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## Greek Maritime History of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century: A new project

In a symposium organised in memory of Professor Gunnar Hering, I feel that it is most appropriate to discuss commerce and transport in the northern Balkans, for it is pertinent to my PhD thesis, initiated at the *Institut für Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik*. Exactly ten years ago, at the very beginning of my PhD course, it was Professor Gunnar Hering along with Professor Olga Katsiardi-Hering who suggested that I focus my research on a particular collection of documents, preserved within the National Archives of Hungary, that concerned the activities of Greek merchants in the northern Balkans and Hungary in the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> However, after I completed my PhD I did not have the opportunity to continue my research on this subject, and, to my surprise, I changed the area of my research from the terrestrial to the maritime commerce. One may, of course, say that where the roads end the sea routes begin, and that commerce cannot be limited by borders of any kind. Products from the hinterland were carried on donkeys and horses to ports, wherefrom they were loaded on ships to be transported to other ports.

In certain cases, traders had the opportunity to choose between the caravan of donkeys and the ship as means of transport. Most interesting is the case of Ragusa/Dubrovnik, which until the early eighteenth century was the main port of export of the produce of the Balkans to Italy. In the course of the eighteenth century, the trade changed direction, and the merchants preferred either the port of Thessaloniki or the land routes leading to Central Europe.<sup>2</sup> The change of trading routes was caused by several economic and

<sup>1</sup> *Ελληνικές εμπορικές επιχειρήσεις στην Κεντρική Ευρώπη στο β' μισό του 18<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα: η οικογένεια Πονδικά* [Greek mercantile enterprises in Central Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century: the case of the Pondikas family], unpublished PhD thesis. Athens 2002.

<sup>2</sup> KONSTANTINOS D. MERTZIOS, *Μνημεία της μακεδονικής ιστορίας* [Monuments of Macedonian History]. Thessaloniki, E.M.Σ. 1947, p. 275. On 1 September 1744, Venetian consul

political reasons, which either obstructed or encouraged trading activity in the area. It is both interesting and useful to compare and identify the changes that indicate crisis and flourishing in particular sectors of a market economy.

The study of different sorts of trading activities, which may be interconnected, requires different approaches. Since the Ottoman archives provide difficulties to non specialists, an alternative research opportunity open to historians is the archives of other Balkan and Central European countries, where Ottoman subjects were active. But is it possible to count the number of horses and caravans that were used in the long-distance trade during a certain period? The only available reports on the size of the caravans, i.e. on the number of horses and muleteers, are those by Western travellers<sup>3</sup>. It is difficult to find material that sheds light on the number and the names of the participants in this trade. Only quarantine certificates could provide such information, and wherever this material has not been destroyed, as it happened in Zemun near Belgrade, it still awaits the researcher.

Much more awaits the researcher on maritime trade. The surviving historical sources are abundant in this area, while access to them is easier. Ship records are plentiful, for every ship sailing across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, for instance along the coastline of the Italian peninsula, Malta, France or Holland, had to register with the port authorities and the lazaretto. The sea offers more routes and better access to a country. This is the reason why we have more possibilities and more sources for the study of maritime history. Numerous archives of port authorities are almost intact, and have been extensively researched from different perspectives.

Yet, what do we know about Greek maritime history? What information do we have about the rise and the decline of the Greek merchant fleet in the eighteenth century, especially right before its participation in the Greek War of Independence? Which archives have been researched so far for the his-

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in Ragusa Rossi reported that traders preferred the market of Hungary to that of Ragusa. On 8 July 1745, he reported that the produce of Macedonia was transferred to the port of Thessaloniki, wherefrom it was exported by sea or land to the markets of Austria, Hungary and Germany; FRANCIS W. CARTER, *Dubrovnik (Ragusa). A classical city-state*. London-New York (Seminar Press) 1972, pp. 136, 356.

<sup>3</sup> HENRI HOLLAND, *Ταξίδι στη Μακεδονία και Θεσσαλία* [Travel to Macedonia and Thessaly], trans. George Karavitis. Athens (Tolidis) 1989, pp. 2023. For caravans and transport means see ARNO MEHLAN, 'Die Handelstrassen des Balkans während der Türkenzeit', *Südost-deutsche Forschungen* 4/2 (1939), p. 234 passim, reprinted in SPYROS I. ASDRACHAS (ed.), *Η οικονομική δομή των βαλκανικών χωρών στα χρόνια της Οθωμανικής Αυτοκρατορίας ιε'-ιθ' αιώνας* [Economic History of the Ottoman Balkans, fifteenth-sixteenth Centuries]. Athens (Melissa) 1979, pp. 367–407.

tory of Greek maritime trade? How much do we know about the size of the fleets, the islands or ports with relatively large fleets or even the reasons for the flourishing of a particular port in the Ionian or the Aegean seas? What about the decline of towns and islands with prominent fleets, such as Messologhi<sup>4</sup> or Myconos<sup>5</sup>? In fact, the available historical information is little, in several cases contradictory and is not based on research in primary sources.

To master the sources of Greek maritime history of the eighteenth century, the collaboration of many researchers with different expertise was deemed necessary. To this end, a research project, titled ‘Greek maritime history, 1700–1821’, has officially been started at the Ionian University in March 2004. It is coordinated by Professor Gelina Harlaftis, and draws on the contribution of many academics, independent researchers and postgraduate students.<sup>6</sup> Its aim is to encourage research in the Greek universities, and it is jointly funded by the Greek Ministry of Education and the European Union. The purpose of my paper is to briefly expand on the use of the project, and to make some suggestions and comments on the importance of the eighteenth century in Greek maritime history.

<sup>4</sup> Konstantinos Sathas publishes a list of ships of Messologhi in 1764, found in a report of the Venetian consul in Patras: Ειδήσεις τινες περί εμπορίου και φορολογίας εν Ελλάδι επί τουρκοκρατίας [Some information about trade and taxes in Greece during the Ottoman rule], *Oikonomiki Epitheorisis*, 70 (Dec. 1878), pp. 433–450, 71(1879), reprinted in 1977 by N. Karavias. This list along with other documents pertaining to Messologhi’s fleet in the eighteenth century have been published by NIKOS ST. VLASSOPOULOS, *Το ναυτικό του Μεσσολογγίου τον 18<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα* [The fleet of Messologhi in the eighteenth century]. Athens 2004.

<sup>5</sup> GEORGIOS D. KRIEZIS, *Ιστορία της νήσου Ύδρας προ της επανάστασεως του 1821* [History of Hydra before the Greek Revolution of 1821]. Patras 1860, p. 28) maintains that many ports and islands, such as Galaxidi, Patmos and Myconos, and their fleets were destroyed during the Russo-Turkish war of 1768–74. Myconos’ fleet, numbering about 25 ships of 400–700 tonnes, was larger than Hydras’. TRYFON E. EVANGELIDES, *Η Μύκονος. Ιστορία της νήσου από των αρχαιοτάτων χρόνων μέχρι των καθ’ ημάς* [History of Myconos from ancient times to the present day]. Athens 1914, reprinted by Bibliofilia in 1996, p. 197) notes that by 1774 the island had lost all of its population and seamen. This explains why Myconos could provide only four ships during the war of Independence. In 1806, Myconos had just 22 ships of a tonnage of 3,301, with 440 sailors and 118 guns.

<sup>6</sup> Members of the project’s team are academics (Evdokia Olympitou, Sophia Laiou, Heleni Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, Gerassimos Pagratis, Maria-Christina Hatzioannou, Despoina Vlami, Biagio Passaro, Carmel Vassallo), doctors in Humanities (Haci Veli Aydin, Katerina Konstantinidou, Katerina Vourkatioti, Anastasia Stouraiti, Spyridon Ploumidis, Fabio di Vita, Daniel Koster), and PhD students (Eleni Beneki, Christina Papakosta, Theoharis Petrou, Magdalini Manolopoulou, Frank Theuma) and an IT specialist (Vagelis Xanthakis).

Firstly, the reasons why certain cities have been examined by our team must be considered. Venice, which ruled the Ionian Islands and was an important port in the Adriatic until its fall in 1797, has been the first and most popular choice of Greek researchers because of the abundance of its historical sources pertaining to Greek maritime commerce<sup>7</sup>. Hints at the importance of other city-ports, such as Trieste<sup>8</sup>, Leghorn<sup>9</sup> and Marseilles<sup>10</sup>, have been equally offered by other researchers. These ports on the western coast of the Mediterranean were first visited by Greek seamen during the Napoleonic wars at the latest. The scope of the project on Greek maritime history also includes Malta, where until recently no research has been conducted by Greek researchers.<sup>11</sup>

In other cases, such as Marseilles, our investigation into the history of Greek shipping has been easier, and the findings are rich. Reports by Greek

<sup>7</sup> AGATHANGELOS XIROUAKIS, Το εμπόριον της Βενετίας μετά της Ανατολής κατά τον Μεσαίωνα επί τη βάσει των εμπορικών καταλόγων του Βαρθολομαίου Πάξη [Venice's trade with the Levant in the Middle Ages according to business records of Bartolomeo Paxi], *E.E.K.S.*, 1 (1938), p. 17–61 and 3 (1940), p. 241–196; CHRISTA PANAGIOTOPOULOU, Έλληνες πλοιοκτήτες και ναυτικοί από τα παλαιότερα οικονομικά βιβλία της Ελληνικής Αδελφότητας Βενετίας [Greek ship-owners and seamen according to the pay-in registers of the Greek Community of Venice], *Thisaurismata*, 11 (1974), pp. 308–328; VASSILIS KREMMYDAS, Ιστορία του ελληνικού εμπορικού οίκου της Βενετίας Σελέκη και Σάρου. Μια στατιστική προσέγγιση. [History of the Greek trading house of Selekiis and Saros in Venice: A statistical approach], *Thisaurismata*, 12 (1975), pp. 171–199; DIMITRIOS GOFAS, Ασφαλιστήρια του 16<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα εκ του αρχείου του εν Βενετία Ελληνικού Ινστιτούτου [Insurance contracts of the sixteenth century from the archive of the Greek Institute in Venice], *Thisaurismata*, 16 (1979), pp. 54–88; ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΣ Μ. ΠΑΝΑΓΙΟΤΑΚΗΣ, Ανδριώτες ναυτικοί στη Βενετία στα μέσα του 16<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα [Andros seamen in Venice in mid-sixteenth century], *Πρακτικά του Α' Κυκλαδολογικού Συνεδρίου: Τα περί Ανδρου* (=Andriaka Chronika, vol. 21). Andros 1993.

<sup>8</sup> OLGA KATSIARDI-HERING, *Η ελληνική παροικία της Τεργέστης (1751–1830)* [The Greek community in Trieste, 1751–1830]. Athens, E.K.Π. 1986; by the same author, *Η αυστριακή πολιτική και η ελληνική ναυσιπλοΐα (1750–1800)* [Austrian foreign policy and Greek shipping, 1750–1800], *Parousia* 5 (1987), pp. 445–537.

<sup>9</sup> DESPOINA VLAMI, *Το φοιρίνι, το σιτάρι και η οδός του κήπου. Έλληνες έμποροι στο Λιβόρνο* [Forint, wheat and the Garden street. Greek merchants in Leghorn, 1750–1868]. Athens, Themelio 2000.

<sup>10</sup> ILIAS GEORGIΟΥ, *Επισιτισμός Γαλλίας υπό της ελληνικής εμπορικής ναυτιλίας (1789–1815)* [Provisioning of France by the Greek merchant fleet, 1789–1815]. Athens 1969; ANNA MANDILARA, *The Greek business community in Marseille, 1816–1900: Individual and network strategies*, unpublished PhD. Thesis. Florence 1998.

<sup>11</sup> Yet the recent work of ΝΙΚΟΣ ΣΤ. ΒΛΑΣΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, *Μάλτα και τα ελληνικά καράβια στον 18<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα* [Malta and the Greek convoys in the eighteenth century]. Athens 2004, is noteworthy.

captains who arrived there often mention Genoa as a stop-over. This piece of Genoese history has not been researched yet by Greeks. This is the reason why we included Genoa into our project. Barcelona is also reported as a frequent stop. Research carried out in Genoa reveals that Greek captains who sailed there reported Barcelona as well as ports in the Black Sea either as their final destination or as sailing place.

By tracing the routes followed by Greek ships in the 1700s we may travel further, to Lisbon, Amsterdam, even America. In periods of high demand for certain products, like cereals, Greek seamen went anywhere they could make a higher profit from their commodities. As it is impossible at the moment to visit all ports that Greeks have possibly sailed to in the past, we will leave many of them aside for another time and another project.

By researching different archives in Greece and abroad, we aspire to collect all possible information on ships with a Greek captain or crew, owned or chartered by Greeks. We are particularly interested in and taking note of the names of the vessels; the names and surnames as well the place of origin of the captain, the owner(s) and the sailors; the shipping routes; the cargo; and maritime trade in general. This information will be put into a database, from which safer conclusions can be drawn. Our main sources are: health certificates issued by the authorities of the aforementioned ports as well as of Messina and Napoli; registers of arrivals and departures of ships; consular reports from Corfu, Marseilles, Malta, Leghorn, Venice and Amsterdam; court minutes of the Muslim *kadi* –judge– of Thessaloniki; the state archives of Herakleion, Crete; and the Ottoman archives of Istanbul. To these should be added codices of island communities and documents found in other Greek public archives.

Processing of historical information is another issue to be taken under consideration. The computerised database is the most useful tool to this end<sup>12</sup>. Our database, titled ‘Amphitrete’, is created with the help of Microsoft Access with a view to enable us to reconstruct the fleets and the networks of maritime commerce (see Picture 2). The analysis of primary sources, such as health certificates issued by port authorities, is adapted to the nature of the examined material. For instance, the verbatim form of a captain’s report

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<sup>12</sup> For the use of databases as a tool for historians see CHARLES HARVEY AND JON PRESS, *Databases in historical research*. Hampshire and London (MacMillan Press) 1996; SEAN TOWNSEND, CRESSIDA CHAPPELL, OSCAR STRUIJVE, ‘Digitising History’, at [http://hds.essex.ac.uk/g2gp/digitising\\_history/summary.asp](http://hds.essex.ac.uk/g2gp/digitising_history/summary.asp); ALASTAIR DUNNING, ‘Plotting a course in database creation: The Gloucester port books database’, at <http://www.ahds.ac.uk/creating/case-studies/gloucester/index.htm>.

guides us to the fields that have to be created. A typical example is the following:

*“A di 21 Giugno 1741, Capitò la martegana greca nominata S. Spiridione padroneggiata dal padrone Demetrio Agiomavriti da Misselongi con 12 persone d’ equipaggio lui compreso proveniente da Cefalonia in 8 giorni con patente di sanità limpida carica di formaggio per conto del padrone sudetto, attestando, godendo et domandando la quarantena”*<sup>13</sup>

or

*“Du 24 fructidor an 6, Le Citoyen Ventre conservateur de Santé a reçu la déposition du Capitaine Manoly di Joanni Grec sujet ottoman commandant la polacre la Madona d’ Idra équipée de 37 personnes entout qui a dit avec serment être parti d’ Idra le 12 Thermidor dite, chargé de 1900 charges de blé pour son compte. Il a relaché a Baslia en Corse le 14 du courant et en est parti le même jour. Il a relaché ensuite a Toulon le 18 dite ou le bureau de la Santé lui a donné un garde qu’il a reçu le même jour. Il en a fait voile hier. Il a remis sa patente nette”*.<sup>14</sup>

Every term in the above texts becomes a field in the database. Material from different sources, such as captain reports to health authorities, registers of ships sailing in or off, crew payrolls submitted to the sailors’ guild – the “Scuole Piccole e Suffragi” in Venice –, etc., have to be included in the same database. For that matter, we have increased the fields and created different versions of the database.

The first step in the research process is the creation of the data entries; it is a rather tiring and time-consuming procedure. The findings, of course, compensate the researcher for his/her effort. The second step entails the processing of the data: it involves the homogenisation of the material, as the data is entered into the database in the same language and form as it is in the document. The words and phrases cited originally are in Italian, French, Ottoman Turkish and Greek, and in different alphabets. We thereafter translate them into the target language, namely the Greek, and use the same spelling in order to be able to draw safe conclusions. The third step is the core aim of the project: it is the analysis of the data and the formulation of the conclusions. A database has the ability to organise data on several levels. In fact, we are able now to identify the places of origin of captains, ship-owners and sailors, and certify whether maritime commerce was organised

<sup>13</sup> National Library of Malta, A.O.M Commissarii di Sanità, Registro degli arrivi di Bastimenti in Quarantena, 6527 (1739–46).

<sup>14</sup> Archives Départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, Marseille, Intendance Sanitaire de Marseille, Série 200 E, Dépôts et Arrivages, Déclarations faites par les capitaines de bâtiments à leur arrivée, folder 553.

on a particular local and/or kinship basis or not. We will soon be able to present in detail the shipping routes between the Levant and Western Europe. This project certainly will shed light not only on maritime life, but, if adequate economic data is found, also on ship owners. Thus we will be able to establish who owned what percentage of a ship's shares; who and to what extent dealt with sea trade. Work done by previous researchers will serve as a guide to our calculations.

The database now has 2,753 entries from the Archives of Venice, 2,106 from the *Scuole piccole e suffragi* series, and 79 from the *Cinque savi alla mercanzia* series; the last series entails a list of ships of Messolonghi in 1764, which has already been published by Konstantinos Sathas<sup>15</sup>. This new reading of the sources has produced new insights into the evolution of Greek shipping in the period under consideration.

The number of entries does not mean much at the moment: it is just an indication about the work carried out so far. For the number of entries does not fully correspond to the number of ships, since the same ship used to make the same journey following familiar routes. Only after the processing of the material will we be more sure about the number of ships owned by Greeks, ships with a Greek captain or a Greek crew, and/or ships chartered by Greeks.

The arguably interesting cases of Thessaloniki, Corfu and Malta are also duly considered in the project.

The court registers of the Thessaloniki kadi (judge) have provided useful information on the first half of the eighteenth century: they revealed 38 ships owned by Greeks. The majority shipped cereals to Constantinople, and their captains originated from the Aegean. As no other information on Thessaloniki is available, these findings are valuable.

The health authorities of Corfu's port kept detailed records of every ship that arrived there. The material preserved in the local archives provides rich data on big and small ships trading in the Ionian Sea and along the western coast of what is today Greece. The mere fact that 400 big ships – that is with a crew of more than ten – were recorded within eight years during the 1760s illustrates the frequency of ship traffic to Corfu.

A recent short visit to Malta gave me the opportunity to familiarise myself with the archives of the local lazaretto, preserved at the National Library. Ships from Messolonghi and the Ionian islands sailed frequently to Malta in the 1740s. These ships continued to stop over at Malta for the rest of the century. The first ship from Hydra appeared in Malta in 1779, yet no ships

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<sup>15</sup> See above fn. 4.



from Spetses and Psara arrived there before 1780. Numerous Greek ships reached the island during the Napoleonic wars.<sup>16</sup> We therefore assume that future research in the Maltese archives might certify the periods of rise and decline of the fleets of Messolonghi and Hydra. Messolonghi excelled in sea trade in the mid-1700s and declined towards the end of the century, while Hydra, Spetses and Psara started to build their fleets in the last quarter of the century. Another interesting (yet preliminary) finding is the probability that Greek ships, like the French, travelled in convoy, as Greek ships usually arrived in Valletta in pairs on the same day or in the course of two or three days.

Malta is an important port for the study of Greek maritime history because many Greek seamen visited the island during the eighteenth and in the early nineteenth century mainly for two reasons:

1. The good port and quarantine facilities and the large storage space in the harbour, which was a great convenience to traders.
2. The need to air certain agricultural products, particularly cereals, during a long journey from Asia Minor or the Black Sea to Western Europe. Malta was midway to France and western Italy (Leghorn and Genoa), and for that matter most appropriate for a stop.

The records of port authorities are very informative on ships coming from the Levant. However, we have to limit our research to particular places for the simple reason that time and funds are limited. To this end, we have grouped the places under examination into two imagined circles: the former entails the Ionian islands, Messolonghi, Aitoliko, Galaxidi and Patras, while Hydra, Spetses, Myconos, Santorini, Psara, Kassos, Thessaloniki and Herakleion are included in the latter. Our research has now expanded into the Greek State Archives, the Ethnological and Historical Society of Greece, the Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece (MIET), and the National Library of Athens, where sources pertinent to the history of local seaside communities are found. Our first task is to identify the sources.

Thereafter we will start to fill in our second database, titled 'Nisso', with data relevant to aspects of economic and social life of islands and ports under consideration, to their population and production, professions and trades (see Picture 3). The sources that provide qualitative data for the first database, 'Amphitrete', encompass travel literature, records found in local archives, published documents, doctoral theses on particular islands and ports as well as secondary academic literature (books and articles). The database is also designed for processing narratives that cannot be divided

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<sup>16</sup> National Library of Malta, AOM 6528, 6529-30.



into several fields. The material thus retains its narrative form and is sorted out into two large groups: according to subject and/or a general keyword, and to place.

We are hoping that by combining information into the two databases we will be in a position to formulate questions and to answer them convincingly.

The project will end in August 2006, yet our material has to be collected by December 2005. So, there are eight months left for analysis and synthesis. It is not a long enough period of time for extensive research, but it will certainly produce some food for thought.

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Picture 1. The *Amphitrete* database – the main form



Picture 2. The *Nisso* database – the main form