## The preparation for the long journey lasting 6-7 months was like a small ritual for the sponge divers.

Let's recapture it.

The preparation for the departure (pokinimata) lasted almost 2 months during February and March and the whole island was on the alert.

The captains recruited and the crew collected all the necessary tools for their work at a hectic pace. They prepared their provisions: sea biscuits, kavourmas — traditional preserved meat- pulses, salt fish in sacks and plenty of barrels full of water were gathered on the tank.

Because of the dangerous nature of their work, the whole weeks prior to their departure they made merry at the taverns of the island 'until the strings of the violin were broken'

They often spent all the advanced payment they got from the captain

'Let me sing and enjoy myself, next year who knows if I would be dead or alive or in other places.'

Before the departure, the consecration with holy water was mandatory, it was an appeal to the grace of St Nikolas, the protector and spiritual haven of the divers.

Anchors aweigh!

The day of the departure was difficult and overwhelmed with intense feelings. Mothers, women and children, elderly sponge divers gathered at the port to say goodbye to their own people.

The boats sailed and the horizon was full of the farewell waving of white handkerchiefs and wishes for a safe journey.





