

**Corsairs and Pirates  
in the Eastern Mediterranean,  
Fifteenth-Nineteenth Centuries**



**Select Papers from the 2nd International Conference  
on the Greek World in Travel Accounts and Maps,  
'Corsairs and Pirates in the Eastern Mediterranean, 15th-19th Centuries',  
17-19 October 2014, Museum of Cycladic Art, Athens**

**Series editor:**  
Artemis Scutari

**Coordination:**  
Dimitris Stefanou

**Text editing and proofreading:**  
Alexandra Pel

**Design and layout:**  
Dora Mitsonia

**Printing:**  
Alta Grafico SA

**Publisher:**  
AdVenture SA  
10 Vas. Georgiou B' Ave, 10674, Athens, Greece  
info@adventuresa.gr

ISBN: 978-960-87792-5-9

Copyright © 2016 Sylvia Ioannou Foundation

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the Sylvia Ioannou Foundation ([www.sylviaioannoufoundation.org](http://www.sylviaioannoufoundation.org)).

The content of each article is the sole expression and opinion of its author(s), and not necessarily that of the publisher. The illustrations in the book have been selected by the authors, who have secured the permissions for the images' reproduction.

***Corsairs and Pirates in the Eastern Mediterranean,  
Fifteenth-Nineteenth Centuries***

Edited by Gelina Harlaftis,  
Dimitris Dimitropoulos  
and David J. Starkey



2016

# Contents

List of Illustrations	9
Acknowledgements	11
Introduction: Pirates and Corsairs in the Eastern Mediterranean Gelina Harlaftis	13
 <i>Topoi, Scale and Practice of Commerce-raiding</i>	
Pirates during a Revolution: The Many Faces of Piracy and the Reaction of Local Communities Dimitris Dimitropoulos	29
A Hub of Piracy in the Aegean: Syros during the Greek War of Independence Apostolos Delis	41
Corsairing and Slave Trading in the Cyclades during the Late Seventeenth Century George Koutzakiotis	55
Recovering 'Mr Roberts': A Seventeenth-century Aegean Captivity Narrative and its Author Colin Heywood	63
 <i>Piracy, Corsairing, the State and the Law</i>	
'It is Not <i>Halal</i> to Raid Them': Piracy and Law in the Seventeenth-century Ottoman Mediterranean Joshua M. White	83
Politics and Piracy in the Ottoman Empire Sophia Laiou	101
' <i>Per omnes partes barbarie orientis</i> ': Maltese Corsairing in the Levant during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries Joan Abela	109

## **The Images of Pirates and Corsairs**

<b>Images of Piracy in Ottoman Literature, 1550-1750</b> Marinos Sariyannis	129
<b>Barbary Legends on the Mediterranean Frontier: Corsairs, Pirates and the Shifting Bounds of the International Community</b> Amedeo Policante	141
<b>Redbeard, Baba &amp; Co.: Piracy and Parody in <i>Asterix</i></b> Nikolaos Chrissidis	151
<b>Epilogue: Parasites, Predators and the Historical Process</b> David J. Starkey	161
<b>Biographical Notes of Authors</b>	169



# **Introduction: Pirates and Corsairs in the Eastern Mediterranean**

**Gelina Harlaftis**

In planning the Sylvia Ioannou Foundation's 2nd International Conference, the Director of the Foundation and the Conference Scientific Committee identified two main aims. The first related to scholarship, for in deciding to focus on piracy and corsairing in the Eastern Mediterranean during the early modern period, it was agreed that the conference should endeavour to stimulate a fresh scientific dialogue on a largely neglected subject. Although the historiography of piracy and corsairing in most seas and oceans of the world is extensive, research on commerce-raiding in the Eastern Mediterranean is lacking. This is perhaps due to the particular difficulties in researching the topic. Given the international, or rather transnational, nature of the subject, skills in languages as diverse as Ottoman, Arabic, Greek, Italian and French are required to interpret activity that was dispersed widely over time and space. While such skills are not easily combined, significant funding is generally required to undertake research in multiple archives in Western as well as Eastern Mediterranean archives, where the documentary evidence that underpins the fascinating stories of pirates and corsairs in the Levant are held. In seeking to mitigate such practical difficulties, the conference incentivised scholars by providing them with the opportunity to present new research findings gleaned from disparate archives, thereby enhancing knowledge and understanding of maritime law, politics, economies and societies. Such broad issues were 'set on the table' and shared, triggering vibrant and exciting discussions that are reflected in the chapters that comprise this volume.

The second aim of the conference was to promote the work of younger generations of historians, especially early career scholars and those in mid-career with a research base to build upon or a new line of enquiry to explore. 60% of the participants of the conference, and most of the contributors to this volume, belong to these categories.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. See the conference website at: <http://www.sylviaioannoufoundation.org/conferences/2nd-international-conference/papers.html>. The conference 'Corsairs and Pirates in the Eastern Mediterranean, 15th-19th Centuries', organised by the Sylvia Ioannou Foundation, was held at the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens, 17-19 October 2014.

of it belongs to infidels, who in no way would allow that in their property, or in any part of it, there be carved and engraved the effigy of the name of Jesus, or His Holy Cross, for them so hostile and hateful.<sup>38</sup>

In 1671, Christodolo di Partaria and Duca di Salonichi submitted a copy of an agreement they had executed whereby particular marks had been made on their cargo so as to distinguish it from that of other merchants. With the help of a document which is later than the period under study, we can understand better why they were so persistent in showing the recording of these marks. The document in question is also from the records of the Tribunale; however, over the course of time it found itself deposited at the Notarial Archives. In this document, which is dated 8 April 1795, the magistrate of the Tribunale appointed an expert to distinguish between Greek and Turkish cargo from various marks and numbering on the same cargo (see figs 3 and 4). From his inspection, it transpired that out of a total of 43 sacks of wool, only 9 had some kind of marking, with 5 having a Turkish mark, 2 having a Greek mark and another 2 having both a Turkish and a Greek mark on them. Out of 4 wooden cases of saffron, only 1 had a Greek inscription, and as regards 341 sacks of tobacco, 149 did not have a mark, 191 had a Turkish number and mark and just 1 had a Greek mark.<sup>39</sup>

Documentation often accompanied a cargo, and this constituted another way of distinguishing between Christian and Muslim merchandise. Experts were appointed to translate all documents found on the captured ship. This not only revealed who the owners of the cargo were, but provided an important source for acquiring information that was not only specific to spy on the movements of the Turks,<sup>40</sup> but also had the additional value that it enabled the knights to gain information regarding current commodity prices. This information was then used effectively to negotiate competitive prices when finding markets to supply the island with the necessary victuals.

As the various primary sources demonstrate, it was common for a Muslim or Greek ship to have a multi-religious crew. Once caught by Catholic corsairs, however, it became very difficult for the Greeks to prove their Christian identity. If there were any suspicions regarding the veracity of their being Christian, once in Malta these captives were handed over to the Inquisitor, who conducted the

---

38. NAM, Trib. Arm., Vol. 1, Case 1 (1601), f. 5v: Nella poppa vicino al temone della sudetta Nave vi sono scolpiti piu e piu segni della santissima croce, Nostra redentione, con lettere, et carattere greche di Evangelico, et Christiano significato, la cui imagine, et forma hoggi di anco si vede benissimo. Et pero in nessun modo si puol suspecttare, nonce fermamente affermare, o credere, che la detta Nave, o parte di essa sia d'Infideli, li quali in nessun maniera comportarebbero che nella robba loro, o in parte di essa vi fusse impresso, et scupito l'effigie et Nome di Giesu, o sua Santa Croce ad essi tanto nemico, et odiosi. [author's translation into English]

39. NAV, Unclassified document held in the eighteenth-century section under the name of *Tribunale degli Armamenti* 1795.

40. A case in point is that of Giorgio Marino of Candia, who on 11 May 1532 was given a safe conduct to travel with his ship (*fregata*) in order to spy on the movements of the Turks. Valletta, National Library of Malta, Archives of the Order of Malta, Liber Bullarum 415, f. 231v.



Fig. 3.

Expert's report on the distinction between Greek and Turkish cargo marks.

Source: Valletta, Notarial Archives of Malta, Unclassified documents held in the eighteenth-century section under the name of *Tribunale degli Armamenti* 1795.

