

Il comportamento di Venezia verso i suoi sudditi greci, soprattutto per quanto riguarda la delicata questione della loro coscienza religiosa, si distingue per una profonda comprensione, il riconoscimento della diversità, rara saggezza e sereno affrontamento. Non perdono nemmeno oggi il loro valore le calme considerazioni di Sebastiano Venier, ambasciatore a Costantinopoli, formulate in quanto egli scriveva nel mese di gennaio del 1628, dopo le violenze perpetrate dai Gesuiti coi giannizzeri, loro sgherri pagati: "... non si può comprender qual Teologia persuade calunniare le persone innocenti per qual si voglia buon fine che se ne avesse; se si ha intenzione di tirar al rito latino i Greci, non so come si possa creder che questo sia il vero termine, mentre anzi con ciò sdegnano et si incrudeliscono".

L'ultimo paragrafo mi sia permesso di dedicarlo all'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, tra le edizioni del quale rientra l'opera del sig. Augliera. Mi sento particolarmente lieto per il fatto che l'Istituto continui la brillante tradizione del passato, ospitando libri di ricercatori italiani eminenti che rivelano gli stretti legami della Serenissima con l'Oriente greco. Le opere monumentali di Giuseppe Gerola, gli studi di Eva Tea e recentemente quelli di Spiridione Courouni, insieme con il libro del sig. Augliera, viaggiano con vento propizio non solo nel mare adriatico, ma in tutti i mari del sapere sotto bandiera verità e consenso.

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Zacharias N. Tsirpanlis, *Ανέκδοτα έγγραφα για τη Ρόδο και τις Νότιες Σποράδες από το αρχείο των Ιωαννιτών Ιπποτών*, vol. 1 (1421-1453). *Εισαγωγή, διπλωματική έκδοση, σχόλια*, Rhodes 1995, pp. 864, published by the Bureau for the Mediaeval City of Rhodes.

It is a privilege and a pleasure for me to review this excellent book by one of the most respected scholars in his field. It is in two parts. The first casts a fresh eye over certain chapters of the mediaeval history of Rhodes on the basis of the data supplied by the documents presented (for the first time) in the second part. The 342 documents are published according to the rules of international diplomacy. All are from the archive of the Knights of St John in the Maltese National Library in Valletta, where Professor Tsirpanlis conducted his research in 1967, 1981, and 1988. The unpublished material he presents spans the period from 1421 to 1522, on the basis of the following considerations.

The Knights' dominion over Rhodes and the Dodecanese began in 1310 and lasted until December 1522. Published studies relating to the first century (1310-1421), until the death of Grand Master Philibert de Naillac, are regarded as more or less satisfactory. Professor Tsirpanlis decided to concentrate on the second century with a view to presenting original material for the period to which scholars have paid less attention. It is also, he feels, a more interesting period for a number of reasons: the administrative institutions of the Knights' island state had now taken shape and are therefore more easily studied and discussed; the Greek islanders' and the Order's commercial and economic development was creating new living conditions; and certain forms of education and intellectual inquiry were now appearing on the islands at an astonishing rate.

It was thus decided that the study should be divided into three volumes: this, the first, volume covering the period until 1453; the second until 1481, the year of the great earthquake; and the third will deal with the last forty years, until 1522.

Of the documents published in Volume 1, 298 are in the Latin of the time, 42 in mediaeval Italian, and 2 in the vernacular Greek used by the Secretariat of the Order.

Not content with simply reproducing the texts, Professor Tsirpanlis makes them more accessible by preceding each one with a lengthy summary, accompanied where necessary by comments and explanations about people, places, words, and terms.

The originality of his approach is further increased by his evaluation and comprehensive presentation of the new documentation. He relates the date it provides to evidence from published, but hitherto unexploited, sources, and then proceeds to draw comparisons with other, near and more distant, Latin-dominated areas and to examine Byzantine and west-European institutions together.

More specifically, he explains the social stratification of the population of Rhodes, discussing the relative positions of the serfs, the slaves, the paid labourers, the mariners, the *francos* (freedmen), and the *burgenses*, as also the feudal customs introduced from abroad and preserved with considerable changes and often merely for form's sake. Tsirpanlis examines the development and operation of the Rhodians' and other islanders' communal traditions; investigates the demographic make-up of the islands (which included Greeks from elsewhere, Jews, Syrians, and west Europeans) in association with the Order's demographic policy; analyses hitherto unknown environmental, building, and topographical problems; lists churches and monasteries, foun-

ders, place-names, and personal names. A number of pages are devoted to trade and commodities, the currencies in use and their relative values, the use of bills of exchange, interest rates, weights and measures, the values of goods, types of ships, and the Greek merchants. One chapter concerns taxes and state revenue, another the administration of justice and the law. And Professor Tsirpanlis also explains the various ranks and offices and gives details about the officials of the Order and of the Knights' state. Finally, he devotes a separate chapter to the Church, the Orthodox and the Latin flock, and how the two coexisted.

In short, we have here a mine of valuable information about a wide range of subjects, with something to offer scholars in all disciplines: linguists (place-names, personal names, vocabulary, terminology); folklorists (objects and manifestations of folk culture, occupations, everyday activities); ethnologists (the co-existence of a mosaic of ethnic groups on mediaeval Rhodes); law historians (the organisation of the courts, legal procedure, civil and criminal cases); constitutional historians (the preservation of a distinctive state entity for two hundred years); archaeologists and architects (the mediaeval castles of Rhodes and the Dodecanese, countless urban and rural buildings, the Greek master craftsmen, builders, carpenters, building materials); palaeographers, particularly those concerned with mediaeval Latin palaeography; church historians (the co-existence of Orthodox Christians and Roman Catholics, churches, monks, monasteries, metropolitans); students of the history of ideas (the diffusion or the amalgamation of eastern and western cultural manifestations); philologists (literary works composed by Latins and Greeks). Zacharias Tsirpanlis has constructed a veritable monument that is a credit to Greek historical science.

This outstanding volume concludes with a bibliography and a detailed index. It is worth pointing out that the edition is very well produced, thanks to the care and attention of the publisher, Zitis of Thessaloniki.