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**Malta and the Rise of the Greek Owned Fleet in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>1</sup>**

Constantinos Nicodimos in his “Memorandum on Psara Island” (Athens 1862) mentions that in 1770 the inhabitants of Psara possessed 36 saccoleva and after 1774 they built 45 big ships of 25 metres in length. They were known for their pirate activity and Psara was also known as Küçük Malta which means “small Malta”. It seems that the people from Psara were competing over the reputation of the corsairs of Malta. Information about the size of the fleet of each island of the Aegean and Ionian Seas is to be found in the texts of various authors. For example two French consuls, Jassaud<sup>2</sup> in 1808 and Pouqueville in 1813<sup>3</sup> and in 1816<sup>4</sup> give three totally different catalogues numbers of ships. The catalogues for the three most important islands were as below:

Numbers of Ships

| Source           | Hydra | Spetses | Psara |
|------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| Jassaud 1808     | 110   | 90      | 100   |
| Pouqueville 1813 | 120   | 60      | 60    |
| Pouqueville 1816 | 100   | 60      | 40    |

<sup>1</sup> The paper is based on data collected by Katerina Papakonstantinou and Frank Theuma with the contribution of Katerina Vourkatioti.

<sup>2</sup> Constantinos Svolopoulos (ed.), *Auguste de Jassaud, Mémoire sur l'état physique de politique de l'Isle d' Hydra, Spécie, Poro et Ipséra en l'année 1808*, Athens (Bibliothiki Istorikon Meleton Seira Anekdoton Taxidiotikon Keimenon 126) 1978, 94-95.

<sup>3</sup> F.C.H.L. Pouqueville, *Voyage de la Grèce*, Paris 1826-1827 (second edition of the work of 1820-21), vol. 6, 294-297.

<sup>4</sup> Constantinos Svolopoulos, «? e????????? eyp?????? st???? ?at? ta? pa?am???? t?? a????? t?? a?e?a?t?s?a?. ????d?t?? p??a?t?? F. Pouqueville» [The Greek Merchant Fleet on the Eve of the War of Independence. Unpublished Table by F. Pouqueville], *O Eranistis* 59/10 (1973) 192 ff.

### Average Number of Seamen per Ship

| Source           | Hydra | Spetses | Psara |
|------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| Jassaud 1808     | 60    | 60      | 48    |
| Pouqueville 1813 | 45    | 45      | 30    |
| Pouqueville 1816 | 60    | 60      | 30    |

The catalogues present indicative numbers of ships and seamen. They were compiled to serve particular diplomatic and political needs. From time to time researchers have tried to complete the picture of the Greek mercantile shipping of the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the help of French, Italian and Austrian archives.<sup>5</sup> The picture that has been formed so far presents an especially dynamic Greek fleet; at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it had succeed in taking advantage of the political and economical conjuncture in the Mediterranean created by the wars between Great Britain and France, the Ottoman Empire and Venice or Russia. It had managed to establish its presence in the eastern and western Mediterranean. The gradual expansion from the Aegean, the Black Sea and the Ionian Sea towards the West during the 18<sup>th</sup> century indicates the ever bigger participation of the Greek mercantile fleet in the economies of the European countries. B. Kremmydas mentions that at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Greek trading fleet was restricted to the eastern Mediterranean (with the exemption of Leghorn) and only at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did it go towards the West. In that case Malta, at the centre of the Mediterranean, was the limit of this maritime activity.

The interest in Malta is part of a broader research project concerning the Greek maritime history of the 18<sup>th</sup> century financed by the European Union and the Greek Ministry of Education. Two years ago at the Fourth International Congress of

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<sup>5</sup> For example Svolopoulos, ? e????????? e?? ?????? st????, 187-207, Vassilis Kremmydas, ???????? ?a?t????a 1776-1835 [Greek Shipping 1776-1835]. Athens 1986, Olga Katsiardi-Hering, «? a?st? ??? p????t??? ?a?? e???????? ?a?s?p????a (1750-1800 pe??p??)» [Austrian Politics and Greek Navigation (1750-1800)] Parousia, 5 (1987), 445-537, Georgios Leontaritis, ????????? e?? ?????? ?a?t????a (1453-1850) [Greek Merchant Shipping (1453-1850)] Athens 1975, Despina Vlami, ?? f?????? t? s?t??? ?a? ? d?? t?? ??p?? ????e? ?μ????st? ??β???? 1750-1868 [The Forint, the Wheat and the Garden Street. Greek Merchants in Leghorn 1750-1868]. Athens (Themelio) 2000.

Maritime History organized in Corfu, in June 2004, together with Gelina Harlaftis we announced the beginning of this research project.<sup>6</sup> I can now provide the first results from this project that lasted for over two creative research years. A team of 20 persons has been working on the project under the supervision of Prof. Gelina Harlaftis. The scope of the project is to record the Greek ships as units as they have been registered in the quarantines and in other archival sources of various Mediterranean ports. The ship as a business unit and its captain as entrepreneur are the target of the research project. The members of the research team have travelled and worked in the archives of various ports of western and eastern Mediterranean. Only in the main port of Istanbul can information be found about ships of the Ottoman area because the authorities in the capital were responsible for the yearly navigation licences. In the west European ports the sanitary authorities registered all ship arrivals especially those coming from the East. Because of time reasons this project is limited to registering ship arrivals not departures; for the same reasons no research has been conducted in notarial or judicial archives. The research done so far confirms expectations of abundant archival material awaiting further research by future historians in order to complete the picture that will have been created by the end of this particular research project in August 2006.

Now let's return to Malta.

The island of Malta is located below Sicily on the route from eastern to western Mediterranean and connects the northern coast with the southern coast of the same sea. Piracy and privateering were two of the main financial activities of the Maltese people during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. But at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and during the 18<sup>th</sup> century piracy was no longer as profitable as it had been and that for several reasons<sup>7</sup>: France and England were a growing presence in the commerce of the Levante; the traffic of French and English ships in the Mediterranean left little space for the activity of smaller maritime powers. Additionally from the 16<sup>th</sup> century the papal power on the island had strengthened: as religious order, the Order of St John that

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<sup>6</sup> Gelina Harlaftis, Katerina Papakonstantinou, «On the Sea-Routes of the Nereids: Formation of Maritime History Databases from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century», *Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Maritime History*, Corfu 22-27 June 2004 (on CD).

<sup>7</sup> Dominic Cutajar, "The Malta Quarantine Shipping and Trade 1654-1694", *Mid-Med Bank Limited Report and Accounts 1987*, Malta 1988, 37.

controlled the island was under the jurisdiction of the Pope, but in 1574 an Inquisitor under the direct command of the Pope was established on the island. That meant that the island was under the control of three authorities, the Grand Master, the Archbishop and the Inquisitor. The last two, as deputies of the Pope, competed with the Grand Master for control of the island. The Maltese corsairs had difficulties from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century for another reason: the Bulla Clementina of Pope Clement XII in the year 1738 forbade pirate action against all Christian ships including the orthodox.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand another judicial court was created on the island, the Consolato del Mare, a popular merchant court, different from that of the Orders' court, the Magistrato degli Armamenti (founded 1605), and of the Inquisitors' court<sup>9</sup>. It was a prize court in which 4 merchants (later on 6) had a seat; they were occupied with claims of ships and prizes, but also with disputes between merchants. There was no possibility of appeal to the court of the Pope in Rome. The Consolato del Mare was the local court for prizes.<sup>10</sup> During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the captivity of a ship became difficult; after the return to Malta there was no possibility of keeping the hostages as slaves and the ship as a prize, because all sailors had to be released and the captain of the ship-prize had the right to claim the ship, the cargo and financial recompense for the damage he suffered.<sup>11</sup>

As a consequence of the decline in privateering the Grand Masters of the Order of St John undertook infrastructure works on the harbour of Valetta aiming to strengthen trade and make Malta the commercial store of the Mediterranean. The island of Malta and the smaller islands that form the Archipelago of Malta needed to import all primary necessities. They had few resources and revenue for the survival of the inhabitants. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the islands of the Archipelago were overpopulated and large amounts of merchandise had to be imported.

A series of measures were taken by the Grand Masters to strengthen trade. From the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and during the 18<sup>th</sup> century new wharfs and store-houses

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<sup>8</sup> Agnes Camilieri, *The Greek Merchant Marine in Malta. A study of Greek Shipping in Malta (1761-1780)*. BA Univ. of Malta 1987, 65.

<sup>9</sup> The cases of the court, known as Tribunale dell' Udienza, were judged at a second level by the papal courts with the intervention of the Inquisitor of Malta.

<sup>10</sup> Victor Mallia-Milanes, "Introduction to Hospitaller Malta", V. Mallia-Milanes (ed.), *Hospitaller Malta 1530-1798. Studies on Early Modern Malta and the Order of St John of Jerusalem*, Malta 1993, 30.

<sup>11</sup> Camilieri, *The Greek Merchant Marine*, 63-64.

were built on the Grand Harbour; many store-houses meant for cereals and lodges for brokers and the custom-house were among the properties built.

Valetta became the centre of trade between East and West. In the port of Marsamxett merchandise was stored in the large lazaretto that had been built on Isoletto (later Manoel Island) and it was capable of providing shelter for sailors, travellers, cargo and animals. It was more comfortable than the lazaretto of Marseille and so it was more profitable. In the Grand Harbour there was also a second lazaretto. In the island's dockyards all ships could be repaired quickly and efficiently. The Order's Hospital (Holy Infirmaria) offered free medical services to travellers and sailors. The low duties and anchorage fee made Malta a very attractive port for ships travelling between west and east Mediterranean.<sup>12</sup> Another crucial factor in the commercial development of Malta was the neutral position of the Order in periods of war.

The sanitary office of Malta was founded in 1593 but the lazaretto building was erected in 1643 because serious outbreaks of the plague had occurred in previous years. The sanitary office was responsible for keeping all serious epidemics out of the island and especially the plague. All ships entering the Grand Harbour coming from areas that were suspect had to stay for a period in the lazaretto. Areas in the eastern Mediterranean and especially the Ottoman Empire, the Ionian Islands that were under Venetian rule were all considered suspect.<sup>13</sup> That means that the picture from the archives of the Quarantine of Malta refer mainly to the trade coming from the eastern Mediterranean, while the picture of the trade in the western Mediterranean is more fragmentary. In the quarantine all ship entries are registered and some times there is a mention of the final destination of the ship or the cargo. In the National Library and in the National Archives of Malta a full series of archival sources is preserved that covers the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The sanitary office continued to operate during the French occupation of 1798-1799 and during the English period after 1800.<sup>14</sup>

Entries in the quarantine registers are homogenous and contain data on the arrival of the ship in the port, the name of the ship, the type and the flag, the name of the captain, his origin, the number of sailors, the cargo and the quantities of the

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<sup>12</sup> Mallia -Milanes, Introduction to Hospitaller Malta, 26-30.

<sup>13</sup> Cutajar, The Malta Quarantine, 45.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Cassar, *Malta's Role in Maritime Health under the Auspices of the Order of St John in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, Malta (Lombard Bank Ltd. Annual Report 1989), Malta 1990, 21.

merchandise, the owner or the recipient of the cargo. So far data for the period 1723-1810 has been entered in the database.<sup>15</sup> Our goal is to complete the period from 1700 to 1821.

The database that has been created for the purposes of the project contains fields for the aforementioned data. This data can provide some initial results.

The development of the data has not yet been completed and I present only some initial results from material that has to be homogenized. The names of the ships and captains are written in different ways and they have to take the same form. Even places are written in various ways.

It seems that the first Greek ships arrived in Malta as prizes. It was a way for the Greek sailors to learn the route that was not known. Greek ships from the Ionian Islands are mentioned only on the Italian coasts from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> Parallel to the ship conquests in the quarantine, registers of Malta are to be found in arrivals of Greek ships from the area of the Ionian Seas.

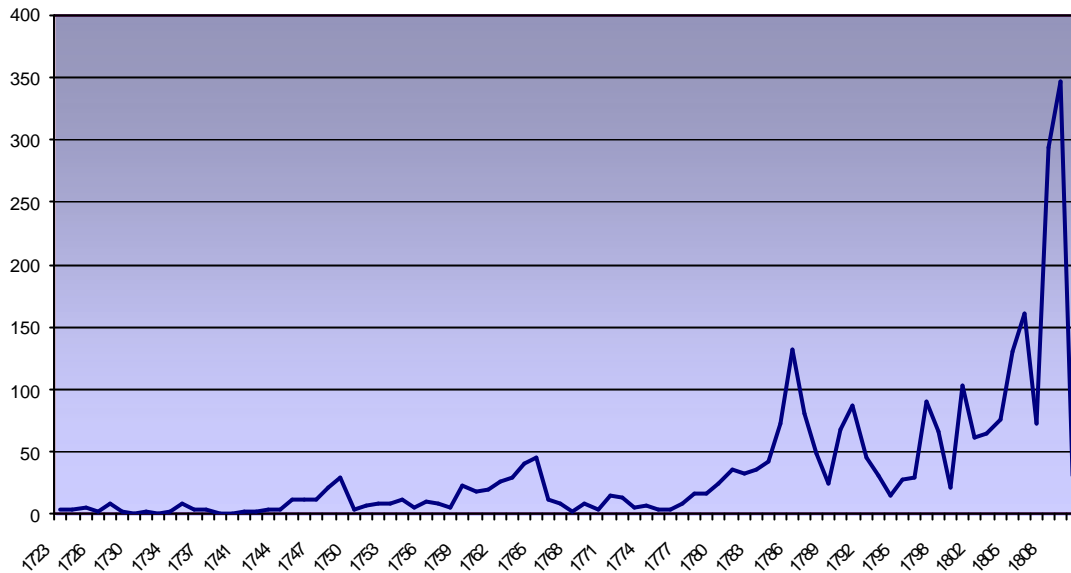


<sup>15</sup> National Library of Malta, Archives of the Order of St John, Commissarii di Sanita, Registro degli arrivi di Bastimenti in Quarantena 6527, 6528, 6529, 6530, 6531, 6532, 6533. Repertorio Library Manoscritti 818, 820, 639.

<sup>16</sup> Gerassimos Pagratis, *Ta??ss?? e??p???? st? fe?et???at??ue?? ??????a (1496-1538)* [Maritime Trade in Venetian Corfu (1496-1538)]. Unpublished PhD, Ionian University, Corfu 2001.

A total of 2,886 arrivals of Greek ships are to be found in the quarantine registers for the period 1723-1810. The traffic of Greek ships per year is as follows:

**Arrivals of Greek ships in Malta 1723-1810**

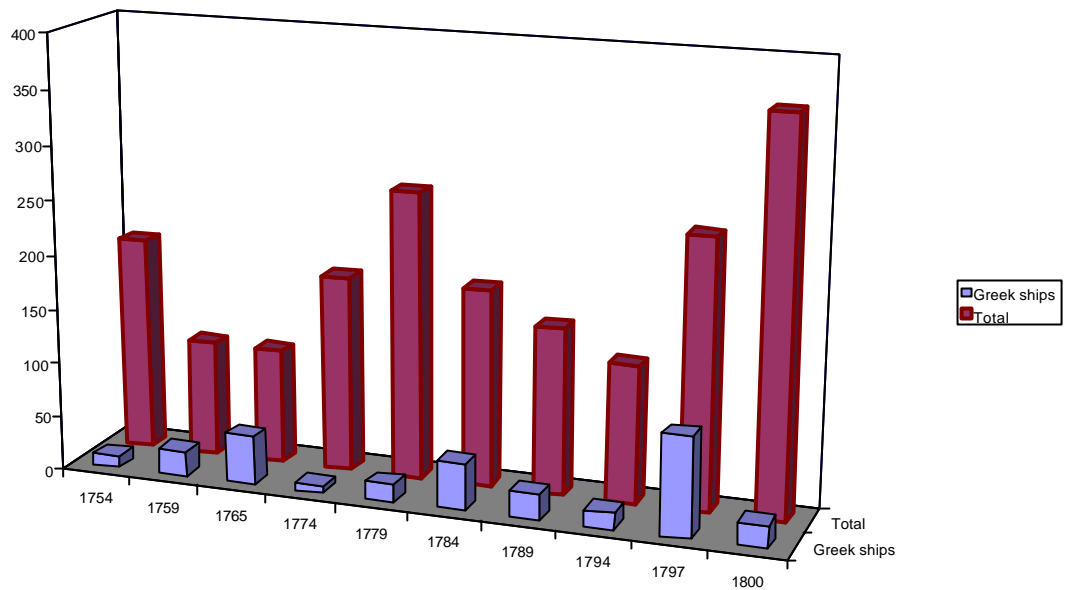


Greek ships in the quarantine registers are called “Greci”. Their arrivals in Malta show an increase during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They start from 3 arrivals in the year 1723, 45 in 1765, 132 in 1786 and rise to 374 in 1809. The increasing number of arrivals of Greek ships in Malta reflects the total picture of traffic on the island, which increased during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and reached a peak during the Napoleonic wars at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The percentage of the arrivals of Greek ships in Malta in comparison to the total of arrivals can be seen in more detail below:<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Data on total arrivals in Malta are from the book of John Debono, *Trade and Port Activity in Malta 1750-1800*. Malta 2000, 148-149.

Arrivals of Greek ships in total 1723-1810

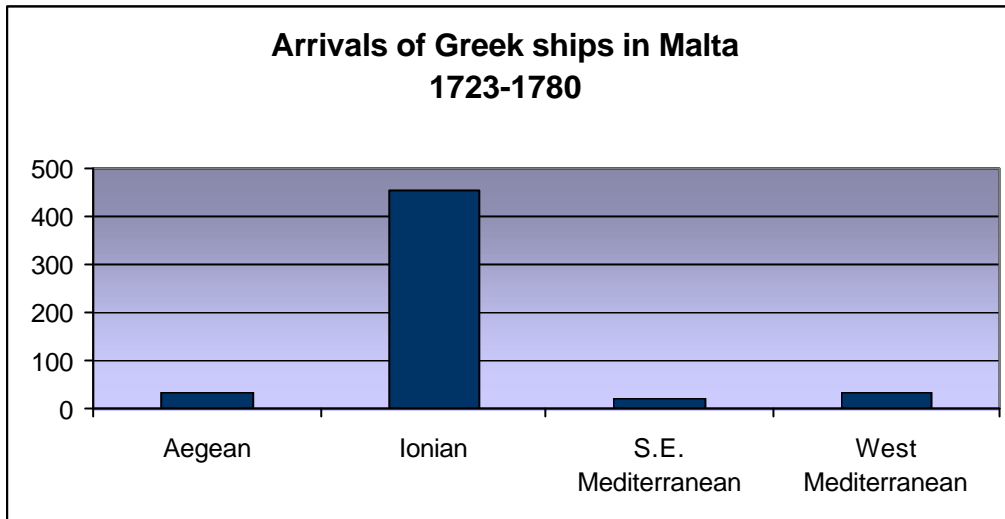


If we calculate the percentage of Greek ships arriving in Malta as a percentage of the total it is clear that in the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the arrivals of Greek ships fluctuated dramatically:

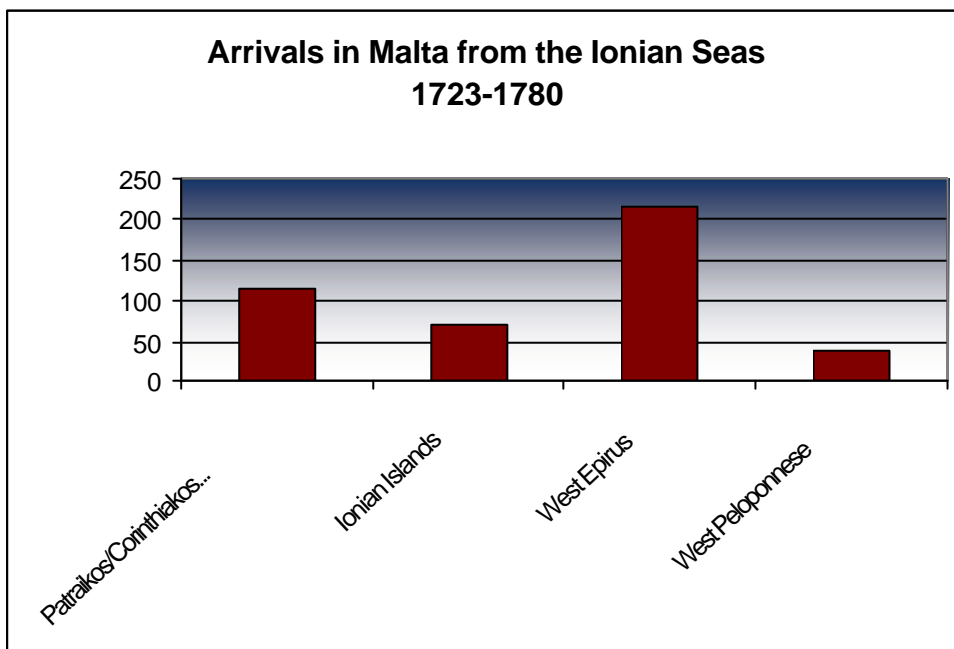
|      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1754 | 1759 | 1765 | 1774 | 1779 | 1784 | 1789 | 1794 | 1797 | 1800 |
| 5%   | 18%  | 30%  | 4%   | 6%   | 19%  | 14%  | 11%  | 27%  | 6%   |

During the Russo-Turkish war of 1768-1774 there was a drop in the arrivals of Greek ships due to the naval battles in the Aegean. We could assume that the ships and sailors took part in the naval battles or that they took advantage of the trading opportunities created by the war in the Aegean Seas. Such opportunities arose during the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and the Continental Blockade. As a consequence arrivals of Greek ships in the 1790s were on the constant increase.

The study of the traffic of Greek ships in the quarantine registers of Malta covers two periods because of the material and the facts known about Greek maritime history. More precisely in the first period 1723-1780 the Ionian Seas together with Patraikos and Corinthiakos gulfs provide the highest level of traffic. For the period 1723-1780 the arrivals of Greek ships in Malta is as follows:



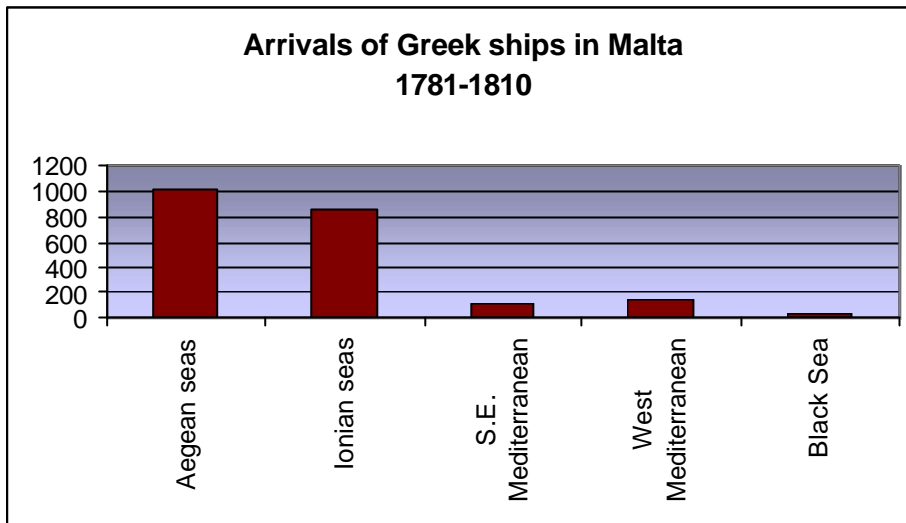
Let's take a careful look at the traffic of the Ionian Seas: the area of Prevesa and Arta on the west coast of Epirus provide the heaviest traffic because they functioned as an exit to the sea for the products of the inland. 31 smaller and larger ports of the Ionian Seas from which Greek ships departed to Malta can be grouped as follows:



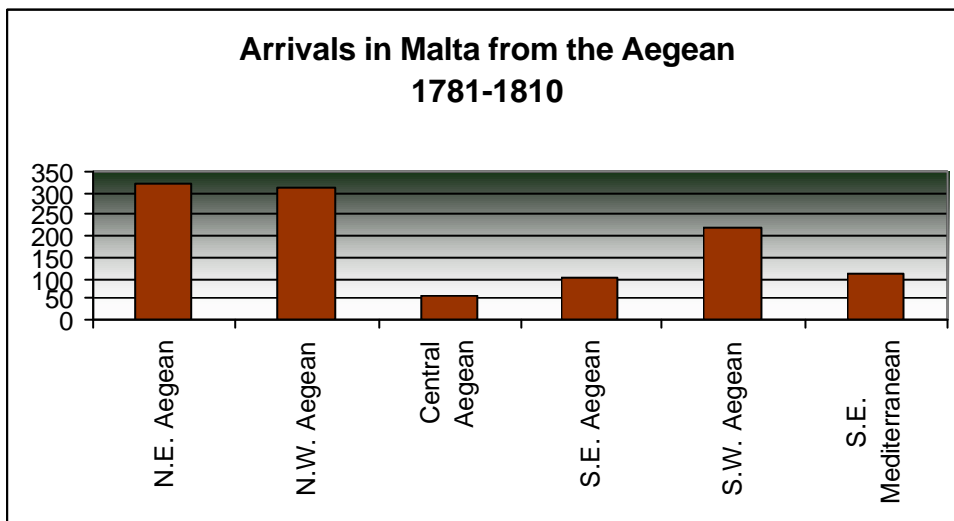
The ports of Prevesa, Missolonghi and of the islands Paxoi and Cefallonia provided the highest traffic in the area.

During the second period, between 1781 and 1810 the picture is quite different. The Aegean seas provided heavy traffic and ships from the islands of Hydra, Spetses and Psara appear.

More specific arrivals in Malta in the period 1781-1810 according to the ports of departure are as follows:



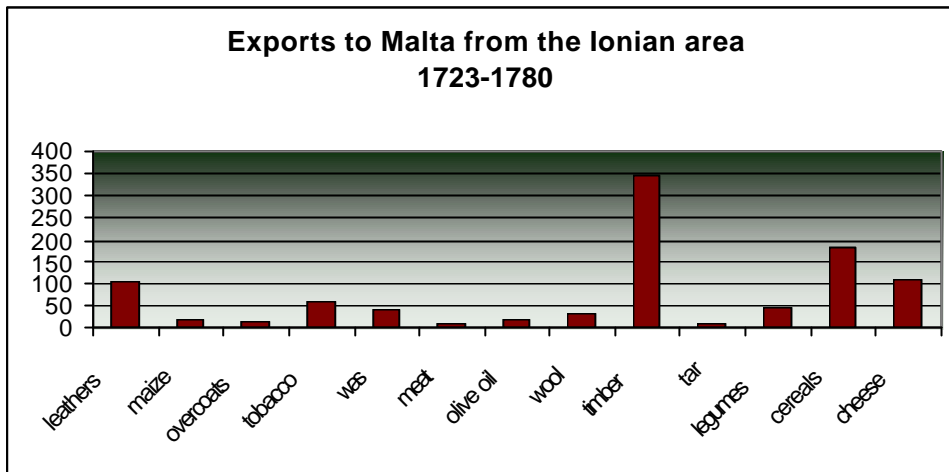
51 ports in the Aegean and 11 in the south east Mediterranean from which Greek ships depart can be grouped as follows:



In the north east Aegean the main ports were to be found on the island of Psara and on the coasts of Asia Minor, especially Smyrna. In the south west Aegean the ports with the heaviest traffic were the ports of Hydra and Spetses, while in the North West Aegean the highest traffic was to be found in Volos.

The two periods 1723-1780 and 1781-1810 have differences in the financial and political circumstances that had been created in the Mediterranean. The local demand for products and the general conjuncture regulated the geography and the tension of trade. If we search for the products that were imported into Malta we discover that during the first phase of 1723-1780 the Greek ships imported timber, leather and

cereals together with dairy products. Especially the Ionian area exported timber and cereals to Malta. The purchaser in those cases was either the treasury of the Order of St John or the Universita of Valetta city.

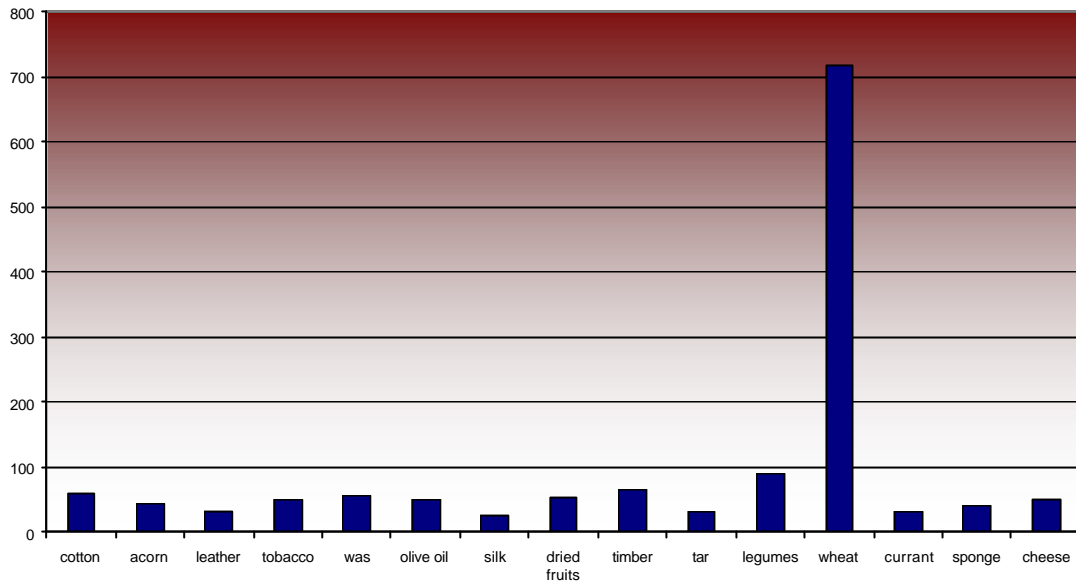


The area of Arta and Prevesa on the western coast of Epirus provided timber for France, Malta and Venice from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. From the beginning of the 1720s the Order of St John had strong trading ties with those areas for the purchase of timber, long before the French started to exploit the forests of the area.<sup>18</sup> In contrast Missolonghi exported cereals and the port of Patras, dairy products.

In the second phase that coincided with the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and the French-English Wars, the needs of Western Europe for cereals determined the trading activity. In the period 1781-1810 the Aegean Seas traded in the following:

<sup>18</sup> Eleni K. Yannakopoulou, *Ga??e????? e?met???e?s? das?? st? ????? ???da (1710-1792)*. [French-Greek Forest Exploitation in Western Greece (1710-1792)]. Athens (University of Athens, Bibliothiki Sofia N. Saripolou 56) 1987, 74-77.

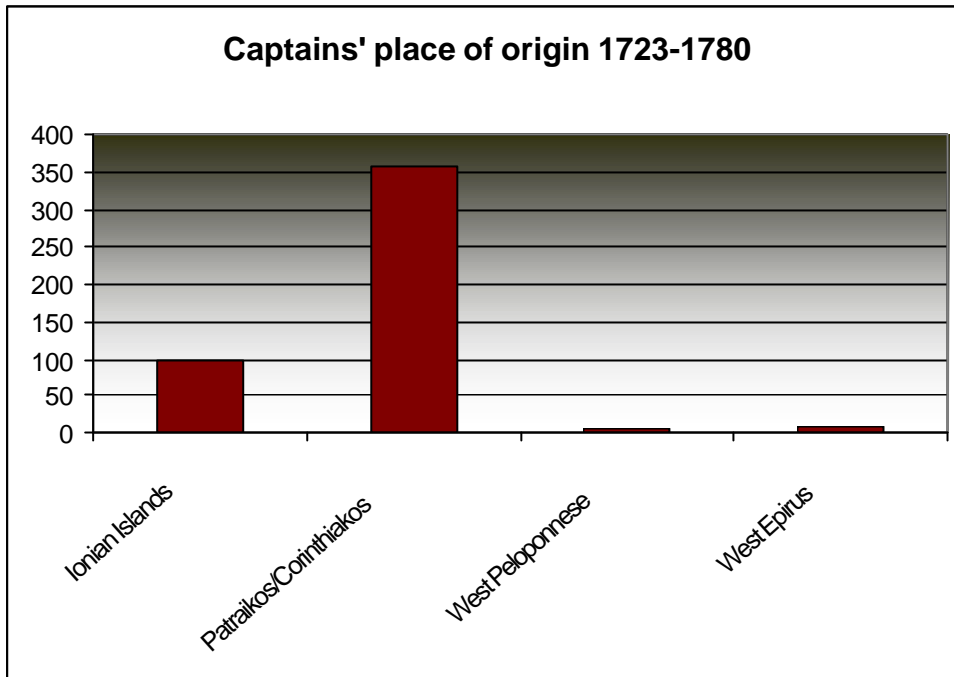
Exports to Malta from the Aegean 1781-1810



Volos was the main export centre for cereals because it had the plain of Thessaly. Psara, Hydra and Spetses were ports of transshipment for cargos of cereals arriving from the Black Sea.

If we consider the captain as the central person on the ship then we can suppose that the place of origin of the captain is the same as the place of registry of the ship, it is important to look up this data in the quarantine registers of Malta. Until the end of the 1770s Missolonghi and Cefallonia were the most common place of origin for the majority of the captains.

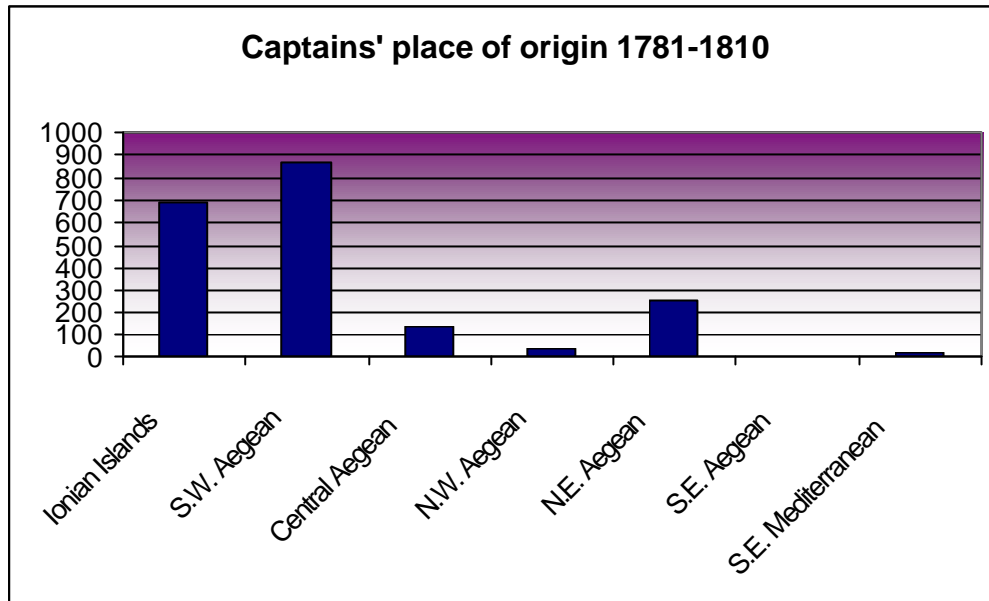
More specifically:



The first captain who was a native of Hydra appears in the registers of the Malta quarantine in the year 1762 and the second one in 1780. In the same period captains are registered from Spetses (in 1780) and from Psara (1785).

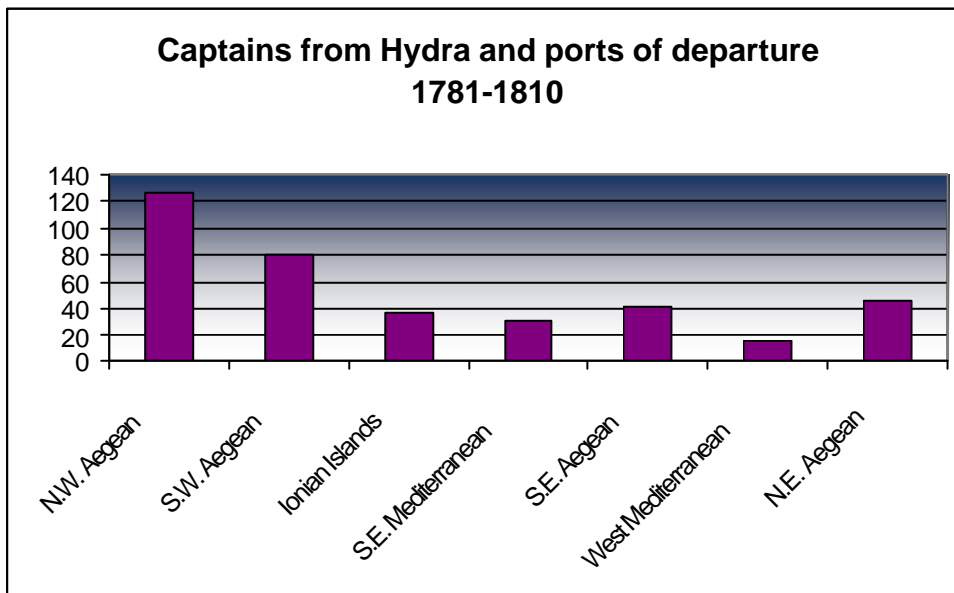
The second period (1781-1810) is different from the first: the difference is obvious in the places of origin of captains. The Ionian Seas together with Patraikos and Corinthiakos gulfs are still the place of origin of captains. Missolonghi and Cefallonia remain at the top, but new places come to the fore, like Galaxidi. And this second phase is the period of maritime flourishing in the Aegean: the majority of captains originate from Hydra, Spetses and Psara. They are the ancestors of the protagonists or even the leading actors of the Greek Revolution of 1821 against the Ottoman Empire that led to the creation of the independent Greek State.

The picture during the second phase is as follows:



We can observe that beside the fact that Volos has a remarkable level of maritime traffic, there are only few captains originating from that area. In contrary captains from Hydra and Spetses were frequent in the port of Volos and usually they traded the cereals of the area.

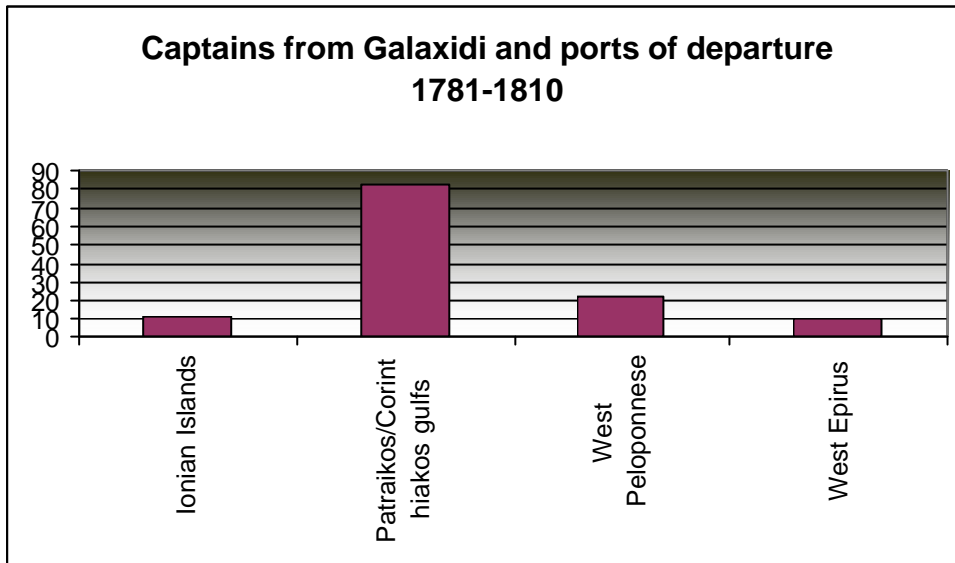
If we take a look at the ports from which the ships with captains from Hydra depart, Volos in the N.W. Aegean is the port with the highest traffic.



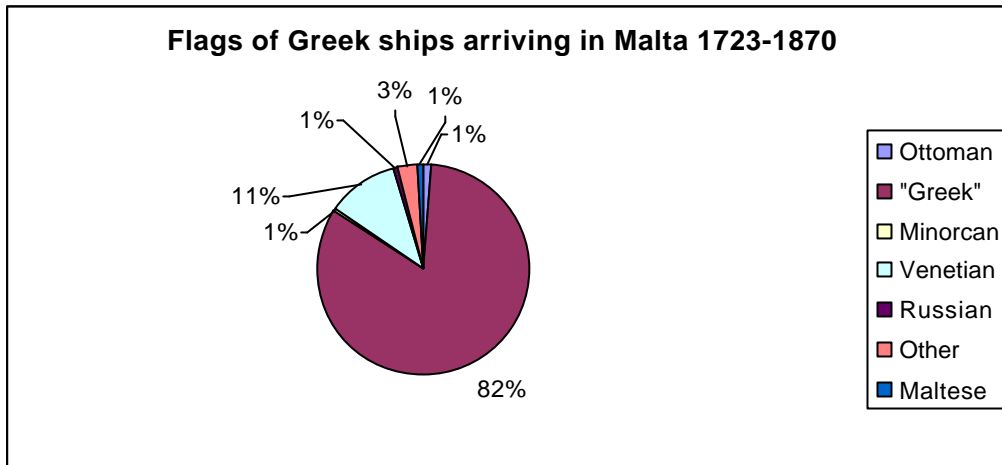
We can see that captains from Hydra do not trade in Spetses and captains from Spetses do not frequent Hydra. The same point can be made about captains from Psara. The three islands were ports of departure for their ships. In that way Hydra, Spetses and Psara were transformed into important ports of the Aegean Seas.

Missolonghi had the same role in the first phase; captains from Missolonghi exported cereals from that port.

For the period after 1781 we can not say the same about Galaxidi from which many captains originate; it did not function as a port for export of agricultural products of the inland like Missolonghi or Etoliko. Native captains from Galaxidi traded in the port of Patras (especially timber and currants); they did not frequent Cefallonia where captains from Missolonghi were active.

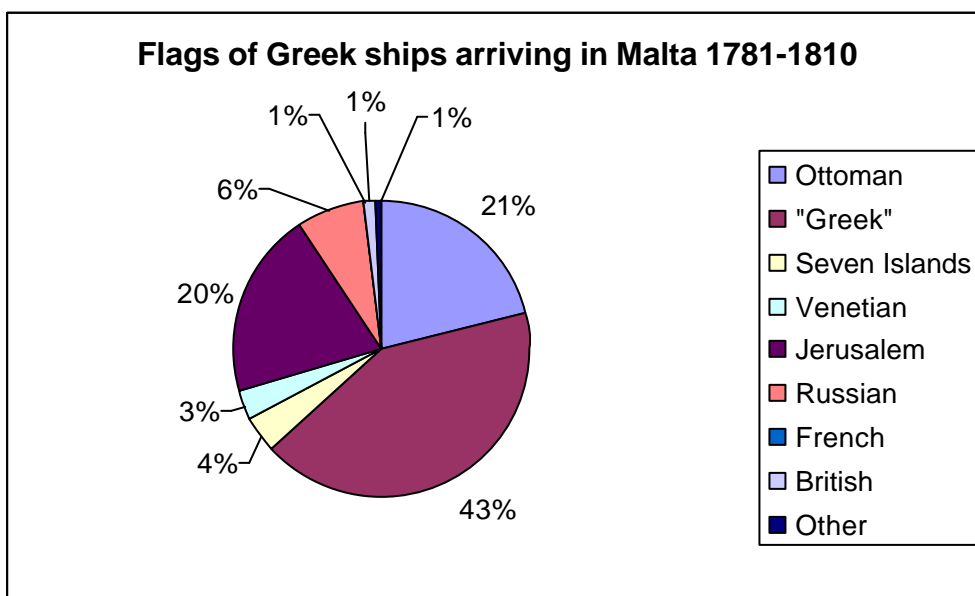


The Greek ships that arrived in Malta during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had different flags. In the first period of 1723-1780 in the registers of the quarantine of Malta the majority of Greek ships are mentioned as “Greco” (82%). Under the name “Greco” we recognize ships from the Ionian as well as from the Aegean Seas. In the first case the captains were either Venetian or Ottoman subjects, but there was a common name for them. We can suppose that Greeks were a specific group of sailors different from other Venetian subjects or Ottomans - like people from Ragusa (Dubrovnik) - since they are characterized differently. A second remark that can be made is that the Greek names in the registers of the quarantine of Malta are in general correctly written. That could mean that Greek sailors and captains were familiar with the people of the Maltese ports. More specifically the flags on the Greek ships in the two phases are distributed as follows:



In the first period of 1723-1780 the “Greek” and the “Ottoman” flag dominate followed by the “Venetian” flag of ships of the Ionian Islands. It is obvious that ships with captains from Missolonghi carried the “Greek” flag.

In the second period 1781-1810 the “Greek” flag dominates (with 43% while the Ottoman flag is represented with 21%) but the flag of Jerusalem appears as a flag of convenience. The Venetian flag declines after the fall of the Republic of Venice to Napoleon in 1798. Ships from the Ionian Islands carry the flag of the Seven Islands during the short period of the existence of the semi-independent state, 1800-1807 (4%). The Russian flag is carried by 7% of ships especially after the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 that permitted Ottoman Christian subjects to use the Russian flag in Ottoman waters.



This is the first example of the processing of very rich material. While the elaboration of the data goes further more issues will arise like the nature of trade the Greek captains exercised: it seems that timber from western Epirus gave an important boost to shipping because it answered to the demand of the Maltese authorities. An important part of the cargo was traded by the captains themselves. The trade activity in comparison to the financial and political circumstances that dominated in the Mediterranean during the 18<sup>th</sup> century is a matter under consideration.

There are a series of issues concerning seafaring that have to be researched such as routes that captains from different places of origin followed. We saw that captains from Hydra, Spetses and Psara departed from their native island. In almost all cases, when they departed from another port they returned to their island before continuing their trip towards the West. In the quarantine registers of Malta the time needed for each trip is also written. The combination of this data can provide interesting results concerning the movement in space and in time. There are also the names of captains and their ships, but for the purposes of this paper I will restrict myself to the data and observations made above.