

Maritime Commodities in Algeria during the Ottoman Era in light of Official Administrative Correspondence

Dr. Hassiba Attalah¹, Dr. Brahim Benmouiza²

¹University of Djilali Bounaama Khemis Miliana, Algeria. E-mail: atallah.hassiba@univ-dbk.m.dz/ <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4581-945X>

²Higher Normal School TALEB Abderrahmane of Laghouat, Algeria. E-mail: b.benmouiza@ens-lagh.dz

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Abstract:

This Research Paper Examines the Maritime Commodities in the Algerian Economy during the Ottoman Era, based on the Official Administrative Correspondences Preserved in the Algerian National Library. The Study Highlights how these Resources Formed a Strategic Pillar of the Local Economy by Securing Food, Supporting Internal and External Trade, and Linking Local Markets with Regional and International Markets via the Mediterranean Sea.

We also Highlight the Impact of Political Conditions on the Movement of Maritime Commodities; Periods of Peace were Characterized by Regular Trade and Stable Markets. In Contrast; Marine Conflicts and the Threat of Piracy during Times of War Necessitated Flexible Intervention by the Administration to Ensure the Continuity of Markets and the Protection of Resources, reflecting the Administration's Ability to Adapt to Economic and Political Circumstances.

Keywords: Maritime Commodities (Marine Goods), the Ottoman Province of Algeria (Eyalet of Ottoman Algiers), Economy, Ottoman Administration, Documentary Correspondences.

Introduction:

Natural Resources Formed a Central Axis in the Development of Trade in Maghrebi Societies. The Trade in Maritime Commodities Such as Salt and Coral was One of the Most Prominent Manifestations of this Activity on the Algerian Coast during the Ottoman Era. These Commodities not only Contributed to Meeting the Daily Needs of the City's Inhabitants but also Helped Expand the Network of Economic Relations across the Mediterranean. From this Perspective; The Study of Official Administrative Correspondences reveals a Complex Web of Relationships between the Local Ottoman Authorities, Port Agents, and Local Merchants. This Correspondences Played a Pivotal Role in Understanding the Mechanisms of Market Regulation, Pricing, and Ensuring the Quality of Goods, reflecting the Local Administration's Vision for Maintaining the Stability of the Province's Economy.

It is Noteworthy that this Activity was not Isolated from the Political and Military Realities. During Peaceful Periods; The Region was Characterized by a Regular Flow of Maritime Goods and Stable Markets. However; Maritime Conflicts and Pirate Threats Necessitated Swift and Flexible Intervention from the Algerian Authorities to Ensure the Continuity of Trade and the Protection of Vital Resources.

Some Studies have touched Upon Aspects of this Topic without Fully Addressing it. For Example; Researcher Aïcha Ghattas Dedicated Her Dissertation to Studying Crafts and Craftsmen in Algiers City (1700-1830 CE) from An Economic Perspective. In A Subsequent Article; She traced the Movements of Algerian Merchants, relying on Records from the French Consulate (1636-1830 CE). However, while these Works Shed Light on Some Aspects of Commercial Activity; They were Largely Limited to Recording the Names of Merchants and their Movements through Foreign Consular Sources, without Delving into the Mechanisms of Local Administrative Control, particularly regarding the Maritime Trade, or the Role Played by Official Ottoman Administrative Correspondences in Regulating this Sector.

From this Standpoint; We raise the Following Question: **How did the Local Ottoman Administration Contribute to Organizing the Trade of Maritime Commodities in the Eyalet of Algiers under Political and Military Pressures? And; What was the Role of Official Correspondences in Revealing the Mechanisms of this Organization?**

This Study is Significant because, to the Best of Our Knowledge; It is the First Attempt to Treat Official Administrative Correspondence as an Independent Source for Studying Maritime Trade, moving beyond the General Accounts of Merchant Activity that Characterized Previous Studies. Its Importance also Lies in its Reliance on Authentic Administrative Documents Held in the Algerian National Library, which have not yet been Adequately Utilized in Addressing this Aspect of the Maritime Economy.

This Research aims to Highlight the Value of Administrative Correspondence as a Dual Source; On the One Hand, it Serves as a Tool for Tracking Official Regulations, and On the Other Hand; It reflects the Role of Marine Resources in the Algerian Economy. It also Seeks to Elucidate the Methods and Approaches Adopted by the Administration to Ensure Market Continuity, Price Stability, and the Protection of Vital Resources. Furthermore; We aim to Provide a Precise and in-depth Analysis of how the Economic Dimension Intersects with the Political and Social Dimensions, and to Reveal the Mechanisms of Power in this Matter, which have Formed a Fundamental Pillar of the Economy.

1. Official Administrative Correspondences and the Importance of Maritime Commodities in the Eyalet of Algiers:

Official Administrative Correspondence Has Been a Primary Source for Understanding the Pivotal Role that Maritime Resources Played in the Local Administration of Algeria during the Ottoman Era. Through Sultanic Directives, Reports from the Chancery, and Correspondence from Naval Commanders; The Extent of the Province's Dependence on Resources Extracted from the Sea is Clearly Demonstrated.

1.1. The Historical Significance of Administrative Correspondence:

The Official Administrative Correspondence Preserved in the National Library of Algeria is among the Most Important Sources revealing the Mechanisms by which Algeria Managed its Maritime Activities during the Ottoman Era. Foremost among these Activities was the Trade in Maritime Commodities, particularly Salt and Coral. This Correspondence Demonstrates that the Local Ottoman Authorities in Algeria Paid Special Attention to these Commodities; Considering them Strategic Pillars of the Domestic Economy on the One Hand, and Tools for Ensuring a Balance between the Needs of the Domestic Market and Algerian Society on the Other.

To illustrate this Diversity in the Content and Distribution of Correspondence; The Following Presentation reviews a Sample of Correspondence Used in this Study:

- **Collection (1641):** Covering the Period between (1746-1792 CE); It Includes (19) Correspondences Consisting of Correspondence between the Beys of Constantine and the Agents of Le Bastion and El Kala. Its Importance Lies in its Focus on the Coral and Salt Trade, the Organization of the Beylik's dues from the Revenues, in addition to Indicating Direct Control Over Sales Operations and the Quality of the Coral.
- **Collection (1903):** Covering the Period (1826-1829 CE), Consists of (05) Correspondences Exchanged between the Agent of Algiers and the Agents of Annaba and Tunis. These Letters Document the Mechanisms of the Salt Trade and its Flow during times of Crisis.
- **Collection (3206):** Covers the Period (1826-1829 CE), and Consists of Two Administrative Executive Correspondences Issued by Hassan Bey of the West to Ibrahim the Tax "Al-Kharj" Agent, to Cover Aspects related to Commercial and Supply Transactions.
- **Collection (3190):** Covers the Period (1823-1830 CE), and consists of (22) Correspondences, which in their Entirety represent Correspondence between the Agents of Annaba and the Rulers of Algiers, which reflect the Continuity of Maritime and Supply Activity despite Natural Disasters and Political Tensions.
- **Collection (3204):** Dating Back to the Year (1244 AH/1829 CE); It Includes a Single Military Supply Correspondence, highlighting the Resilience and Continuity of Maritime and Commercial Activity in the Face of Political Crises and Conflicts with European Powers.
- **Collection (3205):** Dating Back to the Year (1243 AH/1828 CE); It Contains a Single Correspondence that Embodies the Nature of the Coordination Practiced by the Local Administration between the Center and the Ports to Follow Up on Maritime and Commercial Affairs, as well as Providing

Intelligence Data on the Movement of Foreign Forces to Protect Maritime Trade Interests.

1.1.1. Spatial Framework:

Spatial Context is a Fundamental Element for Understanding the Nature of the Trade Networks Managed by the Ottoman Authorities in Algeria. Tracing the Geographical Distribution of Correspondence across Different Periods Reveals that It Helps Identify Communication Routes between the Central Administrative Apparatus and Local Agents in Maritime Centers, whether in Collo, Annaba, or Elsewhere, thus; Contributing to Monitoring Economic and Political Transformations. This Correspondence also Exposes the Extensive Network of Relationships between the Sultan's Court and these Ports, which Served as Key Gateways for Maritime Goods Both Within and Outside the Country.

1.1.2. Timeframe:

The Timeframe is Fundamental to Understanding the Political Developments Surrounding Marine Resources and their Role in the Economy of the Province. The Correspondence Used in this Study Spans from the Early 18th Century to the Early 1830s.

This Period witnessed a Growing Importance of Marine Production and the Financial Returns it generated for the Treasury, at a time when the Province Experienced a Significant Increase in European Ambitions for these Resources. This Same Period Also Saw Transformations in the Methods of Extracting, Organizing, and Administratively Monitoring Marine Resources, making these Letters A Reflection of the Economic and Political Shifts that Preceded the French Occupation.

1.1.3. Formal Characteristics of Correspondences:

It is worth noting the Formal Characteristics that Distinguish these Correspondences, which in turn Serve as An Indicator of their Administrative Value. The Script Used is One of the Most Important of these Indicators; Examination Revealed that Most of these Letters, including Official Decrees,¹ are Written in the Elegant Ottoman Diwani Script, the Official Script Used in the Ottoman State Bureaus, reflecting their Administrative Status and Political Weight.

As for the Language Used; It is Ottoman Arabic, A Blend of Classical Arabic and Turkish Terminology Relevant to Official Correspondence. This, in turn, reflects the Nature of the Ottoman Administrative Apparatus, which Combined Local Arabic Traditions with the Centralized Administration in Istanbul. Since these Correspondences were Written in this Official Script and this Distinctive Diwani

1 - The Dispatches Originate from the Ottoman Sultan and are addressed to the Ottoman Provinces and their Agents in Ottoman Cities. See: Khalifa Hammach, Documents on the History of Algeria during the Ottoman Era: Correspondence of Algeria's Agents Abroad, Publications of the Faculty of Letters and Islamic Civilization, Algiers, Vol. 01, 1st Ed., 1437 AH/2016 CE, p. 14.

Language; They are not Ordinary Local Correspondence, but rather An Integral Part of the Official State Administrative Apparatus, bearing the Symbolism of Authority and a Strict, Centralized Structure.

1.1.4. The Importance of Correspondences:

The Importance of these Letters Lies not only in Documenting the Exchange of Orders or Requests; But also, in Revealing a Wide Network of Diverse Relationships: Economic, Political, and Social. On the One Hand; They Highlight the Role of Agents in Managing the Trade of these Strategic Commodities, and on the Other Hand; They illustrate the Mutual Trust that Allowed for the Completion of Financial Transactions related to the Purchase of Salt, thus Opening a Window into the Necessities of Daily Life and the Economic Interaction between Algeria and Other Provinces and Countries.

These Correspondences, in their Entirety; Represent A Primary Source for the History of the Province (Eyalet of Algeria), and their Contents are Divided into Two Categories:

- **Internal Correspondence:** Letters Exchanged between the Rulers of Algiers and their Agents in Annaba and El Kala /Collo.
- **External Correspondence:** Letters addressed to the Sublime Porte in Istanbul and Algeria' Agents in Ottoman and European Cities.

Generally Speaking; These Historical Indicators Show that this Considerable Legacy is Characterized by A Richness and Diversity that allows us to Explore the Various Aspects of Political, Social and Economic Activity in the Province of Algeria.

1.2. Maritime Commodities in the Ottoman Province of Algeria (Eyalet of Ottoman Algiers):

Maritime Commodities (Marine Goods) Occupied A Pivotal Position in the Economic Structure of the Regency of Algiers; Constituting One of the Most Important Sources of Income Directly Linked to Port Activity and Trade Balances in the Mediterranean.¹ This Strategic Location allowed Certain Beys (the Beys of Constantine) and their Agents in the Interior Centers to Conduct Economic Transactions related to these Goods, enabling them to Connect these Goods to Foreign Markets (Outside the Country's Borders). This reflects the Regency's Ability to Expand its Network of Trade Relations into the Mediterranean Region. This Openness resulted in the Emergence of a Class of Algerian Merchants Active Abroad, including: [El-Hadj Abdul Wahab Benani, whose Activity in France is Mentioned in the Year (1720 CE), Mas'oud Ben Elbar El Qsentini, El-Hadj El Qali in the Year (1724 CE), and Qasim El

1 - Matvey Grigoryevich Kokovtsov, *Reliable News About Algeria: The First Documented Russian Voyage to Algeria*, translated by: Mohamed Rachid Miloud, Dar Al-Wa'i for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 1st Edition, 2024, p. 103.

Charif from Annaba in the Year (1730 CE)¹], in addition to Others who Contributed to Stimulating Trade and Expanding the Scope of Exports.

This External Extension of Maritime Trade Made Financial and Administrative Control an Urgent Necessity to Ensure the Regularity of the Beylik's Profit Returns, therefore; The Administration relied on A Great Deal of Strictness in Monitoring Collection and Taxation. The Vital Economic Role of these Commodities has also Led to their Subjection to Rigorous Regulation, Encompassing Collection, Transportation, Storage, and Distribution to Points of Sale Both Domestically and Internationally. These Administrative Communications Highlight the Mechanisms of Regulatory and Oversight Monitoring, and Reveal the Authorities' Intervention when Violations Occur that Could Harm the Established Commercial System.

The Correspondence of Governor Hassan Bey (1736-1754 CE)² Comes as A Clear Example to Reveal the Mechanisms of the Process, starting with this Bey's Correspondence to "Sheikh Abdullah bin Abi Abbas" to Implement this Organization by the Latter Contacting the Agent of Le Bastion,³ sending the Coral Box to the Bey Periodically, and Confirming the Payment of its Value and Guaranteeing its Quality.⁴ Another Correspondence in the Year (1165 AH/1751 CE) Indicates this Bey and His Demand to the Agent of Le Bastion to Send More Boxes of Coral, in addition to Taking Punitive Measures against those who Violate the Orders, which reflects the Strictness of the Administrative Control in Controlling the Handling of Marine Products.⁵

In A Later Period; The Correspondence of the Governor Ahmed Bey bin Muhammad bin Charif (1826-1837 CE),⁶ in the Year (1763 CE), confirms the Continuation of the

1 - Aïcha Ghattas, Algerian Merchants as Seen Through French Consulate Records (1636–1830 CE), *Revue D'Histoire Maghrébine* (Maghrebian Historical Journal), Al-Tamimi Foundation for Scientific Research and Information, Issues: 61–62, Tunis, 1991 CE, p. 130.

2 - Hassan Bey: His Full Name was Hassan bin Hussein, and He Served as the Bey of Constantine. His Reign is Considered Relatively Long, owing to the Political Stability He Maintained. He Focused on Strengthening Internal Security and Organizing Local Administration, in addition to Supporting Various Economic and Agricultural Projects within His Region.

3 - Le Bastion: A Trading Post Established in the 16th Century by French Merchants—Specifically Near the City of El Kala—It Played a Significant Role in the European-Algerian Trade Network during the Ottoman Era. It was Particularly Important for the Coral and Salt Trades, serving as A Hub for Harvesting these Resources and Exporting them to Europe. Administratively; Various French Sites and Ports were Linked to Le Bastion, and Affiliated Agencies were Established along the Eastern Algerian Coast to Facilitate Coral Harvesting.

4 - Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1641, Letters Nos.: 06-08-11. See Also: Algerian National Archives, Collection: 3190, Letter No. 426. The Correspondence refers to the Receipt of Two Quintars of Coral—Specifically the Two Hundred Pounds Belonging to the French Consul—Dated (Muharram 1241 AH/September 1825 CE).

5 - Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1641, Letter No. 22.

6 - Ahmed Bey bin Muhammad bin Charif: He was the Last Bey of Constantine. His Reign was Marked by Attempts to Modernize the Administration and the Military. He was Notably Known for Establishing Modern Military Units

Same Precise Organization of the Annual dues of the Beylik from the Coral Material, which Indicates the Institutional Nature of this Maritime Tax.¹ While the Correspondence of Saleh Bey (1771-1792 CE)² Dated (1787 CE) confirms the Regular Request to Send Maritime Revenues, which reflects the Continuity of the Administrative Apparatus across Generations in Monitoring this Resource.³

During the Later Period of Ottoman Rule; One of the Correspondences from the Collection (No. 1903) reveals A Development in the Nature of Transactions, as It Includes Letters from Agents Such as: [El-Hadj 'Ammar bin Taza, El-Hadj El-Makki, and Ibrahim (the Agent of Al-Haraj)]. It Shows how the Salt Trade between Algeria and Tunisia was Conducted,⁴ especially during Periods of Unrest and Decline in the Political Situation of the Province (1826-1829 CE). Among the Most Prominent of these Correspondences was A Letter from the Year (1826 CE), describing the Issue of the Loss of a Stock of Salt in Annaba that was Intended to Supply the Ottoman “Mahalla”, with Orders to Purchase New Quantities from Tunisia.⁵ Meanwhile; The Correspondence of Ahmed Bey bin Muhammad bin Charif (1826-1837 CE), in the Year (1828 CE), included A Warning about the Approach of A French Warship to Annaba, and the Need to Tighten Security. Another Letter from the Year (1829 CE), sent by Mustafa, “the Captain of the Algerian Ship, Miftah Al-Jihad, besieged in Alexandria”, to Dey Hussein Pasha (1818-1830 CE),⁶ indicates the Readiness of the Governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali Pasha,⁷ to Supply Algeria with the Salt It Needs,⁸

to Support Institutional Reforms. He was also Recognized for His Prolonged Resistance against the French Occupation, which Lasted Until the City of Constantine Fell to them in (1837 CE).

1 - Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1641, Letter No. 30.

2 - Saleh Bey: Also Known as (Saleh Bey bin Mustafa). He Served as the Bey of Constantine—Part of the Beylik of the East—during the Ottoman Era. His reign was marked by stability, and he achieved significant milestones in urban development. He also led several military campaigns to suppress rebellious tribes in eastern Algeria.

3 - Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1641, Letter No. 88.

4 - Algerian National Archives, Collection: 3206, File: 03, Correspondence No. 16. This Letter Contains Several Pieces of Useful Information, including; The Fact that (Ammar Taza, the Algiers’ Agent) Provided Protection to the Neapolitan Consul and to All Consuls along the Algerian Coast.

5 - Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1903, Letter No. 05.

6 - Dey Hussein Pasha: Born in (1786 CE); He was of Ottoman Descent. He Learned to Read and Write in His Hometown, acquiring a High Level of Education, particularly in Islamic Studies. He attended a Military School to Train in the Art of Warfare before Moving to Algiers, where He rose to Prominence during the Reign of Dey Omar Pasha (1815–1817 CE). He Served as Dey of Algiers from (1818 CE) to (1830 CE) and signed the Treaty of Surrender on (July 05, 1830 CE).

7 - Muhammad Ali Pasha: Governor of Egypt, born in Albania. He was raised within the Ottoman Military Ranks before Assuming the Rule of Egypt in (1805 CE) Following a Period of Unrest. He is Considered the Founder of the Modern Egyptian State in (1805 CE) and Implemented Comprehensive Reforms across the Military, Administrative, and Economic Sectors. His Achievements include; Introducing Irrigation Systems to Vast Agricultural Areas, among Other Initiatives.

8 - Algerian National Archives, Collection: 3204, Correspondence No. 47.

revealing the Continuation of Vital Exchange Networks despite the Escalating Tension with France.¹

These Authenticated Correspondences reveal that Maritime Goods Constituted a Strategic Depth for the Algerian Maritime Economy, and that the Ottoman Administration recognized their Importance Early On. It did not Limit its Efforts to Documenting Transactions; But rather, exercised Real Control and Meticulous Regulation of the Flow of Maritime Goods into the Central Port (Le Bastion), both to Support the Beylik's Finances and to Supply Local Markets. It also Linked the Port in Algiers to the Eastern Ports (Annaba and Collo), ensuring the Supply of Goods to the Ports, particularly during times of Peace and Preparation for War.

And in A Time of Calm; Coral was exploited as A Profitable Export Commodity that brought in Considerable Money for the Treasury. While Salt was Used as An Essential Ingredient in Supplies and Collection. As for Times of Maritime Crises; The Matter has turned into A Dual Security and Economic Measure to Ensure the Continuation of Commercial Activity and Avoid Disturbance in the Market Space.

In Closing; These Official Correspondences reveal that Maritime Resources Constituted a Strategic Pillar of the Algerian Maritime Economy, and that the Local Ottoman Administration recognized their Importance Early On, establishing Effective Distribution and Control Networks Linking the Capital (Algiers) with the Eastern Ports (Annaba and El Kala). These Documents, with their Meticulous Detail; Offer an Indispensable Archival Source for Understanding the Economic and Political Structure that Governed Ottoman Maritime Activity in Algeria.

2. The Economic Importance of Maritime Commodities in the Ottoman Province of Algeria (the Ottoman Eyalet of Algiers):

Official Correspondence reveals that Marine Resources Such as Salt, Fish, and Coral were not merely Consumer Goods; But Vital Pillars of the Local and Regional Economy. Analysis of these Correspondences Shows that these Commodities Formed an Essential Part of Domestic Trade. Salt was Used for Food Preservation, while Coral was A Valuable Export Commodity, linking Algeria to Mediterranean and European Markets. This Trade appears to have been Carefully Planned by the Local Ottoman Administration, reflecting the Authorities' Understanding of the Role of Marine Resources in Contributing to Economic Stability.

Among the Most Prominent Documents that reflect the Organization of this Trade are; A Collection of Letters addressed by Hasan Bey to the Agents of Le Bastion, Dated to Two Main Correspondences in the Years (1746 CE) and (1747 CE).² These Correspondences reveal the Regular Nature of the Coral Trade; The Bey was Keen to Follow Up on Sending Coral Boxes to the Bey Himself, and it also Shows the Administration's Keenness to Ensure that this Precious Material reaches the Beylik's Stores, whether for Use or for Re-Export through the Ports.

1 - Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1903, Correspondence No. 20.

2 - Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1641, Letters Nos. 06-08-09.

Some Later Correspondences Also Indicate the Continuation of this System Under the Rule of Governor Ahmed Bey in the 1860s CE,¹ and then Governor Saleh Bey in the Latter Part of it,² which reflects the Continuity of the Same Maritime Economic Policy across the Eras.

Fish, or what is Known in the Documents as “Al-Hout - the Whale”, was not merely A Food Item; But A Commercial Commodity Subject to Regulation and Taxation. For this Reason; The Local Authority tasked the Port Commander³ with Overseeing All Matters related to Fishermen and the Unloading of Cargo. Consequently; The Fish Trade became A Permanent Fixture in the Coastal Markets, overseen by the Head of the Fishmongers,⁴ who in turn reported to the Town Chief/Cheikh of the City.⁵ A Tax was Levied on the Sale of Fish,⁶ Collected within the Market itself. Market Law Stipulated a Specific Tax, known as “the Bachmaq Tax”,⁷ payable on Every Quantity of Fish Sold. This Tax was A Fixed Source of Revenue for the City, remaining in Effect during Periods of Both Prosperity and Decline, largely Unaffected by Fluctuating Economic Conditions or Changes in Governors.

The Commercial Activity associated with Fishing and Fish Distribution also Contributed to the Vibrancy of Daily Markets along the Diverse Algerian Coast, particularly in Markets Near Urban Centers, such as the Fish Market. In this Context; The Description by the American Traveler (William Shaler) Stands as An Important Testament to Algeria's Marine Wealth. He noted that: “...All Types of Fish Known in the Mediterranean Live in Abundance in the Algerian Sea, and the Most Beautiful Types of Coral Known in the World are Found on the Eastern Coasts...”.⁸ This Description reveals the Awareness among Foreign Travelers—including Shaler—of the Importance of Algeria's Marine Resources and their Richness and Diversity, which Made It an Economic and Social Hub in the Ports and Coastal Areas. These European

1 - Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1641, Correspondence No. 30.

2 - Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1641, Correspondence No. 88.

3 - Port Commander (Harbor Commander): The Official who Performs the Duties of a Harbor Master; He is Responsible for Port Surveillance and Security, Overseeing the Movement of Departing or Arriving Warships and Merchant Vessels, and Receiving Correspondence addressed to the Pasha. Under His Command are Two Ship Captains, a Clerk bearing the Title Khuja of Port Commander, and an Ordiani Pashi (Inspector). For Further Details; See: Albert Dufau, *Ceremonial Register (or A Collection of Historical Notes on the Administration of the Regency of Algiers)*, translated and introduced by: Lakhdar Boutba, Kawkab Al-'Ulum Publishing, Algiers, 1st Edition, 2024 CE, p. 36.

4 - A levy of 400 *Sayma* Coins was Imposed. See: Devoulx, Op. Cit., p. 78.

5 - Aïcha Ghattas, *Trades and Artisans in the City of Algiers (1700–1830 CE): A Socio-Economic Approach*, State Doctorate Thesis in Modern History, Supervised by: Moulay Lahmici, University of Algiers 2, Algiers, 2001–2002 CE., p. 230.

6 - The Tax-Farming System was Annual and Subject to Renewal. See: Ibid., p. 225.

7 - The Bachmaq: A Mandatory Tax Imposed on Guild Masters—Estimated at Fifteen in Number, including the Master of the Fishmongers' Guild. See: Ghattas, Op. Cit., p. 224.

8 - William Shaler, *Memoirs of William Shaler, American Consul in Algiers (1816–1824 CE)*, annotated and introduced by: Ismail Al-Arabi, National Publishing and Distribution Company, Algiers, 1982 CE, pp. 32–33.

Perceptions were not mere Passing Observations, rather; They Indicated an Early Awareness of the Value of the Resources Upon which Society Depended.

In this Context; Maritime Figures Emerged Who had an Active Presence in Economic Life, including: (Muhammad Al-Hawwat¹ and Suleiman Al-Baskari Al-Hawwat²), who Served as A Model for Skilled Fishermen who Contributed to Supplying the Markets with Daily Catches, and Possessed Precise Expertise in Sea Seasons, Fishing Routes, Types of Fish, and Trade Mechanisms within the Fishermen's Market.

The Market System Demonstrates a Clear Commitment to Regulating Buying and Selling Operations within this Market, through the Direct Supervision of Both the Market Inspector and the Market Custodian, who were Responsible for Controlling the Known Prices and Monitoring the Quality of the Catch. This reflects the Authority's Commitment to Regulating the Trade of Sensitive Food Items that Directly affect the Social Stability and Food Security of the Population.

This Image is Confirmed by what Abdullah ibn Al-Shuwayhid reported in His Book "The Law of the Markets of the City of Algiers", where He Mentions Some of the Types of Fish traded in this Market and the Tax Levied on them, explaining the Nature of the Tax Collection and the Prices of Transport and Unloading. He Indicated that the Tax Collector Collected Specific Fees for the Importation of Certain Goods, such as Half A Riyal for A Barrel of Sardines, Three-Eighths of A Small Dirham for Anchovies,³ and Half A Riyal for A Large Barrel of Sardines.⁴ These Texts Provide Important Evidence of the Tax System that governed the Trade of Fish within the Markets and reveal the Position of the Tax Collector as A Link between the State on One Hand and the Economic Operators on the Other.

This Presentation is Further Corroborated by (Albert Devoulx) in His Work "The Record of Maritime Booties", through His Observations on Maritime Activity in the City. He notes that Maritime Booty was An Important Source of Goods Entering the City. In (1767 CE); Two Shipments of Fish and Dried Sardines arrived in Algiers.⁵ And in (1798 CE); A Group of Ships Laden with Sardines and Tuna Entered,⁶ reflecting Active Maritime Traffic and Continuous Trade with the Mediterranean Basin.

It is Important to Note that Salt was Subject to A Special Administrative System Directly Overseen by the State due to its Vital Nature and Multiple Uses. The Salt Khuja/Salt Trade

1 - Algerian National Archives, M. Sh., No. 129.

2 - Algerian National Archives, S.B.M., Series 01, No. 01, File 02.

3 - Abdullah bin Muhammad Al-Shuwayhid, *The Law of the Markets of the City of Algiers* (1107–1111 AH/1695–1705 CE), edited, introduced, and annotated by: Nāṣir Al-Dīn Sa'īdūnī, Dar Al-Basa'ir, Algiers, 2012 CE, p. 51.

4 - Ibid., p. 52.

5 - Albert Devoulx, *les registre des prises maritimes: document authentique et inédit concernant le partage des captures amenées par les corsaires Algériens*, Typographie A. Jourdan, Alger, 1872 CE, pp. 16-17.

6 - Ibid., p. 63.

Official¹ was Responsible for Managing the Beylik's Salt Reserves and Organizing its Distribution to Stakeholders, including Assayer/Salt Employee in Charge ² and Weighers.³ All Transactions were Recorded in Official Ledgers that were reviewed Daily at the Palace, a Procedure that reveals a High Degree of Organization and Administrative Discipline.

The Importance of Salt is Further Confirmed by Later Correspondence between Agents in Annaba and Algiers in the 1820s, which noted the Issue of Lost Salt Stocks Destined for the Military Camp and the Need to Purchase a New Shipment from Tunisia.⁴ This Highlights the Essential Nature of this Vital Commodity and its Direct Link to Supplying the Army and General Provisions. This Strict Regulation reflects the Monopolistic Nature of Salt; As A Crucial Resource Exploited for the Benefit of the Public Treasury, it was not Subject to the Usual Commercial Taxes but rather to the Direct Supervision of the Dey Himself.

On the Other Hand; The Maritime Customs Officer⁵ was Responsible for Monitoring Ships arriving at the Port, determining Unloading and Loading Locations, and Regulating the Collection of Duties on Imported and Exported Goods, with the Exception of Goods Belonging to the Beylik, which were Exempt from Levies. This Exemption Represented One of the Mechanisms that allowed the State to Maintain Revenues from Vital Commodities without the Intermediary of Merchants, thus Reinforcing the Centralization of Financial Authority in the Maritime Economy.

In this Context as well; The Tax Agents⁶ had a Role in this Mission, including Ibrahim, the Tax Agent,⁷ which Indicates the Continuation of the Exchange of Marine and Precious Commodities within An Official Framework, and the Extension of the Network of Economic Relations between Algerian and Tunisian Ports.

It is Evident from all of this that Maritime Commodities were the Backbone of the Ottoman Economy in the Province, as They Contributed to Strengthening Internal and Even External

1 - The Salt Khuja/Salt Trade Official: He is responsible for Directing the Purchase of Loads and their Retail Sale, and the Auction Agent Operates Under His Orders. See: Dufaux, Op. Cit., p. 35.

2 - Al-Sayiji—Assayer/Salt Employee in Charge: An Official who Oversees the Financial Aspects—Such as Accounts, Expenses, and the Like—and is Also Responsible for the Group's Treasury. See: Ghattas, Op. Cit., p. 211.

3 - Weighers: Those who Carry Out Weighing and Storage Operations. See: Dufaux, Ibid., p. 35.

4 - Algerian National Archives, Ref. No., Collection: 1903, Correspondence No.: 05.

5 - The Maritime Customs Official: He is Responsible for Collecting Maritime Customs Duties on Goods Arriving from Islamic Countries (Duties on Goods from Non-Islamic Countries are Paid at the Palace to the Khaznaji). Under His Command are: A Clerk, An Agent for the Customs Stores (Wakil Al-Haraj), A Weigher (Sayaji), and Other Agents. He remits His Collections to the Treasury Every Two Months, and the Keys to the Customs Stores are taken to the Palace Each Evening. See: Dufaux, Op. Cit., p. 35.

6 - Wakil Al-Haraj (The Tax Agents): The Official Responsible for Maritime Affairs; His Duties Entail Monitoring Maritime Activity and Overseeing the Operations of the Shipyards. He Also Supervises the Distribution of Spoils and Monitors Algiers' Foreign Affairs. See: Ahmed Cherif Zahar, *Memoirs of El-Hadj Ahmed Cherif Zahar, Chief of the Sharifs of Algiers (1754–1830 CE)*, edited and introduced by: Ahmed Tawfiq Al-Madani, National Publishing and Distribution Company, Algiers, 1974 CE, p. 50.

7 - Algerian National Archives, Ref. No., Collection: 1903, Correspondence No.: 65.

Trade. The Administration Maintained the Stability of the Markets through Precise Regulation to Monitor Prices, Quantities and Quality of Commodities, which reflects A Deep Understanding of the Role of these Resources in the Economy and Social Policy, and Made the Sea a Strategic Space for Managing Wealth and Achieving Financial Balance for the Province.

3. The Role of the Ottoman Administration in Regulating the Trade of Maritime Commodities:

Official Correspondence reveals that the Ottoman Administration in Algeria did not treat Maritime Goods as Ordinary Commodities; But rather as Economic and Strategic Assets Requiring Meticulous Oversight and Careful Planning. The Administrative System Established to Regulate this Trade was based on a Clear Hierarchy, starting with the Dey and Ending with the Market Agents; Reflecting the Centralization of Decision-Making and the Strictness of its Implementation.

The Dey Exercised Supreme Authority, which manifested in the Issuance of Ad Hoc Decrees (Faramans/Firman) Regulating the Sale of Salt and Coral or Setting their Prices according to the Prevailing Economic Conditions. One Official Correspondence Suggests that these Interventions were not Arbitrary but rather based on Reports Submitted by the Customs Chief. This Correspondence Indicated the Administration's Concern to Prevent the Mixing of Beylik Goods with Private Goods; Reflecting A Keen Understanding of the Nature of Public Property and its Distinction from Individual Commercial Activity.

It was Customary for the Town Chief (Sheikh Al-Balad)¹ to Oversee the Fishmonger,² assisted in Organization by Another Official with the Rank of Market Inspector. This Inspector would Monitor All Goods, their Quality, and Prices, including Fish. He was assisted in this Oversight by Another Official Known as “the Weights Inspector”,³ whose Role was to Monitor Prices and Weights within the Market Area, particularly for Sensitive Seafood Products (Such as Salt and Fish). The Official Correspondence Contained Precise Instructions Mandating Adherence to Approved Official Standards, Prohibiting Fraud in Sales, and Stipulating Penalties and Financial Compensation for Violators. This Demonstrates the Authorities' Commitment to Striking a Balance between Consumer Protection and Ensuring Treasury Revenues. Consequently; An Interactive Relationship between Higher and Lower Administrative Levels is Evident, allowing for the Adaptation of Economic Decisions to the Realities of Daily Life.

Administrative Organization was not Limited to Financial Oversight; It Also Encompassed Security. The City Headman and His Police Officers were tasked with Monitoring the Ports and

1 - Town Chief (Sheikh Al-Balad): Represents Both the Local and Central Authorities, Acting as An Intermediary between Local Residents, Merchants, and the Dey. He Played A Significant Role in Overseeing Commercial Activity within the Neighborhoods and Protecting Merchants' Interests, particularly during Disputes. See: Dufaux, Op. Cit., p. 35.

2 - Ghattas, Op. Cit., p. 230.

3 - Weighing Supervisor (Weights Inspector): Oversees the Auction and External Agents to Ensure the Accuracy of Measures and Scales.

Preventing Acts of Sabotage and Theft, especially at night. This reflects the Administration's Awareness of the Importance of Security in Protecting Maritime Trade. For this Reason; “the Lazma” (Portage Fee)¹ remained Fixed in the Final Years of Ottoman Rule, estimated at (12,500) Pogo Riyals.² In this Context; A Letter Dated (1745 CE) reveals the Allocation of Considerable Funds for the Construction of New Watchtowers to Reinforce Coastal Fortifications,³ a Step aimed at Increasing Protection and Securing Shipping Lanes. Consequently; The Pasha Quickly took Measures to Control the Situation, highlighting that Maritime Security was not Limited to the Oversight of Officials but also Included Investment in Permanent Defensive Structures to Ensure the Continuity of Trade and Mitigate the Dangers Surrounding the Ports.

This View is Further Corroborated by the Russian Traveler (Matvey Grigoryevich Kokovtsov),⁴ whose Historical Records Offer Insight into Affairs in Algiers. He noted that Maritime Activities were A Primary Source of Revenue for the Regency; Mediterranean-related Income—Derived Solely from Fees Levied on Maritime Operations—amounted to Approximately (500,000) Riyals.⁵ This was in addition to the Revenue generated by European Trade Concessions—Exceeding (3,000,000) Riyals, in Value from Goods Exchanged with European Powers—Underscoring that A Significant Portion of these Earnings was Collected from Arriving Vessels.

The Administration Employed a Multi-Currency Monetary System—Most Notably the Silver Riyal (Equivalent to the Gold Sultani), the Silver Qirsh (or Al-Nabeel/the Noble), and Other Denominations Such as the Betaqa /the Card and the Sahib /the Friend—Reflecting the Diversity of the Monetary System and the Extent of European Commercial Influence Upon it. While these Figures are Approximate, They Highlight the Vital Importance of Algerian Ports as Financial and Commercial Hubs, while Simultaneously Revealing the Level of Financial Organization the Administration adopted to Regulate Revenue Collection and Foreign Trade.

The Critical Analysis of this Data reveals that the Local Administration’s Decision-Making was Far from Superficial, rather; It Demonstrated a Degree of Operational Flexibility that Enabled it to Balance the Demands of Strict Oversight with Daily Market Needs. Naturally;

1 - The Lazma (Portage Fee): An Ottoman Financial System Implemented in Algeria. It refers to A Specific, Fundamental Portion of the Regency’s Naval Revenues, paid to the State Annually in the Form of A Designated Financial Obligation.

2 - Algerian National Archives, R.S., Collection: 3190, Correspondence Nos.: 406-407-408-409-410-412-412-413-415-416-417-418-419.

3 - Algerian National Archives, Ref. No., Collection: 1641, Correspondence No.: 04.

4 - The Russian Traveler (Matvey Grigoryevich Kokovtsov): Born in (1745 CE); He Hailed from A Noble Russian Family. He was Known for His Passion for Antiquities and His Interest in European Cultural Heritage, particularly that of France. From His Youth; He took An Interest in the Travels of High-Ranking Officials and Scholars to Russia. He joined the Russian Navy and graduated as A Naval Officer. He Began His Military Service with the Baltic Fleet in (1761 CE). After Eight Years of Service; He was Promoted to the Rank of Naval Lieutenant. He Passed Away in (1793 CE). For Further Details; See: Matvey Grigoryevich Kokovtsov, Op. Cit., pp. 08–09.

5 - Ibid., p. 105.

Central Directives were Implemented Locally through An Integrated Network of Officials, lending the Administrative Apparatus a Practical and Proactive Approach to Crisis Management.

It is Evident from the Totality of these Measures—and the Official Correspondence of the (1641) and (1903) Groups, which Served as Concrete Examples of this Organizational Structure—that the Regulation of the Maritime Trade in Algeria during the Modern Era Was Not Merely an Administrative Activity. Rather; It was A Directed Economic Policy aimed at Ensuring Market Stability and Protecting the Beylik's Resources, while Simultaneously Reinforcing State Sovereignty Over its Ports; This Approach Combined Precise Management with the Active Presence of the Administrative Apparatus in the Minutest Details of Commercial Life.

In Short; Organizational Management transformed those Commodities into A Permanent and Guaranteed Resource for the State. This Completes the Historical Understanding of the Interplay between the Economy and Administration, Effectively Demonstrating the Authorities' Acumen in Striking a Delicate Balance between the Interests of the Treasury and the Relative Stability and Vitality of the Markets.

4. Repercussions of Maritime Activity on the Financial and Social Conditions in the Regency of Algiers:

The Maritime Commodities Under Study Constituted a Pillar of the Local Economy, providing a Steady Stream of Financial Resources that Contributed Significant Revenue to the Beylik Treasury. These Commodities were Classified Under “Port Revenues”—A Primary Source of State Income—at a time when the Financial Administrative Apparatus was Actively Exercising its Oversight Functions.

Sea Salt—Extracted from Saltworks Supervised by the Salt Khuja, Salt Overseer—was Managed Under a Rigorous Administrative System. The Prime Example of this is Found in Official Correspondence Indicating that its Distribution within the City required Direct Authorization from the Diwan,¹ and was recorded in Daily Ledgers; These Ledgers were reviewed by Weighers and Assayer before being returned to the Palace Each Evening, a Practice that Underscores the Centralized Nature of the Financial Oversight Involved. Meanwhile; Another Document Confirms that a Portion of the Output was allocated to Supply the Janissaries and Naval Commanders—Highlighting the Commodity's Strategic Importance—While the Surplus was Directed toward Domestic and Foreign Trade.

As for Coral; It Held Significant Economic Importance due to its Direct Link to Concession Contracts granted to European Merchants in Exchange for Payments to the Regency's Treasury. Official Correspondence reveals that these Transactions were not Concluded Haphazardly, rather; They were Periodically reviewed to Ensure the State Benefited from the Proceeds without Disrupting Port Trade. This Activity Created a Balance between State Revenue

1 - Algerian National Archives, Ref. No., Collection: 3205, File: 03, Correspondence: 07. The Prime Example of this is A Piece of Correspondence that addressed the Provision of Salt Supplies to Other Coastal Cities—including Oran—during Critical Times.

and the Need to Maintain Stable Foreign Relations, while also Providing Employment for Local Fishermen Working Under Organized Administrative Supervision.

Furthermore; Maritime Activity Stimulated the Local Economy by Creating Job Opportunities for Artisans, Transporters, and Merchants, and by Redistributing Wealth within the City. Correspondence Indicates that a Portion of the Revenues was allocated to the Maintenance of Wharves and Stores, as well as the Expansion of Port Facilities to Increase Handling Capacity—Demonstrating the Administration's Awareness of the Importance of Maritime Infrastructure to the Continuity of Commercial Activity.

However; This Prosperity Was Not Always Stable; Maritime Activity Experienced Periods of Financial and Political Turbulence that disrupted the Regularity of Revenues. Monetary Crises and Currency Fluctuations Impacted the Prices of Maritime Commodities—Leading to their Monopolization by Certain Merchants, as noted in the Correspondence—While Harsh Weather Conditions, such as Droughts¹ and Sea Storms,² reduced Production Volumes and Earnings, thereby Adversely Affecting the Social well-being of Port Workers and Ship Captains.

Nevertheless; The Correspondence reveals that the Ottoman Administration Handled these Crises with Organizational Flexibility, at times; It resorted to Repricing Maritime Supplies, while at others—as noted in the Records—It Exempted State-Owned (Beylik) Vessels from Certain Taxes, thereby Helping Commercial Activity to Continue, albeit at A Moderate Pace.

Conclusion:

The Examination of Official Administrative Correspondence reveals that Marine Resources in Algeria were not merely a Source of Wealth, rather; They Constituted a Pivotal Element in the Financial and Social Structure of the Regency of Algiers (Ottoman Eyalet of Algeria) during the Period Under Study. The Organized Exploitation of Resources—Such as Salt and Coral—Enabled the State to Boost the Beylik Treasury's Revenues, meet a Portion of the Needs of the Army, the Navy, and the General Population, and Stimulate Economic Activity in Ports and Coastal Cities.

Administrative Correspondence Highlights the Existence of a Precise System for Managing these Commodities—Encompassing the Monitoring of Production and Distribution, the Tracking of Revenues, and Interventions to Address Crises Affecting the Regularity of Maritime Activity. These Mechanisms Contributed to Maintaining a Degree of Economic Stability, despite the Monetary Fluctuations, Climatic Conditions, and Trade Crises Experienced by the Regency (Ottoman Eyalet of Algeria).

1 - The Regency Experienced a Twenty-One-Years Period Marked by Recurring Waves of Epidemics, which Generally Followed Intervals of Famine and Drought. See: Nāṣir Al-Dīn Sa'īdūnī, Health Conditions and Demographic Situation in Algeria during the Ottoman Era, *Revue D'Histoire Maghrébine (Maghrebian Historical Journal)*, Al-Tamimi Foundation for Scientific Research and Information, Issue 39–40, Tunis, 1985 CE, pp. 432–434.

2 - Ibid., p. 436.

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- 10) Algerian National Archives, M. Sh, 'A: 129.
- 11) Algerian National Archives, S. B. M, File: 01, No. 01, Year: 02.
- 12) Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1641, Correspondence No. 04.
- 13) Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1641, Correspondence No. 30.
- 14) Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1641, Correspondence No. 88.
- 15) Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1641, Letter No. 22.
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- 18) Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1641, Letters Nos. 06-08-09.
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- 20)** Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1903, Correspondence No. 20.
- 21)** Algerian National Archives, Collection: 1903, Correspondence No. 65.
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