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A FAILED AND FINAL ATTEMPT: A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE OTTOMAN INCURSION OF 1614

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ABSTRACT

The Ottoman Empire was increasingly perceived as a weakening naval and military threat throughout the centuries following the decisive Battle of Lepanto in the second half of the sixteenth century (1570-1571). Indeed, several of its corsairing activities and raids resulted in a series of failed military attempts, of which the 1614 attack has often been seen to form part of. The principal aim of this paper is to provide a historical and socio-political context for the Ottoman incursion of 1614 in Malta, together with a detailed account of this considerably undervalued episode of Maltese and Hospitaller history. The study, although largely dependent on seventeenth and eighteenth-century reports and chronicles of the Order of St. John, is not merely a historically-based narrative of the events induced by the invasion, but rather, it seeks to explore contrasting perspectives of the political, military and strategic implications prior, during and subsequent to the attack, and to determine the immediate and eventual impact the attack had on both the locals and the Order of St. John in Malta.

INTRODUCTION

A clash of metal between two armed forces never truly yields effective solutions to political, economic, religious or cultural conflict. Even more so if one of the forces was to be substituted with unprepared and insufficiently protected individuals. Chroniclers who describe the Turkish raid, of the 6th of July 1614, in a number of Maltese villages, are not hesitant to highlight the alarmed reaction of both the locals and the Knights of St. John, and their disadvantage in facing the invading army. However, the apparent bias and selectivity by which the chroniclers describe the details of the unfolding events is not entirely compatible with all the turmoil one would expect from an unforeseen invasion. Indeed, the Turkish troops seemed to have suffered losses much greater than their defending counter-parts. The question we are left to ponder on, thus, is not quite what the extent of the damage was, but rather,

which of the two sides was the most insufficiently prepared for the raid. This paper however, is not so much about military technology or the architectural defensive network of the island, as it is about the contextual history of the 1614 raid as seen from the perspective of the Catholic Knights. Hence, it is against an analysis of the preventive strategies employed by the Knights of St. John, the condition of the afflicted Maltese villages, the role of the locals, and the political and military interests of the Ottoman Turks, that the reliability of the one-sided historical accounts of the 1614 episode will be assessed.

A DAWNING REALITY: A GLIMPSE OF THE ENEMY

On Sunday 6th July 1614, two hours prior to sunrise, a group of fifty-two galleys and six galliots were detected approaching the eastern shore of Malta by (Fig. 1) four



Figure 1: Dawn at St. Thomas Bay, Marsascala. Photograph: Ruben Abela, 2014.

guards stationed at a watch tower along the coast (AOM 6395: f.308v.).¹ Such an opening sentence makes it only natural to tentatively enter the mind-set of the actual witnesses of the scene, concerned with adding numbers and predicting the scale and movements of the invading party. Indeed, if one were to analyse the statement carefully, certain details may be determined without the need to refer directly to written accounts, as they are likely to correspond to the personal experience and assumptions made by the individuals involved, even though at the possible expense of historical accuracy. Thus, of the approaching naval force, it would have been possible to estimate the amount of troops to be disembarked on the island, although such a calculation would have required knowledge of the type and quantity of the incoming enemy

ships. Nonetheless, if information on the crew capacity of galleys and galliots obtained during the Battle of Lepanto (1571) were to be taken as a standard reference point, it would appear that, under optimum conditions, the Knights of St. John and Maltese civilians were facing an army of an average of hundred and ten soldiers, and fifty-five men for each vessel, respectively (Konstam, 2003: p.20). This would approximately amount to six thousand and fifty armed men – a number which is in reality double that accounted for in Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt's letters of correspondence written on the same day of the raid (AOM 1393: f.278v.-279r.). However, in relation to the proportion of the fighting crew assigned to a typical mid-seventeenth Ottoman fleet, the Grand Master's value is far too small. Indeed,

for a smaller fleet of forty galleys and six mahonas, or galeasses, Kâtip Çelebi (1609-1657), calculated an amount of up to five-thousand, three hundred soldiers (Murphey, 1999: p.23), a value which seems to be more consistent with dal Pozzo's (1703: p.589) claim of the five thousand men who landed at St. Thomas point, in the south-eastern part of Malta. If the Grand Master's estimation is correct, however, it would seem that the Turks embarked on a mission for which they were not fully prepared, and where the element of surprise would simply not be enough.

While estimating the scale of the invading enemy is an important step in devising an effective defensive strategy, such details could not have been immediately communicated due to distance and time

restraints. Perhaps, of greater priority was the need to sound the alarm in view of the impending attack, and ensure that most, if not all, get to safety in time. Indeed, the detection of the enemy instigated two contrasting courses of action. Whereas one of the watch-guards was to silently leave his post and report the enemy sightings to the locals of the area of *Santa Caterina* (Fig. 2), the other is vividly described to have rushed towards Wignacourt's fort, crying out the words '*Salva! Salva!*' (AOM 6395: f.308v.) The unspecified fort is likely to be referring to that of St. Lucian in Marsaxlokk, whose design was, coincidentally, presented to the Council of the Order just over four years prior to the raid, on the 1st of July 1610 (AOM 105: f.147v.). However, the lines of sight of this rather low-lying fort overlooking the southern coast of Malta,



Figure 2: Lines of sight from the old parish church of Żejtun, nowadays known as St. Gregory, to the bays of Marsascula and St. Thomas – the two likely landing zones of the Turkish army.

are partially obstructed by the relatively high headlands to the east, therefore, rendering it ineffective in securing the sea inlets of Marsascala (Figs. 3a, b). It was here that the Turkish fleet landed its troops, thus revealing that the Ottomans had a considerably accurate picture of the topography and defensive network of the island.

In light of the Turkish raid of 1614, it would seem appropriate, therefore, to likewise consider the efficacy of the military counter-intelligence of the Order of St. John. In spite of the insufficiency of coastal security, the Order appears to have been well-informed on the movements of the Ottoman Turks. According to Aldighiero Fontana (1718: p.272), the general captain Khalil Pasha desired the raid to be unexpected in order to increase the profit, and minimise the losses of the mission. However, expeditions of the Order's galleys to the east, in 1614, served as a buffer to the Turkish general's intentions, as they not only returned with trophies of their corsairing activities, but also with useful information on the whereabouts and movements of the enemy. Indeed as early as the 3rd of June 1614, reports were made by the general of the galleys Fra Luis Mendes of a large Turkish army garrisoned at Navarino, Greece, and believed to be scheduled to set sail towards western territories in the following months (dal Pozzo, 1703: pp. 587-588). Days prior to the invasion, these reports were confirmed and specified that the naval force berthed at Navarino consisted of approximately eighty galleys. The presence of such a large quantity of enemy vessels was naturally perceived as a threat – a threat which the Council of the Order quickly responded to by amplifying coastal security and allocating around sixty soldiers for the defence of the fortifications of Gozo (AOM 105: f.67r.).

Furthermore, there exists an anecdote² which suggests that the decisions of

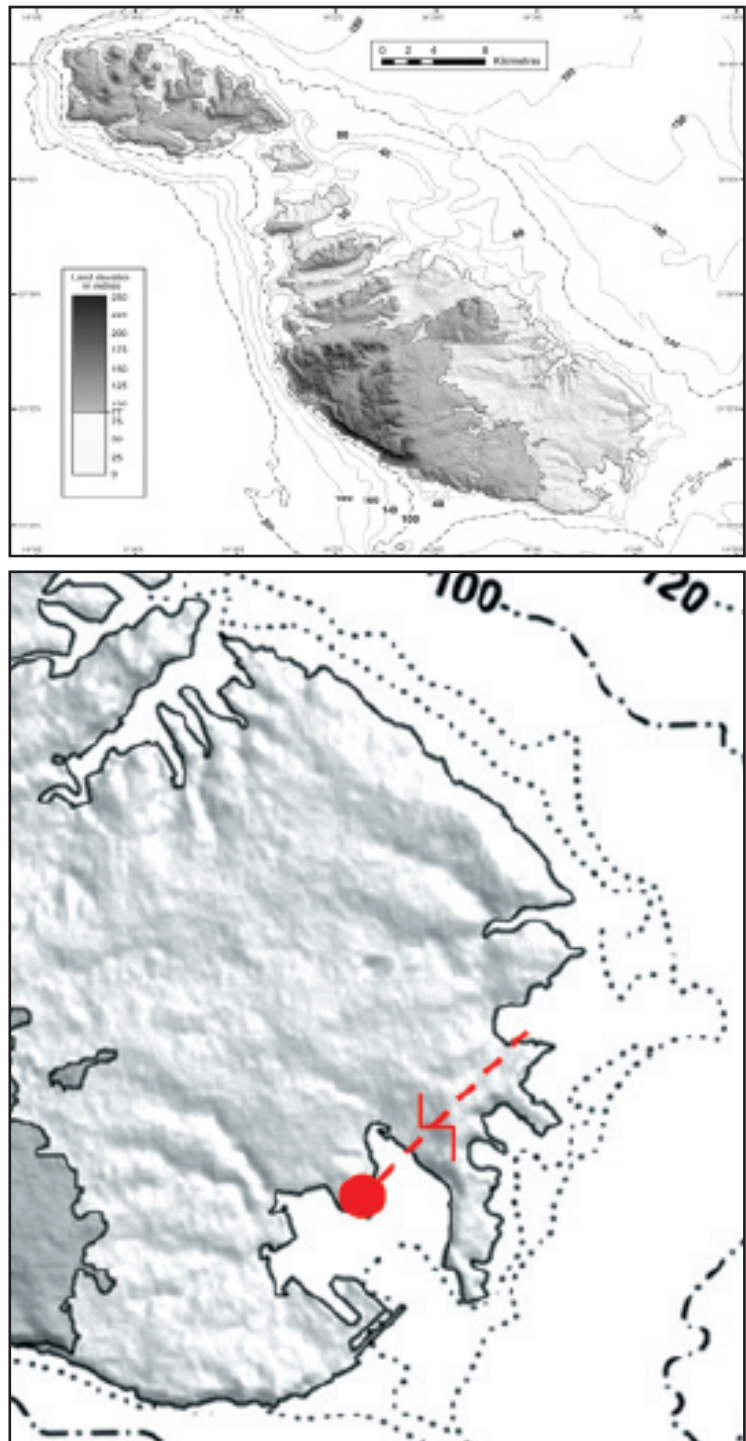


Figure 3a: Topographic elevation of the islands of Malta and Gozo. © Pedley, M. (2011), 168 (4), 913-925

Figure 3b: Detail showing obstructed line of sight from Fort St. Lucian (red dot) to the bays of St. Thomas and Marsascala.

the Grand Master and the Council of the Order, concerned with increasing the security of the islands, were not only a result of sheer man-power, but were somewhat guided by spiritual contemplation and complete faith in their patron saint. In April 1613, an Ethiopian slave named Caterina, relates an apparition to her confessor in which St. John the Baptist encourages her to notify the Grand Master of an impending Turkish raid wherein a number of Maltese villages were to bear the brunt of the attack. The account of the vision proceeds to mention three precautionary steps, which include the diligent maintenance of coastal guards, the construction of a tower in *Marsascirocco*, and another fortification to the north of the city of Valletta, that is, to the left of fort St. Elmo (NLM 1146: I, f.521). It is a tale which, although, intrinsically linked with the precautionary actions employed by the Order of St. John, must necessarily be questioned on its authenticity and reliability due to the apparent bias with which it is written. Indeed, the same unknown author presents the three warnings as having been immediately attended to by Grand Master Wignacourt. However, in doing so, he makes the critical error in assuming that the tower of St. Lucian in *Marsascirocco* is the same one referred to in the Ethiopian woman's revelation. This inaccuracy is, thus, a thorn in the author's argument in presenting the apparition as being true, in spite of the fact that the warnings were, indeed, what was needed for optimising the communication system between one individual and the other, one village and the next.

A STRUGGLE BETWEEN TWO PERSPECTIVES: ENCOUNTERING THE ENEMY

As cries of alarm were translated into canon shots, the rest of the island was notified of the events occurring in the south,

thus, commencing a series of defensive procedures, and counter-attacks (Fig. 4). The rural settlements most vulnerable to the invading army were those which today correspond to the towns and villages of Ħaż-Żabbar, iż-Żejtun, Żurrieq and probably even Gudja. All the mentioned areas are to be found in the countryside. However, it is the former two that stood at the frontier of the two likely landing zones of the Turkish troops, and thus, are the sites where the most damage was incurred. Despite the proximity of the areas to the enemy troops, the locals, having been notified of the advances of the Turks, immediately sought shelter behind the fortifications of Vittoriosa and Senglea (dal Pozzo, 1703: p.589). Furthermore, the Turks did not follow a direct path leading to the area of *Santa Caterina*, and thus, awarded the locals more time to retreat to the city walls (AOM 6395: f.308v.). It would seem thus, that as a result of a combination of effective warning signals and perhaps, a degree of luck, the Turks were unable to harm or carry off any locals as prisoners. This, however, is not the entire truth.

The signalling system did, indeed, seem to be rather efficient. Mustafa Naima, a Turkish annalist writing in the early seventeenth century, notes how two watch-towers, situated approximately a mile apart along the coast of Malta, ignited gunpowder successively until the warning reached the main strongholds of the island (Naima, 1832: I, pp. 417-418). Together with the signal shots from the fort of St. Lucian, these immediately spurred several thousand Knights, on foot and horse, to head in the direction of the invaders, where they engaged in a heated struggle that lasted till the afternoon. Naima further specifies that it was a 'terrible battle' in which several hundreds of these infidels became 'food for the sword.' (1832: p.418) Had this account been written by a Christian chronicler of the Order, it would seem



Figure 4: Earliest printed map by Maltese cartographer, Aloisio Gili, depicting the two landing zones of the Turkish fleet during the raid of 1614 from the Albert Ganado Map Collection, National Museum of Fine Arts, being reproduced by courtesy of Heritage Malta.

that the Knights had the upper-hand and that their counter-attack was effective enough to impede the advancing troops of the enemy. However, it was not. Thus, by 'infidels', Naima is referring not to the Muslim Turks, but none other than to the Christian Knights and locals. Bartolomeo dal Pozzo (1703: p. 590), in truth, does come surprisingly close to Naima's account when describing the initial stages of the encounter. It seems that the first attempt to defend the area of *Santa Caterina* did not have the desired results, so much so, that the Knights incurred much more damage than they set out to deflect. Dal Pozzo, ascribes the disadvantage to the fact that the first line of defence was heavily out-numbered, since reinforcements had still not arrived and could, therefore, not make full use of the military edge offered by a cavalry force which was few in number (1703: p.590).

As a result of these short-comings, several high-ranking Knights, particularly the Commander Campremy and Castellan de Castellet, among others, are described as having been left mortally wounded in the struggle. However, the Council of the Order negates such mortalities altogether, and having found these two individuals alive, brands claims of their death as false alarms, or demoralising rumours (AOM 105: f. 67v.). Unfortunately, there is no sure way of ascertaining the precision of these contradicting reports to the actual event, as they all have been written in hind-sight, and from opposing points of view. Taking into consideration the nature and intended audience of the accounts, the *Libri Conciliorum* may, however, be deemed to be more accurate as they are a private record of the issues dealt with during the ordinary meetings of the Council of the Order, while

chronicle accounts are generally intended for a wider, more public following.

Yet, no one source is exhaustive. Despite recording meticulous details on the activity, decisions and role of the Knights, the *Libri Conciliorum*, fall relatively short in providing an insight into the Maltese rural, social situation. Indeed, little can be gathered, from these registers, on the actual damages and losses suffered by the Maltese locals. The most evident omission is the role the locals had in the defence of their villages. Aldighiero Fontana (1718: p. 273) does remark that a number of civilians, probably militia men, took up arms in face of the enemy, but specifies neither their virtues nor casualties as a result of the assault. In fact, the emphasis is placed solely on the Knights as having a forceful retaliation at the sight of the desecration and ruinous state of the Old Parish Church of Santa Caterina, now known as St. Gregory's. Furthermore, several Knights, praised for their valour, are noted to have fallen, wounded or killed, in the brawl, while only one Maltese individual, Clemente Tabone, is acknowledged for his bravery, and none of the Maltese civilians are mentioned to have perished or been taken prisoners (dal Pozzo, 1703: p.50). However, the *Libri Mortuarium* (SPA, 1555-1671: v.153, f.32v.) and *Matrimonium* (SPA, 1555-1671: v. 146, f.49r.) of the Siggiewi parish archives, reveal a different scenario.³ Here, reference is made to an individual named Mario Ellun, from Żurrieq, who died on the 26th of July 1614 as a result of the severe wounds contracted in the scuffle against the Turkish soldiers at Buleben during the raid. Furthermore, in the annals of Mustafa Naima, it is clearly indicated that several of the Christians were carried away as slaves (1832: p. 418). It seems, therefore, that the accounts of the Order do not truly succeed in portraying the full picture of the extent of the damage inflicted by the Turks, both during and after the raid.

The contrast between the diverging points of view, in fact, is brought out even further in the overall attitude the two opposing forces are characterised with when confronting each other. In the account given by the writers of the Order, the Knights may be seen to progress from possible defeat, during the initial encounter with the Turks at the *Casale* of *Santa Caterina*, to clear victory, after the defending party was reinforced by a garrison of sixty knights and a large army of musketeers, boldly led by the nephew and seneschal of the Grand Master (dal Pozzo, 1703: p. 590). Concurrently, the Turks are considered to have only briefly maintained control of the raid, until the odds slowly turned against them as the defending Christian army increased in size. It was that moment of realization which 'forced them, not to a rapid retreat, but rather to a humiliating escape.'⁴ (Fontana, 1718: p. 274) Such a demeaning phrase to describe the reaction of the Turks stands in stark contrast to the 'heroic and warlike' attitude of the Muslims, as referred to by Naima (1832: p. 418), in their march towards the chief city walls after overcoming the first encounter with the Knights. Herein lays yet another disparity between the two versions of the event. Naima's account states that the acts of vandalism, such as the burning of aniseed and cumin harvests, the felling of olive and citrus trees, and the abduction of cattle and sheep, were all directed towards the Knights, rather than the locals. Such actions were, in fact, considered to have been carried out after engaging in combat, while on their way to the main city or fortress of the island. This could be a reference to either Valletta or Vittoriosa, however, the author is ambiguous in this regard. Even so, the chronicles of the Order suggest a slightly different sequence of events, in which the Turks set fire to the parish church of Santa Caterina and property of the locals, pillaged the poor, and butchered livestock, prior to encountering the Knights (AOM 6385:

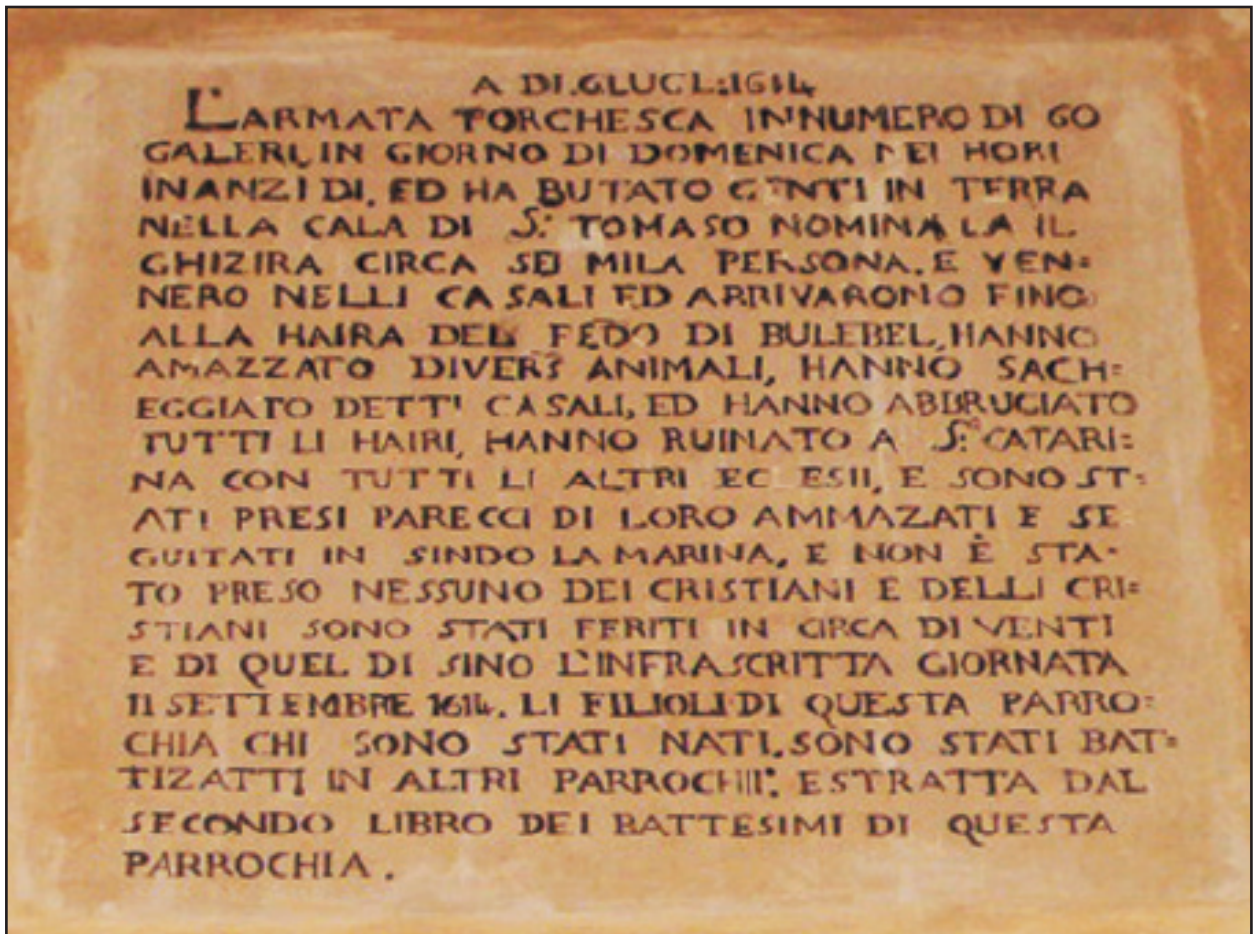


Figure 5: Plaque commemorating the Ottoman raid of the 6th of July 1614 located within the Old Parish Church, Żejtun. Photograph: Ruben Abela, 2010.

f. 308v.; dal Pozzo, 1703: p.589). Once again, determining the proper sequence of events, whether according to the Turkish or Hospitaller perspective, is largely a speculative and hypothetical endeavour. However, it seems that the latter version of the historic episode was chosen to be immortalised in stone, perhaps, as a keen reminder of the dangers and struggles of living outside the city walls (Fig. 5)⁵.

A RAID WITH A CAUSE: INTENTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Be it an escape or a retreat, either of the actions reveals the overriding priority of salvaging as many Turkish troops as possible. This would certainly have been a logical measure, considering that the

destination of the Ottoman army was, ultimately, Tripoli, in an attempt to restore public order in the rebellious area under the government of Dey Suleiman Safar (De Groot, 1993: p. 220). Despite, this, the *Kapudan* Khalil Pasha did not seem satisfied with the extent of damage his troops were able to wreak in the south-eastern region of Malta, as following the retreat to their ships by the evening of the 6th July, they set sail on a northern route, that is, in the opposite direction they were meant to proceed. The intention was to catch the Knights off-guard for the second time, and make a sudden landing in another accessible and unprotected site along the coast. However, what fort St. Lucian was to Marsaxlokk, so was Grand Master Wignacourt's tower to St. Paul's Bay, and indeed, the Turkish fleet had to

continue further north towards Mellieħa, were the troops could safely disembark. The manner in which events unfolded is strikingly similar to the raid in the south, including the fleeing civilians and the targeted sacred space, or monastery in the neighbourhood (Naima, 1832: p. 418). However, in the short space of time between the two attempts, the Order of St. John had sufficiently prepared itself in order to prevent another physical encounter with the enemy. Indeed, in a letter addressed to the captain in command of the tower of St. Paul (AOM 1393, 1614: f. 278v.), the Grand Master gave orders on the frequency of the signal shots, in case the Turkish fleet was to enter into the bay or pass treacherously close to land. Furthermore, the Grand Master and Council assigned around three hundred Knights, some of which were mounted, and seventy-five foot soldiers to Naxxar and Gozo, respectively (dal Pozzo, 1703: p. 591). Such precautionary procedures indicate that, once again, the Order managed to foresee the offensive strategies of the Turks.

Yet, the brief episode at Mellieħa seems to have raised much suspicion among the members of the Council of the Order, regarding the intentions of the Ottoman Turks. Indeed, it is claimed that a number of captured Turks were interrogated on the hasty departure of the invading army, in a likely bid to discover any future enemy schemes. The reason given, according to this source, for the Ottoman retreat, was no other than the intimidation and '*aspetto molto terribile*' of the defending Christians (NLM Libr. 1146: I, f. 526). However, such a reason seems trivial and in direct contrast to the energetic evocations of '*Allah! Allah!*', cried by the Muslims on reaching the shore (Naima, 1832: p. 418). Furthermore, in a letter dated to the 11th of July 1614, the Grand Master points out that on the night of the 8th of July, the Turkish fleet departed after having found a much greater resistance than

expected (AOM 1393: f. 285r.). Thus, the impracticalities, as referred to by Naima, of carrying out another extensive raid in the north of Malta, seems to be a more logical cause for the sudden withdrawal of the Turkish troops, especially in consideration of the, perhaps, more pressing concerns in Porte, Tripoli.

The reluctance of the Turks to bear the brunt of territorial transgression, in reality, belongs to the collective interest of an age whose military engagements were directed towards Europe and away from the Mediterranean, as attested to by the Thirty Years War which broke out only four years after the raid, in 1618 (Braudel, 2000: II, p. 479). The Ottoman Empire, too, had a long-standing concern with European boundaries (Fig. 6). However, the precarious conditions under the reign of Ahmet I (1603-1617), from internal strife, to the desolation of the provinces of Anatolia and of the plague, and to a depleting treasury, would have hardly encouraged the Empire to engage in military warfare that could further exhaust its resources (Upham, 1829: II, p. 93-94). Indeed, it is believed that the eighty-vessel fleet anchored at Navarino on the 3rd of June 1614, after having sailed from Negropont, was intended to oppose the rising threat of a combined fleet of approximately twenty-five to twenty-seven ships of Neapolitan, Sicilian and Maltese dominion. However, the encounter did not occur, and was instead replaced by the opportunistic landing in Malta, as the Turkish fleet headed in the direction of North Africa. Interestingly, the departure of Khalil Pasha's fleet from Tripoli on the 18th of July 1614, followed the same route to Navarino through Malta, however, without any attempt to set foot on the island for the third time (Atauz, 2004: p. 422).

It would seem, therefore, that the raid of 1614 was not quite the pre-meditated, vengeful attempt the chroniclers of the

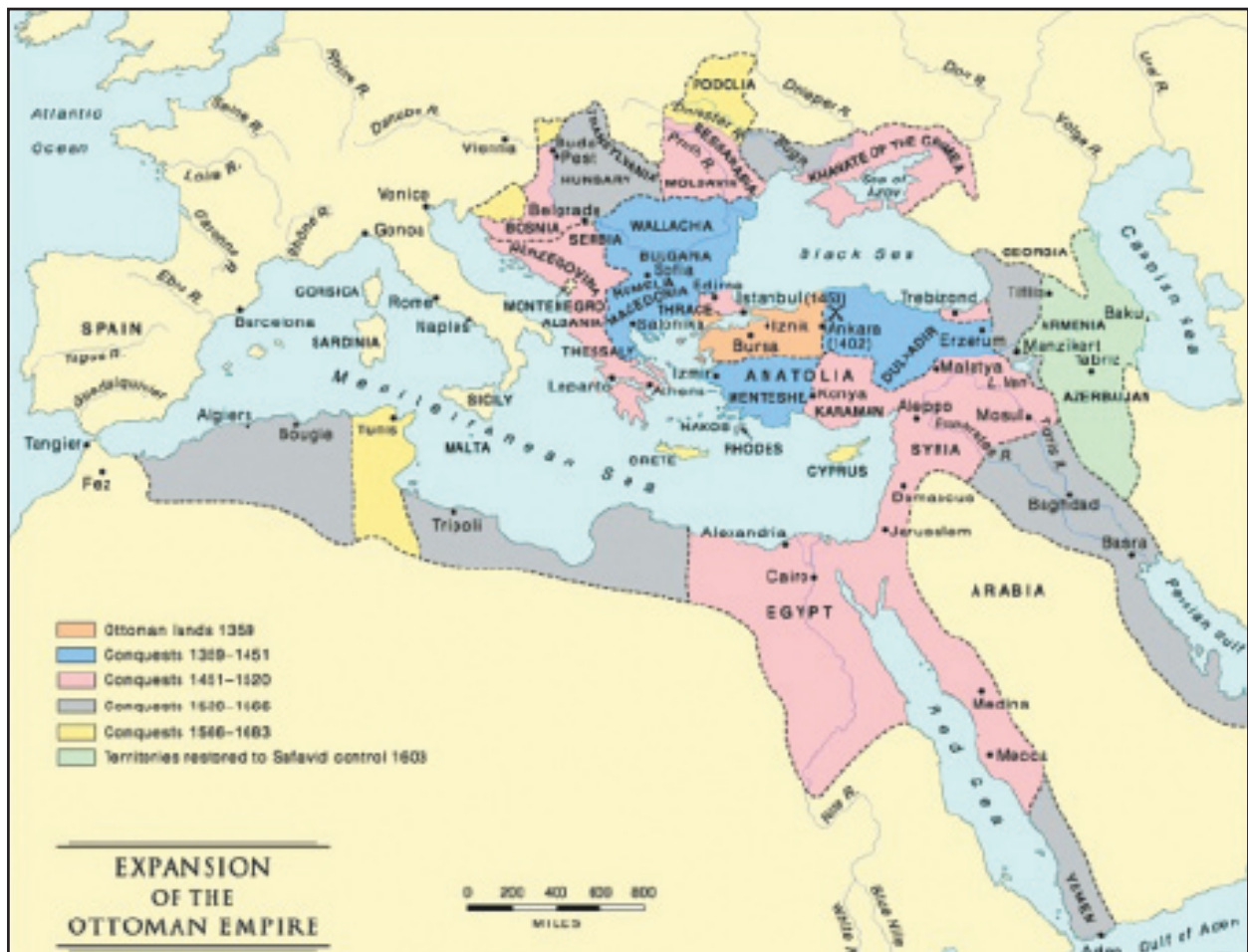


Figure 6: A map of the Mediterranean showing the expansion of the Ottoman Empire between 1359 and 1683. © Houghton Mifflin Company (2001), p. 123

Order pictured it to be. This, however, does not mean that the Ottoman Sultans no longer considered deploying forces against Malta. In fact, Sultan Murad IV (1623-1640), towards the latter years of his the reign, was determined to undertake a much larger expedition against Malta, on account of the troublesome activity of the Order of St. John within the Mediterranean. The increasingly pressing complaints of the impediments and detrimental interceptions of the Christian Knights on Ottoman fleets, trade-routes and ports, resulted in the decision to put together a fleet so large that, according to the seventeenth-century Ottoman traveller, Evliya Çelebi (1611-1682), it amounted to a staggering one thousand two-hundred ships of war, and was moored

at Constantinople, all set to sail into the heart of the Mediterranean (Efendi, 1832: I, pp. 144-145). The death of the Sultan, however, was perhaps, Malta's saving grace, as the plans of the expedition took an unexpected turn yielding no consequence on the islands. Only a few years later, in 1645, the aggravated reaction of the succeeding Sultan, Ibrahim, to the successful pillaging, albeit accidental, activities of the Maltese ships on Turkish merchant vessels crossing the Mediterranean, sparked yet another threat of an imminent assault on Malta. Indeed a Turkish fleet, rumoured to have consisted of over fifty thousand men, was designed to land its troops in Malta - an attempt which surely would have seen the end of the Knights' occupation of the islands (Eversley, 1917: p. 164).



Figure 7: Satellite image of the Maltese islands showing the location of the Wignacourt Towers along the coast of Malta (1609-1620).

For the second time in less than a decade, Maltese history came precariously close to following a course wholly different from the one it is now so well known for. The decision to divert the Ottoman fleet to Crete, instead of Malta, however, was largely a matter of military consideration, rather than a stroke of good fortune. Advisors of the Sultan acknowledged the impregnable quality of the Maltese landing sites, and it was this argument that ultimately convinced the Sultan to reconsider the attack (Upham, 1829: II, pp. 130-131). Indeed, by then, Malta's coastal and inland defences had increased considerably since the raid of 1614 and, more so, since the Great Siege of 1565 which still resonated bitter memories within the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish

raid of 1614, if anything, served to bring to attention the vulnerability of the Maltese coastline, and furthermore, highlighted the areas that were to be addressed immediately. It is no mere coincidence, therefore, that just a month later, on the 1st of August 1614, Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt proposed a model for a tower overlooking St. Thomas Bay and Marsascala, the construction of which was to commence a week later (AOM 105: f. 72r.). The continuous concern of Grand Master Wignacourt to secure the coast, lasted till the final years of his rule with the celebration of the placement of the foundation stone of the *Santa Marie delle Grazie* tower, in Haż-Żabbar, on the 22nd of April 1620 (AOM 106: f. 207r.) (Fig. 7). The Wignacourt towers,

followed by those of Grand Master Juan de Lascaris-Castellar (1637-1657) are, quite frankly, the most accurate testament of the Ottoman threat to Malta's coastal security throughout the first half of the seventeenth century. Constructed out of necessity, concern, and perhaps a degree of pride, the coastal towers are ultimately a visible manifestation of a desire to keep the enemy at bay, and prevent history from repeating itself. In this regard, the Order of St. John may be deemed to have been successful, although, not without first having to pay the price.

CONCLUSION

The immediate outcome of the Ottoman raid in Malta of 1614 is, perhaps, no real mystery. Yet, the several moments which form part of it will remain largely obscured by a veil of inaccuracies, uncertainties and the perpetual contradictions of retrospective accounts. To reconcile the bias of historical descriptions with the factual truth is no simple undertaking and often requires sources that are simply not available or accessible. The case-study of the Ottoman raid of 1614, however, provides that unique opportunity to test

the consistency of the historical narratives of the Order of St. John against those compiled by Turkish chroniclers. The result, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, is one which displays relative similarity with regards to the statistics and manner in which the events unfolded. However, the clear cultural bias inherent in the Catholic Knights' chronicles on one part, and the Muslim Turks' accounts on the other, is difficult to deny. It is evident that both perspectives would rather see their side emerge as victorious, while presenting the other as slightly less oppressive than actually is in reality. An effective, and convincing, way to do this is not by altering the truth, but by omitting facts or presenting personal interpretations based on referenced, but often untraceable, sources. Essentially, it is these two characteristics which reveal the points of departure between the numerous accounts of the 1614 episode, and which at times, cause problems in presenting a coherent description of the event. Ironically, however, it is also, the duality of the diverging and converging perspectives that allow for a more comprehensive analysis of the situation – a situation which, as has been shown, is not as straightforward when seen from opposite ends of the line.

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Endnotes

1 This seems to be the most accurate account of the number and proportion of the Ottoman vessels that landed their troops at St. Thomas Bay. Bartolomeo dal Pozzo (1703, p.588) first rounds up the number to sixty, but points out that the number is occasionally specified as is here noted. Aldighiero Fonatana (1718: p.272) specifies the enemy navy to have consisted of fifty galleys and four mahonas.

2 Credit to Mr. Liam Gauci, curator of the National Maritime Museum, Vittoriosa, for kindly providing information regarding this manuscript.

3 Credit to Anthony Mifsud, from the Siggiewi Parish Archives for bringing this important document to my attention.

4 *'gli forzarono ad una non già ritirata sollecita, ma vergognosa fuga.'*

5 The inscription reads:

A DI 6 LUGL. 1614 L'ARMATA TORCHESCA IN NUMERO DI 60 GALERI IN GIORNO DI DOMENICA NEI HORI INANZI DI, ED HA BUTATO GENTI IN TERRA NELLA CALA DI S.TOMASO NOMINA LA IL GHIZIRA CIRCA SEI MILA PERSONA, E VEN-NERO NELLI CASALI ED ARRIVARONO FINO ALLA HAIRA DEL FEDO DI BULEBEL HANNO AMAZZATO DIVERS' ANIMALI, HANNO SACH-EGGIATO DETTI CASALI, ED HANNO ABBRUCIATO TUTTI LI HAIRI, HANNO RUINATO A S.CATARI-NA CON TUTTI LI ALTRI ECLESII, E SONO ST-ATI PRESI PARECCI DI LORO AMMAZATI E SE-GUITATI IN SINDO LA MARINA, E NON È STA-TO PRESO NESSUNO DEI CRISTIANI E DELLI CRI-STIANI SONO STATI FERITI IN CIRCA DI VENTIE DI QUEL DI SINO L'INFRASCITTA GIORNATA IL SETTEMBRE 1614, LI FILIOLI DI QUESTA PARRO-CHIA CHI SONO STATI NATI, SONO STATI BAT-TIZATTI IN ALTRI PARROCHII: ESTRATTA DAL SECONDO LIBRO DEI BATTESIMI DI QUESTA PARROCHIA.