

## Hayreddin Barbarossa's attack on Aigina in 1537

Barbarossa's attack lives in the collective consciousness of Aigina as one of the worst, perhaps the worst, misfortune to befall the island in the last thousand years. G. Koulikourdi and S. Alexiou described it graphically in their *Aigina*:

Part of [Suleyman's] fleet (30 galiotes and 30 galleys) returning from the Adriatic under the leadership of Hayreddin Barbarossa, attacked the islands of the Aegean, first Kythera and in October 1537, Aigina. Before ordering disembarkation, Barbarossa called for the Venetian governor, Francesco Soriano to surrender. He refused. The first dreadful battle took place on the shore, while the Aeginetans tried to prevent their enemies landing. They were however much fewer than the Turks, and understanding that they wouldn't succeed, they withdrew to the interior and shut themselves in the castle. The Turks brought cannons ashore, cut down most of the trees, and began a furious attack. The Aeginetans held them off for four days. In the end however they took the town, killed the men and the old people, destroyed the walls to their foundations, pillaged the houses and burned them. The women without distinction they offered to the ferocity of the soldiers, and afterwards, with the children and young people, some 6-7 thousand, they took them prisoner on their ships along with the booty. Only a few churches and ruins remained in Paliachora, which had a substantial population – the number of prisoners shows this – and commercial life. The baron de Blancard who passed by shortly after the catastrophe did not see a living soul on the island.<sup>1</sup>

One's first reaction to this has to be, what a cruel savage Barbarossa was. But in addition, one might think, how remarkable that so many vivid details have been preserved of an event that took place getting on for five hundred years ago. So much of what has happened in even the relatively recent past has been lost because no record of it by anyone close to the events, in an official report, or in a letter, or in a diary, happens to have been preserved. But then, every so often, the gloom of the past, the more recent or the more distant, is illuminated by a chance survival.

The general background to events in Greece in the sixteenth century was the intermittently resumed struggle between Venice and the Ottomans. Longer periods of truce were interrupted by shorter periods of fighting, which generally led to the Ottomans increasing their territory at Venice's expense. Individual towns and islands such as Aigina were pawns in this game. Their inhabitants were largely indifferent as between Venetian and Ottoman rule. Life under either meant hard work, taxes and poverty.

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<sup>1</sup> Κουλικούρδη, Γεωργία Π., and Σπύρος Ν. Αλέξιος, *Αἴγινα* (195?): 34-35.

The war of 1537-1540 started (more or less) with the unsuccessful Ottoman siege of Corfu, and ended with the cession by Venice of many of her holdings in the Archipelago, including Aigina.

Within that framework then, what were the survivals that permitted Koulikourdi and Alexiou (“K&A” from now on) to write their detailed account? What, that is to say, were their sources?

They did not give references for the particular passage, but there are several relevant works in their bibliography. Two of these are early sources, manuscripts published by respectively Kostas Sathas and Spyridon Lambros.

The earlier of the two manuscripts, a large-scale work on the Ottomans, is by Theodoros Spandounis, a man of Greek descent who wrote in Italian. It is not clear when he was born – perhaps in the 1460s – but he seems to have spent the latter part of his life in France. Sathas published the last version of Spandounis’s work, which dates from 1538, just a year after the attack. One would hope it to be a goldmine of information. In fact, unfortunately, it says very little:

Barbarossa with eighty galleys went towards the Archipelago, attacked Aigina and sacked it, ...<sup>2</sup>

In the case of Lambros, K&A’s reference, “*N. Ελληνομνήμων (σύντομες ειδήσεις)*”, is obscure – I can find no trace of such a work in Lambros’s *Νέος Ελληνομνήμων* and the only possible candidate seems to be the *Βραχεία Χρονικά* (1932, ed. Αμάντος) a collection of short, previously unpublished, manuscripts. The relevant passage would then be from a manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, dating from the latter part of the sixteenth century, a summary chronicle of the acts of the Ottoman sultans. After recording Suleyman’s attack on Corfu, it goes on:

In the year 1537, 25 October, Aigina was captured by Hayreddin Pasha and 4,708 prisoners were taken.<sup>3</sup>

This gives us a bit more: the date of the attack and a number of prisoners; but we still have none of K&A’s vivid detail.

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<sup>2</sup> “Barbarossa con ottanta galere andò alla volta dell’Arcipelago pigliò Lezena et saccheggiolla, ...”. C.N. Sathas, *Documents inédits relatifs à l’histoire de là Grèce au moyen âge*, Vol. 9, p.199 (Paris, 1890). I have drawn information about Spandounis from Villain-Gandossi, Christiane, “La cronaca italiana di Teodoro Spandugino”, *Il Velcro. Rivista della civiltà italiana* 2-4, anno XXIII (marzo-agosto 1979), pp.152-153; Nicol, Donald M (trs. and ed.), *Theodore Spandounes. On the origins of the Ottoman Emperors*, (Cambridge, 1997), p.ix; Ganchou, Thierry, review of Nicol *op. cit.*, *Revue des études byzantines*, 56 (1998), pp.324-326.

<sup>3</sup> «Ἐν ἔτει ,ζμστ' Ὀκτωβρίου κδ'η ἀναλώθη ἡ Αἴγινα ὑπὸ τοῦ Χαροατοῦ μπασιὰ καὶ ἤχμαλωτίσθησαν ψυχαὶ ,δψη!», Σ. Λάμπρος (ed. Κ. Αμάντος) *Βραχεία Χρονικά* (1932) , p.6, from Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Lincoln Coll. Gr.10, 173v-174 (185v-186).

The earliest of K&A's sources is undoubtedly the one that gave rise to their mention of the "baron de Blancard". This is a work by Jean de Véga, the "Journal de la croisière du baron de Saint-Blancard, 1537-1538". De Véga sailed with the baron and kept the journal at the order of Francois I of France. They passed Hydra on 11 November 1537, and Aigina soon after, that is to say little more than two weeks after Hayreddin's attack.

De Véga wrote

We passed in front of Aigina ... which the army of the Sultan had taken, burned and sacked, where we found nobody.<sup>4</sup>

This adds, importantly, the mention of burning.

Looking again at K&A's bibliography makes it clear that they relied fairly heavily on the work by William Miller, *The Latins in the Levant*, published in English in 1908, and in Greek translation in 1909-10 under the title *Η Φραγκοκρατία ἐν Ελλάδος*<sup>5</sup>. Miller provided a list of his own sources. Using this, together with a plausible assumption that neither K&A nor Miller listed everything that they had consulted, leads one to five basic works in addition to the three already quoted.

The earliest of the five are two Venetian histories from the end of the sixteenth century, the printed *History of Venice* by Paolo Paruta, and the "History of Candia [Crete]" by Andrea Cornaro, which exists only as a manuscript.

Paruta wrote,

But Barbarossa ... passed through the islands of the Archipelago that remained loyal and obedient to [Venice]; some of them not having any way, either by the strength of the place or by the protection of soldiers, to defend themselves, others moved by fear, surrendered at first sight of the armada. These were Skiros ...; Patmos ...; Aigina, of small circumference, but well inhabited, such that it was said that the Turks took out six thousand prisoners; it was also more famous for the convenience of the harbour, and so there normally resided there a Venetian governor, who was at that time Francesco Suriano.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "Passâmes par devant EGINE, isle d'où estoit natifve Hélène, laquelle l'armée du seigneur avoir prins, bruslée et sacaigé, dont n'y trouvasmes personne." Charrière, E., *Négociations de la France dans le Levant : ou, Correspondances, mémoires et actes diplomatiques des ambassadeurs de France à Constantinople et des ambassadeurs,...* Vol.1 (1848): 372.

<sup>5</sup> The account of the attack, together with a footnote giving the sources used, are on p. 507 of the English edition.

<sup>6</sup> "Ma Barbarossa ... trascorse l'Isole dell'Archipelago, le quali si tenevano à divotione, ed ubidienza della Rep.ma, alcune non havendo modo, ò per fortezza di sito, ò per presidio di soldati di difendersi, altre commose da timore, al primo apparire dell'armata se gli arresero. Furono queste Sciro ...; Patmo ...; Legina di picciolo circuito, ma bene habitata, in modo che di questa [i] sola fu detto havere I Turchi condotti via sei mila prigioni; era anco più stimata per la commodità del porto, ed però resideva in essa per l'ordinario un Magistrato Vinetiano, il

This provides us with the identity of the governor, but not any of the other information in the accounts by K&A, and by Miller. Indeed it fundamentally contradicts them. It says that Aigina, that is to say Suriano and the Venetian garrison, was one of the islands that, “surrendered at first sight of the armada”. It says in effect therefore that there was no fighting; but a lot of prisoners, the number of which has gone up to 6,000, and from this Paruta deduces that the population had previously been substantial. On the other hand I feel he hints that the number may not be reliable, adding as he does “*it was said that ...*”

The account in Cornaro is much shorter than that in Paruta, but similar in its gist. He writes,

... Barbarossa took [Aigina] without much fighting, taking the rector and five thousand souls prisoner.<sup>7</sup>

which confirms that the governor was among those captured.

At this point the situation is a bit odd. Of the sources that we have that are closest in time to the events, two (Spandounis and the anonymous Greek chronicler) say almost nothing about the attack on Aigina, two (Paruta and Cornaro) say that the island was surrendered with little or no fighting, and the last, de Vége, refers to sacking and burning, but says nothing about fighting.

However, the next basic source used by Miller, and by K&A tells a different story. It is the account by the Ottoman Haji Khalifeh in a work that was published in English in 1831. French versions have also been published, but I know of no Greek edition, at least that existed in 1950 and so was available to K&A. The book was written in about 1656 and printed in Ottoman in the early eighteenth century. The relevant text is,

The royal fleet leaving Cephalonia proceeded to Motone, where Khair-ad-din chose sixty vessels, with which he remained at sea, Lutfi Pasha returning with the rest to the Porte. Khair-ad-din first touched at Cerigo, whence he went to an island called Egina, which was a strong fortress. To this, having prepared his artillery, he laid siege, and after three days' fighting, succeeded in capturing it on the fourth day, when he took four thousand eight hundred prisoners, besides considerable booty.<sup>8</sup>

Like the Greek manuscript quoted above, and Cornaro, Khalifeh gives a number of prisoners different from that of Paruta – we’ll come back to that. But the passage adds the information that Hayreddin had 60 ships, that he

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quale era allhora Francesco Suriano.” Paruta, Paolo, *Historia Vinetiana* (1643), p.437. The first edition of the work was in 1599.

<sup>7</sup> “... Barbarossa senza troppo combatterla prese, menando[ss]e prigg<sup>ne</sup> il Rettor del luogo ed m/5 anime. » Cornaro, Andrea « *Historia de Candia* », London, British Library Add. MS 8,637, f.92v. Late sixteenth century.

<sup>8</sup> Haji Khalifeh, *The history of the maritime wars of the Turks*, tr. J. Michel (1831): 58.

used artillery, and that the siege lasted into the fourth day, as stated by Koulikourdi and Alexiou.

For the next two basic sources we have to jump to more recent times, to *The History of Greece under Ottoman and Turkish Domination*, by the English historian George Finlay, and the "Mémoire sur l'île d'Égine" of the Frenchman Edmond About, both published 1854. Both tell us that Hayreddin killed the men, that he burned the town and that all the captives were women and children (About actually only refers to women). Unfortunately, however, neither gives a source for the information<sup>9</sup>.

To Miller, writing at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we owe, I believe, first mention of the suggestion that Hayreddin spared the churches at Paliachora. Then for the statements that initially there was a retreat to the castle after the governor had refused to yield, and that the defenders were outnumbered by the Ottomans, I can get no further back than the 1950 talk by I. Likouris printed in Kirix Aiginas<sup>10</sup>.

All that still leaves elements in the story that K&A told which I cannot trace anywhere else at all: that the first battle was on the shore; that the Ottomans cut down all the trees; that they killed the old people (i.e. not just the old men); and that they gave the women to the soldiers.

At this point, then, we have sources for much but by no means all of the story in K&A, but most of these are not very early and there is a greater chance accordingly that they are transmitting the inventions of later ages.

## Other sources

A lot of material has been published since K&A were writing, and the internet makes the location of material much easier than it used to be. So it useful to start again at the beginning as it were and try to identify all the texts that might shed light on the events of 1537.

Such accounts are on the whole strong on the siege of Corfu. But the question is, what happened next? And here they are generally disappointing.

Andronicus Nucius, who lived through the siege and wrote about it and its aftermath some years later, made no mention of Aigina. Nor did Paolo

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<sup>9</sup> Finlay, George, *The History of Greece under Ottoman and Turkish Domination* (1854), p.83; About, Edmond, "Mémoire sur l'île d'Égine" in *Archives des Missions scientifiques et littéraires. Choix de rapports et instructions publié sous les auspices du Ministère de l'Instruction publique et des culte* (1854), III, p.539.

<sup>10</sup> I. Λυκούρη, "Αι ανά τους αιώνες καταστροφαι της Αιγίνης και η ζωτικότητα του πληθισμού της" ΚΑ 39-40 (1950), p.76.

Giovio, in his important history of Venice of 1551. Nor did the sixteenth century Greek manuscript published as *Ecthesis Chronica*, nor a slightly later Venetian historian, Nicolo Doglioni.

Others allowed Aigina the briefest of mentions: Francesco Sansovino, a sacking; Antonio Longo, writing in Venice in 1538, a number of prisoners.<sup>11</sup>

But there is a vivid and detailed account in another Greek manuscript from the sixteenth century, quoted by Yannis Kordatos:

... [Barbarossa] went to Aigina, which belonged to the Venetians and offered war to it; the rector, the governor of the place and the people, when they saw that they had no strength or help for fighting, or to resist the lions, hastened to go down to the shore and submitted to Hayreddin Pasha and surrendered to him; for which reason Filton Pasha when he saw the [heads of families? Venetians?] surrendering, decided to collect all the people young and old, men, women and children, the youthful and the aged, and put them as prisoners in the galleys and left the castle empty without people. And this was on the 26th of that month of October of 1537 A.D. ...<sup>12</sup>

And this corresponds very closely to Paruta's account. The island, that is to say its Venetian rulers, surrendered without a struggle, and there were many prisoners, although in this case the chronicler does not offer a number.

This would tend to swing us back to the sceptical view, that a succession of later writers have exaggerated and embroidered the story to the extent that few of the more lurid details can be believed. However, there remains one more early source to be considered, the "Ghazavat of Hayreddin Pasha".

"Ghazavat" means "holy war" or "holy wars". A ghazavat is thus an account of the wars undertaken by a hero. It is part biography, part paean. The "Ghazavat of Hayreddin Pasha", a work of hundreds of pages, is by Seyyid Murad, who claimed to have fought with Hayreddin in his later campaigns

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<sup>11</sup> Sansovino, Francesco, *Gl'Annali Turcheschi* (1573), p.216; Longo, Antonio, « Istoria della Guerra tra Veneziani e Turchi dall' anno 1537 al 1540 », Athens, Gennadius Library, MSS80, f.60.

<sup>12</sup> « ... ὑπῆγεν εἰς τὴν Αἴγινα, ὅπου ἦτον τῶν Βενετῶν καὶ ἔδωκεν πόλεμον εἰς αὐτὴν· ὁ δὲ ρετούρητος, ὁ αὐθέντης τοῦ τόπου καὶ ὁ λαὸς ὡς εἶδαν ὅτι καμμίαν δύναμιν οὐδέ βοήθειαν ἔχουν νὰ πολεμήσουν, ἢ νὰ ἀντισταθοῦν εἰς τὰ λεοντάρια ἔδραμαν καὶ ὑπῆγαν κάτω εἰς τὸν αἰγιαλὸν καὶ ἐπροσκύνησαν τὸν Χαροῦν πασιᾶ καὶ ἐπαρεδόθησαν εἰς αὐτόν· διότι ὁ Φίλτον πασιᾶς ὡς εἶδε τοὺς Γενήτας ὅτι ἐπαρεδόθησαν, ὤρισε καὶ ἐσύναξαν ὅλον τὸν λαὸν μικροὺς τε καὶ μεγάλους, ἄνδρας, γυναῖκας καὶ παιδιὰ, νέους καὶ γερόντισσας, καὶ ἔβαλεν ὅλους αὐτοὺς αἰχμαλώτους εἰς τὰ κάτεργα καὶ ἀφήκεν τὸ κάστρον ἔρημον χωρὶς ἀνθρώπων. Καὶ τοῦτο ἦτο εἰς τῆς εἰκοσιᾶς τοῦ αὐτοῦ Ὀκτωβρίου μηνὸς εἰς τὰ χίλια πεντακόσια τριάντα ἐπτὰ ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ γεννήσεως. » Κορδάτου, Γ., *Ἱστορία τῆς νεώτερης Ἑλλάδος*, I (1957) pp. 75-76, quoting Ms. Korais 161 as published in *Ἑλληνικά*, I (1928), pp.48-49. I owe this reference to Σταμάτη, Κ., *Αἴγινα Ἱστορία-Πολιτισμὸς* (1989), p.

and for the earlier period to have based what he wrote on Hayreddin's own recollections. It was composed before Hayreddin's death in 1546, and most likely completed in 1541<sup>13</sup>. So, once again we are close to the events and might hope for informational treasure; and this time we are not disappointed.

This is Murad's account:

They returned to Modon. Then Hayreddin Pasha, having received permission, stayed in the provinces with sixty galleys, while Lutfi Pasha went back to divinely protected Istanbul with the rest of the ships.

Hayreddin Pasha reached an island called Igene, on which there was a castle to which the ascent was steep. [ ] Immediately he brought cannon up from the shore. He bombarded the castle for three days and three nights, and on the fourth day victory was his.

He allowed provisions and materials to be looted and, besides those killed, he took four thousand eight hundred infidels prisoner.<sup>14</sup>

Sixty galleys, cannon, a four day-siege, 4,800 prisoners: the first thing that is clear is that this was the source for Haji Khalifeh's account of 120 years later, quoted above. Indeed Haji Khalifeh (in the Ottoman) follows the Ghazavat almost word for word.

The second point is that we have here a fairly detailed story of the attack, which dates from soon after the event and which describes substantial fighting. This complicates the situation. It can no longer be said that the early accounts ignore the attack altogether, mention it without any description, or suggest that the island was surrendered with little or no struggle, while the later ones have vivid stories of battle and slaughter.

We are left, as far as I can see, with three elements.

First, many of the details, for example the mass killing, the rape, have no basis in early sources and so are likely to be inventions by later authors.

Second, early Venetian and Greek sources say, or are at least consistent with, a story that the island was surrendered with little or no fighting, but that thousands of prisoners were taken.

Third, we have a very early Ottoman account, which purports to be by an eye witness, which tells us that Hayreddin brought up cannon, bombarded the castle for three days, captured it on the fourth and took some thousands of prisoners after an unspecified amount of killing.

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<sup>13</sup> Murad, Seyyid, *Gazava't-i Hayreddin Paşa* : (MS 2639 Universitätsbibliothek Istanbul), ed. Mustafa Yildiz, kommentierte Edition mit deutscher Zusammenfassung (1993), pp. 17, 19, 30-31; Gallotta, Aldo, *Il „Gazava't-i Hayreddin Paşa“ di Seyyid Murād*, (1983), pp. 10, 12.

<sup>14</sup> Gallotta, Aldo, *op.cit.* f. 274r, line 13 – f.274v, line 11. I am grateful to Dr Melek Özyetgin for assistance in translating this passage.

I confess I find both of the stories offered by the sources perfectly plausible.

يَتَشَوَّبُ اَنْدُزْكِيرُ وَدُونُوبٌ مَثْوُونَ كَلْدِيكِرْ وَ مَثْوُونَ  
كَلْدُ كَلْدِي رَمَانْدَ خَيْرِ الدِّينِ پَانَا حَضْرَتِي اَلْمَشْرِ  
يَادَه قَا رِغَا بِلَه طَشْرَه قَالُوبِ وَ كَطْفِي پَانَا  
حَضْرَتِي مَا بَا نِي مَوْلَانَا بِلَه حَضْرَتِي اِسْلَامِ  
بُولَه رُجُوعِ اَيْسَلْدِي اَزِي جَانِبِ چُونَكِرِ خَيْرِ الدِّينِ  
پَانَا حَضْرَتِي طَشْرَه قَالُوبِ وَ اَرُوبِ اَيْلَنَه نَاوِ  
جَزِيرَه يَدِ وَ اَرُوبِ وَ اَوَّلِ جَزِيرَه يَدِ بَرَصْرِبِ قَلْعَه  
وَ اَرَايِدِي اَكَا دُوشِدِي وَ اِنَّ فِي الْحَالِ قَرَادَنِ طُوبِ  
جِي فَا رُوبِ وَ اَوَّلِ قَلْعَه يَدِ اَوْجِ كُودِ وَ اَوْجِ كِيچَه  
دُوكُوبِ وَ دُرُودِ نَجِي كُنْدِ اَوَّلِ حِصَارِي قَلْعِ اَيْدُوبِ  
اَلْبِي وَ اَوَّلِ قَلْعَه نَكِ دَا نَجِي اَرْنَا قِي وَ اَسْبَا نِي  
يَغْمَا اِنْدُورِبِ وَ كَفَارِنِ بَرِيرَه جَمْعِ اَيْدُوبِ وَ اَسْبَا  
اَيْدُوبِ وَ فِي الْقَلْعَه دُونِ بِيكِ كِي بُولُودِ اَسْبَا  
جِي قُوبِ اَلْبِي قُورِيلَنْدِنِ عَنَبِي وَ اَنْدِنِ كُجُوبِ

The Ottoman text referring to Aigina. The word "Igene" for "Aigina" is indicated.

## **Surrender without a fight**

You are the Venetian governor in the castle on Aigina, and you learn that Hayreddin is on his way with 60 galleys. Your garrison is not large. You have heard tales of the destructive power of Ottoman artillery. You may not have much confidence in the loyalty of the Greek population. You know that Ottoman policy is to impose taxes on the places they conquer and to ransom important prisoners. So you can choose between heroic and probably doomed defence, during or after which you may well be killed; or immediate surrender, negotiation of terms, and probable survival.

Surrender is clearly the rational course, so you go down to the shore (and I am assuming that we mean here the shore in the vicinity of Souvala). Certainly you don't go down to the shore unless it is to surrender – the only place where you may possibly be safe is in the castle.

This then is the account of the Greek sources and the Venetian historians. The origin of the Greek sources is unknown, but as regards Venetian historians, they, in the nature of the case, tended to be in Venice, many hundreds of kilometres away from the action. They had perhaps information about the Venetian side, but could say much less about Ottoman activities, especially when Hayreddin was moving quickly and the Venetians he encountered were scattered and their reports, arriving in Venice perhaps months after the events, each only related to a small part of the whole picture. In the case of Aigina, Suriano and his fellows had been captured<sup>15</sup>. There was no one left to make any kind of official report. So the fact of having been relatively close in time to the events described is not a guarantee of the accuracy of a description.

We may also speculate on what else may have influenced the Venetian historians, and the Greek chroniclers too. They represented the losers. Would they have been inclined to make light of the fighting in order to deprive the Ottomans of glory?

## **A four-day siege**

In the early sixteenth century the Ottomans were in the lead in the design and use of artillery. Its use by Hayreddin in a siege of fortress of Aigina would be normal. But the cannons were heavy, weighing several tons, and not very accurate. It has been estimated that in order to have a reasonable chance of hitting your target you needed to get to within 50m or so of it<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> I have no information about Suriano's fate.

<sup>16</sup> Guilmartin, J.F. Jr., *Gunpowder and Galleys* (1974), p.164.

We can therefore imagine the heavy cannon being dragged, by men or by mules, up the long slope from Souvala to Paliachora, and then well into the town. Murad accurately describes the ascent to the castle at Paliachora as “steep”. It is indeed very steep, and the cannons themselves would have had to be firing steeply uphill. It would not have been an easy exercise. It is no surprise that the castle should have held out for three days and only succumbed on the fourth. On the hypothesis that this is the true story, Suriano could have calculated that in fact the castle was strong enough, the slope too steep, the difficulty of bringing up and positioning the cannon too great for Hayreddin. He could have had the recent example of Corfu in mind, where the castle had held out for around two weeks and the Ottomans had finally abandoned the siege.

Murad claimed to have witnessed the events he described, so from that point of view he may be thought more reliable than the Venetians and Greeks. On the other hand he had his own, strong, bias. The Ghazavat was essentially a glorification of Hayreddin. Could we expect it therefore to make his victories greater and more glorious than they had in fact been?

### **How many prisoners?**

The choice between the two versions of events outlined above doesn't, for me at least, become any easier, but it is possible to say something about how many prisoners were taken. I have noted that the quoted number varies with the source, from the implausibly precise 4,708 in the Lincoln College, Oxford, manuscript published by Sathas, through 6,000 in Paruta and going up to 7,000 in the work of Paruta's successor as the official historian of Venice, Andrea Morosini<sup>17</sup>. I have already suggested that Paruta found the figure of 6,000 hard to believe, and indeed all these figures must, I fear, be suspect.

We can argue first from the likely population of the island.

On the basis of the area of Aigina's cultivable land and pasture, and the minimum needs at the time, Thomas Figueira calculated that the population that the island could support on agriculture alone in the archaic and classical periods was about 4,000<sup>18</sup>. Of course the actual population then was much larger because of the wealth brought by Aigina's trading activities. But in the sixteenth century agriculture was the only significant activity, and it had to support not only the Greek population but also the Venetian overlords. I think we can therefore take 4,000 as an absolute maximum for the sixteenth

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<sup>17</sup> Maurocenus, Andreas (Andrea Morosini), *Historia Veneta* (1623). p. 182.

<sup>18</sup> Figueira, Thomas, *Aegina: Society and Politics* (1981), pp.23-26.

century population. On this basis, the number of prisoners taken by Hayreddin cannot possibly have been as large as any of the accounts give<sup>19</sup>.

According to Miller, and later K&A, the island was emptied of its inhabitants, this based on the journal of the voyage of de Saint-Blancard. But it is worth looking again carefully at what de Vége wrote:

We passed in front of Aigina ... which the army of the Sultan had taken, burned and sacked, where we found nobody.

The first point to note is that the French fleet did not stop at the island, it passed "in front" on its way from Kythera to Athens. What the French saw was what they saw from the sea. They would have been able to distinguish activity at or near the part of the shore they passed by, but obviously they had no view of Paliachora, and were not in any position to estimate how many inhabitants the island retained. We must remember too that the French were the allies of the Ottomans in the war with Venice. De Saint-Blancard's voyage was expressly in support of the Ottomans, and he was deliberately following in Hayreddin's wake. His fleet comprised sixteen vessels, including thirteen galleys<sup>20</sup>. One can imagine that such inhabitants of Aigina as remained after Hayreddin's departure would not be inclined to make themselves visible at the sight of a French fleet two weeks later. It is also worth recalling the words of the manuscript from Chios, Korais 161, that the Ottomans "left the castle empty without people [emphasis added]", that is to say, the chronicler talks about the castle, not about the town, far less the island. Hayreddin's attack was all about taking the island from the Venetians. To accomplish this he had to capture the castle, and ideally, capture its Venetian occupiers too or, at the very least, kill them or expel them. What the significance to him of the Greek inhabitants of the town and island was we do not know. What was the need for galley slaves or for women and children as gifts to the Sultan? What market was there for slaves in general? What need was there for a population on the island to provide poll tax in the future? And in any event how easy would it have been to round the population up?

On this final point let us go back to Murad's account. If it is an accurate description of the sequence of events, then those events did not happen quickly. The approach of the fleet would have been seen long before it reached the island. The Venetians, on this hypothesis, have decided to stay

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<sup>19</sup> After the Ottoman Empire had taken over a region or an island it was normal for there to be a detailed economic and population survey for the purpose of tax assessment. Unfortunately it appears that no record of such a survey exists for Aigina. I am grateful to Dr Georgios Liakopoulos for this information.

<sup>20</sup> Charrière, E., *Négociations de la France dans le Levant : ou, Correspondances, mémoires et actes diplomatiques des ambassadeurs de France à Constantinople et des ambassadeurs,...* Vol.1 (1848): 340-41, footnote..

put, and rely on the castle's position on a pinnacle, itself high above the shore. All they can do is to wait, and watch and hinder as far as possible the Ottomans' preparations. But for the people in the town, the situation is quite different. They have the option of scattering to all corners of the island, taking with them such belongings as they can carry. They do not by any means have to wait while the cannon are dragged up from the shore and then higher up along the narrow steep streets through the town until they are close enough to the castle to have some chance of hitting it. Hayreddin had lots to do, other islands to attack before winter drove him home. It is not at all obvious that he would have spent time rounding up the inhabitants of Aigina. Of course with 60 galleys he wasn't short of men, so we cannot be sure.

### **Was the town burned?**

De Véga, writing soon after the event, appears to say that it was, but again we must be careful. What he literally wrote was that "the island" was burned. He certainly didn't see the result with his own eyes – he was reporting what he had been told - so it is not surprising that he was a bit vague.

In this case, however, we can argue from the evidence on the ground. Paliachora is famous for the survival of its churches. Many of these date from, and contain frescoes dating from, before 1537. So, if the town was burned, the fire managed to avoid the churches. It seems that this thought occurred to Miller, and to K&A. In an article in the *English Morning Post*<sup>21</sup>, which became the basis for his account of Hayreddin's attack in *The Latins in the Levant*, Miller wrote that Hayreddin "destroyed the town but spared the churches" and K&A similarly commented that "he left nothing standing, except the churches"<sup>22</sup>.

Now to my mind there are two oddities here. The first is the idea that Hayreddin, as a devout Muslim and servant of Suleyman, would have his men burn or otherwise destroy the town, but would at the same time order them to spare the churches. The second is, if the destruction was by fire, whether saving selected buildings was in any way physically possible. I find it easier to believe that the destruction and burning focussed on the castle.

### **Conclusion**

What to believe?

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<sup>21</sup> 23 December 1904.

<sup>22</sup> p.72.

For myself, I find Murad's account difficult to resist, and am inclined to a story something like the following. Hayreddin arrives with his fleet. The people of the town have scattered at his approach. His cannons are dragged up from the shore and through the deserted town. The Venetians and such Greeks as are close to them are in the castle. After three days and nights of bombardment, and then hand-to-hand fighting, during both of which defenders are killed, the castle is captured. Suriano and all his people, man, woman and child, and both Venetian and Greek, are taken, along, perhaps with some from the town or elsewhere on the island. The castle is destroyed, possibly burned. Hayreddin gives his troops permission to loot the town. Then the Ottomans leave.

But, as I have stressed, the sources that have come to light so far that relate to the attack are difficult to make sense of because they tell inconsistent stories. Coming to a conclusion therefore necessarily entails accepting some sources and rejecting others, on grounds that may be more temperamental than rational. In the future possibly more material will emerge from the archives of Venice or Istanbul. In the meantime, the best we can do is to avoid what has no basis in any source.