

Venetian Fortifications ***A Gazetteer***

Mainland Greece, Crete, Cyprus
and the Islands
1204 - 1797

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Aetos Press

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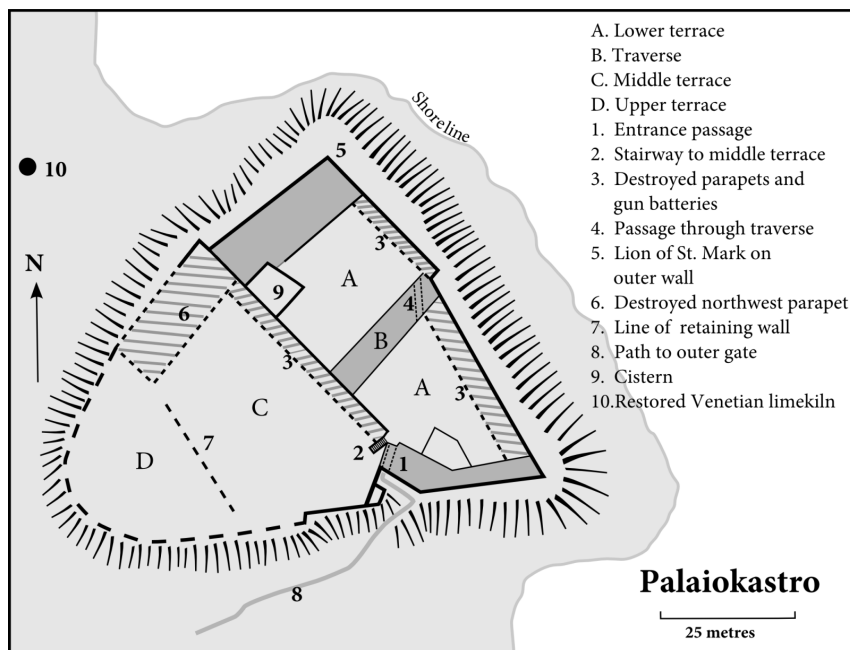
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Palaiokastro of Candia

A late 16C Venetian gun fort completed in 1595. It fell to the Turks in the 1660s and was abandoned thereafter. It occupies a high, triangular rock that projects into the sea eight kilometres west of Candia (Heraklion) on the western shore of the bay. Lat. 35.3655° Long. 25.0394°.



The site of Palaioiastro has been identified as the location of the castle in which Pescatore took refuge before the Genoese were finally expelled from the island by the Venetians. Whatever form the castle had at this time was deemed to be of no importance by the Venetians who left the site to decay. However by 1562 the increasing Turkish threat led to calls for an artillery fort at the western end of the bay to prevent enemy ships entering these waters. The area was beyond the range of Candia's guns and it was thought essential that landing points on this shore were denied to enemy forces. However work did not begin until 1573 probably to a design by Latino Orsini. The triangular outline of the fort was determined by the shape of the rock and its sloping profile called for a work laid out in three levels rising from the seaward side. The first, lower, terrace was quickly constructed, supported by a massive retaining wall built above the cliffs to the east. As was often the case scarcity of

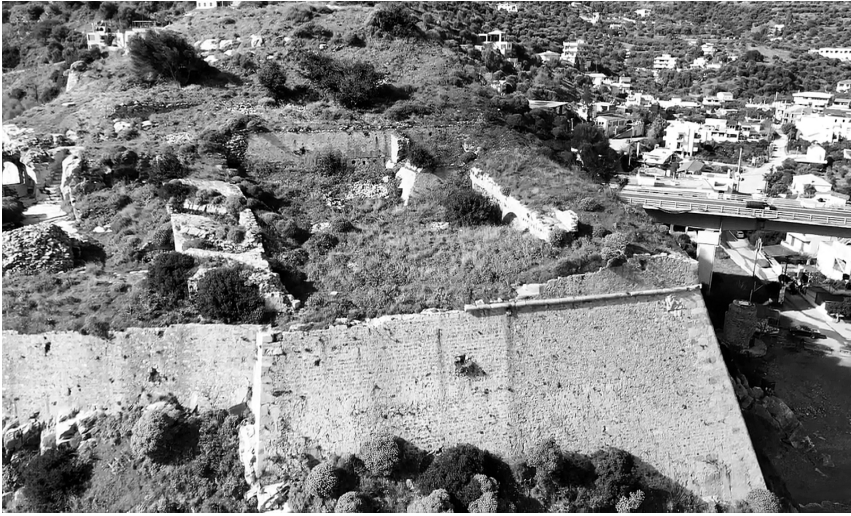


Figure 1.13 Palaiokastro: Aerial view from the east showing the massive retaining wall of the lower platform. The ruined traverse is visible left centre.

resources interrupted progress and numerous delays meant that the fort was not called finished until 1595. At the onset of war in 1645 further work was carried out to reinforce and repair the fort. It resisted the Turks until the last years of the siege of Candia. After the Turkish conquest it fell into disuse.

The fort occupies the entire upper surface of the rock and measures seventy metres across the east front and seventy-five metres east to west. It is separated from the hillside to the west by a defile now occupied by the modern main road. The fort is three sided with the base of the triangle facing east to the bay. All three sides are edged with cliffs which provide considerable natural defences. Although now much ruined the fort's layout can still be identified. The interior is divided into three unequal terraces designed to create level areas on the sloping rock. The lower terrace, the *piazza da basso*, is the largest and the best preserved. Its level platform was created by cutting into the rock to the west and building out over the cliffs to the east. Immense revetment walls to the north, south and east support the eastern half of the terrace and remain the most impressive element of the surviving ruins. They are built of regular courses of roughly squared stone, with massive rectangular blocks up to a metre long reinforcing the angles. The lower terrace is divided in two by a substantial traverse, now ruined. It housed three

vaulted casemates. A vaulted corridor through it, now collapsed, connected the two halves of the terrace. The northern half contained other buildings now destroyed, and a cistern in the northwest corner, which survives.

Originally the ramparts boasted parapets up to five metres thick, constructed of earth faced with masonry. The five embrasures of the eastern parapet housed the fort's main gun battery commanding the open bay to the east. Three were located south of the traverse and two to the north. No trace of these parapets survives and, except for the north-east corner where a badly eroded relief of the Lion of St Mark and the base of a sentry box can be seen, the wall is reduced to below cordon level. However the parapet of the north wall still exists in a ruined state as does part of the south wall. The fort's only entrance stands at the southwest corner of the lower terrace concealed in a re-entrant angle of the circuit. The modest, arched, outer gate leads through the rampart via a five metre long vaulted corridor, partly rock cut. Its finely-worked barrel vault has now almost totally collapsed. A staircase by the inner end of the gate passage leads to the middle terrace, the *piazza de mezzo*. Only its eastern retaining wall and part of the southern rampart survive. Here stood the barracks for the garrison. Contemporary plans show that the middle terrace retaining wall was originally surmounted by a parapet provided with another battery of three gun embrasures facing east. The upper terrace, the *piazza d'alto*, is now bare, although the church for the garrison once stood here. Only traces of the its perimeter wall survive, visible from the road below the rock as sections of revetment to the upper slopes.

On the north beach below the rock is a rare survival, an early Venetian circular lime kiln, used in the manufacture of mortar. Recently restored, it appears to be contemporary with the period of the fort's construction and was presumably used to produce the large amounts of material required.

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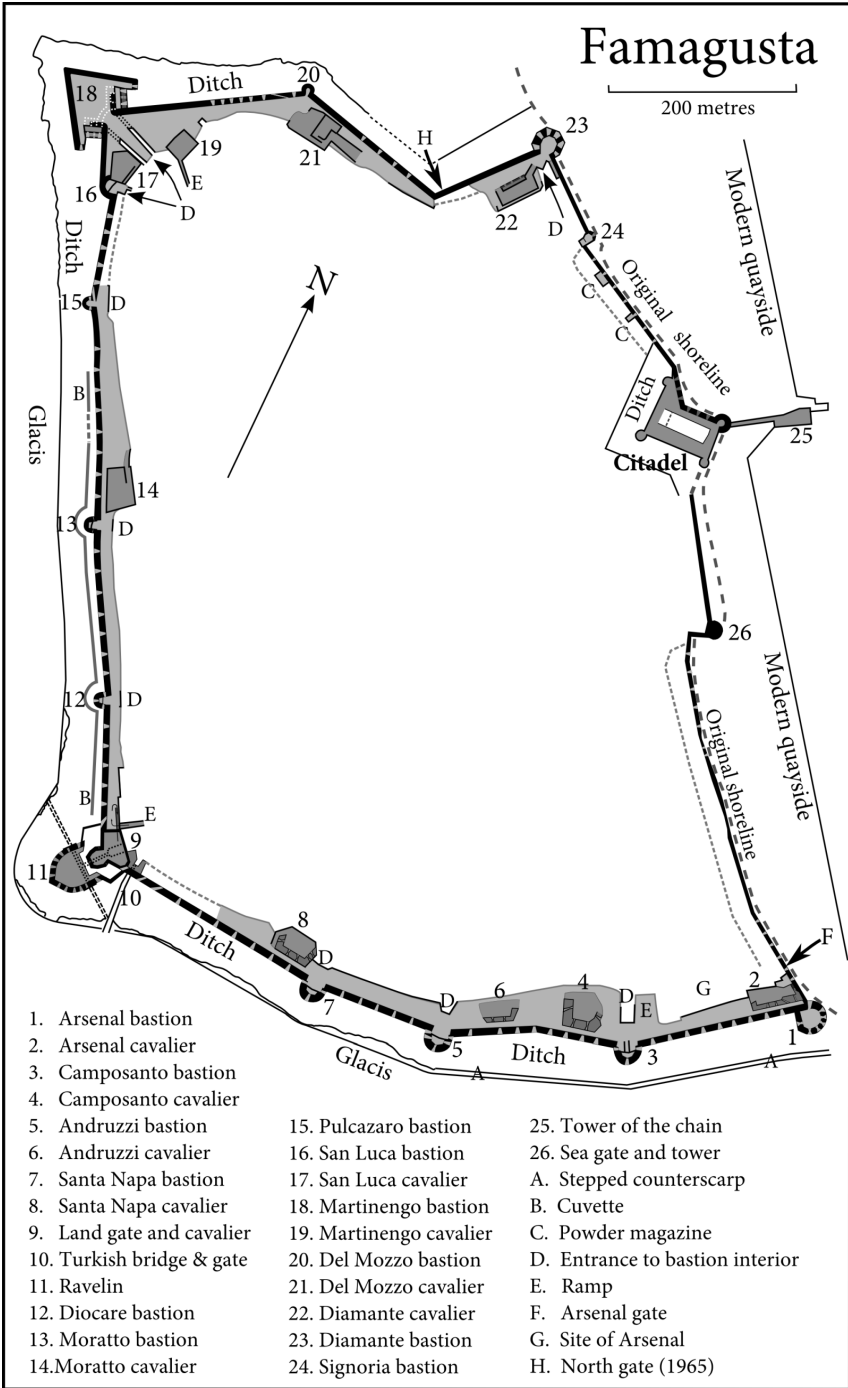
Famagusta

Venetian 1489 -1571. Known as Famagosta by the Venetians, Gazimagusa by the Turks and Αμμόχωστος by the Greeks. The original Lusignan town walls and citadel were heavily modified by the Venetians in phases from 1491 to 1559. The walls, ditch, counterscarp and glacis survive largely intact. Lat. 35.1253° Long. 33.9408°.

After 1192 and the onset of Lusignan rule, Famagusta grew as a link with the ports of the Latin states of Palestine and Syria to the east. The conquest of these states by the Ottomans in 1291 and the loss of the ports of Acre and Tyre then brought further growth in the following decades as Famagusta became the only point of access for the Latin west to the trading centres of the Near East. The town was fortified progressively during the 14C. By the time of the Genoese conquest in 1373 it was surrounded by walls and a moat and there was also a separate castle, or citadel, with its own moat attached to the eastern walls commanding the harbour. This original Lusignan circuit consisted of crenellated walls reinforced by round towers built directly above the inner edge of the rock-cut ditch. The stone excavated from the ditch provided all the necessary material. The walls were built with internal galleries equipped with archery slits, in places on two levels.

The Genoese neglected Famagusta and it was the original Lusignan mediaeval circuit with minor modifications that the Venetians inherited in 1489. The work of updating the defences began in 1491 and was to continue for virtually the entire period of Venetian tenure. The conversion of the mediaeval circuit into an artillery fortress involved the drastic thickening of the walls by adding a broad earthwork terreplein to the inner faces, the creation of deep angled parapets equipped with cannon embrasures and the replacement of the mediaeval towers with half round bastions or demi-lunes raised to the same height as the curtain. The new bastions were hollow and housed artillery firing through low-level gun ports into the ditch in addition to those in the parapet.

At the same time the ditch was made a more formidable obstacle by raising the counterscarp. The heightened counterscarp allowed the creation of a sloping glacis angled so that sweeping fire from the parapet grazed the glacis surface. The deep ditch ensured that the lower part of the scarp wall was completely shielded from bombardment. The excavation of the base of the ditch into the bedrock also made attack by mining very difficult. The defences were further strengthened with a number of cavaliers, high earthwork platforms faced in stone, built on



top of the terreplein, or immediately behind it, and provided with further gun batteries. Almost every bastion has an associated cavalier, although it is not clear how many date to this first period of building between 1491 and 1496. However inscriptions above the Sea gate and on the outer face of the Moratto bastion on the west walls indicate that the walls and bastions of this first phase were complete by 1496 during the jurisdiction of Nicolo Priuli. The walls and towers of the Lusignan citadel were also modified in the period 1491 to 1496. Its original square corner towers are now encased within the massive new walls and round towers added by the Venetians.

At this time the Land gate at the southwest corner of the circuit stood within the original Lusignan hexagonal corner tower. This must have been regarded as a weak point on the circuit, as eventually, in 1544, the ditch here was enlarged and a new detached ravelin was built in front of the gate tower. Two new bridges crossed the moat to gates in each flank of the ravelin. A third bridge connected its rear to the original gate. The Lusignan corner tower was modified to form a high cavalier behind the ravelin. The current gate and bridge, a few metres to the east, are nineteenth century Turkish constructions.

The final modification to the circuit was the strengthening of the northwest corner between 1550 and 1559. Here a large arrowhead bastion was built out into an enlargement of the ditch. Designed by Giovanni Girolamo Sanmicheli, the Martinengo bastion has deeply recessed flanks and faces some eighty metres in length. The bastion is supported by two high cavaliers.

The fortifications today

The greater part of Famagusta's defences are extremely well preserved with the circuit wall, ditch and glacis substantially intact. The Turkish assaults in 1571 were largely directed against the southern section of the walls. Although much damage was caused to the Arsenal bastion, the southern walls and the complex defences of the Land gate, these fortifications were subsequently repaired by the Turks and, in outline at least, they retain their Venetian appearance. The Venetian Arsenal bastion replaced a smaller Lusignan tower and was designed to give additional protection to the port area. The Arsenal itself was a galley repair yard located within the walls and accessed by an arched gateway. Galleys could pass through the opening once their masts were unstepped. They were then hauled up slipways. At some point the gateway was walled up and was only re-opened to accommodate a roadway at the beginning

of the twentieth century. No traces of the internal workshops and slipways remain; the area is currently occupied by a car park and memorial garden. Modern harbour installations now lie between the gate and the sea. The land level has been appreciably raised reducing the headroom through the gate.

The interior of the Arsenal bastion is vaulted and originally housed casemates with low-level gun ports enfilading the ditch. Today the interior houses the Canabulat museum. The bastion's parapet and the low cavalier on the terreplein immediately to the west were modified during the Turkish rebuilding. Many of the gun embrasures on the adjacent curtain wall running west to the Camposanto bastion were also walled up, a common Turkish feature. This section of the curtain wall between the Arsenal and Camposanto bastions illustrates how the Venetians converted the Lusignan walls. The lower two thirds of the external wall facing is original Lusignan work. Two levels of archery slits are still visible, blocked up by the Venetians. Above is the rebuilt artillery parapet, its base marked by the usual Venetian cordon. The inner face of the wall, probably strengthened to resist the new structural loads placed upon it, is now concealed by the thick earth terreplein.

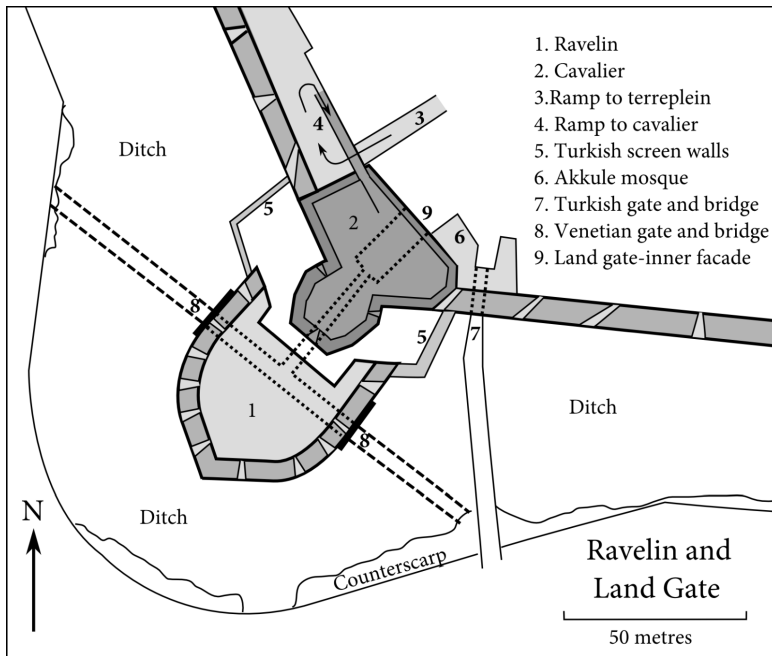
Internally each bastion is accessed through a gated, vaulted corridor running through the thickness of the terreplein. Immediately to the east of the passage to the Camposanto bastion a broad earth ramp allowed easy access to the rampart level for artillery. To the west of the passage the width of the terreplein extends to over fifty metres to accommodate the supporting cavalier. An earth ramp links the surface of the terreplein and the platform of the cavalier. In addition to internal low-level gun ports, each bastion has flanking gun embrasures in the parapet set in the re-entrant angles. All are angled downwards to cover the ditch. Some are open embrasures while others fire through vaulted openings just below the level of the cordon (see for example, Figure 2.1 and 2.3).

Between the Arsenal and Andruzzi bastions the counterscarp is formed by masonry retaining walls built in two stepped sections but with no covered way. This section must represent Turkish rebuilding. From the Andruzzi bastion west to the Ravelin the lower half of counterscarp is rock-cut. Beyond the counterscarp a large part of the glacis still exists for the full length of the southern walls. Although partly occupied by a modern road, its original slope is preserved and it is possible to observe how the walls are concealed from view with only the parapet and the cavaliers visible from the glacis. The terreplein is also still intact along the southern walls save for a short section immediately southeast of the Ravelin.



Figure 2.1 Famagusta: The west flank of the Santa Napa bastion. The deep flanking embrasure in the parapet and the square gun port of the internal chamber are visible.

The Lusignan Land gate to the city, also called the Limassol gate, was housed in the hexagonal tower that formed the southwest corner of the circuit. The gate's unprotected position in the salient of the tower was a serious weakness which the Venetians addressed by enlarging the ditch and building a detached ravelin to shield the gate. The parapet of this new work stands to the same height as the curtain wall. A drawbridge spanned the narrow ditch at the rear and connected the original gate to vaulted corridors within the ravelin leading to two new gates in its flanks. Further drawbridges then gave access to bridges, now destroyed, across the ditch. The slots for the drawbridge mechanism are still visible above the gateways. The ravelin was badly damaged during the Turkish siege. The Venetian themselves detonated a mine under the interior when it was taken during one of the final assaults. At some time after 1599 the Turks repaired the damage, converting the ravelin into a more conventional bastion. The walls and parapets were rebuilt, the gates in the flanks were walled up and the ruined interior was filled with earth to create an artillery platform. They then connected the ravelin to the curtain on either side of the gate tower by building two screen walls across



the ditch. The eastern screen wall is equipped with gun embrasures at half the height of the wall and functions as a form of caponier covering the new bridge. With the old land gate now inaccessible, a new opening was cut through the wall to the east of the corner tower and a new stone bridge was erected across the ditch. A casemate housing a gunport flanking the ravelin had previously occupied this position. Its counterpart in the curtain wall on the northern side of the cavalier can still be seen. Immediately inside the new gate stands the Akkule mosque, built in 1618. The earth fill within the ravelin was removed between 1949 and 1950 exposing the ruined, roofless sub-structure. In 2018 a conservation project consolidated and partially restored the interior. The inner facades of the gates are again visible.

In addition to building the new ravelin the Venetians converted the original Lusignan corner tower into a high, three-lobed cavalier designed to command the walls and ditch to the north and east as well as the glacis and the approaches to the bridges. On the town side of the structure the entrance to the gate passage is through a high pointed archway. On either side of this entrance ramps provided access to the terreplein. The southern ramp was demolished when the Turks created their new gate but the north ramp is still intact. Here, a second ramp, at right angles to the first and bridging over it, leads from the level of the

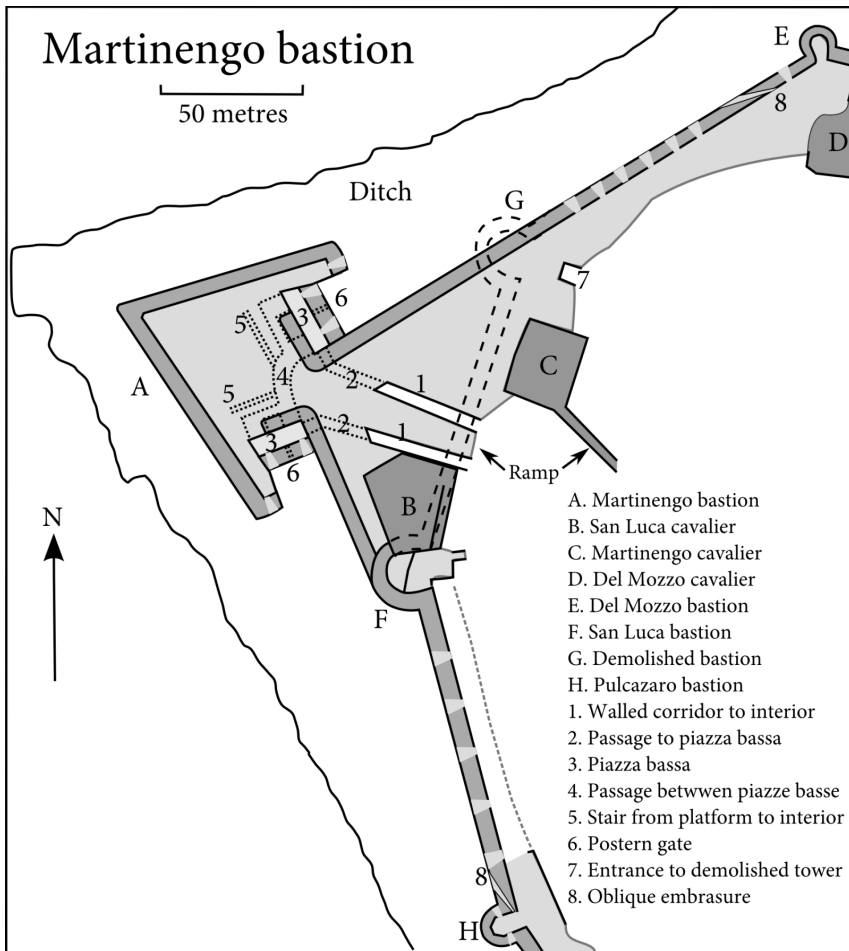


Figure 2.2 Famagusta: The Land gate complex. Visible are the gate in the southeast flank of the ravelin, the Turkish screen wall connecting the ravelin to the curtain, and the Turkish bridge. Behind these structures can be seen the bulk of the high cavalier.

terreplein to the platform of the cavalier through an arched gateway. The platform survives intact although much of its parapet is missing.

North of the ravelin the curtain wall, ditch and glacis are well preserved as far as the Martinengo bastion. Here the terreplein is intact save for the section between the Pulcazaro and San Luca bastions. The walls are reinforced with three demi-lunes and a single cavalier close to the Moratto bastion. In addition a secondary ditch, or cuvette, was cut into the main ditch close to the foot of the curtain. It presumably ran the full length of the west wall and it now survives for two thirds of this distance. The three demi-lunes, Diocare, Moratto and Pulcazaro, are considerably smaller in diameter than their counterparts in the south walls but are equipped with the same arrangement of flanking embrasures and low-level gunports. The cramped interiors of these bastions must have reduced their effectiveness.

When the Venetians first modernised the defences at the end of the 15C the northwest corner of the circuit consisted of two demi-lunes of a similar size and design to those of the southern sector separated by a wall 100m long. The weakness of this arrangement was addressed after



1550 with the construction of the Martinengo bastion. This new work extends over 120m to the west of the original wall and much quarrying was needed to extend the ditch. The San Luca bastion was partially enveloped within a new section of the west curtain leaving only its southwest quadrant visible. The wall north of San Luca was buried beneath the new terreplein and the second tower seems to have been demolished (Plan G), although the entrance to its interior is still visible in the terreplein (Plan 7).

The new bastion, which is very well preserved, conforms to the usual Venetian pattern with recessed flanks concealing piazze-basse but it has several unusual features. Piazze-basse are normally set at half the height of the bastion but here they stand much closer to the floor of the ditch.

Their parapets rise to the height of the bastion's cordon and therefore seem disproportionately tall, with two very deep embrasures. The shoulders of the bastion's faces that protect the concealed flanks do not have the usual rounded orecchione but are almost square. The terreplein at the bastion's gorge is forty metres deep. Here, two walled corridors, open to the sky, are cut into the terreplein on either side of a broad ramp. They lead to vaulted passages giving access to the piazze-basse. Another curved passage within the bastion connects the two piazze via vaulted chambers at their rear. Stairs lead up from this passage to the bastion's platform. More stairs descend from each piazza-bassa to arched postern gates set in the recessed flanks at ditch level.

To enfilade the ditch along the faces of the Martinengo bastion the Venetians cut new embrasures in the parapet of the curtain wall close to the Pulcazaro and Del Mozzo bastions. Built at an extremely oblique angle to the wall and angled downwards into the ditch, they are accurately aligned with the bastion's faces. The bastion is supported by two cavaliers. The San Luca cavalier can only have been erected after 1550 as



Figure 2.3 Famagusta: The south flank of the Martinengo bastion. The San Luca bastion is centre right. Visible are the internal square gunports on two levels and the arched port of the flanking embrasure in the parapet. In the centre can be seen the southern postern gate of the Martingno bastion between the deep embrasures of the piazza bassa.

it straddles the original curtain wall. A ramp along its eastern face leads from the terreplein behind the San Luca bastion to its platform. The northern cavalier, now known as the Martinengo, probably pre-dates the construction of the bastion. A relief model of Famagusta in the Venice Naval Museum shows the fortifications with the earlier twin half round bastions and the cavalier in its present position. At the southeast corner of the cavalier a ramp rises from ground level to its platform.

To the east of the Martingo complex the walls, ditch, counterscarp and glacis survive as far as the Del Mozzo bastion. This is another small, weak demi-lune similar to the Moratto bastion but forming a salient in the curtain. This position is much strengthened by the Del Mozzo cavalier, a massive earthwork with battered, stone faced sides. Built on two levels on top of the terreplein, its northern face stands close to the parapet of the curtain wall. A broad ramp connects its platform to the rampart to the east.

The curtain continues intact beyond the Del Mozzo bastion but the counterscarp disappears beneath a modern road. At a re-entrant angle of the wall this road crosses the ditch and passes through an arch in the wall opened up in 1965. The ditch to the east of this point is overgrown and unrecognisable. The curtain wall runs a further ninety metres east to the Diamante bastion, an octagonal corner tower on a circular talus, thirty metres in diameter at the parapet. This is thought to be entirely Lusignan work, although both the parapet and the interior were altered by the Venetians to accommodate artillery. The tower once stood on the shore and may have been placed to cover the approaches to the harbour. Its arched entrance is still visible. Another large cavalier stands on the terreplein immediately behind the Diamante bastion. The outline of its northwest rampart with three gun embrasures is still visible.

Before the construction of the modern port facilities the eastern sea walls ran along the shoreline. Only a short section of quay to the south of the citadel stood on the seaward side of the wall. The first section of these walls running southeast between the Diamante and Signoria bastions is original Lusignan work at least on the interior. It may never have been reinforced with an earth terreplein. The Signoria bastion is a small Lusignan octagonal work. The wall makes a short jog to the south at this point before continuing southeast towards the citadel. The Venetians reinforced the exterior face of the wall here creating a new parapet with a line of gun embrasures. The earth of the terreplein that formed the gun platform has been removed in this section exposing the inner face of the Lusignan wall. This has also revealed two vaulted structures that lay within the earth cover, thought to be powder magazines.

in the external face. The first phase must be Venetian, the second is probably Turkish work. A postern gate stood where the wall, now collapsed, met the inner enclosure. There is no indication that the collapsed section was bonded to the inner enclosure wall providing evidence that the outer circuit is of a later date.

The southern curtain stands on a natural defensive line and commands the approach to the outer gate. The square gatehouse faces east and is much ruined. Again its parapet is built over a course of earlier crenellations. This pattern is repeated on the adjacent curtain to the west where the original parapet with its notched merlons is buried beneath later work. The first adaptation for artillery seems to have raised the parapet and added vaulted casemates. Their arched outer gunport openings can still be seen. This may be Venetian work of the late 15C. Similar features from the same period can be seen at Nafplio. Later, in the 16C, a broad artillery platform with a new heavier parapet was built by the Turks against the inner face of the wall burying the earlier defences. The eastern end of the southern curtain turns to the south and terminates in a Turkish tower.

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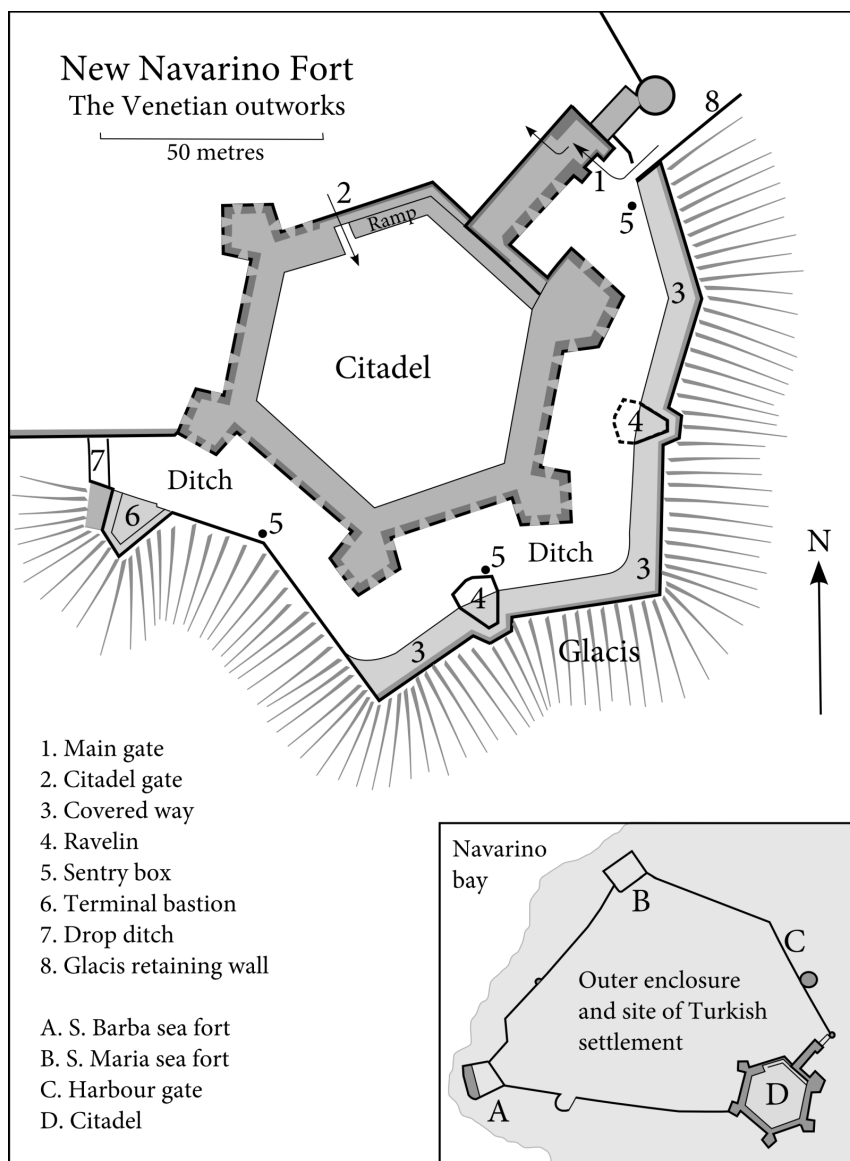
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New Navarino Castle, Anavarin-i Cedid

An artillery fortress built by the Turks in 1573 to guard the southern entrance to the natural harbour of Navarino bay. Taken by Morosini's forces in 1686 and held until 1715. Lat. 36.9113° Long. 21.6921°.

The fortress of Anavarin-I Cedid consists of a bastioned hexagonal citadel connected by an outer circuit to sea bastions at the north and west corners of the fortress. The citadel stands a low hill rising to fifty metres and protects the landward approach, while the sea bastions are sited to command the bay entrance. The western bastion, named S. Barba by the Venetians, is built directly on the rocky shore. The northern bastion of



S. Maria, stands on a low cliff twenty metres high. Each bastion is effectively an independent sea fort equipped with casemates housing vaulted gun ports. The fort's main entrance is housed in a gate tower that originally stood isolated in the centre of the curtain running between the northeast face of the citadel and the eastern round corner tower. Today this gate tower is connected to the citadel by a rectangular gun platform



Figure 6.27 New Navarino: The southwestern section of the ditch showing the counterscarp and steeply sloping glacis. In the flank of the Citadel's southern bastion is the arched opening of a Turkish gunport. A domed sentry box is visible lower right.

forming an arm extending northeast from the main structure (see below). Access to the fortress from the modern town is now via the Harbour gate. Kevin Andrews provides a comprehensive description of this elaborate Turkish work.

When first built the citadel was reinforced by six identical pentagonal bastions. There was no ditch or outworks and the citadel was exposed to direct fire from the southeast. The Venetian bombardment of June 1686 resulted in the explosion of a gunpowder store in the northern bastion. The damage was repaired and subsequent 18C plans indicate that the original layout of the fortress remained unchanged during the twenty-nine years of Venetian occupation. However the Republic still intended to bring the fortifications up to date. Francesco Grimani commissioned the French engineer Levasseur to prepare designs for an extensive system of outworks around the entire landward circuit including a large hornwork to the southeast of the citadel. All the Venetians actually achieved however was a modest ditch with a covered way



Figure 6. 28 New Navarino: The remains of the southern ravelin. The domed sentry box is a later addition.

and a steeply sloping glacis encircling the outer faces of the citadel. The ditch seems to have been created by building up the glacis, with the fill retained by a vertical stone counterscarp. The position of the low-level gunports in the flanks of the citadel's bastions indicates that the floor of the ditch is the original external ground level. The new ditch wraps around the east, south and southwest sides of the hexagon and shields the lower half of the walls from direct fire, but there is only a covered way to the east and south.

Two curious pentagonal structures are built across the outer edge of the ditch although one is now largely destroyed. Andrews called these ravelins, a description that persists to this day. The triangular parts form walled traverses across the covered way, which projects outwards at these two points. The rectangular parts are short two storey structures projecting as caponiers into the ditch. The flank walls of the lower storeys are pierced by loopholes covering the ditch floor. A low door in the inner face gave access to the interior. Above a wooden floor, the walls of

the open upper storey formed a continuous platform with the traverse. Internal steps built against the counterscarp connected the two levels.

The western end of the counterscarp is strengthened by an infantry strongpoint extending out over the glacis to create a form of demi-bastion. This has a deep sloping parapet facing west. Below this position the open western end of the ditch is sealed off by a drop ditch. At the northern end of the outworks the approach to the main gate is now along a narrow corridor between the east corner of the outer circuit wall and the retaining wall of the glacis. Arched entrances to counterscarp galleries beneath the covered way are still visible. Three domed sentry boxes stand on the ditch floor. These seem to be late additions. They do not appear on detailed plans prepared in the first half of the 19C and may date to the later use of the citadel as a barracks and prison.

The present appearance of the citadel is due to French reconstruction work after 1830. A detailed plan, prepared by their engineers that year, reveals that the north and northeast bastions together with the intervening curtain had been reduced to rubble during the events of the Greek revolution. French engineers constructed a new northeast bastion on a larger scale but chose not to rebuild its northern neighbour that had projected into the outer enclosure. The new sections of the curtain wall were built without their original wide gun platforms. Finally the tower of the main gate was incorporated within a new wing connected to the hexagon.

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Thermisi

Venetian between 1394 and 1537 and again from 1686 to 1715. A mediæval castle on a precipitous ridge two kilometres inland from an area of valuable salt pans. Lat. 37.4210° Long. 23.3036°.

The territory of Thermisi was an important outlying possession of the Venetians at Nafplio for the century and a half of their first occupation and again during their brief second period of tenure after 1686. The origins of the castle are obscure. It may have been constructed first by