

## Cooking, Gender, and Hierarchy: A View From the Sea

It is generally accepted that the responsibility of cooking everyday meals in the Classical and Hellenistic Greek world fell either to women or slaves (Wilkins 2000a, 2000b; Curtis 2012; Villing and Spataro 2015). Conversely, literary evidence indicates that the preparation of high cuisine meals for upscale dinner parties or religious feasts was within the male purview, and that, while the cook may not be of high social standing, he was often free and hired himself out for events (Wilkins 2000a, 2000b; Curtis 2012). These inferences, however, become complicated once we look outside domestic or civic spheres and into the confined spaces of merchant ships. Literary and iconographical evidence indicates that the crews of small merchant ships in the eastern Mediterranean were male and could be either free or slave, and the archaeological evidence suggests that most merchantmen carried small crews of only a few individuals (Casson 1971; Beresford 2013). Who, then, does the cooking? Galley artifacts recovered from two Greek shipwrecks, Tektaş Burnu and Kyrenia, offer evidence that there was little to no separation between free and enslaved men on board the ship. In fact, the relatively uniform quality of dining pottery suggests commensality was the norm for modest-sized ships with a small crew. Therefore, does the sea offer a liminal space where terrestrial gender and power differential norms might be more flexible? Evidence from historical periods of seafaring and maritime literature suggests that it might (Adams 2001; Flatman 2003). For example, the thirteenth century Icelandic *Eyrbyggja saga* refers to daily lots drawn to assign meal duties to crew members (Spalding 2014), and before the twentieth century, seafarers of African descent serving in the British Navy and aboard American commercial ships had occasionally risen to officer ranks (Costello 2012). This paper considers cooking, normally regarded as a female or servile

duty in the Greek world, as an example of how life at sea might have necessitated that social norms be bent.

### Bibliography

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