



An Early Modern Dialogue with Islam: Antonio de Sosa's Topography of Algiers (1612) (History Lang and Cult Spanish Portuguese)

Antonio de Sosa

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About the Book

An Early Modern Dialogue with Islam: Antonio de Sosa's Topography of Algiers (1612) makes available in translation a riveting sixteenth-century chronicle of European and North African cultural contacts that is virtually unknown to English-speaking readers. The *Topography* was written by a Portuguese cleric, Doctor Antonio de Sosa, who was captured by Algerian corsairs in 1577 and held as a Barbary slave for over four years while awaiting ransom. Sosa's work is a fascinating description of a city at the crossroads of civilizations, with a sophisticated multilingual population of Turks, Arabs, Moriscos, Berbers, Jews, Christian captives, and converts to Islam from across the world.

In the *Topography of Algiers*, Sosa meticulously describes the inhabitants' daily lives; their fashions, pastimes, feasts, and funerals; their government; the landmarks of the city itself; and much more. Readers will be struck by the vibrancy of his narrative, rendered into English with crisp accuracy by Diana de Armas Wilson. The *Topography* is a treasure trove of amazing customs, startling behavior, and historical anecdotes that will enthrall readers. The extensive introduction by Maria Antonia Garces is a superb archival study of the Mediterranean world described by the *Topography*, as well as an expose of the adventurous, even scandalous, life of its author. The introduction also discusses the fraudulent publication of Sosa's *Topography* under another man's name.

Sosa's chronicle stands out for its complexity, vitality, and the sharpness of the author's ethnographic vision. No other account of captivity in this period offers such a detailed and dynamic tableau of Algerian society at the end of the sixteenth century.

"Long overdue, this translation and edition of Sosa's *Topografia* is an absolute gem. Sixteenth-century Algiers was the Mediterranean's crossroads, a meeting point and melting-pot for Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Sosa's survey literally brings this important city to life. It is all there: architecture, economy, and religion, plus pirates, renegades, slaves, marriage customs, and more. There is no better source for understanding the human complexity of the early modern Mediterranean world, and both Diana de Armas Wilson--for the translation--and Maria Antonia Garces--for the introduction and notes--deserve credit for their masterful achievement." --**Richard L. Kagan, Johns Hopkins University**

"This is a truly significant text for all scholars of early modern Europe, worthy of their greatest interest and attention. *An Early Modern Dialogue with Islam: Antonio de Sosa's Topography of Algiers (1612)* marks a watershed in our understanding of the synergies of power and the nature of shifting identities along the borderlands of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe; this work stands as an example of interdisciplinary and cross-culture criticism at its best." --**E. Michael Gerli, University of Virginia**

"Maria Antonia Garces, author of the classic *Cervantes in Algiers: A Captive's Tale*, crowns her scholarly

achievements with a true masterpiece: *An Early Modern Dialogue with Islam: Antonio de Sosa's Topography of Algiers (1612)*. Sosa's *Topografía* was formerly attributed to Diego de Haedo, but Professor Garces was able to solve the centuries-long mystery of the real authorship of the famous *Topography*, thanks to her patient research in European archives. Garces's stunning discovery, furthermore, sheds new light on the life of Cervantes, for Sosa was not only his fellow captive in Algiers, but also his first biographer. As the foremost scholar on Cervantes's relationship with Algiers and the Mediterranean, Garces has joined forces with Wilson, a superb translator of Spanish texts. --**Luce Lopez-Baralt, University of Puerto Rico**

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