In the Middle Ages Venetian mariners and merchants used to sail along Anatolian coasts to reach Cyprus, Syria and Egypt. Smyrna/Izmir, Aydın, Antalya, Alanya, Adana, İskenderun were some of the ports they called at. In this period ships did not dare to face high-sea waters, but preferred a coastal navigation, stopping every night in a harbour. In this way Venetians had contacts with the peoples who lived along the coasts. To protect their activities they made agreements with their lords, first of all the Byzantines but then also the Turkish dynasties that conquered Anatolia. In this period the Turkish ruler and admiral Çaka Bey conquered Smyrna, built a fleet, defeated the Byzantine one, captured Phokaia /Foça and the island of Lesbos/Midilli and was killed in Abydos in the Marmara Sea (1093). After the first crusade (1096-1099) the Turks remained far away from the Mediterranean Sea, but very soon problems of coastal outlet became of capital importance for them. On 5 March 1207 the Seljuk sultan of Rum, Keyhüsrev I (1192-1196, 1205-1211), seized the city of Antalya, the most important market place between the mainland and the sea routes for Rhodes, Cyprus and Egypt. Venetians made a peace agreement with this ruler and it seems that they pushed him to fight against the emperor of Nicea/Iznik, Theodoros I Laskaris (1205-1222). At the same time they mediated another agreement between the sultan and Henry of Flanders, the second Latin emperor of Constantinople (1205-1216). Keyhüsrev I died fighting a single combat against Theodoros I, and his son Keykavus (1211-1220) ascended to the throne. He too was interested in the sea and, on 26 November 1214, he took Sinop, the most important port on the Black Sea after Trabzon, in order to control the trade routes between the Northern coasts and Syria. In this way, having now access to both the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, he became the «sultan of the two seas» and the «shadow of God on the two horizons», as it is written in a triumphal inscription on the city walls. The same policy was followed by his brother and heir, Alâeddin Keykubad I (1220-1237), who – in 1221 – sent a fleet from Antalya against a town quoted in Latin sources as Candeloro or Skandeloro; its ruler, an Armenian called Kir Vard, surrendered: the place received the name of Alâ’iyyah (Alanya), from the honorary name of the sultan and became the second winter residence of the court and a naval base. In 1224-1225 a Seljuk fleet was sent from Sinop to Sudak in Crimea, under the command of the Kastamonu governor, Husâmuddin Amîr Çoban, to fight the Mongols.

Venetians made agreements with the Seljuk sultans of Rum. The most ancient ones have not survived. On the contrary, the Latin translation of the two-year peace made between Jacopo Tiepolo, the Venetian podestà of Romania, and Keykubad I still exists. The document is dated March 1220. It makes reference to other peace agreements made by Venice with Keyhüsrev I, Keykavus. It established reciprocal treatment for ships, sailors and merchants of both countries on the sea and in the places subjects to the two rulers. It is a proof that in this period the Seljuk did not only fought on the sea but also traded and had merchant ships that called at the places where Venetians had communities and officials.

Just after the conquest of Alanya Keykubad I ordered to create there an arsenal that was finished in 625 AH (12.12.1227-29.11.1228). In the same months a Venetian ambassador, Filippo Zulian, was in Konya where he met one of his countrymen, Marco Longo, who was a member of a Byzantine envoy’s court. There were clearly high level contacts between Venice and the sultan of Rum in that period. No other information is known about this embassy, but Venetians went on frequenting the Seljuk empire and we know that one of them, Bonifacio da Molin (Bonifícius de Molinis de Venetiis), was one of the captains of the Frankish mercenary troops fighting for Kaykhusraw II (1237-1246) during the battle of Kösedag (16.06.1243) where the sultan’s army was defeated by the Mongols who became the real rulers of the country. In April 1255 in Konya the friar William of Rubruck met another (or probably the same) Venetian (Bonifacio di Molendino) who had the monopoly of the alum trade together with the Genoese Nicolò di San Siro from Acre.

The new international situation influenced trade. In 1293 Antalya was conquered by Venetians but they kept it only for a short while. At the same time, this city began to have economic problems, while Cyprus and Ayas became more and more important from a commercial point of view. The Anatolian land route that united Antalya to Sinop was replaced by the sea route that crossed the Straits and, for Western merchants, Trabzon assumed the role of commercial gate towards Persia. In the meanwhile Turks took advantage of the dismantling of the Byzantine fleet that had place in 1284, since many sailors passed in their ranks. The last years of the Seljuk sultanate of Rum (1077-1307) saw the birth of many Turkish principalities. Some of these dynasties were interested in the sea: Gazi Celebi (1301-1322), son of Mesud, of Sinop, was a famous seaman able to swim underwater and made holes in his enemies’ ships using an iron instrument and he probably made an attack also to the city of Caffa/Kefe in Crimea. On the Black Sea coasts the most important harbours were Sinop, Samsun, where a Genoese castle and a Venetian quarter existed, and Giresun. From a maritime point of view, however, the most important emirates were those created on the Aegean coasts of Anatolia: Menteşe (1260-1424), Karası (1297-1360) and Aydınn (1308-1426). Around 1302-1303 their inhabitants began to build ships and to raid neighbouring places.

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8 After a period of Turkish rule, in 1361, Antalya was conquered by the king of Cyprus and taken again by the Turks in 1372; Bombaci, La Turchia, p. 161.

Writing before 1318, Marino Sanudo Torsello, describes the goods that were exported (wood, pitch, silk and Christian and pagan boys and girls) from the regions of Alanya and Antalya to Egypt and imported (sugar, spices, flax): they were so many to be sent to the West by sea. According to this author Turks had just built new ships and had raided the islands that lied around their mainland, the kingdom of Armenia, Cyprus and the Aegean islands, even if their rulers guarded themselves resolutely against shipping and feared European galleys. He also proposes to collaborate with the Turks of Alanya and Meğri in order to fight against Egypt.\(^{10}\) In the same period Turkish naval raids continued: in 1319 ships of Aydınoğlu were defeated off Chios, in 1320 ships of Menteşe tried to conquer Rhodes, in 1325 Turks attacked Euboea/Eğriboz and Naxos and, in the following year, in accordance with the Catalans, they raided again Euboea and Morea. In fact there was an agreement between the Aydınoğlu and Alfonso Fadrique (1317-1330), vicar general of the Catalan Duchy of Athens and illegitimate son of the king of Sicily Frederick II of Aragon (1296-1337). In 1327 Turks from Aydınoğlu attacked Damala, belonging to Martino Zaccaria (1314-1329), lord of Chios; in 1328 they landed in Euboea and, probably in the following year, they took the port of Smyrna that belonged to the same Zaccaria.\(^{11}\)

The codex Morosini, written by Antonio Morosini before 1433, states that, in 1329, a fleet of ships and galleys under the command of Piero Zen, son of Piero, raided an infinite number of Turkish vessels in Romania and near the island of Euboea.\(^{12}\) We know that this expedition was made against Aydınoğlu Umur Bey (1334-1348) who then took the harbour of İzmir (his father had taken the city in 1317) and turned it into his naval base. He used the fleet to impose tribute upon large areas of Romania. In 1335 he became an ally of the Byzantine emperor Andronicus III Palaiologos (1328-1341) and of the future one, John Kantakouzenos (1347-1354), and helped them in Serbia and Albania (1335-1345). In the meanwhile, Venice was trying to launch a crusade against Aydınoğlu but it searched allies also among other Turkish lords, such as the Menteşeoğlu and also the Germiyanoğlu, even if the territories of this last one were far from the sea. Notwithstanding the struggle in the Aegean Sea, Venetians went on trading with Turks above all to buy grain and in April 1331 Marino Morosini, duke of the Venetian island of Crete, signed an agreement with the emir of Menteşe, Orhan. This document was made above all to protect goods and merchants but it testifies that this Turkish emirate had ships and could raid the islands of Karpathos, Kythira, Santorini, Kea and Serifos.\(^{13}\)

In late 1333 Venetians began to attack the Turks of Aydınoğlu, while Umur Bey, accompanied by Südelyan Saruhanoğlu, raided Morea. The latter’s fleet was attacked by some Frank galleys but immediately rescued by Umur. The struggle went on in summer 1334 and at the end of October a Turkish fleet was in the Gulf of Edremit under the command of the emir of Karası, Yakşı: a great naval battle had place, about one hundred Turkish ships were destroyed, the Turkish expansion in the Aegean was stopped for a while and their naval power greatly reduced. In 1337 another duke of Crete, Giovanni Sanudo, signed other two peace agreements with the emir of Menteşe, İbrahim, and with the emir of Aydınoğlu, Hıdır, and his brothers (Umur Bey was one of them). In the first document İbrahim swears that he will not use his fleet unless the promised tributes were not delivered. In the second one


\(^{13}\) The text of the agreement is edited in Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade*, pp. 187-189.
Hıdır states that he will not use ships of every kind, even small boats, as long as the treaty is valid. In this period Turkish seamen used to sail on small galleys (kalyata or kalite, galeotta in Italian), caiques (kayik) and ağribar (iğribar, sing. gurab; in Italian grippo) but these small boats could hardly win against the heavier, well-armed European galleys (kadırga, galea in Italian) and, above all, the swifter galee sottili.

These agreements were followed by a short period of peace, but in 1339 Turks started again naval raids and, day after day, the situation became more and more dangerous. Venetian merchants could not find grain to buy neither on the Aegean coast nor in Crimea. The Tatar khan sent away Franks from Azov/Azak and among his allies there was also the emir of Sinop. Umur Bey devastated the Aegean coasts and islands. In 1342 he had a fleet of about 200/300 vessels including some large galleys. A Christian league, created by Venice, Rhodes, Cyprus and the Pope, started its attacks in spring 1344. On 28 October 1344 it captured Smyrna. The Morosini codex states that Piero Zen, captain of the league, took the city together with an innumerable number of Turkish galleys, vessels and ships: in a single combat he captured sixty vessels, sinking them and killing anyone who did not want to come back to Christianity. This means that most members of Umur Bey’s crews were converts. A little later, there was a Turkish raid and Pietro Zen, «for fear of whom all men from Turkey used to tremble», was surrounded by a huge number of enemies, while he heard a mass in a church of the city, and killed together with the patriarch; many other very strong men were led away as slaves. According to other sources, this happened on 17 January 1345 and in that occasion Umur Bey and Hıdır were also wounded while their brother İbrahim Bahadur was probably killed. After the capture of Smyrne, the crusade was on the point of failing. In spring Turks restarted their raids and Venice was thinking to leave its allies and make peace. In spring 1347, however, a Turkish fleet, sent from Aydn and Saruhan and formed by 118 small vessels, was completely destroyed by the crusaders and in the following year Umur Bey too was killed during an attack to the castle of Smyrne. The idea of a crusade was soon abandoned, while diplomatic contacts started again. In the following period Turkish piracy went on, even if with less strength. Between 1358 and 1414 Venetian authorities made several agreements with the emirs of Menteşe. All these texts speak of Turkish vessels and boats (ligna) and possible battles and encounters with Venetian ships and galleys. Another peace was made with the emir of Aydn in 1353 and it too makes reference to ligna Turcorum and piracy.

In the meanwhile Ottoman power was rising. In this century Ottomans were more interested in conquering lands than in dealing directly with maritime trade. At the beginning they followed the same politics of the emirates they had conquered: they did not really thread Western sea power but only operated a guerre de course against merchant ships. In Orhan’s time (1324-1359), however, they arrived in Thrace probably using Byzantine ships in order to help Adronicus II (1272-1328) against his grandson Andronicus III. In 1336, together with the Genoese, they tried to attack the Byzantine Empire and in this occasion thirty-six Turkish boats or ships reached the European side of Constantinople but they were defeated and only three of them could flee. In 1352 the Ottomans who had already reached the Marmara and the Black Sea regions and conquered the larger part of the emirate of Karasi made an agreement with the Genoese who, on that occasion, got a

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14 The texts of the agreements are edited in Zachariadou, Trade and Crusade, pp. 190-200.
17 Ibn Battûta, I viaggi, pp. 335-336; Zachariadou, Trade and Crusade, pp. 41-60. All the texts of the agreements edited at pp. 211-239.
18 Prior, Geography, technology and War, pp. 171-173.
monopoly over the alum mines of Manisa.19

In the same period a Turkish colony was established by John VI Kantakouzenos in Çimpe, five kilometres far from Gallipoli/Gelibolu. In March 1354 prince Suleyman, with very few men, took this city whose walls had been destroyed by an earthquake. At last Ottomans had a starting point to challenge Genoese and Venetian fleets. The Turks conquered other lands on the Marmara coast. In May 1356 they landed on the European side with seventy armed ships (settanta legni armati) and several covered boats (molte barche imborbottate). They had been called by a Greek nobleman (barone) and they agreed to give him the tenth part of their booty in exchange for food and hospitality in his harbours. 20

Suleyman died soon (1357) but Turkish raids went on. In 1359 the Turks were near Constantinople, in 1361 they conquered Didymoteicho/Dimetokota and in the same period also Edirne felt in their hands. Scholars are still discussing about the right date of this event, a fact linked with Murad I’s ascension to the throne (1361?-1389) and his father Orhan’s retirement. The Venetian chronicler Gian Giacomo Caroldo wrote that on 14 March 1361 news arrived in Venice that the Turks had already captured Gallipoli and Edirne.21 Thus, scholars thought that this city had been taken seven or eight weeks earlier, in 1361, just the time employed by a ship to reach Venice from Constantinople in those times, but Gallipoli had been taken at the beginning of March 1354 and Edirne too may have been captured several months before the news reached Venice. Another Venetian source is perhaps more precise. It is an 18th c. list of ambassadors and diplomats, compiled by Piero Gradengo who made use of records kept by noble families, as usual for this kind of books. It states that, on 1 and 3 March 1360, two Venetian noblemen, Leonardo Contarini son of Schiavo and Marino Venier from the parish of San Giovanni Decollato, had been appointed ambassadors to Murad I by the Venetian senate to congratulate him on his accession to the throne and on the transfer of the imperial seat to Edirne. Thus, this document corroborates the year 761 AH, given in most Ottoman chronicles.22

Venetian sources give also other news about the Ottomans and the sea. For instance just before Murad’s death (1389) there was a naval battle between a galleys with St. Mark’s flag, under the command of Piero Zen, and some Ottoman galleys. In 1391 Venetian authorities complained that Turks raided the cities of Nauplion/Anabolu, Koron and Modon and blocked the island of Euboea. In the following April news reached Venice that Bayezid I (1389-1402) had prepared several galleys and boats to attack either Sinop or, most probably, Venetian lands and he had offered the direction of his fleet to the emperor of Constantinople. For this reason the senate gave order to its captains to prevent Turkish ships leaving Salonica/Selanik, the nearby rivers and Abydos. According to Venetian sources in 1396 Bayezid’s power was growing in Gallipoli where he had collected more than sixty ships to fight Christians.23

19 Bombaci, La Turchia, pp. 232-245.
20 Matteo Villani, Cronica, Firenze, Magheri, 1825, tomo II, p. 140 (libro III, cap. CV); tomo III, p. 147-148 (libro VI, cap. 30). 
Imbarbottate, i.e. covered with leather hanged on an iron stick such as that used for the barbotta (a kind of fusta), Simone Stratico, Vocabulario di Marina in tre lingue, Milano, Stamperia Reale, 1813, Volume 1, ad vocem.
22 Antonio Fabris, From Adrianople to Constantinople: Venetian-Ottoman Diplomatic Missions, 1360-1453, in «Mediterranean Historical Review, 7/2 (Dec. 1992), pp. 154-200. This author makes also present that in August 1360 Leonardo Contarini was not in Venice, while he was there the previous and the following years.
In the meanwhile Timur (1370-1405) was approaching from the East to fight against the Ottomans. In 1401 other news reached Venice. On 11 April a man from Enez told to Cretan authorities that Bayezid had just left Bursa to go towards Sivas, that had been conquered by Timur; that in Balat and Ayasoluk Turks were preparing big and small ships (ligna from eight to twenty thwarts) and had appointed as captain a former Christian from Chios whose name was Ateşçi (Ateşçi/naut. stoker) and moreover, that Bayezid had ordered to build nine galleys and other boats in Gallipoli and to pay the soldiers for three months. On 10 September the Genoese Jacopo de Ecado told that on 24 August the Byzantine ambassadors, the Genoese envoy and the Venetian bailo had left Constantinople to go to Bursa to discuss of peace with prince Süleyman’s mother, that Timur’s son and Bayezid’s son had fought near Sivas and that in Gallipoli no galley had been left but all had gone near Salonica. On 3 March 1402 another person from Enez reached Crete and stated that Bayezid had ordered to disarm his ships and galleys that were in Gallipoli and to dismiss all the soldiers, while some Turks were arming twelve ships (ligna) in Balat and eight ones in Ayasoluk to make naval raids by themselves because they preferred to be on the sea rather than to go to fight against Timur.

After the period of interregnum, Turks began to re-organize their fleet. Prince Süleyman made an agreement with Christians and stated that he would have kept his fleet anchored in Gallipoli. According to the Morosini chronicle in 1412 twenty-two Turkish armed ships took a Genoese galley and killed 113 men while a few others were spared to be ransomed. In 1414 two Ottoman ambassadors got on a Venetian ships, asking galleys for prince Mehmed who wanted to fight against his brother Musa; since Venetians authorities immediately refused, they decided to leave aside the idea of reaching Venice and got off in Senj on the Adriatic coast. In 1415 Mehmed I (1413-1421) had already fifty ships (legni) among which there were fourteen big galleys (galee grosse). A little later it is said that his fleet was of 112 ships and he had galleys and big brigs (brigantini grossi), while, on 4 December, sixty-two Ottoman fuste reached Euboea.

On 2 June 1416 the great admiral (capitano generale del Golfo) Pietro Loredan who fought the battle of Gallipoli against the Ottoman admiral Çalı Bey wrote a very important letter describing what had happened. He had left Bozcaada/Tenedos with ten galleys and a Venetian ambassador, Dolfino Venier, sent to the Ottoman sultan to get the freedom for some Venetian prisoners but also to try to have secret contacts with Mehmed’s enemies: Mehmed II lord of Karaman, prince Mustafa and Mircea voivode of Wallachia/Eflak. Moreover, Loredan himself had had secret orders to attack Gallipoli if the Ottoman fleet was not there.

The squadron arrived near Gallipoli, at the ‘gate of the Janissaries’ (porta de ianasari) where they found about two hundred Ottoman knights and other soldiers who began to throw poisoned arrows against them. They answered with crossbow arrows and artillery (veretoni e bombarde). The following morning they raised St. Mark’s flag. Then, thirty-two Turkish ships (fusti), the only ones that were ready, went out towards them. They had
been frightened by a *grippo* from Lesbos. At first the Venetian squadron fled to have time to arm itself, then it went against the Turks who went aground behind Gallipoli. Pietro Loredan sent the notary Tommaso and an interpreter to express his dismay to the *kapıtan-i derya* [Çali Bey] and to the sancakbeyi of Gallipoli [Saruca Paşa] who sent a Turk and a man from Ancona to answer that they did not know that an ambassador was on board and they were well disposed towards Venetians. During the night the Ottoman fleet dressed in front of the other one.

The following morning (29 May) Loredan left behind three of his galleys with the ambassador and went with the other towards land to get water, since they had received the Ottoman authorities’ permission. At that moment a *grippo* crossed the space between the two fleets and began to use crossbows, bows and artillery against the Venetians. The battle began. Loredan was wounded by two arrows: one hit his jaw and nose and the other crossed his left hand. After two hours the Venetians had won. They killed Çali Bey (*Cialasibey Zerbeth*), his nephews, many great captains together with many naval craftsmen, carpenters and rope-makers – most of them from Genoa, Catalonia, Sicily, Provence and Crete – and Greek and Bulgarian oarsmen; even the Venetian traitor Giorgio Calergi, who fought with the Turks, was killed, while about 1,100 oarsmen were made prisoners. 340 Venetians were wounded and twelve of them died – mostly drowned. Venetians captured also six galleys (*galie complide*) – among which there was Çali Bey’s one – one *galeotta* of 12 thwarts, one of 18 thwarts, three of 20, two of 22 and one of 23. Lastly, they burned five *galeotte*. Loredan wrote a letter to the sancakbeyi of Gallipoli (Sabasti in the Venetian source) who answered in Greek. Loredan did not kill one of the captains of galleys whose name was *Tangri Verenesi*. This captain wrote to the sultan saying that the fault for the battle was on the Turkish side and sent the letter to his mother, who lived in Gallipoli, saying her to deliver it to Mehmed I. Then, Loredan went to Euboea where he left his wounded seamen and the booty he had taken. He also ordered to burn other five Turkish galleys. He judged that the Ottoman ships were very well built and of a great value. He thought that in Gallipoli only one good galley had remained and some others very old and unable to sail: the whole Ottoman fleet had been destroyed.

In this way the first Ottoman-Venetian war began. The only important happening of the period of hostility was the Venetian attempt to take the castle of Lapseki on the Dardanelles, that was defended and saved by Hamza, the great vizier Bayezid Paşa’s brother and the despot of Epirus Carlo Tocco’s son-in-law. During this war, in 1417, the Ottomans took Antalya and the city of Vlorë/Avlonya on the Adriatic Sea; in 1420 they conquered the «two Samsun», that is to say the Muslim one belonging to İsfendiyaroğlu Hıdır as well the Genoese colony that had remained without inhabitants after a great fire. Only in 1419 a new peace agreement was signed with Venice. It shows that Ottomans already tried to exercise on the Marmara Sea the same control that Venetians had on the Adriatic Sea, even if their armed ships were considered under the war law if met Venetians out of the Dardanelles. Moreover, for the first time, reciprocity was stressed as regards merchants and commercial ships and Ottomans began to enjoy the same rights of Venetian subjects in the zones ruled by the doge.
Mehmed I died officially on 30 July 1421 (in reality he had died on 21 May, but his death was concealed for political reasons). The Ottoman Empire was much more strong than in 1413, when he had ascended to the throne. Its fleet was soon rebuilt and it soon became the lord of the Black Sea and one of the most important sea powers of the Mediterranean, strong enough to fight and win also the proud queen of the Adriatic.