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DIPLOMATIC HISTORY AS A FIELD FOR CULTURAL ANALYSIS: MUSLIM–CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN TUNIS, 1700–1840*

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ABSTRACT. *Diplomatic documents which record the relationship between France and the court of the bey of Tunis from the late seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century offer a unique source to understand the way in which cultures with very different assumptions meet and adapt to each other. The ceremonies of submission and reverence had to be adapted to meet European understandings of the state and nation while taking account of Muslim attitudes to infidels. The French Revolution introduced new criteria and new tensions which continued to vex relations into the nineteenth century. This double mirror of 'Otherness' raises interesting questions about the nature of culture and how cultures prove to be very flexible in practice. In spite of the dichotomization of the Others as strangers, there was agreement on common norms governing social situations where actors effectively interacted.*

I

In the Christian imagination of the ancien régime, the 'Barbaresque' corsairs occupied a place apart as 'Others' *par excellence*, dressed up in the stereotype of the pitiless enemies of Christendom. In the representations of the 'Barbaresques', the power of the call to crusade survived until colonial times. At the time of the conquest of Algiers, French propaganda fed on religious and secular arguments and asserted the merit of having cleaned up a nest of pirates, even though Mediterranean privateering, which had never been the sole preserve of the Maghrebis, by then belonged to the past.[1]

European legal doctrine raised uncertainties about the legal personality of the Muslim powers of the Mediterranean. If the theory and the diplomatic practice of the eighteenth century considered that the universal principles of

* The author would like to thank James Turpin for his help in translating this text into English. This article presents some results of the author's unpublished *Habilitationsschrift*: *La diplomatie comme expérience de l'Autre*: *consuls français au Maghreb 1700–1840* (University of Basel, 1999).

[1] See Ann Thomson, *Barbary and Enlightenment: European attitudes towards the Maghreb in the eighteenth century* (Leiden, 1987). On the myth of crusade, see Alphonse Dupront, *Mythe de Croisade* (4 vols., Paris, 1997).

natural law applied to non-Europeans, the development of public international law excluded the latter from the evolving diplomatic order of revolutionary and post-revolutionary Europe, which was limited to the European and American states alone that were considered to be civilized in the tradition of the Enlightenment.[2] For the European chancelleries of the nineteenth century, the question was formulated in terms of a possible admission 'to the advantages of public law and the concert of Europe', as was conceded to the Sublime Porte by the Treaty of Paris in 1856.[3] Yet, the absence of a precise definition of legal status had not prevented the European powers from concluding treaties with the Ottoman regencies of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli nor from granting functions of political representation – in the case of France with the formal diplomatic rank of chargé d'affaires – to the consuls that they maintained in the Maghreb, whilst also negotiating capitulations with the Porte and maintaining diplomatic representation in Constantinople.

Muslim attitudes were characterized by analogous contradictions, between a hostility in principle and the multiple forms of a pragmatic search for legal security with regard to Christendom. The discourse on Christianity as the *dār al-ḥarb* (the lands of war), resulting from the belief in the divine origin of law, denied the legitimacy of all legal order outside of the lands of Islam (*dār al-Islām*). From this perspective the promises of protection in favour of Christians and Jews depended on recognition of the dominance of Islam.[4] In this manner Muslim jurists attempted to provide points of reference that legitimized and homogenized highly heterogeneous practices, which did not necessarily obey theological formulations of power.[5]

In the eighteenth century, diplomatic relations between France or Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire and the regencies of the Maghreb were only disturbed by brief episodes of military conflict.[6] Maghrebis and Europeans respected, in their contacts, a body of common rules, set out in treaties and through custom, that French practitioners of the time – consuls, dragomans,

[2] See Jörg Fisch, *Die europäische Expansion und das Völkerrecht: die Auseinandersetzungen um den Status der überseeischen Gebiete vom 15. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 284–7.

[3] Hans Kruse, *Islamische Völkerrechtslehre* (2nd edn, Bochum, 1979), pp. 163–70. See Jörg Manfred Mössner, *Die Völkerrechtspersönlichkeit und die Völkerrechtspraxis der Barbareskenstaaten* (*Algier, Tripolis, Tunis 1518–1830*) (Berlin, 1968), pp. 148–57, on opinions concerning the regencies of the Maghreb.

[4] On the legal conceptions of relations between Muslims and infidels: Majid Khadduri, *War and peace in the law of Islam* (2nd edn, Baltimore, 1955); Kruse, *Islamische Völkerrechtslehre*. Cf. the articles 'Amān', 'Dār al-ᶜahd', 'Dār al-ḥarb', 'Dār al-Islām', 'Dār al-ṣulḥ', 'Dhimma', 'Djihād', 'Imtiyāzāt', 'Muᶜāhada' in the *Encyclopédie de l'Islam. Nouvelle édition*, vols. I, II, III, VII (Leiden, 1960, 1965, 1971, 1993).

[5] See Jocelyne Dakhlia, *Le divan des rois: le politique et le religieux dans l'Islam* (Paris, 1998).

[6] On relations between Great Britain and the regencies, see Matthew S. Anderson, 'Great Britain and the Barbary States in the eighteenth century', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 29 (1956), pp. 87–107, and Godfrey Fisher, *Barbary legend: war, trade and piracy in North Africa, 1415–1830* (Oxford, 1957). Between France and Tunis, there were only three ruptures, in 1741–2, 1770, and 1798–1802.

clerks of the secretary of state of the marine, then of the ministry of foreign affairs – interpreted as a particular body of law. A specific maritime law that applied only to relations between Muslims and Christians in the Mediterranean notably protected people and possessions of enemies under a neutral flag.[7] The Mediterranean thus appears an important field for the exercise of principles of maritime neutrality that the declaration adopted at the Congress of Paris in 1856 wanted to give universal validity.[8] Whereas the Ottoman capitulations were expressed until the eighteenth century as unilateral promises of security (*amān*), from the second half of the seventeenth century, in the context of a relationship of military inferiority, the regencies of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli concluded with the king of France real treaties, sealed and ratified by the two parties.[9]

Whereas the control of privateering and the security of the French concessions established on the coast, above all for the grain trade, remained, in the eighteenth century, at the centre of Franco–Algerian negotiations, relations with the Regency of Tunis consisted of more varied exchanges that brought European traders and the urban elites closer together. Limited at the beginning of the eighteenth century to France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands, the treaty relations of the Regency of Tunis spread, however, during the century, to the Empire, Sweden, Denmark, Venice, Spain, Portugal, and the United States. Some states of the Italian peninsula excepted, the main Christian states maintained at the end of the century peaceful relations with the Beylik of Tunis. In this relatively small country, governed from the beginning of the eighteenth century by a dynasty of princes who retained the formal title of Ottoman provincial governors (beys) in spite of a large degree of autonomy of the Porte, it is possible to observe more clearly than elsewhere the evolution of diplomatic practice.

In Tunis, privateering had also been an important source of material profits at the time of its apogee in the first half of the seventeenth century. Understood as a maritime form of *djihād*, it contributed until the beginning of the nineteenth century to the legitimization of beylical power. Limited by the capitulations of the Porte and, from the second half of the seventeenth century, by additional treaties directly with the Regency, privateering did not prevent the increasingly close commercial relations that bound the ports of Mediterranean Europe – notably Marseilles and Leghorn – with Tunis. Privateering itself

[7] See, for example, Sartine to Vergennes, Versailles, 28 Nov. 1774, Paris, Archives Nationales (AN), AE B^{I} 1145, fos. 311v–12r.

[8] The Mediterranean practice of these principles, well known to historians of commerce, is widely ignored by historians of international law. This is a good example of how the perception of the international order as a system of relations between states constructed from Europe has obscured the memory of the pre-existing plural Mediterranean diplomatic order.

[9] See the Franco–Tunisian treaties of 25 Nov. 1665, 30 Aug. and 4 Sept. 1685, French versions in Eugène Plantet, ed., *Correspondance des beys de Tunis et des consuls de France avec la Cour, 1577–1830* (3 vols., Paris, 1893–9), I, pp. 182–90, 268–73, 349–57, 366–9. On the treaties see Yvan Debbasch, *La Nation française en Tunisie, 1577–1835* (Paris, 1957), pp. 13–30.

nourished this trade, because the Christian traders did not miss the opportunity to acquire captured goods under favourable conditions.[10]

From the second half of the eighteenth century, the political and economic penetration of the Ottoman Empire and the Maghrebi regencies by the European powers entered, in an increasingly acute way, into the conscience of European contemporaries who began to reflect on the 'Eastern Question'. The cession of the Crimea by the Russo–Ottoman Peace of 1774 also revived within the Ottoman elites debates on the measures required to assure the future of the Empire.[11] Under the reign of Selim III (1789–1807), the introduction of Western forms of organization and techniques spread to diplomacy. The establishment of permanent representations in the main Western capitals and of a specialized administration that formed the core of a foreign affairs ministry led to the integration of the Ottoman Empire into a diplomatic system based on the reciprocity of interstate relations, a process which supposed the acceptance of Western legal concepts.[12]

Relations between the European powers and the Regency of Tunis took place in the same context. During the second half of the eighteenth century, signs of the Regency's growing dependency in relation to European economic centres became increasingly clear. Whereas Tunisian handicrafts – notably the production of *shāshiyya* (woollen caps, exported to the Levant) – then underwent external competition that they could not see off by the mechanization and rationalization of production, its share of grain and olive oil exports increased considerably. In the 1780s, French traders enjoyed in Tunis a predominant position. The Regency received manufactured products of fairly current consumption and it exported bulk agricultural products, wheat, and, above all, olive oil. The developing economic dependence was accompanied by social transformations in favour of those who participated in trade with the European ports, that is to say the beylical family and its entourage as well as rich Arab families of traders, tax-farmers, holders of beylical monopolies, contractors for the supplying of goods and services, financiers, and power-brokers in the provinces.[13]

[10] See Taoufik Bachrouch, *Formation sociale barbaresque et pouvoir à Tunis au XVIIe siècle* (Tunis, 1977); Sadok Boubaker, *La Régence de Tunis au XVIIe siècle: ses relations commerciales avec les ports de l'Europe méditerranéenne, Marseille et Livourne* (Zaghouan, 1987); Mohammed Hédi Cherif, *Pouvoir et société dans la Tunisie de Ḥusayn bin'Alī, 1705–1740* (2 vols., Tunis, 1984–6). On the symbolism of the maritime *djihād* in Algiers, see Houari Touati, *Entre Dieu et les hommes: lettrés, saints et sorciers au Maghreb (17e siècle)* (Paris, 1994), pp. 162–5.

[11] See Virginia H. Aksan, *An Ottoman statesman in war and peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700–1783* (Leiden, 1995); Stanford Jay Shaw, *Between old and new: the Ottoman Empire under Selim III, 1789–1807* (Cambridge, MA, 1971).

[12] Carter Vaughn Findley, *Bureaucratic reform in the Ottoman Empire: the Sublime Porte, 1789–1922* (Princeton, NJ, 1980), pp. 126–40; idem, *Ottoman civil officialdom: a social history* (Princeton, NJ, 1989).

[13] Khater Chater, *Dépendance et mutations précoloniales: la Régence de Tunis de 1815 à 1857* (Tunis, 1984). Leon Carl Brown, *The Tunisia of Ahmad bey, 1837–1855* (Princeton, NJ, 1974), pp. 79–91, on the Tunisian families of traders and intermediaries. On the trade between Sfax and the Levant, see Ali Zouari, *Les relations commerciales entre Sfax et le Levant aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Tunis, 1990).

Whereas the short Franco–Tunisian war of 1770 ended with compromise, the naval expeditions against the 'Barbaresques' after 1815 revealed a new balance of forces decidedly in favour of the European powers.[14] In Tunis, the news of the conquest of Algiers was received ambiguously: the event rid the Ḥusaynites of a neighbour with whom they had always maintained relations of distrust, or even of outright hostility. On the other hand, the conquest of these Muslim lands by a Christian power raised indignation amongst the subjects of the Beylik of Tunis. The French intervention in Algiers was accompanied in Tunis by interference, demonstrations of the overturning of an equilibrium that had assured the autonomy of the Beylik. From 1830, the bey had to sign a treaty with France that summarized his renunciation of everything that in the European view had made singular his relations with the Maghreb: privateering, presents or tributes, Christian slavery, monopolies exercised by the Beylik on exports.[15]

II

As Simona Cerutti underlined, in referring to research on justice and arbitration, the 'rule-centred paradigm' cannot provide a convincing answer to the question of understanding how norms are created. It is necessary to look to the social processes where norms are produced and made real: 'It is not a question of confronting step by step norms and behaviour, but rather of analysing the "legal spaces" that are created through practice.'[16] These observations are also applicable to the study of diplomacy, where every norm rests on past or present negotiations. The Ottoman capitulations and the Maghrebi treaties created some temporary ties *inter gentes*, while the European *ius gentium* was founded on natural law and the existence of universal norms, shared by all contractors.[17] Can one, for all that, reduce to treaty norms the law

[14] See Mohammed Hédi Cherif, 'Expansion européenne et difficultés tunisiennes de 1815 à 1830', *Annales ESC*, 25 (1970), pp. 714–45.

[15] Treaty of 8 Aug. 1830, French version in Plantet, *Correspondance*, III, pp. 704–7. A similar treaty was imposed on the Regency of Tripoli, see the French version in Edgard Rouard de Card, *Traités de la France avec les pays de l'Afrique du Nord: Algérie, Tunisie, Tripolitaine, Maroc* (Paris, 1906), pp. 288–93. For analysis of the conquest of Algiers by Tunisian historiographers of the nineteenth century: Ahmed Abdesselem, *Les historiens tunisiens des XVIIème, XVIIIème et XIXème siècles: essai d'histoire culturelle* (Tunis and Paris, 1973), pp. 304–5, 366–7.

[16] 'Il ne s'agirait pas de confronter pas à pas les normes et les comportements, mais plutôt d'analyser les "espaces juridiques" qui se créent à travers la pratique' (Simona Cerutti, 'Normes et pratiques, ou de la légitimité de leur opposition', in Bernard Lepetit, ed., *Les formes de l'expérience: une autre histoire sociale* (Paris, 1995), pp. 127–49, at pp. 131–2). Cerutti's reflections follow, in particular, the following authors: Fredrik Barth, *Process and form in social life: selected essays of Fredrik Barth* (London, 1981); John L. Comaroff and Simon Roberts, *Rules and processes: the cultural logic of dispute in the African context* (Chicago and London, 1981); Sally Falk Moore, *Law as process: an anthropological approach* (London and Boston, 1978); idem, *Social facts and fabrications: 'customary' law on Kilimanjaro, 1880–1980* (Cambridge, 1986).

[17] Guido Komatsu, 'Die Türkei und das europäische Staatensystem im 16. Jahrhundert. Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des neuzeitlichen Völkerrechts', in Christine Roll, ed., *Recht und Reich im Zeitalter der Reformation: Festschrift für Horst Rabe* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), pp. 121–44, at pp. 140, 143.

that applied to Franco–Tunisian relations, as legal historians have postulated?[18]

As we have already underlined, consuls, clerks, and secretaries of state affirmed, in the eighteenth century, the existence of a particular Barbaresque maritime law. Yet, with a certain irritation, consuls noted that their interlocutors did not grant the same importance to acts that they themselves considered to have created norms. They underlined, in particular, that treaties and custom each had a different status. Many aspects of diplomatic practice were not fixed in any treaty. Thus, regarding the treaties between Great Britain and Tunis, the British consul, Perkins Magra, wrote in 1791: 'As to our miserable treaties, they are so very improvident, ill-explained, and badly translated, that they are only calculated to mislead a consul, and govern more by the customs they have produced, than by their literal import.'[19] Custom, that is to say precedents retained by the common memory of interactors, took precedence over the text of treaties, either validated or invalidated by practices that reflected the capacity of each interactor to force his interpretation of a situation on others.

Consuls to the Maghreb often expressed the fear that a gesture could give rise to custom that would modify contractual norms. Rules of conduct derived their strength from the regularity of their affirmation. Consuls seized on opportunities that presented themselves to require the application of contractual norms and to oppose contraventions susceptible to annul them. These opportunities to affirm the order of relations were not necessarily frequent, however. This explains, as Erving Goffman postulates in an entirely different context,[20] the importance of the many small ceremonies that reminded each of the interactors of his duties: linguistic usage, the formal ceremonial of audiences, notably the obligation of consuls to kiss the hand of the bey, and the practices of private visits, by which interlocutors internalized also the balance of reciprocal relations. Rather than explain the behaviour of actors in terms of their conformity or their unsuitability to a system of norms external to their practices, the question is to see how inter-cultural diplomacy constituted and redefined itself through processes of interaction, with its categories of perception and appreciation, its practices, and its specific norms.

[18] See Mössner, *Die Völkerrechtspersönlichkeit*, p. 170.

[19] Magra to Nepean, Tunis, 14 Sept. 1791, PRO, FO 77/3, fo. 205v.

[20] See Erving Goffman, *Interaction ritual: essays on face-to-face behavior* (2nd edn, London, 1972), pp. 90–1, cf. idem, *Relations in public: microstudies of the public order* (New York, 1972), pp. 62–94.

III

To speak of the universality of the French language in eighteenth-century European diplomacy is a received idea.[21] Yet, if it is true that French was used more often than any other language, the reality is more complex. Mediterranean diplomacy escaped the predominance of the French language. From Constantinople to the Maghreb, Italian remained, until the first decades of the nineteenth century, the main language in oral communications.[22] Recent research on Christian converts to Islam has uncovered men who were probably better prepared than others to understand the language and way of thinking of the Europeans who went to the Maghreb.[23] To transmit news or orders, consuls and the beylical authorities resorted by preference to converts. They accompanied European visitors during their stay in Tunis and served the beys as secretaries and translators. However, to present converts as brokers between cultures that were otherwise insulated and governed by fixed 'grammars', is to ignore a story consisting of constant exchanges. Knowledge of a more or less pidginized Italian (called *lingua franca*) was widespread among the elites of the Regency, who participated in the exchange networks through which goods and men circulated in the Mediterranean.[24] Mameluks of Levantine origin, such as Muṣṭafā khūdja, principal minister of ʿAlī (1759–82) and Ḥammūda bey (1782–1814), but also all of the Ḥusaynite beys, mastered Italian and surprised their more or less unwitting European interlocutors with their expertise in communication.

In travellers' accounts, as in reports of naval officers or in consular dispatches, the fact that the language barrier – Arabic and Turkish – could be overcome by the ease of communicating in Italian was quite emblematic. Representations of a strange and distant universe were contradicted by a feeling of proximity maintained by the ease of direct oral communications. Thus, in Peyssonnel's description of his first audience with Ḥusayn binʿAlī bey (1705–35/40) in 1724, at which the consul had presented him, one finds, on the one hand, a detailed explanation of an unaccustomed ceremonial, and, on the other, the

[21] See Ferdinand Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française des origines à nos jours*, VIII: *Le français hors de France au XVIIIe siècle*, pt 2: *L'universalité en Europe* (Paris, 1967), pp. 799–837, XI: *Le français au dehors sous la Révolution, le Consulat et l'Empire*, pt 2: *Le français au dehors sous le Consulat et l'Empire* (Paris, 1979), pp. 347–8.

[22] Ibid., VIII, pt 2, pp. 826–7.

[23] See Bartolomé Bennassar and Lucile Bennassar, *Les Chrétiens d'Allah: l'histoire extraordinaire des renégats, XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Paris, 1989); Anita González-Raymond, *La croix et le croissant: les inquisitions des îles face à l'Islam, 1550–1700* (Paris, 1992); Lucia Rostagno, *Mi faccio Turco: esperienze ed immagini dell'Islam nelle Italia moderna* (Rome, 1983); Lucetta Scaraffia, *Rinnegati: per una storia dell'identità occidentale* (Rome and Bari, 1993).

[24] On the *lingua franca* spoken in the ports of the Maghreb until the nineteenth century, see Hugo Schuchardt, 'Die Lingua franca', *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 33 (1909), pp. 441–61 (still essential reading), and Guido Cifoletti, *Il vocabolario della lingua franca* (Padua, 1980), and idem, *La lingua franca mediterranea* (Padua, 1989). The term 'lingua franca' originally referred to the Mediterranean pidgins; it later acquired the generic meaning that it has today.

surprise of immediate verbal contact, made possible by the bey's knowledge.[25] With Ḥammūda bey, consuls and travellers discovered an expertise in intercultural communication associated with linguistic knowledge. After his first audiences, Delespine de Chateauneuf, consul-general to Tunis from 1787 to 1791, notes: 'The young prince combined a fine figure, noble bearing and affable manners; I heard him speaking with equal facility three different languages [Arabic, Turkish and Italian].'[26] Chateaubriand, who was received by Ḥammūda bey in 1807, noted in his *Itinéraire de Paris à Jerusalem*: 'The current bey is a clever man … This prince speaks Italian, converses spiritedly, and understands the politics of Europe better than most Orientals.'[27] British contemporaries shared this judgement. The plenipotentiary who, in 1796, came to negotiate the recognition of British sovereignty over Corsica observed, indignant, the skill with which Ḥammūda bey passed from Arabic to Italian and pretended, as the case arose, that he did not understand what was being said to him.[28]

Changes of linguistic usage did not primarily correspond to modifications at the level of the personal competences of interactors. They reflected the vision that these had of their reciprocal relations, they expressed and affirmed the transformation of norms, the degrees and fields of concessions made by interlocutors.

Before analysing these evolutions, it is necessary to set out the linguistic usage within the beylical court. The foundation by the beys – the commanders of the camps (*maḥalla*) in charge of administering justice and levying tributes outside Tunis and the coastal towns – of two successive dynasties, in the middle of the seventeenth century, then from 1705, meant the advent of a locally deep-rooted monocratic power, quite different from the non-dynastic power of the Turkish militia in Algiers who collectively co-opted the deys and lived more separated from the local Arab elites. The Ḥusaynite beys, born and brought up in Tunis, were in close contact with Arab urban notables and adopted their language for oral communications.

Yet, in the eighteenth century, the documents of beys to European powers were almost always written in Turkish.[29] The predominance of the Turkish

[25] Jean-André Peyssonnel, *Voyage dans les régences de Tunis et d'Alger*, ed. Lucette Valensi (Paris, 1987), p. 54.

[26] Delespine de Chateauneuf to Castries, Tunis, 16 Feb. 1787, AN, AE B[I] 1152: 'Le jeune prince joint à une belle figure un maintien noble et des manières affables; je l'ai entendu parler avec une égale facilité trois langues différentes [Arabic, Turkish, and Italian].'

[27] 'Le bey actuel est un homme habile … Ce prince parle italien, cause avec esprit, et entend mieux la politique de l'Europe que la plupart des Orientaux' (François-René de Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* [1811], ed. Emile Malakis (2 vols., Baltimore, 1946), at II, p. 253).

[28] Journal of the Proceedings of my Embassy to the Court of Tunis, 2 Mar. 1796, signed: Waldegrave, PRO, FO 20/10.

[29] See the originals in the volumes of consular correspondence in the AN and the Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris (MAE). Cf. Jean-Michel Venture de Paradis, 'Réponses aux questions de Raynal', in idem, *Tunis et Alger au XVIIIe siècle: mémoires et observations*, ed. Joseph Cuoq (Paris, 1983), p. 26.

language in documents that the bey authorized was a manifestation of the formal recognition of the suzerainty of the Ottoman sultan. The Porte only considered itself bound by the Turkish version of the capitulations. The parallel writing of treaties with the regencies in the respective languages of the parties, in which each only signed the version written in his own language, indicated that each of the interlocutors bound himself under his own legal order. Certainly, the European powers had versions written in their own language, but in case of divergence it is the Turkish text that was followed. At the end of the eighteenth century, French, English, and Spanish diplomacy was still resigned to this situation. Some documents were written as one-sided promises of security (*amān*). Such is the case for the truce negotiated in January 1786 in favour of the king of Spain that was only sealed in its Turkish original.[30] On the other hand, Franco–Tunisian treaties were characterized by their reciprocity of form.[31] Linguistic usage – the writing in Turkish of the authoritative version – contributed to the formulation of a position more in line with Muslim legal conceptions. In extending the requirement for Turkish or Arabic to all exchanges written with the Christians, the beys reaffirmed an interpretation that in reality was becoming obsolete, according to which treaties were one-sided concessions in favour of a minority of Christians that solicited their protection.

Indeed, at the end of the eighteenth century the beys still asked that writings presented in the name of European governments were accompanied by Turkish or Arabic translations. As we saw, in oral negotiations, the beys dealt with the consuls in Italian. However, when it was a question of exchanging some written propositions, they would often be refused if they were not translated into Turkish or Arabic.[32] The rigour with which this requirement was enforced depended on the circumstances. In 1774, ʿAlī bey allowed the consul, as a special favour contrary to the custom of the public audience, to read to him, and to translate into Italian, letters, written in French, in which Louis XVI and the secretary of state for the marine announced the death of Louis XV.[33] On the other hand, in 1794, still not having received satisfaction for prizes made against Tunisians on the coasts of France, the son of ʿAlī bey, Ḥammūda, sent back a letter of the French minister of foreign affairs concerning the new flag of the Republic, while requiring that the consul have a literal translation done in Turkish or Arabic by the dragoman, even though the letter had been read and explained to him by his principal physician.[34] This

[30] Truce of 25 Jan. 1786, Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), Estado, leg. 3408.

[31] See above, p. 3.

[32] Barthélémy de Saizieu to the Compagnie d'Afrique, Tunis, 3 Mar. 1768, AN, AE B^{I} 1142, fo. 153r; Devoize to Talleyrand, Tunis, 12 nivôse an VI [1 Jan. 1798], in Plantet, ed., *Correspondance*, III, p. 339.

[33] Barthélémy de Saizieu to Bourgeois de Boynes, Tunis, 6 June 1774, AN, AE B^{I} 1145, fo. 238v.

[34] Devoize to Deforgues, Tunis, 12 prairial an II [31 May 1794], MAE, CCC, Tunis, vol. 32, fo. 181r.

example illustrates that the requirement to present documents written in Turkish or Arabic was not a practical necessity, but was aimed at pushing a particular interpretation of relations with Europeans: circumstances of war allowed the bey to reaffirm by linguistic usage the unilateral nature of these relations.

Linguistic usage did not conform to what was most convenient to the interlocutors. The beys had a poor understanding of documents written in Turkish. When, in 1757, Muḥammad bey received letters from the king and the secretary of state for the marine, written in French and accompanied by Turkish translations, he read these translations, but finished by returning the French versions to the consul, 'asking [him] to explain them to him in *lingua franca* to see if he had understood the Turkish language well, that he understood but imperfectly.'[35]

However, one could not consider linguistic usage to be an obstacle to communication, since for all interactors it had itself meaning and reaffirmed norms. An anecdote brought back by one of Ḥammūda bey's physicians, Louis Frank, at once confirms the prince's interest in communication that had not passed through the medium of an interpreter, and reveals the symbolic role of linguistic usage: according to Frank the bey wanted to learn to read and write 'pure Tuscan Italian' ('l'italien pur-toscan'). To believe the doctor's description, the full symbolic significance of this training stood in the way of the realization of this project: 'the religious leaders' ('les chefs de la religion') would have him desist from this study, which they held to be 'unworthy of a Muslim prince' ('indigne d'un prince musulman').[36]

Transformations, even apparently minor ones, were thus particularly meaningful. Once Ḥusayn bin 'Alī bey, exceptionally, sent to the French consul a letter written in Italian and dated according to the Christian calendar.[37] An isolated instance, this practice expressed a special favour with regard to a consul, but, from the second half of the eighteenth century, indications of a modification of linguistic usage increased. In a regular manner, Muṣṭafā khūdja, principal minister of 'Alī and Ḥammūda bey – but not the latter themselves – addressed letters, written in Italian by his secretary, dated solely according to the Christian calendar and provided with his seal, to the French and British consuls.[38]

[35] Grou de Sulauze to Peyrenc de Moras, Tunis, 15 Sept. 1757, AN, AE B^I 1139: 'priant de les lui expliquer en petit moresque pour voir s'il les avait bien comprises en langue turque, qu'il n'entend qu'imparfaitement'.

[36] Louis Frank, 'Tunis, description de cette Régence [1816], par le Dr -, ancien médecin du bey de Tunis, du Pâcha de Jannina, et de l'armée d'Egypte, revue et accompagnée d'un précis historique et d'éclaircissements tirés des écrivains orientaux, par J[ean] J[oseph] Marcel', in *L'Univers pittoresque: histoire et description de tous les peuples, de leurs religions, moeurs, coutumes, industries, etc. Afrique*, VII (Paris, 1862), pp. 1–224, at p. 70.

[37] Ḥusayn bin 'Alī bey to Bayle, 7 Apr. 1718, AN, AE B^I 1129.

[38] PRO, FO 335/32/12–17, FO 77/3, fos. 149r, 183r–v, 199r–v; AN, AE B^I 1148, fo. 38r–v, AE B^I 1149.

Even after 1830 the bey sealed documents written in Italian only very rarely. However, already by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ḥammūda bey used as his secretary for Italian correspondence a Neapolitan slave, Mariano Stinca, who became both rich, through trade, and influential, thanks to his relations with his master. Stinca wrote in Italian to the consuls to communicate to them decisions that the bey dictated to him in *lingua franca* or in Arabic.[39] Modifications in linguistic practice reinforced, from the reign of ʿAlī bey and the ascension of Muṣṭafā khūdja as principal minister, the influence of Italian secretaries who, for their part, gave a new importance to the written word in the relations between the Tunisian court – the Bardo – and the consuls that had until then been nearly exclusively oral. On the death of Mariano Stinca in 1814, Maḥmūd bey, out of respect for 'former custom' ('l'ancien usage') refused to respond in writing to the consuls' letters to him. The latters' protests obliged him, however, to give up the project of dealing again with all business orally during his audiences. In relation to the custom invoked by the bey, the practice of Muṣṭafā khūdja and the Italian secretaries of Ḥammūda bey had established new norms henceforth obligatory, not only as far as the choice of the language was concerned, but also in the manner of doing business.[40] Furthermore, with the language, formulas of politeness and honorary titles were adopted that assimilated the Bardo with the courts of Europe. Ḥammūda bey was addressed as 'Sua Eccellenza' but also on occasion the forms 'Regno di Tunisi' and 'Reggio Palazzo del Bardo' were used.[41] During the reign of Ḥusayn bey (1824–35), the honour title 'Sua Altezza', that was applied in Europe to princes of blood, replaced 'Sua Eccellenza', a title henceforth reserved for ministers of the bey.[42]

Under the successors of Ḥammūda bey – Maḥmūd bey (1814–24), Ḥusayn bey (1824–35) and Muṣṭafā bey (1835–7) – a free Sardinian, Giuseppe Raffo, son of a watchmaker born in Tunis in 1795, served as intendant and secretary for Italian correspondence. Through the marriage of one of his sisters, he became the brother-in-law of Muṣṭafā bey. When the bey's son and successor, Aḥmad bey (1837–55), began, at the end of the 1830s, organizing a foreign affairs department, the barely specialized embryo of a ministry, he confided the management of it to his Sardinian uncle.[43] Raffo took

[39] A register containing copies of part of the active and passive correspondence of Mariano Stinca with the consuls (years 1810 to 1814) figures among his personal papers conserved in the National Archives of Tunisia (carton 81, dossier 980). On Mariano Stinca, see Habib Jamoussi, 'Mariano Stinca: image d'un esclave au pouvoir sous le règne de Hammouda-Pacha bey', *Revue d'Histoire Maghrébine*, 23 (1996), pp. 431–71.

[40] Oglander to Exmouth, Tunis, 22 July, 22 Aug. and 22 Oct. 1815, PRO, FO 77/6, fos. 183r–4v, 188v–90r.

[41] Declaration of Ḥammūda bey on the subject of the trêve with Portugal, Bardo, 1 Jan. 1794, PRO, FO 77/4, fo. 3r.

[42] Correspondence of Giuseppe Raffo with Thomas Reade, 1827, 1830, 1832, 1835, PRO, FO 335/53/9 and 10, FO 335/56/3 to 6, FO 335/57/16 to 19, FO 335/63/3 and 4.

[43] Jean Ganiage, *Une entreprise italienne de Tunisie au milieu du XIXe siècle: correspondance commerciale de la thonaire de Sidi Daoud* (Paris, 1960), p. 7; Mongi Smida, *Consuls et consulats de Tunisie au 19e siècle*

advantage of his close relations with the bey to advance commercial operations of a monopolistic character – in tuna fishing, in supplying provisions to coral-fishers, and olive oil exports.[44] Under the predecessor of Aḥmad bey, Muṣṭafā bey, Raffo had presented himself as 'secretary for foreign relations' of the bey of Tunis ('segretario per le relazioni estere di S. A. il Bascia Bey de Tunisi'),[45] but his influence was already such that his European interlocutors referred to him as 'minister' and accorded him special treatment.[46] On their consuls' recommendation, the governments of several Italian states and that of France conferred on him honours, 'without any apparent reason', other than, as the British consul underlined, the intention to win the influential secretary over to their interests: in 1833, he received a Neapolitan decoration, in 1836, the Légion d'honneur, the Sardinian Order of Saint Maurice and Saint Lazare, and the papal title of Knight of Saint Gregory.[47] Giuseppe Raffo remained a Christian; in his apartment in the Bardo the prince of Pückler-Muskau noticed in 1835 some Catholic images.[48] He presented himself as protector and benefactor of the Catholic parish of Tunis.[49] Services rendered to Sardinian subjects led to his ennoblement, in 1851, by the king of Sardinia. After the death of his first wife, a Genoese woman from Tunis, he remarried in 1854 to the daughter of the marquis Ripa di Meana, a retired cavalry colonel. His mediation services at the beylical court therefore, in this certainly exceptional case, led to Raffo's promotion to the nobility of his country of origin.[50]

Before even the formal organization of a foreign affairs department by Aḥmad bey, the Italian mediators were much more than simple secretaries: men enjoying the personal confidence of the bey and, at the same time, privileged interlocutors of the consuls; they filled functions that their European interlocutors associated with those of a secretary of state or a foreign minister of a European government. Whereas the bey continued to maintain the use of Turkish, replaced by Arabic from the first decades of the nineteenth century, in writings bearing his seal, the generalized use of Italian in correspondence

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(Tunis, 1991), p. 18; Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, *La communication entre Tunis et Istanbul 1860–1913: province et métropole* (Paris, 1996), p. 50.

[44] On the thonaire of the Raffo family on the coast of Cap Bon, that by beylical concession remained in the hands of the family from 1826 to 1901, see Ganiage, *Une entreprise italienne*.

[45] Raffo to Cardinal Franzoni, Tunis, 20 June 1836, Rome, Archives of the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (PF), SC, Barbaria, vol. 15, fo. 118r.

[46] P. Luigi da Taggia to Cardinal Franzoni, Tunis, 10 Apr. 1837, PF, SC, Barbaria, vol. 15, fo. 169r.

[47] Reade to Palmerston, Tunis, 30 July 1836, PRO, FO 77/29; Rizo to Alvarez Mendizábal, Tunis, 10 May and 5 June 1836, AHN, Estado, leg. 8369.

[48] [Hermann Ludwig Heinrich Pückler-Muskau], *Semilasso in Afrika*, Dritter Teil: *Biserta*, *Tunis* (Stuttgart, 1836), pp. 188–9.

[49] P. Luigi da Taggia to Cardinal Franzoni, Tunis, 10 Apr. 1837, 4 Jan. 1838, and 10 Apr. 1839, PF, SC, Barbaria, vol. 15, fos. 169r, 236r, 414r–v.

[50] Ganiage, *Une entreprise italienne*, pp. 8–9.

written in his name by a European, reflected and affirmed an increasing imbalance in relations in favour of the European powers. In daily contacts linguistic usage was thus creating norms that transcended it.

IV

In the courts of Europe, diplomatic representatives, who were invested as such by their sovereign prince or state, merited, within the limits of their instructions, the consideration due to that sovereign whose proxy they were, although here too a symbolic imbalance derived from the fact that contact was not direct, but took place between a prince and the *representative* of another prince.[51] In Tunis, the consuls and the extraordinary envoys faced a society that refused as a matter of principle the reciprocity of relations with infidels. As leaders of Christian nations or bodies of traders, consuls participated in ceremonies of power at the Bardo palace. It was difficult to obtain a ceremonial that distinguished consuls and envoys as representatives of a sovereign of equal, or even superior, rank. Until around 1830, most consuls negotiated arrangements that respected the framework of the ceremonial of the beylical court, but which nevertheless introduced some considerable modifications. After the conquest of Algiers, two dramatic transformations symbolized the new imbalance: the abolition of the 'tributes, presents, gifts and any other dues' ('tributs, présents, dons et autres redevances quelconques') by the Franco–Tunisian Treaty of August 1830[52] and, in 1836, the refusal by the French consul to kiss the hand of the bey, followed by its abolition for all consuls by Muṣṭafā bey.

Before 1830 the question is to know how interlocutors negotiated subtle rearrangements of the ceremonial and how they associated therein their own interpretation that, adapted to their system of values, allowed them to 'maintain face'. Judging by some testimonies of the eighteenth century, they were often capable of getting on by mutually acceptable interaction practices. Thus, according to Thomas Shaw who visited Tunis in the reign of Ḥusayn bin ʿAlī, and accompanied the British consul during visits to the Bardo: 'All affairs … with the Regency are transacted in such a friendly and complaisant manner, that it was no small pleasure to attend Mr Consul Lawrence at his audiences.'[53]

Unlike Ottoman ceremonial that exalted the sultan's majesty while limiting his public appearances, the ceremonial of the Maghrebi courts required that the prince be visible to his subjects.[54] It seems, if one looks at the works of

[51] William W. J. Roosen, 'Early modern diplomatic ceremonial: a systems approach', *Journal of Modern History*, 52 (1980), pp. 452–76, at pp. 455–6.

[52] See above, p. 5.

[53] Thomas Shaw, *Travels, or observations relating to several parts of Barbary and the Levant* (Oxford, 1738), p. 155.

[54] Whereas numerous works have studied the ceremonials of the European ancien régime, the historiography of the Muslim world has only just started to look at the symbolic gestures by which aspirations to exercise political and religious authority were expressed. However, lately, the works of Gülru Necipoglu on the Ottoman court (see the following note), of Paula Sanders on Fatimid

Jocelyne Dakhlia, that the ostentatious features of humility, that expressed respect for Divine Law, can be linked with the prince's need constantly to renegotiate the allegiance of each group of his subjects, since their adherence to the dynastic continuity was not acquired in advance. The immediate character of justice was, in the Muslim tradition of the Maghreb, one of the conditions of the legitimacy of princely power. The devout ruler, who was but one member of the community of believers, had to remain accessible, so that he could be seen by his subjects administering justice himself, examining cases presented to him with the *qādī* and the *muftī*. The bey's audiences in the great hall of justice of the Bardo were open to all subjects. Every morning, the bey meted out justice there, without pomp. In regions far removed from Tunis, the *maḥalla* or military camps, one in summer, the other in winter, affirmed the authority of the ruler by their military character, but also because they implied that the prince was present and visible in his functions as referee and judge.[55]

The opening of audiences for plaintiffs and petitioners had consequences for the manner in which consuls and envoys could try to distinguish themselves as the political representatives of their ruler. As leaders of Christian nations, consuls had the right to present themselves every day without formalities – with the exception of Friday, the day of prayer – at audiences with the bey and to submit to him complaints and pending judicial affairs. Whereas, in the Levant, consuls dealt with authorities of the country through the intermediary of their dragomans, in Tunis, consuls interpreted any interruption in direct contact as a hostile gesture on the bey's part.

During audiences, however, consuls had to mingle with the bey's subjects. The principle of granting to the consuls a specific ceremonial was rejected by the beylical court. During public ceremonies in the palace of the bey, which consuls attended as representatives of their nations, such as the formal

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Cairo (*Ritual, politics and the city in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany, NY, 1994)) and Jocelyne Dakhlia on the Maghreb (see the following note) have highlighted that ceremonials presented, at once, the theoretical sources of authority of those that govern, and the social networks that allowed them to exercise such power.

[55] Jocelyne Dakhlia and Lucette Valensi, 'Le spectacle de la cour: éléments de comparaison des modes de souveraineté au Maghreb et dans l'Empire ottoman', in Gilles Veinstein, ed., *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps: actes du Colloque de Paris. Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 7–10 mars 1990* (Paris, 1992), pp. 145–57, at pp. 146, 148–53; Jocelyne Dakhlia, 'Du sacré duel au sacré débattu: la légitimité en écho des souverains maghrébins', *Al-Qanṭara. Revista de Estudios Arabes*, 17 (1996), pp. 341–74, at pp. 344–8, 352, and idem, *Le divan des rois*, pp. 91–2. On the *maḥalla*, see idem, 'Dans la mouvance du prince: la symbolique du pouvoir itinérant au Maghreb', *Annales ESC*, 43 (1988), pp. 735–60. On justice in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Robert Brunschvig, 'Justice religieuse et justice laïque dans la Tunisie des deys et des beys, jusqu'au milieu du XIXe siècle', *Studia Islamica*, 23 (1965), pp. 27–70, at pp. 36–54. On the ceremonial of the Ottoman court, see Gülru Necipoglu, *Architecture, ceremonial, and power: the Topkapi palace in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries* (New York and Cambridge, MA, 1991), especially pp. 15–22: the exterior walls of the Topkapi Palace, followed by a succession of gates, separated the sultan's court from the city. The reclusion of the sultan was aimed at exalting his sacred character, rather than assuring his security.

investiture of the bey by the sultan's representative, their subordination as infidels was expressed by the inferior rank that they occupied with their nation in the act of kissing the hand. They had not only to mix with the subjects of the bey, but in addition had to wait until all Muslim subjects had kissed their prince's hand, before submitting in turn to this ritual. After the investiture of Maḥmūd bey and his son, Ḥusayn, in 1816, some weeks after the expedition of Lord Exmouth, the European consuls together addressed Sulaymān kāhiya, principal minister and son-in-law of Maḥmūd bey, to complain about the fact that they saw themselves 'confused with individuals of all classes, and of all nations, required to wait until the last servant of the bey had kissed the hand, before being permitted to render him the same homage'.[56] In their view, the bey should grant to them the 'just reciprocity' ('juste réciprocité') due in consideration of 'the most honourable reception' ('la réception la plus honorable') given to Tunisian envoys in the courts of Europe. However, it was precisely this public recognition of a relationship of reciprocity with non-Muslim sovereigns that met with reluctance. Undoubtedly the consuls knew this, since they proposed an arrangement that dispensed with their need to participate in the kissing of the hand at the same time as the bey's subjects, even though they would not be explicitly granted a formal distinction as representatives of rulers of, at least, equal rank. They asked for and got the authorization to present themselves only on the day following the public ceremonies as well as the concession of a 'comfortable and decent apartment' ('un appartement convenable et décent') where they could wait for the moment to present themselves to the bey without mingling with the other petitioners. By this last arrangement, one gets back to a solution close to the one adopted by Muṣṭafā khūdja, who, as favourite and principal minister of ʿAlī and Ḥammūda bey, welcomed consuls in his house 'with a politeness that won him the hearts of all' ('avec cette politesse qui lui gagnait tous les coeurs').[57] Difficulties were therefore circumvented through a by-pass strategy that maintained appearances, whilst profoundly modifying the meaning of the ceremonial since consuls were now physically separated from Tunisian subjects.

Under the ancien régime, the diversity of the legal situations that characterized relations between Europeans and Maghrebis, but also between Europeans residing in Tunis, corresponded to the plurality of status and jurisdictions in Europe. In 1816, this was seen as problematic. This modification of perceptions was linked to the shift in European political cultures that postulated the legal equality of citizens and states. While adopting a simple and direct style, conforming to reason, French revolutionaries consecrated a new symbolic repertoire of power. As with republican imagery,[58] the symbolic

[56] Consuls to Sulaymān kāhiya, Tunis, 22 Aug. 1816, AN, 327 AP 14: 'confondus avec des individus de toutes les classes, et de toutes les nations, soumis à attendre que jusques au dernier serviteur du bey lui eût baisé la main, avant d'être admis à lui rendre le même hommage'.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne au combat: l'imagerie et la symbolique républicaines de 1789 à 1880* (Paris, 1979).

representation of power in festivals,[59] or language and gesture,[60] so also diplomatic ceremonial shaped the new political legitimacy. These transformations have received a great deal less analysis than manifestations of revolutionary culture within France, although the redefinition of external relations with surrounding hostile monarchies also interested revolutionaries who aspired to a universal mission.[61] Franco–Muslim diplomacy is not taken into account in the few works produced to date on the ceremonial of the external relations of the French Republic. However, cultural differences conditioned revolutionary diplomacy. The Tunisian context required a particular interpretative and creative effort from the representatives of the Republic, the analysis of which guards against the tendency of cultural anthropology to insist on the stationary and coherent character of culture as a system of signs and symbols either shared or refused.[62] The political culture of the Revolution appears here rather like an inventive practical modality for conceiving social experiences, permitting a redefinition, according to circumstances, of situations of interaction.[63]

Revolutionaries agreed on the principle of rejection of diplomatic conventions inherited from the ancien régime as well as on the need for symbols that expressed a 'system of liberty' and of national sovereignty. The representative forms of the ancien regime had to yield to a ceremonial that conformed to a diplomacy founded on reason.[64] To lead a firm foreign policy, worthy of a sovereign and free nation, and to adapt the usages of this policy to constitutional principles, challenged the practical knowledge of diplomats, whose social status was, at the same time, threatened.[65] The revolutionaries' pretension of reorganizing society and international relations according to universally valid principles threatened, at least in theory, the tacit consensus on which rested relations between the French and the Maghrebis. The practice was a lot more complex. The immediate repercussions were limited. Because of the difficulties that arose from the wars in Europe, French diplomacy preferred to resolve in a pragmatic way the problems that could emerge through the daily contacts with the Maghrebis, and had the tendency not to clarify the issues that might provoke discussions.

[59] Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire, 1789–1799* (Paris, 1976).

[60] Linn Hunt, *Politics, culture, and class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1984).

[61] Linda Frey and Marsha Frey, '"The reign of the charlatans is over": the French revolutionary attack on diplomatic practice', *Journal of Modern History*, 65 (1993), pp. 706–44, insist rightly on the interest that diplomatic ceremonial presents.

[62] From his reading of the works of the anthropologist Fredrik Barth, Giovanni Levi has offered a spirited criticism of this tendency of interpretative cultural anthropology (Giovanni Levi, 'I pericoli del geertzismo', *Quaderni storici*, n.s., 58 (1985), pp. 269–77).

[63] See James Clifford, *The predicament of culture: twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), p. 15.

[64] See Frey and Frey, '"The reign of the charlatans is over"'.

[65] See Jean Belin, *La logique d'une idée-force: l'idée d'utilité sociale et la Révolution française, 1789–1792* (Paris, 1939), pp. 184–8.

The rejection, more theoretical than practical, of traditional ceremonial touched on gestures symbolizing submission, which were considered scandalous. In essence this concerned the French consul's obligation to kiss the hand of the bey, and that of his designated successor, during audiences, as stipulated in 1742 by a secret supplement to the treaty concluded that year which put the French consuls on the same footing as those of the other Christian nations.[66] Until 1742, the right to greet the bey by raising the hat on entering the chamber – along with the right to enter carrying his sword – was one of the privileges that symbolized the precedence of the consul of the king of France over all his colleagues.[67] In the ceremonial of the Bardo, the hand-kiss marked the submissiveness of subjects who presented themselves at the audience to the bey.[68] After the elevation of a new bey the unlucky pretenders kissed his hand as a mark of submission.[69] Obliged to participate in the ceremony of recognition of the new ruler and to repeat the gesture of the hand-kiss during every audience, consuls saw themselves assimilated therefore to subjects of the bey. The hand-kiss marked the submission of infidels to the domination of Islam.

ʿAlī pasha (1735–56) precipitated the quarrel over the kissing of the hand in 1740, when he prevailed over his uncle Ḥusayn bin ʿAlī. In 1741, he razed the Genoese and French trading-posts at Tabarca and Cabo Negro to the ground. ʿAlī pasha symbolically marked his opposition to the policy of peace and commercial opening toward Europe promoted by his predecessor by refusing gestures that distinguished consuls from his subjects. Besides the exemption of the hand-kiss, reserved to the French consul, these included the right of consuls to fly their flag on their houses, a sign of exterritoriality.[70]

ʿAlī pasha asked for the hand-kiss as a public reminder, in contradiction with the provisions and the form of the Franco–Tunisian treaties, of the one-sided character of the protection they afforded Christians who accepted submission to the order of the *dār al-Islām*, in return for privileges, in particular to exercise their rite freely and to administer the internal affairs of their communities according to their particular law. In this regard, it is meaningful that ʿAlī pasha, at all times, assured French traders of his protection.[71] This was not a vain promise: after the break with the king of France in 1741, the corsairs of Tunis besieged French ships, but traders of the French nation in Tunis remained free to continue their business.[72] As an act of submission, the hand-kiss was acceptable to traders established in Tunis, but raised the opposition of the consuls who represented their sovereign.

[66] Treaty of 9 Nov. 1742, French version in Plantet, ed., *Correspondance*, II, pp. 365–6.
[67] Michel to Pontchartrain, Tunis, 12 Feb. 1712, AN, AE B^{I} 1128.
[68] See Cherif, *Pouvoir et société*, I, p. 139, on the entrance of Ḥusayn bey into Tunis in 1706.
[69] On the election of ʿUthmān bey: Soler to the duke of San Carlos, Tunis, 22 Sept. 1814, AHN, Estado, leg. 6250.
[70] Gautier to Maurepas, Tunis, 24 Mar. 1740. Cf. procès-verbal of the assembly of the French nation of 12 Apr. 1741, AN, AE B^{I} 1134.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Crozet to Maurepas, Tunis, 18 Nov. 1741, AN, AE B^{I} 1134.

Yet, in the decades that followed the conclusion of the treaty of 1742, discussions raised by the hand-kiss concerned the subtle differentiation of rank above all between Europeans. Inasmuch as the precedence of the 'Emperor' of France was assured considering the ceremonial in its whole, the consul could, if need be, agree to kiss the hand. Europeans were compelled to this gesture of submission according to the rank of their ruler. Unlike the French consuls, protected by the bey like their nation, all officers of the royal French navy, independently of their rank, were still excused the hand-kiss. This was not the case for officers of other powers. Thus, the commander of two Dutch vessels that had come to ratify, in 1741, the former peace treaties kissed the bey's hand.[73] In 1760, an English officer was prepared to leave without accomplishing his mission, because he would not submit to the ceremonial of the kissing of hand. The British consul convinced him to conform, since it was a matter of custom. These subtle distinctions in the ceremonial were reported extremely attentively by the consuls and other French observers.[74]

The consuls' opposition to subordination increased as, in Europe, the legal hierarchies between states and the differently privileged corporations ceased being constitutive of structures of domination. The considerable privileges, as assured to them by the Ottoman capitulations and the Maghrebi treaties, no longer compensated for the act of submission. Nominated by the committee of public safety as extraordinary commissioner to Tunis, Lallement describes the hand-kiss and the conceptions that underlay it as an act unworthy of a republican: 'The etiquette in presenting oneself to the bey is to kiss his hand … This ceremony displeases and should displease a republican. I tell you that I repudiate it absolutely.'[75] Beaussier, appointed successor to Devoize in 1796, evokes the hand-kiss as a 'humiliating piece of etiquette for republicans' ('une étiquette humiliante pour des républicains'), but respected, like the other nationals, the established ceremonial.[76]

Most of the European consuls – including the French – continued to respect the practice of kissing the hand. A conflict provoked in 1796 by the British consul is interesting for having inspired the French consul to state clearly his own pragmatic attitude. Without having warned the bey that he bore the title of plenipotentiary together with the vice-admiral whom he accompanied, Magra, the British consul, presented himself before the bey and sat down 'with affectation without kissing the hand' ('avec affectation sans lui baiser la main'). If he had accepted this behaviour, the bey would have lost face before

[73] Crozet to Maurepas, Tunis, 16 Sept. 1741, AN, AE B^{I} 1134.

[74] Grou de Sulauze to Berryer, Tunis, 8 Mar. 1760, AN, AE B^{I} 1139.

[75] Lallement to Hermann, Paris, 18 germinal an II [7 Apr. 1794], MAE, CCC, Tunis, vol. 32, fo. 165r: 'L'étiquette en se présentant au bey est de lui baiser la main … Cette céremonie déplait et doit déplaire à un Français républicain. Je vous avoue que j'y répugne singulièrement.' Cf. Beaussier to Delacroix, Tunis, 7 vendémiaire an V [28 Sept. 1796], MAE, CCC, Tunis, vol. 34, fo. 257v.

[76] Beaussier to Delacroix, Tunis, 7 vendémiaire an V [28 Sept. 1796], MAE, CCC, Tunis, vol. 34, fo. 257v.

his court and his subjects. Negotiations could not begin until Magra had given up his title of plenipotentiary of his majesty to kiss the hand of the bey as consul. For the French consul, the episode was double-edged: if he was pleased with the blunder committed by his British colleague, he regretted to have to note that the hand-kiss had been given a meaning that he himself had avoided making explicit: 'The hand-kiss was considered to be a courtesy and the extravagance of the English consul has now converted it into submission' ('Le baise-main était considéré comme une politesse et l'extravagance du consul anglais vient de la convertir en soumission'). He had preferred to consider the gesture as 'a custom consecrated by time' ('un usage consacré par le temps').[77]

In 1816, the British consul, Oglander, proposed to his French colleague to agree together not to kiss the hand of Ḥusayn, eldest son of Maḥmūd bey, during the ceremony in the course of which, in the presence of 'the whole apparatus … of sovereignty' ('tout l'appareil … de la souveraineté'), the young prince had to receive from an envoy of the Porte the firman of the sultan, and the caftan of investiture to the dignity of bey commanding the camps (*maḥalla*). Devoize having signalled to him the need to consult with his government beforehand, Oglander, followed by his American colleague, Anderson, limited himself to a slight nod of the head and withdrew.[78]

Such a refusal conformed with the tendency to negate the Other's own law, which, with regard to the law of war, led to the well known resolutions of the Congresses of Vienna and Aix-la-Chapelle against privateering and Christian slavery. The equality of citizens and states had already become a key issue in diplomacy during the French Revolution, but, from 1815, peace in Europe created better conditions for the Christian consuls to force their own norms on the Maghrebis. At the same time, the United States of America began to affirm their presence and their values on the Mediterranean Christian–Muslim diplomatic stage. In this context, it is significant that in 1817, the United States' consul, Anderson, even refused to kiss the hand of Maḥmūd, the reigning bey. Shaler, consul to Algiers who accompanied Anderson, approved of his colleague's conduct, while referring explicitly to norms that governed relations of power in the United States: why should consuls kiss the hand of the bey, while an American citizen did not even kiss the hand of the president of the United States?[79]

Direct relations between the consuls and the princes whose hands they would not kiss were, by this act, interrupted.[80] It was only in 1836 that, without

[77] Devoize to Delacroix, Tunis, 5 ventôse an IV [24 Feb. 1796], MAE, CCC, Tunis, vol. 34, fo. 51v-2r. Cf. Journal of the Proceedings of my Embassy to the Court of Tunis, 22 Feb. 1796, signed: Waldegrave, PRO, FO 20/10.

[78] Devoize to Richelieu, Tunis, 2 Apr. 1817. Cf. Devoize to Richelieu, Tunis, 18 Sept. 1817, MAE, CCC, Tunis, vol. 43, fos. 17r–v, 69v.

[79] Devoize to Richelieu, Tunis, 18 Sept. 1817, MAE, CCC, Tunis, vol. 43, fo. 70r.

[80] Soler to Cevallos, Tunis, 1 Aug. 1816, AHN, Estado, leg. 6247; Devoize to Richelieu, Tunis, 2 Apr. and 18 Sept. 1817, MAE, CCC, Tunis, vol. 43, fos. 17r–18r, 70r–v; Notice sur le gouvernement de la régence de Tunis, le caractère des personnages qui le composent, ses forces, son

incurring the risk to jeopardizing his position in the beylical court, the French consul could refuse 'a piece of etiquette uncommon in the Christian courts and even in Constantinople' ('une étiquette inusitée dans les cours chrétiennes et même à Constantinople') and incompatible with 'the dignity of the representative of the French nation' ('la dignité du représentant de la Nation française') and with 'the position he should hold in Tunis' ('la position qu'il doit occuper à Tunis').[81] This occurred in full court and without notice, as the British and Spanish consuls underlined in their reports: when Muṣṭafā bey presented, as usual, his hand to the French consul to be kissed, he was told by the consul he could withdraw it, since he had orders from his sovereign to make it known that consuls and all Frenchmen would no longer kiss the hand of the bey of Tunis. The effect of surprise, and the publicity that the refusal got, made the bey lose face. In the Spanish consul's words, Muṣṭafā bey received the affront as a 'mortal blow' ('golpe mortal').[82] Yet, he understood that the European consuls would not respect any longer the ceremonial of his court. He himself generalized the abolition of the hand-kiss.[83]

The modification of the ceremonial was accompanied by military expansion: at the same time, the conquest of Algiers was seen by the Maghrebis as an immediate threat. The consul's behaviour meant the refusal to be subordinate to Muslim conceptions, which continued to express themselves in the ceremonial. In contrast, in the Maghreb, the Ottoman capitulations had from the end of the seventeenth century given way to bilateral treaties that contributed to assuring, with the privileges that they guaranteed, an increasingly crushing European predominance.

The unilateral modification of the ceremonial, which the bey could not prevent, was an element of an aggressive strategy of symbolic domination, as was also the clause of the Franco–Tunisian treaty of 1830 on the abolition of presents or tributes of the European powers. The rejection of the non-European ceremonial did not imply the formal assimilation of the Regency as a European state. Yet, the successor of Muṣṭafā bey, Aḥmad bey, aspired to that position. He would express such a desire while adopting European symbols of power: so, he dressed in an European uniform and received consuls sitting in a room furnished in the European style.[84] Some deliberate provocations by the

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commerce, les consuls qui y résident et les Français qui y sont établis, Paris, Oct. 1820, written by Devoize, AN, 327 AP 1.

[81] Schwebel to Thiers, Tunis, 31 May 1836, MAE, CPC, Tunis, vol. 2, fo. 197v. Cf. Pierre Grandchamp, 'Suppression du baise-main des consuls à la cour du bey de Tunis', *Revue Africaine*, 62 (1921), pp. 335–9.

[82] Rizo to Alvarez y Mendizábal, Tunis, 31 May 1836, AHN, Estado, leg. 8369; Reade to Palmerston, Tunis, 4 and 6 June 1836, PRO, FO 77/29.

[83] According to Ahmad Ibn Abī al-Ḍiyāf, *Présent aux hommes de notre temps: chronique des rois de Tunis et du Pacte Fondamental, chapitres IV et V*, ed. André Raymond (2 vols., Tunis, 1994), I, p. 73, Muṣṭafā bey preferred to no longer speak of the affair.

[84] See Brown, *The Tunisia of Ahmad Bey*, pp. 315–16.

consuls that went against all diplomatic decorum undermined the bey as sovereign; so, in 1843, the French consul, having taken offence because the carriage of Muḥammad bey, cousin of the reigning bey, had passed in front of his carriage, got out and insulted the coachman in Italian, without Muḥammad bey intervening.[85]

The belated abolition of the kissing of the hand should not encourage one to conclude that ceremonial persisted frozen in form and meaning. Although rejections were not dramatic, ceremonial did change appreciably. That one continued to perform formally a particular gesture did not prevent it changing meaning. When the consuls acquired in 1816 the privilege not to present themselves at the Bardo until the day after a public ceremony, the hand-kiss no longer had the same meaning, since, in the ceremonial of the presentation of power they distinguished themselves henceforth from the bey's subjects. Putting an apartment at their disposition where they could wait for the moment of their audience without mingling with petitioners who were subjects of the bey produced the same effect: certainly, the hand-kiss continued, but it took on a distinction that had the tendency to neutralize it as a gesture of submission and to assimilate it to an act of simple courtesy, as Devoize had wanted. The history of an emblematic gesture such as the hand-kiss must therefore be taken as part of the evolution of the ceremonial as a whole.

The controversy over the hand-kiss reveals to us also the differences between the ceremonial of the consuls' audiences and that of the reception of navy officers as temporary envoys. The Bardo conceded distinctions to special envoys much more easily than it did to the consuls. The former remained in Tunis for some days, at most for a few weeks; the latter were established there for many years and integrated themselves into the social networks of the beylical court. Thus the ceremonial for the visits of envoys affected the legitimation of the bey's power much less. These forms changed much earlier towards a relationship of reciprocity.

V

As the privileges obtained by the European consuls in 1816 show, the ceremonial of the Bardo rather evolved by the exemption of the consuls than by the variation of established forms. Before the 1830s, consuls acquired distinctions by the multiplication of contacts outside of the setting of court ceremonies and public audiences. At the end of the 1760s, the French consul and his British colleague were the only ones to be received regularly by the bey in private audience. For Barthélémy de Saizieu, this privilege reflected the prestige of the king that he represented. The French and British consuls sorted out pending questions directly with the bey, while their colleagues were obliged to 'settle with his officials for everything that they required' ('composer avec

[85] Ibid., pp. 242–3.

ses officiers sur tout ce qu'ils ont à prétendre'), if they did not want to humiliate themselves during the public audience.[86] Observers still noted, in the 1820s, a clear contrast between discussions in small committee and the public audiences, where the bey affirmed his consideration in 'a brusque tone … especially to the Christians' ('un ton plus brusque … surtout avec les chrétiens').[87]

Private audiences, where the question of the presentation of the bey's authority in front of his subjects was raised to a much lesser extent, were subjected to a less rigid ceremonial. The emblematic value that interlocutors placed on certain gestures, notably in the setting of the public audiences, contributed to freezing these occasions, whereas informal occasions permitted some unusual attention. This was the case in Tunis, in 1816, at the time of a stay of three weeks by the princess of Wales. The singularity of the event permitted gestures of European gallantry, so, the bey's sons gave 'very politely' ('très poliment') an arm to the princess to escort her to see the palace lions. Although the ceremonial of diplomatic exchange was not directly in play, these gestures also influenced the symbolic balance of relations. Four years later, the European and Tunisian protagonists still recalled the episode.[88]

The multiplication of contacts outside of the public audiences characterizes the practice of Franco–Tunisian relations from the reign of ʿAlī bey. Barthélémy de Saizieu, consul to Tunis from 1763 to 1778, exercised an influence even on the succession of the bey.[89] He said he was 'the first and only to have won his confidence, free access to him and a place to stay in his palace'.[90]

It was the country houses on the sea-shore at La Marsa that offered the privileged setting for sociability freed from the ceremonial of the public audience at the Bardo. At La Marsa, where the bey, his entourage, the Christian consuls, and some traders had their country residences, they became tied up with often intense casual contacts, notably between consuls and the bey or influential characters in his court. Barthélémy de Saizieu enjoyed his country residence by virtue of a free concession from the bey. The close proximity to the prince's residence reflected, in space, his close relations with the beylical court. These continued under his successors. In 1819, Maḥmūd bey occasionally had meals sent to Devoize, the French consul.[91]

One of Barthélémy de Saizieu's successors saw La Marsa as the most suitable place to meet Muṣṭafā khūdja, principal minister of the bey; the possibility

[86] Barthélémy de Saizieu to Praslin, Tunis, 18 Nov. 1768, AN, AE B[I] 1142, fo. 295r–v.

[87] Louis Jean-Baptiste Filippi, Fragments historiques et statistiques sur la régence de Tunis, 1829, in Charles Monchicourt, *Documents historiques sur la Tunisie: relations inédites de Nyssen, Filippi et Calligaris (1788, 1829, 1834)* (Paris, 1929), pp. 41–292, at pp. 160–1.

[88] Gay to Devoize, Tunis, 12 June 1820, AN, 327 AP 18.

[89] Barthélémy de Saizieu to Sartine, Tunis, 11 Oct. 1776, 14 and 18 Feb. 1777, AN, AE B[I] 1147–8.

[90] 'le premier et le seul qui en ait obtenu la confiance, le libre accès et un logement dans son palais' (Mémoire sur l'échelle de Tunis, Tunis, 1 Oct. 1774, signed: Barthélémy de Saizieu, MAE, MD, Afrique, vol. 9, fo. 141r–v).

[91] Gay to Devoize, L'Abdélie, 14 Sept. 1819, AN, 327 AP 14.

of lodging not far from his home was 'the real means of keeping close contact with this principal minister on whom everything depends' ('le vrai moyen de se lier particulièrement avec ce principal ministre de qui tout dépend').[92] This mameluk received consuls in his country residence[93] or returned visits in theirs[94] – even occasionally dining there.[95] These visits, carefully mentioned by consuls, facilitated the resolution of delicate matters.

Whereas the casual visits at La Marsa were, by the end of the eighteenth century, no longer exceptional, meals at the Christian consuls' houses were still viewed as infringements of religious taboos and, as such, remained infrequent. In contrast to the discreet contacts at La Marsa, visits to the European fonduks of Tunis took place under the eyes of a Maghrebi and a European public and had, therefore, more direct influence on the symbolic balance.

Although these visits became more frequent, they were observed with care by consuls who received them. They tended to exaggerate the novelty of the occasion or, at least, the aspects that distinguished it from those accorded to their colleagues. Visits reinforced, on the one hand, signs of reciprocity that still repelled Tunisian society, and on the other hand, they established a hierarchy between the European representatives. This was especially the case if the visit was made on the occasion of a ceremony that characterized the consul as representative of his sovereign. When the royal standard was hoisted for the first time on the Spanish consular house, Muṣṭafā khūdja attended for over seven and a half hours a ball and dinner given by the consul-general, in company with other dignitaries of the Regency. The consul noted, understandably, that it was a very special favour; one can imagine well that it provoked the jealousies of his colleagues, as the Spanish consul claimed.[96]

In 1809, the desire to mark symbolically Napoleon's military victories inspired from Devoize a description of the visit of Yūsuf ṣāḥib al-ṭābıʿ (guard of the seal), two days after Napoleon's feast, that underlines the novelty of such a visit and the brilliant character of the cortege, as well as the satisfaction shown by the guard of the seal during a reception organized to oblige him. In these circumstances, the present of the 'complete porcelain service that pleased him' ('toute la porcelaine du service qui lui avait plu') and a 'beautiful telescope' ('un beau télescope') was no longer assimilated to a tribute, as European powers' presents had been by the Maghrebis, but symbolized the imbalance of cultural representations that the consul wished to affirm.[97] Actually, the visit of Yūsuf ṣāḥib al-ṭābıʿ had not fulfilled the

[92] Delespine de Chateauneuf to Castries, Tunis, 6 Aug. (quotation) and 6 Sept. 1787, AN, AE B^{I} 1152.

[93] Accounts of the Consulate, 1795, presented by Suchita; accounts of the consulate, July–Dec. 1799, presented by Buzarán, AHN, Estado, leg. 6248.

[94] Barthélémy de Saizieu to Bourgeois de Boynes, Tunis, 22 Aug. 1774, AN, AE B^{I} 1145, fo. 283r–v; idem to Sartine, Tunis, 28 May 1775, AN, AE B^{I} 1146, fo. 81r.

[95] Delespine de Chateauneuf to La Luzerne, Tunis, 30 May 1790, AN, AE B^{I} 1153, fo. 132v.

[96] Suchita to Aranda, Tunis, 12 Dec. 1792, AHN, Estado, leg. 4802.

[97] Journal et notes de l'année 1808 et 1809, note of 17 Aug. 1809, AN, 327 AP 1.

consul's initial hopes. The description written for the imperial government conceals the fact that, on the pretext of being busy, the guard of the seal had refused the invitation to the feast itself. Instead of a lunch, he only accepted a simple meal.[98] Clearly, Yūsuf ṣāḥib al-ṭābıʿ was conscious of the implications that his visit would have for the ceremonial that regulated Franco–Tunisian relations.

In the 1820s, the reigning bey himself began going to dine in the country houses of European consuls. During negotiations between delegations of General Clauzel and the bey's family on the future government of Constantine and Oran, the bey, his brother, his children, and ministers met at least two times on the steam-powered boat of the delegation, went out on the sea and agreed to share a meal offered by the French. If the members of bey's family had, at least from 1815, accepted European officer's invitations, this was the first time that a reigning bey accepted to place himself under a European flag. In the context of the military occupation of the neighbouring regency of Algiers and the negotiations on the establishment of Ḥusaynite beys of Constantine and Oran as tributary princes of France, it was, on the part of beylical family, a way of associating its fate publicly with that of the infidels.[99]

At the time of his accession, in 1835, Muṣṭafā bey wished that this event should be solemnized in Europe by a salvo of a hundred and one cannon-shots, like that fired at this time, in Tunis, when the enthronement of a European ruler was announced there. The gesture asked by the bey was unprecedented in Europe. It would have signified the reciprocity of relations between the Regency and the European powers.[100] More than its rejections itself, the argumentation of the French ministry of foreign affairs is revealing, since it is not only founded on 'the unusual character of such a demonstration' ('le caractère insolite d'une telle démonstration'), but also on the inequality of rank that existed between 'a great sovereign of Europe' ('un grand souverain d'Europe') and 'a head of the Regency' ('un chef de la régence').[101]

The rejection of the old ceremonial of the Regency, that, with the abolition of the hand-kiss in 1836, also concerned the public audiences of the Bardo, came with the establishment of ties of dependence, rather than the integration of the Regency into the diplomatic system created by the Congress of Vienna. The stay of Aḥmad bey in Paris, in 1846, the first visit of a Muslim ruler to an European capital, symbolizes this imbalance.[102]

[98] Stinca to Devoize, Bardo, n.d., AN, 327 AP 16.

[99] Lesseps to Sébastiani, Tunis, 19 Nov. 1830, MAE, CPC, Tunis, vol. 1, fos. 150v–1r. On the second visit in January 1831: idem to Sébastiani, Tunis, 15 Jan. 1831, ibid., fos. 160v–1r.

[100] Deval to Broglie, Tunis, 23 May 1835, MAE, CPC, Tunis, vol. 2, fos. 94v–5r.

[101] Broglie to Deval, Paris, 28 Aug. 1835, MAE, CPC, Tunis, vol. 2, fo. 122r.

[102] See Brown, *The Tunisia of Ahmad bey*, pp. 325–34.

VI

Diplomatic ceremonial symbolized power relationships taken as legitimate. However, it was not fixed once and for all. Rather, as with royal ceremonies, all interlocutors associated with it their own interpretations of the context, and adapted it to their systems of values. Diplomatic ceremonial reproduced, while adjusting in a dynamic manner to transformations, conceptions of power and reciprocal relations. Continuities and variations of its forms had immediate meaning for interactors.[103]

In the European diplomatic system of the ancien regime structured according to an hierarchical order that was, in origin, that of the *Res publica christiana*, ceremonial expressed and corroborated publicly the subtle differentiations of rank. If, under Norbert Elias's influence,[104] research interest first focused on the working of royal ceremonials under the absolute monarchy, one also begins to understand better their transformation towards the end of the ancien régime as well as attempts to restore royal symbolism after 1814.[105] The rise of a concept of sovereignty that transcended the individual will of the prince meant that during the eighteenth century forms of representation of court societies, repeated in a more or less rigid way, became opaque, hence the perception of ceremonial as an obstacle that prevented, or at least made more difficult, fruitful negotiations. However, through the reinterpretation of the old gestures and the establishment of new ones, a ceremonial attached to the domain of the state still continues today to regulate diplomatic communication.

Diplomatic ceremonial in the ancien régime certainly reflected first the glory and the prestige of the prince before his subjects, and in confronting rival courts, but it also regulated exchanges between diplomatic representatives that only acquired their meaning in the local context.[106] Royal ceremonial,

[103] Alain Boureau, 'Ritualité politique et modernité monarchique', in Neithard Bulst, Robert Descimon, and Alain Guerreau, eds., *L'Etat ou le roi : les fondations de la modernité monarchique en France (XIVe-XVIIe siècle)* (Paris, 1996), pp. 9–25, especially p. 14. Cf. Daniela Frigo, *Principe, ambasciatori e 'jus gentium' : l'amministrazione della politica estera nel Piemonte del Settecento* (Rome, 1991), pp. 269–88.

[104] Norbert Elias, *Die höfische Gesellschaft : Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie mit einer Einleitung : Soziologie und Geschichtswissenschaft* (4th edn, Frankfurt am Main, 1979), on the etiquette and ceremonial see chs. 5 and 6, pp. 120–221.

[105] In his master work on *Les rois thaumaturges*, Marc Bloch had already studied the disappearance of the *toucher royal* in England and France (Marc Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges : étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale, particulièrement en France et en Angleterre* (Strasbourg, 1924), pp. 381–405). Linked to Bloch's conclusions, Alain Guéry ('L'image perdue des rois de France, XVIIIe-XXe siècle', in Heinz Duchhardt, Richard A. Jackson and David Sturdy, eds., *European monarchy : its evolution and practice from Roman Antiquity to modern times* (Stuttgart, 1992), pp. 195–206) draws attention to the desacralization of the image of the king at the end of the ancien régime and its failed restoration under Louis XVIII and Charles X. Cf. Françoise Waquet, *Les fêtes royales sous la Restauration ou l'Ancien Régime retrouvé* (Geneva, 1981). See Milos Vec, *Zeremonialwissenschaft im Fürstenstaat. Studien zur juristischen und politischen Theorie absolutistischer Herrschaftsrepräsentation* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998), on the German science of the ceremonial in the eighteenth century.

[106] Like Norbert Elias, the American ceremonialist school, which was interested in the royal symbolism of the ancien regime as the leading element in the customary constitution of a

certainly, but it belonged also to all those that took part and used it to affirm their rank in the hierarchy of honours.[107] The transformations of Franco–Tunisian diplomatic ceremonial between 1700 and 1840 arose in the tensions between the local society to which mediators belonged and the society of the court or the capital.

At the end of the 1820s, a quarrel between the British and French consuls, Reade and Lesseps, over the order of precedence shows us this complexity of situations of interaction. At the time of the Congress of Vienna, the former order of precedence was replaced by a new regulation based on the equality of sovereign state representatives: the diplomatic rank of agents – and not the rank of princes or states – and their seniority in the posting in question should henceforth decide their prerogatives. In Europe and in Tunis, forms and meaning of ceremonial evolved according to different rhythms. Until 1829, the French consuls in Tunis enjoyed precedence, although they were not doyens. Thomas Reade himself had initially given way to his French colleague. The European society in Tunis, whilst interacting with European capitals, obeyed its own norms. The decisions of the Congresses of Vienna and Aix-la-Chapelle intervened to situate a consul in a dispute of honour. At the same time, officials in the French ministry of foreign affairs, charged with answering Lesseps's dispatches, no longer understood the terms by which the consul defended his right to precedence over his British colleague. If the ministerial dispatch sustained chargé d'affaires Lesseps's priority of rank over his colleagues having the lesser title of 'agent', it qualified this situation as 'incongruous' ('disparate'). The proposed solution showed that, as a manifestation of a hierarchy of honour distinguishing princes or states, the precedence had, even in the view of a conservative ministry – that of Polignac – lost its meaning: powers could easily end the 'incongruous' situation by giving to their consuls the title of 'chargé d'affaires'.[108] In the face of an interpretation of diplomatic ceremonial as being a matter solely for a prince or a state, the case shows how a modest intermediary could still be attached to something that he considered to be an attribute of his social status. In the manner of a noble in a European court of the ancien regime, the consul was a fully fledged actor in a ceremonial that he used to affirm the prestige of his consulate.

It is essential to underline this diversity. It allows us to guard against a vision of Franco–Tunisian relations that opposes French and Tunisians as coherent cultural entities with fixed identities, pre-existing interaction. It is only from

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monarchical state, concentrated on the function of the ceremonial as a means of reinforcing monarchical power (see, for example, Ralph E. Giesey, *Cérémonial et puissance souveraine: France, XVe–XVIIe siècles* (Paris, 1987); Richard Jackson, *Vive le roi! A history of the French coronation from Charles V to Charles X* (Chapel Hill, 1984)).

[107] See Jeroen Duindam, *Myths of power: Norbert Elias and the early modern European court* (Amsterdam, 1994), especially pp. 99–136.

[108] Polignac to Lesseps, Paris, 25 Aug. 1829, MAE, CCC, Tunis, vol. 48, fos. 235r–6r.

this relation of diversity that one can attempt to understand the manner in which practices of interaction, and more especially diplomatic ceremonial, evolved between 1700 and 1840. In this period the public images that the powers in Europe and America gave themselves changed profoundly. Events such as the American and French Revolutions provoked ruptures that made interpretations attached to certain practices problematic, such as for example the hand-kiss. The Bardo followed these transformations, negotiated interaction practices to which it attached its own interpretations, adapted to its system of values and rules of procedure, that itself underwent modification through contacts with Europeans. Linguistic usage presents an eloquent example of a practice that allowed the assertion of a conception of relations with the Christians which was contradictory to the treaties whose reciprocity was likely to jar Muslim sensitivities. The choice of language was part of practices that recalled, but also produced and reproduced daily, norms that governed relations between Christians and Muslims in the Maghreb. In the same way, the ceremonial that regulated contacts with envoys and Christian consuls constituted an interactional *modus vivendi* established by interlocutors who competed together in defining the situation of interaction. These agreements, between interlocutors, who mobilized different systems of values and rules of procedure, did not affect directly their world view, but affected a repertoire of partial norms regulating the concrete aspects of interactions. They concerned the temporary distribution of the balance of interaction.[109]

According to the context, interlocutors more or less asserted their own values and their rules of procedure. Next to the relationship of forces, the respective importance that they attached to the context determined the interactional *modus vivendi*. Thus, the ceremonial of consul audiences in the Bardo was much more resistant to transformations than that of the visits of special envoys. In this last case, the recognition of beylical power was less directly in play, which explains why the bey and his entourage were open to accommodations that moved away from the ceremonial of the court. On the other hand, in the Versailles of the ancien regime, all Tunisian envoys were forced to accept the mould of a ceremonial that marked the superiority of the 'Emperor' of France.

The bey, consuls, or envoys not only acted in relation to the immediate interlocutor, but also before a public that expected of them the maintenance of a certain 'expressive order'.[110] Country residences at La Marsa admitted exchanges that would have seriously compromised the Tunisian interlocutors if they had taken place in the Bardo or the European fonduks in the city. In the same way, pronounced contrasts between the public and private audiences of the bey were underlined until the 1820s.

The shared partial norms referred to divergent global systems. However, the desire not to prevent interaction often made interlocutors not explicitly express the underlying value differences and avoid opening up conflicts on definitions

[109] See Erving Goffman, *The presentation of self in everyday life* (New York, 1959), pp. 9–10.
[110] See Goffman, *Interaction ritual*, pp. 9–10.

of the situation.[111] In a situation of relative balance in power relations, the stability of diplomatic relations – like all interaction – depended on respect for a ceremonial that allowed all interlocutors to 'maintain face', and, more generally, the capacity to prevent incidents susceptible to making one of the interlocutors lose face and, thereby, threaten future relations. Success produced reactions of 'confidence and assurance' amongst interlocutors; each could present himself with head held high before others.[112] In the establishment of a common ceremonial, agreement could amount to a respectful and often implicit understanding on the manner of managing a disagreement and not making divergence explicit, as the question of the hand-kiss shows.

In reality, inter-cultural diplomatic practice was made of balances and ruptures, of attitudes of respect and consideration, but also of aggressive attempts at domination designed to make the 'Other' lose face, to stop him from projecting an acceptable image of himself. From the French Revolution onwards, and, in a much clearer way, after 1815 and 1830, European and American diplomacies abandoned the restraint that had brought certain consuls – for example, the French Barthélémy de Saizieu (1762–79) and Devoize (1791–1819) – the confidence of the bey or his entourage. The consuls themselves were conscious of this evolution and, as the cases of Devoize and Lesseps (1827–32) show, if their attitude was sometimes critical, they had to promote the change regardless.

[111] See Goffman, *The presentation of self*, pp. 9–10.
[112] See Goffman, *Interaction ritual*, p. 8.