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**MOROCCAN-BRITISH DIPLOMATIC AND
COMMERCIAL RELATIONS IN THE EARLY 18TH
CENTURY: THE ABORTIVE EMBASSY TO
MEKNES IN 1718**

by

Nadia Erzini



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Introduction

European accounts of Morocco during the reign of Mawlay Isma'il (1672-1727) are plentiful and varied: there are accounts of European embassies, of captivity, and of the work of redemptionist orders, as well as extensive European diplomatic archives.¹ However, there are few or no accounts of diplomatic relations between Morocco and a European country that are as comprehensive as two unpublished manuscripts describing the English embassy to Meknes in 1718. The most extensive of the two accounts is in the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (ms.29538), entitled *Negotiations in a Treaty for a Peace with the Emperor of Fez and Morocco: With the History of the Present State of the Empire, and a Faithful Account of Muley Ishmael and his Government, as also of the Religion, Manners and Customs of the People*, by Robert Gamble.² The second manuscript, untitled, is the journal of the ambassador Captain

¹ For the most recent listing of the extensive bibliography and archival material regarding this reign, see Y. Nekrouf, *Une Amitié orageuse. Moulay Ismail et Louis XIV* (Paris, 1991); 'Abdalkrim ibn Musa ar-Rifi, *Zahr al-akam* ed. A. Ben'addada (Rabat, 1992); 'Abdallahman ibn Zaydan, *Al-manzi' al-latif fi mafakhir mawlay isma'il ibn ash-sharif* ed. A. Tazi (Casablanca, 1993); Muhammad-as-Saghîr al-Ifrani, *Rawdat at-tarif bi mafakhir mawlana isma'il ibn ash-sharif* ed. A. Benmansour (Rabat, 1995). For a recent discussion of the nature of Maghribi diplomacy and piracy, see R. Pennell, *Piracy and Diplomacy in Seventeenth Century North Africa. The Journal of Thomas Baker, English Consul in Tripoli 1677-1685* (London, 1989); J. Bookin-Weiner, "Corsairing in the economy and politics of North Africa", in G. Joffe (ed.), *North Africa: Nation, State, and Region* (London, 1993), pp.3-33.

² My thanks to Mary Auckland, Librarian at SOAS, for allowing me to transcribe the manuscript, and to Rosemary Seton, Archivist at SOAS, for allowing me to browse in the storeroom of SOAS Library. I accidentally "discovered" the manuscript in the storeroom, when I was preparing an exhibition of Islamic manuscripts in SOAS, for the inaugural exhibition of the Brunei Gallery at SOAS in 1995. The manuscript is of course listed in the Library's card catalogue of English manuscripts, and it is included in N. Matthews and M. Doreen Wainwright, *A Guide to the Manuscripts and Documents in the British Isles Relating to the Middle East and North Africa* (Oxford, 1980), but its existence has gone unnoticed by historians of North Africa. The manuscript was accessioned by what was then the School of Oriental Studies on 13 November 1934. The Library's Accessions Register states that it was purchased from the booksellers Kegan Paul; the previous owner is not given.

Many thanks also to Professor Michael Brett, Professor Mohamed El Mansour, and Dr Stephen Verroît for their assistance with this article.

Coningsby Norbury to Morocco, which survives in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (ms.Rawlinson C.145).³ This journal was copied by Gamble and included almost in its entirety in the first manuscript. The accounts deal primarily with negotiations for a peace at sea for British ships, that is, protection from Moroccan piracy, in particular the 'Salley Rovers', and for the freedom of British captives (198 captives in 1717) held in Meknes. The period of these negotiations (1716-1718) is an important phase in Moroccan trade and diplomacy, marking a change from French and Dutch pre-eminence to fifty years of British dominance.

Trade, Diplomacy and Corsairing before 1716

In the early part of Mawlay Isma'il's reign, Morocco maintained better relations with France and Holland than with Britain.⁴ Trade between Morocco and both France and Holland flourished especially in Salé and Tetuan in the late 17th century, despite the activities of the corsairs based in Salé, Mahdiya and Tetuan. Trade with France flourished despite the failure of French negotiations for diplomatic treaties, such as the embassy of François Pidou de St Olon for Louis XIV in 1693. In the 17th century, Morocco favoured French trade and sided with France against the common enemy, Spain. In 1700 the situation changed, when the grandson of Louis XIV, Philip V, established the Bourbon succession in Spain, after which French-Moroccan relations declined.

³ This manuscript was acquired by the Bodleian in 1756 as part of a bequest by Richard Rawlinson. It is also listed by Matthews and Wainwright.

⁴ This account of Moroccan relations with European nations relies primarily on the *Sources Inédites de l'Histoire du Maroc* 2nd series, Archives et bibliothèques de France, especially volume 4, 1693-1698, the memorandums and accounts of Jean-Baptiste Estelle and François Pidou de St Olon. For a general introduction see J. Brignon et al, *Histoire du Maroc* (Casablanca, 1967), pp.247-253, 277. For a survey of Anglo-Moroccan relations, see J.S. Corbett, *England in the Mediterranean. A study of the rise and influence of British power within the Straits (1603-1713)* (London, 1904); P.G. Rogers, *A History of Anglo-Moroccan Relations to 1900* (London, [1979]), especially pp.82-87. See also M. Morsy and A.R. Meyers, "L'Apport des archives britanniques à la connaissance de l'histoire du Maroc aux 17^e-18^e siècles. Description des principales sources", *Hespéris-Tamuda* vol. 14, 1973, pp.177-193. For piracy, see Pennell *op.cit.* n.1; and R. Coindreau, *Les Corsaires de Salé* (Rabat, 1948, reprinted Salé, 1993) pp.64-84.

British relations with Morocco, on the other hand, were slow to improve at this period, despite the English evacuation of Tangier in 1684, and despite numerous attempts to negotiate peace treaties. British consuls were based at Salé and Tetuan respectively from 1637 and 1657, and a certain amount of trade was conducted, although less than with the French and Dutch merchants in Morocco. Since the late 17th century the British Mediterranean fleet had cruised the North African coasts to protect British trade from piracy, and in 1704 Britain occupied Gibraltar. The British naval presence in this area increased as a consequence. In 1713 the Treaty of Utrecht reordered European boundaries, stripping Spain of its areas of influence in Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy, and recognising British control of Gibraltar and Minorca. Gibraltar replaced Cadiz as the most important port of the area. In 1718 France and Spain broke formal diplomatic ties with Morocco, a rupture which lasted for fifty years. The British trading empire flourished world-wide, however, and in Morocco Britain was to take advantage of this rupture and dominate trade until the reign of Sidi Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah (1757-1790).

Trade and corsairing coexisted. Corsairing, or piracy by ships with a commission from their government, was regulated by international treaties, and constituted an essential source of income to all the Maghribi states in the mid-17th century, although perhaps more so for the diwans of Algiers and Tripoli, than for Morocco and especially New Salé or Rabat. The 'Salley Rovers' constituted the most active corsairs in Morocco, particularly in the period between 1610, that is the establishment of the semi-independent republic of New Salé or Rabat, and the capture of Rabat-Salé by the first Alawi sultan Mawlay Rashid in 1668. After this date, corsair ships in the Moroccan ports tended to fall under the direct control and taxation of the Alawi sultans.

Although difficult to quantify, corsairing survived to some extent under the Alawi state, and the corsair vessels included both royal and private ships. Mawlay Isma'il's ownership of corsair ships and his taxation of corsair revenue was noted by Estelle in 1698. The activities of corsairs such as 'Abdallah ibn 'Aisha, ambassador to Paris in 1699, were noted by the European sources in the 1690s. Ibn 'Aisha was the chief of admiral of the corsairs, also identified as the governor or captain of the port of Rabat, appointed by Mawlay Isma'il to arm the Moroccan corsair 'navy' and collect the tax revenue from the booty taken by the corsairs. (This was apparently a

different appointment from that of the governors of the town of Salé or the Rabat *qasba*).

The sultan's taxation of corsair prizes led to a decrease of corsairing activity by Moroccans. Mawlay Isma'il claimed a tax of one half of the corsair booty, if the sultan owned the ships, and he claimed one fifth of the revenue from privately-owned ships. This tax on corsair booty was in fact twice the one-tenth tax usually imposed on imports or exports. By 1701 the sultan charged a duty of 70% on goods captured by corsair ships. In 1678 the sultan had also declared all Christian captives his own personal property, no longer to be sold by the pirates, and he bought all the other Christian slaves in private hands in Morocco.

During the first two decades of the 18th century, higher taxes and customs duties, and increased regulation of the Moroccan goods that could be exported, combined with a lack of protection from piratical attacks, effectively ruined peaceful European maritime trade with Morocco. Instead of free trade within the articles of the existing peace treaties, monopolies arose alongside corsairing activities. The European merchants could only survive if under the personal protection, or the monopoly, of influential members of the court and government of Meknes. One such courtier was the Jewish merchant Musa Ben 'Attar (the sultan's "High Treasurer", as he is called in the SOAS manuscript), whose responsibilities, as we shall see, included negotiating with European embassies.⁵ Mawlay Isma'il benefited from this irregular trade, as did his courtiers, who were in turn obliged to pay the sultan periodic gifts amounting to a traditional supplementary tax (the *hadiyya*)⁶ in order to remain in favour, and retain their monopolies. Much of the *hadiyya* paid by

⁵ Ben 'Attar was mentioned in numerous other contemporary European sources as responsible for European embassies. e.g. J. Windus, *A Journey to Mequinez, the Residence of the Emperor of Fez and Morocco: on the occasion of Commodore Stewart's embassy thither for the redemption of the British Captives...in 1721* (London, 1725), pp.5-6. etc.

⁶ G.S. Colin "al-*hadiyya*", part of the entry under "hiba", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* first edition; P. Mercer, "Palace and Jihad in the Early 'Alawi State in Morocco", *Journal of African History*, vol. 18, 1977, pp.531-53, especially p.535 and p.545, and her unpublished doctoral thesis *Political and Military Developments within Morocco during the early 'Alawi period 1659-1727* (London University, 1974).

the governors of coastal areas, as we shall see, consisted of European goods, corsair booty or ransoms for slaves.

The conflict of interests between the European nations and Morocco was insurmountable; the interruption of trade by monopolies and corsairing, especially over the ransom of captives taken, by both sides, continued. Typical of this period is a peace treaty between Mawlay Isma'il and Queen Anne, which was negotiated by Captain George Paddon on July 22, 1714. By 1716 this treaty was invalid. In his account of Anglo-Moroccan relations, Rogers gives the Moroccan complaint, that Britain did not honour the agreed sum of money, or gift, due to Mawlay Isma'il in return for some captives.⁷ Gamble, the author of the SOAS manuscript, gives an alternative account, that it was the Moroccans who broke the peace with piratical attacks on British ships, taking yet more captives to Meknes. Furthermore, Paddon had received an agreement from Mawlay Isma'il to release the British captives. Only after Paddon's departure, the sultan claimed that 10,000 dollars had been promised by Paddon, but had not been delivered. As a consequence the sultan would not release the British captives.

Between 1716 and 1718, as a result of this conflict of interests, Britain, like France and Holland, was frequently on the brink of war with Morocco. The confusions due to dishonest conduct by consuls, who in their turn complain of not having their expenses defrayed by Whitehall, appears elsewhere in the Maghreb at this time. Richard Pennell has pointed out the haphazard nature of British foreign policy and Britain's policy towards its consuls in Tripoli, Libya, given the importance of the consuls in protecting the British trade in the area.⁸ This was the background of the 1716-1718 negotiations described in the SOAS manuscript. The significance of Gamble's account of Cornwall's negotiations lies then in its detailed description of this conflict of interest between Mawlay Isma'il and the maritime nations of Europe, in the new order following the Treaty of Utrecht.

⁷ Rogers *op.cit.*, pp.82-83.

⁸ Pennell *op.cit.*, n.2.

SOAS ms.29538 and Bodleian ms.Rawlinson C.145

In 1716 King George I appointed Charles Cornwall (1669-1718) Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Ships in the Mediterranean, and of the Squadron appointed to cruise against the 'Rovers of Salley', and Plenipotentiary to the court of Mawlay Isma'il (r.1672-1727). The apparent contradiction in Vice-Admiral Cornwall's duties, both directing an aggressive fleet and leading a peaceful embassy, is typical of the combination of corsairing and diplomacy, indeed corsairing and peaceful trade, between Europe and North Africa at this time. This period of European relations with the Barbary states has been termed appropriately the period of "admiral-diplomats".⁹ Cornwall's two-year negotiations, although combined with a British blockade of Moroccan ports, and expulsion of Moroccan merchants from Gibraltar, failed to achieve a peace treaty. The failure was followed by the latter's untimely death on October 6, 1718, in Lisbon, aged only 49.¹⁰

Nevertheless Cornwall's negotiations set the scene for a long-lasting Anglo-Moroccan treaty. Three years later, in 1721, Captain Charles Stewart was to sign a treaty in Meknes, negotiated with the same influential merchant Musa Ben 'Attar and with the Basha Ahmad ar-Rifi, ensuring the release of 296 British captives. This treaty gave Britain for the next five decades exceptionally favourable terms of trading with Morocco, to the disadvantage of France and Spain. After the treaty of 1721, Mawlay Isma'il sent two envoys to the court of George I, 'Abdalqadir "Perez" in 1723, followed by Muhammad ibn 'Ali Abughli in 1725. After Mawlay Isma'il's death, this treaty was confirmed with his son and successor Mawlay 'Abdallah by John Russell in Fez in 1729 and by later treaties: 1734, 1750, and 1751.¹¹

⁹ D. Panzac, "Course et diplomatie: les provinces ottomans du Maghreb et de l'Europe", *Maroc-Europe* vol. 11, 1997-98, pp.139-153.

¹⁰ *The Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 1917) gives his name as Cornewall, and his date of death as 7 October 1718.

¹¹ For the embassy of 1721, see Windus *op.cit.*, and for the embassy of 1729, see J. Braithwaite, *The History of the Revolutions in the Empire of Morocco, upon the death of the late Emperor Muley Ishmael...1729* (London, 1729). See also Nekrouf *op.cit.*, p.378; Brignon et al, *op.cit.*, p.277; Rogers *op.cit.*, pp.86-87. Muhammad ibn 'Ali Abughli is the subject of a portrait reproduced by Bermansour in his edition of Ifrani's *Rawdat at-ta'rif*, *op.cit.*, pl.89-4.

Robert Gamble, author of the SOAS manuscript, was Vice-Admiral Cornwall's secretary. Gamble suggests that Cornwall's negotiations were criticised by contemporaries in the British government, eager for the conflict to be resolved, and Gamble's stated purpose in writing his account, was to clear his employer's name.

I freely own, that one Reason for my publishing the Proceedings in this Treaty was to do justice to the Character of the Gentleman principally concerned therein, whose Memory will ever remain dear to me; I mean the late Vice Admiral Cornwall, whom some malicious and designing Persons, soon after his Decease, charg'd with mismanagement therein...¹²

As a vindication of Cornwall's judgement, Gamble often quoted in his account the letters of approbation that the secretaries of state Paul Methuen and Joseph Addison wrote to Cornwall at every step of the negotiations.

The account was clearly intended for publication, but as Gamble tells us in a notice inserted on the page before the title page of the manuscript, the time was not propitious:

It was intended to have published these Papers upon the Author's return to England. But about the Time they were to have been printed, a Peace was concluded with the Moors [presumably in 1721], and We soon after had a Minister from the Emperor of Morocco at our Court [probably the embassy of 1723], which put a Stop to that proceeding; for had they then appear'd abroad, he might not only have remonstrated against them here, but have sent such an Account to his own Court as might have proved instrumental to another Rupture. For this Reason, and some others improper here to mention, these Memoirs have lain so long dormant.¹³

¹² Gamble *op.cit.*, pp.2-3.

¹³ Gamble, no pagination. The date 1729, presumably the date of completion of the manuscript, is recorded on the SOAS Library catalogue entry of the manuscript, but I

If the principal purpose of Gamble's account was to vindicate Cornwall's failed negotiations, the author's method was to place most of the blame on the mismanagement and, from his viewpoint, the corrupt negotiations of Mawlay Isma'il, his officials and family. The bone of contention was the "present" or payment to the sultan, which constituted at the same time a ransom for the British captives, and a tribute to ensure protection for British ships. The British refused to pay the ransom, and indeed they requested compensation for the damage to British ships and the captured merchandise. Gamble substantiates his accusations of corruption by quoting St Olon's account of similar problems during the latter's embassy. However, as the recent history of French-Moroccan relations by Nekrouf has pointed out, the French negotiators at least were equally guilty of duplicity regarding the ransom and tribute, particularly in regard to the numerous Moroccan galley slaves that Louis XIV was unwilling to part with, in an exchange of captives.¹⁴ The deadlock between Britain and Morocco was only broken when the British capitulated and paid a substantial "gift" or tribute in 1721.

We know virtually nothing about Gamble; he mentions only that he served Vice-Admiral Cornwall on other unspecified appointments. Gamble was an able secretary; his account is precise and comprehensive, although at times unmethodical and labyrinthine. Gamble disclaimed any pretensions to literary style, although he included in his text quotations on North Africa from Classical authors, and on one occasion he inserted a poem of his own composition on the subject of storks. I have been unable to find any writings by Gamble other than the present manuscript.

Gamble's manuscript consists of 473 pages. It is divided into three chapters: the first deals with negotiations by Cornwall with Mawlay Isma'il and various envoys sent to Cornwall while he was based in Gibraltar. The second chapter covers the journey of Cornwall's envoy, Captain Coningsby Norbury, to

have been unable to find any reference to this date within the manuscript itself. Perhaps this date was once embossed on the now damaged spine of the manuscript.

¹⁴ Nekrouf *op cit.*, especially p.219.

Meknes, and Norbury's stormy audience with Mawlay Isma'il. This second chapter, although recounted in the third person, is actually taken by Gamble from the journal kept by Captain Norbury in Morocco, while Gamble himself did not accompany the envoy.

Some passages of Norbury's journal, Bodleian ms.Rawlinson C.145, are quoted verbatim; others are elaborated by Gamble. Norbury's journal consists of only 21 folios, covering the period 24 December 1717 to 8 April 1718. It does contain some supplementary information omitted by Gamble, such as names of those involved in the negotiations. Norbury's account of his stormy audience with Mawlay Isma'il, as we shall see below, is censored in Gamble's version.

Throughout the first and second chapters, and in the six appendices of Gamble's manuscript, the author provides an unprecedented number of copies of documents relating to the negotiations, documents that passed through his hands as secretary to Cornwall. These documents include the correspondence of Cornwall with the sultan; his vizirs; other unofficial representatives in Meknes; the Basha Ahmad ibn 'Ali ar-Rifi in Tetuan; the governor and merchants of Salé; as well as the secretaries of state in London. Also included are Norbury's letters from Meknes, and Cornwall's letter of appointment to Norbury. These documents are provided by Gamble either in complete transcription, or as extracts or summaries. Among the six appendices is the list of the official presents from Britain to the sultan and his courtiers. Many of these documents, particularly the more informal letters of negotiation, appear not to be preserved either in the Public Record Office in London, or in the Moroccan archives.¹⁵ It is this wealth of detail and the inside view of the

¹⁵ The relevant British archives in the PRO are catalogued under the heading State Papers, Foreign Treaties, Barbary States, and Royal Letters; SP42/15-16; SP71/16; SP102/2; SP103/1; SP108/24. See also the Archives of the Admiralty ADM1/1471-1472; ADM1/4099-4101.

No substantial government archives survive from this period in Morocco. There are private archives, such as those of the Fasi family. See Mohammed El Fasi, "Biographie de Moulay Ismael, suivie d'une lettre de Sidi Mhammed El Fasi adressée à son roi", "Lettres inédites de Moulay Ismael; étude, textes, et photocopies des lettres", *Hespèris-Tamuda* supplement to the 1962 volume, pp.5-29 and pp.31-86.

negotiations that distinguish Gamble's account from the better known publications of Windus and Braithwaite.

The third chapter of Gamble's manuscript is a description and history of Morocco, Mawlay Isma'il and his family, and the "Religion, Manners and Customs" of the Moroccans. As neither Gamble nor his informants remained long in Morocco, this is the least interesting section of the manuscript. It is clearly plagiarised from earlier descriptions, such as that by "Leo the African", and from accounts of recent embassies, such as that by Pidou de St Olon in 1693, the latter referred to as a source by Gamble.¹⁶

Admiral Cornwall begins his negotiations

In September 1716, Cornwall arrived at Gibraltar as Commander of the Mediterranean Fleet. As Plenipotentiary to Meknes, he wrote to Mawlay Isma'il, requesting an envoy to Gibraltar to discuss the hostilities at sea and an exchange of captives. At this time, Cornwall ordered the 'Salley Squadron' of the Mediterranean Fleet to cruise against the Moroccan ships, attacking and pursuing them into their ports. There were at least four ships, posted off the coast of Salé, Mamora (Mahdia), Larache and Tetuan or Ceuta, blockading trade out of these ports, a blockade which was not always effective. Cornwall also threatened to sell as slaves the Moroccan captives held in the castle at Gibraltar, if an agreement was not forthcoming.

To complete his stranglehold on Moroccan trade, Cornwall decided not only to blockade the ports, but also to expel the Moroccan Muslim and Jewish merchants from Gibraltar, by October 20, 1716. Cornwall quoted as justification the Treaty of Utrecht. Gamble's account gives equal blame to both Jews and Muslims for the failure of the negotiations with Mawlay Isma'il. The Jews in Gibraltar were accused of serving as informants for their contacts in Meknes. For example, news of the arrival of the British royal gift and a description of its contents from London, was relayed to Meknes, and

¹⁶ Leo the African (Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzani al-Fasi), *Description de l'Afrique* ed. C. Schéfer (Paris, 1896), 3 vols; F. Pidou de St Olon, *Estat present de l'Empire du Maroc* (Paris, 1694). Gamble could have read the English translation by P. A. Motteux, *The Present State of the Empire of Morocco* (London, 1695).

was said to motivate the sultan to request an envoy from Gibraltar. Regarding the passage of information, it is interesting to note that the captives in Meknes were able not only to send letters through their consuls, but also to smuggle letters to Gibraltar, informing Cornwall of events and rumours in the court. Return messages from Gibraltar to the captives in Meknes were communicated by flags on the ships cruising off the coast of Tetuan, read by the captives' contact in Tetuan, presumably a British merchant or the consul.¹⁷

Gamble also mentions another case, of how details of the English newspaper accounts of the British envoy's expenses, reached Meknes through the Jewish merchants in Gibraltar:

When ye Government had order'd, that Captain Norbury should be sent up to the court at Mequinez to demand the Captives, a Letter of Credit was sent out to Admiral Cornwall for 13,000 Pieces of Eight and 500 Pound Sterling, as well as to make a Purchase of some Things to be added to the Present designed for the Emperor, as to answer other Services in the Treaty. This Credit was mentioned in the News Letters that came from England to Gibraltar, which being published about the Town, the Jews immediately got hold of it and convey'd it to Barbary, insinuating that it actually was order'd for the Ransom of the Captives, which News was so greedily swallowed by ye Ministry here [Meknes], that they would never drop that Article: At least, I am assured, they were encouraged to believe, that 10,000 Dollars of that Sum would be allow'd to make good Mr Paddon's pretended Promise.¹⁸

¹⁷ One such report from the captives of Meknes, perhaps completely fictional, concerned a large emerald weighing 22 ounces and valued at 30,000 dollars, that Mawlay Isma'il paid for with a corresponding quantity of beeswax, one of Morocco's main exports at this time. The alerted British ships failed to intercept either the emerald or the beeswax between Tetuan and Cadiz.

¹⁸ Gamble *op.cit.*, p.202.

Cornwall's predecessor in the negotiations with Mawlay Isma'il, the above-mentioned George Paddon, had allegedly promised that Britain would pay 10,000 dollars to ransom the British captives, a promise which Paddon denied, and the British government refused to honour.

Cornwall found the deputy governor of Gibraltar, Colonel Cotton, unwilling to put the expulsion order into effect, because of the debts the Jewish merchants had with the British traders in Gibraltar. Although the Jewish merchants were subsequently allowed to discharge their debts by bringing over more goods from Morocco, this expulsion was never completely effected, and several Moroccan merchants remained in Gibraltar. Gamble suspected Cotton of a personal interest in trading with the expelled Jewish merchants. During his year's residence in Gibraltar, Cornwall had a violent disagreement with the governor, who questioned Cornwall's authority over the garrison.

...an angry quarrel sprang up between him and the governor, arising out of the soldiers' unwillingness to admit to the admiral's authority even in matters relating to the ships in the port, and gradually increasing in bitterness. The blame of this seems to have lain entirely with the governor, who said publicly, at his own table, that 'either Mr Cornwall or himself was the vilest fellow upon earth,' and permitted, if he did not encourage, his officers to 'drink damnation to the admiral and the negotiation he was conducting.' Cornwall may possibly have also used strong language, for he seems to have been a man of hot temper; but the correspondence between the two ended in the expression of Cornwall's determination to refer the matter to the king or to the speaker of the House of Commons. He seems to have been prevented doing so by being called away from Gibraltar on more active service.¹⁹

It appears as if a hierarchy of the civil and military authorities over the garrison had yet to be established at Gibraltar, whose British occupation had only been officially recognised three years earlier by the Treaty of Utrecht. It

¹⁹ "Charles Cornwall" *The Dictionary of National Biography, op.cit.*

seems likely that Governor Cotton and the British merchants may have interfered with Cornwall's negotiations.

Haj 'Abdasalam "Molinas" negotiates for Basha Ahmad ar-Rifi

On the November 23, 1716, the first envoy to Gibraltar, Haj 'Abdasalam "Molinas" of Tetuan, secretary to the governor of Tetuan, Basha Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Battiwi al-Hammami ar-Rifi, arrived at Gibraltar, bearing a letter from the sultan, dated October 1.²⁰ Mawlay Isma'il initially wished to negotiate, and as a gesture of goodwill, released his British slaves in Meknes from hard labour. He also promised to punish the chief of the corsairs of Salé (not named, possibly 'Abdallah ibn 'Aisha), for permitting the current rupture with the British, an order he later rescinded. Cornwall and Molinas agreed on a one-year truce and the exchange of captives, but this was not acceptable to Mawlay Isma'il. Molinas was the first of five Moroccans to claim that they were empowered to negotiate a peace for Mawlay Isma'il, all, as we shall see, without success, and some claiming the sultan's authority without any basis.

Difficulties in the negotiations with Basha Ahmad ar-Rifi

Cornwall then wrote not directly to the sultan, but to the Basha Ahmad ibn 'Ali ar-Rifi, governor of Tetuan and most of northwestern Morocco, the sultan's "Vice-Roy" and "Captain General of the Coasts". The southernmost border of his province is stated as being the Sebou River. Gamble described the Basha Ahmad as one of the most powerful individuals in Morocco: "As the Sea washes a great part of his Province, a considerable Trade flows into it, and such are his Profits therefrom, that he lives in more Grandeur and Authority than perhaps any Subject in Barbary".²¹ The Basha Ahmad was then about forty years old according to Gamble; he had been in power since his father's death in 1713, and his sister was one of the wives of Mawlay Isma'il. Like his father, he was responsible for relations with the English, as Tetuan supplied most of Gibraltar's fresh food, as well as being the main port of entry for British goods sold in Morocco. Patricia Mercer has described in her account of the Moroccan state under Mawlay Isma'il how governors (*qa'ids*) held the responsibility of relations with different European

²⁰ Another copy is in the PRO SP 71/475-478.

²¹ Gamble *op. cit.*, p.96.

countries.²² Some of these positions were hereditary, as for example the Rifis of northern-western Morocco and the British.

Although Cornwall negotiated with the Basha Ahmad, as did other English ambassadors of the period, these negotiations were to prove a major handicap to Cornwall. The Basha delayed the delivery of Cornwall's letters, and did not forward the British cause at court. According to Gamble, ten days were sufficient for the return of an express letter from Meknes to Tetuan. However, three months were to pass before Cornwall's letter to Mawlay Isma'il of February 1717, sent through the offices of the Basha Ahmad, received a response, on April 20, 1717. In his letters to Cornwall, quoted by Gamble at length, the Basha Ahmad contradicted himself about whether or not Cornwall's letters to Meknes had been delivered. Furthermore, in one of his letters, the Basha Ahmad confessed to intentionally delaying King George I's letter announcing his accession to Mawlay Isma'il.

There were various Moroccan objections to the negotiation of a peace: the unpaid 10,000 dollars; the delay in the official announcement to the sultan of the death of Queen Anne and the accession of King George I; the resulting affront to Mawlay Isma'il. Gamble in his first appendix refutes the Moroccan's complaint of a delay, providing a copy of the announcement sent from London dated December 18, 1714. It is unclear why the Basha Ahmad delayed the delivery of this letter, if indeed he did so, but his later letters clarify some of his motivations.

In an extraordinary letter to Cornwall dated March 6, 1717, the Basha admitted that he could not even propose a truce to Mawlay Isma'il, as the Basha himself was in disgrace following the British refusal to pay 10,000 dollars, allegedly promised in 1714. Gamble also explained that the Basha's popularity with the sultan was reliant on the Basha's periodic tribute or *hadiyya* to the sultan, and on the Basha's obtaining gifts from the European nations, primarily from Britain. The Basha Ahmad had difficulties delivering his own tribute to Mawlay Isma'il, a gift which largely consisted of European goods from Gibraltar, due to Cornwall's blockade of the Moroccan ports.

²² Mercer *op. cit.*, 1974 and 1977.

Gamble provided precise examples of the Basha's recent economic difficulties and dependence on goods from Gibraltar:

We must take notice here of his Friend Alarby Shouat, who was in Gibraltar two or three Years as a Security for a small Debt, which he [the Basha Ahmad] had contracted with an English Merchant for Goods, to make up a Present to his Prince and Ministry. Thus Power and Riches don't always attend each other in this Country, tho' they rarely fail to do so in others; for the more considerable the government here, the greater are Muley Ishmael's Demands, whose Policy is to disable the powerful from giving him any disturbance; and this he thinks he cannot more effectually do than by keeping them poor.²³

Furthermore, the Basha Ahmad complained to Cornwall of being out of favour with the sultan for other reasons. The Basha was accused by his enemies at court of secretly receiving payment for freeing a British ship captured by pirates near Tetuan. The British blockade served in this way to hamper the negotiations for a peace.

The Basha Ahmad was not the only player in this confused picture of ministers, governors and other government officials, struggling to benefit from European diplomacy and trading difficulties. As a truce was not forthcoming via the Basha Ahmad, three other envoys contacted Cornwall, including two Jewish merchants, and the governor of Salé. As in the case of the Basha Ahmad, the extent of the sultan's backing is not clear.

Two Jewish Moroccan negotiators: Ben 'Attar and Cansino

Throughout the slow negotiations which extended over several years, the captives in Meknes, although released from hard labour, continued to complain of harsh treatment. Many captives died and others converted to Islam. Abject letters from Meknes and from the captives' relations continued to reach Cornwall and the secretary of state in London. The captives' treatment improved when they were moved to the Jewish quarter, to a house

²³ Gamble *op.cit.*, p.97.

of Musa Ben 'Attar, mentioned above. As the Moroccan Jews and their agents in Gibraltar were responsible for much of Morocco's foreign trade, they exerted a considerable influence on the sultan's foreign policy. The merchant Ben 'Attar for example had an agent in Gibraltar, identified as "Ben Saphut".²⁴ Ben 'Attar, in his letter dated April 7, 1717, informed Cornwall that he (Ben 'Attar) was also empowered to negotiate a truce. However, Ben 'Attar seems to have fallen into a temporary disgrace at Meknes, perhaps because he was not authorised to negotiate with Cornwall. Another Moroccan Jew, Jacob Salvador Cansino, was sent by the sultan to Gibraltar.

Cansino bore a letter to Cornwall dated April 20, 1717.²⁵ The sultan tried unsuccessfully to bypass Cornwall in Gibraltar, and send Cansino as ambassador to London. (Cansino reappeared later in Gamble's narrative, as a merchant in Gibraltar, buying European goods for the Basha Ahmad's *hadiyya*). In a display of peaceful intentions, Mawlay Isma'il ordered all Moroccan ships to remain in harbour, although it was soon to emerge that the sultan and the governors of the ports were ineffective or unwilling to control the corsairs. The sultan apparently wrote that he had given up all claims to the 10,000 dollars. In what Gamble saw as a desperate attempt to obtain the royal gifts being held in Gibraltar, the sultan requested that an envoy be sent by Cornwall to Meknes to discuss the negotiations. The Basha Ahmad also sent the Haj 'Abdasalam "Molinas" and "Hadjy Dowdar" of Tetuan to support this request.

The governor of Salé attempts to negotiate

The fifth person claiming to be empowered to negotiate a peace treaty was the governor of Salé, named as Ahmad ibn Haddu, who can probably be identified with Ahmad ibn Haddu Al-'Attar Al-Hammami Al-Battiwi, (first cousin to the father of the above-mentioned Basha Ahmad ibn 'Ali of Tetuan). Ahmad ibn Haddu was the governor of Salé and of the Atlantic coast between Salé and Safi since 1689, minister to Mawlay Isma'il from 1684, and

²⁴ Windus *op.cit.*, pp.10-11, refers to Ben Saphat as Ben 'Attar's agent in Gibraltar, and relates the punishment of Ben Saphat for some act of disloyalty to Ben 'Attar in 1720.

²⁵ Another copy is in the PRO: SP 71/471-483.

ambassador of Mawlay Isma'il to the court of King Charles II in 1681-82.²⁶ Ahmad ibn Haddu suggested that Cornwall come to Salé to negotiate, as Salé was closer to Meknes than was Tetuan, only a day's journey from the coast. Ahmad ibn Haddu assured Cornwall of a safe reception in Salé, promising to send twenty or thirty Muslim notables of Salé as hostages to the British ships, before Cornwall disembarked at Salé. This letter was accompanied by an extraordinary certificate recommending Ahmad ibn Haddu, from the French merchants of Salé, dated September 3, 1717. This certificate was transcribed by Gamble, and one of the six signatories was Etienne Pillet, the French renegade or convert to Islam, who was appointed governor of Salé in 1700.²⁷ Pillet and the French merchants were attempting to salvage their fortunes, as several years earlier Pillet's inability to pay his enormous debts to the Moroccans had led to the confiscation of all the French merchants' property in Salé. France had refused to indemnify Pillet's debts. Thus Pillet was one of the main causes of the withdrawal of the French consul from Salé and the breakdown of French-Moroccan relations from 1715 to 1741.

Cornwall proceeded to the coast of Salé, but bad weather forced him to return to Gibraltar without landing. In February 1718, the governor of Salé was dismissed for allowing a new truce to be broken by the Salé corsairs.

Captain Coningsby Norbury's embassy

The envoy chosen by Cornwall to send to Meknes was Coningsby Norbury, captain of the *Argyle*, a ship in the 'Salley Squadron'. He was accompanied

²⁶ *Op.cit.*, *SIHM* 2nd series France vol.1, p.586 n.4 etc; vol. 4, p.43 n.1, pp.87, 89, 176; Nekrouf *op.cit.* (pp. 66, 179-181, 208, 224) refers to Ahmad ibn Haddu as governor of Salé by 1689, and viceroy of the Atlantic coast or the region between Salé and Safi. See E.M.G. Routh, *Tangier, England's Lost Atlantic Outpost 1661-1684* (London, 1912) pp.220-222, for an account of this embassy. Ahmad ibn Haddu was the subject of a painting today in Chiswick House, London, by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723) and Jan Wyck (1640-1702): "The Morocco Ambassador".

²⁷ Regarding Pillet, *op.cit.*, *SIHM*. 2nd series France vol. 6 p.332 n.1. (Pillet to Nolasque Néant, Salé 4 April 1708); J.L. Miège, "Les Relations maritimes entre Marseille et le Maroc 1682-1863", *Maroc-Europe*, vol. 2, 1992, pp.25-69, especially p.31.

by Anthony Hatfield, the consul at Tetuan, recently appointed in 1717,²⁸ a Mr Treadway who served as the ambassador's secretary, and a small entourage. Norbury took with him the "Emperor's Present" and gifts for his officials and family, listed in Gamble's appendix 6, as well as 500 pounds sterling and 13,000 pieces of eight for the negotiations. 2000 pounds was considered enough to cover all the gifts and bribes necessary at the court of Meknes. Cornwall's letter of instruction to Norbury is also given by Gamble, as appendix 2, informing Norbury at length of the corruption and bribery at the court of Meknes.

Norbury's embassy began badly, as he and the Basha Ahmad disagreed on points of ceremony from the moment of Norbury's arrival at Tetuan on December 24, 1717, and throughout their journey to Meknes. It is not surprising that the Basha Ahmad was uncooperative, given that he had been forced to sign a note forfeiting any claim to the 10,000 dollars, so as not to endanger the British negotiations with the sultan, but in effect making him unpopular with the sultan. The Basha Ahmad did not deign to return Norbury's visits and delayed their departure to Meknes without explanation. On January 2, 1718 they signed a three-month truce, and the British lifted their blockade of the Moroccan ports. However, in February the truce was broken by Moroccan pirates, who blew up one English ship and captured another. Despite the truce, the cargo of the latter ship was removed to Meknes, on the backs of 200 mules, and the fifty-seven crew were taken captive. At this juncture the above-mentioned governor of Salé was dismissed, to appease the British.

Norbury, the Basha Ahmad, and their entourage travelled through Larache, Qçar el-Kebir, Sidi Casem, and Moulay Idris, entering Meknes on March 6, 1718. Norbury was lodged in a house of the Qaid "Abdelsach", the Basha Ahmad's agent in Meknes, another indication of how negotiations with Britain were seen in Meknes as the Basha Ahmad's financial responsibility. The sultan first received the envoy on March 10, in a square near the armoury of the royal qasba of Meknes. As in other accounts of Mawlay Isma'il, the sultan rode a grey horse, and carried a lance. An "Indian umbrella" or parasol

²⁸ D. Meunier, *Le Consulat anglais à Tétouan sous Anthony Hatfield (1717-1728)* (Tunis, 1980).

was held over him, and he was flanked on three sides by his black guard. In his presence, the officials dressed much less splendidly than usual, wearing red caps instead of their usual turbans, and prostrating themselves before the sultan. Norbury presented the British gift of powder, cloth, tea, sugar and porcelain. At first the sultan promised to release the 170 British captives and to renew the peace treaty, as promised before Norbury's departure from Gibraltar. But in the weeks that followed, the sultan refused to release the captives; it was rumoured that he was unsatisfied with the royal gift, and he again demanded a ransom for the captives.

Various courtiers intervened in the subsequent attempt to persuade Norbury to pay the ransom. Among the principal actors was the Basha "Garzi Busaqara", or Ghazi Bu Shaqara or Ben Shaqra, Prime Minister to the sultan.²⁹ Also involved was not only the Basha Ahmad ar-Rifi of Tetuan, but his brother the Qaid "Abdelwaad" or "Abdelswaad", his agent in Meknes "Abdelsach", and his secretaries "Maht. Alabby" and "Hamoida".³⁰ The minister Qaid "Morina" was described as being almost as influential as the Basha Ghazi.³¹ A figure that appears in both Tetuan and Meknes was the "Farmer General of the Duties on Wax", also known as the "Estanquier General" or "Stanquero".

²⁹ "Garzi" can be identified with a courtier of Mawlay Isma'il, variously described as *vizir* and governor of Marrakech: the Basha Ghazi ibn Ahmad, nicknamed Abu'l-Ghana'im. (Ifrani *op.cit.*, 1995 p.13 n.3, Ibn Zaydan *op.cit.*, 1993 pp.87, 233). Basha Ghazi in fact commissioned Ifrani to write the biography of Mawlay Isma'il, *Rawdat at-ta'rif*, and Ifrani's text includes several laudatory passages in his honour (Ifrani p.34). Braithwaite mentions the "Bashaw Bengazy", as one of the sultan Mawlay Ahmad adh-Dhabbi's courtiers in 1729 (Braithwaite *op.cit.*, p.242).

This is probably the same person as Basha Ghazi Bu Shaqara (Gamble's "Busaqara") identified as Mawlay Isma'il's *sahib ash-shurta*, who died in 1133/1720-21 or in Muharram 1134/ October-November 1721 (mentioned by Rifi *op.cit.*, pp.150,200; Ifrani *Rawdat at-ta'rif op.cit.* p.13 n.3; Ibn Zaydan *op.cit.*, 1993 pp.254, 260. Ibn Zaydan mentions his source for Ghazi: Jirari's *Sharh ash-shamaqmaqiyya*. Also Nasiri (*Kitab al-istiqa* (Casablanca, 1956) vol.7, p.99) refers to Ghazi Ben Shaqra' (note different spelling) as the governor of Marrakesh.

³⁰ Norbury also mentions another brother of the Basha Ahmad, Qaid 'Abdarahman.

³¹ This is a well-known family name of Andalusí origin from Rabat-Sale. Perhaps he can be identified with the 'Abdalqadir Marino mentioned by Nckrouf (*op.cit.*, pp.33-34, 47, 50) as governor of Salé, appointed in 1672 and still in office in 1674.

who ran the royal monopoly on the principal Moroccan export.³² Mawlay Isma'il's chief secretary, who signed the sultan's letters of this period, was the Spanish convert, Muhammad al-Andalusī, originally from Seville.³³ Gamble suspected Andalusī of negotiating without the sultan's knowledge, and indeed of forgery of royal letters. Another convert, less powerful than the Spaniard, was the Scotsman James Ker or Kerr, whose Muslim name is given both as the Qaid 'Abdallah "Escotia" and the Qaid 'Ali.³⁴ Kerr served as English interpreter to Mawlay Isma'il.

Of the sultan's family, his son and heir apparent Ahmad adh-Dhahabi also intervened, but the prince was opposed by the Basha Ghazi. Even members of the royal harem commented on the negotiations and the nature of the royal gift. Their opinions were delivered by the principal Jewish merchants of Meknes, who appear to have had access to the royal household. These counsellors and commercial agents of the sultan: Musa Ben 'Attar, described above as the High Treasurer; Abraham Maimoran; and one "Benquiquy", were also frequent visitors to Norbury.³⁵ Most of these courtiers received

³² 25% tax was levied on the state or royal monopoly of the export of wax (Estelle 1698) *op.cit.*, *SIHM* 2nd series France vol. 4, p.707). Nekrouf (*op.cit.*, p.372, no sources given) names the 'fermier de la cire' in 1716 as 'Abdalqadir 'Adiyyal. Nasiri (*op.cit.*, vol.7, pp. 145, 152, 158, 170) refers to 'Abdalkhalaq 'Adiyyal (d.1747) as governor of Fez under Mawlay 'Abdallah ibn Mawlay Isma'il. The Dar 'Adiyyal, an important late 17th or early 18th century house in Fez is believed to have been built by 'Abdalkhalaq 'Adiyyal. See J. Révault et al, *Palais et demeures de Fès. II. Époque Alawite (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1989), pp.179-189. Norbury names 'Abdasalam Luqash of Tetuan as the Estanquier General of the Coasts, but this seems to be a different post.

³³ Mentioned also in C. de la Veronne, *Vie de Moulay Isma'il, roi de Fès et de Maroc, d'après Joseph de Léon (1708-1728)* (Paris, 1974), p.6

³⁴ Kerr is probably the same translator as that mentioned by Braithwaite (*op.cit.*, pp.180, 185-87, 194-96, etc) in 1729. Braithwaite described him as an Irishman. Mr Carr, who converted to Islam thirty years earlier, and who was also employed as the director of the sultan Mawlay Ahmad Dhahbi's foundry in Meknes.

³⁵ Abraham Maimoran is described by as an agent for the palace, who protected Dutch merchants and exported beeswax, via Cadiz to Amsterdam (*op.cit.*, *SIHM* France vol.2, p.224 n.1; vol.3, pp.226, 327, 401, 444; vol.4, p.103). His cousin and partner was Haim Toledano. Gamble further described Toledano as Ben 'Attar's agent in Gibraltar. The term "Juif du Roi" is used by Nekrouf to describe these merchants

official gifts or bribes, or both, from the British. A bribe was sent to the sultan's favourite wife, on the advice of Ben 'Attar, and Gamble and Norbury recommended that all future embassies take a substantial gift to the sultan's wives. In 1721, again on Ben 'Attar's advice, the ambassador Charles Stewart was to correspond directly with the mother of the prince Mawlay 'Abdallah.³⁶

On March 23, 1718, Norbury's second and last audience with the sultan did not break the impasse, and the meeting was decidedly acrimonious. Norbury's journal vividly describes the haphazard nature of the negotiation:

...the Emp: stood upright in his Stirrups to look for an Interpreter & ask'd one Brouillet that was by with Pillet if he understood arabick he answered yes but not English so the Emp: call'd his own Interp: who being a Barbary Jew was unwilling to speake before the King and the Scotch Renegado [Kerr] coming up the Jew retir'd.

The sultan refused to release the British captives, and gave Norbury a letter to deliver to George I, requesting a ransom. Exasperated, Norbury tactlessly refused to deliver the letter, insisting that he was fully empowered to negotiate on behalf of the king. The sultan and his government complained that Norbury was not fully accredited as an ambassador. In the heated discussion that followed, the interpreter Kerr or 'Abdallah "Escotia" dared not offend the sultan with Norbury's statements, and refused to translate. According to the French archives the sultan wanted 6000 piastres as ransom for the British captives. The sultan offered to liberate twenty captives without ransom further than the royal present, and twenty were freed and sent to Gibraltar. Norbury however insisted that he wanted all the captives or none.³⁷

The sultan apparently was not always informed of the negotiations by his courtiers, a frequent theme in the European literature. Thus Mawlay Isma'il

protected status. (*SIHM* France 2nd series vol.3, p.402 n.5; vol.4, p.243; *SIHM* Holland vol.1, letters from February 8 to March 8 1694; Nekrouf *op.cit.*, pp.200, 208, 219, 287, Brignon et al, *op.cit.*, p.249). The Bengigi family still exists in Fez.

³⁶ Windus *op.cit.*, pp.159-171.

³⁷ Documents in the French archives quoted by Nekrouf *op.cit.*, p.378

vehemently denied Norbury's claims of earlier promises made to the British regarding the captives and the 10,000 dollars. Towards the end of the audience, Norbury accused the ministers and secretaries of forging letters by the sultan, and using the royal seal without the sultan's knowledge. The corruption of the court at Meknes, and the sultan's ignorance of negotiations conducted in his name was a favourite theme of Gamble's, and elsewhere he cited the ease with which the use of the royal seal could be bought. The Basha Ahmad ar-Rifi informed him that it could be bought for a mere ten or twelve dollars.

A specific example of the misuse of the sultan's seal is given by Gamble. It concerns the Jewish merchants expelled from Gibraltar, among whom was Mimon Toledano. A letter to Norbury purporting to be from Mawlay Isma'il and dated 2 Safar 1130/25 January 1718, requested that as an exception Toledano be permitted into Gibraltar to buy goods for the sultan. The British believed this letter not to have been written for the sultan, but for the Basha Ahmad of Tetuan or Musa Ben 'Attar of Meknes, out of favour at the time. The purpose of the letter was to allow the Basha and Toledano to acquire their 'tribute' to the sultan.

Naturally the courtiers present at Norbury's reception (including the Basha Ahmad and the Jewish merchants) leapt to defend themselves and to attack Norbury and his credentials, their antagonism destroying any hopes of Cornwall's mission. On March 28, 1718 Norbury left Meknes, and he hastened to the coast, claiming that he was followed by the sultan's men, who had been ordered to intercept the embassy and hold them to ransom at Tetuan. On Norbury's return to Gibraltar, Cornwall was instructed by the secretary of state to resume the blockade of the Moroccan ports.

Gamble gives the impression that in Britain the failure of the negotiations was blamed on Norbury's tactless behaviour, and on Cornwall's bad judgement. Today we can see with more hindsight that Britain's predicament regarding the ransoming of captives and the protection of ships at sea was symptomatic of all the European maritime nations' relationship with Morocco. The failure of Cornwall's negotiations was more directly due to the refusal by King George I's government to negotiate with Morocco as an equal, to defer to Moroccan officially sanctioned and unofficial piracy, and to pay the expected gift or tribute to Mawlay Isma'il. The conflict of interests with the governor of Gibraltar also did little to facilitate Cornwall's mission.

The success of the embassy of Charles Stewart in 1721, albeit a fully accredited envoy, was due in part to the liberality of the presents or tribute Stewart distributed among the influential courtiers at Meknes³⁸, as well as to a clearer British policy regarding the western Mediterranean, the new role of the British navy in this area, and the decline of French and Spanish trading interests.

Mawlay Isma'il's need to protect trade with Europe coexisted with an inability to control, or a tacit condoning of, corsairing activities. Reliant on the *hadiyya*, particularly the tribute from the governors of his coastal regions, to supplement his income, the sultan was unlikely to closely regulate piracy. The governor of Salé, for example, did not control corsairing or piracy, but his errors were overlooked. At the same time, some of the Moroccan ships, such as those of the Basha Ahmad ar-Rifi, are clearly engaged in piracy as well as in regulated corsairing. The sultan attempted to regulate piracy and corsairing, but to some extent the semi-independent corsairing of the mid-17th century continued. The Moroccan corsair navy begs an invidious comparison with the world-wide influence of the English navy of the period. The exact nature of Mawlay Isma'il's regulation of piracy and corsairing is difficult to assess, given that all the accounts of these activities are by injured European parties. Nevertheless it appears that the lack of a Moroccan naval infrastructure was such that the sultan was unable even to communicate in good time to all his ships the conditions of the ever-changing treaties with European nations.

There was also a lack of diplomatic or government procedure in the court of Meknes. Gamble and Norbury's accounts provide us not only with precious information identifying the *qa'ids*, but they also illustrate the fluid and informal nature of the Isma'ili state, its ministers, governors, and tax collection. Equally, a number of individuals negotiated the treaty although not necessarily empowered or instructed by Mawlay Isma'il. Some officials like the Basha Ahmad ar-Rifi of Tetuan impeded the negotiations because of their own financial problems regarding the *hadiyya*. According to Gamble, the

³⁸ It is interesting to note in this context that the gifts of Louis XIV sent with Pidou de St Olon were sent not in the name of the king, but in the name of St Olon and the French captives, so as not to look like tribute and capitulation to piracy on the part of the French king (Nekrouf *op. cit.* p.221).

Moroccan negotiations were further confused by corruption, as in the inappropriate use of the royal seal. The interpreters employed for the negotiations were often afraid to translate accurately. The negotiations were thus bedevilled both by an informal or haphazard British policy regarding the North African states, and an inconsistent Moroccan policy as regards the European countries. The period of indecision only altered following the rise of British influence in this area.

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