The Evolution of the Ottoman Seaborne Empire in the Age of the Oceanic Discoveries, 1453–1525

ANDREW C. HESS

BETWEEN the conquest of Ceuta in 1415 and the circumnavigation of the globe in 1522, Iberian states began the construction of maritime empires that would encompass the world. In the same period Ottoman sultans, entering upon a century of major expansion, created an Islamic seaborne empire. Corresponding in time but different in character, these two imperial maritime ventures came together along the northern coastline of the Indian Ocean to create a new frontier that firmly separated two different societies.

Until recently the study of joint Ottoman and Iberian naval expansion during the years when Christian Europe rose to the position of a world power on the oceans has not attracted attention. European historians, preoccupied with the identification of their own history, first unraveled the dramatic story of the oceanic voyages, the discoveries, and the European commercial and colonial empires, only stopping to consider how Muslim actions influenced the course of European history: Did the Ottoman Turks cause the oceanic explorations? Did the Portuguese discovery of the new route to India divert Asian trade from Mediterranean to Atlantic ports? Once these questions were answered, the study of Islamic history became the work of small, specialized disciplines, such as Oriental studies, which occupied a position on the periphery of the Western historical profession. Finally the successful imperial expansion of Western states in Islamic territories during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries confirmed for most Europeans the idea that the history of Islam, let alone the deeds of Ottoman sultans, had little influence on the expansion of the West.

In the long run, however, the forces that stimulated Western imperialism led to a greater interest in Islamic history. The voyages of discovery, as revolutionary leaps in the technology of communication, reduced the distance between the world's societies and, therefore, brought Muslims and Christians together as

▶ An assistant professor of history at Temple University, Mr. Hess, who specializes in Ottoman history, received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1966, having studied with Stanford Shaw. An earlier article by Mr. Hess, "The Moriscos: An Ottoman Fifth Column in Sixteenth-Century Spain," was published in the AHR in 1968 (LXXIV, 1–25).


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never before. Closer contact supported a wider examination of the other culture not only to meet political needs but also to satisfy Western curiosity about the uniqueness of Muslim ways. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the increasing interaction between Western merchants, missionaries, soldiers, and colonial administrators significantly widened the number of influential Europeans who were sensitive to the role of Islam in the history of the world. Concurrently, Orientalists developed the tools by which the distinct experience of the Muslim community could be explored. By the twentieth century the work of Oriental scholars and the broader cultural exposure of important groups within European society encouraged Western historians to expand their viewpoints to include the history of Islamic society during the age of European expansion.

As one reflection of the desire for a more universal description of modern history, scholars returned to a crucial period in the imperial experience of the Western world to re-examine the interaction between Muslims and Christians during the age of the oceanic discoveries. Since many historians had argued that the balance of world power passed to European nations when Christians learned to sail over great distances on strong ships, Western historians, shifting their attention to non-Western peoples, sought to describe how the new maritime dimension of world competition in the sixteenth century affected the societies of the Near East. With these considerations in mind, the naval history of the powerful Ottoman Empire should have occupied a major position in the modern interpretations of sixteenth-century maritime history. Yet, with few exceptions, the histories dealing with the impact of Western naval power on the Muslim world contain a limited amount of information on the actions of a sixteenth-century state capable of defending itself against the West.

Now that both Western and Turkish scholars have made Islamic sources available, the internal history of the Muslim world, and especially of the Ottoman Empire, can be combined with the earlier work of Western historians to broaden the description of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century maritime history. At the same time Western interpretations of Muslim reactions to the voyages of discovery can be subjected to a new comparative analysis based on hitherto inaccessible Ottoman materials.

Since the descriptions of Western historians have set the framework for modern naval history, the explanations of Professors Arnold J. Toynbee, Carlo M. Cipolla, and William H. McNeill are selected here as representative of a point of view shared by many writers who concentrate upon the importance of the oceanic discoveries for both the history of the Near East and of the world. In his annex on the “lost opportunities” of Ottomans and Scandinavians, Professor Toynbee argues that during the first half of the sixteenth century Ottoman sea power failed to mount successful naval attacks on Portuguese fleets, either in the western Mediterranean or in the Indian Ocean, attacks that if victorious would have severed

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sea communications between Portugal and India. Such Ottoman naval shortcomings then led, in broad strategic terms, to the enclosure of the Muslim world by the navies of Atlantic nations, which, later on, translated their sea power into a political domination of Muslim lands. The technological and economic side of Western naval expansion is the subject of Professor Cipolla’s work. In his study he claims that the balance of world power tilted in favor of the West from the end of the fifteenth century, when Atlantic sailors exploited technical innovations in the arts of sailing and cannon-making to establish superiority on the oceans. Asian societies then failed to respond to the European challenge because powerful socio-cultural factors prohibited the adoption of superior Western technology. Professor McNeill, in the most sophisticated analysis of the Muslim world on the eve of a new era, also sees 1500 as a pivotal date in Muslim as well as Western history. Limited by the Christian reconquest of Spain and the Portuguese domination of the Indian Ocean and by the rising power of Russia and other European states, and weakened by a widening internal conflict between the heterodox Safavid dynasty of Persia and the orthodox Ottoman dynasty of Europe and Asia Minor, the encircled Muslim community turned in upon itself in the sixteenth century, aged, and fell from its old central position to a subordinate rank behind the growing power of the European seagoing states.

Although these brief summaries cannot do justice to the wider arguments of the above authors, they do serve to lay emphasis upon the naval failures of the Muslim world at a critical juncture in the history of the early sixteenth century. But a reading of Muslim sources for that same period produces no such negative picture of an era in Islamic history that was, for the Ottomans, filled with land and sea victories. The contrast in viewpoints suggests that both Ottoman court chroniclers and Western historians have worked to confirm the superiority of their respective cultures.

As Ottoman sources are developed and compared with descriptions of modern naval history, the need for a new view of the Islamic world’s reaction to the voyages of discovery emerges. First, the fact that an Ottoman seaborne community came into being during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is unknown to most authors. Second, the absence of a developed body of historical literature about the Islamic world and the lack of information on social, economic, and intellectual aspects of Muslim history has conditioned most writers to approach the history of the Near East with questions related only to European matters, for which there are records. Thus histories of Western commercial activity in the Near East, of the rising political power of European commercial classes in matters concerning the Muslim world, of the Christian missionary work in Asia, of Western views of

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Asian cultures, all have to do with only one side of a multi-cultured contact. Any accurate judgment on the Muslim response to the new Western naval expansion, however, must take into consideration such internal structures of the Islamic world as its economy, political organization, social structure, technology, and religious institutions, all of which affected the manner in which the Ottoman sultans responded to the appearance of Portuguese ships in the Indian Ocean. Finally, the sixteenth-century collision of the Ottoman and Portuguese empires in the Indian Ocean brought together states with different imperial aims. To assess, therefore, the success or failure of either Ottoman or Portuguese naval imperialism solely on the basis of Western objectives distorts the internal history of the Near East, inflates the impact of Western technology in the sixteenth century, and obscures the reasons why the age of Vasco da Gama produced a new frontier in the Indian Ocean rather than the defeat of either empire.

To mesh Turkish and European naval history is not an easy task, for there is a commonly held notion that the Turks did not engage willingly in maritime activity. As their most ancient records indicate, the Turks developed little naval experience in their limited contacts with the inland seas of Eurasia. Centuries of nomadic warfare, furthermore, ingrained in the steppe nomads notions associating aristocracy with the use of the horse and camel. Turkish warriors, unprepared by their past for either imperial or commercial seafaring, consequently tended to regard the sea as an alien medium for warfare. Paul Rycaut, writing in the seventeenth century when British sea power entered the Mediterranean, summed up this landsman's attitude toward the sea by citing the statement of an Ottoman who, when questioned about the power of the Muslims on the sea, alleged that “... God hath given the sea to the Christians and the land to them [the Muslims].”

Whatever the attitudes of the Turks may have been toward the sea, their invasion of Anatolia at the end of the eleventh century brought them into an area of the world that had a long maritime experience. Turkish warriors reaching the coasts of Asia Minor after the battle of Manzikert in 1071 captured a shoreline that not only had produced sailors and ships since ancient times, but also limited the ability of the Turkish mounted archers to wage war. Only by taking to the sea could the Central Asian bowmen extend their search for new lands and booty, or the Holy War, to the northern Christian states. But the Turks had more than just a problem of crossing the seas that surrounded Asia Minor, for the Byzantine Empire and the Italian republics, armed by a long history of naval warfare, opposed the northern expansion of Islam.

In the eleventh century, however, the level of Eastern Christian naval power

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7 Henry and Renée Kahane and Andreas Tietze, The Lingua Franca in the Levant (Urbana, 1958), 3-10.
had declined from the decades when Byzantine admirals protected commercial routes in the northern half of the Mediterranean against Muslim attacks. Moreover, the antimilitary policies of the early eleventh-century governments had reduced the Byzantine fleet into a polyglot, ill-financed supporting arm of the emperor’s land forces. At the same time the sea trade of the Empire passed more and more into the hands of merchants from the Italian city-states.

The appearance of Turks on Aegean shores in the last quarter of the eleventh century revealed clearly both the weakness of the Byzantine navy and the disaffection of Anatolian maritime communities toward their old masters. From the year 1080 Turkish frontier warriors occupied large sections of the Anatolian coastline, and, with the help of local shipwrights, began to construct war fleets. Although the Orthodox emperor, Alexis Comnenus, destroyed the ships of the first Turkish frontier captain, Abu’l-Qasim, the Turks soon mounted a more serious naval challenge. At Smyrna, an old center of Byzantine naval activity, a Turkish warrior named Chaka, aided by Anatolian artisans, built a large fleet, which ravaged Aegean islands and threatened Constantinople. Provoked to action by the Turkish naval threat, Alexis dispatched in 1091 the largest Byzantine fleet of the eleventh century against a Turkish admiral who had been educated in the capital of the Empire and who had received assistance from the seagoing population of Asia Minor. By the turn of the century, the Byzantine rulers had gained victories over both land and sea expeditions of the Turks and subsequently managed to keep Muslims away from the coastlines of Asia Minor throughout the twelfth century. Ironically their success only accentuated naval decline in the aging Eastern Roman Empire. Dwindling resources in all areas compelled Byzantine rulers to set aside expensive naval operations. Since the seagoing abilities of Italians could be used against both Christian and Muslim opponents for the price of trade concessions that would not directly reduce the land revenues of the Byzantine ruling class, in 1082 the emperor signed trade agreements that handed over naval supremacy in the eastern Mediterranean to the Venetians. Following this peaceful seaborne penetration of the Eastern Roman Empire, other Italian maritime states entered the Levant as the suppliers of Christian Crusaders. Strengthened on land and sea by the Catholic West, Byzantium of the twelfth century then barricaded herself behind a series of forts that confined the Turks to central Anatolia. Byzantine administrators, now secure within borders defended by


13 During his youth Chaka was held as a prisoner at the Byzantine court. Ibid., 182–220, 280; and Ahrweiler, Byzance et la mer, 184–86.

14 Freddy Thiriet, La Romanie ténéritable au Moyen Age (Paris, 1959), 36–42.

15 Ahrweiler, Byzance et la mer, 187. The impact of the First Crusade on the Turks in Anatolia
Italian sea power and Anatolian castles, further reduced the size of their fleet, and thereby confirmed Italian control over the sea trade of the Levant.\textsuperscript{16}

The oscillations of Byzantine decline in the thirteenth century served only to entrench the Italian position along the coastline of the Empire. Following the capture of Constantinople in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade, Venetians quickly established an eastern colonial empire consisting of ports, islands, and consulates spotted along the grand trading routes of the Levant. From Venice south toward Egypt and Syria and northwest to the Black Sea, the Venetian Republic strengthened its sea lines of communication by acquiring strategic outposts such as Modon and Koron, Crete, and Negroponte. Genoa, too, gained a commercial foothold on the edge of Byzantine territories when in 1261 a Greco-Genoese alliance re-established Byzantine authority in Constantinople. By the fourteenth century sea bases and trading posts running from Chios past Constantinople into the Black Sea formed the outline of an eastern Genoese seaborne empire.\textsuperscript{17}

Molded by the conditions of the Renaissance, Italian imperialism in the East had a character that set it off from the imperial rule of large Mediterranean empires. The smallness of their populations, the concern of ruling classes for commercial development, the dependence of trade on sea transportation, and the wide-ranging nature of business transactions all affected the means by which fiercely independent Italian city-states expanded. Rather than invading and administering large territories, they established limited commercial empires by placing fortified trading posts in enclaves and on islands at strategic positions on the sea routes to the Levant. Defense of these outlying regions then rested on the political ability of Italian rulers, on the economic power of the merchant republics, and on the technical superiority of Italian seamen.\textsuperscript{18}

While Italians divided the land and sea domains of the Byzantine Empire between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, the Turks of Anatolia struggled to pierce the boundaries that had confined them to the interior of Asia Minor since the time of the First Crusade in 1097. During the early portions of the thirteenth century sections of the Anatolian coast at Sinope, Antalya, and Alanya came under the authority of the sultan at Konya.\textsuperscript{19} But no sooner had the Turks of Anatolia

\textsuperscript{16} Thiriet, \textit{Romanie vénitienne}, 44-49, 183-87.


\textsuperscript{18} Thiriet, throughout \textit{Romanie vénitienne}, develops the outlines of Venetian imperialism. An example of Venetian tactics in the international area is contained in the summary of instruction given to the Republic's admiral in the year 1424. See also \textit{Idem, Régestres des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie} (hereafter \textit{Régestres}) (Paris, 1958-61), II, 215.

\textsuperscript{19} The history of the Turkish naval frontier in the Seljuk period is treated in Herbert W. Duda, \textit{Die Seltschakengeschichte des Ibn Bih} (Copenhagen, 1959), 44-46, 61-68, 104-09; Ismail H. Uzunçarşılı, \textit{Anadolu Türk Tarıhi Vesikalari ndan Kitâbeler} (Inscriptions from the Historical Documents of Turkish Anatolia) (Istanbul, 1927-39), II, 234-36; Osman Turan, \textit{Türkiye Selçuklular} (The Seljuks of Turkey) (Ankara, 1958), 123-29; and Ahrweiler, \textit{Byzance et la mer}, 307. Concerning the important question of Byzantine and Muslim institutional influences on the Seljuk naval organiza-
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started to organize their naval frontiers than the Mongols defeated Turkish forces at Köse Dagh in 1243, and a new situation was created in Anatolia.20

The political debris of the Mongol invasion produced a patchwork quilt of Turkish military communities located along the Christian-Muslim frontier in Anatolia. Since the Byzantine Empire could no longer assemble great forces, and the Italians pursued a policy of limited coastal occupation, portions of the Anatolian shoreline quickly passed into the hands of Turko-Muslim border warriors, gházis,21 who established and 'ruled these frontier principalities. Where the frontiersmen maintained control over regions that had seagoing traditions, they soon engaged in corsair actions. Characteristically, from southwest Anatolia, an area rich in naval history, came the renowned Muslim privateer, Umur Bey,22 who with the aid of the population around Smyrna raided throughout the Aegean in the disordered naval wars of the early fourteenth century. None of the frontier sea principalities, however, went beyond the raids and counter-raids so common to the guerrilla warfare along the entire Christian-Muslim frontier. What the corsair emirates did accomplish was to give Turks and Muslims further experience in the Holy War on the seas, an ability the Ottomans would organize and exploit.

In the course of the fourteenth century the Ottoman emirate, whose early history involved almost no exposure to the sea, began to expand. Inexorably the Ottoman sultans found themselves drawn into warfare on the sea. Balkan conquests directed from Anatolia regularly exposed Ottoman troops to attacks from the Christian galleys that dominated the Straits separating the two portions of the Ottoman state. Control of the commercial and military traffic moving to and from the Black and Aegean Seas eluded a state without a navy. Protection of Ottoman coastlines in the Balkans and Asia Minor required a fleet. Finally, no Muslim ruler could hope to command newly conquered territories, half of which were in Asia and half in Christian Europe, without removing Christian control from Constantinople. But to take the Byzantine capital meant challenging the Italian maritime states that now supplied and defended that magnificently walled city.23

By the middle of the fifteenth century the Ottomans could no longer put off

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20 Cahen, Pre-Ottoman Turkey, 119–38.

21 The title given to those who dedicated themselves to war against the infidel on the frontiers. Irène Milikoff, “Ghází,” El2, II, 1043–45.


23 ‘Asıkpaşazade’s chronicle provides evidence of the expansion of Ottoman naval activity. Die altomanische Chronik des ‘Asıkpaşazade (hereafter ‘Asıkpaşazade), ed. Friedrich Giese (Leipzig, 1929), 22, 45, 51, 60, 121, 131. From the Christian side, the deliberations of the Venetian Senate record the Italian reaction to the growth of a Turkish navy. See Thiriet, Régistres, passim. For an early fifteenth-century description of Gallipoli, the main Ottoman naval base, see Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo to the Court of Timour. . . . A.D. 1403–06, trans. C. R. Markham, in Hakluyt Society Publications, old ser. (London, 1859), 27. The Ottoman fleet is recorded here as consisting of forty galleys.
seizing the metropolis that controlled the Bosporus and dominated the land routes leading north into the Balkan peninsula. While Crusader columns from Europe marched toward the sultan’s European territories in 1444, Christian galleys cruising the Straits between the Aegean and Black Seas, almost confined the Ottoman sultan and his army to Asia Minor. Even though Murad II subsequently defeated the European Crusaders at Varna during the winter of 1444, the Christians had now elevated the importance of the Straits, to which the Byzantine capital was the key, to a level that demanded Ottoman action.24 Seven years later Mehmet the Conqueror collected his forces to begin the siege of a city whose geographical location and imperial traditions would lead to the foundation of an Ottoman seaborne empire.

While Mehmet the Conqueror prepared to take Constantinople, caravels under the direction of Prince Henry the Navigator continued the development of a Portuguese maritime empire whose lines of communication would soon envelop Africa. Controlling the Strait of Gibraltar from the Moroccan city of Ceuta since 1415, the Portuguese by the middle of the fifteenth century had occupied islands and set up forts on the western periphery of the Islamic world in a line stretching from Cape Verde to Portugal. On land, however, the transfer of the Muslim-Christian frontier from Iberia to North Africa led only to prolonged warfare, which stimulated Portuguese kings to search for a more profitable form of expansion. Factors in addition to the ceaseless hostility between the two religions25 also prohibited the emergence of a new Christian-Muslim state in North Africa. The commitment of the Avis dynasty to commercial ventures,26 the comparatively limited population resources of Portugal,27 and the superior naval and military
technology of Christian forces slowly encouraged Portuguese kings to create a commercial maritime empire that did not include the vast number of peoples, cities, and territories of northwest Africa. Thus the imperial adventure of the Portuguese skipped along the coast of West Africa, touching the shore here and there at strategic outposts, which were defended later on by many of the techniques the Venetians practiced: the division of political opponents, the employment of economic resources for political ends, and the use of superior military technology when other measures failed.\textsuperscript{28}

In the same year that Gomes Eanes de Zurara finished his history of the discovery and conquest of Guinea,\textsuperscript{29} Mehmet the Conqueror began the siege of Constantinople. The enwalled Christians found that this sultan was able to cut the last line of support for the capital city. To the north the cannons of a newly constructed castle joined with the guns of a companion fort on the other side of the Bosphorus to choke off aid to the capital city from the Black Sea. Then, more ominously for the Christians, the sultan augmented his land siege of Constantinople by stationing a large fleet off the entrance to the Golden Horn.\textsuperscript{30} Kritovoulos, the Greek historian of the Conqueror’s reign, recorded the astonishment of the Byzantine leaders at this new development in the long wars with the Turks.\textsuperscript{31} Not since the eleventh century had Turkish galleys appeared in such strength before Constantinople; and this time the Turks were not overextended.

The Ottomans broke through the massive walls of Constantinople in the spring of 1453, and vigorously took up the Byzantine inheritance, which included, among other things, a long naval history. Whatever may have been the influence of that past on the Conqueror, the Turkish possession of the sea route between the Aegean and the Black Seas vividly demonstrated to the Italians that the land power of the Ottomans had taken on a major naval dimension.\textsuperscript{32} On the other hand, the uneven performance of their fleet during the siege demonstrated to the Ottomans the maritime requirements of an empire ruled from Istanbul.\textsuperscript{33}


\textsuperscript{29} Azurara, \textit{Chronicle of the Discovery}, II, 293.

\textsuperscript{30} Since original sources in many languages give both a variety of technical descriptions and size estimates, the numbers of ships are used here only to indicate changes in Turkish naval policy. Jehan de Wavrin describes the Ottoman fleet as consisting of eighteen galleys, sixty or seventy galliots, and sixteen to twenty small craft. \textit{Chroniques et anciennes chroniques et anciennes histo ries de la Grant Bretaigne, a present nomme Angleterre,} ed. William Hardy and Edward L. C. P. Hardy, in \textit{Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages} (London, 1891), XXXIX, pt. 5, 252. ‘Aşikpaşazade, who is followed by Ibn Kemal, reports a figure of four hundred ships (p. 132). Kritovoulos records a figure of 350 ships plus transport craft (p. 37). Whatever the exact size of the fleet, the Ottoman armada represented a major change in the naval situation along the Straits whether measured in size (Clavijo, \textit{Narrative}, 27), or in the appearance of a Muslim fleet in the Bosphorus where there had been none (Wavrin, \textit{Chroniques}, 19-48, 65-66). Italian and Greek estimates on the number of Ottoman ships are recorded in Steven Runciman, \textit{The Fall of Constantinople, 1453} (Cambridge, 1965), 215, 76 n.1.

\textsuperscript{31} Kritovoulos, 38.


\textsuperscript{33} Ibn Kemal describes Ottoman naval difficulties during the siege of Constantinople (pp. 56-58).
Before settling on the offensive and defensive needs of a new naval position, the Conqueror, in an act of major importance for the Ottoman navy, organized the Orthodox Christian community within the symbiotic religious structure that characterized previous Islamic empires. The appointment of the Patriarch Gennadius in 1454 to head the Greek community and the subsequent acceptance by most Christians in Ottoman territories of the *millet* system, left little doubt that the Turko-Muslim Empire would include the majority of lands and peoples in the conquered areas of the Balkans and Asia Minor. Since the coastal populations of the Aegean and Black Seas, still largely Christian, possessed technical knowledge concerning the sea, the settlement of their denominational relation, albeit in an inferior position, under an Ottoman veneer made their maritime experience available to the sultan. On the other hand the Conqueror’s political solution for non-Muslim communities, which was part of a much wider compromise with old institutions, fixed in the Empire a multiple social structure that separated the merchant community from the upper levels of the Muslim ruling class. Similarly the Ottoman military establishment, deriving the bulk of its income from the administration of agricultural lands, remained only indirectly involved in the affairs of maritime commerce.

As soon as Mehmet took control of his new capital, he promptly showed that Istanbul was to be no ash heap of Byzantine and Latin naval structures. Maintaining the fleet’s old facilities at Gallipoli, the sultan now collected carpenters, merchants, and sailors from the coastal regions of the Empire for the naval service of Istanbul. Upon acquiring a maritime technology that was largely Italian, Mehmet ordered into production naval arsenals to supply galleys for a war fleet. At the same time the Ottoman ruler encouraged the settlement in Istanbul of Christian merchants who had engaged in sea trade. Aware that the growth of the city was related to its economic prosperity, Mehmet also granted tax exemptions to the trades, repopulated the city with artisans and laborers, and launched a public works program.

Stunned by the fall of Constantinople, Christian leaders speculated on what

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*Asikpâşâzâde* notes the Christian threat on the seas (p. 143). Kritovoulos, whose self-interest was involved, records the Ottoman need for a strong fleet (pp. 141–42).

the Muslim Empire, now in possession of an imperial capital, would do. Certainly Christian states on the borders of the Ottoman Empire could expect battles, for the very origins of the house of Osman rested on the vigorous pursuit of the Holy War. And at Trabzon in 1461 the Conqueror confirmed that he warred for the sake of God and not the thrill of conquest.

The desire in all this exertion is not to conquer city and state, but to acquire God’s eternal reward in the Holy War. To obtain His approval, it is a small thing if one endures a hundred thousand of the worst evils and afflictions in the way of the ghazā [war against the infidel], which is the highway to the paradises of Heaven. Yet could a dynasty so conscious of its Turkish heritage also not be motivated by thoughts of world conquest? Ibn Kemal, the greatest of the early Ottoman historians writing on the fifteenth century, thought so; and in his grandiloquent statement on the worldly ambitions of Mehmet, he set down one of the main objectives of Ottoman naval policy during the entire period of expansion.

Like the world-illuminating sun he succumbed to the desire for world conquest and it was his plan to burn with overpowering fire the agricultural lands of the rebellious rulers who were in the provinces of the land of Rūm [Byzantine Empire]. He took with the hand of power and the grip of conquest one by one the cities and lands of the princes who were on the sea shores and it was his plan to flow over them in turn like a wave.

Even if early sultans derived great political force from old Turkish and Islamic imperial themes, let alone from Romano-Byzantine ideas, no ruler could create a stable empire in the Near East without major economic resources. When Mehmet occupied Istanbul he acquired a central imperial city in which he could concentrate the administration of a large state. From that city armies and navies now were sent out to seize the resources of the unbelievers. Assisted by inexpensive naval transportation, Ottoman administrators proceeded to use the economies of the conquered areas to support an imperial system whose base rested on an expanding interior economy.

Since a campaign to excise imperial opponents from the Levant, or for that matter to achieve world domination, implied the use of the sea, the Ottomans lost no time in seeking out knowledge of the maritime areas. Although the Palace School had been established by Mehemet the Conqueror to improve the general

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40 Ibn Kemal, 196.

41 Ancient Turkish myths carry the idea that God had chosen the Turks to rule the world. Osman Turan, "The Ideal of World Domination among the Medieval Turks," *Studia Islamica*, IV (1955), 77–90. Pope Pius II (1458–64) believed that this was the objective of the Turks. Schwoebel, *Shadow of the Crescent*, 71–73.

42 Ibn Kemal, 180.

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quality of his slave corps, it also served as a gathering point for written and cartographical information describing all dimensions of the known world. To advise him on worldly matters the sultan brought to Istanbul the Byzantine scholar George Amurazis who, by imperial command, drew up and commented upon a map of the world. Further evidence that naval affairs rated high attention is supported by the career of the Grand Vizier Mahmud Paşa. Commander of the Ottoman fleet in the Black Sea campaign of 1461, in the Mytilene naval action of 1462, and in the Negroponte assault in 1470, this companion of the sultan also served as the patron of a historical poem, "Düstürnâme-i Enverî," part of which celebrated the fourteenth-century exploits of the pre-Ottoman corsair, Umur Bey. Just as the grand vizier promoted the study of Turkish naval history within the terms of Ottoman culture, the sultan acquired Byzantine maritime experience by bringing a Greek from the island of Imbros, the historian Kritovoulos, into his administration.

If ideas of world conquest stirred Mehmet the Conqueror, his first naval campaigns showed that he would not proceed rashly but would advance from an interior position on land to eliminate Byzantine pretenders and to drive other Christian opponents from the shores of the Aegean and Black Seas. Severing at the Straits Black Sea Christians and their allies from Mediterranean support, the Conqueror launched land and sea assaults on Amasra and Trabzon in 1461 before attempting the purely naval conquest of Kaffa in 1475. Similarly the Ottomans conquered the Morea in 1460 before mounting their amphibious attack on Negroponte in 1470. Along the Anatolian coast, which had been Ottoman since the reign of Murad II, the Grand Vizier Mahmud Paşa quickly overran Genoese positions from the Dardanelles to the island of Mytilene in 1462, and Chios was placed under tributary conditions similar to those the Ottomans had imposed on Ragusa earlier in the fifteenth century.

The expulsion of Italians from their colonies and outposts in the Aegean and Black Seas plunged the Ottomans into their first long naval war. While the Genoese largely retreated from the eastern Mediterranean, the Venetians fought from 1463 to 1479 to reverse the slow Ottoman expansion from the interior of the Balkans and Asia Minor toward the ports and islands of the Aegean and Adriatic. Unable to develop sufficiently powerful Christian support and limited by its small

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44 This history of the Palace School is set forth in Barnette Miller, The Palace School of Muhammad the Conqueror (Cambridge, Mass., 1941). On the subject of Ottoman geographical knowledge in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries see Abdullah Adnan Adivar, Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim (The Ottoman Turks and Science) (Istanbul, 1943), 55-79.


47 The size of the Ottoman fleets in the Trabzon, Negroponte, and Kaffa expeditions, as reported in Ottoman sources, runs between one hundred and three hundred ships. Again these figures include no breakdown according to technical categories. See Ibn Kemal, 181, 285, 385; 'Ashkâşâzâde, 148, 175; Kritovoulos, 165. The position of Ragusa in the Empire is developed in Nicolaas H. Biegman, The Turco-Ragusan Relationship (The Hague, 1967), 26-59; and Bariša Krekić, Dubrovnik (Ragusa) et le Levant au Moyen Âge (Paris, 1961), 39-65.
population, the Venetians found it difficult to use their superior naval ability to stop the Muslims' simultaneous advance on land and sea. On the other side of the conflict the Ottomans, fearful of an open sea battle with the Italians, kept their galleys well within range of their own lands so that Muslim numerical superiority on land could prevent a successful Venetian admiral from taking Ottoman territory. Before 1480 the war on sea, therefore, worked itself out in a series of raids and indecisive confrontations in which the Muslim fleet remained virtually untested in the art of large-scale galley warfare.48

In the last year of the Conqueror's life the Ottoman threat to the Italian naval position in the Levant reached a critical stage. Italians, after the end of the Venetian-Ottoman war in 1479, still remained in control of fortified stations and islands—Modon, Koron, Crete, Cyprus, Rhodes—from which they could both dominate Near Eastern trade routes and attack Ottoman shores at will. Now fearless of Christian naval opposition, the Conqueror sent his galleys out during the spring and summer of 1480 to overturn Christian command of the northeastern Mediterranean by seizing the island of Rhodes and the southern Italian city of Otranto. But the Knights of St. John defended Rhodes with great spirit and forced the Ottoman fleet to retire without a victory in the fall of that year. Meanwhile the northern Ottoman expedition established a beachhead in southern Italy. The death of Mehmet in 1481, however, unleashed all the problems of a contested succession for the Ottoman sultanate. The new ruler, Bayazid II, facing internal opposition from his younger brother Jem, did not risk his fleet in defense of Otranto when Christian galleys appeared in the Adriatic during the summer of 1481. Lacking adequate naval support, the expedition in Italy collapsed and joined the defeat at Rhodes to mark the limits of Ottoman naval operations in the eastern Mediterranean during the reign of Mehmet the Conqueror.49

While Bayazid II engaged in an internal reorganization of the Empire between 1481 and 1495 in order to consolidate his position, the need for a stronger Ottoman navy rose. War with the Mamluks on the Taurus Mountain frontier from 1485 to 1491 strained the supply system of the Ottomans. The sultan, therefore, requested from the Venetians the use of the port of Famagusta on the island of Cyprus in order to support his border forces from the sea. Not only did the Venetians reject the sultan's petition, but they emphasized the naval vulnerability of the Ottomans by sending their own fleet to Cyprus.50 In the last quarter of the

50 Selahattin Tansel lists the following reasons for the wars between the Ottomans and the Mamluks: the development of political connections between the Muslim states in India and the Ottomans during the reign of Mehmet the Conqueror, the failure of the Mamluks to recognize pub
fifteenth century a cry for aid from the Muslims in Spain reached the Ottomans.\(^5\) Here also the champions of the Holy War\(^5\) could do nothing without an effective navy. Closer to the Aegean, the encirclement of the Greek peninsula by Venetian bases reminded the Ottomans that the eastern frontier also remained insecure.

Recognizing the deficiencies of his military establishment, Bayazid II began to acquire experienced naval officers for an expanded fleet. Just as early sultans had drawn able men from the Christian-Muslim land frontier, so Bayazid II went to the naval border between Islam and Christendom for able galley captains. There the Muslim corsair was the equivalent of the fifteenth-century Balkan ghāzī. Like their land counterparts, the naval frontiersmen were products of a brutal naval life in which failure often meant death while success could lead to wealth and power. To profit from the crude but effective training system of the sea ghāzīs, Bayazid II summoned to Istanbul corsair captains, the most famous of whom were from the shores and islands of the Aegean, and offered them positions in the imperial naval organization. By 1495 this procedure attracted into Ottoman service sea captains such as Kemal Reis, Burak Reis, and Piri Reis.\(^5\)

Recruitment of the corsairs quickly raised the technical competence of the Ottoman navy. Experienced in open-sea combat, the corsairs possessed both the skill and the desire to lead Ottoman fleet units against the Christians. Moreover, their wide raiding activities brought into the Ottoman naval institution a wealth of information concerning the Mediterranean. Later on in the reign of Selim the Grim this naval and political intelligence was summarized by Piri Reis in the Kitab-ul Bahriye (Book of Sea Lore).\(^5\) Finally, the infusion of the corsairs took place during a period of increased galley construction, which meant that Ottoman

\(^5\) F. N. rescue the power of the Ottoman sultan, the use of Egypt as a political base by Bayazid II's opponents, the refusal of the Mamluk sultans to allow Ottomans to participate in the operation of the Pilgrimage to the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina, and finally the appearance of border disputes between Ottomans and Mamluks in northern Syria. Sultan II Bayezidin Siyasi Hayati (The Political Life of Sultan Bayazid II) (Istanbul, 1966), 93-100. From the Mamluk side, the same information is included in Ibn Iyas, Histoire des Mamlouks Circassiens 872-906, trans. Gaston Wiet (Cairo, 1945) II, passim. For the communication with the Turk-Muslim frontier state in India, the Bahmani Sultanate, see Gelibülüli Muṣṭafā 'Alî Çelebî, "Kûnh-u al-šîrîn" (The Totality of Information) (Istanbul University Library, TY 5959, IV, fol. 140; Ibn Kemal, 54-45; and Ahmed Feridun Bey, Manṣū ḥ-ul-Salāṭīn (The Writs of Sultans) (Istanbul, 1275/1858), I, 258-60. The ambassador to the Ottomans is given as Khâca Cemâl ad-Dîn Hasan (p. 259, line 22).

Mohammed Abdullah Enan, Nihayat al-Andalus (The End of the Moorish Empire in Spain) (Cairo, 1958), 204-05; James T. Monroe, "A Curious Morisco Appeal to the Ottoman Empire," Al-Andalus, XXXI (1966), 281-303.

\(^5\) Following the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 Ottoman sultans claimed leadership in the Holy War. Halil Inalcik, "Padisah," IA, IX, 491-95.


arsenals also benefited from the knowledge of seamen who lived by constant warfare.\(^{55}\)

Since the addition of the sea *ghāzīs* to the Ottoman fleet marked such an important turning point in the evolution of the Ottoman seaborne empire, it is worthwhile examining the motives that encouraged Muslims to take to the sea as privateers. From the time of the earliest Islamic conquests Muslims had carried the Holy War against the infidel from land to sea where the institution of the Jihad also applied. Stimulated by religious duty and a military tradition enhanced by an imaginative "Jihadist" literature,\(^{56}\) Muslim warriors on the sea frontiers responded to the call of the Holy War in increasing numbers as the Ottoman Empire expanded along the shores of the Mediterranean. Although the Islamic world had no phenomenon quite like the legend of Prester John, reports from distant frontiers concerning the oppression of Muslims attracted seagoing *ghāzīs*.\(^{57}\) Behind the corsairs, the Ottoman sultan, who claimed to be the champion of the Islamic world in the Holy War, added the support of a great state. For those corsairs who won fame in frontier wars, the Ottoman administration, by the late fifteenth century, could offer state positions that went well beyond the rewards of a privateer. If the glorious career of a warrior for the faith yielded insufficient motivation, the capture of infidel prizes, the seizure of rich frontier regions, and the prospect of adventure stimulated many a sailor from poor and probably overpopulated coastal regions to become a corsair.\(^{58}\)

Confident that by the summer of 1499 the Ottoman fleet could compete with Christian flotillas, Bayazid II commanded his viziers to implement the naval policy laid down by his father. The galleys of the Ottomans, including two ships of extraordinary size, sailed toward the Greek peninsula in order to make the sea the frontier. The ensuing battles off the southwest portion of the Morea resulted in the defeat of the Venetian fleet and the Ottoman conquest by 1503 of Lepanto, Modon, Koron, Navarino, and Durazzo. Reversing centuries of frontier history, the Ottomans had achieved naval supremacy in the eastern Mediterranean. But the impact of the Muslim victory would be felt far beyond the Levant, for no single Christian state could parade the naval strength now available to Bayazid II. Moreover, many of the important northwestern ports connected with the rich Indian spice trade fell into the hands of the Ottomans at the same time that Portuguese caravels reached the trading cities on the west coast of India.\(^{59}\)

\(^{55}\) Kemalpaşazade (Ibn Kemal) reports that Bayazid II's policy was to employ ship captains who were experienced in all sea matters. "Tevârîh-i Al-i 'Osmân, VIII Defter" (The History of the Ottoman Dynasty, Book 8), Millet Kutubhanesi, Istanbul, MS no. 32, fol. 65a-b.


\(^{58}\) The sixteenth-century Spaniard, Fray Diego De Haedo, remarked that Ottoman corsairs came to North Africa "... con tan codicia como los españoles pasamos al las minas de las Indias" (with as much greed as the Spanish we send to the mines of the New World). *Topografia e Historia General de Argel* (Madrid, 1527), I, 220-21.

\(^{59}\) The Ottomans built two large Mediterranean sailing ships armed with cannons and other war
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Of these two events, both of which marked major turning points in the history of the Near East, the victories of the Ottomans held more immediate consequences for the Muslim rulers of the Arab lands. For over a quarter century political competition between Ottomans and Mamluks had steadily risen in intensity. Now it seemed only a matter of time before the superior naval strength of the Ottomans would encourage the sultan to eliminate his imperial opposition in the orthodox Muslim community, to acquire the prestige in the Islamic world of protecting the Holy Cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, and to control the lands and trade of Egypt and Syria.  

While Venetians adjusted to the supremacy of Ottoman sea power, the Mamluks found themselves ringed by dangerous, external powers. Having defeated the Venetians, the Ottomans could now intensify their frontier operations in the Taurus Mountains unhindered by a naval threat from the Adriatic. But equally dangerous for the Syrian domains of the Mamluks were the movements of the Safavid warbands in the hills of Anatolia. If the perils in the north seemed truly ominous, the sudden news that Portuguese ships had arrived in the Indian Ocean added even greater uncertainty to the defensive requirements of the beleaguered Mamluk kingdom.

When in the first decade of the sixteenth century the Portuguese made their presence known to Muslim merchants trading in the seas off South Arabia, the Mamluks were forced, for reasons in addition to the protection of trade, to make dangerous policy decisions regarding their southern frontier. Not only were the trading routes to India exposed to attack, but the Holy Cities in Arabia also awaited the protection that had bolstered the political position of the Mamluk emirs in the Islamic world. But how would the Mamluks, crippled in naval matters by both the absence in Egypt of such essential war materials as wood, iron, and copper, and the aristocratic contempt of horsemen for anything maritime, be able to expel the technically powerful Portuguese fleet? Cooperation with the Safavids would yield little naval assistance and would associate, in a culture where politics and religion were intimately mixed, the Protectors of the Holy Places with the unorthodox. On the other hand to accept aid from Bayazid II would only confirm Ottoman superiority over a rival Muslim military government. Moreover, it sug-


Sa'd ed-Din describes the frontier battles between the Ottomans and the Mamluks from 1485 to 1491 as a war for castles that were the "keys to the Arab lands." Tāj-ut-Tevārikh, II, 51. Tansel presents evidence that arguments were being made at Bayazid II's court for the conquest of Arab territories. Sultan II Bayezit'in Siyasi Hayatı, 97-98.


Ibn Iyas notes the division of Mamluk forces to cover the northern and southern dangers to the Empire. Ibid., 79.
gested that the Ottomans might absorb the Mamluk Empire just as they had taken the Muslim states in Anatolia during the fifteenth century. Between 1506 and 1509 the Mamluks made their choices and, in competition with the Portuguese, established the outline of a frontier conflict in the Indian Ocean: the Mamluks fortified the port for the Holy Cities, Jedda; in 1507 the Portuguese seized the island of Socotra just outside the Bab el-Mandab; and the Mamluk sultan, after the 1509 defeat of his own armada by the Portuguese at Diu, requested naval assistance from the orthodox Ottoman Empire.\footnote{On the famous Portuguese policy see Afonso de Albuquerque, \textit{Commentaries}, trans. Walter de Gray Birch, Hakluyt Society Publications, old ser. (London, 1875–84), I, 20. The Muslim reaction before the conquest of Egypt in 1517 is in R. B. Serjeant, \textit{The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast} (Oxford, 1965), 160–62; and Ibn Iyas, \textit{Journal}, I, 152–53.}

Following Francisco de Almeida's victory over the Mamluk fleet off Diu in 1509, frontier warfare between Muslims and Christians on the sea involved the Ottomans in an Indian Ocean naval war. Under the leadership of a new viceroy, Afonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese attempted to cut the ancient trade routes that ran from India north through the Persian Gulf and Red Sea to the cities of the Levant. Vividly impressing Muslims with his seagoing fire power, Albuquerque seized ships and bombarded ports along the southern rim of the Islamic world, compelling Muslim rulers and merchants\footnote{Ibn Iyas supports Portuguese chroniclers who claim that the initial opposition to the Portuguese came from the Muslim rulers and merchants located along the rim of the Indian Ocean. \textit{Journal}, I, 176. See also Caspar Corrêa, \textit{Lendas da India} (Lisbon, 1858–66), IV, 428–33, 748–50; and Damião de Góis, \textit{Crônica do Felicíssimo Rei D. Manuel} (Coimbra, 1949–54), IV, 33. } to send urgent appeals for aid to a Mamluk sultan whose navy, after 1509, was no match for the Portuguese. Already, however, a Mamluk ambassador to Bayazid II had succeeded in a mission directed at acquiring the materials for a new fleet. With deceptive ease, naval supplies and seagoing military men began to work their way south from Anatolia toward the Red Sea port of Suez.\footnote{Burski, \textit{Kemal Reis}, 66–75.} Undoubtedly the Mamluks knew that Ottoman assistance had its price, but by 1513 the audacity of the Portuguese had made considerations other than the development of a Red Sea fleet seem less important. Although Albuquerque, with a flotilla of some twenty ships,\footnote{There was a public reaction in Cairo. Ibn Iyas, \textit{Journal}, I, 288–91.} failed to take Aden in 1513, he subsequently sailed into the Red Sea where his seizure of the island of Kamarān placed the port of the Holy Cities, Jedda, within reach of infidel cannons.\footnote{The Mamluk sultan, Kānsūḥ al-Ghawrī, appointed Salmān Reis as the admiral of the fleet that was sent from Suez in 1515 to defend the Red Sea ports against the Portuguese. According to João de Barros e Diogo de Couto, Ræz Soleimān (Salmān Reis) was born into a Turkish family on the island of Mytilene. \textit{Da Asia} (Lisbon, 1777–88), decade III, bk. I, chap. II, 31–32. After acquiring naval experience in the eastern Mediterranean, he entered the service of the Mamluk sultan at the turn of the sixteenth century. ’Abdallah Muh. bin ’Omar al-Makki, \textit{Al-Asafi, Ulughkhāni (Hajji ad-Dabīr)} states that Salmān Reis led a group of corsairs who won fame in the Holy War, but says nothing about his attachment to the Ottoman Empire before 1517. \textit{An Arabic History of Gujarat} (hereafter Ulughkhānī), ed. E. Denison Ross (London, 1910–28), I, 218–19. Ibn Iyas, however,}
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raw materials collected by the grace of an Ottoman sultan into the form of a galley fleet. Not only did the subjects of the Ottoman sultan direct the construction of the second Mamluk armada, but they also staffed its ranks of galley captains and provided up to two thousand arquebusiers69 for its amphibious unit. Albuquerque knew very well where this naval experience came from when in 1513 he looked for the fleet of os Rumes.70

Even before the Mamluk fleet sailed from Suez to protect the interests of the Muslim community in the Red Sea regions, the 1514 Ottoman victory in northwestern Azerbaijan over the Safavids of Persia suddenly twisted the attention of the Mamluk sultan from south to north. With the forces of the Safavids in disarray after the battle of Chaldiran, and with Mamluk military and naval failings well publicized, Selim the Grim announced to the Muslim world the political superiority of the Ottoman family.71 These new claims indicated that Syria and Egypt would be the next targets of Ottoman expansion, and the news in 1515 that Selim had prepared a fleet, reported to be as large as four hundred ships, further confirmed Mamluk fears. One year after the defeat of the Safavids the rulers of Egypt began defensive preparations against an attack from the north.72

While the Mamluks strengthened their highly conservative military establishment, Salmān Reis introduced Ottoman influence into South Arabia. Like the

states that the Mamluks charged Salmān Reis, an Ottoman (al-'Uthmānī, in the Arabic text), with the construction and operation of the 1515 Mamluk fleet. Journal, I, 340. Serjeant, translating South Arabian texts, records Salmān Reis as al-Rūmī: a sailor from the territories of the Byzantine Empire. Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast, 48–50. Since the arrival of Salmān Reis in Egypt coincided with the Ottoman military aid program, Ibn Iyas' report is probably correct. That Salmān Reis quickly entered the Ottoman navy after the conquest of Egypt in 1517 is clear from all sources. Serjeant, Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast, 50–51; L. O. Schuman, Political History of the Yemen at the Beginning of the 16th Century (Amsterdam, 1961), 17–38, 77–79; Feridun, Münşā'at, I, 491, 498; and De Barros, Asla, decade IV, bk. I, chap. IV, 44–46.

70 The presence of Ottoman arquebusiers in the Mamluk fleet is discussed by Ayalon, Gunpowder and Fire Arms, 78–82; Schuman, Political History of the Yemen, 20, 76–78; and Ibn Iyas, Journal, I, 337–40. In his review of David Ayalon's book, Halil İnalcık notes that Ottoman documents cover the appointment of ship captains to construct war galleys in Egypt for the Mamluks from before 1512.

71 This term has received various interpretations. It is derived from the Arabic al-Rūmī, which generally described someone who came from the territories of the now deceased Byzantine Empire. When used in a military context during the sixteenth century the word usually implied a connection with the Ottoman Empire, renegade Christians, or other non-Muslims, being known by their religion. In Portuguese, Arabic, and Ottoman sources the term was also employed to describe the seamen who were enlisted by the Mamluks and the Ottomans to counter the Portuguese. Albuquerque (Commentaries, II, 60–80) and Corrêa (Lendas da India, I, 741–44) apply this term to sailors who fought in the Egyptian fleets during 1508–09. The definitions of De Barros (Asla, decade IV, bk. IV, chap. XVI, 459–60) and Couto (Asla, I, pt. 2, pp. 264, 395) leave little doubt that os Rumes were sailors from the coastal regions of the Ottoman Empire. For Arabic sources supporting the same general definition, see Serjeant, Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast, 48 n.7. From Ottoman sources, the 1525 report of Salmān Reis on Turkish naval strength in Jedda lists one thousand gemici Rum yeğitleri (brave sailors from Ottoman territories). Fevzi Kurtoğlu, “Meşhur Türk Amirali Salmān Reisin Layıhası” (A Document by the Famous Turkish Admiral Salmān Reis), Deniz Mecmuası XLVII (1935), 68.

72 In his correspondence with other Muslim rulers Selim the Grim used titles that asserted an Ottoman protection over the Holy Cities. Halil İnalcık, “Padişah,” IA, IX, 491–95; and Cüth ed-Din, Geschichte der Stadt Mekka und ihres Tempels, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, in Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka (Leipzig, 1858–61), III, 278. For the reaction of the Mamluks see Ibn Iyas, Journal, I, 356–57, 371–74, 401–02.

Portuguese, the Turks concentrated their attention on the South Arabian shore in order to control the naval traffic through the Bab el-Mandab. Taking Zabid in Yemen during 1516, the Mamluk armada then moved on to attack the strategically located port of Aden. Although the Turks failed to breach the walls of that city, they left a far different impression in Muslim histories of South Arabia than did their equally unsuccessful predecessors, the Portuguese. Recording the Muslim Turks as the representatives of an imperial expansion that aimed to administer lands and peoples rather than hold fortified commercial stations, the South Arabsians marked the arrival of the Mamluk fleet in 1516 as the beginning of the Ottoman domination in Yemen.

While the land units of the Turkish force consolidated their position in Yemen, Salūm Reis returned to Jedda where in 1517 he confronted the new technology of the Atlantic sailing ships with the naval equipment of the eastern Mediterranean. Under orders to destroy the fleet of the Rumes, the Portuguese admiral, Lopo Soares, sailed his armada through the Bab el-Mandab to engage the galleys of Salūm Reis. The Turkish admiral responded to the appearance of the Portuguese fleet with tactics that not only neutralized the fire power of the Portuguese sailing ships but also emphasized the cultural differences between the two empires. Arranging his galleys in a tight group within the narrow, reef-bound harbor of Jedda where he could depend on artillery support from land, Salūm Reis waited for the Portuguese either to commit themselves to what amounted to a land battle in which the more numerous and acclimated Muslims held the advantage, or to retire when their limited ship-borne supplies ran out. Lopo Soares, following the orders of his king to fight only on sea, succumbed to Turkish tactics as desultory combat, disease, and depleted supplies weakened his fighting forces.

Defeated in their attempt to destroy the fleet of the Rumes and dominate the seas around Arabia solely through naval power, the Portuguese turned to diplomacy. Albuquerque was already aligned against the Muslim ʿĀdil-shāh dynasty of Bijapur through friendly contacts with the Hindu rulers of Vijayanagar, and he anticipated the consequences of the Ottoman victory at Chaldiran in 1514 by writing to Manuel I for permission to supply Shah Ismail with cannons so that the

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73 For the 1516 campaign of Salūm Reis see Schuman, Political History of the Yemen, 20–24; Serjeant, Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast, 16, 48; and Ulughkhānī, I, 43, 46.
74 Serjeant, Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast, 48; Schuman, Political History of the Yemen, vii–viii.
75 Although historians of both cultures dislike the lack of a clear-cut victory, all sense the importance of the event that marked the beginning of Ottoman-Portuguese frontier warfare. De Barros, Asia, decade II, bk. I, chap. IV, 39–54; Fernān Lopes de Castanheda, História do descobri mento e conquista da India pelos Portuguezes (Lisbon, 1833), IV, 19–26; Corrêa, Lendas da Índia, II, 494–98; Schuman, Political History of the Yemen, 31–33; Serjeant, Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast, 50. On how galleys should attack sailing ships see Kātbīt Čelebī, Tuḥṣet-ul Kibār ji Erfar-ul-Bihār (The Prizes of the Great in the Campaigns on the Seas) (Istanbul, 1329/1911), 150–51, 161.
76 Albuquerque, Commentaries, IV, 182–84. The alliance lasted well into the sixteenth century. Rodrigo José de Bocarro, Decada 13 da historia da India, ed. Rodrigo José de Lima Felner (Lisbon, 1870), pt. 2, p. 360. On the international struggle, which involved the Ottomans, over the Indian border state ruled by the ʿĀdil-shāh dynasty see Firūshā, Tārīḵh-i Firūshā (Firūshā’s History) (Lucknow, 1321–23/1903–05), II, 2, 11, 13, 14. For the English translation, see Muhammad Kāsim
Safavids might divert the rising power of the Ottomans from India. In a similar manner, Francisco Alvares, after the failure of the Portuguese Red Sea campaign in 1517, mobilized the support of Christian Ethiopia against the advance of the Ottomans into Red Sea regions. By the first quarter of the sixteenth century the efforts of the Christians produced an alignment of states—Ethiopia, Persia, and South India—hostile to the expansion of the Ottomans south of Egypt.

Just as the battle at Jedda reflected long-standing conditions of Muslim-Christian naval warfare, albeit altered in the level of technology, so also did the 1517 conquest of Egypt bring the Portuguese and Ottoman empires together under equally familiar circumstances. Possession of Arab lands meant that the Ottoman sultan acquired the duty of protecting the Holy Places and, therefore, of securing Red Sea defenses. True to its ghāzi tradition, the Ottoman dynasty also became the Islamic champion for the besieged Muslim states and trading posts east of Suez upon which Portuguese imperialism impinged. But nowhere were the old differences between Near Eastern land empires and the commercial maritime states from the Christian world better mirrored than in the conflicting imperial claims of the two empires in contact off Arabia. In 1499 Manuel I asserted that he was “Lord of Guinea and of the Conquests, Navigations, and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, and India.” On the conquest of Egypt, Selim the Grim announced:

Now all of the territories of Egypt, Malatiya, Aleppo, Syria, the city of Cairo, Upper Egypt, Ethiopia, Yemen, the lands up to the borders of Tunisia, the Hijaz, the cities of Mekka, Medina, and Jerusalem, may God increase the honoring and respecting of them completely and fully, have been added to the Ottoman Empire.

Before his return to Istanbul in 1518 Selim the Grim collected naval intelligence and ordered the construction of a new fleet. In 1517, therefore, Piri Reis presented his famous map of the New World to the Sultan, giving the Ottomans, before many European rulers, an accurate description of the American discoveries as well as details about the circumnavigation of Africa. A year later Salmān Reis, who had fought the Portuguese and made prisoners of their men, added his experience to the Ottoman camp. But before Selim could exercise a new fleet, or act on the appeal of ‘Ali Ekber to conquer China, his short reign came to an end with his death in 1520.


Quoted in Gis, Crónica, I, 114 (my italics).

Quoted in Feridun, Munṣaḍāt, I, 429 (my italics).


During the three years between the accession of Suleyman the Magnificent and the end of the Rhodes campaign in 1523, the Ottomans used their navy to consolidate the conquests of Selim the Grim. While the Portuguese campaigned off Aden in 1520 with approximately twenty ships, the Ottomans, under the command of Husayn Bey, strengthened the Turkish position around the city of Zabid in Yemen. To the north a Syrian revolt in 1520–21 exposed the uneasy Ottoman control of the Arab provinces to the rulers of the Christian-held islands—Rhodes, Cyprus, Crete—just off the Anatolian and Syrian coasts. Re-adopting the policy of the Conqueror in order to strengthen his administration of the Arab provinces, Suleyman launched the Rhodes campaign in 1522. Ottoman chroniclers, underscoring the importance of naval communications, justified the war as necessary for the protection of the sea routes both for the Pilgrimage to the Holy Cities and for Muslim trade. But the court historians who prepared this Islamic version of history, with its stress on the duty of a Muslim ruling class to protect religion and urban economic interests, did not elaborate on the dramatic new flow of tax revenues from Egypt to the Ottoman treasury in Istanbul.

Although the seizure of Rhodes seemed to preserve the continuity of Ottoman naval expansion, the intervening conquest of Belgrade in 1521 indicated that the sultan had now turned away from the sea frontiers. Would the Ottomans continue to expand on two frontiers? The question appeared to be unsettled in 1523. Not until 1525 did the imperial commanders reach agreement on where the Empire ought to concentrate its military resources. Another rebellion in Egypt during 1523–24 had postponed the decision because the sultan was forced to send his most important servant, Grand Vizier Ibrahim Paşa, to Cairo in order to restore control. In the interim the Janizaries, apparently encouraged by high state officials, rebelled over the military inactivity of the sultan. Upon his return to Istanbul in the fall of 1525, Ibrahim Paşa brought to Suleyman’s attention a revised copy of Piri Reis’ Book of Sea Lore. Along with its coverage of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, the new recension of this naval handbook featured a detailed description of the voyages to the New World and Indian Ocean, the trading activity, and the naval technology of the Portuguese. Summing up, in Ottoman style, an appeal for continued naval expansion, the poetical introduction of the manuscript con-

82 Serjeant, Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast, 18; Fevzi Kurtoğlu, Turgut Paşa (Istanbul, 1935), 400–509.
84 The poetical introduction of Piri Reis’ second version of his Book of Sea Lore also contains a history of Portuguese naval explorations from the age of Prince Henry the Navigator and details concerning the world’s known seas. Even greater information on the Portuguese Empire in the East, on the size of Portuguese garrisons in Asia, on the strategic and economic objectives of the Christians in the East is in the 1525 report of Salmān Reis. Kurtoğlu, “Meybūr Türk,” 67–73. For an analysis of the poetical introduction on pages 7–85 in the facsimile edition of the Book of Sea Lore, see ibid., i–iv; and Paul Kahle, “The Turkish Sailor and Cartographer,” in The Proceedings of the Pakistan History Conference, ed. S. Moinul Haq (Karachi, 1956), 101–11.
tained the powerful charge that the Ottomans ought to be ashamed of allowing
the Portuguese to approach so close to the Holy Cities.85

In addition to the new information from Piri Reis, the sultan received a de-
tailed military report from Salmān Reis on the strength and objectives of Ottoman
and Portuguese forces operating in the Indian Ocean. Salmān also called for
further action against the Portuguese. He argued that the sultan should expand
military operation in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean in order to acquire the taxes
from the agricultural lands of Yemen and from the commercial trade that passed
through the Red Sea and Indian Ocean ports. He noted, however, that the Portu-
guese, from their fortified ports on the Strait of Malacca, on the islands of Sumatra
and Ceylon, and along the coast of India and Persia, had now diverted to Portu-
gal much of this Indian Ocean trade that had once provided large tax returns
for Egypt. To remove the infidels, and other Muslim opposition, to the imposition
of an Ottoman tax system, the Muslim frontier captain proposed to raze the forts
of the sultan’s opponents with the existing naval forces stationed in the Red Sea.
According to Salmān, the main elements of his galley squadron, which was based
at Jedda, consisted of eight galleys, three galliots, one thousand sailors from Rum,
and various siege cannons. Planning on the basis of eastern Mediterranean galley
warfare, the Ottoman captain did not propose to undertake open sea battles with
the Portuguese sailing ships. Rather, the galleys of the sultan were to be used for
the standard Ottoman naval campaign, the climax of which usually involved an
assault on a fortified position.86

By the end of 1525 the Ottomans came to a decision on the priorities of their
various frontiers. Increasing the number of galleys over the figures in Salmān’s
report, they determined that some twenty-five ships and four thousand men would
best advance the sultan’s interests in South Arabia. But this modest Red Sea squad-
ron represented no major commitment of Ottoman forces: the main decision in
Istanbul had gone against the navy and the economic interests that might have
benefited from Ottoman campaigns in the Indian Ocean. In 1526 Suleyman the
Magnificent redirected the energies of the Ottoman Empire into a series of land
campaigns that would shake the walls of Vienna. Reflecting the consequences of
its political defeat at the hands of military and administrative groups seeking
more land, the naval organization languished until the Habsburg assault on the
Morea in 1532 ushered in a new period in Ottoman naval history.

The conquests of Selim the Grim completed the basic structure of the Ottoman
seaborne empire. On the accession of Suleyman the Magnificent, the Ottomans
ruled coastlines and islands stretching from the Crimea to Yemen. In the north
the Black Sea had lain secure under Ottoman domination since the reign of
Mehmet the Conqueror. To the west and south two sea frontiers, or zones of naval

85 Piri Reis, Kitāb-ı Bahriye, 36, line 4.
86 See Kurtoğlu, “Meşhur Türk,” 68–73.
combat between Christians and Muslims, came into being by the first quarter of the sixteenth century to give shape to this area of the Muslim Empire: the Mediterranean frontier running from the eastern shore of the Adriatic to Egypt, and the Red Sea frontier. Within these areas the maritime community, whose commerce, shore lines, and peoples provided the reasons for the Ottoman fleet, had its center in the eastern Mediterranean, with the Black Sea, the Persian Gulf, and Red Sea acting as appendages. Algeria, the one province to be added that was significantly outside the sea boundaries of Selim's state, remained very much a part of the forward frontier, the home of the corsair. The axis, then, that gave geographical unity to the Ottoman seaborne empire lay north and south. Along with the Russians, the Safavids, the Mughals, the Venetians, and the Ragusans, the Ottomans had molded imperial and commercial structures that ran perpendicular to the older political and economic organization of the Eurasian steppe. This history, and not the oceanic voyages, moved the locus of imperial activity in Eurasia during the sixteenth century.

In the age of oceanic discoveries the Ottomans and the Portuguese constructed seaborne empires that met in the Indian Ocean. Neither empire built up its naval strength suddenly and, in general, a rough similarity existed in the naval development of the two states. The historical importance, however, of this simultaneity is not that Ottoman imperialism caused Portuguese expansion but that the Indian Ocean contact brought together the most militant representatives of the two cultures. At the turn of the sixteenth century, while Ottoman ghāzīs enlarged the boundaries of a state whose growth came from success in the Holy War, a small Christian nation, born in the Reconquista on the western Muslim frontier, used its equally small, but technically unique, navy to challenge the Islamic world in a new area. The Ottomans vigorously opposed the Portuguese, reacting to the implications of their naval supremacy near the shores of Arabia, and not off Morocco. The meeting of the Portuguese and the Ottomans off South Arabia, therefore, represented the continuation of old Muslim-Christian conflicts by states that carried on, in the name of religion, the warrior traditions of two different cultures. No new structure embracing Muslims and Christians emerged from this imperial contact. True, the navigations of the Portuguese heralded, centuries later, the technological and economic superiority of the West, but the resistance they met, symbolized in the appearance of a new sea frontier, continued the long-standing cultural differences between Muslims and Christians. Both events are historically significant.

While the Portuguese created a commercial and oceanic empire, the Ottomans pushed their frontiers into the waters surrounding the eastern Mediterranean to create a seaborne state conditioned by the military and administrative requirements of a land-based Turko-Muslim state. In the course of their voyages rulers and merchants from Portugal and other Christian states participated in overseas commercial and military ventures that, in the East, rarely went beyond the establish-
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ment of a fortified trading post. While Portugal rejected the conquering tradition of her warrior aristocracy to lean almost entirely upon maritime commerce as the primary reason for imperial naval expansion in the East, the Ottomans, in contrast, sought to conquer territories in order to gain tax revenues from newly acquired agricultural and commercial economies. Thus the conquest system of the Ottomans reflected the desire to administer and tax numerous lands and peoples, for only ample resources could support the vast armies and bureaucracies that ruled the Muslim Empire. By the time both naval empires reached Egypt, the differing economic objectives of the two expanding states stood fully revealed. While Albuquerque had sought to apply a policy aimed at monopolizing the sea trade of the Indian Ocean, Ottoman sultans ordered new registrations of the lands and peoples of Egypt for the purpose of taxation and, at the same time, directed the outfitting of small fleets to counter the Christian sea blockade.

To measure, then, the success or failure of Ottoman naval efforts in the sixteenth century by the degree of their control over the Indian Ocean spice trade would render a judgment on the Ottoman use of sea power from the economic standpoint of the Portuguese. Ottoman and Portuguese sources generate a broader basis for an assessment. When Ottoman armies reached South Arabia the sultan faced the question whether or not to make a major effort over great distances against strong fleets and under difficult supply conditions to drive the Portuguese sailors from their positions astride the trading routes of the Indian Ocean. His decision to invade Hungary in 1526, and the subsequent commitment of only enough military resources to carry on a frontier war in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, meant that the economic advantages of large naval operations in the Indian Ocean did not outweigh the gains from expansion in the Balkans, which were more accessible to both the armies and the tax system of the Ottomans. The Portuguese elected, on the other hand, not to occupy more land than that needed for the protection of the distant frontier posts serving their limited commercial interests. Off South Arabia, therefore, the economic structure of each empire encouraged an imperial standoff, for the new sea frontier also marked the limits of effective expansion for an empire whose economic aims were largely agricultural and for a state whose interests were primarily commercial.

To accomplish their aims within ever-widening sea spaces, Ottoman sultans organized the eastern Mediterranean naval experience within their territories and applied it to the military problems brought on by imperial growth along the shores of the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Defeating the Venetians in the years when the Portuguese circumnavigated Africa, the Ottomans went on to use their Mediterranean naval organization in the Indian Ocean against new Christian fleets. Off South Arabia, therefore, the three-masted, broadside Atlantic sailing ships of the Portuguese encountered the Mediterranean galley technology of the Mamluks and the Ottomans.

If, in order to describe the meeting between the two naval practices, the frontier

87 Shaw, Financial and Administrative Organization, 16–18.
conditions south of Egypt, rather than the outcome of specific battles, are examined, then the seagoing technical abilities of each side can be seen to support the differences between these two seaborne empires. The galleys, the manpower, and the heavy cannons of the Ottomans gave the Muslims sufficient strength to confront the Portuguese in the narrow, steamy waters off Arabia, to expand and defend positions on land, and to protect some portion of the coastal trade. For the Portuguese, the technological advantages of their sailing ships did not yield sufficient power in the Indian Ocean to allow them full control over the frontier conditions in the East; rather their ships supported the erection and defense of widely scattered trading posts and a naval supremacy on the open sea. Thus the Red Sea, and later on the Persian Gulf, became the southern limit of effective Mediterranean galley warfare, while the Indian Ocean became the home of the Atlantic sailing ship. By the end of Selim the Grim’s reign in 1520, the two naval technologies took their place beside other forces in a historic division of lands and seas separating the Portuguese and Ottoman empires.88

The historiographical boundaries imposed by language and culture, which have clouded the division of two different societies along an Indian Ocean frontier of historic importance, can now be crossed through the comparison of modern Ottoman and Western naval history. Against a background of sixteenth-century Ottoman history the hypothesis of “lost opportunities” faults the Ottomans for not adopting the priorities of quite different Western commercial states in the very age when Muslim institutions proved successful. Only centuries later was it clear that the commercial and technical predominance of the Christians had resulted in the political domination of large Muslim states by small European nations. Meanwhile the sixteenth-century leaders of the Ottoman state faced the naval problems of a Turko-Muslim Empire erected over the debris of older Near Eastern states. By the standards of that century and according to the institutions that formed their society, the Ottomans successfully met the various external naval challenges on their frontiers, as the cohesive growth of a large sixteenth-century seaborne empire demonstrated.

Elaborating on the idea that the Portuguese sea route to India represented a visible and fundamental challenge that the Islamic world failed to meet, Professor Allen sees the military campaigns of Selim the Grim as a Muslim response along interior land lines against the flanking attack of the Western mariners.89 As

88 The border zone between the two different societies is marked by a series of frontier ports that separate seas with Mediterranean characteristics—the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf—and the coasts of the northern Indian Ocean from the central areas of that same body of water. Thus the ports of Aden, Berbera, and Muscat, the straits at the Bab al-Mandab and Ormuz, as well as the harbors in Gujarat formed a frontier recognized by sixteenth-century historians. For example, De Barros stated that galleys operated better than sailing ships in the Red Sea (Asia, decade III, bk. I, chap. II, 14), while Ulughkhan argued in the case of culture that Aden, as well as Yemen, was on the frontier of the Islamic world (I, 218).

89 William E. D. Allen, Problems of Turkish Power in the Sixteenth Century (London, 1963), 1-14. Fernand Braudel has a more balanced view: Egypt was conquered for reasons internal to the Mediterranean, but the conquest then embroiled the Ottomans even further in a world war with the Christians. La Méditerranée et le monde Méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II (2d ed., Paris, 1966), II, 16-19, 170-72.
Ottoman and Mamluk sources indicate, the appearance of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean threatened the Holy Cities and Muslim trade, causing Muslim rulers substantial concern. But the Ottoman reply to the frontier raids of the Portuguese does not support the argument that the Atlantic sailing ships raised a major threat for the Islamic world; otherwise the Protector of the Holy Cities would not have invaded Hungary. Rather than seeing the invasion of Egypt in 1517 as an outgrowth of European history, the Ottoman evidence emphasizes one of the grand themes of Near Eastern history: since the spread of civilization along the shores of the Mediterranean, the position and wealth of Egypt have attracted imperial adventurers of which the Ottomans were not the last.

Why did the Ottomans, in an age when they mobilized the talents of raw frontiersman who were imperfectly exposed to the influences of traditional Islam, not adopt the new naval technology of the Portuguese just as they had acquired the firearms of the Europeans in an earlier period? Professor Cipolla has argued that the sociocultural institutions of the Ottoman Empire provided little basis for the adoption of Western technology. This is certainly true. The use of large cannons, numerous men, and unstable galleys for summer naval operations to take land objectives for an army whose main economic support came from agricultural holdings would hardly encourage the type of oceanic naval technology developed by small European commercial states. Ottoman sources, however, also indicate that the success, not the failure, of traditional Mediterranean naval practices influenced Ottoman leaders to continue the use of an "obsolete" technology.

The contours of the Mediterranean and not the open areas of the Indian Ocean were the main boundaries for the sixteenth-century Ottoman navy. If Mediterranean naval history through the first half of that century is examined, Ottoman fleets successfully competed with the galleys of their Christian opponents. Even after the battle of Lepanto in 1571 the Ottomans rebuilt with galleys and went on to consolidate their hold over North Africa by taking the Spanish forts at Tunis in 1574. The difficulty of determining when the naval balance of power tilted against the Ottomans results, to a great degree, from the peripheral contact of the two technologies. In the early sixteenth century the Portuguese sailing ships did not mount a direct assault against the Mediterranean heart of the Ottoman seaborne empire, but operated, instead, on the southern edge of Muslim territories. Taught by English and Dutch privateers, Muslim corsairs on the frontier in North Africa would adopt the naval technology of the Atlantic states by the end of the sixteenth century. But the Ottoman Empire, then beset by internal problems, faced no seaborne challenge that called for a change in its basic naval institutions through the use of a new frontier experience.

In no other area is the contrast in viewpoints between Ottoman chroniclers and Western historians so vivid as in the historical frameworks employed to describe the imperial naval history of the sixteenth century. For the age of Vasco da Gama, Muslim chroniclers, ignoring border defeats here and there, record the growth of a powerful Ottoman navy whose victories in the Black Sea and eastern Mediter-
The Ottoman Seaborne Empire, 1453–1525

The interpretation of Western historians, on the other hand, do not reflect this triumphant creation of another major Eastern empire. Since the rise of the West followed the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Western historians naturally concentrated their attention on those developments that both limited Muslim expansion and marked the arrival of a new era. Even though the peripheral character of the Ottoman-Portuguese naval contact is acknowledged in some studies, the circumnavigation of Africa, the Indian Ocean naval wars, the *Reconquista* in Iberia, and other Muslim difficulties in Europe form, in the Western view, a chain of frontier failures—even the battle of Chaldiran is a failure in the argument of Professor McNeill—that mark out the boundaries of Ottoman expansion. In the golden age of Ottoman history, therefore, the conquests of the Ottomans, as seen from the Western side, led to failures and ultimately to the decline of the Muslim world.

When the sources of each culture are unearthed for the age of Vasco da Gama, Portuguese and Ottoman records document the creation of a new oceanic frontier that strengthened, in major proportions, the differences between the Islamic world and the West. Unknown to the Ottomans, the long-range naval expansion of the Portuguese was the outward sign of deep internal changes in Western society that would, centuries later, allow European armies and navies to cross all the frontiers of the House of Islam. Powerful sixteenth-century Ottoman conquests, on the other hand, revitalized a traditional orthodox Muslim community through the creation of a seaborne empire that added to the glory of a great Islamic state.

Accordingly, the historians of the two cultures set down these separate experiences. While Western authors preserved the epochal accomplishments of Portuguese navigators who, immortalized in the poetry of Camões, sailed *por mares nunca dantes navegados,* Muslim historians, writing about the same centuries, had ample material for histories that would maintain the unity of Islamic society. Certainly the populations along the shores of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the northwest portion of the Indian Ocean who saw the banners of sixteenth-century Ottoman fleets unfurl before them had no feeling that in 1500 the Ottomans had suffered a major setback from which they would never recover; rather the galleys of the Turks confirmed for both Christians and Muslims the imperial title of the sultan—Shadow of God on Earth.