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a cura di
VIRGILIO ILARI



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In copertina: Targa sbalzata e ageminata appartenuta a Enrico II, re di Francia, attribuita a Étienne Delaune, Jean Cousin il Vecchio e Baptiste Pellerin, Fontainebleau 1555 circa, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 34.85. Public domain.

The Military Status of the Ionian Islands in 1589 based on the Report by Giovanni Battista del Monte*

by KOSTAS G. TSIKNAKIS

ABSTRACT. In the late 1580s the weaknesses in the military sector of all the Venetian possessions in the Levant were evident. To remedy the problem, it was decided by the Senate that an experienced military actor would be sent to the area, whose mission would be to examine the existing problems, obtain a well-rounded idea of the situation and submit concrete proposals. The person chosen was Giovanni Battista del Monte, an experienced military man, who was provided with explicit instructions regarding the route to follow. The officer departed on his mission in early October 1588. He first visited Crete, then Kythera (Cerigo), Zakynthos (Zante), Cephalonia and Corfu. On his return to Venice, he also stopped in Zara and the rest of the Dalmatian fortresses. In all the regions visited, he closely examined their defence potential and recommended specific solutions. His greatest interest was in recording and improving the land forces. On completion of his mission, he gave an overall picture of the military status in the eastern Mediterranean in a report submitted in late August 1589. This article aims at summarising Giovanni Battista del Monte's mission in the Levant. Particular emphasis is placed on the military status of the Ionian Islands and the measures proposed for strengthening their defence.

KEYWORDS. REPUBLIC OF VENICE; *STATO DA MAR*; CRETE; IONIAN ISLANDS; VENETIAN POSSESSIONS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN; VENETIAN ARMED FORCES; GIOVANNI BATTISTA DEL MONTE.

In the late 1580s the information coming to Venice from its possessions in the Levant was far from optimistic. Its ambitious plan, inaugurated right after the end of the fourth Venetian Ottoman war, aiming to prevent the Ottoman expansion, was difficult to implement. The reasons for its failure, which cannot be mentioned here in detail, were several.¹

* For more on this, see my article, «Η στρατιωτική κατάσταση των νησιών του Ιονίου το 1589. Με βάση την έκθεση του Giovanni Battista del Monte», in *ΣΤ' Διεθνές*

The weaknesses of Venice were more evident in the military sector. According to the established planning, the successful deployment of military forces would constitute a determining factor for future developments. The efforts made to improve them, however, advanced at a rather slow pace, which was highly preoccupying. In case of war, Venice was clearly at risk of losing the vital lands of the Levant to its biggest enemy. In order to avoid this, various ways to remedy the deficiencies observed were sought.²

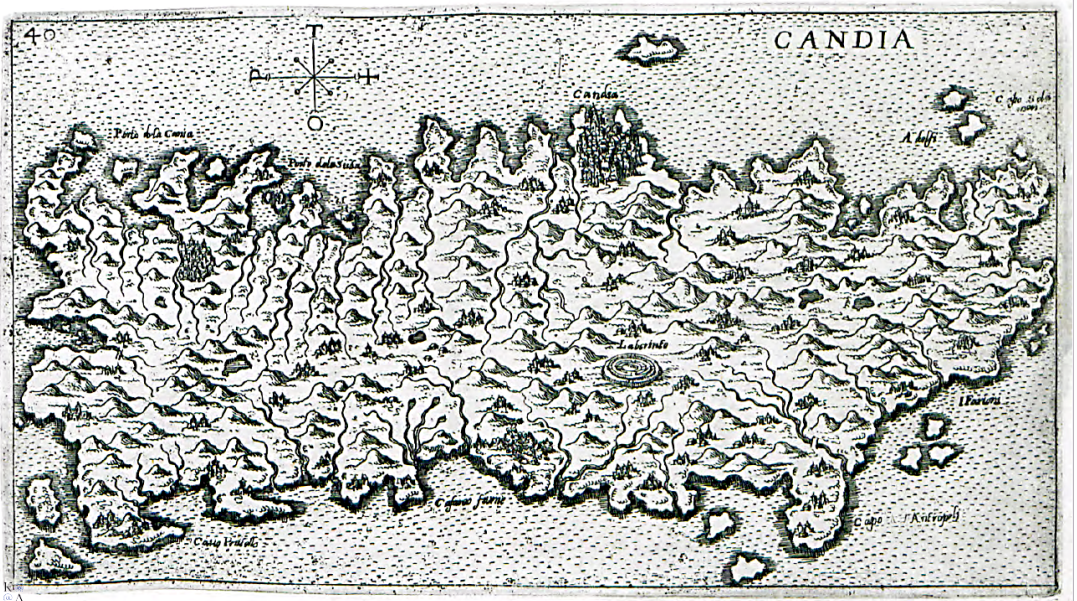
Dispatching an experienced military actor to the area, who, after examining the problems emerged, would give prompt solutions where needed and glean a comprehensive view of the actual situation, was seen as the best solution. Relying on trustworthy advice, Venice would take the necessary steps to address the matter.

The choice of Giovanni Battista del Monte

The discussion over the person who would occupy this sensitive position soon concentrated on the figure of Giovanni Battista del Monte (1541-1614), who was reputed to be one of the best military experts of the time.³ Coming from a family which was known in the intellectual circles of Veneto, he had kept with the family tradition in this field but had also accomplished a number of achievements in his military career.⁴ His contribution to improving the defence of the Terraferma

Πανιώνιο Συνέδριο. Ζάκυνθος, 23-27 Σεπτεμβρίου 1997. Πρακτικά, Vol. 2, Ιστορία. Κοινωνική, Πολιτική, Οικονομική (Θρησκευτικές Κοινότητες, Έποικοι, Μειονότητες, Δημόσιος και Ιδιωτικός βίος, Κοινωνική Πρόνοια), Athens, Κέντρο Μελετών Ιονίου and Εταιρεία Ζακυνθιακών Σπουδών, 2001, pp. 95-110. My heartfelt thanks to Sandy Kouretzi for editing the English text.

- 1 To obtain a more comprehensive picture of the conditions prevailing in the region at that time, see Agathangelos ΧΙΡΟΥΗΑΚΙΣ, *Η Βενετοκρατούμενη Ανατολή. Κρήτη και Επάρνησος*, Athens, Τύποις «Φοίνικος», 1934.
- 2 For more on this, see the article of Luciano PEZZOLO, «Aspetti della struttura militare veneziana in Levante tra cinque e seicento», *Venezia e la difesa del Levante. Da Lepanto a Candia 1570-1670*, Venice, Arsenale Editrice, 1986, pp. 86-89.
- 3 In the documents of the time, the eminent military officer is referred to as either «Giovanni Battista del Monte» or «Giovanni Battista dal Monte». In this article, only the first form is used for reasons of uniformity.
- 4 Βλ. John R. HALE, «Military Academies on the Venetian Terraferma in the Early Seventeenth Century», *Studi Veneziani*, 15 (1973), p. 279 n. 16; Gaetano COZZI, *Paolo Sarpi tra Venezia e l'Europa*, Torino, Einaudi, 1979, pp. 150-151; Manlio PASTORE STOCCHI, «Il periodo veneto di Galileo Galilei», in Girolamo ARNALDI and Manlio PASTORE STOCCHI (Ed.), *Storia della Cultura Veneta*, Vol. 4, 2, *Il Seicento*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza editore, 1984, p. 43.



Candia (Crete) 1598. Source: Giuseppe Rosaccio, *Viaggio da Venetia, a Costantinopoli: per mare, e per terra & insieme quello di Terra Santa, da Gioseppe Rosaccio, con brevità descritto, nel quale, oltre à settantadui disegni, di geografia e corografia si discorre, quanto in esso viaggio si ritroua, cioè: città, castelli, porti, golfi, isole, monti, fiumi è mari: opera utile à mercanti, marinari & à studiosi di geografia*, Venice, Giacomo Franco, 1598.

had been particularly praised⁵ and all decision-makers agreed on him being the right person to treat the issues of eastern possessions. In retrospect, their choice proved the best possible.

Coincidentally, Giovanni Battista del Monte was sojourning in Venice at that time. He had just accomplished the task of reorganizing the infantry (*fanterie*) of the Terraferma, assigned to him by the Senate.⁶ In response to the possibility of

5 About his overall contribution to the military organization of the Venetian State in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, see Michael E. MALLETT and John R. HALE, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State. Venice c. 1400 to 1617*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 308-309, 325, 360-362 and 369-370; Sir John R. HALE, *L'organizzazione militare di Venezia nel '500*, Roma, Jouvence, 1990, passim.

6 The task was assigned to Giovanni Battista del Monte on 11 July 1587 and on 8 November 1587 he presented the measures he had taken in order to improve defence: ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI VENEZIA (hereafter: ASVe), *Secreta-Materie Miste Notabili*, register (hereafter: reg.) 20.

undertaking a similar task in the Levant, he answered positively, asking, though, to be informed of the Senate's decision in good time, before his departure for Brescia, so that he could settle his affairs.⁷ Following this positive development, the way was now open.

By the Senate's decision of 17 June 1588 the eminent military man was elected as *capitano generale delle fanterie*. The supreme Venetian body provided him with a very specific plan of action. His mission in the Levant had to start the soonest possible, as there could be no delay. He was to depart for Crete together with Alvise Giustinian, who would be the General Provveditor of the island. In the following winter he had to be in Crete so as to thoroughly examine all its defensive positions. In spring he had to depart for Zakynthos (Zante) and Cephalonia, and give proper attention to the fortress of Corfu. On his way back to Venice, he was to stop in Zara and the rest of the Dalmatian fortresses. His mission completed, he would submit an analytical activity report.⁸

The Senate promptly informed Giovanni Battista del Monte of his election, which he accepted.⁹ After settling certain issues in the areas of Brescia and Bergamo, he went back to Venice and started getting thoroughly informed about his new domain of responsibility. On 22 July, however, he requested a short postponement of his departure for Crete. Instead of mid-August, as originally planned, he wished to depart only a short time later. Personal reasons – mainly his father's health condition which had been aggravated – made it imperative for him to extend his sojourn.¹⁰

Understandably, his request was approved. In its decision of 3 August, the Senate clarified that since General Provveditor Zuanne Mocenigo, who would report on the situation of the island, was soon expected to arrive in Crete,¹¹ Giovan-

7 ASVe, *Senato Deliberazioni (Secreta)*, reg. 86 (1587-1588), f. 172v (old numbering f. 152v).

8 ASVe, *Senato Deliberazioni (Secreta)*, reg. 86 (1587-1588), f. 172v (old numbering f. 152v).

9 ASVe, *Senato Deliberazioni (Secreta)*, filza 59 (1588): Giovanni Battista del Monte's letter to the doge of Venice, Pasquale Cicogna (Venice, 18 June 1588).

10 ASVe, *Senato Deliberazioni (Secreta)*, filza 59 (1588): Giovanni Battista del Monte's letter to the doge of Venice, Pasquale Cicogna (Venice, 22 July 1588).

11 Zuanne Mocenigo son of the late Andrea first served as general provveditor in Crete in the years 1585-1588: ASVe, *Segretario alle Voci, Elezioni dei Pregadi*, reg. 5 (1578-1588), f. 139r (old numbering f. 137r). The report he submitted to the Senate on 17 April 1589 was

ni Battista del Monte's departure would delay in order for his dispatch to be methodically planned on the basis of the latest developments. This was communicated to Giovanni Battista del Monte the following day. The Senate expressed its satisfaction with his decision to accept the position of *capitano generale delle fanterie*, but also its conviction that he would carry it out successfully. At the same time, however, in order for no more valuable time to be wasted, it authorised the Savi di Collegio to draw up and submit for approval an action plan for the Venetian officer within the following six days.¹²

On 6 August 1588, in accordance with established practice, the Senate approved Giovanni Battista del Monte's *commissione*, that is to say the written orders assigned to an officer departing on a mission, which provided a detailed description of the framework within which he was to act in the time ahead. He had to set sail for Crete with caution so as to avoid the Ottoman fleet sailing in the region. After being thoroughly informed about the existing problems by the General Proveditor, Zuanne Mocenigo, he had to carefully examine all the defence issues of the island. On completion of his tour, he would sail to Zakynthos and Cephalonia in a special boat, intended for his exclusive use. On his way back to Venice, he would stop in Corfu, Zara and the rest of the Dalmatian fortresses.¹³

The Venetian officer was also provided with letters of recommendation addressed to the authorities of the places he would visit, written by the doge of Venice, Pasquale Cicogna. According to these letters, the governors of eastern possessions were required to readily provide the best possible assistance to Giovanni Battista del Monte during the performance of his duties. As clarified, they were required to make arrangements for him to *vedere particolarmente esse fortezze, terre, siti et porti, fanteria, cavallaria, ordinanze et munizioni delle vostre giuriditioni, et informarlo di quelle particolarità che fussero necessarie*.¹⁴

It was also clearly stated that the newly appointed officer was highly ranked.

published by Stergios SPANAKIS, *Μνημεία της Κρητικής Ιστορίας*, Vol. 1, Iraklio, 1940 (reprint Iraklio, Εκδόσεις «Σφακιανός», 1985).

12 ASVe, *Senato Deliberazioni (Secreta)*, reg. 86 (1587-1588), f. 189r (old numbering f. 169r).

13 ASVe, *Senato Deliberazioni (Secreta)*, reg. 86 (1587-1588), ff. 189r-190r (old numbering f. 169r-170r).

14 ASVe, *Senato Deliberazioni (Secreta)*, reg. 86 (1587-1588), f. 190r-v (old numbering f. 170r-v).

While in Crete, he would be subordinate to the general proveditor,¹⁵ and in Corfu, to the baylo, the proveditor and the capitano. Accordingly, in Zakynthos and Cephalonia he would be below the proveditor while in Cattaro, Zara, Sebenico, Traù and Spalato, below the rector (*rettori*) or the count (*conte*).¹⁶ There was a clear description of Giovanni Battista del Monte's responsibility and authority, obviously at his request, with a view to avoiding common misunderstandings amongst officers.

In an effort to eliminate any chance of his work being impeded, all his requests were satisfied. During his tour, he would be accompanied by 6 captains (*capitani*) and 12 halberdiers (*alabardieri*) with a corporal (*capo*). What is more, on 6 August, their salary, which was to be paid in currencies *a valuta di Levante*, was determined with precision. The authorities of the Venetian possessions in the Levant were also charged with the responsibility to provide accommodation in monasteries or other suitable places for both Giovanni Battista del Monte and his family in all the regions he would visit.¹⁷

His tour in the Levant

The following days were dedicated to better organizing his mission. To achieve this, all the necessary steps were taken. On 27 August the captain of the Gulf (*capitano in Colfo*) was notified. Upon receiving the relevant letter, he was required to send Venice a galley to receive the *capitano generale delle fanterie* and transfer him to Crete. The nature of the mission required absolute secrecy to be maintained.¹⁸

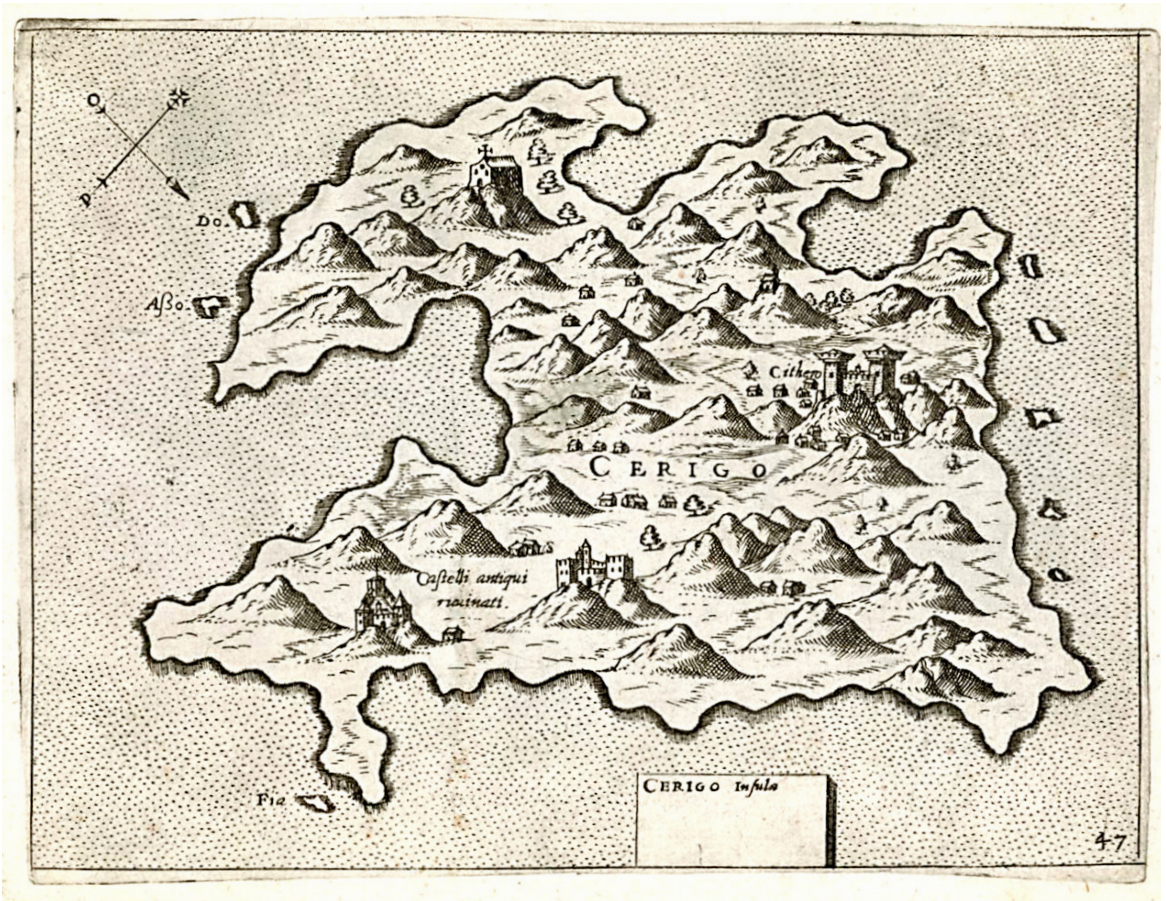
In the following period, Giovanni Battista del Monte dedicated himself to the systematic study of the pending military issues in the Levant. At his request, on 7 September, Giulio Pellegrini was appointed by the Senate as one of his follow-

15 ASVe, *Senato Deliberazioni (Secreta)*, reg. 86 (1587-1588), f. 190r (old numbering f. 170r).

16 ASVe, *Senato Deliberazioni (Secreta)*, reg. 86 (1587-1588), f. 190v (old numbering f. 170v). See the relevant Kostas G. ΤΣΙΚΝΑΚΙΣ, *Οι εκθέσεις των βενετών προνοητών της Κεφαλονιάς (16ος αιώνας)* (Πηγές 12), Athens, Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών. Ινστιτούτο Βυζαντινών Ερευνών, 2008, p. XXXVII, n. 126.

17 ASVe, *Senato Mar*, reg. 49, ff. 94v-95r (old numbering ff. 70v-71r).

18 ASVe, *Senato Deliberazioni (Secreta)*, reg. 86 (1587-1588), f. 198r (old numbering f. 178r).



Cerigo (Kythera) c. 1574. 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, [c. 1574], p. 46.

ers, on the grounds that having served in Crete in the past and knowing the Greek language well, he would be of valuable assistance to him and the difficult work he had undertaken.¹⁹

Giovanni Battista del Monte finally left Venice in the first days of October 1588, taking with him his family and the necessary supplies. The rest of the galleys were waiting for him in the Dalmatian sea. The new Venetian authorities

¹⁹ ASVe, *Senato Mar*, reg. 49, f. 109v (old numbering f. 85v).

who were to take office in Crete had already boarded two of those galleys.²⁰ These were: the general provveditor (*provveditor general*) Alvisè Giustinian, the duke (*duca*) Alberto Loredan, the infantry provveditor (*provveditor della cavalleria*) Marc' Antonio Venier and the general captain (*capitanio general*) Zuan Bembo.²¹ They all together continued their journey to the island.

In mid-October, however, the galleys had to anchor at Corfu for approximately fifteen days. It was impossible for them to continue their route to the south because of the active presence of the Ottoman fleet, which increased the risk of a heated incident.²² That period, though, proved highly beneficial to the *capitanio general delle fanterie*, as he was given the opportunity to have a close look at the fortification of the island – in progress at the time– and spot the existing problems. This way, he gained a first picture of the situation he would be faced with in the months to come.²³

After taking many precautions, the Venetian galleys finally departed from Corfu to reach Zakynthos in late October,²⁴ and once the Ottoman fleet had left the Ionian Sea to winter in the Dardanelles, they continued their voyage to Crete. They first reached Chania, where they remained for three days. Then, on 9 November –30 October according to the old Julian calendar used at the time on the island– they arrived in Chandakas (Candia).²⁵

In the following months, Giovanni Battista del Monte toured all the depart-

20 ASVe, *Senato Mar*, reg. 49, ff. 94v-95r (old numbering ff. 70v-71r) and ASVe, *Senato De-liberazioni (Secreta)*, reg. 86 (1587-1588), f. 198r (old numbering f. 178r).

21 About the powers and responsibilities of officers in these positions see Aspasia ΠΑΠΑΔΑΚΙ, «Αξιιώματα στη βενετοκρατούμενη Κρήτη κατά το 16ο και 17ο αιώνα», *Κρητικά Χρονικά*, 26 (1986), pp. 99-136 (in particular pp. 102-105).

22 ASVe, *Senato-Provveditori da Terra e da Mar*, filza 754 (March 1588-February 1589): Letter of the duke, the captain, the general provveditor and the cavalry commander of Crete to the doge of Venice, Pasquale Cicogna (Corfu, 19 October 1588).

23 ASVe, *Senato-Provveditori da Terra e da Mar*, filza 754 (March 1588-February 1589): Letter of Giovanni Battista del Monte to the doge of Venice, Pasquale Cicogna (Corfu, 27 October 1588).

24 ASVe, *Senato-Provveditori da Terra e da Mar*, filza 754 (March 1588-February 1589): Letter of the duke, the captain, the general provveditor and the cavalry commander of Crete to the doge of Venice, Pasquale Cicogna (Zakynthos, 31 October 1588).

25 ASVe, *Senato-Provveditori da Terra e da Mar*, filza 754 (March 1588-February 1589): Letter of the duke, the captain, the general provveditor and the cavalry commander of Crete to the doge of Venice, Pasquale Cicogna (Candia, 5 November 1588).

ments of the island, carefully examining their lines of defence.²⁶ Many times there was need for him to provide solutions on site which proved beneficial.²⁷ This was often highlighted in the letters sent to the doge by the Venetian authorities of the island at the time. It appears that, in the same period, he socialized with some intellectual men of Crete who would speak highly of him in the time to come.²⁸ His prolonged stay in Crete, though, longer than originally scheduled, seemed to preoccupy the Senate, which, by its letter of 20 April 1589, notified him of the need for him to speed up his departure and prepare his return to Venice. His services were needed elsewhere as well. He was to embark on a ship which would transfer

26 The archive material of his presence on the island at this period is quite rich. A study dealing with the work and proposals of Giovanni Battista del Monte in Crete as a whole is therefore needed. A simple reference to his presence on the island is made in Pezzolo's article, «Aspetti della struttura militare veneziana in Levante tra cinque e seicento» cit., p. 88.

27 To get some idea of Del Monte's proposals see Stergios G. SPANAKIS, «Κανονισμός της Φρουράς του "Βασιλείου της Κρήτης" (1588)», *Κρητικά Χρονικά*, 2 (1948), pp. 73-92, in which the text of the Cretan army garrison regulation, issued in 1588 by Giovanni Battista del Monte, is published. The publication is based on a copy of Florence. In «Έκθεση για τη στρατιωτική κατάσταση της Κρήτης (1589)», *Κρητικά Χρονικά*, 2 (1948), pp. 235-252, Stergios G. Spanakis publishes a report on the military situation of Crete, found in a copy in the State Archive of Florence which he ascribes to Giovanni Battista del Monte. This report is alleged to have been written in 1589. Indications within the text, however, suggest that in all probability the author of the report is not Giovanni Battista del Monte. More specifically, the anonymous author mentions in a paragraph (p. 237) that he stayed in Crete for four years and two months, that is from 31 May 1585 to 31 July 1589. As mentioned above though, the time Giovanni Battista del Monte stayed in Crete was much shorter.

28 There is, however, a negative reference to his work in Crete, made by the illustrious Venetian Cretan scholar Andreas Kornaros (1548-1616/1617), in his famous *Historia Candiana*, available in a number of manuscripts (ASVe, *Miscellanea Codici*, Serie I, Storia Veneta, reg. 67, f. 333r-v). For these specific pages, see Stefanos KAKLAMANIS, «Ειδήσεις για την πνευματική ζωή στον Χάνδακα από το 16ο βιβλίο της "Istoria Candiana" του Ανδρέα Κορνάρου», in Ioannis VASSIS, Stefanos KAKLAMANIS and Marina LOUKAKI (Ed.), *Παιδεία και Πολιτισμός στην Κρήτη. Βυζάντιο – Βενετοκρατία. Μελέτες αφιερωμένες στον Θεοχάρη Δετοράκη*, Iraklio, Πανεπιστημιακές Εκδόσεις Κρήτης and Εκδόσεις Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης, 2008, p. 137 n. 49, 211 and 213. An other illustrious Cretan scholar, Ioannis Vergitsis (1540/1550-1606) also refers to the presence of Giovanni Battista del Monte on the island in the fifteenth book of his *Epitomi de Libri della Storia del Regno di Candia 1597* (ASVe, *Miscellanea Codici*, Serie I, Storia Veneta, filza 142, document no. 46, f. 102v). See Irini LYDAKI, «Ιωάννης Βεργίτισης. Κρητικός λόγιος του 16ου αιώνα. Βιογραφικά και εργογραφικά», *Θησαυρίσματα*, 29 (1999), pp. 245-246 n. 102.

him to Corfu.²⁹ In the end, Del Monte remained on the island until mid-June 1589.

Time was now short for him to visit the Ionian Islands; nevertheless, on recommendation of the island's general provveditor, he decided to examine the fortress of Kythera (Cerigo), amending the written orders he had received. As Alvise Giustinian explained, *la qual fortezza, giudicando io per il suo sito, [è] importantissima quanto altra di questo Regno*, he advised Del Monte to go and see it, *se bene dalla Serenità Vostra non ha in questo proposito né lettere né commissione alcuna*. In that case, he reassured him that *non si ritarderà il suo viaggio, poiché in due hore la potrà vedere commodamente*.³⁰ As a result, instead of sailing to Zakynthos, Giovanni Battista del Monte anchored in Kythera for a few hours in order to examine the fortress of the island. Sticking to the plan, he visited Zakynthos, Cephalonia and Corfu, immediately thereafter. Sailing back to Venice, he stopped at the most important fortresses of the Dalmatian coastline for a brief inspection.

In early August 1589 Giovanni Battista del Monte was back in Venice and by a resolution dated 18 August the Senate showed its appreciation for the work he had carried out, making it clear that it had no doubt his report about Crete would prove valuable to the Venetian affairs.³¹

Having formed a clear opinion on the problems of the Levant, Giovanni Battista del Monte, as was the practice, proceeded to drafting three reports (*relazioni*) to the competent body, the *Collegio*. The first and most extensive report was about Crete, the second, about the Ionian Islands,³² and the third, about the Venetian possessions in Dalmatia. Both their extent and order of submission clearly revealed how important each of these regions was to the *Serenissima*. Be that as it may, all the three reports are most useful, providing us with valuable information about the defence of the Levant.

29 ASVe, *Senato Deliberazioni (Secreta)*, reg. 87 (1588-1589), f. 62v (old numbering f. 42v).

30 ASVe, *Senato-Provveditori da Terra e da Mar*, filza 755 (March 1589-February 1590 and March 1590-February 1591): Letter of the general provveditor of Crete Alvise Giustinian to the doge of Venice, Pasquale Cicogna (Chania, 6 June 1589).

31 ASVe, *Senato Deliberazioni (Secreta)*, reg. 87 (1588-1589), f. 116r-v (old numbering f. 96r-v).

32 ASVe, *Secreta-Materie Miste Notabili*, filza 1: *Relatione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et Corfù. Presentata nell'Eccellentissimo Collegio adì XXVII Agosto MDLXXXIX*, ff. 1r-5v. Reference to the report will be made as follows: *Relatione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et Corfù*.



Zante (Zakynthos) c. 1574. Source: Giovanni Francesco Camocio, *Isole famose porti, fortezze, e terre marittime 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, [c. 1574], p. 29.

The defence status in the Ionian Islands

Giovanni Battista del Monte's report to the Doge of Venice concerning the Ionian Islands was drawn up at his home on 24 August 1589 and submitted to the *Collegio* three days later, on 27 August. The military status of the Ionian Islands, as described in this document of major importance, will be presented in the following pages.³³

³³ Giovanni Battista del Monte's report, used as the basis of this article, refers to the defence

Giovanni Battista del Monte is a military man and, as such, is not particularly meticulous about tidying up his style of writing. He does not make unnecessary digressions which may complicate the situation. Using short, almost terse words, he explains every problem and the way he dealt with it, as well as the necessary steps to be taken in order to prevent it from appearing again.

His stop at Kythera lasted no more than a few hours, and that was because he wanted to avoid the Ottoman fleet reported to be sailing in the region. What he only, therefore, managed to do was to run a quick check on land, focusing on the preparedness of the military forces. Although vulnerable to possible artillery attacks, several parts of the fortress remained unprotected, thus repair work was needed promptly. Despite the fact that ships sailing from or to Crete often called at the port of Kythera, the island had no safe port in reality. Del Monte, however, did not recommend spending much money on its construction, on the grounds that this would make it easier for the Ottomans to disembark troops and artillery on the island and take it over, whereas without artillery, it was practically impossible for them to take possession of it. The Italian infantry (*fanteria italiana*) consisted of 95 soldiers divided in two companies (*compagnie*). There were also 4 salaried artillerymen (*bombardieri salariati*) under a corporal (*capo*). The former were quite competent but the latter was old. During the check on the artillery (*artiglieria*) certain deficiencies were identified, which could be remedied with support from Crete. He had informed the general proveditor so that he would settle the issue by sending material from Crete or Venice.³⁴

While in Zakynthos, Giovanni Battista del Monte inspected the salaried soldiers stationed on the island, the Greek militias and the cavalry. The fortress, as he noted, was situated far from the sea, and its construction dated back long, which meant a full repair of it would cost too much money and was therefore not recommended. The town, thanks to its position, was capable of facing hostile raids, which rendered unnecessary any repair of its fortification, even a partial one. This was not, however, the case with the burg, where the enemy could disembark with ease, hence the need to find ways to eliminate the danger. As to

of Kythera, Zakynthos and Cephalonia, but does not give details on the situation of defence in Corfu; this is extensively described in a separate note he submitted to the island's general proveditor. In this article, only the contents of his report are commented on.

34 *Relazione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et Corfù*, f. 2r.

the salaried soldiers (*soldati pagati*), these numbered 24, all of whom were locals. Because of the low salary they earned however—one sequin per month—they showed little interest. Some of them were hardly suitable for their role, if not absolutely useless. Their leader was about eight years old and had been given that position in recognition of his father's services. As he was going to school, it was his grandfather on his mother's side who commanded the military unit; a man in his seventies who had never used weapons before. Another person, suitable to be their leader, had to be found until the boy came of age. Only in this way, could they hope for real assistance if need be. Despite their number, the local militia (*ordinanze*) of Zakynthos were far from effective. As affirmed by the Venetian authorities of the island, few men could hold an arquebus (*archibuso*). Del Monte suggested selecting a few, skilful and well-trained ones, and dismissing those who were useless, on the grounds that the former would be of better service despite their small number. The cavalry (*cavallaria*) of the island was composed of 116 horsemen, divided in three units under the command of Alexandros Laskaris, who was generally acknowledged to be a highly competent military man. Although there were many old locals amongst them, the cavalymen were at a satisfactory state of readiness. However, a good number of the warhorses were in a bad condition, and it was important to make sure this was stopped. According to Del Monte, little assistance could be expected from a brave man riding a bad horse, thus only horses in a good condition should be kept. They would be fewer but of greater assistance.³⁵

While visiting Cephalonia, Giovanni Battista del Monte started by inspecting the Italian infantry.³⁶ Numbering 48 men divided in two units, the infantry was in a similar condition to that of the other islands, if not worse. That was because it included *diversi greci et alcuni ancora della propria isola*. The local militia were in the same discouraging condition; in fact, they could only be compared to those of Zakynthos. As discovered by the Venetian proveditor, few men knew how to hold the arquebus, which is why Del Monte ordered that their troop be reorganized; the best amongst them had to be selected and given diligent training by an experienced and skilful captain. Particularly encouraging was, however, the

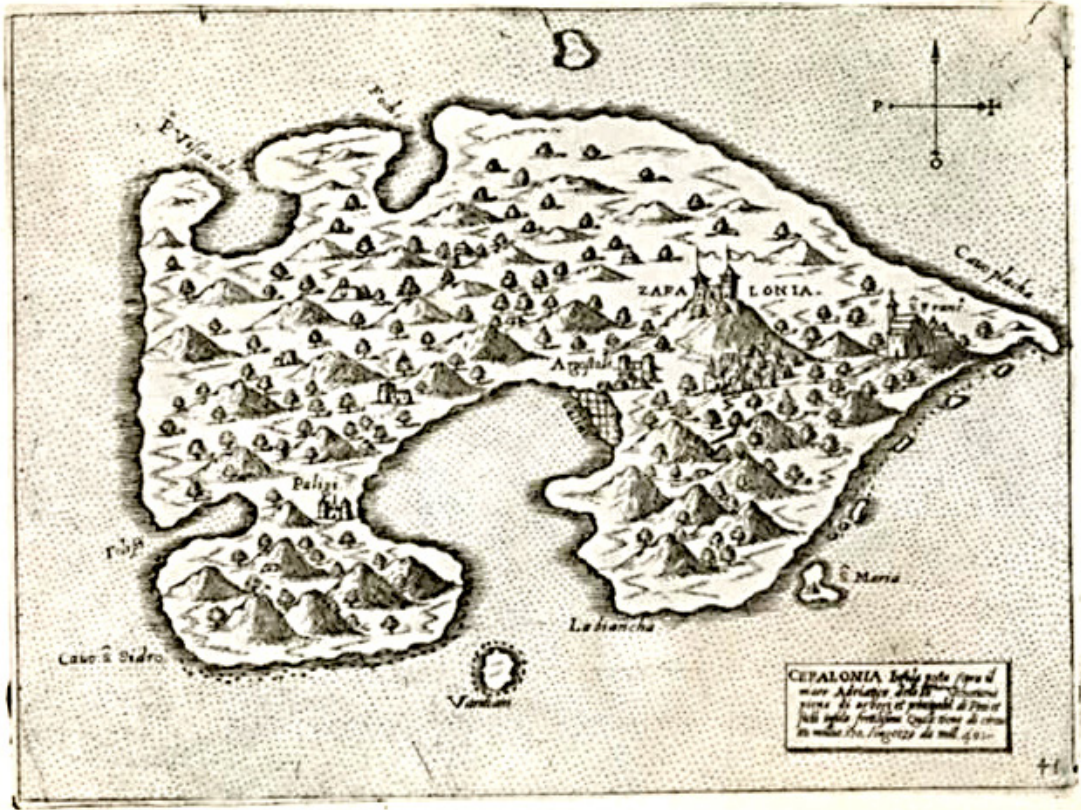
35 *Relazione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et Corfù*, ff. 2r-3r.

36 *Relazione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et Corfù*, ff. 3r-4v.

image of the artillery. Del Monte satisfied himself that the four artillerymen and their leader were most capable. Although of the 60 trainees (*scolari*) only 29 appeared before him, they were well trained. Firearm supplies on the island were quite sufficient and as to a slight shortage of materials he had noted, he would give the Senate a separate explanatory note if asked to. The cavalry, however, was showing signs of disintegration. There were two kinds of cavalry; the first was that of the mercenaries (*provigionati*), numbering 87 men, and the second was that of the locals (*decimali*), numbering 154 men divided in nine units. The whole cavalry was under the command of Giovanni Guasconi. The 40 best mercenary cavalrymen had been sent from Zara under a mandate from Venice. The other 47 were mostly useless old men who did not even know how to ride a horse. These men had to be dismissed and other men had to be placed in their positions; men who would prove useful if the need arose. Likewise, as Del Monte found out himself and was informed by the island's proveditor, the biggest part of the local cavalry comprised village men, who knew nothing about riding horses, completely incompetent and useless. There were only a few men knowing the basics of their service and it was mainly on them that Venice had to count for the reconstruction of the cavalry. As to the fortress of the island, due to being small and far from the sea, it was not worthily of attention.³⁷ There was no need for construct or repair work as, given its location, it did not carry the importance of seaside fortresses, which meant the enemy armada would not need to disembark artillery or troops to attack it; in fact, it was secure enough to meet any possible attacks. Under the instructions of the Senate, Del Monte dedicates many lines of his report to the issue of building a fortress on the Assos peninsula, an issue that was being discussed at the time. He describes the natural peninsula as an easily defended stronghold and explains how a potential fortification could prove effective for the overall defence of the island.³⁸

37 *Relatione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Cefalonia et Corfù*, f. 3v. For more about the Fortress of Saint George see mainly Nikolaos FOKAS-KOSMETATOS, *Το Κάστρο του Αγίου Γεωργίου Κεφαλληνίας. Η παλαιά πρωτεύουσα της νήσου*, Athens, 1966; Nikolaos FOKAS-KOSMETATOS, «Συμπληρωματικά εις τα περί του Κάστρου "Αγίου Γεωργίου" Κεφαλληνίας», in *Διεθνές Ινστιτούτον Φρουρίων. Πεπραγμένα. Η' Επιστημονική Σύνοδος*, Athens, Τεχνικόν Επιμελητήριον της Ελλάδος, 1968, pp. 179-181.

38 *Relatione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Cefalonia et Corfù*, ff. 3v-4v.



Cefalonia (Cephalonia) c. 1574. 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, [c. 1574], p. 47.

His last destination in the Ionian Sea was Corfu. As already mentioned, he had already obtained a first idea of the military status there on his way to Crete. During those fifteen days spent in Corfu, he and the general proveditor had discussed certain measures which, having been promptly implemented, were already bringing results. Taking advantage of Del Monte's returning to the island, the general proveditor of Corfu asked him to submit his ideas on how to better organize defence in the future in writing. Del Monte agreed to this request and submitted his opinion on the matter.³⁹ Not having anything else to add, he attached a copy of

³⁹ *Relazione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et Corfù*, f. 4v.

the submitted note as an annex to his report.⁴⁰ Most of Del Monte's remarks were about fortification technical details which cannot be mentioned here.⁴¹ His observations concerning manpower were not essentially different from those concerning the rest of the Ionian Islands. According to the document, Venice had to make considerable efforts in order to ensure a more effective defence in Corfu; only in this way would the island be kept under its control, which was of vital importance to the Stato da Mar, given that schemes for its conquest were constantly being developed by both the Ottomans and the Spanish. The latter, in particular, operated using a wide circle of spies who filled the ranks of the Venetian military forces.⁴² The biggest part of Del Monte's main report was dedicated to the way in which the fortress of the island would be safe. There was one thing, though, he also stressed in his report, and that was the need for the Spanish Consul to be removed at the earliest possible opportunity, on the grounds that he was doing nothing more than acting as a spy. He came from Naples and was a highly competent man. Having been on the island for years and married to a local woman, he was always aware of the latest developments; consequently, the Spanish knew about everything going on in Corfu in every detail.⁴³

The importance of the report

Giovanni Battista del Monte's report on the defence of the Ionian Islands is shorter than its equivalent on Crete but more detailed than the one on the Dalmatian possessions. As already pointed out, this is indicative of the importance of each region for Venice. This also accounts for the Venetian officer's prolonged

40 Giovanni Battista del Monte's extensive note about the defence of Corfu, attached to the main report on the Ionian islands, is entitled *Copia della scrittura lasciata all'illustrissimo signore provveditore de Corfù*, ff. 1r-4v. In a following article, I propose to deal with the important points he makes about the defence of the island.

41 About the fortification works taking place on the island at this period, see Afroditi AGOROULOU-BIRBILI, *Η αρχιτεκτονική της πόλεως της Κερκύρας κατά την περίοδο της Ενετοκρατίας*, Athens 1977, pp. 50-67. Also, Ennio CONCINA, «Ο Άγιος Μάρκος, η ακρόπολη, η πόλη», in Ennio CONCINA and Alikì NIKIFOROU-TESTONE (Ed.), *Κέρκυρα: Ιστορία, Αστική ζωή και Αρχιτεκτονική 14ος-19ος αι.*, Corfu, Istituto universitario di architettura. Laboratorio di analisi dei materiali antichi and Γενικά Αρχεία του Κράτους, Αρχεία Νομού Κέρκυρας, 1994, pp. 29-37.

42 *Copia della scrittura lasciata all'illustrissimo signore provveditore de Corfù*, f. 1r-v.

43 *Relatione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et Corfù*, ff. 4v-5r.

stay in Crete unlike the initial plan. The defence of the island was faced with extremely acute problems and particular care was needed.

According to the main points of Giovanni Battista del Monte's report, as mentioned above, the military status in the Ionian Islands was disappointing. There appeared to be no optimistic prospect and it should not be forgotten that this was the situation no more than a few years after the implementation of the Senate's ambitious programme, aimed at shielding the defence in the Levant.⁴⁴

Under the circumstances, the question arises how come the Ottomans did not take advantage of the military dysfunction in the Ionian region at that period and did not endeavour to occupy the islands. The answer must be sought in the peace treaty they had signed with the Venetians on 7 March 1573. Neither of the two parties seemed willing to dispute it, at least not at that period.

All the sectors having to do with the defence of the islands were weak. First of all, the fortifications, for the most part, proved completely inefficient. To address the deficiencies, Giovanni Battista del Monte was clear; the Venetian State should spare no expense in remedying them and was urged to carry out the work with regard to the fortresses, including those of Kythera and Corfu. This way, every island would have its central defence zone. As to the fortresses of Zakynthos and Cephalonia, which were situated far from the sea, no excessive expense was needed.

Giovanni Battista del Monte's ideas concerning the potential construction of a fortress in the area of Assos proved particularly valuable. As he pointed out, the residents of Cephalonia were willing to assume not only the construction cost of the fortification but also the maintenance cost of its equipment. Del Monte insisted that if that was the case, Venice had to move the issue forward as much as it could, and once started, it had to be completed soon. In addition, care had to be taken to ensure that the fortified area became inhabited in order to prevent any possible occupation by the Ottomans. As highlighted in the report, whoever owned that area would own the whole island.⁴⁵ Del Monte's suggestions enriched

44 PEZZOLO, «Aspetti della struttura militare veneziana in Levante» cit., pp. 86-89; Ennio CONCINA, «Città e fortezze nelle "tre isole nostre del Levante"», *Venezia e la difesa del Levante. Da Lepanto a Candia 1570-1670*, Venice, Arsenale Editrice, 1986, pp. 184-220.

45 *Relatione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et Corfù*, ff. 3v-4v. At the beginning of the paragraph including Giovanni Battista del Monte's views on Assos, there is a note made in the margin right beside the paragraph, in a dif-

the debate over the usefulness of constructing a fortification on the remote peninsula of Assos, an issue which was dominating the military circles in Venice at the time. In fact, his suggestions were so concrete that they were almost to their entirety adopted by the Senate in its decision on the matter in 1593.⁴⁶

Oftentimes, on the other hand, the nature of the islands itself acted as a deterrent against the enemy. Typical was the case of Kythera, where defence seemed almost non-existent. In spite of the lack of an adequate port, Giovanni Battista del Monte concluded that no money should be spent on constructing one, as, this way, it would be easier for the Ottomans to disembark troops and artillery and, conducting a quick attack, occupy the island.⁴⁷

Overall, the state of the artillery was satisfactory. Some of the equipment, however, was obsolete. This was the case in Kythera and Cephalonia, which is why it had to be replaced under the responsibility of the Venetian central government. As to the artillery manpower, they, too, showed a positive image. They all appeared skilled and fit enough. A memorable case was that of Cephalonia, where not only the artillerymen but also the trainees were in a good condition. However, the good impression the island made on Del Monte was compromised by the fact that only 29 of the 60 trainees appeared before him.⁴⁸

The infantry forces stationed on the islands could barely inspire any trust. It

ferent handwriting: *Circa il sito di Asso*. This also gives an indication of the importance attributed to his views on the matter before the final decision concerning the construction of the fortress of Assos.

46 About the mobility concerning the construction of a fortress in Assos during that period, see Kostas G. ΤΣΙΚΝΑΚΙΣ, «Οι προσπάθειες για την ίδρυση του φρουρίου της Άσου στην Κεφαλονιά (1576-1593)», in Georgios N. MOSCHOPOULOS (Ed.), *Πρακτικά του Ε' Διεθνούς Πανιονίου Συνεδρίου (Αργοστόλι-Ληξούρι, 17-21 Μαΐου 1986)*, Vol. 1, *Ιστορία ως το 1809*, Argostoli, Εταιρεία Κεφαλληνιακών Ιστορικών Ερευνών, 1989, pp. 93-106 (on page 101 reference to Giovanni Battista del Monte's views on the matter of Assos); Kostas G. ΤΣΙΚΝΑΚΙΣ, «Πληροφορίες για την κατασκευή του Φρουρίου της Άσου στην Κεφαλονιά τα χρόνια 1593-1594», in Ilias TOUMASATOS and Georgios N. MOSCHOPOULOS (Ed.), *ΙΑ' Διεθνές Πανίονιο Συνέδριο. Επτανησιακός βίος και πολιτισμός. Κεφαλονιά, 21-25 Μαΐου 2018. Πρακτικά*, Vol. 3, *Κοινωνική Ιστορία, Τύπος, Μουσική, Θέατρο, Τα Ιόνια Νησιά σήμερα*, Argostoli, Εταιρεία Κεφαλληνιακών Ιστορικών Ερευνών, 2019, pp. 53-68.

47 *Relatione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et Corfù*, f. 2r.

48 *Relatione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et Corfù*, f. 3r.

was only in Kythera that the Italian companies were in a satisfactory condition. In Cephalonia, by contrast, the infantry was at the worst possible state, as some Greeks –amongst whom many locals– had joined its ranks. As to the salaried soldiers of Zakynthos, these were solely locals, some of whom were considered to be unsuitable or completely incompetent to offer the services they were supposed to. An illustrative example which epitomized what was happening on the island, was the fact that the infantry was being led by an eight-year-old boy. When the boy was going to school, he was replaced by his old grandfather, who knew nothing about weapons.⁴⁹

The condition of the cavalry differed in several aspects. The cavalry of Zakynthos, which was under the command of Alexandros Laskaris, was well arranged as a whole. However, there were two important flaws. Despite their large number, the cavalry men were old, and as to the horses they used, they were not in good physical condition. Cephalonia, on the other hand, was a special case, with two cavalry units under the command of Giovanni Guasconi. In comparison, partly consisting of competent men from Zara, the mercenary unit (*provisionati*) was more efficient. The local unit (*decimali*) was in complete disorder, as very few horsemen were capable of riding their horses. Giovanni Battista del Monte's advice was clear; the governors of the islands had to replace the old and useless horsemen with other capable ones. He was against the idea of preferring a larger number of men to a smaller one. In times of crisis, it would be better to have a few well trained men than many who would be incompetent, as only the former would provide substantial help.

Referring to the condition of the cavalry in Cephalonia, Giovanni Battista del Monte comes to an overall conclusion of particular interest. Venice deluded itself of having a good cavalry not only in the Ionian islands but all over the Levant, capable of being victorious throughout its territory. On the contrary, it was his belief that if need be, Venice would find itself without either men or horses. The stark reality would then be revealed: the biggest part of the local men were registered as Albanians –which meant as light cavalry– and the biggest part of the horses were in a bad condition.⁵⁰

49 *Relatione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et Corfù*, f. 2v.

50 *Relatione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et*



Venetian Shipyard in Gouvia, Corfu, Foto Mark Ryckaert, 2012.
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As to the local militia, the situation was disappointing.⁵¹ That was the case in both islands about which Giovanni Battista del Monte provided information, Zakynthos and Cephalonia. Only very few men knew how to hold an arquebus. Under the circumstances, what Del Monte proposed as the best solution was reorganizing the corps. The most competent men should be selected and put under the command of an experienced man, who would train them properly. The rest should be dismissed. The rationale was the same: a few but well trained militia-men would prove of greater help than many who would be incompetent.

Concluding his report, Giovanni Battista del Monte pointed out that efforts were needed to provide all the fortifications with large quantities of the latest weapons. Such were the wall and fork muskets (*moschetti da muraglia e da forcina*).⁵² Designed to cause the greatest number of casualties, these weapons would

Corfù, f. 3v.

51 More about the institution of the militia in Greek regions under the Venetian rule in Ioannis D. PSARAS, *Ο θεσμός της πολιτοφυλακής στις βενετικές κτήσεις του ελληνικού χώρου (16ος-18ος αι.)*, Thessaloniki, Εκδόσεις Βάνιας, 1988 (on pp. 41-72 about Crete, on pp. 75-82 about Kythera, on pp. 83-91 about Corfu, on pp. 91-98 about Zakynthos and 98-103 about Cephalonia).

52 This weapon, manufactured in the Netherlands in the late 16th century, was widely used in



Plan of the castle of Assos in Cefalonia (Cephalonia) 1687 Source: Vincenzo Coronelli, *Description géographique et historique de la Morée, reconquise par les Venitiens du royaume de Negrepoint, des lieux circonvoisins, et de ceux qu'ils ont soumis dans la Dalmatie, & dans l'Épire, depuis la Guerre qu'ils ont déclarée aux Turcs en 1684 iusqu'en 1687. Enrichie de plusieurs plans & vues de Places de mêmes Païs, par le Père Coronelli, Cosmographe de la Serenissime République de Venise. Aux dépens de l'Auteur, Paris, Nicolas Langlois, MDCLXXXVII [=1687], table 72.*

prevent the enemy from attacking. The artillery weapons they already had were difficult to use, needed a larger quantity of gunpowder and were too noisy caus-

the regions under the Venetian rule in the following decades. For a detailed description and a picture of it, see Marco MORIN, *Armi antiche. Armi da fuoco individuali dell'Occidente dalle origini al sistema a percussione. Armi da difesa, da caccia, militari. Accensione a miccia a ruota, a pietra focaia*, Preface John R. HALE, Milan, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1982, no. 15 (*moschetto a miccia con forcina*).



Castle of Assos in Cefalonia (Cephalonia).

ing a small number of casualties, while muskets, capable of adapting to any battlefield, were used with ease, needed little gunpowder and could cause a large number of casualties even from a long distance.⁵³

For Giovanni Battista del Monte a key-factor for the success of the plan of action the Venetians were about to take on was the participation of the locals, which should be more substantial. Any attempt to sideline them would only cause problems. Only local people, who cared about their property, could fight the enemy effectively. In this regard, he suggested an expansion of the local militia so that a good number of local men would take part in defending their land. Upon his rec-

⁵³ *Relatione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Ceffalonia et Corfù*, f. 5r.

ommendation, this experiment had already been implemented in the region of the Terraferma with beneficial effects.⁵⁴

In conclusion, Giovanni Battista del Monte's report proves to be a valuable source in order to understand the problems in the Ionian region confronting the Venetian State. His main concern was to put together an accurate overview of the current status in the army forces. Other comments, however, relating to broader defence issues, are also made in his report. It was on his suggestions that the Senate based its plan of action in the following years, proceeding to a series of measures.⁵⁵

A concerted effort was made which eventually bore fruit. By the beginning of the 17th century the defence of the region was strengthened enough to stand up to a war crisis.⁵⁶

After accomplishing his mission in the Ionian Islands, Giovanni Battista del Monte returned to the Terraferma,⁵⁷ where he continued holding important military positions, critical for the future of Venice. Keeping informed of the developments in the Levant, he saw the biggest part of his proposals adopted, which must have made him feel entirely justified.

54 *Relatione dell'illustre general delle fantarie delle fortezze di Cerigo, Zante, Cefalonia et Corfù*, f. 5r.

55 Indicative of the great impact of his three reports on the competent bodies of Venice is the fact that, in the following years, many of Giovanni Battista del Monte's proposals were accepted. In the case of Crete, moves in this direction were promptly made. See the relevant Stergios G. SPANAKIS, «Ένα έγγραφο της Βενετικής Γερουσίας για την άμυνα του "Βασιλείου της Κρήτης" (26 Αυγούστου 1589)», *Κρητικά Χρονικά*, 2 (1948), pp. 477-486.

56 See in this respect PEZZOLO, «Aspetti della struttura militare veneziana in Levante» cit., pp. 86-89; CONCINA, «Città e fortezze nelle "tre isole nostre del Levante"» cit., pp. 184-220. About Cephalonia in particular, see Georgios N. MOSCHOPOULOS, «Η στρατιωτική οργάνωση της Κεφαλονιάς (16ος-17ος αι.)», *Κεφαλληνιακά Χρονικά*, 5 (1986), *Αφιέρωμα στον ακαδημαϊκό Διονύσιο Α. Ζακνθινό*, pp. 1-32.

57 See for instance, Federico SENECA, *Il doge Leonardo Donà. La sua vita e la sua preparazione politica prima del dogado*, Padua, Editrice Antenore, 1959, p. 219.

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Therese Schwager

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UND STRATEGISCHER THEORIEN
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