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Colonial Mapping and Local Knowledge in the
Venetian Empire, 1684-1715

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Abstract

This paper seeks to illuminate the dialogic nature of early modern mapmaking in the context of the larger historiography on colonial cartography and the sociology of geographical knowledge. Taking as a case study the seventeenth-century Venetian conquest of the Peloponnese, it examines two main and interrelated themes: first, the Venetians' attempt to construct a cartographic panopticon which would justify and facilitate colonial surveillance and control; and second, the ways in which the political and cultural encounter between colonisers and colonised is inscribed in Venetian maps, determining the depth of panoptic mapping. This methodological approach demonstrates that the visualisation of the newly acquired territories was not only a tool of territorial expansion and colonial government, but also the outcome of the dialogue (albeit in unequal terms) between Venetians and local communities. By considering mapping as an ethnographic process of cultural exchange, performance and translation between surveyors and native agents of information, the paper sheds light on maps as the hybrid products of social negotiations and power relations. Furthermore, it complicates center-periphery relationships and revises older assumptions about metropolitan planning in the Venetian colonies as an exclusively top-down imposition which denied the key role of indigenous knowledge. On a more general level, the present analysis aims to reveal the heuristic value of cartography regarding two issues of historiographical importance: the central role of information channels between rulers and subjects and the finite limits of imperial power.

Keywords

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> "You've been taken on as a land surveyor, you say, but unfortunately we don't need a land surveyor. There'd be nothing for him to do here at all. The boundaries of our small farms are marked out, everything is properly registered, changes of title rarely occur, and we resolve minor boundary disputes ourselves. So what would we want with a land surveyor?"
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> Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, London, Penguin, 2000, p. 54.

In a well-known passage in *The Prince*, Machiavelli discusses the strategies of holding a newly conquered territory. There he notes that "when states are acquired in a province differing in language, in customs, and in institutions, then difficulties arise". To face these difficulties, he advises the prince to live in his new possession to make it more secure and permanent: "this was what the Turk achieved in Greece", he adds. Machiavelli, however, considers that practical geography is equally important. In arguing that geographical knowledge is "the first qualification of a good commander", he prompts the prince to devote himself to hunting in order to learn "how the mountains slope, how the valleys open, how the plains spread out".[1] In the *Art of War*, moreover, he writes that when the prince attacks a foreign land with his army, "the first thing he must do is to have the whole country through which he is marching described and depicted, so that he knows the places, the number, the distances, the roads, the rivers, the marshes, and all of their qualities". In this exercise, he adds, the prince must have with him local guides and spies who will enable him to verify the accuracy of his territorial plans and descriptions.[2]

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[1] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, transl. by George Bull, London, Penguin, 2003, p. 10, 48. See similar comments in his *Discourse on Livy*, transl. by Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 298.
[2] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Art of War*, transl. by Christopher Lynch, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 111.

Machiavelli's observations helpfully emphasise the complex relationship between geographical knowledge, cartographic practices and the territorial expansion of early modern states. In the context of this debate, the Venetian maps of the Peloponnese compiled at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th c. go straight to the core of the role of visualisation in the production of colonial knowledge. The systematic operation of measuring, surveying and mapping carried out by the Venetian state with the aim of 'reading' and governing its new territories and subjects led to the compilation of the most extensive geographical archive of the peninsula available until that time. The manuscript maps of the Peloponnese, which form a significant section of this rich archive,[3] would have certainly attracted the attention of Marc Bloch who invited historians in 1929 to lay "the baguette" of their historical intuition on topographical maps in order to shed new light on the social history of agricultural communities and rural life.[4]

The two points of departure for the pages to come are Bloch's comment on the "dangerous [...] graphic omissions"[5] contained in maps and Brian Harley's notes on the unwillingness of historical geography to explore maps at the epistemological level and critically understand the "illusion of cartographic objectivity".[6] My aim therefore is to focus on two main and interrelated themes in the specific case examined here: first, the Venetians' attempt to construct a cartographic panopticon which would on the one hand justify and, on the other, facilitate their colonial practices; and second, the ways in which the political and cultural encounter between colonisers and colonised is inscribed in these maps, determining the depth of panoptic mapping. Drawing on the historiography of colonial cartography and the sociology of geographical knowledge, I shall attempt to demonstrate that the Venetian cartography of the Peloponnese was not only the cause, i.e. one of the instruments of territorial expansion, but also the outcome of the colonial relationship, that is, a product of the dialogue between the Venetians and local communities. On a more general level, however, the present analysis aims to reveal the heuristic value of cartography regarding two issues of historiographical importance: the central role of information channels between rulers and subjects and the finite limits of imperial control.

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[3] Olga Katsiardi-Hering, "Venezianische Karten als Grundlage der historischen Geographie des griechischen Siedlungsraumes (ende 17. und 18. jh.)", *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 43 (1993), 281-316; Constantinos Dokos – Georgios Panagopoulos, *Το βενετικό κτηματολόγιο της Βοστίτσας* [The Venetian cadastre of Vostitsa], Athens, Cultural Foundation of the Agricultural Bank, 1993; Marino Zorzi - Piero Falchetta (eds), *Dominio della Serenissima Repubblica di Venetia sopra il mare. Tomo secondo*, Venice, Comune di Venezia, 1995; *Fortezze veneziane nel Levante. Esempi di cartografia storica dalle collezioni del Museo Correr*, Venice, Comune di Venezia, 1999; Eric Pinzelli, "Les forteresses de Morée: projets de restaurations et de dé démantèlements durant la seconde période vénitienne (1687-1715)", *Thesaurismata* 30 (2000), 379-427.
[4] Marc Bloch, "Les plans parcellaires", *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale* 1 (1929), 60-70. Reprinted in his book *La terre et le paysan, agriculture et vie rurale aux XVII e et XVIII e siècles*, ed. by Étienne Bloch, Paris, Armand Colin, 1999, pp. 5-18 (cfr. ch. 1 "Les plans parcellaires et le cadastre").
[5] Bloch, "Les plans", p. 65.
[6] J.B. Harley, "Historical Geography and the Cartographic Illusion", *Journal of Historical Geography* 15.1 (1989), 82. See also his *The new nature of maps: essays in the history of cartography*, ed. by Paul Laxton, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, and the journal *Cartographica* 40.1-2 (2005). Cfr. Christian Jacob, *L'Empire des cartes: Approche théorique de la cartographie à travers l'histoire*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1992; Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps*, New York, Routledge, 1992; John Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic reason, mapping, and the geo-coded world*, London, Routledge, 2003.

The Library of a Colonial Governor

Soon after his death in 1700, the councillors of the community of Gastouni compiled, in both Italian and Greek, a catalogue of the books found in the library of the local *provveditore* Francesco Donà. Among a wide range of titles on a variety of different topics, the list also included several geographical texts: "a book called *Teatro della Turchia* [...] another book on the *Viaggio da Venetia al Santo Sepolcro* [...] another book titled *Relacioni del mondo* [...] and another book called *Itinerario d'Italia* by Andrea Scosto".[7] What was the content of these works found by the councillors in the library of the Venetian official? The first was Justinien de Tours's treatise *Theatre of Turkey* which described "the genius, the nature and customs of the fourteen nations which inhabit it".[8] The second book was the illustrated *Journey form Venice to the Holy Shrine*, a best-seller with numerous woodcuts depicting archaeological monuments, churches, local costumes and cities of the East Mediterranean.[9] The third book must have been the geopolitical atlas *Descriptio Orbis* (1655) by Lucas de Linda, in its Italian translation by Maiolino Bisaccioni, a volume of more than one thousand pages which recorded a wide range of customs from Europe, the Ottoman empire, Africa, China, Japan and Latin America.[10] The fourth item was one of the most famous travel guides of Italy, the *Itinerari Italiae* (1600) by Franciscus Schottus, a lawyer from Antwerp (not to be confused with his brother Andrea, as it occurs in several editions, including that owned by Donà).[11]

The above travel and ethnographic literature sheds light on Donà's reading and on the broader geographical education of Venetian patricians at the time. These high officials had to actively utilise their geographical background knowledge and to apply their cartographic skills in order to assess technical drawings like, for example, Baron Steinau's plan of the fortifications in Corinth[12] or Giovanni Mattiazzi's hydrographical designs of appropriate territorial sections in Nissi (Messini) for the development of rice cultivation with water from the river Pidima.[13] Such plans belonged of course to a long cartographic tradition on which the military and environmental management of the waterscape of Venice and its hinterland was established from the 15th c.[14] The same

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[7] Archivio di Stato, Venice (=ASV), *Archivio Grimani dai Servi*, b. 22, f. 221r-229v, 11.9.1700.

[8] Michele Febvre [pseud. of Justinien de Tours], *Teatro della Turchia ...*, Venice, Curti, 1683. Other editions: Milan 1681, Venice 1684, Bologna 1683, 1684.

[9] *Viaggio da Venetia al Santo Sepolcro, et al Monte Sinai ...*, Venice, Miloco, 1684 (1500). Camillo Tonini - Piero Lucchi (eds), *Navigare e descrivere. Isolari e portolani del Museo Correr di Venezia XV-XVIII secolo*, Venice, Marsilio, 2001, pp. 86-91.

[10] Lucas de Linda, *Le relationi et descrittioni universali et particolari del mondo ...*, Venice, Combi & La Nou, 1660 (1664, 1672). Reprinted in Bologna (1674).

[11] Andrea Scoto [Franciscus Schottus], *Itinerario, overo Nova descrittione de' viaggi principali d'Italia ...*, Padua, Cadorin, 1688 (1610). E.S. de Beer, "François Schott's Itinerario d'Italia", *The Library, Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 23 (1942) 57-83.

[12] National Archives, London, WO 78/330: "Dissegno di Corinto, ove è ripresentato le propositioni di fortificare di s.e. baron di Stainau ... sotto il commando del eccmo. Allexandro Molin".

[13] ASV, *Provveditori da terra e da mar*, fz. 844/5-6, attached to the *dispaccio* 47 of the general *provveditore* Antonio Zeno, 23.5.1692. On rice cultivations in the plain of Nissi see also Spyridon P. Lampros, "Ἡ περὶ Πελοποννήσου ἔκθεσις τοῦ βενετοῦ προνοητοῦ Γραδενίγου" [The Report of the *Provveditore* Gradenigo on the Peloponnese], *ΔIEEE* 5 (1897), 234.

[14] Emanuela Casti Moreschi, "Cartografia e politica territoriale nella Repubblica di Venezia (secoli XIV-XVIII)", *La cartografia italiana (Cicle de conferències sobre Història de la Cartografia, 3er curs)*, Barcelona, Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya, 1993, pp. 81-101; Denis Cosgrove, "Platonism and Practicality: Hydrology, Engineering and Landscape in Sixteenth-century Venice", Denis Cosgrove - Geoff Petts (eds), *Water, Engineering and Landscape: Water Control and Landscape Transformation in*

tradition also supported the officials of the *Stato da mar* in coordinating similar cartographic projects of "legibility and simplification",[15] namely mechanisms of knowledge production through which states usually aim at rendering their subjects and territories more easily visible and therefore governable.

Cadastral mapping was one of these projects which served the collection of geographical information about the rural and urban space of a new colony. In the same way that cadastral maps in the rest of Europe and its colonies were principal tools of state policy on land ownership,[16] so the Venetians deployed mapping as a practical means of exercising political and economic control on Peloponnesian land. A *par excellence* example of how two separate existing traditions, mapping and surveying, were merged to create the scale map from the 16th c. onwards,[17] the maps used by the Venetians depicted the natural and built environment of specific administrative units. As the main supplement to the cadastres, these maps served the policy of tax reform and the settlement politics of the Venetian state soon after the conquest of the Peloponnese. Since to be a subject was tantamount to living in a specified piece of land, the orders of Venetian colonial governance to its three magistrates dispatched to the Peloponnese (the *sindici catasticatori*), Giacomo Renier, Domenico Gritti and Marin Michiel (1687), stressed in particular the need for "diligent plans and exact cadastres".[18] Along with other practices of information collection, like censuses, cadastral surveys, the establishment of local archives etc., mapping was another name for colonial epistemology or, otherwise, the institutionalised production of colonial knowledge. From that viewpoint, the history of mapping should be therefore examined as belonging to a broader history of the Venetian archival and governmental practices, that is, as part of the administrative activity of accumulating and classifying utilitarian data about colonial subjects and their property.

Topographical and military maps were necessary tools for the perception, understanding and functional reorganisation of the Peloponnesian reality in line with the principal interests of colonial administration, namely revenues and defense. To a large extent, thanks to these maps, the new rulers of the Peloponnese passed from the initial stage of considering the region as a *terra incognita* to that where they perceived it as a

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the *Modern Period,* London, Belhaven Press, 1990, pp. 35-53; id., *The Palladian landscape: geographical change and its cultural representations in sixteenth-century Italy*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1993; John Marino, "Administrative mapping in the Italian States", David Buisseret (ed..), *Monarchs, Ministers and Maps: The Emergence of Cartography as a Tool of Government in Early Modern Europe*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 5-25. See also John R. Hale, "The first fifty years of a Venetian Magistracy: The Provveditori alle Fortezze", Anthony Molho – John A. Tedeschi (eds), *Renaissance. Studies in Honor of Hans Baron*, Florence, Sansoni, 1971, pp. 499-529.

[15] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 2-8, 9-83. See also Reuben S. Rose-Redwood, "Governmentality, geography, and the geo-coded world", *Progress in Human Geography* 30.4 (2006), 469-486.

[16] Roger J.P. Kain – Elizabeth Baigent, *The Cadastral Map in the Service of the State*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993. See also David Buisseret (ed.), *Rural Images: Estate Maps in the Old and New Worlds*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996; Ghislain Brunel *et al.* (ed.), *Terriers et plans-terriers du XIIIe au XVIIIe siècle. Actes du colloque de Paris (23-25 septembre 1998)*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2002.

[17] P.D.A. Harvey, *The History of Topographical Maps. Symbols, Pictures and Surveys*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1980.

[18] Spyridon P. Lampros, Ιστορικά Μελετήματα [Historical Studies], Athens, Karavias, 1884, pp. 182-186; Anastasia Stouraiti (ed.), *Memorie di un ritorno. La guerra di Morea (1684-1699) nei manoscritti della Querini Stampalia*, Venice, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, 2001, pp. 75-77.

familiar and accessible place belonging to them. However, while the new colony was measured, mapped and described extensively, the Peloponnese of the manuscript and print accounts in that period often resembles a disorderly and impressionistic compilation of disparate locations and people. These confused impressions, sometimes even involving inaccurate census figures and imprecise administrative boundaries, have caused considerable frustration to a number of researchers who protested against the "inscrutable contradictions of the sources" and their unreliability.[19]

As we shall see below, Venetian knowledge of the Peloponnese was far more limited and incomplete than the Venetians themselves believed and what historians think today. Like all the simplifying mechanisms of state power, maps, censuses and cadastres are techniques aiming to record a complex reality which must be reduced to plain schematic categories to be better understood.[20] Consequently, it would be misleading for someone to take at face value the grandiose organizational and administrative projects of the Venetians or to treat their maps as transparent transcriptions of the world, since their ambiguities and multiple levels of meaning render them works of "controlled fiction",[21] the product of technical processes of measurement, but also a creative act. This point could, moreover, serve as an appropriate warning about the mechanism of early modern Venetian cartographic mapping in its entirety. For the Venetian army engineers as well as for many publishers in Venice, maps did not just record information; they represented and contained the new geographical, political and social order established after the acquisition of the Peloponnese. Already since the 16th c. this process of construction adopted the Ptolemaic conception of mapping, which placed cartography at the intersection of liberal and mechanical arts, and combined theoretical and practical geometry in the context of the philosophical culture of the time.[22] This creative synthesis confirms how artificial was the rigid distinction between the history of science and intellectual and cultural history in the early modern era, a tendency reflecting the approaches of a later age rather than the intellectual divisions of that period. As several scholars have shown, the constant interaction between what we call today 'science' and the field of the 'humanities' blurred the distinction between the sociology of early modern scientific practices and the sociology of knowledge.[23] It would therefore be analytically

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[19] Eftychia D. Liata, *Αργεία γη. Από το τεριτόριο στο βιλαέτι (τέλη 17ου, αρχές 19ου αι.)* [Argeian land: from the *territorio* to the *vilaet* (late 17th – early 19th c.], Athens, National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2003, p. 38. For similar interpretative problems see id., *Το Ναύπλιο και η ενδοχώρα του από τον 17ο στον 18ο αι. Οικιστικά μεγέθη και κατανομή της γης* [Nafplio and its hinterland from the 17th to the 18th c. Settlement size and land distribution], Athens, Academy of Athens, 2002.

[20] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, pp. 46-47, 76-77.

[21] J.B. Harley, "Silences and Secrecy: the Hidden Agenda of Cartography in Early Modern Europe", *Imago Mundi* 40 (1988), 71.

[22] Denis Cosgrove, "The geometry of landscape: practical and speculative arts in sixteenth-century Venetian land territories", Denis Cosgrove – Stephen Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, Cambridge, CUP, 1988, pp. 254-276; id, "Mapping New Worlds: Culture and Cartography in Sixteenth-Century Venice", *Imago Mundi* 44 (1992), 65-89.

[23] Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in 17th Century England*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994; Anthony Grafton, "The New Science and the Traditions of Humanism", Jill Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, Cambridge, CUP, 1996, pp. 203-223; Pamela H. Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004; Peter Dear, "What Is the History of Science the History Of? Early Modern Roots of the Ideology of Modern Science", *Isis* 96.3 (2005), 390-406;

inappropriate, when studying Venetian maps, to accept the evolutionist narrative whereby cartography is thought to have developed from an art to a science, without paying proper attention to the strong element of unity between the socio-cultural and technological factors shaping early modern cartographic knowledge.[24]

Consequently, to understand the Venetian cartography of the Peloponnese, I suggest that we now turn to the sociology of cartographic knowledge and examine the local social relationships surrounding the mapmaking process. The aim in what follows is to illuminate the channels of communication which affected the construction and formation of geographical knowledge between rulers and subjects and to offer some remarks about what I call the *dialogic nature of mapping*. Was a shelf of geography books in the local governor's library or the expert gaze of Venetian surveyors alone sufficient to map out every inch of the Peloponnese? And how easy was it for an empire like Venice to depict its colonial territories and subjects with panoptical precision?

Villa per Villa: Mechanisms of Information and "Hidden Transcripts"

Empires are not easily visible. The larger they are, the more difficult it is to conceive of them in their full dimension and enclose them in a single gaze. Venetian engineers knew that very well and were careful to avoid making their presence felt in the finished products of their topographical surveys.[25] As Matthew Edney has shown in the case of the geographical construction of British India, the lack of images of the surveyors in the act of surveying underscored the rhetoric separation of the cartographer from the depicted land: "for the surveyors to be shown working within the landscape would subvert the entire ideology of geographical observation".[26] In the same way, the privileged distance of the Venetian engineers from the cartographic landscapes enhanced the notion of objectivity and reinforced the sense of omniscience adopted by the panoramic gaze of bureaucratic administrators. Nevertheless, it constantly stumbled on a number of usually insurmountable obstacles.

According to the programmatic guidelines of the Venetian Senate about cadastral surveys, the *sindici catasticatori*, local governors and surveyors had to transform the Peloponnesian mainland into a set of quantifiable and cartographic data that would contribute to the fullest knowledge of the new *kingdom* and improve decision-making in the metropolis. The centripetal movement of information from the Peloponnese to Venice largely followed Bruno Latour's model of the production and circulation of knowledge.[27] According to it, knowledge in European expeditions moved in a cyclical and repetitive trajectory. If, for example, Parisian cartographers were not sure whether Sakhalin was an island or a peninsula, the only way for them to find this out was to send

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Katharine Park - Lorraine Daston (eds), *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 3: *Early Modern Science*, Cambridge, CUP, 2006.

[24] Apart from footnote 6, see Matthew H. Edney, "Cartography without 'Progress': Reinterpreting the Nature and Historical Development of Mapmaking", *Cartographica* 30.2-3 (1993), 54-68.

[25] For a rare example from the Venetian mainland, see the plan of a Querini Stampalia family estate by the *pubblico perito* Antonio Mantovani, who represented himself in action, behind the table with his working tools (1787). Biblioteca Querini Stampalia, Venice (=BQSV), *C. Geogr.* XII.9. Cfr. Giorgio Busetto - Madile Gambier (ed.), *I Querini Stampalia: un ritratto di famiglia nel Settecento veneziano*, Venice, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, 1987, pp. 190-191.

[26] Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997, p. 74.

[27] Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1987, pp. 215-257. See a critique by Michael T. Bravo, "Ethnological Encounters", N. Jardine *et al.* (ed.)*, Cultures of natural history*, Cambridge, CUP, 1996, pp. 338-357.

someone there. However, the success of the mission depended on dispatching his unprocessed data back to Paris, because only there could they be turned into institutionalised, truthlike information. In other words, the map depicting Sakhalin as an island near the Siberian coast could be compiled only in the metropolitan centre, not in the periphery.

While Latour's model successfully illustrates the cyclical pattern of the knowledge-making process, it reinforces, nevertheless, a rigid approach to the relationship between centre and periphery. In suggesting that knowledge is produced exclusively at metropolitan "centres of calculation", it overlooks crucial connections and exchanges between colony and metropolis, as well as the dynamic intra-periphery network between the various colonies. To be more precise, recent studies in the history of science and empire have repeatedly shown the mutual interactions and the multiple movements of ideas, practices, techniques and people between numerous centres and peripheries; moreover, they have decentred colonial science by illuminating the significance and appropriation of indigenous knowledge in western forms of knowing.[28] In our case, metropolitan engineers based their topographical plans on Venetian concepts, tools and techniques, but relied heavily on the oral knowledge and skills of local and itinerant artisans, like the carpenters from Zakynthos who built in 1693 a bridge on the river Alfeios, the masons from Roumeli who worked in 1703 in Koroni, and the artisans from the same region who built in 1719 the lazaret of Lefkada. In the latter case, indeed, the engineer Santo Semitecolo marked on the plan of the lazaret in red ink "the clay-cement stonewalls built by the Roumeliot artisans".[29] Additional examples confirm that several engineers were frequently involved in local webs of information that brought them sometimes into conflict with indigenous interests and perceptions. Therefore, the fact that Venice continued to issue orders and instructions to its overseas dominions does not necessarily imply that the inhabitants of those places remained passive bystanders or that they merely suffered the consequences of every metropolitan innovation without a response. On the contrary, it would be more accurate to say that the defining features of the entire process of mapmaking were its location at the various points of encounter between the metropolitan engineers and the colonial subjects and its dependence on the success and failure of the negotiations between them: interrupted conversations and ambiguous gestures between strangers, submission and indifference were the determining moments in a common process of cartographic knowledge production.

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[28] Michael T. Bravo, "Ethnographic Navigation and the Geographical Gift", David N. Livingstone - Charles W.J. Withers (ed.), *Geography and Enlightenment*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999, pp. 199-235; Roy Macleod (ed.), "Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise", *Osiris* 15 (2000); David Turnbull, *Masons, Tricksters, and Cartographers: Comparative Studies in the Sociology of Scientific and Indigenous Knowledge*, London, Routledge, 2003²; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001, ch. 2; Londa Schiebinger (ed.), "Colonial Science", *Isis* 96.1 (2005) 52-87; Liliane Hilaire-Pérez - Catherine Verna, "Dissemination of Technical Knowledge in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era. New Approaches and Methodological Issues", *Technology and Culture* 47.3 (2006), 536-565; Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

[29] Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Venice (=BMCV), *mss. Provenienze Diverse* 682c, 7.5.1693, and 623c, 20.3.1703· ASV, *Provveditori da terra e da mar*, fz. 962/1: "Disegno Iconografico del Lazaretto con le sue Stallie, che fù principiato l'anno decorso nel Sitto Caligoni, e Brichi", attached to the *dispaccio* 16 of the general *provveditore* Zorzi Pasqualigo, 24.6.1719.

Emphasis on the transactions rather than the unilateral projections of the engineers and surveyors helps us to understand why the verification of property ownership and rent titles formed the basis of the "universal alphabet" of the *territorio* of Vostizza and why they qualified its accuracy as depending on "everything else it was possible for us to see".[30] Through this relational approach we may also comprehend why colonial officials stressed the need to extract the "necessary information from the councillors of this place" and arrive at a "faithful and precise description [...] from settlement to settlement through the most sincere statements".[31] In fact, in order for maps and cadastres to have any value and meaning, the Venetians were obliged to seek the cooperation of the local inhabitants, since the object of mapmaking was the immediate environment of the latter. For example, according to a letter sent in 1688 by the governor of Gastouni, da Riva, the Venetian authorities requested the Greek inhabitants of the region to provide them with written documents of their properties which, apparently, many of them did not hesitate to do.[32] Similarly, in 1692 the *perito* Matiazzi resorted to the aid of the village elders (*vecchiardi*) to draw the estate boundaries in the village of Kamari near Kalamata.[33] Such documentary evidence eloquently reveals the vital role of the local communities in giving substance to the final outcome of the cartographic process and their contribution to the formation of metropolitan geographical knowledge. Through the same accounts one can also see how the specialised knowledge of the Venetian engineers interacted with the oral culture of the indigenous population leading to the incorporation of local social memory into Venetian bureaucratic practices. Consequently, this evidence also casts doubt on contemporary perceptions, like that of governor Gritti who thought that the cadastral survey of the Peloponnese depended entirely on the technicians' good will;[34] as we saw, without the equivalent good will of the locals the technicians' survey would have been much harder to complete.

This conclusion allows us to approach mapping not only as an instrument of government, but also as a mechanism of information gathering and circulation. In other words, the entry of Venetian topographers in the information networks of the Peloponnesian subjects played a crucial part in the success of their efforts to subjugate what was for them an opaque and inscrutable space to the neat classifications of metropolitan geometry. Moreover, the influence of certain local groups and individuals becomes more visible when we examine their role in the supply of information and specialised knowledge to the colonial authorities. A case in point is the inhabitants of Ano Tsakonia who were praised as diligent, trustworthy and toughened, and served "the entire Kingdom as postmen, because they move with incredible quickness through the mountains from one place to the other".[35] Similarly, certain local individuals improved their social position by facilitating the collection and transfer of information to the Venetian state. Let us not forget that a regional map contained geographical information gathered through a dynamic combination of measurement, visualisation and narration: it

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[30] Σπυρίδων Λάμπρος, "Κτηματολόγια Πελοποννήσου" [Cadastres of the Peloponnese], *Neos Ellinomnimon* 18 (1924), 228.

[31] BMCV, mss. *Morosini Grimani* 446, *dispaccio* 31 of the *provveditore*. Antonio Loredan to Francesco Grimani, 12.5.1698, and mss. *Provenienze Diverse* 623c, fasc. VI, 20.7.1703.

[32] Spyridon P. Lampros, "Σημειώσεις περί της εν Πελοποννήσω Βενετοκρατίας" [Remarks on Venetian Rule in Peloponnese], *Νέος Ελληνομνήμων* 20 (1926), 194.

[33] BMCV, mss. *Provenienze Diverse* 763c, 12.4.1692.

[34] Dokos – Panagopoulos, p. XXVII.

[35] Lampros, *Ιστορικά Μελετήματα* [Historical Studies], p. 209.

listed toponyms, indicated landmarks (e.g. churches, mills, bridges) and identified natural resources and strategic locations. As a repository of this information, however, a map could always be susceptible to the limited capacity of the State to fund the topographical research required for its production. Another factor which might have undermined its informative function was the breakdown of communication between the metropolitan surveyors and the indigenous population.

Since the very beginning, the efforts of the *sindici catasticatori* to approach the Peloponnesian mainland in a rational and methodical way stumbled upon the weakness of the central authorities to mobilise the required political will and necessary funds to cover their travel expenses. Lack of economic support from the metropolis was among the basic causes of the eternal postponements to which the cadastral surveys were subjected. Along with them we must add the adversities of travel, the challenges of adaptation to an inhospitable hinterland and the threats of epidemics. The human cost was indeed the single most important parameter contributing to the small number of the technical team and this led, by implication, to a more protracted process of topographical surveying.[36]

Under such circumstances, information gathering was further slowed down by obstacles emerging along the contact zone between the imperial authorities and their subjects. Apart from the basic problems of the legibility of local measurement practices and the need for a common land measurement unit, the main obstacles to state knowledge and the application of an orderly land ownership regime were posed by the trespassing of public estates. The surveyors themselves often complained about the time-consuming process of their censuses either because land claims were not supported by paper titles or because war had resulted in illegal appropriations of nearby estates.[37] In 1689, moreover, the *sindici inquisitori* had also found that in Gastouni false testimonies had been given, an incident that led them to dismiss oral reports by individuals considered as linked to an interested party in a land dispute and began to carry out "inquisitions".[38] This prompted Francesco Grimani to write in 1698 that, while many Greeks claimed land property by displaying old *hodjets* (Ottoman religious court decisions), their claims were not always genuine.[39] This example demonstrates that local information contained dissenting voices which treated mapping as a means of convincing the authorities about their own truths, whether these were different units of measurement or different claims of land property. In this way, they pressed for the representation of their own rural landscapes on the official Venetian maps.

If we look at the inhabitants' statements from an ethnographic point of view, however, we can find in them an element of cunning, which confirms their ability to slip away from the mechanisms of state control in a crafty and inventive way. Dissimulation, false compliance and feigned ignorance were, as James Scott argues, some of the "everyday forms of peasant resistance — the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents, and

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[36] Lampros, "Σημειώσεις" [Remarks], pp. 198-199, 202-203; Dokos - Panagopoulos, pp. XXX, XXXII, LI.

[37] Dokos - Panagopoulos, pp. XXIV-LIX; Siriol Davies, "Pylos Regional Archaeological Project, Part VI: Administration and Settlement in Venetian Navarino", *Hesperia* 73.1 (2004), 87, 90, 113-116.

[38] Lampros, "Σημειώσεις" [Remarks], p. 200.

[39] BMCV, *mss. Morosini Grimani* 375, f. 51r-v, *dispaccio* 16 sent by Francesco Grimani, Corinth 15.8.1698.

interest from them".[40] It is possible that in the Peloponnese such practices of public self-presentation, like the lies which Grimani thought were products of the "incredible prejudice" of the locals,[41] were partly the result of the latter's suspicion towards Venetian mapmaking and a tactic of avoiding confrontation with authority and acquiring some control over their daily lives. It is a well-known fact that both in Europe and in its colonies, the surveyor represented a suspect and potentially threatening figure for the people of the countryside. In 1607, for example, the English surveyor John Norden published a text titled *The Surveyor's Dialogue*, in which he defended the usefulness of surveying through conversations with various individuals from the countryside. In one of them, an outraged farmer asks: "is not the fielde itselfe a goodly map for the lord to looke upon, better than a painted paper?".[42] Like the farmer of this dialogue who accused surveyors of being "the cause that men lose their land",[43] there is no reason to doubt that the inhabitants of the Peloponnese would have reacted in similar ways to the institutionalisation and transformation of their rural space into an object of geometrical calculations that seemed to operate against their customary rights and interests. Furthermore, mapping did not only entail further economic burdens for the native population, who even substituted the State from 1705 by paying themselves for the surveyors' stipends and the subsistence of their horses;[44] it also amounted to a negation of the local society's cartographic imagination.[45] In other words, mapping also meant for them that different locations would no longer be defined in relation to who the neighbours were; oaths and oral agreements would lose their binding force in acts of buying and selling and the settlement of property relations; and the Venetian panoramic view of space would marginalise the horizontal method of mental mapping through topographical features, buildings, trees and other landmarks.

Without doubt more evidence is needed in order to assess the precise consequences of these cultural inversions. However, in contrast to the intentions of those who produced the maps and texts, the subaltern voices of the indigenous population inhabit the body and margins of these documents; for this reason we may therefore distinguish, albeit indirectly, how the local inhabitants dealt with those inversions. Of particular interest in this regard are both the reports of usurpations of public land or the

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[40] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985, p. xvi. On cunning in a Greek context see Michael Herzfeld, *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 25. See also Deborah Reed-Danahay, "Talking about Resistance: Ethnography and Theory in Rural France", *Anthropological Quarterly* 66 (1993), 221-229.

[41] Peter Topping, "The Post-classical Documents", William A. McDonald - George R. Rapp Jr. (eds), *The Minnesota Messenia Expedition: Reconstructing a Bronze Age Regional Environment,* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1972, p. 71.

[42] John Norden, *The Surveyors dialogue ...*, London, printed [by Simon Stafford] for Hugh Astley 1607, p. 15. Cfr. Kain - Baigent, p. 5; Frank Kitchen, "John Norden (c. 1547-1625): Estate Surveyor, Topographer, County Mapmaker and Devotional Writer", *Imago Mundi* 49 (1997), 43-61. On the difficult relations between surveyors and local people see also Mary Sponberg Pedley, *The Commerce of Cartography: Making and Marketing Maps in Eighteenth-Century France and England*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005, ch. 1.

[43] Norden, p. 3.

[44] Spyridon P. Lampros, "Εκθέσεις των Βενετών προνοητών εκ των εν Βενετία Αρχείων εκδιδόμεναι" [Venetian Governors' Reports from the Venetian Archives], *ΔΙΕΕΕ* 5 (1900), 735; Dokos - Panagopoulos, p. LV.

[45] For a brilliant study of the cartographical imagination of a medieval society see Daniel Lord Smail, *Imaginary Cartographies. Possession and Identity in Late Medieval Marseille*, Ithaca-London, ,Cornell University Press, 2000.

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landowners' false statements and the colonial officials' excuses, who often attributed their failure to complete cadastral surveys to the locals' uncooperative attitude. As we saw, the latter were neither passive witnesses in the cartographic process nor did the Venetian officials own an exclusive monopoly in the production of colonial knowledge. In fact, their dependence on the guidance of the indigenous population undermined their image as representatives of an omnipotent and faceless government and revealed the limits of state sovereignty and their own awkward position as colonial settlers: while they did not trust their subjects, they were obliged to turn to them for useful information which, because of their lack of knowledge of Greek, could only be acquired through interpreters. Consequently, the local officials' belief that their personal ignorance was caused by the refusal of the locals to disclose secret information introduced a constant element of conflict in the contact zone between the two. Such problems occurred in the island of Lefkada, when the General *provveditore* of the sea Francesco Correr complained about the limited progress of the local cadastre because of insufficient documentation and excessive dependence on oral testimonies by landowners without paper ownership titles.[46]

The previous examples shed light on the constant tensions between the public and hidden transcripts surrounding Venetian mapping. As Scott observes, in situations where the obvious contestation of power is difficult or impossible, the lower social groups tend to develop strategies of hidden resistance: while they obey the rules defining their "public transcripts", i.e. their formal contacts with the authorities, at the same time they deploy "hidden transcripts" of resistance.[47] Around these concepts, we may therefore describe some of the cases of missing probative documents as examples of hidden transcripts in the contest between the local population and the Venetian administration. In these cases, official compliance with state practices of information gathering coexisted with a covert subversion which undermined the efficiency of those practices. In other words, the public transcript contained the grain of its inversion, that is, the co-articulation of a hidden transcript precisely at the same time.

This conclusion about the ability of the indigenous population to influence the efficiency of Venetian record-keeping and, therefore, to act politically under conditions of external oppression, has broader historiographical implications. One of those relates to the important distinction between the formal citizen bodies known as *comunità* and the wider political community of Greek colonial subjects which some historians fail to make. In restricting the concept of "political community" to the elected notables of the *comunità*,[48] this formalistic approach denies any political role to the unofficial local community and assumes a depoliticised public stance by those who did not belong to the official local councils. This is further confirmed by examples of ordinary individuals

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[46] BQSV, *mss*. cl. IV, cod. 310 (827), *dispaccio* 80, 3.4.1727.

[47] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven – London, Yale University Press, 1992².

[48] This error is evident in Anastassia Papadia-Lala, *Ο θεσμός των αστικών κοινοτήτων στον ελληνικό χώρο κατά την περίοδο της Βενετοκρατίας (13ος – 18ος αι.). Μια συνθετική προσέγγιση* [The Institution of Citizen Communities in the Greek Territories during the period of the Venetian Rule (13th-18th c.): A Synthetic Approach], Venice, Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia, 2004, p. 41. For a sound critique of this book, see Ν.Ε. Καραπιδάκη, "Αστικές κοινότητες κατά την Βενετοκρατία" [Citizen communities under Venetian rule], *Τα Ιστορικά* 43 (2005), 543-552.

who came either into conflict with local councillors[49] or who actively cooperated with the Venetian surveyors, even though they were not members of the *comunità*. These initiatives indicate that a much more complex political reality was present among the informal local communities, which requires an equally compound interpretative approach to ensure that this is not lost under the shadow of the formal institutional structures. As confirmed by the role of native informants who sought to unsettle the visual control of the Venetian state, the production of cartographic knowledge was a field of constant political struggle. For this reason, mapping can and should provide an alternative analytical path for examining the politics of rural space and the power relations between the empire and its subjects, at least on the micro level. Furthermore, if we consider Bennet and Davis's hypothesis that the traces of the Venetian cadastres in eighteenth-century Ottoman records suggest that "the information may have been 'prepackaged' in a certain format by local inhabitants",[50] then we may conclude that the encounter with the Venetian surveyors had also affected the way in which the Peloponnesians perceived their personal geography, their land and their position in relation to imperial power.

Conclusions

At the beginning of this paper I drew attention to Bloch and Harley's advice to be particularly cautious towards the alleged mimetic ability of maps by always taking into consideration the relational conventions on which they are drawn. As I tried to show, in place of the positivist narrative about urban and rural space and its analysis of cartography on the basis of its degree of precision or objectivity, it is more profitable to examine Venetian maps under the prism of the collection and transmission of geographical knowledge as a social and cultural relationship. This methodological approach offers significant advantages for the understanding of the dialectical relationship between cartographic knowledge and colonial government: on the one hand, it shows the importance of visualisation as a core strategy through which Venetians identified, interpreted and ruled their colonies; on the other hand, it sheds light on mapping as an ethnographic process of cultural exchange, performance and translation between surveyors and local agents of information. This approach therefore revises older assumptions about the uniformity of metropolitan planning in the colonies as an exclusively top-down process which denied the key role of local knowledge. In doing so, it constitutes a corrective intervention to several studies that are strictly limited to aspects of the graphic elements of maps, assuming rather simplistically that a monolithic power structure always lies behind their production.

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[49] Examples can be found in ASV, *Archivio Grimani dai Servi*, b. 22, f. 699r-700r, 714r-v, 4.4.1700; BMCV, *mss. Morosini Grimani* 454, *dispaccio* 46 of the *rettore* of Monemvasia Francesco Moro, 20.10.1700.

[50] John Bennett – Jack L. Davis, "A Reconstruction of the Human Landscape of the *Kaza* of Anavarin", Fariba Zarinebaf - John Bennet - Jack L. Davis, *A Historical and Economic Geography of Ottoman Greece: The Southwestern Morea in the 18th Century*, Princeton, The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2005, p. 147. See also John Bennet, "Fragmentary 'Geo-metry': Early Modern Landscapes of the Morea and Cerigo in Text, Image, and Archaeology", Siriol Davies – Jack L. Davis (eds), *Between Venice and Istanbul: Colonial Landscapes in Early Modern Greece*, Princeton, The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2007, pp. 207-208.

Along with similar cartographic projects in other European colonies,[51] Venetian maps were the product of a constant social negotiation involving multiple actors, and the knowledge arising from it was more a representation of complex power relations than of a clear-cut geographical reality. Furthermore, these relations were also a major factor in determining the informational content of maps, an issue which should be born in mind every time we approach them as sources of environmental history, landscape archaeology and micro-toponymy. As already pointed out, maps operated as mediators between the Venetian and the Peloponnesian "information orders",[52] between field experience and book experience, between elite and popular knowledge, and between the material world and its visual representation. Information gathering, however, presented problems of accuracy and reliability. Apart from cases of local councillors considered trustworthy, mainly because of their social position rather than what they said, this process came into conflict with the repeated complaints of the *provveditori* against those whom they saw as unreliable and hypocritical subjects. The dominance of such stereotypical characterisations in the reports of the local officials and in many print texts also served to suppress the contribution of the indigenous people to the production of the Venetian "diligent plans". Behind these aphorisms, of course, one can discern both the fragility and dependence of the Venetian record-keeping bureaucracy on the cooperation of the local inhabitants and the persistence of the myth of the wise and lonely colonial official, who commanded a brilliant knowledge of the conquered region from the top of his imperial panopticon. That is how the omission of 'non-scientific' local data also served to add the necessary 'scientific' authority to Venetian cartography as a technology ostensibly reflecting the empirical findings of objective observation.

In effect, manuscript maps and, to an even greater extent, commercial printed maps from the War of the Morea against the Ottomans (1684-99) show largely how the Venetians saw their own Peloponnese: not the real region, but the one they ruled and conceived of.[53] Insofar as many aspects of local social life continued to lie beyond the spectrum of Venetian experience and the scope of its power, the Peloponnese could never be totally known or drawn. As in Borges' famous story about an imperial map of the same scale as the empire, Venetian cartography reflects both the aspiration and the futility of colonial knowledge.[54] The Venetians, of course, deluded themselves in thinking that censuses, cadastres and maps assisted them in getting to know their territories better and maintaining order over the chaotic and illegible reality which they saw in the Peloponnese. However, order does not necessarily mean control; and for this reason, even though they used their finest cartographic techniques to the state of

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[51] Apart from Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, see Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, Boston, Faber and Faber, 1987; Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1995; Barbara E. Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geograficas*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996; D. Graham Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000; Felix Driver, *Geography militant: cultures of exploration and empire*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2001.

[52] The term has been coined by C.A. Bayly. See his outstanding contribution *Empire and Information: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1770-1870*, Cambridge, CUP, 1996, pp. 3-6.

[53] Anastasia Stouraiti, *Ο Άρης στον καθρέφτη. Η δεξίωση του πολέμου του Μοριά (1684-1699) στη Βενετία* [Mars in the Mirror: The Reception of the War of the Morea (1684-1699) in Venice], PhD dissertation, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Athens 2003, ch. 8.

[54] Jorge Luis Borges, "On Exactitude in Science", *A Universal History of Infamy* (1935), in *Collected Fictions*, transl. by Andrew Hurley, New York, Viking Penguin, 1998, p. 325.

perfection, they still had to watch their latest conquest perish under the feet of the Turks a few years later.