

Center for European Studies Working Paper Series #144 (2007)

**Venetian Colonialism in the Aegean:
Sifnos in the Thirteenth Century**

by

Eleni Mahaira-Odoni

eleni_odoni@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper explores the little-known beginning of Venetian rule of Sifnos, one of the Greek Aegean islands presumably apportioned to Venice following the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Whereas historians have traced the non-Venetian dynasts that ruled Sifnos after around 1310, no one has attempted to investigate the presumably preceding rulers: the Venetian “Soranzos of Sifnos,” cursorily mentioned by a couple of scholars. Relying on sources as well as local fieldwork, this paper proposes that, before becoming doge of Venice in 1312, Giovanni Soranzo may indeed have been the first Venetian lord of Sifnos, between c. 1285 and 1310. The exploration of his career, the tragic life story of his daughter Soranza Soranzo and his son-in-law Niccolò Querini, point to Sifnos as a most likely location for the couple’s refuge and exile following Querini’s involvement in the 1310 seditious acts against the Republic of Venice. This conclusion is informed by a brief examination of apposite coats of arms, proper names and local toponyms.

The island of Sifnos belongs to the western group of the Cyclades and lies about seventy-eight nautical miles south of Athens in the Aegean Sea. Rich in ancient, classical and Roman history and antiquities, Sifnos displays a patchy medieval profile at best.

Historians possess skeletal documentation on the political history of Sifnos after about 1310: the lineages of the ruling occupiers have been established, although details about them have often proven wrong. In broad strokes, the political landscape of Sifnos up to the sixteenth century was dominated by two families, the da Corogna and the Gozzadini. Neither of these families were Venetian, although they pledged allegiance to Venice, directly or indirectly, by being vassals of the Duke of the Archipelago, i.e., the dynast of the Cyclades who was based on the island of Naxos. While the Gozzadini originated in Bologna, the provenance of the da Corogna is highly debatable, although they seem strongly associated with some order of the Knights of Saint John. Thus, it has been generally believed that the Venetian occupiers of Greece (like the Turks, after the fifteenth century) were never on Sifnos.

Both the da Corogna and the Gozzadini names are in existence today in Sifnos and in nearby islands and this is a historical trend we often encounter in areas that had been occupied by the Latins – whether Franks, Venetians or Genovese – throughout Greece. The survival of a name may denote a long line of descendants of a particular household that can include masters as well as slaves, or peasants beholden to a property; or it may belong to individuals who in later historical periods adopted a name that was already linked to a place because of the original masters. This point is particularly relevant to the story that follows.

Research here focuses on the personal and family history of Giovanni Soranzo, eventual doge of Venice (1312-28), most probably the first Venetian to take possession of Sifnos, following the partition of the Eastern Empire after the Fourth Crusade. As far as this island is concerned, the history of the period from 1280 to 1310 has not been studied at all, unlike other areas of the Aegean, such as Crete, which have received considerable attention. The key reason for this lacuna is the practically total lack of information and/or reliable sources.

To start with the historical framework, after the Fourth Crusade and the fall of Byzantium in 1204, the dismemberment agreement for the Eastern Roman Empire,

known as the *partitio*, allocated the Cyclades (and among them, Sifnos) to the possessions of Marco Sanudo, a Venetian nobleman and self-proclaimed Duke of the Archipelago who had led a naval campaign in the Aegean in 1207. Most historians believe that Sanudo offered smaller island sovereignties to his companions – prominent Venetian merchants and shipowners who, for the most part, were already settled in the Aegean (e.g., on Crete) and had proven themselves capable administrators and influential businessmen.¹

Other historians feel that Sanudo was simply unable to hold on to all his possessions, especially after the naval raids and the pillaging wrought by the Byzantines and Licario the pirate; acting realistically therefore, Sanudo probably ceded islands to others and confined himself to lordship over the islands of Naxos, Melos and Syros.² Specifically, after the reacquisition of Constantinople in 1261 by the Byzantines, a mercenary from Vicenza named Licario managed to distinguish himself in naval operations in the Aegean, established a tenure in Karystos (Euboia) and soon rose to the rank of Megaduke (Head of the Navy) in the Byzantine Navy.³ Between 1276 and 1280, he ransacked the Sporades and the Cyclades in the name of Byzantium. As far as the sources are concerned, the exploits of Licario remain the only available references to Sifnos and nearby Serifos in the 1270s and until about 1280⁴.

¹Although there is no specific reference to Sifnos in the agreement dividing the Byzantine Empire (*partitio terrarum imperii Romaniae*), many historians place the island among Sanudo's possessions. Cf. Roberto Cessi, *Venezia Ducale*, 2 vols. (Venice: Deputazione di Storia Patria, 1963), p. 38; Giorgio Cracco, *Società e stato nel medioevo veneziano (sec. xii-xiv)* (Florence: L. Olschki, 1967), p. 58; Bruno Dudan, *Il dominio veneziano di Levante* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1938), p. 37; John Knight Fotheringham, *Marco Sanudo, Conqueror of the Archipelago* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), pp. 77-78; Elisabeth Malamut, *Les Iles de l'empire Byzantin, VIII-XIII siècles*. 2 vols. (Paris: Byzantina Sorbonensia, 1988), p. 102; Samuele Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*. T. I & II (Venice: Naratovich, 1854), p. 102; Freddy Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne au Moyen Age* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, de Boccard, 1959), p. 82..

²Charles Frazee, *The Island Princes of Greece, The Dukes of the Archipelago* (Amsterdam: Adolph Hackert Publishers, 1988), p. 97

³While western sources remain silent about Licario, John Bury points out that the Byzantine historians Pachymeres and Nikephoros Gregoras offer significant biographical information. John B. Bury, "The Lombards and the Venetians in Euboia (1205-1303)," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, T. VII (1886): 335-36.

⁴Marin Sanudo Torsello, "Istoria del regno di Romagna," in Carl Hopf, *Chroniques Gréco-romanes* (Berlin: 1873), p. 123, 127; and in René Grousset, *L'empire du levant* (Paris: Payot, 1949), p. 556. R.-J. Loenertz, p., "Pour une édition nouvelle de l'Istoria del regno di Romania' de Marin Sanudo l'ancien," in *Studi Veneziani XVI* (1974): 33-65, p. 56. Silvano Borsari, "Le colonie veneziane in Romania nel XIII secolo," in *Studi sulle colonie veneziane in Romania nel XIII secolo* (Naples: Univ. di Napoli, 1966), pp. 73-74. O. Μίλλερ, *Η ιστορία της φραγκοκρατίας στην Ελλάδα*, Ελληνικά Γράμματα,

Between 1280 and about 1307 – the date that the da Corogna family is widely considered to have taken over Sifnos – we have no information regarding the political status of the island. One of the reasons is that large parts of the official Venetian records from this era were burned in fires in 1574 and/or later in 1577.⁵ After 1285 the Byzantine navy suffered catastrophic losses and by the year 1300, Constantinople had lost control over most of the Aegean.⁶ Hence we know nothing about who was ruling Sifnos for some twenty-five years, i.e., from about 1285 to approximately 1307.

All the same, Constantine Paparrigopoulos, the well-known historian of modern Greece, in *The History of the Greek Nation*, his *magnum opus*, mentions the “Soranzo family of Sifnos” and inserts a sketch of the family’s coat of arms to be found “in the Church of Kastro in Sifnos.”⁷ Kastro was the fortified capital of Sifnos after the turn of the thirteenth century, and the place of residence of the da Corogna and the Gozzadini ruling families [see Figures 1 & 2 at the end of the paper].

The same information is repeated by William Miller, and also, by Simos Symeonides, the contemporary historian of Sifnos.⁸

Neither Paparrigopoulos, nor Miller provide references as to their sources. In his Appendix, Paparrigopoulos lists Karl Hopf as one of his sources without further elaboration as to specific subject or works. Although Karl Hopf remains one of the major sources of information on Latin rule in medieval Greece, he has also frequently been proven wrong on many issues, particularly regarding genealogies of Aegean despots.

After extensive research on the Soranzo family, the present work proposes the following sequence of historical events.

(Athens: 1960), p. 193 [English version, William Miller, *The Latins in the Levant: A History of Frankish Greece* (London: John Murray, 1908)]. Μαρίνος Σανούδος Τορσέλλο, *Ιστορία της Ρωμανίας*. Εισαγωγή, μετάφραση, σχόλια, Ευτυχία Η. Παπαδοπούλου. Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών, Ινστιτούτο Βυζαντινών Ερευνών, Πηγές 4 (Athens: 2000), pp.142-43.

⁵Marin Sanudo, “Le vite dei dogi” in *Rerum italicarum scriptores*, v. 22: IV, f. 1. (Venice: Muratori, 1938), p. 340. Kenneth M. Setton, *Catalan Domination of Athens (1311-1388)* (Cambridge MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1948, p. 269.

⁶Bury, *op. cit.*, pp. 342-3.

⁷Κωνσταντίνος Παπαρρηγόπουλος, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού έθνους* (Athens: 1932), Vol. 5, Fifth ed. p. 66.

⁸Ο. Μίλλερ, *op. cit.* Σίμος Συμεωνίδης, *Ιστορία της Σίφνου από την προϊστορική εποχή μέχρι τον Β' παγκόσμιο πόλεμο* (Athens: Επτάλοφος, 1990), p. 116.

Giovanni Soranzo, Venetian nobleman, resident of Venice and Crete, having made himself a hero in the war with Genoa, rose through most of the distinguished ranks and offices of Venice. He became successively a member of the Council of Forty, Chief Captain of the Adriatic Gulf, governor of Ferrara, ambassador to Genoa and Sicily, and, in all probability, was the first Venetian sovereign of Sifnos between 1285 and the first decade of the 1300s. Soranzo reached the summit of his career in 1312 when he was elected the fifty-first Doge of Venice, ushering in a long fourteen years of prudent and peaceful rule. He is the only Doge buried inside St. Mark's cathedral - in the Baptistery.

It goes without saying that it is impossible to verify this sovereign's continued presence in Sifnos after he occupied it. Far from unusual, this is also the case with other islands. For example, many among the first Venetian colonizers of Crete were at the same time "absent masters" of other islands.⁹ In contrast, we come across cases with irrefutable signs of a particular presence but without any further information regarding the actual life of an individual at the place in question.

Specifically, in Sifnos, at the highest eastern point of the town of Kastro, south of the ancient acropolis, over the door of a tiny, neglected and crumbling house we can still see a marble plaque with the coat of arms of the Crispo or Crespi family, framed by the date 1551. It seems safe to state here that no one has ever taken note of this plaque [Figures 3, 4, 5]. However, the initials "I.C." correspond to those of Iohannes (Giovanni) Crispo IV, the penultimate Duke of the Archipelago.¹⁰ This official, although he was married to Adriana Gozzadini of the Sifnos lineage, is unlikely to have ever lived in Sifnos given that the seat of the Duke of the Archipelago was on the island of Naxos.

Thus, despite the absence of information as to whether Giovanni Soranzo lived in Sifnos for a sustained time period, his passage can be definitively traced through surviving emblems, and names of places as well as names of persons. In this last connection, we'll follow here the tragic life story of his daughter Soranza Soranzo who, in addition

⁹Cf. Sally McKee, *Uncommon Dominion: Venetian Crete and the Myth of Ethnic Purity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 45.

¹⁰See, Ben Slot, *Archipelagus Turbatus, les Cyclades entre colonization latine et occupation ottomane c. 1500-1718* (Nederlands Historisch Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1982), pp. 38-39. Carl Hopf, *Veneto-byzantinische Analekten* [1859] (Athens, 1960), p. 182. On the Crispo coat of arms, see, Eugenio di Custoza Morando, *Blasonato Veneto* (Verona: 1985, No. 988-990).

to spending the first period of her exile in Sifnos, seems to have bequeathed her name to subsequent local landholders, in classic medieval onomastic tradition.

If this hypothesis stands, the da Corogna dynasty should be placed after the year 1310 rather than 1300, as B. Slot suggests, or even 1307, as claimed by all historians who follow Karl Hopf.¹¹

Let us then see who Giovanni Soranzo was and whether his biography justifies the enigmatic mention of Paparrigopoulos. Since the early colonizing missions to Crete, the Soranzos counted among the fifteen or so distinguished Venetian families of merchants, landowners and governors of Crete (*Duca di Candia*).¹² At times, it has been said that the Venetian rulers of the Aegean were not of noble descent and that their names were simply synonymous with illustrious names of the motherland. This is not true because they left indisputable traces through plaques, monuments and coats of arms in most islands and particularly in Crete. Moreover, although their Aegean forays were clearly profit-motivated and often bordered on piracy, they had to own large and expensive boats in order to undertake such enterprises in the first place.¹³

Already in 1206, at least two Soranzos feature among shipowners and captains in Aegean naval operations against the Turks and the Genovese. Giovanni himself was born in 1240, the son of Antonio Soranzo, attorney general of Venice (*procuratore di San*

¹¹Slot, *Ibid.* Cf. Μίλλερ, *op.cit.*; Συμεωνίδης, *op.cit.*; Hopf, K. "Di alcune dinastie Latine nella Grecia: I Giustiani di Venezia- I Da Corogna," *Archivio Veneto* No. 31 (1886): 147-167, 163.

¹²See 'Σουπεράντιος,' in ΠΥΡΣΟΣ [Encyclopedia], v. 22, p. 159. Michel Balard, "Veneziani e genovesi nel mondo egeo," in Chryssa A. Maltezou, and Peter Schreiner, *Bisanzio, Venezia e il mondo franco-greco (XII-XV secolo)* (Venice: Atti del Colloquio Internazionale organizzato nel centenario della nascita di Raymond-Joseph Loenertz o.p., Venezia, 1-2 dicembre 2000, 2002), p. 194. Doris Stöckly, "Aspects de la colonisation vénitienne," in Michel Balard, ed., *Le partage du monde: échanges et colonisation dans la méditerranée médiévale*. (Paris: Sorbonne Publications, 1998), p. 59. Stanley Chojnacki, "In Search of the Venetian Patriciate: Families and Factions in 14th century Crete," in J. R. Hale, ed., *Renaissance Venice* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), p. 89.

¹³On the Soranzo crests in Crete, cf. Alberto Rizzi, "In hoc signo vinces: I leoni di San Marco a Creta," in *Venezia e Creta*. (Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi. Iraklion-Chania, 30 Sett-5 Ott. 1997. Edited by Gherardo Ortalli. Venice 1998), p. 568, n. 11. Giuseppe Gerola, *Monumenti veneti nell'isola di Creta*. (Venice: 1932), I/2 1906, p. 333, 386. IV, 1932, p. 164, n. 9, fig. 166. On noble Venetian families and the Soranzos, see Vittorio Spretti, *Enciclopedia storico-nobiliare italiana*. T. VI (Milan: 1932), p. 377. David Chambers and Brian Pullan, *Venice, A Documentary History, 1450-1630* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1992), p. 26. Fotheringham, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

Marco¹⁴). According to notarial documents, at the age of seventeen, Giovanni “receives from Pietro Trevisan a certain sum to do business where he pleases¹⁵” and, between 1261 and 1281, he and his brother Marino Soranzo reside in Candia (Herakleion) where they engage in commercial enterprises that involve several notary services. The last evidence testifying to their presence in Crete is a notary act whereby they sell their real estate and their vineyards in 1281.¹⁶

The most frequent references to Giovanni Soranzo among Venetian biographers link him to Venetian victories during naval battles with the Genovese in the Aegean Sea, which had begun back in 1257 and were to last well into the next century. This suggests that Soranzo must have started on his sea adventures and exploits right after he sold his Cretan estates, i.e., soon after 1281, in order to invest in shipowning. Indeed, in 1285, as Head of the Aegean Navy he wrests back Euboea (Negroponte) from the Byzantines and restores it to Venetian possessions.¹⁷

The east Aegean between the island of Spetses and Chalkis (Negroponte) was the major theater of naval battles, hostage-taking and piracy. By the same token, this was a setting where it was both easy and necessary for galleys to take advantage of the surrounding islands for protection. For an intrepid and enterprising man like Soranzo, who, by 1294, had financed three war galleys and put them in the service of Venice, it must have been easy to realize that, during the 1280s, following the sacking expeditions of Licario, Sifnos was defenseless, deserted and highly vulnerable. Moreover, by 1287 he must have found most helpful the authority of his brother Marino, who for the next two

¹⁴Emmanuelle A. Cicogna, Giovanni Veludo, Francesco Caffi *et al.*, *Storia dei dogi di Venezia*, 2nd ed., v. I (Venice: Grimaldo, 1860). Emmanuelle A. Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane* (Venice: 1824), T. III, p. 403-4. Andrea da Mosto, *I dogi di Venezia* (Milan: Martello, 1960), p. 100 ff. Pietro Marcello, *Vite de' principi di Vinegia, tradotte in volgare da Lodovico Domenichi*. (Venice: Plinio Pietrasanta,, 1557), p. 68.

¹⁵*Documenti del commercio italiano nei secoli XI-XIII*. V. II. Edited by R. Morozzo della Rocca and Anonino Lombardo. (Rome: R. Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo. V. 29, 1940), No. 841, p. 366.

¹⁶Cf. *Regesta Chartarum Italiae, op. cit.*, testimony of June 2, 1260, T. II, No. 857, p. 383-4. Leonardo Marcello, *Notaio in Candia (1278-1281)*. Mario Chiaudano e Antonino Lombardo (eds.). *Archivi Notarili*. Sez. III. Comitato per la pubblicazione delle Fonti relative alla storia di Venezia. (Venice: 1960), No. 49 (Feb. 20, 1279), No. 160 (Aug. 4, 1280), No. 298 (21 Oct. 1280), No. 317 (24 Oct. 1280), No. 347 (5 Jan. 1281) and No. 375 (17 Jan. 1281).

¹⁷Bury, *op. cit.* Cicogna, *Delle Iscrizioni...*, p. 404.

years was *bailo* (governor) of Negreponte.¹⁸ And when the Veneto-Byzantine war broke out in 1296, Venice openly encouraged its most prosperous subjects to arm their own galleys and move independently around the Aegean.¹⁹ Finally, in 1296 and 1297, all historical sources depict Soranzo as the hero and protagonist of Aegean naval operations. Together with Menego Schiavo, they crossed the Aegean with twenty-five galleys to reach the Black Sea and Crimea in order to take back the city of Caffa from the Genoese. On the return trip, they spent the winter in Negroponte.²⁰ The recovery of Caffa by Giovanni Soranzo represents an event of considerable magnitude, rendered immortal by the painting on the roof of the examination room (*sala del scrutinio*) in Venice's Ducal Palace; and it was the key achievement that launched his career in the public service.²¹ Obviously, if he had indeed taken possession of Sifnos during the 1280s, it seems unlikely that he would have much to do with the island after the triumph of Caffa in 1297, although this does not necessarily mean that Sifnos was in contention by anyone else.

From 1297, when he again distinguished himself in the siege of Ferrara, and 1312, the year that he became Doge, he held major offices as Head of the Navy and governor of the Gulf and the islands of Venice, ambassador to Sicily and to Egypt, and governor

¹⁸John Bury, *op. cit.*, p. 351. On the affinity of Negroponte with Serifos, Sifnos, Thermia [Kythnos], Melos and Ikaria, see also, Ch. Hopf, "Insulae Aegeopelagi," in *Chroniques gréco-romanes*, p. 177.

¹⁹Guillaume Saint-Guillain, "Amorgos au XIV siècle. Une seigneurie insulaire entre Cyclades féodales et Crète vénitienne." *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 94,1 (2001): 62-189, 68, 70. Vittorio Spreti, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

²⁰On battles in the Aegean Sea and an analysis of the period's chronicles, see Antonio Carile, *La cronachistica veneziana (sec. xiii-xvi) di fronte alla spartizione della Romania nel 1204*. Appendix. R. -J. Loenertz., Leo S. Olschki (Florence: 1969). *The Morosini Codex*. Michele Pietro Ghezzi, John R. Melville-Jones and Andrea Rizzi (eds.) *Archivio del Litorale Adriatico II*, v. I: to the death of Andrea Dandolo 1354, v. II: 1354-1400 to the death of Antonio Venier, p. 67^B, 68^A. R.-J. Loenertz, "Menego Schiavo," in *Studi Veneziani IX* (1967): 315-338, p.317-8. *idem*, "La Guerra di Curzola e la classifica delle cronache italiane," in *Byzantina e franco-graeca* (Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1978), 395-404, pp. 396, 399, 401, 403. Alvise Loredan, *Venezia e I suoi eroi, T. 1: dalle origini al 1431* (Venice: Biblion, 1970), pp. 230 ff.

²¹Julius Norwich, *Venice, the Rise to Empire*. (London: Penguin, 1977), p. 201. On the triumph of Caffa, the stay in Trapezon and the return to Euboia, see also M.C. Magnus, c.15 t, in G. Orlandini, "Marco Polo e la sua famiglia," *Archivio Veneto Tridentino*, IX (1926): 1-68, p. 14. Marco Antonio Sabellico, *Le Historie Venetiane* (Venice: Comin da Trino, 1554), 3 vols, v. 1, p. 70. Giuseppe Cappelletti, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia*. Antonelli (Venice: 1850), p. 116-7. Laugier, p. *Ιστορία των Αρχαίων Δουκών και των λοιπών ηγεμόνων του Αιγαίου πελάγους* (1698) Patris, Hermoupolis, Syros, 1878. Father Laugier [or, curiously, Saulg(i)er], is the only writer who states that Soranzo ... died in Caffa! p. 71.

of Chioggia and Ferrara.²² But at the same time his galleys had remained in the Aegean where, in the course of new confrontations with the Genovese Doria, in 1308, Venice sent three distinguished sea captains to assist the Soranzo ships.²³ In 1309, he was named Attorney General together with his in-law Marco Querini, father-in-law of his daughter Soranza Soranzo.²⁴

Given his brilliant career, Soranzo should have been elected Doge in 1310. But in 1310, a series of explosive events shook the Venetian political landscape and struck irreversibly at the fortunes of Giovanni Soranzo and his immediate family. His daughter Soranza's father-in-law, Marco Querini, and Soranza's husband, Niccolò Querini, together with Bajamonte Tiepolo and many more Querinis and other sympathetic nobles organized a conspiracy against the form of government and in protest of the Doge's policy toward Ferrara and the Pope.²⁵ In addition to dealing with the traitors with extremely harsh and long-term sentences, Venice introduced, on the one hand, institutions of vigilance (*I signori della Notte*) and, on the other, institutions to guard against the sudden broadening of representation for the rising mercantile classes.²⁶

²²"*Ioannis Superancio, potestas insule,*" cf. *Cassiere della Bolla ducale. Grazie-Novus Liber*. Elena Favaro (ed.) (Venice: Comitato per la Pubblicazione delle Fonti Relative alla Storia di Venezia, 1962), No. 32 (1299). On Sicily, cf. *Deliberazioni Miste del Consiglio dei Rogati* (Senato): Serie "Mistorum." Roberto Cessi and P. Sambin (eds.), Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Venezie. Monumenti Storici. v. I. 1960, 13/12/1300 and 28/12/1300. President of the "Committee of 40 (XL)" in 1302, in G. Giomo, "Regesto di alcune deliberazioni del Senato, Misti," in *I Misti del Senato della Repubblica di Venezia, 1293-1331*, No. 184 (19/12/1302) and No. 185 (5/1/1302). On Egypt, see, *I Libri commemoriali della Repubblica di Venezia*, R. Predelli (ed.) (Venice: Monumenti Storici pubblicati dalla Deputazione Veneta di Storia Patria. Serie Prima, "Documenti." 1876), 8 vs., Bk. I, No. 187 (24 Oct. 1304). For Ferrara, *ibid*, No. 385 (1308); for Chioggia and Ferrara, see, Romanin, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

²³Cf. G. Giomo, "Lettere di Collegio: rectius Minor Consiglio: 1308-1310" in *Miscellanea di Storia Veneta*. Deputazione veneta di Storia Patria, s. III, v. 1 (1910) 620-37 No. 44 (25/9/1308).

²⁴*Ibid.*, No. 410 (29/10/1309).

²⁵In *I Libri commemoriali della Repubblica di Venezia*, "Nicoletto Querini detto lo Zoto" is the son of Nicolò de cà maggiori. p. 103, No. 448. In contrast, Hopf considers the "zoppo" son of Pietro Querini (*Veneto-Byzantinische Analekten*, p. 457), while Norwich calls him son of Marco Querini (*op. cit.*, p. 201).

²⁶Lorenzo de Monacis, "Laurentii de Monacis, 'Chronicon de rebus venetis'" *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, v. VIII (app) (Venice: 1758), p. 177. Andreae Danduli, *Ducis Venetiarum, Chronaca Breve*. E. Pastorello (ed.) *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* (R.I.S.), n.s. XII, (Bologna), pp. 375 ff. See also Guido Ruggiero, *Violence in Renaissance Italy* (Piscataway NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), pp. 4-5, 8, 9. G. Cracco, *op.cit.*, p. 371-2. Frederick C. Lane, *Venice, a Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1973), p. 115-7. Norwich, *op.cit.*, p. 201. Romanin, *op.cit.*, T. II, p. 33, ff. See entries from May to August 1310 in F. Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie*, 2 v. (Paris: Mouton, 1961).

The rebels attacked the ducal palace in order to overthrow Doge P. Gradenigo; however, their plans had been leaked and, after a bloody battle, the conspiracy collapsed overnight. Those surviving the fight – among them, Niccolò Querini, Soranzo’s son-in-law – were sentenced to exile to the farthest extremes of the Venetian empire. Nevertheless, the sources testify that none of them complied with the sentence and the condemned took refuge in places of their choice or of their influence.²⁷ The wrath of Venice against the enormous Querini family is striking throughout the many edicts issued to heads of the fleet, in repeated attempts to prevent the conspirators from finding aid and refuge in Romania, i.e., in eastern Venetian outposts like Modone, Corone (in the Peloponnese), Negroponte and the Aegean islands at large.²⁸ For example, Count Giovanni Querini, uncle of Niccolò, although not a party to the conspiracy, immediately left Venice and sailed to the Aegean and to a castle on the island of Astypalaia (Stampalia), which he claimed as his.²⁹

Therefore, if our hypothesis here stands and, on the one hand, Giovanni Soranzo was lord of Sifnos – as Paparrigopoulos states – while on the other, his son-in-law and chief conspirator Niccolò Querini was in need of additional protection from his uncle Giovanni Querini lord of Astypalaia, the flight of Soranza Soranzo and her husband Niccolò Querini to the Aegean appears justified. Giovanni Soranzo, not only disclaimed any

²⁷About the conspirators de Monacis states: “sed quasi omnes ingratisissimi, ut permissi sunt exire Venetias, contra juramentum denegarunt accedere ad designata confinia,” *op.cit.* Cicogna, Emmanuelle A., *Delle Inscrizioni...* v. 3, p. 52. Navagero says that ‘Querini the cripple’ was banished to Ossero, whereas de Monacis specifies Aurimo. Cf. A. Navageri, “*Patritii veneti historia veneta*,” *R.I.S.*, v. XXIII, p. 1010 ff. Lane, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

²⁸Cf. G. Giomo, “*Lettere di Collegio: rectius Minor Consiglio. 1308-1310*,” *op. cit.*, No. 604 (June 1310) for Giovanni Querini and No. 664 (15 July 1310) for warnings to M. Minotto.

²⁹Regarding the ownership of Astypalaia, there is divergence of opinion. Most Italian historians, following Hopf, assign the island to the Querinis since 1207. See, Roberto Cessi, *Venezia nel duecento: tra oriente e occidente*, p. 38. Diehl, *Histoire du Moyen Age*, p. 573. Fotheringham, pp. 52-54. Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne au Moyen Age*, p. 82. Alvise Zorzi, *La repubblica del leone*, Tascabili Bompiani, Venice, 2001-2, p. 118. Cracco, *op. cit.*, p. 58. Di Crollanza, *op.cit.*, p. 390. Giulio Lorenzetti, *Venice and its Lagoon*. (Trieste: Lint ed., 1982), p. 370. According to other historians, the Querini ownership can be traced around 1300 and after some interruptions it solidifies after 1400. See Ch., A. Maltezou, “*Le famiglie degli Eudaimonoianis e Venier a Cerigo dal XII al XIV secolo. Problemi de cronologia e prosopografia*,” *Rivista di studi bizantini e slavi* II (1982): 205-217, 205. R.-J. Loenertz, “*De Quelques îles grècques et de leurs seigneurs vénitiens aux XVI et XV siècles*,” *Studi Veneziani*, XIV (1972) (Florence: Olschki, 1973), pp. 3-35. Peter Lock, *The Franks in the Aegean*, p. 147. G. B. di Crollanza, *op.cit.*, v. II, p. 390.

involvement with the conspiracy but, as Attorney General, was one of the major facilitators of the restoration of order and justice in Venice.³⁰

Herein seems to lie another reason why the official biographies of the Doge Soranzo are silent with respect to Sifnos: as already mentioned, source material from this period has been lost to fires and unknown mishaps; but, above all, neither in 1310 as Attorney General nor, much less, in 1312 when he was elected Doge of Venice would he wish to link his name with Sifnos, the place of exile for his disgraced son-in-law and his daughter.

On this fact, the official Venetian records provide us with abundant, albeit sad documentation. In 1314, i.e., four years after the conspiracy and two years into her father's tenure as Doge, Soranza Soranzo decided to return to Venice from a place of exile that remains officially unknown. One assumes that evidently she was seeking the clemency of her father since she had had no involvement in the conspiracy and was probably hoping to be received as the daughter of the Doge.

Instead, Doge Soranzo ordered her excluded from the palace for life. She was to spend the rest of her days in the monastery of Santa Maria delle Vergini in a secluded cell, apart from other nuns, in the occasional company of a servant. She was forced to apply to the Council of Ten – a special administrative body – for permission to visit her family on very special holidays, such as *La Sensa*, or for medical reasons, when she had broken out with boils and stigmata. Upon those occasions, the lady (*domina*) Soranza, by order of Venice, was directed to arrive inconspicuously at a side door of the palace, at night, and in a covered boat – in order to remain undetected. This pattern of requests for a visit and permits to do so went on until 1335, a good seven years after her father was dead – presumably, for the purpose of visiting her mother and her two brothers. (Soranza had two sisters, Fantana and Elena, both nuns, with whom she had contact only through her visits to the palace.) We have more than thirty-seven entries of requests granted to Soranza from the Council between 1315 and 1335.³¹

³⁰Emmanuelle A. Cicogna, *Delle Inscrizioni*...p. 404.

³¹See "Soranzo, Soranza": entries from 31 October 1315 to July 3, 1335, in *Consiglio dei Dieci. Deliberazioni Miste Registri I & II (1310-1325) and III & IV (1325-1335)*. Ferruccio Zago (ed.) (Venice: Fonti per la storia di Venezia, 1962); see also Romanin, II, 8, p. 49. R. Fulin, "Soranza Soranzo e le sue compagne," in *Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere e Arti*. n.s., v. 2:2 (1876), pp. 965-983. W. G. Molmenti, *The Dogaressa* (London: Remington & Co., 1887), pp. 92-93; P. Molmenti, *La*

The question is then, where did the lady Soranza spend her first four years of exile before being condemned to languish in a Venetian monastery? In medieval Sifnos, much as in Venice, the monastic environment provided a serene and viable refuge to tainted ladies of the time. Also, on an island which was at the mercy of pirates the monasteries of the hinterland offered basic and sustained safety, thanks to the agricultural mode of production. In Sifnos the monastery of St. John the Theologian at Mongou continues to display over its doors the coat of arms that the historian Paparrigopoulos indicates as that of the “Soranzos of Siphnos” [Figures 6, 7]. This emblem is also identical to the one that the British historian George Finlay sketched in his journal, taking care to distinguish this crest from the crest of the Gozzadini, who came more than one century later³² [Figure 8].

A similar crest for the Gozzadini family was submitted by Joseph de Kigala, a Sifnian descendant of Latin roots, in an article published in 1858, without any explanation as to what had necessitated its writing³³ [Figure 9].

This suggests that there was general confusion as to the legitimate use of these crests and that the Gozzadini family had “changed” their crest, a fact to which de Kigala was trying to call attention. Indeed, in Italian heraldic dictionaries the Gozzadini crest now appears strikingly similar to that of the Soranzo family [Figure 10]. In other words, the Gozzadini crest, although bearing purportedly different colors, seems like a recasting of the Soranzo crest. Presumably the Gozzadini were not concerned with the authenticity of their alleged banners some 150 years after the departure and the demise of Giovanni Soranzo.

To return to the fate of Soranzo’s family: the remaining days of his son-in-law, Niccolò Querini “the cripple” (*il zoppo*), were surely just as desolate. He eventually died close to 1326. But after the events of 1310, once his property was forcefully liquidated in

Storia di Venezia nella vita privata. (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano delle Arti Graffiche, 1910), pp. 141-2. Edgumbe Staley, *The Dogaressas of Venice* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1911), pp. 128-31.

³²George Finlay, *A History of Greece* (1837), v. III (New York: AMS Press, 1970), pp. 78-79.

³³I. δε Κιγάλας, «Περί οικοσημων», *Πανδώρα*, v. 9 (1858-1859), p. 196. For the crests of the Soranzos and the Querinis, cf. Eugenio di Custoza Morando, *Blasonato Veneto* (Verona: 1985) and *Libro d’Arme di Venezia* (Verona: 1989).

Venice and a price was put on his head,³⁴ clandestine piracy must have been his only means of survival in exile.

In the south of Sifnos, the peninsula still known as “*tou Kontou*,” i.e., ‘of Kontou,’ offers unique refuge with two routes for escape, Fykiada in the west and Chlakopo in the east. The ruined two-story estate in Moussia stands midway between those two outlets and still bears the traces of a medieval, crusader-style mansion, despite glaring later interventions. Therefore, it is conceivable that the count Niccolò Querini had settled there, fairly close to his exiled wife at the monastery of Mongou, and that the region “of the Conte” (the count), came to be known in Greek as “*tou Kontou*.” This is not a unique Hellenic adaptation of an Italian word. We come across a similar linguistic innovation in the town of Apollonia, the capital city: in local dialect, the region and church “of the Baron” (in Greek and Venetian *Baròn*) are used in the genitive only and turn into “*tou Barou*.”

Of even greater linguistic interest is the nearby location *Tsopos*, between the village of Vathy and the Moussia landholding. Niccolò Querini’s nickname, cited in all official documents, is “Zoppo” – in Venetian, *zoto* or *çoto*, that is, “the cripple,” and it is pronounced in exactly the same way as the Greek *Tsopos*.

Turning now to the names of the doge Soranzo and his daughter Soranza, it is possible to discern a link between her and her probable place of exile. The name Soranzo was Venetian and, like all surnames, it survived unchanged in the new common Italian language – after the thirteenth century. However, the official language of the Republic of Venice was a modified Latin. In Latin, the doge was *Iohannes Superantius* or *Superancius* – a latinized version of the Venetian. Similarly, his daughter Soranza Soranzo’s name was *Superanzia Superanzio*; she was the lady *Superanzia*, a very unusual name and one particular to the Soranzo family. About three years ago, this writer visited the only surviving male heir of the Monastery of Mongou, where *Superanzia* probably spent her isolation. When asked how old he thought the monastery was, and what he knew about his own surname, without a blink he answered, “this monastery goes back to the thirteenth century and so does my family name.” This family’s name is *Sperantza[s]*.

³⁴*I Libri commemoriali della Repubblica di Venezia*, No. 448 (18/8/1310). Cappeletti, *op.cit*, p. 271.

In linguistic terms this is easily a Hellenized version resonating Superanzia's name, adopted probably by subsequent denizens and claimants to property that was once inhabited (and made famous) by the banished Venetian lady.

To sum up the main argument here: Giovanni Soranzo, in 1312, aging Doge of Venice, had probably taken possession of Sifnos between 1280 and 1310, just as the Greek historian Paparrigopoulos cites. In all probability, the Querini-Tiepolo conspiracy of 1310 forced his daughter Superanzia, and his son-in-law Niccolò Querini the cripple, to take refuge on remote and deserted Sifnos. Finally, as it also transpires from the testimonies of George Finlay and Joseph de Kigala regarding the coat of arms of the Gozzadini – who came much later – it seems here that the two crests at the Mongou monastery belonged to the Soranzo, not the Gozzadini. Obviously, this makes additional sense if Soranza was living in exile on that location.

It is worth noting at this point that there exist in Sifnos two other coats of arms that have never been studied or identified. They survive over the main and side doors of the church of the Savior (Aghios Sozon) in Apollonia, the capital. They look like free-form renditions of the main symbolic ingredients constituting the crests of the Soranzos, as well as the Querinis – castles and a lion for the former, and the three lilies for the latter. Both of these families had more than one crest and through the years they appear in slightly different versions, even among heraldic dictionaries [Figures 11, 12, 13, 14 for Soranzo and 15, 16 for Querini].

Finally, there is still an implicit question raised at the start of this investigation. If Giovanni Soranzo was the first Venetian lord of Sifnos, was he also the last? By all indications, it seems certain that he was not. At least in name only, Bertuccio Grimani claimed ownership from 1341 to 1355, although, following the pattern of “absent masters” mentioned earlier, there is no evidence that he ever visited the island.³⁵

³⁵K. Hopf, *Veneto-byzantinische Analekten*, p. 457. Raymond-J. Loenertz, *Les Ghisi, Dynastes Vénitiens dans l'Archipel (1207-1390)* (Florence: Olschki, 1974), p. 162.

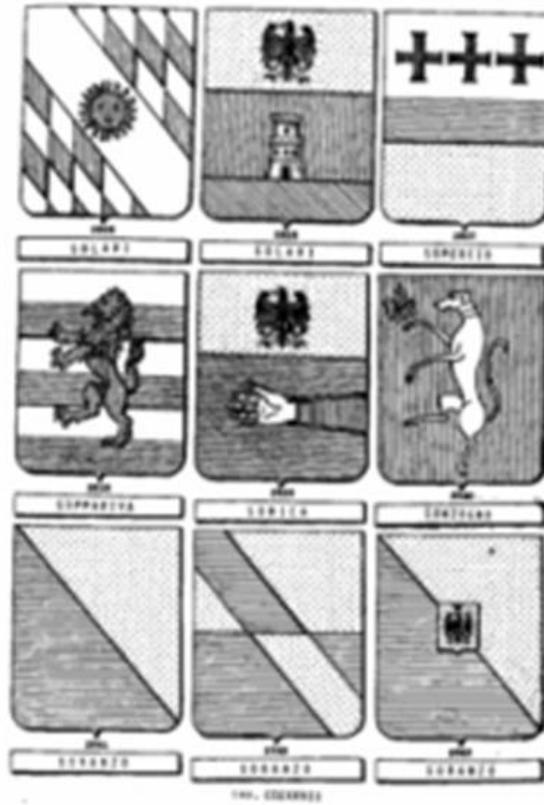
N. Νικολούδης, «Η Σίφνος κατά τη μεσαιωνική περίοδο,» in *Acts of the 1st International Sifnean Symposium*. 3 vs. Society for Sifnean Studies. Athens 2001, v. B', 49-58, p. 56.

List of Figures

Fig. 1. The coat of arms “of the Soranzos of Sifnos” is second from left	p. 15
Fig. 2. On the last row, three Soranzo crests	p. 16
Fig. 3. Official coats of arms of the Crispo family	p. 17
Figs. 4, 5. The Crispo crest over an entrance in Kastro, Sifnos	p. 18
Fig. 6. The Soranzo crest at St. John the Theologian at Mongou	p. 19
Fig. 7. Detail of the Soranzo crest at Mongou	p. 20
Fig. 8. George Finlay’s Journal: on the bottom left, the Gozzadini crest. Bottom right, the (Soranzo crest) “over the door of the monastery of St. John the Theologian at Mongou, Siphnos”	p. 21
Fig. 9. Bottom left, the older Gozzadini crest	p. 22
Fig. 10. The later Gozzadini crest	p. 23
Fig. 11. The (Soranzo) crest at church of Ag. Sozon (the Savior) in Apollonia	p. 24
Fig. 12. Detail of crest at Ag. Sozon	p. 25
Fig. 13. Author’s sketch of crest at Ag. Sozon	p. 26
Fig. 14. Three more Soranzo crests	p. 27
Fig. 15. Querini crests	p. 27
Fig. 16. Author’s sketch of the Querini crest at Ag. Sozon	p. 28



Fig. 1. The coat of arms "of the Soranzos of Sifnos" is second from left.



Morando, Eugenio di Cuzza
 Libro d'arme di Venezia, Venezia MCMXXIX
 (1929)

Fig. 2. On the last row, three Soranzo crests.

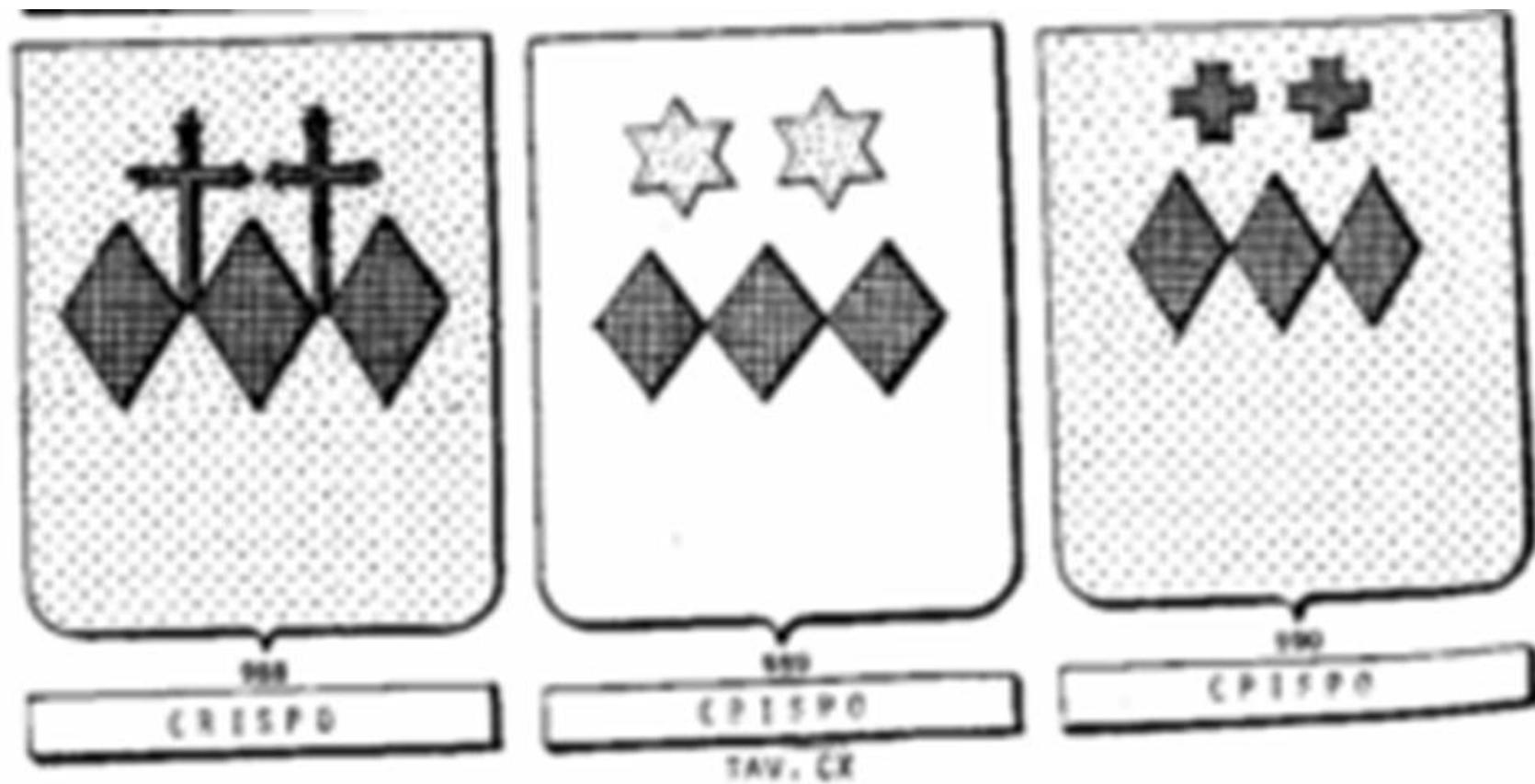


Fig. 3. Official coats of arms of the Crispo family.



Figs. 4, 5. The Crispo crest over an entrance in Kastro, Sifnos.





Fig. 6. The Soranzo crest at St. John the Theologian at Mongou.



Fig. 7. Detail of the Soranzo crest at Mongou

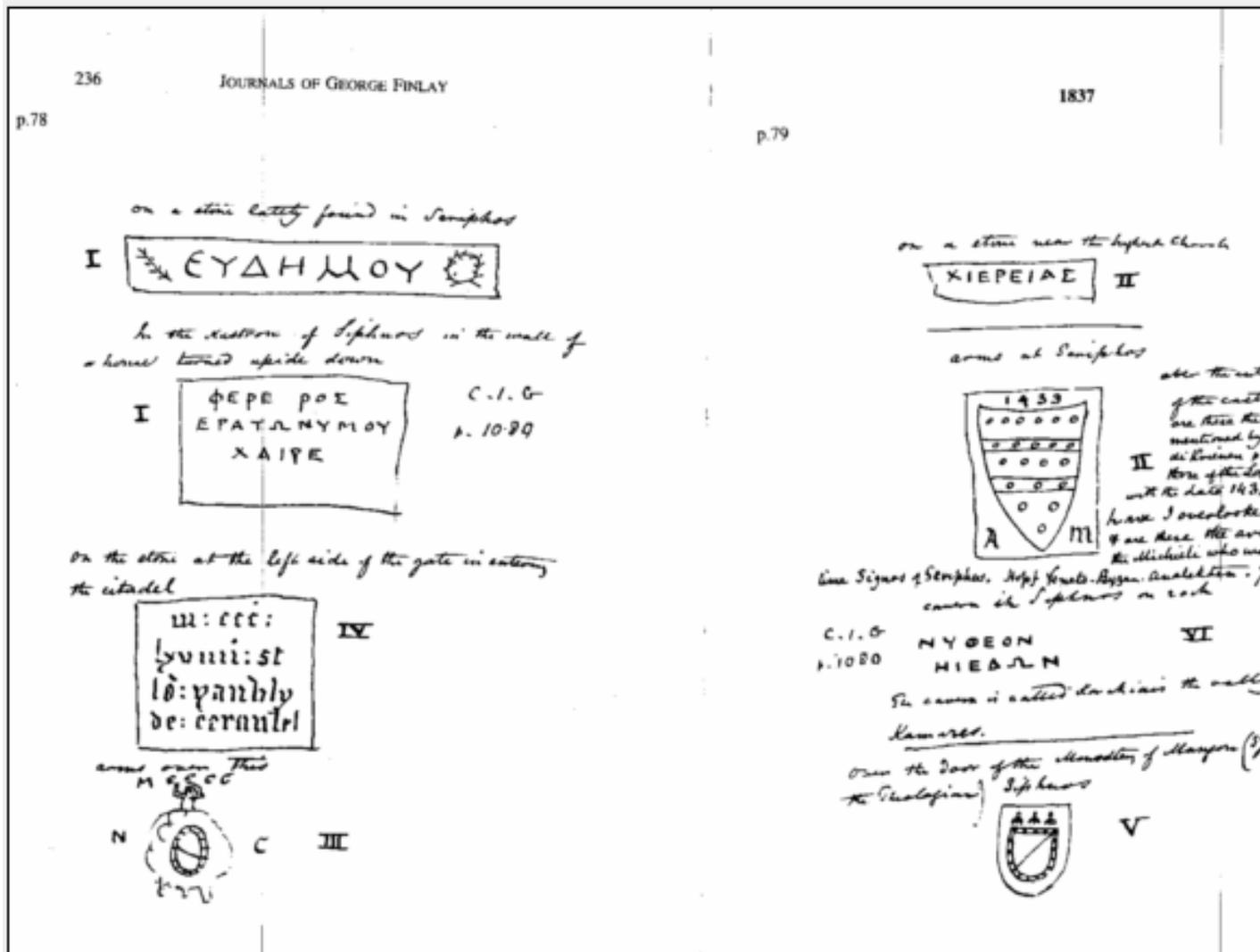


Fig. 8. George Finlay's Journal: on the bottom left, the Gozzadini crest. Bottom right: the [Soranzo crest] "over the door of the monastery of St. John the Theologian at Mongou, Siphnos."



GOZZADINI.

LA Casa Gozzadini deue annouerarsi frà le Illustri Famiglie d'Italia, si per esser stata Capo di fattione, e molto potente, & hauer'hauuto gran parte nella Republica, come per la sua grande antichità, vedendosi di lei nelle più antiche scritture di Bologna honorate memorie, per lo che fino ad hora non si è trouato il suo vero principio, perche alcuni dicono, che d'Alemagna ella partendo, in quei tempi bassi, venisse ad habitare in Bologna. Alcuni altri dicono, ch'ella fosse vna di quelle famiglie, che correndo alla fama della Santità di S. Petronio, mandato da Teodosio II. Imperatore in Italia, doue poi fù fatto Vescouo di Bologna, quiui insieme con lui fermasse la sua habitazione; e Antonio Cautelli riferisse nella sua Istoria di Cremona, che questa famiglia hauesse il suo principio da vn Constanzo Gozzadini, il quale seguendo l'armi dell'Imperatore Federico il grande, quiui fermasse la sua Casa, dalla quale poi discese Testa, che venuto in discordia con altri due fratelli, figliuoli di Bernabò, partirono la robba, e l'amore, e per maggior suo dispreggio, non vollero da indi in poi esser detti de' Gozzadini, mutando nome,

Fig. 10. The later Gozzadini crest.



Fig. 11. The (Soranzo) crest at church of Ag. Sozon (the Savior) in Apollonia.



Fig. 12. Detail of crest at Ag. Sozon.

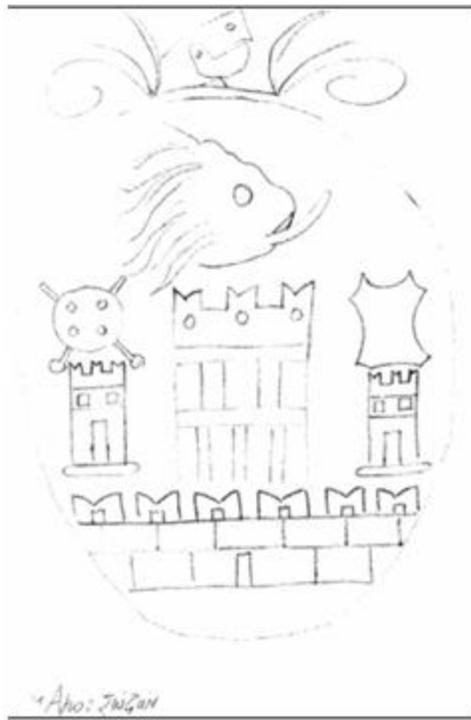


Fig. 13. Author's sketch of crest at Ag. Sozon.

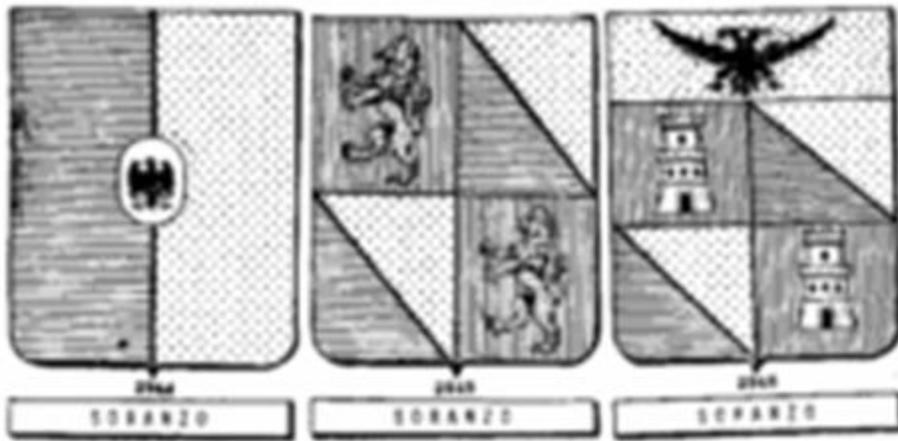


Fig. 14. Three more Soranzo crests

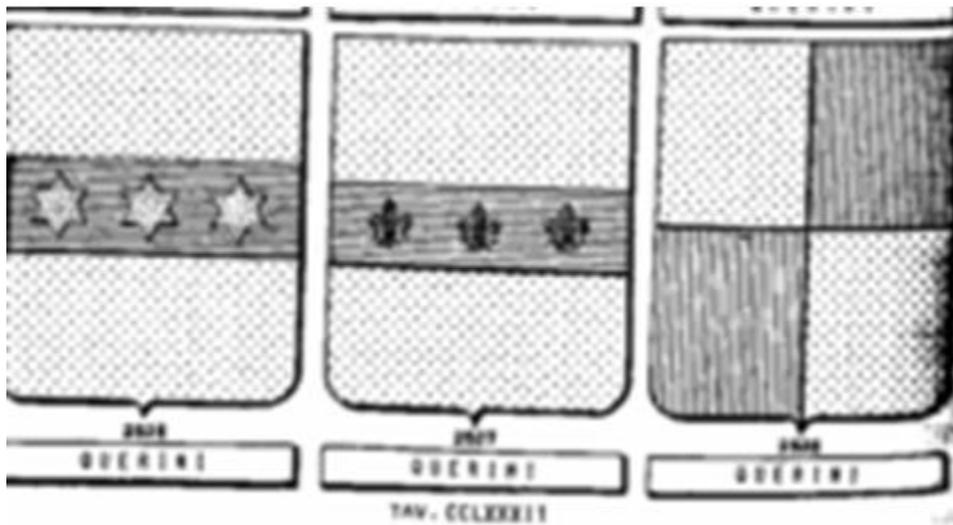


Fig. 15. Querini crests

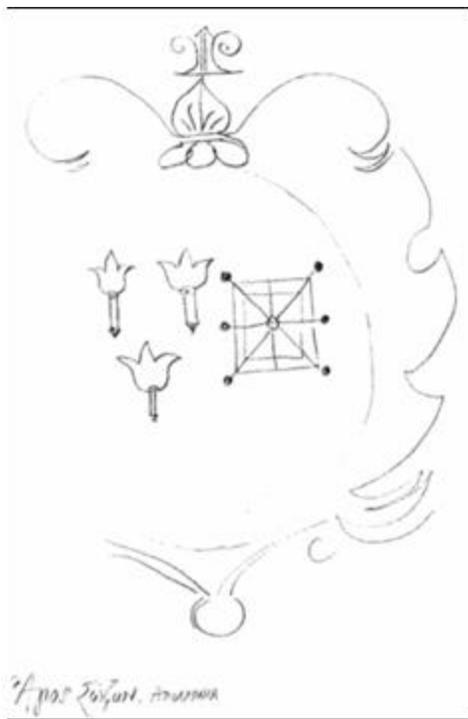


Fig. 16. Author's sketch of the Querini crest at Ag. Sozon.