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Cover: Megalo Karvounari seen from the northeast. Courtesy of the 32nd Ephorate for
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Vittoria dei veneziani sui Turchi in Albania

History of an Event

Mika Hakkarainen

Among the paintings parading Venetian military triumphs in the *Sala dello Scrutinio* of the Palazzo Ducale, there is one on the eastern wall which does not tell much even to an expert of the history of the Republic, to say nothing of an incidental visitor. This rather modest painting with the title *Vittoria dei veneziani sui Turchi in Albania* by Pietro Bellotti (1625-1700)¹ is hanging just to the left of Andrea Vicentino's monumental *La battaglia di Lepanto*. In Umberto Franzoi's presentation of the pictorial decoration of the Palazzo, *Il palazzo ducale di Venezia*, this painting is given the longer title *Vittoria dei veneziani sui Turchi in Albania e demolizione del castello di Margariti*.² The man in cuirass, who stands in the foreground, surrounded by imprisoned Turks and by Venetians pulling down a fortress (Fig. 1), is supposed to be Francesco Corner (1521-1584), who was *provveditore generale di Corfu* from 1570 to 1572.

Bellotti's work is actually a copy of an earlier version by Domenico Tintoretto. The Palazzo Ducale had been damaged partly by fire in December 1577 and a new inner decoration was planned especially for the *Sala del Maggior Consiglio* and *Sala dello Scrutinio*. The decision to order a painting of the capture of Margariti was already part of the original iconographic program drawn up by Girolamo Bardi soon after the fire, at latest at the beginning of the 1580s.³ Domenico Tintoretto was commissioned to make the painting. Later, when the painting had been spoiled by moisture, Pietro Bellotti painted the copy of it in 1663.⁴

Bellotti's painting refers to an event in Epirus opposite to the island of Corfu during the War of Cyprus (1570-1573) soon after the Ottoman fleet had been beaten by the united forces of the Holy League in the battle of Lepanto (modern Naupaktos) on 7 October 1571. At the end of November the Venetian forces in Corfu under the command of provveditore Corner crossed the channel of Corfu and attacked the fortress of Margariti, some miles inland beyond the Parga mountains, which surrendered after a short siege and was pulled down.

The siege and destruction of the fortress of Margariti was, along with the victory at Lepanto, one of the rare successes of Venetian arms during the dramatic war, in which

¹ Palazzo Ducale, Sala dello Scrutinio, Inv. TS 1o p.n. 113. Fig. 1 has been supplied by Archivio Fotografico dei Musei Civici Veneziani and reproduced with kind permission of the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia. Figs. 2-3 have been reproduced by Kari Timonen, National Library of Finland.

² Franzoi 1983, 347-348. See also Pallucchini 1981, 285.

³ "Sopra il secondo Balcone che guarda piu accosto la corte si dovera dipinger la presa di Margariti fatta da Franc.o Corner", in Girolamo Bardi's iconographic program for Sala dello Scrutinio published by Wolters 1966, 305.

⁴ Boschini 1664, 54. For some reason the painting has in the Greek research tradition been attributed to Antonio Vassilacchi called Aliense (1557-1629), a Greek painter from the island of Melos active in Venice for most of his career; first by Moustoksidou 1843, 160-180, and still by Chasiotis 1970, 106 and by Manoussacas 1974, 232.

Venice lost Cyprus. The knowledge of it spread soon to Venice and Italy, as well as to the whole of Europe, especially through semi-official *avvisi* already before the end of the year.⁵ A quite astonishing achievement was a work of the Venetian publisher Giovanni Francesco Camocio, *Isole famose*,⁶ which seems to have been issued already in the same year, in which there are even two plates describing the siege of Margariti (Figs. 2-3). But, in spite of all the publicity and the conspicuous place that the Margariti commemorative painting received in the Palazzo Ducale, the episode itself remained finally a rather insignificant event without any noteworthy glory or further consequences in the context of the war. However, on the local level of the Ionian islands and the Epirotic coast, the attack on Margariti had far more meaning, which needs special clarification. Below is examined how it was recorded in historiography as well as in official reports by Venetian commanders and officials on Corfu.

Historiography

The importance of a public image of the past as well as of contemporary events for any political organization was realized in Venice earlier than elsewhere. Therefore the Serenissima strove consciously to build up an image of itself and its policy,⁷ because, as Paolo Sarpi put it in 1608, “Non ci é forse cosa piú necessaria, quanto manifestar al mondo la verità delle cose passate; piché li nostri avversarii, seguendo l’uso ed esempio de’ suoi maggiori, già hanno fabbricato scritture false, stampate, ma tenute per mettere in luce dove lí par necessario, ed a poco a poco”.⁸

Since the beginning of the sixteenth century the Republic had considered it necessary to nominate special state historiographers, whose task it was to create an official picture of past events. By reason of their position as official historians they had access to the *Cancellaria secreta* (or the *Secreta*), the archives of the Republic and the official reports sent to the Senate.⁹ For the period of the War of Cyprus, one work is especially relevant to the present topic. Paolo Paruta (1540-1598) was appointed state historiographer in 1579, in succession of Luigi Contarini. Besides the history of the Republic covering the period from 1513 to 1551,¹⁰ he was commissioned to compose a history on the war, *Guerra di Cipro* (1570-1572), which however was not published until 1599, one year after his death.¹¹

The War of Cyprus began formally when Sultan Selim’s demand to surrender Cyprus, which was brought before the Collegio by Kubad chaus on 27 March 1570, was rejected.¹² The Venetian fleet under the command of Girolamo Zane, *capitano generale*

⁵ Turcica, no. 1470 (p. 281) “La Gran Rotta e Franchasso fatto novamente a la fortezza de Malgaritta nouamente stampato in ottaua rima” and no. 1480 (p. 284) “Zeytung. Welcher gestalt di Statt Malgaritin (nit weyt von Corfu gelegen) durch der Venediger Kriegsvolck, den Türckischen Feinden abgetrungen, vnd biß auff den boden verbrennt vnnd eben gemacht worden ist.”

⁶ Camocio 1571.

⁷ On defining as well as defending the political values and identity of the Republic, see Bouwsma 1968, 95-231.

⁸ Paolo Sarpi, Lettere 27.5.1608, in Sarpi 1931, I, 15.

⁹ Cozzi 1963-1964, 215-294; Gaeta 1981, 1-91; Benzoni 1996, 757-788.

¹⁰ *Istoria Veneziana* was published posthumously in 1605.

¹¹ *Storia della Guerra di Cipro*, Venezia 1599. Here I have used Paruta 1828, a later edition of the work.

¹² On the prelude to the war and the course of events during it, see the most accurate Setton 1984, 923-1104.



Fig. 1. Pietro Bellotti's painting *Vittoria dei veneziani sui Turchi in Albania* in the Palazzo Ducale, Sala dello Scrutinio.

da Mar, weighed anchor soon after that (30 March), but did not arrive in Corfu until 23 June; Zane was given orders to wait for the fleet of the Holy League. Ottoman forces landed on Cyprus on 1 July. The siege of Nicosia began 24 July 1570 and the town fell seven weeks later. Attempts to bring help to the island during the navigation season 1570 were for various reasons unsuccessful.¹³

Meanwhile in Corfu, where Zane had arrived, casualties caused by plague were enormous. More than 20,000 men were lost, when Zane's escader reached the island.¹⁴ Therefore the need for initiative and success was seen as more than necessary. Eyes were turned to the adjacent coast of Epirus. Very likely on the initiative of Sebastiano Venier, the then *Provveditore Generale di Corfù*, and of the Corfiots themselves, it was decided to direct military activity against Ottoman strongholds on the coast or not far from the coast. One of them was Margariti, a village and fortress some miles inland east of Parga, the most important strategic outpost of the Republic on the coast. The operation, which was thought to be short and easy, was led by Sforza Pallavicino, *Governator General* of the Republic's land troops, a Lombardian mercenary condottiero.¹⁵

¹³ Setton 1984, 923ff.

¹⁴ Paruta 1828, 73-74

¹⁵ Paruta 1828, 74-75: "Però fu deliberato d'espugnare il Castello di Malgariti, luogo per sè stesso ignobile, ma per lo sito suo opportuno ad altri acquisti, e accommodato ad una tale impresa, quale allora si disegnava, cioè facile, e di breve tempo perocchè da implicarli in cose lunge,"

Troops were disembarked during the night between 3 and 4 July in the small port of Nista in the bay of Plataria. The aim was to proceed from the bay towards the northeast to Margariti along the old Roman route, known since Late Antiquity.¹⁶ After having reached the place with scouts and conducted reconnaissance of the district, however, the enterprise was considered too risky by Pallavicino and he withdrew the troops to Nista and further on back to Corfu. The enterprise ended with an open quarrel in the port of Nista in the midst of Venetian commanders and seems to have caused a lot of turmoil, judging from the attention Paruta gives it in his text.¹⁷

Pallavicino found it necessary to send a detailed report on the course of events to the Signoria in April 1571, in which he justified his decisions. To sum it up, he claims to have been misled by local Venetian officials and Greeks concerning Margariti's location, which was farther away than he had been given to understand and the fortress stronger than described. Besides, the way leading to the place was not good enough to transport artillery needed in the siege. Pallavicino also pleaded Sebastiano Venier's presence and familiarity with circumstances. The other commanders of the enterprise reproached him for cowardice, and Pallavicino them for blaming him for the failure.¹⁸ Paruta, who as state historiographer had access to the *Secreta*, seems to have been familiar with Pallavicino's report, as he describes the event and reasons for its failure from his viewpoint, although at the same time noting that through this failure his credibility as military commander had suffered a serious blow.¹⁹

After the glorious day in Lepanto in October 1571 the issue of Margariti was taken up again. The fleet of the Holy League had retired from Lepanto to Corfu in order to reorganize the forces, to share the spoil, and to negotiate for the next move. The negotiations ended, however, with an internal quarrel between Sebastiano Venier, who had led the Venetian fleet at Lepanto as *capitano generale da mar*, and Don John of Austria, formal commander of the Holy League, and with the Spanish and papal forces sailing back to Italy. In order to keep up morale and exploit the favourable situation, Sebastiano Venier sent the bailo of Corfu, Francesco Corner, and Paolo Orsini to reattempt the storming of Margariti. Orsini together with Prospero Colonna had replaced Pallavicino as commander of land troops.

This new attempt to take Margariti is recorded surprisingly briefly by Paruta, although it was successful. He simply notes that the garrison of Margariti surrendered not due to the besieger's efforts, but rather under the effect the battle of Lepanto had made on the Turks. Because the fortress was considered too difficult to keep, it was pulled down.

...fu da' capitani risolto di tentare l'espugnazione di Malgariti. Furono dunque a questa mandate trenta galee, sotto la scorta di Marco Quirini con sei mila fanti, con li quali vi si condussero Francesco Cornaro Proveditore di Corfù, Prospero Colonna, e Paolo Orsini, e altri capi di guerra. Ma i nemici non più per le forze, che per l'opinione della recente vittoria, alla venuta de' nostri sè gli arresero quasi subito; sicchè

¹⁶ Soustal 1981, 90-91.

¹⁷ Paruta 1828, 75-78: "questa così subita ritirata potesse scemare molto di riputazione a quella forze"

¹⁸ *ASV* Capi da guerra, b. 7, 27.4. 1571: "che alcuni hanno pubblicato molte cose aliene dalla verità in pregiudizio mio".

¹⁹ Paruta 1828, 77. "E perchè ogni minima azione era a questo tempo dal Mondo osservata, tutto volto a vedere i progressi di tanto apparato di guerra, il Pallavicino, benchè fosse in grande concetto di valore e d'isperienza militare, con fatica presso molti poté di questo fatto giustificarsi".

impadroniti del sito con non molta fatica acquistarono la Fortezza, la quale giudicandosi, che non si potesse senza grandissimo incomodo, e spesa mantenere, fu per comune parere distrutta.²⁰

A slightly different picture of the event is provided by non-Venetian historiography or memoirs, such as by Ferrante Carracciolo and Anton Maria Graziani. The critical tone is explained partly by the withdrawal of the Republic from the Holy League and the peace with the Sublime Porte without consulting the allies Spain and the Pope. Ferrante Carracciolo (d. 1596), count of Biccari, a Neapolitan nobleman, who had participated in the battle of Lepanto in Spanish service, describes in his *Commentarii delle guerre fatte co' Turchi* the course of the whole war, not only of the battle at Lepanto. As a Neapolitan and loyal to Spanish viewpoints, his way of seeing the Venetian efforts and achievements sounds openly ironic.²¹

The unfortified *borgo* was taken fairly easily and the fortress was put under siege. It took three days to transport artillery from the coast to the village. After a bombardment the fortress was assaulted, which ended without success although with heavy casualties; 150 men were lost. Carracciolo reveals that after this disorganized and unsuccessful assault, it was found 'politically correct' to accede to the Turkish request that the fortress would surrender against free exit for the garrison. Carracciolo may have received his information of the Margariti affair from an eyewitness, like Prospero Colonna:

per espugnarlo Margaritò si tenne tre giorni, nel quarto che arrivarono tre pezzi d'artiglieria fù battuto poco, I nostri didero disordinato assalto, dove si difesero cento venti Turchi valorosamente, ma la notte si resero à patti, che ne uscissero armati con iscimitarre solamente, & à tredici di novembre i nostri v'entrarono vincitori, de quali morirono in questa fattione da cento cinquanta con alcuni Capitani, & Alfieri, havendo in tutto ciò che si fece Prospero mostrato valore, e giuditio.²²

The fall of Margariti thus does not seem to have been as glorious for Venetian arms as Bellotti's painting and its position in Sala dello Scrutinio give us to understand.

Likewise Anton Maria Graziani (1537-1611), secretary of the Cardinal and the papal nuncio Giovanni Francesco Commendone, did not belong to the admirers of Venier nor of the Venetians and their efforts during the war. The picture of the event he creates in *De bello Cyprio* does not flatter the Venetian operations led by Venier:

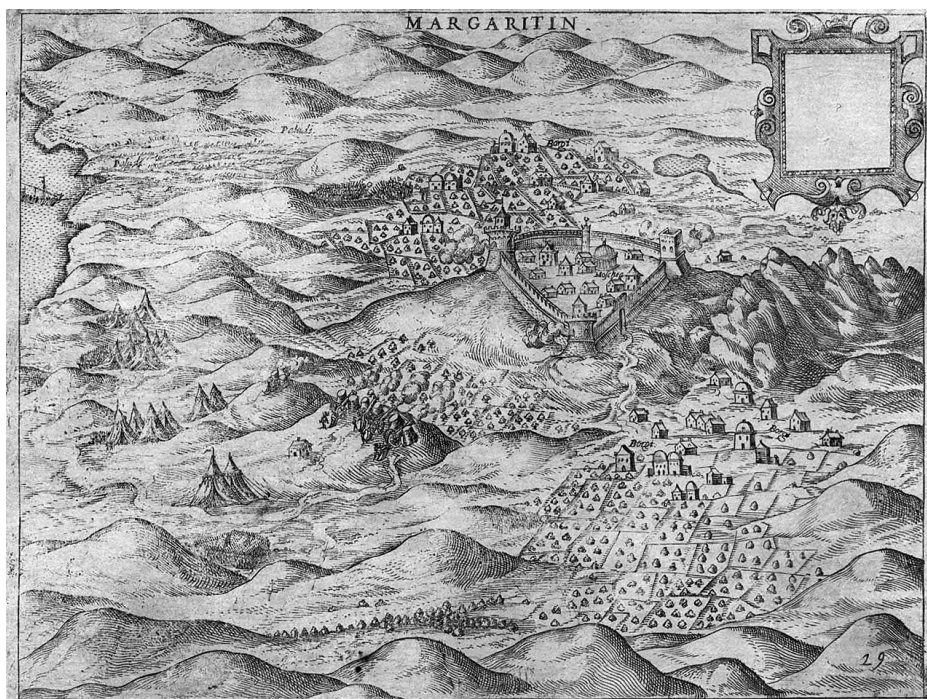
...and thus this Famous Fight no other Fruit but the retaking of Sopoto, and the Castle of Margariti, whence the Turks fled, as soon as Paul Jourdain (Orosini) appeared near the Walls at the head of Four Thousand Men. He raised it to the ground. Several Captains of the Venetian Galeies publicly complained of Venieri's conduct, and accused him of obscuring the Brightness of the late Victory by his slowness and imprudence.²³

²⁰ Paruta 1828, 301. Marco Querini was the *capitano in Golfo*, commander of the Venetian fleet in the Adriatic Sea (called *golfo di Venetia* by the Venetians), Francesco Corner had been appointed commander of the island of Corfu after Venier was promoted to *capitano generale da mar*. Prospero Colonna and Paolo Orsini finally had replaced Sforza Pallavicino in May 1571 as *governator general* of the troops in the fleet.

²¹ Carracciolo 1581, 55: "Trovandosi il Veniero armato à Corfu, spinto dall'ardire, che sogliono tenere i vincitori, inuiò vn mese dopò la vittoria all'assalto di Margaritò".

²² Carracciolo 1581, 55.

²³ Graziani 1630/1687, 266-267.



Figs. 2 and 3. The Siege of Margariti as depicted in Giovanni Francesco Camocio's *Isole famose, porti, fortezze, e terre marittime sottoposte alla Serenissima Signoria di Venetia, ad altri Principi Christiani, et al Signor Turco* from 1571.

Official records

A still more nuanced picture of the course of events can be derived from the communication held by Venetian officials towards the Collegio, that is, from official reports sent by them to Venice. Sebastiano Venier informs the Collegio in a letter dated 3 March 1571 that Albanians from villages surrounding Margariti had several times requested him to send galleers and troops against the fortress. These requests had led him to plan the operation.²⁴ His letter of 22 November is a very brief announcement of the event: the defenders surrendered after heavy fighting and the garrison was allowed to leave with their arms;

Resistette tre giorni la fortezza; il quarto i veneziani piantarono tre pezzi di artiglieria e cominciarono a battere le mura. Corsi all'assalto, i nostri perdettero centocinquanta soldati con alcuni capitani e alfiери, ma i difensori dopo fiera resistenza si arresero a patti e furono lasciati partire coll'onore delle armi.²⁵

A couple of weeks later, on 15 November, Francesco Corner, under whose command the enterprise was pursued by Venier, sheds for his part more light on the issue in the report sent to the *consiglio dei dieci*. Corner gives to understand that during the night after the assault, while he was away from the encampment with other Venetians, the Turks of Margariti contacted Paolo Orsini and Prospero Colonna, commanders of the field troops, and offered the surrender of the fortress on condition that the garrison would be given free exit with their arms. Orsini and Colonna accepted the request, which was made without consulting Corner, who was the highest-ranking representative of the Republic and formally the commander of the troops.

Orsini had argued, for his decision, that the besiegers' situation was awkward and even critical: "Turkish reinforcements could show up at any minute, the will to fight inside the fortress was high, and besides ammunition was running short". Part of the reasons expressed by Orsini were virtually the same ones as Pallavicino's a year before. Corner's point of view was the opposite: "there was no fear of any cavalry attack because of rough terrain, more supply was coming from the galleons, and Corner was convinced that the resistance would have crumbled soon after heavy bombardment. Accepting the surrender was a flagrant violation of the Republic's honour and against the besieger's expectation of destroying the enemy, which was not worthy of mercy".

che essendo io così vicino, non si dovea mai fare questa risoluzione senza mio consentimento, con offesa della dignità publica et con dispiacer universale di tutti li soldati, li quali pieni di ardore non volevano che li fugisse dalle mani un numero di Turchi di tanta braura et indegni di ogni pietà.²⁶

"il Castello di Malgariti, luogo per sè stesso ignobile"

As Paruta notes in his *Storia della Guerra di Cipro*, "il Castello di Malgariti, luogo per sè stesso ignobile, ma per lo sito suo opportuno ad altri", the fortress of Margariti was without any greater significance, but it was not unimportant as to its geopolitical position

²⁴ *ASV* Secreta, Annali della Repubblica, anno 1571, 3 Marzo.

²⁵ *ASV* Secreta, Annali della Repubblica, anno 1571, 7 Novembre.

²⁶ *ASV* Capi del consiglio di dieci, Lettere di rettori, b. 300.

for the local affairs in Epirus and the Ionian islands. Venetian officials in Corfu and the Corfiots themselves, not to mention the inhabitants of Parga on the coast, were very well aware of it.

The island of Corfu was of vital importance both for the Venetian trade route to the Levant and for the control of the access to the Adriatic – to the *Golfo di Venezia* as the Venetians used to call the sea. In spite of the heavy fortifications and the support of the Greek population of the island, its position was extremely vulnerable, because the island was not able to feed its population and garrisons. One year's crop was insufficient to maintain it. Corfu, as well as the other Ionian islands, was heavily dependent on the supply of corn brought from the mainland, that is, on the trade with the Ottoman *terra ferma*. Corfu's position had become more vulnerable since the Ottoman empire extended its power to Epirus in the fifteenth century and organized its administration there. Ioannina was taken in 1430 and Arta in 1449.

In order to secure Corfu against the growing Ottoman power in Epirus, the Republic aimed at seizing outposts and bridgeheads on the coast. Through them the corn supply for the Ionian islands could be organized at the same time as the sailing in the Channel of Corfu was controlled.²⁷ In all capitulations from the fifteenth till the end of the eighteenth century, the Sublime Porte recognised the Venetian possessions on the coast, of which the most important were Butrint, Parga and Phanari.²⁸ Venetian officials never tired of emphasizing their importance for the Republic and the island of Corfu. Butrint and Phanari were important for logging, as were Butrint's fisheries for food supplies. Parga was the military outpost, eye and ear of the Republic in Epirus. The significance of Butrint was described in the following way by Marchio Michiel in 1559 in his *relazione*:

Quanto alle cose di Butintrò, io essistimo quel luogo di grandissimo importanza non solamente per rispetto delle peschiere, delle quali si cava più di doi mille ducati all'anno, ma per molte altre cause, come sono tratte di formenti et altre biave, carne, legne et altre cose necessarie alla fortezza.²⁹

The following year, a Corfiot delegation described the geopolitical location of Parga to the Collegio in Venice as follows:

Di grandissimo importantia, Serenissimo Principe, et Ill.ma Signoria, è stato sempre, et piu che mai al presente è il luoco della Parga, si per gli avvisi, che di che continuo si ha dell'armata Turchesca, et di tutto quello si opera in terra ferma, come anco per la gran quantità di legname da quel luogo si traze, per esserli vicino il bosco famosissimo del fanaro, dove si attrova ogni sorte di legname, et massime per far navilli, fregate, barche, et ogn'altra cosa che necessariamente bisogna all'armata di Vostra Serenità...³⁰

Demarcation establishing borders between Ottoman and Venetian territories in Epirus took place for the first time in connection with the peace treaty of 1478.³¹ Details

²⁷ Especially important was the coast from the Palormo (now in Albania) until Phanaro (the delta of the Acheron River), called 'riviera d'Albanesi' or *Paracalamo* by the Venetians: Donato Malipiero's *relazione* in 1553, *ASV* Collegio, b. 62. One of the kazas of the sancak of Delvino was also called *Parakalamo*; see Balta *et al.*, this volume.

²⁸ On the Venetian bridgeheads on the coast, see e.g. Hakkarainen 2009.

²⁹ *ASV* Collegio, Relazioni di Ambasciatori, Rettori ed altre cariche, b. 84.

³⁰ *ASV* Senato Mar, Reg. 35, c. 20, published by Sathas, V, 313.

³¹ Stefano Magno, in Sathas V, 219-220. On the border commission see Gilliland Wright and MacKay 2007.

concerning the organization of Ottoman rule in Epirus need further study, but it seems that the sancak of Delvino, the administrative district which covered the *terra ferma* opposite to Corfu, and its kazas, had been established at the latest in the beginning of the sixteenth century. The first preserved register dates to the year 1551.³² *Castello di Margariti*, under the jurisdiction of the sancak of Delvino, later the center of the kaza, appears for the first time in Venetian documentary sources during the 1550s. In 1558, a Corphiot delegation appealed to the Senate for financial support to the population of the island. Since the Ottoman siege of the town and the looting of the island in 1537 the food supply had deteriorated and there had been a continuous lack of seed grain. The normal trade routes from the *terra ferma* had been disturbed by the Turks and Albanians from two new fortresses in Sopoto and Margariti, from where the Turks aimed to control the trade.

sono stati fabricati da Turchi doi Castelli in terra ferma qui vicino, cioè Sopoto, et Margariti, per li quali hanno dominata tutta l'Albania, però non si può trazer con facilità, ma prohibiscono et non voleno che si possi cavar ditta biava, per il che stiamo alla discretion loro.³³

Next year, on 17 March 1559, the bailo and provveditore di Corfu Marchio Michiel left his *relazione*, i.e. the final report of his term in office, to the Senate in which he notes “Si ha veduto quanto mal è accaduto per l'edification delli castelli di Sopopotò et Margariti”.³⁴ He refers to Turkish plans to construct a fortress in Butrint opposite to the Venetian base and reminds the Senate of the situation in Sopoto and Margariti, where similar constructions had caused problems for the Venetian subjects and interests. The Corphiot delegation in 1560 bemoaned that the situation had not changed and the threat from those fortresses to the corn supply from the mainland was current:

Noto è a V.S., etc. la necessità et penuria grande di biave, che havemo havuto noi fidelissimi servitori di V.S., poi che sono stati fabricati doi castelli qui vicino, cioè Margariti, et Sopotho, et morirsi da fame.³⁵

Margariti is situated some miles northeast from Parga, on the other side of the Parga mountains. The place became the centre of raids against Venetian possessions on the coast, when the sancak bey of Delvino, Oscur Scurogli, constructed a fortress outside of the village³⁶ obviously in connection with the reorganization of the sancak Delvino. This might have happened soon after the Ottoman-Venetian War of 1537-1540. Margariti was clearly meant to be a counterforce to Parga.

Nel qual luoco (scil. Parga) vi sono anime 900 incirca et è di molta importantia, sì per gli avisi che vengono da quella parte come per il sito et fedeltà di quelli popolo; li quali si mostrano prontissimi di

³² See Balta *et al.*, this volume. In the tax register of 1491 Delvino was still a vilâyet of the sancak of Vlora; see Todorov and Velkov 1988.

³³ *ASV* Senato Mar, Reg. 34, c.20, published by Sathas V, p. 302.

³⁴ *ASV* Collegio, *Relazione di Ambasciatori, Rettori ed altre cariche*, b. 84, ff. 22r-46r; f. 42v.

³⁵ *ASV* Senato Mar, Reg. 35, c.20, published by Sathas V, p. 312. “...avvenne che dopo l'assedio (scil. 1537), et poi che si hanno fabricato qui vicino doi castelli, cioè Margariti, et Sopotho, le cose di esso luoco (Parga) sono molto astrette” (p. 313). On the same occasion an application was made to raise the salary paid for the capitaneo of Parga, which was granted and the salary was hiked up, from six ducati to eight per month.

³⁶ *ASV* Consiglio dei dieci-capi. Lettere dei rettori b.292 nr. 39, 27.3. 1568. The letter concerns the appointment of Baiaşit Şurolı, son of Oscur, as sancak bey of Delvino.

esponer per questo Serenissimo Dominio il sangue, gli figlioli et la propria vita et solamente desiderano di esser serrati da una parte, accioche in tempo di notte all'improvisa da nemici per fossero svalleggiati, essendo che sono lontani miglia se solamente dal castello nuovo de Margariti, dove habitano molti Turchi et più de ottanta spachi.³⁷

Weekly reports, *dispacci*, sent from Corfu to the Senate in Venice give an even more detailed picture of the tension in the district. In April 1557 the bailo of Corfu reported that the commander of Margariti had made raids on Parga and even as far as the island in order to steal young boys.³⁸ In the beginning of the year 1564 the bailo Agostin Sanudo asked the bailo of Constantinople, the Venetian representative in the Sublime Porte, to intervene. To the great surprise of Sanudo his efforts led to the discharge of the commander in Margariti, and even to the returning of property that had been robbed from the Pargiotes, as well as to a call for avoiding border skirmishes with Venetian subjects. This did not last long, however, because already in August the bailo again reported further violent clashes between Pargiotes and Ottoman subjects from Margariti.³⁹

On the basis of the Venetian reports, the raids on Venetian outposts and even on the islands were part of the local Ottoman policy. It was certainly motivated by the desire to weaken the presence and influence of the Republic on the coast, but also by the locals' frustration due to the fact that their access to the coast and ports was hindered by the Venetian presence there. The aim of the voivode of Margariti was, as the bailo noted in 1565, to win control over the profitable and, for Corfu, vital corn trade.⁴⁰

Epilogue

Clashes between Ottomans and Venetians intensified on the coast of Epirus after the open declaration of war in 1570.⁴¹ Margariti was only one of the targets for the numerous attacks launched by Venetians and Corphiots on the Ottoman coast opposite the island of Corfu. The war raged on both sides of the Channel. Sebastiano Venier and Emanuel Marmora attacked Sopoto, a port and fortress close to the bay of Palermos north of Corfu.⁴² Parga seems to have been the first victim of Ottoman military activity; it was sacked and destroyed. After the operations in Valona and Sopoto, Venier sent Paolo Orsini to Parga to restore it, but the mission proved too risky and Orsini withdrew soon; the Turks immediately occupied the place again and destroyed what had been erected.⁴³ A new attempt to restore the fortress of Parga was made under the command of Pietro Lantza⁴⁴ and Angelo Paradiso da Lorena. Lantza's fame as a hero of the guerrilla war has been

³⁷ Relazione of Giovanni Antonio Foscarini, ASV Collegio (Secreta), Relazione di Ambasciatori, Rettori ed altre cariche, b. 84.

³⁸ ASV Senato, Dispacci rettori, Corfu b. 1.

³⁹ ASV Senato, Dispacci rettori, Corfu b. 1.

⁴⁰ ASV Senato, Dispacci rettori, Corfu b. 3.

⁴¹ Already in the autumn of 1570 the Emir of Bastia had been taken captive by Francesco Sphendonis, a Greek mercenary in Venetian service; Sathas IX, 739.

⁴² Paruta 1828, 71ff.

⁴³ Marmora 1672, 340.

⁴⁴ Ioannou 2000, 277-299.

emphasized by the Greek research tradition.⁴⁵ Between the more organized operations led by the Venetian commanders against Sopoto and Margariti, from where the corn supply to Corfu was disturbed, there seems to have been continuous guerrilla war by Greeks and Turks/Albanians.⁴⁶

However, like the victory in Lepanto, which Braudel calls “une victoire sans conséquences”,⁴⁷ the war in Epirus and the fall of Margariti did not change anything in the geopolitical area, as the Corphiot historian Andrea Marmora notes one hundred years later: “ó Dio non volle per le nostre colpe la gloria del Cristianesimo; ó per suoi occulti giuditij permise tanti sconcerti, che i Venetiani, pensando da vero a’ casi loro, si determinano alla pace, qual sequì nel settantatre con la cessione del Regno di Cipri, e del Castello di Sopoto; restando altre frontiere nel termine, ch’erano prima di cominciare la guerra”.⁴⁸ Venice broke away from the Holy League and the war was concluded with the treaty on 7 March 1573. Venetian attempts to solve the big issue concerning the maintenance of Corfu failed. They failed also in trying to eliminate the new Ottoman fortresses of Sopoto and Margariti, which would have been important to occupy in order to control the corn trade. Sopoto had to be ceded to the Turks and Margariti was rebuilt soon thereafter; so the *mal* of which Marchio Michiel spoke in his relazione ten years before the war began would remain there until the end of the Republic.⁴⁹

Memory of the *vittoria* in Margariti, however, was immortalized in painting by Domenico Tintoretto and Pietro Bellotti, and received a prominent place in the Sala dello Scrutinio, next to Vincentino’s *Lepanto*. If the figure in the middle of the painting is Francesco Corner, it is not far-fetched to think that the decision to memorialize Margariti was governed by him or his influential family. Corner’s later career in the service of the Serenissima was remarkable. After the war and having returned from Corfu, he was chosen three times one of the six *savi del Consiglio*, whose function was to present foreign affairs to the Senate. He was thrice elected to be one of the six *consiglieri ducale*, who supervised and controlled the doge’s pursuit of policies. As *consigliere* his duty was to crown Sebastiano Venier doge in 1578. Corner’s career culminated three months before his death (30 October 1584), when he was appointed *procurator di San Marco* (*de supra*), the highest honour a Venetian nobleman could be rewarded for his services.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Marmora 1672, 353.

⁴⁶ Letters by Francesco Corner and Alvise Zorzi in mss Morosini-Grimani 516, ff. 43-53 and 56-82 Museo Civico Correr published by Yotopoulou-Sikilianou 1982, 93-206.

⁴⁷ Braudel 1990, III, 254.

⁴⁸ Marmora 1672, 357.

⁴⁹ Hakkarainen 2009.

⁵⁰ On Francesco Corner see Baiocchi 1983, 195-197. The *procuratori di San Marco*, together with the doge, were the only life-long positions in the administrative structure of the Republic. *Procuratori de supra* administered the property belonging to the Basilica of St. Mark, as well as its maintenance.

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