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Direzione, Via Bosco degli Arvali 24, 00148 Roma

Contatti: direzione@nam-sigm.org ; virgilio.ilari@gmail.com

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(www.societaitalianastoriamilitare@org)

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The Evolution of Fighting Tactics in the Mediterranean: Ottoman-Venetian Naval Battles during the Cretan Campaigns (1649-1655)

by EMIRHAN ÖZÇELİK

ABSTRACT: The line of battle was a revolutionary naval tactic forged during the Anglo-Dutch Wars of the 1650s, which precipitated a fundamental paradigm shift in naval warfare. Its primary objective was to optimize the kinetic output of galleons by deploying vessels in a unified line-ahead formation, enabling coordinated and sustained broadside fire. While the efficacy of this doctrine led to its rapid dissemination across Europe, its adaptation within the Mediterranean theatre remains an under-researched lacuna in maritime historiography. This article investigates the combat tactics of Ottoman and Venetian galleons during the Cretan campaigns (1645–1669), analysing five pivotal engagements to discern how these powers navigated the transition to sailing warfare. The findings suggest that while Venetian commanders attained tactical maturation through formations closely mirroring the line of battle, the Ottoman command failed to institutionalize a coherent doctrinal response—an asymmetric evolution that ultimately led to the marginalization of the sailing ships in Ottoman naval strategy after 1661.

KEYWORDS: OTTOMAN-VENETIAN NAVAL BATTLES, CRETAN CAMPAIGNS, LINE OF BATTLE, NAVAL WARFARE, MEDITERRANEAN HISTORY

1 Introduction

Galleys functioned as the primary combatants within European and Ottoman naval establishments from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries. The integration of artillery during this period precipitated a paradigm shift in maritime warfare; equipped with bow-mounted ordnance, these vessels were capable of destabilizing enemy formations with preliminary volleys prior to executing boarding actions. Once grappled, the artillery continued to provide crucial suppressive fire, supporting infantry engaged in visceral close-quarters combat on the decks. Furthermore, the galley's atmospheric independence —

being less contingent upon favourable wind conditions—enabled commanders to execute precise manoeuvres and maintain ballistic accuracy, provided the rowers exhibited disciplined synchronization.¹

Sailing ships had been integrated into European maritime establishments since the sixteenth century. The introduction of gunports along the hull allowed these ships to mount formidable artillery batteries, thereby enabling them to effectively repel galley-borne boarding incursions. However, their nascent operational efficacy was initially constrained by limited velocity and manoeuvrability. A transformative breakthrough occurred with innovations in ferrous ordnance metallurgy in the United Provinces and England, which permitted the mass production of cost-effective cannons. This metallurgical advancement incentivized shipwrights to optimize speed, agility, and structural integrity. Hulls were reinforced to enhance ballistic resistance, while decks were reconfigured to accommodate expanded broadside batteries. By refining the hydrodynamic profile of the hull and expanding the stern for greater stability, shipbuilders developed agile frigates and formidable two-deck galleons. Consequently, these heavily armed sailing platforms began to exert naval hegemony, particularly within the English and Dutch fleets from the 1650s onward.²

As the numerical preponderance of galleons within naval fleets increased, the imperative arose to formulate innovative tactics and formations to optimize the

- 1 Louis Sicking, “Naval warfare in Europe, c. 1330-c.1680”, in Frank Tallett and D. J. B. Trim (cur.), *European Warfare, 1350-1750*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010, pp. 237-247; Jan Glete, *Warfare at Sea, 1500-1650: Maritime Conflicts and the Transformation of Europe*, Routledge, London, 2000, pp. 25-28; John F. Guilmartin JR., “The Military Revolution in Warfare at Sea during the Early Modern Era: Technological Origins, Operational Outcomes and Strategic Consequences”, *Journal for Maritime Research*, vol. 13, 2 (2011), pp. 132-133; Benjamin W. D. Redding, *The English and French Navies, 1500-1650: Expansion, Organisation and State-Building*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2022, pp. 116-125; For a recent assessment of the beginning of the use of cannon on galleys see. Simone Lombardo, “Galee, bombarde e guerre di simboli: Innovazioni negli assedi anfibì di Chioggia tra genovesi e veneziani (1379-1380)”, *Nuova Antologia Militare (NAM)*, vol. 5, (2021), pp. 93-128; Joseph Eliav, “The Gun and Corsia of Early Modern Mediterranean Galleys: Design Issues and Rationales”, *The Mariner’s Mirror*, vol. 99, 3 (2013), pp. 262-274; *ibid.*, “Tactics of Sixteenth-Century Galley Artillery”, *The Mariner’s Mirror*, vol. 99, 4 (2013), pp. 398-409.
- 2 Brian Lavery, *The Ship of the Line: The Development of the Battlefleet 1650-1850, Volume I*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1984, pp. 12-29; Redding cit., p. 132-134; Sicking cit., p. 247-254; Glete cit., p. 28-32; Guilmartin Jr. cit., p. 133-134.

projection of their cumulative firepower. Initially, ordnance was concentrated in the bow-chase positions to counter galleys and subsidize boarding manoeuvres—a configuration that ultimately proved strategically suboptimal.³ Commanders subsequently recognized that the definitive lethality of the galleon resided not in its longitudinal chase guns, but in the lateral broadside batteries distributed along its continuous gun decks. This realization precipitated a doctrinal shift, as naval theorists focused on formulating a rigorous tactical orthodoxy designed to maximize the kinetic efficacy of broadside fire through disciplined, coordinated formations.

During the pivotal 1588 confrontation with the Spanish Armada, English admirals sought operational frameworks that would optimize the potential of the galleon's broadside fire. To mitigate the existential threat of Spanish boarding parties, they aligned their vessels in a rudimentary line-ahead formation, maintaining a continuous discharge of lateral ordnance. Although the English gunners lacked the ballistic precision necessary to achieve total foundering of enemy hulls, they wrought substantial structural attrition through this synchronized positioning. While this engagement demonstrated the nascent tactical utility of the broadside, it did not precipitate the immediate codification of a formal doctrine for systematic application in subsequent conflicts. Similarly, though Portuguese and Spanish commanders occasionally resorted to linear formations to repel boarding incursions, these reactive measures remained ephemeral and failed to evolve into a theoretically substantiated tactical orthodoxy.⁴

During the seventeenth century, England and the United Provinces cemented their mercantile and maritime hegemony across the North Sea and the Mediterranean, underpinned by their formidable sailing armadas. The expansion of transoceanic trade to the Americas and the East Indies precipitated an exponential expansion of their naval tonnage. By the 1650s, the deployment of hundreds of sailing vessels for both commerce and warfare provided a vast empirical

3 N.A.M. Rodger, "The Development of Broadside Gunnery, 1450-1650", *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 82, 3 (1996), p. 303-304; Sicking cit., p. 250.

4 Marco Mostarda, "L'evoluzione tattica della marina inglese alla vigilia della Seconda guerra anglo-olandese: Il processo di formalizzazione della linea di fila", in E. BERI (cur.), *Dal Mediterraneo alla Manica. Contributi alla storia navale dell'età moderna*, Società italiana di Storia militare-Nadir Media, Roma, 2022, pp. 169-178; Rodger cit., p. 308-317; Glete cit., p. 35-39.

laboratory for captains to refine their mastery of sailing manoeuvres. A critical milestone occurred in 1617, when the English Admiralty promulgated the first Fighting Instructions, which established standardized protocols of engagement and offered the earliest rigorous analytical evaluation of the strategic trade-offs between windward and leeward positioning. Furthermore, the 1625 structural reorganization of the fleet into three distinct squadrons marked a definitive attempt to optimize command-and-control and tactical cohesion during high-intensity maritime combat.⁵

The protracted commercial rivalry between England and the United Provinces escalated into overt hostilities in 1652. By March 1653, the English Admiralty promulgated a revised set of Fighting Instructions, specifically designed to ensure the structural and operational cohesion of the fleet under sail. A central tenet of these mandates stipulated that, regardless of whether the admiral held the windward or leeward position, the squadron was to align in a contiguous line-ahead formation. This marked the first formal codification of the line of battle as a primary tactical orthodoxy. To facilitate this, the English fleet was organized into a tripartite structure—vanguard, centre, and rear—engineered to engage in synchronized manoeuvres.⁶ The efficacy of this doctrinal shift was demonstrated during the Battle of the Gabbard (2-3 June 1653), where the implementation of the line-ahead formation secured a resounding strategic triumph over the Dutch forces.⁷

English admirals instigated a paradigm shift in maritime engagement by simultaneously theorizing and operationalizing the line-of-battle tactic.⁸ In the ensuing years, English galleons maintained tactical hegemony over the Dutch fleet, whose traditional reliance on boarding proved increasingly futile against disciplined broadside fire.⁹ Recognizing the obsolescence of their prior doctrines, Dutch captains systematically assimilated the line-of-battle into their own naval protocols.¹⁰ Within a remarkably brief chronological window, this formation was

5 Mostarda cit., p. 178-182.

6 Mostarda cit., p. 190-196; *Fighting Instructions 1530-1816*, Julian S. Corbett (cur.), Navy Records Society, London, 1905, pp. 99-104.

7 Mostarda cit., p. 196-201.

8 Lavery cit., p. 26-27; Guilmartin Jr. cit., p. 134-135.

9 Mostarda cit., p. 201-211; Harding cit., p. 74-76.

10 R. E. J. Weber, "The Introduction of the Single Line Ahead as a Battle Formation by the

codified into a pan-European maritime orthodoxy, recognized by admirals and captains alike as the definitive tactical framework for large-scale fleet engagements.

This study endeavours to elucidate the trajectory of tactical systems in Mediterranean naval warfare by examining five pivotal engagements between Ottoman and Venetian galleons during the Cretan campaigns (1645-1669). It scrutinizes whether these maritime powers formulated indigenous naval doctrines or assimilated the emerging line-of-battle orthodoxy. The study contends that Venetian commanders successfully operationalized the line-ahead formation, thereby securing a definitive tactical superiority over their Ottoman counterparts. This proficiency incentivized the Venetian Admiralty to augment their fleet with sailing warships in the post-campaign era. Conversely, Ottoman captains struggled to achieve operational proficiency in galleon command or to synthesize a coherent tactical system—a doctrinal inadequacy that ultimately precipitated the discontinuation of the galleon program within the Ottoman Navy in 1661.

In contrast to terrestrial warfare, naval engagements present formidable challenges for granular reconstruction; establishing a definitive account of maritime manoeuvres often remains subject to historiographical speculation.¹¹ To mitigate the inherent ambiguities of these encounters between Ottoman and Venetian galleons, this study adopts a specific methodology, integrating contemporary textual records with primary iconographic evidence. By cross-referencing written chronicles with the detailed tactical descriptions, this research seeks to elucidate the operational chronology and spatial dynamics of each engagement, thereby providing a more resilient framework for interpreting tactical decision-making.¹²

Dutch 1665-1666”, *The Mariner’s Mirror*, vol. 73, 1 (1987), pp. 5-19; Harding cit., p. 83-96; Sicking cit., p. 259-260.

11 Harding cit., p. 60.

12 The Venetians prepared visual descriptions and plans of the battles that took place during the Cretan campaigns. These drawings are collected in a work entitled “*Carte topografiche, piante di città e fortezze, disegni di battaglie della guerra di Candia (1645-1669)*”. The drawings to be used in this study are obtained from this work. It is available digitally at the Biblioteca Marciana (*Biblioteca nazionale Marciana*), see. (https://www.internet-culturale.it/it/16/search/detail?id=mag_GEO0025610&mode=all&teca=GeoWeb+-+Marciana).

2 Venetian Blockade and the First Naval Battle in Foça

Following the fall of Chania and Rethymno, and the subsequent 1645 investment of Heraklion, Venetian commanders—conceding their inability to muster a relief force sufficient to dislodge Ottoman terrestrial hegemony—pivoted toward a strategy of maritime interdiction. By deploying a squadron of chartered Dutch and English galleons, Venice sought to implement a naval blockade of the Dardanelles. The strategic objective was twofold: to sever the logistical lifeline sustaining Ottoman operations in Crete and to destabilize the capital's economy by intercepting merchant shipping. Consequently, the Venetian *armata grossa* (sailing fleet) maintained a rigorous blockade, while the *armata sottile* (oared fleet) was detached for littoral depredations across the Ottoman-controlled Aegean islands. Despite the systemic friction between multi-national captains and the prohibitive fiscal requirements of continuous station-keeping, the Venetian blockade remained largely impenetrable between 1646 and 1648, successfully isolating the Ottoman fleet within the straits.¹³

Throughout this period, Ottoman naval commanders eschewed direct engagements with the Venetian fleet, instead leveraging the operational agility of their galleys to bypass the blockade. To supplement these manoeuvres, shore-based artillery batteries along the Dardanelles were utilized to deter Venetian vessels from encroaching upon the straits. However, the sustained station-keeping of the Venetian *armata grossa* rendered these defensive measures largely ineffectual, placing the Ottoman admiralty in a precarious position. Consequently, Ottoman statesmen improvised a strategy of overwintering reached vessels along the Peloponnese or Chios to avoid the risks of a return voyage to the capital. The resulting maritime paralysis, coupled with the interruption of vital grain supplies to Istanbul, precipitated a domestic political upheaval that culminated in the deposition of Sultan İbrahim in 1648.¹⁴ Despite initial deliberations to commission an

13 Guido Candiani, "Stratégie et diplomatie vénitiennes: navires angle-hollandaises et blocus des Dardanelles, 1646-1659", *Revue d'Histoire Maritime*, vol. 9, (2008), pp. 251-282; Concerning the Dutch galleons in the Venetian fleet, see. Louis Sicking, "Selling and Buying Protection: Dutch War Fleets at the Service of Venice (1617-1667)", *Studi Veneziani*, vol. 68, (2013), pp. 89-106.

14 Concerning the first years of the blockade of the Dardanelles, see. Guido Candiani, *Dalla galea alla nave di linea: Le trasformazioni della marina veneziana (1572-1699)*, Città del Silenzio, Novi Ligure, 2012, pp. 82-92.

indigenous galleon fleet as a countermeasure, the transition was aborted due to strenuous resistance from the Ottoman clerical establishment (*ulema*).¹⁵

Between 1649 and 1656, the Ottoman Navy engaged Venetian forces in five major encounters, each aimed at deconstructing the blockade of the Dardanelles to facilitate the transport of reinforcements and materiel to Crete. The first engagement followed a protracted two-year maritime investment. On 1 May 1649, Grand Admiral (*Kapudanıderya*) Voynuk Ahmed Paşa departed Istanbul with a force comprising seventy galleys, ten mahons, and three galleons.¹⁶ It is highly probable that the Ottoman admiralty augmented this force by requisitioning armed merchantmen alongside several chartered British, French, and Dutch vessels, intended both for logistical support and tactical integration upon exiting the straits.¹⁷ Furthermore, the Barbary corsairs were incentivized with a 120,000 *kuruş* subsidy to contribute their own galleons to the imperial effort.¹⁸

Prior to the Ottoman fleet's sortie, the governor of Kilitbahir alerted the Kapudan Paşa that a Venetian squadron of nineteen galleons, commanded by Giacomo Riva, had encroached upon the Dardanelles. Upon reaching the narrows, Admiral Ahmed Paşa reconnoitred the enemy's disposition. Riva had divided his forces, positioning fourteen galleons near the Anatolian shore for victualling, while anchoring his five most formidable vessels off the Rumelian coast to interdict the Ottoman passage. On 5 May 1649, the Kapudan Paşa initiated a coordinated bombardment from the Rumelian coastal batteries, compelling three Venetian galleons to withdraw. Exploiting this opening on 6 May, the Ottoman fleet weighed anchor for the Aegean. Although adverse winds and a lack of the weather-gage initially impeded Riva's pursuit, he intercepted the Ottoman rear near Tenedos (Bozcaada), precipitating a five-hour artillery duel. During the engagement, Ottoman galleons—which lagged behind the more agile galley vanguard—were shielded by the fleet's formation. Despite being harassed by isolated Venetian vessels, the Ottoman ships sustained negligible structural damage and

15 İdris Bostan, "Kadırga'dan Kalyon'a XVII. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Osmanlı Gemi Teknolojisi'nin Değişimi", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, vol. 24, (2004), pp. 71-72.

16 Batista Nani, *Degl'Istorici delle cose Veneziane*, Venezia, 1720, p. 242; Kâtib Çelebi, *Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr fî Esfâri'l-Bihâr*, İdris Bostan (cur.), Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, Ankara, 2018, p. 205.

17 Candiani *Dalla galea alla nave di linea* cit., p. 93.

18 Kâtib Çelebi cit., p. 206.

successfully transited the engagement zone.¹⁹

Admiral Voynuk Ahmed Paşa successfully eluded the Venetian blockade and transitioned into the Aegean, where he integrated the Maghrebi reinforcements, augmenting his sailing contingent to eleven galleons. Upon reaching Foça (Phocaea), the Kapudan Paşa—disregarding the tactical counsel of the fortress garrison—moored the bulk of his squadron south of the fortress, ostensibly to benefit from its shore-based batteries.²⁰ However, the unexpected arrival of the Venetian galleons at the harbour’s periphery precipitated an immediate crisis. The enemy’s positioning allowed them to dominate the narrow littoral approach and direct devastating fire upon the densely packed Ottoman vessels. In a desperate bid to alleviate the operational bottleneck at the harbour entrance, Ahmed Paşa attempted to dismantle several galleys to clear a passage; however, the proximity of the Venetian broadsides and prevailing adverse winds thwarted these efforts, leaving the Ottoman fleet immobile and vulnerable.²¹

Giacomo Riva remained resolute in executing a pre-emptive strike to capitalize on the Ottoman fleet’s spatial vulnerability within the harbour. During the council of war, a strategic schism emerged: several officers advocated for a defensive posture pending reinforcements, while others expressed profound reservations regarding the deployment of heavy galleons in such a hazardous littoral assault. Riva, however, secured the captains’ cooperation through a pragmatic fiscal manoeuvre, indemnifying the private shipowners against any structural losses or logistical damages incurred during the engagement. This commitment effectively neutralized the commercial hesitations of the chartered fleet, allowing Riva to proceed with his aggressive tactical agenda.²²

On the afternoon of 12 May 1649, Captain Riva penetrated the harbour of Foça with a five-galleon vanguard, initiating a targeted bombardment against the

19 Nani cit., p. 242; Kâtip Çelebi cit., p. 206; Candiani *Dalla galea alla nave di linea* cit., p. 93-94; Roger Charles Anderson, *Naval Wars in the Levant, 1559-1853*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1952, p. 136.

20 Kâtip Çelebi cit., p. 206.

21 “La signalée victoire nagveres obtenev par les Vénitiens, sur l’armée navale des Turcs”, in *Recueil des Gazettes nouvelles ordinaires et extraordinaires*, N. 67, Paris 1649, p. 436-437.

22 Nani cit., p. 242-243; Alessandro Marzo Magno, *Storia di Venezia in dieci battaglie navali*, Editori Laterza, Rome, 2025, p. 135-137; “La signalée victoire nagveres obtenev par les Vénitiens, sur l’armée navale des Turcs”, p. 437; Anderson cit., p. 137.

Maghrebi sailing vessels and Ottoman *mahons* arrayed along the harbor's port flank. As evidenced by the contemporary iconographic record (Fig. 1), the lead galleons—*Amburgense* (M), *San Felipe* (N), and *Madonna delle Vigne* (Z)—are depicted advancing to engage their targets with concentrated fire. While certain Maghrebi units (D-left) are shown reciprocating with short-range broadside volleys, three Ottoman galleons and the remaining Maghrebi vessels (D-right) appear to retain a passive, static posture beneath the protective cover of the fortress of Foça. During the intense exchange, conflagrations erupted on two Maghrebi galleons, both subsequently foundering, while the Venetian forces successfully effected the seizure of an additional Maghrebi vessel.

The second phase of the engagement transpired south of Foça Harbour, where a Venetian squadron of four galleons launched a concentrated assault on the Ottoman galleys moored at the southern approach. As illustrated in the contemporary description (Fig. 1), the vessels *Tre Re* (P), *Carità* (O), *Croce Dorata* (L), and *Princessa* (I), under the command of Bertucci Civrano, successfully breached the defensive perimeter of Ottoman *mahons* (E) at the harbour's mouth. These four galleons assumed a synchronized parallel alignment, delivering a relentless succession of broadside volleys. In response, Admiral Ahmed Paşa coordinated a counter-offensive, utilizing shore-based batteries while personally leading his galleys (F) in an attempt to neutralize the Venetian line via boarding manoeuvres. However, the kinetic intensity of the Venetian broadside fire decimated the advancing galleys, compelling a chaotic retreat. The conflict persisted until dusk, with the protracted artillery barrage inflicting catastrophic structural damage upon the Ottoman fleet. Fearing that the conflagrations from the sinking Maghrebi vessels might precipitate a chain reaction, Captain Riva eventually disengaged to mitigate the risk to his own squadron. The engagement concluded with the Venetian seizure of a galley, a galleon, and a mahon, alongside approximately 4,000 Ottoman casualties.²³

The Venetian victory at Foça was secured through a decisive tactical incursion against the Ottoman fleet at the harbour's entrance. While the superior ordnance

23 Nani cit., p. 243-244; Kâtib Çelebi cit., p. 206; Magno cit., p. 137-143; “La signalée victoire nagveres obtenue par les Vénitiens, sur l’armée navale des Turcs”, p. 437-438; Andrea Valiero, *Historia della guerra di Candia*, Venezia, 1679, p. 204-206; Christine Isom-Verhaaren, *The Sultan's Fleet: Seafarers of the Ottoman Empire*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2022, p. 170.



Fig. 1. *The Battle of Foça*, Carte topografiche, piante di città e fortezze, disegni di battaglie della guerra di Candia (1645-1669). Biblioteca nazionale Marciana.

of the galleons proved determinant, the Venetian captains prioritized the fragmentation of the Ottoman defensive perimeter over the execution of a standardized tactical orthodoxy. Although certain vessels approximated a rudimentary line-ahead formation to optimize their broadside fire, others engaged in isolated, non-linear combat. Consequently, the manoeuvres observed in this engagement preclude the conclusion that the Venetian command—including the integrated English and Dutch contingents—had yet institutionalized a cohesive tactical doctrine, such as the formal line-of-battle, during this phase of the Cretan campaigns.

The Ottoman and Barbary commanders, conversely, exhibited a systemic failure to orchestrate a viable offensive or to mount a resilient defence with their sailing ships. Admiral Ahmed Paşa could have mitigated the Venetian incursion by establishing a formidable blockade at the harbour's aperture, utilizing the collective firepower of the Ottoman and North African galleons. Instead, he opted for a suboptimal defensive configuration, stationing *mahons* and galleys at the harbour's entrance—vessels that were vastly outgunned by the Venetian sailing warships. His second strategic miscalculation involved the attempt to engage the Venetian squadron via traditional boarding manoeuvres; however, the Venetians, operating in a nascent line-ahead formation, deployed their broadsides with such intensity that they precipitated a chaotic tactical withdrawal of the Ottoman oared fleet.

The Battle of Foça served as a definitive tactical demonstration for the Ottoman admiralty, proving that traditional boarding manoeuvres were insufficient to overcome Venetian sailing fleet. It became increasingly evident that the efficacy

of the Venetian broadside could effectively negate the numerical preponderance of the Ottoman oared fleet. Consequently, in 1650, the Ottomans authorized an ambitious rearmament program, mandating the construction of thirty sailing warships (*burtun*). Within that same year, fifteen vessels—ranging from heavy 60-gun galleons to more agile 35-gun platforms—were completed at the shipyards of Istanbul and Sinop. However, this nascent transition was marred by significant setbacks: one vessel was decimated by a conflagration while on the stocks in Sinop, and a 54-gun flagship, sponsored by Grand Vizier Melek Ahmed Paşa, foundered immediately following its launch at the Imperial Arsenal (*Tersâne-i Âmire*).²⁴

3 Naval Battles of Santorini and the Naxos Islands

Despite their tactical success at Foça, the Venetian resolution to sustain the blockade of the Dardanelles was increasingly compromised by inter-command friction between Venetian, Dutch, and English officers. The operational efficacy of the sailing fleet was further eroded by systemic logistical failures, most notably protracted wage disputes with the merchant crews and the erratic supply of victuals. Consequently, the Venetian *armata grossa* proved unable to maintain a continuous presence, allowing the Ottoman fleet to successfully transit the Dardanelles during the winter of 1651.²⁵ This strategic lapse precipitated the circumstances for a second major maritime confrontation in the Aegean, as the Ottoman forces regained the ability to manoeuvre in open waters.

On 13 June 1651, the newly appointed Grand Admiral, Hüsambeyzâde Ali Paşa²⁶ sortied from the capital with a formidable force of thirty galleons, thirty-eight galleys, and six mahons.²⁷ Significantly, the galleon crews were primarily levied from terrestrial infantry units, and their command was entrusted to provincial administrators—a reflection of the fleet's primary mission as a logistical

24 Guido Candiani, *I vascelli della Serenissima: Guerra, politica e costruzioni navali a Venezia in età moderna, 1650-1720*, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, Venezia 2009, p. 28-29; Kâtib Çelebi cit., p. 208-209.

25 Candiani, *Dalla galea alla nave di linea* cit., p. 95-99.

26 Concerning his life and admiralty of Hüsambeyzâde Ali Paşa, see. Isom-Verhaaren cit., p. 172-174.

27 Kâtib Çelebi cit., p. 209.

conduit for Cretan reinforcements. The Ottoman transit to Chios remained uncontested, as the Venetian blockade of the Dardanelles was not in effect at that juncture. Upon reaching Chios, the fleet's strength was further augmented by the sea lords (*derya beys*); Venetian intelligence estimates the total force subsequently escalated to between 40 and 55 galleons, including 16 North African vessels and several requisitioned Christian merchantmen.²⁸ Comparative historical accounts suggest a total of 55 galleons—comprising units from Constantinople, Alexandria, and the Barbary states—supported by a robust auxiliary of 53 galleys and six mahons.²⁹

Admiral Ali Paşa sortied for Crete on 1 July 1651, while a Venetian force of twenty-eight galleons, twenty-three galleys, and eight galleasses—under the command of Alvise Mocenigo—reached Kythira the following day. Informed that the Ottomans were transporting a substantial troop contingent, Mocenigo determined to execute an interdiction, despite his captains' marked aversion to a high-risk engagement. Positioning his fleet near Ios to block the Ottoman transit toward Santorini, Mocenigo convened a council of war to bolster morale. He argued that Venice could offset the numerical disparity through qualitative naval proficiency, asserting that while the Ottoman sailing ships were imposing in scale, they were architecturally deficient, unstable, and lacked specialized ordnance. Furthermore, he advised his officers to distinguish between the inexperienced Ottoman commanders and the North African captains, whom he deemed more formidable adversaries due to their tenacious pursuit of maritime prize-taking.³⁰

At noon on 7 July, Alvise Mocenigo advanced with the intent of executing a surprise tactical interception before the Ottoman command could ascertain the Venetian presence. However, Kapudan Paşa sighted the galleons *Drago* and *San Pietro* while transiting Santorini. Recognizing the imminent threat, he retreated into the maritime corridor between Santorini and Ios to facilitate a tactical consolidation with the Ottoman rearguard. Subsequently, Barbora and Delfino attempted to close the distance and initiate boarding manoeuvres against the Ottoman galleys, but their efforts were neutralized by unfavourable conditions, forcing a

28 Nani cit., p. 278; Valiero cit., p. 265.

29 Giovanni Carlo Serpentino, *Lettera di ragguaglio della vittoria navale conseguita dall'armata della Serenissima Repubblica di Venetia sotto il comando del procurator capitano general da Mar Mocenigo contro Turchi nell'Arcipelago*, Venetia, 1651, p. 2.

30 Serpentino cit., p. 2-3.

The Ottoman command sought to implement a specialized tactical configuration by bifurcating their sailing and oared vessels. Conversely, the Venetian squadron devolved into a fragmented formation, a lapse that significantly eroded Mocenigo's tactical oversight and compromised his ability to transmit coherent signals to his subordinates. Driven by a desire for personal distinction, Girolamo Battaglia unilaterally initiated the engagement, leading five galleons in a premature assault against the Ottoman sailing line. Consequently, during the initial phase of the conflict, the Venetian vessels operated in a disjointed *en échelon* alignment, failing to achieve either a disciplined line-ahead or a cohesive line-abreast posture.

When Girolamo Battaglia initiated a high-risk assault with five galleons, the remainder of the Venetian fleet—having drifted into the lee—was unable to provide tactical support. As evidenced by the contemporary description (Fig. 3), *Principo Piccolo*, alongside *San Pietro*, *Arma di Venezia*, *Sacrificio d'Abram*, *Benedizione*, and *Fregata Contarini*, are depicted engaging the Ottoman sailing line in isolation. Venetian historiography emphasizes that Battaglia exposed his division to disproportionate risk through an impetuous attempt to penetrate the Ottoman defensive perimeter. These vessels are shown executing multiple tactical passes, delivering broadsides while transiting the Ottoman front.³³ Although the visual evidence suggests a rudimentary line-ahead formation among these five ships, the disjointed positioning of the other Venetian units—and the *Sacrificio d'Abram*'s resort to traditional boarding manoeuvres—underscores the absence of a standardized tactical discipline or a cohesive line of battle doctrine at this stage of the conflict.

Primary sources remain lacunary regarding the specific manoeuvres of the Ottoman galleons; however, the death of Mehmed Paşa—the Governor of Anatolia—mortally wounded by naval ordnance while engaging at close range, suggests an intense and costly confrontation. Although the iconographic record (Fig. 3) depicts a contingent of seven Ottoman galleons attempting a coordinated frontal assault, the remainder of the sailing fleet appears characterized by tactical disarray. It can be argued that the inability of the Ottoman and Barbary captains to maintain formational integrity severely compromised their defensive efficacy, leaving individual vessels vulnerable to concentrated Venetian fire. This structur-

33 Serpentino cit., p. 3.



Fig. 3. *The battle between Ottoman and Venetian galleons*, Carte topografiche, piante di città e fortezze, disegni di battaglie della guerra di Candia (1645-1669). Biblioteca nazionale Marciana.

al fragility was fully exposed when eight Venetian galleons, having disengaged from the Ottoman oared vessels, redirected their fire toward the sailing line. Faced with this concentrated broadside pressure, the Ottoman command executed a precipitous withdrawal, effectively ceding the engagement zone.³⁴

In his post-action report to Alvise Mocenigo, Girolamo Battaglia posited that, notwithstanding the Ottomans' numerical preponderance in sailing vessels, they remained vulnerable in future engagements due to a perceived deficiency in tactical discipline and combat resilience among their crews. From his perspective, the Venetian Admiralty maintained a decisive advantage rooted in superior proficiency in the orchestration of sailing warfare, contrasting the professionalized Venetian command with the nascent and inconsistently trained Ottoman officer corps.³⁵

From a tactical perspective, while some Venetian sailing ships approximated a

34 Serpentino cit., p. 3; Nani cit., p. 279-280; Valiero cit., p. 265.

35 Nani cit., p. 280.

line-ahead configuration, the command structure remained unable to orchestrate the entire squadron as a singular tactical entity—a prerequisite for the formal line-of-battle doctrine. Conversely, the Ottoman commanders, many of whom were navigating heavy sailing warships for the first time, exhibited a marked deficiency in ship-handling proficiency and broadside management. Their sole tactical achievement lay in the bifurcation of the fleet, successfully segregating the galleons from the oared vessels prior to the engagement. This manoeuvre was instrumental in mitigating the operational dissonance and logistical friction that typically plagued hybrid fleets when disparate vessel types attempted to engage in close proximity.

Following the engagement at Santorini, the Venetian fleet attempted a secondary offensive to achieve the total destruction of the Ottoman forces; however, the initial pursuit proved futile. The Ottoman fleet had navigated northward, establishing a defensive anchorage within the narrow maritime corridor between Naxos and Paros. Upon acquiring actionable reconnaissance regarding the Ottoman position, Mocenigo's fleet advanced on 9 July. Recognizing that several galleons were straggling and failing to maintain their designated stations, the Admiral prioritized the restoration of formational integrity. Given the limitations of contemporary maritime communications, Mocenigo was compelled to resort to rudimentary visual signalling and vocal imperatives, attempting to manually coordinate his captains as they approached the enemy's new position.

According to Venetian historiography, the fleet was organized into a tripartite tactical configuration, with the Admiral stationed at the core of the primary echelon.³⁶ As evidenced by the detailed schematic of the Venetian deployment (Fig. 4), nineteen galleons were deployed in a transverse line-abreast posture to serve as the rearguard. The remaining sailing vessels were positioned in parallel ranks within the centre and the vanguard, integrated with galleasses and galleys that were symmetrically distributed across the starboard and port flanks. This formation reflects an attempt to synchronize the broadside potential of the galleons with the manoeuvrable proximity of the oared vessels.

The Ottoman fleet was taking on water at Naxos when the Venetian vanguard executed a tactical surprise, emerging on the horizon. This precipitated an immediate emergency sortie from the anchorage. Under the direct command of Ad-

³⁶ Serpentino cit., p. 4; Nani cit., p. 280.

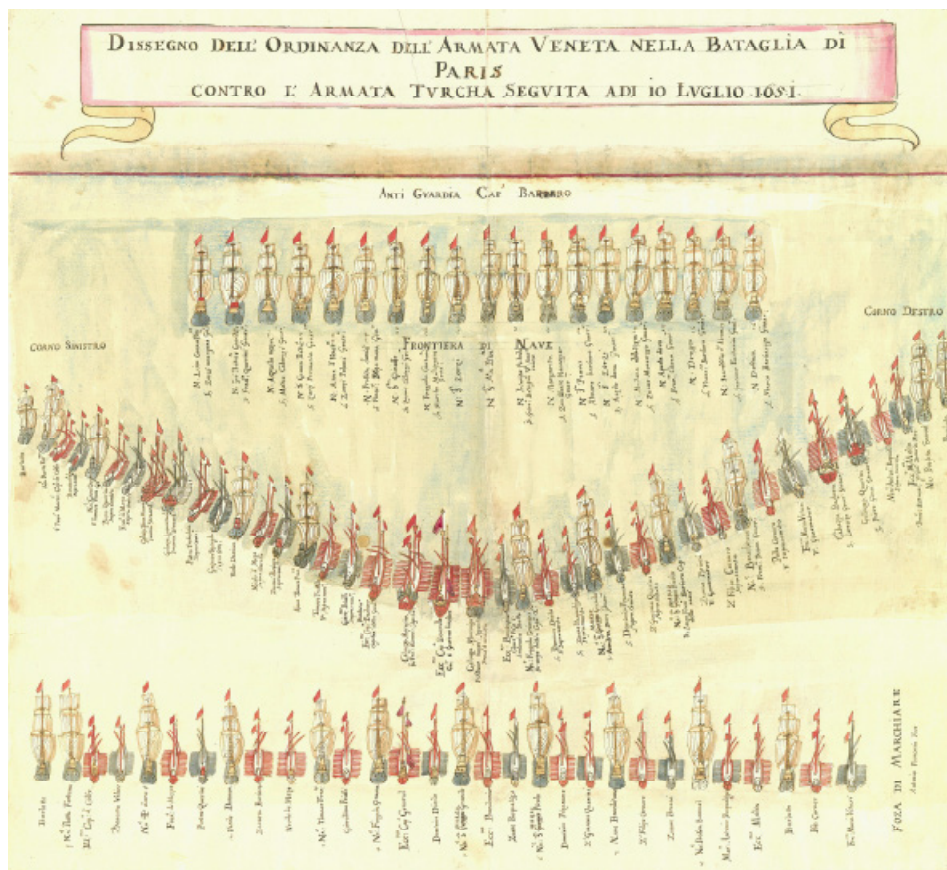


Fig. 4. *The formation of the Venetian fleet*, Carte topografiche, piante di città e fortezze, disegni di battaglie della guerra di Candia (1645-1669). Biblioteca nazionale Marciana.

miral Ali Paşa, the majority of the mahons and galleys established a transverse line-abreast formation at the centre of the defensive array. Simultaneously, the Ottoman galleons—dependent on galley-tow manoeuvres for rapid positioning—were arrayed side-by-side with the oared vessels, collectively constituting the fleet's starboard and port flanks. This configuration probably aimed to provide a unified front, integrating the mobile agility of the galleys with the stationary firepower of the sailing ships.

Despite the element of tactical surprise, the Ottoman command maintained tactical composure, employing preparatory cannon fire to incite a general engagement. Admiral Mocenigo, prioritizing the coherence of his squadron, utilized gal-

ley-tows to manoeuvre his galleons into a concave, crescent-shaped formation as they advanced. Both fleets converged in parallel line-abreast postures until the Venetian discipline faltered; several captains abruptly abandoned their stations, initiating unsynchronized independent assaults against the Ottoman array.

Of the three galleasses stationed on the second line's left flank, two—commanded by Lazzaro Mocenigo and Luigi Tomaso—unilaterally advanced to engage the Ottoman oared fleet. Alvise Mocenigo's inability to prevent this compromise of formational integrity presented a critical opening for Kapudan Paşa, who moved to capitalize on the tactical fragmentation. The Ottoman galleys initially impeded the galleasses' momentum through concentrated bow-chaser fire. Ali Paşa then orchestrated a targeted counter-offensive, deploying a combined force of galleys and four mahons to isolate Tomaso's vessel, while personally leading a primary contingent to engage Mocenigo's flagship.

The Venetian galleasses were swiftly surrounded; however, their crews maintained a resolute defence despite sustaining debilitating casualties. This localized resistance provided a critical window for a Venetian relief force—comprising one galleasse, two galleys, and two galleons—to close the distance and engage the Ottoman centre. Although Ali Paşa successfully initiated boarding manoeuvres, the structural resilience of the beleaguered galleasses prevented their capture. This failure left the Ottoman *bastarda* and its escorts critically exposed as the Venetian warships executed a tactical envelopment. Following a period of high-intensity combat, the *bastarda* succumbed to a catastrophic fire, and Kapudan Paşa was extricated only moments before the flagship foundered. The subsequent retreat of the Ottoman oared fleet resulted in the loss of one mahon, which was seized by the Venetian victors.

The Venetian counter-offensive proved decisive; Admiral Ali Paşa narrowly extricated himself as the centre of the Ottoman line was rendered functionally defunct. Contemporary iconography (Fig. 5) provides a granular depiction of this central collapse, illustrating the tactical vacuum created by the loss of the *bastarda*. Capitalizing on this disruption, Alvise Mocenigo initiated a precipitous strike against the Ottoman left flank. His strategy was to leverage the superior ordnance of the Venetian sailing fleet by deploying the galleons in a disciplined line-abreast formation.

In the description, however, the majority of the Venetian galleons stationed on the right wing (*corno destro*) appear to have maintained a peripheral position,



Fig. 5. *Naxos Naval Battle*, Carte topografiche, piante di città e fortezze, disegni di battaglie della guerra di Candia (1645-1669). Biblioteca nazionale Marciana.

remaining largely uncommitted to the action. Simultaneously, the Ottoman command endeavoured to orchestrate a tactical counter-offensive against the Venetian centre and left flank, deploying sixteen galleons via synchronized oared-towing by eighteen galleys. However, this manoeuvre was neutralized by the systemic collapse of the Ottoman centre and the rapid, uncontested advance of the Venetian vanguard toward the right flank. The resulting lack of coordination precipitated the failure of the Ottoman counter-strike, effectively ceding the tactical initiative to the Venetians.

A substantial contingent of Ottoman sailing vessels remained positioned south of Naxos, dependent on galley-tows for manoeuvrability. Upon observing the disintegration of the central defensive pivot, the galley captains attempted a ret-

rograde manoeuvre toward the east of the island, intending to regroup and escape northward. However, a decisive charge by the Venetian right flank precipitated a total collapse of command and control among the Ottoman oared vessels. Under heavy Venetian bombardment, the Ottoman galley captains were forced to sever their tow-lines, abandoning the immobile galleons to ensure their own survival. This act of tactical desertion left the Ottoman sailing fleet fragmented and defenceless against the advancing Venetian vanguard.

A number of Ottoman galleons, rendered stationary and driven aground upon the Naxian littoral, became vulnerable targets for the Venetian vanguard. Capitalizing on this immobility, Venetian galleys and galleasses initiated aggressive boarding manoeuvres (a phase of the conflict documented with granular detail in Figure 6). Faced with imminent capture, several Ottoman commanders opted for deliberate self-immolation, firing their own vessels as Venetian boarding parties gained the decks. At the conclusion of the hostilities, the Venetian forces had successfully destroyed four Ottoman sailing ships through arson and secured ten significant prizes: six Barbary vessels and four imperial galleons, including one 54-gun heavy unit and three 44-gun frigates.³⁷

In contrast to the initial engagement, the Ottoman command failed to achieve a favourable tactical disposition for their fifty-five galleons, which would have allowed them to operate as autonomous combat units. Instead, these vessels became a tactical liability for the oared contingent. Although Kapudan Paşa established a relatively coherent central line with the galleys and mahons, the sailing vessels were relegated to a disorganized array on the flanks. Consequently, when the oared fleet commenced its retreat, the galleons—unable to form a defensive line and becalmed by prevailing weather conditions—were rendered tactically inert, becoming vulnerable targets for the Venetian vanguard.

In this phase of the engagement, the vacuum in operational leadership and the breakdown of communication among the Ottoman command proved decisive. Although the North African captains possessed a superior maritime heritage in corsairing, which granted them extensive experience in handling heavy sailing

37 For further details of the war, see. Serpentino cit., p. 3-6; Nani cit., p. 280-283; Valiero cit., p. 265-268; Girolamo BRUSONI, *Historia dell'ultima guerra tra veneziani e turchi*, Vol. I, Bologna, 1674, p. 237-238; Kâtib Çelebi cit., p. 209-210; Nâimâ Mustafa Efendi, *Tâ-rih-i Na'îmâ (Ravzatü'l-Hüseyn fî Hulâsati Ahbârî'l-Hâfîkayn)*, Mehmet İpşirli (cur.), Vol. V, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara, 2007, p. 1307-1309.

vessels, they were unable to achieve tactical synchronization with the imperial Ottoman naval establishment. This lack of unity of command meant that the individual skill of the Barbary captains could not be leveraged into a collective strategic advantage, leaving the fleet fragmented under the concentrated pressure of the Venetian line.

While the Venetian fleet at Naxos initially exhibited a higher degree of formational cohesion than in previous encounters, this structural integrity dissipated rapidly upon engagement. The victory was ultimately secured through individual captaincy and localized initiative rather than centralized, coordinated manoeuvres. As the battle devolved into a *mêlée*, the galleasses and galleys emerged as the decisive tactical arbiters, providing the manoeuvrable firepower necessary to break the Ottoman spirit.³⁸ Notably, only two galleons—*Marie Isabella* and *Rotta Fortuna*—played a pivotal role in the dissolution of the Ottoman centre. In contrast, the remainder of the Venetian sailing contingent remained tactically peripheral, failing to exert significant pressure on the Ottoman right wing.

The Naval Battle of Naxos reaffirmed Venetian maritime hegemony over the Ottoman forces in the Eastern Mediterranean; however, it also demonstrated that sailing warships had yet to achieve strategic primacy in determining the war's outcome. Despite the presence of English and Dutch officers within the Venetian ranks, neither side had successfully codified a standardized tactical doctrine for sailing vessels. The failure to institutionalize the line-of-battle configuration, save for sporadic and isolated instances, suggests a significant doctrinal lag during this transitional period of the Cretan War.

4 The Naval Battles of the Ottoman and Venetian Fleets in the Dardanelles (1654-1656)

Despite the decisive nature of the victory at Naxos, the Venetian fleet remained unable to dislodge the Ottoman presence from Crete. Although Alvise Mocenigo maintained active patrols with a hybrid force of galleys and galleons, he failed to sever the Ottoman maritime bridge, allowing Admiral Ali Paşa to continue ferry-

38 Guido Candiani, "From Lepanto to Lemnos: The evolution in the employment of galleasses in the Venetian navy", *Dal Mediterraneo alla Manica: Contributi alla storia navale dell'età moderna*, E. Beri (cur.), Società italiana di Storia militare-Nadir Media, Roma, 2022, pp. 84-85.

ing materiel and reinforcements to the island. Following Mocenigo's resignation, his successor, Leonardo Foscolo—operating alongside the Captain of Galleons, Francesco Barbaro—focused on commerce raiding against merchant convoys from Alexandria through the end of 1651. The withdrawal of Kapudan Paşa to Istanbul, after docking the sailing fleet at Rhodes, provided Foscolo with the strategic opening to re-establish the naval investment of the Dardanelles after an eighteen-month hiatus. Consequently, a squadron of nineteen Venetian galleons maintained a persistent blockade of the Strait until the autumn of 1652.³⁹

The renewed naval investment of the Dardanelles by the Venetian squadron once again interdicted the Ottoman fleet's egress into the Mediterranean. In his formal petition to Sultan Mehmed IV, Kapudan Paşa conceded that the imperial fleet was unable to transit the strait due to nineteen British and Dutch-owned galleons deployed in a flanking posture along the Rumelian and Anatolian littoral. Recognizing that the Ottoman forces were ill-equipped for a direct engagement, he formulated a stratagem to circumvent the blockade: while the Admiral would proceed to Izmir via an overland route, the fleet would execute a feigned withdrawal toward the Black Sea under the guise of logistical timber transport. The objective was to induce the Venetian squadron to abandon their stations, assuming the Mediterranean threat had dissipated.⁴⁰ However, this tactical deception proved abortive, and only six oared galleys successfully infiltrated the Aegean theatre.⁴¹

The outbreak of the First Anglo-Dutch War in 1652 necessitated the repatriation of subsidized mercenary tonnage, as hired English and Dutch galleons were recalled from Venetian service. Facing a precipitous depletion of their sailing fleet's numerical strength, the Venetian Senate was compelled to initiate an indigenous naval construction program within the state shipyards. To mitigate the immediate tactical vacuum, the Venetians also conducted extensive repairs on three Ottoman galleons seized during the Battle of Naxos, subsequently commissioning them into active service after a comprehensive structural refitting.⁴²

Despite the reinforced Venetian presence, *armata grossa* failed to interdict the deployment of Admiral Çavuşzâde Mehmed Paşa's fleet—comprising seventy

39 Candiani *Dalla galea alla nave di linea* cit., p. 113-115.

40 BOA, TSMA.e, 501/32, 696/40.

41 Kâtib Çelebi cit., p. 133.

42 Candiani *I vascelli della Serenissima* cit., p. 32-45.



Fig. 6. *Ottoman galleons sank and captured by Venetian warships and escaped Ottoman warships by towing the galleys*, Carte topografiche, piante di citta' e fortezze, disegni di battaglie della guerra di Candia (1645-1669). Biblioteca nazionale Marciana.

galleys, five mahons, and thirty-four galleons—into the Mediterranean theater in 1653. On 26 May, Admiral Leonardo Foscolo, commanding a potent strike force of twenty-two galleys, six galleasses, and twenty-four galleons, initiated a naval investment of Rhodes. Although Foscolo attempted to provoke a decisive fleet engagement, the Ottoman command declined to sortie, opting for a defensive ‘fleet-in-being’ posture within the safety of the harbour. Consequently, after a prolonged but inconclusive naval bombardment of the citadel until 30 June, the Venetian squadron was forced to withdraw. This strategic opening allowed Kapudan Paşa to successfully execute a critical logistical resupply of ammunition to Heraklion via his oared units.⁴³

43 Candiani *Dalla galea alla nave di linea* cit., p. 116-117; Nani cit., p. 313-314; Kâtib Çelebi cit., p. 210.

4.1. First Naval Battle in the Dardanelles (16 May 1654)

Murad Paşa, the former governor of Buda, assumed the admiralty on 26 December 1653, prioritizing the assembly of a more formidable naval contingent. He immediately requisitioned the maritime expertise of the North African captains; consequently, seven Barbary galleons reached Istanbul prior to the arrival of the Venetian blockade.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Murad Paşa chartered four French mercantile galleons and two pinnaces to serve as auxiliary units.⁴⁵ In the historiographical record provided by Kara Çelebizâde Abdülaziz Efendi, the fleet departed Istanbul on 9 May 1654, comprising forty-four galleys, six mahons, and twenty-three galleons.⁴⁶ However, Venetian intelligence presents conflicting figures: some sources claim an order of battle of forty-two galleys, seven mahons, and twenty-four galleons⁴⁷, while another Venetian captain reported a significantly larger force of thirty-four sailing vessels, forty galleys and six mahons.⁴⁸

Upon receiving intelligence of Ottoman naval preparations, Leonardo Foscolo deployed Giuseppe Dolfin, the Captain of Galleons, to the Dardanelles with a squadron of sixteen galleons, eight galleys, and two galleasses to reinforce the blockade. Dolfin established his station on 16 April 1654; however, the Ottoman main fleet reached Kilitbahir and anchored under the protection of the fortress on 14 May. The strategic situation deteriorated for the Venetians shortly thereafter, as fourteen North African sailing ships and twenty galleys commanded by the sea lords established a southern station, effectively flanking the Venetian squadron. Consequently, Dolfin's fleet found itself tactically enveloped in a pincer formation between the unified imperial and corsair echelons stationed between Kilitbahir and Seddülbahir.

Dolfin deemed only seven of his galleons combat-effective for a direct engagement with the superior Ottoman vanguard. To compensate for the vulnerabil-

44 Valiero cit., p. 313.

45 *Copia di lettera scritta da N.N. dalla naue venetiana la Capitana delle navi armate. Sotto la direttione, & commando dell'illustrissimo, & eccellentissimo signor Iseppo Dolfino dell'illustriss.mo & excell.mo sig. Nicolo. A 27 maggio stil nouo 1654*, Venetia, 1654, p. 1; "Le grand combat donné entre l'Armée navale des Vénétiens & celle des Turcs", in *Recueil des Gazettes nouvelles ordinaires et extraordinaires*, N. 97, Paris, 1654, p. 806.

46 Kara Çelebi-zâde Abdülaziz Efendi, *Ravzatü'l-Ebrâr Zeyli (Tahlil ve Metin)*, Nevzat Kaya (cur), Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara, 2003, p. 175.

47 Nani cit., p. 329; Valiero cit., p. 313.

48 *Copia di lettera*, p. 1; "Le grand combat", p. 806.

ity of his remaining vessels, he tasked the oared units with providing close-escort protection for the weaker sailing ships. Dolfin then deployed his squadron in a bifurcated defensive posture: seven galleons were anchored along the Rumelian coast and another seven along the Anatolian littoral, thereby securing his flanks. To bolster the integrity of this formation, he stationed two galleys and two gal-leases within the central axis, creating a concentrated pivot of firepower at the heart of the Strait.⁴⁹

The visual description (Fig. 7) illustrates the Venetian fleet's tactical geometry: seven galleons formed a contiguous line-ahead formation along the Anatolian littoral, while a symmetrical division on the Rumelian side—augmented by galley-towage—maintained a parallel array. Notably, the vanguard elements of both wings were angled inward to create a crescentic disposition oriented toward the Ottoman fleet.

Dolfin formulated a sophisticated tactical directive to govern this engagement. He ordered the Captain of Galleys, Francesco Morosini, to maintain tow-lines until more than half of the Ottoman fleet had achieved egress from Kilitbahir. Should the Ottoman vanguard initiate hostilities, the Venetian units were instructed to return fire without breaking formation. Only upon the commitment of the Ottoman centre were the galleys to sever the tows. Dolfin's objective was to ensure that the Venetian galleons secured the weather gage at the critical moment; thus, by leveraging the hydraulic advantages of the strait's current, they could execute a disciplined line-ahead assault against the emerging Ottoman columns.⁵⁰

The Venetian operational security was catastrophically compromised when a defecting captain divulged Dolfin's tactical directives to Admiral Murad Paşa. Armed with this intelligence, Kapudan Paşa initiated a strategic reconfiguration of the Ottoman order of battle. To counter the Venetian sailing fleet, he deployed the Ottoman and Maghreb galleons as a heavy vanguard echelon, intended to absorb the initial shock. The mahons were stationed in the center to assumingly provide a secondary line of fire, while the galleys were relegated to the rearguard, seemingly positioned to exploit gaps in the Venetian line or initiate boarding manoeuvres once the sailing vessels had closed the distance.⁵¹

49 Candiani *Dalla galea alla nave di linea* cit., p. 118.

50 Nani cit., p. 330; Valiero cit., p. 314; *Copia di lettera*, p. 2; "Le grand combat", p. 807-808.

51 Kâtib Çelebi cit., p. 211.

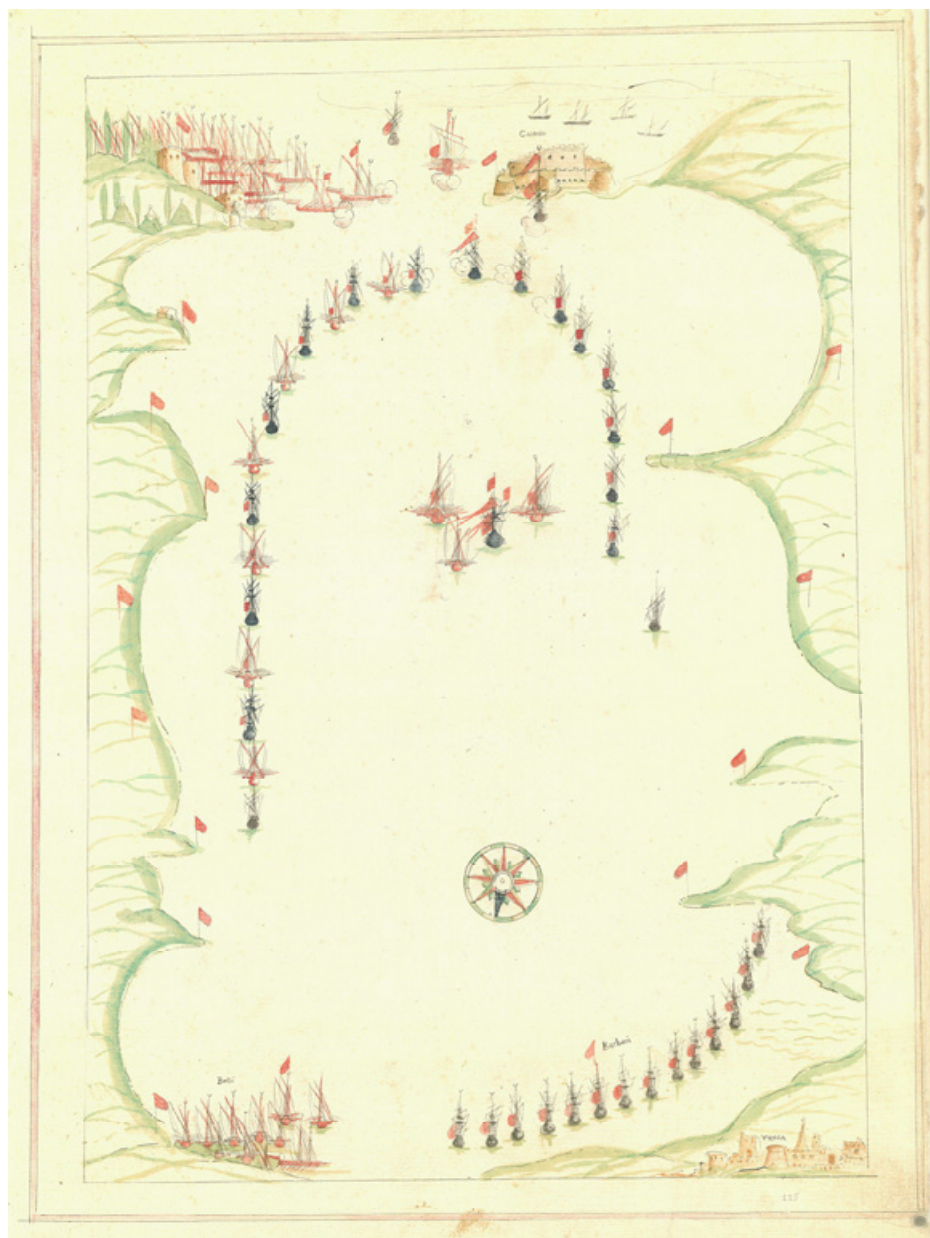


Fig. 7. *The formation of the Venetian fleet (1654)*, Carte topografiche, piante di città' e fortezze, disegni di battaglie della guerra di Candia (1645-1669). Biblioteca nazionale Marciana.

According to the historiographical record of Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa, Murad Paşa formulated his strategy upon the counsel of Küçük Mehmed, the commander of the Tripolitan squadron. Recognizing the tactical complexity of the Venetian crescent, Kapudan Paşa convened a council of war to leverage Mehmed's extensive experience with sailing vessels. Küçük Mehmed proposed a mirrored engagement strategy, wherein he would personally target the Venetian *kapudâne* (flagship), while the Tripolitan *patrona* and *riyâle* would neutralize their Venetian counterparts.⁵² He further suggested that four Tripolitan galleons could engage four Venetian counterparts, leaving the remaining Venetian galleons to be dealt with by the Ottoman sailing ships. The Tripolitan galleons—proficient in aggressive boarding manoeuvres—were positioned as the vanguard of a line-abreast formation. The objective was to circumvent the Venetian gunnery advantage by forcing an immediate transition to close-quarters combat.⁵³

On the morning of 16 May, the Ottoman fleet initiated a high-velocity descent upon the Venetian array, leveraging both the prevailing northerly winds and the strait's favourable current. Contrary to Dolfin's operational calculus, the Venetians forfeited their tactical window to secure the weather gage. The Venetian tactical cohesion disintegrated precipitously at the outset; eight primary galleons—followed by an additional four—disregarded operational directives and commenced a disorganized withdrawal when confronted by the Ottoman vanguard. This rout not only shattered the Venetian line but also compromised the oared contingent, as six galleys were inadvertently dragged into the chaotic retreat.

Observing the collapse of the Venetian formation, Kapudan Paşa directed his squadron to concentrate their assault on the remaining four Venetian vessels rather than pursuing the retreating units. Emir Kapudan, the Captain of the Galleons, grappled with and boarded the *Gouden Adelaar* (*Aquila d'Oro*), a Dutch-hired galleon under the command of Daniele Morosini. The resulting attritional *mêlée* lasted for nearly three hours, with Morosini initially maintaining tactical parity and nearing a defensive victory. However, the arrival of four Barbary galleons to reinforce Emir Kapudan shifted the balance. Recognizing the inevitability of capture, Morosini deliberately ignited his vessel; the ensuing conflagration rapidly

52 The titles of the captains commanding and the ships themselves, *patrona* and *riyâle*, were called by the same names, see. Isom-Verhaaren cit., p. 248.

53 *Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa Vekâyi'nâme'si, Tahlil ve Metin Tenkidi*, Fahri Çetin DERİN (cur.), Ph.D.diss., Istanbul University, 1993, p. 53-54; *Târih-i Na'imâ*, vol. V, p. 1518.

transitioned to the Ottoman ship, resulting in the mutual destruction and sinking of both galleons.

Simultaneously, İskenderiyeli Mehmed Kapudan engaged in a close-quarters assault on *Orsole Bonaventure*, a hired English galleon. As capitulation became inevitable, the English crew followed the precedent of the day and ignited their vessel; the resulting inferno subsequently engulfed Mehmed Kapudan's ship, leading to the simultaneous destruction of both vessels. In contrast, the *Margherata*—another English galleon under Antonio Zeno—demonstrated superior tactical positioning. By successfully maintaining a stand-off range through disciplined broadside discharge, and supported by the manoeuvrability of two Venetian galleys, Zeno managed to disengage and execute a strategic withdrawal from the chaotic mêlée.

Giuseppe Dolfin's flagship emerged as the primary focal point of the Ottoman assault. Shortly after Francesco Morosini, the Captain of Galleys, manoeuvred to support *Sint Joris*, both vessels were tactically enveloped by a combined force of four Barbary and two Ottoman galleons (see Fig. 8). Under sustained and high-intensity pressure, Morosini's galley was eventually foundered. The Ottoman squadron then concentrated their offensive capabilities on the 52-gun *Sint Joris*. While two Ottoman galleons initiated boarding manoeuvres via the starboard quarter, the remaining vessels circled the Venetian flagship, maintaining a devastating rate of raking fire from multiple vectors.

Dolfin successfully repelled an initial Ottoman galleon but suffered significant compromise to his vessel's structural integrity under the weight of the broader bombardment. As *Sint Joris* drifted toward the Rumelian littoral, drawn by the Strait's powerful currents, the engagement intensified as Ottoman mahons and galleys joined the fray. Despite being encircled by a numerically superior hybrid force of sailing and oared vessels, Dolfin maintained a tenacious defence. He exacted a high toll on the Ottoman boarding parties through disciplined small-arms fire and effectively disrupted the assault by delivering sustained broadsides that forced the proximity-bound enemy ships to disengage.

Recognizing the futility of further boarding attempts, the Ottoman captains shifted their tactical objective toward annihilating the Venetian flagship through concentrated ordnance. *Sint Joris* suffered severe dismasting and catastrophic damage to her rigging, while multiple hull breaches below the waterline caused



Fig. 8. *Sint Joris under Captain Giuseppe Dolfin and Francesco Morosini, the Captain of Galleys, surrounded by Ottoman galleons and galleys, Carte topografiche, piante di città e fortezze, disegni di battaglie della guerra di Candia (1645-1669). Biblioteca nazionale Marciana.*

the vessel to begin foundering. Despite this precarious state, Captain Dolfin severed the remaining tow-lines and, leveraging the prevailing southward current, managed to execute a desperate egress through the strait. By rejoining the scattered remnants of the Venetian squadron, he successfully completed a strategic extraction into the Aegean Sea.⁵⁴

The Ottomans secured a pivotal strategic victory in the First Naval Battle of the Dardanelles (1654). This engagement was historically significant for marking a definitive doctrinal shift, as both belligerents deployed galleons in their respective vanguards and formulated galleon-centric manoeuvres. The tactical geometry of the battle was defined by a stark contrast in formation: the Venetian squadron attempted to maintain a contiguous line-ahead array to interdict the

⁵⁴ For further details of the battle, see: Nani cit., p. 330-332; Valiero cit., p. 314-316; *Copia di lettera*, p. 2-5; Brusoni cit., p. 263-265; "Le grand combat", p. 808-816; Kâtib Çelebi cit., p. 211-212; *Abdi Paşa Vekâyi'nâmesi*, p. 54-55; Candiani *Dalla galea alla nave di linea* cit., p. 119-120; Anderson cit., p. 148-151.

strait, while the unified Ottoman and Maghrebi sailing ships were deployed in a formidable line-abreast posture to maximize their shock-potential and facilitate boarding actions.

Ultimately, neither the Venetian line-ahead formation nor the Ottoman line-abreast arrangement proved decisive in determining the battle's outcome. Due to the instantaneous disintegration of Venetian tactical cohesion, the engagement rapidly degenerated into a fragmented *mêlée*. During this phase, Ottoman sailing and oared units exploited the lack of Venetian coordination to initiate pervasive boarding manoeuvres against isolated galleons. As evidenced by contemporary iconographic records (see Fig. 9), the structural order of the fleet vanished, leaving both Venetian and Ottoman vessels extensively embroiled in close-quarters attrition and ship-to-ship boarding encounters.⁵⁵

A Venetian captain underscored the Ottoman operational methodology, noting that their warships executed multi-vector assaults against the Venetian galleons from all directions.⁵⁶ Conversely, Captain Dolfin ascribed the tactical failure to the systemic insubordination of the English and Dutch captains, whose refusal to hold the line compromised the fleet's integrity.⁵⁷ As the fragmented *mêlée* exposed all vessels to the dual hazards of boarding and fire, the Ottomans were unable to achieve a decisive overmatch; instead, both belligerents suffered the symmetrical loss of two galleons. Ultimately, the engagement demonstrated that neither the Ottoman nor the Venetian navies had yet achieved tactical maturation, as they struggled to fully integrate sailing-ship manoeuvres into a coherent naval doctrine.

4.2. *Second Naval Battle in the Dardanelles (21 June 1655)*

Despite experiencing their first naval setback since the inception of the Cretan campaign, the Venetians maintained a posture of strategic continuity into 1655. Following the resignation of Alvise Mocenigo, the supreme command of the fleet was conferred upon Francesco Morosini. Morosini subsequently tasked Lazzaro Mocenigo with enforcing the naval investment of the Dardanelles, deploying a

⁵⁵ As an interesting fact, the Tripolitan galleons did not launch boarding attacks on the Venetian galleons and passed through the Dardanelles without involving fighting, see. Bostan *Kadırga'dan Kalyon'a* cit., p. 78-79.

⁵⁶ "Le grand combat", p. 808.

⁵⁷ Candiani *Dalla galea alla nave di linea* cit., p. 120.

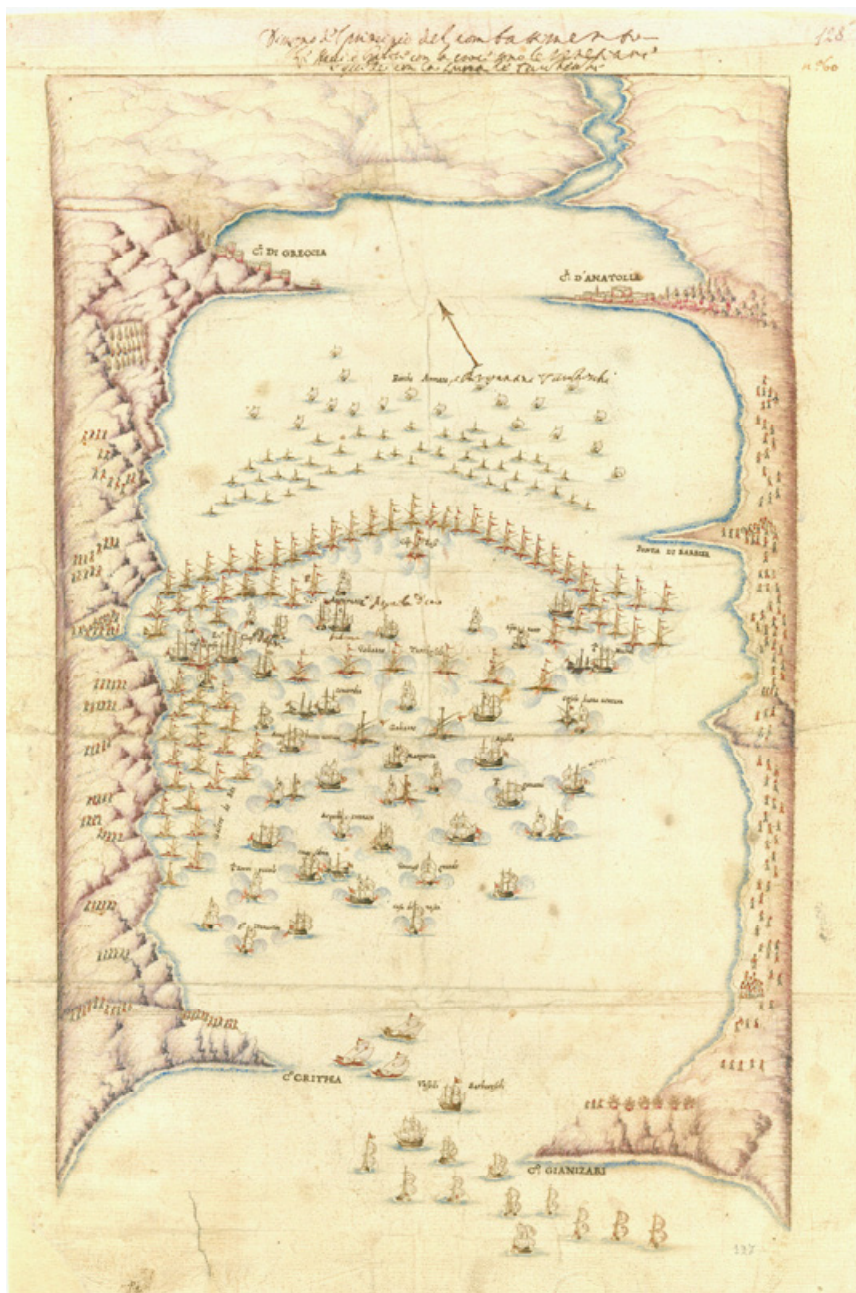


Fig. 9. *The First Naval Battle of the Dardanelles*, Carte topografiche, piante di città e fortezze, disegni di battaglie della guerra di Candia (1645-1669). Biblioteca nazionale Marciana.

formidable contingent of twenty-six galleons, four galleasses, and six galleys to prevent an Ottoman breakout.⁵⁸

On the Ottoman front, the recently invested *kapudanıderya*, Zurnazen Mustafa, sortied from Istanbul on 12 June 1655. Contemporary accounts offer varying estimates of his command's strength: Ottoman chronicler Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa records a force of thirty-two galleons, fifty-one galleys and eight mahons,⁵⁹ whereas the Venetian historian Battista Nani posits a larger naval contingent composed of thirty-five galleons, sixty galleys and eight mahons.⁶⁰ Other Venetian sources report that Kapudan Paşa commanded a fleet of thirty galleons, forty-five to fifty galleys, and eight mahons.⁶¹ Of the thirty sailing warships in the Ottoman navy, three were armed merchant galleons, while two had been hired from the Dutch and one from England.⁶²

Upon arriving at the Dardanelles, Captain Lazzaro Mocenigo implemented a rigorous tactical restructuring. He established a contiguous line-ahead formation using the majority of his galleons along the strait, while the remaining sailing vessels were deployed as a line-abreast echelon within the central axis to provide depth. Strategically, he detached the galleasses and galleys, positioning them along the Anatolian littoral where the diminished current provided a stable environment for oared manoeuvring and restricted Ottoman passage.⁶³ Eventually Mocenigo closed the strait to Ottoman passage with a more organized formation than that of his predecessor.⁶⁴ In contrast, Admiral Mustafa Paşa adhered to the new doctrine that had secured victory the previous year, maintaining a heavy-galleon vanguard, mahons in the centre, and a galley-led rearguard.⁶⁵

58 Candiani *Dalla galea alla nave di linea* cit., p. 121-122; Anderson cit., p. 153-155.

59 Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa *Zeyl-i Fezleke (1065-22 Ca.1106/1654-7 Şubat 1695)*, Nazire Karaçay Türkal (cur.), Ph.D.diss., Marmara University, 2012, p. 16.

60 Nani cit., p. 345.

61 *Lettera di ragguaglio del combattimento tra l'armata veneta, e la Turca a' Dardanelli. Sotto la direttione dell'illustriss.mo et eccell.mo sig. capitan delle navi Lazaro Mocenigo seguito li 21. giugno 1655*, Venetia, 1655, p. 2; Valiero cit., p. 356; "La victoire remportée par la Flote Vénétienne sur celle des Turcs", in *Recueil des Gazettes nouvelles ordinaires et extraordinaires*, N. 117, Paris, 1655, p. 975.

62 Candiani *I vascelli della Serenissima* cit., p. 46-47.

63 Candiani *Dalla galea alla nave di linea* cit., p. 122.

64 Nani cit., p. 346.

65 Kâtib Çelebi cit., p. 213.

On the morning of 21 June 1655, the Ottoman fleet sortied from Kilitbahir, advancing in a broad line-abreast echelon while successfully retaining the weather gage. Recognizing that the Ottoman intent was to execute a synchronized general engagement against the entire Venetian array, Dolfin issued strict directives to his captains. His primary objective was to mitigate the risk of tactical fragmentation and the disorganized flight that had compromised the Venetian line during the previous year's encounter. By commanding his vessels to maintain their stations at all costs, Dolfin sought to convert the Venetian formation into a rigid, defensive barrier capable of absorbing the Ottoman shock.

Antonio Zeno commenced hostilities from his station at *Campo d'Occo*, anchoring the Venetian vanguard near the Rumelian coast. By delivering a concentrated opening salvo against the advancing Ottoman galleons, Zeno successfully disrupted the enemy's momentum. Disoriented by the sudden intensity, several Ottoman captains executed a reactive tactical veering toward the Rumelian littoral to evade the Venetian fire. This manoeuvre inadvertently forced the Ottoman vanguard to abandon their line-abreast assault and instead adopt a parallel line-ahead orientation, effectively matching the Venetian formation.

A precise contemporary rendering of the engagement's primary phase (see Fig. 10) delineates the initial tactical engagement at *Campo d'Occo* sector and the subsequent deflection of Ottoman galleons toward the Rumelian littoral. The Venetian squadron, anchored in a contiguous line-ahead array, subjected the Ottoman vessels to a high-intensity saturation as they endeavored to bypass the blockade. In this depiction, vessels such as *Lepre Rosso* (7), *Corona* (9), *Concordia* (10), *Re David* (18), *Arma di Lechi* (24), and *Profete* (23) are illustrated maintaining a sustained rate of broadside fire, effectively creating a gauntlet of artillery that the Ottoman vanguard was forced to navigate at close range.⁶⁶

The Ottoman sailing contingent was subjected to concentrated and sustained broadside attrition as it attempted to navigate the Venetian gauntlet, resulting in the foundering of numerous vessels. The subsequent withdrawal of undamaged galleons precipitated a systemic collapse of the rearguard's tactical cohesion, deepening the chaos. Visual record further indicates that the remaining Ottoman galleons maintained a staggered and uncoordinated distribution rather than a unified front; consequently, they were reduced to engaging in intermittent and isolat-

⁶⁶ For another version of this description, see. Anderson cit., p. 154.



Fig. 10. *The first phase of the Second Naval Battle of Dardanelles*, Carte topografiche, piante di città e fortezze, disegni di battaglie della guerra di Candia (1645-1669). Biblioteca nazionale Marciana.

ed artillery duels against the entrenched Venetian line.

Simultaneously, Admiral Zurnazen Mustafa Paşa endeavoured to execute a flank assault against the Venetian oared contingent and galleasses anchored along the Anatolian littoral, utilizing his own squadrons of galleys and mahons. However, this manoeuvre was countered by the tactical intercession of several Vene-

tian galleons, whose superior firepower devastated the approaching Ottoman line. Consequently, the Ottoman oared vessels were effectively repulsed, necessitating a strategic withdrawal to the waters south of Kilitbahir. In the ensuing engagement, the Venetian galleons successfully foundered one mahon and a galley, further eroding the Ottoman rearguard's strength.

Buoyed by their initial tactical advantage, the Venetian command sought to transition from a defensive line to an aggressive boarding phase. However, as atmospheric stagnation ensued and the limited Venetian oared contingent proved insufficient to tow the heavy galleons, the squadron commenced fragmented and uncoordinated offensive manoeuvres. Vessels such as *Corona*, *Arma di Lechi*, and *David Golia* became tactically overextended during their pursuit of the Ottoman galleons and were subsequently intercepted. Although Dolfin managed to rescue *Corona* and *Arma di Lechi*, *David Golia*, having been simultaneously grappled by a tripartite Ottoman force, was consumed by a conflagration. The ensuing inferno rapidly transitioned to the surrounding Ottoman vessels, culminating in the mutual destruction of four Ottoman galleons alongside the Venetian ship.

Contemporary iconographic evidence of the engagement's secondary phase (see Fig. 11) confirms that the battle devolved into a *mêlée* characterized by intense boarding actions. *David Golia* became the epicentre of the conflict, surrounded by an Ottoman squadron (G). Conversely, the Venetian fleet maintained its offensive momentum; seven galleons concentrated their fire on Katircızâde Mehmed Paşa's sailing ship, rendering it tactically immobile due to severe dismasting. With its crew decimated to a mere thirty effectives, the vessel eventually ran aground on the littoral. Dolfin further weakened the Ottoman line by seizing an Ottoman galleon as a prize. By the conclusion of the six-hour engagement, the Ottoman losses were catastrophic: nine galleons destroyed by fire, two severely compromised, and three captured by the Venetian forces.⁶⁷

For the first time in the evolving conflict between Venetian and Ottoman sailing fleets, a division of six Venetian vessels implemented a proto-linear configuration. By adopting an embryonic line-of-battle tactic, they succeeded in neutralizing multiple Ottoman sailing ships through disciplined and sustained broadside

67 For further details of the battle, see. *Lettera di ragguaglio*, p. 2-7; Nani cit., p. 346-348; Valiero cit., p. 356-357; Brusoni cit., p. 270-272; "La victoire", p. 975-980; Kâtib Çelebi cit., p. 213-214; Candiani *Dalla galea alla nave di linea* cit., p. 123-124.

Despite the success of their proto-linear tactics, the *mêlée* once again emerged as the culminating phase of the engagement. The Venetian captains ultimately transitioned from artillery duels to aggressive boarding manoeuvres to subjugate the fragmented Ottoman sailing ships. By the battle's conclusion, the Venetian fleet had foundered a substantial portion of the Ottoman vanguard and seized three galleons as prizes of war. However, the Republic's forces failed to achieve a total naval interdiction; they were unable to prevent the surviving Ottoman galleons and galleys from egressing the Dardanelles and maintaining their transit toward Chios.

From the Ottoman perspective, the engagement served as a definitive indictment of their current naval structure, proving that sailing ships remained tactically compromised without a cohesive doctrinal system. Although Sultan Mehmed IV formally decorated Katircızâde Mehmed Paşa, Can Ali Paşa, and Ömer Paşa for their individual valour, these accolades did not mitigate the prevailing institutional disillusionment regarding the galleon's performance. Upon reaching Lesbos, Admiral Mustafa Paşa convoked a strategic council where he ordered the immediate withdrawal of the sailing fleet to Istanbul, summarily concluding that without proper tactical integration, mahons and galleons were an operational liability.⁶⁸

4.3. *Third Naval Battle in the Dardanelles (26 June 1656)*

Following their tactical success in 1655, the Venetians initiated a siege of Monemvasia; however, the intervention of the Ottoman relief fleet prevented the fortress's capitulation. In the wake of this operational failure, Francesco Morosini ceded the supreme naval command to Lorenzo Marcello. The new admiral implemented a radical strategic consolidation, ordering all oared vessels—previously decentralized for predatory littoral operations in the Aegean—to be integrated into a unified naval investment of the Dardanelles. By 23 May 1656, Marcello had successfully deployed a formidable contingent consisting of twenty-eight galleons, seven galleasses, and thirty-one galleys to the mouth of the strait.⁶⁹

Following the tactical catastrophe of the second naval engagement, Zurnazen

⁶⁸ *Silahdar Zeyl-i Fezleke*, p. 17.

⁶⁹ Candiani *Dalla galea alla nave di linea* cit., p. 124; Mango cit., p. 146-149; Giuseppe Ferrari, "La Battaglia dei Dardanelli (1656-1657): Cap. IV. Le operazioni navali durante l'anno 1656", *Memorie Storiche Militari*, vol. 3 (1913), p. 27-30.

Mustafa Paşa was held accountable and summarily relieved of his command, with Sarı Kenan Paşa invested as his successor. Shortly after Kenan Paşa's appointment, a noteworthy incident occurred: a Venetian captain, accompanied by thirty subordinates, defected to the Ottoman lines at the Dardanelles. Upon his arrival in Istanbul, the captain embraced Islam and, as a testament to the Ottomans' tactical need for European expertise, was commissioned as the commander of a galleon within the imperial fleet.⁷⁰

According to the Ottoman chronicler Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa, the *Kapudan Paşa* executed a formal sortie from Istanbul on 16 June 1656, commanding a force of twenty-seven galleons, nine mahons, and fifty galleys.⁷¹ Kâtip Çelebi, however, offers a slightly larger estimate, reporting a fleet composition of thirty galleons, ten mahons, and sixty galleys.⁷² Corroborating Fındıklılı's account, Venetian historiography specifies that the sailing division was composed of twenty galleons and eight frigates (*burtun*).⁷³ Furthermore, an archival report submitted to Valide Hatice Turhan Sultan delineates a specific naval procurement effort: upon Kenan Paşa's recommendation, five frigates were acquired in Galata for 15,000 *kuruş*, with an equivalent sum allocated for their immediate armament and integration into the imperial fleet.⁷⁴

The Ottoman fleet arrived at Kale-i Sultaniye on 23 June 1656, already compromised by a critical manpower deficit. Kapudan Paşa implemented several emergency measures to augment his ranks, attempting to enlist sailors under a standardized wage contract; however, these recruitment efforts were stymied by fiscal insolvency, as the state was unable to provide the requisite upfront stipends. Furthermore, the visible technical and numerical superiority of the Venetian blockade exerted a deleterious psychological effect on the Ottoman ratings. This asymmetric intimidation, coupled with the lack of financial incentives, precipitated a systemic wave of desertions, with many sailors abandoning their stations for the safety of the littoral just days before the general engagement.⁷⁵

70 İdris Bostan, "Osmanlılar Niçin Kalyon İnşasından Bir Süre İçin Vazgeçtiler? (1656-1682)", *Tarih Dergisi*, vol. 71, 1 (2020), p. 229.

71 *Silahdar Zeyl-i Fezleke*, p. 54.

72 Kâtip Çelebi cit., p. 214.

73 Candiani *I vascelli della Serenissima* cit., p. 29.

74 BOA, TSMA.e, 778/33.

75 *Silahdar Zeyl-i Fezleke*, p. 54.

This orchestrated array signifies that the Venetian admiralty had attained full tactical maturity concerning the efficacy of the line-ahead formation. By prioritizing a sustained, high-volume broadside fire, they aimed to neutralize the Ottoman fleet as it attempted to navigate the narrowest reaches of the strait under the cover of the coastline.

Early on the morning of 26 June, the Ottoman fleet sortied in a prescribed order of battle, featuring a galleon vanguard, mahons in the centre, and a galley-led rearguard. Recognizing the Venetian strength anchored near the Rumelian shore, Kapudan Paşa elected to skirt the Anatolian littoral. As delineated in the contemporary iconographic record (see Fig. 12), the Ottoman fleet eschewed the traditional line-abreast assault in favour of a contiguous line-ahead orientation parallel to the Anatolian coast. This tactical shift indicates an intent to execute a sequential passage against the Venetian blockade, thereby optimizing their output through a rolling exchange of broadsides at close range.

The Venetian command was initially disoriented by the Ottoman manoeuvre; however, their primary challenge arose from unfavourable meteorological conditions and the strait's potent hydrodynamics. When the Venetian sailing vessels were stalled by the current, the galleasses and galleys manoeuvred to intercept and interdict the Ottoman transit along the Anatolian littoral (as can be observed in the visual record). Recognizing the Venetian blockade was holding and their own momentum was spent, the Ottoman captains executed a stationary defensive deployment by anchoring between Kale-i Sultaniye and Kepez Cape (Punto de Barbieri). The engagement's pivot occurred when the wind shifted in favor of the Republic, granting them the weather gage. Kenan Paşa endeavoured fruitlessly to bring his fleet into action against the wind, abandoning the advantages of a leeward line-ahead. Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa later condemned this failure, attributing it to Kapudan Paşa's tactical negligence and administrative hubris, which precipitated the eventual fragmentation of the fleet along the Anatolian shore.⁷⁷

In the engagement's terminal phase, the Venetian galleons converged upon the fragmented Ottoman fleet, delivering a series of catastrophic broadsides that forced numerous vessels onto the littoral. As Ottoman tactical cohesion disintegrated, the Venetian line-ahead demonstrated a high degree of tactical maturation; notably, the sailing vessels maintained their formation and transitioned to a pure-

⁷⁷ *Silahdar Zeyl-i Fezleke*, p. 55.

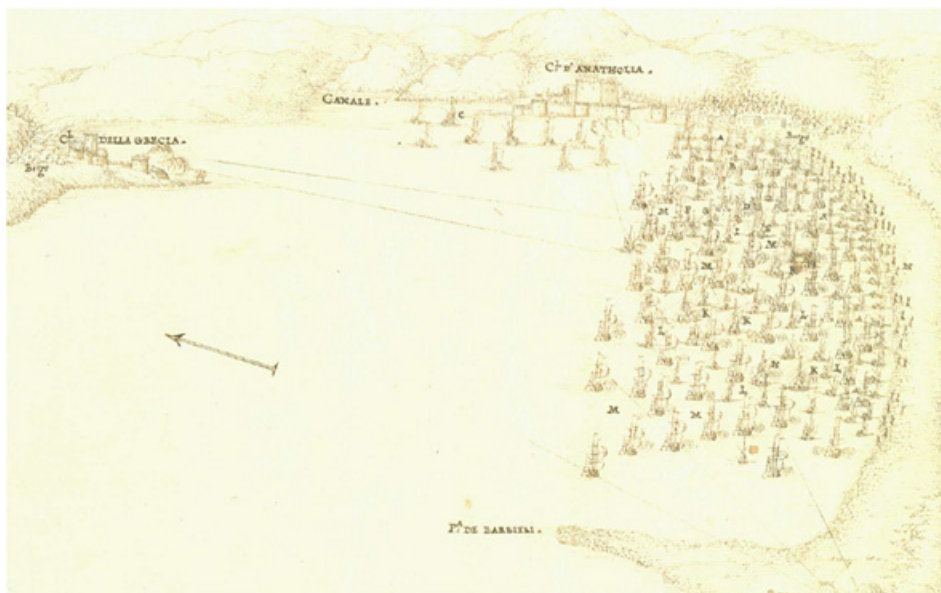


Fig. 13. *The final phase of the Third Dardanelles Naval Battle*, Carte topografiche, piante di città e fortezze, disegni di battaglie della guerra di Candia (1645-1669). Biblioteca nazionale Marciana.

ly artillery-centric engagement, eschewing traditional boarding actions in favour of sustained ballistic suppression (see Fig. 13). Commanders' reports likewise confirm that the Venetian galleons preferred to rely on their artillery rather than engage in boarding actions.⁷⁸ This evidence suggests that the Venetian admiralty became increasingly sophisticated in exploiting the tactical advantages of the line of battle and line-ahead formation. While the galleons provided dominance from the exterior, the Venetian and Maltese galleys—the latter distinguished by their specialized proficiency in littoral boarding—engaged the Ottoman sailing and oared vessels in decisive close-quarters combat, systematically neutralizing the remaining resistance.⁷⁹

By the engagement's conclusion, the Venetian fleet had accounted for the destruction of twenty-two Ottoman galleons and the seizure of six prizes, several

⁷⁸ Ferrari *Le operazioni navali durante l'anne 1656* cit., p. 35-36.

⁷⁹ "Les resioivissances faites à Malthe, au retour de son Escadre, de la dernière Victoire remportée par les Vénitiens, sur l'Armée des Ottomans aux Dardanelles", in *Recueil des Gazettes novvelles ordinaries et extraordinaries*, N. 145, Paris, 1656, p. 1333-1341.

of which were abandoned by their complements in the face of overwhelming fire. The Ottoman oared contingent suffered an equally catastrophic attrition rate, losing forty-five galleys and five mahons. Admiral Sarı Kenan Paşa extricated himself under duress, retreating to Kale-i Sultaniye with a minimal escort. Conversely, Venetian naval losses were numerically negligible, though strategically significant: *San Marco*, under Lazzaro Mocenigo, foundered after being compromised by Ottoman littoral batteries during a pursuit, and two additional galleons were lost to uncontrolled conflagrations. Most notably, Lorenzo Marcello succumbed to a fatal artillery strike while leading a boarding party.⁸⁰

The third naval engagement in the Dardanelles epitomized a sophisticated refinement of Venetian operational doctrine and a heightened capacity for tactical execution under combat conditions. While the second battle had served as an experimental phase for the line-ahead formation, this third encounter witnessed the first successful deployment of a cohesive, formal line-of-battle. Crucially, the Venetian squadron eschewed traditional boarding actions, preventing the engagement from degenerating into a *mêlée*. Instead, they maintained structural integrity, relying upon synchronized broadside discharges and disciplined manoeuvring to neutralize Ottoman aggression. This shift underscores the transition from erratic, individual ship-to-ship combat toward an integrated, systematic application of naval artillery.

For the Ottomans, the 1656 debacle underscored a profound lack of operational proficiency in commanding sailing vessels and a failure to synthesize coherent naval tactics. The prevailing maritime orthodoxy among Ottoman officials—which dismissed mahons and galleons as redundant—was scrutinized during a strategic council convened by Sultan Mehmed IV. Critiques levelled against the galleons included their prohibitive fiscal burden, limited combat efficacy, and problematic tactical reliance on oared propulsion for manoeuvrability in adverse winds. Despite these deliberations, no decisive policy was enacted to

80 For further details of the war, see. *Lettera di ragguaglio della vittoria nauale conseguita a' Dardanelli dall'armata della sereniss. Republica di Venetia. Sotto il comando del signor Lorenzo Marcello capitan general da mar. Contro l'armata turchesca. Adi 26 zugno 1656*, Venetia, 1656, p. 1-7; Nani cit., p. 364-368; Valiero cit., p. 379-382; Brusoni cit., p. 298-302; Mango cit., p. 149-161; “Les particvlaritez de la Bataille gagnée par les Vénitiens sur les Turcs, proche des Dardanelles”, in *Recueil des Gazettes nouvelles ordinaires et extraordinaires*, N. 113, Paris, 1656, pp. 909-920; Kâtib Çelebi cit., p. 214-215; Ferrari *Le operazioni navali durante l'anne 1656* cit., p. 37-39; *Silahdar Zeyl-i Fezleke*, p. 54-57.

decommission the sailing fleet.⁸¹ While galleons participated in the subsequent year's engagements, the decisive fourth battle at the Dardanelles was ultimately secured by the galley squadron.⁸² Consequently, following the cessation of major hostilities and the lifting of the Venetian blockade by 1661, the Ottoman admiralty officially discontinued the construction of galleons as primary combatants, reverting to a galley-centric naval posture.⁸³

5 Conclusion

By analysing five pivotal naval engagements between the Ottoman and Venetian fleets during the Cretan campaigns, this study endeavours to evaluate the proficiency with which both naval commands developed tactical doctrines for sailing warships. Utilizing the line-of-battle and line-ahead formations—which matured during the contemporary Anglo-Dutch maritime conflicts—as a comparative paradigm, it scrutinizes the degree to which Mediterranean commanders assimilated these nascent tactical principles. The research focuses on whether these leaders effectively implemented protocols derived from empirical combat experience prior to their formal theoretical codification, or conversely, if they formulated idiosyncratic operational frameworks designed to optimize the strategic utility of the galleon within the specific geographic constraints of the Levant.

In light of the evaluations presented, it may be concluded that the Venetian Navy exhibited a progressive tactical maturation, ultimately adopting a combat system that closely aligned with the structural principles of the line-of-battle by the conclusion of the Cretan campaigns. Given the prevalence of chartered Dutch and English vessels within the Venetian fleet, it is a compelling hypothesis that northern European captains served as conduits for the dissemination of linear tactics. However, empirical evidence remains insufficient to definitively prove a direct intellectual lineage or formal transmission of these principles—first codified by the English Admiralty in 1653—to the Venetian command within such a condensed chronological framework. Instead, this development may suggest a case of tactical convergence, where separate naval powers independently derived

81 Bostan, *Osmanlılar* cit., p. 232-235.

82 Mango cit., p. 162-182.

83 Bostan, *Kadırga'dan Kalyon'a* cit., p. 74-76.

similar operational solutions from the shared exigencies of galleon warfare.

In any event, Venetian naval commanders achieved considerable operational proficiency in the manoeuvres of sailing warships and the formulation of efficacious tactics. Buoyed by their tactical successes against the Ottoman fleet, the Venetian Admiralty internalized the strategic imperatives of maintaining a robust sailing navy. Consequently, in the aftermath of the Cretan War, they resolved to augment their maritime hegemony by expanding their galleon contingent. More crucially, Venetian commanders consistently implemented the line-of-battle doctrine in subsequent engagements during the 1686–1699 conflicts. Conversely, the Ottoman command exhibited a prolonged doctrinal inertia, failing to formally adopt the line-of-battle until the decisive encounters near the Oinousses Islands in 1695.⁸⁴

The primary catalyst for the Ottoman decommissioning of the sailing fleet was a profound tactical inadequacy; the admiralty failed to formulate efficacious operational doctrines for galleons or to achieve functional integration between sailing vessels and the traditional galley squadrons. An equally critical factor was the acute paucity of seasoned naval leadership in comparison to the Venetian command. The Ottoman fleet's operational continuity was severely compromised by a volatile command structure, as a different *kapudan paşa*—the majority of whom possessed negligible maritime expertise—presided over each of the five major engagements.⁸⁵ Furthermore, this systemic inexperience extended to the sub-commanders, with a significant proportion of galleon captains lacking any prior service within the imperial fleet.

Furthermore, Ottoman galleons were utilized in a dual-purpose capacity, serving concurrently as naval combatants and logistical transports for conveying troops and ordnance to Crete. This hybrid deployment meant that many vessels were presided over by provincial governors and crewed by infantry levies rather than professional mariners. Consequently, the Ottoman admiralty and its captains lacked the operational latitude and technical proficiency necessary to synthesize a coherent tactical doctrine derived from maritime experience. This systemic institutional failure proved catastrophic, as the Ottoman sailing fleet remained

84 For this matter, see. Emirhan ÖZÇELİK, *Akdeniz'de Osmanlı-Venedik Çatışmaları ve Kalyon Dönemi (1670-1699)*, Ph.D.diss., Istanbul University, 2024, pp. 297-362.

85 Isom-Verhaaren cit., p. 159-164.

incapable of countering the tactical sophistication and unified command of the Venetian squadron.

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