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SAYYIDA AL-HURRA: AN ANALYSIS OF THE BIOGRAPHIES OF THE "CORSAIR QUEEN," THE ONLY WOMAN TO RULE MOROCCO (16TH CENTURY)

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Resumo

Sayyida al-Hurra foi governadora de Tétouan e aliada dos corsários que operavam no Mediterrâneo contra os reinos cristãos. O estudo de suas biografias, tendo em vista as limitações impostas por este gênero literário e evitando as armadilhas que se colocam ao pensar sobre uma trajetória de vida, nos permite conhecer quem era esta pessoa singular, a única mulher a governar o Marrocos, e entender seus feitos.

Palavras-chave

Sayyida al-Hurra; Marrocos; corsário; Tétouan; Mediterâneo; Granada.

Abstract

Sayyida al-Hurra was the governor of Tétouan and an ally to the corsairs who worked in the Mediterranean against the Christian kingdoms. The study of her biographies (bearing in mind the limitations imposed by this literary genre and avoiding the traps of thinking about a life trajectory), allows us to know who was this singular person, the only woman to rule Morocco, and understands her deeds.

Keywords

Sayyida al-Hurra; Morocco; corsair; Tétouan; Mediterranean; Granada.

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This study examines some biographies of Sayyida al-Hurra and establishes a historiographical debate about her deeds and life. For this, we will primarily base this study on Spanish Arabist Rodolfo Gil Grimau's article *Sayyida al-Hurra, mujer Maroqui de origen Andalusi* (published in the journal *Anaquel of Arab Studies* in 2000) and in the article *Sit al-Horra Gouvernante de Tétouan et armatrice de navires corsaires au XVIe siécle* by Leila Maziane, professor of modern history at Université Hassan II de Casablanca. This historiographical analysis of these texts and of the supporting bibliography aims to further understand Sayyida al-Hurra—important figure in the history of Morocco and the western Mediterranean.

Moroccan, Andalusian, governor, corsair, and sultana: these words describe Sayyida al-Hurra's life trajectory. A daughter of refugees from the kingdom of Granada, she rose to governor of Tétouan, ally of the corsairs in the Mediterranean, and sultana of Morocco. As the biographies this study will analyze show, she knew how to carry out the game of political alliances needed to remain in power for more than 30 years (with the help of figures such as the sultan of Morocco and the famous corsair Barbarossa). Moreover, to this day, she holds the distinction of having been the only woman to govern Morocco, living up to the title granted to her, al-Hurra: the free one.

Considering that we will be working with biographies, Pierre Bourdieu's considerations in his text *The Biographical Illusion* must be considered, that is, in a certain way, when we seek a certain coherence in al-Hurra's trajectory, we run the risk of fictionalizing it in such a way that the line between what is real and fiction becomes even more blurred.

Since Sayyida al-Hurra may be a title rather than her actual name, much of the personal information about her is limited. Any attempts to trace her life trajectory will inevitably be linked to the broader context of Morocco and the Mediterranean in the 16th century. Thus, this study will seek to describe the context of the space in which her life developed (Bourdieu, 2008: 183-191).

According to Grimau, Sayyida al-Hurra was the daughter of Mawlay Ali Ibn Rashid, emir and founder of Chefchaouen[3], and Lalla Zohra Fernandez, a Mudéjar, that is, a Muslim woman from the Iberian Peninsula, originally from Vejer de La Frontera, near Cádiz (Grimau, 2000: 314). Richard Pennel, in his book *Morocco: From Empire to Independence*, states that Mawlay Ali Ibn Rashid left Spain with his wife in 1471, migrating to Morocco. There he built a kasbah, a North African-style citadel in the Jibala Mountains near the tomb of Sufi

[3] A city also known as Chaouen, Xauen, or Shuan. This study will use the name Chefchaouen.

scholar Mawlay Abd al-Salam bin Mashish from which he attacked the Portuguese. As refugees from Granada settled in the region, Chefchaouen grew around the fortress (Pennel, 2003: 73). Leila Maziane indicates the rare and contradictory Arabic and Hispanic sources about al-Hurra's origins, despite corroborating Grimau's statement about her parents.

Mawlay Ali Ibn Rashid is said to have served as a military man to the last rulers of Grenada and to have fled with his family to Chefchaouen. Al-Hurra's date and place of birth would be uncertain (whether in Granada or Chefchaouen). Maziane suggests that, according to historians, she was born either in 1485 or 1493, getting married at the age of 16 in either 1500, 1510, or 1512 (Maziane, 2019: 294-295). Since Pennel suggests that her parents migrated to Morocco in 1471, her birth in 1485 or 1493 would have taken place in North Africa.

Fatima Mernissi, in her book *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, describes Sayyida al-Hurra's family and youth:

> Her Family, the Banu Rashid, was a Family of Andalusian notables, who like many others decided to return to North Africa after the fall of Granada. The life of Sayyida al-Hurra began amid the anxieties of exile and the uncertainties experienced by all the Andalusian refugees who fled the Inquisition. (Mernissi, 2006: 18)

As we have said and according to Mernissi, the name "Sayyida al-Hurra" refers to the title—rather than her real name—the contemporary Spanish and Portuguese documentation gave to her (Mernissi, 2006: p. 19). Grimau indicates that her name could have been Aisha since the title "al-Hurra," meaning "the free one," could only have been attributed to her after she had taken the government of Tétouan (Grimau, 2000: 315). Maziane points out that the question of her name is worthy of attention as Arab chroniclers would hesitate to describe a woman as such even if she were a ruler.

> The title of al-Hurra (the free one) in itself calls for reflection. In the social and power hierarchy of Muslim societies, being free or servile is a fundamental marker. If they call her "hurra" (free), it is to undoubtedly underline her belonging to the appropriate circles for the exercise of power. In a period marked by wars, corsairs, captivity, and religious conversions, it is important to emphasize that this woman (who governs men) is of free and not servile origin. Freedom does not have the current meaning of the word. Arabic sources also describe her as "sayyida," and we think that this is not fortuitous because this qualifier places her among the "masters" (al asyâd) so as not to go further and describe her as Charîfa, given the religious burden of belonging to the lineage of the prophet. Her family belonged to a Chorfa, Grenadine, and Moroccan lineage. In European sources, she appears under the title "Sayyida al-Hurra" (the free

> lady) or, in similar phonetically distorted ways, as: Sida-el-Horra, Citalforra, Al Horra, Cyti al-Horra, Cyte Alhorra, etc.[4] (Maziane, 2019: 296 - 297)

According to Maziane, sources indicate that Sayyida al-Hurra and her brother Mulay Ibrahim would have received education by sheikhs and Moroccan notables, including names such as Abdallah el Habtî and Abdallah al-Ghazwâni. She was also educated by her mother, whose education in Castilian culture and language enabled her to participate in the diplomatic game with the Iberian kingdoms (Maziane, 2019: 296). On the other hand, her brother would reach the position of governor of Fez, supporting his sister in the exercise of power (Grimau, 2000: 315).

Governor of Tétouan

At the age of 16, Sayyida al-Hurra would marry Ali al-Manzari or Abu Hasan al-Mandari[5] , a man 30 years older than her, then governor of Tétouan. According to Grimau, he may have met al-Hurra's father, Ibn Rashid, during the wars in Granada. Ali al-Manzari is said to have founded a fort near Tétouan to form a corsair base against the Iberian kingdoms. The place attracted other refugees from Granada, who rebuilt Tétouan, granting al-Manzari the title of founder of Tétouan (Grimau, 2000: 315).

However, uncertainty persists as to whether the al-Manzari whom Sayyida al-Hurra married was the one who founded Tétouan (rather than a successor of his by the same name). Mernissi indicates that some sources suggest that it was the founder of Tétouan, who would have delegated the government of Tétouan to al-Hurra due to his advanced age and loss of sight. Other sources suggest that it was al-Manzari's son who put her in government since he respected her administrative skills, putting her in his place when he had to travel (Mernissi,

[4] *Déjà le qualificatif d'Al-Horra (la libre), lui-même, appelle une réflexion. Dans la hiérarchie sociale et du pouvoir dans les sociétés musulmanes, être de condition libre ou servile est un marqueur fondamental. Si les sources la qualifient de «Horra» (libre), c'est pour mettre en valeur sans doute, son appartenance aux milieux aptes à exercer le pouvoir. Dans une période marquée par les guerres, la course, les captivités et les conversions religieuses, il est importante que cette femme qui gouverne des hommes soit d'origine libre et non servile. La liberté n'ayant pas le sens actuel du mot. Les sources arabes aussi la qualifient en même temps de «sayyida» et nous pensons que ce n'est pas fortuit, car ce qualificatif la range parmi les «maîtres» (al asyâd) pour ne pas franchir le pas et la qualifier de Charîfa avec toute la charge religieuse d'appartenir à la lignée du prophète. Sa famille étant déjà de lignée Chorfa, grenadine et marocaine. Dans les sources européennes, elle apparait sous le qualificatif «sayyida al horra» (La dame libre), ou d'une manière plus ou moins déformée phonétiquement: Sida-el-Horra, Citalforra, Al Horra, Cyti al- Horra, Cyte Alhorra, etc.*

[5] Different sources suggest different names for the same man. This study will use "al-Manzari."

2006: 19). On the other hand, Grimau acknowledges that her husband may have been al-Manzari's successor, mentioning historian Gozálbes Busto, who states that she would have married the founder of Tétouan, who would pass the government affairs to his wife due to his age and blindness (Grimau, 2000: 316).

Grimau points out that the Portuguese crown controlled stretches of the Moroccan coast due to its search for a new route to India in the African coast (Grimau, 2000: 311-312). Guillermo Gozálbes Busto, in his article *La nobleza granadina en la fundación y desarolo de Tétuan (siglos XV al XVIII)*, states that Morocco was experiencing a serious economic and political crisis in this period that enabled the Portuguese to take Ceuta and conduct incursions from there against northern Morocco that culminated in the destruction of Tétouan in 1437 (Busto, 1992: 141). Richard Pennel offers more information about this political crisis. The Wattasid dynasty had taken power over Morocco without conquering its entire territory, which would explain its weakness and inability to resist the Portuguese advance (Pennel, 2003: 72).

Grimau points out that the discovery of a path to India via the Cape of Good Hope can explain the economic crisis in Morocco. Moroccans had long benefited from their position as intermediaries between Europeans and the gold, salt, and slave caravans from southern Sahara. These markets collapsed with the Portuguese maritime discoveries, which damaged the condition of all states that depended on their intermediate position. In addition to Morocco, Egypt lost its independence and became a vassal of the Ottoman empire, and the Christian kingdoms took the kingdom of Granada in the *Reconquista* (Grimau, 2000: 311-312).

Guillermo Gozálbes Busto indicates that al-Manzari, al-Hurra's husband, would have been alcaide of Píñar in the service of Boabdil, the last sultan of Granada. Due to the internal divisions of the kingdom of Granada and its imminent defeat by the Catholic Monarchs, he left the Iberian Peninsula for Morocco. There, along with other refugees from Andalusia, he occupied and rebuilt the once-ruined Tétouan. Gozálbes Busto states that al-Manzari lived until 1540, although his wife already exercised real power over the city at that point (Busto, 1992: 143 -145).

Rodolfo Gil Grimau and Leila Maziane offer contradictory accounts of the couple's children. Grimau claims that they had two daughters, one who married a son of Hasan Hasim from Granada named Ahmed (on whom Sayyida al-Hurra would have relied during her rule after the death of her husband) and another who would have married a man named Abu Ali, also from Granada (Grimau, 2000: 316). On the other hand, Maziane claims that the couple would

have had only one only daughter, who married a man named Hassen Mandari, possibly the same person whom Grimau calls Ahmed (Maziane, 2019: 299).

Maziane points to the friendship between al-Manzari and Ibn Rashid, indicating that the marriage was arranged to maintain control of Tétouan in the hands of the Grenadian aristocracy. She also states that al-Hurra was involved in political affairs from the beginning, effectively exercising power as her husband's health deteriorated (Maziane, 2019: 297 -298).

On the other hand, Richard Pennel indicates that Sayyida al-Hurra's father had given shelter to Sidi Abu Hasan al-Manzari in Chefchaouen before the latter moved to the ruins of Tétouan, rebuilding it with the help of refugees from Andalusia to then dedicate themselves to corsair attacks against the Spanish coast. Pennel suggests that al-Manzari's grandson married Sayyida al-Hurra to establish the alliance between Chefchaouen and Tétouan (Pennel, 2003: 74).

With al-Manzari's death, the government of Tetóuan would pass to al-Hurra's brother Ibrahim. However, he had become governor of Fez and would become Grand Vizier of Sultan Ahmed al-Wattasi in 1528, appointing his sister as governor of Tétouan (Maziane, 2019: 298). Upon taking the government, Sayyida al-Hurra would cultivate her own power relations in Tétouan, which would become a refuge and base for corsairs operating against the Iberian kingdoms. According to Mernissi, she would rule Tétouan for more than 30 years (1510-1542), forging alliances with famous corsairs such as Barbarossa, the legendary Redbeard, who then operated in Algiers. Together with refugees from Granada, he organized a corsair fleet that undertook expeditions against Portuguese and Spanish territories, supporting himself with booty and collecting ransoms from war captives (Mernissi, 2006: 18-19).

Maziane attributes the lack of a strong army to the corsair activities in Tétouan during her rule. To ensure their success, she sought to establish alliances with other port cities in the Maghreb, with Barbarossa's Argiel being the greatest ally of Tétouan in conflicts against Christians (Maziane, 2019: 301-303). As Albert Hourani points out in his book *A history of the Arab peoples*, Algiers was the main center of power of the Ottoman Empire in the Maghreb. The imperial navy, housed in Algiers, practiced piracy against Christian kingdom ships, receiving funding and support from local merchants and rulers. A similar case occurred in other cities in the Maghreb, such as Tripoli and Tunis, which also participated in pirate activity, sharing in the profits from the sale of captured goods and from the collection of ransom by the captives (Hourani, 2021: 304-305).

Maziane points out that in 1531, more than 68 Turkish ships originating in Algiers would stop by Tétouan, disturbing the kingdoms of Portugal and Spain,

which came to suspect that the production of wheat and bread in Tétouan in the period financed Algerian corsairs (Maziane, 2019: 301-303).

> A letter from Gibraltar informs us that, on the night between September 9 to 10, the corsairs of Algiers, with a fleet also composed of five units armed by the governor of Tétouan, headed by the Raïs Kara Mami and Ali Hamet, arrived unexpectedly in Gibraltar. Theirs was a great looting. There they kidnapped large numbers of captives, sailing to the port of Tétouan to free themselves of some of these captives (more than 80 women and children), gathering in Badis to anchor their ships on September 14. The Turkish flotilla did not depart until September 30, after Wattasid Sultan Abu Hassûn, lord of the place, paid ransom for the captives at the price of 5000 ducats, which he soon demanded in payment from the city of Gibraltar[6] (Maziane, 2019: 303, our translation).

Thus, Sayyida al-Hurra was directly involved in the activities of the Maghreb corsairs, with whom she shared interests and looting profits. This alliance also protected the city against possible reprisals from the Europeans against the obstacle that corsairs represented for commercial practices in the Mediterranean (Maziane, 2019: 303-305). Even with prohibitions, there persisted a "silent" trade (as Maziane states) between the coast of Africa and Europe. Tétouan would also profit by mainly trading captives from several geographical locations via contacts with the outside world ensured by the authority of Fez (Maziane, 2019: 305).

Such trade is no surprise. Jerry Brotton, in his book *The Renaissance Bazaar: From the silk road to Michelangelo*, shows that the Mediterranean was an important trade route encompassing Africa, Asia, and Europe since the Roman Empire (Brotton, 2010: p. 38). The Ottoman Turks' seizure of Constantinople would do little to change this as it would only levy taxes on such trade (Brotton, 2010: 50). The relationship between women and commercial activity was common throughout the African continent, although the case in North Africa may have differed due to the private status the Islamic faith imposed on women.

The Granada refugees dedicated themselves to and supported corsair activities, aiming to weaken the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula towards a possible return to Andalusia (Mernissi, 2006: 18). Still, according to Grimau, al-Hurra's support for corsair activities would earn her enmities with outsiders

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[6] *Une lettre émanant de la ville de Gibraltar nous informe que, dans la nuit du 9 au 10 septembre 1540, les corsaires d'Alger, avec une flotte composée également de cinq unités armées par la gouvernante, ayant à leur tête les raïs Kara Mami et Ali Hamet, arrivent à l'improviste à Gibraltar. Ils y firent un grand butin et de nombreux captifs avant de cingler vers le port de Tétouan pour se défaire d'une partie des prises, soit plus de 80 femmes et enfants et rejoindre Badis, le 14 septembre, pour caréner leurs navires. La flottille turque n'en repartit que le 30 septembre après que le sultan wattasside Abû Hassûn, maître des lieux, ait racheté tous les captifs au prix de 5000 ducats, dont il ne tardera pas à réclamer le paiement à la ville de Gibraltar.*

and Moroccans, who suffered the reprisals of the Iberian kingdoms (Grimau, 2000: 317).

Deposition and fall

In 1539, Sayyida al-Hurra's main supporter, her brother Ibrahim, died in Fez. According to Grimau, the government of Chefchaouen passed to her half-brother Sidi Muhammad, with whom she had a poor relationship, and who would try from then on to intervene in the politics in Tétouan. According to Grimau, Sayyida al-Hurra's two daughters' husbands would also oppose each other (Grimau, 2000: 317). However, Maziane states that she sought to strengthen relations with her son-in-law Hassen Mandari to maintain her power over Tétouan (Maziane, 2019: 299).

To secure her power over the city, Sayyida al-Hurra proposed a political marriage to the Sultan of Morocco Ahmed El Wattassi, celebrated on June 30, 1541, in Tétouan. The marriage was seen as mutually benefiting both parties. She gained the sultan's political support, whereas he secured his authority over Tétouan. According to Maziane, this would enable al-Hurra to secure her authority in diplomatic and military matters as it would represent the will of the sultan in northwestern Morocco (Maziane, 2019: 299).

The wedding also represented a milestone in the history of Morocco. According to Mernissi, to show that she had no intention of relinquishing her political authority in northern Morocco, Sayyida al-Hurra asked the sultan to leave his capital in Fez and come to celebrate the wedding ceremony in Tétouan; the only time in the history of Morocco in which the sultan got married outside the capital (Mernissi, 2006: 18). For Grimau, this fact suggests that the sultan would have much to gain by marrying a subject that far from the capital, believing that that would maintain a lineage that would guarantee order in the north of the country (Grimau, 2000: 317-318). Pennel indicates that this showed the difference in power between the two, hers so exceeding his that she was able to force him to travel to Tétouan for the wedding (Pennel, 2003: 74).

In our view, the marriage and the title of sultana may have failed to help her maintain her power. As Pennel states, although they dominated it, the Wattasid had little power over Morocco. They sent no aid to the kingdom of Granada, a traditional ally, when it was succumbing to the *Reconquista*; even then, they were unable to defend the Moroccan coast from the advance of the Iberian forces. Her subjects complained of excessive taxes to maintain the constant state of war. The relatively poorly regarded refugees from Granada competed with

local artisans and merchants, despite many being Muslims and waging war against the Iberian kingdoms. Hence the assertion of the weak power of Sultan Ahmed El Wattasi, who had to agree to marry outside the capital, perhaps considering, ironically, that the power of Sayyida al-Hurra could preserve his rule (Pennel, 2003, 72 - 75).

Also, the Portuguese governor of Ceuta, in response to the governor's support for the Maghreb corsairs, ordered the closure of the Ceuta port to all Tétouan trade, which damaged Tétouan, Portuguese, and Spanish merchants; forcing the sultan to intervene diplomatically in the situation (Grimau, 2000: 318).

> Her disputes with the captain of Ceuta, Affonso de Noronha, who decides to stop the trade, and the measures taken by the government to close the port of Tétouan, in turn, had repercussions on the interests of merchants on both sides. The Iberians, as is the case of Bastião de Vargas, agent of the king of Portugal D. João III to Morocco, often speak harshly of her, as this passage shows: "She is very bellicose and temperamental in all matters."[7] (Maziane, 2019: 299 - 300)

Grimau and Maziane offer similar accounts of her removal from power. Maziane indicates that Sayyida al-Hurra maintains her loyalty to the Wattasid dynasty even when another dynasty, that of the Saadi, begins to maneuver to take Morocco. Moreover, her son-in-law Hassen Mandari's father led the movement that overthrows her from power (Maziane, 2019: 300). On the other hand, Grimau indicates that, on October 22, 1542, her son-in-law Ahmed's father, Hasan Hasim, led a group of knights from Fez and, with the connivance of factions opposed to the governor in Tétouan, removed her from office and confiscated her property. However, he also states that the details of the "coup d'état" against al-Hurra are obscure, claiming that he neither knows the extent her daughters and husbands would have conspired against her nor the extent the sultan would have tried to protect his wife (Grimau, 2000: 318). Yet, both authors agree that this event marked the end of Sayyida al-Hurra's political life. Expelled from Tétouan, she returned to Chefchaouen, dedicating her isolated life to religious affairs. She died there about 20 years later (Maziane, 2019: 300).

The Tétouan government would pass to her son-in-law Ahmed Hassen, who ruled it with an autonomy resembling that of his predecessor, refusing to subject to the Saadi, the new dynasty that would take power in Morocco. According to Gozalbes Busto, he would have revolted against Sayyida al-Hurra's feminine power, the only example of a woman ruling a Maghreb city. Hassen would

[7] *Ses démêlés avec le Capitaine de Ceuta, Affonso de Noronha qui décide d'interrompre le commerce, et les mesures prises par la gouvernante de fermer à son tour le port de Tétouan n'étaient pas sans répercussion sur les intérêts des commerçants des deux camps. Les Ibériques, comme c'est le cas de Bastião de Vargas, agent du roi du Portugal Jean III au Maroc, s'expriment souvent à son sujet avec sévérité comme le montre ce passage : « C'est une femme très belliqueuse et très emportée en tout ».*

govern until around 1562, when documents from the period suggest that another governor would have succeeded him (Busto, 1992: 145- 146).

Fatima Mernissi describes Sayyida al-Hurra as the undisputed leader of pirates in the Western Mediterranean, an Andalusian Moroccan who played a key role as governor of Tétouan, a rival of the Portuguese and Spanish in the diplomatic game. She indicates that the community of Tétouan became used to seeing her exercise authority and accepted her as governor without opposition. By allying herself with Barbarossa and organizing his fleet, she launched a long corsair campaign across the Mediterranean against the Christian kingdoms. However, as remarkable as her rule was, Mernissi points out that Muslim historians treated her with a "contemptuous silence" since looking for information about her in Arab sources yields little information (Mernissi, 2006: 18-19).

Leila Maziane indicates how, in a context of political instability, Sayyida al-Hurra was able to impose herself in an environment normally reserved for men in Moroccan society. While she can be described as the only woman to wield sovereign power in Morocco, her power depended on a network of alliances and family connections; as soon as that network was undone, her power was lost (Maziane, 2019: 306).

At a time of transformations (such as the threshold between what is known as the Middle Ages and the Modern Age), Sayyida al-Hurra had to exercise power by adapting to Moroccan society in the face of the Grenadian refugees and the efforts of the new Portuguese, Spanish, and Ottoman empires. For Rodolfo Gil Grimau, she was able to govern because she had been immersed in politics since her childhood since she was the daughter of the governor of Chefchaouen and the wife of the founder of Tétouan. However, he states that the fact that no one openly opposed her fall suggests that her being a ruling woman was not yet something that could be sustained without support—first from her husband and later from her brother—in Moroccan male society (Grimau, 2000, 319). However, the fact that she was worthy of the trust of both is undeniable.

Final Considerations

Due to the unique nature of her government and the historical context in which she was inserted, Sayyida al-Hurra stands out as a ruler, diplomat, and military leader. Her efforts brought prosperity to the city her husband founded; and, if not in Arab historiography, the letters and writings of the Portuguese and Spanish (against whom she dedicated a good part of her efforts) immortalized her diplomatic maneuvers and her corsair leadership. Her downfall, while it

may have been caused by her gender, was also largely brought about by political maneuvering and changes in her historical context, such as the advance of the Saadi against the Wattasid, which contributed to weakening her political power. More than her fall, the fact that she ruled for 32 years with the respect of her sultan and notable figures such as the Ottoman corsair Barbarossa make her time as ruler an important object of study in the history of Morocco.

This study referred to Sayyida al-Hurra as a corsair queen in view of her leadership role to the Tétouan corsairs. They operated, if not with the blessings, certainly with the connivance of the Moroccan state. Sayyida al-Hurra's alliances with Algerian corsairs such as Barbarossa (who would later become an admiral in the Ottoman navy) suggests that the activities of the Tétouan corsairs would have had the knowledge and possible support of the Ottoman Empire, which benefited from their attacks against the Iberian kingdoms.

Despite historiographical uncertainties as to the real identity of her husband (whether it was the al-Manzari who had fought against the Christian kings in Granada and who rebuilt Tétouan or one of his descendants), while she lived, Sayyida al-Hurra surely ruled Tétouan on his behalf and his consent, continuing to do so after his death with the support of her brother without any attacks on her government from Tétouan citizens. On the contrary, the sources suggest that they accepted her rule and, perhaps due to a desire for revenge for being exiled from the kingdom of Granada, collaborated with her government and engaged in corsair activities against the Iberian kingdoms. It is a testament to her power that she was the only female governor in the history of Morocco and the only woman to marry a Moroccan sultan outside his capital. Above all, she proved herself worthy of her title, al-Hurra, the free, for later historiography.

Her story suggests a symbiotic relationship between male and female roles, which should be seen in a complementary rather than a dual way, in which other issues, such as her capacity for articulation and political leadership (which had made her "free") have a more preponderant meaning in her rise than gendered disputes that perhaps made little sense at that historical time.

Chronology

1415 – Ceuta is occupied by the Portuguese.

1437 – Tétouan is destroyed by the Portuguese.

1471 - Mawlay Ali Ibn Rashid and his wife leave Spain to found Chefchaouen.

1484 or 1485 – al-Manzari leaves for North Africa, in which he rebuilds Tétouan with refugees from Granada.

1485 or 1493 – Sayyida al-Hurra is born.

1500, 1510, or 1512 – Sayyida al-Hurra marries al-Manzari.

1528 - Ibrahim, brother of Sayyida al-Hurra, becomes Grand Vizier of the Moroccan sultan Ahmed al-Wattasi.

1531 – Corsairs from Tétouan and Turkish corsairs sack Gibraltar.

1539 – Ibrahim, brother of Sayyida al-Hurra, dies.

1541 – Sayyida al-Hurra marries the Sultan of Morocco Ahmed al-Wattasi.

1542 – Sayyida al-Hurra is removed from the government of Tétouan.

Around 1562 – Sayyida al-Hurra dies.

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