

# Why was Elizabeth I known as 'Sultana Isabel'?

Enquiry: Why was the world 'opening up' to Elizabeth I and her people?

Ms Apps



# Elizabeth I and Morocco

Elizabethan England was perhaps not as wealthy or powerful and Queen Elizabeth I would like when we compare it with Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur's Morocco. Morocco was a kingdom of great wealth with vast supplies of expensive items such as horses, gunpowder, gold and sugar.

Following England's defeat of the **Spanish Armada** in 1588, Ahmad al-Mansur came to see England as a potential ally against Spain. In 1589, Ahmad al-Mansur sent a **delegation** to London to propose a joint attack on Tangier in North Africa, which the Spanish had seized from him. In 1596, he sent warships and supplies to help support the Elizabethan navy's attack on the Spanish port of Cadiz.



# The Moroccan Delegation, 1600

By 1600 it was clear that an alliance against Spain could be beneficial to both Morocco and England. Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur wished for Queen Elizabeth to agree to invade Spain with him.

The **delegation** was led by **Abd el-Ouahed ben Messaoud**. He was al-Mansur's favourite. George Tomson, an English spy and trader in Morocco, described him as having great intelligence, pride and wit. Messaoud led a group of seventeen-men, including a young man called Abdullah Dudar who had been born in Spain. His job was to act as **an interpreter**. It was said he was excited about the possibility of showing off his skills by speaking Italian with Elizabeth.



The **delegation** arrived in August 1600 and caused a stir in London.

Although London was home to people from both West and North **Africa**, for many in London this would have been the first time they would have seen a large group of people they called '**Moors**'. The delegation themselves were shocked at the standards of cleanliness and quality of food in London.

Elizabeth I pledged finances to Ahmad al-Mansur through the **delegation** in return for a vast amount of Moroccan sugar. Elizabeth had an extremely sweet tooth, sending doctors all over the world to find solutions to the toothaches her diet caused. Unfortunately, both the English and Moroccan monarchs died before they could attack Spain.



# The Islamic world in London before 1600

Queen Elizabeth I was not the first Tudor monarch to establish a relationship with the **Islamic world**. In the reign of Elizabeth's brother, King Edward VI, trading posts had been set up in the Moroccan towns of Larache, Safi and Agadir. The **Barbary Company** of Merchants was set up in 1585 to further trade with Morocco.

We know that in London there were people from Morocco such as Mary Fillis. Mary Fillis lived in London in the 1590s and worked making clothing. We know Mary's story because she is recorded as having been baptised as a Christian at around the age of twenty. We know from the records of the church of St Botolph's Church, that Mary Fillis had come to England with her father at the age of eleven.



# Glossary

Abd el-Ouahed ben Messaoud- The Moroccan Ambassador to England.

Ambassador - A representative sent from one leader to another.

Barbary Company - A group of men who put money into travelling to and trading English goods in Morocco in return for Moroccan goods.

Delegation - A group of representatives sent to persuade another leader to agree to something.

Interpreter - A translator of one language into another.

Islamic World - Refers to areas of the world in which Islam was the main religion (e.g. Morocco in North Africa or the Ottoman Empire, which stretched from Eastern Europe to modern Turkey and beyond).

Moors - A confusing Tudor label. Could mean someone Moroccan or Muslim or black and Muslim. Black Muslims were sometimes called 'Blackamoors'.



# Comprehension Questions

1. How would you describe the Kingdom of Morocco in the reign of Elizabeth I?  
*During the reign of Elizabeth I, Morocco was...*
2. Who was England and Morocco's mutual enemy?
3. How did the Spanish Armada impact on Morocco's relationship with England?
4. What did Elizabeth and Ahmad al-Mansur want from each other in 1600?
5. Challenge yourself: What evidence other than the delegation of 1600 do we have of Elizabethan England's links to Morocco?

