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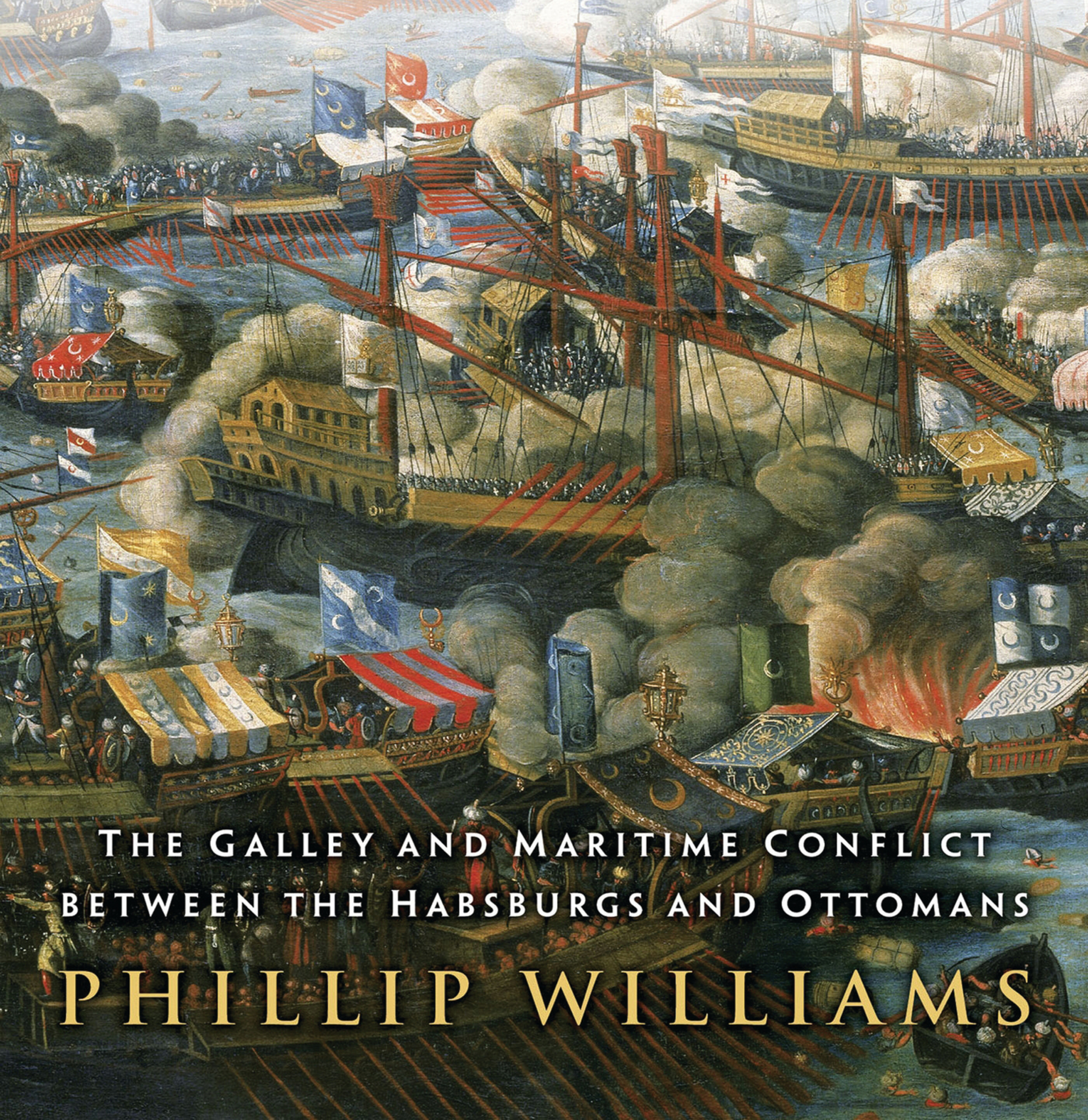

THE GALLEY AND MARITIME CONFLICT BETWEEN THE HABSBURGS AND OTTOMANS

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Empire and Holy War in the Mediterranean

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For my parents, Margaret and Patrick

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations ix
Preface xi
Abbreviations xvii
Introduction: The Mediterranean World in the Age of Captain Francisco de Holanda 1
I. The Domains of War 19
II. The Habsburgs, the Ottomans and the 'Naval Battle' 43
III. *Chusma* 75
IV. Those Esteemed Dreadful Monsters 91
V. The Sea-Wolves 109
VI. The Royal Armada 123
VII. The Shadow of God on Earth 141
VIII. Dear Prudence 171
IX. The Lordship of the Sea 205
X. The Shift to the Mediterranean 227
XI. The Problem of Holy War in the Sixteenth Century 247
Conclusion 265
Notes 271
Select Bibliography 335
Index 351

List of Illustrations

1. The Conquest of Tunis by Charles V, 1535. Etching on paper after tapestries by Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen (dated 1546–50). Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum (Museum number: 1867,1012.404). 6
2. ‘Barbarossa, King of Algiers and arch-pirate’ (‘Barbaroussa Rex Algerii insignis Pyrata’). Engraving on paper by Jérôme David (dated 1610–47). Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum (Museum number: 1952,0405.176). 32
3. Lepanto. Print by Martin Rota (dated 1571). Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum (Museum number: 1872,0511.821). 39
4. ‘A map of the citie and port of Tripoli in Barbary’. Print (book-illustration by Wenceslaus Hollar, published by John Seller, 1675). Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum (Museum number: 1868,0612.265). 67
5. The Conquest of Tunis and La Goleta by Charles V, 1535. Showing the arrival and disembarkation of the fleet near the ruins of Carthage with the north-westerly winds in their sails. Etching on paper after tapestries by Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen (dated 1546–50). Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum (Museum number: 1867,1012.398). 212

6. The Serene Sebastiano Veniero, '*capitano general da mar*' or commander in-chief of the Venetian fleet in 1571, with Lepanto in the background. Engraving (dated *c*.1610). Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum (Museum number: 1868,0822.8552). 225

Preface

This book examines campaigns fought between the Ottoman Empire and the Spanish Monarchy in the Mediterranean in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Ottoman Empire acted as the standard-bearer for Islam, while the Habsburg Spanish Monarchy stood as the defender of Catholic Christendom. The fighting took place in North Africa and on the coasts of Greece and Italy. Menorca suffered serious raids in 1535 and 1558. A salient characteristic of the conflict was the prominence of 'corsairs' or privateers: these were state-sponsored pirates who sailed from Malta, Leghorn, Algiers, Tunis, Djerba and Tripoli to rob the shipping and trade of the other side. They were licensed to take slaves and to sell them on the markets that fed the demand for oarsmen, workers and domestic servants.

The intention of this study is to analyse both the great military campaigns and the phenomenon of piracy with an understanding of the characteristics of the ship deployed in the Mediterranean, the galley. This is undertaken in the belief that the great qualities and strengths of the oared warships have been almost entirely overlooked and that the movement of resources over the seas was vital to both empires. The Italian territories (the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily and the Duchy of Milan) were essential to the military, political and financial systems of the *monarquía* of Spain; the Arab lands played an equally important role in the economic and naval organisation of the sultans of Constantinople.

One of the keys to understanding both empires, therefore, is to interpret the ways by which the Habsburg kings of Spain and the Ottoman sultans justified their rule over peoples in 'foreign' lands whose contribution to their respective empires was essential to their very existence. Scholars of the Ottomans refer to this process as that of 'legitimisation'. There is general agreement that the sultans presented themselves as heirs to the rulers of early Islam – the Caliphs, who (in various guises) governed a unified Islamic empire ('the caliphate') from the time of the Prophet Mohammed (*d*.632) until 1258. This book presents a parallel argument for the Spanish Habsburgs: in order to rule over the fiefs in central Europe and Italy, Charles V (1516/19–56) and his heirs pledged themselves to the Holy Roman Empire of Germany (for Milan, the Franche-Comté and the Low Countries) and to the Holy and Apostolic See of Rome (the Papacy) for the Kingdom of Naples. These fiefs were conferred during ceremonies of investiture in which the Habsburgs promised to rule according to certain conditions and limitations and with a number of 'obligations'. The Apostolic See also claimed 'suzerainty' or 'overlordship' over a wide number of other territories in Europe (amongst them Sicily), North Africa, the Mediterranean and the New Worlds.

The Italian territories occupied a unique role as both the cause of wars and the means of fighting them. In the 1530s, 1540s and 1550s the vast majority of Ottoman campaigns at sea were designed to assist the Kings of France, Francis I (1515–47) and Henry II (1547–59), to seize or recover the fiefs in Italy (Naples, Sicily and Milan) to which they had extremely strong dynastic claims.

Empire and Holy War in the Mediterranean therefore examines two basic themes, the character and qualities of the Mediterranean war galley and the concessions and compromises which the Ottomans and Habsburgs of Spain made in order to legitimise or justify their rule in 'foreign' territories. Both lines of argument might be summed up in the idea that any major military campaign or force in the early modern Mediterranean was profoundly international in nature and origin, as only by drawing resources from the numerous microecologies of 'the corrupting sea' could sixteenth-century armies and navies be sustained.

Consequently, 'empires' or 'hegemonic states' were dependent upon the peoples and resources of the 'periphery' and so were drawn into the process of legitimisation mentioned above, with the peculiar outcome that those agents of proto-national modernity – the Spanish Habsburgs and Ottoman Turks – came to commit themselves to the international medieval programme of the Apostolic See of Rome and the template of the Abbasid caliphate respectively.

The book begins with a brief narrative of events in Italy and the major battles and campaigns. It then moves on to assess the Battle of Lepanto (1571) and the approach to it: the argument is that the engagement was characterised by extremely serious deficiencies in both fleets. The focus then moves onto the galley, its characteristics and requirements. It is argued that there was an enormous difference between strong galleys and weak ones, and the chapters then proceed to analyse how the fleets were configured, what results these configurations had upon the fighting and how a timetable of war shaped campaigns.

This understanding leads to a description of the basic stance or strategies of the Ottoman Empire and the *monarquía* of Spain. In turn, this carries the argument forward to an analysis of different contemporary ideas about how holy war should be prosecuted, about what purpose violence served and how to respond to the raids launched by enemy corsairs. Attention focuses on the Order of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem at Malta and the peculiar set of circumstances – specifically, its devotion to the 'service of God' and its status as a fief-holder – which allowed it to launch attacks on the *Dar al-Islam*, the 'realm of Islam' or the 'domains of felicity'. These were the seas and territories which the sultan, as the Caliph and defender of Islam, was bound to protect.

As we shall see, at crucial moments both Charles V and his successor as King of Spain, Philip II (1556–98), expressed profound reservations about the 'Order of Malta', which they viewed as an institution dominated by Frenchmen. These insights hint at much broader arguments about the nature of political power in Christendom. The Habsburgs of Spain were driven by the 'service of God' in their campaigns in the Low Countries, England, Ireland and the New Worlds.

A comparison of the fighting in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic is made and the origins of the war between Philip II and Elizabeth I of England (1558–1603) are examined.

One of the conclusions is that the new historical agents that emerged in the sixteenth century tended to reinvigorate forms of action and organisation that had been prevalent in the Middle Ages and which have generally been dismissed as relics or anachronisms in the era of the 'renaissance state' and 'sea power'. The 'early modern period' (the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) was shaped by the political legacy of the 'feudalism' of the Middle Ages. Not only was the *monarquía* of the Habsburgs of Spain a 'composite monarchy' (made up of separate states united only in the person of the ruler), but it was one in which sovereignty was itself divided and divisible, being conferred by one prince (the overlord or suzerain) upon another (the 'feudatory' or *feudatorio*) with certain conditions, limits and 'obligations'. Within the Ottoman Empire, the quest to locate the dynasty in the traditions of Islam was manifested not only in the application of holy law within its borders and the rhetoric, costume and ceremony of universal monarchy that characterised the Vienna campaign of 1532, but also in the foreign policy which drove its expeditions into the Indian Ocean and compelled it to attack Malta in 1565 and to reclaim Tunis in 1574.

Historians need to be careful when claiming contemporary relevance for their work, but two arguments can tentatively be advanced. The first is that as Europe moves inexorably towards a system in which sovereignty is itself pooled or shared, the model of the national monarchy and nation-state can be seen as a historical anomaly belonging to the period between the French Revolution and the Fall of the Berlin Wall. Historians working on other forms of military activity and political organisation have advanced this argument in slightly different terms; here, emphasis is placed upon the nuances of sovereignty that were conveyed in the ceremony of investiture and credit is given to the idea that small territorial states could accept much larger entities as their 'feudatories'.

With regard to the Ottoman Empire, the question of the contemporary relevance is a more sensitive one in that today's militants

hold as their final aim the re-establishment of a state based on their model or interpretation of the caliphate. As has often been noted, the Ottoman sultans repeatedly insisted that they sought peace, direct confrontation between the *Dar al-Islam* and the *Dar al-Harb* was relatively rare and cross-confessional alliances were very common. More pointedly, it should be said that the sixteenth-century group that most obviously appeals to today's radicals – the *ghazi* raiders or 'corsairs' of North Africa – were anomalous within Islamic tradition for two reasons: first, the operations of the '*levend*' captains denied one of the most fundamental tenets of the Prophet's teaching, namely that there should be no compulsion in religion; second, that the Islamic corsairs, while drawing on the eternal rhetoric of *ghazi* raiders, commonly robbed, intimidated, enslaved and even murdered the subjects – both Christian and Muslim – of the sultan, the coastal peasants of Greece and Anatolia bearing the brunt of their attacks.

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Abbreviations

AGS	Archivo General de Simancas
CCE	*Consulta* of the Council of State
CCG	*Consulta* of the Council of War
CCI	*Consulta* of the Council of Italy
CJD	*Consulta* of the *junta de dos*
CSPV	Calendar of State Papers Venice
Est.	Secretaría de Estado
fol.	Folio number
GA	Guerra Antigua
leg.	legajo
Sec. Prov.	Secretarias Provinciales
sf	without folio number

Introduction: The Mediterranean World in the Age of Captain Francisco de Holanda

Captain Francisco de Holanda served King Philip II of Spain (1556–1598) for more than 25 years, and during his lengthy career he was captured and enslaved three times by enemies of the Catholic faith. He entered royal service in the Kingdom of Sicily as a contractor with a warship or galleon which he hired to the Crown. Following the direct orders of Don John of Austria, the King's half-brother and commander of the forces of the Christian Holy League of 1571–73, he was present with his ship at the Battle of Lepanto (7 October 1571), the great Christian naval victory over the Ottoman Turks. The following years were to be more difficult. During a trip to transport a cargo of wine to the fortress of La Goleta, a small bastion constructed on the isthmus of Tunis, his ship was captured by an Ottoman captain or *reis*. His vessel was confiscated and Holanda himself was carried off to Constantinople, where he was to remain as a captive for six months before escaping aboard a Venetian merchantman. He then returned to royal service with another galleon, the *Juliana*. His next great adventure would take place outside the Mediterranean, as his warship formed part of a squadron of six vessels carrying Don Diego Pimentel and the companies of regular soldiers of the army or *tercio* of Sicily as part of the Invincible Armada sent against Elizabeth I of England (1558–1603) in the summer of 1588.

Again, fate was unkind to Holanda: the *Juliana* was lost on the coast of Ireland, and with it disappeared the last vestiges of his property and wealth. Worse, he once again found himself a captive in foreign lands, where he would remain for a full year. After his eventual ransom he sailed to Portugal and embarked in Lisbon aboard a merchant ship carrying sugar to Venice, the 'Republic of St Mark' or 'Most Serene Republic'. But near Sicily this ship was overtaken and seized by seven galiots 'of Moors' and 'the third time [he was] lost, captured and carried away' to captivity in Algiers, where he would spend the next three years. Holanda was obviously as resourceful as he was unfortunate and eventually he managed to ransom himself with 800 *escudos* in gold and, intriguingly, a piece of green embroidered cloth, '*una pieca de paño verde*'. Throwing himself at the feet of the new King, Philip III (1598–1621), he stated that he had to support a wife and children and that all of his inheritance had been lost in royal service. His petition brought a modest reward – a salaried position in the galleys of Sicily worth six *escudos* per month.[1]

Captain Holanda's life tells us something about not only the hopes and concerns of those Christian captains and soldiers who fought against the Ottoman Turks, but also about the practices and customs of war.

The empire over which the Spanish branch of the House of Habsburg presided has been variously referred to as 'Spain', the 'Spanish Empire', 'the Spanish Monarchy' or 'the Catholic Monarchy'; the last term offers an indication of its basic stance as defender of Catholic Christendom, that is to say the part of Europe that adhered to the teachings and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. The Ottoman Turks played a similar role as champions and protectors of Sunni Islam. The half-century after 1530 witnessed a series of major campaigns in the Mediterranean, in which both sides regularly mobilised for war. The standard interpretation of events holds that after 1575 or 1580 Philip II abandoned the Mediterranean in order to direct his forces against Protestant powers such as the Dutch Republic and Elizabeth I. The subsequent wars were fought primarily in the Atlantic, English Channel and North Sea by galleons like the *Juliana*, that is to say high-sided ships

that depended upon sail for their propulsion. Holanda's misadventures can therefore be taken as indicative of what Fernand Braudel, the greatest and most influential historian of the twentieth century, called the 'shift to the Atlantic', the abandonment of the Mediterranean by the Habsburg government based in Madrid and the redirection of its resources to wars against the emerging maritime powers of northern Europe.[2]

For many years it was argued that this change of direction and intent was inherently unfavourable to Spain. The basis for this argument was a somewhat curious one: this was that despite the enormous extent of its maritime possessions in the Mediterranean, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Catholic Monarchy was not a 'maritime power'. Recently, however, this interpretation has been seriously challenged by José Luis Casado Soto, who has examined the ships sent as part of the 'Invincible Armada'.[3] An insight into the arguments of this 'revisionist' school was given by Pimentel (Holanda's commanding officer), who fell into the hands of the Dutch in 1588 and provided the following explanation when interrogated:

> The reason why the king undertook this war against England was that he could not tolerate the fact that Francis Drake, with two or three rotten ships, should come to infest the harbours of Spain whenever it pleased him, and to capture its best towns in order to plunder them.[4]

If the traditional understanding of the technology and events of 1588 has been called into question, then the history of the Mediterranean in the period 1560–1620 continues to be dominated by long-established interpretations focusing on decline and abandonment. Campaigns in the inland sea in the sixteenth century have been portrayed as the end of a tradition, the product of a form of warfare which was in the course of losing its essential *raison d'être:* the eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinker Voltaire famously observed that the Christian victory at Lepanto in 1571 led nowhere. His dismissive assessment has plagued historians. Braudel, I.A.A. Thompson, Andrew C. Hess and Colin Imber have examined his judgement; none have been able to deny that it contains more than a kernel of truth.[5] The enormously influential arguments

advanced by Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan about the decisive role of sea power in history served to downplay further the rationale and value of Mediterranean warfare.[6] Indeed the American historian John Francis Guilmartin Jr., writing in the early 1970s, argued that galley warfare was on course to an evolutionary dead end precisely because of the inapplicability of the 'Mahanian model' to it: the oared warship could not 'command the sea' by remaining away from the shore for long periods, and so this form of warfare was condemned to obsolescence by the introduction and spread of gunpowder technology and the modern fortresses of the 'Italian design', the *trace italienne*. Slow, heavily armed armadas of the sort seen in the Mediterranean in the 1560s and 1570s, Professor Guilmartin postulated, were unable to transport the sort of expeditionary force necessary to besiege and overcome the artillery-bearing fortresses which came to be built at strategic harbour positions.[7] The systematic employment of this new military technology signalled the end of galley-based warfare in the inland sea. The advent of major campaigns in the Atlantic in the 1580s seemed to confirm what was already perfectly obvious from the inconclusive expeditions of the previous decades: this was that Christendom and Islam had fought each other to a stalemate in the Mediterranean and that neither the Habsburgs nor the Ottomans could continue to devote the necessary resources and attention to this theatre of arms. Priorities lay elsewhere, in part because the war galley – that is to say the long, narrow oared vessel employed in the inland sea – had been shown to be a much less effective vehicle than the galleon. The impetus in world history lay, as Carlo Cipolla argued in a concise and brilliant study, with guns and sails, not with oars and swords.[8] It should perhaps be added that these lines of thinking dovetailed with the idea that the impetus to contest the Atlantic was itself partly the consequence of the establishment of powerful centralised states based upon the resources of a proto-nation – the Spanish, the French, the English, the Portuguese, the Swedish and (in certain respects) the Dutch.[9]

Holanda's first period of captivity was brought about by the need to carry wine to the outpost of La Goleta: this detail can be tied to many reservations expressed by commanders about this frontier outpost or

presidio, which did not have access to supplies of fresh water within its walls and had only a small water tank in its courtyard.[10] La Goleta was supplied and re-supplied in two ways: first, by sending ships or squadrons from Sicily; second, by maintaining a relationship with the local Muslim ruler, the Hafsid 'King of Tunis'. It was difficult for planners to have much faith in either supply line.[11] The 'King of Tunis' was, averred the Duke of Medinaceli, viceroy of the Kingdom of Sicily in the early 1560s, a man so driven by his enmity towards the Christians that it blinded him to the danger from the Ottoman Turks, who would surely take his throne from him. Medinaceli lamented the 'obstinacy' of 'such a bad man' who had perhaps reached the point of no return.[12] It was reported in February 1562 that other than a galleon sent from Malta the garrison at La Goleta had not had sight of a Christian ship for six months and was in the greatest need, '*con grandísima necesidad*'. The same dispatch stated, without equivocation, that the 'King of Tunis' was the 'principal mover' of Ottoman plans to send the fleet against the Christian fortress.[13]

One of the problems in understanding sixteenth-century holy war lies in determining the value placed upon this small, vulnerable and isolated position. When Charles V sailed to capture Tunis and La Goleta in 1535 his expedition faced major problems on account of the extreme shortage of water in the area; the fighting for control of two or three wells or water tanks seems to have been particularly ferocious, one contemporary interpretation being that the success or failure of the entire mission had depended upon gaining control of these positions.[14] The chronicler Francisco López de Gómara stated that only the emperor wanted to press ahead with the expedition to the city after the capture of La Goleta. The desolate dry countryside surrounding Tunis offered little to its prospective conquerors: 'There is no river, nor spring, nor more than one well of fresh water, and so everyone drinks from cisterns'.[15] In 1536 an earthquake destroyed part of the walls of La Goleta; the garrison responded by destroying the Roman acqueduct in order to make use of its stones.[16] In June 1565, when it was feared that an enemy fleet might assault La Goleta, Philip II and his then high-admiral or *capitán general del mar Mediterráneo*, Don García de Toledo, addressed the problem of

Fig. 1 The Conquest of Tunis by Charles V, 1535. Showing the fortress of La Goleta and the shallow lagoon as the Emperor's fleet prepares to set sail back to Christendom. Etching on paper after tapestries by Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen (dated 1546–50).

how to defend this isolated outpost. Although they disagreed on how this might be achieved, both men based their deliberations on the fact that there were only two wells near La Goleta, both of them at a distance of 'a good two miles', '*los cuales son a dos buenas millas de La Goleta*'.[17] The final loss of La Goleta in 1574 was, almost directly, the result of its isolation: the interruption of the supply lines over the winter of 1573 and 1574 left it fatally vulnerable.[18]

As a strategic position, therefore, La Goleta was profoundly limited: not only was it highly susceptible to attack, but it also commanded an arid terrain and only offered access to the lagoon of Tunis, not to a deep-water anchorage. Holanda's fragmentary autobiography highlights other significant, if often overlooked, themes. In the first place, it would seemingly lead to the conclusion that Sicily was a kingdom of great importance to Philip II, 'His Catholic Majesty'. Modern scholarship has

demonstrated that the island kingdom did indeed make a major contribution to Habsburg war efforts in the Mediterranean and Atlantic.[19] In another important respect Holanda's life illustrated the extent to which holy war was also a business transaction; this was true in several senses. First, captives – or nearly all captives – could be ransomed. Second, his story demonstrates how contractors sold their services to the Crown; as Professor I.A.A. Thompson has shown in a major study, the Habsburg government of Spain employed businessmen whose conditions of service were set down in precise, legalistic documents. The King was constrained by contractual terms which specified how, where and when his warships were to serve him. He could, of course, operate his galleys or galleons outside of these parameters, but in doing so he assumed responsibility for stiff penalty payments for damage and losses.[20]

The contractor – the *condottiere* or *asentista* – was of use because he could exploit market conditions in order to achieve the most efficient return on the King's investment. On a similar note Dr David Parrott has recently argued that during the second half of the 'Thirty Years War' (1618–48) the military businessmen (*munitionnaires*) serving Louis XIII of France (1610–43) and the crown of Sweden supplied land forces which, if comparatively small in scale, were highly mobile and well resourced.[21] In a sense, the events of the years from 1635 to 1648 led rulers to adopt principles which had been evident to Andrea Doria and Charles V a century previously: in most circumstances it was better to have five good galleys than 50 bad ones; war could be successfully prosecuted with small, agile and mobile forces, even if this decision inevitably imposed certain restrictions or limitations on the capabilities, both offensive and defensive, of the forces.

There were, however, some drawbacks or difficulties inherent in the use of 'enterprisers'. In the first place, the fragmentation of administrative and military authority entailed the reduction of the power of the state itself. 'Each contractor, each province, lord or city was,' concludes Professor Thompson, 'in its own way a separate administrative and jurisdictional unit.' In Spain this led to a process of 're-feudalisation', in which the great Iberian landholders like the Duke of Medina Sidonia

extended and deepened their control over the machinery of government in the provinces. Louis XIV reached similar conclusions, in part because he was haunted by the repeated collapses of royal power in the hundred years before 1660 which he blamed on the privatisation of sovereignty, whose most obvious manifestation was the military contractor. The 'Sun King' was therefore determined to maintain central control of his armies, a decision which may not have enhanced their overall effectiveness.[22]

This was not the only drawback to the privatisation of warfare. For reasons which were clearly demonstrated by Holanda's financial losses, the priority of the *asentistas* lay in the preservation of their forces, which they were determined not to expose to unnecessary risks. The great strength or advantage of the contractor system – the capacity and wherewithal to maintain and run a squadron or army – was also its principal restraint or shortcoming, in that as *hommes d'affaires* they necessarily sought to safeguard their galleys or regiments, rather than engage the enemy in risky set-piece battles.[23]

The *asiento* represented, in Thompson's words, 'not merely an abrogation of government, [but also] an abrogation of sovereignty' itself. In other words, the very authority and prestige of the King was fragmented, as key functions of the state (the provision of military forces; the use of violence; the rights to import and export goods or to buy domestically at a set price) were entrusted to private individuals or groups. Yet similar arrangements involving the alienation or part-alienation of the authority of the state played a prominent role in the political, economic and military history of early modern Europe. The tendency towards the division of sovereign authority came from both the respect for tradition and the need to innovate. In the first place, scholars are becoming increasingly alert to the significance of princely figures such as Charles de Nevers (to Italian historians, Carlo I Gonzaga-Nevers) who were at once independent sovereign rulers and subjects of other royal houses. Nevers's position was an ambiguous one: as a 'foreign prince' (*prince étranger*) he was the ruler of a sovereign territory within the crown of France. He was able to exploit his royal bloodline and status in order to commit his king, Louis XIII, to a conflict which diverged from the overall strategic interest of the French monarchy, in

this case the Mantuan succession crisis of 1628–31, a dispute whose origins lay in the conferral or 'investiture' of the imperial fief of Mantua.[24]

Disputes over sovereign rights remained a major source of tensions: this was true even when the territory in question was governed by the infidel Turk. Thus a major source of antagonism among the rulers of northern Italy in the seventeenth century lay in the energetic campaign by the dukes of Savoy to gain recognition of their claim to the royal crown of Cyprus. This drive served to poison Turin's relations with the Republic of St Mark and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, both of whom maintained rival pretensions to the island and its royal closed crown.[25]

The fact that, as Vittorio Amedeo I, Duke of Savoy, put it in 1632, the island of Cyprus was 'violently occupied by the enemy of Christians' did little, if anything, to reduce the level of antagonism between Turin, Venice and Florence (the island, formerly a Venetian possession, had been conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1570–71; the nominal intention of the Christians at Lepanto was to recover it). Controversies of this sort were fed by the widespread determination, noted by the late Robert Oresko, to avoid the stigma of innovation and never to allow any dynastic claim, however implausible, to lapse.[26] In this respect, the Ottomans were little different from their Christian contemporaries. The sultans were determined to uphold their claims to 'suzerainty' or 'overlordship'; this undertaking or policy was critically important because a number of borderland territories in central Europe were governed under a form of investiture, with authority conferred by the Sublime Porte (central government) on its vassal rulers. In the early sixteenth century the Ottomans extended claims of 'superiority' over the Republic of Venice, Mamluk Egypt and, after 1526 and in a variety of forms, Hungary.[27]

The authority of the state, therefore, was fragmented by a number of factors: the need to employ military businessmen; the recourse to ancient familial rights based upon ambiguous and, in nearly all circumstances, bitterly contested interpretations of the historical record; the institution or custom of investiture, by which one prince governed a territory on behalf of another. But it was also true that the 'new' forces or

developments of this period served to fragment further the forms of sovereignty. The early modern state routinely allocated its sovereign rights to independent or semi-independent bodies in order to establish and run commercial *entrepôts* abroad. The first wave of 'globalisation' was achieved by governments that hived off huge chunks of their authority. The great commercial companies that dominated European trade with the rest of the world functioned according to a model of delegated sovereignty. The Dutch East India Company (often referred to by its initials as the 'VOC'), established in the early seventeenth century, operated as 'virtually a state within a state', 'a semi-sovereign capitalist state where trade and protection were integrated'. The other, less successful, Dutch trading companies (noticeably the Dutch West India Company, 1621) operated under a similar charter, as did their English counterparts and rivals (the Muscovy Company, the Levant Company, the East India Company, the Guinea Company, the Eastland Company).[28] The English colonies in North America were established under a similar framework.[29] Until 1729 South Carolina was a private company, run with the intention of generating commerce and profit.[30]

Royal sovereignty was also commonly delegated to private bodies or individuals in one other way: privateering – that is to say, officially sanctioned piracy – was an extremely prominent feature of nearly all forms of war at sea in the sixteenth, seventeenth and, indeed, eighteenth centuries.[31] Raiding the enemy provided an incentive to governmental service, served as a school for the education of skilled seafarers and, in theory at least, helped to fill the royal coffers by depleting the trade, wealth and seafaring community of the enemy. Thus the Islamic corsairs who captured Holanda and carried him off to Constantinople and Algiers were engaged in a low-level war of attrition, in which the nominal intention was gradually to wear away the resources and trade of the Christians.

The figures of the contractor and privateer loomed large in the Habsburg-Ottoman conflict. The study of the history of holy war in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is also, therefore, an examination of commercial negotiation and business acumen; there was virtually no commander or captain who was unaware of how he might benefit

financially or in some other way from the crusade against the infidel, misbeliever or heretic.[32] But for the Habsburgs of Spain the relationship between economic organisation and war was best understood in geographical terms: in its most basic form, the demands of war bound Spain to its territories in Italy. As we shall see, the fighting system of the Habsburgs in the Mediterranean depended upon exploiting those areas of 'abundance' or wealth; the 'regular' or professional forces of the Catholic Monarchy were maintained in these productive regions, with the fundamental strategy of the crown of Spain being that the squadrons or regiments would be moved to defend the territories which were unable to sustain professional military resources at the necessary level. Territories like Naples and Sicily made a decisive contribution to the military efforts of the Catholic Monarchy.[33]

Scientific convention holds that it is impossible to prove a negative thesis, but the history of the early modern period would seem to offer recurring and unequivocal evidence of the difficulty of maintaining professional, regular military forces in 'privileged areas' such as Barcelona, Malaga, the Balearics, Cartagena, Valencia, Gibraltar, Murcia and even, in certain respects, in Cadiz.[34] The faltering attempts to establish flotillas in Catalonia and Valencia under Philip III provide particularly clear-cut demonstrations of the difficulty of maintaining military forces in many parts of Mediterranean Spain.[35] The Kingdom of Aragon had an inward-looking psychology in large part because of its economic isolation, 'the vital concern of the majority of its inhabitants being subsistence farming'.[36] Its military contribution was minimal. In 1630 the capital, Zaragoza, provided 200 men to serve in Lombardy; in 1635 the city (probably) sent 300 men for the war against France (the sources leave room for doubt that this contingent was ever raised).[37] In Valencia during the reign of Charles V – that is, during a period of unprecedented confrontation with the Muslim world, during which there were recurring concerns about the presence of the Moriscos, or 'half-Moors', within Spain – the kingdom provided for the reform of the castle of Benidorm, the improvement of the walls at Peñíscola and Villajoyosa, the construction of a chain of coastal towers and the arming and maintenance of a militia corps and coastal guard. Extremely modest

though this contribution was, it still far outstripped that of Catalonia, where the political class proved to be very reluctant to assist in the construction of the fort at Rosas, considered a principal tool for the defence of the principality.[38] An older interpretation holds that until 1625 the Council of War struggled to organise effective militia companies in Spain; only in Galicia did the government succeed in establishing a viable militia.[39] This interpretation has been slightly modified by recent studies. In the kingdom of Granada, for example, the summer defensive mobilisation involved professional troops and so provided a level of surveillance and protection that was at least the equal of comparable coastal guards elsewhere in early modern Europe.[40]

Fortresses were notoriously difficult to maintain. Even in vital strategic fiefs like Finale Ligure it proved very difficult to feed and supply a permanent garrison; here, as elsewhere, 'the precarious ecological and socio-economic equilibrium' of the conclave, the 'poverty and natural misery' of its terrain, meant that the small additional burden of supporting a few hundred troops might serve to bring about dearth and considerable hardship for the civilian inhabitants.[41] Contemporaries made similar observations about the relationship between war and economic resources in Catalonia, Andalusia, Sardinia, Majorca, Menorca and Ibiza.[42]

Such considerations only served to underline the value of those regions where professional troops, well-equipped fortresses and flotillas of oared warships could be stationed and maintained. Throughout the period 1560–1620 the number of galleys maintained in Italy (not including Venice) outnumbered those in Spain by a factor of three- or four-to-one. In 1604 the disparity was something like ten-to-one.[43] The Kingdom of Naples was always been loyal and generous to its Habsburg Kings. In part, this generosity was fed by the obvious need to defend its own coastlines.[44] Yet it also readily extended its help to cover costs in Milan.[45] It has been calculated that Naples paid for one-fifth of the entire cost of the Holy League operations of 1571.[46] In the five years from 1631 Naples sent 48,000 soldiers, 5,500 horse and 3,500,000 ducats to Milan. 'From 1631 to 1643 alone, in fact, the kingdom sent about 11 million ducats to Milan – and that sum takes into account only money, not men, arms and supplies.'[47]

The demands of war therefore drove the Habsburgs of Spain to exploit the resources of their three Italian territories, the imperial fief of Milan and the 'Kingdom of the Two Sicilies', or Naples and Sicily. After 1528 another imperial fief, the Republic of Genoa, assumed a vital role in the naval and financial systems of the monarchy. One historian described the reign of Charles V as that of 'the Genoese Empire'; another proposed the model of a 'Hispano-Genoese Italy'.[48] Giuseppe Galasso observed that the Spanish did not have an empire in Europe, but rather an imperial system. Mario Rizzo and Arturo Pacini have referred to the Habsburg imperial system in Europe as being based on a 'sort of amphibious strategy', in which Genoa and Milan played a pivotal role.[49]

In an iconoclastic study, Professor Henry Kamen has argued that the fighting resources of the Monarchy were not exclusively – or even predominantly – Spanish in nature. The great victories of the sixteenth century were achieved by forces in which no more than a small part of the armies of Charles V or Philip II were 'Spanish' in origin. As Óscar Recio Morales has shown, the demands of war in the seventeenth century drove the Monarchy to depend increasingly upon regiments drawn from Flanders, Italy, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland and other European states – the '*tercios de naciones*'.[50] While these studies have added balance and nuance to an older narrative, it remains clear that the *infantería española* were taken to be the 'nerve' of the armies and garrisons of the Crown, that is to say, the most loyal, ferocious and disciplined of the forces available to Charles V and his successors. The problem was that these groups were always relatively small in number.[51]

Like the *monarquía* of the Habsburgs of Spain, the Ottoman sultans depended upon the collaboration of its 'conquered' peoples: theirs was a 'negotiated empire'. 'An astonishing array,' concludes a recent work of synthesis, 'of elites and ethnic and religious communities saw the advantage of their ties to the centre of the empire in Istanbul.'[52] The imperial government - sometimes referred to as the 'Sublime Porte', in reference to the gate through which ambassadors had to pass in order to enter the palace or seraglio - marshalled resources that were brought from across the Black Sea and Mediterranean (sometimes referred to as 'the White Sea').[53] Constantinople was the central point of its military,

naval and economic systems, the place 'most apt to command the world' as one English traveller put it.[54] Sultan Mehmed II 'the Conqueror' (1450–81) had recognised as much immediately after his capture of the city in 1453. 'The Empire of the world,' he was reported as saying, 'must be one, one faith and one kingdom. To make this unity there is no place in the world more worthy than Constantinople.'[55] These words hinted at how the Ottoman dynasty – the House of Osmân *ghazi* – sought to locate itself within an older Muslim tradition.

This book will argue that the inland sea was not abandoned by the two major territorial states, the 'Catholic Monarchy' of the Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empire, both of which were essentially Mediterranean powers. It will argue that Christendom and Islam deployed two profoundly different systems of warfare. The galley has been dismissed as a generic form, while in fact its most noticeable characteristic was its diversity. Whereas Braudel wrote of a unified Mediterranean civilisation, and Professor Guilmartin described the 'Mediterranean system of warfare at sea', the differences between the Ottoman and Christian armadas were enormous and reflected in nearly every aspect of maritime planning. The disparity in the number and calibre of warships determined how, where and when the fighting took place. If the model of the modern artillery-bearing bastion held immense attraction for early modern governments, then the reality of their deployment or use was rather different and, in nearly all respects, limited. The strategic value of fortresses was severely restricted by a range of geographical, economical and logistical considerations – so many, in fact, that this study, dedicated to the galley, can do little more than skim the surface of the deficiencies and limitations of the *fortaleza*.[56] Furthermore, the early modern state was simply unable to defend the full extent of its coastlines or to deny the enemy access to rivers and streams. Sources of water could nearly always be secured on 'enemy' shorelines, while very few fortresses commanded the resources necessary (a deep-water anchorage; a prosperous and populous hinterland; a thriving weapons industry; supplies of fresh water in proportion to the needs of its garrison or population) to make them capable, as Rhodes had been in 1522, of

resisting a determined attack for a comparatively long period (the Hospitaller forts held out for just under six months). The general trend in the length of sixteenth-century sieges was downwards, becoming noticeably shorter in the course of the 1500s although the following century would see much more successful defences of major bastions at Crete-Candia after 1645. In short, galleys were not so inefficient, nor coastal defences so effective, as to strangle the life from the Mediterranean systems of warfare at sea.

War operated on a timetable, in which the ambitions of the protagonists could be measured not only by the dimensions of their fleets but also by the date of departure. Ottoman offensive actions in the central and western regions of the *mare nostrum* depended upon catching the spring breezes.[57] Somewhere near the heart of the Habsburg assessment of the practicalities of war in the Mediterranean lay the dual idea that one fleet depended upon sail and the other upon its ability to row. In October 1551 Juan de Vega, the Viceroy of Sicily (1546 to 1557), recognised that the enemy fleet was skilled in the use of the sail but unskilled with the oar on account of its being driven by new *chusma* (the term, slightly derogatory in connotation, that was commonly used for rowers). His comment was made in the context of the sudden and surprising withdrawal of the enemy after its conquest of Tripoli. This was, he averred, evidence of the intelligence of its commanders.[58] This assessment was, without doubt, a simplification, although hardly a grotesque one.

The conflict in the Mediterranean operated on a far higher level and intensity than did other forms of war at sea: even in relatively quiet summers – for instance 1615 – around 170 oared battleships were mobilised by the Ottoman Empire and the Catholic Monarchy for war, while Venice, the neutral power, maintained just under 30 or so sail.[59] Judged by the criteria of administrative provision, the mobilisation of men and the implementation of technology, the inland sea was never abandoned: indeed, the opposite was the case. Measured against the campaigns in the inland sea, the outstanding feature of the conflict between the 'English' and 'Spanish' in the Channel and 'the Indies' was the absence of what, in Guilmartin's terms, might be called 'an Atlantic

system of oceanic warfare', that is to say an established defensive network of harbour fortresses guarded by well-equipped professional troops and supplied and re-supplied regularly by galleys or lighter oared warships.[60] Elizabethan 'seadogs' like Sir Francis Drake (1540–96) and commanders like the Earl of Essex (1565–1601) certainly achieved a number of brilliant successes, but the entire rationale of their expeditions was predicated upon the deficiencies of the seaside defences that they attacked in the Indies or at Cadiz. The final defeat of Drake's last expedition was achieved by 80 or 90 Spanish troops at a hastily constructed fort called La Capirilla, a makeshift position on the road between Nombre de Dios and Panama.[61] In 1595 the regular garrison of Oran-Mers El Kebir ran to 1,156 men.[62] When Pimentel, Francisco de Holanda's commanding officer in 1588, informed his Dutch interrogators that Drake had sailed in a few ruined ships to infest the best towns of Spain he was instinctively comparing war in the Atlantic and Indies with the standards of maritime conflict in the Mediterranean: this comparison was a very suggestive one.[63] In November 1586 Philip II spelled out this understanding of maritime warfare in a letter to Pope Sixtus V Peretti (1585–90): he played down the English naval threat, and stressed that it would be possible, with warships, convoys and forts, 'to gain command of the seas' so that 'I would be safe and sure of not being open to attack'. The King insisted that only his desire 'to serve Our Lord' had led him to make plans for the invasion of England.[64]

The intention of this study is to understand the great campaigns in the Mediterranean 'from below' – to begin with the basic tactical features of the galley, and to demonstrate how a series of relatively simple procedures, systems and conventions determined the approach to warfare. The aim is therefore to provide a detailed investigation of the oared warship – almost, in fact, a biography of the galley, making use of the invaluable recent research by Luca Lo Basso and others.[65] The justification for this methodology and approach is twofold: first, that Charles V, Philip II and Philip III adopted precisely this approach; they formulated their strategy in the great campaigns in the Mediterranean with an understanding of the well-maintained warship, the '*galera en buen orden*'. When it came to the crunch in 1534 (Koron), 1554

(Mahdia), 1560 (Djerba), 1565 (Malta) and 1574 (Tunis), the decision made by Charles V and Philip II was always to preserve the galley fleet rather than to risk it in operations designed to save isolated fortresses. True, Don John saw things very differently in defending Tunis and La Goleta in 1574; but at the very moment when the fighting was taking place the King had already resolved to destroy the first of these fortresses.[66]

These decisions were, in large part, also determined by the characteristics of the Ottoman armada. The qualities, traits and demands of the oared warship directly determined the proportions, characteristics and deployments of fleets during major campaigns. This book therefore focuses upon the galley in order that the salient features of the major campaigns seen in the Mediterranean in the century after 1530 will become evident. A brief narrative account of events may, however, be helpful to the reader.