



EDITED BY
MICHAEL KNAPTON, JOHN E. LAW, ALISON A. SMITH

VENICE AND THE VENETO DURING THE RENAISSANCE

THE LEGACY OF BENJAMIN KOHL



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**Venice and the Veneto during the
Renaissance: the Legacy of Benjamin Kohl**

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The Changing Function of the Collegio in the Governance of Trecento Venice*

by Benjamin G. Kohl
edited by Monique O'Connell

1. Introduction

Among the most famous institutions of Renaissance Venice, along with the Doge, Great Council, Senate and Council of Ten, is the Full College (*Pien Collegio*), often called the cabinet or steering committee of the Venetian state. This version of the Collegio, which received its definition in the second quarter of the fifteenth century, was a committee of twenty-six members, growing out of the Ducal Council, formed in the twelfth century. Thus, the core of the later Collegio was the Doge and his six ducal councilors, who with the three Heads of the Forty, came to form the Signoria, which, among other duties, was the presiding body over the Great Council, the Consiglio dei Pregadi, or Senate, and the Quarantia (or Forty). To help formulate policy and prepare legislation, various boards of Savi (not wise men, but elected experts, or even consultants) were added. The first of them was a special committee of Five Savi agli Ordini, who were concerned with commerce, the navy and overseas colonies. To these were added in 1380 the six Savi del Consiglio, so called because they were elected from the Consiglio dei Pregadi (or Senate), also known as Savi Grandi; they prepared the agenda and bills for consideration in the Senate and the Maggior Consiglio. After the conquest of the Italian mainland in the early fifteenth century, these Savi Grandi were joined by the Savi di Terraferma, a committee of five concerned with war and administration of the mainland empire. All three groups of Savi, together with the Signoria became a council

* This article was originally presented in December 2009 at the conference in honor of Michael Mallett entitled "A Tale of Two Cities. Venice and Florence in the Renaissance" and held at the University of Warwick center in Venice. It was conceptualized as part of a larger study on the functioning of the medieval Venetian state, a project which was sadly left unfinished. Monique O'Connell has edited it, inserting section titles and making minor adjustments to language. The major editorial intervention lies in the addition of notes; in the absence of an accompanying bibliography, the references have been reconstructed from the author's computer files. Every effort has been made to reflect Kohl's intentions in this regard, but there are doubtless omissions that remain.

of ministers, which governed Venice, preparing legislation for passage in the Senate, and the Great Council, and overseeing administration in Venice and throughout its empire.

This is the textbook definition of the Collegio, in fact largely taken from the classic account in Frederic Lane's *Venice, A Maritime Republic* and older glossaries of Venetian institutions¹. The purpose of this paper is to understand how the Full College evolved from its beginnings as a small group of nobles appointed to supervise the Doge and help him govern Venice at the end of the twelfth century into one of the central organs of fourteenth century Venetian governance.

2. Ducal councilors and the Minor Council

Most historians assign the birth of the Minor Council to 1178, the same year in which Orio Mastropietro became doge, following the assassination of his predecessor. At this time, the Doge's advisors, the Savi of the major and minor councils (*sapientes minoris consilii*, *sapientes maioris consilii*) had become clearly differentiated from one another. By the time the ducal councilors were defined by statute in the early thirteenth century, their number was six. One ducal councilor was elected from each of the six *sestieri* of Venice, following the usual requirement of geographic distribution of offices, for a term of one year. Following the principle of *contumacia*, or enforced vacation from office, the councilors had to relinquish their posts for the same amount of time that they had been in office. This practice had two results. In the first place it rendered difficult any dangerous alliance with the doge. Secondly, it denied the power interests of particular groups, which might have elected the same men to the same high office repeatedly and thus compromised the sovereignty of the Great Council. Only members of the aristocratic commune were eligible to participate, with the *de iure* requirement of a minimum age of twenty-five, though that age was in practice too low given the weighty nature of the functions entrusted to the councilors².

The main duties of a member of the Minor Council were to supervise and control the Doge's activities, while making sure the other councilors acted in the best interests of Venice. The first goal was ensured by excluding all the Doge's kin and in-laws from membership, and both goals by the requirement that each member had to come from a different family. Of course this demanding office did not appeal to every Venetian noble. The aversion was particularly great among those successful merchants who realized that they would have to suspend their commercial activities if elected. As a result, refusals to accept office were frequent, so much so that very grave sanctions

¹ Lane, 254-55.

² Cessi, 2:37.

were imposed on those who did refuse, as we read in this law: “anyone who is elected ducal councilor cannot refuse the dignity, and if he does refuse, he cannot be elected to any other office, or be a member of the Great Council or the Senate”³.

Like members of all Venetian councils during the thirteenth century but unlike the Doge, the ducal councilors served without salary, following the general principle that membership in the various assemblies should not carry with it any monetary reward. Membership in the Minor Council was also incompatible with service in another public office for the first six months of service. But during the second six months, the councilor could accept another public office, while continuing his service on the Minor Council. Thus, he received a partial reward for his prior service and prepared himself for another post after the expiration of his year in office.

Ducal councilors had to observe the usual judicial rules enacted to guarantee the equal and impartial operation of all organs of the Venetian government. A councilor had to absent himself from the chamber when discussion of matters affecting his family were held. On those occasions his place was taken by a substitute, selected according to detailed rules, from one of the higher magistracies: the State’s Attorneys (*Avogadori di Comun*), the State Commissioners (*Provveditori di Comun*), and *Sopraconsoli* (with competence over bankruptcies and other mercantile matters), and most frequently of all, one of the Three Heads of the Forty. It often happened that some councilor, who was involved directly or indirectly in an issue under consideration, relinquished his seat to one of the Heads of the Forty. Thus, these Heads came to have such an intimate continual contact with the business of the Minor Council that they ended up belonging to it as, you might say, added members. I can find no specific law that enacted such a reform; we have only a document of 13 March 1231 in which for the first time this formula was used: “with the consent of the councilors and the Heads of the Forty”⁴.

The many duties imposed on the councilors are given to us by the oath that they pronounced for the first time in 1227, which appeared as a kind of appendix to Giacomo Tiepolo’s ducal *Promissione*⁵. Like all magistrates of the Venetian Republic the councilors had to exercise their office – according to the oath of 1227 – with absolute impartiality, without favor toward or prejudice against anyone, without asking for or receiving gifts, either directly or indirectly, and without attempting to obtain illicit funds. They had to carry out every task with complete diligence, and they could not leave the sessions, which were called by the bell of San Marco, except in absolute necessity. Moreover, with that oath, they assumed other special obligations, mainly the duty of oversight and control of the chief executive. The councilors were required to

³ Cited in Maranini, 1:243.

⁴ “Consentientibus consiliariis et capitibus Quarantie”, cited in Maranini, 1:251.

⁵ Roberti, 2:24-31.

advise and supervise the Doge, always with equity and impartiality (the preventive checks), and they were also required to remind him of his duties and eventually make him carry out these duties on those occasions when he might be neglecting or opposing the execution of the decisions of the councils (the repressive check)⁶. In these matters, the Great Council enacted legislation that removed any conflict between the Doge and his councilors, as stated in *Liber Fractus*: “If there is any disagreement between the Lord Doge and the councilors let it be settled in the way that the councilors shall decide”⁷. Thus, in the event of a conflict, the will of the councilors was always to prevail, so it became clear the Doge could rely only on his own powers of persuasion as a member of that Council of which he was always the formal head.

The Signoria’s function as the presiding body was very important to the working of Venice’s several constitutional assemblies. In fact, by the middle of the Trecento, the Doge was the presiding officer and the Signoria the presiding body of all five of Venice’s legislative councils. This was most obvious in the Great Council, where the Doge and the Signoria had great authority in presenting legislation and maintaining public order in its sessions. Although the slates for offices were usually prepared by an ad hoc nominating committee, the many requests for pardons, licenses, permits, and favors were first vetted in the Signoria before they were passed on though the Great Council for enactment or rejection. By the early Trecento, the Great Council typically met about eighty times per annum to fulfill its various obligations, with as many as twenty sessions held on Sundays and other feast days, when all Venetian aristocrats would be free from the duties of trade and other government posts (see Table One). To the councilors, often aided by the Heads of the Forty, belonged the right of initiating legislation; a member of one of the assemblies could propose a bill only if he had obtained prior approval from the Signoria. In every instance, the Signoria prepared a preliminary first draft of new legislation, which the Senate – or the Forty if it treated financial matters – reworked. The legislation was then submitted for final approval to the Great Council, which always had the Signoria as its presiding body. In other words, one might say that before the Great Council deliberated on an issue in full session, it preferred to have every proposal studied by its presiding body, the Signoria, or by another assembly created by it, the Senate or the Forty.

In the aftermath of the Tiepolo conspiracy in 1310, the Council of Ten was permanently established. The Council of Ten always met with the Doge and Ducal Council, making it, in effect, the Council of Seventeen. Though the Ten was led officially by its three Heads, who rotated in and out of the post on a monthly basis, the Doge and the Ducal Council were in fact the presiding body of the Council of Ten as well.

⁶ Roberti, 2:29.

⁷ Cited in Maranini, 1:252-53.

Year	Meetings	Sundays/Feasts (% of Total)	Source
1281	58	9 (15)	Cessi 2, 442-45
1282	79	6 (7)	Cessi 2, 445-47; 3, 3-15
1283	108	17 (16)	Cessi 3, 15-58
1284	107	20 (19)	Cessi 3, 58-91
1285	106	15 (14)	Cessi 3, 91-131
1286	84	9 (11)	Cessi 3, 131-62
1287	89	9 (10)	Cessi 3, 162-95, 227
1288	91	9 (10)	Cessi 3, 195-226
1289	77	12 (16)	Cessi 3, 226-54
1290	77	12 (16)	Cessi 3, 254-76, 281-88
1291	76	7 (9)	Cessi 3, 288-310
1292	67	4 (6)	Cessi 3, 311-29
1293	64	10 (16)	Cessi 3, 329-53
1294	49	7 (14)	Cessi 3, 353-69
1295	58	9 (16)	Cessi 3, 369-94
1296	55	4 (7)	Cessi 3, 395-415
1297	56	9 (20)	Cessi 3, 415-33
1298	30	2 (7)	Cessi 3, 433-47
1299	47	3 (6)	Cessi 3, 447-59; Magnus, fols. 1v-4v
1300	68	8 (12)	Magnus, fols. 4v-12v
1301	54	4 (7)	Magnus, fols. 12v-20v
1302	79	9 (11)	Magnus, fols. 20v-40r
1303	81	8 (10)	Magnus, fols. 40r-58v
1304	83	8 (10)	Magnus, fols. 58v-75v
1305	88	8 (9)	Magnus, fols. 75v-105v
1306	79	5 (6)	Magnus, fols. 105v-34v
1307	83	8 (10)	Magnus, fols. 134v-65r
1308	83	10 (12)	Magnus, fols. 165-93v; Presbiter, fols. 2r-4v
1309	65	7 (10)	Presbiter, fols. 5r-14v
1310	76	9 (12)	Presbiter, fols. 14v-34v
1311	80	15 (19)	Presbiter, fols. 34v-62v
1312	85	10 (12)	Presbiter, fols. 62v-86v
1313	79	14 (18)	Presbiter, fols. 86r-111v
1314	80	13 (16)	Presbiter, fols. 112r-38r
1315	72	13 (18)	Presbiter, fols. 138r-44v; CC, fols. 49v-75r
1316	89	19 (21)	CC, fols. 75r-120v
1317	96	18 (19)	CC, fols. 120v-80r
1318	83	23 (28)	CC, fols. 180v-204v; AC 21, fols. 25r-57r
1319	83	23 (28)	AC 21, fols. 57r-95v
1320	92	27 (29)	AC 21, fols. 95v-128r
1321	88	25 (28)	AC 21, fols. 128v-55r
1322	82	15 (18)	AC 21, fols. 155r-89r
1323	100	19 (19)	AC 21, fols. 189r-217r
....	[AC 22]
1335	57	17 (30)	AC 23, fols. 1r-8v
1336	49	11 (22)	AC 23, fols. 8v-16r
1337	55	24 (44)	AC 23, fols. 16r-24r
1338	46	30 (65)	AC 23, fols. 24r-33v
1339	50	17 (34)	AC 23, fols. 33v-54v
1340	56	19 (34)	AC 23, fols. 55r-64v
1341	62	28 (45)	AC 23, fols. 64r-80v

Table 1. Meetings of The Great Council, Venice, 1281-1341, by year

Table One⁸ gives the number of Great Council meetings by year, the number of meetings held on feast days and holidays, and the percentage of Sunday or holiday meetings out of the total meetings. The normal percentage of Sunday meetings was 14%.

3. *The administration of justice and public order*

The judicial duties of the Signoria itself continually grew in importance; soon Wednesday morning of every week was set aside for this function. The Senate as well enjoyed important judicial functions, and when it met with the Forty, these judicial functions came to be more important than policy-making ones. Meeting under the presidency of the Doge, the Signoria was charged with the resolution of administrative and judicial areas of competence. If two public officials were not able to agree about the limits of their jurisdictions, they were obliged to place the question before the Signoria, and to abide by its judgment. This requirement was usually stated in the capitulary of the magistracy, but if it were lacking there, custom and established usage were followed, as established in a law of 1260: “if the capitulary does not provide an sure answer on the issue”, it should be settled, “following custom and usage”. Partially as a result of this legislation, conflicts over jurisdiction that arose between the numerous courts of Venice were referred to the Signoria for their resolution. Even if there were no real conflict but the parties were in doubt as to which tribunal ought to have jurisdiction in a certain case, the matter was referred to the Signoria to assign it to the proper court. As we read in *Liber Bifrons*, “When there is doubt as to which court law suits may pertain, or if the judges of any court would say without reason that the suit ought not to be heard or determined by them, then the Lord Doge and his councilors ought to assign a court to the litigants”¹⁰.

Every Friday had to be dedicated to the work of control and oversight of the police forces which were directly under the Signoria’s control, instead of under the direct authority of the Great Council. As described in the volume of Great Council deliberations organized by subject under the auspices of Doge Giovanni Dandolo in 1283, there were five or six different police forces, each with the power to try and punish as well as simply arrest miscreants. The tasks

⁸ The numbers are compiled from: Cessi, vols. 2-3; Archivio di Stato di Venezia (=ASVe), Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, regs. Magnus, Presbiter, Clericus-Civicus (CC); ASVe, Avogaria di Comun (AC), Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, regs. 21 and 23 – no tally was entered for reg. 22, accounting for the gap from 1324 to 1334.

⁹ “Si capitularia non dent securitatem de questione... secundum morem et consuetudinem”, cited in Maranini, 1:260-61.

¹⁰ “Quod dominus dux and consiliarii dent curiam litigantibus, cum dubitatur ad quam curiam pertineant questiones, aut si iudices alicuius curiae dixerint sine causa quod questio non debeat ab eis audiri nec determinari”, cited in Maranini, 1:261.

of public order which had originally been assigned to the Capi di Contrate, had been largely absorbed by two groups, the Five of Peace (*Cinque della Pace*) and the Night Watch (*Signori di Notte*) by the end of the thirteenth century. Housed near the Rialto, the Five of Peace were charged with maintaining basic public order: enforcing curfews, arresting individuals for carrying concealed or prohibited weapons, and stopping *rixes* (street fights) among the people that resulted in only minor injuries such as bruises, and injuries that did not leave a scar. To the Five of Peace was soon added the Night Watch, who by about 1250 were, as the name suggests, charged with maintaining public order in Venice after dark. Headquartered at the ducal palace, organized into patrols under one noble per *sestiere*, they were responsible for suppressing violent crime, such as theft, robbery, violent attacks on person and property, and murder. Their mandate was very wide, including regulation of gambling, sanitation, extortion, and broadly “all other similar malfeasance” (“omnibus aliis maleficiis similibus”). After making arrests, they were permitted to apply torture to obtain a confession, but only in the presence of at least two ducal councilors and State’s Attorneys.

A third law enforcement agency was the Market Police (*Corte di Giustizia*), founded in 1173, as Marino Sanudo put it, “to fix the just price on things to eat”¹¹. To the magistracy’s original function of regulating the retail trade in food were soon added market regulation in general: to control commercial fraud, supervise weights and measures, and the craft guilds. As these duties grew, in 1261, the New Justices (*Giustizieri Nuovi*) were added to oversee the wine trade, the operation of taverns, the activities of butchers and bakers, and the sales at take-away food establishments (*furatole*). The two magistracies enjoyed overlapping and sometime conflicting civil and criminal jurisdictions; as a result, appeals from the Old and New Justices (*Giustizieri Vecchi* and *Nuovi*) to the Collegio became more frequent in the Trecento.

Another force were the Captains of Customs Posts (*Capitani delle Poste*), a committee of five nobles elected annually and headquartered at the Rialto, who were aided by several guards (*custodes*) in their task of collecting customs revenues and endeavoring to suppress smuggling. Each customs agent was seconded to a customs house in the settlements on the edge of the Dogado such as Grado, Torcello, and Fusina, where he worked with the local podestà to maintain order. There he and his guards inspected and sealed commodities entering or leaving Venice, levied duties, and, aided by a fleet of patrol boats, arrested smugglers¹². The problem of smuggling was also handled by three Lords of Contraband (*Signori di Contrabanni*), an office which was established in 1281. These officials were charged with overseeing the conduct of outlying customs posts, about eight in Istria, manned by four to ten guards each with patrol boats, to combat smuggling. But their major duties were as a law court

¹¹ Shaw, 22.

¹² Cessi, 2:262-66.

which held court in the ducal palace every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning to interrogate and punish those accused of smuggling.

By the 1320s, Venice's most famous police force were the Heads of the Sestieri (*Capi di Sestieri*), created as an arm of the Council of Ten, which had been formed following the Tiepolo conspiracy (1310) to arrest, try and convict traitors and prevent future conspiracies. The Heads of the Sestieri replaced the Five of Peace as the main keepers of public order in daytime Venice, and soon vied with the Night Watch over the right to control crime and violence in Venice. The conflicts of jurisdictions, duties and authority between the several police forces – to repeat: the Five of Peace, the Night Watch, the New and Old Justices, the Captains of Customs Posts, the Lords of Contraband, the Heads of the Sestieri, each with their own police officers – made an increasing numbers of appeals to the Collegio inevitable. Thus, the role of the Collegio as the supreme court or appellant court in Venice, often aided by the State's Attorneys, became crucial in the course of the fourteenth century, as a study of its minute book, the *Notatorio*, going back to 1327, shows. Although the Minor Council could not modify the capitularies of these police without the consent of the other councils, it could vote on their correct application, and often decided on the nature of jurisdictions and penalties for crimes on a case-by-case basis. Thus one of the chief functions of the Collegio was acting as judges of prime importance.

4. *Formulating Legislative Policy and the Savi agli Ordini*

As the presiding body over the Senate, the Forty, the Ten and the Great Council, in the course of the fourteenth century the Collegio took on an even more important legislative function: they wrote the bills that became the laws of Venice. By the 1330s the Savi agli Ordini were the most important regular element of the Doge's Collegio, elected to prepare legislation on commerce, mercantile policy and the manning and sailing of the galley fleets for consideration and approval in the Senate. The Savi agli Ordini were almost always elected in the month of November, charged first with creating policies and procedures for the squadron that patrolled the Gulf, the fleet that sailed to Romania, and eventually for later convoys of armed and unarmed vessels, their merchants and merchandise, and destinations. The election held on 13 November 1335 chose five Savi to formulate commercial policy for the merchant galleys and to provide for the defense of the Adriatic and respond to the Turkish raids in the eastern Mediterranean¹³. The mandate for the Savi agli Ordini was clear: they were to consult with the current captain of the fleet of the Union, Marino Morosini, and prepare legislation on the galleys armed to patrol the Adriatic and against the Turkish threat within eight days, and for the merchant galleys within fifteen. Indeed, this schedule was nearly met. On

¹³ Leduc, 4:141-42, nos. 365-66.

Sunday 19 November the Senate met and voted to send a solemn embassy to Pope Benedict XII about a crusade against the Turks. On Wednesday 22 November, the Savi elected Bellello Civran, Pietro Correr, Pangrazio Giustinian, Marino Falier, and Marino Morosini of Santa Maria Formosa and put forth several conflicting *partes* on the composition of the Gulf squadron and the Union fleet. In the end, proposals were voted for outfitting the Union fleet of six galleys and the Gulf squadron of two, each under the orders of its galley commander (*sopracomito*), who would appoint his own captain (*comito*) and sailing master (*nauclerus*)¹⁴. On 28 November 1335, the Savi agli Ordini made proposals for a fleet of eight merchant galleys to be sent to Flanders, with detailed provisions for routes, merchandise, crew and armaments. Thereafter, the terms of the Savi were extended month by month, until 20 February 1336, when they made detailed proposals for passage in the Senate on the number, routes, provisions and merchandise of the Romania merchant galleys that were to sail that spring¹⁵. Since the term of this group was not extended beyond the end of February, the Savi agli Ordini were in effect disbanded until a new committee of five Savi was elected in the Senate on 31 November 1336.

Within a few years, however, the Savi agli Ordini, elected each November and charged with preparing legislation on commerce and merchant fleets became, in effect, permanent, meeting intermittently with the Collegio through the year to propose legislation to the Senate on Venice's commerce and fleets. For example, the Savi elected on 23 November 1340 were to make proposals to the Senate, first on the galleys armed to patrol the Adriatic and the eastern Mediterranean for a meeting of the Senate held within eight days and then on 25 November on the officers, crews, armaments and length of service of the merchant fleet (until 1 March 1341)¹⁶. But the Savi agli Ordini did not simply leave office in December, as the original remit required. Their term of office was periodically extended throughout 1341, so that they ended up serving for an entire year. In fact their proposals were critical in defining, at the end of March 1341, the organization of the fleets of merchant galleys sent to Constantinople and the Black Sea, and two other fleets bound for Cyprus and Romania at the same time¹⁷. On 19 November 1341 was elected a new board of Savi agli Ordini, composed of five new members, substituting the doge's son, Nicolò Gradenigo, for his brother Pietro¹⁸. Though elected to serve only until 15 December, these five Savi also had their terms renewed for the next twelve months, as had become the custom. My reading of the Senate deliberations suggests that the Savi agli Ordini had already become a regular element of the Collegio by 21 November 1332, when the first records of election become available. Their term

¹⁴ Leduc, 4:148-51, nos. 376-83.

¹⁵ Leduc, 4:193-99, nos. 494-505.

¹⁶ Leduc, 6:163, n° 329.

¹⁷ Leduc, 6:265-71, nos. 482-83.

¹⁸ Girardi, 7:61, n° 135.

of office became, in effect, annual, since the short terms were routinely extended as shown by the frequent enactments of “*Quod elongetur terminus sapientum ordinum...*”. Throughout the Trecento five Savi agli Ordini were elected annually every November to oversee the outfitting of the Gulf squadron and the number and destinations of the merchant galleys sent out both spring and autumn.

But the Savi agli Ordini were not the only experts elected to augment the Collegio in investigating issues and preparing new laws. There were literally hundreds of such boards formed in the fourteenth century, to handle all manner of problems. Often experts on colonial matters back in Venice were selected to answer diplomatic correspondence, draft laws, and compose commissions for new overseas rectors, based on their own prior experience. As Venice fought wars against the Scaligeri lords of Verona to liberate Padua and annex Treviso in the late 1330s, nobles who had served as *podestà* or field commanders in the Terraferma were appointed to the Collegio to draft legislation for the new realities in Venice’s growing mainland state. A decade later, experts in taxes, public administration and inheritance were made Savi to prepare legislation for passage in the Senate and Great Council to help Venice cope with the disruptions caused by the Black Death. During the Chioggia War a larger committee of twenty-five Savi was formed to formulate war policy and oversee the disposition of fleets, men and materiel. But in about 1380, a smaller group of six *Sapientes*, real senior statesmen, was elected from the body of Senate to prepare law for prompt passage in that body. Thus were born the Savi Grandi, who were a major component of the Collegio until the fall of the Republic. A study of the last Trecento register of the Senate’s secret deliberations suggests that groups of Savi expert in mainland affairs were called upon to draft laws affecting Venice’s relations with Padua, Verona and Vicenza, and its governance of Treviso; these were the origins of the third group of experts, the Savi di Terraferma, who were to complete the Full College in the next century.

5. Case Studies and Conclusions

In conclusion, some examples that demonstrate the Collegio functioned in detail. In 1352, the state’s attorney Filippo Orio brought a case of conflict of jurisdiction between magistracies that could not be resolved by reference to existing capitularies, citing the law of August 1260 that established the Collegio, or the Ducal Council, as the arbiter of competence between magistracies. The specific conflict in this case was between the *Sopraconsoli* and the Judges of the Procurators (*Giudici del procurator*) over the competence to judge Ser Pietro Lando. The vote was to annul all the court orders so far produced, and allow each magistracy to present its case to the Doge and Council¹⁹. In 1376, the Collegio voted to purchase and remove part

¹⁹ ASVe, Collegio, Notatorio, reg. 1, fols. 30v-31r, 8 August 1352: “Posita fuit pars quod omnes sententie, terminationes, cride, precepta, pene, processus et alii quilibet actus facti per utramque

of the house of Ugolino di Enrico Scrovegni, in San Maurizio. The house, purchased cheaply for fifteen lire di grossi, was acquired to allow the creation of a road connecting the church of Santa Maria del Giglio with the parish of San Maurizio; this would require two new bridges, and the resulting road was to be the property of the commune of Venice²⁰.

In general, the *Notatorio* of the Collegio was a running notebook for lesser decisions, and it demonstrates that the Collegio considered and ruled on a wide variety of matters: construction of forts, small tax cases, rulings on commodities like oil and salt to be taxed, exemptions on import duties and wine taxes, notary expenses, and some appeals from judges and magistracies to the Doge and Council.

manum ipsorum officialium in factis dicti ser Petri Lando a denuntiatione prima facta supraconsulibus per plebanum iudicum procuratorum citra, revocentur, annullentur et cassentur, redeuntibus partibus in statu quo erant ante. Et quia res est in questione, ad quod officium pertineant ista facta, utraque manus officialium veniant ad dominum et consiliarios, cum capitularibus et allegationibus suis et terminabitur sicut videbitur esse iustum. 5, non o, non sinceri 2”.

²⁰ ASVe, Collegio, Notatorio, reg. 1, fol. 78v, 15 January 1376: “MCCCLXXV, die quinto decimo Januarii... Eodem die. Determinatum et ordinatum fuit quod ob reverentiam beati Viti, et pro honore totius terre, debeat fieri una via per subtus porticum [sancte *canc. by line*] Ecclesie Sancte Marie Jubanico, eundo ad contractam Sancti Mauricii, que via fiat per partem unius domus empte a nobili viro Hugolino de Scrovegnis, milite qui ob reverentiam domini de ipsa complacuit libenter dominio. Et ex nunc comune nostrum debeat solvere pro pretio dicte domus libras XV grossorum, et nichil aliud. Et contracta Sancti Mauricii solvat omnes alias expensas, tam in faciendo duos bonos pontes, cum perthehatis et aliis opportunis, quam de salizatis et aliis taliter quod placeant dominio. Et dicta via, nunc empta, remaneat et sit perpetuo comunis Venetiarum”.

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Abstract

The Collegio was a central instrument of government in Renaissance Venice, but its development from an informal group of ducal advisors in the twelfth century to a formal institution in the fourteenth century is little understood. This paper traces the evolution of the Collegio's membership, role in the administration of justice and public order, and legislative policy. It concludes with case studies demonstrating the detailed functions of the Collegio.

Keywords

Middle Ages; 14th century; Venice; politics; institutions.

Benjamin G. Kohl
Vassar College, U.S.A., Emeritus

Monique O' Connell
Wake Forest University, U.S.A.
oconneme@wfu.edu