



Summary :

Ayvalik was destroyed after the battle between the Greeks and the Ottomans in 1821 and was abandoned by its inhabitants, who initially moved to Psara Island and were later taken to other areas of Greece.

Date

May 17, 1821 – June 3, 1821

Geographical Location

Western coast of Asia Minor, Aeolis, Ayvalik

1. The Reasons

The relevant Greek bibliography attributes the destruction of [Ayvalik](#) in 1821, to a great extent, to the Ottoman envy of the prosperity of a subordinated city with a solely Christian population. This must have been the attitude of local rulers and the Muslim population of nearby settlements as well as the Ottoman administrative mechanisms, in general. According to the same circles, the Ottomans grasped the opportunity they had and intervened militarily, thus destroying the city.¹ Because the motives behind the events is a historically vague and emotionally loaded issue, the only safe way is to follow the events as they are presented in Greek bibliography, which is the only one that has dealt with the specific subject.

2. Military Operations

From the early days of May 1821, some months after the break of the Greek War of Independence, a small division of the Greek fleet sailing along the coasts of Ionia appeared in the harbour of Ayvalik and started to block the Ottoman ships. In addition, two Ottoman ships carrying troops from Bergama ([Pergamos](#)) were arrested while sailing to the south of the harbour of Ayvalik, an incident that annoyed the Ottoman authorities. The [paşas](#) of Bursa ([Prousa](#)) and [Aydin](#) were given strict orders to take measures for the defence and security of the coasts.

The [paşa](#) of Bursa, who controlled also the region of Ayvalik, turned against the city of Ayvalik. The first measure he took was to send a large force with the aim of repelling the attacks from the sea and deal with a possible rebellion of the inhabitants. The vanguard of that force, consisting of 700 riders, arrived towards the middle of May. Their commander was prevented from camping in the city by the notables (*prokritoi*) and he finally camped in the plain of [Agiasmati](#). Minor incidents and some conflicts occurred. The commander asked for reinforcements from Bursa, while, in the meantime, a large division of the Ottoman fleet turned up in the harbour. The notables were perturbed and visited the Ottoman commander of the fleet trying to appease him with gifts. There were similar moves towards the leaders of the military corps around the city. At the same time the eminent notable of Ayvalik, Athanasios Chatzi Georgiou, accompanied by other distinguished members of the community of Ayvalik, went to Bergama, where he was reassured by the Ottoman authorities about the safety of the city.

On May 17 1821, the Greek fireship captain Papanikolis from [Psara](#) set fire in Eresos of [Lesvos](#) to a small vessel of the Ottoman vanguard. The rest of the Ottoman fleet fled to the Hellespont. That is considered to be the opportunity that the Ottomans were awaiting in order to turn against Ayvalik. At the same time, the reinforcements the Ottoman commander had requested arrived. His forces had camped on the outskirts of the city and took up positions in the nearby hills and the coast. The Ottoman forces accused the community leaders and several inhabitants of collaborating with the rebels and so entered the city.²

On June 2, 1821, a force of 3,000 men entered Ayvalik and occupied key positions towards the coast. A large part of the population had hurriedly left the city some days before in fear of the forthcoming events. The Ottoman military commander demanded money as a contribution to his army, which the potentates refused to give saying that they could not afford it. On the same day a Greek division of 70 ships arrived in order to convey to Psara Island and other safe destinations those that had escaped to the [Moschonisia](#).



Inhabitants of the Moschonisia were also taken with them. Some inhabitants that had remained in Ayvalik also tried to get on the ships and, as a result, the city was thrown into disorder, while the consuls of England, France and Russia left the city.

The battle began on June 3, 1821, when the Greek fleet arrived carrying landing forces. The Ottomans tried unsuccessfully to ward off the Greek forces. Approximately 1,000 men finally landed on the coast, helped by some inhabitants of Ayvalik who joined them, and pushed the Ottoman army back from the coast causing serious casualties. The Ottomans grouped again at the centre of the city and a new clash followed. However, they were defeated again and retreated, setting fire to the city and inflicting considerable damage.

3. Consequences

The Ottomans must have lost over 1,500, while the Greek side approximately 150 soldiers and a few hundred civilians.³ However, the bulk of the population, including those people who had escaped to the Moschonisia before the events, was rescued by the Greek ships. The number of [refugees](#) from Ayvalik, the Moschonisia and nearby villages, those who were initially taken to Psara Island, is estimated at 40,000.⁴ The city of Ayvalik suffered extensive damage and was abandoned by its inhabitants,. Several people from Ayvalik and the Moschonisia, after arriving in mainland Greece, participated in the Greek War of Independence.

1. Σακκάρης, Γ., *Ιστορία των Κυδωνιών* (Athens 1920), pp. 111-114. Καραμπλιάς, Ι., *Ιστορία των Κυδωνιών: Από της ιδρύσεώς των μέχρι της αποκαταστάσεως των προσφύγων εις το ελεύθερον ελληνικόν κράτος, Α΄* (Athens 1949), p. 228, attributes the attitude of the authorities mainly to actions of local rulers: "But it was too late; the atmosphere had been poisoned and the calumnies from the neighbouring Turks had already taken their toll".

2. Κερεσετετζή, Α., *Αϊβαλί (1832-1922): Αναμνήσεις από το ανέκδοτο τετράδιο του ιατρού Ιωάννου Κερεσετετζή* (Athens 1981), p. 11. It should be noted that, according to information provided by major-general Efstratios Pissas, student at the Academy of Cydoniae and member of the "Filiki Etaireia", there were about 400 members of the Filiki Etaireia in Ayvalik, including the important notable of the city, Chatzi Athanasios Chatzi Georgiou. Σακκάρης, Γ., *Ιστορία των Κυδωνιών* (Athens 1920), p. 109.

3. Σακκάρης, Γ., *Ιστορία των Κυδωνιών* (Athens 1920), p. 119.

4. Σακκάρης, Γ., *Ιστορία των Κυδωνιών* (Athens 1920), p. 121.

Bibliography :

	Καραμπλιάς Ι. , <i>Ιστορία των Κυδωνιών. Από της ιδρύσεώς των μέχρι της αποκαταστάσεως των προσφύγων εις το ελεύθερον ελληνικόν κράτος, τόμ. 1</i> , Αθήναι 1949-1950
	Σακκάρης Γ. , <i>Ιστορία των Κυδωνιών</i> , Αθήναι 1920

Glossary :

	pasha (paşa)
A title of high rank in the Ottoman political, administrative and military system, typically granted to governors of provinces and high army officials.	

Sources

Κερεσετετζή, Α., *Αϊβαλί (1832-1922): Αναμνήσεις από το ανέκδοτο τετράδιο του ιατρού Ιωάννου Κερεσετετζή* (Athens 1981).



Quotations

The reasons for the destruction of Ayvalik, according to G. Sakkaris

«Η καχύποπτος βάρβαρος κυβέρνησις εἶχεν ἤδη ἀρκούντως δηλητηριασθῆ ὑπὸ τῶν κακοβούλων παρ' αὐτῆ εἰσηγήσεων τῶν ἐχθρῶν τῆς πόλεως, τῶν περιοίκων μάλιστα τούρκων τοπαρχῶν, οἵτινες ἀδιαλείπτως τὰς ἔριδας ἐκεῖνας (αναφέρεται σε ενδοκοινοτικές διαμάχες) παρίστανον πρὸς τὴν Πύλην ὡς κινήματα ἐπαναστατικὰ κατὰ τοῦ κράτους. Ἡ τοιαύτη ἐντύπωσις διετηρεῖτο πάντοτε ζωηρὰ παρὰ τοῖς κρατοῦσι καὶ παρὰ τὴν ἐπικρατήσασαν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐσχάτως τότε γαλήνην τῶν πνευμάτων, ἐξεδηλώθη ζωηρωτάτη ἅμα τῇ ἐκρήξει τῆς ἐπαναστάσεως. Εὐθὺς τότε κατέστη παρὰ τοῖς ὀθωμανοῖς ἄρχουσιν ὕποπτον πᾶν τὸ ἐλληνικὸν καὶ δὴ τὸ ἀκραιφνῶς ἐλληνικόν, ὅτε μάλιστα περὶ αὐτοῦ ὑπῆρχον προηγούμεναί τινες πρὸς ὑπονοίας ἀφορμαί. Καὶ αἱ Κυδωνίαι ἦσαν πόλις ἀκραιφνῶς ἐλληνικὴ καὶ κατ' αὐτῆς ἤδη ὑπῆρχον ἀφορμαὶ ἀνησυχίας καὶ ὑπονοιῶν τοσαῦται. Παρὰ πάσας δὲ τὰς ἀτόπους καὶ ἀστηρικούς δικαιολογίας, ἃς ἐνιαχοῦ εὐρίσκομεν, ὅτι δῆθεν ἐκ παρεξηγήσεων τῶν προθέσεων τῆς Πύλης ὑπὸ τῶν ὀργάνων αὐτῆς ἢ ἔνεκα ἀκαίρου φόβου τῶν πολιτῶν ἐπῆλθεν ἀκουσίως καὶ μοιραίως ὁ ὄλεθρος τῆς πόλεως, δὲν δύναται ὁ γινώσκων τὸ πνεῦμα τῶν τυραννικῶν κυβερνήσεων, καὶ δὴ τῆς τουρκικῆς νὰ μὴν εἶναι ἀκραδάντως περὶ τούτου πεπεισμένος, ὅτι αἱ Κυδωνίαι ἦσαν ἀνεκκλήτως καταδεδικασμένοι εἰς ἀπώλειαν ἐν ταῖς ἀποφάσεσι τῆς δυναστευούσης ἀρχῆς».

Σακκάρης, Γ., *Ιστορία των Κυδωνίων* (Athens 1920), pp. 111-112.