and the two groups sometimes overlapped, with members of the ashrāf also sometimes holding leadership roles in Sufi brotherhoods. Sometimes allied, sometimes at odds, both the ashrāf and the leaders of Sufi brotherhoods were independent power structures that could support or oppose Morocco’s central administration. Both could also at times include members of the cadres of Islamic religious scholars and jurists known as the fiqahā, though the latter have tended to view both of the other movements suspiciously.

Ironically, the Marinids at one time benefited from the growth in importance of the ashrāf and the Sufi brotherhoods. The discovery of the tomb of Mawlāy Idrīs during their reign was seen as a blessing upon the Marinid dynasty; they had also been the first to introduce

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472 At the risk of oversimplifying, as a mystical path Sufism is in principle open to every Muslim, though the individual is often guided by a shaykh. To some degree it has always been a counterweight to the influence of legalistic Islamic scholars and jurists in Sunni Islam (the fiqahā), as well as Shi’a Islam’s tying of religious authority and knowledge to descent from the Prophet through the vehicle of imams. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, s.v. “Taṣawwuf”, http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam.COM.1188 (accessed online October 23, 2017).

473 Baraka connotes blessing or positive, beneficial, divine force that endowed the Prophet and Islamic saints, and it was often looked upon suspiciously by the legalistic Islamic scholars and jurists focused on learned Muslim traditions. Saint-like individuals possessing great baraka were known as marāboutūs or as a group as murābitūn. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, s.v. “baraka” http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM.1216 (accessed October 23, 2017).

474 Zāwiyas are social institutions that serve various purposes, but are primarily centers for spiritual pursuits and religious instruction. In a technical sense they may refer to actual buildings designed to service travelers and members of a local Sufi brotherhood. Often built around the tombs of a founder, they may serve as the residence of a shaykh or of the head of the zāwiyā. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, s.v. “Taṣawwuf”, http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam.COM.1188 (accessed online October 23, 2017).
zāwiyas to Morocco approximately a century prior. But the alleged behavior of Abd al-Haqq’s Jewish officials, as well no doubt as the increase in taxes to combat the Portuguese and Muhammad al-Shaykh in Arzila, led to an uprising in Fez that resulted in the sacking of the Jewish quarter and the massacring of its population. As Abd al-Haqq was returning to Fez after the uprising, some of his own Marinid followers betrayed him, killed his Jewish vizier and took him into Fez where he was ritually beheaded in May of 1465. Leaders of the uprising proclaimed the head of the ashrāf in Fez, Muhammad ibn Imran al-Juti, their new ruler.

Portuguese expansion in Morocco had thus now contributed to dividing the latter into multiple, effectively independent regions. Among these was Fez under Muhammad al-Juti, the Habt region under the control of Muhammad al-Shaykh based in Arzila, and the Kingdom of Maroco (Marrakech), which was under the de facto control of a tribe known as the Hintata. Additionally, in the south the followers of a Sufi from the Sus had begun a twenty-year rebellion against the clearly-weak Marinids and Wattasids. Perhaps more significant than any of this, Portugal’s aggressiveness had strengthened the social movements centered around the ashrāf and

475 García-Arenal, "The Revolution of Fās," 45. Abun-Nasr, A History, 115. Cook, The Hundred Years War, 94. Julien, History, 212. The term “alleged” is used here with regard to the conduct of the Jewish officials because upon reviewing the various primary sources, García-Arenal is skeptical of the common historical narrative associated with the uprising of 1465. She notes, for example, that the reported conduct of the Jewish officials may have been apocryphal. It was not uncommon for Moroccan rulers to have Jewish administrators, many of them tax collectors who were easy scapegoats for public rage during periods of unrest. Most ended badly as was the case with many high-ranking Muslim tax collectors as well. Additionally, she notes there is no other evidence of a massacre of the Jewish population of Fez at this time, which was at a healthy size just ten years later. She suggests that it was far more likely that the population in Fez rose up because of the economic pressure that fell particularly strongly on them as a result of al-Haqq’s need to combat both the Portuguese and the Wattasid Muhammad al-Shaykh who was gathering forces in Arzila. García-Arenal, "The Revolution of Fās," 62-65.

476 The Hintata were a Berber confederation from the High Atlas mountains of Morocco. They had played an important role in the Almohad empire and many settled permanently in the Dra’a Valley. When the Almohads fell the Hintata supported their Marinid successors and acted essentially as their independent representatives, ruling over Marrakech and the surrounding area. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, s.v. “Hintāta”, http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_2889 (accessed May 17, 2017).

477 This was Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Jazuli, who founded the influential Jazuli Sufi order. Al-Jazuli preached jihad against the Portuguese and that Morocco should be ruled by descendants of the Prophet (one of which he claimed to be, though probably falsely). He died in 1465 and it was his followers who crusaded for two decades, leaving behind a plethora of Jazuli zāwiyas. Abun-Nasr, A History of the Maghrib, 207. Smith, Ahmad al-Mansur, 6-7.
Sufism.

Abun-Nasr views this period of Marinid deterioration and the rising influence of the 
*ashrāf* and the Sufi *zāwiyas* as symptomatic of the exhaustion of the Moroccan tribal system of government. With the Almoravids, Almohads, and Marinids, all the large Berber tribal confederations had participated in the founding of states. Corrupt rule and impotence in the face of fifteenth-century challenges from foreign enemies, however, had led to widespread disenchantment with tribal authority, and the *ashrāf* and Sufi *zāwiyas* were able to assert authority that still required tribal support, but that reached well beyond tribal affiliation.  

Naturally Portugal took advantage of Morocco’s internal distress to great effect. Prince Henry had died, but the Portuguese zeal for conquest in the Atlantic and in Morocco moved forward largely unabated. Even as Portugal assaulted al-Qasr al-Sagir in 1458 their mariners were continuing south along the African coast, where they first discovered the Cape Verde Islands, about three hundred and seventy miles west of today’s Dakar, Senegal. In the early 1460s they brought colonists. The first Portuguese settlement in the Atlantic tropics, the Cape Verdes were to prove a harsh and unhealthy environment for Europeans. Consequently, when sugar production was introduced, its success depended on the institution of a slave-based plantation economy, using Africans from the adjacent African coast in a manner not seen by Europeans since the days of the Roman *latifundium*.  

Slavery within Morocco at this time had undergone a transformation under the Marinids, with sub-Saharan African slaves increasing as those from Europe declined. Morocco itself, however, was not a substantive source of slaves for Europe during this period, either from among Moroccans themselves or from those brought to Morocco from the *bilād al-Sūdān*. The latter

instead were put to work in Morocco or sent elsewhere in the dār al-Islām. Consequently, the Portuguese saw advantages to using the Atlantic sea lanes to directly access a source of sub-Saharan slaves. Despite Portuguese advances down Africa’s Atlantic coast, however, for a time Muslims continued to serve as middlemen for the slave trade. Valentim Fernandes described the Río de Oro (near the southern tip of what is now Western Sahara) as the location where the Portuguese first began buying both gold and sub-Saharan African slaves.\textsuperscript{481} We know that Muslim middlemen were necessary to the trade at that location. Zurara, in fact, describes an expedition to the Río de Oro in the middle of the century in which he reaches agreement with the “Moors” he encounters to return the following year, when there will be “blacks in abundance, and gold, and merchandise by which he might gain much profit.”\textsuperscript{482} Understandably southern Morocco was where sub-Saharan African slavery in the country was most prominent during the fifteenth century, but as we will see, in the sixteenth century slavery was to undergo additional transformations in the country as drought and famine led to the enslavement of thousands of Moroccan Muslims.

While Portuguese explorations in the Atlantic continued, they also made repeated assaults on Tangier in 1460, 1463, 1464, and 1467. In 1468, a year in which plague swept through Fez and out into the countryside, a Portuguese fleet of fifty ships armed with artillery attacked, sacked, and razed Anfa on Morocco’s Atlantic coast in retaliation for an embargo that inhabitants had imposed on Portuguese grain dealers.\textsuperscript{483} The attack on Anfa turned out to be the precursor to a more permanent meeting on the Moroccan Atlantic shore of the twin Portuguese initiatives of exploration and conquest.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[481] Fernandes, \textit{Description}, 45.
\item[482] Zurara, \textit{Guinea}, II, 194.
\item[483] Cook, \textit{The Hundred Years War}, 97. Leo Africanus claims that the attack was because the people of Anfa were too desirous of liberty and were engaged in piracy against Cadiz and Portugal. Leo Africanus, \textit{The History and Description of Africa}, 397.
\end{footnotes}
Within Morocco, the Wattasid leader in Arzila, Muhammad al-Shaykh, laid siege to Fez in an attempt to oust al-Juti and the *ashrāf* who claimed to rule the country. During al-Shaykh’s absence in August of 1471, Portugal’s Afonso V launched a massive expedition against Arzila with over thirty thousand troops and more than four hundred ships. His son João accompanied the expedition’s military leaders. Denying a capitulation offer from the defenders, the Portuguese blasted the gates with terrifying artillery fire. While on campaign Muhammad al-Shaykh had left behind his wife, sister, some children, and much of his funds. Consequently, when the Portuguese invested Arzila and took away approximately five thousand inhabitants as prisoners, including al-Shaykh’s family members, al-Shaykh felt compelled to agree to disadvantageous terms. Not only did he turn Arzila over to the Portuguese and pay an indemnity, but in the resulting negotiated twenty-year truce the restrictions applied only to the flat country—in other words, either party was permitted to attack towns and fortified places.

So, as Muhammad al-Shaykh returned to his Fez campaign after the truce, Portuguese from both Arzila and al-Qasr al-Sagir moved on Tangier. After having so long resisted Portuguese assaults, but now fearful of a fate similar to Arzila and low on defenders because many were away supporting al-Shaykh in his siege of Fez, the people of Tangier fled and surrendered it to the Portuguese without resistance. Farther south on the Atlantic coast, the people of Larache also abandoned their town for fear of the Portuguese.

The conquest of Arzila marked a turning point in the Atlantic war on Morocco. Arzila was Morocco’s northernmost substantial town on the Atlantic, and from this point forward the assault on Morocco was almost exclusively an Atlantic one. In approximately fifty-five years, Portugal had gained controlled of Ceuta, al-Qasr al-Sagir, and Tangier on the Moroccan side of

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484 Cook, *The Hundred Years War*, 97
the Strait of Gibraltar, and had now also begun their movement down the Moroccan Atlantic coast. Muhammad al-Shaykh’s weakness at Arzila initially benefited him when resistance to his rule collapsed in Fez and he was proclaimed the first Wattasid sultan of Morocco. What he now faced, however, was a formal rule of Morocco that in fact extended only a limited way beyond the environs of Fez itself. Additionally, the Portuguese had learned very directly, if it had not been evident before, how they could use the dissension in Morocco that they had nurtured with their earlier military successes, to aid their exploration and expansion along the West African coast.

In 1468, the same year that the Portuguese sacked and razed Anfa, a Portuguese expedition under Diego da Silva challenged the Castilians in the Canary Islands by capturing the latter’s fort at Gando on Gran Canaria. Complaints by Castile eventually led the Portuguese to support the Spaniards in the pacification of the island, whose inhabitants were vigorously resisting colonization despite their technological disadvantages. A year later Isabella I of Castile married Ferdinand II of Aragon, ruling jointly as the “Catholic Monarchs”, effectively uniting two of the three most powerful kingdoms on the Iberian Peninsula and establishing the foundations of modern Spain. Ten years after Diego da Silva’s expedition the monarchs wearied of the Spanish commander in the Canaries, removed him and sent a new expedition of least six hundred soldiers to pacify the chain, which they effectively accomplished in 1483. The Canary Islands off the Moroccan coast were now under Spanish rule, and their local leaders were to consider southern Morocco within their sphere of influence.

While Morocco was fragmented in the 1470s, the Iberian Peninsula experienced its own

488 Under their rule Spain remained technically the union of two crowns, Castile and Aragon, and the institutions of the two kingdoms long remained separate.
turmoil, with Afonso V of Portugal supporting his wife Joanna’s claim to the throne of Castile over that of Isabella I. In the ensuing war of 1475-1479 Morocco suffered collaterally as the Castilians raided towns on the Atlantic coast of Morocco that they considered friendly to the Portuguese.\footnote{Cook, \textit{The Hundred Years War}, 117.} Eventually, Ferdinand and Isabella defeated Afonso V and a series of treaties correspondingly ensued that among other things defined Spanish and Portuguese prerogatives relative to Morocco.\footnote{This conflict featured its own Christian-Muslim alliance, with Muhammad al-Shaykh agreeing to besiege Ceuta while Ferdinand II waged war against Afonso V. Although the Portuguese lost the war, they did not lose Ceuta and they defeated the Castilians in a naval battle in the Bay of Guinea near where the Portuguese were later to establish El Mina. SIHM-Portugal, I, xii.} The first of these treaties, the Treaty of Alcáçovas in 1479, humiliated Afonso V by forcing him to appoint his son João (who had fought at Arzila) as viceroy of Portugal. It also gave the Canary Islands to Spain, but granted Portugal rights along the African coast. A year later the Treaty of Toledo and the Papal Bull \textit{Aeterni Regis} confirmed these rights, with Portugal specifically renouncing claims to the Canaries, but in return receiving rights to Guinea (effectively the sub-Saharan African coast) and, most importantly for Morocco, the exclusive right to conquer the Kingdom of Fez.\footnote{“L’établissement de la suzeraineté Portugaise sur Azemmour, 1486,” SIHM, Portugal I, 1. “Le partage des conquêtes entre l’Espagne et le Portugal au Maroc et sur la côte au sud du Maroc,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 208.} This latter grant effectively reflected the reality that Portugal’s activities along the Atlantic coast of West Africa were not simply about exploration and economic advantage. They were, at least with regard to Morocco, a conscious extension of the medieval \textit{Reconquista}.

King João II used aggressively the authority granted Portugal. Under his leadership Portugal moved far beyond the Moroccan Atlantic to establish an armed trading post in the Gulf of Guinea at São Jórge da Mina in 1482, on the south coast of what is now Ghana. El Mina (“the mine”), as the castle built there was known, was south of the Akan goldfields and slave markets, and became a hub for both types of commerce in the Gulf of Guinea. Weston Cook cites El
Mina as an example of how the Portuguese experience in Morocco “suffused the entire [Portuguese] imperial network as it took shape,” noting that the first governor was a veteran of the wars in Morocco and that the architecture followed that of Ceuta and al-Qasr al-Sagir.\(^{493}\) Morocco now faced two powerful Iberian kingdoms whose expansionist designs using the pathways of the Atlantic posed existential threats to its existence. One, under the Catholic Monarchs, controlled an important Atlantic island group just some sixty miles off Morocco’s southern shore. A second, ruled aggressively by João II, controlled all Moroccan ports on the Strait of Gibraltar, the northernmost Moroccan Atlantic town south of the Strait, and now had much more direct access to the gold and slave sources that had helped sustain Morocco’s economy for centuries. The Atlantic world had thus opened by threatening not only Morocco’s political stability and territorial integrity, but also its access to two of the most vital commodities on which it had long-relied.

**Coercion and Cooperation**

It is at this time that the overall narrative of Portuguese-Moroccan relations tends to emphasize a Portuguese retreat from a policy of overt military aggression to one that instead focused on obtaining negotiated advantages. While this is consistent with the notion that Iberians used Morocco as a training ground to experiment and gain experience with tactics they were to use elsewhere in the Atlantic world and the Indian Ocean, the truth is that both negotiation and aggression were used simultaneously, with the former simply becoming more obviously prevalent than in the past. When he assumed the title of Sultan in 1472 and accepted a treaty with the Portuguese, Muhammad al-Shaykh controlled little outside of Fez and adjacent areas; he was sultan in name only. As mentioned earlier Morocco could be conceived of at the

time as roughly three separate kingdoms: the Kingdom of Fez in the north ruled by the Wattasids under Muhammad al-Shaykh, the Kingdom of Maroco (Marrakech) to the south ruled by an emir and under the effective control of the Hintata tribe of the Atlas Mountains, and now in the far south the Kingdom of Sus in the Sus and Dra’a Valley areas. Effectively, however, autonomous cities and other areas controlled by emirs and local chiefs dominated the Moroccan landscape. One result of the lack of an effective central authority was that despite the twenty-year truce al-Shaykh had signed with the Portuguese, these varied Moroccan power centers found it either necessary or advantageous to negotiate their own terms with the European intruders. In this, the role of the pathways created by the Atlantic was critical.

Although they were Christians and infidels, Iberians were well-positioned to compete for loyalties of hard-battered Moroccans, even if their own armed forces did much of the battering. The worse Wattasid weakness was the inability to prevent the armies and fleets of Lisbon and Madrid from dominating the coastline and pushing deeper into the hinterland, using military force and economic lures. The Iberians had awakened an international appetite for Moroccan cloth, grains, sugars, subsistence and the makhzan tax base. While profit lubricated ties between controlling partner and dependencies, the final recourse of the interlopers rested on the arbitration of superior armed force. This was no free market.

What Cook is describing in the above passage is a key aspect of how Morocco experienced the Atlantic world in its early stages and how Morocco’s participation in turn helped shaped that world. For Morocco the Portuguese ability to move along the coast essentially unchallenged at sea put the Wattasids at a severe disadvantage with their own people. Additionally, by doing so the Portuguese facilitated the wider circulation of Moroccan goods in what was to become the West African component or circuit of the Atlantic world. Both military necessity and the attraction of economic gain thus formed the basis upon which Moroccans might chose to

494 Emirs were essentially governors, princes, or other commanders given authority over a particular region. Typically they swore an oath of allegiance to the caliph or sultan, but depending on circumstances could operate with a greater or lesser degree of autonomy.  
495 Laroui, History of the Maghrib, 241.  
496 Cook, The Hundred Years War, 111.
collaborate with the European interlopers. The result was a Portuguese policy of coercion and cooperation where the boundaries between the two blurred.

When they eventually entered the Indian Ocean the Portuguese had comparatively little trade goods to advantageously market within the well-developed trade networks of that region. What they did have, however, was a maritime military advantage, exemplified in the combination of caravel and cannon, which could project strength far beyond their numbers and in the face of numerically-superior forces. So in an earlier form of a modern day protection racket the Portuguese offered their “protection” in return for trade in valuable commodities, capitalizing on local rivalries to buttress their own strength. When the Spanish eventually went to the Americas, they also used their military advantages in weaponry and tactics to co-opt local peoples as allies against other indigenous powers and offset their numerical inferiority. It was in Morocco that the Portuguese, in particular, experimented with and tested these tactics consistently for the first time outside the context of the Reconquista on the Iberian Peninsula.

Almost certainly recognizing the potential weakness of increasingly-fragmented Morocco, the Portuguese moved down the Moroccan Atlantic coast in part by using the violent conquest of local enclaves to encourage other towns along the littoral to avail themselves of the protection that came with Portuguese vassalage. The massive assault on Arzila was useful in this regard, as the Moroccans there had been denied an “honors of war” surrender by the Portuguese and had affectively been abandoned by their Wattasid ruler, now the sultan. As we saw, the experience of Arzila led to de facto Muslim abandonment of both Tangier and Larache, the former of which had withstood multiple, determined sieges by the Portuguese over a period of

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497 C.R. Boxer notes that in Asia the basic Portuguese tactic of infantry fighting was for individual soldiers to charge headlong toward the enemy as they landed on the beach in the hopes that the enemy would break. This was a tactic justified by the typical numerical inferiority of the Portuguese, something that would be compensated for with their caravels and cannon. C.R. Boxer, *The Portuguese*, 299-300.
decades.

Among the first Moroccan Atlantic coastal towns to seek accommodation with the Portuguese was the enclave of Azammur at the mouth of Morocco’s longest river, the Oum Er-Rbia, roughly half way down the country’s Atlantic coast. Having driven back a Castilian assault in 1480, but now apparently fearing both local Muslim raiders as well as Castilians from the Canary Islands, the people of Azammur felt they could no longer rely on the sultan in Fez or the emir in Marrakech. Consequently, they instead sought to become vassals of Portugal’s King João II in 1486. The terms of the treaty with Azammur were representative of the obligations the Portuguese imposed upon those who sought their protection in Morocco and with few exceptions were repeated in substantially similar fashion elsewhere in the country. Under the terms, the vessels of the Portuguese king were to be free from the trade duties assigned other Portuguese ships and the ships of other nationals. Additionally, factors (feitors) and other representatives of the King were to be permitted to reside safely in Azammur in a house suitable for their duties and stature, or if such a residence was not available, were to be given land on which to construct one. This last was a particularly important component of any treaty, for what it actually entailed was the presence of a fortified Portuguese trading center within or adjacent to the city. While such feitorias were not as advantageous as constructing an actual fortress in the town, which as we will see was a later Portuguese condition in other locations, they provided a measure of security whose absence would make the numerically inferior Portuguese vulnerable in a way that the Genoese, who were engaged in commerce independent of territorial conquest, were not.

Although the authorization of feitorias was potentially the most significant concession

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498 “L’établissement de la suzeraineté portugaise sur Azemmour, 1486,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 1-2
Muslim inhabitants made in submitting to Portuguese rule, they were typically also subjected to annual tribute obligations. A right to export horses to Portugal, either by purchase or through tribute was a consistent feature of almost every vassalage treaty the Portuguese struck in Morocco. Particular to Azammar’s location at the mouth of the fecund Oum Er-Rbia River, the Portuguese also required an annual tribute of ten thousand fish. In return for these concessions, the people of Azammar were to be treated as subjects of the Portuguese king. They would receive royal banners to display when appropriate, and as with the king’s other subjects, could travel within the realm of Portugal provided travel by sea was done on Portuguese vessels through arrangements made with one of the Portuguese feitores. 500 By virtue of this treaty, in 1486 the Portuguese had extended their position from the northern port of Arzila to approximately half way down Morocco’s Atlantic coast. This southward progress placed the Portuguese at the southern boundary access point of Morocco’s Tamasna grain-producing region, an important location for accessing the wheat so often needed to address shortages in Portugal. It also gave them convenient access to the horses, cloth, and textiles of the region, which they could trade profitably in sub-Saharan Africa. 501

Next to come officially under Portuguese sway was the coastal town of Safi, midway along the Atlantic coast of the grain-producing region of the Dukkala, north of the River Sus. The city is actually believed to have subordinated itself to Portuguese suzerainty sometime during the reign of Afonso V (and thus before Azammar). In 1488, however, through its caid, Ahmad ibn Ali, it specifically sought to remind Afonso’s heir, João II, of its loyalty and seek

Terms for Safi were not unlike those applied to Azammur. The caid, nobles, and people of Safi had to take an oath to King João II and provide the Portuguese feitors and other representatives of the king with suitable accommodations in Safi or the land upon which to build them. Their particular annual tribute obligations, in contrast to the fish required of Azammur, were two horses for the King and a certain amount of gold or the equivalent in merchandise. Like the inhabitants of Azammur, the people of Safi would be permitted to come to Portugal under the same terms as other subjects of the king.  

Safi was to be a particularly important trading center for the Portuguese. Commerce from Azammur was primarily between Portugal and Morocco, but for Safi it included merchandise that traveled not only between Portugal and the Moroccan interior, but also to Portuguese possessions farther south all the way to the Gulf of Guinea. Successful commerce involving the latter required trade goods that were of value to the sub-Saharan African, which the Portuguese found in Morocco among textiles like the brightly-colored woven cloth known as the ḥanbal (or as the lamben) in Portuguese. These were rectangular pieces of woven woolen or linen cloth decorated with colored stripes. Used in North Africa as shawls or decorative ground, seat, or saddle blanket covers, sub-Saharan Africans prized them as clothing. Safi already enjoyed a reputation for producing quality textiles, so the Portuguese saw advantage in encouraging this local industry and even manipulating it to meet any changing aesthetic demands of their sub-Saharan clientele. Ḥanbel and associated or similar textiles like the ḥāʾik, jilhāb, burnūs, and qubāʾa all could be purchased at Safi and sold farther south.  

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502 A caid in Morocco was essentially a military-governmental commander or leader of a community or jurisdiction. It is not to be confused with a qadi, which is an Islamic magistrate, judge, or leader with power as the head of a Muslim community within a specific jurisdiction.  
504 Cornell, Socioeconomic, 390-392.
These examples of “diplomatic” engagements by the Portuguese differed markedly from the military aggressiveness of the Portuguese inland and against other coastal towns. Frontier, guerilla-like strike forces known as *rebatos*, for instance, operated out of Arzila and repeatedly attacked Moroccan government troops and villagers, as well as coastal cities like Mazagan, Tit, Anfa, and Mamora.\(^{505}\) These *rebatos* were a consistent vehicle of Portuguese force projection in Morocco when conquest of a specific target by organized military expedition was not the objective. Built around rapidly moving cavalry that emphasized speed and shock, *rebatos* would sortie from Portuguese-controlled towns to burn crops, set ambushes, and terrorize villages and civilians. They also collected taxes and settled disputes in a manner that benefited them, and thus exerted Portuguese sovereignty in the lands adjacent to Portuguese-controlled towns or fortifications. While doing so they would establish relationships with surrounding tribes they thought could be cultivated to advance or defend Portuguese interests.\(^{506}\)

Employment of diplomatic overtures and the *rebato* during this period, however, did not mean that the Portuguese abandoned more traditional means of conquest. Most aggressive of such latter efforts was João II’s 1489 Graciosa campaign against the Wattasid sultan. It marked the only Portuguese defeat in what was a long period of successful dual-track diplomatic and military aggression against Morocco. In this instance the Portuguese sent a fleet of caravels past the city of Larache and up the Loukkos River about nine miles to establish a fort near the confluence of the Loukkos and the Wadi al-Makazin. Fort Graciosa, as the stockade was called, was an instance where the reliance on cannon for defense failed the Portuguese. The Wattasid sultan Muhammad al-Shaykh surrounded the position with some forty-thousand men that artillery from both the fort and the caravels in the river were unable to repulse. Eventually the

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\(^{505}\) Cook, *The Hundred Years War*, 117.

\(^{506}\) Cook, *The Hundred Years War*, 118. Cook characterizes the *rebato* as the Portuguese version of the Spanish *cavalgada* or the Muslim *ghazī* raid.
Portuguese were allowed to leave in return for a ten-year extension of the relatively meaningless truce of 1472, terms which some Moroccan Muslims were subsequently to hold against Muhammad al-Shaykh.\textsuperscript{507}

The treaties between the Portuguese and the communities in Azammur and Safi represent some of the earliest steps in a de facto attempt by the Portuguese to integrate Morocco into what was an emerging Atlantic world network controlled almost exclusively by Iberians. As we have seen, initially Portuguese actions directed at Morocco had many of the characteristics of a medieval crusade. \textit{Rebato} raids in the north were in some sense an extension of this. But Azammur, and particularly Safi, seem to represent recognition by the Portuguese of the role Morocco could play in a new Atlantic network. At the time this network was but a glimmer of what it was to become, but it was indeed a new network that consisted of a handful of discovered or rediscovered island groups and a hitherto unopened West African coast, all newly-accessible due to the pathways created in the Atlantic. Portugal clearly saw the value of incorporating Morocco territories into this network with Safi, in particular, providing products that could be marketed in locations farther south now open to the Portuguese by sea. For Moroccans, treaties like those at Azammur and Safi were an attempt to participate in these new networks in a manner that avoided or mitigated what had up to this point been essentially a campaign of military conquest that Moroccan communities were generally losing. Soon, the creation of the Atlantic world would take a major leap forward, while events on the Iberian Peninsula would alter the demographics of Morocco itself.

\textbf{Refugees and New Communities}

Though violence continued, in the last decade of the fifteenth century major events

\textsuperscript{507}Cook, \textit{The Hundred Years War}, 117-118. Abun-Nasr, \textit{A History of the Maghrib}, 207.
emanating from the Iberian Peninsula itself took precedence over Portuguese activities along the Moroccan Atlantic shore. For Atlanticists, Christopher Columbus’s voyage to the Americas in 1492 was to create a clear starting point for the Atlantic world. It led to a series of Papal Bulls in 1493 by Pope Alexander VI that set up a line of longitude west of the Cape Verde Islands that was to segregate the spheres of influence of Spain and Portugal. More important for Morocco’s experience, however, was the completion of the Reconquista with the fall of Nasrid Granada, bringing to an end the presence of an Islamic state north of the Strait of Gibraltar.

Putting aside the psychological shock of Granada’s fall, Morocco found itself confronted with absorption of the ensuing emigration of refugees from the peninsula, some with technological skills that would be valuable in the continuing conflict with the Iberian powers. In some instances these groups established communities that contributed to the resistance against Portuguese encroachment. Within the northern saddle horn of Morocco, for example, a sharīfīan family claiming descent from both the eighth-century Idrisids and a Sufi teacher from the twelfth century had already established the town of Chefchaouen in 1471-1472. Previously receptive to refugees from al-Andalus, with the fall of Granada Chefchaouen’s rulers encouraged these new refugees to restore Tétouan, which had been dismantled by the Portuguese of Ceuta in 1437. Here they worked together to create a community that essentially served as a buffer between the Wattasids and the Portuguese to the north. Outside of northern enclaves like Tétouan, however, the reception awaiting refugees from Iberia was not monolithic. Nor was the approach those refugees took toward integration within Moroccan society.

Notably, not all the refugees were Muslims. In addition to conquering Nasrid Granada,
in 1492 the Catholic monarchs also expelled Jews from Spanish territory on the peninsula. Some of these Jews went to Portugal, but others went to Morocco, where Jews had already played a prominent minority role for hundreds of years. H.Z. Hirschberg characterizes the eighty-year period under the Wattasids in Morocco as a decisive one for Moroccan Jewry, when “[i]ts spiritual physiognomy and socio-economic structure, as well as its status and place within the Moroccan state, were determined . . . .” Destination governed in part the nature of the Jewish refugee experience in journeying to Morocco. There were reports of women violated by Christian intermediaries, and of refugees marching inland from Arzila and Larache suffering depredations at the hands of Bedouin raiders. Conditions were apparently better, however, for those who landed on the Mediterranean shore controlled by the Wattasid sultan; these Jews were welcome to travel to Fez if they wished. On the whole it appears Jewish refugees settled near older, pre-existing Jewish communities, primarily, though not exclusively, in the seaports and major cities of the interior. Some rose to wield significant influence in the court of the Wattasid sultans in Fez.

The participation of Jews in the Moroccan struggle against Portuguese domination was uneven. Although generally banned from carrying weapons, tumultuous conditions in Morocco allegedly enabled some Jews to work as mercenaries for local Muslim leaders in contravention of Muslim law. Some also served as intermediaries in incipient rebellions against Portuguese dominance. These instances of cooperation with Muslims against Portuguese rule, seemed to be comparatively few, however, at least outside of the court administration in Fez. Jews in

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513 It should be noted that the evidence for this does not appear to be particularly strong. There is one passage in Leo Africanus to which Weston Cook refers, but the later acknowledges that there are no accounts of such activity outside of Leo Africanus. Cook, *The Hundred Years War*, 140.
Morocco’s Atlantic cities under Portuguese domination tended to support Portuguese sovereignty. This appears to have been a result in part of a conscious strategy employed by the Portuguese. Once Safi came under Portuguese control, for example, King Manuel I promised the Jews there that they would never be expelled or forced to convert to Christianity against their will, and if for some reason in the future the king found it necessary that they leave, he would give them two years to prepare and they would be permitted to leave unmolested with all their property.\(^{515}\) Most Jewish émigrés were not scholars or high religious figures, nor merchants, agents, nor craftsmen like highly-valued ironworkers and weapon smiths.\(^{516}\) The value of this last group of Jewish craftsmen is one of the reasons Portugal sought to encourage their emigration to Portugal after 1492, and why Christians were particularly worried later by assertions that some were smuggling arms to Morocco and taking their iron-working skills to inland Muslim cities like Marrakech.\(^{517}\)

Wherever they settled, however, and whatever their skill set, the position of Jews in Morocco always seemed to be a tenuous one during the period of this study. At any given moment they might be viewed as useful and trusted intermediaries between Christians and Muslims, at other times they might be viewed as traitors, or blamed for failures. As merchants they were sometimes highly valued—even entrusted by later Moroccan rulers with the administration of lucrative sugar mills—and at other times charged with faithless dealing.

In addition to Jews, Moriscos and renegados were also part of the immigrant mix in

\(^{517}\) Hirschberg, A History of the Jews in North Africa, 419. The position of Jews in Portugal was delicate. When João II died and was succeeded by his cousin, Manuel I, the latter, as a condition of his marriage to Isabella of Spain (the eldest daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella), was required to expel the Jews from Portugal in 1497. He complied largely by pressuring a significant number of Jews to convert to Christianity under the promise that their faith would not be questioned. As Christians they could not be forced to emigrate and in fact were prohibited from doing so. A large number of these converted Christians were massacred in 1506, after which Manuel I took efforts to protect them and allowed many to migrate to Holland. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s.v. “Portugal,” https://www.britannica.com/science/ambergris (accessed November 16, 2017).
Morocco at this time.\textsuperscript{518} Outside of areas like Tétouan Moriscos, like the Iberian Jews, were not universally welcomed, as their foreign customs, sheer numbers, and competition caused resentment. But religion, technological knowledge, and motivation made them potentially valuable allies in a Moroccan struggle against Iberian domination. Their numbers grew further in Morocco after 1499, when revolts in Spain led Ferdinand II to order that all Muslims either convert or emigrate. Bands of Morisco mercenaries emerged in Morocco in the early sixteenth century and Moriscos also became prominent in the iron forges of Fez.\textsuperscript{519} Renegados were to become prominent in the service of Moroccan leaders as individuals with particular skills who owed their loyalty to the leader and were thus also a useful counterweight to other groups governed by tribal and minority ethnic loyalties.

This influx of refugees to Morocco resulted in the creation of new communities, as well as the expansion of existing ones. But new communities based on changing demographics were not the only type of new community Morocco was to experience during the last decade of the fifteenth century and the first decade of the sixteenth, for the Portuguese launched new initiatives in Morocco at this time that differed from what they had thus far pursued and that created yet another type of community along the Moroccan Atlantic littoral.

While Morocco struggled to absorb the influx of Iberian refugees, Portuguese activities on the coast and in the Atlantic continued largely unabated. Muslim nobles from the Moroccan Atlantic coast continued to seek vassalage under the King of Portugal. Among these were the people of Massa in 1497. With one exception, the terms in Massa were similar to those

\textsuperscript{518} Moriscos were Muslim exiles from the Iberian Peninsula. Some had been mudéjares—Muslims who stayed behind in Christian-ruled lands. Renegados were foreigners who served Muslim rulers. Those that converted to Islam were known more formally as uluj and could be conversos (i.e., “New Christians”) who had recanted and returned to Islam, as well as formerly-Christian Europeans who converted to Islam for any number of reasons, including to obtain particular positions or to improve their status as prisoners of war.

\textsuperscript{519} Cook, \textit{The Hundred Years War}, 142.
established at Azammur and Safi—tribute of horses, no tariffs for merchandise on the king’s ships, and welcome of Portuguese feitors, in return for which the people of Massa would enjoy the rights of other Portuguese subjects and could travel on the king’s ships with permission. The exception to the arrangements with other coastal cities was that the inhabitants of Massa were also to permit the Portuguese to establish a fortress. While Portugal would provide the masons and lime to construct it, Massa was to provide the workforce to bring the necessary stone and sand, and provide food and lodging at usual rates. Once the fortress was built the people of Massa were also to provide a good house for the king’s feitors.520

Permission to build a fortress was a significant development. Earlier the Spanish had made modest attempts at a presence in southern Morocco, in the 1490s having established a small fort that they called Santa-Cruz de Mar Pequeña on the Atlantic coast south of Massa.521 That may have been what prompted the Portuguese to pursue the subordination of Massa in 1497. By this point in time a contrast had developed between conquered cities like Ceuta, Tangier, and Arzila, and vassal-cities on the Moroccan Atlantic coast. Within the former the Portuguese not only housed garrisons, but also colonial settler communities. The latter were not to make a meaningful appearance in the vassal-cities, even if and when those cities were subjected to physical assault and conquered.522 Instead these coastal enclaves typically hosted garrisons of only a few hundred Portuguese soldiers, particularly after Portugal directed its professional troops elsewhere in the country’s far-flung empire. Fortified feitorias and fortresses thus became a critical component of enabling the numerically sparse Portuguese to maintain

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521 There is some confusion in the sources about the date of this Spanish intrusion. The editors of SIHM-Portugal say this occurred in 1497 or 1498. See “Le partage des conquêtes entre l’Espagne et le Portugal au Maroc et sur la côte au sud du Maroc,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 210, note 2. See also, Cornell, Socioeconomic, 395.
522 When the Portuguese attacked and physically occupied the city of Azummur in 1513, settlers allegedly expressed an interest in living there, but a Portuguese official at the time describes this as simple enthusiasm for new things. “Lettre de Nuno Gato à Emmanuel I,” 5 December 1513, SIHM-Portugal, I, 454-456.
some kind of authority—principally through their effective use of artillery—in these vassal communities.

Whatever the basis for the Portuguese intervention in Massa, it escalated tensions with the Spanish, who reacted by taking several further steps of their own. Initially the Spanish governor of Grand Canaria negotiated and received the submission of tribes and villages around Tagaost in the Wadi Nun plain of the southwestern Sus. In 1500, the Spanish governor of the islands of Tenerife and Palma established short-lived fortifications in the interior of the same area. Later, in 1504, this same governor occupied the small Atlantic village of Agadir, only to be rebuffed by the people of Massa, who were allied with the Portuguese.

It was this last provocation by the Spanish that resulted in the Portuguese establishing the small fort of Santa-Cruz du Cap de Gué (Santa-Cruz) a few kilometers north of Agadir in 1505. Spanish encroachment in this area was a clear violation of the terms that allocated to Lisbon the right to conquest in the Kingdom of Fez. Additionally, from the Portuguese point of view Spanish expansion here could also become a threat to the sea lanes Portugal used to reach its gold and trading entrepôt at El Mina in the Gulf of Guinea. Accordingly, King Manuel I, who had succeeded João II in 1495, authorized a private venture in the area by João Lopes de Seqúira. The latter identified a group of springs close to the beach north of Agadir that were an excellent source of fresh water and around it built first a wooden fort and then a larger and stronger stone and lime fortification, garrisoned with artillery. This was to become the important Portuguese stronghold and coastal trading center of Santa-Cruz, which represented yet a third type of

Portuguese presence in Morocco. Now, in addition to conquering and investing established cities like Ceuta and Arzila, and negotiating vassalage arrangements that permitted feitorias in urban coastal center like Safi and Azammur, in the far south of Morocco the Portuguese were creating entirely new fortified trading communities. As an indication of the growing recognition of the value of these southern locations, it is worth noting that while the Spanish and Portuguese faced off in the Massa region, Genoese merchants began operating there as well, buying both gold that arrived from the Sudan as well as local products like wax and hides.  

The middle of the first decade of the sixteenth century witnessed a transfer of power in the Kingdom of Fez, with the death of the first Wattasid sultan and the succession of his son, Abu Abd Allah al-Burtuqali Muhammad (r. 1504-1526). As his name indicates, al-Burtuqali had a particular familiarity with the Portuguese and a specific animus toward them. A son of al-Shaykh, he was but a boy when captured by the Portuguese during their seizure of Arzila. Taken back to Portugal as a captive, he spent seven years there, according to Leo Africanus, becoming fluent in Portuguese, before finally being ransomed. Known as a result of his captivity as al-Burtuqali (the Portuguese), as the new Wattasid sultan he tried for many years to avenge his childhood captivity by repeatedly launching assaults against Portuguese Arzila.

While the Spanish increased their pressure on Morocco from the Canary Islands, Portugal continued its aggressive moves all along the Moroccan Atlantic coast after the ascension of al-Burtuqali. Now their focus appeared to favor the construction of new fortresses or castles. For some time they had been visiting the small coastal town of Mazagan to secure wheat from the Dukkala region. In 1505, not long after al-Burtuqali rose to the Wattasid throne in Fez, King Manual I authorized the Portuguese nobleman, Jorge de Mello, to construct a fortress at

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527 Leo Africanus, *History and Description of Africa*, II, 505-506.

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Mazagan, about ten miles south of Azammur and the mouth of the Oum Er-Rbia. The project failed in the face of opposition from local tribes, but Portuguese efforts at building new fortresses along the Moroccan littoral continued. Only a year later Manuel I authorized the fortress known as Castelo Real on the island of Mogador, a position almost equidistant from Safi to the south as Mazagan was to Safi in the north. Here the Portuguese also faced local opposition, but succeeded in part by reinforcing their efforts with men and supplies from their Atlantic base in Madeira. Over a period of but two years, in other words, the Portuguese had moved to build three new fortresses along the Moroccan Atlantic coast—at Agadir, Mazagan, and Mogador. Then, in 1508, the Portuguese implemented a dramatic change in policy and violently seized direct physical control of Safi.

**The Cases of Safi and Azammur**

Both Safi and Azammur are worth examining in more detail as case studies in how the Portuguese and Moroccans attempted to pursue their competing interests in the complex milieu of an early and expanding Atlantic world. As we saw in the geographic review of Morocco’s Atlantic coast, Azammur sat at the mouth of Morocco’s greatest river, the Oum Er-Rbia. Sandbars made the mouth of the river challenging, but the city was on the boundary of two of Morocco’s fertile grain regions, the Tamasna and the Dukkala, as well on the boundary between the jurisdictions of Fez and Marrakech. This geographic position gave Azammur a singular distinction. For its part, Safi was some eighty miles farther south along the Atlantic coastline than any other Moroccan urban center and was preceded on that coastline by a largely barren shore. Though lacking either an adjoining river or a large harbor, it sat roughly at the coastal

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midpoint of the grain-producing Dukkala region and served as a significant Atlantic port for the inland center of Marrakesh.

Both Azammur’s and Safi’s importance to the Portuguese was buttressed by each being among the first Moroccan urban centers on the Atlantic to seek Portuguese vassalage. Safi had the additional distinction of being the first major Portuguese outpost on the Moroccan littoral to serve as a supply and export base for the larger West African circuit that the Portuguese had created in the Atlantic world. Reflecting this importance the Portuguese employed a variety of tactics at Safi and Azammur as they sought to assert and maintain a level of control necessary to ensure advantage. Even when the Portuguese opted for military conquest, in the aftermath they still confronted demographic challenges that required continued engagement with the local populace in a manner that far exceeded what was required of a simple trading post. As a result, Safi, Azammur, and their environs witnessed a spectrum of colonial relationships that ranged from conquest and coercion to cooperation and collaboration—a range that was to represent the choices facing other indigenous peoples elsewhere in the Atlantic world as Western Europeans expanded their presence throughout the basin. In order to operate effectively in this environment Portugal imposed at these cities an administrative apparatus with strong feudal overtones and converted and restructured Muslim spaces to serve colonial purposes. These efforts in Morocco were among the earliest European colonial experiments in the Atlantic world.

At the heart of the Portuguese policies was the struggle to exercise control and accrue wealth while compensating for their inferior numbers. Moroccans, on the other hand, had to adapt to the reality of superior Portuguese weaponry and Portuguese control of the sea and its trade routes upon which an increasing amount of Moroccan goods travelled. Like people everywhere who later faced potential colonial domination in the Atlantic world, Moroccan
communities in and around Safi and Azammur thus had to repeatedly make choices about where their loyalties and interests ultimately lay and thus where on a spectrum that ranged from resistance to collaboration their actions should fall at any given time. One inevitable outcome of such forced decisions was the emergence of complex figures that moved along this spectrum over time and took whole communities with them in the process. It is at Safi that one of the most famous of these, Yahya ibn Ta’fuft, makes his first substantive appearance.

The variety of tactics and relationships employed at Safi and Azammur by the Portuguese and the Moroccans, as well as the administrative apparatus and spatial adjustments imposed by the former on the latter, all provide examples of approaches and reactions to colonial experimentation in the early Atlantic world. Safi and Azammur are thus potentially useful as examples of how Morocco participated in the Atlantic world and the corresponding influence that participation exerted on both that world and Morocco itself.

The relevant events that ultimately led to the Portuguese seizure of Safi began to unfold in September of 1498. With the ascension of Manuel I to the throne in 1495, Portugal began to assert itself more aggressively. Safi, as we have seen, was one of Morocco’s coastal urban centers that in the absence of a strong Moroccan central authority offering effective resistance to the Portuguese chose to adapt to this reality by accepting the suzerainty of the latter in the 1480s. This included acceptance of tribute conditions that permitted the presence of Portuguese feitors.530 By the end of the fifteenth century these feitors in Safi were well-established and traded in merchandise not only between Portugal and Morocco, but also as we have seen, farther south with Guinea. Safi having thus grown in importance for Portugal’s Atlantic trading network, the increasing age and deteriorating local authority of its caid, Ahmad ibn Ali,

530 “Lettre de Jean II au caïd et aux habitants de Safi,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 25-30. This letter from October of 1488 is in response to a request from the caid of Safi, Ahmad ibn Ali, that the Portuguese King João II honor the earlier relationship with Safi established by his predecessor, Afonso V.
eventually became a concern—a concern nurtured by one of the caid’s ambitious nephews, Abd al-Rahman.

The position of caid was one avenue through which the Portuguese in Morocco attempted to exert influence that extended far beyond the simple trading privileges granted elsewhere in the past to groups like the Genoese. By co-opting and supporting one Muslim notable over another, the Portuguese could disrupt indigenous power relationships and tip the balance in local power struggles among competing Muslim factions, elevating one over another and securing advantages for the Portuguese. Such advantages often centered on increasing the defensibility of Portuguese fortifications and ensuring access to the sea. For the co-opted notable the advantages included not only higher prestige and authority in the community, but often access to a salary and a share of customs duties or booty.

In Safi, as the Portuguese grew uneasy about the aging caid, his nephew, Abd al-Rahman, sought the direct support of the Portuguese against his brother, Yahya al-Sayyat, who was the caid’s favored nephew, by claiming that al-Sayyat was conspiring to turn Safi over to Castile.\(^{531}\) While making this accusation al-Rahman obtained the protection and support of Portugal’s Queen Dowager, Leonor de Viseu (Eleanor of Viseu),\(^ {532}\) and soon upon arriving in Safi with her representative, Diogo Borges, al-Rahman was installed as the new caid after a brief but dramatic skirmish before the Portuguese feitoria.\(^ {533}\)

\(^{531}\) It was Yahya al-Sayyat who had taken his uncle Ahmad ibn Ali’s request to João II approximately a decade earlier.

\(^{532}\) “Lettre de Dio Borges à la Reine Leonor,” 28 September 1498, SIHM-Portugal, I, 36-42.

\(^{533}\) “Lettre de Dio Borges à la Reine Leonor,” 28 September 1498, SIHM-Portugal, I, 36-42. Dio Borges’s letter provides the details of this skirmish. Upon reaching Safi Abd al-Rahman was met joyously by his uncle, who promised whatever his nephew needed. His uncle was unable to deliver on that promise, however, allegedly not because of any ill will, but rather because of the opposition of the partisans of Abd al-Rahman’s brother, Yahya al-Sayyat. Dio Borges, fearful that Portugal would lose control of Safi, proposed assassinating Yahya al-Sayyat, but doing so was vetoed by Portugal’s feitor. The Portuguese secretly brought Abd al-Rahman to the Portuguese feitoria, where plans were made for the latter to ride out in the morning and read a proclamation in the name of the King of Portugal. Accordingly, Abd al-Rahman appeared on horseback before the gates of the feitor, flying the
The progression of events in Safi reveals a pattern in Portuguese policy of successively supporting and sustaining the installation of a Muslim notable as caid only to the extent that notable was willing to support the strengthening of Portuguese fortifications. It was not long, therefore, before Portuguese support for al-Rahman wavered. While the Portuguese explorer Pedro Cabral was in the spring and summer of 1500 negotiating on the East African coast after first landing in Brazil, the Portuguese monarchy was negotiating new terms with Abd al-Rahman in Safi. For reasons that we may justifiably assume reflected concerns about his security and standing in the community, Abd al-Rahman had requested permission to reside in the Portuguese feitoria. As part of his response, however, Manuel I proposed a broad new arrangement. Under its terms all the fees collected from Christian commerce in Safi would go to the Portuguese. While al-Rahman would receive a pension from the fees collected for the Portuguese, and would be reimbursed for some arms he had purchased at Agadir that had subsequently been seized, he would no longer enjoy a previously-granted right to send an annual cargo vessel to Arguin. The Portuguese, in other words, were imposing an arrangement that significantly deprived the caid of the ability to independently accrue wealth by virtue of his position, and instead made him almost entirely dependent upon the Portuguese. As for the request to reside in the Portuguese feitoria, Manuel I asserted that it simply was not large enough to house the caid, the Portuguese feitor, and the feitoria’s secretary. Of course, if Abd al-Rahman agreed to it, the Portuguese were willing to expand and fortify the feitoria so that it could accommodate the caid, as well as troops that Manuel I planned to send.

 royal banner of Portugal and accompanied by two Muslims on foot and two Christian archers. Although soon joined by a dozen poorly-armed Muslims, Abd al-Rahman was confronted by a far larger force of his brother’s partisans surrounding his uncle. Upon enduring taunts and insults, an exasperated Abd al-Rahman charged his opponents, who promptly fled on foot and horseback. After Abd al-Rahman returned to the feitoria the people of Safi, impressed by his performance, proclaimed him caid. Reconciled with his uncle, Abd al-Rahman then proceeded to pillage and destroy the houses of enemies who had fled the city.

This reference to the security of their *feitorias* was to be a recurring theme with the Portuguese. Absent strong, defensible walls and towers, as well as direct access to the sea, the numerically inferior Portuguese, despite their initial advantages in artillery weaponry, felt their *feitorias* vulnerable to both official local opposition and popular uprisings. The relevant communication from the king in this particular instance concluded with what appear to be two apparent warnings to Abd al-Rahman, one implicit and one quite direct. First among these was a report that Portugal had concluded an agreement with Castile in which the latter renounced any intervention in Safi. While this may theoretically have been nothing more than a simple report, it almost certainly conveyed the message that Castile was no longer a potential source of support for those with ambitions in Safi, whether as a rumored association to discredit a rival or as a legitimate counterweight to the Portuguese. More directly, Abd al-Rahman was to be instructed that he not title himself the ruler or lord of Safi. Such a title was for the King of Portugal and Abd al-Rahman must content himself with the title of shaykh or caid.\(^{535}\) Apparently reaching terms, as the year 1500 came to a close the Portuguese formally confirmed the position of Abd al-Rahman as caid.\(^{536}\)

The relative fluidity created by the lack of a strong Moroccan central authority, as well as the layers of possible relationships in a semi-colonial context like the one in Safi, meant that things were rarely truly settled. Such was the case with the confirmation of Abd al-Rahman as caid. His defeated brother, Yahya al-Sayyat, though having fled Safi, had not surrendered his ambitions. Instead, he sought to regain his position by soliciting the favor of the Portuguese

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\(^{535}\) “Instructions d’Emmanuel I pour ‘Ali ben Ouachman,” 15 June 1500, SIHM-Portugal, I, 51-56. The Portuguese claimed that they could not return the weapons they had seized because of the opposition of the Pope. They promised, however, that if the Pope allowed, they would provide better weapons than those that had been seized. \(^{536}\) “Lettres patentes d’Emmanuel I,” 9 December 1500, SIHM-Portugal, I, 57-62. Subsequently, a new Portuguese factor in Safi, Pero Mendes, questioned the expulsion of Abd al-Rahman from the Portuguese factory, claiming that any problems were the fault of the prior factor. “Lettre de Pero Mendes à Emmanuel I,” 7 April 1501, SIHM-Portugal, I, 66-67.
king. Reminding the king of his prior service, Yahya al-Sayyat offered to secure tribute for the Portuguese from the ruler of Marrakech, put the city of El-Medina under Portuguese suzerainty, and if installed as caid again in Safi, to permit the Portuguese to build a fortress there. Apparently these proposals eventually won over Manuel I. Yahya al-Sayyat’s request for safe conduct to Portugal was approved, and then in 1505 the commander of the Portuguese squadron in the Strait of Gibraltar, Garcia de Mello, was instructed to return Yahya al-Sayyat to Safi and install him as caid. The instructions in pursuit of the latter contemplated various possible outcomes. Garcia de Mello was authorized to assist in the expulsion of Abd al-Rahman and installation of Yahya al-Sayyat as caid with troops and cannon, if the people so desired. If the operation was successful, then the Portuguese were to study the possibility of fortifying their feitoria, opening in the ramparts a door to the sea, and stationing twenty-five to thirty men with cannons there. In the event such expansion was not possible, Yahya al-Sayyat was nevertheless to be installed as caid. Finally, if even that proved impossible and the mission became a total failure, then Garcia de Mello was to return with Yahya al-Sayyat. Though available documents do not tell us the details, something most consistent with the last must have occurred, either as a result of local opposition or because the Portuguese found the facts in Safi not to comport with Yahya al-Sayyat’s representations. Whatever the reason, Abd al-Rahman remained caid. But the instructions to Garcia de Mello showed just how quickly the patronage of the Portuguese could change in favor of Muslim leaders who supported the strengthening of Portuguese positions at the expense of Moroccan communities. It also demonstrated the agency

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537 The city of El-Medina, once a significant urban center in the Dukkala region, was approximately eight to nine miles inland from the sea. Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, II, 375n102.


539 “Instructions pour Garcia de Mello,” 16 November 1502, SIHM-Portugal, I, 70-71.

of local Moroccan leaders in pursuing the support of power centers not only within Portuguese officialdom, but among potential competitors to the Portuguese like the Castilians.

It is in the aftermath of al-Sayyat’s failed mission that Yahya ibn Ta’fuft first appears in Safi. From the perspective of an anti-colonialist, ibn Ta’fuft was a collaborator of the most egregious sort. Ingratiating himself with the Portuguese by promising concessions rejected by other Muslims, he eventually led local forces—the so-called “Moors of Peace”—in violent campaigns of repression and pacification throughout the Dukkala and the Sus on behalf of the Portuguese. Apparently enjoying support among some in the Portuguese court, ibn Ta’fuft was, however, never fully trusted by Portuguese leaders in Morocco. As we will see, they complained bitterly of betrayal on the battlefield, the redirecting of tribute, and of reports that their ostensible ally was representing to other Muslims that he was, in fact, working surreptitiously for the demise of the Portuguese in Morocco. While there appears to be little doubt that ibn Ta’fuft sought to and successfully enriched himself through his actions, his status as simply an unabashed collaborator, a greedy opportunist, or a surreptitious resistance leader is less clear upon close examination. He certainly cannot justifiably claim the clear mantel of a national leader fighting for Moroccan independence from Portuguese domination as individual Sa’di ashřāf could do. But if the complaints of the Portuguese leaders on the ground in Morocco are to be given any credence, then ibn Ta’fuft was at best an opportunist seeking personal advantage for himself and at worst a traitor to the Portuguese cause. Evidence we will encounter in this study suggests that ibn Ta’fuft may have been all of these at the same time, an avid Portuguese collaborator seeking personal gain who either by conscience or circumstance at times found it advantageous to hinder his patrons. In this he may be representative of a number of similarly-situated individuals in the colonial environments that were to emerge as the Atlantic world
expanded. Rejecting a clear choice of fighting the colonizers, waiting them out, or seeking obscurity, individuals such as ibn Ta’fuft instead chose to actively integrate themselves in the new order in a fashion that left it sometimes unclear where their loyalties lay.

Yahya ibn Ta’fuft first substantively appears in Safi as a co-conspirator with Ali ibn Washman\textsuperscript{541} in the 1506 assassination of the caid Abd al-Rahman. Reports would have us believe that the assassination occurred because Ali ibn Washman was the lover of Abd al-Rahman’s daughter. The relationship being disapproved by al-Rahman, ibn Washman feared the caid’s wrath and so chose to murder him.\textsuperscript{542} In truth, ibn Washman had been working with the Portuguese since at least 1500. It is through him that Manuel I had informed Abd al-Rahman of the new arrangement the Portuguese were imposing on Safi. Additionally, just as al-Rahman had accused his brother of conspiring with the Castilians, so too did the Portuguese suspect al-Rahman of such conduct.\textsuperscript{543} Consequently, the assassination has all the makings of a Portuguese plot to strengthen their position in Safi by once again installing a caid more to their liking.

Ibn Washman and ibn Ta’fuft, now found themselves threatened by allies of the murdered Abd al-Rahman and requested that the Portuguese assist them or face the potential loss of Safi. In return for supporting these two new would-be caids, the Portuguese secured a promise not only of a *feitoria* with a door opening upon the sea, but also of control over one of the strongest towers on the city walls. These were concessions that would essentially make the Portuguese a separate power in Safi, independent of Muslim control. Such an arrangement had long been resisted by Abd al-Rahman and was no doubt part of what had led to the increasingly

\textsuperscript{541} Much as is the case with the words wadi and *oued*, French sources refer to ibn Washman as ibn Ouachman. See note 184.

\textsuperscript{542} “La Conquête de Safi par les Portugais, 1508,” SIHM-Portugal, 151-161, 154-155. This was the same Ali ben Ouachman involved in earlier communications between Abd al-Rahman and Manuel I.

disfavorable view of him in Portugal.⁵⁴⁴

Among the Portuguese noblemen responsible for addressing the situation in Safi was Diogo de Azambuja, who now in excess of seventy-five years old had already done great service, having fought at al-Qasr al-Sagir, constructed São Jorge da Mina (El Mina) in the Gulf of Guinea, and built and been named captain and governor of Castelo Real at Mogador. De Azambuja, along with Garcia de Mello, trusted neither Ali ibn Washman nor Yahya ibn Ta’fuft, and soon found his suspicions warranted when once ensconced in Safi Yahya ibn Ta’fuft objected to the planned modifications to the Portuguese feitoria. This resistance from ibn Ta’fuft is an example of the manner in which local Muslim leaders sometimes tried to navigate within the Portuguese sphere of influence. With ibn Ta’fuft Portugal was now facing in Safi the third successive local leader that they had installed on the promise of significant concessions to the Portuguese, only to find that leader resist implementation of those concessions once in power. Whether this resistance was based on conscience or fear of popular discontent, it was likely emblematic of local maneuvering that took place in the absence of a strong central authority and with the addition of the Portuguese as a local source of power. Although in this instance ibn Ta’fuft secured permission to send his objections to King Manual I, de Azambuja and de Mello chose not to await a royal response and instead conspired to make Ali ibn Washman and Yahya ibn Ta’fuft so suspicious of each other that each eventually called for Portuguese intervention.⁵⁴⁵

Consistent with this goal, sometime around August of 1507 the Portuguese established a fortified structure in Safi that joined the beach, hid arms and supplies there, and put it in a ready state of defense.⁵⁴⁶ Yahya ibn Ta’fuft again tried to hinder the work by secretly prohibiting the

⁵⁴⁴ "La Conquête de Safi par les Portugais, 1508,” SIHM-Portugal, 151-161, 155.
⁵⁴⁵ "La Conquête de Safi par les Portugais, 1508,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 151-161, 156.
⁵⁴⁶a "La Conquête de Safi par les Portugais, 1508,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 151-161, 156. “Lettre de Diogo de Azambuja à Emmanuel I,” 13 December 1507, SIHM-Portugal, I, 139-144.
supply of masonry materials to the Portuguese. This prompted de Azambuja to seek to replace the former with Ali ibn Washman, who allegedly with the permission of de Azambuja, opened Safi to a local tribe, the Banu Mager, who pillaged the houses of ibn Ta’fuft’s partisans, and presumably sought to kill Yahya ibn Ta’fuft himself. But the ensuing chaos did not work out quite as intended, again exposing the confusion that often accompanied the fluid, multiple layers of intersecting relationships that seemed to dominate Portuguese colonial experimentation in Morocco at this time. Unaware that his grandfather wished for the assassination of ibn Ta’fuft, Diogo de Azambuja’s grandson offered him protection within Safi’s Portuguese fortifications, essentially saving his life. After eight days ibn Ta’fuft was sent to Portugal, not returning until 1510, at which time he was to be lauded by the Portuguese for his devotion to the Crown, becoming notoriously famous for leading Portuguese and local allies against both ashrāf forces and those of the Wattasid sultan.

By the end of the pillaging incident, de Azambuja had effectively obtained what he wanted, installing Ali ibn Washman as caid and finishing what were now formidable Portuguese fortifications with direct access to the sea. Yet with ibn Ta’fuft still alive, the latter’s supporters remained active and cited the pillaging in a plea to Portugal’s Manuel I that he remove Ali ibn Washmen in favor of Yahya ibn Ta’fuft. Diogo de Azambuja defended his selection of ibn Washman to the king as the more agreeable party to Portuguese interests. In his own letter to the king he boasted of the completion of improvements to the Portuguese factory in Safi, and presumably drawing on his experience with the construction of El Mina in the Gulf of

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547 At the time this tribe lived on a mountain north of the Tensift. Although the Arabic name uses a ”ج” the tribal name is pronounced as a hard “g”. “Lettre des habitants de Safi à Emmanuel I,” 2 July 1509, SIHM-Portugal, I, 177-202, 193n1.
Guinea and Castelo Real at Mogador, pressed the point that this was an opportune time to prepare for the construction of a true fortress at Safi. He accordingly asked the king to send lime, armed workers, and wine (since the local water was unhealthy for the workers). Stroking the king, he remarked that the conquest of the kingdom of Maroco (Marrakech) was at hand and that he hoped soon to plant the royal flag in Marrakech.\footnote{“Lettre de Diogo de Azambuja à Emmanuel I,” 13 December 1507, SIHM-Portugal, I, 139-144.}

Despite de Azambuja’s expressed optimism, events in Safi continued to move in unpredictable directions. Near the end of December 1507 the new Portuguese feitor reported that the city was in chaos and had been abandoned by merchants and artisans. If order was not restored by the king, he asserted, continued commerce there would be impossible. Significantly, he went on at length to report information that gives us a glimpse of the apparent value of Safi to the trading network of the Portuguese in the Atlantic. The factor reviewed the merchandise that he had brought with him, and how it was received, noting in particular the disappointment in Safi that he had not brought more gomme-lacque, for all that India could provide, he asserted, should be sent exclusively to Safi, where it could be very profitably marketed. Additionally, the feitor described the merchandise available in Safi and insisted that the city could accommodate all the commerce of El Mina and Arguin.\footnote{“Lettre de João Lopes de Alvim et de Christovão de Almeida a Emmanuel I,” 25 December 1507, SIHM-Portugal, I, 145-148.} It seems clear, however, that the continuing discontent in Safi would have to be resolved if the city was to reach its commercial potential. During the same month that the feitor was reporting, a Portuguese feitor from Andalusia sent to Safi to purchase wheat and sell goods for the king reported that the commercial traffic in the city was insufficient for him to discharge his merchandise, and that he had been advised by the Portuguese feitor there...
to wait until order had been restored and people returned to the city. This Andalusian feitor’s report reveals one means by which Moroccans attempted to oppose Portuguese domination. In the absence of the ability to resist militarily, Moroccan communities could and often did simply migrate away from the occupied location, or in the case of indigenous merchants, elect to trade elsewhere. For the latter to be effective, however, Moroccan merchants needed other locations where they could profitably trade. Consequently, as the Portuguese increased their presence on the Atlantic coast and established networks using the Atlantic that could benefit local merchants, they could make the option of going elsewhere less attractive to these local merchants and potentially win their cooperation with or even their dependence upon the Portuguese.

It eventually became clear that the Portuguese installation of Ali ibn Washman as caid in Safi was not yielding the fruit intended. Once installed and enriching himself, as his predecessors had done the caid openly opposed the expansion of the Portuguese fortifications, forbidding Muslim participation in the work and chastising those who did so. Relations became so strained that in January of 1508 King Manuel I sent four Portuguese ships and twelve hundred troops from Madeira to Safi. Seeking a pretext for direct military intervention, one emerged in the form of a dispute between a Portuguese and a local merchant. The confrontation provoked the city’s population, who attacked the Portuguese feitoria. De Azambuja’s men and troops overcame Muslim forces concentrated at the great mosque and took control of the city. Ali ibn

554 “Lettre de Nuno Ribeiro à Emmanuel I,” 27 December 1507, SIHM-Portugal, I, 149-150. It appears that Muslim leaders did sometimes issue legal rulings, or fatwas, that prohibited Muslims from continuing to reside in places occupied by the Portuguese. Benhima, Safi et son territoire, 234.
555 Leo Africanus recounts the incident as follows: “Now after the Portugales had sufficiently provided themselves of all other kinde of armour and warlike munitions, they sought by all meanes an occasion to fight with the citizens. At length it came to passe that a certain Portugals servant buying meat in the citie, did so provoke a butcher, that after much quarrelling they fell to blowes, whereupon the servant feeling himself hurt, thrust the butcher with his sworde, and laide him along upon the colde earth, and then fledde speedily to the castell, wherein he knewe the merchants to be. The people immediately rose up in armes, and ranne all of them with one consent into the castell, to the end they might utterly destroy it, & cut the throats of all them which were therein.” Leo Africanus, The History and Description of Africa, II, 287.
Washman fled to an area near Azemmour.\textsuperscript{556} In return for his efforts at Safi, as well as for his earlier service in founding El Mina and Castelo Real at Mogador, Diogo de Azambuja received from Manuel I a pension, the grant of the castle of Agouz on the Moroccan coast, and the captaincy and governorship of Safi.\textsuperscript{557}

In the developing Portuguese colonial system of the time the captain/governor was the highest representative of the crown in an occupied territory, and Safi provides an example of the administrative apparatus installed by the Portuguese in those cities dominated by military concerns. Unlike Ceuta, Safi possessed no municipal council. Instead, the captain/governor exercised complete executive authority over civil and military matters, as well as over the judiciary, with his power extending beyond the city to encompass the entire region assigned by the crown. Although not hereditary, feudal characteristics permeated the position of captain/governor. Chosen primarily from the nobility and playing a prominent role in conquests, in addition to an annual salary the holder of the position was entitled to a fifth of the loot taken from raids, slaving, and maritime prizes. A captain/governor was also empowered to appoint a wide variety of subordinate officials. Most important of these was the \textit{comtador}, who was responsible for the finances of the city and the management of royal property. With the captain/governor, the \textit{comtador} determined the level of taxes imposed on inhabitants and oversaw their collection. It was the \textit{comtador} who was responsible for the payment of soldiers

\textsuperscript{556} De Góis, \textit{Les Portuagais au Maroc}, 31-36. “La Conquête de Safi par les Portuagis, 1508,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 151-161, 157-158. A lack of certainty exists as to exactly when the final conquest and investiture of Safi by the Portuguese took place. Conflicting documents place it sometime between the end of January and early July 1508.

\textsuperscript{557} “Lettres patentes d’Emmanuel I,” 25 August 1508, SIHM-Portugal, I, 169-173. The “castle” of Agouz appears to have been at this time a small Portuguese fortification near the village of Agouz, which sat on a bank of the Tensift River approximately three kilometers from the river’s mouth and was presumably related in some fashion to the once great city of Goz to which Leo Africanus refers. Portugal later in 1521 built a small fort there that only lasted for a few years. “Lettres patentes d’Emmanuel I,” 25 August 1508, SIHM-Portugal, I, 169-173, 171n1.
and other public expenses. Cities occupied by the Portuguese also often had an almoxarife, who was responsible for the purchase of grain for the city, for the account of the king, and potentially for the Portuguese homeland as well. The main Portuguese establishment in occupied cities was the feitoria, administered by the feitor, who handled commercial transactions with Portugal, other occupied cities, and other Portuguese colonies.

With his assumption of authority in Safi de Azambuja became responsible for the establishment and administration of this colonial apparatus, and his efforts in doing so earned him the enmity of Safi’s Muslim notables. A year after his appointment they appealed to Manuel I. Their long recitation of complaints mentioned de Azambuja’s role in the pillaging of the city by the Banu Mager, an attack on innocent Muslims after the killing of two Portuguese, and the arrest of Arabs from the countryside who had come to Safi under a guarantee of safe passage, but who upon arrest were then sold as slaves. This last, according to the plea of the Safi notables, had encouraged Portuguese soldiers to buy or steal Muslims to sell as slaves—many of who were then sent to Madeira. Finally, the people complained that Christians had engaged in the desecration of the mosque and violated women and young girls without penalty. Apparently, an earlier letter from King Manuel I had announced the pending return of Yahya ibn Ta’fuft, but the joy of the news to the citizenry was tempered by de Azambuja expelling ibn Ta’fuft’s relatives from the city. The notables reminded King Manuel that it was they, not de Azambuja, who had truly won Safi for the king, as they had refused to participate in Ali ibn Washman’s attack on the Portuguese feitoria the prior year. If the king wished for people to return to Safi and for the

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558 Benhima, Safi et son territoire, 235-236. Other typical Portuguese subordinate administrative officials included the adail, who organized military incursions; the alcaide mor, who was responsible for the citadel in the event of a siege; the almocadem, a deputy responsible for troops under the adail; and the alfequeque, who handled the redemption of prisoners. A plethora of secretaries and interpreters were also common, with the latter position often held by Jews who served as intermediaries and negotiators as well. Benhima, Safi et son territoire, 236.

559 Benhima, Safi et son territoire, 236.

560 Benhima, Safi et son territoire, 236.
restoration of commerce, they asserted, then Christians needed to evacuate the mosque,\textsuperscript{561}\Muslims must be assured that they would no longer be sent\textsuperscript{562} from Safi as either free people or as slaves, those who had been enslaved must be set free, and an emissary should be sent by the king to serve as an intermediary between Muslims and Christians. Only then would the Muslims once again begin cultivating and storing grain, would people return to the city, and would commerce resume.\textsuperscript{563}

The military conquest of Safi turned out to be a harbinger of renewed Portuguese military aggressiveness in Morocco during the reign of Manuel I, including against cities that had already nominally submitted to their rule. Having moved methodically to secure positions along the Moroccan Atlantic coast—rebuffed at Mazagan, but successful at Agadir (Santa-Cruz), Mogador, and now Safi—Azammur was another logical target, and as in Safi, deteriorating internal conditions and the promises of a Moroccan collaborator offered a potential pretext for direct Portuguese intervention.

During April of 1504 the notables of Azammur had asked forgiveness from Manuel I for having plundered Portuguese ships that foundered on the bar of the Oum Er-Rbia.\textsuperscript{564} Granting it, Manuel I chastised the notables for their violations and imposed conditions that included the payment of past years’ tribute and the substitution of the tribute in fish with tribute in wheat and seeds. In the king’s instructions to his representative it is clear that the substitution of wheat reflected once again the value of Moroccan grains to Portugal, for the although it was to be

\textsuperscript{561} As will be discussed later, the Portuguese colonial model of this time involved transplanting to the land of the colonized Portuguese political, social, and economic structures. In the urban areas of occupied Morocco this often involved the conversion of the grand mosque to a cathedral.

\textsuperscript{562} The Arabic phrase in the letter is (يطلع مسلم من ءاسفي), which the editors have translated as “exported” in an apparent reference to the seizure of Muslims to work on Madeira. “Lettre des habitants de Safi à Emmanuel I,” 2 July 1509, SIHM-Portugal, I, 177-202, 187.

\textsuperscript{563} “Lettre des habitants de Safi à Emmanuel I,” 2 July 1509, SIHM-Portugal, I, 177-202. In pleading for an intermediary, the citizens of Safi claimed that an agent already sent by the king had been corrupted by Diogo de Azambuja.

\textsuperscript{564} “La conquête d’Azemmour 3 Septembre 1513,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 394-402, 395.
presented to the notables simply as a condition for re-entering the king’s good grace, the substitution was in fact driven by the need to relieve famine in Portugal.\textsuperscript{565} It does not appear that this attempt at reconciliation was successful;\textsuperscript{566} however, by 1507 the Portuguese had received intriguing assurances from a Muslim collaborator, Mawlay Zaydan, a Wattasid prince who had recently been deposed as the governor of Meknes. After being deposed Zaydan had fled to Azammur where he found his influence was not as substantial as he had expected. Allying himself with a pro-Portuguese faction, and working with a Portuguese as an intermediary, he eventually traveled to Portugal to help plan the latter’s investiture of the city, claiming it would be welcomed by a part of the population.\textsuperscript{567}

Upon eventually returning to Azammur, however, Mawlay Zaydan, like the purported Portuguese allies installed as caid in Safi, proved to be an unreliable ally. On August 10 of 1508 a Portuguese fleet entered the mouth of the Oum Er-Rbia. Muslim forces reacted by moving to defend the city with some eight thousand men and another fifteen or sixteen thousand from the countryside. To confront them the Portuguese had only about four hundred cavalry and two thousand infantry.\textsuperscript{568} In defending cities, fortresses, and \textit{feitorias} the Portuguese had consistently been able to rely upon their competence with artillery to repulse far more numerically superior Muslim forces. The exception, of course, was Graciosa, where the fort was not particularly strong and the Portuguese had to rely in part on artillery from riverine caravels. Ever since their early efforts at Tangier, however, the efficacy of Portuguese artillery in offensive assault had been uneven; the experience at Azammur was not to change that. Muslim forces let the

\textsuperscript{566} This is the position taken by Pierre de Cenival. “La conquête d’Azemmour 3 Septembre 1513,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 394-402, 395. He relies in part on Valentim Fernandes who, writing in 1506-1507, indicates that the people of Azemmur did not pay tribute for two years. Fernandes, \textit{Description}, 29.
\textsuperscript{567} “La conquête d’Azemmour 3 Septembre 1513,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 394-402, 396.
\textsuperscript{568} “Récit de l’attaque d’Azemmour,” 10-12 August 1508, SIHM-Portugal, I, 162-168.
Portuguese disembark from their ships in an apparent attempt to lure them into an ambush. A fierce seven-hour battle ensued before the gates of the city, which were shut fast against the Portuguese, but against which the Muslim forces also became pinned. From atop the city walls Muslims attacked the Portuguese with stones, arrows, and when those ran out, with beehives. Portuguese forces were drawn off into other ambushes and were able to withdrawal only with difficulty. Eventually they regained their ships and sailed away leaving Azammur unconquered.  

Azammur was a rare Muslim victory, and was followed by Muslim assaults against Arzila, Safi, and Massa during the period 1508-1510. Some were led by the Wattasid ruler and others by forces within the Kingdoms of Maraco (Marrakech) or the Sus. For a time Portugal was on the defensive. Naval power and artillery saved Arzila, but shook the Portuguese, the Muslim forces under the avenging sultan al-Burtuqali having broken through the walls and freed some captives before being repulsed. A major assault on Safi in late 1510 was equally dramatic. By this time Safi was under new leadership. Complaints about de Azambuja had led to his replacement with a successor who later in 1510 was in turn replaced by Nuno Fernandes de Ataide. Under Nuno Fernandes the Portuguese in Safi were well aware of the approaching storm, with officials reporting to Manuel I early in the month that a siege of Safi

570 Cook, The Hundred Years War, 145. By the middle of 1510 the inhabitants of Massa were complaining to Manuel I about his indifference to them, claiming that João Lopes de Sequeira at nearby Agadir (Santa-Cruz) was mistreating them, despite their assistance in resisting the Spanish at Agadir. Among their complaints was that he detained a Jew who had to be ransomed by his family, and that despite the king’s instructions to interdict the Arab trade in slaves, he purchased a black from Massa enslaved by Arabs and had him sent to Madeira. They offered to return the accoutrements of Portuguese suzerainty (e.g. the royal banner) and the keys to the factory if he was not going to protect them, and instead would seek the protection of someone else. “Lettre des habitants de Massa à Emmanuel I,” 6 July 1510, SIHM-Portugal, I, 233-247.
571 Leo Africanus, History, I, 506.
572 Although apparently sent to Safi as governor in 1510, Nuno Fernandes de Ataide’s captaincy and governorship of the city were not formally confirmed until July of 1513, shortly before the successful Portuguese conquest of Azammur. “La Conquête de Safi par les Portugais, 1508,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 151-161, 159n5. “Lettres patentes d’Emmanuel I,” 2 July 1513, SIHM-Portugal, I, 391-393.
was no longer in doubt, as all the tribes from the High Atlas to the sea were on the march.\textsuperscript{573} Surrounded by some two hundred thousand Muslims that apparently included Wattasid troops, as well as various \textit{jaysh} contingents and Berbers from al-Medina, from the areas between Azammur and al-Medina, and from the country between Mogador and Agouz, the Portuguese grew so desperate as to arm the city’s Jewish population.\textsuperscript{574} Once again, Portuguese artillery played a vital role and repulsed the assault.\textsuperscript{575}

Both the Moroccan defense of Azammur in 1508 and the subsequent sieges of Arzila and Safi demonstrate that despite the lack of a central authority that could govern all of Morocco, there were power centers that were sufficiently independent to openly resist the Portuguese. They stood on the other end of the spectrum from the collaborationist Portuguese-installed caids and compromised figures like ibn Ta’fuft and Mawlay Zaydan. Supporters of resisting the Portuguese could also be found throughout the country, from Wattasid territory in the north all the way to the regions of the Sus and Dra’a far to the south. What these forces lacked was the military means to successfully expel the Portuguese once the latter became ensconced. The demographic conditions in Morocco at this time, however, meant that this was not the only manner by which to exert pressure on the Portuguese.

Examining the Moroccan experience at Safi and Azammur exposes very early in the construction of the Atlantic world the inherent weakness confronted by the Portuguese colonial project when it sought to move beyond claiming uninhabited Atlantic islands or establishing trading posts. When we witness the Portuguese seek to conquer and administer new territory the demographic challenges soon become apparent. As we saw earlier with regard to Safi,

\textsuperscript{573} “Lettre de Nuno Gato à Emmanuel I,” 4-5 December 1510, SIHM-Portugal, I, 259-264. “Lettre de Nuno Fernandes de Ataide à Emmanuel I,” 5 December 1510, SIHM-Portugal, I, 265-270.
\textsuperscript{574} “Lettre de Nuno Gato à Emmanuel I,” 3 January 1511, SIHM-Portugal I, 271-280.
discontented Muslims could offer resistance by moving away from an occupied location or refusing to trade with it. The impact of such resistance tactics could be enhanced significantly by extending it to the cultivation and supply of grain and foodstuffs upon which not only the occupied cities depended, but at times the Portuguese West African network and the Portuguese homeland as well. Though it seems there was never a dearth of nobles or aristocrats willing to take service in Morocco, it also seems clear that Portuguese efforts in the country were consistently plagued by the absence of a corresponding migration of the Portuguese peasantry. The semi-feudal system of Portugal simply could not work in Morocco absent a peasantry whose labor could be appropriated and directed. Whether or not Portugal itself could have sustained such a migration, and there are indications that it could not have, in the absence of it maintenance of large territorial acquisitions was untenable. Later, mostly in the Western Hemisphere of the Atlantic world, European powers successfully gained control of the local labor force while it existed, and when they could not, when it was insufficient, or when it disappeared, brought in slave labor and European settlers. Portugal was unable to do any of these in Morocco at this time and thus the Portuguese in occupied cities were forced to earn or coerce the cooperation of local groups in the surrounding area in order to sustain their position. This meant, for example, that the complaints like those of the urban notables of Safi to Manuel I about de Azambuja could not always simply be ignored.

Safi once again is an example of the implications of Portugal’s inability to solve this demographic problem. As the months passed after the siege of 1510, the supply situation in Safi became desperate. Local Muslims simply refused to sell wheat to the Portuguese and the city appealed to Manuel I for resupply, claiming that Safi would otherwise be lost.576 Workers and

soldiers also had to be paid, and Safi’s *contador*, Nuno Gato, begged Manuel I to send funds, claiming that he had so extended his credit as to be ashamed to walk through the market. 577 Such actions were the primary means by which Moroccans could engage in resistance absent an ability to challenge the Portuguese directly with raids or sieges of occupied places.

The Portuguese attempted to address this challenge through the systematic fiscal depredation of rural areas surrounding Safi. This was not the colonization we would later see in much of the Atlantic world, most prominently in the Western Hemisphere, where Europeans appropriated large tracts of land upon which indigenous peoples, imported slaves, or settlers worked the land on behalf of the colonial power, or in the eventual case of some settlers, for themselves. Instead, this was a system of tribute relationships coerced by the threat and use of military force. In this manner the Portuguese sought to gather the economic production of the Moroccan countryside in the absence of a labor force that the Portuguese controlled. 578

Additionally, as Moroccans themselves either by choice or by necessity engaged in the new Atlantic network created by Europeans and accessed through occupied Moroccan ports like Safi, the Portuguese imposed duties on the goods that passed through such locations.

Yassir Benhima has published information on the exactions the Portuguese forced upon the localities and tribes in the region of Safi for the period 1510-1512, according to the Portuguese register of taxes. 579 As the information adapted and reproduced in Figure 13 below reveals, the assessments were not uniform, but instead varied by locality and tribal group. Wheat and barley were overwhelmingly the dominant form of payment, which was understandable in the grain-rich region of Dukkala, but the Portuguese in a few instances also received horses or

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578 It is worth noting that the Portuguese establishment of Agouz was part of a largely unsuccessful broader effort by the Portuguese to attempt direct administration of rural areas. Behima, *Safi et son Territoire*, 234.
579 See Figure 13.
falcons. Baskets or satchels known as *alqueire*, and camel loads, were the primary measure of the grain assessments, and were in many cases assessed upon the number of residences or households. It appears from the information that communities and regions of diverse sizes were subject to these de facto tribute payments, with not only large regions and tribes, but also villages of tents and huts, known as douars, being forced to pay the Portuguese. Given the variations in payment, arrangements must have been negotiated individually between the Portuguese and the different local groups. In the absence of any reasons for differentiation being revealed in the underlying documents, Benhima reasonably speculates that these negotiations took into account the produce of the particular region, the capability of the inhabitants, their proximity to Portuguese power centers like Safi, and their political importance.\textsuperscript{580} Examining records from the first two decades of the sixteenth century, Vincent J. Cornell estimates that Europeans gathered some twenty percent of the grain produced in the Dukkala region during this time.\textsuperscript{581}

The architect of this Portuguese policy was the captain and governor of Safi, Nuno Fernandes de Ataide, who some scholars have asserted marked a notable difference from his predecessors to the extent that he sought to turn Moroccan communities into allies. Pierre de Cenival, for example, notes both the distinction and success of Nuno Fernandes’s approach.

The latter [Nuno Fernandes de Ataide] was the main architect of the audacious and innovative policy which assured Portugal, for a few years, of such brilliant successes in the kingdom of Marrakech. Instead of the violent and treacherous policies of Diogo de Azambuja toward the inhabitants, he [Nuno Fernandes de Ataide] was able to inspire confidence in them, to make them faithful allies and tributaries of Portugal and organize the tribes between Safi and Marrakech, realizing from 1510 to 1516, the first experience of a political protectorate.\textsuperscript{582}

\textsuperscript{580} Behima, *Safi et son Territoire*, 240.  
\textsuperscript{581} Cornell, *Socioeconomic*, 387-389.  
\textsuperscript{582} “La Conquête de Safi par les Portugais, 1508,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 151-161, 159. “Celui-ci fut le principal artisan de la politique audacieuse et nouvelle qui assura au Portugal, pendant quelques années, de si brillants succès dans le royaume de Marrakech. Au lieu d'user à l‘égard des indigènes des procédés violents et perfidies de Diogo de Azambuja, il sut leur inspirer confiance, en faire de fidèles alliés et tributaires du Portugal et organiser les tribus d’entre Safi et Marrakech, réalisant ainsi, de 1510 à 1516, une première expérience de politique de protectorat.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality or Tribe</th>
<th>Amount and Nature of Tax</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wirs</td>
<td>500 alqueires of cereals per year (300 of wheat and 200 of barley) (= 5 alqueires of wheat and 3.6 of barley per each house)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magur</td>
<td>same amount as the inhabitants of Wirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarnu</td>
<td>without precision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banū Mager</td>
<td>8 alqueires of wheat and 16 of barley per house (400 houses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tazrut</td>
<td>25 alqueires of wheat per household (a camel load), one mare and one falcon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aguz</td>
<td>100 camel loads (of which 80 loads are barley and 20 are wheat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayyir et Namir</td>
<td>30 alqueires of barley per household, one mare and one falcon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les `Abda</td>
<td>600 camel loads (400 of wheat and 200 of barley), three horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazada</td>
<td>15 alqueires (half barley, half wheat) per household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karawn</td>
<td>15 alqueires of wheat or 30 of barley per house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Jum`a</td>
<td>15 alqueires of wheat or 30 of barley per house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telmist and Ratsana</td>
<td>15 alqueires of wheat or 30 of barley per house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telmist Ayt Suti</td>
<td>1,500 alqueires of wheat or 3,000 of barley for 102 houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skiat</td>
<td>900 alqueires of wheat or 1,800 of barley (65 houses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markuzu</td>
<td>650 alqueires of wheat or 1,200 of barley (45 houses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tlat Mallul</td>
<td>750 alqueires of wheat or 1,500 of barley (51 names)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zwagha/Shiadma</td>
<td>100 camel loads (half wheat, half barley)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douars Brahmiyya</td>
<td>40 camel loads (half wheat, half barley) for 5 douars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharqiyya (fraction Awdal Yusuf)</td>
<td>200 loads of wheat, one mare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halliz, Awdal Shita</td>
<td>30 camel loads of wheat (six douars)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sallali, Awdal Dvit (Arabs of the region of Tit)</td>
<td>100 camel loads (half wheat, half barley) for 20 douars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awdal Fraj, Awdal Brahimm fractions of Awdal Shita</td>
<td>100 camel loads of wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awdal `Amram, Chariyya, Shaj’a, Awdal Yahyâ (Tagrant, Alzimay, al-Jabri, Grandu, Tagrat)</td>
<td>1,400 camel loads (1,000 of wheat and 400 of barley), 4 horses (three for the Arabs and one for the Berbers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Madina</td>
<td>Half a camel load, half of that wheat and half barley, 1,000 camel loads (two thirds of wheat and one third of barley) per household</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13. Portuguese taxes for tribes and localities in the region of Safi (1510-1512).\textsuperscript{583}

\textsuperscript{583} Adapted and translated from the French by the author. The original table is in Benhima, \textit{Safi et son Territoire}, 239. Benhima’s footnote for the table indicates that the source for the information is the text of the register of taxes, and reads in its entirety, “Le texte du register des impôts, connu sous le titre de \textit{Libro de tributes}, est partiellement édité et traduit par A. Bouchareb, \textit{Dukkâla wa al-isti m`âr al-burtughali}, Casablanca, 1984, 493-519.” Benhima, \textit{Safi et son Territoire}, 238n33. An \textit{alqueire} is a Portuguese term derived from Arabic that referred to a basket or satchel carried by pack animals and served as a measure of capacity, primarily for cereal grains. It varied over time. A “douar” is an Arab village that typically contained a group of tents or huts encircling an open space.
From a distance this assessment seems astounding, for however better Nuno Fernandes policies may have been in cultivating Muslim allies, the policies nevertheless relied upon the confident projection of significant, sometimes ruthless, Portuguese military force. Weston Cook notes as much when he characterizes Nuno Fernandes de Ataide as one of an aggressive “class of hotblooded new [Portuguese] capitan,” who believed that “force alone insured that Moors would bow to Portugal as sole arbitrator and protector and to themselves as guarantors.”

Portugal had by this time won a freer hand when it signed the Treaty of Sintra with Castile in 1509, which reserved for Portugal the Atlantic coast of Morocco. Now, under leaders like Nuno Fernandes de Ataide, the policy they adopted seemed to differ most significantly from its predecessors primarily to the extent it did not rely solely on the Portuguese themselves to project Portuguese power. For some years after the Muslim attack on Safi in 1510, rebato raids became the primary offensive vehicle of this new Portuguese approach designed to force alliances and tribute payments on Muslim communities. What made these different from the past was the significant involvement of local Muslim forces in the raids. Local Muslim tribes where now to play a major role in extending Portuguese power inland from the Atlantic.

It was during this time that the formerly would-be caid of Safi, Yahya ibn Ta’fuft, returned from Portugal, now enjoying favor as an agent of Lisbon. Under the new policies of Nuno Fernandes and other Portuguese leaders, Muslims like Yahya ibn Ta’fuft led the “Moors of Peace”—tribes friendly to the Portuguese—against fellow Muslims. As mentioned briefly earlier, this was not always an easy alliance. Ibn Ta’fuft’s most consistent and vehement critic was Nuno Fernandes de Ataide himself. With the support of testimonial letters from prominent Jews and Muslims, Nuno Fernandes wrote repeatedly at length to Manuel I about the Muslim

584 Cook, The Hundred Years War, 146.
leader’s alleged treachery. The latter, so the allegations claimed, was behaving not as an intermediary, as he had represented he would upon his arrival from Portugal, but was instead intently establishing his own independent power base, taking the title of king for himself, collecting tribute for himself rather than for the Portuguese, prohibiting tribes from sending tribute to the Portuguese, ordering the assassination of Jews who informed upon him, and negotiating on his own behalf with the ruler of Marrakech, all with the ultimate goal of winning Safi for the Muslims. His tactics, his detractors alleged, involved going so far as to instigate attacks by Muslims on the Portuguese, pulling his forces from the field and abandoning the Portuguese and their Muslim allies when such attacks occurred, freeing prisoners won in the ensuing battles, and assuring Muslims that his ultimate goal was their liberation from foreign domination.  

Nuno Fernandes de Ataide wrote the king that if he had the authority he would have hanged Yahya ibn Ta’fuft for treason. Understandably, therefore, Nuno Fernandes was incensed when he learned in December of 1514 that Yahya ibn Ta’fuft, after once again traveling to Portugal, had arrived at Azammur promising to conquer Marrakech, apparently with Manuel I’s blessing. This, he wrote the king, showed that the king had less confidence in his own captain and governor than he did in Yahya ibn Ta’fuft. Fearing to leave Safi under the circumstances, he expressed his hope that the king would avenge him if he died in battle,
particularly if betrayed by this supposed ally.\textsuperscript{588} Yahya ibn Ta’fuft had his defenders among the Portuguese and appeared to suffer no immediate consequences as a result of these allegations, even being honored for his service to the Portuguese, at least once at the urging of Nuno Fernandes himself.\textsuperscript{589}

We see in these details about ibn Ta’fuft the complex markers of the hybrid figure that would appear in various places at different times as the Atlantic world took shape. Such individuals navigated the new and changing sociopolitical order of the Atlantic in different forms—as collaborationists, as creoles whose status was always in question, or possibly as tricksters whose hybridity was not governed by bloodline but by a demonstrated ability to move between cultures at will or upon circumstance. Ibn Ta’fuft easily fits the mold of such figures that emerged when various societies around the Atlantic came into contact as the Atlantic world took shape. After 1510 a professed avid collaborationist, we nevertheless saw earlier in Safi how ibn Ta’fuft balked at the strengthening of Portuguese fortifications, losing the favor of the latter, only to win it back and return with even more authority later. Even holding this authority, however, his actions, according to his critics, raised questions about exactly whether or not he was truly a collaborator or instead an infiltrator.

Weston Cook looks upon the Portuguese criticisms of Yahya ibn Ta’fuft with skepticism, perhaps even with a certain level of disdain.

Ibn Ta’fuft led the largest “Moors of Peace” force alongside the capitan of Safi, Nuño Fernandes. He proved a scrappy fighter around Kawuz in 1512, battling the Hintāṭī. In collecting Lisbon’s tribute and protecting Lisbon’s agents, however, he also built up his own principality between occupied Safi and Hintāṭī Marrakech. His conduct soon


brought him afoul of Nuño Fernandes who accused him of all kinds of crimes. Whether or not ibn Ta’fūft had state-building ambitions, the qā‘id’s role made monopoly of violence a goal and required some autonomy. In his own “quanun” decrees, he set out regulations contradicting both tribal customs and Manuel’s regal writ. His rules stress repression of civil violence, punishing those who would take into their own hands laws ibn Ta’fūft claimed as enforcer. Yaḥiyā [sic] also exploited his position as Lisbon’s agent. He imposed corvee labor upon his subjects like the Makanazaya, a confederation under sporadic Portuguese protection since the 1490s. In short, the actions which so offended the capitan fell within customary prerogatives for a qā‘id—or a capitan, for that matter.590

Cook’s evaluation challenges the arguments of ibn Ta’fuft’s Portuguese critics that the Muslim leader was behaving traitorously by amassing local power, collecting tribute, and enforcing a regulatory framework that he alone determined to be necessary. These, as Cook asserts, were not wholly uncharacteristic actions for a powerful caid. This assessment, however, does not address the full spectrum of activities in which ibn Ta’fuft was accused of engaging. It is the allegations of redirecting of tribute, carrying on independent negotiations with other Moroccan power centers, the instigation of attacks against the Portuguese, the freeing of prisoners, and assertions that he represented himself as working for the ultimate demise of the Portuguese that make ibn Ta’fuft potentially far more complicated than simply a collaborator misunderstood or unfairly maligned by Portuguese enemies. His actions, as we have seen, varied in the past from collaboration to resistance, and he had not only spent time in Portugal, but also had clearly become skilled in winning favor among influential Portuguese decision-makers at court. With sufficient local prestige to win many a local Muslim to the side of the “Moors of Peace,” ibn Ta’fuft did, indeed, navigate between and among multiple worlds. Whether he was loyal solely to the Portuguese, to himself and his tribe, or was working to amass power for what he may have concluded was the inevitable departure of the Portuguese, ibn Ta’fuft was at the very least a Moroccan example of the hybrid figure that emerged throughout the Atlantic world as the

590 Cook, The Hundred Years War, 146-147.
creation of that world thrust societies together in new ways, and in some instances, for the first time.

With the policies advocated and implemented by individuals like Nuno Fernandes and ibn Ta’fuft, to their formal expeditions and rebato raids, the Portuguese had thus now added the proxy campaigns and raids of the “Moors of Peace.” In these Muslim clients would lead or direct forces made up overwhelmingly of local tribes buttressed by a small contingent of Portuguese. Such forces pressed forward from coastal enclaves to exert Portuguese authority inland and were critical to securing the exactions outlined earlier beyond the walls of occupied locations like Safi. Coupled with other Portuguese initiatives, this new type of Atlantic attack involving local allies threatened to bring Morocco to the precipice of complete European domination by the second decade of the sixteenth century.

Predictably, Azammur once again became a target. About two years after the initial failed Portuguese assault, it had returned to relative stability. The Portuguese feitoria had reopened and according to the Portuguese feitor, Mawlay Zaydan had surfaced again and assumed jurisdiction in the city over Christians, Jews, and poor Muslims in a sort of power-sharing arrangement with an important Muslim, Sidi Ali. In this new role, Zaydan assured the Portuguese that he was at their service, and in 1510 an agreement was reached that not only renewed the terms of the treaty of 1486, but also gave the Portuguese the right to construct a fortress at Azammur.591 Manuel I then proceeded to follow what Pierre Cenival has characterized as “exactly the same policy as at Safi.”592

While Safi had been under siege, things in Azammur had remained peaceful. Between

592 “La conquête d’Azemmour 3 Septembre 1513,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 394-402, 397.
the start of 1511 and the middle of 1513, however, relations between Zaydan and the Portuguese in Azammur deteriorated. The former allegedly violated long-standing agreements among the parties, so provoking Portuguese agents that they chose to leave the city. Portuguese officials in Safi meanwhile agitated aggressively for intervention in Azammur. In a letter to Manuel I cited earlier, for example, the contador Nuno Gato, in addition to pleading for funds, also urged the king to secure Azammur to the north, claiming that if he did so one could pass from Safi to Azammur as easily as one passed between Lisbon and Santarém in Portugal. A year later, Nuno Fernandes de Ataide, learning that no fleet for such a purpose was being prepared in Portugal, appealed to the king to take action against Azammur even if the king himself had to lead the effort. Long ago, he noted, Afonso V had not deemed it beneath him to take Arzila and Qasr al-Sagir, and they were of much less importance than Azammur. Were the Wattasid sultan in Fez to take Azammur, he warned the king, Portuguese conquests would be in danger. At the same time Nuno Fernandes also sent letters to the king from Muslims complaining about the situation in Azammur and the activities of Mawlây Zaydan.

Whether or not Zaydan’s actions provided a needed pretext, there is no doubt that Portugal’s larger designs in Morocco included the conquest of Azammur, and in this effort they were to return to the tactics of direct and overwhelming Portuguese military intervention that had won them Safi. In August of 1513 the Portuguese launched a massive expedition against Azammur under the leadership of the Duke of Braganza. Consisting of some five hundred ships, two thousand cavalry, thirteen thousand foot soldiers, and a great deal of artillery, Braganza’s

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593 “La conquête d’Azemmour 3 Septembre 1513,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 394-402, 397.
595 “Lettre de Nuno Fernandes de Ataide à Emmanuel I,” 13 May 1513, SIHM-Portugal, I, 387-388.
597 Weston F. Cook characterizes the eventual Portuguese assault on Azammur as “unprovoked” and notes that “[i]n a year when Lisbon’s officers in India pleaded for artillery, Manuel chose to throw his full might against a small Moroccan town already his.” Cook, The Hundred Years War, 147.
force landed at Mazagan on August 29 and soon marched on Azammur, accompanied by some Moors of Peace. The Portuguese effort was eased by the negotiations of Nuno Fernandes de Ataide, who had convinced both the region’s Chériya tribal confederation and the ruler of Marrakech not to intervene. A Portuguese detachment destroyed Muslim fire ships on the Oum Er-Rbia and then the army laid siege to Azammur. After some initial assaults, representatives of the Jews of Azammur informed the Portuguese that the Muslim forces had evacuated the city overnight, and the Portuguese entered on September 3, 1513.

With the successful assault on Azammur the Atlantic war on Morocco had taken on the overtones, in the words of Pierre de Cenival, of a veritable crusade. Manuel I proudly announced to the Pope that the Portuguese had captured Azammur and that the cities of Tit and al-Medina had offered their submission, as had surrounding tribes. He hoped, Manuel I declared to the Pope, to soon conquer all of the kingdom of Maroco (Marrakech).

598 The limited skirmishing that the Portuguese endured was later determined to be at the urging of Yahya ibn Ta’fuft, who Pierre de Cenival asserts must have been concerned about an effective Portuguese occupation policy necessarily diminishing his role as an intermediary between the Portuguese and Muslim communities. “La conquête d’Azemmour 3 Septembre 1513,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 394-402, 399. “Lettre de Nuno Fernandes de Ataide à Emmanuel I,” 29 June 1514, SIHM-Portugal, I, 572-574.

599 “Lettre de Nuno Fernandes de Ataide à Emmanuel I,” 29 June 1514, SIHM-Portugal, I, 572-574.


601 Pope Leo X

602 Pope Leo X
rewarded Manuel I accordingly. Processions and masses were held in the latter’s honor, all the churches existing or to be built in conquered territory were to be attached to the Order of Christ under the patronage of the king of Portugal, and for continuing the war against the infidels, Manuel I was to receive a portion of Portugal’s ecclesiastical revenues. In Portugal poets wrote verse celebrating the victory and there were prominent announcements and celebrations, all in stark contrast to the suppression of information that was to follow the Portuguese defeat at Wadi al-Makazin sixty-five years later.

With the fear sown by the conquest of Azemmur, as well as the corresponding submission of Tit, el-Medina, and surrounding tribes, the path seemed open for the conquest of Marrakech, the capital of the kingdom of Maroco. Advisors pushed the Duke of Braganza to seize the opportunity. Yet the Duke demurred. His letter to Manuel I less than a month after the capture of Azemmur suggests the Duke probably competently and realistically evaluated the circumstances he faced, giving voice to the logistical problems that likely pervaded the entire Portuguese enterprise in the country. Despite what the duke’s advisers urged, conditions for an assault on inland Marrakech were far from ideal. Problems of resupply were a significant factor. Wheat, meat, straw, and wood were all dependent on a viable market with local Muslims, but even those who had submitted were not delivering all the grain they owed the Portuguese. Before anything could be done the duke felt his forces must gather supplies that could last for two to three months. Azemmur, he assessed, because of the difficulty in navigating the bar of the Oum Er-Rbia, should be considered an inland city and would need to be well-supplied and house a large garrison of one thousand five hundred men—more if the sultan in Fez chose to

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603 The Order of Christ in Portugal was the successor military order to the Knights Templar in Portugal after the latter was abolished by the Pope in 1312.
605 La conquête d’Azemmour 3 Septembre 1513,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 394-402, 401-402.
engage. Additionally, the duke suggested, a fortress should be constructed at Mazagan where the Portuguese could store two or three thousand barrels of wheat. Marrakech would have to wait.

In the meantime Azammur became another example of Portuguese experimentation in the mechanics of conquest and occupation as the Portuguese attempted to convert and re-orient Muslim spaces to serve colonial needs. A series of letters between officials in Azammur and Manuel I in late 1513 and early 1514 reveal discussions about how best to occupy and defend the newly-acquired prize. The basic challenge was that the size of the city would require substantial troops and resources if all of it was to be defended. Accordingly, the Portuguese ultimately decided to embark on a construction program that consolidated the Portuguese position into a smaller and thus more defensible area adjacent to the river and enclosed by walled fortifications. Within this enclosed area reserved primarily for Portuguese troops and citizens, the Portuguese demolished or repurposed existing structures (e.g. they converted the mosque to a church), laid new buildings and streets out in a pattern that met their preferences, and exercised complete control. Outside the walls in what became known as the “old city” the Portuguese also demolished Moroccan buildings considered too close to the new enclosed Portuguese position. This process of downsizing, known as atalho, became the common approach for all the cities controlled by the Portuguese in the Maghrib. It essentially created military and civilian sections within conquered cities. Azammur differed slightly from this pattern in that the

606 “Lettre du Duc de Bragance à Emmanuel I,” 30 September 1513, SIHM-Portugal, I, 438-442. Later communications disclose that the Portuguese considered alternatives to a fortress at Mazagan, including constructing a castle on the bar of the Oum Er-Rbia. “Lettre de Nuno Gato à Emmanuel I,” 5 December 1513, SIHM-Portugal, I, 453-456.
Portuguese also designed the enclosed area to house a small number of Portuguese citizens or settlers in addition to the military garrison.\textsuperscript{609}

The advantages coastal holdings like Azammur and Safi afforded the growing Portuguese Atlantic network were significant, for these were not simply waypoints for caravels or merchant ships traveling to the Indian Ocean. As has been emphasized multiple times, the grain provided through these ports was not destined solely for Portugal, but also for Arguin and Guinea. Horses obtained in Morocco could also be marketed attractively in sub-Saharan Africa.\textsuperscript{610} Additionally lucrative was the Portuguese intervention in the Moroccan textile market. According to John Vogt, the role of Morocco as a supplier of cloth to Portugal’s southern trade “was without parallel.”\textsuperscript{611} Vincent Cornell estimates that woven cloth represented approximately forty percent of what was traded for gold at El Mina.\textsuperscript{612} Taking particular advantage of their position in Safi, the Portuguese attempted with some success to direct local internal production toward the colors and styles of Moroccan clothing—the \textit{hanbals} or \textit{lambens}—that were popular in their sub-Saharan markets.\textsuperscript{613} In return for these items the Portuguese received primarily gold and slaves, but with their position in Morocco they now could also potentially redirect these commodities of the centuries-old trans-Saharan trade network toward termini that they now controlled at both ends—in the Gulf of Guinea and in southern Morocco.

With the captures of Safi and Azammur the Portuguese had thus secured a dominant and lucrative position in the heavy grain-producing and textile areas of Morocco’s Atlantic coast approximately one hundred years after beginning their overseas expansion at Ceuta.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[610] Ricard, \textit{Etudes}, 100.
\item[612] Cornell, \textit{Socioeconomic}, 391-392.
\end{footnotes}
Transplanting a semi-feudal administrative apparatus to the occupied cities, they converted spaces within them to better suit the purposes of European colonization, notably by creating defensible perimeters with access to the sea. Lacking a feudal peasantry or slave laborers to cultivate grain under Portuguese direction, they imposed tribute relationships on local Muslim communities in which refusal to participate equaled rebellion and risked the ruthless application of military force. In this the Portuguese were aided by Muslim allies who won favor as the “Moors of Peace” and participated in the appropriation of Muslim productive labor. Generally unable to match the Portuguese militarily, successful Muslim resistance centered on the migration of inhabitants and redirection of trade away from occupied areas. These conditions were fertile ground for the emergence of hybrid figures like those who would be seen elsewhere in the Atlantic world—people who moved between and among the indigenous and European power centers leaving an ambiguous trail.

**Highwater**

Almost a century from when they had first invaded Morocco at Ceuta, Portugal now controlled most of the major towns along the Moroccan Atlantic coast. Only the semi-uninhabited Larache at the mouth of the Wadi Loukkos, the city of Salé at the mouth of the Bou Regreg, and Mamora at the mouth of the Sebou remained outside Portuguese dominance. With most of the Moroccan coast in the hands of the Portuguese, of the three major kingdoms in the country, that of Maroco (Marrakech) continued, after the fall of Azammur, to seem the most ripe for conquest. Azammur’s capture had certainly increased Portuguese prestige and their rule was recognized by a population that encompassed an area bounded by a triangle that extended from
Azammur to Mogador to Marrakech.614 In February of 1514, the son-in-law of the governor of Safi raided the foothills of the Atlas, not far from Marrakech, proving that the Portuguese could successfully attack well into the interior, and encouraging those who agitated for action on Marrakech.615 Within Marrakech itself the ruler Amir Nasr al-Hintati must have felt beleaguered. In addition to facing Christian forces, he was also being challenged by the rising power of a Sa’di *sharīf* from the Sus.

The Portuguese first attempted to secure Marrakech without a fight, proposing a vassalage arrangement, which as we have seen had gained them, if incompletely at first, Azammur and Safi. In August of 1514 they offered protection to Nasir al-Hintati under terms that must have seemed outrageous. As a vassal of the King of Portugal, he would become part of the “Moors of Peace,” obligated to fight Muslims who were the enemies of Portugal. Each year he would pay tribute to Portugal of five horses, as well as sums for each Muslim and Jewish house in the city. Additionally, he would provide his sons and important persons as hostages, while Manuel I would be entitled to construct a fortress in Marrakech.616 Manuel I’s envoy, Fernão Dias also traveled with “secret” instructions. These directed him to impress upon the ruler of Marrakech the significant disadvantages of not agreeing to the Portuguese terms, citing the experience of the Wattasid ruler in Fez, who now sat powerless while the Portuguese governors of Tangier and Arzila raided his territory. Dias was also instructed to gather intelligence about Marrakech—the level of the ruler’s power, the important people, the number of troops and population, the weak points in its defense, the number of towers and gates, and the

615 “Lettre de Nuno Fernandes de Ataide à Emmanuel I,” 15 February 1514, SIHM-Portugal I, 480-481. For the loss of only one dead and thirteen injured, the Portuguese claimed to have killed 560 and captured 420 people, as well as a significant number of cattle, camels, donkeys, and horses. “Lettre de Francisco de Pedrosa à Emmanuel I,” 30 March 1514, SIHM-Portugal, 520-521.
quality of construction of any fortress.\textsuperscript{617}

The first Portuguese attack on Marrakech came in October of 1514 and consisted of fewer than five hundred men, fewer than thirty of whom were Portuguese. They banged on the gates of Marrakech and although Nasr al-Hintati himself emerged with many troops to give combat, no meaningful battle apparently ensued.\textsuperscript{618} In January of 1515 the governor of Safi, Nuno Fernandes de Ataide, went to Marrakech with three hundred Christians and three hundred “Moors of Peace.” Although Nuno Fernandes claimed to have killed some Muslims and taken one hundred and sixty prisoners, this nevertheless does not appear to have been a serious assault. Among his taunting boasts was that some of his men wrote their names on the walls of the city with chalk or coal, humiliating the observing defenders, who included among their number the two sons of a rising \textit{sharīf} from the south and representatives of the Wattasid sultan.\textsuperscript{619}

Such a feeble Muslim response naturally encouraged the Portuguese and in April of 1515, Nuno Fernandes joined the governor of Azamur in bringing a force to Marrakech of approximately three thousand men, with two thousand five hundred of them “Moors of Peace.” But for the earlier tepid reception it is hard to imagine three thousand men capturing Marrakech, and Nuno Fernandes was to find that the amir was emboldened both by the presence of a Sa’di \textit{sharīf} and a representative from Fez who were visiting the city. When the Portuguese and their allies approached, Muslim forces emerged from the city to fight a battle that lasted four hours. As the Portuguese retreated the official from Fez led a pursuit that eventually ended when the “Moors of Peace” turned around to confront it. Marrakech remained in Muslim hands, free of Portuguese control.\textsuperscript{620}

\textsuperscript{617} “Secret Instructions pour Fernão Dias,” 8 August 1514, SIHM-Portugal, I, 593-595.
\textsuperscript{618} De Cenival, “Expédition contre Marrakech, 23 avril 1515,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 687-692.
\textsuperscript{619} “Récit d’une expedition aux portes de Marrakech,” 22 January 1515, SIHM-Portugal, I, 676.
\textsuperscript{620} De Cenival, “Expédition contre Marrakech, 23 avril 1515,” SIHM-Portugal, I, 687-692.
This was as far as the Portuguese were ever to penetrate the interior of Morocco. After being repulsed at Marrakech they returned to the coast, moving north in the summer of 1515 in an attempt to take one of the few bastions on the Moroccan Atlantic littoral that they did not control, Mamora at the mouth of the Sebu River. The capture of Azammur had helped crystallize Portuguese visions of how to accomplish the goal of conquering the whole of Morocco. As Azammur and Safi were considered coastal conduits to Marrakech, Mamora might serve the same purpose for Fez itself. With the help of the additional “Moors of Peace” that conquest would bring, the Portuguese could expand their control of the hinterland until they could reach effectively to the gates of both Fez and Marrakech. Thus two Portuguese arrived in September of 1514 to scout the mouth of the Sebu and its channel and locate the best site for the possible construction of a fortress.621

In June of 1515 the Portuguese dispatched a massive force of two hundred ships and eight thousand men, along with tradesmen and colonists, with the goal of constructing a fortress at Mamora and another at Anfa. When they arrived at the mouth of the Sebu they met no resistance and began their work. The Wattasid sultan of Fez was in the Dukkala pillaging the tribes loyal to the Portuguese. When Wattasid forces eventually arrived at Mamora they consisted of thirty-thousand cavalry, three thousand infantry, and an “infinite” number of tribesmen from the countryside.622 Additionally, the Muslim forces brought artillery. Of small caliber, the artillery did not cause much damage, but was then replaced by large bombards both at the mouth of the river and on a nearby hill. These worried the Portuguese commanders, who decided that they needed to remove the Muslim artillery from the mouth of the river to ensure the entry of their ships.

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621 “L’expédition de la Mamora (juin-août 1515),” SIHM-Portugal, I, 695-702.
For the Portuguese, the attack was a miserable failure and their situation became desolate. Within Mamora, Antonio de Noronha wrote the king saying that the project would require an additional ten thousand men. Commissioners sent by King Manuel to investigate found the situation untenable and the Portuguese withdrew on August 10. But the withdrawal turned into an even larger disaster. As the Portuguese attempted to embark the Muslim forces attacked, and in a panic all the Portuguese ships attempted to pass out the mouth of the river at the same time. Trying to avoid the Muslim artillery on the left bank, some ran aground on sandbars where they were looted and burned, while their passengers fled to the bar across the river’s mouth, many drowning in the process. It is estimated that four thousand died in the Mamora expedition, and the Muslims captured more than fifty pieces of artillery as well as other arms and ammunition left behind—the worst loss in men and material of King Manuel I’s entire reign.623 Portuguese officials worried how local Muslim tribes, including those who had submitted to Portuguese rule, would react once word of the defeat spread.624 Would they remain loyal or would they sense Portuguese weakness?

The expedition for Mamora is one of the Portuguese initiatives in Morocco that perhaps most comports with more traditional colonial projects that the Atlantic world was later to witness. Though the size of the military force was particular to the Portuguese experience in Morocco and thus far exceeded what would generally be seen elsewhere in the Atlantic world, the presence of tradesmen and colonists marked this as an endeavor that perhaps reflected the benefit of experience gained in prior efforts along the Moroccan coast. Tradesmen were likely

brought primarily for the construction of the planned fortress, but the presence of colonists might indicate recognition of the need to address the demographic challenges facing the Portuguese in Morocco. Without colonists of their own to assume control and supervision of cultivable land, the Portuguese in Morocco would be forever dependent upon tribute relationships that could only be sustained by military technology that compensated for inferior numbers. Whether or not the colonists brought to Mamora were intended to expand Portuguese authority directly beyond the city’s bounds is unknown, but their presence raises intriguing questions. In the end, the colonial project of Mamora, however, was a failure, and thus joins a list of failed colonial settlements throughout the Atlantic world.

**End of First Phase**

In the hundred years since the Portuguese had begun their invasion of Morocco they had gained control of nearly the entirety of Morocco’s Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts. The chronology of Portuguese conquest during the first phase illustrates what in retrospect is a relatively methodical approach at attempted subjugation using the pathways provided by the Atlantic, even if this approach was not at the time always well-envisioned or obvious to its practitioners. Moving first across the Strait of Gibraltar, but effectively stymied there, the Portuguese secured positions in the north, middle, and south of Morocco’s Atlantic littoral. Then as Portugal, thin in population and resources, discovered and attempted to exploit lands in the Americas, on the western and eastern coasts of Africa, in the Indian Ocean basin, and even in Southeast Asia and East Asia, they nevertheless continued to pour resources into the conquest of Morocco, targeting intermediate locations along the Atlantic coast, both for the establishment of trading posts and fortresses, and even, as in the case of Mamora, for colonial settlement.
Through these locations they sought not only to trade, but to appropriate the productive labor of
the Moroccan countryside by imposing a tribute system and developing alliances with local tribal
forces that would enable them to project power into the hinterland. Eventually the Portuguese
grew sufficiently aggressive and confident to try assaults on the intellectual and imperial capital
of the north, Fez, and the historical capital of the south, Marrakech. In short, Morocco
experienced the first hundred years of exposure to the Atlantic world in a defensive crouch,
under almost relentless assault, most of which from roughly the last third of the fifteenth century
came overwhelmingly from the Atlantic.

Morocco became during this time an important part of the Portuguese Atlantic, even
global, maritime trading network. Chief among Morocco’s agricultural products that flowed
through this network was wheat, which often succored not only Portugal itself, but Portuguese
possessions farther south along the African Atlantic coast. Equally important were Moroccan
textiles. Highly-valued in Portuguese sub-Saharan markets, such textiles could be traded for
gold from both sub-Saharan and Moroccan termini. Products like wax, hides, and honey from
southern Morocco also found their way into Portuguese markets. With the exception of some of
the overland gold conduits, all this trade, like the Portuguese attempt to dominate Morocco itself,
was by the second half of the fifteenth century predominantly Atlantic-based. As Moroccan
merchants became increasingly involved in this trade, and the Portuguese strengthened their hold
on the coast, Morocans were often forced to choose between collaboration and resistance, and it
was in this context that complex, hybrid actors emerged who tried to move between worlds as
they sought to integrate into what was a new order created by the emergence of the Atlantic
world.

Twice the Portuguese had been rebuffed in attempts to penetrate Morocco’s interior, first
at Fort Graciosa on the way to Fez in 1489 and then twenty-five years later at Marrakech. Now, at Mamora, for the first time they had been thrown back on the Atlantic coast itself. For all intents and purposes up to this point the Atlantic had been an ally of Portuguese ambitions in Morocco. In the far south, however, a new Moroccan power was rising, and it would use the Atlantic in support of its own ambitions.
CHAPTER IV. USING THE ATLANTIC: THE SA’DI, SUGAR, AND SALTPETER

The traditional narrative of Moroccan commerce in the pre-modern and early modern period is exemplified by E.W. Bovill’s two works, *Caravans of the Old Sahara* and *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, published in 1933 and 1958, respectively. It is a story dominated by gold, slaves, and salt. In his earlier work Bovill hoped to highlight the contributions of the peoples of the western Sudan—of sub-Saharan West Africa—and how the civilizations across the Saharan wastes to the north influenced them. His later work strove to highlight how important sub-Saharan Africans were to the people of the north. All the commodities and trade routes that Bovill discussed in his two studies continued to retain importance as the early Atlantic world emerged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But for Morocco in the sixteenth century what became important in transforming its interaction with the Atlantic world was not only these ancient items of exchange, but also two other commodities that were to become important to the European commercial and political dominance of the Atlantic world.

First among these was a spice—sugar—that was to develop such importance to Europe that its production critically influenced labor regimes and migration patterns in the Atlantic world for centuries. Second was saltpeter, a substance crucial to the use of the new armaments with which European powers hoped to extend their influence across the Atlantic and ultimately around the globe. Within Morocco commerce in both commodities was essential in fueling and sustaining the rise of the sharīfian Sa’di dynasty, who used the emerging trade networks of the Atlantic both to launch a counter-attack against the Iberian Atlantic assault and then to pursue their own imperial ambitions in the expanding Atlantic world.

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This study asserts that the second phase of Morocco’s involvement in the Atlantic world revolved around events that are critically influenced by these two commodities. For a hundred years starting in 1415 Morocco’s dominant experience with the emerging Atlantic world was a defensive one, where the Atlantic provided in part the motivation and in part the means by which external forces attempted to exercise control over Morocco or conquer it outright. Commerce was, of course, important during this first phase of Morocco’s involvement in the emerging Atlantic world. It served as a motivating force for European expansion and exploration—both in pursuit of the riches of the East then governed by Muslim intermediaries in the Levant, and of access to the gold fields subject to the whims of Muslim intermediaries in the Sahara. Additionally, commerce also served arguably less romantic, more prosaic purposes during that first phase—to provide access to cereal grains needed by poor Iberian populations, labor for newly-discovered productive land that could not otherwise be exploited, and textile goods that could be marketed elsewhere in the Portuguese commercial network. What all these commercial processes shared was that they were arms of Portuguese hegemonic ambition. That is not to suggest that Moroccan merchants received nothing of value in the exchange, but the commercial networks that the pathways of the Atlantic opened during this time were not to advantage Morocco, but instead motivated and empowered Portuguese ambitions that encouraged the domination and conquest of the country.

In the second phase of its involvement in the early Atlantic world Morocco begins to counterattack using opportunities the emerging Atlantic world created. Prominent among these was the commercial market for sugar. Cultivable in southern Morocco, sugar proved to be a commodity that could be exchanged illicitly for the weapons that had long given the Portuguese significant advantages over the vast majority of the Moroccan forces they faced. With the
Portuguese Atlantic assault had come Morocco’s withering experience of advances in gunpowder weaponry, first artillery and then firearms. Although Moroccans were to capture some of these weapons, gradually learn how to use them, and then turn them to their own advantage, it was the weapons Morocco was able to purchase with sugar that ultimately became important. It was this growing stockpile that not only enabled greater resistance to the Portuguese, but enabled the rise to military dominance of one internal faction within Morocco that was then able to unite the country. This unified Morocco then opened relations with another newly-emerging Atlantic world power—England—which was in turn to continue the contraband weapons trade for both sugar and an additional Moroccan commodity, saltpeter.

Obviously important to the history of Morocco, these factors were also important in the development of the Atlantic world. The ultimate defeat by the Moroccans of the Portuguese at Wadi al-Makazin (1578) effectively ended Portuguese attempts to conquer Morocco and resulted in the temporary unification of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns in 1580. Just as Portuguese adventures in Morocco presumably distracted in part from Portuguese efforts that might otherwise have been directed elsewhere in the Atlantic world, so too its defeat would affect developments in that world. Additionally, the rise of the independent Sa‘di dynasty also prevented what might otherwise have been the realization of an Ottoman desire to establish a maritime presence in the emerging Atlantic world. Though the Ottomans were able to establish themselves sufficiently in North Africa to generate fear in the western Mediterranean and parts of the Atlantic, it was independent Morocco, under a sharīfian dynasty, that in a critical period during the sixteenth century blocked direct Ottoman access to the Atlantic. This in part contributed to a separate Moroccan identity that distinguished it not only from other North African states, but from the rest of the dār al-Islām. All of this was the legacy of the second
phase of Morocco’s involvement in the early Atlantic world.

The Emergence of the Sa’di

As mentioned earlier in this study, the growing influence of the ashrāf and of the Sufi brotherhoods were two important social movements taking place in fifteenth-century Morocco. By the start of the sixteenth-century these two movements had grown in popular appeal, as the people of Morocco found the country fragmented into multiple kingdoms, innumerable local fiefdoms, and large areas controlled by the Portuguese—all of whom might subject them to depredations. The sharīfian Sa’di family in the far south of Morocco emerged out of this milieu in the first quarter of the sixteenth century and rose to prominence.

Al-Ifrani recounts in his work the explanations of various authorities for the emergence of the Sa’di. The family had come to the Dra’a Valley of Morocco centuries before the Portuguese arrival and were but one of many such families in the country who claimed descent from the Prophet.\(^6\) What initially brought them to the broader public consciousness in the south was the family patriarch’s performance of the hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca that every able-bodied Muslim is expected to do at least once in their lifetime. Upon his return this patriarch, Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Zaydani, related that during his journey he had spoken to a wise man in the holy Hijazi city of Medina, who had predicted that not he, but his two sons, were destined for rule.\(^7\) But for this and other eccentric pronouncements it is uncertain whether or not the Sa’di would have stood out from other leading families, many of whom had been mediating local disputes, preaching, engaging in commerce, and gaining praise

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\(^6\) Anonymous Chronicler of Fez, *Tarikh al-dawla as-Sa’diya* (Rabat, 1934), 4. Claims of genealogical descent are subject to manipulation, of course, and some critics of the Sa’di questioned the legitimacy of the lineage they claimed. See e.g. Al-Ifrani, *Nozhet-Elhâdi*, 8-10.

\(^7\) Al-Ifrani, *Nozhet-Elhâdi*, 19.
for resisting the Portuguese. In fact at the time, in addition to al-Zaydani, three other Sufi shaykhs were leading prominent zāwiyas in the region against the Portuguese.\footnote{Cornell, Socioeconomic, 397-398.}

Prophesying, however, brought al-Zaydani critical attention in the form of a referral from a Jazuli Sufi leader in the Sus. Wattasid authority, either from Fez or through vassals in Marrakech, did not extend consistently into the Sus, leaving the population to itself in facing the Portuguese and other challenges. Approached by some in the region desperate for a leader who would end the local turmoil, the Jazuli Sufi leader demurred, as did another. Each suggested, however, that the people seek out a sharīf in the Dra’a—al-Zaydani—known for his prophecies. Another narrative that al-Ifrani recounts proffers that the people of the Sus approached al-Zaydani because the Portuguese insisted that the local population appoint a leader with whom they could treat. If the latter is true then the Portuguese contributed to the elevation of a group within Morocco that was to play a significant role in the demise of Portuguese rule in the country. Whatever the truth, a delegation sought out al-Zaydani in the Dra’a and brought him to the Sus.\footnote{Al-Ifrani, Nozhet-Elhâdi, 20-22.} There in 1510-1511 at Tedsi, a town near Taroudant off the Sus River some forty-five miles inland from Santa-Cruz, al-Zaydani received the bay’a—the oath of allegiance—of the local Berber tribes and preached jihad against the Portuguese. He took the name Muhammad al-Qa'im bi Amr Allah (“One Who Has Arisen by the Command of God”).\footnote{Al-Ifrani, Nozhet-Elhâdi, 32.}

The people of the Sus, according to Leo Africanus, gave the sharīf money for five hundred horsemen, but he retained a larger number of soldiers with the funds and was thus able to extend his dominion in the region. Leo witnessed the fruits of this financial political wizardry, saying that when he visited the court of the sharīf himself there were “about three hundred horsemen; and such numbers of footemen and summes of money, as were almost
The first Sa’di efforts against the Portuguese were not successful. At the same time that Portugal was threatening the coastal cities of Azamur and Safi near the kingdom of Maroco (Marrakech), the Portuguese had also made sure to strengthen their position farther south, in the Sus. In 1511 they drove off a Sa’di assault against Santa-Cruz. Since its founding Santa-Cruz had benefited from the overwhelming military superiority of the Portuguese. Local Muslim forces there not only lacked firearms, but the best equipped only had spears and a small number of crossbows; some even possessed only stones in bags. By early 1513, King Manuel I had purchased the fortress of Santa-Cruz from de Sequeira. In addition to the money he paid for the fort itself, the king also purchased the artillery, arms, powder, and approximately forty-eight tons of sugar residing there. With the assumption of royal authority over the post, the king required that any non-Portuguese ship trading in the area had to provide a certain portion of its cargo to the garrison. He also moved to strengthen the post, replacing a wooden fort with a masonry one, adding a dry moat, assigning caravels as a permanent coastal guard to interdict any illegal trade, and placing a particular prohibition on naval stores and firearms.

Al-Qa’im’s influence must have suffered from the defeat in 1511, but it was not fatal. Maintaining the family’s popular association with the Jazuli Sufi brotherhood, al-Qa’im moved north to Afughal, south of Mogador, in what was likely a calculated political move, as Afughal was the location of the tomb of the founder of the influential Sufi order. In 1514 al-Qa’im’s sons

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634 “Brevet de Chevalerie,” 8 July 1512, “SIHM-Portugal, I, 334. Al-Ifrani fails to mention this defeat, instead characterizing it as a victory that boosted al-Qa’im’s prestige. It is possible that al-Ifrani was not being completely disingenuous here, for the Portuguese were forced to abandon a separate forward castle that they had constructed about six miles north of Agadir. Both castles were wooden-walled structures at the time. Al-Ifrani, *Nozhet-Elhâdi*, 32-33.
637 Cornell, *Socioeconomic*, 396.
returned from Fez, having fought for the sultan in a siege of the Portuguese garrison at Arzila. They now appeared with some fifteen hundred men, some of them gunpowder-warfare veterans from the north, as well as munitions, regalia, and symbols of vassalage to the sultan.\footnote{Cook, \textit{The Hundred Years War}, 172. Both of al-Qa'im’s sons were reportedly at Marrakech during the humiliating engagement in which the Portuguese wrote their names in chalk on the city’s walls.}

Presumably to ensure a smooth succession of power, several years before he died al-Qa'im named his oldest son, Ahmad al-A’raj, his heir, securing a \textit{bay’a} for him, while naming his younger son, Muhammad al-Shaykh, the governor of the Sus.

Portuguese leaders at Santa-Cruz recognized the potential threat emerging from Sa’di power, but at first did not seem overly worried by its prospects. As time passed, however, the reports of Portuguese officials in Safi increasingly mentioned not only forces of the Wattasid sultan in Fez and the Hintata king in Marrakech, but also the forces of the Sa’di \textit{sharīf}. While the Wattasid sultan tried to challenge the Portuguese in the north, in the south, despite their early setbacks, the Sa’di moved aggressively to expand the tribes under their allegiance, drawing them away from both the Portuguese and the Wattasids. Two specific developments aided them in this effort. First, during a famine in 1514-1515, Muhammad al-Qa'im used Sa’di grain reserves to help relieve the suffering of the populace. Second, in May of 1516, Portugal’s most aggressive captain in Morocco, the governor of Safi, Nuno Fernandes de Ataide, was killed during an expedition against some recalcitrant tribes. His death led to disorder and confusion as the Portuguese sought to determine who should lead them. Many local tribes saw the death of Nuno Fernandes as presaging the end of the Portuguese occupation. Some of the “Moors of Peace” turned to looting, and some joined recalcitrant tribes in falling on the Portuguese.\footnote{De Cenival, “Mort de Nuno Fernandes de Ataide,” SIHM-Portugal, II, 1-5.}

As the Sa’di arose in the Sus and began moving against the Portuguese, trade in the south continued, though not always to the satisfaction of the latter. Both supply needs and contraband
traffic drew Portuguese attention. The former were numerous and figure prominently in appeals not just from Santa-Cruz, but from Safi and Azammur, as well. The availability of wheat, either for the garrison and populace of the towns, or for export to Portugal, was a consistent source of concern. So too did the Portuguese find themselves regularly hindered by the absence of needed materials for making repairs and improvements to defensive fortifications, or for constructing commercial buildings. While suitable stone was generally available, the Portuguese were often plagued by a lack of lime needed for masonry construction, and by their dependence on local sources of wood. Although lime could be made in Morocco, builders found it significantly inferior to that of Portugal and also found strong construction sometimes retarded by the humidity of the coast. Finally, both garrisons and workers required payment, funds for which Portuguese occupation officials regularly pleaded with Lisbon.

A letter in late 1513 from the Portuguese feitor at Santa-Cruz and his secretary outlined the growing problems the Portuguese there faced from contraband traffic. Muslims were not coming to Santa-Cruz to trade, and the fortress and buildings were in disrepair, making it difficult to store goods or house merchants. Unable to find suitable lodging, the latter were going elsewhere nearby, where merchants from Cadiz were trading profitably. Continued

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commerce at Santa-Cruz required goods desired by the Muslims, the Portuguese officials argued, especially if the king did not stop the trade of the merchants from Cadiz.\textsuperscript{643}

Six months later Portuguese officials in Santa-Cruz lodged a similar complaint, lamenting both problems in obtaining wheat and the continued presence of illicit activity. A hub of the latter was apparently the small coastal town of Tarkoukou, north of Agadir. The Portuguese discovered that cargo ships where discharging and loading there, presumably to avoid the duties imposed at Santa-Cruz. In response they promptly sent a ship to investigate. Although a contraband ship had already discharged its cargo when the Portuguese vessel arrived, they seized another belonging to a Genoese traveling between Cadiz and Tarkoukou. The \textit{feitores} and his secretary suggested that it would be beneficial for the king to send a well-armed ship to Tarkoukou to interdict this traffic.\textsuperscript{644}

The concerns about illicit activity near Santa-Cruz and its effect on the Portuguese trade network reflect the maturing commerce of the West African circuit of the Atlantic world. As noted earlier in the discussion of Safi and Azammur, one means by which the Portuguese appropriated wealth in Morocco was by incorporating local Muslim merchants into the trade networks the Portuguese had created in the Atlantic. By occupying the coastal access points to the Atlantic trade network, the Portuguese could increase Muslim traders’ dependence on the Portuguese and force the former to accept duties on the commerce. Once the Portuguese integrated the local traders into the network and then gained control of the Atlantic access points, the Muslim traders would find it difficult to disengage from interaction with the Portuguese despite the directives of Muslim leaders dedicated to resisting European intrusion. Of course, all

\textsuperscript{643} “Lettre d’Affonso Rodrigues et de Francisco Fernandes à Emmanuel I,” 24 December 1513, SIHM-Portugal, II, 470-476.
of this only worked if the Portuguese controlled access to the Atlantic network. As time passed, however, additional European actors came on to the scene and proved willing to use smaller coastal villages to trade with Muslims in Morocco in direct contravention of Portuguese strictures. Activity around but outside of Santa-Cruz was a reflection of the presence of such new actors and consequently represented a serious threat to the viability of the commercial network the Portuguese had established. It not only reduced Portuguese revenues, but financed Portugal’s enemies both within Morocco and the larger Atlantic world.

The demographic challenges discussed in the context of Safi and Azammur were also relevant in the far south. Food shortages periodically became acute for the Portuguese at Santa-Cruz, particularly during periods of drought or famine as occurred in 1514-1515. In such instances it became apparent that the growing influence of the Sa’di sharīf played an important role in exacerbating the situation. A couple of months after their prior letter, for example, the Portuguese feitor and his secretary at Santa-Cruz complained of the uncertain relationship with the area’s Muslims and its impact on food and other supplies. Though Muslims were coming to trade, the officials reported, they brought meat and fruit, but not wheat or wood. Without those resources, the Portuguese asserted, they would be unable to complete the work requested by the king.

The influence of the sharīf also affected the Portuguese slave trade within Morocco. During periods of famine, slaves were typically easy to come by as local Muslims submitted to the bondage of Portuguese masters for the sake of survival. But the Portuguese at Santa-Cruz lacked wheat to feed slaves, and slave traders no longer came to Santa-Cruz, according to the officials, for fear of the sharīf. If the king would but send wheat, they argued, the Muslims
would notice it and start to bring wheat themselves.\footnote{Lettre d’Affonso Rodrigues et de Francisco Fernandes à Emmanuel I,” 11 September 1514, SIHM-Portugal, I, 611-618.} As the Sa’di power grew their ability to influence the supply situation in Santa-Cruz only increased. Former Portuguese allies conquered by the Sa’di pledged to supply the fort if the Portuguese would but send troops to open the roads secured by the *sharīf*. On their own, they claimed, they were too weak to resist him.\footnote{Lettre du Cheikh Sa’id à Emmanuel I,” After May 1517, SIHM-Portugal, II, 93-94.}

Trade outside of official channels continued to plague Portuguese officials around Santa-Cruz for years and it, like the famine and food shortages, clearly benefited the Sa’di. In 1516 the Portuguese governor at Santa-Cruz, Francisco de Castro, urged King Manuel I to establish a more moderate customs rate in Santa-Cruz in an attempt to entice merchants who were regularly going to Tarkoukou. This, he argued, would draw revenues away from the Sa’di *sharīf*, who was earning them in places like Tarkoukou and using them to finance resistance to the Portuguese at both Santa-Cruz and Safi.\footnote{Letter de D. Francisco de Castro à Emmanuel I,” 19 August 1516, SIHM-Portugal, II, 27-29.} The Portuguese also attempted to deal with contraband traffic by launching raids with their local allies, including an ambush that burned boats at Tarkoukou and another that assailed a caravan outside Massa carrying gold to the *sharīf*.\footnote{Letter du caid Melek à Emmanuel I,” 30 July 1517, SIHM-Portugal, II, 128-131. In this letter the caid Melek also asserted to Manuel I that if the latter sent troops, Melek could destroy the power of the *sharīf*.}

Preserving the trade revenues of Santa-Cruz and depriving the Sa’di of such revenues were clearly important goals of the Portuguese, but the latter also feared contraband involving gunpowder weapons and war material. Sources suggest that this was not an idle threat. When Leo Africanus traveled through the far south of the country, for example, he commented on the presence of “harquebuzes, handguns & other weapons” among the people.\footnote{Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, 779.} As evidence of this concern, at the start of 1517 King Manuel I ordered that any Christian caught selling arms to the Muslims would have all his property confiscated and be sent into exile for ten years at São Tomé. Furthermore, he
directed that Muslims who reported such violations need not fear repercussions and would in fact receive a monetary reward.\textsuperscript{650}

**Sugar**

For this particular time period available records do not clearly indicate exactly who was supplying arms to Muslims in the area and exactly how and for what they were being exchanged. What is clear, however, is that by this time period contraband trade had been going on with the emerging Sa’di forces for some years, and that this trade involved one of the commodities with which the Sa’di were to become prominently associated—sugar. Sugar, in fact, was to become a major export product of the Sa’di.\textsuperscript{651} When Muhammad al-Qa’im died in 1517 he had tasked his oldest son, Ahmad al-A’raj, with leading the Sa’di movement. His younger son, Muhammad al-Shaykh, remained as governor of the Sus, where he controlled not only a major trans-Saharan route, but where he also encouraged the production of sugar. By the time of his father’s death, in fact, sugar cultivation had sprung up around the town of Taroudant.\textsuperscript{652}

Although sometimes characterized as a Levantine spice, sugar is believed to have originated in New Guinea or Southeast Asia, from whence it spread to Persia.\textsuperscript{653} Arab forces brought it back to the Middle East, where subsequent European crusader kingdoms adopted its cultivation. By the fourteenth century Cyprus had become a major producer, providing the bulk

\textsuperscript{650} “Alvara d’Emmanuel I,” SIHM-Portugal, II, 54-56.

\textsuperscript{651} There is a confusing mistake in volume I of the de Castries collection of documents from the Portuguese archives. The mistake erroneously dates from 1510 a letter from d’Ignacio Martins to Manuel I discussing contraband trade at Santa-Cruz. A footnote to the entry indicates as well that this is the first mention in European documents of the Sa’di. This mistake is rectified in Volume IV of the documents from Portugal, where the same document is republished, and a footnote to the republished document indicates that the letter is from Inacion Nunes to Jean III, and dates from 1550. “Lettre d’Ignacio Martins à Emmanuel I,” 5 November 1510, SIHM-Portugal, I, 255-258. “Letter d’Inancio Nunes [Gato] a Jean III,” 5 November 1550, 405-409 n1.


of the sugar imported into Europe. As Islam expanded westward, sugar cultivation went with it to Sicily, North Africa, and the Iberian Peninsula. Facilitated in part by the seemingly ubiquitous Genoese, Iberian sugar in the fifteenth century traveled as an export commodity to Germany, the Low Countries, and England.654

We saw earlier in this study that as the Iberians moved out into the Atlantic they took sugar with them to the oceanic isles. Climate was not ideal for sugarcane in the Azores; there producers relatively quickly transitioned to other products, including wheat. Ecological conditions, however, were far more advantageous for sugar in Madeira and the Canary Islands. Portugal, as we have seen, authorized the first water-powered sugar mill on Madeira in 1452 and within a few years sugar from the island was available in London. By the first decade of the sixteenth century Madeira was producing more than six thousand five hundred tons combined of white and brown sugar annually.655 Spain’s Gran Canaria in the Canary Islands did not experience as significant a boom as Madeira, but by the 1520s it was producing approximately one thousand tons annually.656 As they had in the Azores, the Portuguese attempted sugar production in the Cape Verde Islands several hundred miles off the African coast, only to find that the climate was not conducive to success. Farther south on the Gulf of Guinea’s island of São Tomé, however, the Portuguese were producing more than two thousand tons by the middle

654 Fernandez-Armesto asserts that sugar was one of two eastern Mediterranean commodities that fueled Genoese colonial activity in the Atlantic islands and formed the basis of early Atlantic economies. Fernandez-Armesto, Before Columbus, 117-118.
655 Stuart B. Schwartz, Sugar Plantations, 8. The conversion of weights and measures from this period is understandably inexact. Iberian sugar production was expressed in terms of arrobas, which had different weights in Portugal and Spain. According to Stuart Schwartz, in Spain, the Canary Islands, and Spanish America the arroba was about 25 pounds. In Portuguese Madeira it was 28 pounds until 1504, when it was increased to 32 pounds. The latter was the standard in Brazil. Stuart B. Schwartz, “Note on Weights and Measures,” in Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). In this study the amounts have been converted to tons or pounds.
656 Stuart B. Schwartz, Sugar Plantations, 10.
of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{657}

In the Americas Columbus had brought sugar plantings to the Caribbean on his second voyage in 1493, and in 1500 Pedro Cabral’s landing in Brazil was ultimately to result in a future sugar powerhouse. All the Atlantic island producers eventually suffered significant competition from American territories, but the industry of the latter took time to develop. It was not until the 1530s and 1540s, for example, that sugar became firmly established in Hispaniola and Brazil, and it was not until the 1560s that the latter began importing substantial numbers of African slaves to create what J.H. Elliott has described as “the first, and most spectacular, example of the enormous wealth to be made from large-scale plantations worked by black slave labour.”\textsuperscript{658} Thus for a time sugar production remained largely that of a medieval economy. Sugar had not yet become a widely-spread addictive sweet, but was still an exotic spice that was only starting to become an increasing part of the aristocratic diet. This meant that until demand grew and substantial competition emerged to meet it, lower yields did not place the producer at a significant disadvantage, as speculative interest generated high profit margins.\textsuperscript{659} Consequently, although production in most of the Atlantic Islands had peaked by the middle of the sixteenth century, it was to be some time before the Americas swamped initial Atlantic producers. These market dynamics thus left time for Morocco to reap increased benefits from sugar production in the early Atlantic world market where the Iberians were operating a defacto monopoly.

We lack clarity today on both the arrival of sugar cultivation in Morocco and the technological processes employed to refine it. Presumably cultivation arrived with one of the waves of Arab expansion to the west, but the technology of refinement changed in the

\textsuperscript{657} Stuart B. Schwartz, \textit{Sugar Plantations}, 13.
\textsuperscript{658} J.H. Elliott, \textit{Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 105. By the end of the sixteenth century Brazil would be the world’s largest sugar supplier.\textsuperscript{659} P. Berthier, \textit{Les anciennes sucreries au Maroc et leur réseau hydraulique} (Rabat, 1966), 270.
Mediterranean during the fifteenth century. Older methods involved a large circular stone that was rolled on top of cut cane. Later innovations, however, employed two rollers that eliminated the need to cut the cane and extracted more juice when the cane was passed between them. Both methods, of course, required animal, human, or hydraulic power to operate.\textsuperscript{660}

What we do know is that from the perspective of climate Morocco was a marginal location for growing sugar cane absent substantial irrigation works. With the exception of the Mediterranean basin, where sugar cane was able to thrive in certain locations, the thirty-fifth parallel north or south of the Equator is generally the plant’s natural cultivable limit. This put the edge of the natural growing region in Morocco a little south of the Atlantic coastal town of Larache. But in Morocco there were additional challenges for sugar commercialization. The natural habitat for growing sugar cane is in areas of high temperature and abundant precipitation, which was not the norm in the Morocco. However, the humidity of the Sus Valley offered better conditions than elsewhere in the country.

As has been noted already, we know that before Muhammad al-Qa'im’s death in 1517 sugar operations had sprung up around the southern town of Taroudant. Yet it is important to note that these do not appear to have been comparable to the large, monoculture plantations that eventually developed elsewhere in the Atlantic world. Instead sugar in Morocco at this time appeared to be cultivated in patches of land interspersed with other crops. Consequently, for production to expand as it later did necessitated infrastructure such as irrigation works, as well as a larger labor force, both of which required a certain amount of cohesion and organizational strength.\textsuperscript{661}

In his textual and archaeological study of the Moroccan sugar industry during the

\textsuperscript{660} Schwartz, \textit{Sugar Plantations}, 4.
\textsuperscript{661} P. Berthier, \textit{Les anciennes sucreries au Maroc}.
sixteenth-century, Paul Berthier asserts that Morocco produced both raw and refined sugar, though it seems unclear whether operations used millstones or rolling cylinders. He also ultimately concludes that servile labor provided the manpower and that there were simply not enough Christian captives in Morocco, contrary to what others have asserted, to have provided an adequate workforce. As a result, supported in part by some additional evidence derived from the terminology used in the sources, he concludes that this labor was most likely sub-Saharan African slave labor, sometimes supervised by Jewish and Christian overseers in what eventually became large-scale operations.\(^\text{662}\)

Unfortunately, after the early European reports, sugar disappears from the records on Morocco for several decades. Thus, the most we can conclude with regard to this early time frame is that the Sa’di engaged in contraband trade with non-Portuguese Europeans during the opening decade of their rise to power, that sugar was a significant part of that contraband trade, and that the goods received in response likely included arms and ammunition.

The Sa’di Road to Marrakech

After Muhammad al-Qa'im’s death two additional developments benefited his sons. First, a major nemesis of Muslims fighting the Portuguese, Yahya ibn Ta’fuft, was murdered in 1518.\(^\text{663}\) A few months after the death of Nuno Fernandes de Ataide in 1516, Manuel I had responded to the resulting disorder in part by naming ibn Ta’fuft the caid of all Dukkala, granting him power over local tribes and a share of the loot from raids.\(^\text{664}\) This must at first have seemed to ibn Ta’fuft like the successful culmination of a lifetime spent in navigating the complex sociopolitical world brought about by Portuguese intervention in Morocco. By his own

\(^{662}\) P. Berthier, Les anciennes sucreries au Maroc, 10, 241-244.
\(^{663}\) “Lettre d’Antonio Leite à Emmanuel I,” SIHM-Portugal, II, 202-203.
\(^{664}\) “Lettres patentes d’Emmanuel I,” July 1515, SIHM-Portugal, II, 6-9.
telling, he moved rapidly to bring dissident tribes back into the Portuguese fold and establish a modicum of peace around Safi. In March of 1517 he challenged and won a victory over forces of the ruler of Marrakech, then moved promptly with seventeen hundred men against forces of the Sa’di, acquiring great booty in the process. Manuel I considered the service of ibn Ta’fuft and certain other Muslims so necessary to the Portuguese effort in Morocco that he appealed to the Pope for authorization to provide them with arms.

Yet, the internal rivalries amongst the Portuguese themselves, as well as among the Muslims and Jews of the region, continued to haunt the steps of Yahya ibn Ta’fuft. While in the spring and summer of 1517 the Portuguese of Safi and Azammur worried over news of the approaching Wattasid sultan of Fez, ibn Ta’fuft wrote letter after letter to Manuel I complaining of his treatment at the hands of Portuguese officials. While he worked for peace, he claimed, his opponents only wanted war, because peace earned them no profit. With the countryside in ruins, and the Arabs and Berbers scattered as the sultan of Fez threatened, ibn Ta’fuft suggested that he could save the situation. The latter continued to have his supporters among the Portuguese in Morocco, and Manuel I reassured ibn Ta’fuft that the king did not believe the accusations against him and retained great confidence in him. He asked the Muslim leader to recognize that the approach of the sultan had put the people of Safi on edge, promised him that he would expel some of the slanderers from Safi, and asked ibn Ta’fuft to show his

665 “Lettre de Yahya Ou Ta’fouft à Emmanuel I,” 9 August 1516, SIHM-Portugal, II, 24-27.
669 “Lettre de Yahya ou Ta’fouft à Emmanuel I,” 24 June 1517, SIHM-Portugal, II, 100-105.
dedication to the king by releasing his grudge against those who had angered him. Manuel I even went so far as to chastise the governor of Safi for branding ibn Ta’fuft a traitor, though he asked that the governor keep an eye on him.

The king’s entreaties were to no avail. Yahya ibn Ta’fuft complained to the king that his enemies continued to conspire against. Finding more hostility toward him in Safi than among the Arabs, and frightened by false testimony and threats to kill him, he fled Safi and took refuge in the territory of the Sa’di, asking the king for justice against the slanderers. This territory was not to be a safe haven for ibn Ta’fuft as his forces and those of the Sa’di battled in early September of 1517. During the ensuing six months it appears that relations between ibn Ta’fuft and the Portuguese improved, but by mid-March of 1518, the former was dead, assassinated by fellow Muslims who were rewarded by the ruler of Marrakech. Whatever the true motivations of this complex, hybrid figure, Portugal seemed at the time to have lost its most effective Muslim ally.

Santa-Cruz soon felt the impact. Portuguese commanders continued to lead forays against the sharīf, but in May of 1518 a Portuguese official reported that the Sa’di sharīf held all the roads to Santa-Cruz and would let no caravans pass. As a result, all those who should otherwise come to Santa-Cruz were going to Tarkoukou, which was said to be well supplied with goods. Now too the “Moors of Peace” were no longer bringing slaves to Santa-Cruz; instead any

they obtained in raids were being auctioned off. The king, the official asked, should send wheat
to sell to the Muslims in return for needed slaves.\textsuperscript{676}

North of Santa-Cruz, in Dukkala, things also once again became tumultuous. There,
Mawlay Nasr al-Wattas, the brother of the sultan in Fez, launched a surprise attack on tribes
loyal to the Portuguese. His conduct and the ensuing terror it caused, according to one
Portuguese account, was likely to bring more tribes into the Portuguese column as they weighed
the loyalty of the Portuguese against the treachery of Mawlay Nasr.\textsuperscript{677} Within six months,
however, the Portuguese complained to their king that the Dukkala was depopulated of Muslims,
most having abandoned the Portuguese for Marrakech or Fez.\textsuperscript{678}

This is yet another example of the fluidity of relationships in the colonial environment the
Portuguese had created in Morocco. Despite the presence of ostensible Muslim allies, these
allies seemed willing to abandon their patrons upon signs of weakness in the latter. Additionally,
when there were potential safe havens elsewhere, as when the Portuguese had proven unable to
conquer Marrakech, in times of trouble the populace in the countryside, upon which the
Portuguese tribute system ultimately depended, could chose to relocate to such havens. With the
movement of populations away from Portuguese-occupied territories we witness again the
underlying weakness of the Portuguese position in Morocco caused by their inability to import a
peasantry or slave labor whose productive efforts could be directed by the occupiers.

The Sa’di seized yet another opportunity to win allies when drought and famine again
struck Morocco during the period of 1520-1524. These twin calamities devastated much of the
country, even when it was over leaving desolation in the form of dead trees, exhausted pastures,

\textsuperscript{676} “Lettre de Fernão Taveira à Emmanuel I,” 28 May 1518, SIHM-Portugal, II, 184-187.
\textsuperscript{678} “Lettre d’Alvaro do Cadaval à Emmanuel I, Start of 1519, SIHM-Portugal, II, 219-220.
and starving flocks. Modern estimates place the mortality rate at one third to one half of the overall population. Worst hit were the Tamasna and Dukkala regions, stretching from Salé in the north to Safi in the south. People abandoned small villages, some of which fell into ruin, epidemics spread through urban centers, and tens of thousands of Muslims voluntarily went to Portugal as slaves to escape the hardship. The Sus, however, was not as affected as areas to the north, and the Sa’di took advantage. While the Wattasid sultan in Fez or proxies in Marrakech were unable to address the calamity, the Sa’di did so, passing grain to the populace through the Sufi Jazuli charity networks.

It is during this time of famine, when the Sa’di apparently fared better from its effects than did the Kingdom of Fez, that we see the first serious reports of conflict between the Sa’di, clearly growing in strength, and the Wattasids, in decline. Accounts vary of the first Sa’di conquest of Marrakech in 1524. According to Sa’di partisans like al-Ifrani, the Hintata ruler of Marrakech submitted to the rule of Muhammad al-A’raj and invited him into the city. This seems unlikely and al-Zayyani asserts that Muhammad al-A’raj declared a holy war, drove the Wattasids out of Fez, and was duly recognized by the inhabitants and the surrounding tribes.

The Wattasid sultan al-Burtuqali, of course, could not acquiesce to such an overt challenge and broke off yet another of his campaigns against the Portuguese in Arzila to promptly lead his army to Marrakech, where Muhammad al-A’raj had installed cannon on the
ramparts—the first we learn of artillery in the hands of the Sa’di. As was to happen so often, the Portuguese garrison at Azammur, suffering from famine and relying on wheat supplies from Madeira, feared that the gathering Wattasid forces were destined not for Marrakech, but for Azammur. They were wrong, however, and the sultan laid siege to Marrakech. Unable to conquer it, he instead secured from Muhammad al-A’raj Sa’di vassalage and tribute. But it was to be a temporary arrangement. Al-Burtuqali died a few weeks later and was eventually succeeded by Ahmad al-Wattas (r. 1526-1545).

Both the Sa’di and the Wattasids at this time attempted to guard their flanks by reaching agreements with the Portuguese in Safi in 1526. The Sa’di sought and obtained a truce that permitted the Portuguese to farm land in the area around Safi without any corresponding tribute obligations to the sharīf. Additionally, the Portuguese could purchase land in the territory of the sharīf to the extent it was not prohibited by religious restrictions. This truce, however, was scheduled to last for only a year, and both the Wattasids and the Portuguese saw value in an alliance against Mohammad al-A’raj and the Sa’di that would permit them each to retain territories they had conquered. In the case of the Portuguese this meant the Atlantic coastline to Santa-Cruz. With the Sa’di collecting but refusing to remit taxes to Fez, the Wattasids attacked Marrakech once again in 1527, only to be forced to call this assault off when the Sultan

687 Cook, The Hundred Years War, 176.
689 “Lettre de Garcia de Mello à Jean III,” 24 October 1526, SIHM-Portugal, II, 382-383.
learned of a revolt in Fez. 690

Rising Sa’di strength elevated Portuguese anxiety at Santa-Cruz. Its contador wrote the king about the state of the garrison. With only one hundred and twenty men capable of fighting, he feared the Sa’di would sense their weakness and attack. 691 In the summer of 1529 the sharīf did so. According to the capitan sent to the post, when he arrived he was able to calm the situation and reach a peace agreement with the sharīf through a Jewish intermediary. He doubted, however, that the peace would hold for the sharīf knew the importance of Santa-Cruz, believing that profits from trade there provided the funds that enabled the Portuguese to occupy not only Santa-Cruz, but also other locations within Morocco. 692 Less than two years later the Portuguese considered abandoning and destroying Santa-Cruz. 693

In Azammur as well the Portuguese worried. By 1521 King Manuel I was dead and had been succeeded by his son João III (r. 1521-1557). The Portuguese doctor in Azammur lamented to the king in 1527 that famine was devastating the city. Looting, he alleged, was rampant, with the population feeling they were only taking back what had been stolen from them by the merchants. 694 During 1529 the sharīf struck, destroying crops in the surrounding countryside. 695 A year later the sharīf attacked again. At the time the people of Azammur were again suffering famine from a lack of wheat. To end the siege a Jewish intermediary sent by the Portuguese negotiated tribute payments to the sharīf. 696

692 “Lettre de Simão Gonçalves da Costa à Jean III,” 15 September 1529, SIHM-Portugal, II, 482-487. The capitan also remarked on the sharīf’s abundance of crossbowman and arquebusiers, as well as his Turkish siege engineers.
What the Portuguese were now experiencing was a significant reversal of conditions from a mere two decades prior. Although drought and the resulting famine played a significant role in this reversal, it also seems clear that the long-term implications of the demographic challenges the Portuguese faced were becoming painfully apparent. The tribute system they had imposed in the absence of an ability or willingness to bring their own peasantry to Morocco as settlers, or to import substantial slave labor, fell apart when they could not rely on the threat of force projected by the Portuguese themselves or their Muslim allies. As Portugal’s weaknesses became exposed, the local Muslim populace found alternatives to submission to the Portuguese that included migration away from Portuguese power centers and offers of allegiance to Moroccan leaders who proved capable of resisting the occupiers. Drought and famine may have served as a tipping point, but the demographic disadvantages of the Portuguese position were the fundamental factor, which now led to the Portuguese in turn having to offer tribute for their own security.

This is one of the few periods when the city of Salé makes a prominent appearance in the Portuguese records. In September of 1529 the governor of Azammar argued strongly to João III that the king take Salé, whose shoreline and ramparts he described in glowing terms. Doing so, he asserted, would prevent Muslim ships from coming there, would weaken the sultan in Fez, and would allow Portugal to both stop the contraband trade taking place there and also collect the customs duties that would be received in Azammar but for Salé’s current independence.697 By early April of 1530, the governor reported that he had reached a truce with the caid of Salé, which was followed by several extensions and the use of the caid as an intermediary for a possible truce with the sultan in Fez.698

Contraband traffic, of course, continued as always to concern the Portuguese. They

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complained to Charles V that Spanish merchants were trading arms, steel, copper, sulfur, iron, stone, and saltpeter at Tarkoukou and Tafetna. In the summer of 1533, the Wattasid sultan granted the French freedom of navigation and the right to traffic along the Moroccan coast. Just a month later, the French ambassador to Fez was denounced for smuggling war materials to the Muslims. Again the records thus show that as the West African circuit of the Atlantic world matured, an increasing number of European actors learned of it, sought to take advantage of its commercial opportunities, and were willing to risk the ire of the Portuguese to trade with Muslims.

Portuguese anxiety rose further when al-A’raj finally did lay siege to Safi in 1534. The Portuguese promptly dispatched both supplies and reinforcements to rescue the garrison. Sa’di forces possessed intimidating artillery, which included a cannon that could launch shot so large that a man could not reach his arms around it. With these they battered the walls of Safi, opening a breach that the Portuguese fought fiercely to defend. When the large piece of artillery broke, the Sa’di dug mines, which the Portuguese countered with mines of their own. Eventually, the Portuguese resistance tired the Sa’di and they withdrew, but the experience had clearly shaken Portuguese leaders.

A few months after the end of the siege, Portugal’s João III circulated a request for

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opinions regarding the possible evacuation of Safi and Azammur.\textsuperscript{703} In his solicitation he explained that the recent siege had cost the treasury greatly, something it could not bear again, particularly given the costs to the crown of India and other territories. Having given much thought to the matter, he wanted to hear opinions on whether one or both of the two cities should be abandoned, or if not, should Portugal consider only preserving fortresses at each to reduce the expense.\textsuperscript{704}

This discussion took place in the context of a larger debate within Portugal about the allocation of limited personnel and financial resources to colonial endeavors, particularly between the Atlantic world and Asia. For the Portuguese such endeavors, some believed, could be pursued in North Africa, Brazil, or Asia, but not all three simultaneously. At the Portuguese court, one faction of traders argued vociferously that Asia should be abandoned by the crown, not because they favored activity in Brazil or North Africa, but instead because they wished for private trade to occur in Asia unfettered by any royal control beyond the granting of licenses.\textsuperscript{705}

Responses to João III of which we are aware could not have been encouraging; they varied widely. A few counseled abandoning the cities, thinking their importance nominal and that their defense would entail great expense and difficulty. Better it would be, some argued, to allocate resources to the defense of Ceuta against the rising threat of Kayr al-Din Barbarus.

\textsuperscript{703} “Circulaire de Jean III à différents gentilhommes et prélats sur l’évacuation de Safi et d’Azemmur et sur la guerre d’Afrique,” 13 September 1534, SIHM-Portugal, II, 637-639.
\textsuperscript{704} “Lettre de Jean III à Cristovão de Tavora,” 13 September 1534, SIHM-Portugal, II, 640-644. “Lettre de Jean III au Grand-Maitre [de Santiago],” 1534, SIHM-France, I, 43-46. “Lettre de Rou Jean III à l’évêque de Coimbra, 1534, SIHM-France, I, 47-51. As part of the request, the king also asked whether a continuing war in Morocco should be directed against Fez or Marrakech, and how such a war, as well as any continuing defense of Safi and Azammur, should be financed. Several respondents expressed doubts about the likelihood of success in additional campaigns against Fez or Marrakech. As to financing, some respondents suggested the matter be taken to the Portuguese assembly of nobles, the Cortes. Others mentioned military religious orders, towns, lords, merchants, and the king’s subjects generally as sources of the needed financing. A number of the letters in response exist in the SIHM collections for Portugal and in translation in those of France.
\textsuperscript{705} Sanjay Subrahmanyan, \textit{The Portuguese Empire in Asia: 1500-1700} (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 94.
(Barbarossa) in the Mediterranean. Others protested vehemently against evacuating Safi and Azammur, citing the costs of compensating the inhabitants for their losses, the encouragement it would give the Muslims, and the damage to Portuguese prestige. One opponent of evacuation appealed to João III’s pride, citing the brilliant conquests of his royal predecessors—João I, Duarte I, Afonso V, João II, Manuel I—and the king’s obligation to preserve them.

Your Highness has inherited his kingdom as well as his honor. He was bequeathed a kingdom at peace with its neighbors, surrounded by so many excellent brothers, so many excellent subjects. That is why, even though the difficulties that have arisen in his time, such as pestilences, famines, earthquakes, losses on land and sea, attacks of the French and other nations excuse him from not having made conquests in Africa, these difficulties do not release him from the obligation to conserve what his predecessors left him . . .

If these places are abandoned, this opponent claimed, it would be seen as a sign of weakness and the Wattasids in Fez, the Ottoman Sultan, and Barbarossa would attack the Portuguese

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708 These letters exist in the SIHM collections for Portugal and in translation in those of France. The extended quotation is taken from the translation in the French collection. “Réponse d’ Aires de Sousa au Roi sur la guerre d’Afrique,” 1 January 1535, SIHM-Portugal, III, 1-14. “Lettre de Manuel Souza au Roi Jean III,” 1 January 1535, SIHM-France, I, 90-105, 95. “Votre Altesse a hérité de son royaume aussi bien que de son honneur. Elle lui a succédé dans un royaume en paix avec ses voisins, entourée de tant d’excellents frères, de tant d’excellents sujets. C’est pourquoi, encore que les difficultés qui sont survenues de son temps, telles que pestes, famines, tremblements de terre, pertes sur terre et sur mer, attaques des Français et d’autres nations l’excusent de n’avoir pas fait de conquêtes en Afrique, ces difficultés ne la déchargent cependant pas de l’obligation de conserver ce que ses prédécesseurs lui ont laissé. . . .”

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Another opponent of evacuation claimed abandonment would make vain the great expense in lives and funds already incurred in conquering the cities. He placed the Portuguese holdings in Morocco first, above the requirements of Portugal’s other overseas possessions in India, El Mina, the Atlantic islands, and Brazil, insisting savings should be realized in all the latter in order to meet what is necessary for Africa. For the time being the Portuguese chose to stay, but history shows clearly where King João III’s preferences lay. He eventually became known as o Colonizado, “the colonizer,” who expanded Portuguese activities in Brazil and Asia, reaching as far as China and Japan.

A final battle over Marrakech between the two primary Muslim powers in Morocco, the Wattasids and the Sa’di, finally occurred in early July of 1536 at Bu Aqba, a ford of the Oum Er-Rbia River. The contest, which became known both as the Battle of Bu Aqba and the Battle of Wadi al-Abid, saw both sides employ gunpowder weapons. As Leo Africanus had earlier claimed to witness the presence of firearms in the Sus, Bu Aqba is thus again suggestive that the spread of gunpowder weapons within Morocco was facilitated by the combination of contraband trade with Europeans on the Atlantic coast, and perhaps indigenous manufacture by Moriscos and others. The latter is effectively confirmed by a report three years later from a Portuguese visitor to Sa’di Marrakech, who witnessed Spanish, French, and Portuguese in the city, the accumulation of financial resources by the Sharīf through trade duties, and the presence of a large number of experts in the manufacture of arms and munitions, including moriscos and marranos, as well as captured Christians.

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711 Cook, The Hundred Years War, 184-185.
712 So lucrative was the trade through Marrakech under Sa’di rule that they collected customs at a rate of 30% compared to the 5% charged in Portuguese holdings. “Mémoire de João Affonso aux membres du Tribunal de Conscience,” 25 September 1539, SIHM-Portugal, III, 220-223. A month before João III also received a report of
The Wattasids enjoyed a two-to-one manpower advantage during the battle of Bu Aqba, according to al-Ifrani, while the Portuguese representative to Fez, Jacob Rute, reported that the Sa’di had among their forces two hundred Turkish arquebusiers. After the Sa’di victory, the Wattasid sultan’s vizier tried to minimize the importance of the defeat, informing the Portuguese that though they had lost the battle and their supply train, Wattasid casualties were insignificant; he and the sultan had returned safely to Fez, and the countryside was quiet with little noticeable change. According to al-Ifrani, the two sides agreed on a split of territory that essentially made the Oum Er-Rbia the boundary between what was now more than ever before two distinct Moroccos, one in the north under the Wattasids based in Fez and the other in the south under the Sa’di based in Marrakech.

Santa-Cruz and Portuguese Decline

Shortly after the Sa’di victory at Bu Aqba, some advisers encouraged João III to take sides, suggesting that whichever Moroccan power sided with the Portuguese would no doubt prevail. Another suggested that the Portuguese move on Larache, a source of contraband trade, since the recent defeat had weakened the Wattasids, and Larache was ostensibly too far from Sa’di lands for the latter to intervene. Other communications, however, reveal Portuguese anxiety, particular about the rising power of the Sa’di and the potential fate of Safi, the French selling contraband through Larache. “Lettre de D. Manuel Mascarenhas à Jean III, 25 August 1539, SIHM-Portugal III, 209-211.


715 Al-Ifrani, Nozhet-Elhādi, 40. According to al-Ifrani, intermediaries found the two Sa’di princes haughty, cold, and disdainful, and not inclined to entertain the wishes of the populace, which led one of the local shaykhs to exclaim “may you never enter Fez as long as I am on the face of the earth” – a proclamation that al-Ifrani claimed came true as the Shaykh died before the Sa’di took control of northern Morocco. Al-Ifrani, Nozhet-Elhādi, 39-40.


Mazagan, and Azammur.\footnote{As Sa’di forces gathered for what ultimately became the attack on Marrakech, the Portuguese at Safi feared the Muslim forces were destined for them. See e.g., “Lettre de Jean III au Comte de Castanheira,” 22 December 1535, SIHM-Portugal, III, 31-33.} During a truce between the Portuguese and the Sa’di scheduled to end in September of 1536, the capitan of Mazagan, Manuel de Sande, reported that for five months no caravans had come to either Azammur or Safi, except for two unimportant ones that he assumed were sent for the purpose of espionage.\footnote{“Ordre de paiement de Luis de Loureiro,” 2 June 1536, SIHM-Portugal, III, 38. “Lettre de Manuel de Sande à Jean III,” 21 September 1536, SIHM-Portugal, III, 59-64.} After learning from his capitan in Safi that the Sa’di had returned to Marrakech with artillery among the spoils from the Battle of Bu Aqba, a worried King João III ordered reinforcements sent to Safi, while the capitan delayed the return to Portugal of portion of the existing garrison.\footnote{“Lettre de Jean III au Comte de Castanheira,” 11 October 1536, SIHM-Portugal, III, 65-66.} Once again the dependence of the Portuguese on a tribute system they could no longer impose became apparent, forcing the Portuguese positions in Morocco to look to the Atlantic islands and Portugal itself for succor.

Continued internecine conflict amongst Morocco’s two indigenous powers could, of course, potentially benefit the Portuguese, provided the latter could avoid conflicts of its own with them. Accordingly, in late April of 1537 the Portuguese negotiated a sometimes tenuous three-year truce with the Sa’di sharīf, Ahmed al-A’raj, which covered Safi, Mazagan, and Azammur. This truce addressed among other things the boundaries of the areas dependent upon the three cities, commercial transactions, the passage of Christians and Muslims, the handling of escaped slaves, the crossing of armed forces over territory, and the presence of Muslims in Portuguese areas.\footnote{“Act de la Proclamation de la paix de Safi,” 25 April 1537, SIHM-Portugal, III, 96-108. “Rapport de D. Rodrigo de Castro, Capitaine de Safi, à Jean III sur la paix avec le Cherif,” 4 June 1537, SIHM-Portugal III, 104-108. When a rebellion against the Wattasids arose in the early months of 1538 and the Sa’di sharīf considered his own march on Fez, the Portuguese remained worried they might move against Safi or Azammur despite the truce. A few months later, the sharīf indeed almost scrapped the truce and gave orders to ravage the crops of Azammur. “Lettre de Bastião Alvares à Jean III,” 6 March 1538, SIHM-Portugal III, 137-138. “Lettre de Bastião Alvares à Jean III,” 4 May 1538, SIHM-Portugal, III, 143-145.} A year later the Portuguese also entered into an eleven-year peace treaty with the Kingdom of Fez. This, among other items, established the jurisdiction of Fez over...
Muslims in the flatlands around Portuguese holdings. It also allowed freedom of commerce between Muslims and Christians except for ammunition and weapons of war, while banning from ports (and allowing the seizure of) Turkish, French, or other non-Iberian ships who took action against the subjects of Portugal or Fez. Each side also could confiscate herds introduced to the other’s territories without authorization, seek reparations for damages and grievances, and set fines for the passing of arms from one territory to another.722

The treaty between the Portuguese and the Wattasids also incorporated recognition of the growing international conflicts into which Morocco was being drawn. By now the Ottoman Empire had gained formal footholds in North African ports and was threatening the western Mediterranean. While the Sa’di and the Wattasids struggled over Marrakech, the Ottomans had lain siege to Vienna. João III had assumed the throne of Portugal in 1521 while Magellan’s ship was undertaking the first circumnavigation of the world. More importantly, in the year that the Portuguese suffered their defeat at Mamora, Charles I had risen in Iberia to become the first to rule Castile, León, and Aragon in his own right, thus becoming the first true ruler of Spain and its empire. Three years later, with Cortes leaving Cuba to colonize Mexico, Charles became the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and was to lead the Habsburg Empire in its struggle against the Ottomans. Clauses adverse to the two primary enemies of the Habsburgs—France and the Ottoman Empire—gave the treaty between the Portuguese and the Wattasids a pro-Habsburg slant, earning the services of the Emperor as its guarantor.723

Despite the agreements with the Sa’di and the Wattasids, the Portuguese remained apprehensive in the midst of famines and revolts, particularly in Safi, where the lack of wheat in

722 “Traité de paix entre le Portugal et le Royaume de Fès,” 8 May 1538, SIHM-Portugal, III, 158-166.
the summer of 1540 caused extreme distress. The feitor there claimed that the sharīf had secured the advantages of peace while leaving the Portuguese with the disadvantages of war. He urged that goods not be sent to the sharīf, but rather stored in Safi, where the Muslims would then be forced to come to obtain them, as in the past bringing with them food like walnuts, dates, almonds, and cattle, rather than only the wool and leathers they were bringing now. Only a few weeks later the capitan of Safi complained to the king that the four to five thousand people of the city where starving while both Azammur and Santa-Cruz had received shipments of wheat from Portugal’s Atlantic islands; he pled urgently for supply before winter.

After the fall of Marrakech to the Sa’di, the elder of the two ashrāf, Ahmed al-A’raj had taken up residence in Marrakech while his brother, Muhammad al-Shaykh, had returned to the Sus. It was the latter who took the next important step in Morocco’s changing relationship with the Atlantic world – the capture of Santa-Cruz from the Portuguese in 1541. Santa-Cruz had sustained attacks from the Sa’di early in the prior decade, but the Sa’di offensive that began in late September of 1540 became a six-month siege, allegedly involving a probably-exaggerated figure of more than one hundred thousand Sa’di troops and partisans. It also illustrated improvement in Sa’di tactics, for the latter did not simply rush the fortress, but instead worked to bring their artillery within range, eventually fortifying the peak above the garrison and then raining shot down upon the Portuguese day and night for three weeks. The latter was the fundamental weakness of Santa-Cruz. Built around the source of fresh water near the beach, it was vulnerable to attack from the heights above by any enemy that possessed gunpowder

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727 “Rapport de D. Rodrigo de Castro sur la perte de Santa-Cruz du Cap de Guê,” after 12 March 1541, SIHM-Portugal, III, 340-343. “Lettre de Guiterre de Monroy à Jean III,” 2 April 1541, SIHM-Portugal III, 365-374. This last source, from the governor of Santa-Cruz, is the most comprehensive and probably also the most self-serving report on the details of the siege.
weaponry.

During the siege the garrison appealed for food and reinforcements, first from Portugal itself in February of 1541, and then a few weeks later from Portuguese Madeira, where wounded had been sent. Its governor also later claimed to have sought aid from the Canary Islands and Safi as well, to no avail. As the days of the siege wore on Muslim works and sappers moved ever closer to the Portuguese walls. Constant artillery barrage took its toll, crumbling the ramparts and disabling the Portuguese cannon. According to the governor of Santa-Cruz, a heavy assault brought the Muslims to the dry moat on March 10 of 1541 before they were driven off. On the next day a shot apparently struck Portuguese munitions and blew a hole in the fortress wall, through which the Sa’di forces successfully rushed the following morning.

The fall of Santa-Cruz brought recriminations, as the governor of the post defended his conduct and castigated those he felt responsible for the defeat. A seemingly nervous King João III addressed explanations to the Pope and the Emperor Charles V that stressed the indefensible nature of Santa-Cruz given the location chosen in the time of his father by João Lopes de Sequeira, his own extensive efforts to strengthen and reinforce the Portuguese position.

731 In his account the governor of Santa-Cruz criticized those who had erected a white flag, as well as deserters who descended the wall on the shore to boats that had been dispatched by waiting caravels. The latter also drew his ire for not immediately sending their boats ashore on March 10th and 11th, and then for leaving on the 12th and 13th without inquiring about the fate of those in Santa-Cruz. He blamed the loss of the fortress on the caravels and the deserters. Although the high tide enabled the former to draw in close, they did not fire on the Muslims erecting scaling ladders or climbing the ropes of the deserters, while the deserters not only reduced the fighting force of the Portuguese, but seen by the Sa’di commanders led them to order a mass advance. Guiterre de Monroy extolled the gallantry and bravery of those few who made a last stand with him before capture, claiming that nothing of the like had been seen since the Romans, something to which he asserted Turks who had witnessed thirteen sieges could testify. “Lettre de Guiterre de Monroy à Jean III,” 2 April 1541, SIHM-Portugal III, 365-374.
and the early representations of Santa-Cruz’s governor that the Sa’di were not a threat. According to the king the Muslims paid dearly for their victory, for he claimed to have personally interviewed ship crews who said blood flowed from the walls toward the sea. Most at fault, the king alleged, were Christians who supplied the Muslims with weapons and took service with them. Turks and renegados, he claimed, were among the numerous and well-armed Sa’di forces. Thanks to the gold they received from Timbuktu, he argued, over the past twenty years the Sa’di had become very powerful and would become more so.732

Portuguese activity in the far south of Morocco had generated multiple responses. Not only did it crystallize resistance to the Portuguese centered on the Sa’di, but the trading opportunities in the area drew the interest of other Europeans, who provided the Moroccans of the south with a means of accessing the Atlantic network that did not depend upon the Portuguese. This enabled not simply the accumulation of wealth by the Sa’di, but also access to weaponry that could be used against the Portuguese. Within this context João III’s prediction turned out to be prescient. The fall of Santa-Cruz indeed made the Sa’di more powerful, bringing them weapons and prisoners, the latter of which they were able to ransom for large sums. Of even greater potential value, for the first time since the Atlantic assault on Morocco, the Sa’di were now able to engage in far more expansive and lucrative trade with the Atlantic world. A Portuguese report from less than ten months after the loss of Santa-Cruz claimed that Taroudant, about forty-five miles inland from the port, was filled with merchandise, and in a period of less than a month had received the cargos of nine ships for which the Muslims provided sugar, indigo, wax, amber, and hides.733

A decade after the fall of Santa-Cruz the Portuguese, who continued to travel to what was

733 “Lettre de Sebastião Alvares à Jean III,” 5 January 1542, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 6-8.
now often referred to as Agadir while in Muslim hands, were still lamenting the contraband trade that passed through the area. According to one report Agadir was where the largest amount of trade involving the Sa’di ashraf took place.\footnote{\textquotedblleft Lette d’Inancio Nunes [Gato] à Jean III,\textquotedblright 5 November 1550, SIHM-Portugal IV, 405-409.} That trade frequently involved prohibited goods and was sometimes brazen as when, the report noted, a ship came to sell what it had obtained by looting a Portuguese Royal Navy ship and killing its crew. Inacio Nunes, the author of one letter, urged João III to seize Agadir and the lightly defended corresponding peak and put a stop to the smuggling. This, he argued, could be easily done, would embarrass the sharif, and would lead to very profitable commerce. According to the letter, both the French and the Castilians were operating factories full of merchandise outside the walls of Agadir, and one group of merchants had apparently negotiated a monopoly on the export of sugar and other merchandise. Some Portuguese had recently found one vessel at Agadir that was carrying banned goods, now loading sugar, and another that had been carrying spices, lacquer, and contraband addressed to a Lisbon merchant, also now loading sugar for France.\footnote{\textquotedblleft Lette d’Inancio Nunes [Gato] à Jean III,\textquotedblright 5 November 1550, SIHM-Portugal IV, 405-409.} In short, the “[l]oss of Santa Cruz broke the dam which kept arms from directly entering Sa’di domains in dangerous quantities.”\footnote{Cook, \textit{The Hundred Years War}, 196.}

It also struck a blow to Portuguese resolve. Some argued for prompt offensive action against the Sa’di, perhaps with the aid of the Wattasids in Fez, predicting that otherwise Morocco would be lost as soon as the following year.\footnote{“Réponse de Cristóvão de Tavora à l’enquéte de Jean III auprès des members du Conseil Royal,” between 17 and 30 April 1541, SIHM-Portugal III, 379-383. \textquotedblleft Lette d’Inancio Nunes [Gato] à Francisco de Lemo,\textquotedblright 17 June 1541, SIHM-Portugal III, 440-444.} Azammur, Mazagan, and Safi seemed especially vulnerable. Indeed, while Muhammad al-Shaykh laid siege to Santa-Cruz from the Sus, his older brother, Ahmed al-A’raj, prepared to attack Azammur from Marrakech, in the second half of March approaching the city with artillery, ladders, Turkish mercenaries, and an
iron chain designed to close the Oum Er-Bia. Joao III had the Pope informed of the danger (seeking to gather new revenues from the church), sent ammunition and reinforcements from both Portugal and Madeira, sought new recruits in Andalusia, and called for the evacuation of Azammur’s Jews to Arzila. Knowledge of Turks and renegados in the Sa’di army, skilled in siege warfare, worried the Portuguese, as did additional reports of contraband weapons and ammunition flowing to the Muslims from French and Spanish merchants.

Weston Cook has described the siege of Azammur as a “crushing humiliation” for Ahmed al-A’raj, though available documents say little about it. It is possible that famine may have won the Portuguese a temporary reprieve, as by the latter part of May a Portuguese admiral reporting on the uselessness of stationing ships in the Oum Er-Bia, noted the now strong state of the garrisons and supplies of Safi, Mazagan, and Azammur. In his view the sharif would not mount a spring offensive due to the famine plaguing the lands. A month later the contador of Safi backed this assessment, citing extreme drought and the resulting famine and death of livestock as leading to the cessation of Muslim hostilities against Safi, with the sharif ensconcing himself in Marrakech. In what was almost surely a recurring theme in times of dearth, some Moroccans attributed continuing famine the following winter to the export of wheat to Christian countries.

741 Cook, The Hundred Years War, 201.
742 “Lettre de D. Rodrigo de Castro à Jean III,” 7 May 1541, 399-402.
Understandably, at this time the Portuguese saw value in a pact with the Wattasid sultan against the rising Sa’di. For the Wattasids, however, this was not a simple matter. Though desirous of allies and having reached peace agreements before with the Portuguese, a formal alliance against other Muslims posed particular dangers for a ruling dynasty. Such considerations, as we have seen, were not paramount for figures like Yahya ibn Ta’fuft, but collaboration with a foreign power against other Muslims was a significant bridge to cross for a dynasty with pretensions of ruling over all of Morocco. Many Muslims, the Wattasids knew, would surely respond negatively, if not engage in outright revolt, as a result of a Wattasid alliance with a Christian power when the purpose of the alliance was to make war against other Muslims. As negotiations took place between Portugal and Fez, the sultan worried about the discussions leaking out, and opposed Portuguese efforts to send a high-ranking diplomatic mission, which he felt would almost certainly draw attention.745

Each party clearly doubted the commitment of the other. The Portuguese complained that Fez had not honored past promises to send troops when the Portuguese were under attack, and were not otherwise engaging in offensive actions against the sharīf. For his part, the Wattasid sultan responded that poor harvests had hindered his ability to meet earlier commitments, that it would be impracticable to raise an army in the late summer of 1541, and that they still were not in agreement about the maintenance responsibility for any troops that Portugal sent.746 In September of 1541, Portugal’s ambassador became convinced that the Wattasids would never formally ally themselves with the Portuguese against the Sa’di sharīf.747

By this time the Portuguese had made a startling decision, which manifested itself in October of 1541 when they evacuated Safi and Azammur. Six years before, as we saw, the opposition to such a move seemed intense. But with the fall of Santa-Cruz and the increasing power of the Sa’di in the area, King João III concluded that the preservation of Portuguese positions along Morocco’s southern Atlantic coast was not practicable. Portugal was spending far more on military needs in Morocco than it was generating in commercial profits. As noted earlier, within Portugal there had long been disagreement among the “India” and “Africa” factions. The former, of course, believed that the vast sums spent in Morocco could profitably be invested elsewhere in the Portuguese empire. Explaining his decision to the Emperor Charles V, João III cited the increasing indefensibility of both locations. Safi, he asserted, was dominated by nearby heights, which no doubt grimly brought to mind the disaster at Santa-Cruz, while adverse weather could make unloading of reinforcements and supplies untenantable for months. Azammur was no better, he claimed, primarily due to the bar and the narrowness of the Oum Er-Rbia. As they had at Santa-Cruz, the Portuguese also placed blame on Turks and renegados, whose contributions in the use of artillery, siege engines, and training, had added to the strength of Morocco’s Muslims. What went unsaid was again the underlying weakness of the Portuguese positions at both Safi and Azammur. In the absence of a loyal peasantry or slave labor, each depended upon the ability to impose a tribute system on the local population that appropriated for the Portuguese the production of the countryside. Without leaders like Nuno Fernandes and ibn Ta’fuft who could attract Muslim allies that could impose this system, the Portuguese at Safi and Azammur were dependent upon the willingness and ability of Muslim

merchants to trade for what the Portuguese had to offer, or upon supply from a homeland that itself sometimes depended upon the grain of Morocco to alleviate famine.

In Fez, the Wattasid sultan felt betrayed by the Portuguese evacuation and was allegedly moved to tears. At the least, he believed, the Portuguese could have demolished the two locations, as the Pope had apparently authorized, rather than leaving them for the Sa’di. Iberian prestige suffered elsewhere at the time as well. During the same month that the Portuguese evacuated Safi and Azammur, Charles V failed in an expedition against Ottoman Algiers. Word also reached Fez a few months later that the Portuguese had suffered setbacks in the Red Sea. When the Portuguese early in 1542 expelled the Jews from Arzila, the sultan became convinced that the Portuguese planned to evacuate it as well. Bitter, he did not hide his regret at having entered into agreements with the Portuguese, and refused to pay the sums he owed them. Meanwhile new Christians, allegedly mostly converted Jews, brought war material to the sultan to the consternation of the Portuguese.

Upon abandoning Azammur, the Portuguese had chosen to reinforce their position at nearby Mazagan, and it became the sole formal reminder of the former Portuguese dominance in the region. Now the “dam” had really burst. Portuguese-Moroccan textile exports to sub-Saharan Africa plummeted, and gold receipts sank below fifty percent of what they had been at the start of the sixteenth century. Fez resented the Portuguese, and beyond controlling access to the overland desert routes south, the Sa’di now also controlled the major southern ports along over two hundred miles of Moroccan Atlantic coastline—ports from which non-Portuguese

752 “Lettre de Bastião de Vargas à Jean III,” 30 March 1542, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 36-37.
753 “Lettre de Bastião de Vargas à Jean III,” 1 February 1542, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 25-29.
European interlopers could now even more easily access the markets for sugar, gold and other commodities the Sa’di had to offer. In the far south of the country, in other words, Moroccans could now enter the network of the Atlantic world without having to pass through the restrictive filter of the Portuguese. Not only were they thus able to trade for their own advantage, but now too within the Atlantic world European competitors of the Portuguese had another avenue by which they could weaken the latter using the pathways of the Atlantic that the Portuguese themselves had created.

**The Unification of Morocco**

When Muhammad al-Shaykh launched his assault on Santa-Cruz from the Sus, he had in effect also refused to assist his brother, Muhammad al-A’raj, when the latter moved from Marrakech against Azammur. Accordingly, relations between the Sa’di brothers began to sour. Muhammad al-A’raj’s original success at Marrakech had initially generated concern among the tribes of the Sus regarding their role in the movement, as well as the envy of his brother. With the latter’s victory at Santa-Cruz, however, as well as al-A’raj’s failure at Azammur, the star of the younger brother rose. The proximate cause of their break was allegedly a disagreement over what al-Shaykh owed his older brother for the capture of Santa-Cruz.

Conflict between the two drew the attention of the Portuguese as well as the Wattasid sultan in Fez. While the latter hoped to take advantage of the situation, military and personal

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weakness apparently prevented him from engaging in any substantive action. Over a period of two years the forces of the brothers engaged in a series of skirmishes and two major battles. The second of these in the summer of 1544 effectively settled the matter between them, with al-Shaykh prevailing. According to al-Ifrani, after his victory, al-Shaykh confined his brother and his children in Marrakech; other sources suggest that he was effectively sent into exile in Sijilmasa.

Pressure continued to mount on the Wattasid sultan in Fez at this time from all sides. Although the internal Sa’di civil war might have seemed beneficial, the mutual weakening of the sides would have been preferable to the victory of one over the other. Additionally, the sultan faced increasing acrimony over the treaty he had signed with the Portuguese, which was increasingly subject to violations and seemed inconsistent with the Portuguese having left Safi and Azammur open to the sultan’s Sa’di enemies. Embittered and facing rebellions in the north, the Wattasid sultan formally renounced the treaty with Portugal in 1543.

After the victory over his brother, Muhammad al-Shaykh proposed a six month truce with Portugal. The latter saw advantages to such an arrangement. It would, for example, give them time to continue removing items from abandoned Azammur and demolish the fortifications. They were, however, skeptical of the sharif’s true intentions, cognizant of how he had used a truce to prepare for the assault on Santa-Cruz. Additionally, the Portuguese were agitated that French intermediaries continued to deliver the Sa’di contraband war material through Agadir.

762 “Lettre de Moulay Ahmed à Jean III,” September 1543, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 136-139.
Accordingly, while engaging with Muhammad al-Shaykh, they also entertained discussions with the defeated Ahmed al-A’raj’s son, Mawlay Zaydan. Though wounded in battle, the latter had escaped his father’s defeat and was willing to engage in talks with the Wattasids and Portuguese; the latter specifically considering access to the sugar of the Sus in their deliberations.\footnote{“Lettre de Luis de Loureiro à Jean III,” 26 July 1544, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 150-154.}

Having secured rule over Marrakech, in 1545 Muhammad al-Shaykh launched a new campaign against the Wattasids in Fez, this time with the aim of taking control of all Morocco. The Sa’di’s first major step in this initiative occurred at the Battle of Darna, where they captured the Wattasid Sultan, Abu al-Abbas and incorporated his artillery and gunpowder units into their army. This battle, according to Weston Cook, was the first to witness Turkish soldiers in the Sa’di army “as corporate bodies, complete with weapons, commanders, and class interests,” and stood in contrast to their use at Santa-Cruz, where they had been mixed in as individuals with sub-Saharan Africans, \textit{renegados}, and Moroccans.\footnote{Cook, \textit{The Hundred Years War}, 208. While noting this, Cook disputes the idea proposed by earlier scholars that the Sa’di army was by this time thoroughly “Ottomanized.” Cook, \textit{The Hundred Years War}, 207-208.} It thus inaugurated, in Cook’s opinion, the “practice of hiring mercenaries as complete fighting units in the Sa’dian army,”\footnote{Cook, \textit{The Hundred Years War}, 208.} something that became more pronounced in subsequent decades.

Though the sultan had been captured at Darna, his army returned to Fez in good order, leaving the Sa’di conquest unfinished, and in the spring of 1546 the latter gathered forces for yet another campaign. For two successive years al-Shaykh unsuccessfully sought to oust the Wattasids. A brief peace negotiated in July of 1547, however, resulted in the release of the Wattasid Sultan Abu al-Abbas in return for Sa’di control of Meknès, Salé, and al-Qasr al-Kabir, as well as the vassalage of Tétouan and Chefchaouen, and the right of the Sa’di \textit{sharif} to coin his

Fearing the complete loss of his kingdom the sultan sought assistance abroad. Areas in northern Morocco looked to powers independent of the Wattasids and the Sa’di, while the Portuguese worried about the vulnerability of their remaining coastal enclaves and sent agents seeking reinforcements to Spanish Andalusia.\footnote{“Lettre de Luis de Loureiro à Jean III,” 27 August 1547, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 229-232. “Lettre de Don Philipp à Charles-Quint,” 7 June 1546, “SIHM-Espagne, I, 120. “Note sur la situation de Mazagan,” before 10 April 1547, SIHM-Espagne, I, 121-122. “Lettre de Luis de Loureiro à Jean III,” 23 November 1547, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 243-245. “Lettre de Luis Alvarez à D. Affonso de Noronha,” 3 December 1547, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 26-249. “Lettre de Jerónimo Diez Sánchez à D. Maria de Eça,” 3 February 1548, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 253-255. “Lettre de Jerónimo Diez Sánchez à Jean III,” 15 May 1548, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 268-272.} Meanwhile it seemed everyone in Fez, whether Wattasid ally or European merchant, tried to convince the Portuguese, the Spanish Habsburgs, and the Ottomans to send aide to the sultan, knowing all would prefer division over a fully-independent Morocco, unified under the Sa’di.\footnote{“Lettre de Luis de Loureiro à Jean III,” 23 November 1547, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 243-245. “Lettre de Luis Alvarez à D. Affonso de Noronha,” 3 December 1547, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 26-249. “Lettre de Jerónimo Diez Sánchez à D. Maria de Eça,” 3 February 1548, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 253-255. “Lettre de Jerónimo Diez Sánchez à Jean III,” 15 May 1548, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 268-272.} Wattasid forces and allies (or at least opponents of the Sa’di) were, according to Portuguese accounts, able to win a few encounters.\footnote{“Lettre de Luis de Loureiro à Jean III,” 23 November 1547, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 243-245. “Lettre de Luis Alvarez à D. Affonso de Noronha,” 3 December 1547, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 26-249. “Lettre de Jerónimo Diez Sánchez à D. Maria de Eça,” 3 February 1548, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 253-255. “Lettre de Jerónimo Diez Sánchez à Jean III,” 15 May 1548, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 268-272.} Yet in the absence of meaningful outside aid, none of which materialized, resisting Sa’di strength may have seemed impossible. In June of 1548 João III of Portugal felt compelled to instruct his ambassador to Charles V to acquaint the emperor with the character and power of Muhammad al-Shaykh, and to request that he send galleys to the Strait of Gibraltar to prevent the sharīf from
communicating with Ottoman Algiers or gathering ships at Salé or Larache that could threaten the passage.  

Early in 1549 Muhammad al-Shaykh finally captured Fez, once again imprisoning Abu al-Abbas, while the latter’s commander-in-chief and now effectively the last Wattasid sultan, Abu Hasun, fled toward Spanish Melilla on the Mediterranean coast.  

The actual Sa’di conquest of Fez fed into a host of European fears about the ultimate objective of this ascending Muslim power and the prospects of a Muslim alliance between Morocco and the Ottoman Empire. As we have seen, during and after the fall of Santa-Cruz, references to the presence of Turkish soldiers arise in the accounts not just of European encounters with Muslim forces, but also in reports of conflicts between rival Moroccan forces themselves. Additionally, European accounts begin to repeatedly express concerns about the possibility of Turkish ships appearing on Morocco’s Atlantic coastline, particularly in lightly-controlled or lightly-inhabited places like Larache. With the Sa’di victory at Fez news spread of renegados and Turkish mercenaries, men out of work as a result of the Habsburg-Ottoman Treaty of Adrianople in 1547, who had found a new home in the formidable Sa’di army and contributed significantly to its victories.  

While the Portuguese and Spanish worried about potential land-based attacks on their holdings in Morocco and North Africa, additional fears arose from reports that the Sa’di were looking to procure ships, that the Ottomans were supplying the Sa’di with sailors, and that with the expertise of renegados and Turks that the Sa’di were planning to construct a navy of their own that could operate out of Atlantic ports like

Larache, Mamora, Salé, and Safi.\textsuperscript{776} With sources reporting on Sa’di interest in developing a naval capability, fears grew that the new power in Morocco planned to invade Iberia itself, prompting the review and strengthening of coastal defenses on the Iberian Peninsula, as well as another formal admonition, this time by Emperor Charles V, against commercial ties between merchants from Cadiz and the Sa’di Atlantic ports of Larache and Salé.\textsuperscript{777} Exaggerated as these fears now look to us, the living memory of the \textit{Reconquista}, the emigration of Moriscos, the expulsion of Jews, the suspicion of \textit{conversos} in Spain, the rivalry of the Habsburgs with France and the Ottoman Empire, and the naval piracy of the latter’s North African proxies, all combined to generate understandable concern.\textsuperscript{778}

Portuguese anxiety once more rose as reports circulated that the \textit{sharīf} was sending scouts to evaluate the remaining Moroccan sites that Portugal occupied.\textsuperscript{779} As concern grew, by

\textsuperscript{776}“Lettre de Luis de Rueda à Maximilien et à Marie d’Autriche,” 6 February 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 147-148. “Lettre de Jean III à D. Affonso [de Noronha],” 27 February 1549, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 310-315. “Lettre de Cristobal de Abreo au Duc de Medina-Sidonia,” 18 February 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 160-162. “Lettre de Verdugo au Duc de Medina-Sidonia,” 18 February 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 163. “Lettre de Don Bernardino de Mendoza à Francisco de Ledesma,” 19 March 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 195-196. “Extraits de Lettres de Don Juan et de Don Bernardino de Mendoza” 14 and 19 April 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 229-232. “Lettre de Pedro de Herrera a Luis de Rueda,” 23 August 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 337-340. The subjects of Abu Hasun, Tlemcen, and Melilla, the Spanish enclave on Morocco’s Mediterranean coast, dominate much of the Spanish correspondence during 1549. As to concerns about Moroccan shipbuilding, one report speculated that the Sa’di could construct small galleys in the safety of Fez and bring them down the Sebu River to Mamora. “Extraits de Lettres de Don Juan et de Don Bernardino de Mendoza” 14 and 19 April 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 229-232. This does not appear likely, if even possible. As mentioned earlier in this study, the Sebu was not navigable to Fez, which actually sat on a tributary of the river. It was perhaps possible that ships could be partially constructed and components floated down the river to a location where construction could be completed. A more probable explanation is that the correspondents possessed insufficient or inaccurate geographical knowledge.


\textsuperscript{778}Spanish correspondence reveals concern about the impact of Moriscos from Granada, Valencia, and Aragon, now resident in Fez and Algiers, on the \textit{sharīf}, with the former urging an assault on Ceuta and the latter promising him allegiance against the Turks. “Avis de Pedro Hernandez,” end of July, 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 321-323.


While the evacuation of Arzila was under consideration, João III then also decided to abandon al-Qasr al-Sagir. Presumably remembering the fatal failure to occupy the dominating peak above Atlantic Santa-Cruz, the Portuguese had not long before taken steps to fortify a corresponding height (the Seinal) above al-Qasr al-Sagir.\footnote{“Lettre de Don Bernardino de Mendoza à Maximilien et à Marie d’Autriche,” 6 August 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 327-330. “Lettre d’Abou Hassoûn à Maximilien et à Marie d’Autriche,” 6 August 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 331-332. “Lettre d’Abou Hassoûn à Jean III,” 30 August 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 341-343. “Lettre d’Abou Hassoûn à Jean III,” 31 August 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 344. “Lettre du Comte de Tendilla à Ledesma,” 28 September 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 361-362. “Lettre d’Abou Hassoûn à Maximilien et à Marie d’Autriche,” 2 October 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 363-365. “Lettre de Jean III à D. Affonso [de Noronha],” 27 February 1549, SIHM-Portugal, IV, 310-315.} Now that recent effort was wasted. As with Safi and Azammur, once again a Portuguese ambassador found himself with the unenviable task of explaining to Emperor Charles V why positions in Morocco were being surrendered to Muslims—a task in this instance made no easier by the expenditures recently incurred to strengthen one of those locations (al-Qasr al-Sagir), and a complicated plan to turn
over the other (Arzila) to a failed Muslim commander.  

Charles V turned out to have no real appetite for committing to the support of Abu Hasun. With a lack of attractive alternatives, João III finally determined to abandon Arzila completely in the spring of 1550, without any attempt to install the Wattasid leader. In the summer he also abandoned al-Qasr al-Sagir. The Portuguese had been all but expelled from Morocco, now holding only Ceuta, Tangier and Mazagan. With their conquest of Fez and the Portuguese departures, the Sa’di had effectively united Morocco and seemed poised to play an important role in the conflict between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans. But their next move would surprise some.

**Conflict with the Ottoman Empire**

Upon coming to power the Sa’di gaze turned northward and eastward, away from the Atlantic. Yet the actions they took at this time nevertheless had a potentially significant impact on the developing Atlantic world. What appears to have motivated the Sa’di at this time was not the allure of repeating heroic conquests on the European mainland, as past Moroccan dynasties had done, but instead concern about the motives and capabilities of the Turks. Despite their military success, the Sa’di position in Fez was not a secure one. They did not have the support

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785 Advocates for Abu Hasun advocated that he had all the qualifications for an African enterprise, characterizing him as “intelligent, well-liked, and with great influence among the Muslims” (“Es hombre harto provechoso para qualquiera empresa que se quiera hazer en Africa, porques sabio y quendo y tiene grandissimo credito con los Moros”). “Lettre de Don Bernardino de Mendoza à Maximilien et à Marie d’Autriche,” 19 July 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 315-316. “Lettre de Pedro de Herrera à Luis de Rueda,” 23 August 1549, SIHM-Espagne, I, 337-340. Charles V apparently was not convinced.
of the majority of the religious and political establishment in the city, including ashrāf who knew the Sa’di would not extend to them the traditional freedom from taxes as the Wattasids had done. Additionally, when Abu Hasun fled he proceeded to travel from place to place seeking allies by stirring up fears of Sa’di offensives, courting both the Spanish and the Ottomans. To Muslim opponents of the Sa’di, the Ottoman Empire and their representatives in North Africa offered the prospect of a safe-haven and an alternative to Sa’di domination.

Up to this point Morocco’s experience with the Ottomans had primarily taken the form of former Ottoman soldiers serving the Sa’di as valuable mercenaries against the Portuguese at Santa-Cruz and in Moroccan civil conflicts. Now, however, with most of Morocco controlled by a single power, the relationship with the Ottoman Empire had potentially profound consequences for the emerging Atlantic world. In the *Ottoman Age of Exploration* Giancarlo Casale sees European activities in the Western Hemisphere as paralleled or mirrored by Ottoman exploratory and conquest efforts in Egypt, East Africa, the Indian Ocean, and farther east. These Ottoman efforts, he believes, have implications for questions about Ottoman knowledge of the Atlantic and Ottoman interest in participating in its exploration and exploitation.

A case in point is the Ottoman Empire’s oft-lamented “failure” to explore the Atlantic or to establish colonies in the New World as Europeans did. In most existing literature on the subject, this is a piece of evidence routinely pointed to as proof that the Ottomans lacked both an awareness of the discoveries and an inclination to participate in them. But this book, rather than asking why the Ottomans never explored the New World, begins with an altogether different question: Why would they even wish to in the first place? As every schoolchild knows, Columbus himself set sail for the west not to discover a new continent (whose very existence he repeatedly tried to disprove) but in search of an alternate route to the Indies. In much the same way, the Portuguese explorers who discovered Brazil did so accidentally while on their way to India, since only by sailing far into the Atlantic could they find winds that would carry them past the southern tip of Africa. Even as late as the seventeenth century, numerous Dutch, English, and French expeditions to North America were similarly undertaken in search of an elusive Northwest Passage to the Orient.

Hence, from the perspective of their own times, the Ottomans’ lack of

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involvement in the Western Hemisphere can hardly be considered a manifestation of collective failure. Instead, it was a logical reflection of the fact that, unlike for Europeans, the New World for them was not on the way to India. As a result, once they had successfully conquered Egypt (a prize for which the Spanish and Portuguese would have gladly traded all their claims in the Americas), the Ottomans quite reasonably took advantage of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf to gain access to the treasures of the East, rather than vainly searching the Atlantic for a shorter route that simply did not exist.

With the benefit of a half millennium of hindsight, of course, we know just how valuable the New World was one day destined to become. But at the dawn of the Age of Exploration, this future was far from obvious, and it therefore serves as a very poor standard for evaluating the relative success of the Ottoman imperial project.  

Casale’s assertions with regard to the Ottomans and the Atlantic seemed designed primarily to refute the notions of those who have viewed the Ottomans as indifferent to discoveries in the west or not inclined to participate in them. It certainly seems true that expansion to the east was a logical approach for the Ottoman Empire, whether before, during, or after the early stages of European exploration to the west. Consequently, a lack of participation in activities to the west should indeed not be the standard for evaluating the “Ottoman imperial project.” Yet, what also refutes those who claim Ottoman indifference is the actual Ottoman historical effort in the west, which included repeated attempts to exercise control in Morocco and, at least from the perspective of the European powers, to gain access to its Atlantic ports. That the Ottomans might succeed in the latter was a consistent fear of European powers, for these Europeans knew that alone among the non-European states in the area the Ottoman Empire was the polity with the potential naval capability to engage in the Atlantic proper—provided they could secure ready access to the sea that was not dependent upon the contested pathway of the Strait of Gibraltar. Such access Morocco possessed. Indeed, Casale mentions in a footnote that beyond questions of motivation there were physical obstacles to Ottoman participation in the Atlantic, specifically citing the challenges of contrary current and wind patterns in the

789 Casale, The Ottoman Age of Exploration, 11.  
790 Casale specifically cites as representative of this Svat Soucek’s work “Piri Reis and Ottoman Discovery of the Great Discoveries,” Studia Islamica 79 (1994): 121-142.
Mediterranean that would have to be overcome to access the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{791} The solution to this problem, of course, which Casale curiously does not mention, was Ottoman control of Morocco. What stood in the way of the Ottomans was thus less the environmental obstacles of the Mediterranean, but rather a \textit{sharīfian} dynasty to the west.

As to motivation, why would the Ottoman Empire wish to exploit the Atlantic? The value of more direct access to the gold deposits of Guinea was one obvious reason, but so too by the late sixteenth century was the value of New World commodities. Spain, for example, in 1564 initiated its convoy system to protect the flow of silver and other commodities from the western hemisphere.\textsuperscript{792} This system of treasure fleets arose specifically in response to the depredations of privateers who clearly knew the value of cargo from the west. Additionally, although information about the Western Hemisphere apparently did not make it into general circulation in Ottoman lands, by 1580 the \textit{Tarih-I Hind-I Garbi} was available to elites with its descriptions of the activities of Columbus, Cortes, Pizarro, Magellan, and the resources of the New World.\textsuperscript{793} If the Ottoman Empire and Morocco were to formally ally, or were the former to conquer the latter, the most powerful state in all the \textit{dār al-Islām} could open a new front against Christendom, imperil Portuguese and Spanish trade routes to both Africa and the New World, and potentially assert its own claims in the Western Hemisphere.

Regardless of whether or not Ottoman leaders had a sincere interest in or even knowledge of what was happening in the Atlantic world, what seems clear is that they were genuinely interested in the strength of their Habsburg rivals to the west, and that their gaze was often forcibly drawn westward by the semi-independent actions of their proxies on the North African

\textsuperscript{791} Casale, \textit{The Ottoman Age of Exploration}, 208n21.
\textsuperscript{792} Elliott, \textit{Empires of the Atlantic World}, 110.
coast. Ottoman-aligned leaders in Algiers, in particular, through their policies and actions were to regularly at this time involve the Ottoman Empire in activities not only in the western Mediterranean, but in Atlantic Morocco as well.

The question of the type of relationship that would emerge between newly-unified Morocco and the Ottoman Empire seemed quickly decided. A well-known exchange of insults between Fez and Istanbul occurred with al-Shaykh, according to al-Ifrani, presumptuously expressing designs on Turkish lands stretching across North Africa all the way to Egypt. He also reportedly addressed the Ottoman sultan Suleyman the Magnificent as the “Sultan of the Fishermen,” an apparent reference to the large number of Ottoman ships in the Mediterranean. In 1550, presumably anticipating eventual Ottoman support for a Wattasid restoration, al-Shaykh’s sons led more than thirty thousand men, including some five thousand ulūj, in an easy conquest of Ottoman Tlemcen in western Algeria.

This audacious move by the Sa’di generated a harsh Ottoman response. If they had not been entirely convinced of it before, presumably now the Turks saw the danger of a strong sharīfian dynasty that might challenge their right to rule over the Islamic world. Although the

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794 Al-Ifrani, Nozhet-Elhâdi, 78-79. Al-Zayanni’s account also discounts potential Ottoman capabilities in the Atlantic. According to him, when gathering to discuss a response to the sharīf’s insult, the Ottoman court officials considered sending a fleet against Morocco, but were concerned by, among other things, the fact that they allegedly had no captains who could navigate in the Atlantic because they had never passed the strait between Ceuta and Tangier. It was allegedly at this meeting that a long-term plan was hatched to assassinate the Sa’di sharīf. Al-Zayyani, al-Tarjuman, 21. Weston F. Cook cites an earlier incident from 1547 involving an arrogant agent from Ottoman Algiers. Cook, The Hundred Years War, 219.

795 “Lettre du Duc de Medina-Sidonia à Maximilien d’Autriche,” 21 July 1550, SIHM-Espagne, I, 441-442. Al-Ifrani, Nozhet-Elhâdi, 55. It is Diogo de Haêdo who mentions the ulūj. He also claims the sharīf’s troops numbered twenty-two thousand and that they were invited to conquer Tlemcen. Diego de Haêdo, Epitome de los Reyes de Argel (Valladolid, 1612), trans. by H. D. de Grammont as Histoire des Rois d’Alger, (Alger: Adolphe Jourdan, 1881), 76-77n. At the time of the Sa’di invasion Tlemcen was again ruled by the Zayyanids, who had been restored to power in 1545 by Turkish soldiers under Hassan Pasha, the ruler of Ottoman Algiers and son of Khayr al-Din (Barbarossa). In 1547 Turkish soldiers withdrew from Tlemcen, leaving it relatively weakly defended in the face of the Sa’di army. Abun-Nasr, A History of the Maghrib, 155-56.
Sa’di forces in Tlemcen repulsed the first Ottoman counterattack in the summer of 1550, the second Ottoman assault in early 1551 overwhelmed them, and al-Shaykh’s forces retreated into Morocco.

With the defeat of the sharīf at Tlemcen revolts spread against Sa’di rule, including in Fez and Marrakech. For the supporters of the Wattasid Abu Hasun this seemed a golden opportunity. They urged Emperor Charles V to support him, arguing that it would be preferable for someone owing the emperor allegiance to occupy Fez and Marrakech rather than that the Turks do so. For their part the Spanish were indeed concerned about the possibility of an alliance between the Wattasid sultan and the Turks, fearing the latter would be difficult to dislodge from Fez once they had secured it.

But the emperor dithered in striking terms with Abu Hasun and the Turks saw an


opportunity to fill the void. Eventually, what was likely a combination of Sa’di intransigence, the promises of Abu Hasun, and Ottoman self-interest, led the latter to move against the Sa’di sharīf. Early in 1554 Abu Hasun entered Fez with Turkish support, while al-Shaykh fled first to Marrakech and then to the Sus. The Turkish success alarmed the Portuguese, who recognized that the Turks had now potentially gained control of Morocco’s Atlantic ports. They urged intervention before the Turks became too settled, and in the meantime attempted to establish friendly relations with Abu Hasun. Their fears proved unnecessary, however, for the Turks did not appear intent on taking control of the Moroccan coast. In a little more than a month, in fact, the Turks had either tired of Fez or had outworn their welcome. Returning to Algiers, they left Abu Hasun in control in Fez, along with a thousand Turkish soldiers for his use. Within the year al-Shaykh returned, winning the Battle of Maslama. The Sa’di sharīf

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was once again back in Fez. Abu Hasun having been killed in battle, the Sa’di had effectively put an end to Wattasid rule in Morocco once and for all.\textsuperscript{806}

The Turkish departure from Fez is a curious episode that brings into question what, if any, genuine interest the Ottomans may have had in accessing the Atlantic at this time. If such interest did exist, it seems unlikely that the Turks would have left Fez so easily. It is possible that they believed the assistance they had provided Abu Hasun would be rewarded with access to Moroccan Atlantic ports whenever needed, or perhaps their experience in Fez convinced them that Abu Hasun was either an unreliable client or unlikely to last long in power. What seems most probable, however, is that the Ottoman departure reflected the lack of a specific strategy emanating from Istanbul with regard to Morocco and the Atlantic world. Instead, when not acting as mercenaries, Turkish troops likely became embroiled in Morocco as a result of initiatives undertaken by Ottoman clients in North Africa. As the appetite or influence of these clients waxed and waned, so too did the Turkish presence.

The following few years witnessed a bewildering array of diplomatic and military moves and countermoves among the Sa’di, the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Turks, and their proxies and allies. In the midst of this, in 1556, Charles V abdicated as King of Spain in favor of his son Philip II (later in the year Charles V abdicated as Holy Roman Emperor as well). After re-establishing his rule in Fez, al-Shaykh, now seemingly firmly locked in a rivalry with the

Ottomans, made overtures to Portugal and Spain, seeking truces and formal alliances. Negociations with Spain envisioned an aggressive offensive war against the Turks in North Africa. To this effort the sharīf promised significant funds and resources to support more than ten thousand Spanish troops that he proposed be sent to Morocco to wage war against the Turks and ultimately assist in the conquest of Algiers.

Trust, however, was in short supply. With the Spanish again dithering negotiations continued to drag. At one point during the discussions the sharīf laid siege to Portuguese Mazagan. Later, the Portuguese received reports that the sharīf had entered into discussions with both the French, who continued to supply him with contraband of war, and the Turks.

Then in the summer of 1556 Spanish reports indicated that Fez was in revolt, anarchy reigned in

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807 The truce with the Portuguese was scheduled for six months, and in October of 1555 the Portuguese worried about the sharīf’s Turkish mercenaries, renegados, and troops gathered in Marrakech, who they feared were preparing to attack Mazagan. “La Trêve de 1555 entre le Chérif et le Portugal,” SIHM-Espagne, 220-221. “Lettre d’Alvaro de Carvalho à Pedro de Alcaçova Carneiro,” 25 October 1555, SIHM-Portugal, V, 39-43.


810 “Lettre d’Alvaro de Carvalho au Roi Jean III,” 13 May 1556, SIHM-France, 159-166.

the kingdom, and that the Ottoman sultan had authorized the pasha of Algiers to conquer Fez.\textsuperscript{812}

This last reflects again the apparent dominance of Ottoman clients in North Africa when it came to determining the role of the Empire in the Muslim west. Apparently, for example, in this instance Istanbul did not charge the pasha with the task of conquering Fez, but instead appeared to have acceded to his request. Ottoman effort, in other words, seemed to be dictated by the pressure exerted by proxies on the frontier of the Empire. Whatever the catalyst, the Ottomans had apparently lost patience with Muhammad al-Shaykh, and had him assassinated in October of 1557 by some Ottoman “deserter” who had shown up at the Sa’di court and become his bodyguards.\textsuperscript{813}

In planning his own succession, Muhammad al-Shaykh violated one of the principals of Sa’di tradition, which was that rule should pass to the next oldest male member of the family. Consequently, upon al-Shaykh’s assassination his oldest son, Abdullah al-Ghalib, took power, while his uncle al-A’raj, all of his uncle’s family, and one of his own brothers were killed in what Weston Cook describes as “a family massacre of epic proportions.”\textsuperscript{814}

The bloodshed certainly must have unnerved al-Ghalib’s brothers—Abd al-Mu’min, Abd al-Malik, and Abu l’Abbas Ahmad—since all eventually fled to Ottoman Algiers.\textsuperscript{815} Conspiring with Abd al-Mu’min, the Turks, through the Bey of Algiers, attempted once again to intervene directly and openly in Morocco, but were defeated by al-Ghalib at Wadi Laban in 1558, thanks in part, according to reports, to the presence of a corps of captive Christian arquebusiers and the

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\textsuperscript{813} Al-Ifrani, \textit{Nozhet-Elhâdi}, 60. “Lettre d’Alonso de Guerrea à la Princesse Régente,” 10 February 1558, SIHM-Espagne, II, 430-432. Al-Zayyani gives a more detailed account of how this assassination plot was hatched and carried out. Al-Zayyani, \textit{Al-Tarjuman}, 21-23.


\textsuperscript{815} Al-Ifrani, \textit{Nozhet-Elhâdi}, 105.
defection of the troops of Dubdu.  

Although the defeat ended open Turkish intervention for a time, the Turks nevertheless continued to meddle in Moroccan affairs, insisting that the sharīf recognize the rights of his brothers, and appointing Abd al-Mu‘min the governor of Tlemcen.

Morocco experienced a relatively peaceful decade during the 1560s, although al-Ghalib continued to consolidate his rule in part by launching substantial assaults against Portuguese Mazagan in 1561 and 1562, employing Italian siege engineers. While the Portuguese outlasted the sieges, they complained bitterly that the English and French had been too long supplying the Muslims in Morocco with weapons of war, including tin and other metals for artillery. In fact, not long after al-Ghalib’s victory at Wadi Laban the French had become even more active in Morocco, with Antoine de Bourbon, the king of Navarre, pursuing access to Moroccan ports, and eventually entering into a treaty with the sharīf that promised the latter troops and munitions in return for the port of al-Qasr al-Sagir. Spanish subjects also continued to supply Muslim forces. Consequently, Portuguese complaints eventually led to yet another round of admonishments from the King of Spain directed at his own merchants of Andalusia, Granada, Murcia, and the Canaries.

An additional problem that continued to annoy the Portuguese was the presence of

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818 “Mémoire de João Pedro Damtas,” 7 June 1562, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 44-49.


corsairs who used the port of Larache to unload their seizures. For most of the sixteenth century the North African shore of the Mediterranean provided the primary bases for Muslim piracy. As noted earlier, the dominant actors there operated under the authority of the Ottomans out of Algiers, as well as Tunis, and Tripoli. Records do not support the presence of correspondingly significant Muslim piracy operating out of Moroccan Atlantic ports at this time. This most likely reflects the retarding impact of Portuguese strength along that coast early in the century and then the relative instability of the country as the Portuguese weakened and various groups fought for control within Morocco itself. In the absence of powerful patrons like the Ottoman Empire, there does not appear to have been sufficient independent supplies of men and material for piracy to develop at that time along the Moroccan Atlantic coast to the extent it was able to do on the North African shore of the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, as time progressed, as Muslim piracy waxed in the Mediterranean, and as Turkish influence made its mark within Morocco, both the Portuguese and the Spanish were to regularly express concern about the potential availability of Moroccan Atlantic ports to corsairs, whether those corsairs emerged from the Mediterranean or had their genesis in Morocco itself. The former, in particular, was not a chimera, for records indicate that at one point, as the prospect of peace loomed between the Spanish and the Ottoman Empire, the pasha of Algiers sought permission to send his corsairs to Morocco’s Atlantic ports, from which they could continue to operate under Moroccan authority in the event of such a peace.

Dynastic change and turmoil in Europe and within the Ottoman Empire may have contributed to the relative tranquility in Morocco during much of the 1560s. As mentioned

earlier, Philip II succeeded his father Charles V as king of Spain in 1556. A year later João III of Portugal died, leaving the throne to his three-year-old son, Sebastian, who ruled initially under the regency of his grandmother, Catherine of Austria, and then of under his great-uncle Cardinal Henry. England witnessed the death of Queen Mary in 1558, sundering her union with Philip II of Spain and bringing to the English throne the protestant Queen Elizabeth. As monarchs changed, Europe also witnessed the spread of religious wars from France and Germany into the Spanish Netherlands, while in Spain, increased repression of the Moriscos resulted in the Alpujarras guerrilla war. In the background of all this, the conflict between the Spain of Philip II and the Ottomans continued, with the Spanish defeating the Turks at Oran in 1563 and then at the island of Peñon de Valez in Badis harbor in 1564. This latter action, originally perceived as a Spanish threat by the Sa’di, resulted instead in a de facto treaty between the parties that recognized the Turks as a common enemy. During the middle of the 1560s Suleyman the Magnificent’s passing led to the elevation of a new Ottoman Sultan, Selim II, which spurred revolts in the empire and temporarily curtailed Ottoman expansion. As the decade ended, however, the Ottomans seemed to have recovered, sending large fleets against Tunis and Cyprus, who all recognized could have been sent farther west, and which would have been welcomed, indeed were hoped for, by the Moriscos of Spain. In 1571, however, the naval defeat at Lepanto exposed Ottoman weakness again, at least for a time. Al-Ghalib saw in this turmoil an opening to eliminate the brother most likely to challenge him—Abd al-Mu’min, the governor of nearby

Ottoman Tlemcen—and had him assassinated.825

When al-Ghalib himself died in 1574, succession followed the same process as it had with his father. Skipping over his estranged brothers, rule in Morocco passed to his son Muhammad al-Mutawakkil.826 Now, at last, the Ottomans in Algiers saw real potential in gaining a foothold on the Atlantic by putting Abd al-Malik on the throne. The Sa’di prince had served the Ottomans at Lepanto, where he was captured and served a year in Spanish captivity.827 Both al-Mutawakkil and Abd al-Malik sought Iberian support for their rule,828 but it was the latter that left Algiers in December of 1575 at the head of a force financed with Ottoman capital and allegedly including eight to ten thousand Turks.829 It battled al-Mutawakkil south of Fez. Before the battle Abd al-Malik had secured the loyalty of Sa'id al-Dughali, leader of al-Mutawakkil’s best infantry unit, a large group of Andalusian musketeers. At an opportune point before the battle had been fully joined al-Dughali and his musketeers turned on al-Mutawakkil, forcing him to flee with what remained of his army.830 Accordingly, Abd al-Malik entered Fez on March 31, 1576, paid off the Turks in his army and sent them back to Algiers, and tasked his brother Ahmad with what turned out to be an unsuccessful two-year campaign to finish off al-Mutawakkil.831 Again, Iberians worried that the Turks would now gain the Moroccan Atlantic

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831 Al-Zayyani, al-Tarjuman, 31-32. Al-Ifrani, Nozhet-Elhâdi, 111-114
ports, noting that the Turks were dispatching people to Larache and Salé, and that they would likely do so to “all other ports as well as the ocean sea and the Mediterranean.”

Despite the fears of Europeans about Ottoman intentions, we are once again faced with facts that bring into question the true level of Ottoman interest in the Atlantic at this time. The Turks had clearly taken sides in what was another Sa’di civil war, but in successfully doing so they apparently did not press for access to Morocco’s Atlantic coast. This did not mean that their participation had not put the Turks in good stead in Morocco. Abd al-Malik flattered the Ottomans, said the Friday prayers in the name of the Ottoman sultan, reorganized the army along Ottoman lines, dressed in Turkish clothes, and spoke Turkish at court. Giancarlo Casale, in fact, includes Morocco at this time as part of the Ottoman Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehem Pasha’s “Soft Empire.” Nevertheless, it is equally clear that Abd al-Malik was not willing to sacrifice Moroccan independence to the Turks. One European observer noted that he had surrounded himself with a guard of six thousand arquebusiers, two thousand renegados, and four thousand Andalusians, with not a Turk among them. The sharīf also sought support from the French and conspired secretly with the Spanish on a treaty that was not favorable to the Ottomans. Treaty negotiations offered, in part, Spanish protection in the event of an invasion of

832 “Lettre de Don Juan de Silva à Philippe II,” 3 April 1576, SIHM-Espagne, 221-224. “Lettre de Don Francisco de Córdoba à Philippe II,” 24 April 1576, SIHM-Espagne, III, 229-232, 230 (“en todos los otros puertos así del mar oceano como del mar mediterráneo”). “Avid de Luis de Herrera,”22 July 1576, SIHM-Espagne, III, 239-243. Giancarlo Casale notes that during the 1560s and 1570s Portuguese authors were also expressing alarm about Ottoman strength in maritime Asia. Casale, The Ottoman Age of Exploration, 149.
833 Abun-Nasr, A History of the Maghrib, 214. Richard L. Smith, Ahmad al-Manṣūr, 26. The English merchant Edmund Hogan asserted that Morocco would be a strong market for English cloth, since the sharīf “will have all his subjecktes wear clothe as the Turkes subjects doo—the which hath not bryn seene heretofore.” “Mémoire d’Edmund Hogan,” March 1577, SIHM-Angleterre, I. 199-205, 204.
834 Casale, The Ottoman Age of Exploration, 149-150.
Morocco in return for certain Moroccan ports. Consequently, although al-Mutawakkil fled to Spanish territory, it was not with the Spanish, but rather with the impetuous young king Dom Sebastian of Portugal that he was ultimately to find support.

**Wadi al-Makazin and the Rise of Ahmad al-Mansur**

Dom Sebastian’s desire for conquest and for the reassertion of Portuguese authority in Morocco was already well established. He had been proposing an expedition since late 1570 and had made a trip to Tangier himself in 1574. One of his more creative proposals involved enlisting the English to sell some Portuguese as slaves to Muslims in Santa-Cruz. From within the Muslim fortress there they could then assist a later invasion. During 1576 the young king lobbied heavily for an invasion to seize Larache, citing the threat posed by potential Turkish expansion. By the summer 1577 he seemed fully committed to a Morocco project, searching for troops, and expressing his dissatisfaction with the reluctance of his uncle, King Philip II of

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840 “Lettre de Roger Bodenham a Burghley,” 16 November 1574, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 141-143.

Spain, to support him.842

His interest in conquest was known in Morocco, and as tensions rose, Moroccans at one point mistook for a Portuguese invasion force the fleet of Francis Drake, who had anchored off the coast near Mogador early in the voyage what would become his circumnavigation of the globe. Under the guise of trading, the Muslims seized John Fry, a member of Drake’s crew, and took him to the shārīf to learn the true purpose of the fleet. Failing in an attempt to retrieve their man, the fleet sailed on its famous journey, while the shārīf, seeing that Fry was an Englishman and learning the truth of the fleet’s appearance, sent Fry back to England on a merchant ship.843

Ultimately, Philip II relented to the persistence of King Sebastian and agreed to provide him with several thousand Castilians as well as ships and food for an expedition to Morocco. These troops ultimately joined a motley collection of other contingents assembled by the Portuguese king. William of Orange had loaned three thousand Walloons and Germans who had fought in the Netherlands. They were, according to Bovill, “ill-disciplined mercenaries whom he [William of Orange] found incurably predatory and of whom he would only be too pleased to be rid.”844 Thomas Stukely, a notorious Catholic opponent of England’s Queen Elizabeth I, led a contingent of approximately six hundred papal arguebusiers who Sebastian successfully diverted away from their planned expedition to Ireland to instead support his Moroccan adventure.845

Troops from Portugal itself included about two thousand cavalry, three thousand adventureiros

844 King Sebastian had asserted he wanted German landskencth like those Queen Isabella had used against the Muslims in Spain. Consequently, these men were referred to as “Germans” though they were actually from Holstein, Holland, and Wallonia. Bovill, The Battle of Alcazar, 76-77.
(young nobles without sufficient funds to provide their own cavalry gear and who thus served as infantrymen), about ten thousand foot soldiers who were mostly laborers and poor conscripts, and some pioneers who were to assist in securing Larache. 846

According to J.F. Conestaggio these forces left Lisbon in June of 1578 under a cloud of gloom.

The King of Portugals departure from Lisbon, was so mournful, that it gave apparent signes of evill successe, for in so great a number of men, and of so divers qualities, there was not any one with a cheerefull countenance, or that did willingly imbarke, against the common custome in the beginnings of warre, but all (as it were presaging of ill events,) complained they were forceable drawne into it. There was such a deadlie silence in the port, that (during all the time of their abode in so great a number of shippes) there was neither flute nor trumpet heard. The Kings galley issuing forth, was carried downe with the currant and brake her rudder against a Flemmish ship: a cannon shot from the towne slew one of his mariners in the boate; so as if we shall give credite to signes as the auncients did, these seemed very ominous. 847

Arriving in Tangier on July 8, Sebastian picked up al-Mutawakkil as well as some Muslim troops and Portuguese garrison forces. 848 The Spanish ambassador, Don Juan de Silva, soon after expressed his hopes that the expedition would be called off as the force was already at this time running out of supplies. 849 Although originally planning to land his force close to Larache, the need for water forced Dom Sebastian first to land at Arzila, where ominous signs again accumulated. His unruly and confused forces resisted re-embarking to proceed by sea to Larache. 850 Consequently, Sebastian’s army remained camped around Arzila for more than two weeks, periodically harassed by Muslim forces. Among the Germans roughly half were sick as a result of the hunger and thirst they experienced during the sea voyage. 851

In the meantime an ailing Abd al-Malik, having learned of the Portuguese landing,

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846 For a discussion of the variation among the sources with regard to the size and composition of the Portuguese invasion force see note 53.
847 Conestaggio, Historie, 29.
848 Bovill, The Battle of Alcazar, 91.
850 Conestaggio, Historie, 30.
marched to Salé with reportedly more than seventy thousand men and then outside the forest of Mamora began casting additional cannon. Through a Jewish intermediary he tried to make peace with Dom Sebastian, offering Tétouan, Larache and Santa-Cruz. A day after the peace offer, a French renegado arrived in the Portuguese camp with more discouraging details on the armaments of the Sa’di forces. Dom Sebastian tried to rationalize the report as false, but found the Spanish ambassador supporting the credibility of the information.

Allegedly succumbing to flatterers who knew his mind, and ignoring the advice of others, Dom Sebastian refused the ostensibly safer course of re-embarking his troops to sail to Larache, and on July 29 started his forces on an overland march to meet the Sa’di army. For six days he marched inland without substantive news of his enemy until finally crossing a small river and camping approximately a league away from al-Qasr al-Kabir on August 3. There the Portuguese experienced the disastrous defeat that left them without a king and that led to the Spanish takeover of the Portuguese crown in 1580.

The Moroccan victory was in the words of historian Thomas Benjamin, “the most important and definitive European defeat in the Atlantic in the sixteenth century . . . .” It also marked a turning point in what this study has characterized as the second phase of Morocco’s involvement in the early Atlantic world. In this phase the Atlantic was not solely a pathway for European penetration and exploitation, as was the case in the first phase. Instead, during the second phase Morocco used these Atlantic connections as a means to resist European encroachment, particularly through trade in contraband war material. This trade expanded

855 Conestagio, Historie, 36-39.
significantly after the Sa’di capture of Santa-Cruz in 1541 and was to go through an additional transformation after the Sa’di victory at Wadi al-Makazin.

The surviving Sa’di leader from the battle, Abu l’Abbas Ahmed, took the title of al-Mansur bi Allah (“victorious by the will of God”) and set Morocco on a new path of independence that relied heavily on his ability to navigate and use advantageously the rivalries of powerful players on the international stage. From the middle of the sixteenth century Morocco had increasingly cooperated on this stage with a new Atlantic challenger to Iberian dominance. That challenger’s pursuit of sugar and saltpeter, and its willingness to trade arms, munitions, and naval supplies, played a critical role in the Sa’di unification of Morocco and their preservation of Moroccan independence throughout the remainder of the sixteenth century.

**Morocco and England**

In 1551 the ship *Lion* and another vessel of unknown name made the first substantive English trade voyage to Morocco.  858 Why English merchants chose to go to Morocco at that time is unclear. Late in the fifteenth century the Italian explorer Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot) had sailed under English sponsorship to North America in the first English transatlantic voyage. A little more than a decade later, however, Henry VII of England died, and despite the discovery of the Newfoundland fisheries, Tudor England then largely turned away from transatlantic initiatives, leaving them to the Portuguese, Spanish, and French until the last two decades of the century.  859

Although it has been asserted that English merchants had been visiting Santa-Cruz

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regularly since 1470, not until the 1540s do English documents begin to reference events in Morocco. One of the earliest comes from English intelligence on the French, who were found to have a great deal of artillery, as well as coal and sulfur, but who lacked saltpeter and gunmetal, and were thus searching for these items in Morocco. Nothing indicates that the voyage of the Lion was an intelligence mission or an attempt to search for armament raw materials as the French were doing, though a Spanish report claimed one of the ships was well-manned and armed and that the other carried merchandise that included pikes and armor. Most likely it appears English merchants were looking for markets for English cloth, as well as sources of gold and sugar. Morocco was already a well-known transit point for gold, and as we saw earlier, sugar from Morocco had been making its way to England, Germany, and the Low Countries for some time. It is worth noting, in fact, that some of the individuals who were to promote trade with Morocco at this time were merchants involved in sugar importing and refining.

The second English merchant voyage took place from May through October of 1552, and consisted of three ships, one of which was again the Lion, captained and partly owned by Thomas Windham, who had participated in the first voyage in 1551. Their journey left from near Bristol and traveled two weeks to reach the port of Safi. As we saw, the Sa’di conquest of Santa-Cruz in 1541 led the Portuguese in the same year to abandon Azammur and Safi, essentially opening the Atlantic coastline of the Moroccan Dukkala, Haha, and Sus to non-Portuguese merchants. Consequently, after unloading some goods and restoring their water and food reserves at Safi, the three ships traveled to Santa-Cruz. There they saw a French ship, noted that they had called at the port the prior year, and gave assurance of their peaceful intentions.

863 Willan, Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade, 94-95.
They stayed for three months, unloading cloth, coral, amber, jet, and other things acceptable to the Muslims of Morocco. What these other things were is unknown, but before the ship had left England the Spanish ambassador asserted that the ships were being loaded with munitions. Whether this was the case or not is unknown, but there can be little doubt that the Portuguese and Spanish both were especially sensitive to the prospect of war material being sent to Muslims along the coastlines of North Africa and Morocco.

After three months, the three English ships left Agadir for home laden with dates, almonds, sugar, molasses, and sugar syrup. A leak forced them to stop in the Canary Islands, where they unloaded some of the sugar. As a result of a misunderstanding they fought with the local Spanish (one of their ships was a converted Portuguese caravel that the Spanish thought had been taken as a prize) and left just in time to avoid a Portuguese fleet that would not have reacted well to their trading in Morocco. One of the valuable commodities the ships brought back was information on Morocco, including that despite staying there in the dangerous heat of the summer months, none among them had become ill.

Records are sparse for English voyages to Morocco during the remainder of the 1550s, but it does seem clear that a more regular, organized trade was established with Morocco in a fashion that the English could not implement farther south in Guinea where the Portuguese still controlled the entry points and took a hostile view of English intervention. Safi and Agadir served as the primary ports of call in Morocco for the English and took a conventional form involving Jewish intermediaries. By 1558 there was an English factor in the country and at least two more English voyages had taken place.
Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603) came to the English throne in 1558 and three years later a Portuguese Jewish convert to Christianity, Melchior Vaez d’Azevedo, approached England’s ambassador to France with a report on the advantageous commerce England could engage in with Morocco. There, he noted, commerce could take place quite healthily all times of the year, in contrast to the sickness to which one was exposed farther south in the Guinea trade. D’Azevedo claimed to have lived in Morocco for twelve years and thus to be familiar with its customs as well as the goods that could be purchased and marketed there. Of the former he noted many of the commodities we have already seen mentioned: gold, copper, sugar, dates, gum Arabic, amber, hides, and horses. Most desired by the Moroccans, he claimed, were tin, sword blades, long war lances, oars for galleys, iron, and blue cloth. Two-thirds of these goods would have to be sold to the King of Morocco at his price, d’Azevedo asserted, but the remainder could be marketed as the merchants saw fit. Of course, D’Azevedo proposed that he lead the trip himself and bring with him merchants familiar with the relevant goods, as well as skilled navigators who could thus become acquainted with voyaging to Morocco. 868 The Lord Mayor of London and two other men tasked with reviewing d’Azevedo’s proposal found that what he was proposing was not in fact a new voyage at all, but rather a trip to the same locations that the English had been visiting now for approximately a decade. They recommended that he be compensated for his travel expenses and dismissed. 869

England’s Moroccan commerce centered almost wholly in London, and T.S. Willan asserts with regard to trade between England and Morocco during the period of the 1560s and 1570s that “the pattern that emerges . . . is clear enough; it is the export of cloth in exchange for

the import of sugar.”

Moroccans engaged in this trade apparently had quality standards regarding the cloth from England, for in May of 1567 some English merchants requested the intervention of Queen Elizabeth because al-Ghalib had seized their goods as a result of a prohibition he had placed, of which they were unaware, on the lower-quality “brown blewes.”

As cloth was the dominant English export, sugar was by far its dominant import. Although almonds, candied fruits, marmalade, capers, and ostrich feathers also appear in the English records, Willan estimates that through the mid-1570s sugar “seems always to have constituted some 85 per cent of such imports by value.”

Documents on Morocco from this period show that Moroccan sugar went overwhelmingly to England, as opposed to Spain, Portugal, France, or the Low Countries. By this point the sugar production of the Atlantic islands had already peaked, but production was starting to grow substantially in Brazil.

Most of the time when the English contemplated trade voyages to Morocco, the Portuguese or Spanish complained that the English were shipping munitions, metals for artillery, or other weapons. The Portuguese ambassador to England claimed in a letter of June 7, 1562, for example, that the earlier-mentioned Melchior Vaez d’Azevedo, despite having his proposals rejected by the English government, nevertheless participated in a trip to Larache in 1561, whose purpose was ostensibly to take bibles to the Jews of Morocco, but allegedly also carried on behalf of English merchants oars, lances, tin, other metals, and undisclosed weapons. This type of weapons trade, the ambassador claimed, profited both the likes of the English and French, but was the reason that the Muslims were able to seize Santa-Cruz and besiege other Portuguese places.

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870 Willan, Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade, 111-112.
872 Willan, Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade, 114.
873 “Mémoire de João Pedro Damtas,” 7 June 1562, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 44-49.
Since the trade in arms and munitions to Morocco was illicit, we should not expect to find voluminous records documenting it. Nevertheless, the claims of the Spanish and Portuguese, merchants themselves, and formal English governmental responses leave little doubt that such illicit commerce took place, with or without official governmental sanction. In February of 1567, for example, a petitioner sought a commercial contract for trading in Morocco. Noting the amount of cloth currently shipped to Morocco, he claimed that he would export more, and would bring back copper for munitions, as well as sugar. Additionally, he also assured that “whereas before time there hathe byn carried divers kinds of monyssyon, owtt of this realme, into the sayde countrye of Barbarye, to the great strengthynge of the heathen peopell of that countrye, I wylbe bounde to carrye none but suche as shall serve for the deffence of ower shippes onlye.”

Seven years later another group of merchants seeking monopoly power over trade in Morocco argued that in addition to unskilled merchants plying the trade, “[s]ome others conveye provision for gallies as owers, brimstone, shrtyes of male, and other municion, having great gayne and proffytt thereby; which thaye esteeme more than the savetie of meny poore Chrystians thatt are daylye taken captives upon the seas by the sayed infidelles.”

The Portuguese attempted to address the broader issue of English commerce with a treaty that would have restricted English merchants from trading with territories conquered by Portugal. English merchants interested in Morocco objected vehemently to such terms, concerned about the possibility that the handful of remaining Portuguese coastal fortifications in Morocco could to lead to the treaty being applied to all Morocco. So important did they see trade with Morocco that they claimed to prefer being forbidden from Portugal itself instead. Accordingly, during negotiations the English insisted that the treaty include a specific exception.

875 “Requête de Marchands Trafiquant au Maroc,” 1547, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 144-145.
for Morocco, while the Portuguese argued that since they did not believe the treaty applied to Morocco, the latter should not be mentioned in it at all.\textsuperscript{877} Portugal hoped to restrict English trade in the country to the Portuguese possessions of Ceuta, Tangier, and Mazagan, while the English, although amenable to limiting the southward travel of their vessels to Cape Blanc, desired access to Larache, Safi, and Agadir.\textsuperscript{878} Counter-proposals of the parties included suggestions that cargo bound for Morocco be inventoried and inspected for armaments at designated English or Portuguese ports. Additionally, the Portuguese tried to steer the English away from Larache and Safi as not suitable for much commerce. Ignoring Larache, the English remarked on their existing trade with Safi, which they characterized as a normal stopping point for them on their way to Santa-Cruz for sugar.\textsuperscript{879} Eventually in 1576 the parties came to terms in a treaty that permitted Portugal to trade with England and Ireland, while the English were given trading rights in Portugal, the Algarve, Madeira, and the Azores – Morocco remained unmentioned.\textsuperscript{880}

During negotiations Queen Elizabeth I had resisted restrictions on English merchants, but in doing so she also acknowledged the existence of contraband trade in arms and munitions to Morocco.

As to the late motion to have hir Majesties subjects prohibited to resort to Barbary, but to some ports, to be lymyted with certen restrictions, hir Majestie marvellleth that this should be required for Barbary, consyderinge it is notorious that ther is a King known, that possesseth that contrey of Barbary under the title of 3 kingdoms, that is Fessa, Marocco, and Soussa, and that by his salve conduct all merchants of all nations, as French,
Spannyards, Flemings, yea Portyngalls also, as it is affirmed, do traffick freely and quietly in every of the three kingdoms; so as if hir Majestie should in any wise defend hir subjects from those trades, they should be in worsse case than all other nations at this daye.

Nevertheless, considering hir Majestie hath a good meaning to revivie the ancient amity with the King of Portyngale, and to recontinew the intercourse betwixt their subjects, and that her Majestie conceaveth that, by so free a resort of her subjects into Barbary, some disordered persons do convey armour and munition to such as are enemies of the King of Portyngale and to the Christian faith, hir Majestie, of mere good will, will, without bynding hirselsfe thereto by any contract, take such orde with hir subjects as those inconveniences shall be avoided, and will also cause hir merchants to make their trade to certen ports notorious; whereby it shall more manifestly appear that they shall only use their repayre thither for trade of merchandise, and not to releve the Kings enemyes with armur or anything belonging to hostilytie.

And to that end hir Majestie will geve order that hir subjects shall carry no armour to be delivered from their own possession to any in Barbary, upon pain of confiscation for all such goods as shall be laden within the ship or the value thereof, providing that they shall register, in some port of England, all their armour, weapons, and munition, which they shall of necessitie carry in their vessels for their defence of themselves and their ship in their voyage.\footnote{\textit{Mémoire en Répose à Francesco Giraldi,}} April 1574, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 123-125.

That the English were amenable to contraband trade with Morocco was apparently evident to part of the larger European merchant community. Hanseatic merchants wishing to transport iron shot to Morocco formally sought English masters and pilots best acquainted with travel to Morocco, and it was at the request of the Portuguese that the English Privy Council decided to command that such masters and pilots not participate.\footnote{\textit{Acte du Conseil Privé,}} 3 February 1576, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 188-189.

It was around this time period that saltpeter—a key element in gunpowder—began to enter into the commerce stream between England and Morocco. Gunpowder is thought to have originated in China and was adopted for use in firearms in Europe sometime in the fourteenth century. The first type of powder was black powder, which consisted of saltpeter, sulfur, and charcoal. Mixtures of roughly seventy-five percent saltpeter, fourteen percent charcoal, and
eleven percent sulfur, create a powder that burns rapidly when ignited. Forty percent of the resultant combustion is gas that in the confined space of a gun breech can propel a bullet or ball. Ordinary saltpeter is the chemical substance potassium nitrate, a crusty material that forms on walls, rocks, caves, and in certain soils, and is caused by the movement of salt to the surface of a porous material by the oxidation of nitrogen-containing matter in the presence of alkalis (e.g. lime). In the sixteenth-century saltpeter could be created artificially by mixing decaying organic matter with alkalis like lime and exposing it to appropriate conditions. Queen Elizabeth I purchased the secret to this artificial process from a German in 1561, but it still required sufficient animal matter to implement. Consequently, an independent supply was valuable, and there were generous natural deposits in Morocco.

Sir Thomas Gresham, on behalf of some officers of Queen Elizabeth, asked John Williams, who was operating in Hamburg as a factor of one Edmund Hogan, whether or not he could locate any saltpeter there. Williams had apparently long before provided the Queen with a great quantity of saltpeter at a much lower price than he could now find in Hamburg, Danzig, and other locations in the area. After having traded his goods for cloth that was not marketable in England, Williams traveled to Morocco to sell that same cloth and there “preceavyd that in that country was store of saltpeetar, far bettar then he cooled provide anne in ane other plase whear hee had traveled; practesyd by all meanes possible how to obtayne of the same, findings very straigchte laws that none or anne passyd owte, neather made, bought, nor solde, but to the Kinges use.” Williams offered to exchange a variety of commodities for saltpeter to no avail until eventually al-Ghalib, after conferring with his “cownsaile of sayntes” agreed that in

885 Bovill, The Battle of Alcazar, 48. Cook, The Hundred Years War, 64.
exchange for “bullets of eyeron for his greate ordenanse,” the English could have saltpeter or any other commodity in Morocco they wished.\textsuperscript{887}

In pursuit of this transaction, al-Ghalib sent to England a sample of the saltpeter and their specifications for the ordnance, which upon approval by the English resulted in the latter sending a small quantity of bullets for review by the Moroccans, who deemed them satisfactory. Abd al-Malik overthrew al-Ghalib at this time, but according to Hogan soon learned of the lack of bullets and of the supplies offered by English. Abd al-Malik waxed enthusiastically about the performance of the English according to Hogan’s report.

\[A\]lthough eare wear dyvars Chrysteans of sondrey nations that had offeryd theare sarvys to bringe hym pellets, monytyon, or anne other thinge that he lackyd, and perceavinge that dyvars dyd make leeke promes in the other Kinges tyme, and none performyd but yow . . . thearefore if i maye have that sarvys of yow to have pellets, according to the proportions that i shall appoynte, i will refuse the offars of all other Chrysteans, and bargayne with yow, as the other Kinge dyd, that for the vallew of the pellets that you shall bringe in from tyme to tyme, you shall have leysens to bey and to transporte saltepetar, coppar, or anne comodetis whatsoeavar i have within my realme; being deseyerous of the honnar i heer of your Queene of England, and the good leekinge i have of the Englyshe nation, to enter in leage as well for the quiet trafficke of her shipps and subjecktes in to this cuntery of Barbere, as through the Straightes in to the Leavant seas, so as hereafter none of her Majesties subjecktes to be taken captyfes or solde in anne of my domynyons; as allso that the Queens Ma shall commaunde anne thinge ells of me or that i have in my cuntery.\textsuperscript{888}

The Moroccan ruler imposed one condition on such arrangements—that none of the saltpeter should find its way to Portugal or Spain. Her Majesty’s government agreed and Hogan’s report noted that in addition to pellets it was known “that there is pracktesyd to sarve the Kinges torne nott only with pellets butt all other things appertaininge to monytyon and provyseons” and that some in England “tooke upon them to carre owte of this realme menne of experyence for the casting theare of all sorts of monytyons and pelletts.”\textsuperscript{889} Such transactions did not go unnoticed

\textsuperscript{887} “Mémoire d’Edmund Hogan,” March 1577, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 199-205.
\textsuperscript{888} “Mémoire d’Edmund Hogan,” March 1577, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 199-205.
\textsuperscript{889} “Mémoire d’Edmund Hogan,” March 1577, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 199-205.

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by the Portuguese, whose ambassador to England reported that the English were supplying munitions to Morocco in exchange for sugar and saltpeter.  

Hogan followed these exchanges with a trip of his own to Morocco in May of 1577 as a representative of Queen Elizabeth, where his persistence secured desired saltpeter and the favorable treatment of English merchants.  

Elizabeth had instructed Hogan to express appreciation for Abd al-Malik’s representations about how English subjects would be treated in Morocco since, she pointed out, they had been having difficulty with Moroccan officials with regard to sugar, “which is not one of the smallest commodities which our subjects transporte hither out of those countries.” Additionally, she stressed to Hogan that he not bring up the matter of artillery and munitions and if pressed by Abd al-Malik to assert as best as possible that the English simply could not do this as it might generate both a trade, and perhaps military, response from other Christian countries that would cause great harm to the English.  

These formal instructions, of course, may have been written for public consumption and it would not have been beyond the Elizabethan government to say one thing in instructions and then proceed to convey arms surreptitiously. Indeed, Portugal’s ambassador in England wrote that the whole city of London was talking about the wonderful reception Abd al-Malik had given the Queen’s representative, and insisted that the latter had provided ammunition and armor to Morocco. For her part, Queen Elizabeth formally thanked the sharīf for the reception given Hogan and the measures taken in favor of English merchants, which she asserted freed the sugar trade from any hindrance. Aware, however, of the concerns the English-Moroccan relationship generated, she asked that their agreements and a future embassy to England that the sharīf was

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890 Mémoire de Francisco Giraldi,” before 5 March 1577, 195-196.  
891 “Relation d’Edmund Hogan,” May-July 1577, 239-249.  
proposing remain secret. After Ahmed al-Mansur came to power in 1578 the parties continued to address issues related to the commerce in sugar and saltpeter. As al-Mansur became desirous of developing his own maritime capacity, he began to insist upon importation of English wood in return for Morocco’s saltpeter.

Commerce in contraband arms was but one of the issues some English merchants eventually used to argue for consolidation of the Moroccan trade under a state-sanctioned monopoly. Other arguments centered on the quality of both the merchants and the merchandise. In 1567 a group of English merchants complained that although some skillful participants had opened trade with Morocco, selling English cloth at good prices and securing sugar, dates, almonds, and fine gold, that trade had now deteriorated. Entrance of unskilled merchants who flooded the market was the alleged cause. Two Jews, according to the complainants, handled all the traffic for the Moroccan king, and being quite proficient in commerce themselves, recognized the deficiencies of these unskilled English merchants and took advantage of them so that the English no longer obtained fair prices for their cloth and no longer brought gold back to England as payment, but instead low quality goods. English merchants made similar claims in 1574, arguing that unlawful traders were using specie taken out of England, instead of cloth, to purchase sugar, thus denying the state its due customs revenues. They requested licensing for trade with Morocco similar to that imposed by the Portuguese and Spanish.

Among the major concerns of some English merchants was the political turmoil caused by the death of rulers in Morocco and the manner in which the sharīf administered and enforced

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900 “Requête de Marchands Trafiquant au Maroc,” 1574, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 144-145.
contracts of sale. Upon the death of a ruler contracts could be ignored, with English merchants despairing of ever obtaining any redress. Even under consistent rule, however, English merchants still faced the headwind of inconsistent contract enforcement by the *sharīf*. English merchants often sold cloth or other goods on credit, with payment to come in the form of sugar pledged from particular Moroccan sugar refiners. Unscrupulous merchants, however, according to the allegations, would offer higher prices for the pledged sugar to the *sharīf* or the Jews who operated the sugar refineries for him. The *sharīf* would not require that the original credit contract be enforced, putting the “honest” English merchants at substantial risk of having to borrow at exorbitant rates to meet their own obligations, while the unscrupulous merchants secured and sold the sugar that had been previously pledged as payment. Such practices were the source of merchant complaints in 1576 and 1583, and documents show that queen and her representatives on a number of occasions petitioned the *sharīf* for redress on behalf of adversely-affected English merchants.  

Part of what made these trade practices so difficult to address was that what the established English merchants characterized as dishonest practices often won the support of the Sa’di *sharīf* and his intermediaries. In 1583, for example, English merchants complained again that dishonest merchants were taking munitions to Morocco, as well as “galles, framed tymber, and expert carpenters, with other provisions to make galles, as also shote, owars, and all other furnytur for them.” This, they claimed, had garnered theses dishonest merchants favor with Ahmed al-Mansur (who was clearly seeking such material to expand his maritime capability). In

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turn, the sharīf’s favor won them that of the Jews who ran the sugar mills, and it was these latter who would sell to these dishonest merchants sugar that was already committed as payment for prior sales of English cloth and other goods, at times leading to the bankruptcy of the Jewish refinery owners and corresponding substantial losses for the unpaid English merchants. Were the established merchants to complain, they claimed, they might incur the wrath of the sharīf in the form of captivity, confiscation of their goods, or worse, as the sharīf obviously did not want his illicit supply of munitions, weapons, and naval material jeopardized by such protests. 902 One focus of the merchants’ ire was John Symcotts, who the queen had earlier authorized to export wood to Morocco in return for saltpeter. Symcotts, the merchants alleged, opened, delayed, and translated their letters to the sharīf for his own benefit, 903 and had reached a secret agreement with the sharīf that reserved for Symcotts the sole right to import to Morocco “iron, tyn, lead, or brymston.” 904

Ultimately such lobbying led to the formation of the Barbary Company in 1585, which with a patent from the queen, exercised a monopoly over English trade with Morocco until 1597. 905 As what was known as a “regulated” company, the Barbary Company’s form differed substantially from that of the other major English corporate vehicle of the time, the joint stock company. While the latter pooled the capital of its members and shared both risks and benefits proportionally based on the individual member’s capital contribution, members of a regulated company paid a fee, agreed to certain conditions, and then traded with their own capital assuming both full risk and profit for themselves.

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The idea of regulating Moroccan trade was predictably not universally welcomed by English merchants. Among the arguments against incorporation of a regulated company was the belief that agreed-upon trade practices would still be unenforceable in Morocco, where merchants who were able to curry favor with the *sharīf* would continue to be able to do as they will regardless of the rules of the company and the oversight of directors in England. Nor did opponents believe that incorporation would increase the supply of any useful commodities over and above what was already possible, as it would simply be limiting trade to the members of the company. Supporters, of course, argued that penalties could nevertheless be enacted in England against dishonest merchants who flouted company rules and that all should not assume that the *sharīf* could not eventually be induced to agree to and enforce the company’s policies. Interestingly, supporters also cited saltpeter as one of the commodities that could have been imported from Morocco in larger quantities had trade been but better regulated.  

An irony of the Barbary Company’s creation was its critical promotion by the Earl of Leicester, for whom John Symcotts served as agent in Morocco—the same John Symcotts who we have seen was a target of vehement criticism for unscrupulous practices in the Moroccan trade. The Earl of Leicester apparently saw the value of using a monopoly corporation to limit his competition for the Moroccan trade and thus promoted and became one of the founding members of the company. Indicative of his importance and control over the enterprise was the insertion in the letters patente of a clause that essentially required the earl’s approval of any

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906 “Mémoire sur un projet de compagnie de commerce,” before 15 July 1585, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 458-461. “Mémoire de marchands trafiquant au Maroc,” before 15 July 1585, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 462-463. In this latter document the particular merchants actually noted that they were not asking for a corporation but instead for a time-limited monopoly to regulate the trade with Morocco.  
regulation or license. Leicester also secured the appointment of his client, the soldier Henry Roberts, as the first official English ambassador to Morocco in 1585.

The record shows that the establishment of the Barbary Company did not end the woes of commerce between England and Morocco. Henry Roberts and the company, for example, were humiliatingly ineffective in resolving a dispute involving the English ship *Dolphin*, whose captain in October of 1585 had delivered goods to Safi and then a few days later seized a Spanish caravel. Reacting to the pleas of the Spanish who had escaped the seized ship and traveled to Marrakech, Al-Mansur condemned the English action and threatened to seize the *Dolphin’s* goods and penalize English merchants. Roberts attempted to resolve the situation but proved impotent in the face of the squabbling English merchants, which resulted in al-Mansur imprisoning merchants who had goods on the *Dolphin*. One of these captives wrote a letter detailing the incident and offering a scathing criticism of the English representatives, the Barbary Company, and the general situation of the English in Morocco.

Under the Barbary Company sugar appears to have remained the dominant commodity imported to England from Morocco. Since individual or partnership members of the company conducted the trade, however, rather than the company itself, it is difficult to determine with specificity the sum total of the sugar trade at this time. In fact, according to Willan, figures exist for only one complete year, 1587-1588, and show that in addition to various forms of sugar, imports from Morocco showed a greater variety than in prior decades and included indigo, gum Arabic, saltpeter, wax, hemp, goatskins, fruits, nuts, seeds, marmalade, ostrich feathers, and

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908 “... and with the expresse license and consent of the more part of them living and trading, first had and obtained, so always, that the sayd Earle of Leicester be one, if hee bee living.” “Lettres Patentes d’Élisabeth,” 5 [n. st. 15] July 1585. SIHM-Angleterre, I, 468-475, 472. This Earl of Leicester died in 1588.
Figure 14. Sugar imports from England to Morocco in select years. Compiled by the author from textual information in Willan, *Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade*, 111-114.  

As a result, although sugar remained the dominant import from Morocco, as a percentage of total imports from the country, it dropped from in excess of 90 percent in the 1560s and 1570s to less than 70 percent in the 1580s.  

Despite the regulations of the Barbary Company the sugar trade continued to experience difficulties. The company’s monopoly position led the retailers and buyers of Moroccan sugar to

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910 The measures used for recording sugar imports depended in part on the type of sugar and included in addition to weights, capacities like “chests” and “hogsheads.” Willan has converted these for the most part into hundredweights or quintals (cwt), which is equivalent to 112 pounds in the imperial system. Conversion estimates to pounds in the table were calculated by the author. Willan, *Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade*, 111-114, 266-267.


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complain of higher prices, the introduction of inferior sugars, and the company’s failure to
clearly mark the quality of sugar as had been done in the past.\footnote{913}{“Mémoire de marchands,” 28 August [n. st. 7 September] 1589, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 525-526.} Additionally, under al-Mansur
Morocco continued to assert what it presumably deemed its prerogative to administer trade in the
way it saw fit. One English representative sent to Morocco lamented what he considered to be
the horrible state of the trade for both sugar and saltpeter.

The trade of the Anglish merchauntes in Barbary is continued with more dishonner to her
Majestie and the state then benefit to themselves; for the prices of sugars are raysid to an
excessive rate, and the merchauntes forced to take them, good and bad, fine and coarse,
all at one price. The Moore doth robbe the Jewes and maketh them so bare as they are
forced to breake and runne awaye daily with the merchauntes goodes; which hath so
much impaired their estate as (two houses only exceptid) there is not any among them
that is free from taking up of monny at two and a half and three in the hundreth by the
moneth, to keepe credit and to perfourme their bargaynes with the Moore; who forceth
them to mayntayne his ingennes, and draweth them to make hard bargaynes with him; in
ether of which yf they fayle never so little of perfourmaunce, then doth he presently
imprison them in the common gaole, among theeves and murtherers, and cloggeth them
with yrons, as if they weare the most detestable malefactors in the world, besides many
other wronges, extorcions, and open injustice ofefrd unto them by himself, his sonnes,
and other principall men about him, not tolerable to be suffered by her Majesty: the rather
for that nether herself, nor the state in generall, do reape such benefit by that trade as may
in any proporcion countervayle the hinderannce and barbarous usage of the subjects
(espetially now that saltpeter cannot be had from thence, and that the monnyes are so
raysed as there would be rather losse then gayne in caryeng their goulde into England):
for there is not Caryed into Barbary, one yere with another, above three thowsand clothes
(a small vent to be put in accompt of any generall benefit to the realme), nor brough
from thence two thowsand chests of sugar, when there is most (which countervayleth not
the spoyle of so much tymber in England); by which the custome of both which
commodityes her Majesty revenwes are but slenderly encreasid. . . .

. . . .

The merchauntes themselves have in some sorte been the causes of their owne
harm and spoyling of the trade, partly by overlaying of the same, which hath bred a glut
and discredite of their commodityes, and partly also by outbidding one another in the price
of Barbary commodityes thorough the envy and malice that raigneth among them; which
hath bred a conceipt in the Moore both that they wanted other ventes for ther owne
commodityes, and that they weare extraordinary gayners by his.\footnote{914}{“Lettre de Cardenas à Walsingham,” 18 October 1589, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 530-540, 537-539.}

This representative went on to argue that rather than traveling inland it would be better for the
English to only trade on the coast of the Sus, near the sugar refineries, where, as “lyke as other
Christians do trade with the Indians and with other negros,” they would be at less risk of their lives and property.\textsuperscript{915} In an indication of just how important the sugar industry was thought to be to al-Mansur, the English representative said he did not fear that the sharīf would reject such an approach because he would not want to risk the loss of “the benefit of his ingennes (which are more worth to him then all the Sus besides, and yeld mayntenaunce to the most part of the inhabitants there) and of the English clothes whereby he reapeth double benefit.”\textsuperscript{916}

As opponents of the Barbary Company’s formation had predicted, the sharīf also did not confine himself to trading within the company’s monopoly even among the English merchant community, much less with regard to other countries. Merchants complained in 1587 that despite their monopoly they had learned that some West Country merchants were trading in Morocco.\textsuperscript{917} In 1589 they complained that French traders had secured the produce of sugar refineries obligated for payment of cloth previously brought by English merchants. These French traders now not only were selling the sugar at a higher cost, but wished to sell it in England no less.\textsuperscript{918}

The next decade continued to see complaints over the quality of sugar, but by this time the English had begun to refine sugar in the home country. In 1593 the queen received a request for the regulation of sugar refining. At the time, according to the request, sugar in England came from what might be described as a truly Atlantic network—Brazil, Sao Tome, and Morocco—was “all in powder and for the most parte very corrupte,” and was brought mostly by foreigners

\textsuperscript{915} “Lettre de Cardenas à Walsingham,” 18 October 1589, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 530-540, 539.
\textsuperscript{916} “Lettre de Cardenas à Walsingham,” 18 October 1589, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 530-540, 539.
\textsuperscript{917} “Requête de la Barbary Company a Leicester,” 1587, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 486-488. Queen Elizabeth did apparently write a letter to the sharīf in favor of English merchants that ultimately led him to issue a proclamation protecting them from seizure. “Édit de Moulay Ahmed el-Mansour” 10-19 March 1588, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 490-491.
\textsuperscript{918} “Requête de la Barbary Company,” 1589, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 553-558.
on foreign vessels. While being refined in England, according to a complaint, this sugar was allegedly mixed with unwholesome compounds, which the queen was urged to prohibit. Additionally, the applicant asked the queen to prohibit the export of sugar and byproducts like molasses.

Resisting such regulation of sugar refining, opponents provided a glimpse not only of the processes used in refining, but also the changed nature of the industry. English refiners, a response to regulation asserted, were behaving no differently than those in Antwerp and elsewhere. Sugar, whether it came to England from Brazil, Sao Tome, or Morocco, needed refinement, the writer alleged, for it otherwise carried a bad scent and was mixed with sand, dirt, and other things. While the English used to get their refined sugar from Antwerp (where there were allegedly at one time one hundred refineries), now they were exporting refined sugar to Germany and the Low Countries. Were the crown to regulate the English sugar refining industry then English refiners would lose out to their competitors on the continent.

Just as the creation of the Barbary Company did not end the problems of the sugar trade, it also did not halt the contraband trade in war material. A 1595 memorandum indicates that English merchants obtained from Santa-Cruz sugar, saltpeter, dates, molasses, carpets, and cotton in return for providing the Moroccans with cloth, red caps for mariners, and “all kinde of greate ordinaunce and other artellyrye, ashtimber for oares, armor of all sortes.” That the latter was considered contraband is confirmed by the admonition in the memorandum that “yf the Spanyerdes take yowe trading with them, yow dye for it.” Then, in 1596, the merchants of the company complained that one Richard Thomson had brought additional merchants into the

Morocco trade outside of the company who had bought up not only all the almonds, dates, capers, and molasses, but also were engaging in the practice of purchasing sugar already obligated for payment to other merchants. This they were alleged to be able to do because they furnished al-Mansur with “ores for gallies, luances, muskettes, musket arrows, caliveres, poldaves, cordage for gallies, sorde blades, gret shott and such like.”

The corporate monopoly of the Barbary Company ended in 1597 and its shortcomings as a regulator of Moroccan commerce no doubt contributed to its expiration without renewal or the creation of a successor organization. After the company’s demise sugar continued to figure in the commercial relationship between England and Morocco. In 1598 plague struck Morocco and the disorders that followed led to worries that the sugar operations would be ransacked as workers abandoned them. Two years later the familiar complaint reared its head before the Privy Council that some English merchants in Morocco were purchasing sugar already obligated as payment to others. Seeing it as a matter of great import to the state as a whole, the Privy Council barred English merchants from engaging in such practices. A month later, English observers claimed that an embassy sent to England by Morocco was in fact essentially an espionage mission, dispatched by al-Mansur to determine the prices at which Moroccan sugar was being sold in England in the hopes of being able to charge more for it.

This last charge helps illuminate the reality of English commerce with Morocco, particularly during the reign of Ahmed al-Mansur. It seems clear that whatever advantages the Barbary Company may have conferred on its members it did not stop the abuses that had

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924 “Requête de marchands de la Barbary Company,” before 24 September 1596, SIHM-Angleterre, II, 101-103, 103.
contributed to its founding. During the company’s existence English merchants continued to create gluts in the Moroccan market, thus lowering the prices offered for English goods. Inferior quality sugars continued to make their way to England from Morocco. Unscrupulous merchants continued to purchase sugar already obligated as payment for English goods purchased previously on credit. And contraband war material continued to flow from England to Morocco.

The reality of the Morocco trade at this time, in other words, is that whatever may have been the true intentions of the Barbary company and the English government—and given its conflicts with Spain the English government’s restrictions on war material seem to have been half-hearted at best—these intentions were for all practical purposes subject in large measure to Moroccan decisions about what was in the latter’s best interest. Though English merchants complained about their treatment, and the English government sometimes chose to intervene on their behalf, al-Mansur appears to have managed the relationship effectively to obtain what he wanted. English merchants still brought cloth and war material to Morocco and left with sugar and saltpeter. Al-Mansur ostensibly made the calculation that despite the importance English representatives thought he attached to the Moroccan sugar industry he was nevertheless in a position to tolerate the undermining of credit arrangements in that industry to the detriment of certain English merchants. Such actions on his part did not eliminate the flow of war material he desired. Sugar and saltpeter, and export markets for their cloth, al-Mansur correctly determined, were sufficiently important to the English to overlook what they considered to be his shortcomings. Or at least, he seems to have calculated, the combination of the English desire for export markets and for sugar and saltpeter, coupled with their competition with the Spanish in the Atlantic world that made him useful, would lead the English to overlook his abuses.

It was this ability to navigate competing currents of commerce and politics, as well as
interpret how the desires of a counterpart on the international stage could be manipulated to Morocco’s advantage, that came to be a hallmark of Ahmed al-Mansur’s rule. In this second phase of Morocco’s involvement in the early Atlantic world, al-Mansur’s reign thus represented the pinnacle of a significant transformation that had been taking place for more than a half century. During the first phase the pathways and networks of the Atlantic world overwhelmingly represented for Morocco the means by which foreign powers exploited the country. Although still unable to effectively resist Europeans militarily on the ocean proper, during the second phase Morocco had nevertheless learned how to use these Atlantic pathways and networks first to resist foreign domination and then to forcefully assert its own independence.

The development of the sugar industry and the opening of trade with England were of particular importance in this regard. With the exception of some activity in the Newfoundland fisheries, the English had not yet asserted themselves dramatically in the Atlantic world. Their first tentative steps toward Morocco in the 1550s, however, were to benefit both countries significantly. With Morocco the English gained a southern foil against the ambitions of the powerful Catholic Habsburgs of Spain, which matched the northern foil of the Netherlands. Additionally they found a source of sugar that was independent of the Portuguese and Spanish-controlled sources in the Atlantic isles and the Americas, as well as a source of saltpeter that was critical to their own munitions manufacture. For Morocco England represented a Christian power whose desire for commodities like sugar and saltpeter made the latter valuable successors and supplements to the gold and slaves that had dominated earlier Moroccan commercial networks. Export of such commodities to England brought the wealth, arms, and military supplies vital to the rise of the Sa’di dynasty and enabled Morocco both to reclaim its territory and resist further encroachment by Europeans and the Ottomans. Now, perhaps, Morocco could
use these same Atlantic pathways and networks for expansive designs similar to those of its powerful neighbors.
CHAPTER V. CONQUERING THE ATLANTIC: IBERIA, SONGHAY, AND SPANISH AMERICA

In his work, *Reviving the Islamic Caliphate in Early Modern Morocco*, Stephen Cory makes a compelling argument that Ahmed al-Mansur used traditional Islamic ideology not only to enhance his political legitimacy within Morocco itself, but as part of a larger project aimed at establishing an Islamic caliphate in the West that would rival the Ottoman Empire. The nature of al-Mansur’s interactions with the Ottoman, European, and sub-Saharan polities may all be seen as part of this effort. It is possible, however, without doing damage to that construct, to simultaneously view some of those interactions through another prism, one that takes into account Morocco’s liminal status between two worlds, one Islamic and one Atlantic, not wholly of either, but instead a part of both. A prism, in other words, that specifically recognizes Morocco’s uniqueness at the extreme western rim—the Maghrib al-Aqsa—of the dār al-Islām, as well as its uniqueness as the only Muslim country within the orbit of the Atlantic world. After consolidating his rule and stabilizing his relationship with the Ottoman Empire, al-Mansur embarked upon three international initiatives, two abortive and one successful. These initiatives looked not to the east and the Islamic world, but to the north, south, and west, and may be viewed not only as elements of a plan to establish an Islamic caliphate in the West, as Stephen Cory asserts, but also as part of a Moroccan attempt to play a meaningful role in the Atlantic world.

*Consolidation*

Upon assuming the Moroccan throne after the victory at the Battle of Wadi al-Makazin (1578), Ahmad al-Mansur led a Moroccan state that was newly respected on the international

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928 Cory, *Reviving the Islamic Caliphate*, 3.
stage. Though some urged the Turks to seize control and others used the fear of a Turkish takeover to encourage a Spanish invasion, nothing ever came of such schemes. In Morocco itself, al-Mansur moved promptly over a period of a few months to dispatch those most likely to threaten his rule. Additionally, with reportedly more than five thousand prisoners taken in the Portuguese defeat, the resulting ransoms increased al-Mansur’s wealth significantly. Al-Mansur used the riches obtained not simply to consolidate his rule, but to carry on the extensive urban expansion of Marrakech that culminated most impressively in the al-Badi (“the Marvelous”) palace. Begun five months after the victory at Wadi al-Makazin the fifteen-year project was to symbolize the magnificence of Sa’di rule. Consisting of more than five hundred columns, twenty domes, gold-covered ceilings and walls, fountains, pavilions, groves, and underground passages, al-Badi drew comparisons to the Umayyad and Abbasid palaces of Cordoba and Baghdad. Al-Ifrani described the palace as “one of the tallest and most splendid monuments which have existed, and it surpasses in beauty the palaces of Baghdad. It is a kind of earthly paradise, a marvel of the world, the height of art; one swoons with pleasure and

929 Dahiru Yahya challenges this conventional view, arguing that the battle at Wadi al-Makazin “was seen by many seasoned European observers of Moroccan affairs as having weakened the country. The Qaṣr al-Kabīr victory did not yield any important strategic results, it did not lead to any territorial gains for the country, nor did it obliterate the notion that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Morocco could be measured in terms of the interest and security of European states or the Osmanli Empire.” Yahya, Morocco in the Sixteenth Century, 100. The European observers he mentions include Cabrette. Weston F. Cook takes a quite different view of these “seasoned European observers” noting that arguments for invading Morocco were waived aside, for “[t]hose who gave such advice were few and, like the ‘expert’ Cabretez, had been too often wrong before.” Cook, The Hundred Years War, 256.


931 These included Sa’īd al-Dughali the leader of the Andalusian troops who had defected from al-Mutawakkil to Abd al-Malik when the latter won the throne. Neither Abd al-Malik nor Ahmad al-Mansur fully trusted elements of their army after that. In fact, Bovill reports that before the battle of Wadi al-Makazin, Abd al-Malik offered men an opportunity to depart before the battle if they did not wish to fight against al-Mutawakkil. Just in case they were afraid to admit such in front of him he sent three thousand men whose loyalties he most questioned to harass the Christians around Arzila. Bovill, The Battle of Alcazar, 95-96. After the victory at Wadi al-Makazin, al-Dughali planned to make a play for power by leading a rebellion in the Sus. Al-Mansur had him killed. Al-Zayyani, al-Tarjuman, 36-37.


admiration.”

As much as al-Badi was a sign of al-Mansur’s greatness, it was also a sign of Morocco’s now international outlook, for the project drew upon an international corps of artisans and materials. Andalusians, Iberian Jews, and European architects, artisans, masons, and craftsmen participated in the work. Black and white marble came for the project from Italy and Ireland and was paid for by an equal weight of Sa’di sugar from the Sus. Lime for construction came from Timbuktu. Al-Mansur even reportedly asked Philip II of Spain to allow two Spaniards working for the sharīf to travel to India for materials.

Approximately a year after Wadi al-Makazin, in another sign of Morocco’s new position on the international stage, embassies traveled to Morocco for the ceremonies that formally marked al-Mansur’s assumption of power. Sources indicate that representatives came from Europe, Africa, and the Near East and included among them the Spanish, Portuguese, English, Dutch, and French, as well as delegations from Algiers, Istanbul, Gao (the capital of the Songhay empire), and Ngazargamu (the capital of Bornu). Whether simply in recognition of their importance, to pit the two against each other, or out of sincere desire to establish good relations with both, al-Mansur had the Ottoman and Spanish delegations make their presentation of gifts one after the other. Al-Ifrani speaks highly of the gifts of both, yet those of the Spanish apparently far surpassed those of the Ottomans, leading the representative of the latter to remark

934 Al-Ifrani, Nozhet-Elhâdi, 181 (“un des monuments les plus hauts et les plus splendides qui aient existé, et il surpasse en beauté les palais de Bagdad. C’est une sorte de paradis terrestre, une merveille du monde, le comble de l’art; il fait pâmir de plaisir et d’admiration.” For al-Ifrani’s full discourse on the palace see Al-Ifrani, Nozhet-Elhâdi, 179-195.
to al-Mansur that the Ottoman gifts were out of true friendship to a *sharif* that practiced jihad, while the Spanish came only to court him out of fear. The sultan in Istanbul, the Ottoman representative is alleged to have continued, fears no one. Al-Mansur reportedly responded in a manner that begrudgingly recognized the supremacy of the Ottoman sultan.  

Whatever may have truly occurred at this display of pageantry, Morocco under al-Mansur faced a complicated international situation and the new Moroccan leader initially took steps to avoid additional conflicts with external powers. Despite the damage he had inflicted on Portugal, al-Mansur did not move against the remaining Portuguese enclaves in the country. He also returned the body of Dom Sebastian without ransom, and similarly freely released several important persons, including the Spanish ambassador to Portugal, Don Juan de Silva, who had accompanied the Portuguese invasion force.  

With these actions and the sumptuous gifts presented by the Spanish, all very public signs of amity between the parties, English observers grew concerned about the apparent rapprochement between Spain and Morocco. The *sharif* allegedly offered King Philip II of Spain both passage through his territory and the assistance of forty thousand men to conquer Algiers, and soon after this report English observers also claimed—erroneously as it turns out—that Morocco and Spain had entered into a treaty.  

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937 Al-Ifrani, *Nozhet-Elhâdi*, 146. Mustapha ibn Hassan Husayni Jannabi, *Al-Bahr az-Zakkhhar wa l'aylam et-Tiyyar*, trans. and ed. by Edward Fagnan, in *Extraits Inédits Relatifs au Maghreb (Géographie et Histoire)* (Algers: Adolphe Jourdan, 1924), 285-359, 353. Cory, *Reviving the Islamic Caliphate*, 61-62. Modern observers take differing views of the exchange between al-Mansur and the Ottoman envoy. Weston F. Cook asserts that al-Mansur demonstrated that he wanted good relations with both parties. Mercedes García–Arenal writes that al-Mansur was “actively hostile toward the Ottomans,” that “the gifts the Turks had brought him were paltry,” and that “he had been slighted and treated as a vassal.” García–Arenal, *Ahmad al-Mansur*, 75. Dahiri Yahya claims that the “preferential treatment given to the Spanish embassy . . . was to have serious consequences for Morocco’s foreign relations,” for it “displeased the English and Osmanli representatives, who felt that they were being insulted by the Sharîf’s favorable attitude toward their enemies.” Yahya, *Morocco in the Sixteenth Century*, 103.  


939 “Lettre d’Augustine Lane à Ralph Lane,” 9 September 1579, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 356-360.  

For his part, King Philip II of Spain reciprocated in the face of the Moroccan overtures by
demurring on a proposal for the forcible seizure of Larache presented to him by a French
adventurer. Philip II had long coveted the Atlantic port, apparently being among those who
feared the Turks gaining a naval presence there. He had begun negotiations with Abd al-Malik
over its fate and hoped to resume such talks with Ahmad al-Mansur upon the former’s death. In
the meantime, however, a young Frenchman named Lansac resurrected an earlier plan that the
Spanish king had rejected in 1576 and now seemed to regard with more interest in the fall of
1578.941 In this effort Lansac was encouraged by the French sea captain, Louis Cabrette, an
opportunist who circulated between France, Spain, and Morocco. When a reconnaissance
mission to Larache returned, however, it reported that Larache was no longer an easy prize,
having been reinforced by Ahmad al-Mansur. Lansac assured the king that he could still win the
port by paying its renegado governor to surrender the city.942 Unfortunately for Lansac, by 1580
Philip II had not responded affirmatively to the proposal and an embittered Lansac returned to
Paris unsatisfied.943

This was not to be the end of Spanish efforts to gain Larache. Philip II’s interest in
securing the port continued, as did al-Mansur’s desire to dodge the issue. Late in 1581 Philip II
held troops in reserve to seize the city after al-Mansur had sent him a request for aid against the
Turks.944 In June of 1582 there was a report that out of fear of the Turks, Ahmed al-Mansur had
given Philip II all the forts and ports on the coast both within and outside the Strait of

Philippe II” 6 December 1578, SIHM-France, II, 4-6.
944 “Lettre de Henry Cobham à Walsingham,” 12 December 1581, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 394. “Lettre de Philippe II au
Gibraltar. Later in the year, al-Mansur apparently blundered, offering in bluff to exchange Larache for Mazagan. Philip II agreed, which forced al-Mansur to insist on additional negotiations to delay the matter. Meanwhile Cabrette, always one to encourage an invasion of Morocco, again used fear of the Turks gaining access to Larache toward this end. The Turks were perfectly capable of conquering Morocco, he claimed, now that the country was under a foolish leader. Were they to do so they would gain access to Larache and other ports where they could house half their fleet. From there they could not just damage Spain, but perhaps conquer it with the help of the Moriscos. Controlling the Moroccan coast, the Ottoman sultan with his superior fleet would have the key to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, Cabrette argued.

Once again we see that whatever the reality of Ottoman intentions toward the Atlantic, fear of Ottoman access to Moroccan Atlantic ports was real for Europeans, or at least thought to be real enough for opportunists like Cabrette to use as a tool for encouraging European intervention in the country.

As rumors continued to swirl that Philip II was to seize or receive Larache, some argued that this would be sure to raise the ire of the Turks, and that Spain should thus also move against Algiers. By 1584 the Spanish were frustrated. Al-Mansur clearly was not negotiating the turnover of Larache in good faith. They hid their resentment so as not to encourage him to treat with the Turks.

Such flattery, prevarication and delay was to epitomize the techniques al-Mansur used to navigate the complex world in which Morocco now found itself as a unified state. As he had

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945 “Lettre de Roger Bodenham à Burghley,” 12 June 1582, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 400.
done with the Spanish, he engaged in similar maneuvering with the other major power of the era, the Ottoman Turks. His relationship with them had not started out as positively as it had with the Spanish. There was, as we have seen, the alleged exchange over gifts when al-Mansur came to the throne. Additionally, al-Mansur ostensibly insulted his Muslim rival when he had the Friday sermon said in his own name, rather than that of the Ottoman sultan. He also adopted the practice of past caliphs by leading public prayers himself.\(^{950}\) This did not generate immediate antagonism from the Ottomans. By late 1580, however, Spain and the Ottoman Empire had agreed on a truce, which suited both given the conflicts they faced in the Netherlands and in Persia, respectively. Though this might normally have been seen as a positive development for Morocco, the truce was not well received in Algiers nor by the renegado Kapudan Pasha (Grand Admiral of the Ottoman fleet), Aluj Ali. An Ottoman land war against Persia or Russia offered little opportunity for gain for the admiral and the corsairing fleets based in Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. Aluj Ali, in fact, had worked vehemently, although unsuccessfully, to sabotage treaty negotiations. When Algiers rose in de facto revolt, Ali, sent to restore order, used al-Mansur’s failure to respond to a letter from the sultan as an excuse to pursue an assault on Morocco and potentially upend the truce with the Spanish. Learning of the impending attack, al-Mansur made the appeals to Spain we saw earlier and hastily sent an embassy to Istanbul that successfully aborted the invasion.\(^{951}\) Al-Mansur had defused the crisis and probably was reminded of lessons he had no doubt learned earlier in exile among the Ottomans about the role proxies in Algiers and elsewhere played in Ottoman political decisions about the West. Accordingly, he later sent a second, more flattering embassy to Istanbul at the same time that he was negotiating with the

\(^{950}\) Al-Jannabi, *Extraits inédites*, 354.

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Spanish for the ceding of Larache.\textsuperscript{952} In the meantime Istanbul recalled Aluj Ali where he died in 1587.

With his rule substantively consolidated within Morocco itself, and his relationship with the Ottomans in a state of relative calm, al-Mansur gradually turned his attention toward the type of conquests pursued by his powerful counterparts on the international stage. Despite his presumed pretentions to lead the Muslim world, he was effectively blocked to the east, as it would necessarily involve conflict with the Ottomans or their independent-minded proxies in North Africa. Instead he turned his attention to the north, south, and west, where Iberia, sub-Saharan Africa, and even Spanish America beckoned.

\textit{Looking North: Portugal}

Relatively few revolts occurred under Al-Mansur. The first of these arose relatively early in his reign. Near the time in 1579 when the various embassies came to pay their respects to al-Mansur he fell grievously ill. Though he recovered, the incident shook his Moroccan supporters who urged him to name an heir apparent to the throne, and accordingly al-Mansur so named his son, Muhammad al-Shaykh al-Ma’mun.\textsuperscript{953} This angered and led to the rebellion of al-Mansur’s nephew, Dawud, son of al-Mansur’s brother Abd al-Mu’min, who as the eldest of the next generation believed himself entitled to the throne. Al-Mansur relatively quickly put down this rebellion and Dawud, according to al-Ifrani, fled to some Arab tribes in the south and led a nomadic desert existence for the remainder of his life.\textsuperscript{954} The presence of pretenders potentially backed by the Ottomans or the Spanish was to be a relatively constant, if ultimately insignificant

\textsuperscript{952} “Relation de Pero Añez do Canto,” between 9 and 16 March 1582, SIHM-France II, 98-100.
\textsuperscript{953} Al-Ifrani, \textit{Nozhet-Elhâdi}, 146
\textsuperscript{954} Al-Ifrani, \textit{Nozhet-Elhâdi}, 150-151.
feature of al-Mansur’s reign. Yet in a sign of the changed circumstances brought about by the Moroccan success at Wadi al-Makazin and Morocco’s newly-asserted independence, it soon became apparent that Morocco could play the pretender patronage game as well, and in this instance direct it at the most powerful empire in the Atlantic world.

The death of Dom Sebastian at Wadi al-Makazin in 1578 had set off a succession crisis in Portugal. With his having no direct heir, on August 27, 1578, the Portuguese Cortes named as king his uncle and former regent, Cardinal Henry, the last surviving brother of João III. Henry, however, was in his mid-sixties and people doubted he would live much longer. Nevertheless hopeful of producing an heir, Henry petitioned the Pope to be allowed to marry. In January of 1580, however, he died. With his death, several grandchildren of Manuel I claimed the throne, the two with the most support being Dom Antonio, the illegitimate son of one of Manuel I’s sons, and Philip II, the powerful king of Spain.

Dom Antonio had accompanied Dom Sebastian to Morocco and had languished for a time in captivity, but by the rules of primogeniture he had the strongest claim to the throne, despite his illegitimacy. Although proclaimed king briefly in July of 1580, his rule did not last three weeks. Portugal’s upper classes had supported Philip II even before the appointment of Cardinal Henry, and just before Dom Antonio’s ascension Philip had sent an army of forty-seven thousand troops into Portugal and dispatched a fleet of sixty ships from Cadiz. His forces soon conquered both Setúbal and Lisbon, securing the Portuguese throne for Philip and combining the crowns of Portugal and Spain in a union that was to last for the next sixty years.

955 Abd al-Malik’s son, Isma’il, lived under Ottoman patronage in Tlemcen. Mawlay Nasr, another nephew of al-Mansur who was resident with the Spanish, led an ineffective uprising in 1595. Al-Mansur experienced one other rebellion in 1585 that he extinguished in six months. Cook, The Hundred Years War, 259-260. Al-Ifrani, Nozhet-Elhâdi, 174-178.
Dom Antonio fled into exile in 1581, ultimately landing in England, where Queen
Elizabeth saw an opportunity to address what was now a very troubling situation. With the
union of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns Philip II now not only controlled the potential
wealth generated by the Spanish possessions in the Americas, but also that of Portugal in the
Atlantic islands, Brazil, the African coast, and India. The union thus had profound potential
consequences for the Atlantic world. Henry Kamen characterizes this time as “in every sense the
high tide of Spain’s power,” with the most populous areas in the Netherlands making peace, the
end of Inca resistance in Peru, the refounding of Buenos Aires, Spain firmly established in the
Philippines, and Spanish expeditions moving into what eventually became the southern United
States. Although Philip chose to allow the Portuguese to administer their homeland and their
empire with little direct Spanish interference, he also now spent some of his time in Lisbon.
Here he stared out into the Atlantic from what was an advantageous staging and departure point
for Spanish fleets. It was soon after the union, with the Spanish and Ottomans turning away
from conflict with each other, that Philip II began focusing intently on Spain’s Atlantic
ambitions, the protection of its treasure ships from the Americas, and the challenges of the
English and Dutch.

This was an acceleration of what Sanjay Subrahmanyam has characterized as an “Atlantic
turn” by Portugal that had begun in prior decades. In Subrahmanyam’s view Dom Sebastian’s
invasion of Morocco was part of this turn, for it reflected a growing belief among some that
North Africa, the Atlantic islands, and Brazil were all linked as part of a new network that
excluded Portuguese possessions in Asia. Morocco, by soon becoming involved in an English
attempt to hinder the expansion of Spanish power, participated in what was now more than ever

958 Kamen, Spain, 120.
959 Kamen, Spain, 120-121.
960 Subrahmanyam, The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 122-123.
an Atlantic-world issue—control of and access to the trade networks that were developing in the
Atlantic under the dominance of one hegemon.961

English representatives did not participate in the initial lavish attempts to curry favor
with al-Mansur in which the Spanish had engaged, and consequently from an early stage in his
rule were worried about his burgeoning friendship with the latter. The English were, however,
already engaged in significant trade relations with Morocco, and Abd al-Malik had once
favorably compared Queen Elizabeth to Philip II, saying that the latter “cannot govern his owne
countrie, but is governed by the Pope and Inquisition.” At the end of 1579, after al-Mansur
had risen to power, some in England advocated for a secret treaty with Morocco, which by
giving England bases on the Moroccan coast could be used to continually threaten Spain, its
Indies fleets, and potentially conquer the Canary Islands.963 Dom Antonio’s arrival in England,
however, provided another means by which to achieve such goals and imperil Philip II’s
seemingly unassailable position in the Atlantic.

In August of 1586, Portuguese spies reported that Dom Antonio, resident in England, had
dispatched envoys to Morocco with the backing of Queen Elizabeth, to solicit the support of the
sharīf for his claim to the Portuguese throne.964 Two years later Henry Roberts, urging the
sharīf’s support of Dom Antonio, reported that al-Mansur repeatedly expressed his willingness to
support the proposed English endeavor. His recent delays Roberts attributed to news of the
Spanish armada approaching England, the outcome of which the sharīf waited upon.965

The defeat of the Spanish armada understandably escalated English attempts to enlist

961 It could, of course, be argued that this effort was also a global one, given Portugal’s maritime reach into the
Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia, and the Far East.
Morocco’s support against Spain through the vehicle of Dom Antonio. Queen Elizabeth wrote to al-Mansur to inform him of the English victory and sent him Dom Antonio’s son as a hostage for the performance of any resulting bargain. In the meantime Henry Roberts returned to England with an ambassador from al-Mansur. Philip II’s operatives monitored the English overtures and the Spanish ambassador to England complained of Elizabeth’s attempts to enlist Moroccan support, something which the English denied.

In January of 1589 Ahmad al-Mansur’s ambassador delivered specific and substantive proposals from the sharīf for assistance to Queen Elizabeth in her project to install Dom Antonio as king of Portugal. He offered men, money, food, the use of Moroccan ports, and his own person if the Queen so desired. The sharīf urged Elizabeth to send one hundred ships to carry his army across the Strait of Gibraltar, which he suggested would force the king of Spain to remove his forces from Portugal in order to defend Spain’s southern coast, opening Portugal to Dom Antonio. Elizabeth responded that she advised al-Mansur against participating in the invasion himself, due to its danger. Nor did she think it advisable that he send troops, presumably fearing the reception that would greet a Portuguese claimant who came to power partly on the back of an invading Muslim army. Money for the effort, however, she strongly urged the sharīf to send.

Al-Mansur clearly saw his progressing martial alliance with the English, whether he planned to follow through on it or not, as an opportunity to expand his own naval capability for operations in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. As evidence of this, we see that he promptly

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967 The arrival of the Moroccan ambassador touched off a wave of fascination in London with things Islamic, and led to a series of popular plays. See e.g. Jerry Brotton, This Orient Isle: Elizabethan England and the Islamic World (St. Ives: Allen Lane, 2016), 154-181.


969 Résumé des propositions de Moulay Ahmed,” after 22 January 1588 [n. st. 1589], SIHM-Angleterre, I, 513-514.

followed the previous exchanges with a request by his ambassador that, in case of war with any non-Christian neighbors, he be permitted to hire English ships and sailors, to buy oars for his galleys, and if needed, to hire carpenters and shipwrights to help him to build fustes and frigates.  

Queen Elizabeth answered courteously, but also ambiguously, responding that she would be willing to do whatever she could to meet his requests within the laws and customs of her kingdom, and provided that her fleet, which she reported had now set out for Spain, could obtain food and other supplies at his ports.  

Spanish spies seemed to be aware of all the relevant developments in the apparent English-Moroccan alliance, reporting on Dom Antonio’s travel to Dover to embark on the expedition and of the promises of men, arms, and funding from al-Mansur.  

The English expedition against Spain left in April of 1589 under the joint command of Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Norris accompanied both by Dom Antonio and the Moroccan ambassador. They first attacked and looted Corunna in Galicia and then landed at Peniche and marched toward Lisbon. No popular uprising in support of Dom Antonio occurred, however, and rebuffed by Spanish forces, the English retreated to the town of Cascais on the Portuguese coast about twenty miles from Lisbon. Suffering significantly from disease during the months of May and June, the force returned to England, unsuccessful in its attempt to install Dom Antonio to the Portuguese throne.  

Al-Mansur sent no aid to the expedition, and in July Portuguese informants reported that the sharīf was not honoring his pledge to send to Dom Antonio, now in England, the money that

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971 Mémorandum de l’ambassadeur Marocain,” 26 February 1588 [n. st. 8 March 1589], SIHM-Angleterre, I, 520-521.
974 “Moulay Ahmed et l’expedition de Drake en Portugal,” 1589, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 527. The expedition had additional aims beyond the installation of Don Antonio. It was also to destroy the Spanish Atlantic fleet, which had survived the defeat of the Spanish armada essentially intact, and also establish an English base in the Azores. Drake and Norris succeeded in achieving none of these.
had been promised.\textsuperscript{975} The frustrated English found that al-Mansur was to play the same game of prevarication and delay that he had played with, among others, the Spanish over Larache.

John de Cardenas, the current envoy to Morocco for Dom Antonio and the English, attempted in October of 1589 to secure the financial support for the recent expedition that al-Mansur had pledged. He was kept at Safi on the coast, however, for more than twenty days, before being allowed to proceed to the \textit{sharīf}’s court, and then kept waiting long again before being granted an audience. Once before the \textit{sharīf} he found that al-Mansur, though acknowledging his commitments, spoke endlessly in generalities and could not be pinned down on the particulars of completing the transfer of funds. Though promised another audience four days later, when Cardenas arrived the \textit{sharīf} had sent a Jewish councilor to repeat al-Mansur’s pledges.

Unsatisfied, Cardenas received promises of yet another audience with al-Mansur, who again did not show up but instead sent a \textit{renegado} councilor who relayed that the \textit{sharīf} would send the funds when offensive actions in Portugal were again begun. This councilor also refused on behalf of the \textit{sharīf} to release some powder and shot that had been promised the English. A clearly incensed Cardenas lamented these broken promises and insisted upon the release of Dom Antonio’s son, who had earlier been pledged as a hostage for the maintenance of Dom Antonio’s share of the bargain. Al-Mansur refused.\textsuperscript{976}

Cardenas naturally decried the dishonesty and dissembling of al-Mansur, but attributed it to the latter’s fear of Spain, who he had antagonized in part with his dithering over Larache, and who was providing refuge to potential pretenders to the Moroccan throne. In Cardenas’s estimation, al-Mansur never had any intention of helping confront Spain, but instead believed that once England had invaded the Iberian Peninsula on behalf of Dom Antonio, it would be hard

\textsuperscript{975} "\textit{Avis de David},” 21 July 1589, SIHM-France, II, 185-186.
\textsuperscript{976} “\textit{Lettre de Cardenas à Walsingham},” 18 October 1589, SIHM-Angleterre, I, 530-540.
for the English to disengage, regardless of whether or not al-Mansur participated. It was this negative experience in his dealings with al-Mansur that contributed to Cardenas, as we saw earlier, decrying the state of English merchants in Morocco at this time and suggesting that trade take place solely along the coast of the Sus.  

Attempts to secure al-Mansur’s promises of support for Dom Antonio and the English continued into the next year, with Queen Elizabeth promising to allocate troops and resources as soon as al-Mansur provided the pledged funds. In the meantime, Dom Antonio attempted to enlist French support to pressure the sharīf. When Elizabeth sent yet another English representative, Edward Prynne, to Morocco she found him subjected to the same delays and fair, but meaningless words, afforded Cardenas. Additionally, Prynne became a de facto hostage of al-Mansur, who refused to release him until he received responses to his letters to Queen Elizabeth. These, according to her councilors, offered nothing other than the renewal of old promises. As the stalemate continued, with the English pledging action only when they received promised funds and al-Mansur only agreeing to send funds when an another attack was launched, the English struck upon the idea of opening discussions with the Turks as a means to pressure the sharīf. Elizabeth so informed al-Mansur and proceeded to send a letter to the Ottoman sultan.

It had no real impact. More than six months later the English were still beseeching al-Mansur to meet his promises and release those he was holding hostage. Yet things had, in fact,
changed dramatically. Previously, al-Mansur had prevaricated and included among his excuses for not assisting the Drake-Norris expedition the tardy return of his ambassador with relevant information.\textsuperscript{983} Now, years later, he began offering a different explanation for his continued failure. This time, however, the explanation was true. Al-Mansur’s gaze had turned south.

\textit{Looking South: Songhay}

During Ahmad al-Mansur’s reign, Morocco made two attempts to what some might characterize as colonies. Separated by roughly a decade, the efforts could hardly seem more dissimilar. One is among the most studied episodes in the history of relations between North African and Sub-Saharan states before the modern era; the second is hardly known at all. In the first, begun in 1590, al-Mansur’s Moroccan forces spent months crossing the Sahara desert, after which, their numbers whittled down to somewhere between two and three thousand men, they defeated an African army of the Songhay Empire at least fifteen times their size. Establishing their capital at the conquered city of Timbuktu, the Moroccan forces proceeded to exercise uneven and contested control over the northern bend of the Niger River and the surrounding region. A decade later al-Mansur proposed to England’s Queen Elizabeth I a joint effort to wrest from Spain control of the latter’s possessions in the Western Hemisphere. Although the influence of Moroccan administration in the Middle Niger lasted in one form or another into the eighteenth century, the effort in the Western Hemisphere never bore fruit, and faded into obscurity.

These two efforts appear to represent the first and last attempts by an independent Arab-Berber Islam to pursue its own program of colonization until Morocco’s intervention in the Western Sahara during the twentieth century. Earlier efforts, like the initial Muslim conquest of

\textsuperscript{983} Mémoire sur les affaires de Portugal,” before 18 August 1590, SIHM-Angleterre, II, 30-33
Iberia, had been at least nominally an extension of the Arab expansion sanctioned by the eastern caliphates in Damascus and Baghdad. And by the time the effectively independent Arab and Berber dynasties arose in the west, Islam had retrenched behind the Pyrenees, and substantive expansion into Christian Europe was a thing of the past. From that period until the days of al-Mansur, Arab-Berber Islam conquered no new lands, substantively expanding only at the expense of its Muslim neighbors to the east. After al-Mansur, and until the post-colonial period of the late twentieth century, internal strife within Morocco and European military superiority prevented any efforts at colonization.

These two initiatives by al-Mansur are so different in direction, scope, and achievement that scholars tend to address them separately, any link seeming to rest solely on their temporal affiliation with al-Mansur’s reign. Traditional narratives stress al-Mansur’s economic motives in the Songhay invasion, particularly his desire for commodities like gold and slaves. Stephen Cory makes a persuasive claim that al-Mansur’s primary motivation was ideological and political, namely to establish a western caliphate that could challenge the Ottoman Empire for supremacy of the Muslim world. No doubt both types of motives played a part in al-Mansur’s sub-Saharan adventures. What this study suggests, however, is something that links both initiatives—the invasion of Songhay and the diplomatic overtures regarding the Americas—as more integrated events that are examples of Moroccan imperial ambitions at a specific historical moment. This historical moment bore the influence of a vision created by the Atlantic world, one of imperial ambitions and rewards, and along with the participation in the English attempt to weaken Philip II’s Atlantic monopoly, constitutes the third phase of Morocco’s involvement in the early Atlantic world.

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984 An exception is García-Arenal, Ahmad al-Mansur.
985 See e.g. Yayha, Morocco in the Sixteenth Century, 145-162.
986 Stephen Cory, Reviving the Islamic Caliphate in Early Modern Morocco.
The international workforce that al-Mansur employed in constructing the al-Badi palace mirrored to some degree the manner in which al-Mansur organized his army. Although still decidedly Turkish, al-Mansur mixed the Arab and Turkish approaches to organization, and also filled his army with Andalusians and renegados. Ever since the Andalusians had turned on al-Mutawakkel, however, al-Mansur had held them in suspicious respect, even going so far as to have a spy monitor them at the Battle of Wadi al-Makazin. After having their leader, al-Dughali, disposed of he retained substantial Andalusian troops, but drew his senior commanders from the ranks of the renegados, who commanded what was essentially a standing professional army of twenty-six thousand troops, with another twenty-five thousand scattered throughout the country.987

When analyzing al-Mansur’s Songhay effort we are fortunate to possess the work of authors unattached to al-Mansur’s court, through which we have an opportunity to evaluate events presumably unencumbered by the flattering official portrayals that are so often the product of official dynastic secretaries and chroniclers. The work of the Arab historian and native of Timbuktu, Abd al-Rahman al-Sa’di, is one example. Al-Sa’di eventually secured employment in the Moroccan administration at Timbuktu, but his loyalties lay with the native elites of the Middle Niger. From him we gain a local perspective on the Moroccan invasion and conquest of the Songhay Empire, and well as on the Moroccan administration of the Middle Niger up until the middle of the seventeenth century.988 Another perspective is provided by an

987 Smith, Ahmad al-Mansur, 52. This of course changed over time. By 1602, according to Weston F. Cook, something resembling a standing national army consisted of some fifty thousand men under al-Mansur’s direct command stationed around Marrakech. Discrete units made up of Turks, Algerians, and Andalusians remained, with commanders drawn from their ranks and well as from those of renegados. Most of the cavalry were Moroccans organized by region or as jaysh tribes. By the end of his reign al-Mansur had also introduced black Sudanese slaves to the army. Cook, The Hundred Years War, 261.

988 The original Arabic and a French translation are available in Al-Sa’di, Tarikh Es-Soudan, trans. O. Houdas (1913-194; repr., Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1964). A partial English translation is available in John O. Hunwick,
anonymous Spaniard resident in Marrakech shortly after the Moroccan invasion. He offers both an account of the initial expedition and an astute and prescient assessment of the venture’s long-term prospects.

Salt was the immediate pretext for al-Mansur’s interest in the Songhay Empire. Along with ivory, slaves, and gold, salt had been a staple of trans-Saharan trade between the western Maghrib and sub-Saharan Africa for centuries. Found in isolated tracts of the desert, its mining and transport had long been controlled by various Tuareg confederations, and by the sixteenth century the Songhay exercised sufficient influence over the latter to designate who among them governed the trade. For the Sa’di, as for all North African polities, the value of salt was not so much as a commodity for local use. Even if North Africans had controlled the Saharan deposits, the salt mined would still have traveled south, where it was an essential mineral in the hot and humid climate. What made salt so crucial in the north was that it served as the main commodity exchanged for gold.

Both European and North African traders had long searched in vain for the mysterious sources of African gold, which always seemed to be in some not-too-distant region just over the horizon. Al-Sa’di notes that Jenne on the Middle Niger owed much of its prosperity to its status as the meeting place where those from Taghaza exchanged salt for the gold brought from the mines of Bitu. Yet even he, much closer to the source than any North African or European explorer or trader, was mistaken, for there was no mine at Bitu. It was instead simply the southern terminus of the trade route from Jenne; there traders brought gold gathered in the forest.

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Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: Al-Sa’di’s Ta’rikh al-sūdān down to 1613 and other Contemporary Documents (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 1-269.


Hunwick, Timbuktu, xli. In the Sahara the drying of ancient inland seas had left rock salt so dense that it can be cut in blocks and transported on camelback. Smith, Al-Mansur, 88.

Smith, Al-Mansur, 88.

Hunwick, Timbuktu, xli.

regions farther south. The search for these elusive gold fields was one motive for Portuguese maritime exploration along the African Atlantic coast. They too found, however, that direct access to the sources was blocked, and were forced to rely on local traders who brought gold to Portuguese coastal stations starting in the late fifteenth century.

Originally based in southern Morocco, the Sa’di were almost certainly familiar with the trans-Saharan trade networks of which their homeland in the Dra’a valley was a northern terminus. Their rise to power, in fact, appears to have stemmed in part from their skill at mastering the commercial system of the region. The possible impact of Portuguese maritime expansion could not have been lost upon ones so well-versed in the region’s trade, even if the Portuguese had not secured direct access to the gold fields. Already in the thirteenth and


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fourteenth centuries an eastward shift in the trans-Saharan trade routes had lessened Morocco’s commercial importance. A Portuguese presence on the Guinea coast posed a similar threat by making it more convenient for the local population to market gold there, rather than undertake the journey to the exchange points of the Middle Niger. If gold was al-Mansur’s objective, to obtain it he first needed to control the salt pans of the Sahara.

The difficulties attached to any such venture were well known. Early Sa’di attempts to control the salt resources of the desert date from at least 1526, when a Moroccan force temporarily occupied the Tuwat Oasis. Over the next thirty years al-Mansur’s predecessors launched additional expeditions against Tuwat, Taghaza, and into Mauritanian. But the importance of salt was too great for the Songhay to consider relinquishing control. According to al-Sa’di, in the early 1540s the Songhay rulers responded to one Moroccan request by ordering a raid of two thousand Tuareg on Morocco’s Dra’a Valley. Later, they foiled an otherwise successful Moroccan conquest of Taghaza by simply redirecting traders to another location.

Al-Mansur’s first effort, however, fared much better. Al-Sa’di reports that the Sultan requested of the Songhay one year’s worth of tax from the mines of Taghaza, and received instead a goodwill gift of more than ninety pounds of gold, the generosity of which allegedly led to a great friendship between the sultan and the Songhay Askiya (emperor) Dawud.

Some see the rivalry with the Ottoman Empire as an important factor in al-Mansur’s Songhay venture. Ottoman agents were indeed active in sub-Saharan Africa. Bornu, a central Sudanic empire in the area adjacent to Lake Chad, attracted Ottoman mercenaries and

996 Abun-Nasr, History of the Maghrib, 112.
999 In 1556-1557 the Moroccans took control of Taghaza, but the Songhay authorized the Tuareg to trade at another site. With no traders thus available, the Moroccans withdrew and the Songhay reestablished suzerainty. Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 193-194. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 166-167. See also Smith, Al-Mansur, 88-93.
1000 Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 180. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 155.
technology with a series of aggressive jihads. In the middle of the century the Ottomans themselves extended their reach into Fezzan, a territory also claimed by Bornu. The latter sent an embassy to the Ottomans, but negotiations came to naught.\textsuperscript{1001} It is unclear whether or not military conflict ensued, though the anonymous Spaniard claims that the Turks marched through Egypt to conquer Bornu, but so weakened by thirst could not defend themselves.\textsuperscript{1002} Whatever may have occurred, the Ottoman supply of arms to Bornu dried up, and in 1582-83 its leaders turned to al-Mansur to meet their needs.

Morocco does not appear to have been willing to provide assistance to Bornu at this time, and it is partly on this basis that some have speculated that al-Mansur was even at this early date preparing his trans-Saharan expedition. His delaying tactics led to three separate embassies from Bornu, the last ostensibly, though we do not know for certain, tasked with conveying Bornu’s allegiance to al-Mansur as caliph and imam.\textsuperscript{1003} In the context of al-Mansur’s subsequent colonial ventures, what seems most relevant about these exchanges is not Bornu’s request for arms or advisors, or even their alleged assertion of allegiance. Instead it is al-Mansur’s pursuit of acknowledgement as caliph and imam. It is not clear whether this was part of a substantive campaign for recognition or merely a scheme to delay a military commitment. Nevertheless, it is an ideological focus that was to be repeated in subsequent Moroccan dealings with the Songhay.

Although it is difficult to know with any certainty precisely when al-Mansur settled on the conquest of Songhay, subsequent events suggest that it might have occurred sometime in the early 1580s. It is unclear if Ottoman activities played any role, but they may at least have

\textsuperscript{1001} Yahya, \textit{Morocco in the Sixteenth Century}, 146-147.
\textsuperscript{1002} “Account of the Anonymous Spaniard,” in Hunwick, \textit{Timbuktu}, 327.
\textsuperscript{1003} Yahya, \textit{Morocco in the Sixteenth Century}, 148-150.
spurred renewed Sa’di interest in controlling the Saharan oases, for the Ottomans in Algiers made an unsuccessful attempt on Tuwat in 1579, which al-Mansur followed with an equally unsuccessful effort of his own two years later. Finally, in 1583, Morocco took control of Gurara and Tuwat in a brutal campaign directed against the local population.

Some scholars suggest that the Gurara and Tuwat expeditions were the final step in preparations for the Songhay venture, and indeed a number of important factors seem to have coalesced at this time. Capture of Tuwat gave al-Mansur control of the primary route by which trans-Saharan trade could otherwise bypass Morocco. In addition, as we have seen, two years earlier al-Mansur and the Ottoman Sultan had reached a rapprochement of sorts, buttressed partly by the departure from Algiers of the aggressive pasha Aluj Ali that at least temporarily lessened tensions between the two Muslim powers. Finally, as we have also seen, trade had brought closer ties between England and Morocco so that the former now looked increasingly to the latter as a potential ally in any struggle against Catholic Spain. The last was a particularly important development at the time, for although the departure of Aluj Ali from Algiers had lessened Ottoman pressure on Morocco, so too did it diminish Spanish-Ottoman rivalry. As a result, Spain, now united with Portugal, could devote a greater measure of effort to its Atlantic and North African foes.

After the capture of Gurara and Tuwat, as well as his initial successful maneuvering among the Ottomans and Spanish, al-Mansur apparently felt confident enough to launch a substantial expedition whose ultimate objective might have been Songhay. Askiya Dawud, with

1004 Dahiru Yahya downplays the salience of Sa’di-Ottoman rivalry over Saharan trade routes to the Moroccan invasion of Songhay, noting that the Ottomans never expressed any real interest in exercising control over the Western Sudan, while the Sa’di had openly done so. Sa’di interest, he believes, should be considered in the context of Sa’di relations with Western European powers, particularly Spain and Portugal. Yahya, Morocco in the Sixteenth Century, 145.
1006 Yahya, Morocco in the Sixteenth Century, 122.
whom al-Mansur had allegedly become friends, had died in 1582, and soon after al-Mansur sent an emissary to the Niger whose mission al-Sa’di believed to have been espionage.\textsuperscript{1007} Whether the Songhay thought this to be so at the time is unknown, but soon after the conclusion of the embassy al-Mansur dispatched a force of some twenty thousand men into Mauritania. Ambiguity about the goals of this expedition stem from the route it followed and the differing conclusions of the sources. Al-Sa’di asserts that al-Mansur “sent an army of 20,000 men to the area of Wadan, with orders to seize the lands along the sea coast and other territories until they reached the lands of Timbuktu.”\textsuperscript{1008} God, however, according to al-Sa’di, dispersed the army by hunger and thirst.\textsuperscript{1009}

Wadan is an indirect means by which to approach the Middle Niger. It is possible that the Moroccans wished to avoid the more direct route through Taghaza because of the severity of the intervening desert. They also may have hoped to reinvigorate the western trade routes that had seen diminished activity for several centuries.\textsuperscript{1010} More provocative assertions suggest that al-Mansur sent particularly troublesome troops on the expedition, if not with orders that they be abandoned, at least with the hope that they would perish.\textsuperscript{1011} An equally plausible explanation, of course, is that al-Mansur actually had designs on Wadan at this time. Already holding Tuwat, Wadan would have given him control over the eastern and western routes connecting sub-Saharan Africa with the Maghrib. Taghaza in the middle, in which the Sa’di had already expressed an interest, would have been the only north-south route left not under Moroccan control. In any event, the mission to Mauritania was a miserable failure. An undeterred al-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[1007] Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 183. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 158.
\item[1008] Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 193. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 166.
\item[1009] Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 193. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 166.
\item[1010] Richard Smith finds the latter objective, if true, to be ill-conceived, asserting that the people at the southern end of the western route had little to trade other than slaves. Smith, Al-Mansur, 92.
\item[1011] Smith, Al-Mansur, 92.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Mansur followed it but a year later with an expedition to Taghaza. According to al-Sa’di the Moroccan sultan sent two hundred musketeers to the salt reservoir with orders to seize everyone there.\(^{1012}\) As they had done decades earlier however, when the Moroccans arrived the Songhay simply prohibited people from trading at Taghaza and redirected their activities elsewhere. Frustrated, the musketeers returned home.\(^{1013}\)

Though he held Tuwat, al-Mansur’s efforts at dominating access to gold through command of the salt trade appeared by the middle of the 1580s to have ended in failure. Even dismissing the ambiguous mission into Mauritania, multiple generations of Sa’di attempts on Taghaza had been relatively easily frustrated by the Songhay. If al-Mansur had not previously harbored designs on the Sudan, it is not difficult to see how they might have emerged as a result of these failures. Rather than be deterred by the difficulties of trans-Saharan conquest already encountered, al-Mansur may have concluded that the only means to access the gold he needed was to conquer the sources themselves. The challenge was when and how to do so.

Sources differ on the immediate catalyst for the eventual Moroccan invasion of 1590-1591. Al-Sa’di identifies a Songhay slave imprisoned at Taghaza, Wuld Kirinfil, as the impetus. According to al-Sa’di it “was God’s decree and His destiny that he [the slave] should break out from that prison and flee to the Red City, Marrakesh….\(^{1014}\) There he wrote a letter to al-Mansur describing the difficult circumstances under which the Songhay were living and the resulting ease with which they could be conquered.\(^{1015}\) The anonymous Spaniard asserts that the ostensibly same escapee claimed to be the brother of the Songhay ruler, Askiya Ishaq, that his throne had been usurped, and that in return for support in regaining his kingdom he would

\(^{1012}\) Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 194. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 166.
\(^{1013}\) Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 194. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 166-167.
\(^{1015}\) Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 216. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 187.
acknowledge al-Mansur’s suzerainty and reward him with great wealth. While such an offer would no doubt have been tempting to al-Mansur, we should be cautious about attributing to this one entreaty more than the spark that enticed yet another trans-Saharan expedition. Absent changes in other circumstances, it is difficult to imagine that al-Mansur would have embarked on such a risky venture after so many prior failures.

As we have seen, however, international events had evolved dramatically since al-Mansur’s futile attempt on Taghaza in 1585. To the north the English had defeated the Spanish armada in 1588. The victory meant that a weakened Spain now anticipated an English invasion, and had neither the time nor resources to focus on expansion in Morocco. In the south the Songhay Empire, according to al-Sa’di, suffered from a political succession crisis and a resulting civil war. Al-Mansur had no doubt been monitoring the latter through a network of spies who appear to have kept him reasonably well-informed. Wuld Kirinfil’s letter, therefore, most likely merely confirmed what al-Mansur already knew, though coming from a purported member of the Songhay royal family it may have offered additional leverage missing from earlier ventures.

Al-Mansur reacted to Wuld Kirinfil’s letter by sending one of his own to the Songhay askiya. In it he asserts rights to revenue from the Taghaza salt mines, noting his position as caliph and imam, and buttressing his claims with a dissertation on Morocco’s role as the bulwark of Islam.

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1017 Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 194-211. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 167-180.
1018 Robert Smith notes that in addition to information gained from trans-Saharan merchants al-Mansur had also sent to the Songhay court two Qur’anic specialists accompanied by two renegados and two Andalusians, all of whom were spies, and who at one point returned with a letter from the askiya’s nephew promising his allegiance if al-Mansur sent an army to Gao. Unfortunately, Smith’s source is not documented and I have been unable to find any reference to these individuals in al-Sa’di, al-Ifrani, or the account of the anonymous Spaniard. Smith, Al-Mansur, 93.
1019 Hunwick, Timbuktu, 295.
Our intention is to spend what accrues from this [the tax revenue from the mine]—God willing—in pursuit of campaigning and jihād, and in stipends for those soldiers and armies who are under our exalted purview, and which we have established to lie in wait for, and inflict injury upon, the enemy of God, and which we have readied for defence of the authority (kalmia) of Islam, and to protect the lands and people.

They are the armies of God. Were it not for the fact that their sharp swords form a barrier between you and the infidel tyrants, and their protecting cavalry strike blows in the face of unbelief before you, and prunes the thorns of infidelity by extirpating its warriors and partisans, and by constantly joining issue with it in its very land—its flowing torrents would inundate you, and its pouring rain would flood your land. [These armies of God] have reined in unbelief, so that you have slept securely under surety, and in equanimity and peace of mind under protection.

We have dispatched this noble letter to you so that you might know what God has spared you through our swords, which have kept you safe in tranquility and ease, in gardens and springs; and that you might experience the help and happiness that our noble vision saw fit [to provide], in conformity with our exalted order for the amelioration of the condition of persons and places; and that you might not endeavour to nullify this duty, which brings such benefit to Islam; and that you might continually aid the part of God to fight the idol worshippers. 1020

As an enclosure al-Mansur included a copy of Wuld Kirinfil’s letter, remarking that he had not yet reached a decision regarding the refugee’s request for aid. 1021

It is interesting to consider the various messages potentially embedded in this letter. There is, of course, the implicit military threat. The mighty armies of God who strike the infidel to the north could easily turn south at the sultan’s command, and by including a copy of Wuld Kirinfil’s letter in his reply al-Mansur ensures the askiya knows he has evaluated Songhay strength. In addition, it is also possible that even at this late date al-Mansur had not settled on the idea of colonization. No initiative we have thus far examined offered the Middle Niger as its unambiguous and unequivocal objective, and the letter to Askiya Ishaq seems on the surface at least to offer the prospect that allocation of Taghaza tax revenue could bring matters to a

satisfactory close. But what is most interesting about the letter from the perspective of al-Mansur’s colonial ambitions is the appeal to the political and religious ideology of the Islamic community. Was this simply a pragmatic tactic designed to ensure support from the Moroccan establishment, or did it reflect a genuine interest in an Islamic universalism with ramifications for a broader Moroccan imperial project? Stephen Cory argues persuasively for the latter.

Pragmatic considerations are certainly evident in the lead up to the Songhay invasion. Al-Mansur faced substantial internal opposition to any new expeditions in the south. Some of the reticence reflected Morocco’s prior failures in the region. In making his case to a consultative assembly he had called to endorse the Songhay expedition, al-Mansur directed his remarks to such tactical concerns.

As for former dynasties which, you say, never contemplated such a project as mine, you know well that the Almoravids were fully occupied with the conquest of Andalusia and struggles with the Christians; the Almohads were similarly engaged and had also to fight the Sanhaja nomads; finally the Merinids had to fight the Abd al-Wadid of Tlemcen. But today the road to Andalusia is closed to us by the conquest of the whole of the country by our enemies the infidels, and we are no longer at war with Tlemcen or the rest of the kingdom of Algiers because it is all in the hands of the Turks. Moreover, our predecessors would have found great difficulty if they had tried to do what I now propose, for their armies were composed only of horsemen armed with spears and of bowmen; gunpowder was unknown to them, as so were fire-arms and their terrifying effect. Today the Sudanese have only spears and swords, weapons which will be useless against modern arms. It will therefore be easy for us to wage a successful war against these people and prevail over them. Finally, the Sudan being richer than the Maghrib its conquest would be more profitable than to drive out the Turks which would call for great efforts with very little gain. Do not let the inaction of our predecessors lead you to regard as distant that which is within reach, and as difficult that which is easy.\footnote{Bovill, \textit{The Golden Trade of the Moors}, 166. It appears Bovill is quoting al-Ifrani, but there is no definitive citation.}

That al-Mansur emphasized practical concerns does not mean that he did so to the exclusion of larger, more abstract objectives. The Songhay were, after all, fellow Muslims...
against whom any attack needed to be carefully justified, particularly when there were Christian powers nearby against whom military campaigns should presumably first be directed. Appeals to the needs of the greater Islamic community therefore offered a means by which al-Mansur could support action against the Songhay if they were recalcitrant in meeting his demands. Court chroniclers, in fact, assert that when al-Mansur addressed the consultative assembly he also stressed the greater glory of the Islamic community, emphasizing that the economic riches of the Sudan would aid the unity and expansion of Islam. Among the resources its conquest would provide was not only gold, but perhaps the timber needed for a navy.  

Whether opportunistic or genuine, an appeal to the notion of a universal Muslim polity could be as easily applied to ventures in the Western Hemisphere as it could to any in sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, the historical moment in the Maghrib may have been ripe for the more fantastic. Al-Mansur had already laid claim to the loyalty of the Sunni population with his pretensions to the caliphate, and his specific references to the imamate had similar appeal to the Shi’a. But adding to the grandiosity of Muslim expectations was the approach of the Islamic millennium and the possibility that the long awaited redeemer of Islam, the Mahdi, a figure particularly resonant among the extensive Sufi brotherhoods of the Maghrib, might reveal himself in the person of Ahmad al-Mansur. There is likely no definitive answer available to us on the question of whether or not al-Mansur saw himself or his colonial ambitions in millennial terms, but it is clear that his Songhay venture drew on robust political and religious imagery, all of which could be used to validate a broad array of imperial dreams to an otherwise skeptical Moroccan audience.

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1024 The complex ideologies of legitimacy present in the western Maghrib at the time are beyond the scope of this paper. It is worth mentioning, however, that the notion of the Mahdi, a redeemer who would rid the world of injustice, had taken root amongst many Muslims in the western Maghrib as a result of the spread of Sufi
Al-Mansur may also have found colonization of the Sudan potentially advantageous for his dealings with European powers, both friends and foes alike. By this time the glory of his victory at Wadi al-Makazin in 1578 had faded and his shortcomings as an ally had become evident. Again as we have seen, al-Mansur had failed to live up to his assurances to the Spanish over Larache and to his assurances of support for the English assault on Portugal. To potential allies Morocco seemed to be a feckless and unreliable partner. Thus, as a result of his machinations and prevarications, it seems possible that by the fall of 1590 al-Mansur was in sore need of a martial demonstration that would restore his credibility as a formidable regional power, much less one that had any aspirations of participating in overseas ventures. Such a demonstration might be provided by a successful conquest of Songhay.

Al-Sa’di reports that Askia Ishaq responded intemperately to al-Mansur’s request for the tax revenue from Taghaza, his reply accompanied by the simultaneous challenge and insult of a spear and two iron shoes.1025 The Sultan accordingly made preparations for an invasion. When his force assembled it was, according to al-Ifrani, a mighty army of elite soldiers with the strongest camels and best horses, and its departure was an “unprecedented spectacle.”1026

Most scholars have examined the composition of al-Mansur’s expedition exclusively from the perspective of the political and social dynamics of the Moroccan state, or concentrated on its fighting abilities relative to those of its Songhay opponents. Yet, the constituent elements of the force may also offer clues as to what, if any, type of post-conquest state al-Mansur originally anticipated establishing in the Sudan. There were, in fact, a variety of precedents from which he could chose. It is conceivable, for example, that al-Mansur’s ambitions in the south

brotherhoods that endorsed the concept. They believed that the Mahdi would reveal himself at the Muslim millennium, which would occur in October of 1591. For a discussion of Madhist beliefs in this context see Yahya, *Morocco in the Sixteenth Century*, 157-162, and for Madhism and al-Mansur particularly, Smith, *Al-Mansur*, 72-75.


were limited to immediate conquest, followed by acknowledgement of a tributary relationship that would require little, if any, sustained presence in the region. Another option, and one consistent with Moroccan exposure to Portuguese and Spanish efforts, would involve establishing small, defensible enclaves through which trade and tribute might be regulated. A third approach could imitate prior eras of Arab conquest, awarding territory and booty to tribal groups content to settle in the new lands.

Descriptions of the Sa’di force vary in the details, but are generally consistent overall. According to al-Sa’di it consisted of three thousand musketeers, both mounted and on foot, as well as support personnel.\(^\text{1027}\) The anonymous Spaniard tallied one thousand renegado musketeers, one thousand Andalusian musketeers, five hundred mounted musketeers also mostly renegados, and one thousand five hundred lancers from among the local people. The total number, including one thousand service personnel, could have amounted to five thousand men.\(^\text{1028}\) At the head of this army al-Mansur had placed a blue-eyed eunuch, Jawdar Pasha, the commander of Morocco’s Andalusian contingents.\(^\text{1029}\) Under him in the chain of command were ten caids, some of whose names tell us a great deal about the structure of the Moroccan military at this time: al-Mustafa al-Turki, Ahmad al-Harusi al-Andalusi, Ahmad b. al-Haddad al-‘Umari of the makhāziniyya, Ammar the Eunuch the Renegade, Ahmad b. Yusuf the Renegade, Ali b. al-Mustafa the Renegade, Ba-Hasan Firr the Renegade, and Qasim Waraduwī al-Andalusi.\(^\text{1030}\)

What is immediately evident from these contemporary accounts, and what is most relevant for our purposes, is the prominence of renegados and Andalusians in the Moroccan invasion force. Not long after assuming power, al-Mansur had continued his predecessors’

\(^{1027}\) Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 217. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 188.
\(^{1028}\) “Account of the Anonymous Spaniard,” in Hunwick, Timbuktu, 319.
\(^{1030}\) Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 217. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 188.
attempts to reorganize the Moroccan army, both technologically and administratively. Traditionally, Moroccan forces had been composed of two broad tribal contingents, the *jaysh*, who provided troops in time of war in return for freedom from taxation or lands from which to derive their own tax revenues, and the *makhzan*, who were salaried, billeted tribal troops paid from state revenues. \(^{1031}\) Neither group, given their tribal allegiances, owed their position exclusively to the sultan. Consequently, their loyalty to the state in the event of tribal upheavals was not unquestioned. Al-Mansur adopted the Ottoman practice of incorporating non-Turkish and non-Muslim elements into the army. Among the most prominent were European Christian *renegados* and Muslim Andalusians. Unlike the tribal corps these two groups often carried firearms, often filled senior posts in the army, guarded the sultan when he led campaigns, and received their pay before all others. \(^{1032}\) Neither group, as their names imply, were fully integrated into Maghribi society, and thus their allegiance to the ruler could be more readily ensured since it was through him alone that they enjoyed special status.

The comparatively sizeable contingent of *renegados* and Andalusians in the Sa’di expedition is open to several possible interpretations. They were certainly among the best of the *sharīf’s* troops, and in this sense it is no surprise to see them in the invasion force. At the same time, dispatching some of his most loyal forces on an uncertain mission across nearly a thousand miles of desert also held special risks for al-Mansur’s domestic position. Revolts had under his predecessors been commonplace in sixteenth-century Morocco. In fact, al-Mansur was returning from the suppression of a rebellion in Fez when Wuld Kirinfil arrived and spurred renewed consideration of a Saharan venture. \(^{1033}\) Consequently, the extended absence and potential loss of loyal, effective troops was not a light matter.

It is also possible that considerations other than the success of the mission factored into al-Mansur’s selections. Despite the presumed loyalty of renegados and Andalusians, al-Mansur’s relationship with latter, as we have now noted several times, had not always been positive. Early in his reign Andalusians in the south staged a mutiny against him. Though he readily dispatched them, the threat to al-Mansur at that time was substantial, for southern Morocco was the base of Sa’di power. Meeting the challenge forced him to rely substantially on northern Moroccans, among whom most Andalusians lived. Authorizing the assassination of the Andalusian leaders, al-Mansur drove a wedge between the northern Moroccans and the Andalusians that was to persist throughout his reign. Though unlikely, it is not inconceivable that al-Mansur purposefully dispatched troublesome troops on what promised to be a difficult task. As we saw, speculation about such tactics already surrounded al-Mansur’s earlier mission to Mauritania.

The prominence of the highly effective renegados and Andalusians in the Moroccan invasion force no doubt contributed to its initial success. Unlike previous sojourns deep into the Sahara, the Moroccan forces reached the Niger River adequately intact sometime in February or March of 1591. Though greatly outnumbered, they routed the Songhay, whose arrows and spears were no match for Moroccan muskets, and soon captured Timbuktu, Gao, and Jenne, making the first the capital of the Moroccan Arma administration. Unfortunately for al-Mansur, the conquest of these urban centers did not end armed conflict between Sa’di Morocco and the Songhay. Resistance continued from the latter’s traditional lands in Dendi. Campaigning in this region the Moroccans found themselves beset by difficulties. According to

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al-Sa’di, “they suffered most terribly from exhaustion, prolonged hunger, exposure, and sickness due to the insalubrity of the land. The water affected their stomachs and caused diarrhoea which many died from, in addition to combat fatalities.”

Faced with such challenges the Moroccans retrenched, and established garrisons at various locations on a narrow strip that ran along the Niger River from Gao to Jenne.

At this point one feels compelled to consider exactly what sort of presence, if any, al-Mansur had in mind for the Sudan. It is difficult to imagine that he envisioned what would essentially be the long-term exile of some of his best troops and commanders in a foreign land, particularly if he had imperial ambitions elsewhere. There is some speculation that he originally planned to recall the renegados and Andalusians after the initial conquest and replace them with Saharan troops from the Sus. Such a strategy would be consistent with Arab conquests of the past, and would free the reliable renegados and Andalusians for domestic needs and other ventures. Nothing in al-Sa’di’s account suggests that the early Moroccan forces brought wives, families, or other possessions, and so there is little upon which to base a contrary conclusion. In fact, early in the campaign, al-Mansur’s commander, Jawdar Pasha, seemed inclined to reach some sort of accommodation with the Songhay, presumably recognizing the difficulties of a prolonged war and occupation. After the capture of Gao al-Sa’di reports that the Songhay askiya offered more than nine hundred pounds of gold and one thousand slaves for the return of his kingdom; Jawdar transmitted the proposal to the sultan and returned to Timbuktu to await his response. Upon receipt of the offer Al-Mansur allegedly flew into a rage at Jawdar’s idleness. He sent a new commander and eighty musketeers (presumably also renegados or

1036 Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 239. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 205.
1037 Hunwick, Timbuktu, xliii.
1038 Saad, Social History of Timbuktu, 173.
1039 Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 221. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 191.
Andalusians) to the Niger with orders to dismiss Jawdar and drive Askiya Ishaq out of the Sudan.  

This reaction from the sharīf clouds analysis of his pre-invasion expectations. He may simply have taken personally Askiya Ishaq’s insulting response to his demand for Taghaza. Or he may by this time have abandoned, if he had ever entertained, the notion of a simple tributary relationship requiring minimal subsequent Moroccan involvement. What seems most likely is that al-Mansur had settled on a long-term presence in the region, likely to be provided by Saharan settlers once control had been established. Accomplishing the last presumably necessitated the removal of independent askiyas, which would explain both al-Mansur’s demand that Ishaq be driven from the Sudan, as well the subsequent ambush and killing of his successor, Askiya Muhammad Gao. Congruently, al-Mansur, or at least one of his commanders on the ground, appears to have recognized that some sort of daily civil administration was important to the ultimate success of the Moroccan effort. Accordingly, in their capital of Timbuktu the Moroccans created a collaborationist Askiyate under Sulayman ibn al-amir Askiya Dawud.  

If al-Mansur’s plan had indeed been to rotate back to Morocco the renegados and Andalusians once the Middle Niger had been pacified, a variety of factors conspired to prevent this. The first was the persistence of the Songhay resistance. Those among the Songhay who did not defect to the Arma administration’s Askiyate rallied to Muhammad Gao’s younger son, Askiya Nuh, who continued to wage what appears to have been for a time an effective guerrilla war, more successful against the Moroccans, according to al-Sa’di, “than Askiya Ishaq had been

1040 Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 225. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 195.  
1041 After a series of defeats, Askiya Ishaq went into exile at Bilanga, where he was betrayed and killed. His successor in Songhay, Askiya Muhammad Gao allegedly offered his allegiance to al-Mansur, but while meeting with Pasha Mahmud was seized and killed. Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 230-231, 232-233. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 198-199, 200-201.  
with a force a hundred times larger.”

It was in campaigning against Askiya Nuh that the Moroccans suffered so extensively from disease, hunger, and the other afflictions mentioned by al-Sa’di. Jawdar Pasha’s replacement, Pasha Mahmud, repeatedly bemoaned conditions to al-Mansur, who eventually sent six additional contingents of troops. Yet Askiya Nuh outlasted Mahmud, who was killed in battle in 1595.

In addition to difficulties in the field, the Moroccans also struggled to develop a rapport with the local scholarly and religious elites. By establishing the seat of their administration at Timbuktu they had simultaneously distinguished themselves from the Songhay at Gao, secured the primary crossroads of trade between the Middle Niger and the north, and positioned themselves in the midst of the region’s preeminent scholars, jurists, and merchants. It is unclear which of these considerations dominated Moroccan colonial thinking. Al-Mansur appears to have placed at least some importance on engaging the patricians of Timbuktu. From earlier communities these elites had inherited a tradition of independence in which urban centers operated autonomously under the leadership of their own scholars or jurists. A prior Songhay ruler, Sunnî ‘Ali, had ignored that precedent to his disadvantage. His inattention to the prerogatives of the elite had led to a massive exodus of the wealthiest merchants and scholars as he advanced upon the city in 1469. Before his invasion al-Mansur addressed a letter to the qadi of Timbuktu asserting the righteousness of the Moroccan cause and asking the qadi to urge

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1043 Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 238. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 204.
1044 Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 238. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 204.
1045 Al-Sa’di offers a complicated tale of Pasha Mahmud’s death. Apparently an informant from Timbuktu complained to al-Mansur that the Pasha behaved too cruelly toward the region’s inhabitants, and that he had only remitted to the Sultan a small part of the wealth confiscated from Timbuktu’s jurists. Al-Mansur promptly dispatched a replacement with orders to execute Pasha Mahmud. The latter, forewarned, launched a suicide attack against some pagans who were fighting with Askiya Nuh. Struck down by arrows, the pagans cut off his head and mounted it on a pole in the market of Leka. Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 266-269. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 225-227.
1046 Saad, Social History of Timbuktu, 18.
1047 Saad, Social History of Timbuktu, 43.
the populace to welcome the Sultan’s forces.\textsuperscript{1048} The leading families and scholars of Timbuktu,
however, were not so easily swayed and nothing appears to have come of the request, save
perhaps the prevention of an anticipatory exodus of the sort that had greeted Sunni ‘Ali.

Whatever prior plans al-Mansur may have had for the region’s elites, the Moroccan
occupiers’ relationship with the populace in their new capital quickly soured. After returning to
Timbuktu to await al-Mansur’s response to the initial Songhay peace proposal, Jawdar Pasha
chose the quarter of the city with the largest houses as the place in which to build a fort for his
soldiers, promptly turning out its residents with little notice.\textsuperscript{1049} When Jawdar’s successor, Pasha
Mahmud, left the city to campaign, elements within Timbuktu rose in rebellion. Al-Sa’di
recounts the relevant events, including the constant harassment of the Moroccan garrison, an
attack by the Tuareg, and the burning of parts of the city.\textsuperscript{1050} A relief force reestablished order,
but when Pasha Mahmud returned after two years of difficult and ultimately unsuccessful
campaigning, he ordered the arrest of the city’s jurists and the looting of their wealth. A number
of those taken were killed while being transported to the fort, and the others were exiled to
Morocco.\textsuperscript{1051}

The prolongation of conflict in both the urban centers and the hinterlands appears to have
doomed any effort at truly successful pacification of the Middle Niger during al-Mansur’s
lifetime. Far from being able to recall all his renegados and Andalusians, each successive pasha
he dispatched save one had to be accompanied by additional musketeers to enforce their

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{1048}
\textsuperscript{1049}
Al-Sa’di, \textit{Tarikh}, 222. Hunwick, \textit{Timbuktu}, 192. According to al-Sa’di this was the quarter of the Ghadamisi,
who were presumably merchants or families originating in Ghadames, in the western part of Libya.
\textsuperscript{1050}
Al-Sa’di, \textit{Tarikh}, 240-243. Hunwick, \textit{Timbuktu}, 205-207. Among those killed was Wuld Kirinfil, the Songhay
refugee who had encouraged al-Mansur’s invasion and who had accompanied the expeditionary force.
\textsuperscript{1051}
Al-Sa’di, himself a later member of Timbuktu’s merchant-scholar class, as well as an official in the Arma
administration, devotes substantial space to the arrest of the Timbuktu scholars. Al-Sa’di, \textit{Tarikh}, 256-276.
\end{footnotes}
authority. These were above and beyond, of course, the presumably more substantial contingents sent independently to reinforce the Moroccan garrisons and to continue the campaign against the remnants of the Songhay Empire. It is also worth noting that not all who went south arrived safely. The one pasha sent without escort, for example, had on a prior occasion left for Songhay with five hundred renegados and five hundred Andalusians. After he split the group in two in order to travel by different routes, the Andalusians were never heard from again.

Several years after the invasion of the Sudan, therefore, al-Mansur had established in the region neither a tributary relationship that drew minimally on Moroccan resources, nor a settler colony with the potential to dominate the region economically or demographically. Instead he found himself administering, much like the Portuguese and Spanish had on his coasts, scattered enclaves, garrisoned by musketeers whose maintenance costs brought into question the long-term viability of the entire endeavor. One of the most interesting aspects of the situation al-Mansur thus confronted was that it had been so astutely predicted by the anonymous Spaniard. Writing from Marrakech in 1591 the Spaniard suggests that despite the gold the expedition would generate, it would nevertheless be the ruin of the sultan.

[H]e has sent his best troops on this expedition, 2,500 musketeers, both on foot and mounted…. There is little hope that they will return, since beyond the fact that many have died and more will die every day, the country being very unhealthy for strangers, to hold it down it will be necessary that these troops remain permanently in the region, either to hold onto what they have conquered, or to subdue the Blacks, should they attempt a revolt.

Moreover, it will always be necessary to send soldiers to replace those who die, and it also will be necessary that they be drawn from the renegade Andalusian musketeers who remain to the king, both infantry and cavalry; but it is on these troops that the existence of his kingdom rests. Over and above the harm he will suffer from the absence of a corps of this quality, which is the most valiant and the one in which he has the most confidence—

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1052 Pasha Mahmud brought eighty in 1591, Pasha Muhammad Tabi’ brought 1,000 in 1597, Pasha Sulayman brought five hundred upon Jawdar Pasha’s recall in 1600. Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 225, 271, 289. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 195, 229, 244.
1053 Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 277. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 233.
a fact which could result at the first opportunity in his total destruction—great expenses will ensue for him because of the considerable wages he pays in advance to the men when they leave, and because of the cost of munitions, foodstuffs, camels, tents and various pieces of equipment which those who cross the Sahara and follow their path take with them, and these are numerous.

It will also be necessary to construct fortresses, one at Timbuktu, another at Gao, for the security of the troops and as somewhere they can retire to, and also to serve as a check on the Blacks and prevent them from revolting. This involves great expense, since it will inevitably be necessary to send the munitions from Morocco.

And even if everything goes well for him, he will have no profit out of all these labours and all these expenses other than what he saves from the dues he formerly paid on merchandise. It is by importing these that he ought to draw off the gold of Guinea, for it is not thought that he can in any way get to the region where the gold is collected. The profit will be inconsiderable, and even when he raises some tribute, everything will be absorbed and more by the wages of the troops he must permanently maintain.

Admittedly, it must have been difficult for al-Mansur to accept the logic of such arguments early in the colonial effort, for from all accounts the riches secured by the sub-Saharan venture were substantial. Al-Ifrani writes that “when the kingdoms of the Sūdānic lands were conquered, gold to stir envy among the jealous and dazzle those who beheld it, was brought to him—so much of it that al-Mansur paid salaries only in nuggets of pure gold, to say nothing of what was set aside for other purposes such as the fabrication of earrings, jewelry, and such like. On account of this he was named ‘the Golden’ (al-Dhahabī), because of the flood of gold in his days.”

A Scottish merchant in Morocco in 1594, Lawrence Madoc, was similarly effusive. After witnessing the arrival of thirty mules laden with gold, he wrote but a few weeks later that Morocco had “such an infinite treasure as I never heard of; it doth appeare that they have more golde then any other part of the world beside. The Alcaide winneth all the countrey where he goeth without fighting, and is going downe towards the sea coast. This King of Marocco is

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like to be the greatest prince in the world for money.”

Gold, of course, had been the source of Sa’di interest in the Sudan from the very beginning, and it is in its use that we might finally expect to find a more direct connection between the Songhay effort and Moroccan ambitions in the Western hemisphere. As the anonymous Spaniard had predicted, a substantial portion of the gold generated by the conquest went to pay the army and the bureaucracy. In addition, al-Mansur constructed mosques and schools, improved the fortification of some ports, expanded the sugar refineries of the Sus, and completed his elaborate palace. Yet with all the wealth that flowed northward there is nothing to suggest that he considered investing it in colonial ventures farther afield—no maritime explorations, no massive naval construction programs.

Of course, by 1595 any such extraordinary agenda, if it existed, might simply have been supplanted by domestic difficulties. In that year the Spanish released from their territory a pretender to the Moroccan throne, al-Nasir ibn al-Ghalib, who though defeated within a year, aroused alarmingly substantial support among the Moroccan populace. Shortly thereafter, one of al-Mansur’s sons so aroused the enmity of the Moroccan establishment that a consultative assembly recommended that he be executed, something al-Mansur could not bring himself to do. As if things were not bad enough, for several years during the latter part of the decade a plague crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and swept through Morocco, killing some of the sultan’s best troops, and prompting revolts throughout the countryside. Finally, after his repeated prevarication earlier in the decade, England’s Queen Elizabeth I increasingly dismissed al-Mansur, essentially limiting their exchanges to discussion of merchant issues. Despite all of

these calamities, wealth from the Middle Niger continued to fill the state’s coffers. A letter from the Englishman Jasper Tomson in the summer of 1599, for example, reports on the return of Jawdar Pasha, noting that he brought with him thirty camels laden with unrefined gold, as well as horses, eunuchs, slaves, and other stores carried on one hundred and twenty camels.\footnote{\textit{“Lettre de Jasper Tomson à Richard Tomson,”}}

It is appropriate to question why al-Mansur’s Songhay invasion may be considered a relevant component of Morocco’s involvement in the early Atlantic world. Two factors best argue for its inclusion, one immediate and practical and another more long-standing and theoretical. The first is the quest for gold closer to its source, if not control of the source itself. This, as we know, in part motivated Portuguese advances down the African coast and into the Gulf of Guinea. It seems inconceivable that al-Mansur’s Songhay adventure did not in part attempt to counter European movement along Atlantic pathways toward the sources of gold—movement that Morocco could not stop in the maritime arena, but could potentially combat by crossing the expanse of the Sahara. As to the second factor, while Stephen Cory examines al-Mansur’s desire to establish a western caliphate as ample motivation, the \textit{sharif} also had before him the examples of the Portuguese and Spanish, who now controlled lands and wealth across the ocean in the Americas and India. These were now Atlantic empires with whom the Sa’di had been contending for almost one hundred years. As al-Mansur’s reign neared its end, his next international initiative seems to support the notion that he looked to emulate in part the Atlantic empires and the world they were creating, for now he looked to the West.

\textit{Looking West: Spanish America}

At the end of the sixteenth century al-Mansur appears to have tried to reinvigorate his relationship with the English. The latter had been aware of his Songhay venture almost from the
start, or at least since a letter in June of 1590 in which he had proffered the distraction of the expedition’s preparations as an explanation for his dismissive treatment of the queen’s ambassador.\(^{1062}\) Al-Mansur’s need to excuse his conduct might have been the sole motive for disclosing the initiative at that time, but it is equally likely that he wished the English to take particular note of his ambitions and capabilities.

Almost a decade later al-Mansur called the Englishman Jasper Tomson to his tent late at night. Questioning Tomson with apparent delight about recent news of an Ottoman defeat, he eventually inquired of Tomson whether or not Queen Elizabeth would be willing to join the sharīf in an expedition to conquer Spain. Tomson professed not to know the Queen’s mind, and although reporting that he did not take the proposal seriously, agreed to transmit the question to the queen.\(^{1063}\) Approximately a year after that exchange al-Mansur sent his envoy Abd al-Wahhid ibn Mess’ud to England to carry on secret discussions with Elizabeth.\(^{1064}\) Several months later a memorandum detailed that al-Mansur was, in fact, formally proposing an alliance with the English against the Spanish. Al-Mansur claimed that he could provide men, munitions, food, wood for ships, and iron to carry the war to Spain itself. Offering to provision the English ships and supply whatever Spanish territory the English seized, he reminded the English of what he had set out to do and had accomplished in Songhay. There, in Guinea, he boasted, he had captured eighty-six thousand cities and, in the process, proven the worth of his soldiers in hot climes.\(^{1065}\) This is the first instance we know of in which al-Mansur is potentially suggesting a possible link between the Moroccan experience in the Sudan and future imperial endeavors.

Queen Elizabeth apparently responded promptly to the sharīf’s proposals, but the transmission of

\(^{1063}\) “Lettre de Jasper Tomson à Richard Tomson,” 24 June 1599, SIHM-Angleterre, II, 142-146.
\(^{1065}\) “Mémorandum d’Abd El-Ouahed,” 13 September 1600, SIHM-Angleterre, II, 177-179.
her response and necessary follow up discussions were complicated by the difficulty in safely returning the Moroccan embassy to its home country.\textsuperscript{1066} In an apparent attempt to conceal the nature of the mission the return route contemplated a detour to Turkey in the company of English merchants. Yet some merchants and sailors refused, finding it “a matter odious and scandalous to the world to be too friendly or familiar with Infidells.”\textsuperscript{1067} Instead, the embassy returned directly to Morocco, with letters from Queen Elizabeth explaining that the negotiations for the proposed joint action were too complex to put in writing and instead would be handled by Henry Prannell, an Englishman resident in Morocco.\textsuperscript{1068}

In less than six months, al-Mansur suggested taking things a step further—or a leap further. Elizabeth, perhaps fatigued at his renewed and constant entreaties for operations against the Spanish, had advised al-Mansur that taking action against the Spanish in the Mediterranean or along their Atlantic coast would be of little value. To be effective it was necessary to strike at the Indies and deprive Spain of the sources of its wealth. For this effort the Queen sought funds from Morocco for the rebuilding of the English fleet.\textsuperscript{1069} Al-Mansur, his ambitions apparently rekindled, agreed and proposed terms. He would indeed send the necessary funds, for these were readily available, but two preconditions first needed to be addressed. The first of these involved the means of transmitting the funds. Such a large sum could not be sent by a relatively defenseless merchant ship. Instead, he proposed that the English send a warship to collect it.\textsuperscript{1070}

As for the second precondition, it centered on the uses of the respective armies and the division of territory in the Spanish Indies.

\textsuperscript{1066} Mémorandum d’Abd el-Ouahed,” after 15 September 1600, SIHM-Angleterre, II, 180.
\textsuperscript{1069} “Mémoire de Moulay Ahmed El-Mansour Pour Élisabeth,” 27 February 1601, SIHM-Angleterre, II, 206-209.
\textsuperscript{1070} “Mémoire de Moulay Ahmed El-Mansour Pour Élisabeth,” 27 February 1601, SIHM-Angleterre, II, 206-209.
We must treat of your armie and of our armie, which shall goe to those countries, of peopling the land, after that—with the help of God—we shall have subdued it. For our intent is not onely to enter upon the land to sack it and leave it, but to possesse it and that it remayne under our dominion for ever, and—by the help of God—to joyne it to our estate and yours. And therefore it shall be needful for us to treat of the peopling thereof, whether it be your pleasure it shall be inhabited by our armie or yours, or whether we shall take it on our chardg to inhabite it with our armie without yours, in respect of the great heat of the clymat, where those of your countrie doo not fynde themselfes fitt to endure the extremitie of heat there and of the cold of your partes, where our men endure it very well by reason that the heat hurtes them not.

Furthermore, it shall be necessarie that wee treat of the division of the countrie between us and yow—by the assistance of Almightie God—that it may be understood howe the rentes and profittes thereof may be devyded, that every one of ech side may knowe of his part, and that all things may be cleare between us an yow concerning our partes.  

This was the only and last communication between al-Mansur and Queen Elizabeth that explicitly addressed a joint colonial expedition in the Western Hemisphere. As it took place, Elizabeth found herself forced to confront the rebellion of Robert Devereux, the 2nd Earl of Essex. Over quickly, the earl’s execution removed one of England’s more aggressive nobles, and thus someone more likely to support an Anglo-Moroccan alliance against Spain. Caution instead prevailed. After 1601 the plague arose again in Morocco, and in August of 1603, while in an encampment outside of Fez, al-Mansur died of an unknown illness. With him Morocco’s imperial adventures died, products, it seems, of his personal ambition and imagination, rather than of Moroccan destiny. Upon his death, Morocco itself descended into fratricidal strife, with three of al-Mansur’s sons engaging in a decade long civil war that left the country devastated. Amidst the turmoil, dreams of an empire in the Western Hemisphere


1072 This rebellion lasted a mere two weeks in February of 1601 and led to Devereux’s beheading at its conclusion. Brotton, This Orient Isle, 275.

dissipated even more quickly than they had arisen.

To the north the idea of invading Spain not only disappeared, but was replaced with a potential threat by a former ally. Elizabeth I had pre-deceased al-Mansur by almost five months, and shortly after her death Henry Roberts proposed an English invasion of Morocco to her successor, James I. Roberts claimed to have been holding plans for this project in secret for fifteen years, but now with James I’s ascension he felt free to reveal them. Morocco, he claimed would provide abundant wealth in cereals, saltpeter, and gold from Guinea, and the treasure of the Moroccan king alone would pay for the expedition six times over. Such riches and glory, he argued, would end the dissension between England, Ireland, and Scotland.1075

To the south the Arma administration of Timbuktu found itself largely abandoned upon al-Mansur’s death, and from 1608-1610 it tottered on the brink of collapse.1076 Though it recovered, the last pasha appointed from Marrakech died two years later.1077 From that point forward local garrisons selected pashas from amongst their own number, and eventually from those born in the Middle Niger. In 1657, as the Alaoui dynasty supplanted the Sa’di in Morocco, the population of Timbuktu rendered a bay’a to the local pasha, formally signaling the Arma administration’s independence. Al-Mansur’s, and Morocco’s, first and only successful imperial venture had lasted for less than three generations.

Most scholars are apt to agree that the anonymous Spaniard’s predictions had been particularly prescient. Colonization of the Sudan indeed turned out to be a terrible drain on Moroccan resources despite the wealth generated in the short term. For the Sa’di the drain was perhaps fatal. One of al-Mansur’s sons, Zaydan, in the midst of the succession crisis reportedly lamented that his father had wasted twenty-three thousand of Morocco’s elite troops. “My

1076 Saad, Social History of Timbuktu, 189.
1077 Al-Sa’di, Tarikh, 335. Hunwick, Timbuktu, 270.
father squandered them to no effect. No more than five hundred of them came back to die in Marrākesh. The rest all died in the Sūdān.”\textsuperscript{1078}

Despite the enormous risks and costs involved in al-Mansur’s expedition to the Sudan, the logic of the long-term venture takes on a different shade when considered in the light of a potentially larger, more grandiose imperial scheme. One scholar has characterized al-Mansur’s interest in America as an obsession.\textsuperscript{1079} If this was indeed the case—and it is not clear that there is evidence to support such an assertion—then the Songhay experiment must be evaluated in that context. Bereft of a navy and dependent upon a salaried army of foreigners to project power, al-Mansur needed gold if he was to expand across the Atlantic. Was the Songhay expedition a conscious effort on his part to establish the conditions under which Morocco could do so? Had strains of Mahdist millenarian thought convinced him of a destiny in which he carried Islam across the oceans? Or were the two ventures completely unrelated? Was it simply Queen Elizabeth’s commentary on the sources of Spanish wealth that had planted the idea of trans-Atlantic glory in al-Mansur’s mind?

Today the idea of a Moroccan colony in the Americas seems incredible. Yet was it? During al-Mansur’s lifetime England had tried and failed in attempts to establish a permanent presence in mainland North America. When it successfully did so, its colonies were at first sparsely populated. Indeed, the existing Spanish holdings of the time were lightly-garrisoned. Al-Mansur thus certainly had the troops and funds necessary to establish a presence in the Western Hemisphere comparable in size to those of the Spanish and later the English. Ample motivation for such a venture also existed, as Queen Elizabeth had alluded to, in the significant sources of silver that had been discovered in the 1540s and that were enriching Spain. Although

\textsuperscript{1078} Al-Sa’di, \textit{Tarikh}, 291. Hunwick, \textit{Timbuktu}, 245.
\textsuperscript{1079} García-Arenal, Ahmad al-Mansur, 141.
heavily outnumbered by indigenous Americans, the Spanish had succeeded in the Western Hemisphere with the help of local indigenous allies, as well as technological and microbial disease advantages. So too might Morocco be able to find local indigenous allies chafing under Iberian rule. Additionally, Moroccan forces would not have suffered from the technological differences or disease vulnerabilities that had disadvantaged Americans relative to the Spanish. Consequently, the only critical factor missing for Morocco was the capability to cross the Atlantic independently. With the one Muslim power thought capable of potentially developing an ocean-going fleet, the Ottoman Empire, blocked from Atlantic ports by Sa’di Morocco, in retrospect Al-Mansur’s reign may have provided the one and only window of opportunity for the Muslim world to participate in the overseas colonization that contributed so greatly to European dominance of the Atlantic world.
CONCLUSION. MOROCCO IN THE EARLY ATLANTIC WORLD

The purpose of this study is to begin the process of integrating Morocco into the larger narrative of the Atlantic world. Although Moroccans never crossed the Atlantic in meaningful numbers, Morocco nevertheless played an important role in the early stages of the process that created that world. Alone among Muslim polities Morocco possessed an Atlantic coastline and centuries of Atlantic experience that substantively differentiated it from Islamic states to the east. What this embryonic Atlantic identity meant was that when the Sea of Darkness was eventually breached by Europeans, Morocco had to negotiate a new frontier that connected to new networks and influences much more directly than did other Muslim countries, and that would require of Morocco an Atlantic-oriented response if it was to survive independently.

Over a period of just less than two hundred years Morocco’s experience of this emerging Atlantic world occurred in three phases. Though their boundaries were not always clear and the phases overlapped, each nevertheless represented a transformation in how Morocco experienced and participated in the early Atlantic world. The first phase, which began with the Portuguese assault on Ceuta in 1415, marked a period of Atlantic-based aggression against Morocco by the primary Atlantic countries of the age, Portugal and Spain. For those who consider initial Portuguese expansion either the beginning of the creation of the Atlantic world, or a critical precursor, Morocco was thus there from the very beginning. Over approximately one hundred years it was under relentless assault that contributed to the toppling of two Moroccan dynasties. During the second half of that phase this assault was almost exclusively an Atlantic one and was tied directly to Portuguese expansion down the African littoral and Iberian occupation of the Atlantic isles, both of which were made possible by the pathways the Portuguese pioneered in the Atlantic.
Though it would be unjustified to suggest in the abstract that Morocco was absolutely necessary to the development of the Atlantic world, it is clear that the Portuguese found it to be an important part of the overseas empire they had created in constructing that world, for long after they had achieved success in the Indies and the Americas, they continued to pour resources into Morocco. Morocco in this context represents a place of transition from the medieval period of the crusades to the early modern era characterized by European overseas expansion and colonization. It was a place of experimentation for Portugal, in particular, which developed expertise through both successes and failures in the use of the caravel and artillery and the establishment and administration of overseas coastal settlements. So too did Morocco serve as a laboratory in which Portugal had to confront the fundamental demographic challenges posed by expansion without a corresponding migration of peasantry or the importation of slave labor. This necessitated the creation of local alliances and tribute relationships. All of these became relevant factors in overseas expansion and were thus contemplated and confronted elsewhere in the Atlantic world.

Additionally, Morocco proved to be a critical component of the West African trade circuit of the Atlantic world that the Portuguese created. Grain from Morocco went not only to Portugal itself, but to other locations the Portuguese controlled in that network. So too did Moroccan textiles, which the Portuguese found could be traded lucratively in sub-Saharan Africa. This network in the pre-Columbian period constituted an “Atlantic world” for the parties involved, as the new interactions and significant transformations it entailed depended upon the new pathways carved out of the Atlantic by Europeans. Both the reality of Portuguese military superiority and the attraction of profit to be gained in the new networks contributed to the emergence of hybrid figures within Morocco who moved along the spectrum of collaboration
and resistance as they attempted to integrate into the new order of the Atlantic world. In this, Morocco presaged and mirrored the experience of other societies within the Atlantic world who were to confront European advances. Finally, however important the trade goods from Morocco were to the early circuits of the Atlantic world, one certain conclusion is that for Portugal, in particular, Morocco drew resources that the thinly-populated and thinly-resourced country could otherwise have allocated elsewhere in the Atlantic world or around the globe.

To successfully counter the Atlantic assault required Morocco to contrive an Atlantic response. This it did in a second phase of involvement in the Atlantic world that lasted approximately from 1515 until the death of al-Mansur in 1603. At the heart of this response was the sharīfian Sa’di family’s use of the new trade networks opened in the Atlantic to secure the wealth and arms needed to resist and then counter-attack against the Portuguese. What was initially contraband trade for sugar was at the heart of this process. As Europe expanded into the Atlantic and then to the Americas, its taste for sugar grew. Yet before the American plantations could change the economics of the industry and overwhelm older producers, this expansion provided a narrow window in which Moroccan sugar from the Sus could be advantageously traded outside of Portuguese and Spanish control. When the Sa’di family took advantage of this, it assisted them in accumulating the wealth and martial resources necessary to go on the offensive against the Portuguese.

With the conquest of the Portuguese fortress of Santa-Cruz, enabled in part by the sugar trade, the Sa’di were able to expand their gunpowder arms capability through the use of captured weapons. More importantly, along with the corresponding Portuguese abandonment of Safi and Azammur on Morocco’s Atlantic coast, the Sa’di dramatically expanded legitimate trading opportunities with the Atlantic world beyond the Iberian powers. These powers had been drawn
to Morocco by the Iberian successes in the Atlantic, the wealth from which enticed competitors. Most important for Morocco within this context was the opening of relations with the English, just then poised to become an Atlantic power. Trade with the English originally revolved around sugar and cloth, but eventually grew to include saltpeter and war materiel. Again, expanding trade with the English facilitated the growth of wealth and armaments critical to the Sa’di unification of Morocco and their ultimate removal of the long-term Portuguese threat. Additionally, with the emergence of a unified sharifian dynasty in Morocco, the Ottoman Empire was effectively blocked from access to an Atlantic coastline, where a consistent presence might have had significant implications for how the Atlantic world eventually developed.

Once Ahmad al-Mansur had solidified his rule in Morocco, he embarked on three foreign adventures, one actual and two forsaken, which while infused with economic and ideological motives, also represented an attempt to participate in the imperial expansion Morocco had witnessed in the Atlantic world. Unable to invade Iberia or travel across the Atlantic, but witnessing the expansion of both the Ottoman Empire and the Spanish and Portuguese, al-Mansur mirrored their colonial efforts with his own effort across the sea of sand in sub-Saharan Africa. This third period of Moroccan involvement in the Atlantic world co-existed with the part of the second phase that extended into al-Mansur’s reign.

Although the Songhay adventure did not involve a trans-Atlantic component, it was nevertheless a movement southward in Africa that was at least partly a response to the European presence in Gulf of Guinea and imitative of Iberian advances in the Americas. Al-Mansur eventually followed it with a proposal for a joint English-Moroccan move against the Spanish in the Americas. While it is easy today to dismiss al-Mansur’s overtures regarding the latter as at best an attempt to delay or mislead the English and at worst a preposterous, unrealistic scheme, it
may also be viewed as reflecting a genuine desire to replicate the imperial designs Morocco saw represented in the existing Atlantic world of the time.

A few years after Elizabeth I and al-Mansur died in 1603, the English under their new monarch, James I, established their first permanent settlement in the Americas at Jamestown. The Moroccan state, in contrast, crumbled. In an all too familiar succession struggle, Morocco again descended into a mix of feuding principalities, cities, and tribes. But the concept of an Atlantic-oriented Muslim community seemed to have irrevocably taken root. Although a united Moroccan state no longer existed, much less one with the organizational and financial resources necessary to expand into the Western Hemisphere, the successor principalities and cities—and even some republics—continued to aggressively engage the Atlantic.

The era of the Barbary corsairs was underway and Morocco was the only Muslim country with direct access to the Atlantic. In Salé-Rabat the Republics of the Bou Regreg emerged during the first half of the seventeenth century. Their ranks swelled by the influx of experienced and embittered Andalusian Moriscos, the Sallee Rovers rivaled in corsairing activity their Ottoman-ruled counterparts in the Barbary Mediterranean ports of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. Regularly operating some 500 miles from the estuary of the Bou Regreg among the Atlantic islands and Iberia, the corsairs of Salé sometimes extended their reach into the English Channel and even to Iceland. In 1625, William Bradford, the Governor of the Plymouth colony in America, noted in his diary that Moroccan pirates from Salé had captured ships on their way to England almost within sight of Plymouth. It was as close as Morocco was to come to a

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1080 Smith, Ahmad al-Mansur, 161.
1081 As they had done to the Jews in 1492, the Spanish crown expelled Moriscos from the Iberian Peninsula between 1609 and 1614. Some of these settled in Morocco, where they played a significant role in corsairing activity, particularly in Salé-Rabat.
1083 Matar, Turks, Moors, and Englishmen, 94.
venture in the Western Hemisphere. As the Sa’di dynasty came to an end in the middle of the seventeenth century, the Atlantic world itself was developing in new ways as the English and French expanded their permanent settlements in the Americas, the slave trade escalated, and commercial networks expanded dramatically. Morocco was to participate very little in these developments, and in hindsight its early involvement in the Atlantic world may be viewed as a resilient response to a seemingly insuperable challenge, followed by an opportunity lost.

Morocco continued to pursue relations with the English and other Protestant powers in Europe. After the Alaouí dynasty (the dynasty that still rules Morocco today) first came to power in 1664, a Moroccan ambassador made a celebrated visit to the court of Charles II for seven months in 1681-1682. Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen*, 38. A century later Morocco was the first country to recognize the United States of America. Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4.
Appendix A. Chronology of Important Events in Morocco and the Atlantic World

1260 – Castile sacks Salé on the Moroccan Atlantic coast and occupies it for approximately a month.

1269 – Marinids capture Marrakech and bring a de facto end to the Almohad Caliphate.

1340 – Marinid navy takes control of Strait of Gibraltar and destroys a Castilian fleet at Algeciras. Marinid land forces, however, suffer disastrous defeat in al-Andalus at the hands of Castilian, Catalan, and Portuguese Christian forces at Río Salado. From this point forward Marinids concentrate their efforts almost exclusively on North Africa.

1385 – Forces of João I of Portugal defeat those of John I of Castile at the Battle of Aljubarrota. Establishes House of Avis as the ruling dynasty of Portugal.

1399 – Castile sacks the Moroccan Mediterranean city of Tétouan and kills or enslaves its population.

1402 – French expedition under Castilian auspices conquers Lanzarote in the Canary Islands.

1405 – Castilians conquer Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands.

1406 – John II assumes the throne of Castile.

1413 – Henry V assumes the throne of England.

1415 – Portuguese capture Ceuta.

1418 – Portuguese rediscover the Madeira Islands. First Portuguese settlers arrive in 1420.

1419 – Joint Marinid-Nasrid attempt to retake Ceuta fails and leads to significant unrest in Morocco.

1420 – Marinid Sultan Abu Sa’id ‘Uthman III is assassinated. Abu Zakariya of the Banu Wattas becomes de facto leader of Marinid Morocco as vizier to the one-year old Marinid Sultan Abd al-Haqq. Marks beginning of Wattasid control of northern Morocco.


1424 – Prince Henry of Portugal fails in attempt to conquer Gran Canaria in the Canary Islands.

1425 – Moroccan siege of Ceuta fails.

1433 – King João I of Portugal dies and the throne passes to his oldest son, Duarte, brother to Prince Henry and Prince Ferdinand.
1434 – After a dozen or more failed attempts encouraged by Prince Henry, the Portuguese sea-captain Gil Eanes reportedly rounds Cape Bojador.

1437 – Portuguese under the command of Prince Henry launch an unsuccessful assault against Tangier. Surrounded outside the city walls, Henry and his army are allowed to depart in return for a promise to return Ceuta to Morocco. Prince Ferdinand is made hostage as pledge to the promise. Portuguese Cortes refuses to honor the promise and Prince Ferdinand dies in captivity in Fez in 1443. Moroccans discover the tomb of Mawlay Idris, founder of Morocco’s first sharīfian dynasty.

1438 – King Duarte of Portugal dies. His oldest son and heir, Afonso, is only six-years old at the time and operates under the regency first of his mother and then, at the insistence of the Cortes, of his uncle.

1439 – Portuguese arrive in the Azores and find feral sheep presumably left by earlier passing ships.

1448 – Wattasid Abu Zakariya dies and control in Morocco passes to another Wattasid vizier, Ali ibn Yusuf. Afonso comes of age and is crowned King of Portugal as Afonso V.

1452 – Portuguese authorize the first water-driven sugar mill on Madeira and production of sugar skyrockets.

1453 – Ottoman Turks capture Constantinople, ending the Byzantine Empire. French defeat the English at Castillon in July and then capture Bordeaux in October, effectively ending the Hundred Years War between the two countries. French victory leaves Calais as the only English possession on the European continent.

1455 – Papal Bull, Romanus Pontifex, grants Portuguese rights in newly discovered lands of Africa and Asia.

1456 – Madeira exports sugar to England for the first time. Portuguese discover and ultimately colonize the Cape Verde Islands.


1459 – Marinid Sultan Abd al-Haqq, now of age, unsuccessfully attempts to recapture al-Qsar al-Sagir from the Portuguese in an eight-week siege (1458-1459). After failure of the siege the sultan purges the Wattasids and among the replacements he appoints are Jews or muhājirun (Jewish converts to Islam). A Wattasid, Muhammad al-Shaykh, escapes the purge and establishes himself in Arzila, where he gathers followers and limits actual Marinid control to the area around Fez.
1460 – Portuguese attempt to capture Tangier deteriorates into raiding around Ceuta. Prince Henry of Portugal dies. Portuguese reach Sierre Leone on the coast of West Africa.

1463 – Portuguese launch a probing attack in an attempt to capture Tangier.

1464 – Portuguese again launch a probing attack in an attempt to capture Tangier.

1465 – Marinid Sultan Abd al-Haqq betrayed by followers and ritually beheaded in Fez. Leaders of the uprising install the leader of the ashrāf in Fez, Muhammad ibn Imran al-Juti. Morocco now effectively four major polities: Fez, the Habt region ruled from Arzila, the Kingdom of Maroco (Marrakech), and the Sus.

1467 – Portuguese again launch assault on Tangier.

1468 – Plague strikes Morocco. Portuguese sack and raze Anfa (Casablanca). Portuguese capture Castilian fort on Gran Canaria. Portuguese later join Castile in pacifying the islands’ native inhabitants.

1469 – Isabella I of Castile marries Ferdinand II of Aragon effectively uniting two of the most powerful kingdoms on the Iberian Peninsula (although the polities remained technically separate until the 18th century, they are in some instances generally referred to jointly as Spain in the remainder of this chronology).

1471 – Afonso V of Portugal captures Arzila on Morocco’s Atlantic coast with a force of 400 ships and over 30,000 troops. Then, after ransoming captives, moves on Tangier, which surrenders without resistance. The Wattasid leader in Arzila, Muhammad al-Shaykh, is allowed to leave and resumes siege of Fez. Signs limited twenty-year truce with the Portuguese.

1472 – In March, Muhammad al-Shaykh’s siege of Fez overcomes forces of al-Juti, and the former is proclaimed Sultan.

1475 – War ensues between Portugal and Castile as Afonso V of Portugal supports his wife Joanna’s claim to the throne of Castile over that of Isabella I. War lasts until 1479.

1478 – Spain sends hundreds of soldiers to Gran Canaria in the Canary Islands. Campaign to pacify the island lasts for five more years.

1479 – Treaty of Alcáçovas ends war between Portugal and Castile and gives Canary Islands to the latter, while granting the former exclusive navigation and monopoly rights over Africa’s coast. Rights confirmed again by 1480 Treaty of Toledo and 1481 Papal Bull Aeterni Regis, which explicitly reserves for Portugal the conquest of the Kingdom of Fez.

1480 – Castile launches an assault against Azammur on Morocco’s Atlantic coast.

1481 – Afonso V dies and João II rises to the throne of Portugal.
1482 – Portuguese establish armed trading post of São Jóurge da Mina in the Gulf of Guinea. Known as El Mina (“the mine”) and situated about 100 miles south of the Akan gold fields and slave markets, it becomes a hub for Portuguese commerce in the Gulf of Guinea.

1483 – Native inhabitants of Gran Canaria in the Canary Islands surrender to the Spanish.

1486 – Local leaders recognize Portuguese suzerainty over Azammur on Morocco’s Atlantic coast.

1488 – Local leaders reaffirm Portuguese suzerainty over Safi on Morocco’s Atlantic coast (believed to have occurred originally prior to submission of Azammur). Portuguese mariner Bartolomeu Dias rounds the Cape of Good Hope.

1489 – In February the Portuguese take a small fleet of caravels up the Wadi Loukkos and past Larache. Near confluence with Wadi al-Makazin they establish Fort Graciosa. Surrounded by Moroccans, in August they are allowed to surrender and keep their arms, horses, and guns.

1492 – Muslim Granada falls to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, marking the end of the last Muslim polity on the Iberian Peninsula. Ferdinand and Isabella expel all Jews from Spain. Christopher Columbus, sailing under the banner of Ferdinand and Isabella, lands in the Americas. Spanish land in La Palma in the Canary Islands and conquer it in 1493.

1493 – In a series of Papal Bulls, Pope Alexander VI sets up a line of longitude west of the Cape Verde Islands to segregate the spheres of influence of Spain and Portugal.

1494 – Treaty of Tordesillas between Portugal and Castile moves west the line of demarcation set out in Pope Alexander VI’s bulls of 1493.

1494 – Native inhabitants of Tenerife, the last independent island in the Canaries, defeat a Spanish force of 1,000 men, 120 horses, and artillery.

1495 – King João II of Portugal dies and is succeeded by Manuel I.

1496 – Spanish conquer the last independent Canary Island, Tenerife. Spanish establish the small fort of Santa-Cruz de Mar Pequena on Morocco’s Atlantic coast south of Massa.

1497 – Local leaders of Massa, in southern Morocco’s Sus region, accept Portuguese suzerainty.

1500 – Portuguese Pedro Álvares Cabral makes landfall in Brazil. Spanish governors on the Canary Islands of Tenerife and Palma established short-lived fortifications on Morocco’s Atlantic coast in the southwestern Sus region. First revolt of Muslims in Alpujarras region of Spain.

1504 – Spanish Canary Island governor occupies the small southern Moroccan Atlantic coastal village of Agadir, but is rebuffed by the people of Massa, who are aligned with the Portuguese.
Wattasid sultan Muhammad ibn Yahya dies and is succeeded by his son Muhammad al-Burtuqali.

1505 – Portuguese establish fort of Santa-Cruz du Cap de Gué (Santa-Cruz) just north of Agadir. This is destined to become a major Portuguese trading enclave. Manuel I authorizes construction of a fort at Mazagan on Morocco’s Atlantic coast. The attempt at Mazagan fails due to local resistance.

1506 – Manuel I of Portugal authorizes construction of a fortress on the island of Mogador on Morocco’s Atlantic coast.

1508 – Portugal violently seizes control of Safi on Morocco’s Atlantic coast. Portugal also attempts to capture Azammur, but is driven off by Muslim forces. Muslim success results in Moroccan attacks on Arzila, Safi, and Massa from 1508 – 1510.

1509 – In Treaty of Sintra the Spanish relinquish their claims to Atlantic Morocco. Henry VII of England dies and is succeeded by Henry VIII. Tudor England largely turns away from transatlantic enterprises for a time. Portuguese win a battle in the Arabian Sea near Diu, India, against a combined force of Gujaratis, Egyptian Mamluks, and others supported by the Ottomans, Venetians, and Ragusans. Victory eases Portuguese commercial penetration of the Indian Ocean.

1510 – King Ferdinand of Spain authorizes the sending of fifty slaves to work in the Hispaniola gold mines. Although slaves had participated in voyages of discovery, this is the first major transfer of slaves to the Western Hemisphere. A Sa’di sharīf from the Dukkala region in the far south of Morocco receives the bay’a—oath of allegiance—from local tribes in the Sus, taking the name Muhammad al-Qa’im.

1511 – Muslim attack led by the Sa’di on Santa-Cruz repulsed by Portuguese.

1513 – Massive Portuguese force captures Azammur on Morocco’s Atlantic coast. Portugal now controls all the major cities and ports on Morocco’s Atlantic coast save Larache, Salé, and Mamora. First sugar mill in Hispaniola begins operation.

1514 – Portuguese forces move inland and attack Marrakech, capital of the Kingdom of Morocco. Drought and famine strike Morocco for two years and the Sa’di sharif Muhammad al-Qa’im uses grain reserves to succor local populace.

1515 – Portuguese forces twice again attack Marrakech. Portuguese launch major assault on Mamora on Morocco’s Atlantic coast and are driven off with heavy losses. The disastrous defeat marks the high-water mark of Portuguese control in Morocco.

1516 – Charles I (grandson of Isabella) succeeds Ferdinand II and becomes King of Spain and ruler of the Spanish Empire (first to rule Castile, León, and Aragon simultaneously in his own right and thus the first true King of Spain). Portugal’s most aggressive leader in Morocco, the governor of Safi, Nuno Fernandes de Ataide, is killed.
1517 – Sa’di sharīf Muhammad al-Qa’im dies and control of the movement passes to his oldest son, Ahmad al-A’raj, while his younger son, Muhammad al-Shaykh serves as governor of the Sus.

1518 – Murder of Yahya ibn Ta’fuft, most prominent leader of Muslims aligned and fighting with the Portuguese, the so-called “Moors of Peace.”

1519 – Charles I of Spain becomes Holy Roman Emperor as Charles V. Magellan’s ships leave to attempt the first circumnavigation of the world. Cortes sets sail from Cuba with ten ships to colonize Mexico.

1520 – Drought and famine again strike Morocco from 1520-1524. Devastates much of the country leaving desolation in the form of dead trees, exhausted pastures, and starving flocks. Perhaps one third to one half of the population dies. Tens of thousands voluntarily go to Portugal as slaves. The Sus is less affected and so the Sa’di again expand support by distributing grain.

1521 – In August, Tenochtitlán falls to Cortés after a terrible siege and the Mexica Empire essentially comes to an end. Manuel I dies and João III assumes the Portuguese throne.

1522 – One of Magellan’s ships, the Victoria, finishes the first circumnavigation of the world.

1524 – The Sa’di attack Marrakesh and invest it. Wattasid sultan, al-Burtuqali, marches against them. Unable to conquer the city, he secures Sa’di recognition of his sovereignty and returns to Fez. Al-Burtugali dies a few weeks later and is succeeded eventually by Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn Muhammad.

1526 – Moroccan force temporarily occupies the Tuwat Oasis in the Sahara Desert.

1527 – Wattasid sultan unsuccessfully attempts to retake Marrakech from the Sa’di, but is forced to return to Fez to put down a revolt.

1533 – Wattasid sultan grants the French freedom of navigation and the right to traffic along the Moroccan coast.

1534 – Muhammad al-A’raj lays siege to Safi.

1535 – Charles V destroys Barbarossa’s corsair fleet at anchor in Tunis. In subsequent years, however, the corsairs, in Ottoman service, establish naval supremacy in the western Mediterranean, endangering the Spanish coast.

1536 – The Sa’di defeat Wattasid forces at the Battle of Bu Aqba, effectively ending Wattasid attempts to regain control over Marrakech.
1538 – Wattasid ruler Ahmed ibn Muhammad signs a truce with the Portuguese, alarmed by the rise of the Sa’di. Truce is followed by a formal treaty.

1541 – Sa’di forces under Muhammad al-Shaykh capture Santa-Cruz from the Portuguese after a six-month siege, securing guns and raising significant funds from the ransoming of captives. Ahmed al-A’raj leads unsuccessful campaign against Azammur. Portuguese evacuate Azammur and Safi.

1542 – Rupture between the Sa’di brothers results in a civil war among the Sa’di. At the Battle of Amaskrud, the forces of Muhammad al-Shaykh prevail and win authority over the Dra’a in the south and Sijilmasa in the east.

1543 – Embittered by the Portuguese evacuation of Azammur and Safi, and facing rebellions in the north, the Wattasid sultan renounces his treaty with Portugal. Muhammad al-Shaykh sends an expedition to the western Sahara in an attempt to gain control over some salt mines.

1544 – A second battle between the Sa’di brothers again results in a victory for Muhammad al-Shaykh, who takes control of Marrakech and the Sa’di movement.

1545 – Muhammad al-Shaykh launches a campaign against Fez and captures the Wattasid sultan at the Battle of Darna. Discovery of the silver mountain of Potosí in the high Andes benefits Castile.

1546 – Continuing the campaign against Fez, Muhammad al-Shaykh engages in an unsuccessful assault on Meknès. Important silver deposits discovered at Zacatecas in northern Mexico benefit Castile.

1547 – A brief peace between the Sa’di and the Wattasids results in the release of the Wattasid sultan in return for Sa’di control of several cities and the right to coin their own money. Treaty of Adrianople between the Hapsburg Empire of Charles V and the Ottoman Empire of Suleyman the Magnificent results in a substantial number of renegados and Turkish mercenaries seeking work elsewhere. Some travel to Morocco and find a place in the Sa’di army.

1549 – Muhammad al-Shaykh captures Fez. The Sa’di now dominate Morocco. Portuguese establish crown government in Brazil.

1550 – Portuguese evacuate Arzila on Morocco’s Atlantic coast and al-Qasr al-Sagir on Morocco’s Mediterranean coast. Only Ceuta, Tangier and Mazagan remain in Portuguese hands. Apparently fearing Ottoman support for a Wattasid restoration Muhammad al-Shaykh sends a force of more than 30,000 men who easily conquer Ottoman Tlemcen in western Algeria.

1551 – Ottoman force retakes Tlemcen from the Sa’di. Englishman Thomas Windam's first voyage to Morocco.

1552 – Englishman Thomas Windham’s second voyage to Morocco.
1553 – Mary becomes Queen of England.

1554 – The last Wattasid sultan, Abu Hasun, captures Fez from the Sa’di with Ottoman support. Within the year, Muhammad al-Shaykh returns to Fez after winning the Battle of Maslama. Abu Hasun is killed in battle bringing a final end to Wattasid rule. Queen Mary of England marries Philip II of Spain.

1556 – Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (King Charles I of Castile) abdicates first as King of Spain and then as Holy Roman Emperor. His son Philip II becomes King of Spain and his brother Ferdinand becomes Holy Roman Emperor. The Sa’di lay siege to Mazagan.

1557 – Muhammad al-Shaykh assassinated by pretend Turkish deserters. Succeeded by his son Abdullah al-Ghalib. The latter has his uncle Muhammad al-A’raj, all his uncle’s family, and one of his brothers killed. Al-Ghalib’s remaining brothers—Abd al-Mu’min, Abd al-Malik, and Abu l’Abbas Ahmad—eventually flee to Ottoman Algiers. Philip II of Spain, with English support, goes to war with France. King João III of Portugal dies and is succeeded by three-year-old Sebastian, first under the regency of his grandmother and then of his uncle, Cardinal Henry.

1558 – Turks, conspiring with Abd al-Mu’min, march against al-Ghalib, but are repulsed at Wadi Laban. French capture Calais from the English, marking the end of the English presence on the continent. Queen Mary of England dies and is succeeded by Queen Elizabeth.

1560 – Ottomans defeat Phillip II's Holy League fleet at the Battle of Djerba.

1561 – Al-Ghalib lays siege to Mazagan.

1562 – Al-Ghalib again lays siege to Mazagan.

1563 – Spanish defeat the Turks at Oran.

1564 – Spanish capture Peñon de Velez from the Ottomans. Spain establishes the first convoy system to the Americas for protection of its treasure ships. Consists of two fleets, the flota leaving in April or May for Vera Cruz in New Spain, and the galeones sailing in August for Panama, with the combined fleets returning in the fall after joining in Havana.

1566 – Suleyman the Magnificent dies and leadership of the Ottoman Empire passes to Selim II.

1568 – Moriscos launch a second revolt in Alpujarras in Spain. Lasts until 1570. Moriscos then forcibly scattered throughout Spain in aftermath. Inspires need for final solution to "Morisco" problem in Spain, which is ultimately dealt with by expulsion in 1609-1614. Dutch in the Netherlands rebel against Phillip II of Spain.

1570 – Mutiny breaks out among Moriscos in Spain who are being relocated throughout Castile. 200 Moriscos are killed and women and children are enslaved. Some escape and make their way to North Africa.
1571 – Don Juan of Austria, the bastard half-brother of Philip, defeats the Turkish fleet at the Battle of Lepanto. Englishman William Winter raids Spanish base at St. Augustine, Florida. Francis Drake attacks Spanish silver route across isthmus of Panama from 1571-1573.

1574 – Al-Ghalib dies and is succeeded by his son, Muhammad al-Mutawakkil, a succession that is contested by al-Ghalib's brothers, Abd al-Malik and Ahmed.

1576 – Abd al-Malik defeats al-Mutawakkil and captures Fez. Al-Mutawakkil flees, chased by Ahmed, and eventually gets to Iberia where he seeks Spanish and then Portuguese assistance.

1577 – Francis Drake begins journey to become first Englishman to circumnavigate the world. Loses a crewman in Morocco when mistaken for an invasion force. Leaves crewman (who is safely returned to England) behind and proceeds on circumnavigation, which he completes in 1580. English merchant Edmund Hogan travels to Morocco as a representative of Queen Elizabeth to secure saltpeter and favorable treatment of English merchants.

1578 – Under the young king Dom Sebastian the Portuguese and a force of European mercenaries invade Morocco and meet disaster at what is variously known as the Battle of Wadi al-Makazin, the Battle of al-Qasr al-Kabir, the Battle of Alcazar, or the Battle of the Three Kings. King Dom Sebastian, the Moroccan ruler Abd al-Malik, and the Portuguese-supported pretender to the Moroccan throne, al-Mutawakkil, all perish. Ahmad assumes the throne of Morocco, taking the title of al-Mansur bi Allah (“victorious by the will of God”). Earns large sums from ransoming captives.

1579 – Ahmad al-Mansur begins construction of al-Badi’ Palace in Marrakech. Ottomans from Algiers launch an unsuccessful attempt on the Tuwat oasis in the Sahara.

1580 – Portuguese succession crisis. With lack of Portuguese royal heirs Philip II of Spain takes control of Portugal. Spanish control lasts until 1640. Overseas colonies are kept separate, but Dutch, in rebellion against Spain since 1568, now also attack Portuguese colonies. Francis Drake completes circumnavigation of the world, begun in 1577. Spain and the Ottoman Empire agree on a truce.

1581 – A claimant to the Portuguese throne, Dom Antonio, flees into exile, ultimately emerging in England. England establishes the Turkey Company, which in 1592 is renamed the Levant Company. Al-Mansur launches an unsuccessful campaign to control the Tuwat oasis in the Sahara.

1582 – Leader of the Songhay Empire dies. Soon after al-Mansur sends an embassy whose purpose is believed to be espionage.

1583 – Morocco takes control of Gurara and Tuwat oases in brutal campaigns against the local populace.

1584 – Somewhere around this time al-Mansur allegedly sends a force of 20,000 men along the coast of Mauritania toward Wadan, where they are allegedly dispersed by hunger and thirst.
1585 – Al-Mansur sends 200 musketeers to seize the salt reservoir of Taghaza in the Sahara. Songhay Empire simply redirects traders elsewhere in response. English Barbary Company is established to regulate English trade with Morocco. Exercises a monopoly until its dissolution in 1597. War breaks out between England and Spain, largely over the former’s support of Dutch protestant rebels against Philip II. Lasts until 1604. Francis Drake sacks Santo Domingo, Cartagena and St. Augustine in the Americas.

1587 – Francis Drake attacks Cadiz in Spain.

1588 – English defeat the Spanish Armada.

1589 – English attack Lisbon, seen as a response to the Armada and an attempt to install Dom Antonio on the Portuguese throne, fails. Bitterness emerges between England and Morocco over the latter’s lack of material support for the effort.

1590 – Al-Mansur sends an army across the Sahara to invade the Songhay Empire.

1591 – Moroccan army routes the much larger forces of the Songhay Empire and captures Timbuktu, Goa, and Jenne. Large quantities of gold are later sent to Morocco from Songhay lands, earning al-Mansur the nickname of al-Dhahabī, “the Golden.”

1592 – First English ships arrive in the Indian Ocean.

1595 – Spanish release a pretender to the Moroccan throne, al-Nasir ibn al-Ghalib, who leads a revolt that al-Mansur puts down within a year.

1596 – Plague recurs in Iberia and eventually crosses the Strait of Gibraltar, striking Morocco, killing some of al-Mansur’s best troops, and leading to various small revolts.

1600 - Lengthy war between the Dutch and Portuguese/Spanish begins and continues until 1663.

1601 – Al-Mansur suggests to Elizabeth I a joint English-Moroccan invasion of Spanish holdings in the Americas. Plague again emerges in Morocco.

1602 – Al-Mansur’s named heir, al-Ma’mun, leads a failed rebellion against his father.

1603 – Al-Mansur dies of plague in August. Succession conflicts erupt among three sons and two of his grandsons. Elizabeth I of England dies.
Appendix C: Sixteenth-Century Rulers
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