

*The Greek Correspondence of Bartolomeo Minio, Volume II: Dispacci from Candia (1500–1502)*. Diana Gilliland Wright and John R. Melville-Jones, eds. Archivio del Litorale Adriatico 11. Padua: Unipress, 2015. xxx + 274 pp. €45.

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Bartolomeo Minio was a fifteenth-century Venetian patrician who built his political career serving as an administrator in Venice's maritime empire. The first volume in this series presented his correspondence from Nauplion, where he served from 1479 to 1483, at the conclusion of a long and bitter war between Venice and the Ottomans. This volume presents Minio's letters from his time as captain of Crete in 1500–02. In the intervening twenty years, Minio had been elected to several other important positions, including a stint as captain of the Flanders galleys and as captain in the mainland city of Rovigo, as well as terms in the Venetian Senate; when we meet him again at the beginning of this set of dispatches, he is returning from Cyprus, where he had served as captain of Famagusta. When Minio arrived in Crete, he found that illness and death had left the Venetian administration in the capital city of Candia shorthanded, and he

decided to remain and offer his experienced leadership, a decision later confirmed by the Senate. The captaincy of Crete was a particularly crucial post because Venice was again at war with the Ottomans, and at the moment Minio took up his position in Crete, Venice had just lost the Peloponnesian city of Coron to the Ottomans.

As one might expect from a military administrator in a time of war, the overwhelming concern of Minio's letters is matters of defense. In addition to a constant stream of requests for more troops and money to repair and build defenses and outfit galleys, Minio describes the problems caused by the streams of refugees from the war zone and the constant shortage of grain — a problem both for provisioning the galleys and for feeding the homeless and destitute survivors. Minio arrived to find a nearly empty treasury, something he attributed to the noncollection of taxes. The level of detail in Minio's letters make them a valuable source for military and naval history.

The letters are extremely repetitive, but there was a functionality to the repetition. Having served elsewhere in the empire as well as on the Senate, Minio knew perfectly well the stream of requests for resources and protests of poverty the Senate was receiving from elsewhere. Minio and other administrators needed to keep constantly asserting Crete's needs in order not to seem less needy than other locales. The letters thus serve as an example of the practical problems of ruling an empire and the degree to which Venice relied on its administrators to solve problems with limited resources. In fact, Minio was presented with a grisly example of what happened when one failed: he received the body and head of Carlo Contarini, the Venetian commander who surrendered Zonchio to the Ottomans and was then decapitated by the Venetians for cowardice and treason.

As in the previous volume, this is a dual-language edition, with English translation on facing pages. The editors have done an excellent job of clarifying the more technical points of the letters, offering definitions of key terms and providing context for Minio's references in the extensive footnotes. The introduction sets the scene in the city of Candia and summarizes the main content of the letters; it might have been useful for the nonexpert reader to set Minio's dispatches in the context of similar texts from other administrators, highlighting what is particular to Minio's letters and what is characteristic of the genre. There are not many surviving dispatches from the fifteenth century, making Minio's letters a particularly important source for a transitional period in Venice's empire.

The editors decided to include relevant excerpts from the diaries of Marino Sanudo, offering scholars a valuable opportunity to directly access Sanudo's sources. As students of Venetian history will know, Sanudo assiduously copied letters into his diaries, but we rarely have the opportunity to compare the original letter with Sanudo's summary. In this case, Sanudo extracts the meat of Minio's requests quite accurately but leaves out the many rhetorical flourishes aimed to convince and persuade. The inclusion of the Sanudo extracts highlights the letters' usefulness for those interested in communication and news distribution around the Mediterranean in wartime. This volume is a substantial contribution to both Venetian and Mediterranean history and adds to the growing

body of primary sources in translation; it is appropriate for undergraduate as well as graduate courses.

Monique O'Connell, *Wake Forest University*