

The Deeds of Commander Pietro Mocenigo in Three Books. Coriolano Cippico.
Ed. Kiril Petkov. New York: Italica Press, 2014. xxxviii + 110 pp. \$30.

This volume presents for the first time a modern English translation of the Latin text of Coriolano Cippico. The editor writes that, apart from this volume, there is only one modern translation of the work, in Croatian. The Italian translation is now centuries old,

completed in 1796 by Jacopo Morello, the famous librarian of the Marciana Library in Venice. An excellent modern Latin edition of the text was issued in 1990, edited by Renata Fabbri (Antenore). This is the edition that Petkov uses for his translation.

Coriolano Cippico (1425–93) was a member of an illustrious Dalmatian family. He was a humanist who had studied in Padua in close contact with many patricians and intellectuals. Dalmatia in the era was part of the Venetian Republic, and so Coriolano was a citizen of the Serenissima. After Negroponte fell into Turkish hands, the Serenissima organized a powerful naval fleet and asked the city of Trogir to send an extra galley of which Cippico was named *sopracomito* (a technical term that means in Venetian the commander of a ship). The expedition to the Levant (1470–74) was commanded by Pietro Mocenigo, who already knew and respected Cippico; therefore Cippico was able directly to participate in the war. When Mocenigo returned to Venice, he was elected doge (16 December 1474–23 February 1476). It is in this period that Cippico wrote his detailed account, titled *Petri Mocenici Imperatoris Gestorum Libri Tres*, which was published in 1477. This was a memorial work, intended to recount memorable and successful events. The text clearly demonstrates that it is designed to defend Mocenigo, whose actions are always justified and praised. The triumphs of the expedition are discussed at length, whereas the negative events receive scant treatment. Cippico's text is a firsthand account, and therefore reliable, even if its point of view is clearly Venetian. It is important foremost because of the rarity of fifteenth-century Venetian historiography, before the Venetian Senate instituted official public historiography at the beginning of the Cinquecento. The histories of Sabellico, Navagero, and Bembo, written "by public order," would then recount the fifteenth century for the glory and honor of Serenissima, and with goals entirely different from those that today we think of as historical objectivity.

Cippico recounts episodes and events in which he directly participated. In his account, he executed the most important mission Mocenigo assigned, in November 1473 at Famagosta, to reaffirm — through the figure Caterina Corner, queen of Cyprus — Venetian dominance after a plot in the palace in which Andrea Corner and Marco Bembo (respectively, uncle and cousin of Caterina) were killed. Cippico used this important episode in Cyprus to underscore a Venetian loyalty not correspondent with the real historical truth. It is, therefore, surprising to find that the editor gives very few explanations about these incidents, and that he does not refer to other accounts in his introduction and notes, instead relying almost exclusively on what Cippico relates. It is disappointing in particular that the bibliography does not include any of the historical or critical texts published between 2010 (the 500th anniversary of Caterina Cornaro's death) and the present, and lists instead only novel-like biographies of her published in the late 1980s. The incomplete bibliography is certainly to blame for the fact that Petkov includes inaccurate accounts that circulated nearly thirty years ago about episodes regarding Charlotte, James II, and Caterina, without the information that recent historical studies have brought to light. And this occurs with regard to other episodes as well. Overall, we can say that the bibliography lacks many important texts published not

only recently, but also some time ago (perhaps because some of these were in Italian?). It is curious that the editor does not cite the entry on Cippico in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (vol. 25, 1981), while citing other *Dizionario* entries.

The translation of the text is, on the other hand, very fine, even as it remains close to the original. In this case the aphorism that says a translation is either “ugly and faithful or beautiful and unfaithful” is undone; this translation is beautiful and faithful. This volume, in addition to the introduction, the history of the text, and the translation, offers interesting illustrations, at times not linked to the historical period at issue (see 17, 31, 41, 45, 82, in which late sixteenth-century and nineteenth-century illustrations are included). As the text relates to the Quattrocento, the images from later centuries seem out of place since the divide between fifteenth-century cartography and that of later centuries is well known. Nevertheless, these illustrations help the reader to visualize the places where key events took place.

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