

The Travels of Reverend Olafur Egilsson: The Story of the Barbary Corsair Raid on Iceland in 1627

By Olafur Egilsson

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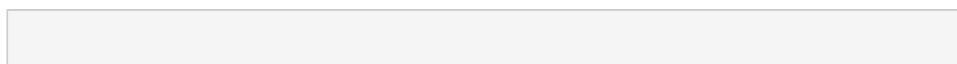
In the summer of 1627, Barbary corsairs raided Iceland, killing dozens of people and abducting close to four hundred to sell into slavery in Algiers. Among those taken was the Lutheran minister Reverend Olafur Egilsson.

Reverend Olafur (born in the same year as William Shakespeare and Galileo Galilei) wrote *The Travels* to chronicle his experiences both as a captive and as a traveler across Europe (he journeyed alone from Algiers to Copenhagen in an attempt to raise funds to ransom the Icelandic captives that remained behind). He was a keen observer, and the narrative is filled with a wealth of detail?social, political, economic, religious?about both the Maghreb and Europe. It is also a moving story on the human level: we witness a man enduring great personal tragedy and struggling to reconcile such calamity with his understanding of God.

The Travels is the first-ever English translation of the Icelandic text. Until now, the corsair raid on Iceland has remained largely unknown in the English speaking world.

To give a clearer sense of the extraordinary events connected with that raid, this edition of *The Travels* includes not only Reverend Olafur's first-person narrative but also a collection of contemporary letters describing both the events of the raid itself and the conditions under which the enslaved Icelanders lived. The book has Appendices containing background information on the cities of Algiers and Salé in the seventeenth century, on Iceland in the seventeenth century, on the manuscripts accessed for the translation, and on the book's early modern European context.

The combination of Reverend Olafur's narrative, the letters, and the material in the Appendices provides a first-hand, in-depth view of early seventeenth-century Europe and the Maghreb equaled by few other works dealing with the period. We are pleased to offer it to the wider audience that an English edition allows.



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Editorial Review

About the Author

Karl Smári Hreinsson is freelance writer and documentary film maker. Additionally he owns and operates Saga Akademia, a language school in Iceland. Adam Nichols is associate professor of English at the University of Maryland.

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