**Later Middle Ages -- ~1000-~1500 ce/15**

**1311**

The Major Council deliberates that from then on the members of the Pregàdi must be elected within the Major Council itself, and no candidates from the people will be accepted.

<http://www.arielcaliban.org/PX_senate.pdf>

**1312**

Philip IV Capetian the Handsome, king of France, takes steps to control the spread of Roman law doctrine, a competitor to his hold on legislation. Within the text of a reform of law studies in the university of Orléans, he declares that *Regnum nostrum consuetudine moribusque precipue, non iure scripto, regitur* ("Our kingdom is mostly governed by custom and usages, not by written law"). The astute wording ("mostly") allows for his sovereign legislation, but not for direct application of Roman law, which was sometimes intended as the only true "written law".

**1315**

Jacopo Bertaldo, a cleric employed for many years in the Chancery, writes his *Breviarium* ("Summary"), often called *Splendor Venetorum civitatis consuetudinum* ("Brilliance of the usages of the city of the Venetians"). It is meant as a handbook for a young friend, who planned to enter judicial offices in the Curie, but it remained incomplete.

Bertaldo feels that the backbone of the Venetian law system is customary, and that this slowly evolving custom should be only modified by laws in statutory form: these are approved by the *placitum* and can be equated to what nowadays is called "instant custom". Instead, he sadly remarks, most of the legislation actually comes from the Councils and magistrates, with no saying by the people.

The names of the members of the Major Council, their deaths, the new generations and any cooptations of new members, are inscribed in a new Libro d'Oro ("Golden Book"), a sort of Who's Who of the ruling aristocracy.

**1319**

General revision of the Libro d'Oro by the Avogadori di Comun, who are now entrusted with updating it after control of the prescribed requisites in each case of new enlistments.

The committee of three who since 1297 could propose cooptations, subject to the vote of the Forty, is abolished.

The young nobles enter the Major Council and begin their political career at 25, after some experience of trade and of the ways of the world. Once a year however, on December 4, feast of Saint Barbara, thirty young nobles of 20-24 years are chosen by lottery to anticipate their membership and the beginning of their career.

Now the Major Council is complete as the plenary assembly of the hereditary aristocracy, and the holder of sovereignity.

**~ 1330**

Begins the Chancery series of the registers where international treaties are recorded: *Liber Albus* ("White Book", with the Byzantine Empire) and *Liber Blancus* ("Cream-coloured Book", with the Western Empire). The names refer to the colour of the vellum cover.

Early books of deliberations by the Major Council are also given suggestive names, like Zaneta (a woman's name) or Ballarinus (the name of the Chancellor), or descriptive names helpful in locating them on the shelves, like Luna, from the symbol on the spine, or *Pilosus*, from the unshaved vellum cover.

<http://www.arielcaliban.org/PX_doodles.pdf>

**1332**

Andrea Dandolo, future doge and a rare member of the aristocracy to pursue a legal culture at the university of Padua, writes a summary of statutory laws: *Summula statutorum floridorum Venetiarum* ("Short précis of the flourishing statutes of the Venetian State").

**1335**

The Council of Ten is deliberated permanent by the Major Council, and will not need any more prorogations, but just the regular turnover by election. The presence of an Avogadore di Comun is required for the legality of each session.

**1339**

The city of Treviso with its territory, after many decades of hiring Venetians as foreign, impartial, politically knowledgeable podestà, is annexed by the Venetians through a spontaneous pact of dedition.

Construction begins on the Ducal Palace as we see it today. The hall of the Major Council is the largest room with a flat ceiling (built by naval carpenters from the Arsenale) in Europe, before the introduction of reinforced concrete in the late XIX century.

**1342**

Andrea Dandolo completes his *Chronica brevis*, a short history of Venice from 46 CE to 1342.

Information about the area in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages was fragmentary and uncertain at the time; this allowed chroniclers and historians to build legends of glory about the beginnings of the State.

Public historians would follow, appointed by the State to write official histories for future memory.

Of course, recent events could not be as easily altered as origin myths could be constructed. However, even these myths reflect the medieval attitude which required cohesion and continuity rather than critical analysis. By the time humanism brought about a more scientific consideration and contextualisation of existing documents, the myths were ealready stablished, and the lack of exhaustive documents meant that they could not be uprooted after all.

Some of them, like the foundation anticipated at the time of the Hun incursions of Attila (about 405), or the identification of the Paulicius in the *Terminatio Liutprandina* with a first doge, called by the Byzantine nickname of Anafestus, are regrettably still circulating in popular histories of Venice despite having been debunked by XX century historians of the era, archaeologists and philologists.

<http://www.arielcaliban.org/PX_johannes_diaconus.pdf>

<http://www.arielcaliban.org/PX_legends_421.pdf>

**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.

**1350-55**

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.

**1378-81**

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.