

The Development of Rialto

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Venice is unique among the great cities of Italy because it did not arise in ancient times, but in the middle ages. It was founded on an archipelago in a large lagoon in the early middle ages, but its origin remains veiled in mystery. Even today, while the scarcity of documentary sources has been offset to some extent by archeological research, many aspects of the city are still baffling¹. Furthermore, the traditional interpretation of the extant sources has been criticized, resulting in the development of new interpretations².

The aim of this paper is, therefore, to provide a fresh perspective on the development of Venice in its earliest beginnings through an examination of some of the latest studies.

1. The Name Venetia

The name Venice (Venezia) is derived from the Latin “Venetia,” which meant the land of the Veneti people. It is said that this people resided between the Eastern foot of the Alps and the Adriatic, but the specific area designated by this name has changed with time and circumstances³. As the name Venice generally means the city of Venice today, we shall use the name Venetia to refer to the region in which the city was later constructed. This is because the focus of this paper is not only the city of Venice, but also the time before the city was founded. For other place names, the more common English or Italian names shall be used.

The “X regio” in the regional administration system created by Augustus in the 1st century included Venetia and Istria (Histria). Also, the extent of the “provincia Venetia et Histria” in the provincial administration system created by Diocletian in the 3rd century was larger than that of the “X regio” from east to west, so Diocletian’s Venetia was probably larger than that of Augustus. In the “provincia Venetia et Histria”, the cathedral established at the important

1 Crouzet-Pavan, Elizabeth, *Torcello. Storia di una città scomparsa*, Roma, 2001, (titolo originale: *La mort lente de Torcello*, Paris, 1995) capitolo 2. See also articles relating to Venetia in the following book: AA. VV., *La Venetia nell’area padano-danubiana*, Padova, 1990.

2 Cf., Crouzet-Pavan, Elizabeth, op. cit., capitoli 1-2.

3 Concerning the meaning of Venetia, cf. the following references: Buora, Maurizio, Viabilità e insediamenti nell’antico Friuli. Un problema di continuità, in, AA. VV., *La Venetia nell’area padano-danubiana*, cit.; Basso, Patrizia, La devota Venetia: I militari a servizio dell’imperatore, in, ididem; Rigoni, Anna Nicoletta, L’ambito territoriale della Venetia. Altomedioevo e Medioevo nella cosmografia dell’anonimo Ravennate in Paolo diacono e Guido, in, ibidem.

strategic point of Aquileia was the seat of the archbishopric which comprised both Venetia and Istria.

The name Venetia actually had a double meaning in Roman times, that is, in the time of the “X regio”, Venetia had two meanings: the first was “Venetia magna” (the broad inland territory from the eastern foot of the Alps to the Adriatic), and the other was “Venetia pauca” (the narrow coastal and lagoon areas). According to the *Cosmographia* edited anonymously by someone from Ravenna at the end of the 7th or the beginning of the 8th century, Venetia was considered to be a separate political entity from Istria, and its coastal territory was even smaller than it had been as Venetia pauca.

In the famous 8th century chronicle of Paulus Diaconus, Venetia had two meanings: one was the same as the meaning of “Venetia magna” mentioned earlier, and the other was “these little islands which we now call Venetia” (*paucae insulae quas nunc Venetias dicimus*)⁴. It seems that, as time passed, the meaning represented by the term “Venetia pauca” became more common, while its territory was gradually delimited more precisely.

From the late Roman imperial age, due to a change in climate which caused an increase in precipitation, the lagoons became larger, and the inland area became more widely separated from the Adriatic. The lagoon area continued intermittently from Ravenna to Aquileia and, on its inland side, extended as far as the line which connected Altino, Elarea (later Città Nova), Concordia and Aquileia⁵. Before long, this lagoon area became tied to the Adriatic ports by water ways whose construction had begun in the 1st century, thus bringing it under the Byzantine sphere of influence, while the inland area developed its own sphere of influence through the creation of land routes. The islands in the lagoon had potential merits as a site of habitation: they were favored with rich fishing grounds and shellfish beds, they had the potential for salt production, and they had abundant fresh air and tide circulation to regulate dirt and excreta. It is unclear when the size of the lagoon area began to diminish as a result of a decrease in precipitation, the accumulation of deposits and land development by reclamation, but it seems likely that this process began in the high middle ages.

2. The Formation and Independence of the Society of Venetia

From the late Roman imperial age, due to a succession of barbarian invasions, the inhabitants of inland Venetia, especially those who inhabited the cities along the Roman highways, sought refuge in the lagoon area⁶ which we shall loosely refer to as Venetia from

4 Rigioni, *op. cit.*, p.142.

5 Concerning the lagoon, cf. the following reference: Rosada, Guido, *La direttrice endolagunare e per acque interne nella decima regio marittima: tra risorsa naturale e organizzazione antropica*, in, AA. VV., *La Venetia nell'area padana-danubiana*, cit. Concerning roads and waterways in Roman times, cf. also the following: Scalfi, Bianca Maria, *Le ricerche archeologiche nel Veneto*, in, AA. VV., *La Venetia nell'area padano-danubiana*, cit.

6 Concerning the movement of people and the bishoprics of Venetia, see the following: Castagnetti,

now on. As the Lombards attacked and occupied these Roman cities, so the inhabitants of Aquileia, Concordia, Oderzo, Altino, Treviso and Padova took refuge in the lagoon area where they gradually began to form permanent dwelling places, such as Grado, Caorle, Eraclea (Città Nova), Iesolo (Equilo), Torcello, Rialto, Olivolo, Malamocco and Chioggia. Most of these places were destined to remain villages except for two: Eraclea, which became the political and military stronghold of the area, and Torcello, which became its commercial hub⁷. The Lombards did not invade the lagoon area, probably because they did not possess military ships. In 569, the archbishopric of Aquileia was split between Lombardian territory and Byzantine territory. The archbishop of Aquileia escaped from Lombard-occupied Aquileia, and transferred his seat to Grado which remained under Byzantine rule. In 607, every city in Aquileia and Grado elected their own local archbishop of Aquileia, and there was a conflict between the two archbishops regarding their legitimacy⁸. This conflict continued for many centuries until, in 1053, the Roman synod acknowledged that the archbishop elected by Grado should have jurisdiction over the bishoprics of Venetia and Istria. The religious unity of Venetia was subsequently ensured by this bishopric.

The description of Venetia in the early Middle Ages found in church documents constitutes important historical evidence, because other types of documentary sources were so scarce⁹. Let us now examine the six bishoprics located in Venetia. Three of these six were transferred from the inland area, and retained their original names. For example, the archbishop of Altino, who transferred from Altino to Torcello, continued to retain the title of archbishop of Altino, so the title “archbishop of Torcello” was—at least in early times—merely an informal usage. The other three archbishoprics were newly established. The former three were the bishoprics of Altino (transferred to Torcello), Oderzo (transferred to Eraclea) and Concordia (transferred to Caorle). Henceforth, for the sake of convenience, we shall refer to these transferred bishoprics by their commonly used names. The latter three were those of Iesolo, Olivolo and Malamocco. Olivolo was an island which initially had an important role in the lagoon of Venetia (*laguna veneta*)¹⁰, and was situated at the eastern end of modern day Venice. It is supposed that the former three bishoprics were transferred to the lagoon area anywhere from the end of the 6th to the first half of the 7th century. Furthermore, it is theorized that the latter three were established anywhere from the middle to the second half of the 8th century¹¹. From this time difference, it seems reasonable to speculate that, in the lagoon area, the population in the bishoprics which had transferred from the Roman inland cities increased somewhat earlier than that of the

Andrea, *Insedimenti e “populi”*, in, AA. VV., *Storia di Venetia, I (Origini- Età ducale)*, Roma, 1992.

7 Ortalli, Gherardo, *Venezia dalle origini a Pietro II Orseolo*, in, AA. VV., *Storia d'Italia, I (Longobardo e Bizantini)*, Torino, 1980, pp. 358-359.

8 Regarding the archbishopric of Grado, see the following: Rando, Daniella, *Le strutture della Chiesa locale*, in, AA. VV., *Storia di Venezia, I*, cit.

9 For more information about the six bishoprics and the church system, see Rando, op. cit.

10 Ortalli, *Venezia dalle origini*, cit., p.359.

11 Rando, op. cit., pp. 645-647.

bishoprics which had been newly established in more distant places.

As Oderzo, the original seat of the Byzantine government, was destroyed in 667 by the Lombards, it was transferred to Eraclea where the citizens of Oderzo had taken refuge, and it continued to be subject to the exarchate of Ravenna¹². In 697, the first doge was elected by the inhabitants of the lagoon area of Venetia. His seat was at Eraclea¹³. The term “doge” derives from the Latin “dux”, which means leader. It commonly refers to the head of Venetia or Venice, but its scope and character change occasionally. Around 742, the doge’s seat was transferred to a more easily defensible place. This was a village named Malamocco, situated on a sandbar also named Malamocco, which separated the lagoon from the Adriatic. Ravenna, the Byzantine stronghold from which Italy was ruled, was briefly occupied by the Lombards in 735, and permanently in 751. Venetia, already having resisted the Byzantine Empire through the iconoclasm movement, strengthened its autonomy through this occupation¹⁴. In 770 or the following year, the current doge received the title “consul (ipatus / hypatus) et imperialis dux Venetiarum provinciae”¹⁵, and the territory under his rule was to be called “ducato” or dogado. Meanwhile, having destroyed the Lombard Kingdom in 774, Charlesmagne formed the Kingdom of Italy out of the late kingdom, and nominated his son Pipin as king. In 803, the pro-Frank party in Venetia destroyed Eraclea, the stronghold of the pro-Byzantine party, and acceded to the Franks in 805. Later, when the Byzantines despatched a fleet to this area, the party accepted Byzantine rule¹⁶. In 810, in an effort once again to make Venetia subject to the Franks, Pipin and his Frankish troops invaded the lagoon area from Chioggia through the sandbars. Venetia, in cooperation with the Byzantine fleet, repulsed him near Malamocco, which provided reinforcement to the pro-Byzantine faction and maintained the area’s autonomy¹⁷. Perhaps in the following year, the doge’s seat was transferred to a little island named Rialto (Rivoalto) which was located in the middle of the lagoon, and thus more favorably situated for defense.

As is well known, through the treaty of Aachen concluded in 812 between Charlesmagne and Michael I, Venetia was to belong to the Byzantine Empire. Throughout the 9th century, the weakening Byzantine Empire lost the power to intervene in the dogado, but the Frankish

12 Ortalli, *Venezia dalle origini*, cit., p.362; Cf., Pavan, Massimiliano e Arnaldi, Girolamo, *Le origini dell’identità lagunare*, in, AA. VV., *Storia di Venezia, I*, cit., p. 448.

13 Castagnetti, op. cit., p.582.

14 Ortalli, *Venezia dalle origini*, cit., p.366.

15 Ortalli, *Il ducato*, cit., p.726. The rank of doge in the Byzantine court gradually increased in importance.

16 Ortalli, *Venezia dalle origini*, cit., pp.378-381.

17 Ortalli, *Il ducato*, cit., pp. 731 sgg.; idem, *Venezia dalle origini*, cit., pp.380-381. Concerning this event, cf. Lane, Frederic C., *Venice. A Maritime Republic*, Baltimore and London, 1973, p.5. “. . . Charlesmagne sent his son Pepin to conquer Venice in 810 A. D. Pepin stormed and sacked Malamocco, which was then the capital, but he did not continue on to capture the doge when the latter retreated to Rivoalto. The Franks withdrew from the lagoons, and the Byzantine emperor sent a fleet to reaffirm his authority.” Following this, the Venetians should have repulsed the Franks by themselves.

Empire also did not intervene in its affairs out of a desire to remain on friendly terms with the Byzantines. In 840, Venetia and the Kingdom of Italy became allies against the Slavs and, in the subsequent treaty, Venetia was formally regarded as an equal partner, namely an independent state, and not as a dependent of the Byzantine Empire¹⁸. In the 9th century, Venetian sea power prevented the Muslims from ruling the Adriatic¹⁹. In the age of the independent Kingdom of Italy (888-963) after the political order of the kingdom had totally collapsed, the power of Venetia grew exponentially. In 933, Venetia attacked and destroyed Comacchio, a stronghold of the kingdom of Italy, and its foremost commercial rival on the rivers flowing from the inland areas to the Adriatic (but especially the Po). As Venetia was not self-sufficient, it was totally dependent on this commerce²⁰. In 967, in a treaty with Otto I who wished to rule Venetia, its commercial privileges eroded for the first time in the series of commercial treaties which it had concluded since the Frankish age. However, in 992, in a treaty with Otto III who did not have such an ambition, the commercial conditions once again became more favorable to Venetia. In the same year 992, the Byzantine emperor issued a golden bull to Venetia, in which he referred to the Venetians as allies with a powerful fleet, and gave them a privileged position in the imperial markets. Moreover, in this golden bull, the Venetians were referred to as foreigners (*extranei*), and not as subjects²¹.

3. *The Development of Rialto*

From the 9th to the 10th century, Rialto became the center of the dogado and thus the real capital of Venetian territory. After the fall of Ravenna, the Byzantine Empire did not intend to rule the lagoon area directly, as it was situated on the periphery of its territory, but chose instead to grant autonomy to the local people. The archipelago of Rialto was situated in the midst of the Venetian Lagoon, and composed of many tiny islands positioned adjacent to each other. It is guessed that up to the 11th century, its central part was organized into the six wards of Olivolo, Gemini, Rialto (Rivoalto), Luplio, Canareclo and Dorsoduro²². Already in 775 or in the following year, a new archbishopric was established in Olivolo, but Rialto was situated in a more favored position for defense, being in the middle of the lagoon and adjacent to the great curve of Canal Grande. As was mentioned previously, in 811 or thereabouts, the doge's seat was transferred from Malamocco to Rialto. The former was the stronghold of the pro-Frankish

18 Ortalli, *Il ducato*, cit., pp.746 sgg. For more information about the change in the international role of Venetia, see this article.

19 Ortalli, *Venezia dalle origini*, cit., pp.397-399.

20 Bartolami, Sante, *L'agricoltura*, in, AA. VV., *Storia di Venezia, I*, cit.

21 Ortalli, *Venezia dalle origini*, p.391. See also the following which examines the eight commercial treaties in 992-1198 concluded between Venetia and the Byzantine Empire: Pozza, Maro e Ravegnani, Giorgio, a cura di, *I trattati con Bisanzio, 992-1198*, Venezia, 1993.

22 Cf., Morachiello, Paolo e Scarabello, Giovanni, *Venezia. Dalle origini al XIII secolo*, Milano, 1995, p.16 (carta); Bellavitis, Giorgio e Romanelli, *Venezia*, Roma-Bari, 1985, p.25.

party in Venetia, while the latter was that of the pro-Byzantine party, or the independence-oriented party. Around 829, the doge attacked the people of Malamocco, and burned down their village²³.

In 829, the corpse of S. Marco (or so it was believed) was transported from Alexandria in Egypt to Rialto by two Venetians, namely one from Torcello and one from Malamocco²⁴. Immediately, a chapel to preserve the corpse was constructed adjacent to the Doge's Palace (Palazzo Ducale) as a private chapel for the doge. However, it was not the cathedral of the archbishop in Grado, but this private chapel dedicated to the famous saint that became the symbol of the spiritual unity of the whole dogado. The power of the archbishop decreased in tandem with the decline of the city of Grado, and from 878 on, he nominated the persons appointed by the doge as bishops of the dogado. Soon after 1115, the archbishop finally transferred from Grado to Rialto (in the parish of S. Silvestro), and had disagreements with the bishop of Olivolo (Castello, as shall be mentioned later), who controlled the bishopric of Rialto, concerning the border of their jurisdictions. Moreover, in 1451, the archbishopric of Venice was established with its seat at S. Marco, which became a cathedral (Basilica di S. Marco). It was a consolidation of the archbishopric of Grado and the bishopric of Olivolo (Castello).

The population of the archipelago of Rialto had increased by the second half of the 8th century, which indicates that a bishopric had been established in Olivolo by 775 or the following year. Furthermore, according to land reclamation records from Dorsoduro ward in 864-881, land development of the archipelago by reclamation had begun in the 9th century. The land area of each island in the archipelago increased through reclamation, causing adjacent islands to joined together. This process finally led to the creation of one large island inside which many canals ran in all directions. The original distinct islands had effectively disappeared. The name of this large, newly created island was also Rialto²⁵, derived from the original Rialto which had been situated in the middle of the archipelago. This new Rialto became the real social center of the archipelago, because both the Doge's Palace and the Chapel S. Marco were located there. Rialto was divided into various blocks by the old and new canals, and these blocks shall be linked by arched bridges under which it was possible for boats to pass.

Let us now examine the development of Rialto. In 900 or thereabouts, (wooden) walls were constructed on the land and iron chains were stretched through the water in the area from the original little Rialto to Olivolo as a countermeasure against the Magyars' possible invasion of the dogado. As this area, composed of adjacent small islands, was integrated into a defensive unit enclosed by walls and chains, it was later to be called "the city of Venetia"

23 Ortalli, *Il ducato*, cit., pp.734-736.

24 Concerning the meaning of the relocation of the corpse of S. Marco, see the following references: Ortalli, *Il ducato*, cit., p.738; Rando, *op.cit.*, pp.666 sgg.

25 Castagnetti, *op. cit.*, pp.582-583; Ortalli, *Il ducato*, cit., pp. 734, 761.

(Civitas Venetiarum). In the dogado of these times, “cities” surrounded by a wall should only have been known as Grado, and perhaps Chioggia²⁶. At roughly the end of the 10th century, the area from Rialto to Olivolo was nearly unified in its shape. In 1074, the archbishop of Olivolo was for the first time referred to as the archbishop of Castello. Castello was a place name derived from the castle (castello) constructed in the 810’s in a corner of Olivolo, with the permission of the Byzantine Emperor²⁷. This fact suggests that the original little island Olivolo, where the seat of the archbishopric had originally been established, had already become a part of the new large Rialto, losing its original land divisions in the process. The name Olivolo had not already been used as a place name, and the name Castello, used as a place name at that time, was used as a name for the place where that seat was located. In this way, some names for the lands which had originally comprised the archipelago of Rialto were gradually abandoned, perhaps because the lands had lost their actual forms as islands. However, as in the case of Rialto, some old names continued to be used, but with their original meanings having undergone alterations.

If Rialto became, as mentioned above, the political and spiritual center of the dogado in the 9th century, the question of where its economic center was located remains to be answered. On this issue, we shall refer to evidence from “Of the Administration of the Empire” (*De administrando imperio*) which the Byzantine Emperor Constantinos VII Porphyrogenetos compiled in 948-952. Its description of the topography of Venetia is generally correct, and it should be based on information collected before the middle of the 10th century. In this description, Torcello is mentioned as “the great market” (*emporion mega*)²⁸. Concerning the two Venetians who transported the corpse of S. Marco, one was from Malamocco (*Buono da Malamocco*), and the other was from Torcello (*Rustico da Torcello*)²⁹. This fact is also of great interest when considered together with the Emperor’s description³⁰. Torcello became the seat of the bishop of Altino, who escaped from Altino in about 639, and this bishopric ruled the little islands of the Archipelago of Torcello, namely Burano, Costanziaca, Ammiana, Mazzorbo, and so on. The dimensions of this archipelago were a little smaller than those of Rialto, but today they differ from the original figures, because its land area has increased due to the accumulation of earth and sand sediments. From the 11th century onward, almost all commercial documents were drawn up in Rialto, and in 1097, the phrase “the market” (*emporium*) of Rialto was recorded for the first time³¹. The process of the transfer of the commercial center from Torcello to Rialto was still unclear to contemporaries, but it is possible

26 Ortalli, *Venezia dalle origini*, cit., p.385.

27 Castagnetti, op. cit., p.579.

28 Castagnetti, op. cit., p.579; Crouzet-Pavan, op. cit., pp.38-39.

29 Crouzet-Pavan, op. cit., p.109.

30 Crouzet-Pavan, op. cit., pp.38-39.

31 Roesch, Gerhard, *Mercatura e moneta*, in, AA. VV., *Storia di Venezia, I*, cit., pp.556, 568. Concerning the commercial development of Venetia, see this article.

that, in about the middle of the 10th century³², the commercial center transferred to what had already become the political and spiritual center of the dogado.

The primary reason for the development of Rialto may be as follows: Rialto was situated in the best place in the archipelago for defense, and it was large enough to support a substantial population. The Doge's Palace was founded there after the critical struggle against the Franks, and the corpse of S. Marco, which was to become an object of worship for the entire dogado, was quickly enshrined in the chapel adjacent to the palace. Thus Rialto became not only its political, but also its spiritual center. Once its status as such a center had been confirmed, it soon became established as a commercial center as well, while the commercial function of Torcello, situated nearer to the mouths of rivers, was lessened gradually by sedimentation³³. Moreover, from the second half of the 11th century, because Venetian commerce was firmly directed overseas and geared towards commerce by sea (see later), it is hypothesized that Rialto, situated in a location with easy access to the Adriatic, was advantageous as a market location.

From 999 to the following year, the Venetian fleet directed by the doge travelled to the area from Istria to Dalmatia to suppress Slavic pirates who resided at the mouth of the Neretova (Narenta) and its surroundings. Returning in triumph, the doge assumed the title "the duke of the Venetians and the Dalmatians" (*dux Venetorum et Dalmaticorum*), which was accepted immediately by the pope and the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire³⁴. The marriage of a son of the doge with a daughter of the Byzantine Emperor in 1004 was a symbolic event in the transformation of the relationship between Venetia and the Byzantine Empire from one of subordination to one of equality³⁵. In the 11th century, trade with the Byzantine Empire occupied the primary position in Venetian sea commerce. In 1082, the Venetians received from the emperor a large commercial privilege in various markets throughout the empire as a reward for their naval support against the Normans of South Italy who had attacked the empire. Thanks to this privilege, Venetia surpassed Amalfi, which had been subject to the Normans, in trade with the empire. A little later in 1095, Venetia cooperated with the Kingdom of Italy to oppose the Magyars who had invaded both the kingdom and the dogado. Through this treaty, Venetian merchants gained the right to trade freely throughout the Kingdom of Italy while, as the treaty stated, "in the direction of the sea, (the merchants of the kingdom were able to go) to your land (Rialto), but not further (*per mare usque ad vos et non amplius*)"³⁶. Thus, the Venetians were guaranteed a monopoly in the commerce between the kingdom of Italy and the Adriatic. However, because the kingdom was losing power while the power of its cities was increasing, the significance of this guarantee was somewhat lessened, so Venetia chose to

32 Ortalli, *Il ducato*, cit., p.761.

33 Cfr., Crouzet-Pavan, *op. cit.*, pp.165, 183, 204.

34 Ortalli, *Il ducato*, cit., p.776.

35 Ortalli, *Il ducato*, cit., p.779-780.

36 Roesch, *op. cit.*, p.562.

conclude commercial treaties with the various communal cities after its treaty with Verona in 1107³⁷.

Having concluded assorted treaties with the Byzantine Empire and the Fatimids, Venetia was at first reluctant to participate in the Crusades, maintaining that the goals of the First Crusade were contrary to the interests of its allies. However, as the disadvantages of a failure to participate became evident, the Venetians finally decided to join around 1100. Moreover, in 1123, they treated with Warmundus (pacum Warmundi), the archbishop of Jerusalem's substitute for the king who had been captured by the Muslims and, through this treaty, the Venetians acquired commercial privileges as a reward for their fleet's support of the crusaders and as compensation for damage to their trade with Egypt³⁸.

The extensive commercial privileges granted by the Byzantine Empire in 1082, the monopoly right granted by the Kingdom of Italy for trade between the kingdom and the Adriatic in 1095, and the commercial privileges settled by the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1123. After the rapid expansion of international trade thanks to these privileges, the focus of Venetian commerce shifted decisively from the inland areas to overseas, especially to the Eastern Mediterranean.

The primary centers of social life in the dogado were the archbishopric seat in Grado, the seat of the doge in Eraclea and Malamocco, and the great market in Torcello. But, from the 9th to the 10th century, the seat of the doge, the chapel of S. Marco and the great market became concentrated in Rialto, which came to assume an important role in the dogado, and gradually became the real center of Venetia. Malamocco was destroyed by the earthquake of 1106 in which it suffered an inundation, and its bishopric was transferred to Chioggia in 1110. Conversely, the places where the other bishopric seats were situated, that is, Caorle, Eraclea (Città Nova), Iesolo, and also Grado where the archbishopric seat was located, all became peripheral regions in the dogado³⁹.

From the late 10th century, persons of importance from every part of the dogado began to relocate to Rialto. Furthermore, in the second half of the 12th century, after its international trade had already taken off, the urbanization of Rialto proceeded rapidly, and it became the sole seat of power. Those men of influence who remained in their original places found themselves excluded de facto if they refused to relocate. The absolute power of the doge was gradually curbed by the great men who resided in Rialto, and survived the fierce social competition by engaging to some extent in international trade. Thus a commune regime was established, in which power was wielded collectively⁴⁰. However, it was not until 1143 that the

37 Gasparri, Stefano, *Dagli Orseolo al commune*, in AA. VV., *Storia di Venezia, I*, cit., pp.811-812.

38 Gasparri, op. cit., pp.809-814.

39 Rando, op. cit., pp.656-657.

40 Gasparri, op. cit., pp.817-821; Cracco, Giorgio, *Venezia nel Medioevo. Dal secolo XI al secolo XIV*, Torino, 1986, pp.42-44; Castagnetti, Andrea, *Famiglie e affermazione politica*, in AA. VV., *Storia di*

term “commune” (comune) appeared in a document for the first time⁴¹.

Notes

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Venezia, I, cit., pp.637-638.

41 Crouzet-Pavan, op. cit., p.129.