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Venetian-Ottoman Wars

EDITED BY STATHIS BIRTACHAS



Società Italiana di Storia Militare

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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.

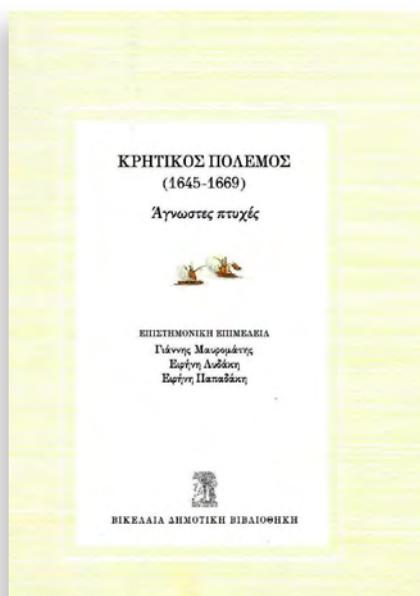


“Oltremarini” (Overseas) Regiments in Venetian service, nicknamed ‘Schiavoni’
(Vinkhujzen Collection, NYPL)

YIANNIS MAVROMATIS, EIRINI LYDAKI AND EIRINI PAPADAKI (EDS.),

Κρητικός Πόλεμος (1645–1669): Άγνωστες πτυχές
 [= *The Cretan War (1645–1669): Unknown Aspects*]

Heraklion, Vikelaila Municipal Library, 2021, pp. 380.



The rivalry between Venice and the Ottoman Empire constitutes indubitably a most significant section of southeastern Mediterranean history. From the 15th to the early 18th century the two opposing forces were engaged in seven wars which ended with the final victory of the Ottoman state. This victory, however, was not an easy one, since the Venetian ‘lion’ did not cease to spread its wings across the Mediterranean forcing the Ottomans to pay a significant death toll in their efforts to expand their plans of conquest.

In the aforementioned series of those Venetian–Ottoman wars, it was the Fifth (1645–1669) that proved excessively harsh and long in duration, also known as

‘the Cretan War’, since the great island was to become the target of the Ottoman Porte following the loss of Euboea/Negroponte (1470) and Cyprus (1571), which signaled the abatement in the dynamics of the *Serenissima*’s possessions network. The bibliographical references dealing with the Cretan War are countless, yet this volume consists of a major contribution summing up and analyzing various facets of society, economy and political-military matters, primarily based on the pertinent use of archival material. It appears as the collective labors on the part of professors at universities and researchers, through twenty-one studies derived from papers presented during a relevant international congress held at Heraklion (1–3 November 2019). The editorial task was undertaken by Yiannis Mavromatis, Eirini Lydaki and Eirini Papadaki, while the volume is dedicated to the memory of Stylianos Alexiou, Nikolaos Panagiotakis, Nikos Giannadakis and Andreas Savvakis.

The first two studies provide a survey of historical texts as well as of their historiographical approach and research perspectives. In particular, Yiannis Mavromatis offers a general conspectus of 17th-century Greek historical texts, while Anastassia Papadia-Lala attempts to present the Cretan War through various historiographical approaches thus, manifesting its relevant research potential. In the third paper, Chryssa Maltezou presents the Republic’s defeat as it was handled on the part of Venice which was an issue of major importance for the *Serenissima*, as the reverberation of Crete’s loss on Venetian society was a serious one; thus, the wound caused by the unfortunate outcome of the war on the Republic’s collective memory had somehow to be smoothed. In the fourth essay, Ioanna Steriotou analyzes the facet of the war dealing with fortifications and defensive capabilities on the part of the Venetian administration regarding the most important military mechanics and their *modus operandi* during the period of the war.

Essays five and six by Kostas Tsiknakis and Angeliki Panopoulou respectively deal with topics of social and economic history. A particularly interesting issue related to research for Venetian domination – and Latinocracy in general – is the stance of the Greek populations towards their foreign rulers. In our present case, the Greeks participated actively in the fight against the Ottomans contributing an essential assistance in Venice’s long-term struggle against the Porte. However, this fight was dependent on a large scale in the effectiveness of the Republic’s supplying network, as described by Angeliki Panopoulou, who furnishes details

on the operation of that system. Essay seven by Nuri Adieke and Neyiir Berktaý treat the issue of the extent to which Venetians and Ottomans could exploit the economic and demographical conditions on the island during the war, while A. Nücket Adiyeké and Neyyir Berktaý present to us another type of the ‘war’: that is, the struggle with epidemics and natural phenomena, which added yet another problem to the Ottoman aggressors in their attempt to capture Crete. The ninth essay by Manolis Drakakis discusses the testaments compiled by the notary Mateo Pacidhioti in the long course of the siege, providing another aspect of this confrontation, as the island’s defenders, not only Greeks but foreigners as well, dictated their final wills: they manifest the cares of everyday people not only for earthly life but also for the one lying beyond – thus the historian is in a position to study the agonies and reactions of locals and foreigners in the crucial phases of the war.

Study ten by Maria Patramani is of a prosopographical nature and examines the life of the aristocrat Michiel Muatso, who ended up as a refugee in Venetian Cythera/Cerigo, while Tatiana Markaki in essay eleven deals with the role of women in everyday life during the Cretan War through notarial documents. Kostas Lambrinos in study twelve tackles social history as well, looking, once again through archival material, at social workings effected in the city of Chania during its Ottoman siege and manifesting the ways in which social mobility was promoted on the Venetian side. On the other hand, essays thirteen and fourteen are of an ecclesiastical and religious nature. Aspasia Papadaki researches aspects of worship and religious life in Chandax city during the war, while Demetrios Tsougarakis and Helen Angelomatis-Tsougarakis inform us on the attitude of the local clergy during the Cretan War – the latter showing a bilateral nature between those who supported the Venetians and those who believed that it would be to their advantage to side with the Ottomans. In study fifteen Sotiris Koutmanis attempts yet another demographic and social approach, discussing the topic of Cretan refugees who eventually found shelter in Venice herself, thus strengthening the city’s Greek community. The reverberations of the Cretan War in Padova through the work of Carlo de Dottori entitled “*Cretae oppugnatio*” forms the subject of essay sixteen by Stefano Trovato, who attempts to shed light on the impression of the war in the Veneto regions, while in essay seventeen Marinos Sariyiannis envisages the Ottoman conquest of the island from a different perspective, as Crete (Ikritish in Arabic; Girid in Ottoman texts) would become a crucial Ottoman

base of trade and economy within the larger eastern Mediterranean basin.

The four last papers are equally interesting as the Cretan War passes through another filter, i.e., that of literary influence and adaptation. Tasoula Markomihelaki deals with the poem entitled “Plunder of Paroikia of Paros (1668)”, which functions as a literary source. Eirini Papadaki, on the other hand, presents us the “Chronicle of the Cretan War” by Martio Stefanoni, who was an eyewitness – which consists of a rare, important case. Eirini Lydaki, too, analyzes the literary aspects of the war, which worked as a source of inspiration for several authors. Finally, Alfred Vincent unravels yet another important literary facet connected with the Cretan War, that is the way in which the latter is narrated in the South Slavonic epic songs, which reverberate the instance of the seizure of two women belonging to the Sultan’s harem by the Hospitaller Knights of Saint John.

Some of the included studies contain interesting photographs, maps and helpful old editions on their contents, while, as a general observation, this is a most notable and carefully prepared volume, the originality of which is further enhanced by the high scholarly quality of its contributors. It will be most welcome not only to the specialized researcher but also to the undergraduate student, as well as to the lay reader. Its pages provide a multi-faceted picture, a conspectus of the Cretan War, which was included among the most crucial events in the history of the Eastern Mediterranean.

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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).

Venetian-Ottoman Wars

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