



Captives and Countrymen: Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785-1816

Lawrence A. Peskin

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In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the Barbary States captured and held for ransom nearly five hundred American sailors. The attacks on Americans abroad and the government's apparent inability to control the situation deeply scarred the public. *Captives and Countrymen* examines the effect of these acts on early national culture and on the new republic's conception of itself and its position in the world.

Lawrence A. Peskin uses newspaper and other contemporaneous accounts—including recently unearthed letters from some of the captive Americans—to show how information about the North African piracy traveled throughout the early republic. His dramatic account reveals early concepts of national identity, party politics, and the use of military power, including the lingering impact of the Barbary Wars on the national consciousness, the effects of white slavery in North Africa on the American abolitionist movement, and the debate over founding a national navy.

This first systematic study of how the United States responded to "Barbary Captivity" shows how public reaction to international events shaped America domestically and its evolving place in the world during the early nineteenth century.

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