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Venetian-Ottoman Wars

EDITED BY STATHIS BIRTACHAS



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On the cover: lantern of an Ottoman galley captured at Lepanto.
Venice, Armory rooms of the Council of Ten at the Doge's Palace.
Topwar.ru website of Vjačeslav Špakovsky.



Venice and the Ottoman Empire as warriors. Source: [Roger PALMER, Earl of Castlemaine], *Das von den Türcken außs äusserst bedrangte, aber: Durch die christliche Waffen der heroischen Republic Venedig außs tapfferst beschützte Candia* [...], Frankfurt, Wilhelm Serlin, 1669.



“Oltremarini” (Overseas) Regiments in Venetian service, nicknamed ‘Schiavoni’
(Vinkhujzen Collection, NYPL)

The Multifaceted Role of the Cypriot Élite in the Defense of Cyprus before and during the Venetian–Ottoman War (1570–1571)

by CHRYSOVALANTIS PAPADAMOU*

ABSTRACT: Cyprus constituted a Venetian base of geostrategic importance in the Levant and its most profitable possession in the *Stato da Mar*. For these reasons, during the last years of its dominion over the island, Venice tried – though not with any particular success, as later events would demonstrate – to implement a program of organizing defenses against Ottoman expansionist aspirations; this involved the construction of new fortifications and the strengthening of already existing fortresses, the consolidation of local military forces and their reinforcement with specialized officials and additional units. The present study investigates the prominent economic and political role of the local élite (feudal lords, noblemen, and wealthy bourgeois of Nicosia), firstly, in the aforementioned pre-war activities and, secondly, during the War of Cyprus (1570–1571). Given the fact that its members maintained their luxury mansions and resided in the Cypriot capital, their interest focused on the latter and drastically affected the decisions of the Venetian administration as well as the outcome of the military operations during the Siege of Nicosia by the Ottoman troops.

KEYWORDS: REPUBLIC OF VENICE, *STATO DA MAR*, OTTOMAN EMPIRE, WAR OF CYPRUS (1570–1571), CYPRIOT ÉLITE, NICOSIA.

Waiting for the Ottoman attack against Cyprus

Throughout the sixteenth century, Ottoman expansionist aspirations in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean continued to grow, following the conquest of various regions of North Africa: Egypt (1516–1517), Algeria (1519), Cyrenaica (1521), and Tripolitania (1551). As for Cyprus, the

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last outpost of Christendom at the southeastern tip of the Mediterranean, for a long time it succeeded in evading the imperialistic ambitions of the Ottomans. Nevertheless, throughout the period of Venetian domination on the island there was an underlying fear of an imminent Ottoman attack, while small-scale pirate raids were not uncommon.¹

Upon the accession of the new Ottoman sultan, Selim II (1566–1574), to the throne, Venice attempted to preserve its sovereign rights on Cyprus by renewing the peace treaty it had concluded with the former's father, Suleiman the Magnificent. However, seeking a great conquest that would be the crowning achievement of his reign, as after all tradition dictated, Selim II wished to implement the aggressive policy of his predecessors by including Cyprus in his schemes of conquest. According to his counselors, the island was considered a "key" to controlling the Eastern Mediterranean, at the same time serving as an intermediate stopover for Ottomans on the pilgrimage to their holy city, Mecca.²

Due to the expansionist ambitions of Selim II, therefore, the air throughout Europe was heavy with fear of a large-scale Ottoman offensive. This feeling became even more pervasive with the conclusion of the Hungarian War and the Treaty of Adrianople, signed on February 17, 1568, between the German Emperor Maximilian II and the Sultan. The Ottoman forces were able to disengage from that particular front and could now be used in a new area of operations.³ As a consequence, the Ottoman threat brewing beneath the surface across Europe as well as a steady flow of sketchy information leaking from Constantinople to the

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- 1 Andreas ORPHANIDES, «Πειρατικές επιδρομές στην Κύπρο στα χρόνια της Βενετοκρατίας», *Κυπριακός Λόγος*, 55-56 (1978), pp. 12-26; Kostas G. ΤΣΙΚΝΑΚΗΣ, «Η Κύπρος στη δίληξη του ανταγωνισμού των ευρωπαϊκών δυνάμεων (15ος–16ος αι.)», in Nikos MOSCHONAS (Ed.), *Κύπρος. Σταυροδρόμι της Μεσογείου*, Athens, National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2001, p. 88; Andreas ORPHANIDES and Nicholas COUREAS, «Piracy in Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean during the Late Lusignan and Venetian Periods (15th–16th Centuries)», *Επετηρίδα Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών*, 33 (2007), pp. 121-162, with extensive bibliography.
 - 2 ΤΣΙΚΝΑΚΗΣ, «Η Κύπρος», cit., pp. 87-91; Stathis BIRTACHAS, *Society, Culture and Government in the Venetian Maritime State: The Case of Cyprus* [Κοινωνία, πολιτισμός και διακυβέρνηση στο βενετικό Κράτος της Θάλασσας: Το παράδειγμα της Κύπρου], Thessaloniki, Vanias Publishers, 2011, p. 147.
 - 3 George HILL, *History of Cyprus*, Vol. 3, Cambridge, At the University Press, 1972, p. 880; Robert MANTRAN, «L'Impero Ottomano, Venezia e la Guerra (1570–1670)», in Maddalena REDOLFI (Ed.), *Venezia e la difesa del Levante: da Lepanto a Candia 1570–1670*, Venice, Arsenale Editrice, 1986, pp. 227-229.

European capitals, speaking of a renewed Ottoman offensive, increased the odds of an attack on specific targets. As early as 1567, news regarding the hectic flurry of Ottoman military preparations began to flood the Republic. On October 20, 1567, intelligence mentioned Malta or Cyprus as possible targets. Messages from the following year (October 30, November 18 and 28, December 14, 1568) were similar in content, while on June 11 and 25, 1569, the Venetian *bailo* in Constantinople informed the *Serenissima* that the objective of the Ottomans was Spanish-held Puglia. For their part, on July 23 of the same year, in an effort to eliminate the chances of an attack against their Mediterranean territories, the Venetians asked Selim II to abide by the Venetian–Ottoman treaty of peace and friendship they had signed in the past.⁴

Finally, at the beginning of 1570 Selim decided to invade Cyprus and in April of that year the Ottoman armada set sail from Constantinople for the island, led by Piali Pasha and Lala Mustafa Pasha. The Ottoman fleet, numbering approximately 350 ships, approached the shores of Cyprus on July 1, 1570, and the landing at the Saline of Larnaca took place a few days later.⁵

Strengthening the island's defenses in the face of war

The Ottoman threat pushed Venice into adopting a more systematic approach towards improving the defense capabilities of its possession during the last decade of Venetian dominion in Cyprus; and this despite the difficult conditions it faced at that period, such as the partial destruction of its fleet from a fire that broke out in the Venetian arsenal (September 13, 1569), the famine that plagued the Venetian hinterland (*terraferma*), the inability of the Venetian navy to prevent the depredations of the Uskok pirates in the Adriatic, the decrease in state revenues

4 Ioannis HASSIOTIS, *Οι Έλληνες στις παραμονές της ναυμαχίας της Ναυπάκτου. Εκκλήσεις, επαναστατικές κινήσεις και εξεγέρσεις στην ελληνική χερσόνησο από τις παραμονές ως το τέλος του Κυπριακού πολέμου (1568–1571)*, Thessaloniki, Society for Macedonian Studies, 1970, pp. 19–21; HILL, *History*, cit., pp. 878–879.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 892–896; Aikaterini ARISTEIDOU, «Ο κυπριακός πόλεμος (1571–1573) και η κατάληψη της Λευκωσίας και της Αμμοχώστου από τους Τούρκους σύμφωνα με ανέκδοτες πηγές του ιστορικού αρχείου της Ραγούζας», *Επετηρίδα Μουσείου Αγώνα*, 1 (1979), pp. 12–48; EADEM, «Μεχμέτ πασά Σοκόλοβιτς και Κυπριακός Πόλεμος», *Κυπριακά Σπουδαί*, 51 (1987), pp. 72–74; Gilles GRIVAUD, «Η κατάκτηση της Κύπρου από τους Οθωμανούς», in Theodoros PAPADOPOULLOS (Ed.), *Ιστορία της Κύπρου*, Vol. 6, *Τουρκοκρατία*, Nicosia, Archbishop Makarios III Foundation / Office for Cyprus History, 2011, pp. 58–59.

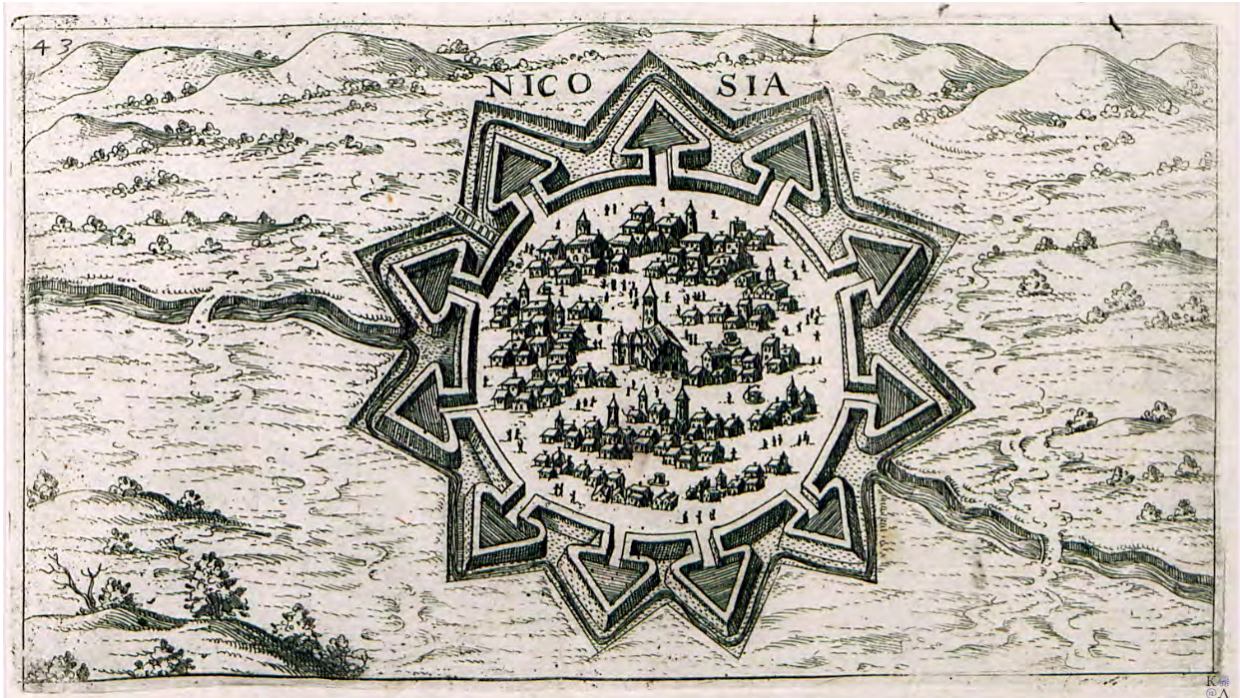
as a result of the commercial competition between Venice and other European powers (France, England, Portugal, Spain, Habsburg Empire) and Joseph Nasi in the Mediterranean.⁶

In this context, Venice dispatched experienced military men and engineers to the island, with orders to evaluate the situation and recommend solutions aimed at optimizing its defenses. For instance, in 1562 Ascanio Savorgnan submitted a report to the Venetian Senate with regard to his overall impressions during his sojourn in Cyprus. In his report he mentioned, among other things, that Nicosia was not in any imminent danger, it being a considerable distance from the sea, and that the fortifications of this city should not be further reinforced. Instead, he proposed the construction of new fortifications either in the Saline of Larnaca or in Limassol.⁷

Nevertheless, when fears of the imminent Ottoman assault on Cyprus began to grow, Venice once again dispatched Giulio Savorgnan, brother of the aforementioned Ascanio, as well as Sforza Pallavicino, on the island (1567). The former would be responsible for the fortifications that would have to be either repaired or rebuilt according to the precepts of modern military engineering, mainly taking into consideration the need to effectively counter the ever-increasing use of gunpowder artillery; the latter, as a military expert, would recommend to the Venetian Senate ways of better organizing the defenders. With the help of both the Republic of San Marco and the Cypriots, particularly the nobles, the two experts spent significant amounts of money on configuring and reinforcing the island's major fortified cities, i.e. Nicosia, Famagusta and Kyrenia. For example, in the spring of 1567 Venice disbursed 50,000 ducats for the island's fortifications and

6 Maria Pia PEDANI, «Tra economia e geo-politica: la visione ottomana della guerra di Cipro», *Annuario dell'Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica*, 5 (2003), pp. 287-298; GRIVAUD, «Η κατάκτηση της Κύπρου», cit., pp. 149-150.

7 Gianni PERBELLINI, «Le fortificazioni del Regno di Cipro nello Stato veneto (X–XVI sec.)», *Κυπριακά Σπουδαί*, 50 (1987), pp. 215-220; IDEM, *The Fortress of Nicosia, Prototype of European Renaissance Military Architecture*, Nicosia, Leventis Foundation, 1994, pp. 9-10; Antonio MANNO, «Politica e architettura militare: le difese di Venezia (1557–1573)», *Studi Veneziani*, n.s. 11 (1986), pp. 91-137; Gilles GRIVAUD, *Venice and the Defence of the Regno di Cipro. Giulio Savorgnan's Unpublished Cyprus Correspondence*, translated by G. Cunningham, Nicosia, Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 2016, pp. 163-222; Stathis BIRTACHAS, *Venetian Cyprus (1489–1571). Reports by the Dominion's Supreme Administrative Officials*, Thessaloniki, Epikentro Publishers, 2020, pp. 343-344.



1 Thanks to the plans of Giulio Savorgnan, Nicosia acquired a star-shaped enceinte with 11 bastions. Source: Giuseppe ROSACCIO, *Viaggio da Venetia, a Costantinopoli: per mare, e per terra & insieme quello di Terra Santa [...] opera utile à mercanti, marinari & à studiosi di geografia*, Venice, Giacomo Franco, 1598.

an additional 50,000 for the dispatch of soldiers and materiel for the fortresses.⁸

Thanks to the plans of Giulio Savorgnan, Nicosia acquired a star-shaped en-

⁸ John HALE, «From Peacetime Establishment to Fighting Machine: The Venetian Army and the War of Cyprus and Lepanto», in Gino BENZONI (Ed.), *Il Mediterraneo nella seconda metà del '500 alla Luce di Lepanto*, Florence, Leo S. Olschki, 1974, pp. 175-179; Gilles GRIVAUD, «Aux Confins de l'Empire Colonial Vénitien: Nicosie et ses Fortifications (1567–1568)», *Επετηρίδα Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών*, 13–16 (1984–1987), pp. 269-273; Iaian FENLON, *The Ceremonial City. History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 157; Gilles GRIVAUD, «Un société en guerre: Chypre face à la conquête ottomane», in Angel NICOLAOU-KONNARI (Ed.), *Η Γαληνοτάτη και η Ευγενεστάτη: Η Βενετία στην Κύπρο και η Κύπρος στη Βενετία / La Serenissima and La Nobilissima: Venice in Cyprus and Cyprus in Venice*, Nicosia, Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 2009, pp. 194-195; Walter PANCIERA, «Giulio Savorgnan e la costruzione della fortezza di Nicosia (1567–1570)», in Evangelia SKOUFARI (Ed.), *La Serenissima a Cipro. Incontri di culture nel Cinquecento*, Rome, Viella, 2013, pp. 135-138.

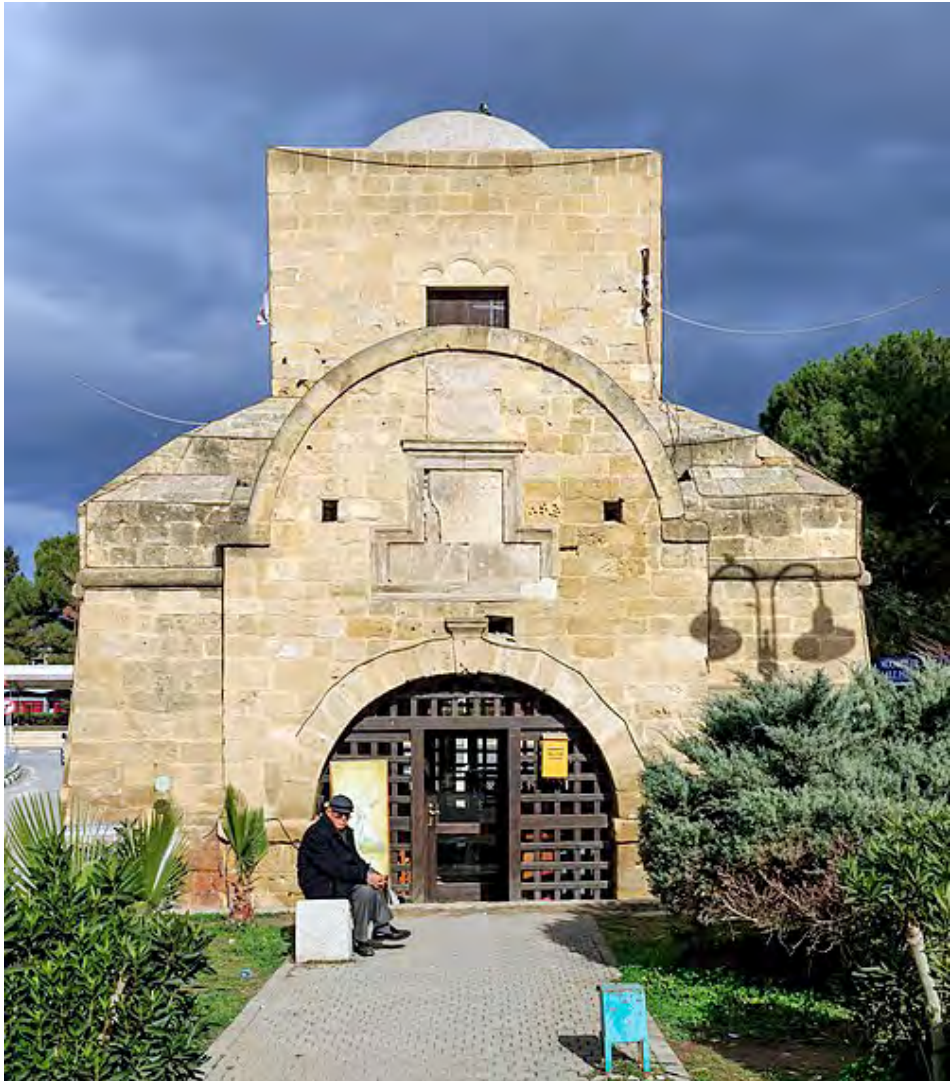


2 Nicosia, the Famagusta Gate. Photo by A. Savin. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

ceinte with 11 bastions (Fig. 1). In order to facilitate the construction of the new fortifications, it was deemed necessary to demolish some of the city's residential districts, while only three of the eight existing gates were preserved: those of Famagusta (Fig. 2), Kyrenia (Fig. 3) and Paphos. Nevertheless, despite efforts to complete the fortification of the island's capital before the outbreak of war, this proved unfeasible.⁹

As regards Famagusta, during the Middle Ages it constituted an important center for transit trade in the Eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, it was the last

9 PERBELLINI, *The Fortress of Nicosia*, cit., pp. 8-10; Benjamin ARBEL, «Η Κύπρος υπό ενετική κυριαρχία», in Theodoros PAPADOPOULLOS (Ed.), *Ιστορία της Κύπρου*, Vol. 4, *Μεσαιωνικόν βασίλειον-Ενετοκρατία*, Nicosia, Archbishop Makarios III Foundation / Office for Cyprus History, 1995, pp. 472-474; Nicola COLDSTREAM and Maria ΙΑΚΟΒΟΥ, «Βενετικές οχυρώσεις», in Dimitra PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZI and Maria ΙΑΚΟΒΟΥ (Eds.), *Βυζαντινή Μεσαιωνική Κύπρος: Βασίλισσα στην Ανατολή και Ρήγαινα στη Δύση*, Nicosia, Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 1997, pp. 175-177; BIRTACHAS, *Society, Culture and Government*, cit., pp. 60-62; PANCIERA, «Giulio Savorgnan», cit., pp. 138-142; Fausto LANFRANCHI, «Giulio Savorgnano a Nicosia. Nascita di una Fortezza 'alla Moderna' (1567-1570)», *Studi Veneziani*, 71 (2015), pp. 277-444; GRIVAUD, *Venice and the Defence*, cit., pp. 259-476.



3 Nicosia, the Kyrenia Gate. Photo by A. Savin. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Christian outpost in the Levant, putting up a vigorous fight against Ottoman expansionist policies during the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Throughout the period of Venetian domination, the administrators paid close attention to the fortifications of the city. More specifically, when Venetian rule was established in Cyprus, it was decreed that 10% of the revenues of the Public Treasury would be permanently allocated to funding work on the fortifications of Famagusta.

At the same time, from 1506 onwards an extra amount of 100 ducats per month was spent for that purpose that would increase over time according to the specific needs. It is estimated that 178,902 ducats were spent on the fortifications in question over the period 1491–1528. It should also be noted that, to carry out these building projects, the administration of the island drew upon the services of the adult population of “free” peasants (*francomati*), who were obligated to offer the state ten days (later reduced to six) of compulsory service (*angaria*) annually. In addition, each year Venice sent professional artisans to Famagusta for that purpose.¹⁰ According to the Venetian military engineer Giovanni Girolamo Sanmichieli, tasked with supervising construction work on the fortifications of Famagusta in 1558, the city was “the key to the Kingdom”, since its economic significance went hand in hand with its central geographical and military location.¹¹

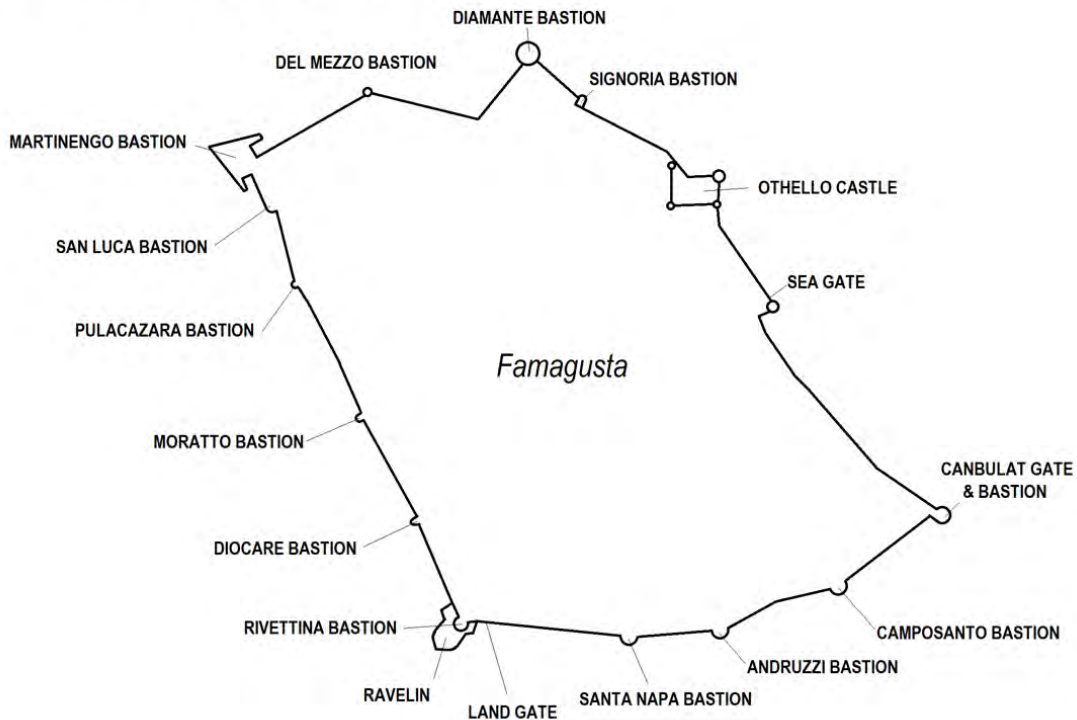
The fortifications of Famagusta owe much to the designs of military engineers, the most important of whom were Ercole Martinengo (1555), Giovanni Girolamo Sanmichieli (1558), Luigi Brungoli (1561), Ascanio and Giulio Savorgnan (1562 and 1567).¹² These works show the transition from the medieval enceinte to the bastioned fortifications of the Early Modern period (Fig. 4). Nevertheless, certain Venetian officials viewed the city walls as strong or even impregnable, while in the case of the Martinengo Bastion, constructed in 1560, one comes across an

10 MANNO, «Politica e architettura militare», cit., pp. 112-117; ARBEL, «Η Κύπρος», cit., pp. 472-473; COLDSTREAM and ΙΑΚΟΒΟΥ, «Βενετικές οχυρώσεις», cit., pp. 177-179; BIRTACHAS, *Society, Culture and Government*, cit., pp. 57-58; GRIVAUD, *Venice and the Defence*, cit., p. 83; Gilles GRIVAUD, «Martiale et marcienne, Famagouste entre 1474 et 1571», in Gilles GRIVAUD, Angel NICOLAOU-KONNARI and Chris SCHABEL (Eds.), *Famagusta. History and Society*, Vol. 2, Turnhout, Brepols, 2020, pp. 376-387.

11 Giovanni Girolamo Sanmichieli was charged with overseeing the fortifications of Corfu as well as Famagusta. He viewed the former as the “key to Italy” and the latter as the “key to the Kingdom of Cyprus”. See MANNO, «Politica e architettura militare», cit., pp. 95-96; Gilles GRIVAUD and Nasa ΠΑΤΑΠΙΟΥ (Eds.), *Pietro Valderio, La guerra di Cipro*, Nicosia, Cyprus Research Centre, 1996, pp. 167-168; Stefano TOSATO, *Patrimonio veneto nel Mediterraneo. Fortezze veneziane dall’Adda all’Egeo: le difese della Repubblica di Venezia nei disegni della Biblioteca comunale di Treviso (secoli XVI-XVIII)*, Venice, Marco Polo System, 2014, pp. 11, 17-19; GRIVAUD, «Martiale et marcienne» cit., p. 373.

12 PERBELLINI, «Le fortificazioni del Regno», cit., pp. 206-214; MANNO, «Politica e architettura militare», cit., pp. 100-104; Nasa ΠΑΤΑΠΙΟΥ, «Οι οχυρώσεις της Αμμοχώστου επί βενετοκρατίας (ΙΣΤ΄ αι.)», *Επετηρίδα Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών*, 25 (1999), pp. 79-130.

FORTIFICATIONS OF FAMAGUSTA



4 Diagram of the fortifications of Famagusta, by Xwejnusgozo. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

architectural design that is exceptionally successful and advanced by the standards of the day. Furthermore, because of its crucial importance to the Kingdom of Cyprus, the city served as the seat of the *capitano* of Famagusta, who was invested with administrative and judicial powers that were largely independent from those of the *Reggimento* of Nicosia. In fact, in peacetime the *capitano* was in charge of all the armed forces on the island, while in times of war or an emergency Venice would dispatch to Cyprus a *provveditore generale*, who would assume command of the troops.¹³

13 ARBEL, «Η Κύπρος», cit., pp. 459-460, 466-471; IDEM, «Κύπρος: Επαρχία της Βενετικής Δημοκρατίας. Συνέχειες και Ασυνέχειες», in Dimitra ΠΑΠΑΝΙΚΟΛΑ-ΒΑΚΙΡΤΖΙ and Maria ΙΑΚΟΒΟΥ (Eds.), *Βυζαντινή Μεσαιωνική Κύπρος: Βασίλισσα στην Ανατολή και Ρήγαινα στη*



5 Kyrenia, eastern view of the fortress and the ancient harbor of the town.

Source: <https://www.romeartlover.it/Cipro4.html#>.

The Venetians also paid some attention to the fortress of Kyrenia (Cerines), the specifications of which, however, were only meant to meet the technological demands of the Middle Ages (Fig. 5). Thus, during the period from 1504 to 1528 a total of 33,868 ducats were expended for works on the fortifications of the fortress in question, according to the report of the *luogotenente* Silvestro Minio (1529). Furthermore, on March 11, 1562, the Venetian Senate voted to introduce a special tax to finance the fortress's reinforcement.¹⁴

As far as the island's lesser strongholds were concerned, the Venetians were content to either preserve or dismantle them. In the Kyrenia Mountains, the castles of Kantara (Fig. 6), Saint Hilarion and Buffavento (Fig. 7), though in use during the early Venetian period, were later abandoned. This was due to the overall defense strategy followed by the Venetians, who preferred concentrating their military forces in the coastal areas rather than splitting them among a large num-

Δύση, Nicosia, Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 1997, pp. 161-168; BIRTACHAS, *Society, Culture and Government*, cit., pp. 31-33.

14 ARBEL, «Η Κύπρος», cit., p. 473-474; BIRTACHAS, *Venetian Cyprus*, cit., p. 97.



6 The castle of Kantara. Source: Alexander DRUMMOND, *Travels through different Cities of Germany, Italy, Greece, and several parts of Asia [...]*, London, W. Strahan for the author, 1754.

ber of smaller forts, especially inland ones. However, in the case of Cyprus not even this strategy was implemented with any sort of consistency, since the fate of the castles along the Kyrenia Mountains was shared by the fortresses of Limassol and Paphos. In the case of the former, after the surprise Ottoman raid of 1539 the Venetians decided to demolish the castle of Limassol, so that it would not be used as an enemy stronghold in a similar future circumstance. As for Paphos, the two small coastal castles were neglected and in 1540 the city's fortress was demolished. In 1558, Giulio Savorgnan proposed building three new fortresses along the coastal regions of the island (outside Paphos, in Saint Nicholas of the Cats and



7 The castles of Saint Hilarion and Buffavento. Source: Alexander DRUMMOND, *Travels through different Cities of Germany, Italy, Greece, and several parts of Asia* [...], London, W. Strahan for the author, 1754.

in the vicinity of Kyrenia), so that a potential Ottoman attack could be repulsed.¹⁵ A few years later, in 1567, Giulio proposed the construction of a fortress in the Saline, which had developed into an important financial center for transit trade with Syria. This plan, however, never materialized, a fact that made it easier for the Ottomans to launch an amphibious assault in that very area in June of 1570. Therefore, Nicosia and Famagusta were the Venetians main centers of resistance; consequently, it was there that the outcome of the War of Cyprus and the political fortunes of the island would be decided.¹⁶

The role of the Cypriot elite in the defense of the island

Let us examine the reasons for the Cypriot elite's peaceful cooperation with the Venetian authorities from the beginning of the Venetian rule throughout the period. After the annexation of the Kingdom of Cyprus to the Venetian Maritime State, the new overlords kept the institutional framework of the existing feudal system unchanged. Years of experience in colonial administration had taught them that a radical shake-up in the institutions could bring about political and social unrest. Thus, throughout the Venetian presence on the island, collaboration between the upper classes and the overlords was taken for granted. A telltale sign of the cooperation between the two parts was the decision of Venice to create, shortly before the fall of the island (1566), a Council consisting of 11 members of the Cypriot elite, that would aid the Venetian *luogotenente* in discharging his duties.¹⁷

During the Venetian period, the aristocracy on Cyprus included families of French, Spanish, Venetian, Syrian and Greek-Cypriot descent. They formed the backbone of the upper-echelon social group of feudal lords, nobles and bour-

15 GRIVAUD, *Venice and the Defence*, cit., p. 87-88.

16 BIRTACHAS, *Society, Culture and Government*, cit., p. 63; Angel NICOLAOU-KONNARI and Chris SCHABEL, «Limassol under Latin Rule», in Angel NICOLAOU-KONNARI and Chris SCHABEL (Eds.), *Lemesos. A History of Limassol in Cyprus from Antiquity to the Ottoman Conquest*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, pp. 351-352.

17 Benjamin ARBEL, «The Cypriot Nobility from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century: A New Interpretation», in Benjamin ARBEL, Bernard HAMILTON and David JACOBY (Eds.), *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, London, Frank Cass, 1989, pp. 177-178; ARBEL, «Η Κύπρος», cit., pp. 489-498; BIRTACHAS, *Venetian Cyprus*, cit., pp. 325-326, 331-332, 488-489 (Report of Giovanni [Zuan] Francesco Stella).

geois. This privileged élite, consisting of approximately 180-200 families, derived substantial income from landed estates and capitalizing on the island's agricultural production.¹⁸ The aforementioned aristocrats owned palaces in the island's capital, which was the seat of the college of governors (*Reggimento*, also known as *Rettori*), and at the same time they maintained country houses on their fiefs. Ten families were particularly prominent among the local élite and played an important role in the affairs of the island, interfering with the decisions of the aristocratic community's council, holding a monopoly on public offices and receiving the bulk of the agricultural production. They were the families of Singlitico, Podocataro, de Nores, Sozomeno, Negron, Costanzo, Davila, Fabrice, Flatro, and Acres (or Dacres). Their financial clout and social prestige were enhanced during the Venetian period thanks to those families' transactions, and the close ties they developed, with their overlords, as well as to the marriage alliances they concluded with Venetian patricians.¹⁹ Moreover, the pursuit of public and ecclesiastical offices on the part of the higher echelons of local society aimed both at supplementing their income and at ensuring the financial security of those younger family members who – due to paternal estates being inherited solely by

18 Wipertus H. RUDT DE COLLEBERG, «Δομή και προέλευση της τάξεως των ευγενών», in Theodoros PAPADOPOULLOS (Ed.), *Ιστορία της Κύπρου*, Vol. 4, *Μεσαιωνικών Βασιλειών-Ενετοκρατία*, Nicosia, Archbishop Makarios III Foundation / Office for Cyprus History, 1995, pp. 831-832; Aikaterini ARISTEIDOU, «Ενοικιάσεις και πωλήσεις φέουδων επί Βενετοκρατίας στην Κύπρο κατά την περίοδο 1509–1517», *Επετηρίδα Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών*, 23 (1997), pp. 115-123. Also see Miriam Rachel SALZMANN, *Negotiating Power and Identities. Latin, Greek and Syrian Élites in Fifteenth-Century Cyprus*, Mainz, Verlag de Römisch – Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2021.

19 Among the noble families of Cyprus that formed marriage alliances with Venetian families were, e.g., the de Nores family with the Querini, Orio, Pesaro, and Corner families; the Podocataro family with the Pesaro, Querini, Michiel, and Zorzi families; the family of Singlitico with the Pesaro and Barbarigo families, etc. See ARBEL, «Η Κύπρος», cit., p. 496; RUDT DE COLLEBERG, «Δομή και προέλευση», cit., p. 829 fn. 40, 834-837; Nasa ΠΑΤΑΡΙΟΥ, «Ο Κύπριος έμπορος Florio Audet. Συμβολή στην προσωπογραφία Κυπρίων επί βενετοκρατίας», *Επετηρίδα Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών*, 31 (2005), pp. 147-148; BIRTACHAS, *Venetian Cyprus*, cit., pp. 417, 420-421; Stathis BIRTACHAS, «Produzione di cereali e crisi alimentare e sociale a Cipro veneziana (1560–70): la testimonianza dei pubblici rappresentanti nelle loro relazioni finali», in Bruno CREVATO-SELVAGGI (Ed.), *Atti del VIII Convegno internazionale Venezia e il suo Stato da mar. Alimentazione, cibo, gastronomia nello Stato da mar / Proceedings of the 8th International Congress Venice and its Stato da Mar. Food and Gastronomy in the Venetian Stato da Mar (Venezia / Venice, 13–15 febbraio / February 2020)*, Rome, Società Dalmata di Storia Patria, 2022, pp. 295-296.

firstborn children – did not possess land.²⁰

Apart from their participation in the administration of the island, some feudal lords and nobles bought baronial titles from the *Serenissima*, after the families of the original holders had died out. This process begins with Giorgio Contarini, cousin of Queen Caterina Cornaro, who secured the title of County of Jaffa (1476).²¹ Afterwards, in the 1520s, the hereditary title of count was acquired by the scions of families in possession of substantial wealth, namely the Singlitico and the de Nores. Specifically, Eugenio (Zegno) Singlitico received the title of County of Rochas in 1521 and Zuan (Jean) de Nores that of County of Tripoli in 1529. The aforementioned titles had originated in the Crusader states of Syria and Palestine.²²

Collaboration between local élites and the island's Venetian administration was mutually beneficial: on the one hand, the former secured a series of privileges and a share in controlling the local administrative machinery; on the other, it was viewed by the latter as a necessary tool in dealing with the various political and socio-economic problems that might arise, as was all too often the case with the feudal lords and nobles in Crete.²³ Thus, apart of course from the military service owed by the – by now obsolete – feudal cavalry to the ruler,²⁴ the Cypriot élites provided their support to the Venetian administration on a number of occasions. It happened, for example, in 1537, when Hayreddin Barbarossa attacked Corfu (August 27, 1537).²⁵ It was then that the Cypriot feudal lord Giacomo Singlitico

20 ARBEL, «The Cypriot Nobility», cit., pp. 175-190; IDEM, «Η Κύπρος», cit., pp. 489-498; Aikaterini ARISTEIDOU, «Πλούσιοι και φτωχοί στη βενετοκρατούμενη Κύπρο», in Chryssa MALTEZOU (Ed.), *Διεθνές Συμπόσιο: Πλούσιοι και φτωχοί στην κοινωνία της ελληνολατινικής Ανατολής*, Venice, Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, 1998, p. 385; BIRTACHAS, *Society, Culture and Government*, cit., pp. 86-87.

21 RUDT DE COLLEBERG, «Δομή και προέλευση», cit., p. 832.

22 Jean RICHARD, «Pairie d'Orient latin: les quatre baronnies des Royaumes de Jérusalem et de Chypre», *Revue Historique de Droit Français et Étranger*, 27 (1950), pp. 67-88; IDEM, *Orient et Occident au Moyen Âge: contacts et relations (XIIe–XVe s.)*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1976, cap. XV; Benjamin ARBEL, «Greek Magnates in Venetian Cyprus: The Case of the Singlitico Family», *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 49 (1995), p. 330; IDEM, «Η Κύπρος», cit., pp. 491-493.

23 BIRTACHAS, *Society, Culture and Government*, cit., p. 102.

24 Gilles GRIVAUD and Aspasia PAPADAKI, «L'institution de la *mostra generale* de la cavalerie féodale en Crète et en Chypre vénitienne durant le XVIe siècle», *Studi Veneziani*, n.s., 12 (1986), pp. 165-199.

25 Eugenio BACCHION, *Il dominio veneto su Corfù (1386–1797)*, Venice, Altino, 1956, pp. 69-

reinforced the Venetian military forces on Corfu by sending money, grain, rusk, and cotton («[...] 8,410 staria di formento, et cantari cipriotti 120 di biscotto et il tratto in danari, di 25 sacchi di cotton [...]»)²⁶ The supplies Giacomo shipped to Corfu were especially valuable in times of military conflict, since they constituted basic necessities.²⁷ Additionally, Giacomo reinforces the garrisons of Kyrenia and Lapethos with soldiers and horses from his fiefs. These actions only become known to us several decades later, in 1613, when Caterina, daughter of Giacomo Singlitico, fled to Venice after the fall of Nicosia to the Ottomans (1570). In a petition addressed to the Venetian Senate, Caterina emphasized her family's contribution not only during the War of Cyprus, but also throughout the period of Venetian domination on the island, and asked for the financial aid of five ducats that she received from the Venetian state every month to be transferred after her death to her niece, Cecilia de Nores. In recognition of her family's services and sacrifices, on March 29, 1613, the Senate approved her request.²⁸

81; Michael MALLETT and John HALE, *Military Organization of a Renaissance State: Venice, c. 1400 to 1617*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 227-233; Elli YOTOPOULOU-SISSILIANOU, «Οι Τούρκοι στην Κέρκυρα», in Ennio CONCINA and Alikì NIKIFOROU-TESTONE (Eds.), *Κέρκυρα: Ιστορία, Αστική Ζωή και Αρχιτεκτονική 14ος-19ος αι.*, Corfu, Cultural Association "Korkyra", 1994, pp. 49-58.

26 ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI VENEZIA (hereafter: ASV), Senato, Terra, filza 205, unnumbered fols, August 14, 1612.

27 Grain and rusks were necessary for the troops, as were rusks for feeding the crews of both warships and merchantmen. The production of rusk took place mainly in Venice, as well as in major harbors of the *stato da mar*, such as Famagusta and Candia. Large quantities of grain were needed to make rusk and in Cyprus this crop was found in abundance. See Charalambos GASPARI, «Εμπόριο και φορολόγηση προϊόντων», in Chryssa MALTEZOU (Ed.), *Βενετοκρατούμενη Ελλάδα. Προσεγγίζοντας την ιστορία της*, Venice, Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies in Venice, 2010, pp. 256-257; BIRTACHAS, *Venetian Cyprus*, cit., pp. 233, 234-235, 314, 366.

28 Caterina resided in Nicosia and during the Siege of the city she lost seven of her children, along with several other members of her family (five brothers, among them the *collaterale generale*, county Eugenio Singlitico). After the conquest of Nicosia, Caterina was taken prisoner by the Ottomans and, after her release, she settled in Venice with her only surviving child, Francesco. For the petition of Caterina Singlitico, see ASV, Senato, Terra, filza 205, unnumbered fols, August 14, 1612. For the Senate's approval, see ASV, Senato, Terra, reg. 83, fol. 47r (olim 24r), March 29, 1613. Cf. Chrysovalantis PAPADAMOU, *Cypriot Refugees in Venice after the War of Cyprus (1570-71). Reconstruction of Everyday Life, Social and Cultural Integration (1570-1650)* [Κύπριοι πρόσφυγες στη Βενετία μετά τον Πόλεμο της Κύπρου (1570-71). Ανασυγκρότηση του βίου, κοινωνική και πολιτισμική ένταξη (1570-1650)], PhD diss., Nicosia, University of Cyprus, 2019, pp. 212, 457.

Because of the Ottoman danger, cooperation between local élites and the *Reggimento* of Cyprus intensified during the 1560s. As Bernardin Belegno, outgoing counsellor to the *luogotenente* of Nicosia, pointed out in his final report (1563), the local élite was willing to assist the Venetian administration in an emergency, despite the fact that their ranks included rich and powerful families that could cause problems for the dominant city.²⁹ Two years later, in his final report (1565), the outgoing *provveditore generale* and *sindico* Bernardo Sagredo also stressed the deference shown to the island's administrators by the aristocracy.³⁰

The Venetians knew that, if the interests of the Cypriot aristocracy were jeopardized, a backlash was definitely to be expected. Thus, in the face of the Ottoman danger, they tried to follow a conciliatory policy, as was characteristically the case a few years prior to the Ottoman invasion, when the Cypriot élite was included in the administration's decision-making process. Specifically, in early 1559 the Community of the feudal lords, nobles and bourgeois of Nicosia dispatched two delegations to Venice, spurred on by the recommendations of the military experts who had been sent to the island to propose solutions on how better to organize its defense. The first delegation was dispatched after Ercole Martinengo proposed building an additional fortress on the island. The delegation, consisting of Eugenio Singlitico, Giacomo de Nores and Andrea San Zuanne, asked the senators to select the territory of Kyrenia as the site where the new fortress was to be constructed (January 7, 1559). The reason behind this was that the port in question was only a short distance from Nicosia. At the same time, it stressed the inadequacy of the fortress of Famagusta to protect the Cypriot population in the event of an invasion. Finally, it demanded that additional military forces be dispatched to the island. In fact, in an effort to put even more pressure on the *Serenissima* to meet its demands, the Community of Nicosia sent a second delegation to Venice, consisting of Tutio Costanzo, Zufre Babin, Hieronimo Attar, Hieronimo Bustron, Ugo Flatro, Piero Hierusalem, and Hieronymo Zappe (February 24, 1559). The second delegation reiterated the requests of the first and, in addition, accused the *capitano* of Famagusta of oppressing the nobles. However, Venice only met the Cypriot aristocrats' demands in part, sending military forces to the island. As for the construction of a new fortress, the Senate did not reach a decision, wishing to

29 BIRTACHAS, *Venetian Cyprus*, cit., pp. 261, 376, 386.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 315, 397.

consult beforehand with its experts.³¹

Consequently, in 1562 the Senate dispatched Ascanio Savorgnan to the island for an on-site inspection of defensive preparations. In a report submitted to the Venetian Senate, Savorgnan noted that Nicosia was not in any imminent danger, since it lay far from the coasts, and for this reason its fortifications should not be further reinforced. This view of his encountered stiff opposition from the noblemen who lived in Nicosia, due to the existential threat their families and fortunes faced. These noblemen demanded the immediate reinforcement of the capital city's fortress. As a result of their pressure, and to avoid unpleasant complications, the Venetian administration acquiesced to the demands of the Cypriot élite and went ahead with the reinforcement and refurbishment of the city walls of Nicosia.³²

Thus, despite the differences, and in addition to the manpower they provided from their fiefs, the feudal lords also spent significant sums of money for the completion of the fortifications of Nicosia. More specifically, the island's financially prosperous feudal families offered (from 1567 onwards) the Venetian administration 10,000 ducats each. In return for this financial contribution, the administration went on to name 7 of the 11 bastions after the families that had contributed to their construction: Rochas (Singlitico), Tripoli (de Nores), Podocataro, Flatro, Caraffa, Costanzo, and Davila (Fig. 8).³³

Apart from the above-mentioned families, there were also those who spent smaller amounts of cash on strengthening the island's defenses, such as Giovanni Paolo Bustron, son of the late Gieronimo, cavalier, who shortly before the invasion of the Ottoman forces gave the administration 2,100 ducats, as well as 7,000 *mozza* of grain from his fiefs.³⁴ Demetrio Fini did the same, offering significant sums of money to reinforce Nicosia, as well as a large – though undefined – number of foot soldiers and cavalry.³⁵

31 GRIVAUD, *Venice and the Defence*, cit., pp. 114-121.

32 GRIVAUD, «Η κατάκτηση της Κύπρου», cit., pp. 147-148.

33 BIRTACHAS, *Society, Culture and Government*, cit., pp. 61-62.

34 ASV, Senato, Mar, filza 97, unnumbered fols, June 17, 1587.

35 The information in question, as well as others regarding the contribution of the Fini family to the defense of Nicosia, are drawn from petitions by Vincenzo, grandson of the aforementioned Demetrio and son of Emanuel, to the Venetian authorities to be awarded Venetian nobility (1649), as well as the prestigious office of the Procurator of Saint Mark



8 Nicosia and its fortifications. The Venetian administration named 7 of the 11 bastions after the families that had contributed to their construction. Source: Giovanni Francesco CAMOCIO, *Isole famose porti, fortezze, e terre maritime sottoposte alla Ser.ma Sig.ria di Venetia, ad altri Principi Christiani, et al Sig.or Turco, novamente poste in luce*, Venice, alla libreria del segno di S. Marco, [ca. 1574].

In addition, more than a few aristocrats agreed to sacrifice their luxury res-

(*Procuratore di San Marco*) [1658]. See a passage from the 1649 petition of Vincenzo Fini: «[...] Obbliando le memorie più antiche e brevemente restringendosi a questi ultimi tempi, sempre memorabile per le lagrime sempre fresche in piangerne l'eccidio, furono il padre e l'avo miei che difesero col petto e con l'oro Nicosia, che sostennero a proprie spese numero grande di milizie a piedi ed a cavallo e che somministrarono più volte somme grandi di denaro a rappresentanti eccellentissimi in sovvegno di quegli urgentissimi disastri. Fu pure l'avo istesso, furono quattro i suoi figliuoli che fra gl'incendi di quelle armi sulle mura della città assediata e combattuta imprimerono col sangue i cattaveri sopra i loro bene-

idences to the expansion and reinforcement of the new city walls of Nicosia. Specifically, the administration proceeded with the demolition of 1,800 houses, 11 palaces, 3 monasteries and 80 churches, which resulted in the overall transformation of the cityscape.³⁶ Among the houses pulled down was the palace belonging to the de Nores family, more specifically to Giason de Nores, situated near the Caraffa Bastion; moreover, Giason de Nores also lost additional revenues amounting to 3,000 ducats.³⁷

Furthermore, shortly before the outbreak of war, Cypriot feudal lords organized, in collaboration with the Venetian administration, military units consisting of men from their fiefs, whom they drilled and armed at their own expense. For instance, Giofre Corner contributed to the defense of the island by recruiting and organizing 300 men of military age, whom he maintained at his own expense;³⁸ Giovanni Muscornò offered 200 foot soldiers from his lands to the defense of Nicosia, as well as his entire fortune;³⁹ on 1 May 1570, Alessandro Podocataro brought to Famagusta 300 foot soldiers from his fiefs, whom he supplied with clothing worth 341 ducats, as well as arms, while he also collected foodstuffs

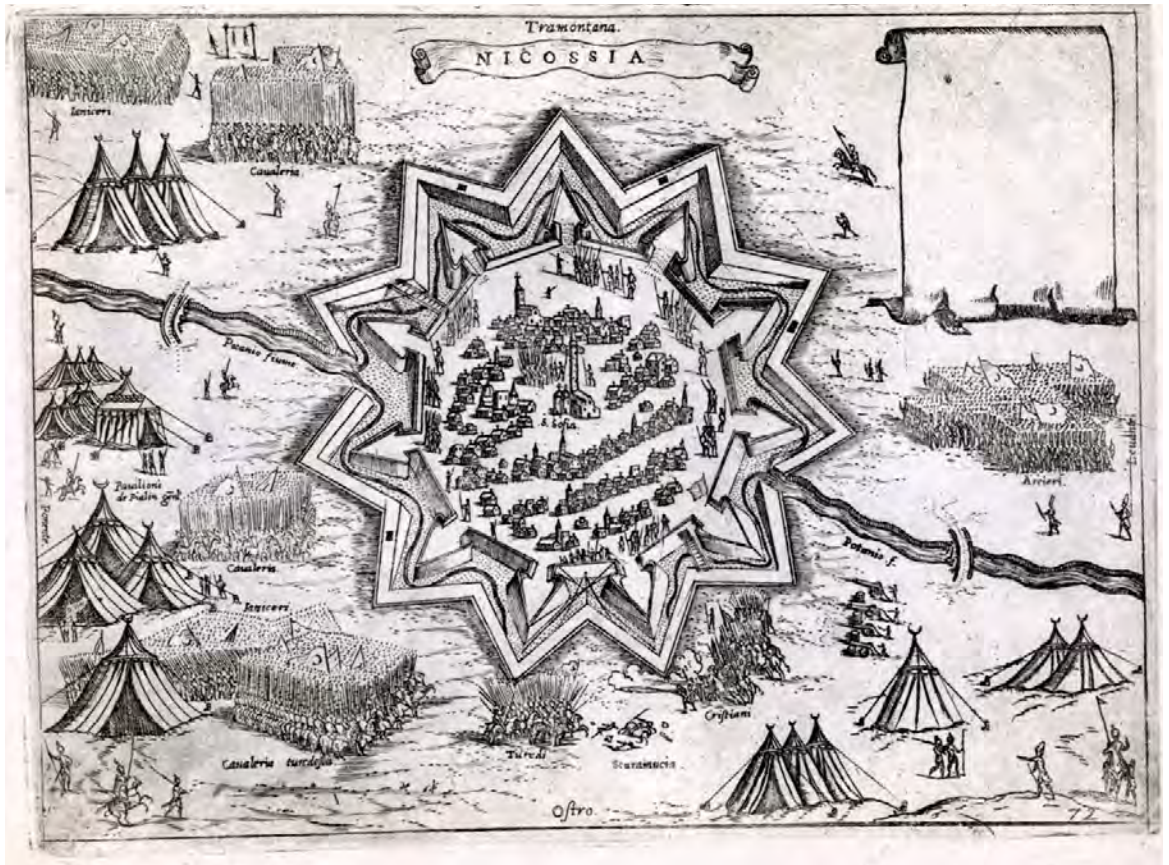
meriti sepolcri [...]». See also a passage from the 1658 petition: «Questa ricchissima casa [...] del Regno di Cipro [...] ha goduto nobiltà e titoli qualificati; e nell'aggressione di quel Regno mostrò una generosissima fede verso la Serenissima Repubblica, avendo con milizie a piedi e a cavallo condotte a proprie spese sostenuto gran parte della difesa più agli ultimi periodi di Nicosia; resosi il predetto Vincenzo in Venetia dopo la perdita dal Regno ha continuato lo stesso zelo al pubblico servizio e merito li predetti onori [...]». Library of the MUSEO CIVICO CORRER, Cod. Cicogna 1064, unnumbered fols.; Chrysovalantis ΠΑΠΑΔΑΜΟΥ, «Cypriots in Venice after the War of Cyprus (1570/71): Prosopographical Approaches: The Case of the Fini Family» [«Κύπριοι στη Βενετία μετά τον Πόλεμο της Κύπρου (1570/71). Προσωπογραφικές προσεγγίσεις: η περίπτωση της οικογένειας Fini»], *Thesaurismata*, 44 (2014), p. 228. A special study on this particular family is in preparation.

36 PERBELLINI, «Le Fortificazioni del Regno», cit., pp. 193-225; Gilles GRIVAUD, «Nicosie remodelée (1567). Contribution à la topographie de la ville médiévale», *Επετηρίδα Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών*, 19 (1992), pp. 285-294; GRIVAUD, *Venice and the Defence*, cit., p. 270.

37 The demolition of the house of Giason is confirmed by a petition his wife, Lucretia Benedetti, filed to the Venetian Senate, requesting financial assistance: «[...] perso insieme con la patria tre mila ducati d'entrata, quando di più ci fu distrutto un bellissimo palazzo perché impediva la fortezza di Nicosia [...]». See ASV, Senato, Terra, filza 153, unnumbered fols., March 28, 1599; ΠΑΠΑΔΑΜΟΥ, *Cypriot Refugees*, cit., pp. 453-454 (the edited document).

38 On Giofre Corner, see ASV, Senato, Mar, reg. 44 (1578-1580), fols. 114r-v (olim 84r-v), March 7, 1579; ASV, Senato, Mar, filza 73, unnumbered fols. (November 8, 1578); ΠΑΠΑΔΑΜΟΥ, «Cypriots in Venice», cit., p. 228.

39 ASV, Collegio, Suppliche di dentro, b. 6, August 29, 1578.



9 The Ottoman Siege of Nicosia (1570). Source: Giovanni Francesco CAMOCIO, *Isole famose porti, fortezze, e terre maritime sottoposte alla Ser.ma Sig.ria di Venetia, ad altri Principi Christiani, et al Sig.or Turco, novamente poste in luce*, Venice, alla libreria del segno di S. Marco, [ca. 1574].

(cheese, barley, legumes etc.) from his estates to feed the city.⁴⁰ It is worth noting that Alessandro Podocataro, along with his father Filippo and brother Tuzio, were the only noblemen who agreed to abandon their palaces in Nicosia and move with their military forces to Famagusta, following the order issued by the Venetian administration for the feudal lords' military levies to be split between Nicosia and Famagusta.⁴¹

40 Important evidence regarding Alessandro's contribution to the defense of Famagusta are drawn from a petition of his to the Venetian Senate. See ASV, Senato, Mar, filza 50 (1571), unnumbered fols., February 16, 1571.

41 GRIVAUD, «Η κατάκτηση της Κύπρου», cit., p. 167. Cf. Alessandro PODOCATARO, *Relatio-*

The meeting to discuss how to organize the defense of the island and what actions to take during the imminent Ottoman attack was held at the newly-built palace of Giacomo de Nores, County of Tripoli, in Asha [Assia] (April 6 or 10, 1570). The civil and military authorities of Nicosia and Famagusta gathered there: the *luogotenente* Nicolò Dandolo, the *collaterale generale* Eugenio Singlitico, Marcantonio Bragadin, *capitano* of Famagusta, and the *capitano* Astorre Baglioni, charged with organizing the Venetian resistance, first in Nicosia and later in Famagusta. A number of noblemen, including Marco Zaccaria, Giovanni Sozomeno και Zuanne Bragadin, also took part in this council of war. Among other things, at this meeting it was decided to distribute the men of the civil militia (*cernide*) among the two urban centers (out of a total of 5,000 men, 3,500 were stationed at Nicosia and the other 1,500 at Famagusta), for Cypriot feudal lords to relocate to Famagusta to strengthen the city's forces, as well as to bring in the cereal crop or to destroy it, should its harvest prove impossible.⁴²

In addition to organizing military contingents, during the operations Cypriot noblemen were also commissioned as army officers. The following instances are listed by way of indication: Giacomo de Nores, Count of Tripoli, commander of artillery units, commander of a company of 70 pikemen and commander of a unit of feudal cavalry;⁴³ Ugo Flatro, who during the Siege of Nicosia was put in charge of the Flatro Bastion along with one of his sons and his son-in-law, Tomaso Ficardo, and also served as *luogotenente general della cavallaria della nobiltà*;⁴⁴ Paleologo Corner, son of the feudal lord Giofre Corner, who led a com-

ne di Alessandro Podocataro de' successi di Famagosta dell'anno 1571 ora per la prima volta pubblicata, edited by Andrea TESSIER, Venezia, 1876; modern edition in Paschalis M. KITROMILIDES (Ed.), *Κυπριακές πηγές για την άλωση της Αμμοχώστου*, Athens, Institute of Neohellenic Research / National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2011, pp. 37-87.

42 GRIVAUD, «Η κατάκτηση της Κύπρου», cit., pp. 52, 167-169.

43 Chryssa MALTEZOU, «Η περιπέτεια ενός ελληνόφωνου Βενετού της Κύπρου (1571)», in Theodoros PAPADOPOULLOS and Benedict ENGLEZAKIS (Eds.), *Πρακτικά του Δεύτερου Διεθνούς Κυπριολογικού Συνεδρίου*, Vol. 2, Nicosia, Society of Cypriot Studies, 1986, p. 237; ARBEL, «Η Κύπρος», cit., pp. 492; GRIVAUD, «Η κατάκτηση της Κύπρου», cit., pp. 126, 168-169.

44 The reference to Ugo Flatro is known through a petition his daughter Isabella submitted to the Senate on February 15, 1596: «[...] povera et infelice Isabella cipriotta fu figliuola del quondam signor Ugo Flatro, cavalier feudatario nella città di Nicosia, et relicta del quondam signor Tomaso Ficardo [...]». In her petition, Isabella detailed her father's contributions before and during the war. She further noted that her family offered money for the construction of a bastion in Nicosia which was named after them (Flatro) and that, during

pany of light cavalry (*stradioti*); the brothers Pier Paolo and Zuanne Singlitico, sons of Marco, who had bands of militiamen under their command; Alessandro Podocataro, who served as the commanding officer of a company of native men-at-arms; Hector Podocataro, who commanded a unit of foot soldiers; Giovanni Sozomeno, commander of engineers;⁴⁵ Emanuel Flangino, who led 100 defenders in Nicosia and, at the same time, offered substantial quantities of cotton for the protection of the capital's bastions;⁴⁶ Giacomo Zaccaria, who was in charge of 300 infantry,⁴⁷ et al. But the most important military position held by a Cypriot nobleman during the War of Cyprus was that of *collaterale generale*. By a decision of the Senate in 1570, Eugenio Singlitico, County of Rochas, was recalled from the Venetian *terraferma*, where he was serving at the time, and posted to his homeland of Cyprus, to assume the duties of *collaterale generale* alongside the Venetian *luogotenente* Nicolò Dandolo. These two men assumed command of the capital and the responsibility to defend it against the Ottoman invasion.⁴⁸

However, it was the miscommunication between military and civilian authorities, particularly the *Rettori* of Nicosia, that determined, in many cases, the outcome of the operations, tipping the balance in favor of the Ottomans and thus costing the defenders many lives. A characteristic example is the act of insub-

the Siege of the city, her father took command of the bastion in question. He was taken prisoner after the fall of the city; later he was ransomed by a merchant and fled to Venice, where he lived in poverty. It was there that he petitioned the government of Venice for financial assistance. Various individuals came forward to verify the claims in her petition, including Giovanni Sozomeno. In the end, the Senate voted to allow her a monthly pension of two ducats (January 15, 1599). See ASV, Senato, Terra, reg. 69, fol. 205v (olim 182v); ASV, Senato, Terra, filza 153 (1599), unnumbered fols., February 15, 1596.

45 Guido Antonio QUARTI, *La Guerra contro il Turco a Cipro e a Lepanto: 1570-1571. Storia documentata*, Venice, G. Bellini, 1935, pp. 266-269.

46 ASV, Notarile, Atti, b. 4853, fols. 104v-105v, August 7, 1577; and fol. 219v, November 29, 1577.

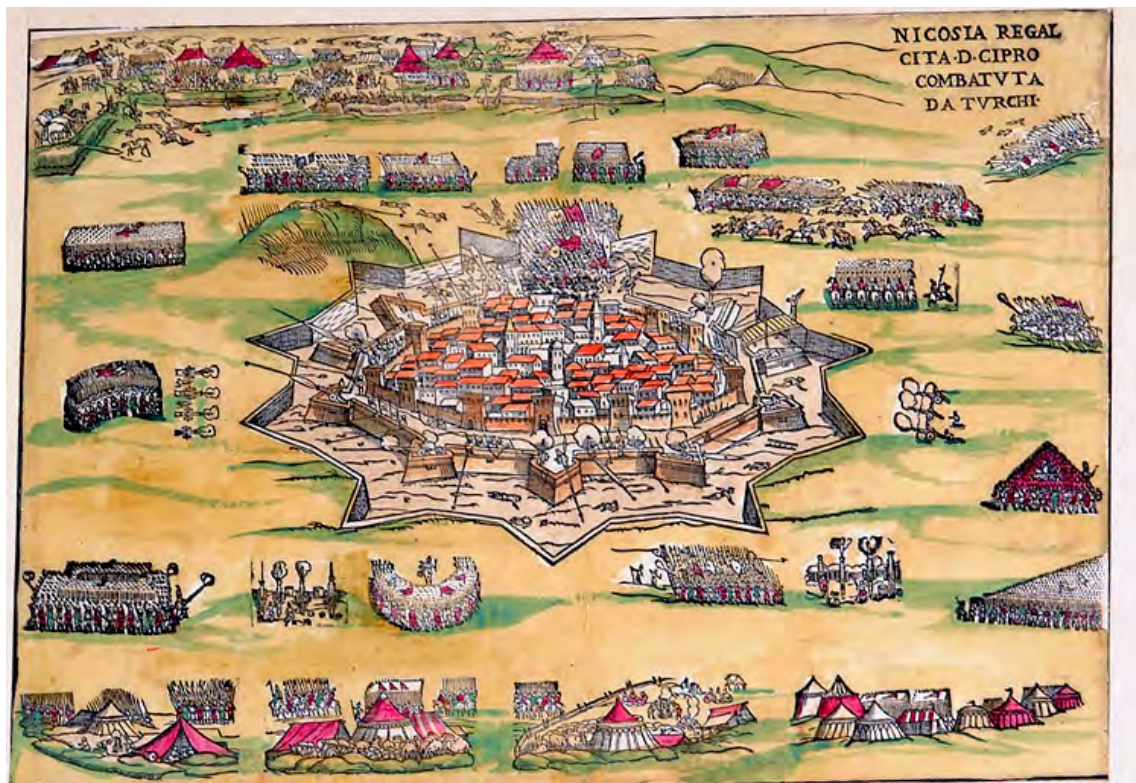
47 The information is drawn from a petition by the aristocratic brothers Alvisè and Andrea Zaccaria (March 10, 1579), who served in the military forces of the Venetian *terraferma* in 1579. In this petition, they asked the Venetian government for an increase in their salaries. Furthermore, wishing to reinforce their argument, they noted that they had been loyal subjects of Venice, fought in the War of Cyprus, lost their fortune and relatives, and that their uncle, Giacomo Zaccaria, commanded 300 infantrymen. The Senate decided to raise the monthly salary of Alvisè from 23 to 25 ducats, and that of Andrea from 20 to 23 ducats (May 25, 1579). See ASV, Senato, Terra, reg. 52, fol. 208v (olim 177v); ASV, Senato, Terra, filza 77 (1579), unnumbered fols., March 10, 1579.

48 GRIVAUD, «Η κατάκτηση της Κύπρου», cit., p. 169.

ordination of the *collaterale generale* Eugenio Singlitico during the landing of the Ottoman forces at Larnaca on 3 July 1570. Singlitico, in consultation with *capitano* Astorre Baglioni, commander-in-chief of the military forces, decided to repulse the Ottomans as the latter reached the Saline. Consequently, Singlitico, along with captains Andrea del Berretin and Lazzaro Coccapani, camped in the vicinity with a detachment of approximately 400 mounted *stradioti* and 100 arquebusiers, in order to keep the Ottoman invasion force under close surveillance and strike at the first opportunity. The agreed-upon plan was for the military force under Singlitico to join that of Astorre Baglioni, which was to come from Famagusta and consist of 300 horsemen and 200 infantrymen. Then the combined groups would attack the Ottomans. Disobeying the orders he had received from Baglioni, however, Singlitico refused to attack the invaders and ordered his troops to return to Nicosia, leaving Baglioni and his force exposed; shortly before reaching Larnaca, the latter were informed of Singlitico's withdrawal, at which point they had to return to Famagusta without having accomplished anything. In this way, the Venetian armed forces missed the opportunity to attack the Ottoman troops while the latter were landing on the island. It is interesting to note at this point that on July 5, 1570, the *luogotenente* Nicolò Dandolo was blaming the failure of the operation on Astorre Baglioni and not on Eugenio Singlitico, a fact that demonstrates the tense conflicts and lack of communication between the defenders' commanders.⁴⁹

Further evidence of this lack of communication may be found in another incident that took place during the Siege of Nicosia (Figs. 9 and 10), a few weeks before the fall of the city. On August 15, 1570, at the instigation of the *collaterale generale* Singlitico, it was decided to send a force consisting of 400 mounted *stradioti* and 2,000 Italian and Greek foot soldiers in a surprise assault to destroy the Ottoman cannons. Singlitico's proposal was approved by the Venetian *luogotenente* Dandolo, on the condition, however, that the Cypriot élite would not take part. The plan of attack that was drafted consisted of three parts. The first entailed a group of soldiers that would sortie from the Famagusta Gate, reach the vicinity of the Davila Bastion without a fight, there to give the signal for a second group to attack and then proceed to spike the enemy guns. The second part of the plan called for 600 soldiers to sally forth from the Costanzo Bastion

49 *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60 and fn. 54 (different versions of the incident by Venetian officials).



10 Map of Nicosia, by an unknown cartographer, depicts «Nicosia, royal city of Cyprus during its conquest by the Ottomans» in 1570 (24 x 34cm). B/2005/0,248 © The Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia. Courtesy of the Museum.

against the Ottoman forces, while the third involved an attack by the cavalry of the *stradioti* in support of the first group, who would attempt to destroy the guns. The operation, however, did not go as planned. As the troops were emerging from the Famagusta Gate, the Greek soldiers disregarded the orders issued to them and broke into a disorderly charge against the Ottoman forces, at the same time giving the signal for the second group to attack. Even though Dandolo was made aware of the misunderstanding that had arisen, his refusal to let the cavalry reinforce the attackers resulted in confusion and panic, and several defenders lost their lives. Dandolo's decision was caused by the fact that his explicit orders had been disobeyed by certain feudal lords, who got embroiled in the operation by surreptitiously infiltrating the ranks of the *stradioti*. As a result, the mishandling of the situation by the commanders and the insubordination of the feudal cavalry

led to the operation ending in failure and to the death of several officers and men who took part in the attack. Taking advantage of this climate of miscommunication and disobedience permeating the ranks of the Venetian army, the Ottomans mounted a vicious assault against the Costanzo Bastion, causing significant material damage and loss of life to the defenders. We should stress here the general phenomenon of widespread insubordination on the part of the noblemen and their unwillingness to participate in various critical stages of the Siege.⁵⁰

Ultimately, the Siege of Nicosia lasted 45 days. A number of different factors determined the outcome in favor of the attackers: the inability to complete the fortifications; the way the two commanders, Nicolò Dandolo and Eugenio Singlitico, as well as the feudal cavalry, mishandled the situation; the lack of communication between leaders and the men under them; and the lack of assistance from the outside world. On September 9, 1570, the Ottomans succeeded in storming into the city. Looting and slaughter lasted more than three days and, according to the sources, the victims on the first day numbered more than 20,000, with a proportionate number of prisoners. Several members of the Cypriot élite are included among the hundreds of victims. The fate of the aristocrats was sealed in the battles for Nicosia and those who survived the massacres were either hauled to the slave markets of the Levant or forced to relocate to the West; only a very small number remained on the island. According to the chroniclers of the War of Cyprus, the casualty rate among the noblemen who took part in the battles for Nicosia was particularly high.⁵¹

With regard to Famagusta, aristocratic participation in the city's defense was minimal compared to that of Nicosia, because most of them had congregated in the capital. Of course, the military situation in Famagusta was much better than in Nicosia, since work on the fortifications had been completed, the bands of merce-

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77, 167.

⁵¹ Wipertus H. RUDT DE COLLEBERG, «Les Litterae Hortatoriae accordées par les Papes en faveur de la rédemption des Chypriotes captifs des Turcs (1570–1597) d'après les fonds de l'Archivio Segreto Vaticano», *Επετηρίδα Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών*, 11 (1981–1982), pp. 13-167; IDEM, «Δομή και προέλευση», *cit.*, p. 841. For lists of prisoners, see: BAŞBAKANLIK OSMANLI ARŞIVI, Maliyeden Müdevver, defter 221 bis; Vera COSTANTINI, «Destini di guerra. L'inventario ottomano dei prigionieri e otere di Nicosia (Settembre 1570)», *Studi Veneziani*, n.s. 45 (2003), pp. 229-241; Stefanos ΚΑΚΛΑΜΑΝΙΣ (Ed.), *Andrea Cornaro. Historia Candiana. Μια αφήγηση του Δ' βενετοτουρκικού πολέμου (1570–1573)*. *Κύπρος – Ναύπακτος*, Nicosia, Cyprus Research Centre, 2017, pp. 487-494.



11 The Ottoman Siege of Famagusta (1570–1571).

Source: Giuseppe ROSACCIO, *Viaggio da Venetia, a Costantinopoli: per mare, e per terra & insieme quello di Terra Santa [...] opera utile à mercanti, marinari & à studiosi di geografia*, Venice, Giacomo Franco, 1598.

naries were receiving their rations and salaries regularly, there was an organized hospital for treating the wounded, and, generally speaking, morale among both the troops and the population was high. In contrast with the situation that prevailed in Nicosia, where the defenders were discontented with the *luogotenente* Nicolò Dandolo, in Famagusta the populace had faith and trust in the supreme commanders Marcantonio Bragadin, Astorre Baglioni and Lorenzo Tiepolo.⁵² Thanks to the spirit of collaboration and determination these commanders exhibited, and to the loyal cooperation between them and their subordinates, the besieged put up a stiff resistance in Famagusta and the Siege (Figs. 11 and 12) lasted almost a year, causing significant loss of life in the Ottoman camp. Yet, the failure of the allied fleet to arrive and reinforce the defenders forced Bragadin,

⁵² HILL, *History*, cit., pp. 988-998; ARISTEIDOU, «Μεχμέτ πασά Σοκόλοβιτς», cit., pp. 73-74; FENLON, *The Ceremonial City*, cit., pp. 162-163; Federico MORO, *Venezia in guerra. Quattordici secoli di storia, politica e battaglie*, Venice, La Toletta, 2011, pp. 181-183.

the *capitano* of Famagusta, with the consent of its inhabitants, to proceed with the surrender of the city on August 5, 1571.⁵³

After the capitulation of Famagusta, some of its defenders were massacred, while others were taken prisoners. Because the city had surrendered, the Ottomans captured only a small number of prisoners. The survivors either left the island or chose to make their peace with the new political order. Especially the members of the upper echelons of society who submitted to the Ottomans remained on the island, participating in the Ottoman administration and, in this way, preserving their estates, or at least part of them. To achieve that, most of them converted to Islam. This is deduced from the fact that non-Muslims could not hold office.⁵⁴

The Ottoman conquest marked the end of a long period of Latin dominations (Frankish, Genoese and Venetian) on the island and the dismantling of the legal and political edifice it had imposed on Cypriot society, which was based on Western feudal institutions and the Assizes of Jerusalem. With the coming of the Ottoman overlords, the feudal socio-economic establishment was replaced by a military state with a combined secular and religious authority.⁵⁵

Conclusions

The *Serenissima* attempted in various ways to shield its distant possession of Cyprus. It was within this framework that, during the last decade of its rule on Cyprus, it stepped up measures to strengthen the defenses, dispatching experienced military consultants to the island and spending large sums of money to complete the works. While Venice was implementing its defensive strategy, the ruling class of the feudal lords, nobles and bourgeois of Nicosia, who understood that a possible political change would bring about either a loss of privileges and

53 HILL, *History*, cit., pp. 1008-1027; Gigi MONELLO, *Accadde a Famagosta. L'assedio turco ad una fortezza veneziana ed il suo sconvolgente finale*, Cagliari, Sceptsi & Mattana, 2006, pp. 32-36; GRIVAUD, «Η κατάκτηση της Κύπρου», cit., pp. 113-117.

54 RUDT DE COLLEBERG, «Δομή και προέλευση», cit., pp. 840-841. Also see Costas P. KYRIS, «Modes de survivance, de transformation et d'adaptation du régime colonial latin de Chypre après la conquête ottomane», *Επετηρίδα Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών*, 13-16, 1 (1984-1987), pp. 255-268.

55 Gilles GRIVAUD, «Δίκαιον – Οικονομία», in Theodoros PAPADOPOULLOS (Ed.), *Ιστορία της Κύπρου*, Vol. 6, *Τουρκοκρατία*, Nicosia, Archbishop Makarios III Foundation / Office for Cyprus History, 2011, pp. 274-275.

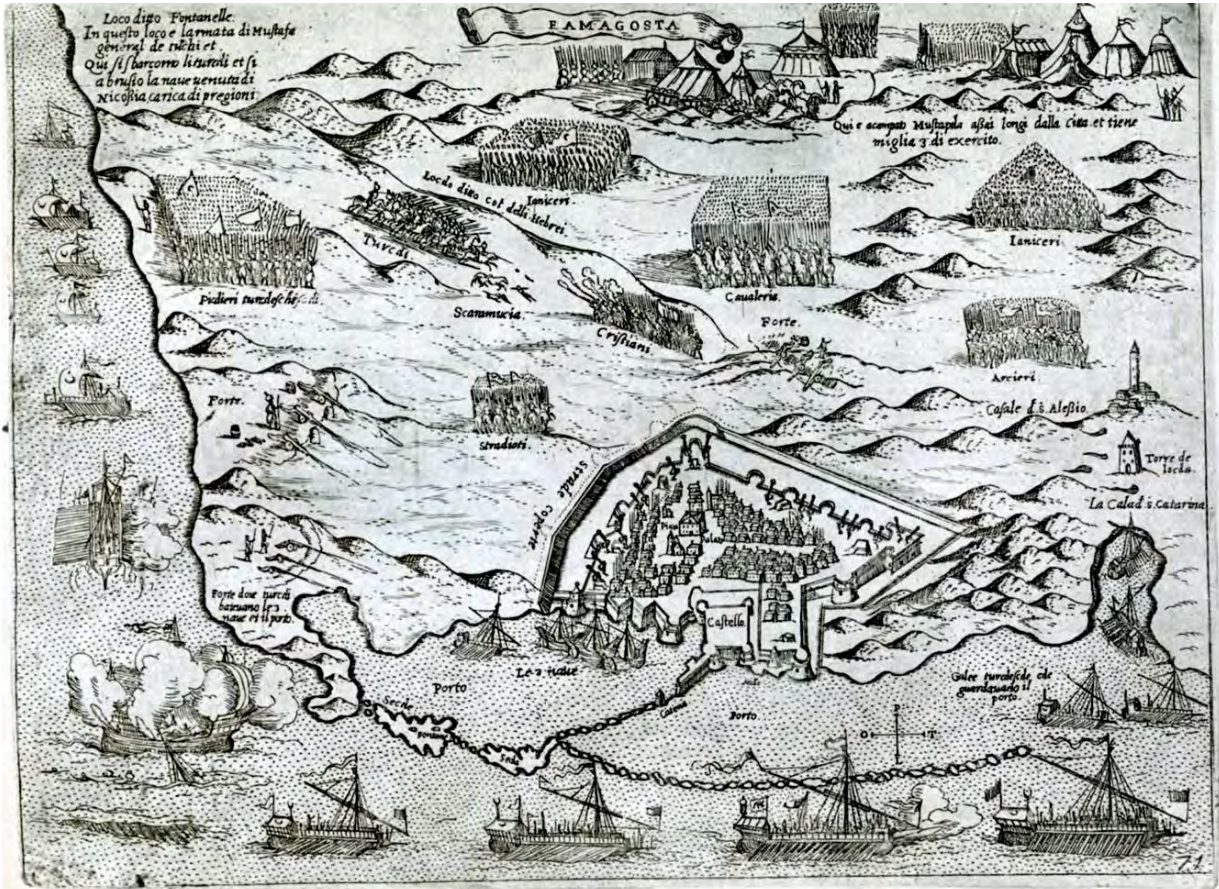
a reduction in its overall political and social power or its complete disappearance into the new regime, did not remain on the sidelines. Thus, it contributed to the fight against the Ottomans with men and supplies. In addition to cash donations, Cypriot feudal lords supplied significant amounts of grain and other materials from their fiefs, that would come in handy during the imminent Siege of Nicosia, as well as manpower, both for military service and as laborers in the fortifications. Of particular importance was the financial aid amounting to 10,000 ducats, that each of the seven wealthiest families of the island contributed towards constructing the bastions of Nicosia. In this way, on the one hand, they secured their families and estates, and on the other, they enhanced their prestige.

Throughout the Venetian period, the Cypriot élite developed strong relationships with the *Serenissima* and its senior officials, a fact that ensured mutual benefits and, of course, facilitated the imposition of Venetian rule over the local populations; on the other hand, it profoundly affected the efficiency and smooth functioning of the local administrative machinery. Not only did the significant political, social and financial standing of the noblemen of Nicosia ensure them access to the possession's Central Financial Office and Land Registry (*Secreta*) and Public Treasury (*Camera*); it also enabled them to forge marriage alliances with prominent families of Venetian patricians, to manipulate the policies of local officials, and even to influence the decisions of Venice itself on key issues, e.g. the defense of the island in the face of Ottoman expansion at the expense of the Venetian *stato da mar*. These phenomena are documented in the sources and reached their peak during the final decade of Venetian rule (1560–1570/1), going so far as to assume the character of a display of insubordination to the orders of the *Rettori* of Nicosia on the part of certain aristocrats. A characteristic example is their reaction to the views of the Venetian military experts regarding the usefulness of fortifying the Cypriot capital. In this case, in fact, the Venetian Senate chose to meet the exorbitant demands of its aristocratic allies on Cyprus, rather than adopt the militarily sound expert opinions mentioned above. Consequently, it went ahead with the reinforcement of the fortifications of Nicosia, thus creating a star-shaped enceinte with 11 bastions.

The non-alignment of members of the Cypriot élite with the policies of the rulers whenever they believed that their interest demanded it may be observed before, as well as during, the military operations against the Ottoman invasion forces. For instance, when, during the meeting at Asha (Assia), the Venetian com-

mand decided to split the military forces between Nicosia and Famagusta, only the members of the Podocataro aristocratic family agreed to abandon their palaces in the capital and move to Famagusta with the armed bands under their command. The rest of the aristocrats of Nicosia disobeyed the commanders' orders and refused to abandon the Cypriot capital. Another example of their disobedience to Venetian commands may be observed during the Siege of Nicosia: specifically, during the failed sortie organized by the *collaterale generale* Eugenio Singlitico (August 15, 1570). In the attack attempted against the besiegers, a number of noblemen disregarded the orders of the *luogotenente* Nicolò Dandolo, resulting in confusion and a breakdown in communication, which ultimately led to the besieged suffering a crushing defeat. After all, the poor cooperation between the noblemen and the Venetian officials had already been in evidence since the beginning of the Ottoman invasion. It was at precisely that point that the advantage of repulsing the numerically superior Ottoman forces at the Saline of Larnaca was lost. Even though Eugenio Singlitico and Astorre Baglioni had agreed to lead their respective military forces in an attack against the disembarking Ottomans, at the last moment the former recalled the military corps he commanded and returned to Nicosia empty-handed. The failure of noblemen and Venetian officials to work together reached a breaking point with the lack of communication between the two military commanders of Nicosia, Dandolo and Singlitico, a fact that greatly contributed to the capture of the city after a Siege of only 45 days. On the contrary, such phenomena were absent in the case of Famagusta, the fortress of which withstood the Ottoman Siege for almost a year.

As was to be expected, and as was intimated above, the Cypriot élite was harmed beyond repair by the outcome of the Venetian-Ottoman conflict in Nicosia. The noblemen of Nicosia lost their fiefs, numerous family members, their famed luxury palaces and their estates in general. Besides, the fact that the Ottomans had taken the city by storm and not by treaty meant that its inhabitants were not subject to the Ottoman law of war. According to the latter, those who surrendered voluntarily had the right to either convert to Islam or submit and pay a perpetual head tax. Those who refused to surrender, however, would find themselves subject to the practical consequences of the conquest: captivity or death. It should be noted that on this issue too the case of Famagusta is different, since the second largest city of Cyprus ultimately surrendered to Lala Mustafa Pasha and came under Ottoman military jurisprudence, as described above. Moreover,



12 The Ottoman Siege of Famagusta (1570–1571). Source: Giovanni Francesco CAMOCIO, *Isole famose porti, fortezze, e terre maritime sottoposte alla Ser.ma Sig.ria di Venetia, ad altri Principi Christiani, et al Sig.or Turco, novamente poste in luce*, Venice, alla libreria del segno di S. Marco, [ca. 1574].

the inhabitants of Famagusta who fell into Ottoman hands were definitely fewer when compared to those of Nicosia, because 3,660 people fled the city shortly before its capitulation.⁵⁶

Despite the above-mentioned problems in the relationship between the Cypriot élite and the Venetian administration of Cyprus, both before and during military operations, the loss of its army units and the treasure it had invested in the defense

⁵⁶ GRIVAUD, «Η κατάκτηση της Κύπρου», cit., p. 98.

of the island, as well as the loss of its important possession, the *Serenissima* made arrangements, both collectively and individually, to alleviate the suffering of those who had escaped the War and were seeking refuge in the city of the Doges and the other possessions of the *stato da mar* in the Levant. It was the standing practice of the Venetian government after every Venetian–Ottoman conflict to succor the loyal subjects (refugees or otherwise) who had served it, by providing them with food, monetary assistance etc., by granting them land and/or by rehiring the war veterans in the Venetian armed forces.⁵⁷

In addition to posting noblemen from Nicosia who had contributed to the defense of Cyprus to various administrative and military positions, as well as offering them financial assistance, the Venetian government was also taking care to provide security to their wives and/or children. The response of the Senate to the petitions of the latter concerning the granting of financial aid was immediate.⁵⁸

In conclusion, the War of Cyprus (1570–1571) left its mark on the lives of the island’s inhabitants regardless of their social background. As for the feudal lords, nobles and bourgeois in particular, the vast majority of them had linked their destinies with the Republic of Venice and lost their privileges, economic power, and numerous family members. This explains, to a large extent, the vast sums of money they expended on the island’s defenses, the military equipment they provided during operations, and their personal service in the army. After the War, the survivors and those released from captivity settled in various other Venetian possessions or even in the city of the lagoon itself, where the authorities, in recognition of their loyalty and service before and during the War of Cyprus, offered them a chance to rebuild their lives; but not, however, the opportunity to reclaim

57 Typical cases of Greek subjects of Venice who received government aid after a Venetian–Ottoman conflict in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries included Naupliots, Monemvasians, Cypriots, and Cretans. See for instance Chryssa MALTEZOU, «Πρόσφυγες από την Κρήτη στα Κύθηρα (Άγνωστες πληροφορίες από το αρχείο των Κυθήρων)», *Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών*, 39–40 (1973), pp. 518–526; Marianna KOLYVA-KARALEKA, «Αποκατάσταση Ναυπλιωτών και Μονεμβασιωτών προσφύγων στην Κρήτη το 1548», *Byzantinische und Neugriechischen Jahrbücher*, 22 (1977–1984), pp. 375–452. On the re-employment of the veterans of War of Cyprus in the Venetian army and navy, see Stathis BIRTACHAS and Chrysovalantis PAPANAMOU, «Veterans of the War of Cyprus (1570–71): Captivity, Liberation and Restitution through their Recruitment into the Venetian Armed Forces. A First Approach», *Nuova Antologia Militare. Rivista interdisciplinare della Società Italiana di Storia Militare*, 1, 3 (June 2020), pp. 113–133.

58 See e.g. ASV, Senato, Terra, reg. 69, fol. 205v (olim 182v); and reg. 83, fol. 47r (olim 24r).

their former grandeur and socio-economic status. Their contribution to the War is ingrained in Cypriot collective memories through the journals and memoirs some of them have left behind,⁵⁹ but mainly through the names of the surviving bastion of the city walls of Nicosia, the construction of which was funded by the major Cypriot feudal families.

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59 See e.g. PODOCATARO, *Relatione*, cit.; Giovanni SOZOMENO, *Narratione dell guerra di Nicosia, fatta nel Regno di Cipro da' Turchi l'anno MDLXX*, Bologna, per Biagio Bignami, 1571. Cf. BIRTACHAS and PAPADAMOU, «Veterans of the War of Cyprus», cit., *passim*.

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The Venetian fleet in front of Preveza, 1690. Oil on canvas, by an unknown artist.
Preveza, Photo Collection of the Actia Nicopolis Foundation.



Icon of the naval Battle of Curzolari (Echinades in Greek) islands, by the Cretan painter Georgios Klontzas, last decades of the 16th century; one of the most famous depictions of the naval Battle of Lepanto in post-Byzantine art. Courtesy of the National Historical Museum, Athens (cat. n. 3578).

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