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How to take a Fortress? The Wrong and the Right Way: Preveza 1538 and 1605

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*How to take a Fortress?
The Wrong and the Right Way:
Preveza 1538 and 1605¹*

In contrast with the failure of 1538 –the end of Christian supremacy on the sea– the Knights of St. Stephen easily took the fortress of Preveza in 1605 and illustrated how to do it successfully!² The comparison of two apparently similar events provides new keys to understand them, although the circumstances as well as the objectives of the two campaigns were drastically different. We will principally focus on the episode of the attack on the fortress, observing the similarities and differences between both events. The completely opposite outcomes of the two campaigns, illustrates the right and the wrong way to take a fortress in modern times.

Another time, another goal

Certainly, 1538 was the year of a new crusade for the Christians. For them, Preveza was only the first step in a huge campaign to liberate territories from the Turks and eventually reconquer Christian places all the way up to the Holy Land. In 1605, the objective seemed to be less ambitious. Crusades were no longer in fashion. The more limited aim was to reduce piracy in the Mediterranean Sea by destroying their bases, but without occupying those places. The objective was thus to weaken the Ottoman forces and not to conquer their territories. When Cosimo I de' Medici³ established the chivalrous order of *Santo Stefano* in 1562, it was to fight the pirates in the

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¹ I would like to thank Mr. James S. Curlin for his editing of my English translation and for his interesting remarks.

² *Relazione* 1605, fol. 4.

³ ANTONETTI 1983, 94.

Mediterranean Sea and to assure its safety. As Grand Master, Cosimo wanted to “involve the Florentine nobility in his maritime policy.”⁴ His fleet consisted of no more than 16 galleys, which was much smaller than the one used by the united Christian forces of 1538.⁵ The knights’ mission was summarized in the first lines of the *Relazione dell’impresa della Prevesa*: “to usefully train his knights of the *Religione di Santo Stefano* with other subjects, soldiers, serving the Catholic Faith against the common enemy.”⁶ Preveza was considered to be a threat in 1605⁷ and that is why the knights decided to attack that dangerous fortress.

In 1538, the attempt to take Preveza ended as a failure for the allied forces, signalling the end of Christian naval domination and the beginning of the Turkish *thalassocratia*. Setting aside the development of that famous naval battle,⁸ we will focus on the first moment of the events of 1538: Marco Grimani’s attack on the fortress. The Venetian Marco Grimani was the Patriarch of Aquileia and he led the papal forces. Taking advantage of the absence of Admiral Andrea Doria, Grimani hoped to secure a great success. But he lamentably failed in his purpose with significant consequences. It was a turning point: learning of the Christians’ presence in the area, Barbarossa immediately left Modon and travelled to the Ambracian Gulf,⁹ thereby changing the balance of the situation. Nevertheless, a point to observe is the prolegomena of both attacks.

According to the *League Chapters*, Marco Grimani was the third in the hierarchy. Vincenzo Capello, commander of the Venetian forces, had to obey the legate *a latere*, “as it is required by his rank.”¹⁰ But Venice trusted Marco Grimani because,¹¹ as native of Venice, he would help “the enterprise, the Venetian State and affairs.”¹² According to his *Commissione*,¹³ Vincenzo Capello received the order to join Corfu as soon as possible¹⁴ and take his orders from Andrea Doria, as required in the 10th item of the *League*.¹⁵ The al-

⁴ ANTONETTI 1997, 44.

⁵ For the quantification of 1538, I would quote for the low estimate MERCECA 2010, 110: “135 galleys [long ships] and 62 ships [round ships]” and for the high estimate BESBELLI 1980, 97: “162 long ships and 140 round ships.”

⁶ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2.

⁷ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2.

⁸ See PUJEAU 2014.

⁹ MURÀD 1993, 219.

¹⁰ ASV, *Commissione Capello*, fol. 2.

¹¹ Venice played a great part in the choice of Grimani to lead the papal fleet.

¹² ASV, *Commissione Capello*, fol. 2.

¹³ ASV, *Commissione Capello*.

¹⁴ ASV, *Commissione Capello*, fol. 1v.

¹⁵ *Capitula sanctissimi* 1538 and a French edition: *Les Chapitres* 1538.

lies had to prepare their reinforcements and be ready to embark in the following month (March). Thus, Capello's *Commission* of 20 March is a proof of the Venetian's readiness.

Marco Grimani supervised the preparation of the papal fleet in Venice before he left on a pilgrimage to Loreto. Finally, the papal fleet arrived in Corfu on 15 July. Andrea Doria was delayed; he would arrive later.¹⁶ For the moment, he needed to take Charles V back and to solve a mutiny in the Spanish troops after the Tunis war of 1535.¹⁷ The Spanish soldiers were still waiting for their pay. Unlike the emperor, Venice regularly paid its men, avoiding such disorder. Taking advantage of the Doria's absence, Grimani took on a big challenge.¹⁸

As set out in the Capello's *Commissione*,¹⁹ the Venetians had to obey Grimani. So when the Patriarch decided to join the Venetian explorers on 10 August,²⁰ they had no choice. Carlo Sigonio described the situation:

*Already arrived at Corfu with their troops, both generals, Capello with the Venetian fleet and Grimani with the papal fleet, so as not to waste their time as they were waiting for Doria [...] they thought it would be advisable to reconnoitre the mouth of the gulf where the enemy was certainly.*²¹

Grimani took advantage of this reconnaissance. In contrast with the patriarch who made his decisions alone, Capello was assisted in his military decisions²² by Alessandro Contarini²³ and Pasqualigo. This arrangement was specifically designed to avoid any sort of personal political takeover²⁴ and to

¹⁶ PARUTA (1703, 419) wrote on the 7th September for Sigonio, it would be earlier; SIGONIO (1598, 197) and CAPELLONI (1565, 99) indicated the end of August.

¹⁷ Paolo Giovio tells how the mutiny is put down, GIOVIO 1553, fol. 205v-207v.

¹⁸ PUJEAU 2006, 164.

¹⁹ ASV, *Commissione Capello*, fol. 2: "honorando il Reverendissimo Legato Apostolico come conuien al grado chel tiene" and fol. 2v: Capello will be assisted by Francesco Pasqualigo and Alessandro Contarini "proveditori all'armata."

²⁰ A Cardinal Farnese's letter to Ferrerio from Rome (11th October 1538), Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Principi 14, fol. 160v.

²¹ SIGONIO 1598, 196-197.

²² "Il Capitano Generale non era arbitro di decidere da solo la condotta della guerra perchè per tutte le questione importanti di carattere generale e per stabilire il piano delle operazioni egli doveva sempre interpellare la Consulta che decideva a maggioranza di voti", see NANI MOCENIGO 1935, 20.

²³ ASV, *Commission* of the 21th March, *Deliberazioni reg 58 Secreti secretorum*, fol. 19v et reg 59 *Secreti secretorum*, fol 37.

²⁴ See the use of foreigner *condottiere* instead of Venetians to lead the armed forces, see PUJEAU 2005.

guarantee that the common interest was served. Such an attack would bring glory to Grimani and profit to the Christian forces – in case of success.

How to take a fortress? Is there a modus operandi?

We are talking of a surprise attack! According to the Venetian historiographer Paolo Paruta, “Patriarch Grimani, exhausted by such a long idleness, thinking to train his troops, made with 36 galleys for *San Nicolò di Ciuità*.”²⁵ He certainly had an ulterior motive. He would have been informed that the fortress was pregnable: “He learned from the local people that the fortress of Preveza was weakly defended.”²⁶ It was therefore a great opportunity for Christendom to destroy this enemies’ den. The patriarch “decided to go in that direction, thinking that a fast attack could surprise the defenders and assure the conquest of the fortress.”²⁷ Therefore, his military project was simply based on hearsay.²⁸

The valuation of the fortress was very different between the two campaigns. According to Paruta, the place was weakly fortified, “built in the old style and not very strong, much appreciated for the setting, defended by a normal troop of Turks.”²⁹ In the *Relazione*, the author described a strong place: “fortified by walls, towers, ditches and defended by 300 janissaries with 30 bombardiers and more than 70 pieces of artillery, under Mamut Aga’s command.”³⁰

About the naval strengths in the two battles, in 1538 Grimani had 36 galleys³¹ of the papal fleet and 25 galleys of Pasqualigo.³² In 1605, the Grand Duke of Tuscany only sent five galleys with 400 soldiers who were led by skilled captains “with all that was useful to take such a fortress.”³³ Concerning the land forces, in 1605 Federigo Ghisiglieri (*maestro di campo*) led the

²⁵ PARUTA 1703, 418.

²⁶ PARUTA 1703, 418.

²⁷ PARUTA 1703, 418.

²⁸ The same tactic was precedently tried at Clissa, on the 9th February Christian forces landed at San Hieronimo: 3000 soldiers with 14 pieces of artillery trying immediately to take the fortress. On the 12th many soldiers and riders of the Grand Turk arrived and teared to pieces the Christians. They lost many men and artillery.

²⁹ PARUTA 1703, 418.

³⁰ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2.

³¹ *Les Chapitres* 1538 indicated –in the 2nd item– the amount of the papal participation: 36 galleys (9 from Venice). See PUJEAU 2006, 202.

³² PARUTA 1703, 418.

³³ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2.

infantry, whereas in 1538 Alessandro da Terni³⁴ led 800 soldiers. Both men were certainly skilled, but the great difference was the preparations, because in 1538, everything seemed to be improvised. Pasqualigo was unaware of Grimani's project when the patriarch joined him to go and reconnoitre the place.³⁵

In 1605, the entire attack was already planned. The *Relazione* tells how the project was presented to the captains and officers at the *Fossa di Santo Giovanni* with the objective of securing their agreement. Thus, their mission was not imposed on them. In contrast, during Grimani's attempt, Paolo Giustiniano was obliged to obey. In 1605, it was possible to refuse: "Accepting the *commissione* bravely, they swore to fight with faith and courage."³⁶

Now, we arrive at the attacks themselves, which illustrate both the wrong way and the right way to take a fortress. On 2 May 1605, the knights arrived at the island of Antipaxos (50 kilometers from Preveza), seized an enemy boat and learned that the enemy had five armed boats in the waters off Preveza. Realizing that a direct attack from the sea was impossible, they sent a man on a small boat to reconnoitre the best location for disembarking troops for a land invasion force.

In 1538, Grimani did not bother to do any reconnaissance, and instead converted the reconnaissance of Pasqualigo, who was "sailing to Zanto [Zakynthos] to spy on the Turkish fleet,"³⁷ into an attack. The historian Paolo Giovio described Grimani leaving from Corfu with the papal fleet on the pretext of spying on the enemy.³⁸ Was his project of attacking the fortress already in his mind?

In the Paruta account, two different events seem to have been combined: the ships' entrance into the narrow mouth of the Ambracian Gulf and the disembarkation: "Paolo Giustinian's galley opened up the road to the others, the Patriarch entered by this mouth into the channel of Preveza and disembarked the men and the artillery over a mile from the castle in open land."³⁹ However, Giovio mentioned Turkish cannonades before the Christian disembarkation and indicated that only three cannons were on land to shoot at the fortress with support from their ships' artillery.⁴⁰

³⁴ He attacked the fortress. Disembarked with 800 soldiers, took the place between the town and the sea, bombarded the walls. All the storms were repelled with strong losses for the imperial and papal forces. Thus they were forced to re-embark for Corfu.

³⁵ PARUTA 1703, 418-419.

³⁶ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2v.

³⁷ PUJEAU 2006, 164.

³⁸ GIOVIO 1553, fol. 208.

³⁹ PARUTA 1703, 418.

⁴⁰ GIOVIO 1553, fol. 208.

In 1605, the knights were more prudent during the disembarkation:

*They left Antipaxos in order to arrive the following night after overcoming naval difficulties with the help of the moonlight, they met the guide coming back to take them to the disembarkation point, 3 miles far away from the fortress, they arrived at 6 o'clock.*⁴¹

The *Relazione* mentioned a rider who followed the galleys during the day “screaming over 8 miles”⁴² as quoted in the text, “nevertheless, they quietly disembarked, using caique and felucca, without any sort of trouble.”⁴³

This is the point in which the two attacks diverge. Grimani’s attempt in 1538 was characterized by nervousness and improvisation, in contrast with the knights’ sang froid and excellent organization in 1605, which illustrated their perfect mastery of the siege.

In 1538, Grimani immediately launched the attack against the fortress without any advance preparations. Paruta described this military surge: “Because the greatest hope of success was in the promptness, they didn’t spend time to build trenches, they immediately bombarded the walls with artillery.”⁴⁴ The key element of the victory was its celerity. However, everything did not proceed as Grimani planned: “As Alessandro da Terni, in charge of this, was acting slowly, the patriarch thought to disembark himself in order to urge the setting up of the artillery and to bombard continuously.”⁴⁵ So, Grimani was only stirring when da Terni was actually in charge of the artillery. Was this poor of organization?

In each campaign, the disembarkation prompted a Turkish counter-attack. This eventuality was not anticipated by Grimani and for that reason the assailants were quickly reduced to an awkward position. On the contrary, in 1605 the knights easily had the situation under control. In 1538, the goal was to take the Turks by surprise, but the least difficulty could ruin everything, which was precisely what happened when Turkish reinforcements arrived and sealed the fate of the Christian attack. As Paruta described: “But as they begun [to bombard], many Turks arrived from everywhere in the place where the Christians were installed.”⁴⁶ The reinforcements increased to a considerable size: “Their number grew so much that ours were without any protection, un-

⁴¹ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2v.

⁴² *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2v.

⁴³ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2v.

⁴⁴ PARUTA 1703, 418.

⁴⁵ PARUTA 1703, 418.

⁴⁶ PARUTA 1703, 418.

der the threat of the enemy cavalry.”⁴⁷ The attack on the fortress was abandoned and the Christians tried to run away: “They decided to re-embark the soldiers and the artillery, and avoiding hazard, to come back Corfu.”⁴⁸ Paruta hushed up the Christian loss, and Giovio explained (some 50 years earlier) that the Turkish reinforcements from Lepanto were a multitude of cavalymen and soldiers who attacked with terrible screams, killing and injuring most of them.⁴⁹ Their assault was so vigorous that the Christians were forced to move back to the water’s edge. Giovio underlined the heroic behaviour of Alessandro da Terni,⁵⁰ who bravely contained the Turks’ attack, despite a severe injury.⁵¹ Once the artillery was on board, Grimani sailed back to Corfu, altering the truth by hiding his patent failure in the attack and claiming that he was only performing a reconnaissance of the enemy fleet.⁵² Paruta described Grimani’s welcome: “Grimani’s enthusiasm and zeal were praised and if he was more fortunate in his attack, he would have received a complete praise.”⁵³

In 1605, the place of disembarkation was safer: the Knights of St. Stephen chose a landing spot three miles from their target, which allowed them time and space to organize themselves. The disembarkation illustrated their method: “just landed, colonel Ghisiglieri disposed the soldiers”⁵⁴ like a column of marching troops. In the first rank, he put the scouts: “he sent the guide forward with the lieutenant Giovenico.”⁵⁵ Next, there was the vanguard i.e.:

*Captain Ottavio Benci, one of the infantry captains, the knights Bentivoglio Bentivogli and Gori with some others who came with the captain Viscardo with 3 petardieri [“petarders”] and 20 seamen to help to carry and to use the petards. After them came Lorenzo Benincasa, captain Benci’s squire with the most part of his company of musketeers and pikemen with other weapons and war tools [...].*⁵⁶

⁴⁷ PARUTA 1703, 418.

⁴⁸ PARUTA 1703, 418.

⁴⁹ GIOVIO 1553, fol. 208-208v.

⁵⁰ GIOVIO 1553, fol. 208 v.

⁵¹ Is it an allusion to Tite Live? Giovio was compared to him! Giovio told this episode in the same way as the *Horatius Coclès*’s exploit. The antique hero defended by himself the bridge of Rome against Porsenna in *Roman History*, Book II, X, 1-13?

⁵² GIOVIO 1553, fol. 208v.

⁵³ PARUTA 1703, 418.

⁵⁴ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2v.

⁵⁵ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2v.

⁵⁶ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2v.

He then placed the bulk of the men, i.e. the battalion, after these first two groups: "The colonel followed them with many cavalrymen, well armed with the well organized company of Captain Trollo Gentile."⁵⁷ Eventually, Captain Paolo Emilio Rebugo's and Captain Matteo Angelo's companies formed the rearguard."⁵⁸

The troops proceeded up to a village of 300 homes⁵⁹ ("un Borgo"), a half-mile distant from the fortress ("fortezza della Prevesa"). The villagers began to rise up. In contrast with Grimani who was disconcerted by unexpected resistance, the colonel easily settled the problem: he ordered the vanguard and the petarders to continue on to the fortress while he sent two captains with musketeers to neutralize the villagers, who easily executed their mission.⁶⁰

In 1605, innovative new weapons help explain the success. The petarders were the men in charge of the petard, a mortar capable of blowing up the walls or doors of fortifications. According to Giuseppe Grassi,⁶¹ the petard was a French invention (1579-1580). The *pétard* comprised a metal or wood bell-shaped device filled with gunpowder and affixed to a wooden base called a *madrier*. This was attached to a wall or gate using hooks and rings, the fuse lit and, if successful, the resulting explosive force, concentrated at the target point, would blow a hole in the obstruction, allowing assault troops to enter.

While Captain Benci and the others were busy neutralizing the villagers, the first group approached the fortress, which was already on alert. Bravely, they crossed the bridge over the ditch and arrived at the main door. Captain Viscardo and his men installed the petard while the Turkish sentry atop the huge tower (the so-called *torrone*) raised the alarm in vain. The first door was blown open as was the second. Benci and his men easily entered the fortress with the rest of the troops.

Inside, the Turks and their *aga* tried to defend the fortress. However, they were not able to support the charge of the assailants: the *aga* was killed and the Christians took control of seven out of the fortress' eight towers. Twenty Turks were entrenched in the last one. The colonel refused to risk his men's lives to flush them out because "he knew by one despaired Turk who threw

⁵⁷ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2v.

⁵⁸ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 2v-3.

⁵⁹ "la fortezza della Prevesa, con il suo Borgo di case trecento", *Relazione* 1605, fol. 3v. I would like to thank Mr. Nikos D. Karabelas who observed that the number of houses was more probably 30 and not 300, as he wrote in his paper and read in Inghirami's handwritten report, see KARABELAS 2010, 415, n. 122. On the other hand, this *Relazione* is part of propaganda about the St. Stephen's Knights exploits.

⁶⁰ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 3.

⁶¹ GRASSI 1833, 199.

himself off the *torrone* that they were close to surrender.”⁶² So, as agreed, he gave the signal “two shots into the air” announcing that the fortress was taken.

The galleys sailed closer in an orderly manner, and at a certain point the vice-admiral ordered the ships to point their bows at the *torrone* so that their largest cannons were oriented towards the rebel tower. This show of fire-power convinced the embattled Turks to surrender and enabled the Knights of St. Stephen to achieve their objective.

In few hours, the fortress was taken and entirely sacked, as were the 300 houses of the village. However, since the village contained both Turkish and Greek dwellings interspersed, the knights did not burn it so as to spare the Greek houses. The Christian losses were not heavy: only 11 deaths and 40 injured men, “each one tried to seize booty and to grab everything that it was there, they found a lot of things.”⁶³

To further weaken their enemies, “Four hours from the rising-sun, the vice-admiral let the flagship under guard and landed with many rowers to embark the artillery.”⁶⁴ In the end, the Knights of St. Stephen loaded 46 Turkish cannons onboard their galleys. Two huge cannons were left behind, but they were *inchiodati* (spiked), that is to say they were rendered inoperable by driving an iron nail into the touch hole of the cannon, so as they could not be used again. The rest of the fortress was set on fire, which became a considerable conflagration. After taking these measures, the soldiers left their positions and retired in order, but not before burning a Turkish *galeotta* of 19 banks in the harbor. That same night, the Christians sailed away.

Psychological warfare, war of nerves or changing of balance?

Both campaigns dealt with the fighters (their number, quality, and moods). Let's examine those different sides to understand better the background.

Whereas in 1538 Grimani clearly underestimated the number of the defenders, in 1605 the knights overestimated it. Instead of finding an expected 300 janissaries, the knights only found 80-100 inexperienced Turks at the most. Furthermore, many of them escaped by the embrasures of the ditch and the others were already far away “trading silk or buccaneering.”⁶⁵

According to the *Relazione*, the Turks were not so brave. Besides the ones who bolted or jumped out the fortress during the attack, other Turks

⁶² *Relazione* 1605, fol. 3.

⁶³ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 3v.

⁶⁴ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 3v.

⁶⁵ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 3v.

would have given proof of real cowardice when the Christians passed Santa Maura by the sea. In accordance with the usual naval practice, the Christians fired several cannon and musket shots, but they did not observe any reaction from the Turks who were normally expected to *ripost* by firing back their own salvo.

Different authors underlined such behavior as a Turkish habit in the face of difficulties. Even the author of the *R'Azaouat* who described the combat of 1538 according to the Turkish point of view mentioned this habit. During the naval battle, when the Christians suddenly seemed to take advantage with the help of the wind, he commented: "If the Christians have joined the Turks with this prosperous wind, their round ships would have blown off the Turkish galleys as dinghies and put them to flight."⁶⁶ The author did not hide his reaction: "Thus, as the Christians came closer, the Moors lost heart,⁶⁷ became discouraged and were frightened."⁶⁸ According to Paruta, the threatening round ships the author referred to were Venetian vessels: "both Venetian round ships: the galleon under Alessandro Condulmer's command and the *barza* under Nicolo Trivisano's command, those ships, perfectly provided with artillery sailed forward, all the lines like fortified towers to support and to strike the first enemies' attack."⁶⁹ Moreover, Paruta noted that Barbarossa also shared this common fear:

*When Barbarossa saw that they were coming closer [...] [meaning that he would have to fight against the largest ships] he began to regret to have decided to sail out of the Preveza Gulf! There was so much terror in the Turkish fleet that many of the Turks surrendered to the Christians who were prisoners on their galleys. However, Barbarossa quickly recovered his composure.*⁷⁰

This paralysing fear of the Turks that stops them from reacting recalls another example from 1595. During a glorious campaign in Valachia to help Sigismond Báthory against the Turks, 100 Tuscans, a sort of shock troop, always fought furiously. As they were trying to take the fortress of Giurgiu, the Turks inside under Sinan pacha's command were struck immobile because of their fear: "During the attack [...] the ones who were inside remained as calm as if there was nobody inside."⁷¹ They did not change their behavior when

⁶⁶ BONAFFINI 1993, 226.

⁶⁷ The author apparently named all the Muslims *Mori*.

⁶⁸ BONAFFINI 1993, 226.

⁶⁹ PARUTA 1703, 423.

⁷⁰ PARUTA 1703, 423.

⁷¹ *Relazione del viaggio* 1607, fol. 27.

the Hungarians eventually attacked: “Going across the bridge, they took many horses and things that were there without receiving at least a stone.”⁷²

In 1605, there was no comment about the Turk’s behavior. Maybe it was only a way to show or depict the Turks. The success of 1605 was not acclaimed in the same way as the Lepanto victory. In the latter case, many texts were written to celebrate the Christian victory as a real hope for the future. In the *Relazione*, however, the objective of the author was to show that the knights did a good job and fulfilled their aim to secure the Mediterranean Sea.

To fully explain the successful outcome of the campaign, the *Relazione* also mentioned the human booty. When they returned to Antipaxos, the knights counted their prisoners: 143 slaves (men and women) and 22 Greeks (taken by mistake). As soon as they were recognized, the Greeks were immediately liberated.⁷³ How they returned home is not mentioned. The remaining slaves were unloaded at Messine on 8 May “cheerfully,”⁷⁴ The *scrivano generale* (“general writer”) stayed at Messine “to send the artillery and the slaves to Livorno.”⁷⁵

After the Preveza campaign, the knights’ missions continued, harassing the enemies in “the Levant to damage the common enemy of the Christendom.”⁷⁶ There is an account extolling Jacopo Inghirami’s exploits, the *Cronistoria dell’Antichità, e Nobiltà di Volterra cominciando dal principio della sua edificazione infin’al giorno d’hoggi*. His series of successes was described: “our country, lord captain Iacopo Inghirami, nobleman of Volterra, knight of the Grand Cross of St. Stephen and admiral of HSH⁷⁷ Grand Duke Ferdinand and Grand Duke Cosimo II de’ Medici, fortunate with his numerous exploits and victories that are those.”⁷⁸ In the single month of May 1605 alone, Inghirami led the knights on three campaigns: after the combat at Preveza on the 3rd, the knights used six galleys on the 22nd “to take a *caramusale*⁷⁹ in the Satalia Gulf”⁸⁰ in spite of the huge Turkish artillery, and on the 28th, with the same six galleys, they seized another *caramusale* at Castel Roggio, taking 63 slaves.

The *Cronistoria* recalls the main events of the exploit: “Five of HSH’s galleys under the command of the noble Jacopo Inghirami [...] arrived at

⁷² *Relazione del viaggio* 1607, fol. 27.

⁷³ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 4.

⁷⁴ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 4.

⁷⁵ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 4.

⁷⁶ *Relazione* 1605, fol. 4.

⁷⁷ Her Serene Highness.

⁷⁸ GIOVANNELLI 1613, 150.

⁷⁹ A Turkish boat with three masts, a sort of round ship to transport goods.

⁸⁰ GIOVANNELLI 1613, 152.

Preveza formerly Atticus [Actio] headland.”⁸¹ The fortress was presented as being impregnable: “guarded by three hundred janissaries, thirty bombardiers and eighty cannons.”⁸² The attack was succinctly summed up as: “The infantry, just disembarked, installed the petard on the door and entered.”⁸³ After this, the text briefly described the capture of the fortress: “The infantry fought manly and captured the fortress, brought under control everything, sacked the place, took forty-three slaves, captured forty-six cannons and many other pieces and reembarked victoriously.”⁸⁴ Even if the number of cannons mentioned was slightly different from that indicated in the *Relazione* (46 vs 47), there was a much larger difference concerning the number of prisoners (43 vs the 143 of the *Relazione*), which must have been a typographical mistake.

This victory was part of a succession of commando actions in the Mediterranean Sea to weaken the Turks. The exploit of 1607 apparently had the same objective, as recounted in *Relazione del viaggio, e della presa della città di Bona in Barberia. Fatta per commissione del Sereniss. Gran Duca di Toscana in nome del Sereniss. Principe suo Primogenio, dalle Galere della Religione di Santo Stefano. Il dì 16 di Settembre 1607. Sotto il Comando di Siluio Piccolomini Gran Contestabile di detta Religione, & Aio del medesimo Principe*. It described a new success of the Knights of St. Stephen: “Thus, there is no year, no month which we do not hear of exploits by the feared boats of the Religion of Saint Stephen which had published their fame all over Europe.”⁸⁵ This universal fame would be due to Jacopo Inghirami: “these last three years, under the command of the Knight Jacopo Inghirami, from Volterra and admiral of the *Religione*.”⁸⁶ His worth was limitless:

*under a steady luck, one time on the sea, another time disembarking very brave soldiers, they took back on the sands of Tuscany innumerable prisoners from the Barbarians as it was not enough with a great courage they captured, sacked or frightened the most fortified fortresses and the most important Levantine and Barbarian cities.*⁸⁷

Thus, even if most persons’ attention were focussed elsewhere in Europe, the knights’ exploits were noticeable. Their success at Preveza and the other

⁸¹ GIOVANNELLI 1613, 152.

⁸² GIOVANNELLI 1613, 152.

⁸³ GIOVANNELLI 1613, 152.

⁸⁴ GIOVANNELLI 1613, 152.

⁸⁵ *Relazione del viaggio* 1607, fol. 2.

⁸⁶ *Relazione del viaggio* 1607, fol. 2.

⁸⁷ *Relazione del viaggio* 1607, fol. 2.

Christian victories were weakening the Ottoman forces. The Turkish golden age was already over! The success on Preveza was symptomatic of a new balance of forces between the Ottoman Empire and the Christian Republic.

Conclusions

The two campaigns of 1538 and 1605 were good examples of their respective times and examples of how military affairs were conceived. As an illustration of this, I would highlight that Grimani's attack in 1538 followed almost the same scheme as a previous attempt (with the same result). A few months before, the papal fleet tried the same tactic of disembarking and attacking immediately. The Turkish reinforcement was put to flight in the same way as was later done in 1538.

The unsuccessful Grimani's attack changed the whole campaign. It was the reason why Barbarossa returned to Preveza. And afterwards, as Barbarossa was there, the Christians thought to challenge him and decided to stay there when their primary project was to attack the Turks elsewhere (e.g. Lepanto, where they would win in 1571).

Unfortunately, the Christians disagreed, i.e. the famous disunion. The Venetians were hoping to achieve victory while Doria was looking to stop this silly campaign by any means. The conquest of Castelnovo would be only a distraction. Nothing was done to keep the place under Christian power and in the following spring the Turks easily took it back. The consequences were very heavy: the Turkish diplomats blamed Venice for years about Castelnovo conquest.

In 1605, the success was proof of a perfect cohesion in contrast with the improvization of the unfortunate campaign in 1538, which was a succession of unsafe and unplanned decisions. The many councils in order to determine how to proceed illustrate a problematic climate of hesitation. Eventually, all these temporizations resulted in missed opportunities, revealing a great amateurism and ending in a patent failure.

In the attempt of 1605, all actions testify to preparation and professionalism. They used experienced specialists to complete the execution of an accurately prepared plan, and they employed new military technology, i.e. *petardieri* and *moschetteri*.

Both campaigns illustrate the way that the Europe tried to solve the Turkish threat at different times. In 1538, it was a vast campaign viewed as a new crusade to destroy the Turks and regain Christian territories, without thinking of the internal problems of Europe. In 1605, the goal was less ambitious but more realistic. The purpose was to weaken the pirates by all means possible,

and it was a success. The method was based on a progressive exhaustion of the enemy. Less beautiful speeches and more acts. Between both campaigns, the lessons of history had probably helped the success of the second one, illustrating the right way to take a fortress.



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