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THE SOUND AND THE FURY: CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES  
ON OTTOMAN NAVAL ORGANIZATION, 1590-1620

Self-perception offers a revealing insight into the nature and evolution of historical empires. Contemporary and later chroniclers were united in interpreting the period 1590-1620 as one in which disorder and chaos characterized the Ottoman Empire. The period after 1590 was almost universally described as *zaman-i ihtilal*, meaning «a time of disorder» in the specific sense of the disturbance of a system. This was in contrast to previous eras, the time of «good order and regularity, of systematic arrangement» and «a time of maturity and perfection»<sup>1</sup>. Many Christian observers of the day believed the Ottoman Empire to be in decline, a perception that dovetailed with the outlook and preoccupations of nineteenth and twentieth century historians, concerned as they were with the rise and fall of empires<sup>2</sup>. Observers from both inside and outside the House of Osmân believed that the origins of this decline or instability lay in the personal failings of successive Sultans. «The Prince is the Physician of the State», observed one English traveller to Istanbul, «but how can he

List of abbreviations: Ags, Archivo General de Simancas; Est., Secretaría de Estado; CSPV, Calendar of State Papers Venice. In using Turkish terms I have employed the spelling used by recent Ottoman scholars.

<sup>1</sup> C. Woodhead, *Perspectives on Süleyman*, in C. Woodhead, M. Kunt (eds.), *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age. The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*, Longman, Harlow and New York, 1995, p. 189. This paper is a reworking of a chapter from my doctorate, *Piracy and naval conflict in the Mediterranean, 1590-1610/20*, Thesis presented for the degree of D.PHIL at the University of Oxford, 2001. I am grateful to Robin Briggs, Prof R. A. Stradling, Dr David Parrott and Dr Patrick Williams for their perceptive criticisms of it. Dr Rhoads Murphey provided me with valuable help and advice. I would like to dedicate this paper to the memory of my grandparents, John and Rosie, George and Freda.

<sup>2</sup> H. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire. The Classical Age 1300-1600*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1973, p. 51; C. Woodhead, «The Present Terror of the World? Contemporary Views of the Ottoman Empire c1600», *History. The Journal of the Historical Association*, vol. 72, n. 234 (1987), pp. 20-37.

cure it if he himself be sick?»<sup>3</sup>. The recent work of scholars such as Christine Woodhead, Metin Kunt, Rhoads Murphey, Andrew C. Hess, Suraiya Faroqhi, Daniel Goffman and Colin Imber has striven to reconcile the assessments made by sixteenth and seventeenth century commentators with the picture, necessarily more nuanced and complex, that emerges from the Ottoman archives. Goffman has recently argued that the interpretation of the Empire as being in terminal decline from 1580 is not so much wrong as inadequate as a means of understanding the complexity of Ottoman history in this period<sup>4</sup>.

In line with this «revisionist» line of thinking, Alexander H. de Groot has provided a re-assessment of the navy after 1580, suggesting that the Ottoman threat remained vigorous throughout the seventeenth century. The fleet, numbering between forty and fifty galleys, employed roughly one-fifth of the number of men who were active in the army<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless well-informed and intelligent Christian statesmen of the period 1590-1620 were convinced that

<sup>3</sup> G. MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel. English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720*, Palgrave, London and New York, 2004, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> The starting point of this «revisionist» line of thinking can be traced back to H. Inalcik, *Military and Fiscal Transformation of the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700*, «Archivum Ottomanicum», VI (1980), pp. 283-337. A number of essays in C. Woodhead, M. Kunt (eds.), *Süleyman the Magnificent and his Age* cit., deal with this theme: M. Kunt, *State and Sultan up to the age of Süleyman: frontier principality to world empire*, pp. 3-29; G. Dávid, *Administration in Ottoman Europe*, pp. 71-89; S. Faroqhi, *Politics and socio-economic change in the Ottoman Empire of the later sixteenth century*, pp. 91-113; C. Woodhead, *Perspectives on Süleyman* cit., pp. 164-190. In addition, A. Williams, *Mediterranean Conflict*, pp. 39-54, is also of interest to the subject examined here. Other relevant works are S. Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History. An Introduction to the Sources*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, and Id., *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, IB Tauris & Co, New York, 2004; R. Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare 1500-1700*, UCL Press, London, 1999; Rifa'at 'Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State. The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1991; I. M. Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants. The Transformation of the Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1983; D. Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, esp., pp. 123-7.

<sup>5</sup> A. H. de Groot, *The Ottoman Threat to Europe, 1571-1800: Historical Fact or Fancy?*, in V. Mallia-Milanes (ed.), *Hospitaller Malta 1530-1798. Studies on Early Modern Malta and the Order of St-John of Jerusalem*, Mireva, Malta, 1993, pp. 199-254; Id., *The Ottoman Mediterranean since Lepanto (October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1571). Naval warfare during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, «Anatolica», n. 20 (1994) pp. 269-293; R. Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare* cit., pp.17-23 and *The Ottoman Resurgence in the seventeenth-cen-*

the Empire and its armada were in a much weaker state than they had been under Süleyman I (1520-1566). Noting that the Christian corsairs were daring to venture as far as the castles of the Dardanelles, the Count of Miranda, Viceroy of Naples, suggested in 1591 that sixty or seventy galleys could destroy the entire Archipelago<sup>6</sup>. In 1607 the Venetian ambassador at Constantinople remarked to the Spanish that «if your Don Juan of Austria were alive, he would decide to come one day to dine in Constantinople and would be able to do so»<sup>7</sup>. That year Ferdinando dei' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany (1587-1609), sent an armada to attempt to capture Fama-gosta. The Viceroy of Naples, the Count of Benavente, remarked that what had once been impossible for such a prince – he meant «such a minor prince» – was now «not very difficult, on account of the state in which the Turk finds himself»<sup>8</sup>. Certainly Spanish statesmen based major decisions upon their assessment of the Ottoman Empire. When the Duke of Lerma, favourite of Philip III (1598-1621), advocated the expulsion of the Moriscos in January 1608, his argument for doing so was based upon the difficulty «in which the Turk now finds himself and the affairs of Barbary» where Algiers was involved in a protracted war with the indigenous Arab peoples of the hinterland<sup>9</sup>.

*tury Mediterranean*, «Mediterranean Historical Review», n.8 (1993), pp. 186-200. These works modify the older picture of the Mediterranean as presented in a vast number of works, for instance R. C. Anderson, *Naval Wars in the Levant 1559-1853*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool 1952, pp. 55-120; S. Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo. Cristiani e musulmani fra guerra, schiavitù e commercio*, Mondadori, Milan, 1993, pp. 20-1; F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Collins, London, 1972, 2 volumes, translated by S. Reynolds, II, pp. 1139-1142, 1222-32. Colin Imber's two classic essays represent the 1560 of scholarship into the Ottoman fleet, *The Navy of Süleyman the Magnificent*, «Archivum Ottomanicum», VI (1980), pp. 211-82 and Id., *The reconstruction of the Ottoman fleet after the battle of Lepanto, 1571-2*, «Studies in Ottoman History and Law», Istanbul, 1996, pp. 85-101.

<sup>6</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1092, fol. 158 Miranda to Philip II, Naples 20 June 1591.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1352, fol. 58, Avisos 20 March 1607. This report includes a number of dispatches from Ottaviano Bon. In order to save space, I have used the term «Avisos» for the long titles of dispatches from Constantinople. Similarly, many documents contain a series of *avisos* from different agents or dates, and so have been cited on several occasions. In order to save space and avoid confusion, I have not referred to previous citations of the same document.

<sup>8</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1104, fol. 83, Benavente to Philip III, Naples 17 August 1607.

<sup>9</sup> A. D. Ortiz & B. Vincent, *Historia de los moriscos. Vida y tragedia de una minoría*, Alianza, Madrid, 1978, p. 171.

The use of Christian documentation inevitably raises the question of reliability. The Christian states competed among themselves to secure information; they routinely circulated dispatches that served their particular political and military interests: thus the Knights of Malta frequently exaggerated the threat from the Levant in order to secure men and provisions from Sicily<sup>10</sup>. The Republic of Venice was forever «crying wolf». In September 1606 Benavente dismissed reports that the enemy fleet ran to seventy sail with more than 8,000 soldiers as «an invention of Venetians»<sup>11</sup>. The most prized sources of intelligence came from agents inside the Sultan's palaces, of whom there were normally several at any one time<sup>12</sup>. Where the documents in the Archivo General de Simancas can be juxtaposed with the recent research of Ottoman specialists a high degree of corroboration emerges. For instance the intelligence reports tell us that the preparations for the fleet were interrupted in 1595 and 1601 as a result of the political situation at Court. We know from Murphey's research that in these years the preparations for the campaigns in Hungary were also thrown into disarray by political infighting in Istanbul<sup>13</sup>. It is also clear that some of the Ottoman records appear to be at best highly-misleading<sup>14</sup>.

Part of the value of the assessments made by contemporary Christian spies, commanders, ambassadors and viceroys lies in the difference between their evaluation of the Sultan's fleet and the appraisal made by de Groot. Statesmen of the day measured Ottoman for-

<sup>10</sup> Thus in 1610 Alof de Wignacourt, the Grand Master of Malta (1601-22), warned that the new *kapudan-i deryâ* was «the best and most fortunate (*venturoso*) captain there had ever been in that Empire». Yet according to the dispatches arriving in Sicily, the new admiral was simply the son-in-law of the Grand Vizier, «little skilled in the affairs of the sea but a man of [whom there are] high hopes», Ags, Est., leg. 164, fol. 13, *Copia de la carta q[ue] el Gran Maestre de ...*, and fol. 33 Duke of Escalona to Philip III, Palermo 28 May 1610. In fact, despite this speculation Khalil Pasha was reappointed.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1103, fol. 175, Benavente to Philip III, Naples 15 September 1606.

<sup>12</sup> For some details on the recruitment and assessment of spies, *Ibid.*, lib. 'K' 1677, fol. 104, Don Francisco de Vera to Philip III, Venice 17 March 1601; lib. 'K' 1678, fol. 43b, Don Alonso de la Cueva to Philip III, Venice 30 May 1608.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1545, fols. 86-7, Avisos 5 to 22 April 1595; lib. 'K' 1677, fols. 97, 107, 123 Avisos 19 February to 22 May 1601; R. Murphey, *Warfare* cit., pp. 31, 138-14.

<sup>14</sup> Claims to have repeatedly attacked Reggio di Calabria in the late 1580s and early 1590s (A. H. de Groot, *Ottoman Threat* cit., pp. 215-6) are confusing at best: the town was razed only once, in 1594.

ces against their own and within the context of the history of Mediterranean warfare. In doing so, they compared two very different administrative systems, and the criteria by which they judged the *armada del Turco* reveals a great deal about their own assumptions and priorities. In turn their thoughts should provide an understanding of naval warfare in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Christian statesmen believed that the defining characteristic of the Sultan's navy lay in its command structure. Essentially, the entire apparatus of Ottoman naval administration depended upon the character of the high admiral, the *kapudan-i deryâ*. (*pace* Imber, the terms «Kapudan Pasha» and «high admiral» will be used interchangeably in this paper) and the political situation at the Istanbul court. The critical feature in this system was the comparative weakness of the Ottoman navy in relation to the enormous wealth of the Levant. The underlying problem for the imperial navy was that its administrative system was calibrated to ensure a degree of instability. As an isolated individual unsure of what the next round of ministerial changes would bring, the Pashas looked to the Grand Signor as the only source of power. The Venetian ambassador Ottaviano Bon phrased this observation succinctly, stating that the Pashas always lived in great fear of summary execution «as it hath been ever observed, that few viziers die in their beds, which makes them use this proverb, *that he that is even the greatest in office, is but a statue of glass*»<sup>15</sup>.

The perception of Christian contemporaries was that the Ottoman system had been established precisely to avoid the interruption of military discipline by political machination. The commander-in-chief (*serdar* or *serasker*) of land forces and the *kapudan-i deryâ* were appointed for the duration of one campaigning season only. What happened in the 1590s was that the safeguards in this «constitution» were circumvented. Discipline was not enforced; failures were not punished<sup>16</sup>. At this point the former strengths of

<sup>15</sup> O. Bon, *The Sultan's Seraglio. An Intimate Portrait of Life at the Ottoman Court*, with an introduction and endnotes by Godfrey Goodwin, Saqi Books, London, 1996, p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, after the fracas of the 1607 attack on the galleons from Naples (see below), «the Turk» (meaning «the Sultan») was so enraged that he was considering cutting off the head of the Kapudan Pasha. However bribes saved the admiral's neck, Aqs, Est., leg. 1352, fol. 109, Avisos 22 August 1607.

the Ottoman system turned into its principal weaknesses. Individual self-interest took precedence over service to the Sultan; as dynastic or client-patron networks emerged, they were able to erode the Spartan military discipline which had previously characterized the Empire. Recent Ottoman specialists have agreed that these changes took place but have suggested that they also had positive effects: many innovations – for instance, the involvement of women in political affairs – are now viewed more as creative adjustments than as symptoms of decline. In the long term they allowed the Empire to survive the enormous challenges of the period 1580-1650<sup>17</sup>. Perhaps some sort of division between short- and long-term factors is needed; the assumption underpinning the Christian understanding of the Empire at the time was that these changes, and the instability that they engendered, brought about an enormous reduction in the operational efficiency of the fleet.

This assessment can be closely tied to the conclusions of recent research conducted in the Ottoman archives. Imber has demonstrated that the reconstruction of the imperial fleet after the defeat at Lepanto (7 October 1571) was largely due to the efforts of the Grand Vizier, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, who had previously served as the high admiral in the years 1546-49<sup>18</sup>. He concludes that the most marked feature of Ottoman military organization was the lack of highly developed institutions. Even in its heyday the imperial navy depended upon the diligence of the high admiral, the Grand Vizier, the Sultan himself, a few hundred captains and their officers and crewmen, the *Azabs*<sup>19</sup>. Certainly in the eyes of the Christian spies of the 1590s and early 1600s the weakness of the Ottoman navy originated in the absence of an institutional and financial structure which might have sustained preparations throughout the year. In contrast, the Ottoman army enjoyed a greater degree of administrative stability. If there was no «institution» of the army, then it was nevertheless true that land forces were established with permanent administrative and corporate structures based around the *kapi*

<sup>17</sup> C. Woodhead, *Perspectives on Süleyman* cit., pp. 188-9; L. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem. Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 1993, pp.153-185.

<sup>18</sup> C. Imber, *The reconstruction of the Ottoman fleet* cit., *passim* and *esp.* pp. 86-100.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.100-1; Id., *The Ottoman Empire. 1300-1650. The Structure of Power*, Palgrave, Basingstoke and New York, p. 303.

*kulus*, the full-time professional warriors who were the slaves of the Sultan<sup>20</sup>.

The Ottoman galley fleet depended upon the annual levy of oarsmen (known as the *kürekçi azap*) in the provinces of Anatolia (Asia Minor) and Rumelia (the European province of the Empire, south of the Danube). Imber notes that mortality rates must have been high; certainly many recruits sought to desert before they were placed aboard the galleys<sup>21</sup>. The Christian galley squadrons were, with the possible exception of those of Venice, based upon the principle that the oarsman's performance dramatically improved during the first four years of his service on the banks. The western assessment of the Ottoman fleet was that the reliance upon volunteers and new recruits inevitably meant that the fleet was propelled by comparatively weak rowers – its galleys sallied «in poor order». It found long voyages to be difficult and dangerous<sup>22</sup>. But this was not the only way in which it was different to the western flotillas. As Imber has demonstrated, throughout the sixteenth century Christian observers reported that the Ottoman hulls were constructed with unseasoned wood, meaning that they did not last long<sup>23</sup>. In contrast, the hulls of the galleys of Spain were supposed to endure for around 14 years<sup>24</sup>. Certain other long-term weaknesses were pointed out: one of these was that the Ottoman armada was beset by a failure to recruit maritime peoples. The troops used in the sixteenth century were drawn from the *timar*-holding (or *timariot*) *sepahis* and janissaries, unused to life at sea<sup>25</sup>. Again, Christian commanders were acutely aware of the extent to which troops had to be toughened up for service on the galleys. The Ottoman navy was consistently observed to be essentially a land force that had been sent to sea: consequently its men very quickly fell ill, meaning that there was an inverse correlation between the time spent

<sup>20</sup> R. Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare* cit., pp. 25-34, 133-168; J. F. Guilmartin, Jr., *Ideology and Conflict: The Wars of the Ottoman Empire, 1453-1606*, «Journal of Interdisciplinary History», XVIII: 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 729-31. See also Imber's perceptive concluding comments on the survival and resilience of the Empire, *Ottoman Empire* cit., pp. 318-325.

<sup>21</sup> C. Imber, *Navy of Süleyman* cit., pp. 265-8.

<sup>22</sup> For instance in 1618, Aqs, Est., leg. 1930, fol. 202, Avisos 6 July 1618.

<sup>23</sup> C. Imber, *Navy of Süleyman* cit., p. 225.

<sup>24</sup> Although there is some evidence that the regulations were not followed, D. Goodman, *Spanish naval power: Reconstruction and Defeat 1589-1669*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 112.

<sup>25</sup> C. Imber, *Navy of Süleyman* cit., pp. 260-1.

at sea and the operational capacity of the armada. Western rulers saw that their squadrons had to be maintained in permanent commission: this alone could provide *galeras en buen orden*, that is to say galleys with strong oarsmen, experienced admirals (captains general), trained crews, seasoned wood and soldiers accustomed to the hardships of life at sea<sup>26</sup>. This was the rationale that permeated all forms of western naval activity. When diplomatic exigencies forced it to do so, the Order of the Knights of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem stated that its *raison d'être* was to provide experienced sailors and commanders, although its claim to have trained Don John of Austria invites scrutiny<sup>27</sup>. The evidence suggests that the political and social training given at the Palace School in Istanbul was geared to producing land warriors. Naval captains were, as Imber notes, rarely promoted to positions of command in the fleet in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. Even in the glory days of the 1550s Pashas secured the position of high admiral over more experienced figures through patronage and political intrigue, although this did not necessarily prevent the appointment of successful admirals<sup>28</sup>. Experience was no guarantee of success: Ja'fer Pasha had been trained in the toughest of naval schools, that of the North African corsairs, but, as we shall see, he was to prove a disappointment as the *kapudan-i deryâ* in the years 1606-7.

It should be stressed that in condemning the failures of the Sultan's navy, our sources frequently compared the actual state of the Ottoman fleet with an idealized image of the Christian squadrons – this is perhaps an example of the sort of distortion or misrepresentation that the late Edward W. Said called «orientalism»<sup>29</sup>. It should

<sup>26</sup> P. Williams, *Past and Present: The Forms and Limits of Spanish naval power in the Mediterranean, 1590-1620*, in M. Rizzo, J. Ruiz Ibáñez, G. Sabatini (eds.), *Le Forze del Principe. Recursos, instrumentos y límites en la práctica del poder soberano en los territorios de la monarquía hispánica*, University of Murcia Press, Murcia, 2003, 2 vols., I, pp. 239-278.

<sup>27</sup> V. Mallia-Milanes, *Venice and Hospitaller Malta 1530-1798. Aspects of a Relationship*, Publishers Enterprise Group, Malta, 1992, p. 93.

<sup>28</sup> The ex-corsair Turgut refused the position of Grand Admiral in the 1550s because he feared the wrath of the Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha, who sought the position for his brother, Sinan Pasha. On the other hand Imber points out that Piyale Pasha proved to be successful Kapudan Pasha, despite his lack of previous experience, C. Imber, *Navy of Süleyman* cit., pp. 226-7.

<sup>29</sup> E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1978, *passim*. This theme is examined in detail by G. MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel* cit., *passim*; S. Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History* cit., pp. 15-16.



be added that the Christian assessors were aware not only of the weaknesses of the «Turkish» system but also of its strengths. As we shall see, the naval forces of Sultans Murad III (1574-95), Mehmed III (1595-1603) and Ahmed I (1603-17) were in many respects greater than those of England under Elizabeth I (1558-1603). Moreover the great unknown was always the *potential* strength of the Ottoman armada. The spectre of a huge Ottoman force lingered throughout the period under study, in part because when disease struck and harvests failed it suited the Knights of Malta to exaggerate the scale of the threat<sup>30</sup>. Yet there was always a reality behind these warnings of a vast and unstoppable fleet that was to descend early in *el año que viene*. If the principal cause of the inefficiency that bedevilled the navy – indeed, the Empire as a whole – lay in the failings of the Sultan and the poisonous rivalries at court, then it was in the character of political and military leadership that reform was most urgently needed<sup>31</sup>. A system whose effectiveness hinged on personality was, by definition, not a difficult one to repair.

This observation can be linked to the belief voiced by nearly all spies, agents, commanders and viceroys that the Ottoman fleet was reactive, that it was brought together in response to the threat from the Christian galleys. When there was no serious threat, it was impossible to envisage the Turks making any «extraordinary efforts»<sup>32</sup>. In one of his last letters, written late in 1605, Gian Andrea Doria warned Philip III that the Turk would have been «stung to see his seas invaded» by the Catholic armada that summer and would

<sup>30</sup> As in 1592 when the Order put out reports that 100 galleys would shortly attack the island, V. Mallia-Milanes, *Venice and Hospitaller Malta* cit., pp. 104-10. These concerns, must, however, be understood within the complex political relationship between Malta, Sicily, Madrid and Rome: in 1591 the wheat exports, the *tratte*, had been withheld.

<sup>31</sup> Here the observations of Christian agents in Istanbul were very similar to the complaints voiced by contemporary Ottoman critics, such as the Bosnian *ulemâ* (a cleric learned in the *Shar'ia*, the sacred law of Islam) Hasan al-Kâfi and Koçu Beg, who presented his celebrated *risâle* or tract to Sultan Murad IV (1623-40). Their argument was that military affairs should be prosecuted by the Sultan and his ministers without the intervention of court intrigue, specifically mentioning the influence of the Ottoman princesses – in this they precisely echoed the assessment of the Christian agents in Istanbul, V.J. Parry, *The Ottoman Empire 1566-1617*, in R.B. Wernham (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History. Volume III: The Counter Reformation and Price Revolution 1559-1610*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 350-2.

<sup>32</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1540, fol. 411, Avisos 1 & 2 September 1590.

send out a large fleet in the search for revenge in the next campaigning season<sup>33</sup>. Corsair expeditions in the Levant were «what agitates the Levant and wakes the Turk», as the Marquis of Villafranca put it in 1615<sup>34</sup>. Spanish statesmen in the age of Cervantes clearly saw that the corsairs of Malta and Leghorn could irritate the Turk, but it was impossible for them to conceive of undertaking major campaigns – *empresas de consideración* – that would bring the Sultan’s Empire crashing down. As Victor Mallia-Milanes has demonstrated, Venetian statesmen repeatedly voiced similar arguments, although their complaints against this form of *el corso* were based upon commercial, not military-financial, considerations<sup>35</sup>. What clear-sighted statesmen came to appreciate was, therefore, that the brilliant expeditions of the corsairs of Malta and Leghorn had proven counter-productive: paradoxically they had ensured that, almost in spite of itself, the Sublime Porte had maintained a large galley fleet. If the Christian galleys were to eschew expeditions in the Levant, reasoned Benavente in December 1605, then the Turkish fleet would in time wither away<sup>36</sup>. Similar perspectives or strategies were voiced by western visitors to Istanbul. The English traveller Henry Blount (1602-1682) suggested that Ottoman military power had been sustained by the threat from the Safavid Persian and the Christian West; without these external pressures, the Empire «could soon corrupt», collapsing into vice and indolence<sup>37</sup>. Such observations doubtless contained a degree of the «orientalism» that Said deplored: they judged complex Ottoman phenomena solely in reference to the external threats to the Empire, thus denying it any internal integrity or rationale. Ironically they would have been rejected by the Sultan’s most implacable enemies, the knightly privateers of Valletta, who were necessarily the most enthusiastic propagators of the image of the Empire as an inherently expansionist *gazi* state. However, with regard to the navy in the period under study it can be demonstrated that, at the very least, there was something to be said for letting sleeping dogs lie.

Those Spanish and Venetian statesmen who warned that constant corsair activity in the Levant ran the danger of provoking a

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1102, fol. 234, Doria to Philip III, Genoa 18 December 1605.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1888, fol. 26, *Consulta* of the Council of State, Madrid 2 December 1614.

<sup>35</sup> V. Mallia-Milanes, *Venice and Hospitaller Malta* cit., *passim*.

<sup>36</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1102, fol. 275 Benavente to Philip III, Naples 1 December 1605

<sup>37</sup> G. MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel* cit., p. 173.

massive Ottoman offensive were, however, drowned out by those who foresaw nothing but opportunity in the almost unguarded wealth of the Sultan's maritime possessions in the eastern Mediterranean. It can be demonstrated that during the 1590s and the early seventeenth century the problems inherent in the Ottoman system of naval administration were compounded by a number of factors – indolent and indecisive Sultans; the personalities and failings of successive admirals; low and irregular levels of financial investment; internal rebellion in Anatolia and throughout the Empire; massive military commitments in Hungary and Persia; the ferocious aggression of the Christian states in both the Mediterranean (the *mar mayor* or *mar blanco*) and Black Sea and – a point that cannot be examined in detail here – the asperity of the weather. The result was the collapse of the annual preparations for the navy into a short window period in late winter or spring, the devastating raids of the privateers in the Levant in the early weeks of the campaigning season, the late arrival of the Ottoman squadrons in the despoiled seas and the futile search for retribution. This cycle itself fuelled – and was fed by – the political prevarication in Istanbul, the rapid turnover of high admirals and, finally, the autumnal threats of two or even three hundred sail *en el año que viene*<sup>38</sup>.

Beyond this, and with respect to the work of Braudel and Imber, we can discern the interaction of state power and geography over the *longue durée*: up until 1574, the vast boundaries of the Ottoman Empire had been a source of nearly limitless quantities of men, timber, sail, metals, equipment, biscuit, munitions and expertise<sup>39</sup>. However the dispersion, and indeed the relative seclusion of those territories which could only be united by the galley, was probably the principal impediment to the proper running of the navy in the period after 1580. It was almost as if the Ottoman fleet could only function on the basis of «all or nothing»: it was capable of the Herculean efforts of 1565 and of the improvised retaliatory raids seen in the late summers of 1598 and 1602, but not of the sort of routine policing operations in spring which would

<sup>38</sup> It is interesting that the Christian agents painstakingly reported all the threats uttered by the Viziers and «ministers» of the Sultan. Doubtless, it was in their interests to do so. For some examples, see F. Braudel, *Mediterranean* cit., II, pp. 1198, 1224-5.

<sup>39</sup> C. Imber, *Navy of Süleyman* cit., pp. 220-2, 228-35; F. Braudel, *Mediterranean* cit., *passim*.

have made such expeditions unnecessary. Indeed there was a sense that both the armada and its enemies were caught in a cycle of violence from which they could not escape: in many years the spectacular attacks of the Christian corsairs destroyed provisions that were (apparently) being sent to the capital for the next year's fleet<sup>40</sup>. This view of the raids invites suspicion in that it serves to portray the *corso* practiced by the Knights of St John and the Tuscan Order of St Stephen as a sort of pre-emptive strike against Ottoman expansionism. As we have seen, highly-informed figures such as Doria and Benavente believed the opposite to be the case. They would have pointed out that numerous administrative and financial restraints held back Ottoman preparations. At every stage eastern supply lines were open to sabotage and ambush. Particularly vulnerable were the Arsenals in the Black Sea, where up to thirty new galleys were burnt by Cossack raiders in 1603<sup>41</sup>. Another long-term problem was that the imperial squadrons were engaged in vital administrative operations that stretched into the winter months, meaning that the galleys and their crews were «ruined» and useless for the next season<sup>42</sup>.

Galley warfare in the Mediterranean in the age of Philip III was governed by a strategic timetable. This was a highly-sophisticated military environment, in which the latest defensive technology was employed on the coasts of Naples, Sicily, Malta and the Venetian territories. Paradoxically, the Ottoman navy in the period 1590-1620 was at once both extremely powerful and profoundly weak, an extraordinary administrative achievement and a total strategic failure. While the imperial fleet was unable to defend its own coastlines against the spring incursions of the élite Christian privateering squadrons, later in the summer the Sublime Porte routinely sent out armadas that were as large, and sometimes larger, than the Anglo-Dutch taskforce that raided Cadiz in 1596. Western commanders and strategists realized that any attempts to take territories from the Sultan were destined to come up against the ceiling that Don John

<sup>40</sup> For example 19 *caramusalis* were captured by three galleys from Malta in the late summer of 1589. 16 were sunk by the knights, who thereby interrupted the preparations for the *gruesa armada* that the Sultan had threatened for the following spring. Ags, Est., leg. 1156, fol. 190, Avisos from Malta 9 October 1589.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1099, fol. 95, Avisos 11 July 1603.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1103, fol. 63, Avisos 12 & 24 December 1605; lib. 'K' 1678, fol. 4, Avisos 21 November 1607.

of Austria had reached at Tunis in 1573-74: it was envisaged that it would be possible to capture positions from the infidel, but extremely difficult to hold them against a determined Ottoman counter-offensive<sup>43</sup>. Peace was as unobtainable as was overall victory. Both the Ottoman Empire and the Catholic Monarchy found that disengagement from the Mediterranean was not an option that they could seriously countenance.

The functions and purposes of the navy had grown with the expansion of the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries<sup>44</sup>. The basic requirement made of the Sultan's fleet was that it should escort two annual convoys from Alexandria: the first was the «caravan» which brought the tax or *sâlyâne* from Egypt in spring; the second was the galleon convoy which sailed in autumn. The details of the attacks do not concern us here, as many of them have been examined by historians such as Michel Fontenay, Mallia-Milanes and Salvatore Bono<sup>45</sup>. In the period 1590-1620 the imperial fleet was incapable of performing these rudimentary policing and convoy operations satisfactorily. Enormous losses were sustained<sup>46</sup>. In 1589 a fleet of seventy sail had been unable to prevent the Knights of Malta running riot in the Levant: one report tells us that the corsair knights had taken 27 ships in total, «and so could hardly fit all the [new] slaves aboard their galleys»<sup>47</sup>. Advance reports from the capital spoke of the cargo of the Alexandrian galleons in 1608 being worth «two millions». When news came through of the capture of a large part of the convoy there was dismay in Istanbul «as nearly everyone in the city had an interest in them»<sup>48</sup>. A contemporary Tuscan prin-

<sup>43</sup> P. Williams, *Past and Present* cit., pp. 265-6.

<sup>44</sup> A.C. Hess, *The Evolution of the Ottoman Seaborne Empire in the Age of Oceanic Discoveries, 1453-1525*, «American Historical Review», 75 (1970), pp. 1892-1919; H. Inalcik, *Ottoman Empire* cit., p. 105; V. J. Parry, *The Ottoman Empire, 1520-66*, in G.R. Elton (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History. Volume II. The Reformation 1520-1599*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1958, pp. 518-531; E. Sola and J. F. de la Peña, *Cervantes y la Berbería*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico and Madrid, 1995, pp. 13-32 gives slightly different details.

<sup>45</sup> M. Fontenay, *L'empire ottoman et le risque corsaire au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in *Actes du II<sup>e</sup> Colloque International d'Histoire*, Athens 1985, pp. 429-59; S. Bono, *Naval Exploits and Privateering*, in V. Mallia-Milanes (ed.), *Hospitaller Malta* cit., pp. 351-398; V. Mallia-Milanes, *Venice and Malta* cit., pp. 99-144.

<sup>46</sup> A. H. de Groot, *Ottoman Threat* cit., p. 200.

<sup>47</sup> Ags. Est., leg. 1092, fol. 6, Miranda to Philip II, Naples 20 January 1590; leg. 1156, fol. 188, *Avisos de Corfu* October 1589.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, lib. 'K' 1678, fols. 114, 119, *Avisos* 28 October to 27 November 1608.

ted account valued the booty captured by the Grand Duke's galleons at one million ducats – a credible claim<sup>49</sup>. In the autumn of 1621 Don Pedro de Leyva, in command of 30 reinforced galleys, captured the entire caravan coming from Alexandria, despite the proximity of 22 Ottoman galleys<sup>50</sup>. The booty must have been worth a huge amount.

Aside from the losses suffered by the convoy system, the Ottoman fleet was regularly unable to defend its own seas, coastlines and fortified harbours. The Christian corsairs succeeded in capturing and sacking major Ottoman bases at Patras (1595 and 1603), Chios (1599), Lepanto (1603), Prevesa (1605) and Durazzo (1606)<sup>51</sup>. In 1607 and 1616 large contingents of the fleet were badly treated by a handful of western galleons (in the former case Benavente claimed, somewhat improbably, that his small squadron consisted of cargo ships which he had innocently sent into the Levant to ferry wheat)<sup>52</sup>. In 1613 the galley squadron of Sicily captured seven Turkish galleys, provoking the fury in Istanbul that was to threaten major reprisals against the West<sup>53</sup>. Furthermore in its pursuit of the western privateers the Ottoman navy was remarkable for its ineptitude. The prizes taken by the enormous armada of 1594 amounted to three galleons belonging to the Ragusan contractor Jorge d'Olisti – a small return for the investment in a fleet of nearly one hundred sail<sup>54</sup>. In 1601 it was a similar story: the «Pasha of the Sea» brought back one Genoese galleon loaded with steel valued at 37,000 escudos<sup>55</sup>. In 1604 and 1607 the high admiral arrested groups of Turkish corsairs in the

<sup>49</sup> G. Guarnieri, *I Cavalieri di Santo Stefano*, Pisa 1960, p. 307. On the merchandise carried from Egypt, O. Bon, *Sultan's Serraglio* cit., p. 99.

<sup>50</sup> R. C. Anderson, *Naval Wars* cit., pp. 109-10; see also the *Relación cierta del viage que Don Pedro de Leyva ... 1621*, reproduced H. Ettinghausen, *Noticias del siglo XVII: La Prensa a Barcelona entre 1612 i 1628*, Juntament de Barcelona, Barcelona, 2000, pp. 335-8.

<sup>51</sup> R.C. Anderson, *Naval Wars* cit., pp. 64-71; C. Fernández-Duro, *Armada española desde la unión de los reinos de Castilla y Aragon*, Madrid 1972 reprint, 9 vols, III, pp. 246-7. Admittedly, the landing at Chios was only a partial success.

<sup>52</sup> In 1607 3 well-armed galleons from Naples battered 33 Ottoman galleys, including the Sultan's flagship, Ags, Est. leg. 1104, fol. 125, Benavente to Philip III, Naples 23 December 1607; R.C. Anderson, *Naval Wars* cit., pp. 86-8; A.H. de Groot, *Ottoman Threat* cit., p. 223.

<sup>53</sup> R .C. Anderson, *Naval Wars* cit., p. 79.

<sup>54</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1544, fol. 167, Avisos 15 October 1594.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1349, fol. 63, Avisos 30 December 1601.

Levant. The prisoners were executed in front of the Sultan and, tellingly, the Christian ambassadors<sup>56</sup>. In 1609 and 1615 a number of light galleons or bertons (*bertoni*) were triumphantly sailed into Constantinople by the high admiral, Khalil Pasha (see below). In January 1618 a fleet of 60 galleys was unable to capture the monastery of the *Santa Casa di Loreto*, the Holy House of the Virgin at Loreto (near Ancona), although on this occasion it was Providence, in the shape of a sudden heavy storm, that defeated the infidel fleet and led to the sinking of 23 of its galleys (\*). In fairness, the Ottomans did enjoy two fairly significant victories over the Catholic Monarchy – the burning of Reggio di Calabria in 1594 and the sacking of Manfredonia in 1620, in which nearly 500 slaves were captured<sup>57</sup>. However both towns had been abandoned by their garrisons prior to the landings. To this list of Ottoman successes can be added the raids of the Barbary corsairs – most notably, Murad *reis*'s expedition to Lanzarote in 1587, which was very possibly timed to coincide with the English attack upon Cadiz and led to the capture of over one thousand slaves<sup>58</sup>.

Those Christian statesmen who believed that the Ottoman fleet performed badly in this period based their assessment not only upon its inability to defend its own seas but also upon the futile attacks launched upon the West by successive Ottoman admirals. Again and again the Ottoman fleet ran along the coasts of Naples and Sicily (1593, 1594, 1598, 1599, 1602) or threatened to do so (in practically any of the years in the period 1590-1620). Such expeditions were viewed with scarcely-concealed bafflement by the westerners: coastal towns in Calabria and Puglia were well fortified; reliable intelligence

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1102, fol. 73, Avisos 20 & 30 January 1605; lib. 'K' 1678, fol. 10, Avisos 8 January 1608. In 1607 a small ship – a *falva* – from Messina was also captured.

<sup>57</sup> A. H. de Groot, *Ottoman Threat* cit., pp. 216-225; R.C. Anderson, *Naval Wars* cit., pp. 108-9.

<sup>58</sup> I. A.A.Thompson, *War and Government in Habsburg Spain, 1560-1620*, Athlone Press, London, 1976, p. 33; R. C. Anderson, *Naval Wars* cit., pp. 63-109.

(\*) This event is recounted in the *Relación verdadera ...* reprinted in Ettinghausen, *Noticias del siglo XVII* cit., pp. 171-174. No reference to the attack is found in R.C. Anderson, *Naval Wars* cit., pp. 100-2 and chapbook accounts like this one can be unreliable. The *Relación* specifically blames the Republic of Venice for its failure to act to defend the Adriatic, and therefore might be linked to the Duke of Osuna's conflict with the Republic. On the other hand, it provides a mass of details. Further research is necessary.

networks allowed the governments to place the militia and cavalry on alert well in advance of any landing (in part this was aided by the delays created by the Ottoman preference for careening their hulls two or three times, a practice that might well be linked to the relatively poor calibre of the materials from which the fleet was assembled); finally extensive tracts of seaside land – the *lugares abiertos* – were abandoned.

Perhaps the clearest example of the futility of this sort of raid upon the coasts of southern Italy can be found in 1598. In this year the Ottoman *kapudan-i deryâ* Cigala arrived with a fleet of 55 galleys off the coast of Messina. Braudel writes that Cigala was able to receive his mother and extended family aboard the flagship – «such official indulgence would have been unheard of twenty years earlier». The Viceroy of Sicily, the Duke of Maqueda, confessed that he was surprised to see such a Turkish fleet arrive, especially since it ran the risk of being confronted by the superior Christian armada which would destroy it «without any doubt». Among the weaknesses of the enemy fleet the Viceroy picked out the fact that it could disembark only 3,000 soldiers<sup>59</sup>.

There can be no doubt that the Ottomans realized the strategic importance of the navy<sup>60</sup>. If they ever forgot, then they could be certain that the representatives of the Republic of Venice would quickly remind them<sup>61</sup>. The command of the Ottoman naval forces of the

<sup>59</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1158, fol. 182, Maqueda to king, Messina 28 September 1598; F. Braudel, *Mediterranean* cit., II, pp.1187-8, 1231-2.

<sup>60</sup> In early December 1606 a debate in the Ottoman imperial council in Constantinople, the *Divan*, stressed that an efficient fleet was of paramount importance to the survival of the Empire, then ravaged by internal rebellions and banditry («the damages done upon land can be remedied only by having a good armada on the sea»), faced with the escalating aggression of the Christian corsairs and the prospect of a large scale intervention by the Catholic armada, Ags, Est., leg. 1352, fol. 35, Avisos 3 December 1606. The Ottomans realized almost immediately after its capture in 1453 that Istanbul would have to be provisioned by and from the sea, C. Imber, *Ottoman Empire* cit., p. 287, n.1. This doubtless made attacks of the sort seen in 1589 especially frustrating for the Turks: in the western Mediterranean, the Muslim corsairs of Barbary would nearly always redeem captured foodships back to their Christian owners.

<sup>61</sup> After fielding vociferous complaints from the Venetian ambassador, the exasperated Grand Vizier, Kuyuju Murad Pasha, explained that it was impossible for the Porte to maintain 100 galleys – or even 50 – continually on the seas. Est., leg. 1352, fol. 83, Avisos 30 May 1607 which includes *Avisos de autor de importancia de 12 de junio 1607*.



White and Black seas fell to the high admiral. The incumbent was accorded the rank of «Pasha», the honorary title attached to senior office. The *Veziir Azam* (commonly referred to as the Grand Vizier) retained the right to inspect the Arsenal as, of course, did the Sultan<sup>62</sup>. Because of the power and importance of the high admiral, the history of the individuals given the position of *kapudan-i deryâ* might be said to be the history of the Ottoman navy itself. Uluç Hasan Pasha, then the governor general (*beylerbeyi*) of Tunis, bought the position of *kapudan-i deryâ* in 1588 for the equivalent of two hundred thousand ducats<sup>63</sup>. In 1591-4 and 1598-1604 the Sicilian renegade Cigala-zâde Yusuf Sinan Pasha was the *kapudan-i deryâ*. (Spanish and Italian documents always used his Christian surname, Cigala, and in order to avoid confusion he is referred to here in this way). In 1595 two figures appear to have held the post: Khalil Pasha – the office-holder – and Memi Arnaute Pasha, his deputy and the commander at sea. The arrangement (or something like it) seems to have been maintained in the following years, as we know that Memi Pasha led the Ottoman navy in 1597<sup>64</sup>. In 1605 Sinan Pasha held the position, and he was succeeded in 1606 by Dervish Pasha (previously the Head Gardener or *Bostanci* Pasha) who apparently served with Ja'fer Pasha, an Algerian corsair. Hafiz Ahmed (also reported by the Christian spies to have previously been the *Bostanci* Pasha) was appointed in 1608<sup>65</sup>. He was replaced in 1609 by Khalil Pasha, previously the *Doganci* Pasha (chief falconer and huntsman to the Sultan)<sup>66</sup>. Khalil Pasha was re-appointed in 1610

<sup>62</sup> H. Inalcik, *Ottoman Empire* cit., p. 96.

<sup>63</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1090, fol. 7, Miranda to Philip II, Naples 1 August 1588.

<sup>64</sup> F. Braudel, *Mediterranean* cit., II, p. 1231.

<sup>65</sup> Admittedly the Christian spies were cautious about supplying the name of the admiral, and often simply gave his previous position and a brief description of his character. Imber cites Katib Chelebi's chronicle, but a degree of confusion over 1606-8 remains. There might be two Kapudan Pashas in one year: one who commanded the fleet in June, and another who was appointed in November or December for the following campaign. C. Imber, *Ottoman Empire* cit., pp.299-300; Ags, Est., leg. 1103, fol. 75, Avisos 13 January & 3 February 1606; see also the Duke of Feria's letter of 4 April 1606, cited below n. 110. The *Bostancipasa* or *Bostanci* Pasha was the Head Gardener, Commander of the Sultan's Guards, Master of the Household, Captain of the Royal Barge and Chief Executioner.

<sup>66</sup> Ags, Est., lib. 'K' 1678, fol. 15, Avisos 15 February 1608. In his *relazione* of 1612 Contarini states that the affairs of the navy were in a very poor order on his arrival in Constantinople, «per l'ignoranza et viltà di Calil Capitano del Mare», cited by R.

and 1611<sup>67</sup>. Despite a record of moderate success, he was forced to make way for *Damad* Mehmed Pasha in 1612-3, whose appointment was facilitated by his status as the Sultan's favourite and son-in-law and who was to prove a disastrous high admiral<sup>68</sup>. Returned to the admiral's palace at Galata in late 1613, Khalil Pasha subsequently served as high admiral in two periods (until 1616 and from December 1619 until 1623). In addition he was the Grand Vizier in the years 1616-19<sup>69</sup>. Chelebi Ali Pasha, son of the governor-general of Tunis, occupied the position of high admiral in the years 1616-19<sup>70</sup>.

The position of high admiral was an annual appointment. The dispatches from Constantinople describe fierce competition amongst the Ottoman ministers to secure it. The position was often purchased with bribes<sup>71</sup>. It was sought not simply for its financial benefits (Venetian sources speak of a guaranteed income of forty thousand *akçes*) and political influence, but also because the incumbent could not be sent as commander-in-chief of the Ottoman territorial forces in either Hungary or Iran<sup>72</sup>. The high admiral also held considerable powers of patronage, and we read of disputes between the Grand Vizier and Kapudan Pasha over the appointment of clients and dependents<sup>73</sup>.

Canosa, *Storia del Mediterraneo nel seicento*, Sapere 2000, Roma, 1997, p. 121. A.H. de Groot confirms the appointment of Khalil in 1609, *Ottoman Threat* cit., p. 217. See also the *relazione* reproduced in N. Barozzi, G. Berchet (eds.), *Relazioni degli stati europei lette al senato dagli ambasciatori veneziani nel secolo decimosettimo*, series V, vol. 1, *Turchia*, Venice, 1871, p. 146.

<sup>67</sup> N. Barozzi, G. Berchet (eds.), *Relazioni* cit., p. 143.

<sup>68</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1358, fol. 29, Avisos 6 & 7 December 1613. Mehmed lost the post in December 1613, and it was given to Khalil Pasha, Aga of the janissaries «*que lo fue dos años ha, hombre de valor y inteligencia de las cosas de la guerra, pero no platico de las de la mar*»; N. Barozzi, G. Berchet (eds.), *Relazioni* cit., p. 141 for 'Mehemet' (here Mehmed) Pasha being *capitano del mare* in 1612. A. H. de Groot, *Ottoman Threat* cit., pp. 214-218.

<sup>69</sup> R.C. Anderson, *Naval Wars* cit., p. 81; N. Barozzi, G. Berchet (eds.), *Relazioni* cit., p. 294; A. H. de Groot, *Ottoman Threat* cit., pp. 214, 218-9. Some of Khalil's correspondence has been published, CSPV 1613-15, n. 227-9.

<sup>70</sup> A. H. de Groot, *Ottoman Threat* cit., p. 223; C. Imber, *Ottoman Empire* cit., p. 300.

<sup>71</sup> E. Alberi (ed.), *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, Florence 1840 series, 3 vols, II, p. 355.

<sup>72</sup> Imber provides details on the salaries paid to the high admirals, *Navy of Süleyman* cit., p. 249; Murphey details the reluctance of imperial soldiers to take part in the eastern campaigns, *Ottoman Warfare* cit., pp. 129-31.

<sup>73</sup> Ags, Est. leg. 1092, fol. 183, Avisos 11 & 12 September 1591; leg. 1544, fol. 170, Avisos 12 November 1594; CSPV 1610-13, n.457.

This form of naval organization necessarily placed enormous importance upon the person of the *kapudan-i deryâ*. Although Khalil Pasha was arguably the most successful admiral of this period, he failed to intrigue western statesmen in the way that Cigala did. As *beylerbeyi* of Baghdad the Sicilian renegade oversaw the capture of two provinces from the Safavid Shah, Luristan and Hamadhan in 1587, and in 1596 he advised Sultan Mehmed III, who had taken personal command of operations in Hungary<sup>74</sup>. His ill-conceived attempts at reform of the *timariot sepahis* after this campaign led directly to the outbreak of *Khurûj-i Jalâliyân* rebellion in Anatolia<sup>75</sup>. Few of his Christian adversaries doubted the reasons for his failure as a naval commander. Nearly all western observers discerned a psychological motivation in his actions: they found no strategic rationale in his attacks and could only speculate that the Kapudan Pasha wanted to demonstrate his power to his homeland, to prove himself the «lord of Calabria»<sup>76</sup>. His actions and plans were subject to constant speculation<sup>77</sup>. His campaigns seemed to owe more to a mentality of vendetta than to any strategically-informed consideration of what the fleet might achieve. Southern Italy was at once his audience and the object of his aggression: on one level he can be taken as a peculiar demonstration of the outlook of the renegade, his loyalties torn between his two religious and political identities. Indeed some contemporaries wondered just where his allegiances lay. In 1602 the French ambassador in Istanbul, Jean Savary de Brèves, was circulating the opinion that Cigala had always been a Christian in his heart, and «through respect to his mother and brother a devotee of Spain. For this reason in his time as admiral he has not inflicted any damage on the territories of the Catholic King»<sup>78</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> F. Braudel, *Mediterranean* cit., II, p. 1202; H. Inalcik, *Ottoman Empire* cit., p. 42; L. Scaraffia, *Rinnegati. Per una storia dell'identità occidentale*, Rome-Bari, 1993, pp. 121-22.

<sup>75</sup> On his military career, V.J. Parry, *Empire 1566-1617* cit., pp. 359-60, 363, 371-5; C. Imber, *Ottoman Empire* cit., p. 73.

<sup>76</sup> L. Scaraffia, *Rinnegati* cit., p. 122; Ags, Est., leg. 1349, fol. 64, Avisos 13 January 1602; leg. 1544, fol. 151, Avisos 27 & 28 February 1594; leg. 1096, fol. 123, Count of Lemos to Philip III, Naples 20 September 1599 and fol. 135, 28 September 1599.

<sup>77</sup> As early as December 1596 the Count of Olivares was relaying rumours to Madrid that the high admiral wished to visit his mother in Messina; clearly much of the speculation about Cigala was well founded. *Ibid.*, leg. 1094, fol. 274, Olivares to Philip II, Naples 13 December 1596.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1160, fol. 116, Duke of Feria to Philip III, Palermo 9 June 1602.

Such complaints were in part a consequence of Cigala's enormous self-regard: this was a man who named his vice-admiral galley after himself and who had apparently promised the Sultan in 1592 that he would storm Messina<sup>79</sup>.

Around twenty galleys were employed every year in the Black Sea to fight against the Cossacks, whose savage attacks shocked even the western spies<sup>80</sup>. Around 40 vessels were maintained in the Mediterranean. Of these, around 25 were administered in what the Christians described as the «guards of the archipelago», that is to say the squadrons of Rhodes, Cyprus and the Aegean islands<sup>81</sup>. A further fifteen or so light galleys (galiots) were stationed in the North African bases under the corsair captains or *reis*.

The intelligence system consistently reported that a comparatively large number of hulls were available, with around 40 to 60 stored in the Arsenal built on the Golden Horn<sup>82</sup>. With concerted efforts in the dockyards, a larger number of hulls would be made available. In October 1609 it was calculated that, overall, just under 80 poorly-constructed hulls would be ready for the following year<sup>83</sup>.

The real problem for the navy lay in finding crews for these vessels. Year after year the spies reported a shortage of oarsmen and claimed that only inexperienced rowers could be enlisted<sup>84</sup>. In 1594 and 1614 – that is to say, the two summers in which efforts were made to send out large fleets – there were about 30 unmanned hulls left behind in Istanbul<sup>85</sup>. These reports were echoed in many years. In May 1612 thirty galleys were available to sally with the other squadrons «but it is not known where they would go; moreover there is a lack of money, oarsmen (*chusma*) and they are not in as good

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1542, fol. 152, Avisos 2 November 1592.

<sup>80</sup> C. Imber, *Ottoman Empire* cit., pp. 315-16, provides an overview of the Cossack attacks and tactics.

<sup>81</sup> On the squadrons of the archipelago de Groot provides details, *Ottoman Threat* cit., p. 207.

<sup>82</sup> Ags, Est., lib. 'K' 1675, fol. 16, *Relación de las galeras que hay en Levante armadas y por armar...*, 5 January 1591; leg. 1349, fol. 64, Avisos 13 January 1602; leg. 1352, fol. 35, Avisos 3 December 1606.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, lib. 'K' 1679, fol. 147, Avisos 3 & 6 October 1609; R. Canosa, *Storia del Mediterraneo* cit., p. 118.

<sup>84</sup> As Benavente calculated would be the case in 1606, see his letter of 1 December 1605 cited above n. 36.

<sup>85</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1544, fols. 159, 161, 164, 166, Avisos 24 June to 2 October 1594; leg. 1358, fol. 205, Avisos 21 July 1614.

order as they ought to be»<sup>86</sup>. Christian observers repeatedly stated that the problems encountered by the Ottoman armada were down to the shortage of funds<sup>87</sup>. It is clear, for instance, that there existed a group of captains without crews (*Azabs*) in the early seventeenth century (56 in 1604, 30 in 1608), and this can only be explained by efforts to economize<sup>88</sup>. However, it seems a little simplistic to argue that all the problems and failings of the fleet originated in financial shortages. This is because much of the expenditure – the salaries of the janissaries and riggers and the service of the *timariot sepahis* – would have been incurred in any circumstances and/or was met as a part of the Ottoman social-administrative system. Imber's study of the navy under Süleyman I has demonstrated that there is an enormous difficulty in assessing overall financial expenditure, as materials and services were secured from across the Empire and were paid for in a variety of ways<sup>89</sup>. Nevertheless, nearly all Spanish and Venetian reports underline the lack of funds as the main reason for the failings of the Turkish fleet. Throughout the period 1590-1620 the central Treasury ploughed the great majority of its disposable funds into the territorial campaigns of the Long Turkish War (1593-1606) against the Emperor Rudolf II (1576-1612), the conflict with the Safavid Shah 'Abbâs I «the Great» (1587-1629) in the periods 1603-12 and 1615-18 and the fighting of internal revolts and lawlessness across large swathes of the Empire (above all the *Khurûj-i Jalâliyân* revolt in Anatolia in the period 1596-1610). The inflationary vortex into which the Ottoman currency had been dragged in the 1580s exacerbated these financial difficulties<sup>90</sup>.

The shortages of funds were compounded by the corruption of the officials and by the profiteering intentions of successive *kapudan-i deryâ*. Command of the eastern seas brought with it the supervision of two very sizeable additional sources of income: bribes and tolls paid by the Italian states for the right to trade in the ports of the Levant (in particular licenses to export wheat from Vólos) and the tri-

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1356, fol. 290, Avisos 19 May 1612.

<sup>87</sup> For example R. Canosa, *Storia del Mediterraneo* cit., pp. 117-124 citing the *relazioni* of the ambassadors Bon (9 June 1609), Simon Contarini (1612), and Cristoforo Valier (6 August 1615).

<sup>88</sup> C. Imber, *Ottoman Empire* cit., p. 304.

<sup>89</sup> *Id.*, *Navy of Süleyman* cit., pp. 218-19.

<sup>90</sup> F. Braudel, *Mediterranean* cit., II, pp. 1203-4; V.J. Parry, *Empire 1566-1617* cit., *passim*.

bute from the *eyâlets* (provincial governorships) of the Aegean and Archipelago<sup>91</sup>. The suspicion voiced by many western commentators was that a portion of these funds regularly found its way into the hands of officials, with a certain amount being used to sustain the armada through the autumn and winter<sup>92</sup>. In 1598 and 1601 the departure of the armada from Istanbul was delayed by the wait for money to arrive, and this suggests that the high admiral was in charge of the provisioning of the fleet after its departure from the capital<sup>93</sup>. In 1607 the *bailo* reported that Ja'fer Pasha, the high admiral, had offered to sustain eighty galleys for the Sultan in exchange for the rights to farm the profits from tolls and privateering. However, the Imperial Council or *Divan* rejected the proposal, not wishing for any one individual to become «master of the sea»<sup>94</sup>. This evidence dovetails with recent research that has emphasized the wealth of the Levant throughout the seventeenth century<sup>95</sup>. Certainly, the Ottoman fleet appears to have gathered momentum and strength after its departure from the capital, as the high admiral was able to collect «tributes» and «presents» as well as janissary and *sepahis* troops in the eastern Mediterranean. It is difficult, therefore, to believe that an overall scarcity of funds was the sole cause of the problems experienced by the Ottoman navy in the period 1590-1620. The fact that the Porte was meeting the annual cost of running at least 60 galleys, manned by (at the very minimum) two thousand men of war and operating for more than six months every year, indicates that considerable resources were available to the Kapudan Pasha<sup>96</sup>. Rather, the documents strongly suggest that the shortages were exacerbated by the fact that funds were irregular, pilfered, channelled into the gal-

<sup>91</sup> A. H. de Groot, *Ottoman Threat* cit., p. 209.

<sup>92</sup> It was reported that his exploitation of the position of high admiral in 1601 had yielded Cigala one hundred thousand *akçes*, Ags, Est., leg. 1349, fol. 65, Avisos 27 January 1602.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1349, fol. 198, Avisos 17 July 1601; F. Braudel, *Mediterranean* cit., II, p. 1232. In both cases these delays occurred after the ceremonial departure from Constantinople.

<sup>94</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1352, fol. 71, Avisos 26 April 1607, «...*el Divan no quiere dejar enseñorear ninguno en la mar*».

<sup>95</sup> R. Murphey, *Ottoman Resurgence* cit., p. 187.

<sup>96</sup> In his valuable study of the Ottoman navy in the period 1640-1700, Dr Murphey argues that «the manpower question constituted the critical variable affecting Ottoman performance in seventeenth century military operations both on land and sea»; R. Murphey, *Ottoman Resurgence* cit., pp. 193-4.

leys during the least productive part of the year or invested unwisely in running as large a number of vessels as possible. In other words the evidence indicates that it was inefficiency that, more than any other factor, handicapped the Ottoman fleet. For this reason, it was practically impossible to separate the question of investment from that of the supervision of naval resources. Given the fact that he bore sole responsibility for the navy, the admiral had to attempt to correct manifest deficiencies even if, as in June 1613, this was a matter of last-minute, cosmetic surgery<sup>97</sup>.

Insofar as the Christian spies working in the Arsenals themselves understood the matter, the proper supervision of naval preparations throughout the winter and spring was as important as monetary injections in priming the fleet. Proper supervision was, of course, repeatedly undermined by the political intrigue that surrounded the appointment of the Kapudan Pasha: there would be no work until the high admiral was secure in his tenure of the post<sup>98</sup>. Any delay in conferring the position would therefore reduce the overall effectiveness of the fleet. This was why the involvement of the *Wâlîde* Sultans (the mother of the prince on the throne) and *Khâsseki* Sultans (the consorts who had born the sultan a child) was believed to be disastrous: not only did they meddle constantly in the selection and assessment of the admiral, but simply by delaying the conferment of the post they also reduced the period available for the preparation of the fleet. By the time that the main corpus of the fleet (the squadron sent out from Istanbul under the high admiral) was ready to sail, the Christian corsairs were already heading back to their bases<sup>99</sup>. The efforts of the craftsmen and officials employed in the Arsenals would subside to the «ordinary level» unless properly supervised. This amount of activity would appear to have been met by the labour of the Christian slaves, and would allow for the preparation of some twenty-five to thirty galleys in Constantinople. This picture is confir-

<sup>97</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1357, fol. 283, Avisos 12 June 1613.

<sup>98</sup> Thus according to the *bailo*, Ottaviano Bon, the lack of activity in the early spring of 1607 was largely attributable to the ambiguous status of the admiral: Ja'fer Pasha had been appointed as *kapudan-i deryâ*, but was not yet certain of being in charge come summer, *ibid.*, leg. 1352, fol. 58, Avisos 20 March 1607.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, lib. 'K' 1675, fols. 39, 42, Avisos 4 & 19 April 1591; leg. 1544, fol. 146, Avisos 1 January 1594; leg. 1545, fols. 195-7, Avisos 12 February to 10 March 1596; leg. 1095, fol. 242, Avisos 10 July 1598; lib. 'K' 1677, fols. 97, 123, 128, Avisos 19 February to 4 June 1601; F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean* cit., II, p. 1232.

med by a report that on 1 April 1615 a disgruntled slave set fire to the munitions dump of the Arsenal at Istanbul, killing 300 Christian slaves but only a handful of Turks<sup>100</sup>. The reports often suggest that auxiliary Turkish or Christian craftsmen were summoned or recruited, although this did not necessarily mean that they would be paid – or even employed. In October 1590 artisans were called to work in the Constantinople dockyards «so that [the officials] can get money for the licenses which they will sell to allow them to return to their homes»<sup>101</sup>. Forced or semi-coercive demands were commonly made of the Christian populations. In May 1591 an order was given for 2,000 rowers to be raised «which they usually do every year in order to scare the Christians, reducing it later to cash payments»<sup>102</sup>. It should be added that work in the Arsenals was just one indicator of naval preparations; the baking of biscuit was another tell-tale signal of intent<sup>103</sup>.

Without political impetus, therefore, work at the Arsenal would subside to the «normal level». Only after the appointment of the High Admiral would serious efforts be undertaken, and even then it sometimes required the intervention of figures from the royal household to pressurize the high admiral to raise his game. In July 1590, for example, work in the Arsenal was restricted to readying old hulls<sup>104</sup>. In June 1591 the building of the galley of the Grand Vizier had to be suspended due to the lack of wood «by which you can judge the [state of the] others»<sup>105</sup>. We read frequently of a shortage of skilled craftsmen. In 1608, for example, the lack of shipwrights in the Arsenal suggested that the three galleasses then under construction would not be satisfactory<sup>106</sup>. Perhaps typical were the events of 1618. In the spring the Porte was putting particular care and diligence into the preparations for the armada, but this was after a winter in which work had been nothing more than routine. The armada would be

<sup>100</sup> *Ags, Est.*, leg. 1359, fol. 148, Avisos 3 April 1615.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1540, fol. 414, Avisos 13 & 14 October 1590.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1541, fol. 215, Avisos 11 May 1591.

<sup>103</sup> As in November 1590, *ibid.*, leg. 1540, fol. 416, Avisos 10 November 1590.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 408, Avisos 21 & 22 July 1590.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1541, fol. 216, *Por cartas de un ministro público de los que reside en Constantinopla de primero de junio 1591*. This mysterious minister was almost certainly the Venetian ambassador, Hieronimo Lippomano.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, lib. 'K' 1678, fol. 36, Avisos 11 May 1608. The report also stated that there would be a shortage of oarsmen.



comprised of sixty vessels, «badly reinforced for the lack of officers (*gente de cabo*), oarsmen and captains of valour and experience to govern galleys. And they will not be able to leave port until the end of April or the middle of May»<sup>107</sup>.

Many years – 1593, 1596, 1607, 1608, 1609, 1615, 1618 – witnessed a number of months of activity in the Ottoman Arsenals, bakeries and armouries<sup>108</sup>. This burst of urgency usually resulted in up to 50 galleys leaving the Dardanelles. In April 1606 the Turks were promising 150 galleys for that summer, but the agents found it impossible to believe that more than 100 would be sent out. In July 1608 three months had been spent working in the Arsenal «but they have not yet got together twenty galleys»<sup>109</sup>. Preparations in other years – 1594 and 1614 being the clearest examples – saw a more concerted effort to muster a large fleet<sup>110</sup>. Once the main squadron had left Istanbul it was common to concentrate men and materials into a smaller number of ships, meaning that between 15 and 30 were cannibalized in order to improve the others.

Istanbul was, according to Blount, «of all places that I ever beheld the most apt to command the world [...] for strength, plenty and commodity no place can equal it: Then it stands almost in the middle of the World, and thereby capable of performing commands over many Countries, without any great prejudice of distance»<sup>111</sup>. From here the high admiral sent to the farthest corners of the Empire for men, provisions, skills and money<sup>112</sup>. Braudel noted that a proposal to galvanize the Turkish fleet was mooted in 1591, a series «of fiscal measures: ‘voluntary’ contributions by the *sanjack-bey*s and Pashas, special levies from Jews and other taxes, details of which are difficult to interpret from the western version»<sup>113</sup>. In late 1592 attempts were made to tempt back the «old captains» into service by gene-

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1930, fol. 119, Avisos 25 May 1618.

<sup>108</sup> For a more detailed account of these years, see P. Williams, *Piracy and naval conflict* cit., pp. 72-5.

<sup>109</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1162, fol. 41, Feria to Philip III, Palermo 4 April 1606; leg. 1105, fol. 61, Avisos 9, 11 & 14 July 1608.

<sup>110</sup> See the numerous reports in *ibid.*, leg. 1544, and leg. 1358.

<sup>111</sup> G. MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel* cit., p. 126.

<sup>112</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1092, fol. 110, *Guillermo de Saboya de Constantinopla a 18 de enero 1591*; leg. 1545, fol. 193, Avisos 14 January 1596; leg. 1349, fol. 194, Avisos 15 June 1603; leg. 1352, fol. 22, Avisos 4 November 1607.

<sup>113</sup> F. Braudel, *Mediterranean* cit., II, p. 1224.

rously increasing their salaries<sup>114</sup>. In 1594 there were plans for the drafting of oarsmen from mining communities in Anatolia to reinforce the *chusma*<sup>115</sup>. Perhaps here a small addition to Said's critique of orientalism can be made. Christian writers portrayed the Ottoman Empire as a land of dark *bagnios* crammed with Christian slaves<sup>116</sup>. The reality was very different. At the heart of an empire of twenty million inhabitants there were only around 1,500 to 2,000 slave oarsmen and craftsmen<sup>117</sup>.

Numerous dispatches detail the administrative operations performed by the navy in the Levant and Black Sea. The most significant of these operations was the policing of the spring convoy or «caravan» from Alexandria, a task which should ideally have been accomplished as early in the season as possible in order to guard against the Christian marauders, and the protection of the commercial galleons late in the season. But there was also a timetable of court ceremony surrounding the launch and departure of the main corpus of the fleet. A frequently-reported detail was a visit to the tomb of the Hayreddin Barbarossa, *kapudan-i deryâ* from 1533 to 1547. He was remembered as the founder of the Ottoman navy, and at his sarcophagus prayers would be offered for the success of the fleet<sup>118</sup>.

The pattern of events should by now be clear. Rarely was it altered. While the Porte was struggling to gather its armada, the lupine Christian corsair squadrons moved into the eastern Mediterranean in April and May, and sometimes even earlier. They seldom failed, in part because of the implacable nature of their aggression. The reports show surprisingly little variation year-on-year: when he heard of his losses in the spring of 1591 the Sultan was despairing

<sup>114</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1542, fol. 150, Avisos 21 September 1592.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1544, fol. 161, Avisos 23 & 24 July 1594. For similar measures in the 1560s, C. Imber, *Navy of Süleyman* cit., p. 266.

<sup>116</sup> For an assessment of the number of Christian slaves in Ottoman lands see R. C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, Palgrave, Basingstoke and New York, 2003, pp. 3-26.

<sup>117</sup> The population figure given by R. Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare* cit., p. 49.

<sup>118</sup> On 23 April 1608 the galley *bastarda* (vice-flagship) of the *kapudan-i deryâ* was launched «with much celebration and artillery salutes», Ags, Est., lib. 'K' 1678, fol. 31, Avisos 26 April 1608. For similar festivities, *ibid.*, leg. 1105, fol. 73, Avisos 11 & 27 July 1608; leg. 1096, fol. 70, Avisos 26 June 1599; A. H. de Groot, *Ottoman Threat* cit., p. 221.

or desperate, *desesperado*<sup>119</sup>. While there may be a hint of exaggeration or chauvinism here, it is nevertheless clear that the violence of the knights was shocking, almost nihilistic in its refusal to compromise with the infidel. The Maltese expedition of 1589 (mentioned above) saw the burning and sinking of at least a dozen grain ships – and this in a year in which harvests had failed across the Mediterranean. Such wanton destruction provoked a fury in Constantinople that ensured that the armada was dispatched in order to repair damages, to investigate the possibility of collusion by Ottoman subjects and, if possible, to recoup lost prestige. The western agents in Istanbul regularly reported this mechanistic response to the Christian attacks – 1592, 1601, 1610 provide clear examples<sup>120</sup>. Only rarely, as in 1615, did the Sublime Porte manage to break out of its spring lethargy and launch a squadron of 25 sail early in April, although it is perhaps revealing that this prompt movement surprised the Venetian government in Zante<sup>121</sup>.

Perhaps the most interesting and well documented example of this mechanism of corsair intrusion, court wrath and tardy response comes from 1602. There was little to concern western agents over the winter months. A report from January stated that the dockyards in Istanbul appeared more «like a cattle shed than an Arsenal»<sup>122</sup>. In early June two Ottoman galleys sailing to the capital from Tunis intercepted and captured a ship that was carrying booty back to Leghorn for the Order of St Stephen, whose knights had ambushed a part of the Alexandria «caravan». The two galleys arrived with this news in Constantinople on 9 June. At this date, Cigala, designated *kapudan-i deryâ* that year, was still at court. Under pressure from the exasperated Sultan, hasty preparations were made to send out as much of a fleet as was possible. Further impetus was added by reports, again somewhat exaggerated, of the size of the Catholic armada. Inevitably, the Turkish galleys were in poor trim<sup>123</sup>. On 9 June the Viceroy of Sicily, the Duke of Feria, relayed reports of the

<sup>119</sup> For example Ags, Est., lib. 'K', fol. 55, Avisos 31 May 1591.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1542, fol. 145, Avisos 11 & 13 July 1592; lib. 'K' 1677, fol. 128, Avisos 3 & 4 June 1601; leg. 1354, fols. 79, 109, Avisos 7 February & 3 April 1610; F. Braudel, *Mediterranean cit.*, II, p. 1231.

<sup>121</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1359, fol. 140, Avisos 20 March 1615; CSPV 1613-15, n. 774.

<sup>122</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1349, fol. 64, Avisos 13 January 1602.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 195, Avisos 23 June 1602; fol. 75 Avisos 7 July 1602.

enemy fleet without expressing any concern<sup>124</sup>. But by the end of the month the high admiral was in Modon with 60 galleys, «thirty well armed and thirty the very opposite». He would be able to embark 3,000 janissaries and 3,000 *sepahis*, «and some other men of service»<sup>125</sup>. An attack by a disembarkation force of 3,000 Turks upon Reggio di Calabria was unsuccessful, despite the town being garrisoned by only 100 Spanish soldiers<sup>126</sup>. In Genoa the news of the retirement of Cigala's fleet was well received, especially in light of «the little damage» that he had been able to inflict<sup>127</sup>.

The Christian corsair galleys did their damage as the evenings grew longer: Philip III's commanders came quickly to realize that the prospects of any major effort by the Catholic armada depended upon them persuading the privateers of Leghorn and Valletta to hold back from spring raids in the Levant which could only serve to mobilize Ottoman forces on land and sea<sup>128</sup>. The problem for Istanbul in many years was that its fleet was not in shape until the evenings began to shorten. In 1608, 1610, 1612 and 1615 the privateers sailed aboard bertons (*bertoni*), high-sided vessels that were better equipped than oared warships to navigate in rough seas. The Christian corsair threat was expanding into parts of the calendar that previously had been safe. However the point of enduring relevance was that the Porte was as inadequately prepared to face the new challenge as it had been the old. Other powers – Spain with its two annual treasure fleets from the Indies and Venice in the Levant itself – had proved themselves to be capable of organizing successful convoy systems. Braudel, noting that spring comes early to the eastern Mediterranean, suggested that the fine weather of April and May in the Levant had benefited the Ottomans in the early and mid-sixteenth century<sup>129</sup>. In the age of Philip III the same climatic patterns

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1160, fol. 117, Feria to Philip III, Palermo 9 June 1602.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 137, Feria to Philip III, Palermo 14 August 1602.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1349, fol. 38, Francisco de Vera y Aragón to Philip III, Venice 28 September 1602.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1431, fol. 210, Don Juan Vivas to Philip III, Genoa 21 September 1602.

<sup>128</sup> Thus a plan to capture the Alexandria caravan depended upon lulling the Turks into a false sense of security, *echando voz* that the Christian squadrons were to chase corsairs around Sardinia. *Ibid.*, leg. 1106, fol. 199, Marquis of Santa Cruz to Philip III, Naples 5 December 1611.

<sup>129</sup> F. Braudel, *Mediterranean* cit., I, p. 137. The main Ottoman fleet had departed from Istanbul by 22 March 1565, R.C. Anderson, *Naval Wars* cit., p. 18.

abetted the western privateers. Clearly, the rhythm of seasons determined the timetable of piracy and war.

The return of the imperial armada to Constantinople was almost always the scene of bitter recriminations. The failure of the 1594 fleet provided Cigala's enemies with all the ammunition they needed. The high admiral arrived back to a hostile reception in Constantinople on 11 or 12 December with sixteen galleys. As late as Christmas Eve he had not kissed the hand of the Sultan «for the imputations and bad offices which were made against him in his absence». The race to succeed him had already begun<sup>130</sup>.

The *kapudan-i deryâ* was nearly always detained at sea with administrative chores until late November and frequently into December. This allowed him to circulate his account of events and, more importantly, to hand out bribes at court. The drawback was that the terrible conditions aboard galleys in these chilly months killed the oarsmen in their droves<sup>131</sup>. When things had gone disastrously wrong – as in 1608 and 1613 – the high admiral used his political influence to assuage the fury. In 1613 Mehmed Pasha employed his consort, a daughter of Sultan Ahmed, to secure what was, in effect, a pardon<sup>132</sup>. In both 1610 and 1614 Khalil Pasha sent ahead with news of his «great victories» over the Christians; these accounts turned out to be gross exaggerations<sup>133</sup>. In 1615 – one of the few summers in which Christian marauders were captured – events took a bizarre turn. Having returned on 7 November, the Kapudan Pasha claimed that he had been warned in a dream about the danger of the Ottoman fleet being discovered in a Greek harbour by the Christian armada. This premonition had, apparently, saved the entire armada from destruction<sup>134</sup>.

In 1609 Khalil Pasha captured two large galleons fitted-out in Malta and Leghorn, a galiot, two English *bertoni* and a number of

<sup>130</sup> Aqs, Est., leg. 1544, fols. 170, 173-4, Avisos 12 November to 24 December 1594.

<sup>131</sup> For instance by November 1607 the majority of the *chusma* had been killed by the «severity of the weather». Once again oarsmen would be the great necessity for *el año que viene*, «and so they condemn to the galleys as many as possible». *Ibid.*, lib. 'K' 1678, fol. 4, Avisos 21 November 1607.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 100, 114, 118, 119, 127, 136, Avisos 27 September to 30 December 1608; leg. 1358, fol. 16, Avisos 21 November 1613; F. Braudel, *Mediterranean* cit., II, pp. 878-9.

<sup>133</sup> Aqs, Est., leg. 1355, fols. 295-6, Avisos 10 & 11 December 1610; leg. 1358, fols. 239, 284, Avisos 20 August to 2 October 1614.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1360, fol. 6, Avisos 14 November 1615.

smaller craft<sup>135</sup>. In both 1609 and 1615 the returning fleet was met with joyous celebrations in which captives were paraded: in 1609 a number of Knights of St John were taken prisoner and in recognition of his success Khalil was raised to the vizierate<sup>136</sup>. Yet the festivities of this year (described in two very detailed reports) might tell us something about the causes of long-term failure. The idiom of the festivities of 1609 was political rather than military – artillery salutes, processions, *banderas*, the humbling of slaves before their new master, political advancement and, perhaps most evocatively, the untarnished, virgin galleys which were sent out to the admiral ahead of his ceremonial entrance. Ottoman power at its height had impressed Christian observers for its piety and humility. On the return of the fleet following the resounding success at Djerba in 1560, Süleyman I immediately went to a mosque to thank Allah for the victory<sup>137</sup>. The triumphant entrance of 1609 emphasized the unity of political and military concerns. This mentality allowed military failures to be mitigated or even excused through political avenues and placed the reputation of the fleet, measured in terms of its size rather than its tactical capabilities, and the need for futile retaliatory raids against the West above strategic considerations of medium- and long-term significance. Put bluntly, the celebrations of 1609, the acts of prevarication of 1608, 1610, 1613, 1614 and many other years besides, not to mention the miraculous deliverance of 1615, belonged to a political environment in which things were not as they seemed, one in which political patronage and prevarication were more important than actual military achievements. Christian commanders had regularly enjoyed comparably successful summers without indulging in such ostentatious celebrations. Indeed, the rivalry between the various western squadrons ensured that any claim to success was subjected to considerable scrutiny, and sometimes to withering scepticism<sup>138</sup>.

In all this it should be taken into account that political symbolism – the robe of honour, the flag, horse and drum – had been a potent feature of Ottoman military and political history since the Empire's

<sup>135</sup> A. H. de Groot, *Ottoman Threat* cit., p. 217; Ags, Est., leg. 1354, fol. 20, Avisos 15 November 1609 & 8 January 1610; CSPV 1607-10, n. 735.

<sup>136</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1354, fols. 43-4, Avisos 12 & 13 December 1609.

<sup>137</sup> V. J. Parry, *Ottoman Empire, 1520-66* cit., p. 533.

<sup>138</sup> The competition between rival *capitánes generales* is examined in P. Williams, *Past and Present* cit., pp. 250-68.

foundation by Osmân Gazi<sup>139</sup>. The nature of the processions of 1609 and 1615 evokes the old debate about the links or continuity between Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire: these spectacles of triumph could have come from the pages of Tacitus. If the Turks did see themselves as the new Romans, then there was no doubt who assumed the role of the Visigoths. By January 1610 it was back to the old pattern of corsair intrusion into the eastern Mediterranean, while in Istanbul they were still refitting the captured galleons<sup>140</sup>. Looking at the period as a whole, allowance must be made for the extraordinary figure of Cigala, who was able to survive setbacks which manifestly destroyed the prospects of many of his successors. There would appear to be a kernel of truth in the observation made, somewhat chauvinistically, by his Christian contemporaries about the dearth of viable competitors<sup>141</sup>. Yet within this pattern the role of the westerners must be given prominence. The almost uninterrupted chain of Christian corsair successes repeatedly forced the hand of the Porte. At moments of crisis, there was only one figure to turn to; after 1604, the mechanism was reversed. The advent of emergency only accelerated the search for commanders of talent. Within this framework, every high admiral was presented with an excellent excuse for failure, *viz.* the manifold deficiencies inherited from his predecessor. In short, there was no sense of institutional or personal accountability of the sort that can be seen in the naval organization of the western Mediterranean powers.

This is not to deny that very impressive forces were gathered under Ottoman admirals in this period. Throughout the summer of 1589 reports consistently stated that the Ottoman fleet carried 8,000 troops<sup>142</sup>. The problem for Istanbul was that even comparatively large forces had little chance of success. The Viceroy of Naples, Miranda, was mystified by the appearance of the Ottoman fleet on the shores of Calabria in August 1594, as a fleet of one hundred sail and carrying «only» 8,000 soldiers (some reports suggested more) was clearly incapable of undertaking a serious campaign – *una empresa de consideración* – against the kingdom<sup>143</sup>. In 1603 the most reliable intelligence

<sup>139</sup> H. Inalcik, *Ottoman Empire* cit., p. 55.

<sup>140</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1354, fol. 76, Avisos 25 January 1610.

<sup>141</sup> A report from 1601 stated that the Empire was at such a loss for talented commanders that it would run the risk of collapse if it lost Cigala, *ibid.*, lib. 'K' 1677, fol. 111, Avisos 4 April 1601.

<sup>142</sup> F. Braudel, *Mediterranean* cit., II, pp. 1190-1.

<sup>143</sup> Ags, Est., leg. 1094, fol. 108, Miranda to Philip II, Naples 18 September 1594.

held that the Ottoman fleet congregated in the Negropont numbered over 50 galleys and was garrisoned by well-equipped janissaries, *sepa-his* and «other men» of the region<sup>144</sup>. In October 1606 the Ottoman fleet consisted of 55 galleys, of which only 30 were «reasonably armed for oarsmen» and the rest were very poorly fitted out. Still the armada was carrying more than 7,000 «marksmen» (*tiradores*). Benavente, perhaps reflecting that in future he would place more faith in the warnings issued by Venice, put the coastal defences on alert<sup>145</sup>. In August 1607 reports reached the government in Sicily that some 60 Turkish galleys had arrived in waters near Zante. The Viceroy, the Duke of Escalona, saw no cause for panic, in part because the report was unconfirmed but also because it seemed unlikely that the Turks would venture from their seas. He would, in the meantime, take the usual precautions<sup>146</sup>. Twelve months later Benavente was slightly more concerned, as the absence of the galleys and Spanish infantry from Naples meant that the enemy armada of fifty well-armed sail and 6,000 to 8,000 troops might be able to cause some damage in the «isolated regions» of the kingdom (that is to say those that were beyond the reach of the light cavalry)<sup>147</sup>. Nevertheless in all these cases the assumption underpinning the response of the governments was that, in normal circumstances, sixty Ottoman galleys would not be enough to launch a meaningful attack upon the coastlines of Naples and Sicily, and much less upon the stark island-fortress of Malta. The usual precautions would suffice, even if they were expensive. In 1603, 1606, 1607 and 1608 the moment passed, as the viceroys had expected, without any significant offensive. There was, however, one exception to this rule. In 1620 the sacking of Manfredonia was accomplished by an armada carrying around 7,000 troops, although it is revealing that this reverse was seen as a disaster by the government of Naples. Had the town put up any collective resistance, its chances of success would have been better than reasonable. It was certainly well-equipped with munitions: when the fleet made its grand entrance into the capital, the spoils presented to the Sultan included 400 barrels of gunpowder<sup>148</sup>. Savary de Brèves's allegation against Cigala – that he remained a Christian at heart – appears unlikely to have been true. What is clear is that other

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1160, fol. 217, Feria to Philip III, Palermo 27 August 1603.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1103, fol. 190, Benavente to Philip III, Naples 5 October 1606.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1162, fol. 209, Escalona to Philip III, Messina 20 August 1607.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, leg. 1105, fol. 56, Benavente to Philip III, Naples 1 August 1608.

<sup>148</sup> A. H. de Groot, *Ottoman Threat* cit., p. 224.



admirals – Hafiz Ahmed Pasha in 1608, for example – had been unable to keep much more modest promises to clean the seas<sup>149</sup>. Khalil Pasha's successes, as detailed by de Groot, should not be overlooked, but on the other hand he sustained heavy losses and rarely contemplated offensives against the Christian powers. Certainly western spies were not very impressed with his achievements: the vessels captured in 1615 were dismissed as «more boats than ships» by Philip III's agents in Istanbul. If there was a hint of prejudice in this sort of assessment, then it would also be fair to say that Khalil had done nothing more than to arrest temporarily the onslaught of the western privateers. Furthermore, Cigala was not the only Pasha of the Sea to find that meaningful attacks on the Christian West were extremely difficult to undertake. The massive preparations for the 1614 armada led only to skirmishes on the coast of Malta, although it should be said that the bulk of forces that summer were diverted to suppress a rebellion in Greece<sup>150</sup>. Cigala's failure must, therefore, be seen in its proper context. While his expeditions can be judged to have been particularly poorly planned, it has to be pointed out that that later admirals were similarly unable to intercept the knightly pirates or to inflict serious damage on the coastlines of Naples, Sicily or Malta. In short his successors would be haunted by exactly the same problems as the Sicilian renegade: caught between a rock – the offensive capability of the western corsairs – and a hard place – the defensive system set up by the Christian powers – the imperial fleet was trapped in a sort of strategic quagmire, as the capture of the two bases of the corsairs, Leghorn and Valletta, was judged by all senior strategists to be beyond the capability of any amphibian operation, even one of two hundred and fifty sail. Generations of Kapudan Pashas after Cigala and Khalil would strive to contain the western corsairs; it would not be until 1798, and the arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte on the island, that the problem of Maltese *corso* would be solved.

Set within this broader historical panorama, the events of the period 1590-1620 might be revised. It could very well be argued that the criteria for success adopted by Christian commentators in these years were unduly harsh and should be modified. After all, it could be held that devastating piratical attacks were a feature of the early modern period as a whole: no sea-faring state or peoples escaped them. Fur-

<sup>149</sup> Aqs, Est., lib. 'K' 1678, fols. 118-9, Avisos 12 to 27 November 1608.

<sup>150</sup> See the numerous reports from this year in *ibid.*, leg. 1358.

thermore it could be argued that the record of Christian campaigns against the Sultan's territories was modest. Those expeditions that were undertaken in the Levant – in 1604, 1605, 1614, 1619 – were based upon the use of stealth<sup>151</sup>. The only large-scale attack fell upon Algiers in 1601 and, again, it is clear that the success of this mission was predicated upon the Turks not anticipating it. Both sides maintained a formidable defensive system. In any summer of the period 1590-1620 there were at least 160 war galleys in operation in the inland sea, not to mention the numerous coastal forces – the legions of light cavalry, regular troops and militias that were called up when danger loomed. The Mediterranean witnessed a sort of Cold War after 1580, in which the actions of the two major territorial powers were governed by the rationale of deterrence. We can hardly expect that the (comparatively) large but (largely) ineffective Ottoman fleets studied here – those of 1589, 1594, 1596, 1598, 1602, 1606, 1607, 1608, 1609, 1614, 1615, 1618, 1620 – will claim a place in the textbooks, but by any objective criteria their size and strength at least entitles them to historical parity with the English fleets of Elizabeth I or James I (1603-25)<sup>152</sup>. Professor John F. Guilmartin, Jr. has written of the symbiotic relationship between the coastal defences and an enemy fleet, arguing that gunpowder technology had tipped the balance in favour of the former in the course of the sixteenth century, thus signalling the death-knell of the Mediterranean system of warfare at sea<sup>153</sup>. While the events described in this paper demonstrate the overall validity of this argument, it must be added that the level of warship mobilization and technological application was far higher in the Mediterranean than in the Atlantic. The fortifications at Messina or Valletta were vastly superior to those at Cadiz or Coruña. Seaside defences in Naples, Sicily and Malta presented an

<sup>151</sup> P. Williams, *Past and Present* cit., pp. 264-66.

<sup>152</sup> The English navy carried around 10,000 soldiers in 1588 and 19,000 in the attack upon Coruña in the following year. On both occasions the overwhelming majority were novices who fell ill very quickly; as many as 11,000 died in the latter expedition. In 1596 the English contingent of the Anglo-Dutch fleet that raided Cadiz carried 6,000 men. As we have seen, Cigala's fleet in 1598 – disdainfully dismissed as it was by the baffled Viceroys – carried more troops than Drake had led (1,925 again with many novices) on his famous expedition to the Indies in 1585-6. P.L. Williams, *Armada*, Tempus, Stroud and Charleston, 2000, pp. 146-7; Id., *Philip II*, Palgrave, Basingstoke and New York, 2000, pp. 188, 211-13.

<sup>153</sup> J.F. Guilmartin Jr., *Gunpowder and Galleys. Changing Technology & Mediterranean Warfare at Sea in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century*, Conway Maritime Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition London, 2003, *passim*.

obstacle that probably could not have been overcome by any amphibian operation in the early modern period. Had Sir Francis Drake landed on the shores of Naples, the viceroy would have called out the militia and had him arrested. The English seadog would have fared little better on the fortified coastlines of Sicily, as Valentina Favaro's recent research has demonstrated<sup>154</sup>. Here we can speak of a long tradition of Mediterranean military architecture. As Anthony T. Luttrell has pointed out, the Hospitallers maintained a tradition of building «some of the mightiest fortresses of their times», from the Krak-des-Chevaliers onwards<sup>155</sup>. In short, the traditional historiographic image of an abandoned Mediterranean and an Atlantic bustling with combatants fitted out with the latest technology presents an exact inversion of the actual state of affairs. Major campaigns came to a halt after 1574 in the inland sea precisely because both sides were able to mobilize such impressive naval forces. Armed deterrence, not abandonment, was the salient characteristic of the Mediterranean in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The case can be re-stated: galley warfare, governed as it was by a strategic timetable, offered very narrow windows of opportunity to any state intent upon major campaigns, *empresas de consideración*. Delays, deficiencies and weaknesses were ruthlessly punished, although it would have to be said that conditions were very different in the two halves of the Mediterranean. The brilliant violence of the Christian knights stands in contrast to the more studied, commercial privateering of the corsairs of North Africa. It should also be stated that the major Ottoman campaigns of the early modern period – those of 1481, 1522, 1565, 1570-1, 1645 – were sent in response to the coruscating attacks of the Knight of Malta. Essentially, the events examined here appear almost identical in nature to the major campaigns of the fifteenth, sixteenth and later-seventeenth centuries. The only difference – and it was obviously a very major difference – between the 1560s and 1600s lay in the scale of the Ottoman response: 200 or so galleys were sent to Malta in the spring of 1565; 60 or so sail were led by Cigala in his vain searches for autumnal retribution at the end of the century<sup>156</sup>. Even during the «time of

<sup>154</sup> V. Favaro, *La Sicilia, fortezza del Mediterraneo*, «Mediterranea. ricerche storiche», n.1 (June 2004), pp. 31-48.

<sup>155</sup> A. T. Luttrell, *Malta and Rhodes: Hospitallers and Islanders*, in V. Mallia-Milanes (ed.), *Hospitaller Malta* cit., pp. 262-264.

<sup>156</sup> On Maltese raids in 1564, R.C. Anderson, *Naval Wars* cit., pp. 17-18.

good order and regularity» the 60 to 80 regular galleys of Sultan Süleyman I had frequently fallen prey to the four or five elite vessels of the knights. The decisive feature of war by oar was not the number of ships mobilized, but rather their quality or order (*orden*).

Writing in 1603 Richard Knolles contrasted the strengths and discipline of the unified Ottoman Empire with the sinfulness and incompetence of the warring princes of Christian Europe<sup>157</sup>. Many statesmen of the Catholic Monarchy would have disagreed profoundly with his assessment. On the other hand, they would have accepted that, in regard to naval organization, two very different systems were in operation. The Catholic Armada was the congregated squadrons of at least nine semi-independent polities, amongst whom a jagged rivalry existed. The Ottoman navy depended disproportionately upon the political and military skill of one man. The careful, regular maintenance of the western fleet was compared with the sudden «fury» that produced an Ottoman armada. Indeed, western commanders frequently wrote about their galleys as if they were thoroughbreds, creatures with long lineages requiring careful husbandry. They were clearly aware of their marked difference to the Ottoman galleys, manned by oarsmen who had been enlisted for only one year's service. The trouble with thoroughbreds was, of course, that they were few in number. Consequently western commanders always sought to hide the target of any intended attack, even sending out squadrons on diversionary raids («to send out the voice» in the documents); their guile compared with the boastfulness of the Viziers, the annual, but empty, promises to punish the Knights for their raids. Whereas the Ottoman system was based upon the recruitment of Christian youngsters (like Cigala) to serve in its highest ranks, the Christian system placed enormous emphasis upon noble pedigree that could be traced back for at least four generations. Indeed purity of blood (*limpieza de sangre*) was one of the organizing principles of Spanish society. It was as if the two systems relied not only upon different political, administrative and social structures, but also upon entirely different organizing principles – fury against prudence; force of numbers against stealth; unity against division; conversion and inclusion against exclusion and the purity of blood; experience against inexperience. The two armadas, and the very different sort of expeditions that they undertook, were reflections of the deeper characteristics that shaped these two civilizations.

<sup>157</sup> Quoted in C. Woodhead, 'The Present Terrou of the World?' cit., pp. 22-24.