

SOME REMARKS ON THE «CRETICA»
OF CRISTOFORO BUONDELMONTI

(*Cristoforo Buondelmonti, Descriptio Insule Crete et Liber Insularum, Cap. XI : Creta*, Édition critique par Marie - Anne Van Spitael, Hé-
rakleion (Crète) 1981, pp. (2)+343+XXII pl. +1 map).

The works of Cristoforo Buondelmonti, apart from achieving an enormous success in their own time, are of great interest to every scholar studying the Aegean world in the Late Middle Ages. A new edition of his works or part of them is, therefore, an event that can hardly pass unnoticed; indeed it is very welcome and potentially very useful because Buondelmonti, being the first "modern" traveller to describe the Aegean islands in a more or less systematic way, is considered to be an essential source for everyone interested in the area.

This notice, far from intending to examine the work of Buondelmonti as a whole, has a more limited scope, namely to make some comments on Buondelmonti's work concerning Crete as edited by Mme Van Spitael.

We may recall that Buondelmonti owes his fame to two works: a description of Crete known as *Descriptio Candiae* or *Descriptio Insulae Cretae* (DIC) and a description of the Aegean and Ionian islands as well as Constantinople, known as *Liber Insularum Archipelagi* (LIA), a chapter of which deals again with Crete. The original Mss. of both these works, the first of which was sent to the humanist Niccolò Niccoli and the second to the author's patron cardinal Giordano Orsini, have never been found, despite persistent researches undertaken at various periods in the past. However, we possess a relatively large number of copies, particularly of the LIA which had been a great success, all of which bear a varying degree of textual similarity to each other; and the same applies to the maps which usually accompanied these Mss.

The first edition of the DIC was attempted by the 18th century Venetian scholar Flaminio Cornaro (Corner), who used one Ms.¹; the LIA was first published by L. de Sinner with the help of three Paris Mss. but with many mistakes and misunderstandings²; finally É. Legrand published again the LIA in a Greek version found in a Ms. of the library of the Seraglio in Constantinople and, at the same time, he reprinted Corner's edition with many corrections and with a long and very useful introduction³. A second volume which would have contained the commentary was announced by Legrand but never appeared. The chapter on Crete of the LIA in the Latin and Greek version of Sinner's and Legrand's editions respectively were reprinted by El. Platakis⁴. Recently (1984), a translation of the DIC into Greek by Mrs. Olympia Aposkiti-Alexiou has been published.

These are, briefly, the editions of the works of Buondelmonti, apart from his maps, and one may have expected from Mme Van Spitael more than the eight lines which she dedicated to the history of the previous editions of Buondelmonti's works. There is, indeed, a general lack of references which is apparent and striking, particularly in the second part of the book, i.e. the sections concerning Buondelmonti's activities and his Mss.: one is under the impression that Mme Van Spitael is somehow the first to write about Buondelmonti or to discover his Mss., because she refers to practically no-one else's works⁵.

1. *Creta Sacra*, I, Venetiis 1755, pp. 1 - 18 and 77 - 109.

2. *Christoph. Bondelmontii, Florentini, Librum Insularum Archipelagi*, Lipsiae et Berolini, 1824.

3. *Description des îles de l'Archipel, par Christophe Buondelmonti, Version grecque par un Anonyme, Première partie...*, Paris 1897 (Publications de l'École des Langues Orientales Vivantes, quatrième série, tome XIV).

4. Ξένοι φυσιοδίφαι, γεωγράφοι καὶ περιηγηταὶ περὶ Κρήτης κατὰ τοὺς IB'-IΘ' αἰ., *Amaltheia* 6 (1971), pp. 105 - 112.

5. Special mention must be made of three particularly useful works on Buondelmonti with further bibliography, which Mme Van Spitael does not refer to: R. Almagià, *Planisferi, Carte Nautiche e Affini dal secolo XIV al XVII esistenti nella Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Città del Vaticano 1944 (Monumenta Cartographica Vaticana, I), pp. 106 ff.; A. Campana, *Da codici del Buondelmonti*, *SBN* 9 (1957), pp. 32 ff. (Silloge Bizantina in onore di S. G. Mercati); R. Weiss, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 15, 1972, pp. 198 - 200, s. v. Cr. Buondelmonti. See also the analysis of Buondelmonti's works in J. P. A. Van Der Vin, *Travellers to Greece and Constantinople* (Nederl. Hist.- Arch. Inst. Te Instanbul), I, Louvain 1980, pp. 133 - 150 and 227 - 237.

Mme Van Spitael's edition is divided into three parts. In the first she examines briefly the situation of Crete in the beginning of the 15th century, the life and voyages of Buondelmonti as well as his itinerary in Crete and, finally, his language and style of writing. In the second part the editor examines the Mss. of the DIC and the LIA and gives her edition of the texts along with a translation into French. The third part contains the editor's commentary on the texts and her conclusions. The book is completed with the bibliography¹, two indices, twenty-two plates and one map.

Since the edition of the text and the Mss. are particularly interesting, let us consider them first.

The DIC is known by only five Mss. Mme Van Spitael has established the text by collating Cod. Chig. Lat. IV, 74² and the Ms. of Buondelmonti in a private collection in Baden³; variants have been given from Cod. Laur. Plut. 29, 42⁴ and Cod. Ros. 703⁵. The fifth Ms., Cod. Marc. Lat. X, 124⁶, contains an abridged version of the DIC and was collated only in certain passages to help clarify the text of the other Mss.

It must be noted in the first place that Mme Van Spitael has described these Mss. without a single bibliographical reference. Secondly, the description of the Mss. given by her is unsatisfactory and, occasionally, incorrect. For instance, one is never told whether a Ms. containing the DIC (and/or the LIA) contains anything else, too. To take one example, Cod. Chig. Lat. IV, 74 also contains the *Liber de seculo et religione* by Coluccio Salutati⁷, but this she does not mention; in the same Ms. the sequence of the folia is disturbed but again this is not mentioned when the editor enumerates the folia—which results

1. Which is referred to only in the commentary, not in the previous parts of the book.

2. A. Campana, *op. cit.*, p. 34; R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

3. Van Spitael, *op. cit.*, p. 80 - 81; cf. M. Guarducci, *Kret. Chron.* 4 (1950), p. 528 (note).

4. A. M. Bandini, *Catalogus codicum latinorum bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae*, I, Florentiae 1774, col. 58 - 59.

5. H. Tietze, *Die illuminierten Handschriften der Rossiana*, 1911, p. 184; cf. R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 116 - 117.

6. G. Valentinelli, *Bibliotheca Manuscripta ad S. Marci Venetiarum*, VI, Venetiis 1873, p. 300 - 301.

7. A. Campana, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

in a confusion—as she does not mention the lacunae¹; the same Ms. contains four drawings in the text of the DIC which are also not mentioned; finally, the date of the Ms. (17th century) is never mentioned by the editor. The Ms. of Baden, which is the least known of all, is also described in a similarly casual manner; so are the Mss. Laur. Plut. 29, 42 and Ros. 703. For the latter the editor mentions that its colophon is “sans aucune mention de date”², but in fact the colophon bears the date 1418 and the beginning of the Ms. gives the date MCCCCX(X)V (1415)³. Concerning the copyist of the Ros. 703, Bartholomeo de Columpnis, Mme Van Spitael wonders if he was a member of the Colonna family and thinks that he lived in the end of the 15th century, unaware of the fact that de Columpnis has been the subject of an article by A. Campana, who dates the copying of the Ros. 703 by him in 1425⁴.

Before we come to the method that Mme Van Spitael has used to edit the text of the DIC, it must be remembered that Buondelmonti wrote not one, but certainly two and possibly three versions of this work, whose copies bear proof of this fact. Indeed, Buondelmonti wrote a longer and a shorter version of the DIC between 1417 and 1422 (not 1420, as the editor thinks), or, according to another view, after the first version had been completed and sent to Niccolò Niccoli in 1417, a second—shorter—version was written containing material absent from the previous one; a third version, which was a revision of the first, was completed in Constantinople in 1422⁵. In other words, there was not one original form of the DIC written by Buondelmonti, but two or three “original” versions, the copies of which are the Mss. we possess now.

Mme Van Spitael accepts that there are two different versions of the DIC but, contrary to everyone else who wrote on Buondelmonti and contrary to all the evidence provided by the Mss. themselves, she considers the shorter version older than the longer one, presenting

1. *Ibid.*

2. Van Spitael, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

3. R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

4. A. Campana, Chi era lo stampatore Bartolomeo de Columnis di Chio, *Studi e ricerche sulla storia della stampa del Quattrocento*, Milano 1942, pp. 1 - 32; cf. idem, *SBN* 9 (1957), p. 52.

5. R. Weiss, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

no argument whatsoever to support this view¹. According to the editor, the Cod. Chigianus and the Ms. of Baden represent the long form of the DIC, whereas the shorter one is represented by the Laurentianus and the Rossianus². We are not told from what version the abridged form of the DIC in the Cod. Marc. Lat. X, 124 derives.

What Mme Van Spitael did in editing the text was to collate all five Mss. indiscriminately, forgetting that she had previously admitted that "Ces quatre manuscrits paraissent provenir de deux versions primitives differentes"³. However, since not all the Mss. go back to a common original, this method of edition is objectionable in principle because it ultimately transforms the text into a form that has never existed. For example, in the description of Cod. Ross. 703 the editor informs us that "ce manuscrit contient des gloses fort nombreuses" one of which is *et signum dat civitati*⁴. If we turn to the text that Mme Van Spitael has edited, we read in lines 579 - 80: *in quo custos Candie vigilat et signum dat civitati*; which means that she has incorporated in the text a gloss that does not exist in any of the other four Mss. In the same manner, one cannot see why in l. 938 *per penam pendentes* of the short version (Laur. Plut. 29, 42) should be preferred against the reading *ab alto pendentes* of the Baden, Chigianus and Rossianus Mss., nor why in the same line *cedunt*, given again by the short version (Ross. and Laur.), should be preferred against *ruunt* given by the Mss. of the long version. On the other hand, the editor's sometimes drastic emendations of the text cannot be always accepted, as e.g. in the cases of *Pseira insula* and *Uisea* to which we will return later.

It is unnecessary to multiply these examples because the point is that we could have had a far clearer picture of what Buondelmonti wrote, if the editor had put side by side instead of mixing up the two different versions. Indeed, an edition of the two versions separately in two parallel columns would offer much better chances both for comparison and for comments on the text, because now the variants given in the apparatus criticus remain virtually without comment. Fortunately,

1. Van Spitael, *op. cit.*, p. 92 - 93.

2. Nevertheless, A. Campana, *op. cit.*, p. 52, maintains that the Ros. 703 is "anche un esemplare della redazione ampia della Descriptio Insulae Cretae".

3. Van Spitael, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

it is true that the differences in the two versions of the DIC are not very serious, as far as the essentials are concerned, and from this point of view though the overall form of the text is not very near to what Buondelmonti actually produced, the important thing remains that the variants of the text are now available.

After the edition of the DIC, an edition of the chapter dedicated to Crete in the LIA becomes somewhat superfluous, as there is practically nothing essential in the latter which is not already mentioned in the former. Seen in this way, the LIA might as well have been ignored altogether. However, since the editor decided to edit its chapter on Crete, she ought to have concentrated on what is more important, namely, not so much the text itself, as the maps which illustrate the Mss. of the LIA, and the collation of the greatest possible number of Mss.

Unfortunately, although the editor has included in her plates four maps of Crete from various Mss. of the LIA, neither the best nor the most important ones have been included, nor did she pay any attention to the maps at all, despite the fact that she accepted, albeit half-heartedly, that Buondelmonti could have been a cartographer as well¹.

In fact Buondelmonti himself wrote at the end of the DIC contained in the Cod. Chig. Lat. F IV, 74: "*Scripsi hunc librum figuram que insule...*" etc., which means that the DIC was originally accompanied by a map of Crete. Today, only one text of the DIC, the one preserved in the Cod. Ross. 703, is accompanied by such a map and a very important one too, about which, incidentally, Mme Van Spitael remains silent, as she does for all the maps of Buondelmonti. Every other map of Crete connected with the work of Buondelmonti that survives today accompanies the LIA.

The map of the Ross. 703 presents the western half of Crete in a folio measuring 19 × 24 cm; it lacks the eastern half which would have made the original dimensions 19 × 48 cm². Another map, very similar to this but perhaps closer to the original, is preserved in the Cod. Res. Ge. FF 9351 of the Bibliothèque Nationale. It measures 29,5 × 59 cm and lacks only the eastern tip of Crete³. A third one,

1. Van Spitael, *op. cit.*, p. 38 - 39.

2. Cf. R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 116 and plate LVI (upper), where it is reproduced.

3. L. Valée, Notice des documents exposés à la section des cartes de la Bibliothèque Nationale, *Revue des Bibliothèques*, 1912, p. 163, no 165; cf. R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

an excellent and superbly executed map of Crete, covers the whole fol. 134^v of the Cod. Vespas. A XIII (Arundel 93) of the British Museum, which also contains the text of the LIA¹. All these maps, if we may restrict ourselves to these three among the many others that exist, are very detailed: a close scrutiny of their legends reveals that, although the latter two (as all the rest, except the first one) accompanied the LIA where the description of Crete is very short, their indications and legends in fact correspond in detail to the full text of the DIC. This proves that the same map of Crete which was originally produced to illustrate the text of the DIC was also used later to illustrate the short chapter on Crete which is contained in the LIA, despite the fact that this map was far more detailed than the text on Crete in this latter work. In other words, by checking on the better and more detailed maps of Crete existing today in Mss. containing the LIA, we can check in fact on Buondelmonti's narration and itinerary in the DIC.

Mme Van Spitael has failed to realize the importance of these maps, not for the text of the LIA but for that of the DIC, as she failed to realize that, since Buondelmonti first published his DIC followed by a map on which he had depicted his itinerary in some detail, a modern edition of this work should be accompanied by and constantly compared to as many maps related to this work as are available and worth this effort.

Coming now to the Mss. of the LIA, Mme Van Spitael has described, again with no bibliographical references, a total of thirteen Mss.; she has also used two more, Cod. Chig. Lat. F IV, 74 and the Ms. of Baden, which had been used before for the edition of the DIC, and a third, the Ms. of the Seraglio, which is a translation of the text into Greek. The edition of the short version was based on the Chigianus and the Ms. of Baden; for the edition of the longer version there were used the Ms. of Norfolk², two Mss. of Venice³, three of Florence⁴

1. J. Planta, *Catalogue of the manuscripts in the Cottonian Library...*, 1802, p. 435; *Catalogue of the Arundel manuscripts in the British Museum*, London 1834, p. 26. Very detailed description in A. Derolez, *The Library of Raphael de Marcatellis*, Ghent 1971, pp. 90 - 94.

2. W. Roscoe - S. de Ricci, *A handlist of the manuscripts in the library of the Earl of Leicester at Holkham Hall*, London 1932, p. 41; cf. *The Holkham Hall Library, Illumination and Illustrations in the Ms. Library of the Earl of Leicester*, ed. by W. O. Hassal, Oxford 1970.

3. Cod. Marc. Lat. X, 124 - 3177 and Cod. Marc. Lat. XIV, 45 - 4595; see p. 90, note 5 *supra*.

4. For Cod. Laur. Plut. 29, 25 see: A. M. Bandini, *op. cit.*, col. 41 - 42; for Cod. II, II, 312 (Bibl. Naz. Centr.) see: G. Mazzatinti, *Inventari dei manoscritti delle*

and five of Paris¹, but each group of Mss. was considered as one, despite the variations within each group. The Ms. of the Seraglio and the Ms. A 219 inf. of the Ambrosiana were described but not collated².

It is not very clear to me why the editor has restricted herself to these Mss. only, and has not tried, if not to collate, at least to locate and describe as many Mss. of the LIA as possible. As this work had known an enormous success in its time, there exists a great number of copies, many of them with very interesting maps. A brief research of ours has produced the following Mss. containing the LIA in one form or another, and quite possibly many more must exist in various other public or private libraries.

1. Bibl. Ambrosiana, Cod. Y 72 Sup., containing the text of the LIA rendered in "volgare" (Venetian dialect)³.
2. Bibl. Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Cod. Magliab. XIII, 7⁴.
3. Bibl. Universitaria di Padova, Cod. 1605⁵.
4. Bibl. Classense di Ravenna, Cod. 308⁶.
5. Cod. Marc. Lat. X, 123. The text is incomplete⁷.
6. Cod. Marc. Lat. XIV, 25⁸.
7. Cod. Marc. Ital. VI, 19. The text is in "volgare"⁹.

Biblioteche d'Italia, vol. 9, Forlì 1899, p. 92 - 93; for Cod. 673 (M. I. 25) (Bibl. Riccardiana) see: J. Lamius, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum qui in Bibl. Riccardiana Florentiae adseruantur*, Liburni 1761, p. 245.

1. For the three Mss. Fds. Lat. 4823, 4824 and 4825 see: *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Regiae*, pars tertia, tomus quartus, Paris 1744, p. 5; for the Ms. Lat. Nouv. Acq. 2383 see: H. Omont, *Nouvelles acquisitions du Département des Mss. pendant les années 1898 - 1899*, Paris 1900, p. 22; for the Ms. Res. Ge. FF 9351 see p. 93, note 3 *supra*.

2. While the omission of the former is understandable, the exclusion of the latter is not. Moreover, while the Ms. of Milan is said to be "apparenté" to the Ms. of Norfolk (p. 85), in the stemma (p. 92) it is shown as deriving from the Chigianus. For this latter Ms., Cod. A 219 Inf., see: A. Amelli, *Indice dei codici manoscritti della Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, *Revue des Bibliothèques*, 1909, p. 151.

3. *Inventario Ceruti dei manoscritti della Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, vol. 5, 1979, p. 306; cf. P.O. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, I, London 1963, p. 344.

4. R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 105, note 3.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

6. G. Mazzatinti, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, Forlì 1894, p. 214.

7. G. Valentinelli, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

8. R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 114, note 3.

9. *Inventari dei Mss. delle Biblioteche d'Italia*, vol. 77, Firenze 1950, p. 6.

8. Cod. Marc. Lat. X, 215¹.
9. Cod. Vat. Ross. 702².
10. Cod. Vat. Ross. 704. The text is in "volgare"³.
11. Cod. Vat. Ross. 705⁴.
12. Cod. Vat. Urb. Lat. 458⁵.
13. Cod. Vat. Urb. Lat. 459⁵.
14. Cod. Vat. Barb. Lat. 270⁶.
15. Cod. Vat. Chig. F V, 110⁷.
16. Cod. Marc. Lat. X, 158⁸.
17. British Museum, Cod. Sloane 3843⁹.
18. British Museum, Cod. Vespas. A XIII (Arundel 93)¹⁰.
19. British Museum, Cod. Titus B VIII, 235. It contains a part of the LIA, not including Crete, translated into English¹¹.

1. See p. 95, note 7 *supra*.

2. H. Tietze, *op. cit.*, p. 101 - 102; R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 107 f.

3. H. Tietze, *op. cit.*, p. 184; R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 113 - 114; A. Campana, *op. cit.*, p. 49 f.

4. H. Tietze, *op. cit.*, p. 182; R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 113; A. Campana, *op. cit.*, p. 49 f.

5. C. Stornaiolo, *Codices Urbinates Latini*, I, Romae 1902, p. 466 - 467; cf. R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

6. R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

7. A. Muñoz, I codici miniati della Biblioteca Chigi, *Revue des Bibliothèques*, 1905, p. 370; cf. R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 110 - 111.

8. G. Valentinelli, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

9. S. Ayscough, *A catalogue of the Mss. preserved in the British Museum... including the collections of Sir H. Sloane...*, vol. I, London 1782, p. 365. According to the copyist of this Ms., Jacob Palmerius (Paulmier) "nobilis Cadomensis" (= Caen), who copied the text of the LIA in 1642, the original Ms. of Buondelmonti existed in the library of the French scholar Auguste de Thou, in Paris. Here is how the title of this Ms. reads (fol. 3^r): *Liber Insularum Archipelagi/Christophori de Bondelmontibus/cuius autographum extat in Bibliotheca Thuana/Lutetiae./Hoc autem exemplar propria manu descripsit/Jacobus Palmerius a Grentemesnil/Nobilis Cadomensis/Anno Domini Dionysiano 1642*. Cf. Sinner, *op. cit.*, p. 11; F. W. Hasluck, Notes on Mss. in the Brit. Museum relating to Levant Geography and Travel, *ABSA* 12 (1905 - 6), p. 198. Indeed the *Catalogus Bibliothecae Thuanae*, Paris 1679, p. 421, edited by Joseph Quesnel, contains a "*Liber Insularum Archipelagi, Christ. de Bondelmont. cum figuris. fol.*". I do not know whether this indication has ever been followed up by those searching for the original Ms. of Buondelmonti.

10. See p. 94, note 1 *supra*.

11. J. Planta, *op. cit.*, p. 435. The date 1320 is obviously a mistake for 1420. Cf. Sinner, *op. cit.*, p. 27; F. W. Hasluck, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

20. National Maritime Museum, London, Cod. 36 - 9918 C/P 13¹.
21. National Maritime Museum, London, Cod. 38 - 9919 C/P 20¹.
22. Ann Arbor University, Michigan, Cod. 162².
23. Gennadeion Library, Athens, Cod. XXII, 3, 71³.
24. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cod. Lat. Nouv. Acq. 16⁴.
25. Leyden, Cod. Voss. Lat. Q 62⁵.
26. Bodleian Library, Oxford, Cod. Canon. misc. 280⁶.

It is interesting to see that in the edition of the LIA, Cap. XI: Creta, Mme Van Spitael did what it would have been better if it had been done in the edition of the DIC. Here we have again more than one version of the text. According to R. Weiss⁷, there was an original version finished before 1420, which is now lost; a second version was completed in Rhodes in 1420 and was sent to cardinal Orsini, as was the previous one, too. A third version, in shorter form, was written by Buondelmonti in Constantinople in 1422 and again dedicated to Orsini; finally, a fourth version followed around 1430 with various geographical remarks in the first two chapters, two new maps and an abundance of antiquarian, mythological and philosophical excursuses which, along with a lengthy preface, were absent from the previous versions.

Mme Van Spitael mentions only two versions, those of 1420 and 1422, considering again the longer version as preceded by the shorter one. She says nothing about a version produced ca. 1430, but it seems that she does not accept this view because she states that Buondelmonti must have died shortly after 1423⁸. Be that as it may, Mme

1. D. Howse, *An inventory of the navigation and astronomy collections at the National Maritime Museum*, London 1973, pp. 6/9 - 6/10; D. Howse - M. Sanderson, *The Sea Chart*, London 1973, p. 17; *A guide to the Mss. in the National Maritime Museum*, II, 1980, pp. 107 - 108.

2. S. de Ricci - W. J. Wilson, *Census of Mediaeval and Renaissance Mss. in the USA and Canada*, II, New York 1937, p. 1122.

3. Manuscript catalogue of the Gennadeion Library p. 22.

4. H. Omont, *Nouvelles acquisitions du Département des Mss. pendant les années 1921 - 23*, Paris 1924, p. 18; cf. Monique - Cécile Garand, La tradition manuscrite du "Liber Archipelagi Insularum" [sic], *Scriptorium* 29 (1975), p. 69 - 76.

5. K. A. De Meyier, Un manuscrit de "Liber Insularum Archipelagi" de Christophe Buondelmonti à Leyde, *Scriptorium*, 25 (1971), pp. 300 - 303.

6. C. Mitchell, Ex libris Kiriaci Anconitani, *Italia medievale e umanistica* 5 (1962), pp. 283-299.

7. *Op. cit.*, p. 199.

8. Van Spitael, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

Van Spitael edits here separately two versions of the chapter on Crete of the LIA, following this time the correct principle which was not adopted in the edition of the DIC. Once again it would have been much more convenient if these versions were edited in parallel columns so that the texts could be more easily compared to each other.

Let us now consider the commentary which the editor has appended to the text, a task almost equally important as the edition of the text. It is to Mme Van Spitael's credit that her comments are copious and usually very detailed. She has managed to clarify a great number of Buondelmonti's obscure passages and to identify the place-names mentioned by the author, making an extensive use (despite the fact that she ignored Buondelmonti's own maps) of later Venetian maps and later travellers' accounts, as well as archaeological reports combined with her own experience of travelling through Crete. There are, however, some remarks that have to be made.

The comments are, understandably, largely of a geographical and archaeological nature. As far as the latter are concerned Mme Van Spitael, eager to give as much information as possible, often reaches the other extreme: perhaps carried away by her own experience, she does not restrict her comments on what Buondelmonti actually said he saw, but goes on to analyse what he must have seen according to her opinion. To give one example, about his *civitas Camara* Buondelmonti writes this antiquarian remark: *Plura et magna hedificia marmorum dimictunt sotii*¹. Thinking that Buondelmonti was actually looking at the ruins of ancient Praisos, the editor gives a long note on this city and the surrounding area and then concludes: "Il a pu voir (sc. Buondelmonti), comme nous, des ramparts, un sanctuaire de sommet, les soubassements d'un grand édifice public, à la fois maison des hommes (ἄνδρῶν), prytanée (πρυτανεῖον) et sénat (βουλευτήριο), les citernes, les tombes voûtées, les restes de quelques maisons d'époque hellénistique"². Remember that Buondelmonti only referred to *Plura* (or *rura*) *et magna hedificia marmorum*.

This type of comment is provided nearly every time that Buondelmonti writes, even in the vaguest terms, about seeing ancient ruins. Since Buondelmonti is mostly studied for his remarks on ancient

1. *Ibid.*, p. 165. "*Plura*" is an emendation of the editor for "*rura*" given by all the Mss.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 270 - 271.

sites he visited, this over-enthusiastic commentary by the editor ultimately offers to the reader a greatly over-estimated assessment of Buondelmonti's testimony. In other words the reader is often presented with a false picture about what Buondelmonti actually saw and this constitutes a serious drawback of the editor's work especially when, as we shall see below, there is a near-certainty that Buondelmonti also described places that he had never visited.

On the other hand there are several passages which would have deserved comment but do not receive any. This usually happens with passages of historical or social content, but there are other instances as well. For example, the ruins seen by Buondelmonti during his excursion south of the town of Kisamos are never commented upon¹; nor is Buondelmonti's remark that the church of St. Titus at Gortyna is a small one, while the church at the near-by village of Agioi Deka is as big as the church of St. Trinity in Florence, when it is obviously the contrary that is true²; nor is there any comment about the inhabitants of the western parts of Crete whom Buondelmonti presents so vividly in various passages³, to mention only a few of the passages where comment is lacking.

On the contrary there are sometimes comments on things never mentioned by Buondelmonti at all. For instance, commenting on Buondelmonti's phrase *Massalam post longum iter invenio flumen*⁴, the editor includes the following remark: "Là, les marins peuvent échapper à l'animosité des habitants de Khora (Sfakion), pirates réputés, faire de l'eau douce (elle sourd de la plage en creusant légèrement le sable) et se reposer une journée entière (un dimanche?)"⁵. Now Buondelmonti says or implies nothing of the above except that there he rested for one day. In the same way, when Buondelmonti mentions that in the region of *Castrum Novum* (Castel Nuovo, modern Kastelli Kainourgiou) the inhabitants cultivate flax⁶, the editor remarks: "Il est très douteux que Buondelmonti... ait réelle-

1. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 174 - 175.

3. E.g. pp. 115 - 116, 123 f., 131 f.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

ment assisté au rouissage (du lin)"¹. But he never claimed anything of the sort!

Sometimes the editor fails to cite references supporting her claims; e.g. it would be very interesting to know where she obtained the information that the area around the village of Episkopi (Monofatsiou) was "une région d'ailleurs fortement colonisée par les Arabes entre 827 - 961"²; or what is the source of her information that "c'étaient un monastère et une chapelle dits San Giorgio de la Ponta (ou Punta) ou monasterio di Nazareth, au bord de la mer, à la base du promontoire qui ferme à l'Est le port d'Heracleion"³. And the reader would like very much to know what part of the text the note n° 198, p. 280 refers to.

Coming now to the geographical comments, these are basically linked with Buondelmonti's itinerary dealt with in the first part of the book.

As we have said, the first part of the book consists of three sections. The first of these deals with the situation of Crete in the beginning of the 15th century, being a short exposé of the administrative, social, economic and religious conditions prevailing in Crete at that time. This analysis, however, is somewhat irrelevant as neither Buondelmonti nor Mme Van Spitael make any particular mention of these conditions anywhere in the book, nor is there any discussion of the social, economic etc. background of Crete seen through Buondelmonti's narration. Nevertheless, neither this section nor the third one, dealing with Buondelmonti's art of writing, are as interesting for our discussion as the second section, which concerns the life of Buondelmonti and his voyages in Crete.

Reading Mme Van Spitael's short "Notice biographique" on Buondelmonti one gets the distinct impression that it is less documented and less detailed than it ought to have been, compared with the

1. *Ibid.*, p. 283.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 277. The whole area of Heracleion and the surrounding villages must have been densely populated by the Arabs, although we possess no information other than the coin-finds and the remains of an Arab building at Knossos. Even so, there have been no Arabic coins found at Episkopi, though there have been found in Heracleion and at the villages of Knossos, Agios Ioannis, Archanes, Kounavoi, Finikia and Dafnes; cf. D. Metcalf, *Coinage in south-eastern Europe 820 - 1396*, London 1979, pp. 344 - 345.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

respective article of R. Weiss written more than ten years ago. The same general lack of documentation and the impression that the editor uses imaginative guesswork is given by the note on the conditions of Buondelmonti's travel. However, the most important part of this section is the one dealing with the itinerary followed by Buondelmonti.

The editor starts with the firm conviction that Buondelmonti's narration in the DIC should be taken at face value, i.e. that Buondelmonti actually followed the itinerary exactly as it is narrated in the DIC, which, in turn, is nothing more and nothing less than a true account of this journey exactly as it had happened. It looks as if it never crossed the editor's mind that Buondelmonti may have not followed this itinerary in the same way that it is related or, indeed, that he may not actually have visited some of the places he described, in the same way that he had very possibly not visited all the islands he described in the LIA¹. Despite the fact that the editor herself recognizes that the division of the narration in the DIC into three parts (south coast—north coast—inland route from East to West) was done “pour le commodité des lecteurs”², she nevertheless thinks that this was an “ordre logique” followed in actual fact. Moreover, on the basis of the ex-libris of Buondelmonti and other indications the editor came to the conclusion that the DIC was the product of a more or less continuous exploration of Crete for approximately three months in the year 1415; she then embarked on a rather futile task, supposedly based on the text of the DIC, namely to produce a table of Buondelmonti's day-by-day travel around and through Crete, allegedly undertaken between April and June 1415³.

Let us consider this latter first, i.e. that a detailed table of Buondelmonti's days of journey can be worked out. Mme Van Spitael's assumption is based on the following indications:

- a) A note in the Cod. Chig. Lat. F IV, 74 which reads: *Tres menses preteriere in quibus ego Christoforus indignus presbyter de Buondelmontibus de Florentia hanc perquisivi insulam.*

1. Cf. R. Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 117 note 4.

2. Van Spitael, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 46 - 52.

- b) The ex-libris of Buondelmonti¹. Among the Mss. which he bought in Crete, one was purchased on 5 May 1415 in Castel Belvedere and another in September 1415 on Mt Jouktas.
- c) The fact that Buondelmonti described a feast of St. Constantine in the homonymous village of Rhethymnon, which establishes his presence there on a 20th - 21st of May.

Besides these indications there is the editor's hypothesis that Buondelmonti's travel was continuous and exactly as described in the DIC, while the two dates of May 1415 are used as fixing-points for establishing Buondelmonti's sequence of travel.

About these arguments we could make the following remarks. The note in the Cod. Chigianus that Buondelmonti explored the island during three months is considered very important in determining his itinerary, but a similar note in another Ms. is ignored. Indeed, Cod. Ambros. A 219 Inf. containing the LIA, in the chapter on Crete reads: *Ego autem anno Incarnationis Domini MCCCCXV... Cretam totam diebus XXIII equester perquisivi...* For how long, then, did Buondelmonti explore Crete, three months or twenty-four days?² And if the latter is true, what are we going to do with the editor's detailed table of travel?

Secondly, if the date 5 May 1415 is important in fixing Buondelmonti's sequence of travel, the second date, September 1415, does not fit into the sequence at all: according to the editor's table Buondelmonti visited Mt. Jouktas around the middle of April, not in September which is outside his alleged period of travel. One can, of course, argue that Buondelmonti's visit in September was different from the one in April, but then the same argument could apply to his visit at Castel Belvedere as well, in which case the latter's value as a fixing-point for Buondelmonti's travel is destroyed.

Thirdly, the Cod. Chigianus which contains the note about Buondelmonti's three months stay does not mention the year 1415 at all; on the contrary, its last chapter of the DIC ends with the words *Vale. In Candia MCCCCXVII*, which the editor herself translates

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 34 - 35, where the editor merely repeats the information given by É. Legrand, *op. cit.*, pp. XXIV - XXVI, without citing her source. She is not aware of one more Ms., Cod. Vat. Gr. 338, bought by Buondelmonti in Crete in 1418 and cited by Almagià, *op. cit.*, p. 105 note 4.

2. Or twenty-six according to R. Weiss, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

“Adieu. Fait à Candie 1417”¹. Strictly speaking, the editor would be more justified in thinking that Buondelmonti’s three-months visit took place in 1417, since she also remarks that he wrote up his description of Crete “plusieurs jours ou plusieurs semaines après son trajet”², and not one or two years after his travel.

Last but not least, the text of the DIC itself hardly ever offers any indications, even indirect ones, about Buondelmonti’s daily stations, except in very few cases. To illustrate this point let us take a quite ordinary passage of the DIC, e.g. the part immediately after Cydonia (Chania) as far as Rethymnon³; this, according to the editor, covered from the sixth until the tenth day, inclusive, of the second part of his travel (north coast). It is immediately obvious to anyone who cares to make the comparison that the text of Buondelmonti offers absolutely no clue for such a division in days of journey, since the narration runs continuously without intervals of any sort. Although we could discuss the details and could remark that one could have hardly had time to do in one day all that supposedly took place in the 7th day, or that had Buondelmonti travelled on horseback⁴, the 8th, 9th and 10th days of his travel would have actually taken only one or one and a half days, the point is that the indications offered are so vague and the conditions of travel so uncertain that we can never be sure of the circumstances, the time or the sequence of Buondelmonti’s journey.

Let us now come to the editor’s view that Buondelmonti followed exactly the described itinerary and that, of course, he visited every place he described. Unfortunately, the reality seems to be somewhat different. There are some passages in the DIC which are so vague or so incorrect that it seems almost certain that the Florentine did not pass through the places in question or that his visit in some places followed a different route from the one described in the narration. This becomes more evident in the last part of his narration concerning the westernmost part of Crete through the inland route.

According to the editor, after leaving Myriokephala Buondelmonti marched westwards passing through the villages of Kallikratis,

1. Van Spitael, p. 196.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 139 (510) - 143 (560).

4. As the Ms. Ambr. A 219 Inf. clearly says he did, see p. 102 *supra*.

Asfendou, Askyfou, Kaloi Lakkoi, Mouri, Aradena, Agios Ioannis and Samaria, after passing through the homonymous gorge¹. Then, through the plateau of Omalos he crossed the valleys of the torrents Agrilianos, Kalamonitis, Tauronitis, Kolenis and Tyflos, passing through the villages of Sembronas, Palaia Roumata, Kakopetros, Sasalos and Katsamado until he reached the village of Ai Kyr Giannis (modern Tsourouniana)²; from there he probably proceeded to the ruins of ancient Polyrrhenia (Apano Palaiokastros), whence he reached Phalasarna³.

All this itinerary has been conceived on the basis of a text of Buondelmonti which only mentions *Leucos mons*, *Lutro*, *ecclesiam Sancti Chyr Ioannis cum rure maximo*, *Cacoperato flumen*, *Chissamospolini* and *Pholarna*⁴. There is no other mention of anything else and, to say the very least, it would be astonishing if Buondelmonti had not dedicated even a few words to the magnificent, awe-inspiring and unique gorge of Samaria, had he passed through it or had he seen it. Of the places he mentions, the White Mountains, the village of Loutro and Kisamos were already referred to in the previous parts of the DIC. On the other hand, the only new places he mentions in this passage are all in the region of Kisamos and easily accessible from there. Consequently, it seems that Buondelmonti never followed the inland route west of Myriokephala; on the contrary, it seems much more plausible that he visited the village of Ai Kyr Giannis when he had been at Kisamos, all the more so as he had then described an excursion he had made inland, i.e. towards that region⁵. It is also probable that if he ever visited the ruins of Polyrrhenia⁶, it was during that excursion when, after having marched southwards of Kisamos for some time, he visited a *templum vetustissimum* in which he saw a *musaicum opus* and was told about *multis hedificiis porfireis et marmoreis* and *busta ydolorum*⁷.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 298 note 236.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 299 note 238.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 300 - 301 notes 240 - 241.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 193 (1120) - 196 (1148).

5. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

6. Mme Van Spitael is right in supposing that Buondelmonti actually spoke about Polyrrhenia when he thought he reached Phalasarna, *ibid.*, p. 301.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

The view that Buondelmonti did not visit the interior of the west part of Crete is strengthened by the presentation of that region in the maps of Crete which accompany Buondelmonti's works. In all these maps there is absolutely nothing corresponding to the western part of the inland route that Buondelmonti supposedly followed: apart from the indications 'White Mountains' and legends indicating the existence of massive cypress forests, this region is otherwise virtually blank, with no indications or place-names referring to the interior of the western part of Crete; it seems fair to assume, then, that Buondelmonti never passed through that region.

This is not the only instance showing that the Florentine did not follow the itinerary described in his narration. The same applies to the eastern part of the inland route as well, namely from cape Sidero as far as the plateau of Lasithi. Mme Van Spitael works out an elaborate and detailed itinerary of Buondelmonti's for that part, but the simple fact is that the author hardly mentions any modern place-name in all this region, except for the names of the mountains; there are only the names of the ancient cities, the ruins of which he supposedly saw, but in actual fact arbitrarily located on the basis of a map of Ptolemy.

There are only two instances when he mentions a modern place-name in this region. In the first, the text as edited by Mme Van Spitael reads: *Chersonesus nunc Uisea uidetur*¹. The editor comments amply on the village of Visea which, incidently, is first mentioned 150 years after Buondelmonti, but one is somewhat surprised to see that *Uisea* is an emendation by the editor for *villa* given by three out of the four Mss. used, and *iula* which is given by the fourth; a fact that makes the emendation hardly plausible or necessary, and the existence of the word *Uisea* in the text of Buondelmonti extremely doubtful.

In the second instance Buondelmonti writes: *Ad septentrionem Citeum olim a longe in altum montem conspiciamus qui Causi hodie ab accolis nominatur*². According to the editor, Buondelmonti was at that time in the region between the modern villages of Thrypti and Monastiraki in the eparchy of Hierapetra. Assuming that by *Causi* he meant the village of Kavousi as it is commonly thought³,

1. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

3. I am entirely unconvinced about this identification, all the more so as Kavousi is not, of course, in *altum montem*.

it would have been indeed an extraordinary accomplishment, if from that position Buondelmonti could see the Late Minoan III and Archaic remains scattered all around the area of Kavousi, which have been excavated on various occasions since 1901. If Buondelmonti ever saw anything there, it is much more reasonable to suppose that this could be done while he sailed along the north coast, which he described in the second part of the DIC, as Kavousi is of course not far from the coast and it is more easily accessible from there.

In other words, it is extremely doubtful whether Buondelmonti ever travelled inland from cape Sidero due west as far as the plateau of Lasithi; the latter must have been visited from another route, possibly from Chandax.

In another instance, when in the second part of the DIC Buondelmonti sails along the coast of the gulf of Merabello towards the two islets of Conida and Pseira, the text is edited as follows: *In transtris postea sedimus donec a leva Conidam (et a dextra Psiram) insulam (ante) promuntorium visitamus*¹. The brackets contain the editor's emendations, and the commentary on note 162 explains: "A *dextera promuntorium*: L'expression précédente 'a leva Conida' (c'est-à-dire: à gauche, l'île de Conida) ne peut-être contre-balancée par 'ad sinistram' (à gauche) des manuscrits fautifs (...)"². For one thing, the comment is not quite comprehensible. For another, one is led to understand that Buondelmonti, sailing eastwards, passed south of Conida which he saw to his left, but north of Pseira which he is presented as having seen to his right. This route is, of course, perfectly possible; but the reader does not know what to think when he sees in the editor's own map of Buondelmonti's itinerary that this same route has been shown south of both islands, that is to say, Buondelmonti must have seen both to his left³. Consequently, either the map is not correct on this point or, more likely, the emendation is completely wrong.

The belief that Buondelmonti travelled according to the itinerary of the DIC sometimes leads to awkward or unconvincing assumptions. The third part of the DIC after the settlement of Kastelli (Pediada) as

1. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 265.

3. *Ibid.*, map facing p. 224.

far as the ruins of Gortyna is a good example of this¹. The narration is full of mistakes and inconsistencies despite the editor's efforts to explain them. Buondelmonti, according to the editor, after Kastelli visited Episkopi (Pediada), then Thrapsano, Castel Belvedere, Castel Bonifacio and finally he reached Gortyna. The only certainty here is that Buondelmonti bought a manuscript at Castel Belvedere on 5 May 1415. For the rest, he states that he saw the bishopric of Arkadia from Episkopi, which is impossible²; that he saw Castel Belvedere to the west of a place specified by the editor as Thrapsano, while it is to its south and in any case invisible from that village; that *in capite huius plani*³, i.e. the plain of Mesara, there is Castel Belvedere, which is not true even if he really meant Castel Bonifacio and got mixed up as the editor supposes. This itinerary, as defined by Mme Van Spitael, is to say the least questionable and it seems more sound to assume that Buondelmonti visited Castel Belvedere under unknown circumstances and/or by a different route, as the possibility of his having followed the itinerary vaguely implied in the DIC seems most unlikely.

To summarize, Buondelmonti's itinerary in the DIC includes the description of places which, almost certainly, the Florentine had not visited; as a result, their description is vague, incorrect and leads to misunderstandings. Consequently, not only should these suspect passages be better defined, but also his overall evidence should always be treated cautiously and not taken for granted.

There are various other details concerning the itinerary of Buondelmonti that could be discussed, as well as certain reservations about the faithfulness of the translation of some passages into French⁴; but there is no need to expand on these. With the reservations that

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 171 - 173.

2. In the commentary, p. 277 note 194, the editor supposes that Buondelmonti saw it from the vicinity of the village of Arkalochori, halfway between Thrapsano and Castel Belvedere, but unfortunately Buondelmonti mentions Arkadia while still in Episkopi.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 175. The editor translates "Au fin fond de cette plain", which is hardly what the author seems to have had in mind.

4. E.g. "*Gortinam urbem atque metropolim inveni*" can hardly be translated "J'ai trouvé la plus vaste des cités de toute l'île, la ville de Gortine ou Mitropolis", *ibid.*, p. 173.

have been expressed, Mme Van Spitael's work is still useful, although it is a pity that it has not been organized and presented in a more scholarly way.

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