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Stendardo di Lepanto (1570), Lati A e B, Museo Diocesano di Gaeta. Wikimedia Commons. Lo stendardi fu dipinto a tempera su seta da Girolamo Siciolante da Sermoneta (1521-1575), su incarico del Cardinale Onorato Caetani. L'11 giugno 1570 fu benedetto da Papa Pio V nella Basilica di San Pietro e consegnato a Marcantonio II Colonna ponendolo al comando della flotta pontificia. Partito da Civitavecchia e giunto a Gaeta il 22 giugno 1571, Marcantonio Colonna, fece voto di consegnare lo stendardo al patrono della città qualora fosse tornato vincitore. Il 13 agosto Pio V fece consegnare un secondo stendardo della Lega a Don Giovanni d'Austria, comandante generale della flotta cristiana che, riunitasi a Messina, salpò il 24 agosto verso Lepanto. Durante la battaglia del 7 ottobre i due vessilli sventolarono rispettivamente sull'Ammiraglia e sulla Capitana pontificia e non furono mai centrati dal tiro nemico. Nelle stesse ore il papa ebbe la visione della vittoria e in ricordo rifinì l'Ave Maria nella forma attuale, aggiunse le Litanie lauretane alla recita del Rosario e l'appellativo mariano di Auxilium Christianorum e consacrò il 7 ottobre a Santa Maria delle Vittorie sull'Islam, celebrato con lo scampanio al mattino, a mezzogiorno e alla sera in ricordo della vittoria. Papa Gregorio XIII trasferì poi la festa alla prima domenica del mese di ottobre intitolandola alla Madonna del Rosario. Al ritorno da Lepanto, Marcantonio Colonna sciolse il voto consegnando lo stendardo al vescovo Pietro Lunello. Il vessillo fu poi conservato presso la cattedrale dei Santi Erasmo e Marciano.

GIANCARLO BOERI, GIANFRANCO MARZIN

L'esercito della Repubblica di Venezia dal 1684 al 1797

[Part I: 1684-1685] Luca Cristini Editore, 2024.



hese books represent the first part in two volumes¹ of an ambitious project to chronicle the history of the armed forces of the Republic of Venice from the beginning of the Morean War in 1684 to the fall of the Most Serene Republic in 1797, covering roughly the final century of its existence. Over 240 pages, the first book's four authors meticulously analyze just the first two years of the Morean War – a clear testament to the scope and ambition of the entire project.

The book is divided into 12 chapters (in addition to the bibliography), organized chronologically. It begins with an account of the diplomatic efforts that established the Holy League, followed by descriptions of Venetian war preparations,

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¹ Vol I: Generalità le campagne degli eserciti della Repubblica di Venezia del 1684 e 1685 in Levante e in Dalmazia e Albania; Vol. II: Le uniformi e le bandiere degli eserciti della Repubblica di Venezia nelle campagne del 1684 e 1685 in Dalmazia e Albania.

and culminates in an analysis of the planning and execution of military operations during the campaigns of 1684 and 1685. The latter is presented in a structured manner: military operations in the East Adriatic theatre (encompassing Venetian province of Dalmatia and Albania, and Ottoman Bosnia) are examined first, after which the focus shifts to the Aegean theatre, which included several Ionian islands and ports. The text is written in the style of traditional historiography, or what is sometimes referred to in military history as "drums and trumpets" history, offering a narrative account of campaigns and battles intended for a general readership.

The book is based on an analysis of unpublished sources, published contemporary texts, and insights from modern historiography on topics relevant to its theme. Its primary limitation, however, is its exclusive reliance on Western sources and historiographical works, almost all authored by Italian writers. This is, understandably, a result of the significant language barrier and is, unfortunately, a common characteristic of most works on early modern military history involving the Ottomans. Progress is being made regarding the Pannonian theatre of war, a major concern for the Porte, as experts on Ottoman sources are increasingly focusing on it. However, the Aegean and, especially, the East Adriatic theatres remain underexplored in this context. Regarding modern historiography, numerous works by local historians (e.g., Croatian and Serbian) examine Venetian military organization in its dual province of Dalmatia and Albania, but almost none are available in English or Italian. Consequently, their omission from this research is understandable.

The book begins with a brief but straightforward chapter titled "Premise" (*Premessa*, p. 6), in which the authors outline the empire-building strategy of Venetian policymakers, focused on securing the Republic's commercial sea routes while avoiding resource-intensive territorial conquests. The next chapter, "Central State and War Administration" (*L'amministrazione centrale dello stato e della guerra*, pp. 7 – 19), examines the evolution and functions of various Venetian political institutions, with a particular emphasis on the central state's military administration. Equal attention is given to the Republic's renowned naval forces and its land armies. This chapter clearly highlights the carefully organized civil oversight of the military, with the *Savio alla Scrittura* (i.e., Minister of War) positioned at the top of a multilayered system of administrative control over the armed forces. The genesis of the two-century-long Ottoman expansion in the Balkans, culminating in the famous attack on Vienna in 1683, as well as the diplomatic



▲▼ Truppe tedesche in marcia e accampate (con il seguito di donne e bambini)

efforts that led to the formation of the Holy League, are explored in the chapter "The Premises of an Unexpected War" (*Le premesse di una guerra non attesa*, pp. 19-36). This chapter also provides detailed biographies of the key figures of the Great Turkish War, of which the Morean War was a part. These include Emperor Leopold I, Pope Innocent XI, dodge Alvise Contarini, Ottoman sultans and Grand Viziers, as well as various generals and other military commanders.

The detailed exploration of the book's main theme begins with the chapter "Preparations for War" (*Preparativi per la guerra*, pp. 37-71), which opens with an overview of tactical reforms implemented in the Republic's land forces during the 1680s. This is followed by an in-depth account of the contracts Venice established with other Italian and European states for hiring troops. The chapter includes analyses of the organization of infantry units up to the regiment level, along with a detailed description of the Venetian cavalry, which featured some exotic units recruited from the Republic's overseas possessions. The composition of land units (i.e., the number of officers, NCOs, and soldiers for each type of unit) is also presented in tables for easier reference. The next chapter, "Departure" (*Partenza*, pp. 71 – 108), explores the election of key officials tasked with leading Venetian operations in both the East Adriatic and Aegean war theatres. These efforts aimed

to exploit the fact that the majority of Ottoman forces were engaged in the Pannonian theatre against the Habsburg offensive and to erase the bitter memory of the defeat in 1669. Special attention is given to the renowned *Capitano Generale da Mar* (Venetian supreme military commander), Francesco Morosini, while the roles of other officials are also depicted in detail. The chapter also focuses on the differences in strategic goals among various factions within the Venetian elite. Attention is then redirected to the small-scale warfare in Dalmatia and Albania (modern-day Bay of Kotor in Montenegro), initiated by Venetian irregulars and militia even before the buildup of the Republic's professional forces had begun.

This theme is further explored in the next chapter, "The Campaign of 1684 in Dalmatia and Albania" (La campagna del 1684 in Dalmazia e Albania, pp. 109 - 114). As Venetian commanders deemed professional troops essential for largescale offensives against Ottoman Bosnia, the chapter analyses the organizational structure of elite professional infantry units, such as the Oltramontani (recruited from beyond the Alps) and the *Italiani* (recruited from the Italian states), as well as the structure of Venetian professional cavalry deployed in Dalmatia and Albania during the first months of war. The military career of Nicolò Marchese Dal Borro is examined in detail, highlighting his importance as a future Venetian general. Alongside Governor Girolamo Cornaro, Dal Borro was a key figure in achieving the series of brilliant Venetian's successes during the 1686 – 1688 campaigns in this war theater. The final part of this chapter focuses on the indecisive military policy of Governor Domenico Mocenigo, which, contrary to the wishes of the central government, left the Venetians without a victory in the first campaign of the new war in this theater. In a similar manner, the following chapter, "The Campaign of 1684 in the Levant" (La Campagna del 1684 in Levante, pp. 115 – 164), depicts the first military operations in what was, for the Venetians, the main theatre of war. It begins with a detailed description of the island of Corfu, the principal Venetian naval and military base in the Ionian Sea. This is followed by an analysis of the composition of Morosini's fleet and the army transferred to Corfu to launch an offensive against Ottoman bases. The expeditions to Santa Maura and Preveza are explored in detail, depicting both operations almost on a daily basis, from the Venetian landing to the conquest of these two Ottoman strongholds. In addition to these amphibious operations, the actions of the Venetian fleet of sailing ships in the Aegean Sea are also analyzed.

Following the same pattern, the operations and battles of 1685 are divided be-

tween two theatres of war. The first are those in the Eastern Adriatic, examined in the chapter titled "The Campaign of 1685 in Dalmatia and Albania" (*La Campagna del 1685 in Dalmazia e Albania*, pp. 165 – 186). The size and composition of the Venetian professional army are analyzed at both the opening and closing of the campaign season, providing a clear understanding of the military resources the Republic allocated to this province. The battles of Sinj and Zadvarje (*Duare*) are detailed, along with operations in the Neretva River valley. A hesitant policy and conflicts with the leaders of Venetian irregulars, which are also highlighted in this chapter, led to the replacement of Governor Mocenigo with the more dynamic Pietro Valier. However, despite heightened expectations, the Venetians once again failed to achieve significant success in this theater. The chapter concludes with profiles of key military commanders in this theatre, many of whom were of local origin.

The chapters "The Campaign of 1685 in the Levant" (La Campagna del 1685 in Levante, pp. 187 – 192) and "The Campaign of 1685" (La Campagna del 1685, pp. 193 – 232) explore Venetian operations in the Aegean theatre of war. They cover preparations for the campaign season, including an examination of new contracts the Venetian government concluded with European states to hire reinforcements for the Levant. The size and composition of these new units, with a focus on infantry recruited from the German states, are analyzed, along with a series of significant Venetian successes in the Peloponnese. The chapters also include biographies and career overviews of numerous European generals and officers serving in the Venetian army. The day-to-day siege of the important Ottoman fortress of Corone is depicted in detail, as is the Venetian conquest of several other key strongholds. Additionally, attention is given to the role of allied troops, including Papal and Maltese forces, who fought alongside the Venetian army in this campaign. The final chapter of the book, "The Naval Campaign of 1685" (La campagna navale del 1685, pp. 233-237), describes the naval and amphibious operations of the Venetian fleet of sailing ships, which was administratively separate from the Republic's galley fleet. The chapter focuses on the fleet's composition, including the number and rank of its sailing ships, as well as its actions against Ottoman sea lines and bases on the Aegean islands during the second campaign of the war. The book concludes with a brief bibliography. Notably, there is no conclusion, which may seem unusual, but this omission is likely because this is the first volume in a series of books on the Venetian army in the 17th and 18th centuries.

In conclusion, although the book is aimed at a broader audience, particularly

military history enthusiasts, it also holds significant value for professional historians. This value stems primarily from its reliance on archival sources, especially the *Senato – Deliberazioni* collection housed in the *Archivio di Stato di Venezia*. Another notable strength of the book is its focus on a relatively understudied theme, even among experts in early modern military history.

The second volume of the aforementioned series is dedicated more to military history enthusiasts. Its focus is on the uniforms and flags of Venetian army units that fought in the Eastern Adriatic theater during the first two campaigns of the Morean War. In addition to a textual analysis of various historical sources – such as contemporary paintings, engravings, stone reliefs, and written descriptions – the book includes detailed and highly accurate reconstructions of military uniforms and flags, both drawn and painted.

The book is divided into four chapters, followed by a bibliography. In order, these are: "Premise" (*Premessa*, pp. 7-8); "Uniforms of the Venetian Army (1684-1699)" (*Le uniformi dell'esercito Veneziano (1684-1699)*, pp. 9-26); "Uniforms of Venetian Army Units During the Campaigns of 1684 and 1685" (*Le uniformi dei corpi dell'esercito Veneziano nelle campagne del 1684-1685*, pp. 27-72); "Flags" (*Le bandiere*, pp. 73-79); and "Bibliography" (*Bibliografia*, pp. 79-81). Equal attention is given to infantry and cavalry units, including professional soldiers, militia, and irregulars in Venetian service.

Unlike other similar books on military regalia, the authors of this book take a meticulous, critical approach to their historical sources, rather than simply accepting them at face value. As a result, unlike many of their colleagues, they recognize that the absolute uniformity and standardization of military uniforms and equipment – so often depicted in such works – were myths and did not exist in reality. In addition to covering a period and war theatre that has been largely unexplored in terms of military regalia, the book is expected to be warmly received by military history enthusiasts. It will also prove useful to professional military historians, helping them visualise – an important but often neglected method within the profession – the protagonists of the Morean War in the East Adriatic theatre.



Carle Vanloo (1737 / 1747), *Le Voeu de Louis XIII au siège de la Rochelle en 1628*, esquisse du tableau du Maître-autel de l'église de Notre-Dame-des-Victoires. Musée Carnavalet, Histoire de Paris, P1912, CC0 Paris Musées / Musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris,

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