

= Licario =

Licario , called Ikarios (Greek : ???????) by the Greek chroniclers , was a Byzantine admiral of Italian origin in the 13th century . At odds with the Latin barons of his native Euboea , he entered the service of the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (r . 1259 ? 1282) , and reconquered many of the Aegean islands for him in the 1270s . For his exploits , he was rewarded with Euboea as a fief and rose to the rank of *meas konostaulos* and *meas doux* , the first foreigner to do so .

= = Biography = =

= = = Origins and early life = = =

Licario was born in Karystos in Latin @-@ held Euboea (Negroponte) , from a Vicentian father and a local woman . He was of humble origin , but able and ambitious . Serving as a knight under the Latin triarch Giberto II da Verona , he managed to win the heart of Felisa , sister of Giberto and widow of another triarch , Narzotto dalle Carceri . The match was met with disapproval by Felisa 's family . They secretly married , but the marriage was cancelled by her relatives . Fleeing from their wrath , Licario sought refuge in the fort of Anemopylae near Cavo D 'Oro . He repaired the strong fortress , assembled a small group of followers , and began raiding the surrounding estates , belonging to the island 's nobles .

= = = Entry into Byzantine service = = =

At that time , the newly restored Byzantine Empire , under the leadership of Michael VIII Palaiologos , sought to recover Euboea , which was the major Latin insular possession in the Aegean Sea and a base for piratical activity directed against his lands . Furthermore , along with the Principality of Achaea it presented the major obstacle to his complete recovery of Greece . Already in 1269 / 1270 , a Byzantine fleet under Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos had attacked and captured one of the island 's major Latin strongholds , the town of Oreos .

Facing the persistent refusal of the island 's barons to treat with him , desiring vengeance and eager for glory and wealth , Licario presented himself to Philanthropenos , offering his services . He , in turn , took him to the Emperor , who was eager to use the services of talented Westerners whenever he could , and had already bankrolled several Latin corsairs in his service . Licario became the Emperor 's vassal according to Western feudal rules , and in turn was strengthened with imperial troops . Under the leadership of Licario , the Byzantines could now mount a serious attempt to conquer the island , while their forces were further augmented by many defections from the Greek population .

The Byzantine forces , under Licario 's command , now (in 1272 / 1273) launched a campaign that took the fortresses of Larmena , La Cuppa , Clisura and Manducho . The Lombard triarchs then appealed to their liege @-@ lord , Prince William II of Achaea , and to Dreux de Beaumont , marshal of the Angevin Kingdom of Sicily . William was able to recover La Cuppa , but de Beaumont was defeated in a pitched battle and was subsequently recalled by Charles of Anjou . Between then and 1275 , according to the Venetian chronicler Marino Sanudo , Licario himself served in the Byzantine army in Asia Minor , where he scored a victory against the Turks .

= = = Conquest of Euboea and campaigns in the Aegean = = =

In 1276 , following their great victory over the Lombard triarchs of Negroponte at the Battle of Demetrias , the Byzantines renewed their offensive in Euboea . Licario attacked his native Karystos , seat of the southern triarchy , and took it , after a long siege , in the same year . For this success , he was rewarded by Michael VIII with the whole island as a fief , and a noble Greek wife with a rich dowry . In turn , Licario pledged to provide 200 knights to the Emperor . Gradually , Licario reduced

the Latin strongholds on the island , until , by 1278 , he had seized almost all of it except for the capital , the city of Negroponte (Chalkis) .

For his successes , Licario was rewarded with the post of *megas konostaulos* , head of the Latin mercenaries , and eventually appointed as *megas doux* after Philanthropenos 's death in ca . 1296 ; the first foreigner to be thus honoured . He commanded the Byzantine navy in a series of expeditions against the Latin @-@ held Aegean islands . The first to fall was Skopelos , whose fortress was believed to be impregnable . Licario , however , knew that it lacked water supplies . Thus , he attacked it during the hot and dry summer of 1277 and forced its surrender . Its lord , Filippo Ghisi , was captured and sent to Constantinople ; his other possessions , the islands of Skyros , Skiathos and Amorgos , were also taken soon after . After that , Licario went on to capture the islands of Kythera and Antikythera off the southern coast of the Morea , and later Kea , Astypalaia , and Santorini in the Cyclades . The great island of Lemnos was also captured , although its lord , Paolo Navigajoso , withstood a three @-@ year siege before surrendering .

Finally , in late 1279 or early 1280 , he returned to Euboea , landing in the norther town of Oreos and moving south towards Negroponte . His forces by now included many Spanish and Catalan mercenaries (the first time the latter are mentioned in Greece) and even former adherents of Manfred of Sicily , who had fled to Greece after Manfred 's defeat and death at the hands of Charles of Anjou . As he reached Negroponte , the triarch Giberto II da Verona , Felisa 's brother , and John I de la Roche , the Duke of Athens , who were present at the city , rode out with their forces to meet him . The two armies met at the village of Vatondas , northeast of Negroponte . The battle resulted in a major victory for Licario : John de la Roche was unhorsed and captured , while Giberto was either killed (according to Sanudo) or captured and taken along with de la Roche as a prisoner to Constantinople , where , according to Nikephoros Gregoras , the sight of the hated renegade , moving triumphantly among the assembled Byzantine court , caused him to drop dead .

After Vatondas , Negroponte seemed about to fall into Licario 's hands too . The city , however , was quickly reinforced by Jacques de la Roche , lord of Argos and Nauplia , who , along with the energetic Venetian bailo , Niccolo Morosini Rosso , led its defence . Facing determined resistance and possibly fearing an intervention of John I Doukas , ruler of Thessaly , Licario was forced to raise the siege . Licario then turned to reducing the remaining Latin strongholds on the island , becoming its total master except for the city of Negroponte itself , and ruling it from the fortress of Fillia . His fleet carried out further naval expeditions : the islands of Sifnos and Serifos were taken , and Licario 's ships raided the Peloponnese .

Licario himself sailed to Constantinople , presenting Emperor Michael VIII with his captives . Then , at the height of his fame and success in ca . 1280 , Licario disappears from the sources , and his subsequent fate is unknown . Most likely he lived in Constantinople and died there .

= = Assessment = =

His conquests proved temporary only , as the Byzantines were gradually evicted by the Venetians and the other Latin lords . Even in Euboea , Licario 's major gain and personal fief , the Lombard barons managed to complete their reconquest of the entire island by 1296 . Nevertheless , Licario proved one of the most successful military leaders in Michael VIII 's employ , and his victories greatly enhanced the emperor 's own standing and prestige amongst the Latins . The historian Deno John Geanakoplos ranks him , along with Michael 's brother John Palaiologos , as the two men who caused the most damage to the Latin rulers of Greece .