

**Heraldic Miscellany, including Venetian Heraldry; Letters and Privileges Pertaining to Venetian History; Lists of Venetian Families Eligible for the Great Council  
In Italian and Latin, decorated manuscript on paper  
Italy (Venice), c. 1565-1567**

*i* (modern paper) + *i* (paper) + 69 + *i* (paper) + *i* (modern paper) folios on paper, watermark similar to Briquet no. 13899, Sirène: Naples, 1524-28, Rome, 1526, and Briquet no. 13900, Sirène: Naples, 1533, Imola, 1536, Fabriano, 1539, contemporary foliation in Arabic numerals, top outer recto, 1-68, leaving the first leaf unfoliated (collation *i-ii<sup>s</sup> iii<sup>s</sup> [+9, f. 24 has been tipped in at the end of the quire] iv<sup>6</sup> v<sup>10</sup> vi<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>8</sup> [+2; f. 49 has been tipped in between the first and second leaf of the quire] viii<sup>6</sup> ix<sup>2</sup> x<sup>6</sup> [-5 -6; two leaves excised with some loss of text]), paper reinforcement strips pasted in the inner folds of many of the bifolia, ruling in lead (justification, 138 x 74 mm.), text written above top line in dark brown ink in an elegant, slanted humanistic cursive script in twenty-four to twenty-five lines, three-line initial outlined in dark brown ink and tinted in yellow, with foliate decoration tinted brown and square frame (recto of first unnumbered leaf), OVER TWO HUNDRED COATS OF ARMS drawn in dark brown ink, tinted in most cases with red, blue, yellow, brown, or black, at least two late sixteenth- or seventeenth-century hands have made additions to the text, red crayon marks in the margin at the heads of some of the entries, the lower outer corner of f. 35 has been neatly patched with paper. CONTEMPORARY BINDING of limp vellum, sewn on three parchment bands, with two green fabric ties attached to the fore-edge of the upper cover and two (one cut short) attached to the fore-edge of the lower cover, some staining on vellum binding, with small tear along the lower fore-edge. Dimensions 206-208 x 142-146 mm.*

Forming a veritable pageant of Renaissance nobility, these highly visual coats-of-arms (more than two hundred of them), and the accompanying text, contribute to our understanding of sixteenth-century Venice and its most prominent families. We have been able to identify only four other manuscripts with similar contents, including a substantial section that focuses on eligibility for inclusion in the Great Council of Venice. With its contemporary binding, even preserving its original silk ties, the volume must have been the prized possession of one of the patrician elite.

## PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of watermarks supports the localization of this manuscript in eastern Italy around the middle of the sixteenth century, and evidence of script and dialectal words – notably “quatordesi” (f. 63v), but also common words like “có” – all point to this manuscript’s origin in Venice. Internal evidence permits a more precise dating of the manuscript. The entry on the Pisani family concludes, still in the hand of the scribe, with the appointment of Alvise Pisani as cardinal on 12 March 1565 (f. 26v), providing a *terminus a quo* of 1565 for the manuscript’s completion. The last doge to be identified in the text on Venetian families is Girolamo Priuli (see f. 26), who served as Doge of Venice from 1559 until his death in November of 1567, allowing us to date the text between 1565 and 1567.
2. Additions in two slightly later hands suggest that this book belonged to one or more early owners invested in its contents. One writer added to a text discussing ducal *andate*, or annual ceremonial processions, two additional *andate* instituted at the end of the

sixteenth century (f. 68v). Another made updates to entries within the first text, the list of Venetian noble families, adding, for example, an entry for the Mezo family (f. 20) and making an addition to the entry on the Cigogna family that observes, "di questa casada del 1585 fu fato dose di Venetia Messer Pasqual Cigogna [Of this family in 1585 Messer Pasquale Cigogna was made doge of Venice]" (f. 10). A *corno ducale*, the ceremonial crown of the doge, has been drawn and colored by one or more later hands over the arm of the Cigogna (f. 10), Ponte (f. 20), Pesaro (f. 20v), Sagredo (f. 29), and Venier (f. 33v) families and a cardinal's hat has been drawn in the margin for the Barbarigo family (f. 3v). These additions point to ownership by one or more Venetian owners -- possibly a member of the Venetian nobility, who might be expected to have a more personal investment in the delineation and history of the patrician elite.

3. Belonged to Alessandro Volpi (signature on f. ii recto and in the lower margin, recto of the first unfoliated leaf). An inscription (f. i verso) relating the contents of the manuscript may also have been added in Volpi's late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century hand. The signature of one Alessandro Volpi of Padua appears in another manuscript, Milan, Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense di Brera, MS 106.
4. Belonged to Carlo Tyrichteo(?), who identifies himself in a presentation inscription, f. i recto, dated 25 January 1881: "Al molto Reverendo Padre Clemento [sic] Candotto offre Carlo Tyrichteo[?]."
5. Belonged to Clemente Candotto, a priest of Venice, who identifies himself in a presentation inscription, f. i recto, dated 15 November 1881: "Al pregiatissimo Signore Signor Zaccaria de Grego da Venezia il concittadino. Fr. Clemente da Venezia."
6. Belonged to Prince Alberto Giovanelli (1876-1937), collector and benefactor of the arts in Venice; his bookplate, "Ex Libris Alberti Giovanelli," front pastedown.
7. Private European Collection.

## TEXT

unfoliated leaf, recto – f. 37, [Preface] incipit, "Non senza causa di gran lunga da ciascuno giuditioso furono sempre piu estimate se antiquita ... et amoreuol fatica"; unfoliated leaf, verso, *Queste prima sono le xxxiiij casade de Tribunij antichi*; f. 1, [List of noble Venetian families], incipit, "A. Auanzago. Questi uenero da Mantoa et la quel luogo passerno in Riualta ... come al presente se attroua"; [ff. 37v-39v, blank but ruled];

List of fifty-three noble families of Venice in roughly alphabetical order – they are consistently alphabetized according to the first initial of the family name but no further – with accounts of their respective origins and histories, as well as tinted drawings of their arms. This is preceded by a brief preface and a list of twenty-four Venetian houses which had once provided the *tribuni* who ruled the Venetian islands before the emergence of the doge.

ff. 40-46, *Copia di una lettera scritta al nobel homo Ser Zorzi Dolfin a quel tempo Bailo in Armenia ...*, incipit, "Petrus Gradenico Dei gratia Dalmatię atque Crouatię dux ..."; f. 47v, *Copia de una lettera scritta da*

*un Zenouese fatta in Budua del 1380, incipit, "Frater diligende per questa ui scriuo dele noue occorse tra nostre galis Zenouese ... Valle";*

Two letters describing significant events in fourteenth-century Venetian history. The first, from Doge Pietro Gradenigo (1251-1311) to Zorzi Dolphin (Giorgio Delfino), Venetian governor (*bailo*) of Armenia, and dated 27 June 1310, recounts the failed conspiracy, attempted earlier that month by Bajamonte Tiepolo and other members of the old Venetian aristocracy, to overthrow Gradenigo and the Great Council (*Maggior Consiglio*) of Venice. The second, attributed to a Genoese writer and dated to 1380, recounts the events of the Battle of Chioggia (1379-1380), part of the Venetian-Genoese wars that ended in a decisive victory for Venice.

*ff. 46v-61, Nel ano del nostro Signor yhesu christo 1379, incipit, "Questi sono i Cittadinj de Veniesio [sic] li qual se offerse a la guerra de Zenouesj ..."; f. 58v, Questa e la uera suma de tutte 30 le casade de cittadinj fono fatti del consiglio a la guerra de Zenouesj; f. 59v, Questi sono li nomi de casade mudadi; f. 60, Questi infrascritte sono quindese casade fono fatte del consiglio in tempo de Messer Pedro Gradenigo Doxe ...; f. 60v, Queste sono 18 casade che scamporno da Costantinopoli ...; f. 61, Queste sono le 7 casade che uerre de Soria de Atre ...; f. 61, Queste sono le casade de zentil lhomenj fatte al Serrar del consiglio del 1297 ...;*

List of Venetian citizens who served with distinction in the 1378-1381 war with Genoa, known as the War of Chioggia, along with their contributions of men and funds to that war. This is followed by a list of thirty men among those included in the first list who were rewarded for their contributions to the war with what was essentially ennoblement, eligibility to participate in the republic's Great Council. Aside from the list immediately following, which specifies earlier family names of prominent Venetian families, all of the remaining lists specifically pertain to families made eligible to participate in the Great Council.

*ff. 61v-63, Copia del Priuilegio de Malamoco. Da cha Bognolo, incipit, "Retrouandosse el ben Doxe in Malamoco ..."; f. 63, Extractum? ex originalibus registris communis Verone, incipit, "Nos Mastinus dello scalla ciuitatum Verone ...";*

Copies of two documents dated to the early fourteenth century. The first of these is a privilege granted to Malamocco, dated 11 March 1312, and the second is a Latin extract from the register of the commune of Verona, a letter dating to 1331 from Mastino II della Scala (1308-1351), then lord of Verona.

*ff. 63v-68, PER qual causa il serenissimo Principe faci quatordesj solenita a l'anno ET in diuersi tempi uisiti diuerse giesie per la citta, incipit, "È cosa ueramente indegna di Cittadino ... che fu da gli(?) omi qui institui//";*

This text details fourteen regular ducal *andate*, processional visits to different churches and other significant locations by the Venetian doge, his cortege, and members of various religious and civic organizations. Furthermore, the text offers explanations of the reasons behind them.

*f. 68v, addition in a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century hand detailing two additional ducal andate.*

These added *andate* exemplify the dynamism of processions in sixteenth-century Venetian culture. The first was instituted after a severe outbreak of the bubonic plague in Venice between

1575 and 1577, and was held annually on a date established as the anniversary of the city's deliverance. The second was held annually in celebration of the Venetian victory in the Battle of Lepanto in 1571.

This manuscript's contents pertain to the history of the Venetian nobility, with particular attention given to the histories of the noble houses, to their eligibility for inclusion within the Great Council, and to significant events in Venetian history, particularly in the fourteenth century, which saw the effects of a major transition in the ways in which membership in the nobility was conferred and understood.

The Venetian Republic, which endured from the late seventh century until 1797, was administered by several governing bodies with different responsibilities. These included the doge, an elected head of state, along with a senate and several conciliar bodies, including the Great Council, which initially comprised a fixed number of members drawn from patrician families of Venice and which exercised electoral and legislative duties. At the close of the thirteenth century, in 1297, the Venetian Republic enacted a major reform to the procedures by which members of the Great Council were selected every year. In order to bring more clarity and stability to this selection process, the 1297 reform, known as the *Serrata* (closure) of the Great Council, removed limitations on the size of the Council, while stipulating that all those who were current members or who had been members over the last four years might remain members and that a specially appointed electoral committee might nominate new members. These initial reforms were intended to enlarge membership within the Council and to make it possible to circumvent factionalism in the process of selecting new council members from among Venice's patrician families. These reforms were quickly followed by curbs limiting the circumstances in which new members could be approved. These effectively restricted membership, and the nobility conferred by eligibility for membership, to a particular group of families in Venice. There were exceptional cases in which membership was granted to citizens outside these families, as when Doge Pietro Gradenigo in 1290 admitted families expelled from Acre and the Holy Land (listed in this manuscript on f. 61) and when, as discussed above, thirty men were admitted to the Council for their services in the War of Chioggia (1378-1381). Still, by the beginning of the fourteenth century eligibility was strictly regulated and tracked in a registry of noble births.

The majority of the texts included within this manuscript explicitly address Venetian families' eligibility for membership within the Council, among other matters of historical interest. A number of these – most frequently a list of Venetian noble families with their origins and arms, the lists of families admitted to the Council at different times, and the letter of Doge Pietro Gradenigo – circulated together in other sixteenth-century manuscripts – for example, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. ital. 155 and Windsor, Eton College Library MS 193 (known as the *Venetorum Nobilium Liber*) – and seventeenth-century manuscripts – for example, London, British Library, Additional MS 18659 and Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Correr 1032.

## ILLUSTRATION

Over two hundred coats of arms accompany the first substantial text within this manuscript, the list of Venetian noble families (ff. 1-37). Placed in both the inner and outer margins of the page, these arms were drawn in dark brown ink, often with a great deal of delicate detail or shading. Most of them have been colored in light washes of red, blue, yellow, and brown, though a dark

brown wash has been employed in rare instances. Where a member of the family has been appointed doge, cardinal, or pope, the ceremonial headgear associated with that office has been included, most often surmounting the arms, but in three instances drawn separately in the margin (ff. 3v, 7v). There are a few instances in which arms have been drawn by the original artist but left uncolored (see f. 10, 33v, and 34), two in which the inside of the arms has been drawn in later (see ff. 5, 24), and one in which arms were clearly added in a later hand (see f. 30).

#### LITERATURE

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#### ONLINE RESOURCES

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