



H.F.R.I.
Hellenic Foundation for
Research & Innovation

Description of the funded research project
2nd Call for H.F.R.I. Research Projects
to Support Post-Doctoral Researchers

Title of the research project: From Archaeology of Piracy to Pirate Archaeology. Piracy in the Greek Seas from Prehistoric to Roman Times

Principal Investigator: Vangelis Samaras

Reader-friendly title: A.P.Pir.A.

Scientific Area: Humanities & Arts

Institution and Country: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

Host Institution: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

Collaborating Institution: Museum of Cycladic Art



Budget: 135.000€

Duration: 36 months

Research Project Synopsis

The object of the A.P.Pir.A. project, hosted by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, is the archaeological investigation of piracy in the Greek seas from the Final Neolithic (c. 4500-3200 BC) to the end of the Roman period (330 AD). The term *archaeology of piracy* is borrowed by Thucydides' *Archaeology* (1.2-19), i.e. the first chapters of the work of the great historian, as the project intends to transcribe accordingly the first chapters of piracy, in order to create a completely new subfield of archaeological research, named *pirate archaeology*. The main research aims are (1) to gain a full understanding of this phenomenon and to point out its common features diachronically, (2) to identify the archaeological signature of piracy, and (3) to determine the possible impacts of the identification of the phenomenon on the interpretations given to the archaeological data of Greece at various times. This project completely overturns the established research approach to piracy, as it will be the first systematic investigation of the subject, with a thorough examination of piracy in the Greek seas over the course of five millennia and seeking not only the victims but the pirates themselves. The Department of Educational Programmes of the Museum of Cycladic Art participates in the A.P.Pir.A. project as collaborating organization and will design and implement an educational programme for schoolchildren from 8 to 11 and from 12 to 14 years old. Aim of this programme will be to offer to the students knowledge of ancient piracy in a pleasant way and to contribute to their training to inspect, examine and revolutionize fixed ideas.

Project originality

The A.P.Pir.A. project completely overturns the established research approach to piracy. Up until now, studies on this phenomenon have been historical as a rule, limited to a period covering just a few centuries, and mainly discussing the impacts of pirate activity on coastal and island communities. The A.P.Pir.A. project is the first systematic investigation of the subject, with a thorough examination of piracy in the Greek seas over the course of five millennia and seeking not only the victims but the pirates themselves.

At the same time, the fact that our research is not be limited to the historical period but will extend into prehistoric times is particularly important to Greek prehistoric and early historic archaeology, given that this is the first time that piracy forms the object of systematic, in-depth study, offering new perspectives for archaeological interpretations of the material of these periods. Moreover, this *archaeology of piracy* will be instrumental – via the identification of the archaeological signature of piracy – to the establishment of a new subfield of archaeology: *pirate archaeology*. This can contribute significantly to archaeological research in Greece and, indeed, anywhere in the world where there was intense pirate activity. Obviously, we are under no illusion that the A.P.Pir.A. project will eliminate the many difficulties presented by the study of piracy. It will, however, propose a set of archaeological characteristics, mapping a hitherto uncharted ocean, in order to provide a framework for the archaeological investigation of this complex phenomenon in future.

Expected results & Research Project Impact

The A.P.Pir.A. project is expected to have a particularly significant scientific and social impact. The *archaeology of piracy* will contribute to the full understanding of an endemic – in the case of Greece – and exceptionally dynamic phenomenon, with multiple influences on many fields of human activity, contributing valuable information to archaeological and historical research. Furthermore, challenging the tacit acknowledgement that piracy cannot be diagnosed archaeologically, the proposed study will offer an alternative and, in some cases at least, more convincing framework of interpretation for the archaeological and historical data. It will also identify archaeological sites which may have been connected with piracy but have hitherto been interpreted in a different way. At the same time, *pirate archaeology* will certainly, through the archaeological criteria and features proposed, contribute significantly to the study of piracy in other regions, too, possibly overturning older interpretations and contributing to the understanding of many previously indecipherable elements.

Concerning the social impact of the project, the fascinating topic of piracy through the educational material and modern training methods will offer to the students knowledge of ancient piracy in a pleasant way. In parallel, the schoolchildren may realize that archaeological research is not restricted to excavations but contributes to the recognition and understanding of various phenomena, like the one of piracy. Maybe the most important contribution of the educational programme is the training of the students to inspect, examine and revolutionize fixed ideas (reconceptualization). This training on analysing and having a critical view on fixed ideas will undoubtedly help the students to develop the sense of social responsibility in order to respond to contemporary social problematic, and to develop a sense of citizenship in a continuously changing society.

The importance of this funding

The acceptance of our proposal for the implementation of the A.P.Pir.A. project from the H.F.R.I. was a source of great pride and responsibility, as it was selected after a demanding and competitive evaluation process, with main criteria the extent of scientific quality, excellence, and innovation. The implementation of this research project is an extremely important step for my academic and personal development, as it offers me the opportunity to form and coordinate a small research team, which consists exclusively of young and promising researchers. Moreover, the H.F.R.I. funding gives the opportunity both to me personally and to the other members of our research team to carry out a high-quality research program, remaining in our place of origin and working on our research interests.



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