

**THE IONIAN SEA IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY:  
PORTS, THE PORT SYSTEM AND THE FORMATION OF THE IONIAN  
COMMERCIAL AND MARITIME NETWORK**

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*Abstract:*

Historically, the Ionian Sea played a vital role in linking the Western and Eastern Mediterranean with the Adriatic Sea. The major commercial routes of European and international trade passed through its waters. Consequently, the ports and port system of the Ionian Sea became an integral part of the new era of early economic globalization and the international trade system of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Within this trade system, Ionian shipping specialized in the transport of bulk cargo from the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean to Western Europe. This specialization led to the distribution of commercial and nautical activity within Ionian shipping and the port system during the British occupation of the Ionian Islands (1815-1864). Ionian shipping formed the base for the construction of the Ionian commercial and maritime network, and contributed to the expansion of the global shipping centre of London.

This work aims to identify and present the terms of the formation of the Ionian commercial and maritime network during the period of the British occupation and discusses the apportionment of commercial and nautical work within the Ionian port system.

*Key words:*

Ionian Sea 19<sup>th</sup> century, United States of the Ionian Islands, Great Britain, Commercial and Maritime Networks, External and Internal Distribution of Commercial and Nautical Work.

**IONIAN SEA:  
PORTS, PORT SYSTEM AND THE FORMATION OF THE IONIAN  
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DURING THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

**1. Ionian Islands: integration in the political and economic environment (19th century)**

The Ionian Sea played an important historical role in linking the Western and Eastern Mediterranean with the Adriatic Sea. The major commercial routes of European and international trade passed through its waters. The Ionian Islands lie at this important economic and commercial crossroads. At first sight, it appears that the growth of Ionian shipping was easily predicted (Harlaftis 2001). However, the economic development of a certain region is not determined exclusively by a sole factor, but by the interaction of many resultants: such as geographical position; political, social and economic status. Therefore, in order to define the terms of the growth of Ionian shipping, we should take into consideration not only the geographical dimension of the Ionian Islands, but also their political, social and economic reality. These realities were a result of their status as a “Colonial Protectorate,” imposed by Great Britain on the Seven Islands of the Ionian Sea; the so-called “Eptanisa.” This colonial status lasted nearly six decades, from 1809 to 1864.

According to the Treaty of Paris (November 5, 1815), the Ionian Islands became a protectorate of Great Britain. The treaty signalled the creation of a free and independent state, under the formal name “United States of the Ionian Islands”. Great Britain undertook not only the political protection of the islands, but also the obligation to recognise the rights of constitutional governing in the newly established state. Beyond this formal reading of the treaty, however, the Ionian Islands constituted a part of the British colonialist empire. The head of administration was the Lord High Commissioner, who was appointed by the Ministry of Colonies in London. The Lord High Commissioner had absolute and unlimited responsibility and jurisdiction over the Ionian Islands (Karapidakis 2003). Thus, when referring to the Seven Islands of the 19th century, we are in fact referring to a cluster of islands belonging to the worldwide colonialist and commercial British Empire. It is within this framework that the commercial, seagoing Ionian shipping of the 19<sup>th</sup> century developed.

The British presence and influence on commerce and Ionian seagoing shipping may be more clearly understood by examining two indicative pictures. The first presents the idea that the Ionian subjects sought the help of the British in order to release their State from the yoke of France, so that they could practice their commercial and nautical activity without disturbance (*The Times*, No 7847, Thursday, December 7, 1809). In the fall of 1809, Ionian tradesmen and nobles launched an appeal to this effect to the British administration of the Mediterranean Sea in Malta (Chiotis 1863, 1877). The second example shows that Great Britain viewed the Ionian Islands as a strategic asset to her global commercial interests. *The Saturday Magazine* of July 1840 states: "the importance of these islands to England has reference principally to their geographical position, by which they are admirably adapted for protecting our trade in the eastern parts of Europe, and of extending our commerce as soon as Greece

becomes more settled and civilized" (*The Saturday Magazine*, No. 515, July 11, 1840).

Within this framework, British protection over the Seven Islands provided a great impulse for strengthening and expanding the commercial and nautical activity of the Islands. According to this status, the Ionian tradesmen, skippers and shipowners had the right and the potential to invoke their British citizenship, which would enable them to engage in their commercial and nautical activities undisturbed. Ionian subjects who sailed to Spain or who were merchants in Vatum, Alexandria, Damascus, Durazze (on the Albanian coast), Belgrade, or on the coasts of the Black Sea had the safety of British citizenship to follow them. It is worthwhile to note that in almost all of the agreements concerning shipping and commercial interests that Great Britain signed with other states and kingdoms, an annex was included stating that the United States of the Ionian Islands were part of the British Empire and as such had the same rights and obligations to fulfil according to the signed agreements. Moreover, Ionian subjects could practice and expand their activities within the geographic boundaries fixed by the political and economic power of the British Empire (Hobsbawm 1999). For example, they could take advantage of the privileges of settlement and marketing of grain in the areas bordering the Danube, following the British abolition of their Laws of Navigation; grain could now be trafficked freely (Cafruny 2001; Davis 2001). It should be noted that approximately 80% of the Greeks who were involved in trade in these regions held British citizenship, and were mainly from the island of Cephalonia (Harlaftis 2001).

The activity of the people from Cephalonia and from other Ionian islands led to the constitution of the Ionian network of commerce and shipping in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with centres of activity in the Danube and the Black Sea (Aserson 2002; King 2005; Matvejevich 1998). This provided a developmental boost to Greek-owned commercial shipping through the separation of commercial activity from shipping activity, catalysing the changeover from the dual profession of tradesman-shipowner, to that of the specialised shipowner (Harlaftis 2001, 2003). In other words, the importance of Ionian shipping lies in the fact that the Ionians managed to be included and participate actively in the international commercial system and to experience the terms of the early phase of economic globalisation, as it was developed during the 19th century. This reality provided Greek-owned commercial shipping all the conditions and experiences that enabled Greece to dominate the world shipping industry in the 20th century.

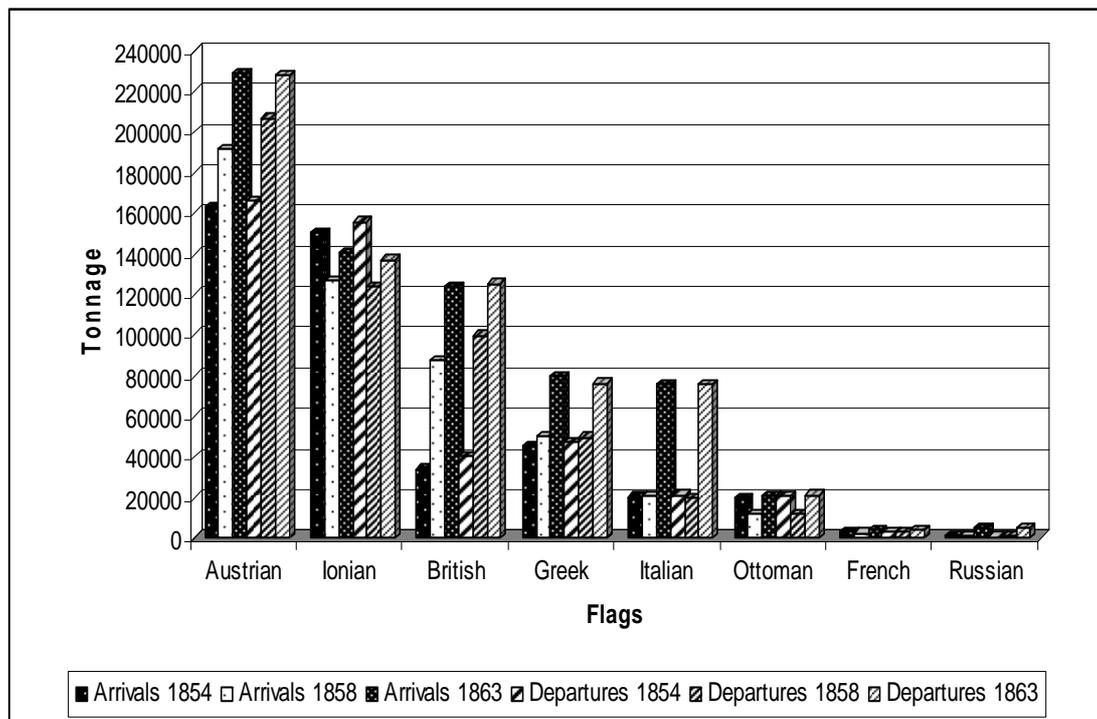
The objective of the current paper is to present the Ionian Sea along three basic dimensions: shipping, commerce and harbours. By the "port" dimension, we mean the particular character that the Ionian harbour system had received - if it had received one - during the period of British sovereignty in the islands. The examination of these three parameters will allow us not only to approach the terms of the growth of the Ionian commercial fleet and Ionian shipping during the 19th century, but also the terms of the constitution of the Ionian network of commerce and shipping, and the expansion of the main shipping centre of London.

## 2. The Ionian Islands at the crossroads of international commercial routes

### 2.1. Arrivals and departures in the Ionian ports

The importance and role of a marine region is related to three basic factors; the first is the offered capacity and the flags of the arriving and departing ships; the second has to do with the commercial and shipping network in which a port system is developed; the third refers to the type of nautical and commercial activity in which a port system is specialised. In order to perceive the role that the Ionian Sea and the Ionian port system played in international commercial routes and transactions, let us look at the elements concerning the capacities of arrivals and departures in the ports of the Ionian Islands, during the period of 1854-63 and compare these elements with the corresponding data of the other marine regions in the Eastern Mediterranean (Diagram 1.1).

**Diagram 1.1. Arrivals and departures in the ports of the Ionian Sea, during the period of 1854-63 (capacity and flag).**



Source: processed elements from Gazette Jonie 1855, 1859, 1864. (The unified Italian flag occurs in the year 1861, after the political unification of the Italian peninsula. Before that year, more than one flags existed; the flag of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Neapolitan), the flag of Sardinia and the flag of the Pontifical States).

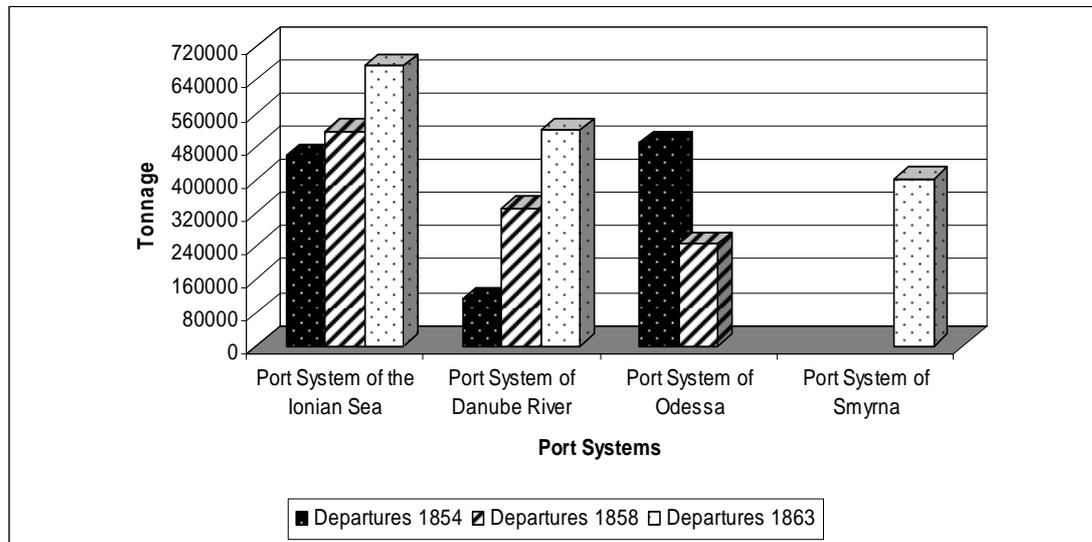
From the diagram, the following conclusions can be drawn: a) examining the number of flags reveals that the ports of the Ionian Islands constituted important stations of international commerce. It should be pointed out that the diagram presents only the basic flags, i.e. the flags concerning ships with the largest registered capacity. On the other hand, we have to add that the Ionian ports were ports of call for many other flags, such as flags from Holland, Denmark, Bremen, Hamburg, USA and Jerusalem; b) in examining the flags, we observe that the Austrian flag dominates in number

followed by the State of the Ionian Islands' flag. The difference, however, is reversed in favour of the Ionian Islands' flag if the number of Greek flags is added. The reason for this is that an important number of shipowners from Cephalonia and the other Ionian Islands selected their flag according to their commercial interests. Taking this into account, the dominating fleet in the Ionian Sea was Greek-owned. In third place is the British flag, followed by the Greek flag; the fifth place is occupied by the Italian flag (which is declared as such after 1861--after the political unification of the Italian peninsula, which unified the previous status of many states and flags of the Italian peninsula); the registered capacity of the Italian flag is followed by the flags of the Ottoman Empire, France and Russia; c) the third element that arises from the data of the diagram is the constantly increasing capacity of the ships under the Austrian flag and the relative stagnation of the Ionian flag. The British flag shows an augmentative tendency while entering into the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Greek flag seems to move upward after the end of the 1850s, like the Italian flag. As far as the Ottoman, French and Russian flags are concerned, we can speak of stagnation or of small fluctuations of the registered capacities, without any particular importance, but their presence in the Ionian Sea is in any case perceptible.

If we want to proceed a step forward and to explain the data of the diagram, the increasing number of flags and registered capacities clearly show the great importance and central role of the Ionian marine region in the international commercial arteries. The Ionian ports – found in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea –constituted basic turning-points for all the ships of the main commercial and nautical powers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is a rather expected reality for the British flag, because the Ionian Islands were part of the British colonies and as such the Ionian ports constituted necessary turning-points for British trade within the Mediterranean and Far East.

On the other hand, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had only two direct exit-ports towards the Mediterranean Sea. These were the ports of the north-eastern Adriatic Sea: Trieste and Venice. As a result, the Ionian Islands and their ports became the necessary “import” and “export” interlocutor of Austrian commerce, due to the islands' location at the mouth of the vast Adriatic Gulf. As far as the Greek flag is concerned, we have to point out that the most important export port of the Greek State was Patras, which belonged to the Ionian port system. The ports of the South-eastern Italian peninsula also belonged to the same marine region and port system. Their commercial contacts with the neighbouring seven islands' ports were not only inevitable but were also necessary for their economic existence. Summarizing, it should be mentioned that the sovereignty of the Austrian flag is the one aspect of the Ionian shipping. The other aspect is the real and absolute sovereignty of the British commercial and nautical force, having in mind that both the “maternal” British flag and the “subsidiary” Ionian flag served the shipping and the commercial interests of the globalised British Empire.

**Diagram 1.2. Departures (capacity) from the port systems of the Ionian Sea, the Danube River, Odessa and Smyrna, 1854-63.**



Source: processed elements from Gazette Jonie 1855, 1859, 1864; see also Tzelina Harlaftis, *History of Greek Owned Shipping*, Nefeli Publications, Athens 2001, pp. 180-189. (The region of Odessa includes the ports of Odessa, Nikolaev, Sevastopol and Teodosiia. The marine region of the Danube River includes the port cities of Braila, Galati and Sulina).

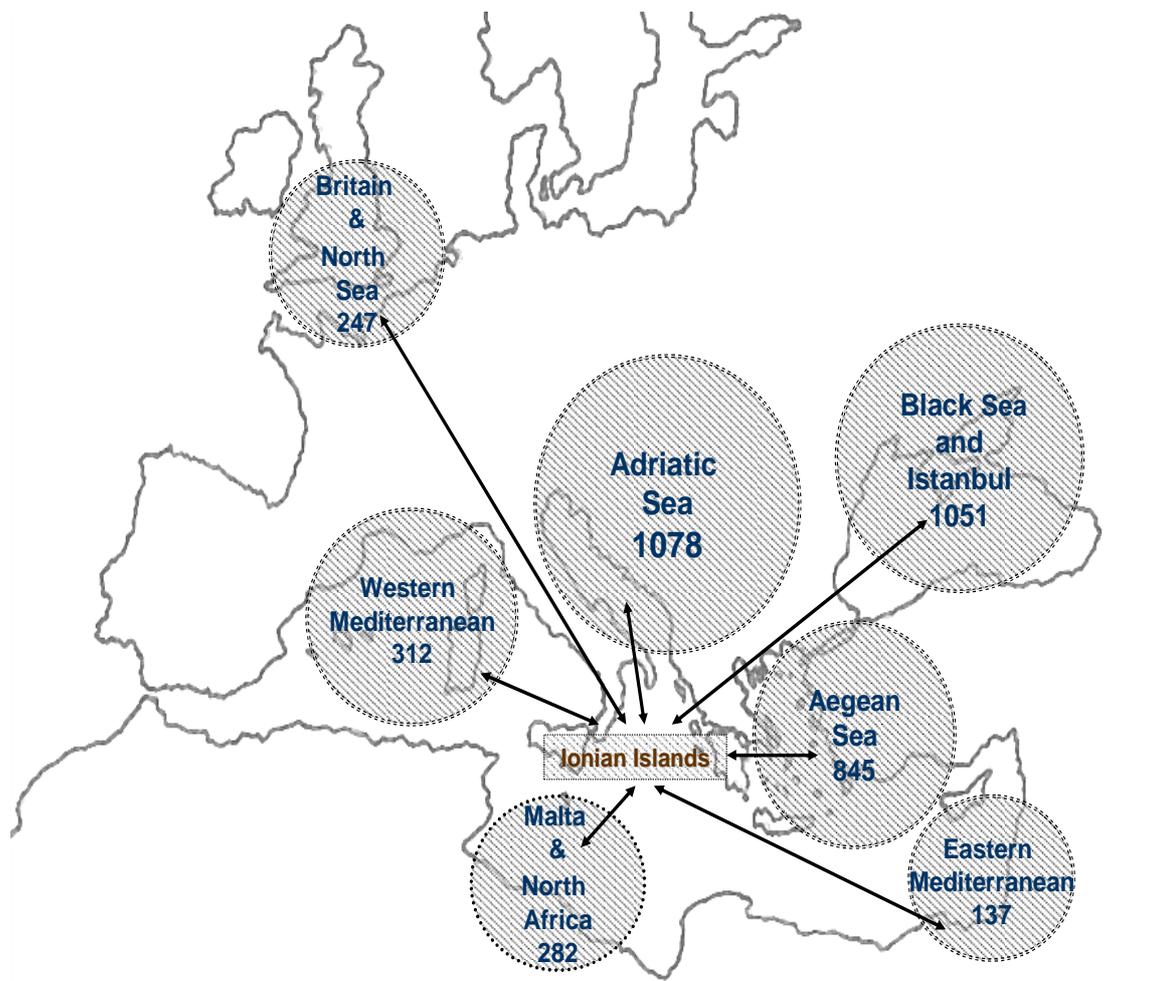
In order to acquire a clearer picture of the importance of the Ionian Sea in the international commercial routes of the 19th century, we compared the capacities of the departures from the Ionian ports with the corresponding departures from important ports of the Eastern Mediterranean: Danube, Odessa and Smyrna (Harlaftis 2001; Focas 1975; Herlihy 1986; Kardasis 1993). The Danube and Odessa were selected due to their extended commercial and nautical importance by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as breadbasket regions and providers of food for the European continent. Smyrna was selected as one of the most important import and export ports of the Ottoman Empire in the Aegean Sea. Between these four port systems, the Ionian port system gained the dominant position, followed by those of the Danube River, Odessa and Smyrna. It is worthy to note that the ports of the Ionian Islands engaged in larger and more intense commercial activity than the ports of the Black Sea and Smyrna. We should keep in mind that we are referring to marine regions, which are both – to a greater or smaller degree – export and import port-systems. According to these parameters, we argue that the Ionian Sea constituted an integral part of the continuously expanding economy of the 19th century, as an active participant in the international trade system of that period.

## 2.2. The Ionian commercial and shipping network: routes, products and ports

Having presented a general picture of the Ionian Sea and its important role in international commercial routes, let us examine the second parameter: Ionian shipping and its commercial network. At this point, it should be stressed that the term “Ionian shipping” refers to the total number of commercial and seagoing ships which were owned by the citizens of the United States of the Ionian Islands, regardless of flag. The objective of the study of the Ionian commercial network is to map out the

commercial arteries that connected the marine region and port system of the Ionian Sea with the basic commercial, import, export and transit centres of the 19th century. Tracking the commercial ports - the partners of the Ionian Sea - will provide us with a clear picture of the extent and importance of the Ionian Sea in the international commercial system.

**Map 1.1. The Ionian commercial network (according to ship arrivals), 1844-60.**

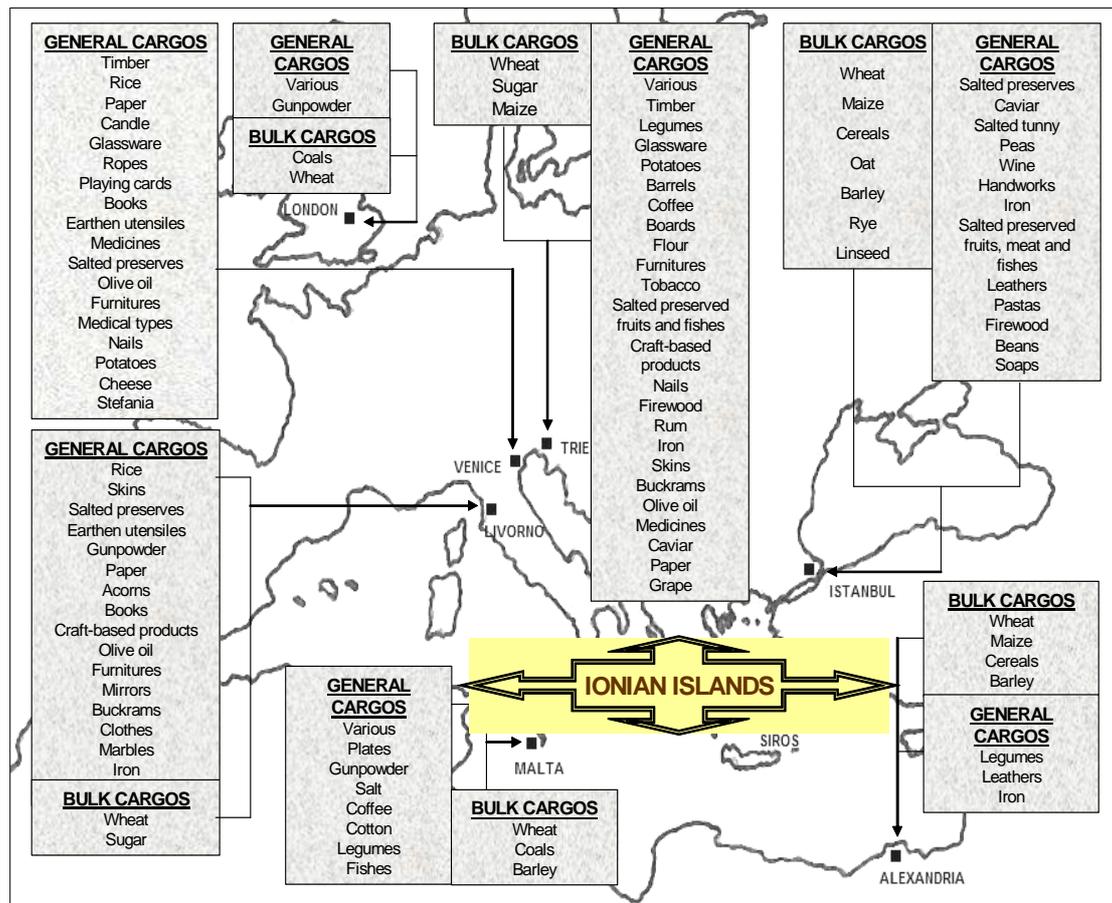


Source: processed elements from Gazette Jonie, years 1844, 1850, 1855, 1860. Georgios N. Moschopoulos - Stamatoula Zapanti, *Quarantine Service of Cephalonia 1846-1864*, Volume I, General Archives of the Greek State - Archives of the Prefecture of Cephalonia, Argostoli 1997; Georgios N. Moschopoulos - Stamatoula Zapanti, *Quarantine Service of Cephalonia 1846-1864*, Volume II, General Archives of the Greek State - Archives of the Prefecture of Cephalonia, Argostoli 2000; Tzelina Harlaftis - Nikos St. Vlassopoulos, *Historical Register Pontoporia, Seagoing Sailing Ships and Steamboats, 1830-1939*, E.L.I.A. Publications (Greek Literary and Historical File), Athens 2002. (\*Details on ship arrivals in the ports of Kithira and Ithaca were located only for the years 1844 and 1850).

To illustrate the connection between Ionian shipping and the international commercial centres, the above map has been drawn up (Map 1.1). The map presents the commercial network of the Ionian Islands, based on the commercial ports – the partners of the Ionian Sea –, (arrivals and departures) during 1844-60. From the map, it can be seen that there were two main regions connected to the inhabitants of the Ionian Islands: the Black Sea and Istanbul; and the Adriatic Sea, with its main ports:

Trieste and Venice. The network includes the Aegean Sea dominated by the island of Siros, the Western Mediterranean with the commercial centres of Livorno and Marseille, the North Sea with London being its centre, the Central Mediterranean with the commercial centre of Malta and the Eastern Mediterranean with the port of Alexandria as the centre of nautical activity.

**Map 1.2. The Ionian commercial network, 1844-60: general and bulk cargos.**

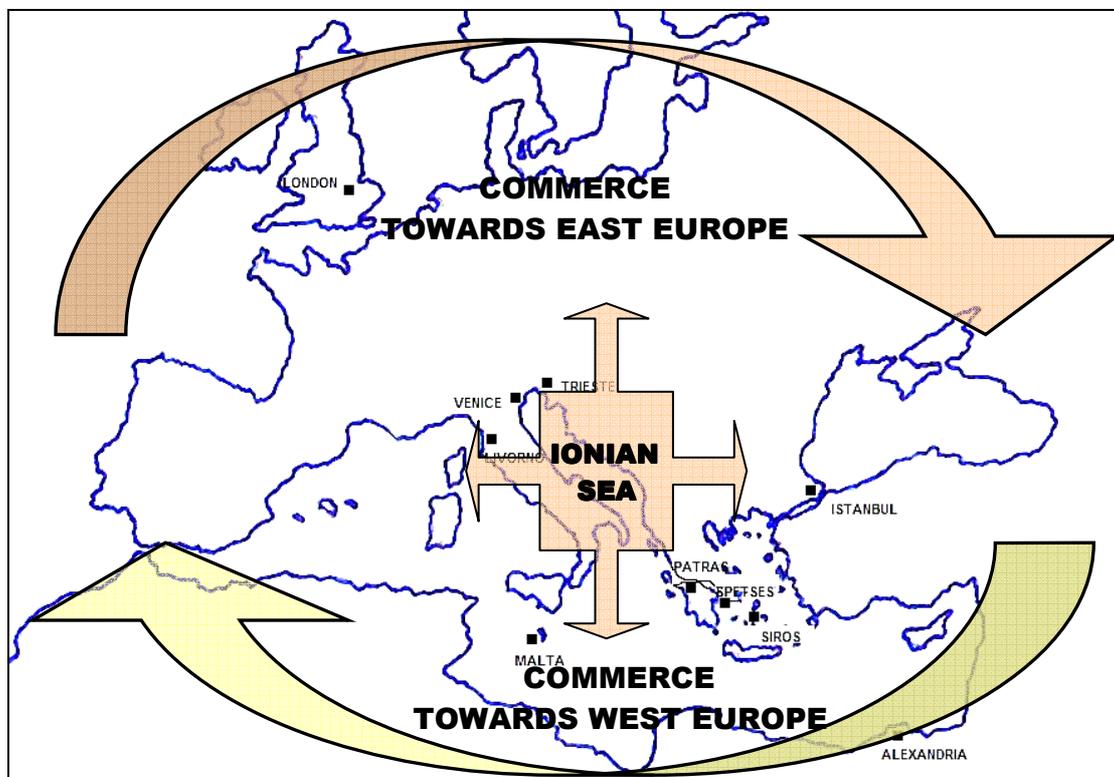


Source: see Map 1.1.

The above map (Map 1.2) provides useful information concerning the general and bulk cargos that were trafficked to, from and around the Ionian Islands. The general cargos consisted mainly of processed or semi-processed products with a high cost per unit and a limited volume, while the bulk cargos comprised of cheap products in large quantities. Bulk cargos were important for shipping because value was based on the quantity and the distance of the transported goods and not on small quantity or increased market value (Harlaftis 2001; Metaxas 1988). There were four categories of general cargos: foodstuffs (raisin, other dried and fresh fruits, wine, spices and pastries), fibres and buckrams (silk, wool, cannabis, carpets, lace), medicines and dyes (licorice, opium, madder, indigo, etc.), and various other goods (tobacco, cigarettes, jewels, perfumes, sponges, acorns, etc.). The bulk cargos usually contained grain (wheat, maize, barley and oats), cotton, wool, cottonseed, linseed, animal grease

and sugar. The map provides an indicative picture of the merchandise that was trafficked to, from, and around the Ionian Islands. Regarding the general cargos, the main types included timber, legumes, salted preserves and leathers, while the bulk cargos were grain, sugar and coal. The fact that the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea both supplied the ships of the Ionian Islands with grain headed for Western Europe is also of great interest. The ports of the Western Mediterranean and North Sea trafficked mainly in general cargos. These were cargos that industrially developing Western Europe provided to the international and local markets of the agricultural Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea in exchange for the grain required to feed the expanding and undernourished urban populations of Western Europe (Aldcroft et al. 2005; Hobsbawm 1999).

**Map 1.3. The main commercial routes towards Eastern and Western Europe and the Ionian Sea, during the 19th century.**

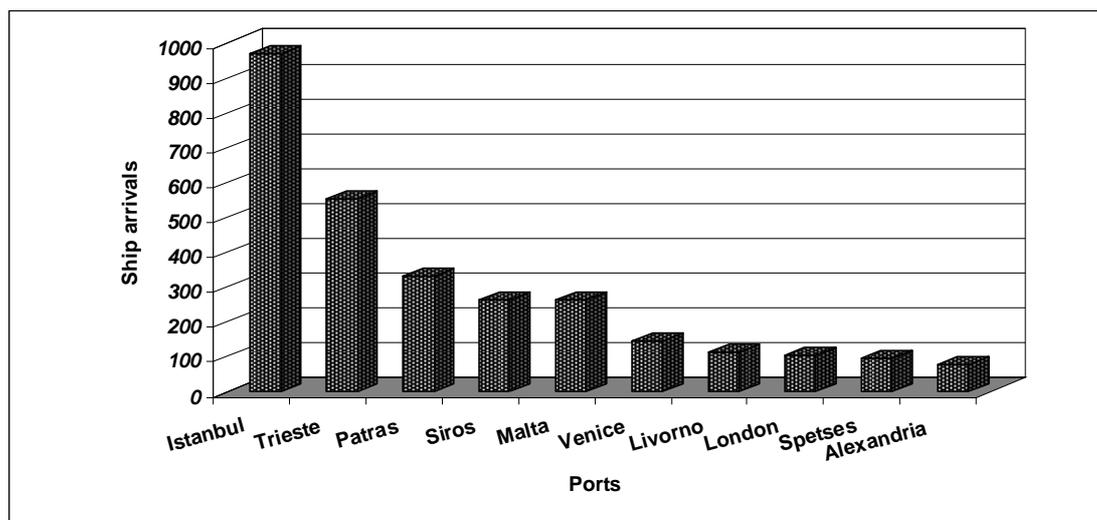


Source: see Map 1.1.

Map 1.3 presents the bipolar commercial and economic relationship between Western and Eastern Europe. Moreover, this schematic depiction conveys the nodal place of the Ionian Sea and its port-system in the commercial crossroads between the two European poles. This concrete commercial and nautical dimension of Ionian shipping will be discussed in the following section of this paper. For now, let us focus on the main ports and commercial partners of Ionian seagoing shipping. Diagram 1.3 presents the top ten main commercial destinations of shipping from the Ionian Island.

Istanbul dominates in the top position, but it is important to recall that most of the ships coming from or sailing to the Black Sea were docked in the port of Istanbul. As a result, its dominance is fictitious to a certain degree. Furthermore, we must note that Istanbul, as capital of the Ottoman Empire, constituted an important commercial transit hub. Research has shown that 35% of the ships that came from Istanbul held grain supplied by the ports of the Black Sea. Trieste holds second place, dominating the general cargo field (95%); it constituted the gateway for Austria and Hungary to the Mediterranean. Patras and the island of Siros follow; Patras as a direct link to the Ionian Sea and as a main export centre of firewood, wheat and raisin. Siros was a main transit port of the Eastern Mediterranean, the transit products being 73% grain. Malta follows with bulk cargos (wheat, barley and coal) constituting 26% of all trafficked products. Venice and Livorno hold sixth and seventh place, with the main products being timber (27%) for Venice and bulk cargos (95%) for Livorno. The last three ports are London with its main products: gunpowder, coal and wheat; the island of Spetses, in the Aegean Sea, which constituted a main port for the distribution of grain (84% of trafficked products); and finally, Alexandria with grain as its main merchandise (74%).

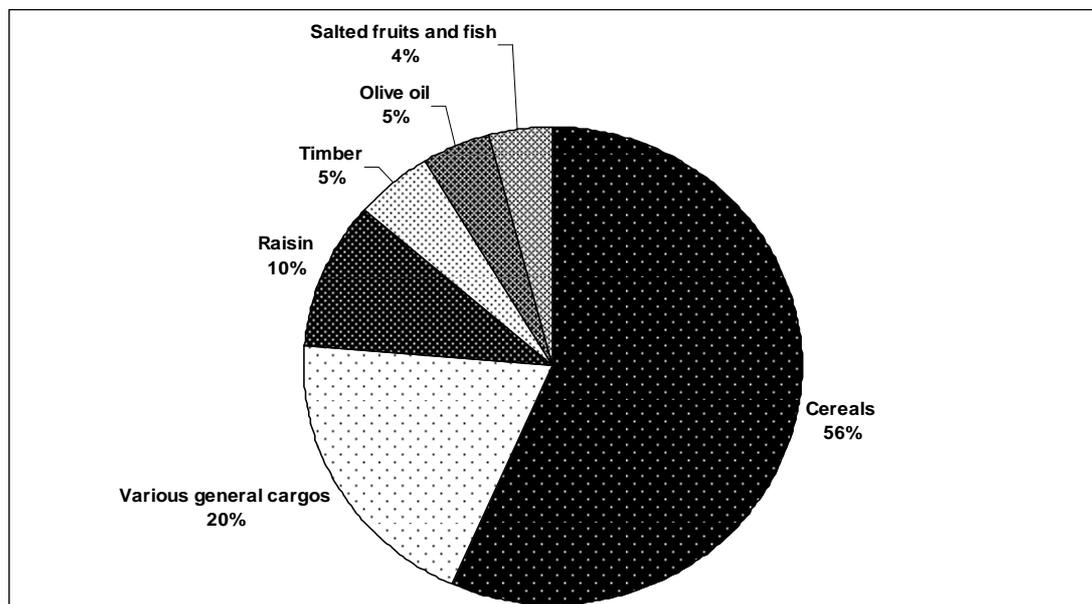
**Diagram 1.3. The ten main commercial partner-ports of Ionian Island shipping, 1844-60.**



Source: see Map 1.1.

Diagram 1.4 completes the presentation of the merchandise that was trafficked in ships from Cephalonia and the Ionian Islands and presents the main products concerned. From the pie chart, and according to the above mentioned diagrams, the domination of grain and raisin is clearly evident, which strengthens our thesis regarding the Ionian Islands' specialisation in the transport of bulk cargos.

**Diagram 1.4. The commercial network in the Ionian Islands, 1844-60: bulk and general cargos.**



Source: see Map 1.1.

### **2.3. The Ionian port system: nautical and commercial activity, specialization and distribution of work**

Having presented the central role of the Ionian Sea and its ports in the international commercial system of the 19th century by examining the offered capacity, the flags of the arriving and departing ships in the Ionian Sea and the commercial network of the Ionian Shipping, we will now examine the third parameter: the type of nautical and commercial activity in which the Ionian port system specialised. It should be mentioned that there are three basic types of port systems: export, import and transit ports (Broeze 1989; Murphay 1989).

Before examining the nautical and commercial specialization of the Ionian port system, let us sum up the main characteristics of the Ionian Sea and shipping: a) firstly, the Ionian Sea played an important role in the commerce of the Mediterranean, not only due to its central geographic position, but also because of the fact that the Ionian Islands were part of the global, colonial British Empire; b) secondly, Ionian shipowners and ships succeeded in shaping a wide commercial network starting in the Black Sea and extending to the Western and Eastern Mediterranean and the North Sea; and c) thirdly, within the framework of this international trade system, Ionian shipping specialized in the transport of bulk cargos from the granaries of the agricultural Black Sea region and the Eastern Mediterranean to industrial and urban Western Europe. The second main export product of Ionian shipping was raisin, forwarded mainly to the international markets of London and the Netherlands. According to these three basic characteristics of the Ionian Sea and its commercial and nautical activity, we can assume that the Ionian ports were not only nodal turning-points in the world of international commerce, but they played a double role: transit

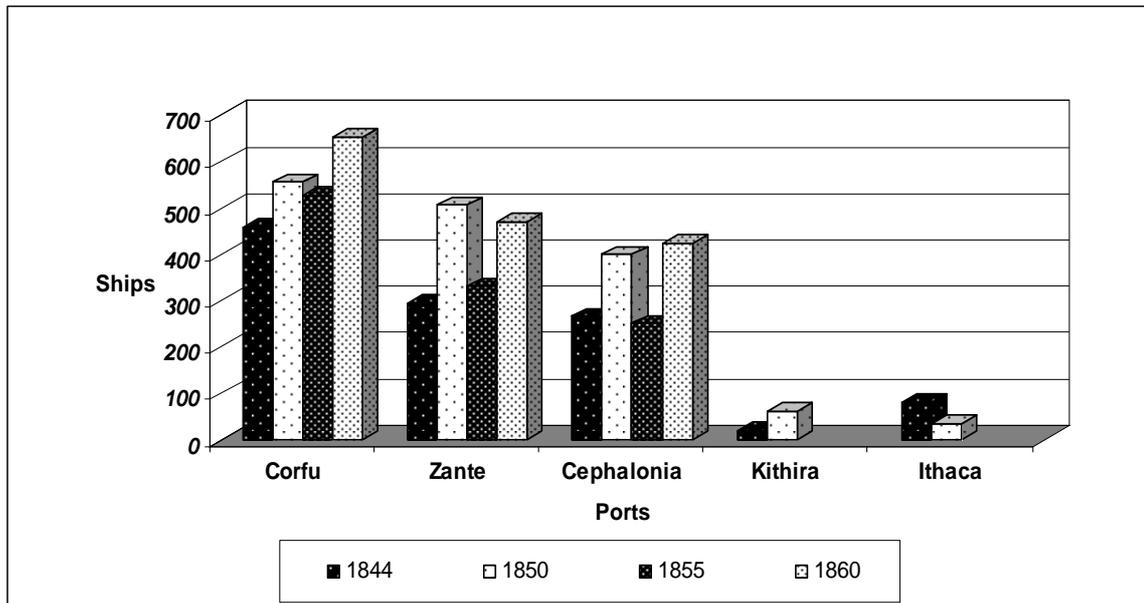
and export (see diagram 1.4 and map 1.3) As far as export from the Ionian ports is concerned, the main export product, as already mentioned, was raisin. The two main export ports were Cephalonia and Zante. The third main Ionian export centre was the port of Patras. Although Patras was part of the Greek Kingdom and not of the United States of the Ionian Islands, it did belong to the Ionian Sea and to the Ionian port system. Patras turned out to become a basic port of call for Ionian commercial ships due to the large amount of raisin cultivated in the Peloponnese region and the increasing demand for raisin in the domestic markets of Great Britain, the Netherlands and the West coast of the USA, according to the results of research conducted in the Archives of the Ionian Islands.

Within the framework of the international distribution of commercial and nautical activities, Ionian shipping and ports took on a leading role in the transit of Black Sea grain towards the markets of Western Europe. At the same time, Ionian shipowners exploited the rural production of the Ionian hinterland – the hinterland not only of the islands but also of the Ionian continental coast – and as a result they shaped an important network of raisin export. These are the two basic commercial and nautical activities in which the Ionian port system specialised in the framework of the international commercial and port system.

However it is not only this particular – wide – role that the Ionian port system played as part of the international commercial system, but also the distribution of work that took place inside the Ionian port system. This is due to the fact that almost every port system is characterised by its endogenous tendency to apportion its internal shipping and commercial activities among the ports that form it.

In order to examine the formation of this distribution of work inside the Ionian port system, we focused our attention on the ports of the Ionian Islands, comparing ship arrivals in Corfu, Zante, Cephalonia, Kithira (Cerigo) and Ithaca during the period of 1844-60 (diagram 1.5). Corfu held first position in the number of ship arrivals, followed by Zante, Cephalonia, Kithira and Ithaca. Corfu was the political and commercial capital of the United States of the Ionian Islands at that time and was in direct contact with the Adriatic Sea and the Western and Eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, many of the tradesmen and charterers from the Ionian Islands operated from Corfu. Corfu itself had a high demand for goods to cover the needs not only of its residents but also those of the British administration and the Ionian bureaucracy. Zante was second in importance as a port of the Ionian Islands, boasting an important commercial centre from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, serving as a basic station of the English Levant Company and distributor of raisin to Great Britain and to Western Europe (Harlaftis et al. 2002). The island of Cephalonia occupied the third position with her main port, Argostoli, as the most important raisin export centre of the Ionian State during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cephalonian's third position is in fact inversely proportional to the magnitude of Cephalonian shipping. At this point, it should be stressed once again that 80% of the fleet of the Ionian Islands and about 40% of the Greek-owned fleet that sailed in the Ionian Sea were ships of Cephalonian interest. Therefore, when discussing shipping in the Ionian Islands, we are in fact referring substantially to Cephalonian shipping.

**Diagram 1.5. Ship arrivals in the ports of the Ionian Islands, 1844-60.**



Source: see Map 1.1.

Within the distribution of commercial and nautical work in Ionian Island shipping during the British occupation, Corfu functioned as the political, administrative, economic and commercial centre of the Ionian Islands, with Zante maintaining a small share. Corfu's needs were covered by Cephalonia, the nautical centre of the Ionian Islands. This shipping specialisation also constituted the core of growth and consolidation of Cephalonian supremacy, so that the island became a major nautical centre in the Ionian Sea; a centre from which shipowners and ships, regardless of flag, shaped a wide commercial network starting in the Black Sea and extending to Newfoundland, New York and Rio de Janeiro.

To sum up, in the wider dimension of the international trade and shipping system of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ports of the Ionian Sea specialised mainly in transporting the grain of Black Sea granaries to Western Europe and, secondly, in exporting Ionian raisin to the ports of the Northern Sea and to those of the Atlantic Ocean. This is the main role of the Ionian port system as participant in the international commercial system. However, focusing on the internal operation terms of the Ionian ports, we observe that each Ionian port took on a specific role within the framework of Ionian shipping. Due to this internal distribution of work, Ionian shipping played a leading role in the international commercial arteries and transactions of the Mediterranean Sea.

### **3. Conclusion**

Our objective in this paper has been to lay out the terms that enabled the Ionian Sea to become a nodal commercial and nautical centre in the Mediterranean during the 19<sup>th</sup>

century. In investigating the terms of this commercial and nautical development, we have chosen to examine the three basic parameters that determine the importance of a marine region: shipping, commerce and the port system. Our conclusions can be summarized as follows: a) the Ionian Sea constituted an integral part of the continuously expanding economy of the 19th century. In the era of early globalization, the Ionian Sea participated actively in the international trade system, mainly due to the fact that the Ionian Islands were part of the British colonial Empire; b) within the framework of this international trade system, Ionian shipping specialized in the transport of bulk cargos from the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean to Western Europe. Furthermore, this specialization enabled Ionian shipping to set the foundation for the development of the Ionian network of commerce and shipping, and contributed to the expansion of the main shipping centre of London.

Due to this extended Ionian commercial and nautical network, many Ionian tradesmen and seamen began moving to the regions of the Black Sea: mainly the Danube, to the ports of Braila, Galati and Sulina; the marine region of Azof, to the ports of Taganrog, Rostof, Berdiansk, Geisk and Certs; the Caucasian coast, to the ports of Novorossiysk and Vatum; and the South-western coast of the Black Sea. In these port cities, the Ionians established commercial and nautical enterprises, specialising mainly in marketing grain and coal. The main characteristics of these businesses were the following: a) the formation of commercial networks based on familial kinship (relation by blood and/or affinity) and on common origin, aiming at the formation of “closed” enterprising circuits and, therefore, totally controlled; b) they were specialised mainly in shipping, with trade functioning as a complementary activity; and c) they chose to move towards direct communication and infiltration into the local markets of cereal producers in the granaries of the Black Sea, in order to gain absolute control of the supply, distribution and sale of the product (Harlaftis 2001; Focas 1975; Kardasis 1993).

It is clear that the Ionians exploited the broadening demand for wheat and grain of the populations of Western Europe and the need for coal for European steamships. As a result, they managed to consolidate an important business network not only in the ports of the Black Sea, but also in those of Istanbul, Piraeus, Marseille and London. These were the port-stations of the central commercial artery that linked the granaries of the Black Sea with London, the commercial, economic and shipping centre of the world in the 19th century (Davies 2001; Sturmeay 2001).

In London, Ionian entrepreneurs and shipowners set up powerful shipping and commercial enterprises and succeeded in becoming members of the Baltic Exchange Centre. The main contribution of Ionian shipowners and tradesmen during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> was that they provided a developmental boost to Ionian- and Greek-owned commercial shipping via the separation of commercial activities from shipping activities, bringing about the changeover from the dual profession of tradesman-shipowner, to that of specialised shipowner.

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