

The Era of the Algerine Corsairs, 1597 to 1830

Synopsis

Treatment

The purpose of my exhibit is to excite viewers' interest in a fascinating historical period. In addition to primarily postal elements, I have used illustrations and other documents to increase the visual and historical appeal.

Algiers in 1749



Knowledge

I have been a student of Algerian postal history for more than thirty years, including co-authoring a monograph on the French hand cancels. I have translated most of the letters and have indicated where my personal research has added to this exhibit. Among the references are two similar (but not identical) PowerPoint presentations where I have accumulated a lot of my research and shared it with others. Not all of my "Algeria" library is devoted to this period, but I have at least eight feet of shelf space filled with books about the history of Algeria.

Rarity and Condition

Based on my knowledge of available material, I believe at least a third of surviving mail from this period is in my exhibit. It has taken more than 30 years to accumulate the items in this exhibit. The earliest letters are irreplaceable, although there are others with consular markings (used in the late 18th and early 19th centuries) that appear on the philatelic market from time to time.

In 2009 I won a grand award with a full ten frame exhibit of Algerian postal history to 1876. I have acquired more than half the material in this exhibit since then.

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Condition is quite good, especially because only one letter is missing its contents and one more is missing a page. Please keep in mind that the oldest letter was written when Queen Elizabeth I was on the English throne.

Presentation

Although the disbound engravings are not in chronological order, the remainder of the exhibit is ordered by time of writing. Again, my goal is to get viewers interested in the historical period and in the artifacts that have survived to tell the story.

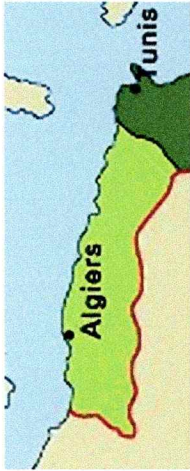
References

- ☐ PowerPoint presentation on YouTube as part of the British Empire Study Group (page 4 of their videos at bestudygroup.org): [The History of the Barbary Pirates and Europeans in Algeria Ken Nilsestuen \(youtube.com\)](#). There are some interesting added comments pointing out that my viewpoint results at least in part from the victors writing history.
- ☐ PDF of the presentation listed below: [Microsoft PowerPoint - Algerian \[postal\] history to 1830 \(franceandcolonies.org\)](#)
- ☐ PowerPoint presentation on YouTube to the France and Colonies Philatelic Society: [Algerian Postal History to 1830 \(youtube.com\)](#). This is roughly the same as the BESG presentation above, although I revised this version for the BESG to place more emphasis on English matters.



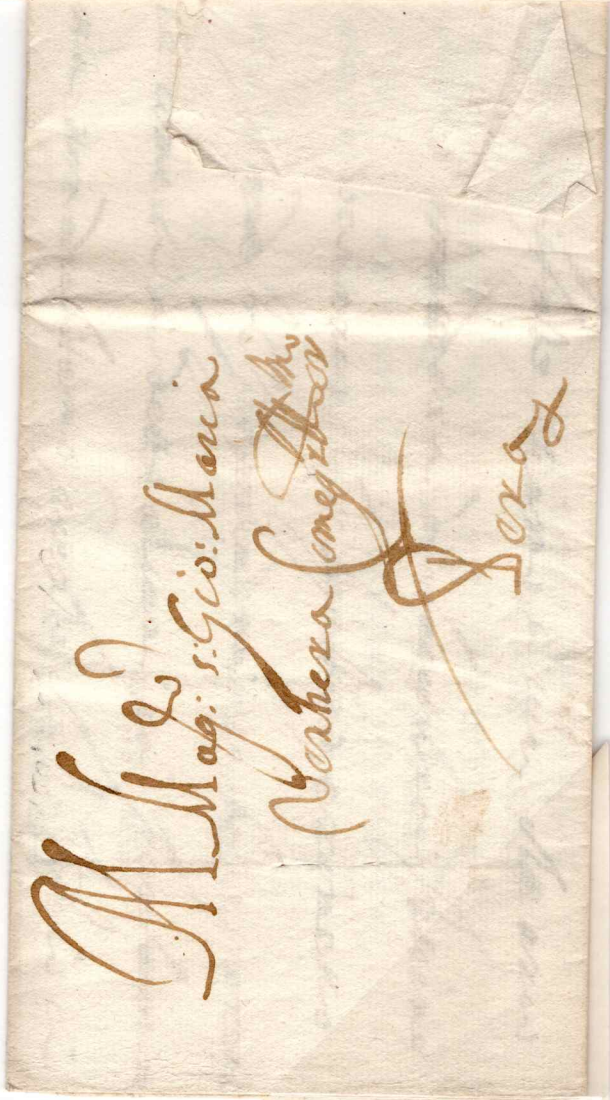
THE ERA OF THE ALGERINE CORSAIRS, 1597 to 1830

I want you to get a sense of the violent and dangerous life on the Mediterranean Sea and in the area now called Algeria from 1597 to 1830. In the late 1400s Algerines (residents of Algiers) asked Turkish privateers for assistance to prevent Spanish dominion.



Extent of Turkish influence in Algeria

January 4, 1597, Algiers to Pera, Turkey. *Commercial letter written in Milanese dialect (Italian). Pera (now Be-yoğlu) is on the European side of Istanbul.*



★ Oldest surviving letter from Algiers, only known letter to Turkey during Ottoman period in Algiers. Carried by ship, no official mail service.

Algiers engraving designed by Adolphe Rouargue, engraved by Edouard Willmann (1820-1877).

Probably removed from *L'Algerie ancienne et moderne* by Leon Galibert (Paris, 1844).

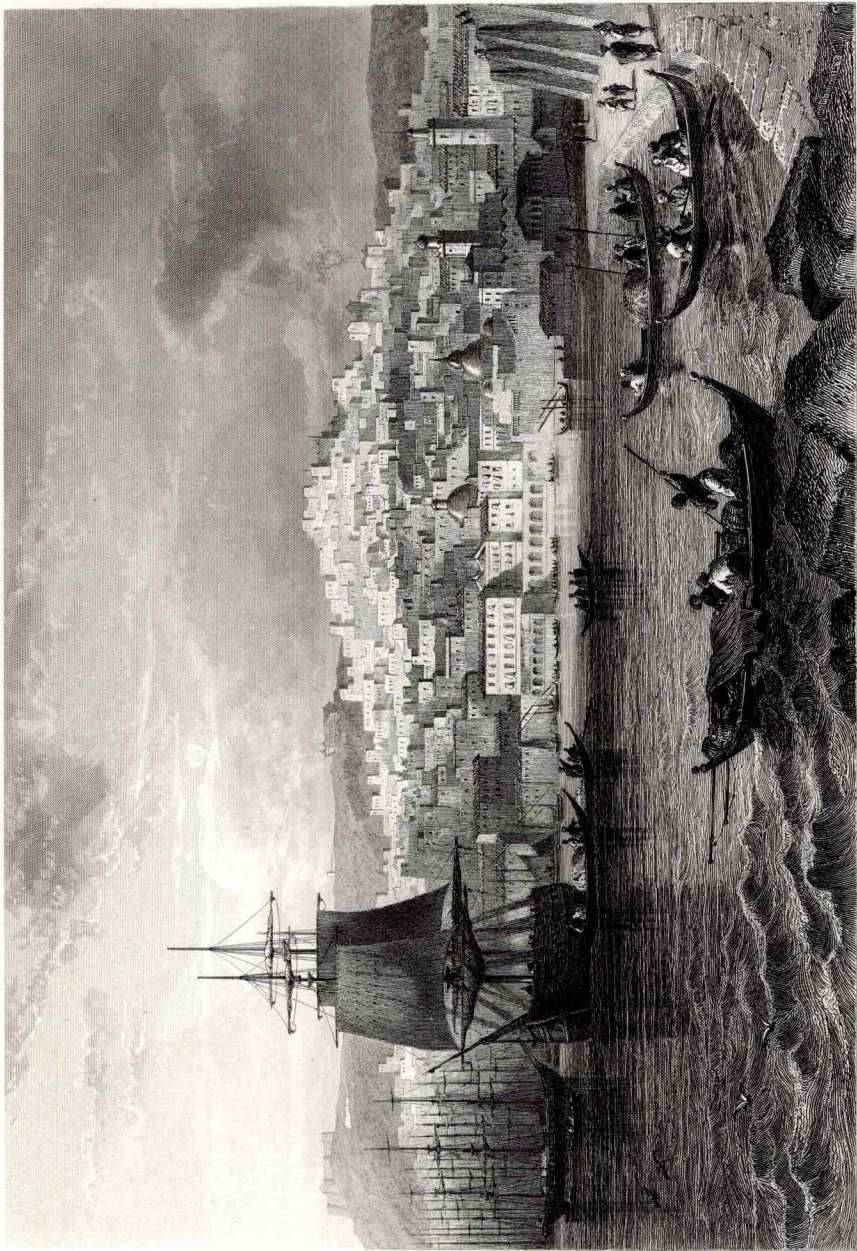
Piracy against European ships was the result, with Ottoman Muslims attacking Christians and Jews (and vice versa) for several centuries. This continued until the French landed troops west of Algiers on June 14, 1830, and deposed the Ottomans on July 5. The oldest surviving letter (below) was written in 1597, our starting point.

Personal research

Expertized

★ Item of special significance

Algiers, ca. 1840



Ed. Willmann sc.

ALGER.

At least a third of the surviving mail is in this exhibit, **presented roughly chronologically**. The letters in this exhibit reference piracy, disease and slavery, as well as commerce. In addition to Christian slaves, there were Europeans and Americans present in North Africa for commercial and diplomatic reasons. This exhibit includes letters from all of these groups.