

[Dogale] Ducal Commission from Agostino Barbarigo, Doge of Venice to Sebastiano Mauro [Moro] on the occasion of his appointment to Governor of Padua
In Latin and Italian, illuminated manuscript on parchment
Italy, Venice, dated 24 January 1496

44 pp. (22 ff.), preceded and followed by a single later paper flyleaf, complete (collation: i14, i18), written in a cursive humanistic script, in brown ink, on up to 27 lines (justification 178 x 103 mm), parchment ruled in brown ink, guide-letters for planned decorated initials set off to the left in the left-hand margin, opening two first lines copied in colored red and green epigraphic capitals, 5-line high opening initial "A" in liquid gold with elaborate white-vine decoration on colored grounds of dark red, blue and green, decoration extending vertically into the left-hand margin, in the lower margin a painted armorial shield placed in a green laurel wreath with similar white-vine decoration and colored grounds. Nineteenth-century half calf over navy cloth boards, spine lettered in gilt: "Augustini Barbadico Commissio Ducalis," marbled endpapers (Outer edges of parchment a bit stained, but never hindering legibility nor core of the text, else in good condition). Dimensions 270 x 135 mm.

Precisely dated and localized, the present Dogale (document issued by the doge) boasts elegant white-vine initials, close in style to manuscripts and incunabula produced in Venice and Padua in the later fifteenth century. The manuscript was clearly copied for Sebastiano Moro whose illuminated arms figure at the foot of the first page. It is a fine example of the type, reminding us that such manuscripts were cherished as precious objects so that descendants could take pride in their family's record and their ancestor's likeness.

PROVENANCE

1. Copied and decorated in Italy as suggested by the script and white-vine decoration, and confirmed by the content and holder of the assigned office. Sebastiano Moro [Mauro], Governor of Padua. His coat-of-arms placed in a crown of laurels at the foot of p. 3: "D'argent à trois bandes d'azur, au chef d'argent charge de trois mûres de sable, les tiges en haut" (see J. B. Rietstap, *Armorial général*, II, p. 264). Sebastiano Moro must have been a member of the illustrious Venetian family that produced for instance the Doge Cristoforo Moro (Doge from 1462-1471, the eleventh family member to be elected Doge). The Moro family settled in Venice in the mid 12th-century.
2. Sir Thomas Phillipps (1792-1872), MS 2375, his ink bookstamp on front blank but ruled leaf: "Sir T. P. Middle Hill, 2735". Sir Thomas Phillipps was an English antiquary and famous book collector who amassed the largest collection of manuscript material in the 19th century. Fittingly

self-described as a “vello-maniac,” he collected over 100,000 manuscripts, and in doing so nearly bankrupted himself and his family.

TEXT

pp. 1-2, blank, but the word “*commissio*” in brown ink in a later hand on p. 2;

p. 3, Dogale or Ducal Commission from Agostino Barbarigo, Doge of Venice to Sebastiano Mauro on the occasion of his appointment to Governor of Padua, dedication: “*Augustinus Barbadico dei gratia dux venetiarum etc. Committimus tibi nobili viro Sabastiano Mauro dilecti civi et fideli nostro...*”;

pp. 3-42v, incipit, “[D]iem autem qua ad ipsum regimen applicueris nobis suis litteris denotabis...”; explicit, “[...] contra principale ad unguem prout jacet”; colophon, “Datum in nostro ducali palatio die .XXIII. mensis januarii indictione XVa MCCCCLXXXVI [1496].”

p. 43, Added notes in a near-contemporary hand in Venetian dialect, relating to payments due by different members of society (Podesta; Conziliere (?); Chavalieri).

This manuscript contains a Ducal “*commissio*” (*dogale*, a document issued by a Doge, the title for the highest elected official in several Italian republics). The Doge of Venice was one of the most powerful among them. Dogali were used to transfer power to certain individuals, granting them various rights, responsibilities, and privileges. The present Dogale granted by the Doge of Venice appoints Sebastiano Mauro as Governor of Padua, a province that was a Venetian possession as were numerous other neighboring provinces such as Bergamo, Brescia, Vicenza etc. Diplomatically speaking, a “*Commissio*” was the confirmation of an appointment to a public-office holder with the list of particular statutory obligations the holder had sworn to obey. It provided the newly-appointed office-holder with the transcripts, duties, and privileges applying to the office, including such details as the salary perceived by the office-holder: “*Habere quidem debes pro tuo sallario libras noningentas in anno...*” (p. 3). D. S. Chambers has studied the *commissioni* of the Procurators of Saint-Mark, and notes: “Numerous *commissioni*, particularly relating to government appointments outside Venice itself, survive from the period under discussion, when the quality of these manuscripts was at its peak; many are elegantly written on vellum and exquisitely decorated ... Not surprisingly, *commissioni* have for long been sought after as collector’s items and have sometimes been taken apart ... *Commissioni* are generally known as *dogali*, a misleading name because any sort of document or letter written in the doge’s name by a chancery scribe was, strictly speaking, a *dogale* or *ducale*” (Chambers, 1997, pp. 24-25). Chambers adds that a comprehensive list and study of all *dogali* has been undertaken by Helena K. Szépe of the University of South Florida (Chambers, 1997, p. 25, note 10).

Agostino Barbarigo, succeeded to his brother Marco as Doge of Venice in 1486. He died in 1501 (see Michaud, *Biographie universelle*, vol. III, p. 36: “Le règne de Barbarigo fut pour les Vénitiens une époque de dangers et de calamités...” (p. 36). It is interesting to point out that as Procurator of St Mark, Agostino Barbarigo received from his brother Marco Barberigo (then Doge) a *commissio* dated 1485, now found in Venice, BCV, MS Correr, cl. III, 160 (see Mariano-Canova, 1968, fig 5:

"Maestro veneziano-padovano"; Mariano-Canova, 1969, cat. 97, fig. 142). As Doge, Agostino Barbarigo had an important number of *commissioni* redacted, some elaborately illuminated. Mariano Canova (1968) provides the references to a number of these *commissioni* granted by Agostino Barbarigo (see Mariano Canova, 1968, pp. 327-328, note 22).

Precisely dated and localized, the present manuscript boasts very elegant white-vine initials, close in style to the manuscripts and incunabula produced in Venice and Padua in the later fifteenth century (see Mariani-Canova, 1969, fig. 18; 26; 73). The manuscript was clearly copied for Sebastiano Moro whose illuminated arms figure at the foot of the first page. One should note that *commissioni* of such sort were cherished as fine objects so that descendants could take pride in their family's record and their ancestor's likeness.

LITERATURE

Bradley, J. W. "Venetian Ducali," in *Bibliographica*, ii (1896), pp. 257-275.

Chambers, D. S. "Merit and Money: The Procurators of Saint Mark and their Commissioni, 1443-1605," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 60 (1997), pp. 23-88.

Mariani-Canova, G. "La decorazione dei documenti ufficiali in Venezia dal 1460 al 1530," in *Atti del Istituto Veneto* 126 (1968), pp. 319-334.

Mariani-Canova, G. *La miniatura veneta del Rinascimento 1450-1500*, Venice, 1969.

ONLINE RESOURCES

On Cristoforo Moro, Doge of Venice, with the arms of the Moro (Mauro) family:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cristoforo_Moro

Representation of the Doge Barberigo by Bellini:

http://www.cassiciaco.it/navigazione/iconografia/tematiche/vergine/09_barbarigo.html