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The Problem of Piracy in Commercial Relations between the Ottoman State and the Kingdom of Two Sicilies (Sicilyateyn) between 1740 and 1804

REYHAN YİRŞEN*

Abstract

One of the most striking challenges in the Mediterranean encountered by the states which gained trading rights with the Ottoman State seems to have been the assaults of pirates. The frequent attacks against trading vessels, especially by such pirate groups as *Garp Ocakları* and the pirates of Ülgün, can be traced when documents related to Ottoman maritime activities are examined. This problem of piracy is also evident in commercial relations between the Ottoman State and the Kingdom of Two Sicilies. In this context, some *büküms* [imperial decrees] for protecting Sicilian traders against the pirate assaults were included in the trading agreement between two states in 1740. Moreover, the Kingdom of Two Sicilies took a proactive approach to protect the lives and secure the property of its traders by signing a separate agreement in 1741 with *Trablusgarp Ocağı*. This study aims at revealing the situation of commercial relations under the threat of piracy in the Mediterranean between the parties referred to in light of Ottoman archival documents.

Keywords: Mediterranean, Kingdom of Two Sicilies, *Sicilyateyn*, piracy, Ottoman maritime

Öz

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile ticaret yapmaya hak kazanmış olan devletlerin Akdeniz’de yaşadıkları en önemli sorunlarından birinin korsan saldırıları olduğu görünür. Osmanlı denizciliğine dair kaynaklar incelendiğinde Garp Ocakları ve Ülgün korsanlarının ticari gemilere sıklıkla saldırdıkları izlenmektedir. Söz konusu korsanlık sorunu, Osmanlı Devleti-Sicilyateyn Krallığı arasındaki ticari ilişkilerde de belirgindir. Bu bağlamda iki ülke arasında imzalanan 1740 tarihli ticaret antlaşmasına korsan saldırıları karşısında Sicilyateyn tüccarlarının korunması ve zararlarının tazmin edilmesine dair hükümler konulmuştur. Ayrıca Sicilyateyn Krallığı Trablusgarp Ocağı ile 1741 yılında ayrı bir antlaşma imzalayarak uluslararası sularda tüccarlarının mal ve can güvenliğini korumak için önleyici bir hamlede bulunmuştur. Bu çalışma, Akdeniz’de Osmanlı Devleti ile Sicilyateyn Krallığı arasında korsanlık tehdidi altındaki ticari ilişkilerin durumunu Osmanlı arşiv belgeleri ışığında değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akdeniz, İki Sicilya Krallığı, *Sicilyateyn*, korsanlık, Osmanlı denizciliği

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This study, based on the Master’s thesis titled “6 Numaralı *Sicilyateyn (Düvel-i Ecnebiye) Defteri*’nin Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirilmesi”, has been further developed from the paper orally presented at the 11th International Symposium for Turkish History of Sea Trade on 29-30 April 2019, and is unpublished.

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Introduction

This article basically examines the problems in the relations between the Ottoman State and the Kingdom of Two Sicilies¹ that emerged between the years of 1740 and 1804 upon the assaults of pirates or corsairs under Ottoman patronage against Sicilian trading vessels in the Mediterranean. The phenomenon of piracy in the Mediterranean has been much addressed in many modern studies using various approaches. Some of these studies have drawn a framework for the piracy in the Mediterranean related with its formation, organization and political and economic parameters, especially from the 16th century on when it became a decisive factor in the Mediterranean.² This literature has become diversified with other studies and much narrowed in specific content in terms of geographical regions and pirate groups.³ These researches has mainly discussed the effects on the political and commercial developments in the Mediterranean of pirate groups, which constitutes the basic problem of this study and generally cited as Barbary states. Apart from these researches, especially within the framework of situations such as captivity and slavery led by piracy, the studies that draw intriguing socio-cultural conclusions through such texts as memoirs and similar historical narratives also deserve to be underlined here. In this regard, for instance, the experiences of the women sometimes as participants and sometimes as victims of such situations as captivity and slavery have been evaluated by Tucker with an approach conceptualized as “gendered violence.” Likewise, the studies by Matar and Bracewell evaluate the socio-cultural effects of piracy on some social groups by utilizing the same historical texts as Tucker does.⁴

When it comes to the relations between the Ottoman State and Sicilyateyn as an independent monarchy, a comprehensive monograph is not available. However, it should be noted that there are some studies assessing their bilateral relations from specific aspects. These studies mostly focus on the commercial and diplomatic relations between the two parties.⁵ The studies of Bottari and Demiryürek are particularly important in that they deal with the founding texts of the commercial relations between the two states within the framework of official records.

In this article, I will attempt to evaluate the problems that emerged between the two parties around piracy in the Mediterranean based on Ottoman archival documents. In this context, three *Sicilya Defteri* have been investigated, all registered at the Department of Ottoman Archives of Turkish Presidency State Archives of the Republic of Turkey (Başkanlık Osmanlı Arşivi [BOA]) in Istanbul. Out of these *defter*s [registers], 96.1 *Sicilya Abdname Defteri* totals 149 varaqs [pages] and bears 277 *büküms*, 97.2 *Sicilya Defteri* totals 270 varaqs with 475 *büküms*, and 6 *Numaralı Sicilyateyn Düvel-i Ecnebiye Defteri* comprises 226 varaqs and 1220 *büküms*. The contents of these registers have been examined in terms of pirate activities. In this context among these *defter*s only 6 *Numaralı Sicilyateyn Düvel-i Ecnebiye Defteri* contains a great number of *büküms* related with piracy. 97.2 *Sicilya Defteri* contains only one such record, and any *büküm* of this kind is not available in 96.1 *Sicilya Abdname Defteri* at all.

¹ The phrase Kingdom of Two Sicilies is referred to in Ottoman archival documents as *Sicilyateyn*, which means “Two Sicilies” with the suffix *-eyn* making a singular noun plural in Ottoman Turkish. Therefore, I will use the term *Sicilyateyn* instead of Kingdom of Two Sicilies throughout.

² Özdemir 2004; Malcolm 2015; Gürkan 2020.

³ Hess 1978; Panzac 2005; Bostan 2009a; Gürkan 2010; Jamieson 2012.

⁴ Tucker 2014; Matar 2007; Bracewell 2001.

⁵ Turan 1967; Bottari 2014; Demiryürek 2014; Doğan 2016; Pirolo 2019.

The main purpose of this study is to assess the parameters of commercial relations between the Ottoman State and *Sicilyateyn* under the pressure of piracy in the Mediterranean by seeking answers to such research questions. Where and when were the trading vessels assaulted? Was the ship crew captured? What kinds of goods were transported by the vessels when they were assaulted by the pirates? What kinds of precautions were taken by the governments against piracy? Were they successful in preventing the piracy? If not, why? How did piracy influence the volume of bilateral trade?

The article is composed of five main sections. The first section will draw a general outline related with the phenomenon of piracy in the Mediterranean with which the Ottoman State began to be engaged in the 16th century. The second section focuses on the historical story of the Ottoman State and *Sicilyateyn* relations by bringing forward the earliest contacts for commerce between the two parties. The third section covers the status of *Sicilyateyn* merchants in Ottoman commercial law, especially under the conditions of the treaty in 1740, which is the first agreement between the parties in question. In the fourth section, the data recorded in the *defters* referred to above is given. The last section deals with the attitude of the Ottoman administration against piracy activities in the context of the cases and *büküms* in the *defters*.

This article, basically based on *6 Numaralı Sicilyateyn Düvel-i Ecnebiye Defteri* which has not been studied yet, is expected to make significant contributions both to the research of maritime history in the Mediterranean in general and of Ottoman-*Sicilyateyn* relations specifically.

The Phenomenon of Piracy in Ottoman Period

Piracy was surely not a newly emerging phenomenon in Ottoman times. The activities of piracy were frequently observed in the Mediterranean from antiquity onwards.⁶ While these activities were formerly encouraged by many states or kingdoms such as the Athenians and Hellenistic kings for efficient instrument against the enemy powers,⁷ the Roman Empire identified the situation as the threat to maritime travel and accordingly sought to hinder it as much as possible.⁸ Having reappeared with the rise of Arab Muslims in the Mediterranean basin, piracy then gradually turned into a functional instrument utilized by sovereign powers against each other, especially the Islamic and Christian territorial states from the 16th century on.⁹ As suggested by Braudel, piracy emerged as a secondary form of war among the great states in the Mediterranean.¹⁰ It seems possible to offer that this pragmatic approach towards the piracy was also continued to a great extent in the following periods.¹¹

The successive military achievements, involving the conquests of Algeria and Tunisia and the absolute success at the Battle of Preveza respectively in 1516, 1534 and 1538, set the stage for Ottoman State to become a dominant power in the Mediterranean. This situation was reinforced throughout the western Mediterranean with the conquest of Tripolitania in 1551.¹² The advantages resulting from the seizure of Algeria especially reinforced Ottoman interests in the Mediterranean and thus contributed to political leverage for the Ottomans, even at the regions

⁶ Braudel 1973, 2:866-69.

⁷ Arslan and Tüner Önen 2011, 190-91; Sestier 2017.

⁸ Özdemir 2004, 78-79; Sestier 2017, 205.

⁹ Rebitsch 2019, 168-70; Glete 2001, 2-3; Meray 1963, 113; Özdemir 2004, 81.

¹⁰ Braudel 1973, 2:865.

¹¹ White 2017.

¹² Panzac 2005, 9-12; Murphey 1999, 191-92.

far from the center. Having emerged as the active elements of piracy in the Mediterranean from the 16th century onwards and generally referred to as *Garp Ocakları* (or Barbary States by the Europeans), these three provinces, namely Algeria, Tunisia and Tripolitania, regularly made trouble for the vessels of foreign states in the Mediterranean.¹³ The relations between the Ottoman administration and these corsair groups gradually developed on a ground that proved mutually beneficial for the related parties.¹⁴ Apart from *Garp Ocakları*, the pirates of Ülgün in the region of Albania seems to have been another player in the activities of piracy in the Mediterranean.¹⁵ All these provinces, which harbored great number of pirates, influenced the commercial operations of the traders of England, France and Venice in the Mediterranean during the 16th and 17th centuries.¹⁶

Garp Ocakları and the pirates of Ülgün maintained their presence in the Mediterranean as quasi-independent entities nearly for three centuries.¹⁷ Though it seems that they were officially administered by a *beylerbeyi*,¹⁸ who was directly appointed by the Ottoman central government, the pirates were organized under the de facto administration of an authority called a *dayı* who was determined from among them.¹⁹ These pirate groups, especially those deployed in North Africa, became a major international problem. Especially between the 16th-19th centuries their assaults for booty and captive on trading vessels in the Mediterranean proliferated remarkably. This is why the Ottoman administration had to accept the articles related with piracy on the *abdnames*,²⁰ which were signed with such foreign states as Austria, France, England and Sardinia trading in Ottoman waters.²¹ However, the states such as France, England, Venice, Tuscany and Sardinia, all of which traded in the Mediterranean, needed to make agreements with *Garp Ocakları* apart from those signed with Ottoman State since the latter could not impose its political authority over the pirate groups under the current conditions.²² The remoteness between the center, that is, the Sublime Porte, and the North African provinces where the Barbary corsairs were mostly situated, might be a decisive parameter in this situation.²³ In addition, the multilateral nature of power composition controlling the affairs on the Barbary coast, namely *beylerbeyi*, *dayı* and some corsair syndicates, must have made the situation built by the treaties even more difficult to manage.²⁴ As noted by McLachlan, besides the factors referred to, the fairly strong religious as well as economic motivation among the corsair groups to commit piracy in the Mediterranean – a remarkably busy sea in the Early Modern Age – both destabilized the political climate of the region and reduced the predictability of the treaties in this sense.²⁵

¹³ Bostan 2009b, 231; Çetin 1996, 383; Acıpinar 2016, 210.

¹⁴ Gürkan 2010, 133-47.

¹⁵ Öztürk 2018, 4; Malcolm 2015, 149-50.

¹⁶ Bostan 2009b, 231.

¹⁷ Bono 1993, 40-41; Panzac 2005, 1; Öktem and Kurtarcan 2011, 26.

¹⁸ The governor of any province in the Ottoman administrative organization.

¹⁹ Kuzucu 2015, 171.

²⁰ van den Boogert 2005, 24-30. This is agreement text signed between two parties on any field. The agreements signed by the Ottoman administration are collected in the *abdname defteri*, which is the registers of imperial treaties.

²¹ Bulut 2002, 200-6; Arı 2007, 292; Öktem and Kurtarcan 2011, 27; Bostan 2017, 19; Kurtaran 2016.

²² Yirşen 2018, 585-89; Bostan 1994; Colás 2016, 851; Acıpinar 2019, 211; Oral 2021, 180-81.

²³ Gürkan 2010, 126-28, 156-57.

²⁴ Colás 2016, 848, 851.

²⁵ McLachlan 1978, 286.

The Ottoman State-*Sicilyateyn* Relations

One of the political entities with which the Ottoman administration contacted regarding piracy activities in the Mediterranean was the *Sicilyateyn*. As suggested by Mendola, too little is known of this kingdom.²⁶ The situation mostly results from the fact that political integrity was not exactly accomplished in the Italian peninsula till the second half of 19th century. Especially the presence and rivalry of such relatively efficient political entities as Venice, Genoa and Tuscany in the peninsula and the complicated network of relations among the Spanish and Austrian dynasties makes the political appearance of the peninsula difficult to observe.²⁷ Still, it is possible to suggest that modern historians have reached a consensus about the period when the kingdom emerged. Accordingly, the *Sicilyateyn* was founded in 1734 through the merging of Sicily and Naples with the latter as its capital (figs. 1 and 2).²⁸

Just after it emerged as an independent monarchy, a series of political initiatives was launched to enhance the economic potential of the kingdom. In this context as a first step, an administrative body, the *Supremo Magistrato del Commercio* (Chief Magistrate of Trade), was established in October of 1739 with broad judicial powers.²⁹ This aimed at making the institutional organization of the kingdom suitable for trade. This political move was then followed by some treaties and exemptions for commerce which were made with states ranging from those in the Mediterranean basin to other states in various regions.³⁰ In this regard, apart from those with the Ottoman State and Barbary states, which will be discussed below in detail, commercial agreements were signed with the Kingdom of Sweden, the Kingdom of Denmark, Holland and the Russian Empire.³¹ Likewise, as the integrated part of this policy, the kingdom undertook some steps to reorganize and strengthen its merchant navy to ensure sustainable and safe trading within the maritime process.³² Within this framework, especially the challenging threat of piracy in the Mediterranean, seems to have been a strong parameter for the kingdom to pursue a policy of prioritizing safety.

The kingdom built commercial relationships in the Mediterranean with the Ottoman State. The earliest contacts between the Ottoman State and the *Sicilyateyn* date to the 18th century.³³ Bilateral commercial relations must have been embraced at such a high level that Carlos III, who reigned over the kingdom between 1738 and 1759, commissioned an ambassador named Finocchietti in 1740 to Istanbul to supervise commercial and diplomatic procedures on behalf of the kingdom.³⁴ Another mission expected from him was to put pressure on the Ottoman administration to persuade the Barbary corsairs to provide a peaceful commercial setting in the Mediterranean.³⁵

These first contacts between the Ottoman State and the *Sicilyateyn* seem to have evolved into much more developed relations in a short period. In this context, they signed on 7 April

²⁶ Mendola 2020, 12, 100.

²⁷ Smith 1988, 1-12.

²⁸ D'amora 2003, 718; Imbruglia 2007, 72; Demiryürek 2014, 56; Pirolo 2019, 177.

²⁹ Bottari 2014, 149.

³⁰ Pirolo and Sirago 2017, 49-50, 55-57.

³¹ Pirolo and Sirago 2017, 49.

³² Sirago 2019, 135-37.

³³ Sevinç 2013, 412; Pirolo 2019, 177-78.

³⁴ Turan 1967, 82.

³⁵ D'amora 2003, 719.

1740 a treaty of trade and amity consisting of 21 articles with the mediation of *Humbaracı Ahmet Paşa*.³⁶ The text of the agreement contained the articles regulating the precautions to be taken against the piracy and the liabilities of the parties on the issue.³⁷ The warm approach of Carlos III, the king of the *Sicilyateyn*, towards the Ottoman government in this period is thought of as a political initiative for developing bilateral commercial relations, preventing pirate assaults in the Mediterranean, and improving interstate cooperation.³⁸ Besides, another treaty of 17 articles was signed in 1741 between the *Sicilyateyn* and *Garb Ocakları* as an entity under the control of the Ottoman administration. The treaty – which covered many issues such as social, political and juridical – was signed on 3 June 1741 at the end of the negotiations between *Karamanlı Ahmet Paşa*, the *bey* [governor] of Tripolitania, on behalf of *Garb Ocakları* and Cacentovoski, the envoy of the *Sicilyateyn*, Carlos III.³⁹ However, the agreement was violated in 1745 upon a complaint by a *zimmi*⁴⁰ who alleged to have been robbed by the *Sicilyateyn* pirates. This incident then prompted *Garb Ocakları* to organize counterassaults against *Sicilyateyn* vessels in such a way that it might have been taken as solid evidence in violation of the agreement conditions.

The Status of *Sicilyateyn* Merchants in the Ottoman State according to the 1740 Treaty

The treaty in 1740, referred to above, seems to have been the turning point in Ottoman-*Sicilyateyn* relations. That 13 out of its 21 articles involved regulating commercial relations and the status of merchants is significant in revealing the nature of bilateral relations between the parties. A range of privileges was granted to the merchants of the parties within the scope of these 13 articles directly related with commercial procedures. Accordingly, the very first article of the treaty highlights that the same rights and privileges would be also guaranteed citizens of the *Sicilyateyn* as those accorded other European citizens by the Ottoman administration on land and maritime trade.⁴¹ The second article seems to have regulated the ratio of customs duty, that is 3%, which was to be paid by the merchants of the *Sicilyateyn* at Ottoman harbors and customs posts.⁴² The procedures regarding the 3% ratio must have been handled by the Ottoman government so cautiously that the firmans sent to the custom officers insistently reminded them to be precise at this point.⁴³ Nevertheless, official documents note that some complaints were made about several custom officers who demanded double taxation or disregarded the basic rules and principles established by the central government.⁴⁴ The third article entitled the *Sicilyateyn* to open consulates that could represent their citizens who dwelt and

³⁶ Kurtaran 2017, 221.

³⁷ Demiryürek 2014, 57-60.

³⁸ Doğan 2016, 65.

³⁹ Sevinç 2013, 415; Pirolo 2017, 127-28; Özler 2017, 25-26.

⁴⁰ A *zimmi* is a member of any non-Muslim community under Ottoman rule.

⁴¹ BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 96.1, 3; Özler 2017, 35; *Muâbedât Mecmûası* 2008, 2:58. *Muâbedât Mecmûası* is the entire corpus of interstate treaties signed by the Ottoman administration. It was published in 1877 by the Ottoman State. This corpus has been published in facsimile in 5 volumes by *Türk Tarih Kurumu* for researchers. This facsimile edition has been useful throughout the study.

⁴² BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 96.1, 4; Özler 2017, 36; *Muâbedât Mecmûası* 2008, 2:58.

⁴³ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 11.3.

⁴⁴ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d., 06, 13.4, 15.3, 118.4.

traded in Ottoman lands.⁴⁵ In this context, the contents of the official documents reveal that some consulates of the *Sicilyateyn* were opened at such Ottoman coastal regions as Izmir, Paleo Patras (Balyabadra), Thessaloniki, Arta, Chios, Mycenae, Durres, Cyprus and Aleppo.⁴⁶ The fourth article preserves the legal rights of any person or *reaya* [Ottoman subject] in case of his death while trading in Ottoman lands. Accordingly, the article guaranteed the delivery of his private belongings to his legal representatives or consuls.⁴⁷ However, this situation could sometimes constitute the issue of various complaints. This is why some firmans on official documents were issued to solve the problem regarding allegations that the property of a deceased person was seized by some people from these Ottoman subjects.⁴⁸ The fifth article details the legal procedures to be followed in case of disputes exceeding 4,000 *akçe*, which concern the merchants of the *Sicilyateyn* or their translators and another person.⁴⁹ For instance, a case related to the problem of debits and credits between persons at an event in Ioannina should be tried at Istanbul since it exceeded the maximum amount, 4,000 *akçe*.⁵⁰

The treaty's seventh article appears to have brought a series of rights and privileges to Ottoman merchants. It provided notification that the official appointed as consul to Messina by the Ottoman administration would be in charge of providing safety for the Ottoman merchants there and of supervising whether the same rights and privileges of *Sicilyateyn* citizens were applied to Ottoman citizens. The 11th article ensures that trading vessels of the Ottoman State and the *Sicilyateyn* were supposed to salute each other as a display of their amity by raising flags to the mast in case of an encounter at sea. Besides, the article, in case of an encounter with any trading vessel, gave authority to the warships of both parties to check the documents of trading vessels by two officials from their crew.⁵¹ The 13th article guaranteed that the goods of the people of the *Sicilyateyn* or their merchants trading under their flag would not be seized or assaulted.⁵² However, some violations by Ottoman citizens during the following process can be observed in official documents. In this regard, a letter was sent to Istanbul by an envoy of the *Sicilyateyn* on this issue. The letter reported that several merchants of the *Sicilyateyn* were robbed by a group of 40-person bandits at a zone between *Cuma Pazari* [Haravgil] and Kastoria while they were shipping various items to their partners in Istanbul: 13 rolls of *diba*,⁵³ 33 rolls of *telli batayi*,⁵⁴ seven rolls of black *kotuz*,⁵⁵ two rolls of red *saye çuka*,⁵⁶ and one roll of white *saye çuka*. The bandits also seized 16,300 *guruş* from them. Additionally, they killed one person and severely injured three others. It was also stated in the letter that the bandits were in collaboration with the security staff at the police stations who, supposedly in charge of guarding the local people, were acting indifferently to banditry activities. A firman was issued regarding these developments to the Governor of *Rumeli*. He

⁴⁵ BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 96.1, 4; Özler 2017, 36; *Muâbedât Mecmûası* 2008, 2:58.

⁴⁶ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 5.1, 6.3, 7.3.

⁴⁷ BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 96.1, 4; Özler 2017, 36; *Muâbedât Mecmûası* 2008, 2:58.

⁴⁸ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 52.1.

⁴⁹ BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 96.1, 5; Özler 2017, 36-37; *Muâbedât Mecmûası* 2008, 2:59.

⁵⁰ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 15.1.

⁵¹ BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 96.1, 6; Özler 2017, 38; *Muâbedât Mecmûası* 2008, 2:60.

⁵² BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 96.1, 6; Özler 2017, 38; *Muâbedât Mecmûası* 2008, 2:61.

⁵³ This is a kind of embroidered and colored silk fabric.

⁵⁴ This is a kind of georgette used in the Ottoman period.

⁵⁵ This is a kind of fabric made from horsehair.

⁵⁶ This is a napless, thin and plain fabric woven from wool.

ordered that the suspects be caught, and the stolen goods be returned to the actual owners. The aforesaid police station should be controlled by those from the local people.⁵⁷ The same article strongly underlines the fact that piracy should not be conducted across their waters. The Ottoman government, based on this article, issued a guarantee not to assault vessels and merchants trading with the flag of the *Sicilyateyn*, and to return all the properties seized by the pirates in case of any assault.⁵⁸ However, the treaty remained in force for only four years, and the earliest complaints related to piracy were recorded in 1744.⁵⁹ The 15th article entitled the merchants of the *Sicilyateyn* to cooperate with their preferred brokers regardless of ethnic identity and religion and guaranteed not to interfere in their commercial operations at all.⁶⁰ 17th article from the Ottoman government permitted the pirates of Ülgün in Albania to trade freely with the people of the *Sicilyateyn* on condition that they aided the vessels of the *Sicilyateyn* by regarding them as vessels of a friendly nation. Not only that, any kind of loss by the pirates who broke the rules would be compensated.⁶¹ Indeed, some cases indicating violations can be observed on the *defter* examined within the scope of this study. In this context, the *büküm* enacted by the Ottoman government addressing the governor of *Rumeli* and the *kadı* of Ülgün upon the complaint of 32 merchants robbed by a pirate named İbrahim of Ülgün while they were on a *Sicilyateyn* vessel ordered that all the goods and cash be returned to the actual holders.⁶² In the 19th article, the merchants of the *Sicilyateyn* were required to pay a consulate tax at Ottoman harbors for their consuls and ambassadors.⁶³ The people of the *Sicilyateyn*, according to the 20th article, were guaranteed treatment in matters of trade similar to any other European states with which Ottoman government was in friendly relations. The 21st article stated that vessels could not be prevented from departing the port for a supposed reason. In the case of such an attempt, an immediate intervention would be performed by the related consul.⁶⁴

The treaty includes articles not only on commercial matters, but also those related with preserving the security and interests of states, as the parties of the agreement, and their citizens. In this regard, Ottoman officials could not restrict, without cause, the freedom of the citizens of the *Sicilyateyn*. Another point was that required aid was to be provided by the related experts for the vessels of both parties after having been put in quarantine. Also, the vessels of the parties would not be forced to carry either troops or arsenal. Any vessel of Ottoman, which intended to approach a port of the *Sicilyateyn*, would first enter the *lazaretto* and then be received at the port, if suitable. The vessels of a third party, which the Ottoman and *Sicilyateyn* governments designated as an enemy, would not be allowed to be equipped with arms at each other's ports. Both Ottoman and *Sicilyateyn* vessels would be protected from those entering a port and carrying an enemy flag, according to the parties in question.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, h. 44.2.

⁵⁸ BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 96.1, 6-7; Özler 2017, 38; *Muâbedât Mecmûası* 2008, 2:61.

⁵⁹ Yirşen 2018, 20.

⁶⁰ BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 96.1, 7; Özler 2017, 39; *Muâbedât Mecmûası* 2008, 2:62.

⁶¹ BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 96.1, 7; Özler 2017, 39; *Muâbedât Mecmûası* 2008, 2:62.

⁶² BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 79.3.

⁶³ BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 96.1, 9.

⁶⁴ BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 96.1, 9.

⁶⁵ Yirşen 2018, 20-21.

The Problem of Piracy between Ottoman State and *Sicilyateyn*

The *6 Sicilyateyn Düvel-i Ecnebiye Defteri*, which comprises the main source of this article, is important because it contains relatively more *büküms* on piracy among the *Sicilyateyn defter*s. It bears many records and *büküms* of pirate activities in the Mediterranean between the years 1745 and 1804. The contents of these records range from taking hostages, captivity, extortion of goods and money on board, and the seizure of trading vessels to killing and injuring the crew by the pirates. These record the places where the pirate assaults occurred, the names of the pirates, the list of the transported goods, and other similar details. Another point about these records worth noting is that we can trace the effort by the Ottoman State to keep the checks and balances mechanism on the Barbary corsairs and its attitude towards returning the captives and the goods to their homeland or owner. The records in this *defter* leave no doubt that the treaty, which aimed at a commercial relationship without piracy between the Ottoman State and the *Sicilyateyn*, remained in action nearly for four years without any overt violation.

Though any precise date is unavailable, a total of 18 pirate activities were recorded between the earliest assault that can be dated between 25 January and 5 February 1745 and the last one between 27 September and 6 October 1804.⁶⁶ The Ottoman government, among those directly related to this kind of activities, sent 16 more *büküms* to the related officials for the pursuing and resolution of the cases.⁶⁷ The enacted *büküms* mostly addressed the *kapudan paşa* [imperial admiral] of the time,⁶⁸ the *paşa* and *dayı* of Tunisia and Tripolitania,⁶⁹ the *kadis* of Alexandria and Ülgün,⁷⁰ the *beylerbeyis* of Algeria, Tripoli and Tunisia,⁷¹ the governor of Rumeli,⁷² the *kadi* of Durres,⁷³ the *vizier* of Morea⁷⁴ and the *naiıps* [deputy fortress commanders] and the *dizdars* [fortress commanders] of the fortresses on the Bosphorus that are *Anadolu Hisarı* and *Rumeli Hisarı*.⁷⁵ The people involved in such activities were generally referred as pirates, but sometimes as *izbandid*.⁷⁶

The earliest complaint about piracy activity in the Mediterranean waters seems to have been made by an Ottoman *zimmi*. A certain Nikola complained that he was assaulted by a buccaneer named Anderya, who pirated across the Mediterranean under the flag of the *Sicilyateyn*, and all his goods were seized by him. The succeeding process of prosecuting Anderya revealed that he was Spanish in origin but was then denationalized by the Spanish government because he often got involved in piracy, so he fled to the Mediterranean. However, the *zimmi* Nikola insisted on suing the *Sicilyateyn* for the harm caused by Anderya. Thus, the envoy of the *Sicilyateyn* applied to the Ottoman State to conduct an extensive investigation on the issue. The Ottoman government nominated six officials to investigate including *kapudan* [captain]

⁶⁶ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 23.6, 34.6, 37.3, 52.4, 55.3, 58.3, 67.5, 70.1, 79.3, 88.1, 89.2, 90.3, 91.1, 91.2, 92.1, 97.1, 108.8; BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 97.2, 16.58.

⁶⁷ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 34.7, 41.1, 53.1, 54.2, 59.1, 62.5, 66.3, 68.1, 80.2, 88.3, 90.1, 92.4, 94.3, 95.1, 95.3, 99.3.

⁶⁸ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 88.3, 89.2.

⁶⁹ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 75.1, 77.3, 85.2.

⁷⁰ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 52.4, 70.1, 79.3.

⁷¹ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 54.2, 73.1, 74.3, 75.1, 97.1.

⁷² BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 77.1, 79.3.

⁷³ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 53.1, 91.2.

⁷⁴ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 34.7, 37.3, 59.1, 67.5, 92.1.

⁷⁵ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 75.1, 96.3.

⁷⁶ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 34.7.

Kuchuk Hasan who was then on duty in the Mediterranean, *kapudan Emeksiz* Mehmet, the commander-in-chief of frigates in the Mediterranean, and *kapudan* Derviş of Thessaloniki. It was detected through these investigations that the buccaneer named Anderya was still engaged in piracy with the flag of Istanbul.⁷⁷

The exact names of the places where acts of piracy took place were usually mentioned, but sometimes only Mediterranean is given. Such scenes as the waters before the castles of Moton⁷⁸ and Koron⁷⁹ at Morea, the vicinity of Patras,⁸⁰ a district of Morea, the port of Mesalonge⁸¹ at the town of Angelokastro, the port of the island of Kea,⁸² Manyá,⁸³ the port of Barletta in the *Sicilyateyn*,⁸⁴ Crete,⁸⁵ the port of the town Uluz in Albania,⁸⁶ and the port of Durres⁸⁷ come into prominence on the official documents as places where acts of piracy frequently occurred (fig. 3).

Another aspect of the pirate assaults recorded on the official documents is the loss of life and property. These were considered to cause serious damage to commercial activities. The numeric data in the *defter* about violations concerning loss of life in pirate activities has been precisely recorded from the earliest assault to the last one. Accordingly, reports indicate that three people were killed at different events.⁸⁸ While some *büküms* provide a clear figure about the injured, others only point to the presence of the injured without referring to any number. However, in some cases the number of injured was provided in conjectural terms such as least or most.⁸⁹ Likewise, a great number of ship crews were taken captive in the pirate attacks. In this regard, a pirate named Hacı Usta oğlu Hüseyin held 16 members of crew captive after being employed by a merchant of the *Sicilyateyn*. Another pirate named *Arnavud* Ahmed held 13 sailors.⁹⁰ We think that these kind of assaults, which culminated in the loss of life, injury or captivity for either merchants or crews, might have influenced, if at a limited level, both the motivation and logistics of bilateral commerce between the parties.

It seems possible to obtain some projections, based on the amount of money and gold seized, on the loss of property that merchants suffered from assaults by the pirates. In one case Hacı Usta oğlu Hüseyin organized an assault on two vessels of the *Sicilyateyn* with a *şehtiye*⁹¹ and extorted 500 pieces of gold and valuable items from these ships.⁹² In another case, two pirates of Tripoli attacked a captain of the *Sicilyateyn* and seized 2,000 *guruş* from

⁷⁷ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 23.6.

⁷⁸ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 34.6.

⁷⁹ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 92.1.

⁸⁰ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 59.1.

⁸¹ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 108.8.

⁸² BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 55.3, 58.3.

⁸³ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 68.1.

⁸⁴ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 70.1.

⁸⁵ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 79.3, 90.1.

⁸⁶ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 91.1.

⁸⁷ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 52.4.

⁸⁸ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 37.3, 67.5.

⁸⁹ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 37.3.

⁹⁰ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 52.4, 88.3.

⁹¹ A sailing vessel with two masts, alike brig.

⁹² BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 52.4, 53.1, 62.5.

him.⁹³ A pirate, Ibrahim of Ülgün, extorted the goods of 32 merchants worth of 125,000 *guruş* on a vessel of the *Sicilyateyn*; another *büküm* warned officials that all losses should be compensated as soon as possible.⁹⁴ Similarly, in another case Hasan of Ülgün, one of the pirates from Tripolitania, seized the vessel of a captain of the *Sicilyateyn* by extorting his capital of 2,350 *guruş*. The ship was then returned to its holder although the money was not.⁹⁵ Another *büküm* deals with a pirate from *Garb Ocakları* who extorted two chests of coral and 3,000 gold coins from a captain of the *Sicilyateyn*.⁹⁶ All the assaults referred to above led to a financial loss worth 3,500 gold coins and 129,350 *guruş*. Though the figures on the loss of life and the labor force seem not to have influenced the overall potential for bilateral commercial relations significantly, such losses might have damaged, even if at a limited level, the human resources, financing and capital balance of commerce.

The assaults by the pirates in Ülgün and *Garb Ocakları* were sometimes directed to the capture of commercial vehicles. In this regard, five vessels of the *Sicilyateyn* and two fishing boats were commandeered in four separate attacks by the pirates. The perpetrators of the earliest case were determined to have been from Ülgün, though their identities were not available. They seized two vessels of the *Sicilyateyn* and two fishing boats, and so were the subject of a complaint.⁹⁷ The other attacks were organized by pirates named Nuh and Recep from Ülgün, and *Arnavud Ahmed*.⁹⁸

Little data is usually available on the type of goods transported in commerce between the Ottoman State and the *Sicilyateyn*. Only rarely do the *büküms* contain some data on this aspect, and the goods transported vary from grain to fabric. A pirate of Tripoli named *Arnavud Ahmed* reportedly stole 500 sacks of soap from the vessel of a *Sicilyateyn* merchant, Hristo Fanogavira.⁹⁹ Similarly, 11 *denk*¹⁰⁰ of silk were being transported on the vessel of a *Sicilyateyn* merchant, Cüzebbe Eskarban, when it was attacked by the pirates.¹⁰¹ In another case, two vessels of the *Sicilyateyn*, one loaded with salt and the other with wheat, were captured by a pirate of Tripoli who benefited from the fact that they lost their routes. All their cargo was transferred to his own vessel.¹⁰² The vessel of a *Sicilyateyn* merchant, Yorgi Pakomaki, was attacked by a Tunisian pirate, and 9,000 *kile*¹⁰³ of wheat were captured by him.¹⁰⁴

The Attitude of the Ottoman Administration against Piracy Activities

Pirate attacks seem to have been a challenge to which the Ottoman government paid close attention. It struggled for years to find the criminals and to compensate the damages caused by

⁹³ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 55.3.

⁹⁴ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 79.3.

⁹⁵ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 92.1.

⁹⁶ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 97.1.

⁹⁷ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 70.1.

⁹⁸ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 88.1, 89.2, 90.3.

⁹⁹ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 88.1.

¹⁰⁰ A *denk*, a measure unit, is equal to twenty skeins, though changeable in different settings on Ottoman archival documents.

¹⁰¹ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 89.2.

¹⁰² BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 91.2.

¹⁰³ A measure of weight the equivalent of which is changeable both to the type of cereal and region in which the measure is used.

¹⁰⁴ BOA., A. DVNS. DVE. d. 97.2, 16.58.

them. In this regard, it enacted many firmans ordering related administrative officials that cases of piracy be investigated in depth and accordingly, the extorted items and goods of value as well as the captives should be returned. The presence of successive *büküms* underscore the determination of the government towards resolving the problem of piracy. The language and style reflecting the sensitivity of the government on such documents is especially noteworthy. When the *büküm* – sent to *Garb Ocakları* after the assault by Hacı Usta oğlu Hüseyin – demanding the return of captives and valuables went unanswered, a harsh warning was given in a subsequent *büküm* from the Sultan: “I will not allow you to approach the waters and ports of the Ottoman cities.”¹⁰⁵ Besides, other *büküms* were sent towards the resolution of this matter at various dates within a five-year period.

At the treaty signed in May of 1764 by the *kapudan-ı derya* Mehmet Paşa, Mahmud Paşa, the deputy of *Garb Ocakları*, and the envoy of the *Sicilyateyn*, it was committed through an article by the Ottoman government that it would not be attacked to the vessels of the friendly states, surely including those of the *Sicilyateyn* in the vicinity of its citadels, ports, piers and anywhere within the 30 mile offshore limit in accordance with maritime law, and that if any assault occurred, all damage would be compensated by *Garb Ocakları*.¹⁰⁶ However, it can be encountered on the documents with many cases which seem to have overtly violated this article. One of them is on the assault in April of 1776 by Ahmet Hoca, a pirate from *Garb Ocakları*, to the vessel of two captains of the *Sicilyateyn*, Banhonkof Galo and Nikola Banhobirimo, which was anchored at a pier in the town of Angilikasrı. Upon the complaint, most probably by the captains, it was ordered that the event be investigated in-depth and the loss of the captains be accordingly compensated on account of that the attack referred was overtly contradictory to the agreement.¹⁰⁷

The Ottoman administration could issue single firmans towards the resolution of different events occurring separately from each other. Therefore, a firman was enacted concerning the pirate activities of *Arnavud* Ahmed, Nuh and Recep, each being the suspect of different cases. This firman contained the legal procedures about these people in question. Accordingly, it was ordered that the vessels of the *Sicilyateyn* captured by these pirates in Ottoman waters, their crew taken as captives, and any stolen valuables be immediately returned. Another attempt specific to this event is the memorandum signed by the *kapudan-ı derya* Mehmet Paşa, Mahmut Ağa, the deputy of *Garb Ocakları*, and the envoy to the *Sicilyateyn*. The agreement stipulated the return of two of the vessels captured and the release of the captives who were the ship's crew.¹⁰⁸ However, the third vessel, captured along with the other two, 1,000 gold coins of Maghreb, and seven *denk* of silk, would not be returned. This served as compensation for the pirates of the *Sicilyateyn* capturing an Ottoman vessel and killing the Muslims on board. Though no record is available regarding this assault of the *Sicilyateyn* which *Garb Ocakları* claimed, the *Sicilyateyn* seem to have consented to the fact that a vessel, 1,000 gold coins of Maghreb, and seven *denk* of silk were to remain in hands of *Garb Ocakları* in accordance with the trilateral agreement.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 62.5.

¹⁰⁶ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 94.3.

¹⁰⁷ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 108.8, 95.1, 97.1.

¹⁰⁸ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 90.1, 94.3, 95.1, 95.3.

¹⁰⁹ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 97.1.

Excluding those directly speaking about incidents of piracy, the Ottoman administration issued other 20 *bükiims* addressing *Garç Ocakları* and the pirates of Ülgün. These cautioned them not to commit piracy against vessels of the *Sicilyateyn*, which individually indicates how much importance the Ottoman State attached to such commercial affairs. One reports that Karlogatola, a captain of the *Sicilyateyn*, arrived in the Dardanelles with his 30-person crew, and cautions the pirates not to interfere with this vessel.¹¹⁰ Likewise, another *bükiüm* remarks that a merchant named Antonyo Filata would sail his vessel from Çeşme to Chios and Izmir to transport aid to Muslim troops. It then ordered the related parties not to interfere with the vessel in case of an encounter.¹¹¹

Conclusion

The fact that the Ottoman State took control of the Western Mediterranean to a great extent after conquering Algeria, Tunisia and Tripoli seems to have brought absolute political supremacy to the region. From the 16th century on, the pirates of *Garç Ocakları* played a disruptive role regarding the maintainability of Ottoman maritime power. Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that the Ottoman State fell short in keeping *Garç Ocakları* under its control, mostly due to the difficult conditions of the period from the final decades of the 17th century on. The new setting, which the balance between the Ottoman State and *Garç Ocakları* lost against the former's position, led to the proliferation of offenses by *Garç Ocakları* against vessels of foreign states. To these, a series of commercial privileges were entitled, and therefore led to some disruptions in maritime commerce. Thus, the European states had to sign another agreement with the representatives of *Garç Ocakları*, apart from the one made with the Ottoman State, to avoid such assaults and to realize a smooth commercial experience. One of these states is the *Sicilyateyn*. However, the records of complaints on the *abdname defterleri* overtly document that the parties did not adhere steadfastly to the agreed conditions in most cases.

In conclusion, the documents *izn-i sefine*¹¹² issued from the year 1745 to 1804 concerning commercial relations between two states continued at a high volume. One of the important aspects of this process worth highlighting is that, despite 18 recorded cases of piracy, this did not affect bilateral relations in significant way. Besides, the Ottoman administration took initiatives in order to resolve these troubles in a way pointing to its loyalty to the agreements in force. Likewise, Ottoman officials frequently controlled the related bodies by enacting *firman*s at various times to prevent the pirates from making assaults against the vessels of the *Sicilyateyn* in the Mediterranean. However, another conclusion at this point is that the Ottoman government, at least from the 17th century on, had difficulty in imposing its authority upon the pirates of *Garç Ocakları*.

¹¹⁰ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 75.1.

¹¹¹ BOA., A. DVNS. HADR. d. 06, 105.1.

¹¹² The documents of permission given to the vessels to pass through the Bosphorus and the Hellespont in Ottoman period.

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FIG. 1 Map of the Sicilyateyn (Kingdom of Two Sicilies) <https://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/76917/kingdom-of-naples-or-the-two-sicilies-mitchell> (accessed 11 April 2023).



FIG. 2 Coat of arms of the Sicilyateyn (Kingdom of Two Sicilies) BOA. MHD. 103.

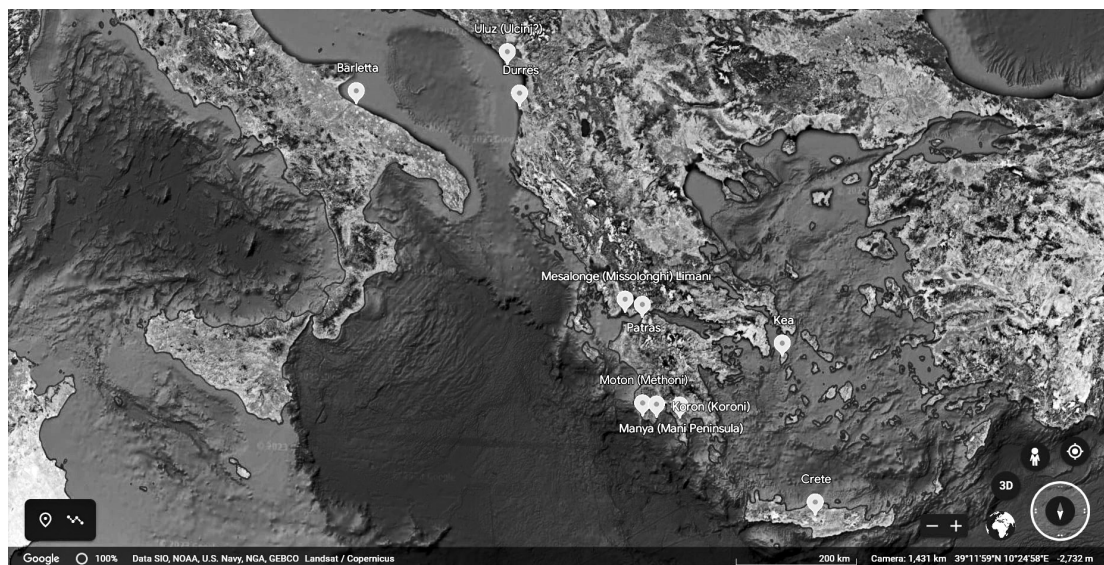


FIG. 3 Google Earth image showing the distribution of pirate activity.

