

Archaeological and iconographic evidence for the post-medieval rig in the Western Black Sea

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The research is one of few studies of Western Black Sea seafaring which use nautical and maritime archaeology approaches and attempts to narrow down the wide topic of post-medieval Western Black Sea seafaring, particularly through focusing on the rig. Two main datasets collected in the last five years provide the nautical data of the research. The first consists of several late medieval shipwrecks with extremely well-preserved upper structures, including rigging elements, discovered on the bottom of the Bulgarian Black Sea during the three field seasons of the M.A.P. Black Sea project – the first high-tech archaeological project ever undertaken in the world. The second dataset is a corpus of 340 ship graffiti carved in four medieval churches in Nessebar, Bulgaria, which were recorded non-destructively using advanced photographic methods during a three-season project which I coordinated. For the purposes of analysis and interpretation of the two datasets, complementary sources of information on rigging such as treatises on rigging, travelers' accounts, published historical evidence, and nautical dictionaries were used. With this I aim to demonstrate the diversity of the rigging arrangements of the ships that navigated Black Sea between the 17th-19th centuries and cover one of the aspects of the maritime history of the region which has been poorly explored. Moreover, it would facilitate our understanding about the response of the Western Black Sea coastal population to the changing post-medieval world, and specifically the effects of those changes on Black Sea seafaring.