

Molly Greene: The Ottoman Maritime World in the Seventeenth Century: A Local Perspective

The ordinary routines of Ottoman maritime commerce in the eastern Mediterranean have left few traces in the historical record. This paper draws on the rich records of the prize court in Malta known as the *Tribunale degli Armamenti* to illuminate this little-known world. Ottoman Christian petitioners at the *Tribunale*, seeking compensation for goods that had been taken from them during the course of an attack by the Maltese corsairs, produced voluminous documentation that describes the habits and conventions of Ottoman sailors, merchants and sea-captains, both Muslim and Christian. Using this information provided in the lawsuits, I will argue for the importance of the two Egyptian port cities of Rosetta (Reshid) and Damietta (Dimyat) in the 17th and 18th centuries as "Ottoman Alexandrias." What I mean by that is that these two cities functioned as poles of attraction for Christian and Muslim merchants drawn from a wide swath of territory - the Aegean islands, the Anatolian littoral, Thessaloniki and Istanbul - much like Alexandria drew in merchants from the entire Mediterranean world in the nineteenth century. Unlike Alexandria, we know almost nothing about these earlier port cities, which were entirely Ottoman creations. My paper is a first step towards an appreciation of the importance, and endurance, of this commercial configuration.