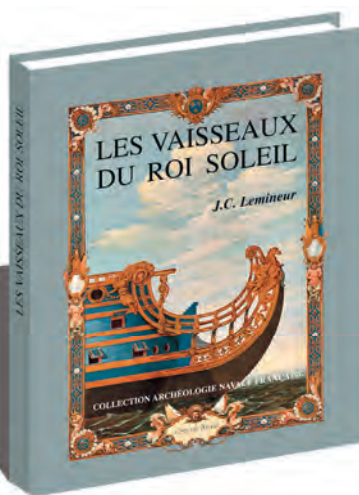


Jean-Claude LEMINEUR with the direction of Jean BOUDRIOT

THE SUN KING'S VESSELS

A LONG STUDY OF THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SHIPS THAT MADE UP THE LINE-OF-BATTLE IN THE NAVAL ARMIES OF LOUIS XIV



The glorious title of this volume guarantees that its contents will not disappoint our readers. The author presents the creation and evolution of Louis XIV's navy in an historical context. The fruit of many long years of archival research working with primary sources, its invaluable contents are an essential reference work of French naval history. We present its table of contents for your examination. In his introduction, Jean-Claude Lemineur explains his choice to focus the volume on those ships, especially three deckers, which were selected to form the first line of battle. This is but one aspect, however, of an enormous project involving commentary and

original analyses by the author. The first study of Louis XIV's navy takes its place as the culmination of our French Naval Archeology Collection. We hope that we have accomplished the task we set ourselves and have introduced a wider audience to the importance of French naval architecture in our cultural heritage.

COMPOSITION OF THE WORK

23x31cm format, sewn section with headband

Laminated inside dust jacket, with a four-color illustration of the ship Le Soleil Royal.
248 pages, 135 gr paper, with 130 illustrations and 30 tables.

3 four-color inset plates reproducing the illustration on the dust jacket.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THREE-DECKERS OF MORE THAN 70 GUNS IN 1671

We will start with the 100-gun three-decker whose image is best-known.

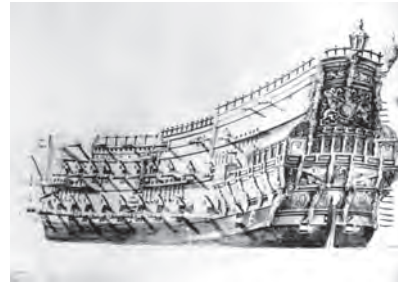
- This type of ship is pierced for 16 gunports at the lower battery. It is armed with 15 guns at the lower, second and third batteries, 8 on the quarterdeck and the forecastle. In addition, it has there are two guns on the poop deck, which brings the total to 55 guns to each side. This arrangement is the one that was seen on the *Soleil Royal*. There are one or other variations on the *Royal Louis*, the *Reine* and the *Royal Dauphin*, but all these vessels have the peculiarity of possessing three complete batteries and armed quarterdeck and forecastle. The *Soleil Royal* and the *Royal Louis* were the only ones with armed poop decks.



A 100-gun ship, the *REINE*, built in 1668 at Brest by Laurent Hubac. The *REINE* was pierced for 16 gunports at the lower battery. Its 100 guns were distributed over three decks, the forecastle and the quarterdeck. The later part topped by an unarmoured poop deck. Drawing from 1673 by Vandevelde the Elder. - Greenwich National Maritime Museum - pic 91 594

- The 84-gun ship was pierced for 14 gunports at the lower battery; as indicated in the Album de Colbert, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd batteries were each armed with 13 guns and 3 on the quarterdeck, which indeed amounts to 42 guns to each side. This type of ship is indeed a standard three-decker without a forecastle. This peculiarity may be found on all three-deckers of under 100 guns. This arrangement of the artillery may be found on the *Monarque*, after its forecastle was razed at its return from the *Candair* campaign. Vessels which, like the *Couronne* and the *Scypre* were only armed with 82 and 80 guns, only had one or two guns on each side of the quarterdeck.

The 74-gun ship was also pierced for 14 gunports at the lower battery. It had no forecastle. The top deck was generally continuous from stem to stern, but the artillery line up was interrupted in the middle part of the ship. Whereas the first and second batteries each bore 13 guns to each side, the third deck only had around 8, as can be observed on examples shown on Vandevelde's drawings. On



The *Constant Reformation* was an English 60-gun ship of 1619. She found refuge in Holland in 1648 when Cromwell sought Charles I for the second time. She was lost at sea in 1651. The presence of artillery pieces at the waist leaves no doubt about the existence of a third deck. Drawing by Vandevelde the Elder from 1648. - Greenwich National Maritime Museum - Musée de la Marine - pic 91 249



The 41-gun English ship *Constant Reformation*, she found refuge in Holland in 1648. She was burned in 1649. The presence of an artillery piece at the level of the fore end of the main channel at the third battery shows that this level is not a quarterdeck, but a true deck. The shorter quarterdeck occupies the fourth level. Drawing by Vandevelde the Elder from 1648. - Greenwich National Maritime Museum - Musée de la Marine - pic 91 549

The Dutch Navy also had three-deckers of this type. The *Bredersde* was one of those. Built in 1646, this vessel was initially armed with 59 guns and considered in the catalogue, as a two-decker. However in that case, the quarterdeck would have ended forward of the mainmast. This is obviously untrue; never had a quarterdeck been that long; on the contrary, the quarterdecks of those days were rather short, ending just forward of the mizzen. Instead, it must be a broken third deck as mentioned in the 1670 regulation. It is more than probable that a light structure occupied part of that space in order to provide a connection between the fore and aft parts of this interrupted third deck. Comparable arrangements may be found on an unidentified vessel with the number 826 in the catalog of Vandevelde's drawings, a drawing from 1666.

The *Bredersde* was a 59-gun Dutch vessel of 1646. She was sunk in 1658. At midship of the third deck can be seen a structure that connects the fore and aft parts as on the *The Love*. Note that this third level that ends forward of the mainmast cannot be a quarterdeck, this type of deck usually ending between the mizzen and the mainmast. Drawing by Vandevelde the Elder probably from 1658.



Unidentified Dutch ship. The length of the head indicates that she was built at the beginning of the 1650's. This ship has four levels above the second battery. It is likely that they consist in a quarterdeck and a poop deck, plus two additional levels. In fact it is a three-decker with a quarterdeck, a poop deck, and a half poop deck. Drawing by Vandevelde the Younger of 1656. - Greenwich National Maritime Museum

This series of examples Shows that three-deckers of under 70 guns were not exceptional in those far-away days and mostly, that the concept was not uniquely French. In England, 50-gun three-deckers were adopted at the time of the beginning of the reign of the Stuarts and were retained until the end of the Commonwealth. This formula was abandoned at the restoration of the monarchy which coincided with the construction of more impressive vessels whose artillery was also distributed over three decks.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE FIREPOWERS OF TWO-DECKERS AND THREE-DECKERS

It is therefore reasonable that the 1670 and 1671 regulations did away with the third deck on ships of under 50 guns at first, and then on ships of under 70 guns.

As we shall see later, these directions were followed for the most part. However, the three-deck formula presented some advantages and kept its supporters for a long time. Although impeded by their high superstructures during naval maneuvers, three-deckers were still adapted to close combat. Of course, the development of the line-of-battle tactics eliminated the confused scuffles of the end of the 16th and the first half of the 17th centuries, but close combat was still possible, depending on circumstances.

In this instance, supporters of the three-deckers were correct. Nevertheless, it was necessary to reach the enemy. Faced with more maneuverable two-deckers, the job did not seem easy.

The absence of pictorial depiction leads us to recreate these two types of 56-gun ships, a three-decker and a two-decker. These recreations are based on documents of the time that can hardly be contested.

The ship *la Royale* has been recreated by referring to two records. One, dated 29 April 1666 was from the warship captained by His Highness Monseigneur le Duc de Beaufort¹. The other, dated from 1665 is an inventory of the bronze and cast-iron guns that are on the king's vessel listed in the following²: It is a three-decker built at Brest in 1661.

The scarcity of builders at Brest leads us to believe the author was Laurent Hubac without much risk of being mistaken. Renamed *la Ferme* in 1671 this ship was a part of the royal fleets until 1676, when it was struck from the Navy list.

1- Inventory of the warships commanded by Monseigneur le Duc de Beaufort. (National Archives - Navy - Series B2 - 3rd Register, folios 33 to 46).
2- Inventory of bronze and cast-iron cannon in 1665. (National Archives - Navy - Series B1 - 5th Register).

56-gun three-decker pierced for 12 gunports at the lower battery whose line were drawn following the dimensions of the vessel *la Royale* built in 1661 (National Archives - Navy - Series B2 - 3rd Register, folios 33 to 46).
Length overall is 133 ft. 4 in.
Width of gunports at the lower battery is +/- 32in.
Distance between gunports is 7 ft. 9 1/2 in.
Depth-in-hold is 12 ft.
First battery: 22 18-pounders
Second battery: 20 12-pounders
Third battery: 10 8-pounders
Quarterdeck: 4 4-pounders
1661 (National Archives - Navy - Series B1 - 5th Register).

