

LEO CADOGAN RARE BOOKS

74 Mayton Street, London N7 6QT

ACCOUNT OF ALGIERS - ESCAPE ATTEMPT OF CERVANTES

1. [Cervantes, Miguel de] Haëdo, Diego de, O.S.B. [Sosa, Antonio de]: Topographia, e historia general de Argel, repartida en cinco tratados, do se veran casos estraños, muertes espantosas, y tormentos exquisitos, que conviene se entiendan en la Christiandad: con mucho doctrina, y elegancia curiosa. Dirigida al ilustissimo[sic.] señor Don Diego de Haedo Arçobispo de Palermo, Presidente, y Capitan General del Reyno de Sicilia. Por el Maestro fray Diego de Haedo Abad de Fromesta, de la Orden del Patriarca San Benito, natural del Valle de Carrança. *En Valladolid, por Diego Fernandez de Cordova y Oviedo, Impressor de libros [...] acosta de Antonio Coello mercador de libros. 1612.*

First edition. Folio, fols. [12] 210. With index bound after prelims. Woodcut armorial to title-page, woodcut decorations, head- and tail-piece, and initials. Copy likely washed and with some careful repairs, but very nice and bright, in a fine burgundy morocco gilt binding, marbled pastedowns and endpapers, all edges gilt. The binding signed by Brugalla, 1946, and with gilt supralibros featuring scales of books and motto "Antiguo y moderno"; the same motto to a small exlibris to front pastedown of I. Fernandez, another small exlibris with text "Seleccion" (binding slightly scuffed but very good).

Extraordinary and important first-hand account of sixteenth-century Algiers, its government, society, and its Christian captives, THIS BOOK ALSO CONTAINS THE FIRST BIOGRAPHY OF CERVANTES IN ALGIERS, WITH A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF HIS SECOND ESCAPE ATTEMPT. Captured by pirates in the Mediterranean, the writer was kept as a slave in the city between 1575 and 1580, before a ransom was paid. Cervantes's experiences in Algiers informed writings including 'Don Quixote', and he wrote two plays on the subject ('El trato de Argel' and 'Los baños de Argel'). In England, the present book, and its account of Cervantes, were used by John Morgan in his 'History of Algiers' (1731).

During his captivity, Cervantes made four escape attempts, a fact which the present author refers to. The second attempt (September 1577) is described, at fols. 184 recto to 185 recto, with Cervantes's name appearing five times. Cervantes was the leader of the escape, which was betrayed. "[The Ottomans] seized them all, and particularly shackled Miguel de Cervantes, a gentleman from Alcalà de Henares, who was the author of this business, and was therefore the most to blame". Cervantes was kept chained in the dungeons for five months, while some "were shut up without seeing the light [...] for more than seven months [...] Miguel de Cervantes sustained them with a great risk to his life, which four times he was at the point of

losing - impaled or hooked, or burnt alive - for things he attempted to do in order to free many men [...] Hassan Pasha, king of Algiers, said that while the maimed Spaniard would be under his guard, his Christians, his vessels, and even the whole city were safe. This is how much he feared the schemes of Miguel de Cervantes" (tr. Garcès).

It has been suggested that Cervantes wrote this book, but attribution has also been made to Antonio de Sosa, a Portuguese cleric captured and imprisoned in Algiers in 1577, who knew the writer. As an eyewitness to Algiers, the book has much of interest. "[It] covers hundreds of pages with infinite details about sixteenth-century Algiers - its geography, customs, history, and the ordeals of the Christian captives [...] [The book] was composed in the very dungeons of Algiers [...] The first book of this treatise [...] is dedicated to a minute description of the city [...] its geography and customs, while the second [...] is a chronicle of its most recent history, from the foundation of the Barbary State to the last decade of the sixteenth century [...] The three 'Dialogues' contained in the third part [...] represent the eloquent testimony of an eyewitness who participated in the dramatic experience endured by Christian slaves in Barbary [...] [This was] the most important sixteenth-century historiographical treatise on Algiers, one characterized by a modern historian as 'the most extensive and exact of the documents' on the first seventy years of Algiers under Turkish rule" (Garcès). The book has been explored for evidence of the rich racial and cultural mosaic of the contemporary city (its inhabitants listed as coming from as far as Suriname, New Spain (Mexico) and Brazil), and also as a source for linguistic studies (with usage and discussion of 'lingua franca').

Our copy was bound by Emilio Brugalla Turmo (1901-1987), a celebrated Paris-trained binder of Barcelona. Examples of his work are found in the British Library online bindings database.

CCPB000037047-9. Palau 111980: "Obra rara en comercio y buscada por hallarse en ella noticias relativas al cautiverio de Miguel de Cervantes, y datos sobre su patria". IB 45116. OCLC shows nine copies in North America (NYPL, Kansas, BPL, BU, Harvard, JHU, Brown, NY Hist. Soc., Toronto), and three in UK (BL, Oxford, NLS).

María Antonia Garcés, 'Cervantes in Algiers, a captive's tale' (Nashville 2002), esp. 32-35, 45-49. On the book and 'lingua franca', see e.g. Phillip Strazny (ed.), 'Encyclopedia of Linguistics' (New York and Abingdon 2005), 626. For a suggested authorship by Cervantes, see Daniel Eisenberg, "Cervantes, autor de la "Topografía e historia general de Argel" publicada por Diego de Haedo", in 'Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America', 16/1 (1996), 32-53.

[ref: 2951] **£8000**