

2021-22 / LESSON 22 / 2021-12-10

Later Middle Ages -- ~1000-~1492 ce/14

1343

Andrea Dandolo is elected doge at barely 37 years. During his office (1344-1351) he works at *Chronica per extensum descripta*, an analytical history of Venice from 46 CE to 1280.

1345

The Byzantine jurist Constantine Armenopoulos writes *Hexabiblos* ("Six Books"), an up-to-date handbook which would later, after the Turkish conquest in 1453, be consulted as a source of knowledge about the customs applied as personal law to the Greek part of the population in the Turkish Empire.

1346

Andrea Dandolo promotes the collection of the new statutory laws deliberated after 1242, as well as of the maritime statutes; it is called *Liber Sextus* ("Sixth Book"), after the five which composed the *Statutum Novum*.

The maritime statutes soon become obsolete because of technical advancements and their text is lost until another doge, Marco Foscarini, would rediscover them in a ms. in the late XVIII century.

http://www.arielcaliban.org/PX_maritime_statutes.pdf

1347-48

The Black Death (bubonic plague, caused by *Yersinia pestis*) reaches Venice with cargos of hemp for ropes from Tanai, a port in Crimea on the Black Sea. The plague would rage in Europe until about 1350, exterminating one third of the population.

This disaster would radically change in the following decades the dynamics of society and economy throughout the Continent. Workers are scarce and they can now demand better wages and conditions; whole guilds relocate where markets are most attractive, and social turnover increases.

The Republic takes this chance and gathers qualified artisans for specialised production of luxury goods by deliberating laws offering benefits.

1350-1355

Third war against Genoa for control over the bottleneck of Pera on the Dardanelles, the access to the Black Sea and to hemp for the merchant as well as military fleets.

1354

At the death of Dandolo, Marino Falier is elected as doge after a career including several elections as member of the Council of Ten.

1355

Marino Falier plots to take control of the State as signore of Venice. The plot is discovered, the doge is tried and condemned by the same Council of Ten of which he had been a member, and publicly executed.

For the occasion, the Ten are joined by a Zonta of 20 members with rights of proposal, but not of vote.

The event and its outcome leave a deep sign in the Venetian political life.

When the Ducal Palace is restored after the fire of 1577, the series of the doges' portraits, painted at the top of the walls of the hall of the Major Council, includes a black drape instead of his bust, with the words: *Hic est locus Marini Faletri decapitati pro criminibus* ("This is the place of Marino Falier, beheaded because of his crimes").

The Republic enforces the law against any criminal, all the more so as he covers public offices, and more severely in proportion to the rank of the office, including that of doge. It is a better way to maintain the public image of the State, both internally and internationally, than covering up such disreputable events.

1378-1381

Fourth and last war against Genoa, this time for the control of the island of Tenedos (Bozcaada), on the Turkish side of the Dardanelles, and of Cyprus, then in the hands of the crusader Lusignan family since 1092.

The war develops in the whole Mediterranean. In 1378, attacking during a storm, the Venetians destroy the Genoese fleet at Anzio at the mouth of the Tiber in the Tyrrhenian Sea.

A new Genoese fleet moves into the Adriatic, while a coalition of allies (the da Carrara signori of Padua, the Visconti of Milan, the Hungarian king and the patriarch and imperial feudal lord of Aquileia, with the approval of the pope) send armies against Venice by land. The Venetian fleet divides: part remains in the eastern Mediterranean, engaged in an attempt to recover Cyprus from the Genoese on behalf of the Lusignan, the rest sails back to defend Venice.

They overwinter in Pola (Pula) in Istria, the Genoese fleet in Zara (Zadar) in Croatia, the armies on the mainland.

Early in 1379, the Genoese destroy the Venetian fleet in Pola, so that only seven ships escape to Venice. While the land armies siege the capital, the Genoese raid the northern part of the Venetian territory and then establish a hold inside the lagoon itself by taking Chioggia, after an 11-days battle.

Diplomatic offers by the Venetians are refused, and the capital prepares to face a winter of siege, while those who have stores of food and fuel offer part of them to the State to be shared with the poor, as well as timber, iron, sails and ropes to rebuild the fleet.

During the winter 1379-80, the Venetians block the Genoese in Chioggia by stealthily sinking old ships loaded with rocks across the canals giving access to the harbour.

Meanwhile the rest of the fleet sails back to Venice from Cyprus despite the stormy season, surprising the Genoese on January 1, 1379 m.v. (= 1380). Most of the Genoese allies leave one by one after separate negotiations with Venetian ambassadors. By summer 1380, the Genoese in Chioggia surrender, and in a few months the war on the sea ends. On land, however, the da Carrara still fight with some success, taking Treviso and the surrounding territory.

In 1381, with the mediation of the duke Amedeo d'Aosta, a treaty is signed in Turin. It sacrifices some of the Venetian Dominions, but it marks the end of the Genoese success in the eastern Mediterranean and of their ambitions on the Adriatic Sea.

1386

Dedition of the island of Corfu.

After the plague and the war, the end of the century is relatively peaceful. About thirty families who had distinguished themselves in support of the State during the war are coopted in the Major Council.