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Venetian-Ottoman Wars

EDITED BY STATHIS BIRTACHAS



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On the cover: lantern of an Ottoman galley captured at Lepanto.
Venice, Armory rooms of the Council of Ten at the Doge's Palace.
Topwar.ru website of Vjačeslav Špakovsky.



Venice and the Ottoman Empire as warriors. Source: [Roger PALMER, Earl of Castlemaine], *Das von den Türcken außs äusserst bedrangte, aber: Durch die christliche Waffen der heroischen Republic Venedig außs tapfferst beschützte Candia* [...], Frankfurt, Wilhelm Serlin, 1669.



“Oltremarini” (Overseas) Regiments in Venetian service, nicknamed ‘Schiavoni’
(Vinkhuzen Collection, NYPL)

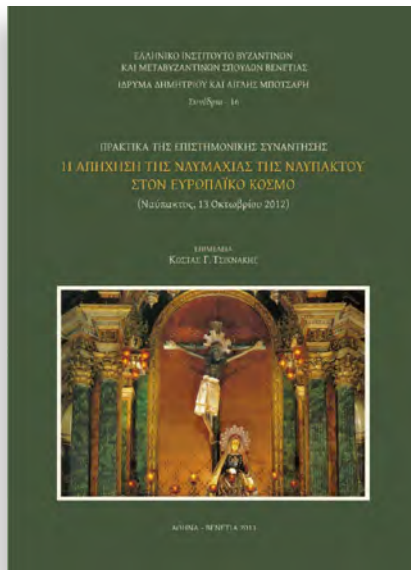
KOSTAS G. TSIKNAKIS (ED.),

*Η απήχηση της Ναυμαχίας της Ναυπάκτου
στον ευρωπαϊκό κόσμο.*

*Πρακτικά της επιστημονικής συνάντησης
(Ναύπακτος, 13 Οκτωβρίου 2012)*

*[= The impact of the naval Battle of Lepanto on the
European world. Proceedings of the scientific meeting
(Nafpaktos, 13 October 2012)]*

Athens and Venice, Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies
in Venice – Demetrios and Aegli Botsaris Foundation, 2013, pp. 258.



This volume includes the proceedings of a scientific meeting on the impact on the European world of the naval battle of Lepanto that took place on October 7, 1571, near Echinades islands (Curzolari in the Venetian dialect), a group of islands in the Ionian Sea, off the coast of Acarnania, between

the fleets of the Holy League, a coalition of Catholic states arranged by Pope Pius V, and of the Ottoman Empire. It is the common effort of significant researchers from Greece, Italy and Spain, with Kostas Tsiknakis as editor. Tsiknakis, Functional Researcher (A) at the National Hellenic Research Foundation / Institute of Historical Research, is the author of many essays regarding the Venetian–Ottoman wars, the participation of the Greeks in them, as well as the revolutionary movements that manifested in the Hellenic territories during these wars.

In her opening speech (pp. 13-14), Chryssa Maltezou, former Director of the Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies in Venice, and an Academy of Athens Member today, notes the following. After the naval battle of Lepanto, the sultan reportedly told the Venetian ambassador in Constantinople: «Destroying our fleet in Lepanto, you Christians only managed to uproot a single hair of our beards, while we, detaching Cyprus from your rule, cut off an arm». Indeed, the victory of the allied Christian forces against the invincible Ottoman fleet was a short-lived episode, and its protagonists, especially the Venetian Republic, failed to redeem it militarily and politically to the expected degree. Nevertheless, on a symbolic level the military victory of Christianity against Islam was of great importance and was celebrated with great pomp in Europe. According to Fernand Braudel, this is the military event of the 16th century with the greatest impact in the Mediterranean, a huge flame that we still see shining, despite the distance of centuries that separates us.

The volume includes the following studies.

Ioannis Hassiotis («Ιδεολογικές επιβιώσεις της ναυμαχίας της Ναυπάκτου στον ισπανικό κόσμο»¹, pp. 17-51), a diligent researcher of the Spanish archives with a great contribution to the study of the Greek's role at the age of the naval battle of Lepanto, as well as their connections with the Spanish and Venetian information networks of the time, examines the historical processes by which Lepanto, mythologized or demythologized, was used in the political symbolism of Spain from the day after the naval battle to the present day. The choice of the Spanish case is due to the fact that Lepanto occupies a special place in the ideological trends that have taken place in the Spanish world, and often in the wider Spanish-speaking world. According to the author, in Italy, too, each province also claimed its share of the glory of the naval battle; but, of course, until

1 English title: «Ideological endurance of the naval battle of Lepanto in the Spanish world».

the Risorgimento its ideological uses had, in contrast to Spain, a less Italian and more local character. The same is concern Venice – which, of course, presented the most productive and brilliant depiction of the naval battle, especially in literature and art; but also the Holy See, the case of which stands out because of its supranational priorities.

Kostas Tsiknakis («*Η ναυμαχία της Ναυπάκτου και οι επαναστατικές κινήσεις στον ελληνικό χώρο*»², pp. 53-89) investigates the revolutionary movements in the Hellenic territories under Ottoman rule, which had already begun to break out before the naval battle of Lepanto. The victory of the Christian forces, however, triggered – in most cases at the instigation of Venice – a revolutionary wave that spread to a great part of the Hellenic regions (from Morea, Central Greece and Thessaly to the Northern Epirus and Macedonia, in the Aegean islands from Imbros to the Dodecanese, as well as on the coasts of Asia Minor). The limited support by the Venetians, however, but also the general procrastination of the Christian forces were destructive for the insurgents: it is estimated that the victims of the Ottoman repression amounted to about 30,000 souls, while the number of captives remains unclear. In addition, the Ottomans reorganized their armed forces, significantly strengthening the garrisons in their possessions and taking administrative measures in Morea, which had been the epicenter of the uprising. The anti-Venetian climate, which began to grow after the described developments, benefited the Spanish rivals, who sent spies to some of the above areas in order to promote their interests in the East.

Gino Benzoni («*E dopo? Tra mitizzazione e disincanto*»³, pp. 91-109) makes an overall assessment of the Fourth Venetian–Ottoman War (1570–1573) from the Venetian point of view. According to him, it should be noted the conscious adoption of a double register by the Venetians: that of glorification of the Lepanto's triumph, of its memorization as eternal, of its mythization; and, at the same time, that of the disenchanted consideration in terms of the final balance. In other words, we could talk about a joyful pride for the battle of Lepanto and the defeat of the enemy, immediately targeted in Venice and from Venice by jokes, sneers, parodies etc.; and, simultaneously, about the attention to the disappointing prog-

2 English title: «The naval battle of Lepanto and the revolutionary movements in the Hellenic territories».

3 English title: «And then? Between mythicization and disenchantment».

ress of the war, the failure to continue the pressing offensive, the shortcomings of the command, the overwhelming stagnation of operations, the dissensions on the same operational theater, the unresolved differences between the Christian allies and the jam that these caused. The Venetian–Ottoman peace is signed under very harsh conditions for the *Serenissima*: definitive loss of Cyprus; payment, within three years, of 300 thousand ducats as compensation for the war expenses incurred by the Sublime Porte; increase to 1,500 ducats of the annual tax for maintaining the possession of Zakynthos (Zante); restoration, in Dalmatia and Albania, of the pre-conflict borders with consequent revocation of the Venetian advancements during the war. In the final analysis, the Venetians appeared to have been crushed by the Ottomans, whom they had defeated at Lepanto.

According to Eusebi Ayensa («The naval battle of Nafpaktos (1571) and its significance in the history and literature of Catalonia», pp. 111-122), we need do acknowledge that the involvement of Catalonia in the planning as well as the control of the Christian fleet during the naval battle of Lepanto was undoubtedly crucial. Actually, several of the galleys that fought were Catalan, commanded by Catalan admirals. For this reason, in the Catalan historiography of the Romantic period the Christian victory in Lepanto depicted as the last major achievement of the Catalans in the East, after the legendary campaign of the Almogavars in the Duchies of Athens and Neopatras in the Hellenic territories (14th century). The author focuses on the most significant Catalan official who participated in the battle of Lepanto: Luis de Requesens. Due to the young age of John of Austria, the latter became the true leader of the fleet (although officially Requesens was ranked as second in command). Ayensa's research is based on a thorough examination of Requesens' personal archive, kept in the National Archive of Catalonia at the city of Sant Cugat des Vallès. Furthermore, the author highlights some Catalan literary texts on the battle of Lepanto, with emphasis to the extensive epic poem *Lepant*, by Joan Pujol (Barcelona 1573).

The religious, military and maritime Order of Santo Stefano (St. Stephen) was established in Pisa by Duke Cosimo I de' Medici with the aim to protect the trade on the Tuscan coast and to defend the Tuscany against the naval attacks of the Ottomans and the North African corsairs. In this context, the administration of Tuscany had decided to put its twelve galleys, five of which belonging to the Knights of Santo Stefano, under the Pope's order in the naval battle of Lepanto. The Knights stationed as fighting men not only on the Order's own vessels, but

also on the other seven Tuscan galleys. Christine Pennison («The Grand duchy of Tuscany's contribution to the battle of Lepanto and, in particular, that of the Order of the Knights of St. Stephen. A preliminary survey of sources in the archive of the Order», pp. 123-136) presents in detail their contribution to the battle, based on a series of sources from the Order's archive (Archivio di Stato di Pisa, *Ordine dei Cavalieri di S. Stefano*).

The oracular, prophetic and prognostic literature was very popular in the West and in the East at the time of the naval battle of Lepanto. Antonio Rigo («Profetizzare Lepanto»⁴, pp. 139-156) explores Greek texts of this genre. In particular, analyzes the relevant works of Zacharias Skordylis and Georgios Klontzas.

As mentioned earlier, Venice presented the most productive and brilliant depiction of the naval battle of Lepanto in literature and art. Indeed, this historical event was celebrated in a climate of triumph with large processions, liturgies and folk festivals, was a source of inspiration for Venetian creators and left its mark on many literary and dramatic genres: plays, poems, lyric songs, etc. usually dedicated to officials of the Venetian fleet. Gogo Varzelioti («Δραματουργικά και λογοτεχνικά κείμενα στον απόηχο της ναυμαχίας της Ναυπάκτου. Η περίπτωση του Antonio Molino»⁵, pp. 157-165) presents the case of the well-known playwright Antonio Molino, also known as Burchiella, who wrote works belonging to a short-lived literary genre, the “military comedy” (*commedia stradiotesca*). His lyrics are written in a mixed literary idiom (i.e. in a hybrid literary language, created by the introduction of Greek words or phrases in the Venetian dialect) and narrate the adventures of Manoli Blessi, *stradioto* in the service of the *Serenissima*, who fights in the context of the Venetian–Ottoman warfare. The author points out those works of Molino that refer to the naval battle of Lepanto.

Maria Kazanaki-Lappa («Το Κουμπατιμέντο Κουρτζουλαρίου. Οι απεικονίσεις της ναυμαχίας της Ναυπάκτου στη μεταβυζαντινή ζωγραφική»⁶, pp. 167-186) investigates the depiction of the naval battle of Lepanto in the work of two painters

4 English title: «Prophesize Lepanto».

5 English title: «Dramaturgical and literary works in the aftermath of the Battle of Lepanto. The case of Antonio Molino».

6 English title: «*The Battle of Curzolari* [= Echinades] *islands*. The depictions of the naval battle of Lepanto in post-Byzantine painting».

from Crete: Michail Damaskenos and Georgios Klontzas. According to the author, the examined icons reflect the ideological positions of Venice and express the general belief that the fact of the collapse of the invincible Ottoman fleet was a proof of divine favor and encouragement for the fulfillment of the Christians' expectations. From the part of the art history, they reflect the renewal efforts of Damaskenos and Klontzas for the merging of the Byzantine tradition with the art of the Renaissance and Mannerism, in the most interesting moment of the phenomenon we call today the Cretan Renaissance.

Panayotis Ioannou's essay [«Η ναυμαχία της Ναυπάκτου στα έργα των ζωγράφων Αντόνιου Βασιλάκη (I'Aliense), Βελισσάριου Κορένσιου (Belisario Corenzio) και Δομήνικου Θεοτοκόπουλου (El Greco)»⁷, pp. 187-210] focuses on works by three emblematic Greek painters, who were active in the Italian and / or Iberian Peninsula during the time of the military operations in Lepanto and immediately after the naval battle, when a large number of orders on the subject of the naval battle were carried out. From these orders a varied iconography was formed, which contributed to the consolidation and comprehension of the mythology of Lepanto and which concerned issues related to the preparation and conclusion of the Holy League, the naval battle itself (the formation of the fleets, their conflict, the phases of the battle), the protagonists, the allies and the heroes (but also the enemies), as well as the glorification of victory, its remembrance and the worship associated with it.

The enthusiasm for the victory of the Holy League in Lepanto led to the composition, immediately after the naval battle, of a large number of poems and other compositions, songs, honorary speeches, exhortations, prayers and psalms to honor the contributors to the Christian victory. A few of them were works by first-rate poets. Most of them were printed in Venice, usually not in the best printing houses, and the rest mainly in Italy. They circulated as individual pamphlets, which, in addition to texts, often included woodcuts or simpler decorations. Charis Calliga («Έντυπα φυλλάδια με ποιήματα για τη ναυμαχία της Ναυπάκτου στις συλλογές της Γενναδείου Βιβλιοθήκης»⁸, pp. 211-224) presents pamphlets

7 English title: «The Battle of Lepanto in the work of the painters Antonio Vassilacchi (I'Aliense), Belisario Corenzio and Domenikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco)».

8 English title: «Printed pamphlets with poems about the Battle of Lepanto in the collections of the Gennadius Library».

of this genre, which he found in the Gennadius Library of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

Finally, in the appendix of the volume Despoina Vlassi [«Περιγραφή της ναυμαχίας της Ναυπάκτου από τον Βενετό Girolamo Diedo (31 Δεκεμβρίου 1571)»⁹, pp. 227-258] republishes an extensive report written by the counsellor of Girolamo Diedo, on the orders of the Venetian bailo of Corfu Francesco Corner, and was addressed to the Venetian bailo in Constantinople. This report is a historical testimony, from the Venetian point of view, of the events that took place from the arrival of the Christian fleet in Corfu to its victory over the Ottoman fleet.

In conclusion, this collective volume presents a variety of perspectives and themes regarding the contribution of the Christian forces in the naval battle of Lepanto, as well as the impact of their victory on the Western European societies of the time, but also on historiography, literature and art to the present day. The essays of the authors are scientifically sound, and are either original contributions, based largely on primary sources, or attempts to re-read and re-interpret already known historical processes and phenomena.

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9 English title: «Description of the naval battle of Lepanto by the Venetian Girolamo Diedo (December 31, 1571)».



Sir Kenelm Digby (1603–1665), an English diplomat, writer, thinker and privateer (or state-sponsored pirate). Source: Wikimedia Commons.



Icon of the naval Battle of Curzolari (Echinades in Greek) islands, by the Cretan painter Georgios Klontzas, last decades of the 16th century; one of the most famous depictions of the naval Battle of Lepanto in post-Byzantine art. Courtesy of the National Historical Museum, Athens (cat. n. 3578).

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