

Orhan Kolođlu

RENEGADES AND THE CASE  
ULUÇ/KILIÇ ALİ

In the history of the Mediterranean region, the *Renegade* of the Christians who becomes a *Mühtedi* by joining the Muslim religion, has played an important role. In European languages the Renegade is the person who abandons Christianity for a different faith. The Mühtedi, on the other hand, according to Muslim and Turkish communities, is the person of another faith who embraces Islam. Since Islam began to spread 600 years after Christianity, it gathered its early followers among pagans, a few Jews but especially Christians. Its rapid spread over Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Sicily, Spain and into central France indicates that all Mediterranean communities were largely affected by the religion. Christianity, which had become the domineering and ruling faith through Papacy and the Byzantine Empire, was now largely disturbed by this competitor. For this reason, it was only natural that both sides scrutinized the *Renegade/Mühtedi* very closely. The concern of one side in losing a believer matched the concern of the other side in preventing the loss of the Mühtedi, who is then called a *Mürted* (apostate, the verb is *irtidad*).

European research on this subject outweighs the research done by Muslims, because renegades had not only been, quantitative-wise, many times more than mürteds, but also they played more important roles as history-makers in the Mediterranean. Muslim indifference to their past is easily understandable because the interest was focused only on their activities as Muslims. However, European research bears the mark of the Christian perspective and has a reactionary approach. The Islamic attitude, which accelerated the whole issue has been mostly disregarded. On the other hand, a more objective approach emerged in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Salvatore Bono, a major researcher on the topic, proves this to be the case:

L'abiura era un fenomeno solo di libera scelta o anche di costrizione? Bisogna, innanzitutto, sgombrare il campo della leggenda delle atroci torture cui sarebbero stati sottoposti gli schiavi cristiani per farli convertire alla fede

islamica. I Musulmani, di regola, non attuavano azioni per costringere gli schiavi all'apostasia; da un lato perché una islamizzazione generale degli schiavi sarebbe stata, oltre che impossibile, certamente antieconomica dato che, senza gli ostaggi per i quali pretendere un riscatto, la 'corsa' avrebbe perso il suo significato commerciale (...) d'altro lato, perché il loro comportamento era frutto di una naturale tolleranza religiosa (...) come dimostra il fatto che non erano solo schiavi o ex schiavi a compiere le conversione ma vi erano anche molti uomini liberi che abbandonavano la loro terra natale, soprattutto la Sicilia e la Calabria, dove erano oggetto di discriminazione sociale, per abbracciare liberamente la fede maomettana e fare dell'Islam una seconda patria<sup>1</sup>.

The change which has been affecting the whole world, has also deliberated this point of view. It is evident that, for the time being, Western researchers are trying to cast a new light on their old sources as they consume them. As an example I would like to highlight two very important recent studies on the subject. The first is Bartolomé & Lucile Bennasser's 1989 book titled *Les Chrétiens d'Allah – L'histoire extraordinaire des renégats XVIIe – XVIIIe siècles* (ed. Perrin, Paris); the second is Lucetta Scaraffia's 1993 book titled *Rinnegati* (ed. Laterza, Roma/Bari). Both books are entirely based on European sources. However, the fact that substantial information can also be gathered by looking into the Ottoman Archives finds proof in Professor Yavuz Ercan's book titled *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Gayri Müslimler = Non-Muslims under Ottoman Rule*, (Turhan kitabevi, Ankara, 2001).

In this article emphasis will be on two major points whilst trying to fill this void:

1. The Islamic world's approach to *ihtida*, conversion to Islam, and *irtidat*, desertion of Islam, in historical context<sup>2</sup>.
2. The social role of the Renegade/Mühtedi especially in shaping naval history during a period – 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards – when the Ottoman Empire ruled the Mediterranean region.

<sup>1</sup> S. Bono, *Siciliani nel Maghreb convertiti all'Islam*, «Islam Storia e Civiltà», 18 VI. N.I, Jan-March 1987; M. Biagioni, *I Corsari Barbareschi contro Genova e il Levante Ligure*, Luna ed., La Spezia, n.d., p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Main sources: A. Köse, *İhtida*, «Diyanet İşleri İslam Ansiklopedisi»; A. Ağırakça, *Hazreti Ebubekir Devri İslam Tarihi*, Buruc yay., İstanbul, 1998; H. Akay, *İslami Terimler sözlüğü*, Islamic Information Center yay., İstanbul, 1991; O. Hançerlioğlu, *İslam İnançları Sözlüğü*, Remzi Kitabevi, İstanbul, 1984; Y. Ercan, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Gayri Müslimler*, Turhan Kitabevi, Ankara, 2001.

It is inevitable for those who lose their followers to show strong reaction and to take certain precautions. In those years, these could even take the form of capital punishment. We shall not delve into actions, such as the Inquisition, practised by Christianity. Islam refuses forced acceptance of any faith and it is clear that *adherence* (ihtida) as well as *apostasy* (irtidat – *apostate* = mürted) were practiced at the very beginning, during the Prophet's lifetime. What makes it easy for those adhering to Islam was the understanding that a person would not be in the act of accepting a new religion but he would be returning to his original faith. According to Islam, Man is born a Muslim; change, if any, occurs later on. In an era where tribal living was widespread, adherence to Islam would take place en masse pertaining to the preference of the tribal leader. The Prophet himself is known to have discriminated between *Mümin* and *Müslim*. *Mümin* is the person who can comprehend the message of Islam (Quran and Sunna) and interpret it. *Muslim*, encompasses those who pronounce the Kelime-I Shehadet, that «there is only one Allah and that Muhammed is his Prophet» and the declaration of their acceptance of Islam is sufficient; they are not questioned beyond their observation of the five binding duties of Islam. Only Allah has the authority to question his souls. The reward one receives for *adherence* is that one does not have to be held accountable for what he has previously done. In other words, his sins are forgiven and he is regarded as pure as a newborn babe. In a tradition passed on by Buhari from Ibni Mes'ud, the Prophet's answer to a question on this topic was:

In Islam, those who do good deeds are not inquired about the things they have done in the state of Paganism (Djahiliyya). But those who do evil in the state of Islam are questioned for both their past and later deeds.

The Quran has a peaceful approach towards *irtidat*, apostasy. The Holy Prophet's words «My duty is to teach people to say 'there is no God but Allah», indicates that the rest is left to the person's sense of responsibility. A death threat is out of the question. The verse in Bakara Sura (2/217) is repeated in other Suras as well: «Whoever among you abandons his faith and dies a heathen, his deeds are in vain both in this world and the next. He is destined for Hell and shall remain there forever».

The same judgement applies to those who once accepted Islam decide to return back to their original faith: «Those who believe and

then refuse but believe yet again and once more refuse, shall not be forgiven by God, nor shown the right path» (Nisa, 4/137).

The death penalty in the context of denial of faith occurs only once in the Quran. The Quran gives permission to kill the renegade if he tries to entice the Muslim away from Islam and convert him into his own faith (Nisa 4/89).

Following the death of the Prophet, there emerged certain people who had the tendency toward accepting certain rules of Islam and rejecting others. There also appeared people who were in complete rejection and even some who claimed to be prophets themselves. Under such circumstances Khalifa Ebubekr saw it fit to include in the law of Islam capital punishment for apostasy. Thus, the law prevented the acceptance of a faith based on personal interest. It is a well-known fact that the Quran contains few practical rules and that canonical jurisprudence developed in later centuries was based on the decisions of various administrations and sects. The application regarding the renegade also displays variations. In a canonical book written in Arabic in 1110 and translated into Turkish in 1332<sup>3</sup>, the differences between the Shafi'i and the Hanefite sect on matters such as the following were given in detail; what one sect approves, the other rejects:

The validity of contract between master and slave – The validity of ablution (with sand or earth in default) with another item not permitted by law – The canonically lawful cleansing of the dead body prior to burial – The division of inheritance: public treasury or the heirs? – Whether the person escaping to countries outside the dominion of Islam be considered dead – The question of worship for a mürted who joins Islam again, concerning the period in which he abandoned his Islamic duties – Woman's right to separation prior to or after nuptial consummation – Whether the renegade woman should be killed.

The Ottomans who officially accepted the Hanefite sect, which is considered to be the most moderate of the four sects, possessed a more tolerant understanding than the others. This tolerance manifests itself not only in conversion to Islam, but also in the rights

<sup>3</sup> A.A. Bilgin, *Nazmü'l-Hilafıyyat Tercümesi*, Türk Dil Kurumu yay., Ankara, 1996. The Arabic text was written by Abu Hafs Omar b. Muhammed en Neseft, the translator in 1332 is Ibrahim b. Mustafa b. Alişir el Melifdevi.

given to members of other monotheistic religions. The most striking evidence of this tolerance is found in Mehmed the Conqueror when he established the Orthodox Patriarchate under state protection; the famous 16<sup>th</sup> Century Grand Vizier Sokullu's reopening of the Serbian Patriarchate and giving them freedom of faith and culture is a similar act of tolerance. On the other hand, canon-respecting Ottomans, for political reasons, continued the Arab practice of disregarding Shiites as Muslim and acted it out with determination. In the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the prominent Sheikhulislam Ebussuud Effendi declared by way of fatwa the Kizilbash as «renegades whose execution is lawful». He even considered them more base than the Armenians:

Issue: Those of the Kizilbash faith, when by decree of the Sultan, are killed while among the captives of the elderly and children those who became Armenians, will they be set free?

Answer: They will be. Because Armenians will never cooperate with the Kizilbash soldier and fight against the soldiers of Islam, they are not considered captives by canon law<sup>4</sup>.

The Ottoman approach towards the renegade is depicted in this very special case of 1812:

A priest visits Osman Agha and tells him that he had been his slave as a child and that after having been taught the Quran and memorized it, Osman Agha had liberated him and that he had stayed a Muslim for 30 years but after going to his province and staying with his relatives for a while he had abandoned the Islamic faith. He was possessed by the supersitition that he ought to be sacrificed for the sake of Christianity and thus be endowed with the highest rank. He had arrived in Istanbul asking his master to have him killed for becoming a heathen. Instead, he was given much advice. But on not accepting any, he was asked to apply to the Kaimmakam Pasha (deputy grand vizir). He approached the Divan-I Humayun (Imperial Chancery of State) and said, "I was once a Muslim but later embraced Christianity and became a heathen". The official, upon realizing that his counsel was in vain, ordered him to be imprisoned until he came to his senses. During his 20-day stay in the prison, he disturbed the other prisoners by continually shouting, "Do not detain me from my path..." He was again taken to the Divan.

<sup>4</sup> E. Düzdağ, *Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları*, Enderun Kitabevi, İstanbul, 1972, p. 111.

This time, he was executed based on his testament and in accordance with the holy fatwa, in front of the Imperial Gate. It was recorded that Christians gathered his blood in cotton balls (16.7.1812)<sup>5</sup>.

The renegades who joined the Ottoman ranks during its foundation and rise, have to be classified as «Army» and «Navy» officials. It was natural for the Ottomans, who in their first 200 years spread mainly in the Balkans, to be interested in the renegades they could use in their armies. A list prepared by a researcher famous for his Turkish nationalism, gives a general idea on the roots of the administrators at the highest levels of the Empire (dates besides the ranks indicate up to what year the counts were made)<sup>6</sup>:

	Turk	Possibly Turk	Non-Turk	Unknown	<b>Total</b>
Grand Vizier (1922)	78	15	105	17	<b>215</b>
Minister of Foreign Affairs (1836)	41	22	11	30	<b>104</b>
Administrator of Finance (1835)	54	36	20	56	<b>166</b>
Sheikhulislam (1922)	122	-	6	3	<b>131</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>295 (48%)</b>	<b>73 (12%)</b>	<b>142 (23%)</b>	<b>106 (17%)</b>	<b>616</b>

We cannot claim that these figures are a hundred percent true, but still, if we divide the unknown between the two, we can see that 1/3 (about 200) of the highest level of the Ottoman rule was held by those who were of non-Turkish origins. Excluding the Arabs and Muslims of similar origins, 1/7 or 1/8 of the positions were held by those with Christian roots. It should never be forgotten that these people served an Empire which had etched its name into world history. They also strived for the Empire's success against the Christian World, not as Christians but as true believers of Islam.

At this point, it is important to be reminded of the Ottoman *Devshirme* (recruiting of boys for the Janissary Corps) system, which worked efficiently at the beginning. We cannot deny the fact that this system of selecting Christian children and giving them a special education to prepare them for government posts was one type of 'forced Islamization'. In western sources, especially those written by priests,

<sup>5</sup> Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Cabi Tarihi* (ed. M.A. Beyhan), Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 2000, v. II, p. 863.

<sup>6</sup> I.H. Danişmend, *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi*, Türkiye yay., İstanbul, 1947-1955, 4 voll.

there is much mention of intense complaints, but it should not be forgotten that there were as many who regarded it as hope. The 16<sup>th</sup> Century was the greatest period of the Ottoman Empire and the Grand Vizier of 14,5 years in the third quarter of the century, Sokullu (Sokolowitch) Mehmet Pasha was a recruit of Serbian origins. In addition to his great services to the State being acknowledged, he was also honoured in marriage to Sultan Selim II's daughter. He re-opened the Serbian Patriarchate and appointed his brother Makarije, head priest<sup>7</sup>. Some religious circles might not have approved of this, but the Serbians must have been very happy.

There are many examples of recruits who attained high positions to have helped the development of their birth places. They did this in the manner of believers of Islam (Mumin) without ever debasing other Religions of the Book. In Mehmed the Conqueror's 'Kanun-name' (the Book of Laws) it is recorded that the recruited children were given to «Turks» ie. Turkish families, to help them learn Turkish and Islam. Later they would be placed in schools. They would staff the «Enderun» (Palace School) as well as the Janissary cadre. A very clear description of their full pledge to the State and Islam comes from François Savary de Brèves who served for 22 years (1584 to 1606) as secretary to and later as French Ambassador to Istanbul:

The Christian children brought up in Islamic faith and tradition hate their relatives, never mention them; they accept the Sultan as protector and father and are loyal to him only. They call themselves the servants of Allah, are faithful to Islam and are hostile towards Christianity<sup>8</sup>.

Although the majority of high level officials of the State were recruits, it would be wrong to regard them as Christians having European characteristics – despite the claims of certain European writers. On the contrary, we cannot ignore the existence of a special combination, a blend that does not exist in other Islamic communities. This is why the Ottoman thinkers are referred to as «Rumi» (belonging to Rome) and the Ottomans had no objection to calling their capital city Istanbul «Konstantiniyye» until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>7</sup> Y. Ercan, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Gayri Müslimler* cit., p. 167.

<sup>8</sup> F. Savary de Brèves, *Discours abrégé des asseurez moyens d'anéantir et ruiner la moharchie des princes ottoman*, Paris 1615?, p. 28.

The Ottoman rule also had no objection to accepting those who became Muslims either by their own will or through the recruiting system, accordingly to the long lasting understanding which had its roots in the Ottoman social structure. The Turks had a slow paced migration to Anatolia, which took place over a centuries long period of time. At first, they were naturally a minority among the locals. Although they had to war in order to settle in these lands, it is also true that they chose to apply tactics of consensus. It is well known that the Byzantine rulers had only the Turks as their allies in their fight against the Crusaders. It is also a fact that Turkish soldiers served in Byzantine armies, while Byzantine regional rulers cooperated with the Seljuks and the Ottomans.

The tendency to convert voluntarily to Islam increased as the Ottoman rule gained power. In its first 200 years, the Ottoman rule spread more to the Balkans and central Europe, where the majority of the population was Christian and Ottoman armies too, encountered Crusade Campaigns. The reason why the Ottomans were successful was not only because of their military power, but also because of the support they received from the locals who were struggling with feudal rulers. The minutes of Venetian Senate proceedings<sup>9</sup> record the pro-Turkish attitudes of the Greeks living on the Aegean islands and in the Peloponnese and their preference of Ottoman lands for shelter.

Not only the moderate and the poor, but also princes and kings converted to Islam. Georgian, Greek, Walachian and Moldavian princes are known to have converted. Venetian Doge Andrea Gritti's son Aloisio Gritti commandeered the Ottoman armies in the Balkans as *Yousuf Pasha*<sup>10</sup>. A Pargean youth became *Frenk Ibrahim Pasha* and served Sultan Suleyman from 1523 to 1536 as grand vizir. The first Ottoman Sultans Orhan, Murat I and Beyazit I are known to have married Byzantine, Bulgarian and Serbian princesses and that these women lived in the Ottoman Palace without having to give up their faith<sup>11</sup>. Above all, there never existed a practice in Islam, which pre-

<sup>9</sup> F. Thiriet, *Régestes des Délibérations du Senat de Venise Concernant la Romanie*, 3 voll., Paris, 1959-1961.

<sup>10</sup> A. Decei, *Aloisio Gritti au Service de Soliman le Magnifique*, «Anatolia Moderna», 1992, pp. 10-60.

<sup>11</sup> I. H. Danişmend, *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi* cit., v. I; Maria Pia Pedani in her article *Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy* («Turcica», 32, 2000, pp. 9-32) describes



vented those who were once slaves to be promoted to higher status. Hayrettin Pasha of Tunisia was once a child from the Caucasus sold as a slave, who later became grand vizir of the Sublime Porte in the 1870s. This is summarized in Halil Sahillioğlu's words and reflects the basic differences with the European application:

Often a former slave might end his days leading an honourable and free life in the land of Islam. Furthermore, captivity and slavery manifested themselves in the Islamic World as the result of adverse fortune, but paradoxically, also a path leading to power and authority. The road to kingship, for the Mameluks – at Egypt – passed through the land of slavery [...] In principal, it was possible to rise from slave boy (pençik oğlanı) to grand vizier, the highest position in the state next to the Sultan<sup>12</sup>.

The converts of the Seas had a special attribute because Corsary/Piracy was somewhat under the control of the states and were half-independent in the periods when the region's economy was based on their activities. Being of Central Asian roots, it was inevitable for Turks to make use of the locals. 17<sup>th</sup> century Turkish writers acknowledge the fact that naval expressions entered the Turkish language at first from Greek, then Italian and Spanish languages<sup>13</sup>. Towards the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Turks appeared for the first time in the deep-rooted naval world of the Mediterranean. They had to learn every practice related to trade and war. As early as the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century Chaka Bey established a naval force that could challenge the Byzantine Empire. This indicates that the Ottomans had begun to train their own cadre. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Anatolian coastline came under the control of Turkish principalities. Venetian Senate records of 1341 mention a strengthening Turkish naval force and the preparation of a navy heading for Crete. In 1428 the senate also discussed issues such as Greeks having good relations with Turks which in turn might help them enter the Peloponnese<sup>14</sup>.

the life of a mühtedi woman at the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the wife of the sultan in the palace, and her contacts with his family members in Italy, as well as information about other women.

<sup>12</sup> H. Sahillioğlu, *Studies on Ottoman Economic and Social History*, Ircica, Istanbul, 1999, p. 107.

<sup>13</sup> K. Çelebi, *Tuhfetül Kibar fi esfari'l Bihar* (ed. O. Ş. Gökyay), Tercüman yay., v. II, p. 213.

<sup>14</sup> F. Thiriet, *Regestes des Deliberations du Senat de Venise Concernant la Romanie* cit.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman State had already settled on the coasts of the Adriatic, sieged Otranto and even aimed at conquering Rome. Undertaking such campaigns, especially in spite of states possessing undeniable naval power such as Venice and Genoa, indicates a state power worthy of establishing high standards. In fact, toward the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Ottoman ships sailed as far as the Spanish coasts to carry away the fleeing Muslims and Jews. The fact that Egyptian Mameluks were not able to respond to the pleas of these people, clearly showed that the only naval power in the Islamic world were the Ottomans. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in the western world, the term 'Muslim' had lost its entity and the expression 'being Turk' had replaced the expression 'being Muslim' in all European languages<sup>15</sup>. This went even further to encompass not only the Turks and the Muslims but also all non-Muslims living in Ottoman ruled territories as well as North African Berbers and Negroes brought from central Africa. Therefore, it was becoming more and more difficult to distinguish between those of Turkish roots and the renegades. As a result, conversion to Islam had become less of an issue.

Franz Babinger talks of the submissive mood felt by the Christian communities in the region following the conquests of Mehmed the Conqueror, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. He mentions:

Instead of joining forces against the danger threatening them, the Italian cities and states were at war with each other, or were trying to win over the 'Gran Turco' and this not sufficing, were coaxing the Turkish armies into Italian land to destroy their neighbours. Peoples of certain regions were no longer terrified of coming under Ottoman control. Although they might have used this as a threat against the oppression of their rulers, this condition can easily be historically explained. Battista Mantovano, in his book titled "De Calamite temporum" clearly states that most of the people living on the Adriatic coast felt it was their fate to be conquered by the Ottomans and that Ancona even wished to be so. The unbelievable nonchalance exhibited towards an Ottoman advance would confuse minds later in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>15</sup> S. Bono, *Schiavi Musulmani nell'Italia Moderna*, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Napoli, 1999, p. 36 etc. «Among the 420 slaves enumerated in 1544 there were 210 Turks and 79 Mores it means men from North Africa, but interesting detail, 64 of these Turks were in reality Greeks coming from the Aegean islands, particularly Methylene» (P.J.H. Lomer, *Les Turcs sur les galères du roi de France*, FDE Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 1980 Güz, pp. 28-45).

The case seems to be proven with the incident when a Papal emissary with the rank of cardinal was threatened by a Ravenna envoy who stated their city would only surrender if Turks took over<sup>16</sup>.

European sources mention 300 thousand renegades in the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, which proves that a vast transformation was taking place. L. Scaraffia explains the case as:

The majority of those who converted were those who carried the hope of improving their living conditions and gaining their freedom [...] At the same time, the free peoples of the coastal regions were also converting to Islam of their free will and in great numbers, in expectation of improving their economic and social conditions. As Christian sources indicate, the large number of rich renegades in the major cities of the Ottoman Empire proves that they have been successful. Although we do not have the exact dates, it seems that biggest movements toward the East have coincided with the great moments of crisis the European societies suffered, such as economic collapse or religious and political oppression. It seemed very appealing to have the opportunity to make a fortune and improve ones status in lands conquered by the Turks, who as a community, did not recognize the idea of nobility through birth [...] The renegades played an important role in the wars between pirates by informing on the whereabouts and habitual activities of their fellow townsmen, in return of fortune and social status<sup>17</sup>.

The attack made on *Ceriale*, near Genova is still referred to as '*the Turk's raid*' and is a major example of this situation. 300 people, of whom half were women, were abducted and then returned for a ransom. The actual reason behind this raid was a regional labourer who was not given permission to marry his master's daughter and who in turn had left for Algeria, become a Muslim and brought along the pirates to plunder his own village<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> F. Babinger, *Fatih Sultan Mehmet ve İtalya* (transl. B. S. Baykal), Belleten, n. 65, January 1953, pp. 41-84. It was also published in the «Rivista Storica Italiana», anno LXIII, fasc. IV.

<sup>17</sup> L. Scaraffia, *Rinnegati*, Ed. Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1993.

<sup>18</sup> In the conference on the subject of «Corsaries, Slaves between North Africa and Liguria in 16. and 17. Centuries» held in Ceriale the February 2004 particularly prof. Gallea explained in detail the 1637 affair. Also see: F. Gallea, *I riscatti Cerialesi catturati dai barbareschi durante il sacco del 2 luglio 1637, in Corsari Turchi e Barbareschi: Prigionieri Schiavi Riscattati*, Associazione Amici di Peagna, Ceriale 1989, pp. 43-50; Id., *Il sacco di Ceriale del 1637 ed il Maineri*, in *Corsari Turchi e Barbareschi in Liguria*, Associazione Amici di Peagna, Ceriale 1986, pp. 77-88; O. Koloğlu, *Ceriale'nin İtalyan*

To state it more clearly, in addition to the Catholic-Protestant quarrel and the effects of the Inquisition, and also the riches acquired in the Americas, Spain was striving to control all Europe and the Mediterranean:

It is apparent that during this period, the rest of the Christian world was terrified by the idea that the whole world would come under Spanish hegemony. The separation between France and Venice had reached such an extent that after 1504, their citizens never fought side by side. It was not surprising that not only the Tunisians, who were caught between the threat of Islam (Ottoman) and the inner strife of the Christians, but also pro-Lutherans and Greeks living in Europe, accepted the protection of the Turks. Also Christians who suffered cruel persecutions sought refuge in Algeria where the atmosphere was brighter and more liberal. Just like the Moroccan and Turkish sultans, even in far off England there were people who were eager to befriend Barbaros Hayreddin of Algeria<sup>19</sup>.

The Spanish threat leading Christians to cooperate with the Ottomans was another factor that encouraged conversion to Islam. Similarly, Balkan communities who once fought the Ottomans could be seen in cooperation with the Turks. More importantly, the French were in full cooperation with the Sultan against Spanish threat. In accordance to what was referred to in Christian circles as “Empia alleanza” (non-religious alliance)<sup>20</sup>, France had agreed not to assault or take captive anyone who was under the Ottoman protection—Muslims referred to as Turks and non-Muslims. This undoubtedly softened the prejudice against Islam. When the French allowed Barbarossa Hayreddin Pasha to spend the winter in the harbour of Nice as their protector, the people of the region could not have been unaffected.

Corsary/Piracy were not activities where only Muslims challenged Christians. Their corsaries and pirates too, were operating in the Mediterranean. Also, the Spanish armies and navy continued to attack North African countries and ports until 1574. In short, peoples of the region suffered equally. Therefore, they preferred the side that offered more advantages. There are witnesses who, in contrast to the propa-

*Türkleri*, «Popüler Tarih», April, 2004, p. 34-39. Also: B.E. Maineri, *I Turchi al Ceriale*, Roma, 1890 (ristampa 1992).

<sup>19</sup> E.C. Chems, *Algérie Le Passé Révisité*, Casbah ed., Alger, 1998, pp. 85 etc.

<sup>20</sup> G. Valente, *Calabria e Liguria al tempo della pirateria*, in *Corsari Turchi e Barbareschi in Liguria* cit., p. 33.

ganda in continental Europe, mention that captives taken to Islamic regions were treated reasonably well. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, Cervantes, who was kept captive in the *Algerian Odjak* (Turkish military organization) for five years, admits: «There was one thing that truly amazed me: these heathen dogs gave us all the freedom to worship our faith». The most important Orientalist of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Venture de Paradis adds: «There is no reason for the Christian captives to complain. Turks treat them mildly and humanely. They can buy their freedom back in a short time with the money they earn»<sup>21</sup>.

In the Ottoman State, the majority of *Kaptanıderya*'s (Great admiral of the fleet) one of the highest rank in the Ottoman officialdom (until 1867) were renegades.

Turk	Possibly Turk	Non-Turk	Unknown
39 (24%)	18 (11%)	70 (43%)	34 (22%)

When we add half the number of unknowns to non-Turks, it is possible that more than 50% would be renegades. This percentage is higher than the Grand Vizier, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Administrator of Finance group. There is one point here that shouldn't be missed: those whose fathers, grandfathers were renegades were still considered – with a racial approach, instead of cultural – as having non-Muslim roots. On the subject of the number of seamen of the North African Odjaks a writer mentions that in 1588 among the 43 captains in Algeria 19 were renegades and 2 were children of renegades. Considering this number correct, it still repeats the rate of 50%. This should also include seamen who are not of captain's rank. As Nilo Calvini states: «Renegades sometimes were, even if they like it or not, persons of the first plan in this big human drama»<sup>22</sup>.

It was natural for 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Christian observers to evaluate this situation in the light of the interest of their societies. There have been few who considered being objective. Lucette Valensi states that, such interpretation continued until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century:

<sup>21</sup> Venture de Paradis (ed. J. Cuoq), *Tunis et Alger au XVIIIe Siècle*, Sindbad, Paris, pp. 153-156.

<sup>22</sup> N. Calvini, *Aspetti del fenomeno della pirateria Turca e Barbaresca nella Liguria*, «Corsari Turchi e Barbareschi in Liguria» cit., p. 14.

Before the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an ethical more than ethnographic literature, which tries to describe the customs, affected every human group with a certain number of signs, voluntarily negative and totally inadequate and let us ignorant from the reality<sup>23</sup>.

This approach has taken the form of regarding the contribution of the renegades to the Islamic world and to Ottoman history alternatively, as unimportant or thinking of the renegades' success as the success of the Christians. For example, Haedo's<sup>24</sup> work contains very important information, but because of its exaggerating and debasing attitude, it prepares the grounds for an incorrect and one-sided approach. In other words, such publications are never free of a racist perspective. It is never questioned why these very talented renegades were not successful in their own societies. Since it is a very striking example, I would like to dwell on the Uludj/Kilidj Ali Pasha (Uluç/Kılıç) case.

The meaning of Uludj is not very clear. Italians use *Ulugh Ali*, *Euldj Ali*, *Lucciaili*, *Occhiali*, *Ucciali*. According Venture de Paradis «aldj is a name given to a Christian who becomes Turk»<sup>25</sup> it means who becomes Muslim. Fuad Carim, a Turkish diplomat who was on service in Algeria describes it in his book as follows:

Although its nickname is transmitted in our histories, as "Uluc", its real pronounciation is "alic? (alidje). Written in Arabic with the letter "ain", the word "alic" which means foreigner and infidel, is an expression as well as an often used nickname proper to the North Africa [...] Alic Ali was spelled Occhiali in Italian, particularly in the south Italian spelling. As the Turks has difficulty in pronouncing "ain" which is a consonant, they preferred to use Uluc Ali . This is our opinion<sup>26</sup>.

Turkish sources which are not reluctant to mention the origin of mühtedi's does not mention Uludj Ali's. Even Kamus-ul Alam, the first modern Turkish encyclopaedia published in 1890's present him as a Turk from Anatolia. His Italian origin is no longer questioned. It is accepted that he was captured by Ali Ahmed Reis who gave him

<sup>23</sup> L. Valensi, *Le Maghreb Avant la Prise d'Alger*, Flammarion, Paris, 1969, p.13.

<sup>24</sup> For Haedo's critic: E. Önalp, *Cervantes'in Türklere esir düşmesi ve Esaretinin eserlerine yansması*, OTAM, n. 3 , 1992, pp. 297-321.

<sup>25</sup> Venture de Paradis, *Tunis et Alger au XVIIIe Siecle* cit., p.154.

<sup>26</sup> F. Carim, *Cezayir'de Türkler*, Sanat basımevi, İstanbul, 1962, p. 102.

his name when he embraced Islam. On the other hand we have information from his contemporary sources, concerning his activities as a Turkish corsair and admiral<sup>27</sup>.

Once he became famous as a corsair on the Maghreb coasts he joined around 1548 Dragut Reis (Turgut) and played an important role in the conquest and defence of Mahdiye Fort. It must be remembered, that since 1520's Corsairs of the Maghrebine Odjaks were considered state functionaries of the Sublime Porte. He accompanied Dragut in his Istanbul trip after the conquest of Tripoli in 1551. Sultan Soliman the Magnificent who recieved them assigned him eighty akça (Silver Ottoman coin) salary and authorized to carry lanterns on his ships. Zekeriyazade's book titled *The War of Djerba*<sup>28</sup> contains some detailed information about his activities when in 1560 Spaniards tried to reoccupy Tripoli by dispatching their armada. The first reaction of the Sublime Porte was to have the Sultan/Khalifa send robes of honours and messages to the native – especially Bedouin – Arabs to prevent them from helping the Spaniards. In addition, Dragut gave them money and the Arabs renewed their allegiance. Zekeriyazade, in his words «The Arab is hungry, his aim is not to rule, they are in search of only silver and gold, looting and plundering» explains that the poor Muslims of the region can cooperate with the Christians because they are in need. Also in the book, it is recorded that some «ignorant degenerates helped the heathens». This relationship existed prior to the Turks settling in the region and indicates that in the Mediterranean, economic interest went beyond religious ties. The conversion of some Christians purely for reasons of profit, as mentioned above, should be regarded within this framework. It is also important to see that while the number of those who converted from Islam to Christianity is low, the number of Christian renegades is very high. We have to accept that the reason for this is the Ottoman system, which offered much stability and material gain.

<sup>27</sup> Some Turkish publications about Kılıdj Ali: Selaniki, *Tarih*, İstanbul, 1281, pp. 100-103; Peçevi, *Tarih*, İstanbul 1283, v. I, pp. 486-501; A.R.S. Saffet, *Kılıç Ali Paşa'nun tercüme-i haline dair bazı telkikat*, «Risale-i Mevkute-i Bahriye», III n. 6, april 1336; A.H. Emir, *Kılıç Ali Paşa ve Lepanto*, İstanbul, 1931; F. Kurtoğlu, *Kılıç Ali Paşa*, İstanbul 1935; H. Küçük, *Kaptanı Derya Kılıç Ali Paşa*, İstanbul, 1975; H. Şehsuvaroğlu, *Kılıç Ali Paşa*, «İslam Ansiklopedisi», 1955; M.C. Baysun, *Lepanto*, «İslam Ansiklopedisi», 1955; *Kılıç Ali*, «Osmanlılar Ansiklopedisi», YKY, 1999; T. İnci, *Tarih Dergisi*, vol. II, pp. 1389-1391 and vol. V, pp. 3288-3290.

<sup>28</sup> Zekeriyazade, *Ferah Cerbe Savaşı*, (ed. O. Ş. Gökyay), İstanbul, 1975, pp. 39-41.

In the same book we learn about Uludj Ali's activities during the 1560 Djerba War.

Sait Reis, the Cadi (Judge of Islamic canon law) and the protectors of the fortress of Tripoli wrote letters about the events in detail and gave them to Uludj Ali, a captain of the region and of high merit, to take them to the Sultan. With his ship he brought the joyous news to Istanbul. God's graced Sultan was very pleased and gave orders for the captain to be "treated in the best way". Uluch Reis was promoted to an envious rank and given a monthly salary of 100 aspers.

He was rewarded for his deeds / because he sacrificed himself for God's religion / Not worth even a red copper coin / his name became as valuable as green gem stone/Received honour and glory from the Sultan / such he would never have dreamt of.

(In April 1560, when the Ottoman navy campaigned under the leadership of Algerian Governor General Piyale Pasha and reached the island of Euboa...) a renowned captain who was once a pirate, sent his equal and peer Kaya Chelebi along with two of his ships. He also sent Kaya Chelebi to Chuka Island of Venetian land to implore about the place and also sent him to France and other heathen countries to collect information for the royal navy. Uludj ordered him to keep an eye if they dispatch a frigate. Kaya Chelebi left with his men in broad daylight while many watched. (...) Two more ships were sent. But although they found no trace of the enemy, news arrived that Uludj Ali, the famous captain, had come across a big ship of the ill-named heathens. The ships that should have accompanied him were not alongside him, so he was alone. Climbing the mast himself under disguise and observing the surroundings, the ill-named enemy's ships saw Uludj Ali Reis at the observation post and immediately fired onto him a fireball like a dragon's breath. The cannonball went past by the devoted and the faithful souls so close that its wind knocked this skilful captain off his mind and blow up his cap. Stunned, he struggled down the mast in fear of his life. As he came to himself, the enemy hoping it would succeed, sent a second cannon ball and this one tore off a part of one of the ship's masts. When it passed close to the rudder man and missed the captain's bridge, he thanked God over and over again. Uludj Ali turned his galley, which resembled a sea dragon, around. He ordered the heathen oarsmen to remove their clothes and draw out their swords and Kurdian knives. They opened cannon fire on the enemy galleys from the bow and stern and fired more than thirty cannon balls. As this difficult battle carried on, the three piece armada lying in front of the island's fort were informed. They too set sail against the wind and upon encountering the large enemy galleys, they immediately lowered their sails and rushed to their granaries. Behind them arrived Nasuh Aga's galleys and with their help, the enemy galley was saved from sinking and towed away. In this battle 55 heathen soldiers and 43 pieces of fire spitting,



thunder striking cannons were taken. Three of these cannons were of bronze. When the news reached the good-natured Pasha, he ordered the oars out of the water. Thousands of thanks were offered. Nasuh Aga received the honour of kissing Uludj Reis's hand and was thus filled with pride.

Uludj Ali also took part in the siege of Djerba Fort and later learned about the tunnel the inhabitants had opened to secretly reach an outside well to use its drinking water. Upon learning about this, «they overtook the well with a heroic battle similar to the one mentioned above, and they filled the well with earth [...] The trenches belonging to veterans Uludj Ali and Ali Perteg Beg reached the coastline. Another well was taken by Ali with our Azebistan veterans».

After the success in the Djerba war, in which he commanded a fleet he is appointed Mutasarrif (governor) of İzmir district. He participated in the Malta expedition in 1565 and on the death of Dragut named beglerbei of Algeria. Fighting the Spaniards in 1569 he conquered Goletta and participated with his fleet in the conquest of Tunis. Contributed to the sultans campaign of Cyprus (1570) by destroying the Maltese fleet, then joined the Empire's fleet stationed at Lepanto Bay, for winter break. At the beginning of October 1571 the allied Christian fleets under the command of Don Juan of Austria arrived at the outskirts of Lepanto. At the meeting of the Ottoman generals and admirals he reminded them that the ships need to repair after six months activities at sea, and the lack of sailors and fighters as mostly they had been send to their towns for winter vacation. As the Christian fleet could not enter the bay, his proposal was to avoid any engagement by not leaving the bay. The chief commander Müezzinzade refused this proposal as well as Ali's formula for tactics in confronting the Christian fleet at sea. The Ottoman fleet suffered its greatest defeat on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 1571, while Uludj Ali was the only admiral able to save some forty or more ships from destruction, by escaping genuisly from the encirclement. Some Turkish historians named this defeat of the Ottoman fleet *singun* which means «disarray».

He was received as a hero in Istanbul by the Sultan, his nickname was changed to Kildj Ali (which means sword) because he was able to break through the allied line like a sword and appointed Kaptanı Derya (Chief admiral). In its imperial decree the sultan describes him as a person who «deserved to be appointed because of his expertise in the naval art, his capacity of discipline among the victorious soldiers, his repeated efforts to protect the honour of the religion and

state». And he was immediately charged with the urgent reconstruction of the fleet. When he complained from the lack of financial and technical necessities, the grand vizir Sokullu – a recruited Janissary himself – replied:

The power and the capacity of this Sublime Porte is such that, even if all the anchors of the ships will be ordered from silver, all the ropes from silk thread, and all the sails from satin, it is possible. Whatever supplies will not be sufficient, you will receive it directly from me on this basis.

Sokullu also warned the Venitian ambassador: «By conquering Cyprus, Ottoman State cut an arm, while at Lepanto Christians shaved only the beard. A cut off arm cannot grow anymore, while the beard will come out even stronger». Indeed, the construction of the fleet which started according Selaniki Mustafa Efendi's history, on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 1571 was completed in 120 days. By June 1572 the Ottoman fleet under the command of Kildij Ali Pasha started its expeditions in the Mediterranean. It aimed to show the continuity of the Ottoman Empire's power in the Mediterranean as before. Its effect was felt immediately by European allies. Both Venitian and Spanish fleets avoided any skirmish, while the Ottoman fleet behaved also cautiously and sufficed by attacking only the Pulian coasts under Spanish rule. Furthermore, Venitian-Spanish discord had also its effect. Venice accepted a peace treaty with former status quo and according Ottoman documents, to pay three hundred thousand ducat indemnity plus to continue its yearly allotments; which means that Lepanto did not have its expected political result. Nearly for the next two hundred years – apart from the Cretan War – the Ottoman State will not be disturbed seriously in the Mediterranean. As it is described by the Encyclopaedia Britannica «The immediate practical effect of Lepanto was small, its moral effect was great; the battle was glorified in paintings by Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese and others». It must be added that fantastic street demonstrations all over Italy and Central Europe were organized to display Turkish prisoners and flags.

On the Ottoman side, the satisfaction was based on the feeling of trust to the mühtedis. Experts agree that the shipyard was modernized and the Ottoman fleet equipped and constructed according the latest technologies under his guidance. The system worked perfectly and the achievements of Kildij Ali continued till his death as the chief admiral. In 1574 he participated at the command of the Ottoman

fleet in the definitive conquest of Tunisia from the Spaniards. In 1582 he was at the head of the fleet to change the ruler of Crimea according to the Sublime Porte's policy.

In the last years of his life he concentrated on the construction of mosques and foundations for their upkeep. He decided to invest his fortune due to the generous gifts of the sultan, to an imposing mosque on the Bosphorus shore near the Tophane, cannon foundry of the empire. A special order was issued by the sultan in July 1578 to the iron mines for providing, amount paid but with priority, the necessary material without delay. He was very rich and revered. When the grand vizir Ibrahim Pasha married the daughter of Safiye Sultan he was bridegroom's best man. The bridal veil and bed net he presented were worth 50 thousand gold. Even he paid the repair expenses of the shipyard at Sarayburnu, near the sultan's palace of Topkapi. The waqf (trust fund) he set up for the expenses of his mosque is composed of a Turkish bath and some buildings constructed nearby. This quarter of Istanbul is still named after him, Kılıç Ali Paşa Mahallesi. The mosque is constructed by the chief architect of the empire, famous Mimar Sinan.

The Friday prayer is the most important worship for Muslims. He used to perform his Friday rituals always in his own mosque and enjoyed very much to distribute personally alms to the poor. He liked to hand over whatever he had in his pocket and if they were too many, without hesitating borrowed money from nearby friends to satisfy the needy. 27<sup>th</sup> June 1587, aged more than eighty, he came again to his mosque, made his prayer, distributed alms and returned to his palace. Since twenty days he was not feeling too well. With some medicaments it was going better but not behaving according to his age. Doctors warned him: "You must abstain from relation with woman!" He didn't mind and 'while playing with a young girl, his soul flew from his body to the other world.' In his palace 50 thousand gold coins were found. Also the sale of his property provided 500 thousand gold which were transferred to the State treasury<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> A. Refik, *Kılıç Ali Paşa Camii*, (From his book titled *Kafes ve Ferace Devrinde İstanbul*), «Akşam newspaper», April 20, 1936, p. 6. A Christian slave Michael Heberer who worked in the Ottoman fleet's dockyard between 1585-1588, describes the death of Kılıç Ali as a murder in a boat, because he named the sultan's daughter – wife of the grand vizir – as a prostitute, and adds fantastic details about the killers' efforts to prove that *he died with a natural death (Osmanlı'da Bir Köle - Brettenli Michael Heberer'in Anıları 1585-1588, Kitap yay., İstanbul, 2003)*. In our opinion this shows the reaction of a Christian to a renegade who contributed so much to the victory of Islam.

