CHAPTER I

Greeks, Venice, and the Ottoman Empire

by Siriol Davies and Jack L. Davis

The history of Venice's territorial possessions in the Aegean area begins at the start of the 13th century, when the Republic agreed to transport the Fourth Crusade to the Holy Land. These forces instead attacked and plundered the Byzantine capital of Constantinople, to the ultimate advantage of Venice's economic interests in the Levant. When the city fell to the crusaders in 1204, the Venetian doge, Enrico Dandolo, negotiated for a major share of the spoils of the Byzantine Empire in Greece. The territories which thus came under Latin rule became known in the West as "Romania."

By the mid-15th century, in areas now within the borders of the modern Greek state, Venice held the island of Crete, the fortresses of Koroni (Coron) and Methoni (Modon) in Messenia, Argos and Nauplion, certain of the Aegean islands, the islands of Corfu and Kythera, and Naupaktos (Lepanto). Venice in the 13th century also had acquired virtual sovereignty over the island of Euboia (Negroponte), which it maintained until 1470, when the island was lost to the Ottomans.

Parallel to this expansion of Venice in the Balkans, a fledgling Ottoman Empire whittled away at Byzantine territory in the East. By the beginning of the 14th century, the Byzantines had lost almost all of Asia Minor to several small independent Turkish states. One of these, a small polity in northwestern Asia Minor in the area of Bithynia, was ruled by Osman, founder of the Ottoman dynasty. As he expanded his rule through wars of conquest, coastal Byzantine cities such as Nicaea and Nicomedia soon fell and an Ottoman fleet began to threaten Byzantine island possessions.

In 1354, Ottoman armies entered Europe for the first time; by 1370, Didymoteichon and Adrianople in Thrace had been captured. After the defeat of the Serbs at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, Constantinople became a Byzantine island surrounded by Ottoman possessions, and the Morea (the Peloponnese) was the only substantial Balkan territory that remained in Byzantine hands. In 1453, Constantinople also fell, and Mehmed the Conqueror transformed it into the Ottoman capital, now Istanbul.

In the course of the next 450 years, the borders of the Ottoman Empire expanded or contracted in the Balkans and the Aegean, as territory was gained or lost through warfare or treaty in lands that once had belonged to the Byzantine Empire or subsequently to various Latin powers

Figure 1.1. Ottoman expansion in the eastern Mediterranean, 15th–17th centuries. R. J. Robertson, after Pitcher 1972, map XIV

(Fig. 1.1). Among the latter, Venice was the most significant force. Apart from territorial possessions in the northern Adriatic, the Venetian overseas empire was mainly insular (Ionian and Cycladic islands, Crete, and Cyprus), reflecting the need for ports of call for Venetian galleys on their voyages to the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean. The period was punctuated by Veneto-Ottoman wars in 1463–1479, 1499–1500, 1537–1540, 1570–1571, 1645–1669, 1684–1699, and 1715–1718. In intervals of peace, the longest being that from 1571–1645, the Venetian ambassador in Constantinople did his best to ensure that awkward incidents such as attacks on Ottoman shipping by Venetian subjects did not give cause for the sultan to declare war.

The tale of these years is mainly one of Venetian losses: in 1500, Methoni and Koroni; in 1540, Nauplion and Monemvasia; in 1570, Cyprus;

in 1669, Crete. Rather unexpectedly, the late 17th century brought a revival of Venetian fortunes in the form of the conquest of the Peloponnese, but this late imperial dream was short-lived. For most of the 18th century, until the end of the Republic in 1797, the Venetian empire south of the Adriatic was restricted to the Ionian islands.

The historical geography of the Ottoman Empire is also complicated, and political histories of specific areas often diverge. Thessaly, Boiotia, and Epirus had become Ottoman possessions already by the middle of the 15th century and remained so into the 20th century. But other areas of the Aegean were under Ottoman domination for a much shorter time. Venice lost the island of Tinos to the Ottomans only in 1715. The island of Kythera was Ottoman for fewer than three years (1715–1718). Quickly regained for Venice as a result of the Peace of Passarowitz, Kythera remained a colony of Venice until the Napoleonic wars.

Since it is impossible to offer readers a short and simple narrative history of Ottoman or Venetian Greece, we instead provide the following brief overviews of Ottoman and Venetian rule in those areas of modern Greece and Cyprus relevant to the chapters in this volume—namely, parts of the eastern Mediterranean (the islands of the Aegean, Crete, Kythera, the Morea, and Cyprus) where both the Ottoman Empire and Venice had major political and economic interests.

THE AEGEAN ISLANDS

In 1451, rule of the Aegean islands was extraordinarily fragmented. The Sporades (discussed in Chap. 2 by Machiel Kiel), Limnos, Thasos, Samothrace, and Imvros were nominally Byzantine but paid tribute to the Ottomans; the Genoese controlled Lesbos, Chios, and Samos; the Knights of St. John, the Dodecanese. An independent Duchy of Naxos held the central Cycladic islands, while Kea (discussed in the Introduction to this volume and also by Kiel) was divided among several families of Italian origin who sometimes ruled under the protection of Venice. In the course of the 16th century, however, most of the Aegean islands were brought into the Ottoman Empire, in campaigns by Hayreddin Barbarossa in 1537 (as described by Kiel). The Duchy of Naxos and the island of Chios were annexed in 1566, and only the island of Tinos remained in Latin hands through the 17th century. The Ottoman Empire ruled most of the islands indirectly through the intermediary of local Greek elites, as had the Latins before them (see Chap. 3 by Aglaia Kasdagli). Few Muslims settled there. The Sporades and Cyclades became part of the modern Greek state as a result of the Greek War of Independence.

CRETE

Assaults on Ottoman shipping by Westerners, especially the Knights Hospitallers of Rhodes, provided an excuse for the Ottomans to attack the island of Crete, Venetian since the early 13th century; the culprits often sought refuge there. The final Ottoman conquest of the island began in

April 1645, when a fleet of 78 galleys and various smaller ships set sail from Istanbul under the orders of Sultan İbrahim IV, believing that Crete would be an easy conquest.

Crete was to be the last major territorial gain of the Ottoman Empire and a major loss to Venice. By 1647, Rethymon, Chania, and most of the smaller fortresses had fallen, and Ottoman efforts were focused on Candia (modern Iraklion). By 1669, nearly all of the island was in Muslim hands, and the Ottomans had long since set in place an administration that would persist for more than two centuries. Both Venetian and Ottoman systems of governance on the island are the topics discussed by Allaire B. Stallsmith in Chapter 8. Crete was unified with the modern Greek state in 1913.

KYTHERA

The island of Kythera came under Venetian control after 1204 and was ceded to a Venetian noble family, the Venieri. The family divided the revenues of the island into 24 lots, which were shared among its members. In 1363, however, the Venieri, who also had interests in Crete, participated in a revolt against Venetian rule there, and the Republic decided to seize back control of Kythera from them. Eventually 13 of the shares were returned to the family, but Venice retained direct control of the other 11. The island was governed by an official appointed directly from Venice. This unusual arrangement prevailed until the end of Venetian rule in 1797, being only briefly interrupted by an Ottoman occupation from 1715 to 1718. In 1537, Kythera was sacked by Barbarossa in a devastating raid. Over the years the island was administered variously from Crete (until 1669), the Peloponnese (1687–1715), and Corfu (1718–1797).

THE MOREA

In 1459, a civil war between two Byzantine despots, Thomas and Dimitrios Palaiologos, invited Ottoman interference in the Peloponnese. By March 1462, the Morea had been pacified by the Ottomans. Venice's determination to hold on to its coastal possessions, however, meant that the Ottomans were able to establish firm control only with the campaigns of Sultan Bayezid II between 1499 and 1503. Venice managed to retain Nauplion and Monemvasia until 1540, but after that the Morea remained in Ottoman hands until 1685. Under the Byzantines and Ottomans, large numbers of Albanian immigrants widely settled there, in areas such as the Methana peninsula (Hamish Forbes's topic in Chap. 6).

Soon after Venice lost Iraklion to the Ottomans in 1669, a crusade of the so-called Holy League, an alliance of Venice, Austria, and Poland, was launched under the auspices of the pope. The Venetians, with support from German mercenaries, Maltese forces of the Knights Hospitallers, Slavs, papal troops, and recruits from Tuscany, opened an offensive aimed at recapturing Crete. The project failed in that objective but did result in the total conquest of the Morea between 1685 and 1690.

In 1684, a Venetian naval offensive captured the island of Lefkas and the port of Preveza in Aitolia. In 1685, Koroni, Kalamata, and fortresses in Mani were taken. In 1686, Pylos, Methoni, Argos, and Nauplion were gained, and the conquest of the Morea, except for Monemvasia, was completed the following year with the addition of Patras and Corinth. Venice then set out to organize the administration of its new province. Aspects of its rule there in the late 17th and early 18th centuries are discussed by Alexis Malliaris in Chapter 5, by Timothy E. Gregory in Chapter 9, and by John Bennet in Chapter 10.

Venice's rights to this *Regno di Morea* (Kingdom of the Morea) were recognized in 1699 under the terms of the Treaty of Karlowitz. Venice continued to rule the Morea until 1715, when the Ottomans regained it in its entirety in a brief but bloody campaign. The Morea then remained firmly in Ottoman hands until 1821, when the rebellion began that led to its incorporation into the modern Greek state.

CYPRUS

After 1191, the island of Cyprus was ruled by a dynasty established by Guy de Lusignan, the dispossessed heir to the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Italian merchants gained power on Cyprus, and in the 15th century the island became the property of Venice after one of its noblewomen, Caterina Corner, married the Lusignan king. The island was taken by the Ottomans in 1571, and was held until Great Britain obtained control of it in 1878 through an agreement with the sultan. In Chapter 7, Michael Given discusses the effects of Frankish, Venetian, and Ottoman administrations on patterns of settlement on the island.

FURTHER READING

From the foregoing brief survey it should be clear that the political history of each region varied considerably in this period. Therefore we close this chapter by highlighting some references as good starting points concerning the history of the period. Further specific regional bibliography can be found in each chapter, and should be read in conjunction with relevant works mentioned in the Introduction.

With regard to the borders of the Ottoman Empire and the extent of Venetian possessions in the Aegean, see Pitcher 1972; concerning economic and political treaties between the two empires, see Theunissen 1998. Thiriet 1959 tells the story of the development of the Venetian Empire up to 1500. Shaw and Shaw 1976–1977 is an important source for the history of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, and Hammer-Purgstall 1842 remains indispensable. Gregory 2005 provides a very readable account in English of the interaction between the Ottomans and the Byzantines; for surveys of the history of post-Byzantine Greece see, in particular, Finlay 1856, Vakalopoulos 1973, and Zakythinos 1976. Miller 1908 is still the best description of the complicated history of Western colonization in the

Aegean in the wake of the Fourth Crusade (see also Miller 1921). Lock 1995 is an important supplement that is attentive to material culture as well as documentary evidence. Jacoby 1989 is useful on the transition from Byzantine to Latin rule, and Balard 1998 provides a comprehensive bibliography of recent scholarship on the Latin East. On the incorporation of Ottoman territories into the modern Greek state in the 19th and 20th centuries, see Gallant 2001.

With respect to Ottoman and Venetian rule in particular parts of the Aegean and Cyprus, there is now a wealth of good resources. These include, for the Greek islands, Balta and Spiliotopoulou 1997 (for Santorini), Koder 1973 (for Euboia), Koumanoudi and Maltezou 2003 (for Kythera), and Slot 1982 (for the Cycladic islands); for Crete, Georgopoulou 2001, Greene 2000, and Zachariadou 1983; for the Morea, Davies 2004, Setton 1991, and Zarinebaf, Bennet, and Davis 2005; and for Cyprus, Arbel 2000 and Jennings 1993. On relations between local Orthodox populations and both Venice and Istanbul, see Papadia-Lala 2004, Ploumidis 1985–1992, and Zarinebaf, Bennet, and Davis 2005. Recent scholarship on Venetian Greece is disseminated through *Thesaurismata,* the journal of the Greek Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies in Venice.

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