Regionalism, localism, and individualism in the Ottoman Mediterranean

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Among the obstacles that impede assessment of the interaction between individuals and social groups with the maritime environment during the early modern era, two stand out in particular. The first of these has its origin in the distorting lens of research paradigms that prioritize the dominant state and anachronistically attribute to it an ability to intrude itself on every aspect of community life. Particularly in the case of the maritime borders of a state like the Ottoman Empire, which extended in the north to the Black Sea, the northern Aegean, and the Adriatic, and in the south to the Mediterranean coastal waters of North Africa and the Red Sea, the sea distances and the relatively modest size of the fleets at the state’s disposal precluded any regular presence, inspection, or control. The second obstacle is the disproportionate privileging and over-utilization of sources that reflect the state’s priorities, perspectives, and in-built biases. As a corrective to the underrepresentation of the individual and of regions (including maritime regions) in favour of state-centric approaches, this chapter addresses the evidence that enables us to restore voice, agency, and activism to the seafarers that populated the Ottomans’ Mediterranean domain in the seventeenth century. My focus in what follows will be on sources rooted in folk traditions, oral testimony, and diary accounts. As a point of departure, I summarize the state of current research, and indicate some alternative approaches for future work regarding conditions in the eastern Mediterranean.
PART ONE: THE MYTH AND ILLUSION OF THE DOMINANT STATE IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN LANDS

When the Ottoman lands of the seventeenth century are studied from the standpoint of official ordinances and state regulatory regimes, what emerges is the misleading appearance of orderliness and compliance with directives issued by the state and its administrative organs. However, it is apparent that such regulatory statutes inscribed ‘on paper’ remained largely aspirational, and neither the state nor its chief enforcement agent, in the Ottoman case the ‘Admiral of the Sea’ (kapudan-i derya), were capable of delivering consistently on the intentions and promises outlined in chancellery documents. To demonstrate the pervasiveness of non-compliance with state directives, three circles of inter-relationship are explored here. The first two involve Ottoman diplomatic relations with Venice and France – both purportedly regulated by inter-state agreements called capitulations – and the third is associated with internal attempts by the Knights of St John in Malta to introduce regulatory order to the sometimes fractious, even insubordinate, ranks of their own corsair operatives.

The history of the Ottomans’ trade with Venice has been studied extensively and we have at our disposal the full texts of the various capitulations, together with their draft versions, due to the comprehensive research of Hans Theunissen.1 Despite the self-declared intentions of both signatories to the treaty text (finalized in 1574 and ratified by the Ottomans in 1575) to ensure the free movement of goods across the sea between the Adriatic and the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, the terms of this agreement were repeatedly breached until war broke out again in 1645 over Crete. The scale of the breaches was usually minor, and they were not even always recorded, but even the documented instances suggest the regulations were largely ignored.2 The articles of the chancellery document clearly pronounce injunctions against Venice’s offering of safe haven, repair, and provisioning facilities in the ports under its jurisdiction to pirate ships (harami barça/harami gemi). However, the terms of clauses negotiated at the level of inter-state diplomatic negotiation were not easy to deliver uniformly or comprehensively throughout the entire stretch of Venice’s colonial network in the eastern Mediterranean, including island enclaves such as Tinos and the more accessible Zakynthos/Zante. In these areas local governors enjoyed considerable leeway in the interpretation of statutes emanating from the centre.3 Local authorities were not always thorough in their investigation of the provenance of goods, or even the identity or state affiliation of the ships entering their ports to dispose of cargoes that might be regarded, on closer inspection and in official eyes, as stolen goods or contraband.4 Even without the connivance of local authorities, the sales of goods acquired from acts of piracy were transacted quickly at the nearest convenient port and news of an ‘irregular’ incident taking place in nearby waters might arrive too late to allow local officials time to react. Only the most egregious cases involving large sums or the loss of ships were brought to the attention of central government authorities, usually in relation to a claim for compensation lodged through diplomatic channels.

The scale of unresolved compensation claims is apparent from the survival of the traces of a submission by François Savary de Brèves, France’s ambassador to the Porte
Ottoman Mediterranean seafaring

in the 1590s, incorporated in a June 1594 summary of the state of piracy in the western Maghrib addressed to the kapudan-i derya by the imperial authorities in Istanbul. The summary indicates that the kapudan paşa was instructed to investigate a reported loss of goods valued at 800,000 gold pieces from French ships through seizures by the Algiers fleet. It also reminds him that while reports had been received confirming the redemption of ‘a few’ of the captives held in Algiers, the majority still remained in captivity. It suggests that at least three named captains active in the regional waters of the North African ‘regencies’ regularly joined in manoeuvres with the Ottoman imperial fleet in galleys that were each powered by 80–100 French galley slaves.5 One of the ‘Algiers’ ship captains is named as ‘Ilyas of Binzert’, indicating that he was from a home port that technically belonged to the jurisdictional remit of the governor of Tunis. This suggests that the nominal jurisdictional boundaries and administrative arrangements, and even the overarching authority structures themselves, were more fluid and negotiable than would appear at first glance.

The institutional frameworks within which the capitulations were interpreted and implemented were both more complex and multi-layered, and at the same time less orderly, than the clear-cut versions of the diplomatic documents. Especially in remoter provinces, in addition to the shadow cast by institutions and legal codes sanctioned by higher authority, local personalities and politics often dominated.6 In North Africa, in addition to urban notables, Ottoman governors had to contend with a complex web of tribal networks and alliances.7 Only by examining sub-imperial levels of power relations, and the sub-state actors who occupied centre stage in provincial localities (including the ship captains of the regency fleets whose movements and mobilizations often sprang from their own initiative and calculation of cost/benefit ratios), will it be possible to understand the real dynamics that governed patterns of maritime traffic and navigation in the Mediterranean.

The vassal state of Malta provides another example of how the regulatory reach of small states exceeded their grasp, which, despite its technical position as a feudal dependency of the Kingdom of Sicily, was, in practical terms, largely self-governing. Despite the minuscule scale of its territory and resources compared to its imperial masters and their rivals in the Mediterranean and the relatively modest size of its fleet, it was able to punch well above its weight. Still, there were limits to its control, even with those agents (the Knights of St John) over whom it purported to exercise direct authority. The volume of corsairing had reached such a level of intensity that the Order felt compelled in 1605 to establish a tribunal for the resolution of disputes, the Tribunale degli Armamenti. Disputes arose not just between the knights over the distribution of prizes, but also with corsairs affiliated with other Christian powers who sought to make use of Malta’s port facilities.8

Infractions of the regulations that took place in port under the gaze of the dockyard authorities were comparatively easy to detect, but it was more difficult to enforce the law in cases involving capture of vessels on the high seas when the rapid and decisive distribution of prize money was a priority. In these cases, on-the-spot decisions about prize sharing were more likely to be governed by instinct, force of habit, and custom rather than by strict adherence to the rule of law. The attempt to introduce more regularity, predictability, and transparency to customary practices and prevent
indiscriminate pillaging resulted in a tangled web of complex procedural rules, in some places ambiguous or open to interpretation. The rules occupied 43 lines of text in article 30 of the ordinances of 1631, and there were 100 articles in total. This prolixity indicates anxiety rather than self-confidence on the part of the would-be regulators. The repeated references of the intent to ‘chastise’ non-compliers is another indication that some (perhaps many) paid little heed to the regulations.

The success levels achieved by the regulatory attempts of chartered companies engaged in the Levant trade paralleled those of states and state-lets. In the case of the Levant Company which received its permanent charter in 1592, the gap (both in social rank and income levels) between company directors, merchants and traders (in London), and their operatives, agents, and factors in the field gave rise to jealousy and insubordination, with agents trading locally for their own personal profit. Naturally, these gains were not disclosed to their principals. In particular, evasion of ‘consulate’, a duty payable on goods bought and sold by the factories in the Levant, was hard to prevent or detect. In a recent study, Barbara Sebek suggests that embezzlement of company revenues by factors was a well-known fact and ‘there was nothing that could be done about it short of calling them back to England’. The figure of the sharp-witted servant (factor) who was able and eager to deceive and defraud his gullible, dim-witted master became a stock character of late Elizabethan and early Stuart literature. In an era of irregular and slow communication with home nations, it is not hard to imagine how ineffectual the attempts of such distant ‘managers’ to control their ‘underlings’ remained in the age of sail.

The case of the French in the Levant, nominally regulated by its own Levant Company and the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles for ship registration and customs collection, was similar to that of England. The work of Paul Masson showed that roughly 70 per cent of the traffic that entered the port of Marseilles for inspection consisted of smaller vessels which carried cargoes (such as wheat and other commodities) that were exempt from consulate fees (called cottimo) and thus are omitted from official trade statistics. Apart from the few vessels with larger cargo capacity carrying high-value goods such as textiles, the bulk of the seaborne trade of Marseilles carried in French vessels consisted of lightly regulated or unregulated trade. Historians ignore at their peril the smaller traders and the smaller craft, including blockade-runners, interlopers, and other dealers in contraband goods. In addition to offering a quantitative assessment of trade and commercial traffic (including piracy as a form of petty trade), historians need to provide a qualitative assessment of the different categories of trade and traders, and not focus exclusively on the ‘big players’ and the state-sponsored commercial fleets.

**New trends in research on maritime history and the maritime environment**

Research on the early modern Mediterranean has concentrated mostly on assessing the competition between trading nations and political constructions such as sovereign states, which are perceived as monolithic and unitary entities. There has also been a tendency to overlook regional differences expressed in localized climatic and
environmental conditions in favour of broader geographic or maritime regions such as 'the Mediterranean World', which is often regarded as a uniform whole rather than as a combination of varied landscapes and seascapes each with its own distinct features. Recently, instead of seeking to define the shared features of broader regions, environmental geographers and historians have begun to study the localized manifestations and effects of climate in the historical past within more confined spatial parameters. One aspect retrieves evidence from diaries, journals, and other narrative sources containing precise reference to weather, experienced in specific time and space, as perceived by individuals who left their impressions in writing. By focusing on human experience and the socio-cultural aspects of climate, including extremes of climate such as storms at sea, scholars are able to apply the analytical concept of proxemics in meaningful ways. This work involves the microscopic investigation of humans’ relationships with their immediate surroundings, for example a ship’s company or community life in a small coastal settlement made up mostly of seafarers and their families. The study of what Steven Rappaport terms ‘worlds within worlds’ is particularly appropriate for seafaring communities. The textual excerpts included in the second part of this chapter reveal, for instance, that seafaring people regarded themselves as separate; a tribe or race apart from other land-based groups such as villagers, townspeople, or nomads.

In assessing the position of seamen in society it is essential that historians highlight the pejorative attitude of metropolitan societies, which tended to regard sailors as outcasts existing at the margins of polite and civilized urban society. While some aspects of seamen’s self-description might appear exaggerated, or to stretch the limits of credulity, they nevertheless provide important information. How seamen were regarded by the judicial system when they were deemed to have transgressed the law often reveals relatively little about the inner identity of the sailor, or the bonds of fidelity and solidarity that bound seamen to their community of fellow seafarers. To investigate the interrelations and social bonding between shipmates, this chapter focuses on accounts of seamen’s experiences in their own element, i.e. at sea.

**Defining the distinctive characteristics of regional and sub-regional maritime districts in the southern Mediterranean**

In order to understand the social conditions that prevailed in different parts of the Ottoman Mediterranean, it is essential to sub-divide the region into its appropriate geographical segments or quadrants. Three main divisions are considered:

1. the main shipping lanes that linked the capital Istanbul with Alexandria, passing through the part of the Aegean that lay closest to the Anatolian littoral, then proceeding through the Straits of Rhodes;
2. the remoter parts of the Aegean including the Cyclades Archipelago;
3. the extended shores of North Africa lying to the west of Egypt, i.e. the ‘regencies’ of Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers.

Only the first of these broad maritime regions was rigorously controlled, patrolled, or directly incorporated within the domain of the kapudan-i derya. In relation to
North Africa, the three Ottoman provinces of Algiers (1519), Tripoli (1551), and Tunis (1574) entered the Ottoman orbit at different times and under different conditions, parts of the coast remained outside any effective external jurisdiction, and the extreme west (i.e. Morocco) was under the independent rule of the Saadian and, after 1659, the Alawite dynasties. These sub-regions also comprised distinct climatic zones, and the far west displayed features that were more characteristic of the Atlantic zone than of the rest of the Mediterranean. The distance between the northern and southern shore of the Mediterranean also broadened significantly eastwards from Algiers, causing a spatial separation between the various parts of the Ottoman Mediterranean and the sea’s northern extension into the Adriatic. Concerning the East–West axis, Morocco was distinct from the rest of the Islamic world due to its distinctive cultural, administrative, and sectarian religious makeup, and, especially in terms of its cultural imprint: it was only in Egypt and Syria that the Ottomans left a very deep and durable trace.\(^{18}\)

In terms of economic makeup and reliance on piracy as a source of income, Algiers was different from its corsairing partners and counterparts in the Christian world, especially Malta, as revealed by the relative size of their fleets. Figures published by Robert Davis suggest that between two-thirds and three-quarters of all the Christian slaves/captives held in North Africa were imprisoned in Algiers.\(^{19}\) In his assessment of the prevalence of, and risks posed by, Mediterranean piracy, Daniel Panzac has estimated that roughly 90 per cent of the Christian captives held by the corsairs of Tunis came from the portions of the sea west of Sicily, whereas the captives held in Algiers came predominantly from shore raids on the nearby coasts of Spain.\(^{20}\) Consequently, while piracy was an important phenomenon in the seventeenth-century Mediterranean, it was distributed unevenly across the various zones and sectors of the sea, with some sectors virtually devoid of risk.

Regarding the fleet size and naval capacity of the various crusading/corsairing fleets, Peter Earle suggests that the Algiers fleet consisted of 60 large sailing ships in 1624–5, each carrying 24–30 guns, while Tunis had 14 ships and Tripoli had three.\(^{21}\) By comparison, in the first three-quarters of the seventeenth century, the Maltese fleet consisted of 20–30 ships, with only the largest of these carrying 35 guns, and the majority with no more than 10–20.\(^{22}\) By the end of the seventeenth century, both fleets (Algiers and Malta) were smaller, with Algiers slipping to 20–40 ships and Malta to 10–20. However, the Algiers fleet still outgunned its adversaries by a considerable margin.\(^{23}\) The majority of French commercial vessels sailing from Marseille in the mid-seventeenth century carried at most 10–15 guns, similar to the level of armament of the Maltese corsairs, and thus made an easy prey for even the most lightly armed Algiers vessels.\(^{24}\) Though Algiers outstripped the competition by a large measure throughout the seventeenth century, it confined its zone of activity for its asymmetrical naval warfare to the most vulnerable and richest hunting grounds in the maritime spaces of the western Mediterranean, especially the approaches to the Straits of Gibraltar. Malta was undoubtedly capable of inflicting serious harm in isolated incidents such as the attack in 1644 by six Maltese ships on the Istanbul-Alexandria convoy provoking a diplomatic row with Venice when they stopped for provisions in Crete on the return leg to Valletta. In Crete, they were given assistance by the Venetians despite the terms of the capitulations.\(^{25}\) Assessed in broad comparative terms,
Ottoman Mediterranean seafaring

compared to the asymmetrical naval warfare of the western Mediterranean, corsair activity in the eastern Mediterranean was sporadic and on a reduced scale. Nevertheless, it is an important aspect of Ottoman history, as revealed in the surviving accounts of capture and captivity at the hands of Maltese pirates left by Ottoman eyewitnesses.\(^{26}\)

Ottoman insularity

A further important sub-region of the Ottomans’ maritime space is represented by islands and other communities separated from the mainland by a lesser or greater distance.\(^{27}\) According to a widely used periodization applied to the Mediterranean in the late sixteenth century, it is commonly assumed that the 1570s marked an age of transition from an era of galley warfare and frontal confrontation, with deployment of large fleets between the Mediterranean’s two naval superpowers, i.e. Spain and the Ottoman Empire, to a new era of scaled-down conflict. This transition marks the beginnings of the age of sail in the seventeenth century. The coincidence of apparently ‘decisive’ transformative geo-political events such as the siege of Famagustsa and the Fall of Cyprus (September 1570–August 1571), the sea battle in the Gulf of Patras near Lepanto (Nafpaktos) (October 1571), the Fall of Goletta and the establishment of Ottoman rule in Tunis (August 1574), have given credence to this view. However, the conclusion that the result was the introduction of a new order of uniformity or administrative regularity under Ottoman rule is over-simplified. In most places, it was a gradual process and, in a few, full integration with the rest of the empire was never achieved. For Cyprus, because of its size and relative proximity to the Ottoman heartland in Anatolia, the regime change that accompanied the end of Venetian rule and the beginning of Ottoman control was more visible and immediate. However, the waters around Cyprus, including the shores of southern Anatolia opposite – in particular the stretch between Silifke and Alanya – were not immediately or effectively pacified.\(^{28}\)

In Tunis, the fall of the Hafsid/Spanish condominium rule ushered in a period of stability, but maintaining the delicate balance of power between local elements and the authority of the Ottoman governor was never easy, and the history of the province under Ottoman rule was punctuated by relatively frequent outbursts, sometimes for prolonged periods, of civil strife and instability. Despite the appearance of a simple handover of authority to Ottoman imperial control, politics at the local level remained important, with governors making sustained efforts to contain potentially explosive rivalries between competing families, factions, and local militias, not always successfully.

In order to demonstrate the nature of the balance of power and distribution of power-shares, in parts of the empire remote from the imperial centre in Istanbul, the islands provide an excellent case study. The kinds of administrative regimes that emerged in the islands, especially the remoter islands, took a form that was dictated by necessity and negotiated with local power brokers rather than imposed unilaterally from the outside. The Ottoman maritime and administrative presence was significant in areas assigned to the direct administration (and revenue collection authority) of the kapudan-i derya which were chiefly centred in the northern Aegean (protecting the approaches to the Dardanelles) and islands with an important Ottoman military and
Rhoads Murphey

naval profile, and strategic significance, such as Rhodes. The kapudan-i derya’s remit
was wider than this, but his capacity for close patrol and simultaneous presence in the
wider maritime space of the Mediterranean was limited. The key areas of Ottoman
strategic concern were the Black Sea and the coastal waters of the Ottoman home
provinces in Anatolia. However, given the size of the Ottoman imperial fleet, it was
not possible to deploy significant squadrons to both these theatres of war simultane-
ously, even in times of threat such as in the 1690s during the multi-front war with
Russia in the Sea of Azov, and Venice in the Morea, in the War of the Sacra Ligua. In
peacetime too, regular tours of inspection by the kapudan were confined to the larger
islands with significant populations and revenue potential.

Some Aegean islands such as Tinos remained under Venetian rule until 1715 after it
was bequeathed to the Republic by the last of the Ghisi family in 1390, while others
were controlled (in both economic and administrative senses) by private family inter-
ests, represented in the case of Sifnos and Kithnos by the aristocratic Bolognese clan of
the Gozzadini. Putting aside the finer points of de jure juridical rights, the interests of
a few wealthy families predominated in many islands, whether their overlord and over-
seer was Venice, the Ottoman government or, as was the case in tiny communities such
as Tabarka (situated just off the Tunisian mainland), Spain. Though for centuries Tabarka
remained under nominal Spanish rule, between 1542 and 1742 it was both governed
and controlled by the Genoese family of the Lomellini according to their commercial
interests. Ownership and hereditary possession in a single family was, in a number of
places and cases, sufficiently well-entrenched to allow family members and their asso-
ciates to accommodate changes in the wider political arena of the seventeenth-century
Mediterranean with most of their power and social position intact.

Naxos provides another example of the preservation of privilege over the longue
durée. Originally a possession of the Latin Duchy of the Archipelago, on its submission
to Ottoman rule in 1566 by the last of the Crispi barons, its first ‘governor’ Joseph
Nasi was given full authority by Selim II to govern the island as his personal fief.
After Nasi’s death in 1579, although nominally its administration was transferred to
the maritime domain of the kapudan-i derya, it was designated as a saliyanı district, i.e.
a self-governing district that collected its own revenues and remitted them as a lump-
sum to the Ottoman treasury. It is a sign of its almost complete autonomy that until
1669, at the conclusion of the Veneto-Ottoman conflict over Crete, no attempts were
made to survey the island’s revenue potential or establish a permanent Ottoman garri-
son. The first cadastral survey of Naxos took place in 1670. Despite being the largest
of the islands of the Cyclades, Naxos was not equipped with a suitable anchorage, and
as a consequence most of the shipping traffic called at nearby Paros to deliver and load
their cargoes. In de facto terms, the formal transfer of sovereignty and suzerainty had
to accommodate a large measure of flexibility as well as continuity with past practice.
Apart from changes in personnel, little changed regarding the entrenched family and
political networks of island communities.

In addition to island enclaves, attempts to provide accounts of the fragmented
nature of the economic landscape of the Mediterranean must address how the flow
of maritime traffic was affected by the competition for profits from shipping on the
part of a number of free ports or, in the case of the eastern Mediterranean, ports that
offered market access on favourable terms. The multi-centric nature of Mediterranean trading networks was further transformed by the near-simultaneous emergence, in the 1650s and 1660s, of competing free-port enclaves established at Livorno (under Tuscan oversight), at Genoa (under Ligurian oversight), and in Marseilles under the watchful gaze of the French Crown, the latter succeeding in exercising a greater degree of regulatory control than its rivals. As a result, in the short term, Marseilles lost its competitiveness in international trade to rival ports.34

In sum, for most of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries, in the commercial sphere there was little substantive move to highly regulate markets, or create uniform production aimed at export markets in any of the four quarters of the Mediterranean world: north, south, east, or west. Such standardization and centralization of industrial production and mercantile practice was largely a product of the period after 1740 and, particularly for the eastern Mediterranean, a sector-wide and place-specific approach to the study of local market dynamics is essential. Each region and sub-region (Syria, Egypt, the Maghrib, and the Aegean Archipelago) possessed its own unique features and characteristics. As a result, moving beyond the Istanbul-centric and state-centric historical narratives and archival source traditions is a priority if historians are to escape being drawn into the illusion of the dominant state and the myth of the rise of the dominant West. Despite the yeoman-like efforts of the emerging mercantile trading nations of the North Atlantic, such as the English and the Dutch, for most of the seventeenth century, their participation in the Levant market was, in terms of trade volumes and values, capable neither of distorting nor of transforming local markets. Fully integrated global trading networks emerged only in the later part of the eighteenth century.

In the second part of this chapter, I focus exclusively on the perspective of indigenous Ottoman actors and participants, especially those closely associated with life at sea. A few of these left highly revealing self-descriptive or autobiographic accounts that offer a glimpse into Ottoman maritime realities as experienced by the individuals themselves. How they regarded the risks and rewards of the seafaring life often clashed openly with the perspectives offered in carefully scripted Ottoman chronicle accounts. These autobiographical and self-descriptive accounts provide an unmediated eyewitness version of the circumstances encountered by early modern seafarers of the eastern and southern portions of the Mediterranean. In this age of unmanaged, loosely regulated, and lawless maritime spaces of the eastern Mediterranean, it was neither diplomatic intervention nor protection offered by state authorities, but the determined instinct for self-preservation of rugged individuals that enhanced their life prospects and chances for survival.

PART TWO: OTTOMAN NARRATIVE SOURCES ON THE LIFE OF THE SEA

Introduction to the sources

This section examines two of the surviving full-length Ottoman narratives, which can be classified as belonging to the genre of personal memoir or autobiographical writing.35 In Ottoman terms, accounts relating personal experiences or adventures
Rhoads Murphey

(*ma-cera*, literally that which has passed by, or befallen a person), or alternatively *ser-güzeş*, the Persian version of the same, were a recognized form of literary composition. The latter term is directly incorporated into the title of one of the works under discussion – the 1599 account called ‘The Adventures of a Prisoner of Malta’ by an Ottoman captive named Kadi Mustafa. The second account, dated circa 1695, relates the experiences of a sea captain called the ‘Jailer-Captain’ and is entitled the ‘makale’, a complex term but with a basic meaning, derived from its triliteral Arabic verbal root ‘kwl’, connected with speech or oral declaration. In what follows, these two principal sources are referred to as the *Sergüzeş of 1599* and *Makale of 1695*.

A comparative assessment of their literary forms is instructive. While some scholars argue that the 1695 account should be regarded as a work of fiction, others note the value of such accounts, which incorporate a plethora of accurate and highly realistic details about life aboard a sailing vessel. The two Ottoman tales are dissimilar in tone, linguistic register, and intended readership. They relate the experiences of individuals who belonged to different social status groups, with contrasting outlooks and expectations from life. Taken in chronological order, the *Sergüzeş of 1599*, written by a member of the Ottoman state bureaucracy with high expectations of social and professional advancement, is introspective and centres on the kadi’s state of mind and yearning for release as a prisoner on land in Malta. The second, the *Makale of 1695*, provides a vivid account focused on fast-moving external events. These include a storm at sea, shipwreck, and capture by Christian corsairs, recovery of freedom after participation in a mutiny on-board, difficulties in extrication from the covetous intentions of shore-based Ottoman officials and, finally, commencement of a career as Muslim corsairs under the flag of Tunis.

Another difference is that the 1599 text is narrated by its author, a literate man and a member of the Ottoman learned profession, who proudly asserts authorship, interspersing his account of events with sophisticated verses of his own composition. It is clear that Kadi Mustafa Efendi’s intended audience are his peers in rank and prestige in Istanbul society, whose generosity he depends on to secure the ransom needed for his release. The style and register of his narrative is moderated to suit their refined tastes, as he echoes their values and social orientation.

In contrast to the ambience of the Istanbul literary salon evoked by Kadi Mustafa, the 1695 narrative provides a description of life on-board a ship (both on deck and below deck). The specialized vocabulary of masts and mizzens, hawsers, and anchor chains, permeates the narrative and the unfolding drama is conveyed in a linguistic register and tone suggestive of everyday speech that would have appealed to a non-elite audience of common seamen. Several references in the text refer to the implied audience’s disdain for, even total incomprehension of, the literary conceits and mannerisms of Ottoman elite society. For example, when the Jailer-Captain, after he has led a mutiny, is handed a written order by a lieutenant of the Ottoman governor of Cyprus demanding that he surrender his vessel to the governor’s inspection, the captain gives the following response in the form of simulated speech typical of folk narrative: ‘We (speaking for the whole ship’s crew) have no experience of the form of such government directives, nor is there any among us who can read or comprehend their content.’ In short, the Jailer-Captain, while acknowledging the invitation
to attend the governor’s council to receive the latter’s congratulations for capturing an enemy ship, grows suspicious of the governor’s intentions and refuses to attend in openly mocking terms:

We (the ship’s crew) are no more than a bunch of ruffians clothed from head to toe in dirty rags and wholly unfit to be dressed in the robes of honour bestowed in Council on the likes of such a grand personage as yourself, your Excellency. Never up to the present day have we ever attended a Vizier’s council, nor have we ever seen the likes of such an esteemed person’s summative edict.  

Such passages convey the clear sense that, far from being ashamed of their own boorishness or illiteracy, the seamen are proud of their own traditions and freedom-loving ways, whose essence landlubbers will never be able to experience or appreciate.

The mocking tone and subversive undertones of the language used in the Makale can be compared with the highly respectful tone and deferent forms of address used in Kadi Mustafa’s Sergüzeşt. In sending his appeals for help to Istanbul using his former cellmate Haci Hasan as his courier, Kadi Mustafa refers to the capital as the ‘Court in which Justice Makes Its Home and Whose Throne Is as Exalted as the Heavens’ and the sultan is addressed as ‘His Excellency and Most Fortunate Majesty in Whom The World Takes Refuge (Shadow of God on Earth)’.

A key aspect of the Makale’s composition/recitation that merits further comment is its colloquial character which mimics the pattern of everyday speech and oral delivery. In contrast to Kadi Mustafa’s Sergüzeşt, the question of ‘authorship’ is left vague in the Makale. This evasiveness lends an aura of verisimilitude and authenticity to the narrative by allowing the tale to be (re)told/recalled by means of the collective voice of the shipmates who experienced it in the form of shared episodic memory. The ‘we-ness’ of the narration stands in stark contrast to the ‘me-ness’ that characterizes Kadi Mustafa’s memoir. While the Jailer-Captain is the clear hero and the chief protagonist of the tale, what is celebrated is not so much his triumphs or even the astuteness of his decisions as captain, but his worthiness as a paragon of the values held dear in the group consciousness of the sailors, i.e. independence, self-reliance, ingenuity, bravery, candour, and plain-spokenness.

Outwardly, the Makale purports to be a written account first drafted by one of the participants in the events of 1673 named Köle Yusuf. Yusuf is identified as the manumitted slave of a Cairo merchant named Abdurrahman. After surviving the dramatic events of the voyage, several years later (circa 1678) Yusuf returned to Cairo and gave an account of his adventures to his master. Some two decades after that (circa 1695) Abdurrahman’s son Ibrahim had in his possession a manuscript copy of the tale which he authenticated as the tale composed by Yusuf ‘in his own hand’ from which he (Ibrahim) had fashioned a summary account of his own modelled on the original. It was this second-hand version that the ultimate copyist/scribe named Süleyman used to create a fair copy. It is this copy, twice-removed from the original account of Köle Yusuf, that Süleyman offers his readers, describing himself not as ‘author’ but merely as transcriber (müstensih). Which of the three potential claimants Yusuf, Ibrahim, and Süleyman should rightfully be considered its author is left a puzzle, perhaps
deliberately, by the ultimate copyist Süleyman who refers to himself at the outset only as *hakir* (the lowly one) and later, at the end of the manuscript in the colophon, as *fakir* (the humble one).44

Putting aside the merits of the various claims for ‘authorship’ or further consideration of the text’s transmission, the most important authenticating detail is provided in the copyist Süleyman’s use of the *nisba* ‘al-Giridi’, which indicates that the copying of the manuscript was carried out by a Cretan, in all likelihood in Crete.45 The surviving text’s provenance in a location known for its intimate connection with the sea and seafaring folk inspires confidence that the copyist had access to the storytellers of yarns and sea ditties frequenting the waterfront. Both the details contained in the text and the way he narrates his tale suggest he made use of oral informants who were intimately connected with seafaring, the seafarers’ way of life, and the shared ethos of that community.

Another significant difference between the two tales is the way they refer to time, calibrate time, and convey a sense of the passage of time. The account authored by the letter-writing and rhyme-composing *kadi* notes the precise calendrical dates on which key events occurred. It is thus possible to reconstruct a sequentially accurate account of what actually happened to him, as well as where and when. That a large part of the account of his captivity was written during the 19 months of captivity (between his arrival in Malta in mid-June 1597 and his release in January 1598), in the form of a sort of live reporting or *aide mémoire*, is indicated by the fact that, as stated in the colophon of his text, he ‘completed’ the manuscript in the *hijri* year 1007 (August 1598–July 1599), only a few months after his return to Istanbul. Kadi Mustafa also records that precisely 26 days elapsed between the capture of the small *Karamürsel* craft in which he was travelling in the waters off Cape Arnaoutis near Cyprus and his arrival in Malta in the custody of his corsair captors.46

In the *Makale*, time and the passage of time are described differently. Here reference to time is equally accurate and precise, but the manner of referring to it is not the conventional one of days, weeks, months, and years, but rather seasons of the year and times of the day. This latter time-scale is one applied by everyday folk in everyday rhythmical and cyclically repeating daily encounters, in contradistinction to that associated with the calendrical mind-set of the bureaucratic man of letters.

In both texts, news, correspondence, reports, and gossip circulate within the maritime space of the Mediterranean via a number of different mediums: captains of Christian merchant vessels, the Christian merchants themselves, deputized agents (often non-Muslim merchants from Istanbul) bearing letters with news about the status of requests for ransom payments, and the arrival of gossip and verbal reports from new Muslim captives arriving in Malta as prisoners. All these different modes of communication contributed to a trans-Mediterranean network that linked Muslim captives ‘imprisoned’ in Malta with the world outside. The isolation of captives from knowledge about what was happening in the wider Mediterranean world and beyond was never that absolute or complete.47

The general perception of time, and the means of calibrating and measuring it encountered in the *Makale* provides readers/listeners with a nuanced appreciation of the fleeting nature of time, and of time experienced in the moment. In the *Makale*, the day is typically divided into the periodic divisions of morning, noon, and night,
conforming to what occupied the thoughts of sailors and navigators as they performed their daily duties. Visibility, the presence of cloud cover, the periodic sighting of other (potentially hostile) vessels, are conditions noted in the text with their precise time-specific referents. The hourly scale used to track increases and decreases of wind velocity during a storm is given in accordance with the five daily prayer times for Muslims, which occurred at fixed times dictated by the rising and setting of the sun.

The following passages excerpted from the text will serve as a guide to how the onset, the rising velocity, and the denouement of a winter storm were perceived, and then recalled, by sailors and passengers aboard a slenderly proportioned shehtiye (sätia/setee) sailing the coastal waters off Alexandria in the late seventeenth century.48

First day at sea (Makale: 114, line 19 and 115, lines 1–9)

Towards sunset (akşama karib) on the first day out of port the wind died down and gathering clouds darkened the evening sky, a clear sign of an impending storm. It was the time, round about 10 days before the winter solstice (gün dönmesine on gün kalmış idi) and a short time before the onset of the winter storm season which is marked by the appearance of the black sea genie (karakoncolos günlerine bir kaç gün var idi).49 At midnight (gece dördüncü saat’te) the wind kicked up from the east bringing with it foul weather and high waves.50

Second day (Makale: 115, lines 10–25 and 116, lines 1–13)

The following day in the late forenoon (kusluk vakti), the wind shifted around to the west and gained such strength that by the time of the midday prayer (öğle namazı vakti) it had become even more ferocious than the previous day’s easterly gale.51 It continued gathering strength until mid-afternoon (ikindi vakti) by which time the waves towered above us, breaking over all sides of the ship. By sunset (akşam namazı vaktinde), the driving rain and high winds, accompanied by intermittent lightning flashes and occasional hail showers, reached such intensity that crew members were no longer able to grip the halyards and sheets. At that juncture a huge wave broke over the stern carrying the chief navigation officer overboard and with him the compass box. Thus deprived of its eye, the ship and its company lurched forward with a feeling like that of a horse rider who had mounted a blind horse. During the pitch dark of night (gece) we lost all sense of our true position, only catching a brief sight in the glimmer of the occasional lightning strike. As we proceeded onwards in this fashion, trusting in God’s mercy (and protection), around midnight (tahminen gecenin dördüncü saat’te) aided by a lightning strike we spied an indistinct black shape on the horizon. The captain declared it to be land but others thought it was only clouds. Shortly afterwards, after a second lightning strike, it became clear that the indistinct shape was in fact the contour of a coastline.

The third day [daybreak] (Makale 116: lines 14–20)

At daybreak (sabah olduktan) when full visibility was restored, we did our utmost to steer ourselves towards the shore, but the action of the waves and the adverse flow of the current held us back.
The third day [subsequent developments] (Makale: 116, lines 21–5 and 117, lines 1–12)

By the light of day, we were able to discern that what lay before us was not the mainland but an uninhabited island. It was now fully 24 hours (yiğirmi dört saat) since the beginning of the storm (i.e., the westerly gale) but its force had still not abated; if anything, it was stronger than before. Our ship was continuously breached, both from the bows and the stern, by the incessant action of the waves and there was no chance for us to lower the rowboats or attach a tow line. After our repeated attempts to approach shore safely failed, evening fell (akşam oldu) and the time of the bedtime prayers (at nightfall) drew nigh (yatsu vakti yaklaştı). The wind continued to rage and reached levels that exceeded its heights of the previous 24 hours. In the wee hours of the night, at the fifth hour after nightfall (gecenin beşinci saat’te), a massive wave struck the vessel in the bows with such force that it carried away the anchor chain and the ship was driven ashore and, with a rolling and thumping, struck land and was dashed to pieces.

In the sample passages selected from the storm sequence in the Makale, the reader is immersed in the minute-by-minute and hour-by-hour action, sharing the experiences of the ship’s crew. As modern historians it is important for us to gain a sense in real-time, in the light of such first-hand accounts, of how this battle with the elements was waged and with what results. Works such as Kadi Mustafa’s Sergüzeş allow us to orient ourselves in historical time and pinpoint the day, month, and year in which letters were sent, state correspondence received, or literary works composed and are, of course, valuable in their own right. Nevertheless, in order to appreciate how the maritime environment was actually experienced, works such as the Makale that provide a cinéma verité glimpse into contemporary reality, presented in three-dimensional time and place, are of equal value. The separate worlds of the terrestrial and the maritime, the seafarers and the landlubbers, the literate and the unlettered judged (and reported) ‘reality’ in accordance with their own standards, and following their own instincts and sentiments. There are relatively few sources that restore a voice to the sailors from the lost world of the Ottoman mariner, but the Makale is a rich source of information. The concluding section of this chapter provides a selection of passages from the Makale which showcase the values, ethos, way of life, and traditions of those who sought their fortune on the open sea.

Four excerpts (vignettes) from the Makale

Excerpt (a): The speech of the Jailer-Captain turned mutineer to the officer cadre and others among his former shipmates and Christian shipmates (altogether 17 in number) inviting them to join the ranks of the 53 Muslim mutineers already under his command (Makale: 127, lines 6–26).

Excerpt (b): The Jailer-Captain’s statement concerning the governing principles to guide the new ship’s crew united under his command (now totalling 70; 53 plus 17) (Makale: 129, lines 8–24 and 130, line 1).
Excerpt (c): Explanation of the logic governing the Jailer-Captain’s decisions regarding to whom he should assign the captaincies of two captured ships designated to serve as his vice-admiral (*patrona*) and Rear-Admiral (*riyale*) in future cruises.

Excerpt (d): Summation on the state of the Jailer-Captain’s mind at the end of three years of corsairing under the newly adopted name of Mahmud while flying the flag of Tunis.

Excerpt (a)

‘In the presence of the chief officers of the galleon whom he had released from the hold where they had been kept in confinement during the mutiny, the Jailer-Captain addressed them as follows:52

My brothers. Please excuse me for having mistreated you. I deemed it desirable to keep you an arm’s length away from the fray lest you come to some harm. Since you were not made privy to our plans, we feared that you might offer resistance and suffer some accidental injury during the scuffle. The last thing we wanted was that being compelled to meet force with force, we should inflict casualties on you, our dear friends and companions from these many years of cruising and corsairing together. Now, God be praised, we have achieved our purpose (in the mutiny) and the ship is safely in our hands. At present we would like to divvy up in equal shares in the spirit of brotherhood all the goods, coins and other valuables that have come into our possession.53 Thereafter, it is our intention to take up a new career of corsairing under the flag of whichever of the three “hearth”s” (*ocaks*) of the Maghrib (namely Algiers, Tunis, or Tripoli) we all agree to. Whatever we then acquire in the way of prizes we will distribute amongst ourselves according to the law and custom of the sea rovers. I offer you this, o my brothers, with whom I stand together heart and soul, for you to consider and, if you are willing, you may join our brotherly band according to this covenant. If you are unwilling to accept these terms you are free to go onshore with your belongings intact. Whichever course you choose, you go with our blessing.

When Jailer-Captain had finished addressing his former shipmates in these terms, they replied to him in one voice saying:

For these many years we have served together and shared the bonds of friendship and mutual support incumbent on those who have broken bread and shared sustenance together. Given the closeness of our association in the past, it is inconceivable that we should now part ways and seek our fortune elsewhere. We pledge ourselves to your service and wholeheartedly accept you as our new captain. We will follow you in accordance with the precept “your friends are our friends and your enemies are our enemies” and accept your orders unconditionally. We will fight body and soul for the protection of our shipmates (whether they be Muslim or Christian) whenever they are exposed to peril and we also commit ourselves to carrying out our duties to the fullest extent of our abilities, serving even more devotedly than we did before under our former (Christian)
Rhoads Murphey

captain. As you well know, the beast of the fields is bound to his duty by the yoke he wears around his neck whereas the brave-hearted hero (yığıt) is bound only by his oath and steadfastness in his every word and deed. You, as our new captain, should now summon a similar resolve to fulfill your responsibility as a fellow member of our band of braves.

When the new recruits (among the galleon’s former officer corps) offered the foregoing response to the Jailer-Captain’s plea for cooperation, he was greatly pleased.

Excerpt (b)

‘After the Jailer-Captain had successfully dismissed the unreasonable demands of the governor of Cyrus and his emissary,\(^5\) he summoned the experienced hands and veteran crew members for a ship’s council. When they had gathered, he spoke to them in the following words:

O my brothers, after that narrow escape with governor, it now behoves us to join the service of one of the Maghrib Hearths. It is not sensible for us to try to go it alone. The question is, should we elect to join the sultan’s service in Istanbul and risk being seized in the claw of the almighty Ottomans? If we chose that course, there is no doubt that, in addition to being stripped of our galleon and all our possessions, we will all be cast into prison and remain powerless to escape their grasp for the rest of our lives. Another option would be to serve in the Algiers fleet. It is well known that they are a determined lot, but, at the same time, because the Algiers Hearth is notorious for its stinginess, it is likely that they too would seize our ship for their own use. They would be unable to resist the temptation to add our ship to their own flotilla since there is no swifter nor more well-shapen craft than ours in their whole fleet. In its fully decked out condition our vessel is capable of carrying up to fifty guns, enough to make it the pride of their fleet. If, alternatively, we were to decide to serve under the banner of Tripoli, they, in view of their general state of penury, would be certain to envy us our gains from corsairing. It is a well-known fact that This Hearth has the worst reputation among the Three Hearths of the Maghrib for its niggardliness in the distribution of prize money. The best choice for us is service under the flag of Tunis which is widely reputed as a prosperous Hearth. Besides, we already have in hand a pennant with their colours which we retrieved from a locker belonging to our galleon’s former captain. It was once the flag of the vice-admiral of the Tunis fleet. Let us hope, if God the Merciful wills it, this flag will serve as the auspicious emblem of our future good fortune. So, what say yee? What do you think is our most favourable choice?

When the captain had finished addressing them in this manner the whole company replied speaking with a single voice:

You are our captain. Your judgements and your deliberations are more incisive than ours. Whatever you approve, we accept with full confidence and satisfaction.
When the group’s joint decision was thus determined, they formally adopted their new identity as corsairs of Tunis by unfurling its banners and they fired a gun salute with muskets and cannon to signal their affirmation of the captain’s choice.

Excerpt (c)

‘The assembled company representing the companies of the three ships, all serving under the Jailer-Captain Mahmud’s command, now gathered for a discussion about assigning the captaincies of the two captured Maltese ships; one a man-of-war of 24 guns and the other a larger ship carrying 36 guns. The captaincy of the first was awarded to Ali Bey, the rebellious son of the Governor of Cyprus who had run away from home to seek his career as a Muslim corsair by joining forces with the other Muslim mutineers when they first seized control of the galleon in Cyprus. They admired him for his martial spirit, but took the precaution of assigning a seasoned veteran named Captain Mehmed to assist Ali as his chief navigational officer. During the council discussion, the old hands offered Ali Bey their advice in the following words:

Ali Bey, you are by birth and upbringing the son of a vizier and are in every respect a brave and courageous man-at-arms. However, at present, you are still largely untutored in the ways of the sea. Until you gain proven knowledge and experience, you must faithfully follow Captain Mehmed’s judgments and decisions and never go against his orders. Although you are a brave warrior, when it comes to matters of the sea, you must defer to Captain Mehmed’s greater wisdom and experience.

So saying, the seasoned crew members sought to educate and give guidance and admonishment to their worthy, but still inexperienced, comrade. For the captaincy of the second capture, the 36-gun ship, Captain Mahmud chose a renegade captain whose adopted Muslim name was Ahmed to serve as his Rear-Admiral. This was because, having served for long years as a Christian corsair and (like Captain Mahmud himself in his previous life as the Jailer-Captain) acquired an intimate knowledge of life at sea, he was perfectly qualified to captain his own vessel. On these grounds, the captaincy was awarded to the recent convert Ahmed at Captain Mahmud’s request and with his personal offer to stand surety for Captain Ahmed’s good behaviour.

Excerpt (d)

‘After Captain Mahmud had issued his orders regarding the captaincies of the two captures, he resumed his cruising and corsairing for a period of three years, hunting as a pack of three with his newly acquired Vice-Admiral and Rear-Admiral. Together they brought back many prizes and acquired rich booty for distribution in Tunis. During this period, their reputation for corsairing and feats of derring-do spread throughout the length and breadth of the Maghrib making them the envy of one and all in the Three Hearths. At this point, the governorship of Tunis changed hands when
(by the command of God the Exalted) the current incumbent died. The post was then filled by a new state dignitary who, after a short spell in office, became jealous of Captain Mahmud’s reputation and accomplishments, saying:

This man has accumulated fabulous wealth and, what's more, he has earned the love and admiration of his comrades. It is only a matter of time before he, relying on the backing and support of his faithful friends, will be emboldened and set his eye on my position of status and respect intent on unseating me as governor.

When the governor's fear and envy were thus aroused, he hatched a plan to eliminate Captain Mahmud as his rival by murdering him. However, a group of Captain Mahmud's friends and well-wishers warned him of the governor's malign intentions. Thereafter, a chill entered into Mahmud's relations with the governorate of Tunis. Although Mahmud cherished no ambition for high political office, it was true enough that, had he so wished, he could easily have joined the ranks of the state dignitaries. But, he had no taste for life ashore and if, after the conclusion of successful expedition, he had to stay ashore for more than 40 days, he became unwell and craved an early return to sea. Even though it was thanks to Captain Mahmud's fame and reputation that the new governor held onto his present position of dignity, he could not stomach the idea of Mahmud's success and he remained jealous of Mahmud's wealth and reputation. The ignoble governor was unable to rid his poisoned mind of the thought of murdering this courageous and admirable man. For him, his own pride and unworthy fixation on his own career prospects blinded him to all other concerns. Despite being consumed inwardly with such thoughts, the governor hid his real intentions so that, whenever the two should meet to transact joint business, he gave the outward appearance of friendship and always treated Captain Mahmud with all manner of honours and courtesy. In private however, the hypocritical governor did his utmost to engineer Mahmud’s murder. At this juncture, when Mahmud had already lost enthusiasm for further service with Tunis, he began to receive overtures from Algiers, accompanied by generous gifts, enjoining him to attach himself to their service. Their persistence eventually paid off and Captain Mahmud became inclined to accept their offer and started making his preparations in secret to shift his allegiance, together with his Vice-Admiral and Rear-Admiral, from Tunis to the Algiers Hearth'.

Notes
2 See M. Pedani, *The Ottoman-Venetian Border: 15th–18th Centuries*, Venice: Edizioni Ca'Foscari, 2017, p. 44: 'piracy continued all through the century as the uninterrupted building of coastal watch-towers bears witness'.
3 For the exhortations incorporated in the formal agreements, see the Ottoman text of the 1575 capitulations in Theunissen, *Ottoman-Venetian Diplomatics*, p. 507, line 27: ‘gayri vilayetin harami bağralarına ve kadastro ve gayri gemilerine Venedik kendu adalanna ve limanllanna ve hisarlarla süzgürmeyap duyurmayal’.* The Italian translation in article (‘capitulum’) VII (p. 535) contains similar language: ‘non sia lasciato haver ricapito nelli porti & terre mie alle navi & gallese de corsari alien’. 
4 In Zante, for example, it seems that in 1628 one of Sir Kenelm Digby’s privateering partners, Captain Woodcock, was able to dispose of goods acquired without his superior’s knowledge or approval without the local customs officials being any the wiser. See R. Murphey, ‘Merchants, Nations and Free Agency’, in A. Hamilton, A. de Groot, and M. van den Boogert (eds), Friendship and Rivalry in the East: Studies in Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Levant from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century, Leiden: Brill, 2000, pp. 40–1.


6 For a sense of how different one governor’s regime might be from that of his predecessor in terms of relations and interactions with local power brokers and other high-profile personalities, see Excerpt (d), from the memoir/autobiography of the Jailor-Captain called the Makale.


8 For the founding of the tribunal in 1605, see P. Earle, Corsairs of Malta and Barbary, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1970, p. 108. For the emphatic repetition of particular prohibitions, such as connivance with the captains of non-Maltese origin who sought to circumvent the regulations, an offence that carried a penalty of ten years of penal servitude on the galleys, see Earle’s reference to the ordinances of 1608 and 1682 on p. 117.


10 According to the classic study by Alfred Wood, History of the Levant Company, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935, p. 56, consulage was ‘largely evaded by short or false entries made by the ship’s captains and factors working in collusion’.


12 Paul Masson provides his assessment of the French trade with the Levant judged from two sets of figures, the first from 1633 and the second covering the period 1700–15. In 1633, 70/103 of the vessels belonging to the commercial fleet consisted of smaller vessels (largely barques) with a carrying capacity of 15–40 tons. See P. Masson, Histoire du commerce français dans le Levant au XVIIe Siècle, Paris: Libraire Hachette, 1896, p. 188. By the first decade of the eighteenth century, the fleet had grown, but the proportions remained roughly the same. From a total of 3,450 sailings, 782 (22.7 per cent) were loaded on ‘Great Vessels’ with larger cargo capacity and 2,668 (77.3 per cent) were accounted for by small and medium sized vessels (No. XVIII of the Appendices). Despite the smaller carrying capacity of each individual vessel, the far greater number of sailings undertaken by them meant that they accounted for a volume of cargo between two and a half and five times greater than that of the ‘Great Vessels’.

13 According to Alain Blondy, ‘corsairing was “a lesser form of economic activity” and is to be regarded an integral part of the overall commercial picture. The smaller scale piracy practiced by the islanders of the Cyclades can also be viewed as the last recourse of populations who were living at the margins between bare subsistence and outright deprivation’. See

See the textual excepts provided in section entitled ‘Ottoman narrative sources on the life of the sea’ (pp. 159–168) for an attempt to recover the trace of some of the smaller, non-state actors and the character of their self-directed, otherwise unrecorded, activities.


For the placement of sailors at the margins of respectable society, based on an examination of criminal court proceedings, and thus implying acceptance of the notion that they should be regarded as members of a peripheral community with subaltern status, see E. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, pp. 98–102. The sub-heading of this section of the book is ‘sailors, travelers and other transitory people’.


Earle, *Corsairs of Malta*, pp. 45–6


Earle, *Corsairs of Malta*, pp. 45–6. Algiers equipped the vessels in its fleet with 30–50 guns in the late seventeenth century compared to the level of 24–30 supplied in the earlier part of the century.


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In terms of the regional distribution of those affected, figures covering the period 1659–63 show that among 515 individuals released from captivity in Malta, residents of Anatolia accounted for 14.6 per cent, Istanbul 12.4 per cent, Syria 11.1 per cent, and less than 10 per cent for each of the other tabulated regions. It is perhaps noteworthy though that, collectively, Tunisia (8.5 per cent), Tripoli (7.2 per cent), and Egypt (7.2 per cent), accounted for a significant proportion of the total (118/515 or 22.9 per cent). See Panzac, *La Marine ottomane*, p. 124.

For the Cyclades which, along with the group of ‘twelve islands’ (the Dodecanese) situated closer to the Anatolian mainland, form a separate unit of analysis, see region 2 in schematic list of maritime regions, p. 155.

This is confirmed by the acts of piracy and seizure of civilian Ottoman transport ships related in the *Makale*, associated with the period at the close of the seventeenth century. See
section entitled ‘Ottoman narrative sources on the life of the sea’ (pp. 159–168). According to an earlier account, the Sergüzeşt of Kadi Mustafa dated 1599, the western passage near Cape Arnaoutis was also vulnerable to opportunistic corsair attack.

33  See Masson, Histoire de commerce français, p. 428.
35  While the short account of two pages attributed to Ibrahim al-Dimyati, a native of Damietta in Egypt, can be considered a valuable addition to the corpus of Muslim captivity accounts, it is focused mostly on the conditions of his captivity in Malta and reflects little on conditions of life at sea. See N. Matar, Europe Through Arab Eyes, 1578–1727, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, pp. 241–2. The short duration of his captivity, described at the end of his tale as ‘one month’, suggests his case was in some respects atypical.
39  Makale, p. 128.
40  Makale, p. 128. The adoption of self-deprecatory references to themselves as ‘üstü baş muleves kişis’ does little to disguise their contempt for the frippery and foppishness of the official classes.
41  Sergüzeşt, p. 79.
43  Although the year 1084 hijri (April 1673–April 1674) is noted in the text as the year the ship’s crew first set sail from Alexandria, the course of their adventures unfolds over the following three to four years, covering the period up to about 1678.
44  It can be verified that the surviving manuscript was copied in 1158 A. H. (February 1745–January 1746), and was inscribed at the behest of a socially elite person, Köprülüzade Hafız Ahmed Paşa. At the time of copying, he was present in Crete as garrison commander of the fortress of Kandiye in the months between September 1744 and September 1746. See S. Bey, Sicill-i Osmani, Vol. 1, p. 262.
45  Bey, Sicill-i Osmani, p. 262.
46 The dates for his capture (28 Ramazan 1005, yeım al arabâ/Thursday 15 May 1597) and his arrival in Malta (evvâhi-i Şevval or 21–9 Şevval 1005/7–15 June 1597), together with his mention of the elapsing of 26 days spent in transit, fix the precise date of Kadi Mustafa’s arrival in Malta as 24 Şevval 1005/10 June 597. See Serküzest, p. 73.

47 The relatively short time between live reports being received from new captives arriving in Malta, and the events that were transpiring in the capital Istanbul, is indicated by the reference in Kadi Mustafa’s text (Serküzest, p. 106) to his learning, by word of mouth, of the promotion to the grand vizierate (on 9 April 1598) of Cerrah Mehmed Paşa, and death (on 1 April 1598) of the Chief of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy, the Şeyhülislam Bostanzade Mehmed Efendi, at the end of his second term in office.

48 In the following summary account, references to time of year (season) and time of day (prayer intervals) are given in italics. In reference to the crewing requirements and the monetary value of a typical satia we have data from several contemporary sources. On the crew complement of a typical satia, data supplied in Digby’s sea journal suggests that the crewing of these two-masted, brigantine-rigged sailing vessels required a minimum of 22 men. See Digby, Journal of a Voyage, p. 31. The Jailer–Captain’s text (Makale, p. 133) suggests the indemnity price for a satia was 20 purses (10,000 piastres). This figure is confirmed in the eighteenth century where it is recorded that two business partners paid 9,600 piastres for a şehitiye. See E. Eldem, ‘Strangers in Their Own Seas? The Ottomans in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century’, Studi Settecenteschi 29–30, 2009–10, p. 35.

49 For the identification of the days of the black sea genie in folk consciousness with the period at the beginning of the 40 coldest days of winter (arbâni) lasting from the winter solstice (21 December) to the end of January, see H. Kahane, R. Kahane, and A. Tietze, The Lingua Franca in the Levant: Turkish Nautical Terms of Italian and Greek Origin, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958, pp. 521–3. According to the folk calendar that guided mariners, the high winds (furtuna) associated with each part of the 40-day period of winter had their own separate names. According to this calendar, the ‘winds of Karakoncolos’ corresponded to 13–14 January O.S. (23–4 January in the Gregorian Calendar) which would place them at the close of the 40 coldest days of winter. See B. Karaöz, ‘Zemheri Fırtınası’nın Başlangıcı’, 8 January 2018,https://tarihnedio.com. For an idea of place-specific variation in folk practice and belief in different regions (e.g. Black Sea, Aegean, southern Mediterranean, etc.) see also P. N. Boratov, ‘Les Maîtres de l’espace sauvage’, in H. Balfet, P. N. Boratov, and C. Bromberger (eds), Pratiques et représentations de l’espace dans les communautés méditerranéennes, Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1976, pp. 89–100.

50 Using the 24-hour clock, and assuming that the sun set in those latitudes around 17:00 and nightfall occurred around 20:00 at that season, the fourth hour after nightfall would correspond to 24:00.

51 The time when the sun reaches its zenith is the time for the midday prayer. The whole of the period preceding that, between sunrise (sabâh) and noon (öğle), are loosely referred to as ‘küşlük’, but it generally refers to the later part of the forenoon when the sun is high on the horizon.

52 It was essential to his success as a corsair captain that the Jailer–Captain should gain the full cooperation of experienced hands, especially skilled officers, as his future comrades. On this, see also Excerpt (c) below.

53 The cash value of the spoils to be distributed among the 70 mutineers including crewmen and officers is identified (Makale, p. 128) as 59,500 piastres, meaning that the share per head was 850 piastres.

54 See above, the passages quoted on pp. 160–1.

55 The Jailer–Captain’s conversion to Islam and his adoption of the name ‘Mahmud’ are noted in the text (Makale, p. 140) with little comment, and by a passing reference to feasting held to commemorate his circumcision ceremony (Makale, p. 144). On the whole, the text avoids long digressions on religious themes or religious identity as a source of group solidarity and loyalty among shipmates. Emphasis on the need for unity and the adoption of an attitude of
Ottoman Mediterranean seafaring

’all for one and one for all’ to ensure their joint success in corsairing is more prominent than expressions of religious fervour which might serve to emphasize division. The text adopts a non-judgemental attitude toward religious identity. While in most cases the adversary crews can be identified as Latins and Catholic, non-Muslims (usually Orthodox Greeks) made up at least part of the crew of most Ottoman vessels in the Mediterranean. Strident religious tones or crusading rhetoric are rarely evoked in the Makale. The first reference to Mahmud’s conversion comes fairly near the end (on page 28 of the 36-page text), for instance.

It is noteworthy that in the case of both appointments, what the Captain valued most was not status, private conscience, or religious affiliation, but experience and competence in navigation.

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Rhoads Murphey


