

## Introduction

This dissertation results from a series of straightforward questions: is Giovanni Mansueti still worth studying? Or, to phrase it differently, is there any reason to re-examine a painter who has invariably failed to captivate the interest of the general public and, above all, has been comparatively neglected by the majority of contemporary critics? In a period when monumental monographs are more than ever dedicated to the so-called *great masters*, or to the valuable reconstruction of the various artists that emanated from their workshops, is it really necessary to discuss the independent activity of one of those fleeting epigones? And, at last, if it is worth doing, how can we approach a painter whose oeuvre has been so bitterly mauled by art historians?

Twentieth-century scholars pulled no punches in stigmatizing Mansueti's work. The painter attracted sharp criticism mainly regarding his style which, as Lionello Venturi once claimed, led Mansueti to design "fantocci di legno che non sanno muoversi nemmeno come burattini"<sup>1</sup>. Giovan Battista Cavalcaselle and Joseph Archer Crowe raised objections to Mansueti's artistry, defining it as "primitively stiff and conventional", the result of an artist of "small powers" who could only rise "to any brightness of harmony or colour"<sup>2</sup>. Some decades later Raimond Van Marle did not give Mansueti preferential treatment either, since his work, although seen as productive, was nonetheless condemned as "mediocre, unattractive and boring"<sup>3</sup>. A painter, as Fritz Heineman then argued, who though a "scolaro di Gentile Bellini" as well as influenced by his brother Giovanni, could not "nascondere la struttura legnosa delle sue figure" and "la sua mancanza di penetrazione"<sup>4</sup>. Interestingly, even Mansueti's few supporters could not refrain from pointing up his limitations. Hans Tietze and Erica Tietze-Conrat, for example, who dedicated a separate heading to Mansueti's drawings in which he even appeared "emancipated from Gentile" Bellini, concluded that his work was "insignificant"<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Lionello Venturi, *Le origini della pittura veneziana, 1300-1500*, Venezia, Istituto Veneto di Arti Grafiche, 1907, pp. 345-346.

<sup>2</sup> Giovan Battista Cavalcaselle and Joseph Archer Crowe, *A History of Painting in North Italy*, ed. by Tancred Borenius, vol. I, London, John Murray, 1912, pp. 223-225.

<sup>3</sup> Raimond van Marle, *The Development of the Italian School of Painting*, vol. XVII, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1935, p. 200.

<sup>4</sup> Fritz Heinemann, *Giovanni Bellini e i belliniani*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza Editore, 1962, p. 247.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Tietze and Erica Tietze-Conrat, *The Drawings of the Venetian Painters in the Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Centuries*, New York, Hacker Art Books, 1979, p. 189.

Productive but mediocre, artistically emancipated and yet minor and insignificant: a quite unfavourable label which has marred Mansueti's reputation up to the present day. A label that, nonetheless, reckons without the evident success that he was granted by his contemporaries, having in fact been hired by some of the most prestigious institutions of his time, both religious and lay. A painter who, as Patricia Fortini Brown put it, "produced more paintings for *scuole* than any other artist of his time, with the exception of Carpaccio"<sup>6</sup>. This moves the discussion to why a re-evaluation of Mansueti is timely, even further than has been already outlined. In fact, a few additional questions present themselves: how was it that a minor painter such as Mansueti could contribute so substantially to the emergence, development and final efflorescence of Venice's narrative painting? And, concurrently, how could such a seemingly insignificant painter become, *pace* the twentieth-century criticism, one of the leading exponents of the Venetian Orientalist Mode? If boring and mediocre, how is it possible that in his time Mansueti's pictures adorned high altars and private chapels, the meeting halls and altars of *Scuole Grandi* and *Piccole*, as well as the walls of state offices?

A concise account of Mansueti's artistic affiliations and major commissions might help to highlight the paradox of criticism too concerned with stylistic analysis to notice the painter's real achievements.

After having completed his apprenticeship, probably at the Ducal Palace alongside Gentile and Giovanni Bellini<sup>7</sup>, by the end of the 1480s Mansueti was eventually able to establish his own workshop in "confinio sacti juliani" possibly favoured by a lucrative marriage to Laura Longini<sup>8</sup>. Although formally emancipated, an attractive Bellinesque style continued to characterize his work. This first drew the notice of Giorgio Vasari<sup>9</sup>, and subsequently

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<sup>6</sup> Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1988, p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Humfrey, *Pittura e devozione: la tradizione narrativa quattrocentesca*, in *La pittura nel Veneto. Il Quattrocento*, vol. I, Milano, Electa, 1989, p. 316; Jennifer Fletcher, *I Bellini*, in *La Bottega dell'Artista tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, a cura di Roberto Cassanelli, Milano, Jaca Book, 1998, pp. 131-153, especially pp. 143-144; Gabriele Matino, "Gentile Bellini, Giovanni Mansueti e il Riconoscimento del miracolo della reliquia della Croce al ponte di San Lio: chiarimenti e proposte", *Venezia Cinquecento*, 20 (2010), p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> G. Matino (2010), pp. 18-19, 33 note 53. On the Longinis and their intimate relations with both Giovanni and Vittore Mansueti see: Fabio Agostini, "Giovanni Mansueti: la vita, la famiglia, l'eredità", *Venezia Cinquecento*, 22 (2013), pp. 6-11.

<sup>9</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori ed architettori*, a cura di Gaetano Milanesi, vol. III, Firenze, Sansoni Editore, 1878, p. 648.

modern critics often concentrated on the identification of Mansueti's artistic borrowings from the work of Gentile and Giovanni Bellini<sup>10</sup>, not to mention the influence that artists such as Vittore Carpaccio and Cima da Conegliano are believed to have exerted on him<sup>11</sup>. According to this literature, Mansueti emerges as a versatile artist who, as it has been argued, "had the ability to discern the best element for the required genre"<sup>12</sup>.

His debut as an independent master can be dated to around 1492, when he completed the *Allegorical Representation of the Trinity* for the church of Santa Maria Assunta *dei Crociferi* (fig. 1)<sup>13</sup>. Already by the turn of the 1490s Mansueti's workshop must have been exceptionally busy. Between 1494 and 1496 he joined Gentile Bellini, Vittore Carpaccio, Benedetto Diana, Lazzaro Bastiani and Pietro Perugino at the *Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista*, for which he painted the *Miracle of San Lio* (fig. 2) and the *Healing of Niccolò Benvegnudo's Daughter* (1506; fig. 3)<sup>14</sup>. Between the

<sup>10</sup> Giannantonio Moschini, *Giovanni Bellini e i pittori contemporanei*, Venice, G. Orlandelli, 1834, pp. 60-70; Lionello Venturi (1907), pp. 345-346; Roger Fry, "Exhibition of Pictures of the Early Venetian School at the Burlington Fine Arts Club-II", *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 21 (1912), pp. 47-48; Tancred Borenius, "The Venetian School in the Grand-Ducal Collection, Oldenburg", *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 23 (April 1913), pp. 25-27, 30-31, 35; Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, vol. VII, tome 4, Milano, Hoepli, 1915, pp. 558-562; G.B. Cavalcaselle and J.A. Crowe (1912), pp. 222-226; R. van Marle (1935), p. 193; Tancred Borenius, "Among the Belliniani", *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 74 (1939), pp. 12-23; Sandra Marconi, "La pala del Mansueti a Zianigo", *Arte Veneta*, II (1948), p. 150; Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance*, vol. I, London, The Phaidon Press, 1957, p. 108; F. Heinemann (1962), pp. 247-49; Fritz Heinemann, "Spaetwerke des Giovanni Mansueti", *Arte Veneta*, XVI (1965), pp. 150-152; Sanda Miller, "Giovanni Mansueti a Little Master of the Venetian Quattrocento", *Revue romaine d'histoire de l'art*, XV (1978), pp. 77-115; *Gothic to Renaissance. European Painting 1300-1600*, ed. by Peter Humfrey, London-New York, Colnaghi, 1988, p. 94; Annalisa Perissa Torrini, "Una Trinità di Giovanni Mansueti", *Arte Veneta*, XLV (1993), pp. 108-111; Stéphane Loire, *Un tableau de Mansueti conserve a La Celle Saint-Cloud*, in *Homage à Michel Laclote*, Milano, Electa, 1994, pp. 317-323; J. Fletcher (1998), pp. 131-153; Peter Humfrey, "Giovanni Mansueti", in *La pittura nel Veneto. Il Cinquecento*, a cura di Mauro Lucco, vol. 3, Milano, Skira, 1999, p. 1305; Andrea De Lillo, "Giovanni Mansueti", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. LXIX, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2008, p. 160; G. Martino (2010), pp 5-34; F. Agostini (2013), pp. 5-44.

<sup>11</sup> Anton Maria Zanetti, *Descrizione di tutte le pubbliche pitture della città di Venezia e delle Isole circonvincine*, MDCCXXXIII (reprint, Sala Bolognese, Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1980), p. 18; Pompeo Molmenti and Gustav Ludwig, *The Life and Works of Vittorio Carpaccio*, London, John Murray, 1907; S. Miller (1978), p. 102; *The Early Venetian Paintings in Holland*, Maarssen, John Benjamins Publishing, 1978, pp. 106-109.

<sup>12</sup> S. Miller (1978), p. 102.

<sup>13</sup> Francesco Sansovino, in his *Venetia Città Nobilissima et Singolare*, In Venetia, appresso Iacomo Sansovino, MDLXXXI, f. 61r, saw in that church a "Crocifisso di Sagrestia fu di Giovanni Mansueti". An excellent analysis of the painting is provided by Martin Davies, *National Gallery Catalogue. The Earlier Italian Schools*, Second Edition (revised), London, printed for the Trustees, 1961, pp. 326-328.

<sup>14</sup> G.B. Cavalcaselle and J.A. Crowe (1912), pp. 222-226; Sandra Moschini Marconi, *Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia*, vol. I, Roma, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1955, pp. 134, 137; S. Miller (1978), p. 81; Fiorenzo Canuti, *Il Perugino*, Siena, La Diana, 1931, vol. I, p. 121, vol. II,

execution of the two *teleri* Mansueti also signed the *Arrest of St Mark* for the chapel of the Guild of the Silk-Weavers at the *Crociferi* (1499; fig. 4), where he collaborated with Cima da Conegliano, Lattanzio da Rimini and a further unknown painter<sup>15</sup>. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, just before the completion of *Benvegnudo* picture, Mansueti executed two further paintings commissioned by the *Ufficio del Cattaver* (ca. 1502; figs. 5-6)<sup>16</sup>, as well as the *Trinity* altarpiece for the church of San Simeone Profeta (ca. 1505; fig. 7)<sup>17</sup>. Besides the countless *Madonne* that most likely absorbed the activity of his workshop throughout the first two decades of the XVI Century<sup>18</sup>, Mansueti was also able to secure prestigious assignments such as the altarpiece for the church of San Pietro di Castello on commission from the Patriarch Antonio Contarini (ca. 1512-13)<sup>19</sup>, the *San Maffeo Altarpiece* for the high altar of the convent church of San Matteo in Mazzorbo Island (1515-16; fig. 8)<sup>20</sup>, and the altarpiece for the church of the Natività di Maria of Zianigo (1518; fig. 9)<sup>21</sup>. The final

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p. 184; Stefania Mason Rinaldi, “Contributi d’archivio per la decorazione pittorica della Scuola di S. Giovanni Evangelista”, *Arte Veneta*, XXXII (1978), pp. 293-301; Alessandro Ballarin, *Una nuova prospettiva su Giorgione: la ritrattistica degli anni 1500-1503*, in *Giorgione. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studio per il 5° centenario della nascita (29-31 Maggio 1978)*, Castelfranco Veneto, 1979, pp. 237-238 note 1; G. Matino (2010), p. 6; F. Agostini (2013), p. 28. On the arrangement of the cycle see: P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 282-286.

<sup>15</sup> On the narrative cycle see: Peter Humfrey, *Cima da Conegliano*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 82-84; P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 286-287. On Mansueti’s painting see: S. Miller (1978), p. 91; *Venice and the Islamic World 828-1797*, ed. by Stefano Carboni, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 304-305 n. 27 (catalogue entry).

<sup>16</sup> S. Moschini Marconi (1955), pp. 135-136.

<sup>17</sup> *Cinque Secoli di Pittura Veneta*, exhibition catalogue, a cura di Rodolfo Pallucchini, Venezia, Serenissima, 1945, p. 46; Giles Robertson, *Vincenzo Catena*, Edinburgh, University Press, 1954, Appendix III D 1, p. 81; B. Berenson (1957), p. 108; S. Miller (1978), p. 93; M. Davies (1961), pp. 326-328; *Restituzioni '91. Quattordici Opere Restaurate*, exhibition catalogue (Vicenza, Palazzo Leoni Montanari, 13 settembre – 31 ottobre 1991), Banco Ambrosiano Veneto, 1991, pp. 49-52; A. Perissa Torrini (1993), pp. 108-111.

<sup>18</sup> *Proposte e restauri. I musei d’arte negli anni Ottanta*, Museo di Castelvechio – chiesa di San Francesco al Corso, Verona, Cortella Spa Industria Poligrafica, 1987, pp. 78-79; *Pinacoteca Civica di Vicenza. Dipinti dal XIV al XVI secolo*, a cura di Maria Elisa Avagnina, Margaret Binotto and Giovanni Carlo Federico Villa, Cinisello Balsamo (MI), Silvana Editore, 2003, pp. 203-204, 571; Gianluca Poldi and Giovanni Carlo Federico Villa, *Dalla conservazione alla storia dell’arte. Riflettografia e analisi non invasive per lo studio dei dipinti*, Pisa, Edizioni della Normale, 2006, pp. 81-82; *Museo di Castelvechio. Catalogo generale dei dipinti e delle miniature delle collezioni civiche veronesi. I. Dalla fine del X all’inizio del XVI secolo*, a cura di Paola Marini, Gianni Peretti e Francesca Rossi, Cinisello Balsamo (MI), Silvana Editore, 2010, p. 202.

<sup>19</sup> Augusto Gentili, *Le Storie di Carpaccio*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1996, pp. 107, 182 note 51.

<sup>20</sup> G. Moschini (1834), pp. 60-70; R. Van Marle (1935), p. 161; B. Berenson (1957), p. 109; T. Borenius (1939), pp. 12-23; F. Heinemann (1962), p. 247; S. Miller (1978), pp. 78, 97; Alvise Zorzi, *Venezia scomparsa*, Milano, Electa, 1984, pp. 285-286; Kate Lowe, “Elections of Abbesses and Notions of Identity in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy, with Special Reference to Venice”, *Renaissance Quarterly*, LIV (2001), pp. 389-429, especially pp. 421-424; A. De Lillo (2008), p. 160; F. Agostini (2013), pp. 33 note 12.

<sup>21</sup> S. Marconi (1948), p. 150; S. Miller (1978), p. 87.

recognition of his artistic value was achieved by the end of the 1510s, when he was repeatedly hired by the *Scuola Grande di San Marco* to paint three out of seven canvases for the narrative cycle on St Mark's evangelic mission in Egypt: the *Healing* and the *Baptism of Anianus* (1518; figs. 75-76), and the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark* (c. 1525-29; fig. 74)<sup>22</sup>. On those occasions Mansueti's narrative skills and Orientalist repertoire were so highly esteemed as to make him a reputable successor to painters like Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione and/or Palma il Vecchio.

The first scholar who acknowledged Mansueti's unquestionable success and attempted to appraise his work from an objective, unprejudiced point of view was Sanda Miller<sup>23</sup>. Her study – up to now the only monograph available on the painter – has had the indubitable merit of drawing scholars' attention to Mansueti's artistic value. Through an insightful reconsideration of his style, Miller is able to supplement extant documentation on Mansueti's artistic training in the Bellini workshop; to retrace his artistic development and provide the first systematic analysis of his oeuvre; to demonstrate, through an original analysis of his narrative and devotional paintings, Mansueti's comprehension and selective reuse of the prototypes developed by his contemporaries; and, finally, to attempt a pioneer discussion of his creative process and workshop practices. This seminal work has, however, a substantial flaw: it does not investigate the reason of Mansueti's artistic success. It does not ask why his distinguished patrons appreciated his work, and what they admired in it. As a matter of fact, Miller is almost taken by surprise “by the commissions he received”, which, she admits awkwardly, “would suggest that his paintings were sought after by the Venetian patrons”<sup>24</sup>. How this could happen is nonetheless left unanswered.

The flaw in Miller's study lies, in my opinion, in the approach she employs. It lies in the stubborn attempt to explain Mansueti's success by means of stylistic analysis even though all evidence attests its methodological inadequacy. An example would clarify this crucial point. To discuss Mansueti's *Miracle in Campo San Lio* (fig. 2), Miller compares the picture to contemporary examples of narrative painting by Gentile Bellini (*Miracle at the*

<sup>22</sup> See below Chapter 2, Sections 3.III-VI.

<sup>23</sup> S. Miller (1978), pp. 77-115.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 102.

*Bridge of San Lorenzo*, 1500) and Vittore Carpaccio (*Healing of a Possessed Man by the Patriarch of Grado*, 1494). The analysis employs traditional tools of stylistic enquiry, comparing the three pictures to outline the “peculiarities characteristic of Mansueti’s style”, eventually labelled naïve<sup>25</sup>. On the occasion of the second *telero* painted by Mansueti for the *Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista* (*The Healing of Niccolò Benvegnudo’s Daughter*; fig. 3), formal investigation takes the place of stylistic comparison, however Miller cannot avoid admitting how “its lack of conspicuity led in the past to confusion regarding the subject-matter”<sup>26</sup>. Regardless of such a puzzling inconsistency, Miller makes no attempt to explore Mansueti’s narrative aims, nor does she endeavour to interpret the painting in the light of its well-known narrative source and socio-cultural context<sup>27</sup> – on the whole, the discussion limits itself to a fascinated description of garments, postures, expensive inlaid marbles, and lavish furnishings. Even more remarkable is her final inference. Lacking in formal or stylistic evidence to support Mansueti’s unquestionable attainment, Miller is obliged to notice that he “met *presumably* the approval of the patrons [...] because another Scuola employed him at a later date”<sup>28</sup>. Mansueti’s success at the *Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista* is therefore explained according to his following commissions at the *Scuola di San Marco*. What attracted the interest, and ducats, of his demanding patrons is simply unstated.

In my view this example demonstrates how stylistic analysis – which still proves itself undoubtedly fruitful in untangling knotty problems concerning with attribution, authorship, dating etc. – inevitably fails when dealing with the work of a painter whose artistic language does not abide by the rules art historians have developed to assess aesthetic appreciation. It demonstrates that in order to understand and evaluate the work of an artist as elusive as Mansueti we are compelled to reconsider the model of values heretofore employed and address his paintings from a different, unattempted angle. It goes without saying that this dissertation does not limit itself to the discussion of Mansueti’s stylistic achievements or shortcomings; nor is it my

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 84.

<sup>27</sup> Kiril Petkow, *The Anxieties of a Citizen Class. The Miracles of the True Cross of San Giovanni Evangelista, Venice 1370-1480*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2014, pp. 105-121, especially pp. 119-121.

<sup>28</sup> S. Miller (1978), p. 84 (Italic mine).

intention to bring into question the comments of a criticism that, although sometime with ungenerous tones, noticed the indisputable truth: Giovanni Mansueti's style, if compared to the new generations', was patently inadequate, surely minor. Instead, my research intends to reverse the order of the theoretical priorities, vetting the pictures as semantic devices with functions and purposes other than the sole aesthetic fulfilment. At least, other than *our* contemporary yardstick. Expanding upon the methodology employed in my article on Mansueti's *Miracle of San Lio*, in which the interrelation of text/image/context has demonstrated how the painting was used to give shape to the social and devotional identity of the *Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista*<sup>29</sup>, this dissertation thus rejects the stylistic approach as an end in itself. If, as Ernst H. Gombrich once claimed, "art is an embodiment of values", it is the purpose of this dissertation to re-asses the remit of such values within the work of Giovanni Mansueti in order to identify what made, to the eyes of his contemporaries, his work a work of art<sup>30</sup>. Accordingly, Mansueti's "stiff and conventional" pictures, his "curious eccentricities", are evaluated in the light of the cultural motives that prompted their execution, that is to say the investigation of the context in which the paintings were conceived, produced and perceived<sup>31</sup>.

The interpretation of paintings within their contexts raises a series of questions on method that cannot be evaded. The first problem lies in the definition of *context*, notably of its relation with, and causation of, an artwork. As warned, for example, by Jonathan Culler, Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, art historians should proceed warily when assembling a body of contextual material to interpret artworks<sup>32</sup>. The context, it is argued, cannot be presumed to produce the meaning of an act since it is in itself "the product of interpretive

<sup>29</sup> G. Matino (2010), pp. 5-18.

<sup>30</sup> Ernest H. Gombrich, *Topics of Our Time. Twentieth-century issues in learning and in art*, London, Phaidon Press, 1992, pp. 71-73. On the concept of value applied to minor painters, see: Gabriele Neher and Rupert Shepherd, *Introduction: Revaluating Renaissance Art*, in *Revaluating Renaissance Art*, ed. by Gabriele Neher and Rupert Shepherd, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000, pp. 1-18.

<sup>31</sup> On this subject see: Rona Goffen, *Piety and Patronage in Renaissance Venice: Bellini, Titian, and the Franciscans*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1986; Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in the Fifteenth Century Italy: a Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, II edition, 1988, pp. 29-108; A. Gentili (1996).

<sup>32</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1988; Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History", *The Art Bulletin*, 73 (1991), pp. 174-208.

choices”, those of the historians<sup>33</sup>. Once considered from this perspective, context thus loses its status of historical “ground upon which to base interpretation”<sup>34</sup>, establishing that its formulation could be “indefinitely extended” and, as such, it would be unable to delimit and control the object we presume it has determined<sup>35</sup>. If it is hard to deny that the reproduction of historical contexts is subjected to the historian’s own choices, I believe it is equally limiting to consider artworks as the passive effect of causative circumstances. Artworks, in other words, should be regarded as historical evidence in the same way as other conventional proofs<sup>36</sup>. Accordingly, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate Mansueti’s pictures as integral features of the context in which they were conceived: the context, it is assumed in this study, does not cause the artwork but it contains it. The set of historical, biographical, cultural and social evidence that this research unfolds is not used to unearth, uncritically, the motives of a given commission, on the contrary it is juxtaposed with the artwork in question to gain access to the context itself. The linkage between cause (context) and effect (artwork) is considered mutual, in fact “reversible”<sup>37</sup>.

Defining the artwork as one of the factors that contributes to the reconstruction of the context poses an additional question on the information it expresses, notably on the meanings attached to it. Since the early twentieth-century, one of the enduring concerns in the analysis of Renaissance artistic production has been the interpretation of the meanings of images, that is to say the reading of their (disguised) messages. The iconological method, whose analytical domain was firstly theorized in a famous essay by Erwin Panofsky in 1939, has been subjected to much criticism explicitly directed to confute, amend and re-formulate the complexities of its process<sup>38</sup>. It is not my intention

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<sup>33</sup> M. Bal and N. Bryson (1991), p. 175.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 177.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Use of Images as Historical Evidence*, London, Reaktion Books, 2001.

<sup>37</sup> On the concept of “chronological reversal” in art historical analysis, see: M. Bal and N. Bryson (1991), pp. 178-180; Michael Ann Holly, “Past Looking”, *Critical Inquiry*, 16 (1990), pp. 371-396.

<sup>38</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology. Humanistic Themes In the Art of the Renaissance*, New York and London, Oxford University Press, 1939; Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, New York, Doubleday, 1955; Erwin Panofsky, *Problems in Titian: Mostly Iconographic*, London, Phaidon, 1969. On the criticism of Panofsky’s method see: Otto Pächt, “Panofsky’s Early Netherlandish Painting”, *The Burlington Magazine*, 98 (1956), pp. 266-277+279; Ernest H. Gombrich, *Introduction: Aims and Limits of Iconology*, in *Symbolic Images: Studies in the*

to retrace here all the opposing currents of thought that have been confronting one another through the last century, however I believe that a brief description of how this research seeks to cope with the most contested principles of the iconological method is necessary.

One of the constant occupations of iconologists has been tracing literary works to clarify the intention of the artists. This approach has raised a series of questions regarding the kind of literature painters would be able to use (or understand) when designing their iconographies, and, as a consequence, the kind of message artists intended to convey through their work. A striking example is represented by the highly debated case of Titian's *Poesie* painted for Philip II between 1554 and 1562. According to some scholars, Titian designed extremely complex iconographies visualizing refined philosophical concepts imparted by the work of some neoplatonic advisers; for others, on the contrary, the paintings depicted quite straightforward subjects solvable in the light of the patrician culture on erotic painting<sup>39</sup>. The dispute, evidently, is not confined to the mere identification of the literary source used by Titian, but it revolves around the question of whether or not the artist adhered to a pre-existing iconographical programme; not to mention the controversy about who was responsible for its formulation and how we should interpret its disguised meanings, if any. This debate pictures quite clearly the main flaws of the iconological method: the lack of conclusive evidence to support the proposed interpretation, and the suspected tendentiousness of the proofs provided. As a general rule, in fact, since documentary evidence regarding iconographical

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*Art of the Renaissance*, London, Phaidon, 1972, pp. 1-22; Christine Hasenmueller, "Panofsky, Iconography, and Semiotics", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 36 (1978), pp. 289-301; Robert Klein, *Forms and Meaning: Essays on the Renaissance and Modern Art*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980; Keith Moxey, "Panofsky's Concept of Iconology and the Problem of Interpretation in the History of Art", *New Library History*, 17 (1986), pp. 265-274; *Iconography at the Crossroads*, ed. by Brendan Cassidy, Princeton, Princeton University, 1993; Mieke Bal, *Reading "Rembrandt": Beyond the Word-Image Opposition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991; Otto Pächt, *The Practice of Art History. Reflections on Method*, trans. by Christopher S. Wood, London, Harvey Miller Publishers, 1999, especially pp. 71-77; Craig Harbison, *Iconography and Iconology, in Early Netherlandish Paintings. Rediscovery, Reception, and Research*, ed. by Bernhard Ridderbos, Anne Van Buren, and Henk Van Veen, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2005, pp. 378-406; *Iconography Without Text*, ed. by Paul Taylor, London-Torino, The Warburg Institute-Nino Aragno Editore, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Exemplary, in this respect, is the passionate debate occurred during the conference *Tiziano e Venezia. Convegno internazionale di studi (Venezia, 1976)*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza Editore, 1980. See especially: Francis Haskell, pp. 41-46; Giorgio Padoan, pp. 91-102; Giorgio Petrocchi, pp. 103-109; Charles Hope, pp. 111-124; Carlo Ginzburg, pp. 125-135; Philip P. Fehl, pp. 139-147; Augusto Gentili, pp. 169-178. The opposing positions that emerged at the Venetian conference back in 1976 are still topical: Charles Hope, *Titian*, London, Chaucer Press, 2003, and Augusto Gentili, *Tiziano*, Milano, 24 Ore Cultura, 2012.

programmes is exceedingly rare, scholars have been compelled to attribute their interpretations to the figure of an obscure adviser responsible for devising the iconography under examination<sup>40</sup>. Whereas such an empiric approach has sometimes led to the belittlement of the artistic process, it is however important to stress that it has also provoked an opposing tendency, equally unfortunate, tending to overestimate the role of the artist.

Aware of the shortcomings of this approach, my study does not avoid using literary sources to interpret Mansueti's work. In the case of his three paintings on the *Life of the Virgin and the Child* in Burano, this research proposes an iconographical interpretation based on a widely accessible Apocrypha, the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna*. Admittedly, no documentation has survived to establish if Mansueti, or his donors, had a direct knowledge of the text. However, the comparison of the paintings with the Apocrypha demonstrates not only the cogency of the proposed juxtaposition, but it also excludes Mansueti's resort to conventional sources such as Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*. The case of the narrative cycle for the *Scuola di San Marco* is more complicated, since no contemporary text has proved completely convincing. Therefore, in order to avoid forced interpretations, this research refers to multiple sources encompassing primary hagiographies (e.g. Symeon the Metaphrast), their popular vernacularizations (e.g. Jacobus de Voragine), and local versions (e.g. Lorenzo Giustiniani). Furthermore, in the absence of a pre-existing iconographic programme which could elucidate the purposes, whether historical or cultural, of the commission of the cycle, this research avoids the risk of creating a fictional advisor as well as attributing the role of deviser to any of the numerous painters involved in the project. This approach has a dual purpose: on the one hand it aims to reconsider the cycle as a whole in order to avoid partiality dictated by aesthetic preferences or prejudices, on the other hand it seeks to re-assert the centrality of the relationship between the artist and his donor. The earliest offer made by the Bellini brothers to paint a series of canvases for the *Sala dell'Albergo* of their

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<sup>40</sup> On the topic see: E.H. Gombrich (1972), pp. 1-25, especially pp. 5-7; Ernst H. Gombrich, *Topos and Topicality*, Annual Lecture of the Society for Renaissance Studies, London, 1975; Charles Hope, *Artists, Patrons, and Advisers in the Italian Renaissance*, in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. by Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981, pp. 293-343; Charles Hope and Elizabeth McGrath, *Artists and Humanists*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. by Jill Kraye, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 161-188; P. Burke (2001), pp. 40-41.

*Scuola* may clarify this crucial issue.

On 15 July 1492, following the intention of “principiar tuta la faza in testa del albergo ditto in un solo tellaro”, the *Banca* agreed with the artists to “poner quelle historie et hopera che per la schuola sera termenado, tamen cum el consejo et parer dej ditti doi fratellj [Bellini]”<sup>41</sup>. This document has been interpreted as the proof “that it was the painters, rather than some learned advisers, who were taking the chief initiative on the choice of the subject-matter”<sup>42</sup>. If such an interpretation reveals the attempt to clear the ground of undocumented learned advisers, it is however unquestionable that the role assigned to the artists is excessive. The contract, as it is, does not give the Bellinis any right to choose, autonomously, the subject of the paintings; it does acknowledge that their advice (*consejo*) and opinion (*parer*) would be taken into consideration, but it then states that it is the *Scuola* that has to take the final decision (“che per la schuola sera termenado”). According to such an unequivocal declaration of intent, together with the unchallenged authority of the *Provedadori sopra la fabrica* on art patronage<sup>43</sup>, this research investigates the entire narrative cycle as the result of a mutual interaction, or better negotiation, between the *Scuola* and the artists. In other words, it is the purpose of this research to discuss the cycle in the light of the ability of the painters in projecting the devotional needs and expectations of their demanding patrons.

It has become clear that one of the central concerns of this study is the recovery of the artistic intentions, that is to say the analysis of the conditions under which the paintings were made and, most importantly, the evaluation of how such conditions affected the way in which established iconographic types were reinvented. I have already mentioned the principal objections raised by modern scholarship to this type of enquiry; however, considering that my research makes use of contextual analysis<sup>44</sup> to identify, and explain, topical allusions disguised within pictures, I believe that Gombrich’s famous lecture *Topos and Topicality* could help to specify the methodology here employed.

<sup>41</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 292 doc. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Humfrey, “The Bellinesque Life of Saint Mark Cycle for the Scuola Grande di San Marco in Venice in Its Original Arrangement”, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 48 (1985), pp. 234-236, and pp. 235-236 note 24. In this respect, see also Philip Sohm, *The Scuola Grande di San Marco 1437-1550. The Architecture of a Venetian Confraternity*, New York and London, Garland Publishing, 1982, pp. 240-248.

<sup>43</sup> On this subject see below pp. 86-92.

<sup>44</sup> See above p. 7 note 31.

Gombrich's contention, pure and simple, is that "it is a mistake to look in [the art of the Italian Renaissance] for topical allusion"<sup>45</sup>. The first objection concerns the absence of documented evidence to corroborate a given interpretation – what I have previously defined as the iconographic programme. What Gombrich objects to is the attempt to elaborate a symbolic (rather than narrative) programme with the explicit purpose of laying the foundation of topological interpretation. As a consequence, the examination of artworks is inevitably compromised by the intrusion of the scholar who is suspected to subject the artist's choice to his own purposes – an accusation already observed while discussing causality in art historic praxis. A third, crucial objection is that the attempt to anchor the analysis "to a particular framework or context", namely the attempt to make it topical, is purely speculative: "situations change but works of art remain". It is legitimate, Gombrich clarifies, to "include topical references" when dealing with "temporary structures as triumphal arches", but in the case of permanent works there is no need for much exegesis. After all, even if it can be proved that a certain subject was chosen as a consequence of a given circumstance, "are we not again entitled to say that [the artwork] was intended to transcend the immediate occasion"?

This last objection deserves to be discussed at length since it challenges the very nature of my work. In doing so, I believe that the case of the *Scuola di San Marco* would prove once again decisive. On this specific occasion, however, it is necessary to focus on the paintings rather than on conventional evidence, so as to avoid the risk of subjecting the reconstruction of the context to any biased intention. In addition, this approach would also demonstrate the efficacy of addressing paintings as historical evidence, what were elsewhere described as objects able to bear witness to the past<sup>46</sup>. The cycle depicts the striking episodes of St Mark's apostolic mission in Egypt; the Evangelist, however, is not alone in his expedition. The scenes are in fact packed with countless portraits of the *Scuola's* officeholders who assist their Holy Patron throughout his journey. What is the role of these portraits in the scenes, and,

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<sup>45</sup> E.H. Gombrich (1975).

<sup>46</sup> Francis Haskell, *History and its Images. Art and the Interpretation of the Past*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993, p. 7; P. Fortini Brown (1988); P. Burke (2001); Filippo de Vivo, "Historical Justifications of the Venetian Power in the Adriatic", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 64 (2003), 159-176.

most importantly, what do they tell us about the sitters? As observed by Richard Brilliant, “group portraits are not random collections of persons but deliberate constructions of the significant relations among them”<sup>47</sup>. In the case of the *Scuola di San Marco*, such a significant relation can be easily referred to the intention of the brothers to strengthen their privileged relationship with, and intimate devotion to, their Holy Patron. Furthermore, as discussed by Fortini Brown, these portraits have a “testimonial function”: they are used to witness the truthfulness of the miraculous event represented<sup>48</sup>. On a different level, however, the fact that these portraits exhibit contemporary clothes corresponding to the official dress code of the Renaissance Venice<sup>49</sup> produce a temporal relocation of St Mark’s mission coinciding with that of the sitters. In other words, the inclusion in the painting of the portraits of the men who commissioned the narrative cycle would tend to make the conversion of the infidels topical. This hypothesis is then encouraged by the infidels themselves, or better by their costumes. Since the seminal work of Julian Raby<sup>50</sup>, it has become clear that in the cycle of the *Scuola di San Marco* the pagans converted by St Mark were turned into accurate representation of sixteenth-century Egyptian regents, namely the Mamluks and, as from the end of 1516, the Turks. This evident re-elaboration, or better updating, of the hagiographic account cannot be resolved as a simple matter of taste. Nor can we avoid acknowledging that when the cycle was commissioned the Mamluks and the Turks were the primary trading partners of the Venetian merchants, in fact the partners of some of the most influent members of the *Scuola* itself.

This brief description of the main characters of the cycle demonstrates that the pictures need to be interpreted in the light of a particular framework, not the other way round. Their manifest topicality asserts that topical references are not the result of idle speculations made by extravagant scholars, but rather the inner structure of the cycle. The paintings show that in the eyes of the *Scuola* the recipients of St Mark’s evangelism were the contemporary

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<sup>47</sup> Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture*, London, Reaktion Books, 1997, pp. 92-93.

<sup>48</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 223-224.

<sup>49</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 225-231; Peter Humfrey, *The Portrait in Fifteenth-Century Venice*, in *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, exhibition catalogue (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 21 December 2011 – 18 March 2012), ed. by Keith Christiansen and Stefan Weppelmann, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011, pp. 48-63.

<sup>50</sup> Julian Raby, *Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode*, London, Islamic Art Publication, 1982.

inhabitants of Egypt: the hagiographic source, whatever it might be, was explicitly reworked to meet the needs of the merchant patrons. Therefore, going back to the objections raised by Gombrich, if it is completely legitimate to claim that the paintings could be meant to transcend the immediate occasion, it is at least imprudent to fail to notice that the cycle itself is part of that immediate occasion. As previously stated, the context does not cause the artwork, it contains it. The context, in other words, must be considered the means not the end of the analysis. Accordingly, this study intends to establish if and how Mansueti was able to interpret the unique requirements of his various customers. An analysis aimed to substantiate the artistic success of a painter who, although not au fait with the latest manner, was nonetheless able to design pictures that were anything but “insignificant”.

One of the preferential interlocutors of this dissertation will be, needless to say, Patricia Fortini Brown’s *Venetian Narrative Painting*. After more than twenty years following its original publication it can be maintained that the book has radically influenced, if not even reshaped, our understanding of a visual language, the narrative painting, developed in Venice by the mid-fifteenth-century. Great interest attaches to the now historicised concept of the *eyewitness style*, a critical term which although indebted to Baxandall’s *period eye*, in fact aspired to its actual overcoming in which the painters and their works were “mobilized to create a *period* version of truth”<sup>51</sup>. In doing so, Fortini Brown summoned an impressive range of written sources (chronicles, guild statutes, humanist treatises, pilgrims’ accounts, travellers’ descriptions etc.) to corroborate an *inventory style* in fact reflected in, and projected by, the Venetian literary tradition. The marked tendency of “a sense of the fortuitous”, of the accumulation of countless “trivial details” not just confined to architecture but rather even extended to “whole congeries of bystanders”, were thus intended as narrative tools primary aimed “to confer upon a particular version of an event a look of documentary authority”<sup>52</sup>. Accordingly, the narrative painting was therefore considered a visual translation, or better a visual recording of supernatural circumstances whose depiction was in itself a concrete proof of their actual occurrence. In the opinion of Fortini Brown, the narrative cycles adorning the meeting hall of the Venetian *Scuole* were

<sup>51</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 132.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 125.

therefore used “to capture and to amplify the holiness of the relic” they treasured, as well as to make topical the miraculous lives of the holy patrons they bestowed<sup>53</sup>. If looked at from this perspective, the Venetian painted *istorie* would not only “preserve the memory of an historical event”, but in fact they performed the same functions as written hagiographies, the ancient *passio*, through which the *praesentia* of the martyrs lived on among their devotee worshippers<sup>54</sup>.

In my study I expand upon Fortini Brown’s idea of narrative painting as pictorial recordings of the Venetians’ unique cultural understanding of “the world around them”<sup>55</sup>. At the same time, however, my purpose is to subject the concept of *eyewitness style* to a close critical re-assessment. I work from the premise that complications inevitably occur when the *eyewitness style* is not supported by a detailed analysis of the historical events and argue that Fortini Brown’s *aesthetic of credibility* inevitably fails if unconnected with its historical context. It is the case, as stressed by Paul H.D. Kaplan, of the “tremendous economic, social, political, and military struggles which wracked Venice between 1470 and 1530”, and which have nonetheless left “little trace in [Fortini Brown’s] reading of the paintings”<sup>56</sup>. And in this regard, it is quite remarkable that the League of Cambrai, just to mention the most dramatic circumstance at the opening of that century, was briefly mentioned by the author only at the very beginning of her book<sup>57</sup>. Even more surprising is the brevity with which the scholar dealt with the crucial relationship between Venice and the East, particularly in the case of the narrative cycle of the *Scuola Grande di San Marco* where the episodes are in fact set at the contemporary sixteenth-century Mamluk Court. Unexpectedly, the never-ending controversy on pepper price with the Sultan Kansuh al-Ghuri is barely mentioned, and no better treatment is afforded the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk Empire (1516-17). The Orientalist paintings are investigated in terms of aesthetic accuracy without, however, questioning the historical motives that most likely

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Brown, *Cults of the Saints: Its Rise and Functions in Latin Christianity*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982, pp. 86-105.

<sup>55</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 132.

<sup>56</sup> Paul H.D. Kaplan, “Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio by Patricia Fortini Brown”, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43 (1990), pp. 614-616.

<sup>57</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 11-12.

prompted their execution<sup>58</sup>. Accounts of Venetian diplomats are discussed, yet their descriptions are used to corroborate formal evidence, not to investigate the unique Venetian understanding and ideological perception of the Islamic *other*. Not to mention the unfortunate use of an eyewitness source such as Zaccaria Pagani, whose account of Domenico Trevisan's diplomatic mission is just mentioned as a naïve description of Egypt, without making reference to the fact that the ambassador was indeed one of the most prestigious members of the *Scuola* itself<sup>59</sup>. When, at last, the pictures are questioned in the light of historic events, the results are at the very least incomplete. One such case, as already emphasized by Jennifer Fletcher<sup>60</sup>, is the reading of Paris Bordon's *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* where the accurate analysis of Andrea Gritti's new cultural policy is followed by a clumsy interpretation of Venice as new Rome<sup>61</sup>. If to the eyes of Fortini Brown the narrative painting recorded the "particularity of place and moment"<sup>62</sup>, it is the express aim of this dissertation to investigate those specific places and moments in order to complete and indeed update a hermeneutic approach of undoubted worth.

The *eyewitness style* presents, in my opinion, an additional flaw concerning with the naturalistic truthfulness of the pictures. There is no doubt that Venetian Early Renaissance visual imagery was characterized, above all in the work of Mansueti, by a pronounced predilection for descriptive and, to some extent, trivial details; there is also no doubt that the narrative cycle of the *Scuola Grande di San Marco* reflected the inclination of a society for the minutiae narrated by pilgrims and ambassadors who visited the Holy Land<sup>63</sup>. However, such an explicit attempt to convince the beholder, to persuade spectators with pictures "as truthful as possible", must be intended as a means of expression, a narrative device which cannot be seen as the ultimate aim. In my opinion, Fortini Brown's approach fails in noticing the Venetian visual predilection, at least equally embedded than the *eyewitness style*, for religious symbolism, nuanced metaphor and erudite allegory.

The idea that Renaissance painting concealed symbolic allusions

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 196-203.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 206-207. On Domenico Trevisan's membership see below p. 141 note 560.

<sup>60</sup> Jennifer Fletcher, "Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio by Patricia Fortini Brown", *The Burlington Magazine*, 131 (1989), pp. 651-652.

<sup>61</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 237-239.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 132.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 125-132.

beneath its tangible appearance, and as such should be investigated and interpreted accordingly, has been the subject of strenuous criticism. I have already discussed above the various objections to the critical conditions connected to iconological analysis, whether with reference to the identification of an iconographic programme and its deviser, or to the attempt to anchor the proposed interpretation in a distinct historical context. A further object of modern criticism has been the practice of looking for complex theological symbolism within religious paintings, especially with reference to realistic details such as animals. It is a common objection that “no surviving literary sources [...] suggest that the ordinary lay viewer or patron of this art was unusually concerned with the religious subject-matter and symbolism of a visual image”<sup>64</sup>; nor, many have argued, is it possible to establish if and how medieval bestiary tradition and animal symbolism were handed down to the Renaissance period<sup>65</sup>; not to mention that has appeared paradoxical that a new cryptic symbolism pervading the whole nature could be formulated in the “very moment when religious art was anxious to broaden its basis and appeal to wider circles”<sup>66</sup>. In consequence, the inclusion of animal depictions in religious paintings has been generally treated as a peripheral issue and in fact regarded as the symptom of a naturalistic inclination typical of the Renaissance period, especially of the Venetian and Netherlandish schools<sup>67</sup>. As it might be expected, however, animal symbolism has had its own advocates. With regard to the Venetian context, the work, among others, of John V. Fleming, Bernard Aikema, Augusto Gentili, and Simona Cohen, has focused on the spiritual and moralistic implications of animal imagery which, ultimately, has resulted in the attempt to demonstrate the assimilation, and conscious appropriation, of medieval symbolism in Renaissance visual culture by artists of the likes of Giovanni Bellini, Vittore Carpaccio, Jacopo Bassano, Titian and many others<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> C. Harbison (2005), p. 380.

<sup>65</sup> Simona Cohen, *Animals as Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art*, Leiden-Boston, Brill Academic Publishers, 2008, p. 144.

<sup>66</sup> O. Pächt (1956), pp. 275-276.

<sup>67</sup> C. Harbison (2005), pp. 378-406; Simona Cohen, “Review Essay: Animal Imagery in Renaissance Art”, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 67 (2014), pp. 164-180.

<sup>68</sup> John V. Fleming, *From Bonaventure to Bellini. An essay in Franciscan exegesis*, Princeton (New Jersey), Princeton University Press, 1982; Bernard Aikema, *Jacopo Bassano and His Public. Moralising pictures in the Age of Reform ca. 1535-1600*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996; A. Gentili (1996); Augusto Gentili, *La bilancia dell'arcangelo. Vedere i dettagli nella pittura veneziana del Cinquecento*, Roma, Bulzoni Editore, 2009; S. Cohen (2008). See also: Eugenio Battisti, “Le origini religiose del paesaggio veneto [1980]”, *Venezia*

Building on this scholarship, this thesis seeks to expand the debate to the specific case of Giovanni Mansueti whose extensive resort to animal depiction has been accused to result in a “menagerie let loose”<sup>69</sup>. My analysis firstly centres on the interpretation of Mansueti’s atypical *Flight Into Egypt* in Burano in the light of the literal account provided by the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna*. The study not only demonstrates, as already stated, a surprising affinity between the text and the picture, but it also uses natural symbolism to link Mansueti’s iconography with the Apocrypha’s imagery. This undeniable correspondence has manifold ramifications. First of all, it documents that a fifteenth-century vernacular Apocrypha, whose popularity is clearly attested by the several editions published throughout the last two decades of the fifteenth-century in Venice, contained precise reference to medieval bestiaries and their moralized sources. This is the case, for example, of the eschatological symbolism attached to the so-called *scenting panther*, the origin of which can be easily traced back to *Physiologus* and the tradition that it triggered, and its circulation in Renaissance Venice is witnessed by the Franciscan friar Francesco Suriano. Secondly, it demonstrates how Mansueti’s animals were not work of a naïve painter, but they were used to convey a series of well decoded meanings undoubtedly shared by his public – we should admit that whoever commissioned Mansueti to paint such an unprecedented version of the *Flight into Egypt* was deeply aware of the symbolism that it involved. Finally, Mansueti’s conscious use of animal symbolism sheds new light on his late production, notably on his work for the *Scuola di San Marco*. If the example of the *Baptism of Anianus* (fig. 76) is self-evident – no one, I assume, would object that depicting a child keeping a swallow on the leash (fig. 122) must harbour symbolic allusions – the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark* (fig. 74) meets exactly the case.

On the right-hand side of the scene Mansueti has painted a curious set of three animals consisting of a deer, a leopard and a bear. Although positioned

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*Cinquecento*, 2 (1991), pp. 9-26; Herbert Friedmann, *A Bestiary for Saint Jerome. A Symbolism in European Religious Art*, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institute Press, 1980; Jane C. Nash, *Veiled Images. Titian’s Mythological Painting for Philip II*, Philadelphia-London-Toronto, Art Alliance Press, 1985; Rona Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989; Ronald Lightbown, *Carlo Crivelli*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2004.

<sup>69</sup> Emma G. Salter, *Nature in Italian Art: A study of landscape backgrounds from Giotto to Tintoretto*, London, Adam & Charles Black, 1912, p. 4

in a privileged portion of the painting, scholars have invariably avoided investigating the three animals whether with regard to their function as exotic ingredients included to endorse a documentary portrayal of the Mamluk Court, or in the light of the symbolism that the author might have attached to them. With regard to the former option, the comparison with a truthful representation of a contemporary Islamic city pictured in *The Reception of the Venetian Ambassadors in Damascus* (fig. 109) surely sets a positive precedent. The painting features a stag and a doe facing each other in a busy square in Damascus; none of the numerous characters, both Venetians and natives, appears to pay attention to the curious rendezvous as if the presence of the two wild animals roaming loose was an ordinary encounter in those days. Supposing, then, but not granting, that in Renaissance Syria stags were allowed to wander around in the cities, it is hard to believe that, as in the case of Mansueti's *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark*, ferocious animals such as leopards and bears could be entitled to the same liberty. In other words, we should admit that their presence does not perform any documentary function, and as such it requires careful examination. This example indicates that the symbolic interpretation of Mansueti's peculiar wildlife is not due to the attempt of pursuing at all costs an abstruse symbolism hypothetically disguised by the artist in his painting. On the contrary, the case of the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark* demonstrates the need to regard animal symbolism as an integral feature of Mansueti's artistic language: an expressive device that we must consider in order to reassess the real value of his work.

Revaluing Giovanni Mansueti's work cannot evade engaging in Venetian Orientalist Painting, mostly because of my proposed new reading of the narrative cycle for the *Scuola Grande di San Marco* (Chapter 3). Since Raby's study on the *Ottoman and Mamluk Modes*<sup>70</sup>, numerous scholars have increasingly become involved with such a fascinating subject, eventually resulting in a better understanding of the painters who contributed to this. Raby, notably, was the first who unveiled the Venetian extensive knowledge of both Ottoman and Mamluk clothing, garment and headgear, the latter even identified as the very feature employed to characterize and distinguish various ethnic groups and hierarchical ranks. A study that, after all, not only helped

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<sup>70</sup> Julian Raby (1982).

Venetianists to build up an accurate vocabulary, but which has in fact provided a valuable frame of formal reference and visual sources.

The first, tangible repercussion of Raby's work can be found, once again, in Fortini Brown's study of Venetian narrative painting<sup>71</sup>. Although perfunctory in historical contextualization, the analysis brings to the fore two crucial issues: the painters' conscious indifference towards "authentic middle-eastern architecture", and the concurrent use of headgear and custom to provide "authentic-looking" Mamluk figures<sup>72</sup>. An intuition only recently investigated in its cultural ramification by Bronwen Wilson, where costume is "charged with articulating geographical differences"<sup>73</sup>. Additionally, Fortini Brown also analyses in detail Gentile and Giovanni Bellini's *Preaching of St Mark*, providing concrete evidence of whether first hand and indirect sources influenced their personal version of Alexandria.

More recently, the investigation of the relationships that existed between Venice and the East has provided an historic frame necessary to comprehend the origins, whether visual or literary, of the Eastern motifs portrayed in the Venetian cycles. Remarkable in this respect is the work of Rosamond E. Mack, but less concerning her brief discussion of the Venetian Orientalism, and more on the wide range of luxury goods that the two cultures ended up sharing through the means of bilateral trading<sup>74</sup>. As claimed by Oleg Grabar, Mack's section on *The Pictorial Arts* unfortunately contains quite disappointing results, for it asserts that "Orient as subject matter" was not common in Italian painting, but was indeed limited to "a small number of Venetian paintings"<sup>75</sup>. A situation well-known to Mack herself, whose introduction of the volume warns the reader of how the "continuous commercial and diplomatic contacts [...] contributed little to the Italian

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<sup>71</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 68-69, 196-216.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>73</sup> Bronwen Wilson, "Reflecting on the Turk in late sixteenth-century Venetian portrait books", *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*, 19 (2003), pp. 38-58. See also Bronwen Wilson, *The World in Venice. Print, the City, & Early Modern Identity*, Toronto, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto Press, 2005, pp. 70-132.

<sup>74</sup> Rosamond E. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza. Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2002.

<sup>75</sup> Oleg Grabar, "Venice's Mediterranean Colonies: Architecture and Urbanism by Maria Georgopoulou; Venice and the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 1100-1500 by Deborah Howard; Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West by Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton; Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600 by Rosamund Mack", *The Art Bulletin*, 85 (2003), pp. 189-192.

understanding of the Oriental world”<sup>76</sup>. A circumstance probably derived, Grabar observes, from the very nature of those connections, in fact “commercial, not cultural”, and which eventually resulted in affecting “the arts only superficially”<sup>77</sup>. In conclusion Grabar poses a quite constructing question, asking what, if not trade, “can explain the obvious presence of so many features of Islamic origin in Italian art of the Renaissance”<sup>78</sup>. A question that, as far as Venetian art is concerned, I believe should be nonetheless reversed, enquiring into the cultural and ideological implications of such trading connections, and defining what we shall therefore include in the notion of commercial relationship itself.

Such a crucial question has found a substantial response in Deborah Howard’s *Venice & the East*. Howard has examined the “exploration of subjectivity [and the] mentality of the Venetian travellers” – whether merchants or pilgrims – “and the way they reacted to the built environment of the East”; a remarkable study which has introduced the concept of *cultural transfer* to decipher the “assimilation of eastern characteristics into Venice’s visual culture”<sup>79</sup>. Howard’s approach is not equally novel when dealing with pictorial Orientalism, notably in her essay *Venice, the Bazaar of Europe* for the exhibition catalogue for *Bellini and The East*. On this occasion the accurate analysis of the commercial relationships between Venice and the East leads only to a brief enumeration of oriental elements and well-known sources, whereas the “issue of the religious divide”, although raised, remains nonetheless unanswered<sup>80</sup>. And quite similar are the conclusions of Caterina Schmidt Arcangeli in the subsequent catalogue *Venice and the Islamic World*, where the introductory highly-detailed essay on the connections between the Mamluks and the Venetians is unfortunately unexploited<sup>81</sup>. And yet, Howard

<sup>76</sup> R.E. Mack (2002), p. 14.

<sup>77</sup> O. Grabar (2003), p. 190.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 191.

<sup>79</sup> Deborah Howard, *Venice & the East. The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 1100-1500*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2000, pp. xiv.

<sup>80</sup> Deborah Howard, *Venice, the Bazaar of Europe*, in *Bellini and The East*, exhibition catalogue (Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 14 December 2005 – 26 March 2006; London, National Gallery 12 April 2006 – 25 June 2006), ed. by Caroline Campbell and Alan Chong, Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 12-35, especially pp. 24-25, 28-31.

<sup>81</sup> Deborah Howard, *Venice and the Mamluks*, in *Venice and the Islamic World 828-1797*, ed. by Stefano Carboni, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006 b, pp. 72-89; Caterina Schmidt Arcangeli, “Orientalist” Painting in Venice, 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries, in *Venice and the Islamic World 828-1797*, ed. by Stefano Carboni, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 120-139.

outlined all the relevant evidence: an historical portrayal of the Mamluk society, a documented reconstruction of the commercial contacts with the Venetians from the fall of Acre (1291), and, finally, a brief re-adaptation of her concept of *cultural transfer* through the analysis of trade, diplomacy and pilgrimage. Given such a comprehensive introduction, Schmidt Arcangeli's essay is surprisingly disappointing. Her investigation of the formal origin of the *Orientalist Mode*, located in the sketchbooks of Jacopo Bellini and the list of exotic goods portrayed by the Venetian artists appears quite useless. And even less stimulating is the shallow analysis devoted to the narrative Orientalist cycles. Described as "Venetian representations of the Islamic world", the analysis is confined to an evaluation of the accuracy of Syro-Egyptian costumes which only rarely goes beyond a formalist approach. Schmidt Arcangeli appears to be fully aware about the "explicit religious-political significance" of setting Venetian saints' lives in Mamluk Egypt, and yet such a decisive issue remains inexplicably ignored<sup>82</sup>.

Expanding upon the theoretical contribution of the aforementioned studies, my dissertation intends to investigate the Venetian *Orientalist Mode* as a cultural, rather than stylistic, phenomenon. What previous scholars seem to have forgotten is the fact that those narrative cycles, before being visual proof of a precise society, were devotional images. Their commission, iconographic design and final arrangement were the result of a precise negotiation between the patron and the painter in order to achieve a purposive effect. The final product, although necessarily required to fulfil criteria of formal credibility, was primarily intended to meet precise religious expectations of its patron and, concurrently, to exorcise fears and anxieties generated by external, unmanageable contingencies (e.g. trade conflicts with Mamluks). The documented knowledge of Ottoman and Mamluk costumes, and their prominent inclusion in the narrative cycles between the 1490s and 1520s, should therefore be read in the light of two mandatory issues: the commercial relations and recurring conflicts between the *Serenissima* and the Islamic World, and the ideological implications of having as commercial partners a Muslim counterpart. If, as Fortini Brown and Schmidt Arcangeli suggested, those narrative cycles epitomize the unique Venetian representations of the

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<sup>82</sup> C. Schmidt Arcangeli (2006), p. 128.

East, my research focuses on those representation as visual projections of the Venetian understanding of the *other*. Why should a society so deeply involved with the Levantine trade suddenly decide to represent its commercial associate as the very tormentors of St Mark? What sort of religious-political significance shall we attribute to a narrative cycle where the evangelic mission of Venice's Holy Patron is set at the Mamluk court? And, finally, what were the contextual motives that prompted the depiction of the Mamluks' conversion?

### ***Organization***

My dissertation isolates two antithetic and therefore complementary case studies – their narrative vocation and Oriental tendency being the only common denominator.

Chapter 1 analyses Mansueti's three small panels on the *Life of the Virgin* at the church of San Martino (Burano). The first purpose of the chapter is to identify whether the three panels were originally hung in the church of San Martino, or if they were instead part of a private collection that subsequently passed to the church itself. Thanks to an archival survey carried out at the Archivio Parrocchiale of the church of San Martino, the analysis intends to demonstrate that the paintings were in fact private devotional objects with no attachment to any of the chapels of the church, nor with any of the relics there originally treasured.

Secondly, building upon Miller's and Ettore Merkel's researches<sup>83</sup>, this study investigates the paintings in light of their literary sources, notably Apocryphal literature. Unlike previous studies, however, the discussion does not refer to the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, itself a useful but inevitably generic source, but makes use of the Apocrypha published in Venice by the end of the fifteenth century. In this respect, instead of employing the over-used *Legenda Aurea*, the paintings are interpreted through the vernacular *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna*, originally printed in Bologna in 1474, but widely accessible in Venice since 1480. The aim of the discussion is to reproduce the religious context in which the paintings were most likely

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<sup>83</sup> S. Miller (1978), pp. 91, 112 notes 109-112; Ettore Merkel, *Le storie di Maria e dell'infanzia di Cristo di Giovanni Mansueti nella chiesa di San Martino in Burano*, in *Per l'arte da Venezia all'Europa. Studi in onore di Giuseppe Maria Pilo*, a cura di Mario Piantoni e Luca De Rossi, Monfalcone, Edizioni della Laguna, 2001, pp. 143-147.

conceived, and to investigate how they reflected, and visually supported, their donors' spirituality and devotional practices. It will be the comparison between the Apocryphal sources and their pictorial versions that will bring to light their devotional function; and, concurrently, it will be the analysis of the canvases as visual translation of spiritual activity and private meditation that will eventually unveil the religious purposes of their donors.

Finally, given that both the *Nativity* and the *Flight into Egypt* present plenty of Oriental figures crowding their backgrounds, the research discusses Giovanni Mansueti's accuracy in reproducing Mamluk clothing and headgear. The analysis is intended as an introduction to Mansueti's works for the cycle of the *Scuola Grande di San Marco* (Chapter 3). An introduction which is not restricted to the textual and figurative sources that animated Mansueti's repertoire, but which includes a discussion of the contextual motives that prompted the inclusion of contemporary Mamluks in the scenes of the *Life of the Virgin* set in the Veneto mainland.

The last two Chapters function in double harness, the first being the contextual integration of the latter.

Chapter 2 provides a close analysis of the *Banca* of the *Scuola Grande di San Marco*, with the manifest intent to re-evaluate the bureaucratic mechanisms involved in the art patronage. Building upon the work of Brian Pullan and Richard Mackenney, with even more emphasis on Philip Sohm's and William Wurthmann's work<sup>84</sup>, Section 2.II re-examines the complicated commissioning system in view of the role played by the *Quattro Capi di Banca* and the group of *Trenta huomeni* – the latter being a group of crucial relevance whose deliberations have been misinterpreted in previous studies. The analysis makes use of archival documentation in order to establish the criteria employed to select the *Trenta huomeni*, but also to determine who was in charge to summon it, when the group was expected to meet, and, finally, what was its juridical province within art patronage. Archival evidence is then used to outline the portrayal of a standard *Provedadore sopra la Fabbrica*, namely the

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<sup>84</sup> Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice. The Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1971; Richard Mackenney, *Tradesmen and Traders. The World of the Guilds in Venice and Europe, c. 1250 – c. 1650*, London & Sydney, Croom Helm, 1987; P. Sohm (1982); William B. Wurthmann, *The Scuole and Venetian Art, 1260-C. 1500*, Chicago, The University of Chicago, the Faculty of the Division of the Humanities, PhD dissertation, 1975; William B. Wurthmann, "The Council of Ten and the *Scuole Grandi* in Early Renaissance Venice", *Studi Veneziani*, XVIII (1989), pp. 15-66.

officer usually appointed to superintend the execution and completion of art projects. The discussion provides a unique case study on the election of two *Provedadori* after Giovanni Bellini's commission for the *Martyrdom of St Mark* (1515). An investigation that accurately documents not only the substantial consistency between the commission of the painting and the election of its superintendents, but which even produces the identity and role of the officers who took part in such major art patronage.

Section 2.III constitutes a documented investigation of the men who monopolized the *Scuola*'s power and activities during the first thirty years of the Cinquecento – an analysis which finds its methodological model in Elena Maria Massimi's article on the *Scuola di San Rocco*<sup>85</sup>. The survey, based upon a series of archival documents (e.g. *Mariegola*, Officer Register and various testaments) and secondary evidence (e.g. several chronicles and Giuseppe Tassini's *Cittadini Veneziani*), investigates the *cursus honorum* of the most important officials of the confraternity and, concurrently, it considers their roles within the wider context of the Venetian society. The aim of this section is to demonstrate how a set of *cittadini originari* used their economic wealth and interclass connections to take over control of the *Banca* of the *Scuola Grande di San Marco* in the very years when the juridical recognition of their social status was in the making.

The survey follows a pyramidal structure. The first two sections (2.III.a-b) examine the crucial cases of Jacopo Dardani and Vittore Ziliol who, according to their unchallenged status within the *Scuola* and the sizeable support of their relatives, are indicated as the prime inspirers and advocates of the narrative cycle. Following the commissions' chronological order as established by Peter Humfrey<sup>86</sup>, the two following sections (2.III.c-d) discuss the social components of the *Quattro Capi di Banca* who commissioned the paintings in 1504, 1515, 1518, 1525 and 1533 – with the only exception of the *Banca* that ordered the *Sea Storm* canvas, whose hypothetical identification is suggested at the end of Section 3.V.a. The analysis aims to document how at the *Scuola Grande di San Marco* power was controlled by a limited group of people, associated by kinship or mutual interest, who supported and influenced

<sup>85</sup> Maria Elena Massimi, "Jacopo Tintoretto e i confratelli della Scuola di San Rocco. Strategie culturali e committenza artistica", *Venezia Cinquecento*, 9 (1995), pp. 5-169.

<sup>86</sup> P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 226-227 note 3.

the execution of the entire narrative cycle.

Section 2.IV develops and arguments the existence of a restricted oligarchy at the lead of the *Scuola Grande di San Marco*. The first part demonstrates how the members of this oligarchy had, in the majority of the cases, concurrent economic interests in Venetian maritime trade, being in fact directly involved with the goods imported from, or exported to, the Egyptian markets. The second part of this section provides two case studies aimed at contextualizing, within the *Scuola's* art patronage, what I define as the *centralization of power*. Mirroring the description of the commission procedure of Giovanni Bellini's *Martyrdom* (1515), the first case reconstructs the striking events that led to Giovanni Mansueti's first commission (1518). An analysis which not only unfolds the revealing relation of powers within the *Banca*, but which also proves how most of the officers in charge at the time of Bellini's commission were in fact able to influence, directly or indirectly, even the decision of the group of *Trenta huomeni* in 1518. The second case study, the commission of a new processional banner in 1525, serves the purpose of validating the existence of the proposed oligarchy by showing how the same group of officers consistently attended the meetings of the *Trenta huomeni* through an extended period of time.

Chapter 2 expands upon Isabella Botti's article on Giovanni and Gentile Bellini's *Preaching of St Mark in Alexandria*<sup>87</sup>. Given the commercial interest in the Alexandrine market of a number of the members of the *Scuola*, as well as their direct involvement in the successful stipulation of a new commercial treaty with the Mamluks, Botti has been able to identify the historical motives that prompted the execution of the painting. Notably, she has demonstrated how the *Scuola's* membership visualized the oratorical and persuasive power of St Mark to allegorise, and thus celebrate, the recent achievements of the *Serenissima's* trade policy. As widely discussed in the introduction of the following chapter (3.I), Botti's analysis is regarded not only as the methodological approach to follow, but it in fact stands for an ideal prelude to my reading of the entire narrative cycle. Given the thoroughness of her interpretation, and the recent relative failure to supplement her achievements<sup>88</sup>,

<sup>87</sup> Isabella Botti, "Tra Venezia e Alessandria: i teleri belliniani per la Scuola Grande di San Marco", *Venezia Cinquecento*, 2 (1992), pp. 33-73.

<sup>88</sup> Monica Adele Shenouda, *The Image of Alexandria in Renaissance Venice*, University of

Chapter 3 does not provide any independent consideration of *St Mark Preaching in Alexandria*. The crucial role of the *Preaching* in shaping the cycle is extensively considered, however, whether as an ideal manifesto of the *Sala dell'Albergo*'s iconographical program, or with regard to its semantic reverberations on isolated paintings such as Mansueti's *Healing and Baptism of Anianus* (3.V.c-d).

Chapter 3 offers a discussion of the visual symbolism and devotional purposes of the narrative cycle of the *Scuola Grande di San Marco* never attempted before. The aim of the chapter is to challenge the current understanding of the cycle, itself regarded as fragmentary, if not even void of a coherent iconographical program and consistent arrangement. The investigation follows the chronological sequence of the commissions rather than the thematic order. Such an analytical structure, purposely meant to mirror the salient historical events of the first three decades of the sixteenth-century, is designed to outline the contextual motives that prompted the inception of every single canvas. Accordingly, the *Sea Storm* and the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* frame, chronologically as well as ideally, the beginning and the end of the analysis. Given its function of epilogue to the chapter, the second episode of the *Legend of the Fisherman* is followed by an iconological interpretation of the entire cycle in the light of historical events that profoundly shook the Venetians' convictions, and consciences, at the beginning of the 1510s (3.V.f).

Every section is divided into three subsets. The first appraises the iconography of the paintings, which are described in relation to their visual references and narrative sources. As already mentioned, the study essentially refers to Symeon the Metaphrast's *Martyrium sancti Marci apostoli et evangelistae*, however, its reading is recurrently supplemented by Venetian hagiographies (e.g. the *Legendae Sanctorum* of the Basilica, and Lorenzo Giustiniani's *Devoti sermoni delle solennità de Santi*) and Jacopo de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*. The introductory discussion is then followed by an historical section purposely meant to frame the paintings in view of the circumstances that most likely led to their commission. The intent of this section is to describe the Venetian perspective of the events. Whenever possible, therefore, the historical reconstructions are based upon the eyewitness accounts of the

members of the *Scuola Grande di San Marco* itself. The final part of any section is then devoted to the interpretation of the meanings of the pictures. The analysis makes use of the *Scuola*'s specific reactions to historical incidents to gain access to the very purposes of the paintings. Theoretically, the paintings are therefore intended as the result of their donors' response to the unmanageable effects of the external world on their lives. Empirically, such a contextual analysis also offers the opportunity to re-evaluate the iconography of the paintings in light of the concrete contribution, cultural as well as practical, of the painters. In this regard, the visual alteration of the literary sources, if related to the historical events that marked their design, eventually unfolds not only the real sense of the pictures, but in fact provides evidence about the design process itself. Accordingly, this research considers the visual modifications of accepted codes as symptoms of a profound dialogue between the painter and his donors, where the aspirations of the latter are in fact interpreted and projected by the ability of the former.

With regard to Giovanni Mansueti, finally, the deciphering of the allegorical structure of the narrative cycle offers the priceless opportunity to compare his iconographic solutions with those invented by his esteemed colleagues. The aim of this section is therefore the evaluation of Mansueti's personal artistry in constructing pictures, his ability in negotiating between literary sources and the donors' devotional requirements. As stated at the beginning of this introduction, the dissertation is not concerned with formalist examination and stylistic assessment. If, as Miller put it, Mansueti's numerous commissions "would suggest that his paintings were sought after by the Venetian patrons"<sup>89</sup>, it is principal ambition of this research to re-evaluate Giovanni Mansueti's artistic success according to his proficiency in fitting into a prearranged series, his personal talent in contributing to, and indeed elaborating on, the specific goals of the narrative cycle as a whole.

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<sup>89</sup> S. Miller (1978), p. 102.

## 1. *THE LIFE OF THE VIRGIN AND THE CHILD AT BURANO*

### 1.1. Introduction: Criticism Overview

Usually assessed in light of his contribution to the cycles of the Venetian *Scuole Grandi* and *Piccole*, Mansueti's distinctive narrative vocabulary has been hardly investigated<sup>90</sup>. Great efforts have been made to study his work against the backdrop of the contemporary masters', and, as a consequence, in emphasizing his chronic delay in absorbing Cinquecento stylistic achievements<sup>91</sup>. If, as was anticipated in the introduction, previous analyses have delineated a painter of minor standing, the aim of this study is to clear the field of preconceptions and develop alternative criteria to re-address Mansueti's work. In doing so, this chapter discusses a little-known cycle on the *Life of the Virgin and the Child* that Mansueti depicted at the beginning of the sixteenth-century. A cycle that, although fragmentary, in fact outlines what I consider to be Mansueti's concrete strengths: a conscientious insight into the narrative source, a purposive selection of meaningful iconographic options, a surprising ability to conceive allegorical structures and, finally, a remarkable talent for tailoring pictures to the unique devotional requirements of his patrons. Ultimately, this case study is meant to act as introduction to Mansueti's narrative painting, notably his work at the *Scuola Grande di San Marco*<sup>92</sup>. The intention is to establish the theoretical preconditions to re-evaluate Mansueti's substantial contribution to that narrative cycle, and, on a larger scale, to explain how such a "little master"<sup>93</sup> was eventually able to become one of the most acclaimed narrative painters of his time<sup>94</sup>.

In San Martino (Burano), at the far end of the right aisle, are displayed three small canvases featuring, respectively, *The Betrothal of the Virgin*, *The Nativity with Shepherds* and *The Flight into Egypt* (figs. 10-12). Marco Boschini was the first who attempted an attribution, relating the paintings to some unknown pupil "della scuola di Giovanni Bellino" (1664, 1674); a

<sup>90</sup> S. Miller (1978), pp. 77-115; E. Merkel (2001), pp. 143-147; G. Matino (2010), pp. 5-34.

<sup>91</sup> P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 225-242; P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 152-156, 200-203; D. Howard (2006 b), pp. 24-25; C. Schmidt Arcangeli (2006), pp. 126-129.

<sup>92</sup> Henceforth *SGSM*.

<sup>93</sup> S. Miller (1978), pp. 77-115.

<sup>94</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 64.

proposition still accepted in the following century when Anton Maria Zanetti judged them as “cose belle della maniera de’ Bellini” (1773)<sup>95</sup>. The attribution to the Bellinis and their circle had great support in the nineteenth-century<sup>96</sup> – with the only exception of Giannantonio Moschini, who in turn leaned to Vittore Carpaccio’s authorship<sup>97</sup>. Nonetheless, it was thanks to Cavalcaselle and Crowe that the paintings, although valued unimportant, damaged and dirty, were eventually given to “the style of Mansueti and his school”<sup>98</sup>. Since then, the three little canvases have been accepted as autograph examples of Mansueti’s mature corpus by scholars such as Van Marle and Miller; an attribution definitively confirmed by Ettore Merkel who, after having superintended their latest restoration, published the only study currently available on the Burano paintings<sup>99</sup>.

Before delving into their fascinating iconographies, I consider it crucial to investigate their long (and troubled) relation to the church, mostly on the grounds of lack of information regarding the actual donors of the canvases. Extant evidence suggests that over the centuries the three paintings were gradually reduced in status from important devotional images to little more than decorative objects. At the time of Boschini the paintings were described as “tre quadretti posticci” – an adjective, *posticci*, which openly declares their transitory condition<sup>100</sup>. Subsequently, the canvases were repeatedly moved around the building, changing places and, I assume, becoming dissociated from their original religious function. Sometime between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, they were moved from the left wall of the main chapel to the right side of it<sup>101</sup>. Then, the sequence was broken and the images were displayed separately for almost a century: *The Betrothal of the Virgin* resided

<sup>95</sup> Marco Boschini, *Le miniere della pittura veneziana*, In Venetia, Appresso Francesco Niccolini, MDCLXIV, p. 552; Marco Boschini, *Le ricche miniere della pittura veneziana*, In Venetia, Appresso Francesco Niccolini, MDCLXXIV, p. 44; A.M. Zanetti (1733), p. 462.

<sup>96</sup> *Il fiore di Venezia ossia i quadri, i monumenti, le vedute ed i costumi veneziani rappresentati in incisioni eseguite da abili artisti ed illustrati da Ermolao Paoletti*, vol. I, Venezia, Tommaso Fontana Editore, 1837, p. 129; Pietro Selvatico, *Guida artistica e storica di Venezia e delle Isole circonvicine*, Venezia-Milano-Verona, P. Rigamonti Carpamo, 1852, p. 286; Francesco Zanotto, *Nuovissima guida di Venezia*, Venezia, Presso Gio. Brizeghel Tip. Lit. Editore, 1856, pp. 688-689; Pompeo Molmenti and Renato Fulin, *Guida artistica e storica di Venezia e delle isole circonvicine*, Venezia, Antonelli, 1881, p. 445.

<sup>97</sup> Giannantonio Moschini, *Guida per la città di Venezia all’amico delle belle arti*, vol. II, Venezia, Alvisopoli, 1815, p. 450.

<sup>98</sup> G.B. Cavalcaselle and J.A. Crowe (1912), p. 225, note 1.

<sup>99</sup> R. Van Marle (1935), p. 198; S. Miller (1978), p. 91; E. Merkel (2001), pp. 143-147.

<sup>100</sup> M. Boschini (1664), p. 552; M. Boschini (1674), p. 44.

<sup>101</sup> A.M. Zanetti (1733), p. 462.

above the main entrance, whereas the other two canvases were displayed as a pair near the main chapel<sup>102</sup>. In 1931 the three canvases were finally reunited, at first displayed in the Sacristy<sup>103</sup> and then moved (1963) to the nearby Oratorio di Santa Barbara where they stayed up to the late 1980s<sup>104</sup>. Thereafter, they were once again brought back to the Sacristy where, apart from a temporary stint in the Cappella della Concezione in 1993<sup>105</sup>, they remained until the late 1990s<sup>106</sup>. Finally, they came to rest in their current location (but no longer in the correct narrative sequence) at the end of the right aisle<sup>107</sup>.

As demonstrated, following on from Boschini's description, the three paintings have increasingly become 'wandering' objects, mirroring an unquestionable misunderstanding and incomprehension of their original provenance and function. In this regard it is worth dwelling on Zanetti's account. While describing the main chapel of the church of San Martino, Zanetti noticed an unsuspected ensemble made by a *Massacre of the Innocents*, "d'autore moderno incerto", and Mansueti's three paintings<sup>108</sup>. The description offers an insight into the devotional priorities of San Martino's congregation, and emphasizes the common practice of assembling paintings of unrelated authors to fulfil contingent devotional functions. In 1773, among various cults for the parishioners, at San Martino there was that of the Innocents, whose

<sup>102</sup> P. Selvatico (1852), p. 286; F. Zanotto (1856), pp. 688-689; Archivio della Chiesa Parrocchiale di San Martino di Burano (henceforth ACPBu), *Visite pastorali b. 2* (= *Legati, Inventario chiesa-archivio*), b. *Quadri e preziosi*, 20 May 1900, nos. 6-8.

<sup>103</sup> ACPBu, Chiesa, *I inventario, II Restauri etc.*, b. *Restauri, Chiesa Parrocchiale di Burano, Quadri in Sacrestia (Novembre 1931)*; R. Van Marle (1935), p. 198; ACPBu, Chiesa, *I inventario, II Restauri etc.*, b. *Inventario Chiesa Parrocchiale (1939al 1960)*; Michelangelo Muraro, *Nuova guida di Venezia e delle sue isole*, Firenze, Edizioni Arnaud Firenze, 1953, p. 335; ACPBu, Chiesa, *I inventario, II Restauri etc.*, b. *Sacra Visita pastorale di sua Eminenza Reverendissima il Cardinale Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli Patriarca di Venezia*; ACPBu, *Visite pastorali b. 2* (= *Legati, Inventario chiesa-archivio*), b. *Patrimonio Parrocchiale + Pratiche varie* (1960); Giovanni Musolino, *Burano e il suo Pastore*, Venezia, Tipografia Veneta, 1962.

<sup>104</sup> ACPBu, Chiesa, *I inventario, II Restauri etc.*, b. *Prima Santa Visita Pastorale del Cardinale Patriarca Giovanni Urbani*, 30 October 1963; ACPBu, *Visite pastorali b. 2* (= *Legati, Inventario chiesa-archivio*), b. *Patrimonio Parrocchiale + Pratiche varie* (1966); Giulio Lorenzetti, *Venice and its Lagoon. Historical-Artistic Guide*, trans. by John Guthrie, Trieste, Edizioni Lint, 1985, p. 833; Giulio Lorenzetti, *Venezia e il suo estuario, guida storico-artistica*, Trieste, Edizioni Lint, 1988, p. 822.

<sup>105</sup> ACPBu, *Visite pastorali b. 2* (= *Legati, Inventario chiesa-archivio*), b. *Patrimonio Parrocchiale + Pratiche varie* (1993).

<sup>106</sup> *Tre itinerari culturali nel veneziano: La laguna. La storia e l'arte, le isole e il litorale dal Cavallino a Pellestrina*, vol. II, a cura di Camillo Semenzato, Venezia, Corbo e Fiore Editore, 1992, pp. 368-372; *Storia di Burano*, a cura di Mario De Biasi, Venezia, Associazione Artistica Culturale di Burano, 1994, p. 114.

<sup>107</sup> E. Merkel (2001), pp. 143-147. The cycle currently displays the *Nativity* followed by the *Betrothal of the Virgin* and the *Flight into Egypt*.

<sup>108</sup> A.M. Zanetti (1733), p. 462.

miraculous examples were hosted in the church at that time, and which may have stimulated the devotional circumstances that created the particular ensemble<sup>109</sup>. A pictorial pastiche that, in the last analysis, featured *The Massacre of the Innocent* as the major *pala*, whereas Mansueti's three canvases presumably made up a fictional *predella* showing episodes of the Holy Family implicitly related to the theme of the *Massacre*.

The new pictorial ensemble mentioned by Zanetti demonstrates that Mansueti's pictures, although emptied of their original function, remained valued by being absorbed into the visual culture of the living parish of San Martino. Conversely, it also shows that by the eighteenth century the religious congregation had lost any knowledge of both the devotional function and initial location of the paintings. Therefore, all things considered, it could be suggested that the paintings were placed in the church as a result of a pious legacy, and then became absorbed within the devotional life of the church. One example of such a donation comes from Mansueti's family, when his sister-in-law, Lucia Longini, who had married Mansueti's brother (Vittore), decided to bequeath her "quadro de la Trinita inzogiado" to the church of Santa Sofia (August 1534)<sup>110</sup>. As argued in the case of San Martino, Lucia left an image to a church which then needed to adapt it to its liturgic space and, accordingly, to its devotional practice.

Mansueti's three canvasses offer therefore an intriguing case study for the fate of a devotional inheritance from a private collection. And indeed the modest sizes of the canvases would strongly suggest a private provenance, since they do not fit with the usual dimension of an altarpiece or a *predella* panel<sup>111</sup>. However, before pursuing this path, it would be worth looking into a different opinion, especially because it was expressed by the only scholar who

<sup>109</sup> Archivio Storico del Patriarcato di Venezia (henceforth ASPVe), *Torcello, Visite pastorali*, b. 1-2 (1628), f. 56v; Flaminio Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello*, Padova, Giovanni Manfrè, 1758 (reprint, Sala Bolognese, Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1990, p. 601).

<sup>110</sup> Archivio di Stato di Venezia (henceforth ASVe), Notarile, Testamenti, Bianco Carlo, 80, no. 653 (in her second will, however, Lucia arranged to bequeath the painting to the "hospedal di San Zuanne e Polo"; 16 June 1545). Another example is provided by the case of the ducal secretary Simon Lando who left "tutti li suoi quadri di casa devoti" to the monastery of Santa Maria Maggiore "per adornamento della Cappella" on 2 January 1584 (Antonio Emmanuele Cicogna, *Delle Inscrizioni veneziane*, Venezia, Picotti, 1824-53 (anastatic edition, vol. III, Bologna, Forni Editore, 1982-83), p. 419). On the marriage between Vittore Mansueti and Lucia Longini see above p. 2 note 8.

<sup>111</sup> E. Merkel (2001), pp. 144-145.

has had the chance to examine the paintings from a privileged, closer viewpoint.

Merkel suggests that the three canvases formed a part of the original decoration of the church's organ pipe chest ("fronte di cantoria")<sup>112</sup>. A suggestion derived from the church inventory (25 May 1900)<sup>113</sup> and, probably, from the analysis of Cavalcaselle and Crowe, who briefly discussed the Burano canvases just after the description of two "organ shutters" and "four small pieces" in the Venetian church of San Giovanni Crisostomo<sup>114</sup>. It is unclear whether Cavalcaselle and Crowe mentioned Mansueti's pictures at Burano and San Giovanni Crisostomo to imply a common use or just to corroborate his authorship. However, once compared to the Burano canvases the "four small pieces" show certain iconographic elements that explicitly reject Merkel's argument. Because of the position of the choir, and thus their elevated view point, the works for San Crisostomo respond by featuring unelaborate compositions, bare settings and, what is more, a visible lack of concern with intricate detail. In stark contrast, the Burano pictures, with their lavish attention to detail, are explicitly designed to be carefully observed only from close-up. It is therefore unlikely that the three paintings at Burano could decorate the organ pipe chest of the church of San Martino.

Rejecting Merkel's proposal, we need to go back to the canvases and undertake a preliminary analysis to evaluate their formal uniformity and iconographic coherence. The three canvases measure approximately 80 x 135 cm, however *The Betrothal of the Virgin* and the *Nativity with Shepherds* appear to have been cut down at some point, and were originally larger<sup>115</sup>. The *Betrothal* is paradigmatic in this respect: the temple, placed behind the celebrating engagement, shows in fact only the lower part of its central niche and, in addition to that, the scene as a whole appears as a close-up of a bigger, rather than a completed painting. This hypothesis is supported by the analysis of the canvases that Mansueti painted for the *SGSM* (figs. 75-77), where the compositions, although more crowded, feature various buildings precisely

<sup>112</sup> The old organ was replaced during the twentieth-century (ACPBu, *Organo*, b. 175).

<sup>113</sup> ACPBu, *Visite pastorali b. 2* (= *Legati, Inventario chiesa-archivio*), b. *Quadri e preziosi*, no. 6: "Non si sa quale sia il posto originario di questo quadretto [*Betrothal*] come di quelli nelle schede 7 e 8 [...] Forse ornavano il parapetto di un organo".

<sup>114</sup> G.B. Cavalcaselle and J.A. Crowe (1912), p. 225, note 1. The two "organ shutters" and "four small pieces" are attributed to "Mansueti's mixed style between Carpaccio and Vivarini".

<sup>115</sup> E. Merkel (2001), pp. 144-145.

organized and measured by size and height, providing the balance and the structural organization of the pictures. Evidently, the *Betrothal* shows the same tidy architectural structure: a technical artifice rejected in both *The Nativity with Shepherds* and *The Flight into Egypt*. Such an iconographic heterogeneity, although far from definitive proof, would then suggest that the three canvases were not originally painted for the same pictorial cycle, but were rather items from different collections. A hypothesis also corroborated by Boschini's description ("tre quadretti posticci"), not to mention the uncommon diaspora they have suffered during the following centuries. Accordingly, I therefore strongly suggest that, after being donated to the church of San Martino, the three paintings were eventually put together due to their thematic, or even stylistic, affinity.

In this chapter I analyse the three canvases separately, looking for any evidence that could support, or confute, such a theory. It will be the comparison between the textual sources and their pictorial versions, namely the investigation of the religious context that produced the visual adaptations of the Apocrypha, which will bring to light, if any, the different purposes of the pictures, as well as the devotional concerns of their donors.

## 1.II. Joseph *Exemplum Virtutis: The Betrothal of the Virgin*

Mansueti has set *The Betrothal of the Virgin* (fig. 10) within a Renaissance church rather than an ancient temple: a neat space that partitions the scene into three different sections, while the inlaid floor measures the depth of the composition. The middle portion, where the priest is marrying Joseph and Mary, is designed as a classical chapel with four thin marble columns supporting the central niche; on both sides, silhouetted against the two lateral segments of the transept, three bridesmaids (right-hand side), three good men and a youth (left-hand side), witness the scene.

As already argued, Boschini attributed the *Betrothal* to some unidentified pupil of Giovanni Bellini, while in the following century Zanetti simplified the assumption, relating it to the generic Bellinesque school<sup>116</sup>. Mostly because of its peripheral location, the painting was rarely mentioned, with the exception of a few guides to the lagoon, which maintained its attribution to the school of the Bellinis, or even to Vittore Carpaccio<sup>117</sup>. Building upon such suggestions, Cavalcaselle and Crowe eventually put forward an attribution to Giovanni Mansueti, largely accepted since.<sup>118</sup>

The primary justification for such an attribution can, of course, be found within Mansueti's autograph oeuvre. If the compositional symmetry of the *Betrothal* draws on the *Allegorical Representation of the Trinity* (1492) as a precedent (fig. 1), it is indeed Mansueti's *Christ Among the Doctors* at the Uffizi (fig. 13)<sup>119</sup> that provides decisive evidence. The comparison shows great similarities not only in the harmonious design of the buildings rhythmically divided by round arches, but also in the use of identical marble columns and

<sup>116</sup> See above pp. 29-30.

<sup>117</sup> P. Selvatico (1852), p. 286; F. Zanotto (1856), pp. 688-689; Giambattista Albrizzi, *Forestierye Illuminato intorno le cose più rare, e curiose, antiche, e moderne della città di Venezia, e delle isole circonvicine*, In Venezia, MDCCXL (reprint, Sala Bolognese, Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1984, p. 319); *Il fiore di Venezia* (1837), p. 129.

<sup>118</sup> *La laguna di Venezia*, a cura di Giovanni Magrini, vol. I, Venezia, Treves-Treccani-Tumminelli, 1933, p. 48; R. Van Marle (1935), p. 198; M. Muraro (1953), p. 335; G. Musolino (1962); S. Miller (1978), p. 91; *Guida d'Italia. Venezia*, Milano, Touring Club Italiano, (III edition), 1985, p. 657; G. Lorenzetti (1985), p. 833; G. Lorenzetti (1988), p. 822; *Tre itinerari* (1992), p. 372; *Storia di Burano* (1994), p. 114; E. Merkel (2001), pp. 143-147; A. De Lillo (2008), pp. 159-160; G. Matino (2010), pp. 21-23.

<sup>119</sup> The first owner currently known is Niccolò Puccini who bought the painting in 1852. See: F. Heinemann (1965), pp. 150-152; B. Berenson (1957), p. 108; *Gli Uffizi. Catalogo generale*, a cura di Luciano Berti, Firenze, Centro Di, 1979, p. 364, no. P992; *Poesia d'interni. Capolavori dai depositi degli Uffizi (Firenze)*, Firenze, Giunti Editore, 2006, pp. 62-63; G. Matino (2010), pp. 19-22.

florid capitals. A compositional parallel that, I argue, strongly suggests a date for Mansueti's *Betrothal* near the execution of the *Christ Among the Doctors*, that is in the 1510s.

Beside the attribution and dating of the painting, I reckon it is crucial to investigate the textual source that most likely inspired the scene: a first step toward understanding the devotional culture of the donor, and the individual motives that led him to the commission of such a specific episode of the life of the Virgin. In this respect, Merkel has correctly argued that the description of *Betrothal of the Virgin* could be found in the Apocryphal *Protevangelium of James*<sup>120</sup>, or, we shall add, in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*<sup>121</sup>. Nonetheless, I believe that the analysis of the devotional books published in Venice by the end of the fifteenth century would better reflect the culture that in all likelihood influenced the picture under discussion.

Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, whose vernacular translation was made by Nicolò Manerbi<sup>122</sup>, has to be considered as a crucial source: an accessible hagiography that, between 1475 and 1518, was republished nineteen times by twelve different Venetian printers<sup>123</sup>. Contrary to all expectations, however, Voragine does not devote a separate chapter to the *Betrothal*, but rather places it within the narrative of *The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary*:

“When Mary was in her fourteenth year, the high priest publicly announced that the maidens who were reared in the Temple and had come of age should return to their homes and be legally joined with their husbands. The other girls obeyed this edict. Only the Blessed Virgin Mary answered that she could not do so, both because her parents had dedicated her to the service of the Lord and because she herself had vowed her virginity to God. [...]

A feast of the Jews was imminent, and he [the high priest] called the elders together to consult them. [...] They prayed earnestly, and the high priest went inside to consult the Lord. Presently a voice sounded from the Holies for all to hear. It said: ‘Each unmarried but

<sup>120</sup> E. Merkel (2001), p. 145. *Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, and Revelations*, trans. by Alexander Walker, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, MDCCCLXX, pp. 5-6.

<sup>121</sup> James Keith Elliot, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of the Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation Based on M.R. James*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993 (ed. 2005), pp. 88-89.

<sup>122</sup> Nicolao de Manerbi, *Incomincia el libro intitulato legendario de sancti composto per el reverendissimo patre frate Iacobo de Voragine de lordine de predicatori Archiepiscopo de Genoua*, 1494, Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (henceforth BNM), INC. V 437 (microfilm: 152-153).

<sup>123</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, translated by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols., Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993.

marriageable man of the house of David is to bring a branch to the altar. One of these branches will bloom and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove will perch upon its tip, according to the prophecy of Isaiah<sup>124</sup>. The man to whom this branch belongs is, beyond all doubt, the one who is to be the virgin's spouse.'

Joseph, of the house of David, was among the other men, but he seemed incongruous to him that a man of his advanced age should take so tender a young woman to wife, and he alone withheld his branch when the others placed theirs on the altar. So it was that nothing happened as the divine voice had predicted, and the high priest thought to consult the Lord a second time. The voice responded that the only man who had not brought his branch was the one to whom the virgin was to be espoused. Therefore Joseph brought his branch forward, it flowered at once, and a dove came from heaven and perched upon it. So it was clear to all that Joseph was to be Mary's husband"<sup>125</sup>.

Even more surprising is the fact that only a little part of Voragine's narrative fits with the scene depicted by Mansueti. In keeping with previous versions of the subject, such as Raphael's *Betrothal of the Virgin* in Brera (fig. 14), Mansueti in fact merged the two striking moments of the episode: the engagement, as the very subject of the painting, and Joseph's flowering rod, as the visual representation of God's will. By picturing the rod, Mansueti thus emphasized Joseph's divine destiny, his selection by the indisputable command of God ("The man to whom this branch belongs is, beyond all doubt, the one who is to be the virgin's spouse").

On the left portion of the painting three male characters are shown berating a younger man who is breaking his own fruitless branch. Here, Mansueti's version follows established iconographical models (e.g. Vittore Carpaccio's *Betrothal of the Virgin*; fig. 15), but it is worth remembering that Voragine omits this detail from his description. An alternative source for this episode is provided by another vernacular Apocrypha that enjoyed particular popularity in Venice where it was republished seven times between 1480 and 1500<sup>126</sup>. I am referring to the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna* where the

<sup>124</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible with The Apocrypha: King James Version*, ed. by David Norton, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, Isaiah 11: 1.

<sup>125</sup> J. de Voragine (1993), vol. 2, p. 153.

<sup>126</sup> Following the first edition (Bologna, Azoguidus, 1474, 10 December), the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna* was then published in Vicenza (Longus, 1477, 20 March; Vicenza, Achates, 1481, 23 October), and in Venice (Girardengus, 1480, 31 May; de Piasii, 1486, 18 March; Riccius, 1489, 18 August; Joannes Rubeus, 1492, 30 March; Tacuinus, 1493, 24 September; de Bonellis, 1499, 6 April; de Vitalibus, 1500, 21 December). See: *Appendices ad Hainii-Copingeri Repertorium Bibliographicum*, fascicle V, Milano, Gorlich Editore, 1953, p. CXXXI.

holy selection of Joseph is described as follows:

“La matina seguente subito viene una angelica voce in lo tempio la quale odendo tuto lo populo dixè: Io comando che tutti quelli del tribu di iuda masculi li quali non hanno moglie vui li faciati ragunare in lo tempio cun una vergella in mano: El pontificio debbia mettere tutte le vergelle in sancta sanctorum: la sequente matina se debia rendere a zascheduno la sua vergella in mano & a quello lo quale fiorira la verzella in mano siali data la verzene maria per sua sposa in guarda e in salvamento: [...] Ancora non era aparito alcuno segno: Alhora se vesti lo summo pontificio d’ le vestimente sancte sacerdotale & si entro in sacta sactorum cum solenne oratione & cum incenso mirra & aloe & altre odorifere specie divotamente orando e chiamando dio e pregando. Vene alhora una voce da cielo e dixè: Manchace uno da dio lo quale ancora non è venuto cun la sua vergella & e chiamato yoseph fiolo de jacobò homo iusto che teme dio. [...] Abitar pontificio lo vede da lonze suxo la porta e chiamalo altamente yoseph vieni a mi che tu sei aspectato: Alhora yoseph vergognose e timidamente se presento cum la sua vergella denanze al pontificio & andando yoseph la sua vergella se fiori nobilissimamente. Vedendo questo li maistri cum tuto lo populo ogne homo comenzo a laudare e glorificare lo altissimo dio de questo gratioso miracolo [...] Ora veduto per tutto lo populo [...] tuti comenzono a laudare dio e glorificarlo maravegliosamente dicendo a yoseph: Veramente tu sei amico e servo de dio: tu sei quello tutto perfecto e iusto e beato: [...] Havendo mostrato dio per ti così alto e gratioso miracolo: Et bene dicemo che tu se degno de essere acompagnato e de havere in tua guardia questa santa verzene tanto bella e tanto gratiosa e tanto virtuosa [...]

Alhora alcuni da quelli zudei antiqui e amici de dio e molti discreti li quali molto bene havevano cognosuto yoseph comenzono a laudare e commendare yoseph a li maistri del tempio presente tutto lo populo dicendo signori nui cognosemo questo yoseph per buono homo e sanctissimo e de bona conversatione e de boni costumi: Et sempre ha menato la sua vita honesta casta e virtuosa: ello se fu fratello de Cleophas loquale tolse Anna per sua moglie dietro a la morte de yoachim questo sie maistro de ligname & entro la sua arte e de la sua roba libere e misericordioso a li infermi a li poveri & a li tribulati visitandoli e confortandoli cum le lemosine e cum dolce sermoni tutto pieno de carita: Ello sa macerato lo suo corpo: dezunando vigilando orando lavorando e sempre ha observado li statuti e li comandamenti de la sancta lege de moyses. In lui non e vitio nessuno ma tutto virtuoso honesto mundo vergognoso humele paziente benigno pietoso reverente ad ogne homo mansueto e repossato: Unde non senza cassone laltissimo dio lha acompagnato de tal compagnia mostrando per lui si alti e si mafifesti miracoli. Dixè sancto Theofilo che li maistri del tempio oldita la vita e le sancte operatione de yoseph e veduto tanti & si alti miracoli elli li comandono e consontono chello dovesse receive maria per sua sposa<sup>127</sup>.

<sup>127</sup> *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna*, Stampato in Bologna in casa di Baldissera de li arciguidi a di dieci de dicembre MCCCCLXXIII, BNM, INC. 360 (= 41026), ff. 14r-15r.

The anonymous author pictures the episode quite vividly. When compared to the *Legenda Aurea* we can observe how the author of the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna* enlarges the episode by describing all its minute details, and, unexpectedly, by bringing the *populo* to the forefront. The *populo*, in other words, becomes a prominent performing entity; it gains a crucial function. It is the *populo*, after all, who personally recommend Joseph to the priest as a suitable candidate<sup>128</sup>. Considering its large and choral part in the narration, we can thus assume that the author employed the *populo* to endorse the miraculous flowering of Joseph's rod. In the author's mind, the *populo* is witnessing and authenticating Joseph's ethical conduct and moral values, all of which render Joseph the perfect candidate to safeguard Mary.

This unusual prominence of the *populo* distinguishes Mansueti's *Betrothal of the Virgin*. As I have already described, on the left portion of the picture the painter portrayed four male characters, all holding barren branches; we can spot three sober figures, all wearing Venetian common black berets (*berrette*), who have turned away from the ceremony itself, focusing their gaze instead on a colourfully dressed young man who is about to break his own rod in an ostentatious display of frustration. However, in the case of the Burano painting, that gesture goes far beyond signalling an unsuccessful suitor's frustration, for it rather brings into question the divine selection of Joseph. According to Giovanni Bonifacio, breaking the rod was in fact an open act of insubordination, it was meant to disempower somebody<sup>129</sup> who, in the case of the *Betrothal*, had to be identified as Joseph, or even as God himself.

In this context, it may be worth paying closer attention to the three good men beside the undisciplined youth: three portraits, I argue, of the supposed donors, whose restraint provides an example in contrast to the insubordination of the youth (fig. 16). If we look closer at the scene it can be observed that, while the two men who dress in brown robes are simply glaring severely at the youth, the one with long blonde hair and a red stole is censoring this inappropriate behaviour by raising his right hand; a gesture of blame that, if we

<sup>128</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 14v.

<sup>129</sup> *L'Arte de' Cenni con la quale formandosi favella visibile, si tratta della muta eloquenza, che non è altro che un facondo silentio*, di Giovanni Bonifacio, in Vicenza, Appresso Francesco Grossi, MDCXVI, p. 325.

pay more attention to the detail, is shared by the closest companion who has just entwined his arm. By expressing its disapproval, the moderate couple gives a moral lesson to the beholder, demonstrating the necessary observance of the divine precepts. Again though, the wise *populo* comes to the fore. On one side it allows the devout viewer the opportunity to meditate on the holy choice of Joseph, as well as on the infallibility of God's judgment, while on the other hand the *populo* also entrusts Joseph with the role of *exemplum virtutis*, the moral example to be followed.

In the absence of archival documents, the iconographic study of Mansueti's *Betrothal of the Virgin* has provided plenty of incidental evidence, even regarding the nature of its donors. First of all, by comparing it to its probable textual source, the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna*, we have been able to locate the very protagonist of the picture, and the moral lesson he was expected to teach. The vernacular Apocrypha has in fact unveiled the moral function that, in all likelihood, both the painter and his donors intended to attribute to St Joseph: the relevance of his humility, continence and commitment – a message clearly aimed at a male audience. In other words, Mansueti's *Betrothal of the Virgin* stated resolutely that Joseph, who not by chance wears the same colours as the intemperate young man – but revealingly inverted and devoid of the 'foolish' red and turquoise<sup>130</sup> – was the appropriate *exemplum* to follow. With the right path established, it thus became the beholder's responsibility to emulate Joseph's example of humility. The same humility that, as happened to the humble shepherds, would eventually lead to the contemplation of the *Nativity* of the Son of God.

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<sup>130</sup> *Della Mercatura e del Mercante Perfetto. Libri quattro di M. Benedetto Cotrugli Raueo, Scritti già più di anni CX. & hora dati in luce*, In Vinegia, all'Elefanta, MDLXXIII, ff. 89v-90r.

### 1.III. Joseph Faber Lignarius: *The Nativity with Shepherds*

Apparently more chaotic than the *Betrothal*, *The Nativity with Shepherds*<sup>131</sup> (fig. 11) maintains the same compositional structure. In the middle Mansueti has turned the traditional hovel into an austere wooden hut sheltering the Virgin, the Child, the ox and the ass. Given the function of this compositional hub, the hut has been surrounded by different characters and actions, thus dividing up the scene by means of space and time. Starting from the background, we can observe a series of events that have traditionally marked Christ's coming, namely its narrative introduction. Far in the distance, on the right, the divine birth is announced to the shepherds, whereas on the left, closer to the hut both by time and space, a procession of Oriental dignitaries, the Magi, are heading towards Christ's shelter. Finally, according to such spatial division, the *Adoration* is taking place in the foreground where, on the right, three shepherds are adoring the Child, whereas on the left, a man, wearing a brownish tunic dress, pairs up with the reflective Joseph.

As in the case of the *Betrothal*, Cavalcaselle and Crowe were the first to assign *The Nativity with Shepherds* to Giovanni Mansueti, and were then followed by other scholars<sup>132</sup>. Miller, for instance, has indicated a striking "similarity" between the Burano *Nativity* and a "signed painting of the same subject" in the Museo di Catelvecchio of Verona (fig. 17)<sup>133</sup>: a suggestion supported by both iconographic evidence, such as the riding Magi and the adoring shepherds, and compositional elements such as the structural organization of the picture<sup>134</sup>. More recently, Merkel has even tried to broaden the stylistic references, providing a list of versions among which he mentioned *The Nativity with Shepherds* now at the Gemäldegalerie of Berlin (fig. 18), a lost variant originally painted for the Castello di Collalto, Susegana (lost in 1917; fig. 19), and a third canvas at the Museo Civico of Padua (fig. 20)<sup>135</sup>. If the latter can hardly be related to Giovanni Mansueti's authorship, being in fact

<sup>131</sup> With regard to the title of the painting, in fact different from the usual *Adoration of the Shepherds*, see: Carolyn C. Wilson, *St. Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art. New Directions and Interpretations*, Philadelphia, Saint Joseph's University Press, 2001, pp. 27-28.

<sup>132</sup> *La laguna* (1933), vol. I, p. 48; R. Van Marle (1935), p. 198; M. Muraro (1953), p. 335; G. Musolino (1962); S. Miller (1978), p. 91; *Guida d'Italia* (1985), p. 657; G. Lorenzetti (1985), p. 833; G. Lorenzetti (1988), p. 822; *Tre itinerari* (1992), p. 372; *Storia di Burano* (1994), p. 114; E. Merkel (2001), pp. 143-147; A. De Lillo (2008), pp. 159-160.

<sup>133</sup> *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 304 no. 26 (catalogue entry).

<sup>134</sup> S. Miller (1978), p. 91.

<sup>135</sup> E. Merkel (2001), p. 144.

already attributed to Francesco dai Libri or to an anonymous Veronese painter<sup>136</sup>, the comparison to the signed panel in Berlin is instead more persuasive, since it features the same wooden shed (drawn in a precise linear perspective) as well as the compositional structure of the Burano's *Adoration*. Ultimately, this stylistic evidence corroborates the attribution of the Burano canvas to Giovanni Mansueti, and enables, inter alia, a dating of the painting to the 1510s.

According to the methodological approach already employed in the previous section, Mansueti's *Nativity with Shepherds* will now be evaluated in light of the Apocryphal literature on the theme, seeking a textual source that might have influenced its iconography. The analysis intends to highlight the devotional purposes, if not the identity, of the donor portrayed beside the newborn Christ, his personal contribution to the definition of the image. Aim of the discussion, together with the analysis of the cult of the shepherds, will be the privileged relationship that the donor establishes with Joseph.

Jacobus de Voragine, as Pseudo-Matthew<sup>137</sup>, briefly mentions *The Adoration of the Shepherds* within the description of the Nativity<sup>138</sup>. Furthermore, the narrative does not focus on the *Adoration* episode, neither does it describe it at all, whereas it only seeks to establish its veracity by drawing on the shepherds as embodiment of "the creatures possessed of reason and discernment". However, another passage of the *Legenda Aurea* provides a far more interesting description of the episode. I am referring to the *peregrinatio* into the Holy Land of St Paula, whose narration Voragine excerpted from St Jerome's letter:

"Next she went to Bethlehem and, entering the Savior's cave, saw the Virgin's sacred refuge; and in my hearing she swore that with the eyes of faith she saw the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, whimpering in the manger, the Magi adoring the Lord, the star shining overhead, the virgin mother, the watchful guardian, the shepherds coming in the night to see the word that had come to pass [...]"<sup>139</sup>.

Although in Paula's version the shepherds do not take the lead, the way she

<sup>136</sup> *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 304 no. 25 (catalogue entry).

<sup>137</sup> *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, in *Apocryphal Gospels* (1870), p. 33.

<sup>138</sup> J. de Voragine (1993), vol. 1, p. 41.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 121 note 1, 122.

describes the episode is of great interest. The *Nativity*, its venue as well as the different characters who take part in it, are accounted by terms of a vision (“with the eyes of faith she saw”): what in Renaissance times was seen as the result of spiritual activity and devout meditation<sup>140</sup>. Even more interesting is the fact that Paula’s vision features, together, the main characters painted by Giovanni Mansueti (fig. 11), vividly portraying the “Infant [...] whimpering in the manger” under the watchful eyes of both the Virgin and Joseph, and the “star shining overhead” while leading both the Magi and the shepherds to the miraculous venue. Even if sketchy, Paula’s description provides a colourful picture of the episode. More interestingly, Paula’s vision suggests how the devout readers would live out their faith, how their fervent minds, profoundly trained by devotional books and religious paintings, could reproduce pictures so deeply meditated.

The *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna* provides a wide-ranging description of *The Nativity with Shepherds*:

“Solome cum grande alegreza insi fora e comenzo a predicare como la mane si era siccata e como ella lhavea sanata uno citello lo quale nuovamente era nato da una verzene pura e sancta: A lo predicare de Solome si vene molti homini e femene e li pastori de le contrade diceano che videno li angeli alegrarse e glorificare dio dicendo che era nato yesu christo fiolo de dio per lo quale lo mundo sera salvato e sera restituito lo regno de ysrael: Ancora videmo heri una stella grande oltra misura lucente e forte splendente sopra la spelunca e duro lo spiandore del vespero fin a questa matina: La qual cosa bene significa la nativitate de si alto signore: Et a li pastori de le altre contrade guardando & procurando le sue bestie apparve una luce grandissima la quale tutti li circondava & in quella luce erano angeli splendidi li quali li diceano non temite e non dubitati: Nui ve anuntiamo alegreza solenne la quale sera cognosuta da tutti li populi per lo universo che in la cita de David sie nato lo salvatore de la humana generatione: E in signo de questo vui trovariti uno fantino invogliato (sic) in drapi e maria sua madre cum lui. Veduto li pastori e oldito questo se congregono e consigliono dicendo: Andemo fino a la cita de bethlem e vedemo se lo

<sup>140</sup> M. Baxandall (1988), pp. 40-56; Augusto Gentili, Marco Lattanzi and Flavia Polignano, *I Giardini di Contemplazione. Lorenzo Lotto, 1503/1512*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1985; Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, *The Madonna and Child, a host of saints, and domestic devotion in Renaissance Florence*, in *Revaluing Renaissance Art*, ed. by Gabriele Neher and Rupert Shepherd, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000, pp. 147-164; Donal Cooper, *Devotion*, in *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, exhibition catalogue (London, Victoria and Albert Museum 2006-2007) ed. by Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis, London, V&A Publications, 2006, pp. 190-202, especially pp. 202-203. See also *Specchio della fede hystoriado novamente impresso compilato da fra Roberto di leze vescovo di Aquileia*, in Venetia, per Bartolomeo de Zani da Portes, MCCCCCV.

vero quello che ce nuntiato che sia nato lo salvatore del mundo: Andando elli videno una stella forte resplandente sopra la spelunca. Alhora elli cognoveno che vero in quella spelunca e nato lo signore del cielo e de la terra: Entrono in la spelunca e trovano la madre cum lo fiolo invoieato cum li drapeselli. Alhora elli se inzenochiono e si ladorono come verace dio. Poi contono a la verzene maria la visione cum tutto zo che elli haveano odito: La verzene maria li dixe come suo fiolo era fiolo di dio nato de spirito sancto. Li pastori si se partino anuntiando per tutte le contrate lo fiolo de lo altissimo dio e salvatore del mundo e nato”<sup>141</sup>.

As in the case of the *Betrothal*, the narration is extremely accurate and vividly detailed. At first, the author introduces the shepherds through the description of the miracle of Salome’s withered hands: an anecdote used to demonstrate the virginity of Mary before, during and after the miraculous childbirth<sup>142</sup>. Secondly, the text mentions the star above the wooden hut that, according to Voragine’s version, the shepherds had to regard as the very proof of Christ’s Epiphany<sup>143</sup>. The following scene portrays a group of joyful angels who, surrounded by a supernatural light, are visiting the shepherds to announce the coming of the Lord. Then, spurred by the angels’ account, the shepherds decide to go to Bethlehem where they finally contemplate the Child under the shining star (“stella forte resplandente”). The shepherds, once again according to Voragine, have therefore the crucial function of witnessing the salvific birth and, more importantly, of spreading news of such a joyful Epiphany. A responsibility, it is worth emphasizing, which is emphatically shared by Joseph who, according to St Bernard of Clairvaux, was considered the first witness to the Incarnation<sup>144</sup>.

As I have previously described, the right-hand portion of Mansueti’s painting features two distinct events (fig. 21): in the background it portrays the *Annunciation to the Shepherds* whereas in the foreground it depicts the *Adoration* episode. The two scenes, indeed fully described by the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna*, are divided by the wooden hut which provides a narrative hinge between the background and the foreground. Among the various characters that the hut accommodates there are three little angels who,

<sup>141</sup> *Vita di Gesù* (1474), ff. 19v-20r.

<sup>142</sup> David R. Cartlidge and J. Keith Elliot, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha*, London and New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 90-94. See also: *Apocryphal Gospels* (1870), p. 12 (*The Protevangelium of James*), and pp. 31-33 (*The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*).

<sup>143</sup> J. de Voragine (1993), vol. 1, p. 78.

<sup>144</sup> See C.C. Wilson (2001), pp. 3-9. See also the *Vita di Gesù* (1474), ff. 20r-v.

silhouetted against a golden sky, are flying towards the right to meet the shepherds at the riverside (fig. 22). Despite Mansueti's visible limits in organizing the scenes, this detail takes on a crucial function in the spatial-temporal connection between the two episodes. The supernatural light, which is limited to the sky contained within the wooden hut, is in fact used to recall the episode of the *Annunciation to the Shepherds*, when, according to the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna*, a powerful light suddenly appeared to them. Yet, perpendicularly to the Child, the star, that according to the angels would have indicated the place where the Lord was located (“Andando elli videnò una stella forte respiandente sopra la spelunca”), shines at the top of the wooden hut: here, in the foreground, where the shepherds have found the Saviour, their quest is finally accomplished (“Alhora elli cognoveno che vero in quella spelunca e nato lo signore del cielo e de la terra”).

To appreciate the devotional imagery, and the religious enthusiasm, which formed the spiritual background of our hypothetical donor, it would be worth enlarging the remit of the present study, and evaluate the fervent faith that Early Renaissance pilgrims devoted to the places under discussion.

Deborah Howard mentions the *Indulgenze de' Luoghi di Terra Santa*, a popular pocket guide-book listing “all the indulgences available in the Holy Land”<sup>145</sup>. Among numberless possibilities for gaining indulgences, this little book notes that, around the village of Bethlehem pilgrims had the chance to visit the place, now turned into a church, where the angel had announced Christ's coming (“Item la Gexia deli Angeli Sancti. Dove lo Angelo annuntio ali pastori la Natività de Christo”). This place of worship was very popular amongst pilgrims who left quite accounts of it. If Barbon Morosini limited the description to a stark portrayal<sup>146</sup>, Santo Brasca on the contrary narrated a miracle occurred nearby it<sup>147</sup>. Describing the fortuitous encounter of Gabriele Capodilista with a certain “signor Iohanne inglese” in 1458, Brasca mentions a “divota alterchatione” about the place where the shepherds had been

<sup>145</sup> *Indulgenze de' Luoghi di Terra Santa*, BNM, Ms. It I, 52 (=5235); D. Howard (2000), pp. 190-191.

<sup>146</sup> *Peregrinagio de mi Barbon Moresini al viaggio de Ierusalem et altri lochi de terra sancta, principiato adi quindese luio Mille cinquecento quatordece*, BNM, Ms. It VI, 6 (=5887), f. 18r. See also *Il Trattato di Terra Santa e dell'Oriente di Frate Francesco Suriano*, a cura di Pre Girolamo Golubovich, Milano, Tipografia Editrice Artigianelli, 1900, p. 121.

<sup>147</sup> *Viaggio in Terrasanta di Santo Brasca 1480 con l'Itinerario di Gabriele Capodilista 1458*, a cura di Anna Laura Momigliano Lepschy, Milano, Longanesi & C., 1966, p. 211-212.

announced, which was eventually settled only by a divine sign (“si partì da cielo una balla d’oro [...] et cadete de directo in cima lo monticulo di pastori el quale gli mostrava il predicto misier Gabriele”). Capodilista’s anecdote, although highly imaginative, shows that the “monticulo di pastore” was popular amongst contemporary pilgrims (“cerca quaranta peregrini tra li quali era il signor Iohanne inglese et molti altri cavalieri”), and it demonstrates that the cult of the shepherds was so ardently worshipped that it could even originate highly imaginative phenomena.

Far away from the Holy Land, golden balls may not fall so easily to feed the cult of the Shepherds, nonetheless the faithful had the chance to attend, annually, both the *Annunciation* and *The Nativity with Shepherds*. In this respect, it would be worth paying attention to the *sacre rappresentazioni* (miracle plays) of some Italian *Scuole di devozione*<sup>148</sup>, such as *La rappresentazione della natività di Cristo*, a miracle play staged by the religious brotherhoods of the *Giustizia* and *San Fiorenzo* in Perugia<sup>149</sup>. The narrative, which essentially follows the Apocryphal tradition, gives voice to the shepherds, in fact making them the leading actors of the play<sup>150</sup>.

Following the *Annunciation* episode, the shepherds decide to give credit to the angel and, after a light meal, they head to Bethlehem where they eventually find the “capannetta”. The scene portrays the arrival of the shepherds, and their worship of Jesus. If the previous narration was based upon the traditional theme, the ending of the scene sets aside a crucial role for Joseph, who in fact begins a private conversation with the shepherds:

“JOSEF dice: Io vi ringrazio quanto i’ posso piue / di tanto cacio ch’avete arrecato; / bastava solo arrecarne due, / l’altro per voi aversi riserbato; / ma vel meriterae el buo Jesue / di tanto amor gli avete dimostrato [...] e fatto colezione, NENCIO dice a Josef: Gioseppo mio, egli è vicino al giorno: / partir noi ci vogliam con grande amore [...] Risponde JOSEF a’ pastori: Priego facciate a noi ritorno: / io v’accomando a Cristo salvatore”.

In a key scene Joseph is portrayed as host: thanking the shepherds for the visit and the gift they have brought, sharing a meal with them, and, at the time of

<sup>148</sup> Alessandro d’Ancona, *Origini del teatro in Italia. Studi sulle sacre rappresentazioni*, vols. 2, Firenze, successori Le Monier, 1877, especially vol. I, pp. 28-40.

<sup>149</sup> *Teatro del Quattrocento*, a cura di Luigi Banfi, Torino, UTET, 1977.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibidem*, *La rappresentazione della natività di Cristo*, 2, 4.

their leave taking, interceding with the Child (“io v’accomando a Cristo salvatore”)<sup>151</sup>. The relationship between Joseph and the shepherds is more than a narrative expedient, it is the sign of an intimate connection. By attributing to Joseph and the shepherds an active role within the play, the texts thus testify their relevance within the context of the *Nativity*: a subject frequently used to celebrate Joseph’s cult<sup>152</sup>. According to this last assumption, it would be worth paying attention to the fourth, fictional shepherd portrayed in Mansueti’s *Nativity*: the aforementioned donor who creates an explicit connection with Joseph himself.

While describing the painting, I hastily mentioned the figure of the donor sitting beside St Joseph (fig. 23). His portrait shows a rounded face with a small beak shaped mouth and two large and ample eyebrows. He is wearing a long brown robe from where sticks out a crimson stocking. Both Miller and Merkel noticed his humble dress. Apart from Merkel, who confined the analysis of such a crucial character to a brief description, Miller has tried to investigate the costume of the man, proposing that the brown *pavonazzo* dress was, at that time, “a colour for mourning”<sup>153</sup>. An interesting proposal that, however, needs a contextual examination.

Venetian noblemen, excepting the doge and senators, exhibited their mourning in a very distinctive way. According to Cesare Vecellio, during the period of mourning the *corrotto* (literally *broken heart*) wore a brown robe called “habito a bruno” (fig. 24), whose distinctive feature was a long train (“un lungo strascino”). Then, a few days after the funeral was held, the long train was eventually tied up round the waist, or even cut off, although the funeral weeds would be worn much longer<sup>154</sup>. With regards to mourning colours, finally, along with brown (*a’ bruno*), Venetians senators also wore crimson (*cremesino*) and purple (*pavonazzo*), since they used to wear black only on the occasion of the doge’s death<sup>155</sup>.

Even if very tempting, and historically probable, Miller’s proposal lacks

<sup>151</sup> *Ibidem*, 19-20.

<sup>152</sup> C.C. Wilson (2000), pp. 27-47.

<sup>153</sup> S. Miller (1978), p. 112, note 110; E. Merkel (2001), p. 145.

<sup>154</sup> Mentioned in Doretta Davanzo Poli, *Abiti antichi e moderni dei Veneziani*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza Editore, 2001, p. 75.

<sup>155</sup> Pompeo Molmenti, *Storia di Venezia nella vita privata: dalle origini alla caduta della Repubblica*, Torino, Roux e Favale, 1880 (vol. III, VII reprint, Trieste, LINT, 1973, pp. 478-488); D. Davanzo Poli (2001), p. 75; Doretta Davanzo Poli, “I colori di Venezia”, *Quaderno 8*, (Centro Studi di Storia del Tessuto e del Costume, Venezia), 1996, pp. 29-33, especially p. 31.

iconographical relevance. There is no iconographic proof, in fact, that the donor is in mourning: his dress, although brown, does not show any long train, whereas the red socking looks quite inappropriate in a mourning context. From my point of view, the severe dress demonstrates instead the will to conform to the humble tone of the scene, and share with the shepherds their sinlessness and modesty. This hypothesis finds support through an analysis of Mansueti's *Nativity* in Castelvechio, in which the donor not only wears a modest brown dress, but also holds a shepherd's crook (fig. 17). More importantly, both pictures cannot be related to mourning since their main goal is to commemorate, and thus relive, the birth of Christ. *The Nativity with Shepherds* celebrates life: the coming of God and his promise of Salvation. Additionally, in the Burano *Nativity* the donor establishes a privileged relationship with Joseph, namely the (putative) father of a newly-born baby. By pointing Joseph out, the donor does not show any mourning concern, whereas his gesture, which might be interpreted as a sign of eponymy, highlights Joseph as one of the main characters of the painting, certainly the recipient of personal devotion.

As I have said, Joseph was commonly portrayed in the scene of *The Nativity with Shepherds*. This is because, as Carolyn C. Wilson put it, it was largely believed he had himself heard simultaneously the *Annunciation to the Shepherds* (fig. 25), but also because, according to Luke 2:16, the shepherds said they had "found Mary, Joseph, and the babe" at the manger<sup>156</sup>. Another common feature, evidently followed by Mansueti, was to portray Joseph asleep or deeply meditating: an unconsciousness formerly interpreted as sign of his perplexity, or even incomprehension of the occurring mystery<sup>157</sup>. The iconography of the sleeping Joseph had on the contrary a specific significance directly related to his ability of receiving God's word in dreams, which on this specific occasion might refer to two distinct episodes<sup>158</sup>. At first, Joseph's ecstatic contemplation, so openly stressed by the pointing donor, should be seen as a reference to the *Annunciation to the Shepherds* that is taking place far

<sup>156</sup> C.C. Wilson (2001), p. 36.

<sup>157</sup> With regard to Joseph's perplexity see: Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, translated by Janet Seligman, 2 vols., London, Lund Humphries, 1971, vol. I, pp. 73-76; C.C. Wilson (2001), pp. 35-36. On the same iconography applied to St Mark see: Debra Pincus, "Mark Gets the Message: Mantegna and the *Preadestinatio* in Fifteenth-Century Venice", *Artibus et Historiae*, 35 (1997), pp. 135-146.

<sup>158</sup> C.C. Wilson (2001), pp. 35-37. On Joseph's three dreams see: G. Schiller (1971), vol. I, pp. 56-58, 117, 124.

in the background. In this respect, Joseph acts as go-between to the two episodes by means of time and space, thus combining the *Annunciation* (the past) with the *Adoration* (the present). Secondly, Joseph also projects the scene into the future, in fact creating a crucial link with the following episode (*The Flight into Egypt*), since his nap recalls his second dream when he “was warned in his sleep by the angel of the Lord, who said to him: Take Mary and the child, and go into Egypt by the way of the desert” (fig. 26)<sup>159</sup>. According to Pseudo-Matthew, who by the way sums up Matthew’s version (2: 13-15)<sup>160</sup>, we can recognize in Joseph’s drowsiness his precognition of the oncoming danger, and, simultaneously, of the flight he is going to take in order to protect his family. Again, St Bernard provides crucial support of Joseph’s role describing him as “a prudent and faithful servant [...] whom the Lord placed beside Mary to be her protector”<sup>161</sup>. At the same time, however, Joseph’s figure features a peculiar detail, a very revealing one indeed, which might expand our present knowledge of his devotional function within the painting.

By a closer examination, we can observe that Joseph is not leaning on a common stick (fig. 27), but, interestingly, his left elbow rests on an axe, a quite peculiar detail that Mansueti already painted in the *Nativity with Shepherds* once in Susegana (fig. 28). The axe indicates a personal, specific attribute of Joseph as *faber lignarius*. Although relatively rare in Renaissance painting<sup>162</sup>, Joseph’s axe was meant to refer to his carpentry: an iconography based upon *The Protevangelium of James* where it is said that Joseph, once arrived at the Temple, threw “away his axe [and] went out to meet” the heralds who were assembling the candidates of Mary’s marriage<sup>163</sup>. Furthermore, in the Apocryphal *History of Joseph the Carpenter*, Joseph himself was explicitly described as a man “skilful in his trade, which was that of a Carpenter”<sup>164</sup>, and in the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna* he was called “maistro de ligname”<sup>165</sup>.

As we have seen, in *The Nativity with Shepherds* Mansueti has turned

<sup>159</sup> *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, in *Apocryphal Gospels* (1870), p. 35.

<sup>160</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Matthew 2: 13-15. On the iconography of Joseph’s second dream see: G. Schiller (1971), vol. I, p. 117.

<sup>161</sup> C.C. Wilson (2001), p. 3.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 198, note 28.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>164</sup> *The History of Joseph the Carpenter*, in *Apocryphal Gospels* (1870), p. 63.

<sup>165</sup> *Vita di Gesù* (1474), f. 15r.

the traditional hovel into a wooden hut: an efficient, although unadorned, shelter for the Holy Family. In this respect, Joseph's craftsmanship not only provides the protection he was committed to fulfil ("ellecto per tuo custode e per guardia del tuo fiolo unigenito con la sua preciosa madre")<sup>166</sup>, but, according to St Ambrose's *Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucan*, it could also refer to the capabilities of God the Father as Creator<sup>167</sup>. Therefore in the painting, Joseph the carpenter, the meticulous artisan who provided such a sturdy shelter to the Holy Family, is portrayed as the "earthly surrogate of the Creator"<sup>168</sup>.

The picture displays a further, subtle allusion to Joseph as guardian of that Church he contributed to establish. Mansueti designed the wooden hut by keeping strictly to the instruction of linear perspective learned by observing Jacopo Bellini's examples (fig. 29)<sup>169</sup>, and in fact we can easily measure the depth of the building by following the recession of the pilasters into the distance. Yet, although the first column on the right leans correctly on the ground, the one on the left unexpectedly grafts onto Joseph's shoulder. On this occasion, unlike the traditional iconography of Joseph's supporting the collapsing roof of the hut as symbol of the "passing away of the Old Order"<sup>170</sup>, Joseph is instead holding up a secure refuge: a role that, as I have said, explicitly refers to his guardianship of the Church. By marrying Mary, who according to patristic literature symbolized *Ecclesia*, Joseph was in fact regarded as the spouse of the Church; whereas, as Peter John Olivi debated, he was also seen as "the image of the Roman pontiffs, installed as guardians of the Church"<sup>171</sup>. In this respect, Pope Pius IX appointed Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church<sup>172</sup>.

In short, the anonymous donor of *The Nativity with Shepherds*, whose

<sup>166</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 22r. See also *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, in *Apocryphal Gospels* (1870), p. 27.

<sup>167</sup> C.C. Wilson (2001), p. 60.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>169</sup> S. Miller (1978), pp. 91, 112 notes 108-109.

<sup>170</sup> C.C. Wilson (2001), pp. 30-31; Carolyn C. Wilson, "Francesco Vecellio's *Presepio* for San Giuseppe, Belluno: Aspects and Overview of the Cult and Iconography of St. Joseph in Pre-Tridentine Art", *Venezia Cinquecento*, 4 (1996), pp. 39-74. On Francesco Vecellio's commission see: Gabriele Matino, "Non é Francesco. Un pittore dimenticato e un esilio inventato", *Venezia Cinquecento*, 18 (2008), pp. 85-88; Elia D'Inca and Gabriele Matino, "Regesto per Francesco Vecellio", *Studi Tizianeschi*, 6 (2010), pp. 20-46.

<sup>171</sup> Mentioned in C.C. Wilson (2001), p. 5.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 4, 178 note 12.

name was probably Joseph, has demonstrated his deep devotion towards his eponymous Saint. A profound devotion that, evidently, was fully aware of the multifaceted symbolism of Joseph, thus requiring the painter to design a specific and detailed iconography of the Saint. Yet, who was our mysterious donor, and what was his social milieu?

We have already mentioned Giovanni Mansueti's *Christ Among the Doctors* (fig. 13); a key painting, I argued, for dating the Burano pictures. Additionally, the painting could also provide unexpected clues about our reticent donor. In its foreground, flanking the Virgin and Joseph, Mansueti has drawn a series of portraits. Starting from the right-hand side (figs. 30-31), we can observe two men wearing black cartwheel hats (*à tagliere*), black cloaks (*ferraiolo*), long robes (*Romane* or *Pretine*), and "calzette di seta": a distinguished costume that, according to Cesare Vecellio's set of examples, should be identified as that of the Venetian merchants or retailers<sup>173</sup>. On the left-hand side of the painting the social class of the portraits, or better their institutional rank, varies (fig. 32). The eldest in the group, namely the one wearing a long brownish cape lined with fur, can be easily identified as a doctor "in Terra ferma nello Stato Veneto", whereas the middle-aged man with long blonde hair, a black dress and a cap "a tegame", should rather be regarded as a generic nobleman<sup>174</sup>. The last on the left, finally, deserves a detailed examination (fig. 33). As his closer companion, this man wears a black cap "a tegame", yet, unlike all his other friends, he proudly exhibits a long crimson robe with wide sleeves (probably *a comeo*): a dress that, according to the Venetian symbolic hierarchisation of colours, could be worn only by men of "primaria Magistratura"<sup>175</sup>. He has a rounded face with a double chin, a small beak shaped mouth and two curved, large and ample eyebrows. We have already met a man who fits to such description. Although aged, in fact, this face matches almost entirely with the donor of Mansueti's *Nativity with Shepherds* (fig. 23). The resemblance, I believe, is remarkable: their noses and the ample eyebrows, but also the peculiar beak shaped-mouths, are identical. Furthermore, a detail of their dresses provides additional evidence. In the

<sup>173</sup> *Degli Habiti Antichi, et Moderni di Diverse Parti del Mondo, Libri Due, fatti da Cesare Vecellio*, In Venetia, Presso Damian Zenaro, 1590, ff. 116r-v.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 106r, 159r.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 150r; D. Davanzo Poli (1996), p. 29.

Burano's painting we have noticed that, under his severe brownish robe, the donor wears a pair of red stockings. Although it might be considered as an eccentric characteristic, according to Cesare Vecellio red stockings were commonly worn by Venetian noblemen ("E tutti questi portano [...] le calze rosse")<sup>176</sup>. We can thus suggest, although only hypothetically, that the Burano painting was commissioned by a man of high standing, in fact a patrician who in all probability held an institutional position of relevance in the Venetian government. An assumption not only confirmed by his top-ranking clothes, but also endorsed by the Uffizi's *telero*, where the *Templum Salomonis* projects an allegorical representation of the Venetian Ducal Palace as the Biblical *Palatium Salomonis* (fig. 13)<sup>177</sup>.

The analysis of *The Nativity with Shepherds* has already unveiled copious evidence about its donor, mostly regarding his devotional beliefs and social status. However, the painting still holds further elements: the group of the Magi riding toward the wooden hut to honour Christ's coming. Mansueti was not new to such iconography, having already combined the episode of the shepherds with the riding Magi in the case of the Castelveccchio version (fig. 17). According to the variant generally accepted by the Western Church, by the time of the shepherds' visit the Magi were only at the very beginning of their journey, since they were expected to worship the Child only after "the second year was past"<sup>178</sup>. Nonetheless, we shall assume that Mansueti, while designing the painting, followed Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, where instead the *Adoration of the Magi* takes place "thirteen days" after Christ's birth<sup>179</sup>.

In the case of the Burano version, the Magi are not portrayed as generic Oriental kings, but they wear specific clothing datable to the sixteenth-century Mamluk empire<sup>180</sup>. In this respect, the most identifiable garment is the voluminous horned-turban worn by Melchior, the older magus with a long white beard, that in Renaissance time was generally known as *al-takhfifa al-kabira* (or *al-nā'ūra*) and served as a crown to the Mamluk sultan, or his

<sup>176</sup> *Degli Habiti* (1590), f. 106r.

<sup>177</sup> David Rosand, *Myths of Venice. The Figuration of State*, Chapel Hill & London, The University of North Carolina Press, 2001, pp. 96-116.

<sup>178</sup> *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, in *Apocryphal Gospels* (1870), p. 35. See also: G. Schiller (1971), pp. 95-96; D.R. Cartlidge and J.K. Elliot (2001), pp. 94-96.

<sup>179</sup> J. de Voragine (1993), vol. 1, p. 78.

<sup>180</sup> On the Castelveccchio painting see: *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 304 no. 26 (catalogue entry).

Amirs<sup>181</sup>. According to extant documents, contemporary Venetians were well-aware of such bizarre headgear. Besides their numerous depictions, to be found mostly in Carpaccio's paintings (figs. 34-35), it would be worth paying attention to the vivid, and sometimes irreverent, descriptions provided by contemporary eyewitnesses. If Domenico Trevisan, Venetian ambassador at the Mamluk court in 1512, restricts his account to a raw report ("Aveva [the Sultan] in capo un fez molto grande con due corni lunghi mezzo braccio e più")<sup>182</sup>, Pietro Martire d'Anghiera, Spanish ambassador between 1501 and 1502, on the contrary reserves an entire section of his *Delle cose notabili della provincia d'Egitto* to such a specific garment<sup>183</sup>. Martire minutely portrays the Sultan's turban in all its components ("escono sei corna"), distinguishing short horns ("quattro sono lunghe una spanna, & grosse, come un grosso braccio") from two longer ones ("quasi due gran punte lunghe poco meno di sei palmi"). The Spanish ambassador, moreover, does not spare ironic comments. At the end of his description he compares such a ridiculous projections ("corna ridicolose") to the horns of the snail ("come le corna della lumaca"), or, which is even worse, he labels the horned-turban as a cuckolded garment ("cornuto dolopan")<sup>184</sup>. His description demonstrates how intense was the perception of the Mamluk horned-turban among Western observers: an exotic headgear that in fact Cesare Vecellio could not neglect in his pattern book, where the turban, following Trevisan's account, is accurately described and vividly drawn (fig. 36)<sup>185</sup>.

According to such detailed accounts, we can easily assume that Mansueti, while designing the riding Magi in the Burano *Nativity with*

<sup>181</sup> Leo Ary Mayer, *Mamluk Costume: A Survey*, Genève, Albert Kundig, 1952, p. 16. See also: J. Raby (1982), pp. 35-40; Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, *Maometto II e Gentile Bellini: la creazione di un'immagine imperiale*, Venezia, Centro Internazionale della Grafica di Venezia, 1996, p. 7.

<sup>182</sup> *Viaggio di Domenico Tevisan ambasciatore veneto al Gran Sultano del Cairo nell'anno 1512 descritto da Zaccaria Pagani di Belluno*, Venezia, Tipografia Antonelli, 1875, p. 22. See also *I Diarii di Marin Sanuto*, a cura di Rinaldo Fulin, Federico Stefani, Guglielmo Berchet, Nicolo Barozzi e Marco Allegri, 58 vols., Venezia 1879-1902 (anastatic edition, Bologna, Forni Editore, 1969-79), vol. XV, col. 196 (1512): "in testa una fessa granda con corne".

<sup>183</sup> *Relationi del S. Pietro Martire Milanese. Delle cose notabili della provincia dell'Egitto scritte in lingua Latina alli Sereniss. di felice memoria Re Cattolici D. Fernando, e D. Isabella, & hora recate nella Italiana. Da Carlo Passi*, In Venetia, appresso Giorgio de' Cavalli, 1564, ff. 32v-33r. On Pietro Martire's work see: Nicolas Warner, *The True Description of Cairo. A Sixteenth-Century Venetian View*, vol. I, London-Oxford, The Arcadian Library in association with Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 90.

<sup>184</sup> Jeannine Guérin Dalle Mese, *L'occhio di Cesare Vecellio. Abiti e costumi esotici nel '500*, Alessandria, Edizioni Orso, 1998, pp. 141-142.

<sup>185</sup> *Degli Habiti* (1590), ff. 478r-479r.

*Shepherds*, was undoubtedly aware of the Mamluk garments he was portraying. Furthermore, we could also argue that the decision of turning generic Oriental characters into Mamluks could probably be a decision agreed with the donor, in fact purposely tailored to his personal needs. In other words, the intentional transposition of the new testamentary episode to sixteenth-century Venice (in the background we can observe a patch of the Venetian lagoon) cannot be considered as a meaningless adaptation. According to the painting, the three wise men are no longer the traditional kings, but they rather embody the Mamluk court represented by the Sultan himself and his following. Thus, in Mansueti's *Nativity with Shepherds*, the Mamluks, namely the muslim infidels, have taken place of the Biblical kings to revere the true God, that is to say the Christian God.

As I will discuss extensively in Chapter 3, such religious ideology should be contextualized in light of the commercial relationship between Venice and the Mamluks at the beginning of the sixteenth-century. A relationship that, from the Venetian point of view, was brought into question by the unreasonable requests that the Mamluk sultan had constantly put forward on the pepper price, and which found a temporary arrangement in the 1510s<sup>186</sup>. With regard to the present discussion, this specific iconography could provide, although hypothetically, further evidence for the identity of the anonymous donor. Beside the high office he held, we could in fact suggest that, as the greater part of his fellow-citizens, our mysterious donor was also a merchant financially involved in the Levantine trade. A hypothesis that would then explain the inclusion of the Mamluk/Magi in the iconography; a hypothesis that, surprisingly, will find in the *Flight into Egypt* its cultural support and iconographical confirmation.

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<sup>186</sup> Another visual example of such controversial relationship is discussed by I. Botti (1992), pp. 33-73.

#### 1.IV. Christ the *True Panther: The Flight into Egypt*

At first glance Mansueti's *Flight into Egypt* looks needlessly crowded (fig. 12), yet, as in the case of *The Nativity with Shepherds*, on examination we can observe a neat and well contrived composition. In the middle of it stands the Holy Family: the Virgin, hugging the Child to her breast, is sitting astride the donkey, while Joseph is pulling at the reins. Again, as in the *Nativity*, this group acts as the narrative hub, around which all the additional elements revolve. The compositional structure of the painting induces the spectator to focus on the middle of it, in fact shaping the Holy Family inside a fictional pyramid traced out by the rising hills far in the distance, or by the bird flocks purposely heading toward the stronghold. The rest of the characters revolve around the Holy Family, or, more precisely, converge on it. The foreground is filled up with a sensational variety of animals approaching the travelling family, including birds (a parrot, an eagle, a peacock, a partridge etc.), mammals (an ox, a donkey, a fox, an ape, some rabbits, a lion, a leopard etc.), and even monstrous beings such as the three dragons coming out from a shadowed forest on the right. On the opposite side, just beside a little bear, the Infant St John the Baptist points out the curious event to the beholder. Far in the background a view of a Venetian countryside features a network of canals that washes a few small houses (and a traditional *casone*; figs. 37-38), whereas on the right, going up the hill, we can observe an ecclesiastical complex and a small village with turreted walls and a stronghold. An idealized picture of a healthy, fertile and peaceful field that visually evokes Francesco Patrizi Senese's arguments on how urban forms and locations should be developed as an expression of good government (fig. 39)<sup>187</sup>. A quietness and serenity that, however, appears to be profaned by a great number of turbaned characters. Hence, according to this preliminary analysis, we can assume that *The Flight into Egypt* is not taking place in a nameless, parched desert, but rather in the lush Venetian inland: a peaceful territory unexpectedly populated by Oriental inhabitants.

As in the case of the two previous paintings, *The Flight into Egypt* was

<sup>187</sup> I am referring to *De institutione rei publicae*, Paris, 1494, and *De regno et regis institutione*, Paris, Da Prato, 1519, as discussed in Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, trans. by Jessica Levine, Cambridge-London, The MIT Press, 1989, pp. 104-106.

firstly attributed to Mansueti by Cavalcaselle and Crowe, and subsequently accepted by succeeding scholars<sup>188</sup>. In his analysis, Merkel has related it to the work of both Vittore Carpaccio (fig. 40), and Jacopo Bellini (fig. 41). Even if we can admit vague influences of Carpaccio's *Flight into Egypt*, Mansueti's picture rather suggests a preferential connection with Jacopo's version, as well with a number of his sketches like the *Study of Five Lions* (Musée du Louvre, Paris, f. 77v), the *Cheetah Studies* (fig. 42) or, finally, the *Three Warriors Battling a Dragon* (fig. 43)<sup>189</sup>.

Although Merkel's work corroborates our theory on Mansueti's apprenticeship, quite surprisingly the scholar does not address the painting's attribution. An issue that would rather provide not only evidence on the *Flight's* authorship and dating, but also on the artistic process of Mansueti's workshop. With respect to the former, we shall observe, once again, Mansueti's *Christ Among the Doctors*, where the figure of Joseph – with his Brunette curly hair, flowing beard, and mature look – matches almost exactly the figure in the work of Burano (figs. 44-45), thus allowing an approximate dating in the 1510s. A further connection can be located. In Mansueti's signed *St Jerome in the Wilderness* at the Accademia Carrara of Bergamo (fig. 46)<sup>190</sup>, as in the case of the *Flight into Egypt*, the customary desert has been turned into a Venetian crowded countryside with a river, an ecclesiastic complex and a massive crenellated bastion. Surprisingly, the two paintings feature the identical setting. I am referring to the small village, no more than few houses indeed, that stands on the riverside nearby the religious building. Even if partially hidden by the luxuriant vegetation, we can observe the identical built-up area in the background of the *Flight*, thus suggesting the employment of a workshop cartoon during the designing process (figs. 47-48). A professional habit that we

<sup>188</sup> See above pp. 29-30.

<sup>189</sup> E. Merkel (2001), p. 146.

<sup>190</sup> G.B. Cavalcaselle and J.A. Crowe (1912), p. 226 note 3; E.G. Salter (1912), p. 4; S. Miller (1978), pp. 99, 114 note 159; Francesco Rossi, *Accademia Carrara Bergamo. Catalogo dei dipinti*, Bergamo, Grafica Gutenberg-Editrice, 1979, p. 63; Francesco Rossi, *Accademia Carrara. Catalogo dei dipinti sec. XV-XVI*, Cinisello Balsamo (MI), Silvana Editore, 1988, p. 192; H. Friedmann (1980), pp. 98-99; *I Grandi Veneti. Da Pisanello a Tiziano, da Tintoretto a Tiepolo. Capolavori dell'Accademia Carrara di Bergamo*, exhibition catalogue (Roma, Chiosstro del Bramante 14 October 2010 – 30 January 2011), a cura di Giovanni Valagussa e Giovanni Carlo Federico Villa, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana Editore, 2010, pp. 96-97. The signature at the feet of the Saint reads: "Johannes de Mansuetis faciebat"; G. Matino (2010), p. 22.

can also notice in another variant of *St Jerome in the Wilderness* (fig. 49)<sup>191</sup>, where Mansueti not only re-used the cartoon under discussion, but he reversed the entire Carrara version to produce a new, independent painting.

There are only a few iconographical precedents for the *Flight into Egypt*, so it seems even more necessary to turn to texts for sources of the unusual subject-matter than the discussion of the two previous images. Conventionally, the *Flight into Egypt* used to feature the Virgin and the Child sitting astride a donkey, while Joseph (or, sometimes, an angel) led them along a dusty path. The *Flight* was gradually replaced with complementing episodes such as the *Miracle of the Palm* and the *Rest on the Flight*, for they allowed painters to portray the Holy Family in an unexpected informal atmosphere<sup>192</sup>. Although widely narrated by Pseudo-Matthew (20-21)<sup>193</sup>, Voragine describes the *Miracle of the Palm* only briefly, thus omitting to enter into detail<sup>194</sup>. The narrative denotes the palm tree as the main character of the miracle. It is the palm, after all, that, obeying Christ's wish, devoutly bents down its head and offers its fruits to the exhausted wayfarers ("a te palma dicho abassa giu li rami toi & dala radice tua produce lacqua. le qual chose subitamente furono")<sup>195</sup>. As a matter fact, it was the miraculous bow that impressed the painters' imagery, thus developing an iconography in which the fleeing family, on its thirsty path to Egypt, was welcomed by the refreshing tree (figs. 50-51). A distinguished and unavoidable detail that, even after a detailed examination of the luxuriant vegetation of *The Flight into Egypt*, cannot be located at all. In other words, although the canvas sets the *Flight* in a rural scene, none of the trees looks like a palm tree. Additionally, according to the fact that the painting is crowded by animals, it should be worth approaching it from a different perspective, and focus on a different moment in narrative of the long way to Egypt.

The specific episode, including dragons and few other animals, is fully described in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (18-19):

“And having come to a certain cave, and wishing to rest in it, the

<sup>191</sup> G.B. Cavalcaselle and J.A. Crowe (1912), p. 226 note 3. See also S. Miller (1978), pp. 99, 115 note 163. A b/w picture can be found at the Photo Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence.

<sup>192</sup> G. Schiller (1971), pp. 117-124.

<sup>193</sup> *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, in *Apocryphal Gospels* (1870), pp. 37-38.

<sup>194</sup> J. de Voragine (1993), vol. 1, p. 57.

<sup>195</sup> N. de Manerbi (1494), f. XXIr.

blessed Mary dismounted from her beast, and sat down with the child Jesus in her bosom. And there were with Joseph three boys, and with Mary a girl, going on the journey along with them. And, lo, suddenly there came forth from the cave many dragons; and when the children saw them, they cried out in great terror. Then Jesus went down from the bosom of his mother, and stood on His feet before the dragons; and they adored Jesus, and thereafter retired. Then was fulfilled that which was said by David the prophet, saying: Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all ye deeps. And the young child Jesus, walking before them, commanded them to hurt no man. But Mary and Joseph were very much afraid lest the child should be hurt by the dragons. And Jesus said to them: Do not be afraid, and do not consider me to be a little child; for I am and always have been perfect; and all these beasts of the forest must needs be tame before me.

Lions and panthers adored Him likewise, and accompanied them in the desert. Whenever Joseph and blessed Mary went, they went before them showing them the way, and bowing their heads; and showing their submission by wagging their tails, they adore Him with great reverence. Now at first, when Mary saw the lions and the panthers, and various kinds of wild beasts, coming about them, she was very much afraid. But the infant Jesus looked into her face with a joyful countenance, and said: Be not afraid, mother; for they come not to do thee harm, but they make haste to serve both thee and me. With these words He drove all fear from her heart. And the lions kept walking with them, and with the oxen, and the asses, and the beasts of burden, which carried their baggage, and did not hurt a single one of them, though they kept beside them; but they were tame among the sheep and the rams which they had brought with them from Judaea, and which they had with them. They walked among wolves, and feared nothing; and no one of them was hurt by another. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet: Wolves shall feed with lambs; the lion and the ox shall eat straw together<sup>196</sup>.

As observed in Mansueti's *Flight into Egypt*, Pseudo-Matthew sets the scene within a forest, then describing the meeting with the dragons (who "came forth from the cave"), and the tame attitude of "lions and panthers" toward the "beasts of burden". The two scenes are not the figments of the author's imagination, but they rather refer to precise scriptural passages. In the first case, the text explicitly declares his source as "David the prophet" (Psalm 148: 7)<sup>197</sup>, whereas the latter, although not specified, can be easily identified with Isaiah 11: 6-8<sup>198</sup>. The narration evidently aims to demonstrate to the Virgin and Joseph (along with the devout reader) the divine nature of Christ, who, according to his own words, should not be considered "a little child", for, he

<sup>196</sup> *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, in *Apocryphal Gospels* (1870), pp. 35-36.

<sup>197</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Psalm 148.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibidem*, Isaiah 11: 6-8.

says: “I am and always have been perfect; and all these beasts of the forest must need be tame before me”. A theophany traditionally visualized, since Middle Age, by portraying the Holy Family being worshipped by frightening, and yet submissive, dragons (fig. 52).

Having found the religious source, and its scriptural interpretation, it would be interesting to read the version provided by the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna*, which has already proved effective in elucidating Mansueti’s previous compositions:

“Scapado yoseph cum maria & cum lo fantino verso egypto [...] perveneno a una spelunca: A la quale la verzene maria descese e la se messeno per possare Stando la per pocho spacio nel bosco se dimostrava dragoni e altri feri animali de li quali questi haveano gran paura: yesu christo descese de lo grembo de la madre e missese ad andare verso quelli draconi li quali vedendo christo se inzenochiono e fenli reverentia e adorolo. Et in questo sia compita la prophetia che dixe lo signore sera laudato e adorato da li draconi e da tutti quelli che sono in abisso: [...] Unde lo fantino dixe a yoseph e a la madre non considerate vui questo che se io son fantino: Io sono propheta ello sie di necessitade che ancora le bestie de le selve obediente siano denanze e mansuete: Simelmenete veneno li Leopardi leoni e altri diversi animali ingran quantitate li quali tutti adoravano christo e mostravano la via secondo compagnia: La verzene maria vedendose aproximare questi animali tutta se spaventava guardando al fiolo in faza. Alhora christo li dixe dolze madre non havere paura questi animali veneno per nostra compagnia [...]

Vene ancora ursi lupi vulpe simie e tante altre generatione de animali li quali come erano zunti tutti adoravano christo e la madre poi si se meteano in compagnia mansuetamente [...] Et non faceano despiacere luno a laltro [...] Ancora aproximandose a li lochi piu domestighi zunzevano in compagnia bestie desmestice cum li soi pastori come e pecore agnelli capre boi e asini e tutti insieme andavano e stavano in pace e mansueti che novita alchuna non facevano luno a laltro. Et alhora fu compiuta la prophetia de yheremia la quale dicea che lupi cum agnelli manzarano e lupi con boi demorarano. [...]”<sup>199</sup>.

If the plot is mainly based upon Pseudo-Matthew, the narrative setting on the contrary varies significantly. What was a vague forest has developed into a real landscape populated by monsters, animals, birds, and men. The opening of the scene portrays the Holy Family riding through a “bosco” and meeting, near a

<sup>199</sup> *Vita di Gesù* (1474), ff. 22v-24r. See also *Vita de la preciosa vergene maria e del suo unico figliolo iesu christo benedecto*, in Venetia, per Zoanne roso da vercegeli nel anno de la salute. M.cccc.lxxxii.adi.xxx.de marzo, Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Correr (henceforth BMC), INC. G 52, especially chapter XXIX.

cave, “dragoni e altri feri animali”. The episode adheres to Pseudo-Matthew: it quotes the aforementioned Psalm 148, thus explaining the divine nature of the Child to the reader, as well as his preordained supremacy upon evil forces (“sia compita la prophetia che dixit lo signore sera laudato e adorato da li draconi e da tutti quelli che sono in abisso”)<sup>200</sup>. A prophecy which has to be regarded as the crucial theme of Mansueti’s *Flight into Egypt*, where three harmless dragons are emerging from the wood to revere the Child. Once the first prophecy is fulfilled, the company continued its journey. On this occasion the scene changes venues: the Holy Family now advances into the mountains (“passano questi boschi e zuneno a le montagne”), where it eventually meets “ursi lupi vulpe simie e tante altre generatione de animali”, providing a surprising *ekphrasis* of Mansueti’s picture. The scene is meant to introduce the second prophecy, showing, by the metaphor of wolves sharing food with lambs (“lupi cum agnelli manzarano e lupi con boi demorarano”), the New Order established by Christ. Isaiah’s prediction<sup>201</sup>, in fact, fulfils when the Holy Family and its unusual retinue approach the countryside. Here, having met the shepherds and their helpless livestock, wild animals behave fairly, so that “non faceano despiacere luno a laltro”. The flight then continues through the veneration of the whole creation.

The *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna* provides a detailed representation of Mansueti’s *Flight into Egypt*, in fact compensating for the narrative gap of Pseudo-Matthew. Hence, we should regard the vernacular Apocrypha, or at least a closer variant of the copy in our hands, as the very source used by, or recommended to, the painter to design the composition. A hypothesis also supported by a couple of further details.

While discussing Christ’s extraordinary encounters along the way to Egypt, I have intentionally neglected to mention two crucial passages where the author lavishes extraordinary detail on describing the meeting with two further animals: a green parrot and a panther. Regarding the former, the author says that the green parrot, which is portrayed as capable of recognising kings (“se elli se scontraseno cum alcuno re o che fusse per essere re elli cum voce humana lo salutano dicendo: dio te salve re”), greets Christ on his journey, thus

<sup>200</sup> See also Meyer Shapiro, “The religious meaning of the Ruthwell Cross”, *The Art Bulletin*, XXVI (1944), pp. 232-245, especially p. 235.

<sup>201</sup> The *Vita di Gesù* (1474) wrongly attributes the prophecy to Jeremiah instead of Isaiah.

demonstrating his divinity and power (“elli cognoveno che christo era re sopra li altri re e sancto e iusto”)<sup>202</sup>. The parrot’s eloquence, as well as its habitual symbolism of redemption both in Christological and Marian contexts, was widely employed in Renaissance painting, mostly among Northern European painters, but also by artists personally connected with Mansueti himself (figs. 53-54)<sup>203</sup>. A symbol, the “papagallo de colore verde”, which turns up in Mansueti’s *Flight into Egypt* as roosting on a stub just in front of the Mother and the Child to emphasize, in favour of the devout viewer, the divine nature of Christ (fig. 12).

The latter case refers to the holy nature of Christ as well, yet this time it is unveiled by a curious anecdote which deserves special consideration:

“Vene panthere queste panthere si sono quasi ceche e dormeno tal hora ben tri di e sonno molto odorifice in tanto che quando se levano dal dormire lo suo odore e si grande e si forte che li serpenti che sentano cadeno morti: Alcuni animali li quali tanto se delectano de questo odore che le segueno queste pantere per ogni parte [...]”<sup>204</sup>.

The passage is unequivocal: the panther stands for the Resurrection of Christ, his rising after the third day. According to a long-established tradition, both textual and iconographical, the author illustrates how satiated panthers were believed to sleep for three days (“dormeno tal hora ben tri di”), and, once awaked, they emitted such a strong fragrance (“lo suo odore e si grande e si forte”) that would simultaneously kill snakes (“li serpenti che sentano cadeno morti”) and attract other creatures (“Alcuni animali li quali tanto se delectano de questo odore che le segueno queste pantere per ogni parte”).

As early as Aristophanes, panthers, unlike all the other animals, were believed to scent: a distinctive property that, as Aristotle puts it, made them use it to hunt<sup>205</sup>. In *Physiologus*, the prodigious faculty of the panther is eventually

<sup>202</sup> *Vita di Gesù* (1474), ff. 24r-v.

<sup>203</sup> Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, trans. by Harris Rackham, book X, Cambridge (Massachusetts)-London, Harvard University Press, 1997, chapter LVIII, p. 367; A. Gentili (1996), pp. 55, 162 note 14. Apart from the illustrated examples, it is worth mentioning Albrecht Dürer’s *Virgin Among a Multitude of Animals* (1503, Wien, Graphische Sammlung Albertina), Francesco de Rossi Salviati’s *Holy Family with Parrot* (1540, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado), and a number of paintings by the so-called Master of the Parrot (e.g. *Virgin with Child and a Parrot*, 1520, San Diego, Museum of Art).

<sup>204</sup> *Vita di Gesù* (1474), f. 23r.

<sup>205</sup> See also Marcel Detienne, *Dioniso e la pantera profumata*, Roma-Bari, Editori Laterza, 1983, pp. 66-67; Aristotle, *History of Animals*, ed. and trans. by David M. Balme, vol. XI, Cambridge (Massachusetts)-London, Harvard University Press, 1991 (book IX, chapter VI), p.

associated to the Resurrection of Christ since, once awoken on the third day, it

“roars out in a loud voice and many a pleasant fragrance issues from his voice. Those who are far away and those who are near, hearing his voice, follow its pleasant fragrance. Our Lord and Saviour rising up from the dead became a pleasant fragrance for us<sup>206</sup>, peace for those who are far away and those who are near [...] Only the dragon when he hears the panther’s voice is seized by fear and bolsters itself within subterranean caves where it does not suffer the power of that sweet fragrance. Having coiled itself up, the dragon falls into a deep sleep and remains there immobile and senseless as if dead. The other animals, however, follow the panther where he goes”<sup>207</sup>.

*Physiologus*, to be considered the very source of the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna*, ends making even clearer the correspondence between the panther and Christ, who is in fact named the *true panther*, the one who “draws to himself all humankind (captured by the devil and held punished by that) through his incarnation”. Only apparently rarefied, the symbolism of the scenting panther was on the contrary a widespread belief in Renaissance time, even among the clergy. Francesco Suriano, for instance, the guardian of the Mount Syon who reputedly knew Giovanni Bellini in person<sup>208</sup>, debated the panther in his *Trattato di Terra Santa e dell’Oriente*, where he argued:

“Un animale chiamato panthera, per lo odore mirabile del quale sono seguitati da tutti li animali: e quando sono satulli dormeno tre dì e tre notte continuo: e resvegliandose gridano e dall’ansito mandano tanta suavità de odore, che passa ogni precioso aromatico odore; per il che tutti li animali, eccetto li serpenti corrono a quella fragrantia”<sup>209</sup>.

In Mansueti’s *Flight into Egypt*, among the numerous animals converging toward the Holy Family, there is apparently no trace of a panther, whereas we can observe, right at the feet of the ass, an awakening leopard (fig. 12). As from Ancient Greece, wild animals belonging to the family *Felidae*

247; Pliny the Elder (1997), book VIII, chapter XXIII, p. 49.

<sup>206</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Corinthians 2: 15: “For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish”.

<sup>207</sup> *Physiologus*, trans. by Michael J. Curley, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1979, pp. 42-45. See also: *Libro de Clarissimo Philosopho Ceco d’Ascoli ditto Lacerba, con commento nuovamente trovato & nobilmente historiato revisto et emendato, & da molte incorretione extirpato, & dalantiquo suo vestigio esemplato*, In Venetia, per Giovanni Andrea detto Guadagnino Vavassore, MDXLVI, Book IV, Chapter XXXXII, f. LXXXIr.

<sup>208</sup> This is what Suriano maintains in his *Trattato* although he apparently mistakes Giovanni for his brother Gentile (*Il Trattato di Terra* (1900), p. 94 note 2).

<sup>209</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 233.

(*Pantera* and *Acinonyx*) were generically named *párdalis* or *pánther*, without any further distinctions<sup>210</sup>. According to Pliny the Elder, panthers were not associated, as we currently do, with black panthers (“small spots like eyes on a light ground”), whereas the substantive *panthera* was regarded as the genus to which leopards belong, that is to say the *Panthera pardus*<sup>211</sup>. In this regard, it would be worth paying attention to various Medieval illuminations, where panthers are portrayed with speckled furs, rather than black coats (figs. 55-56). Having said that, Mansueti painted a feline that, although presently identified as a leopard, in his time was widely known as a panther. An identification openly supported by the painting, where the feline is portrayed while awakening at the feet of the Child. Therefore in the painting, Christ, although still a Child, not only establishes the New Order but he promises the believers eternal life. The symbolic association with the panther is then meant to prefigure, as *Physiologus* puts it, the Resurrection of the *true panther*, that is the salvation of the souls. The extraordinary attraction of the panther’s scent, which, as we have seen, mirrors the “pleasant fragrance” of the risen Christ, thus visualizes an *allegory of Salvation*: as animals are attracted to acknowledge the divine nature of the Child, thus the promised Resurrection of Christ draws to himself the believers.

There is no need, I believe, to dwell on the Christian symbolism of any single creature that Mansueti portrayed, since after all the painter’s intent was to summarise the Apocrypha. However, it is worth stressing that the unveiled *allegory of Salvation* is also supported by other approaching animals such as the (golden) eagle, an image of spiritual regeneration<sup>212</sup>, or the lion, whose symbolism deserves few words.

*Physiologus* argues that the lioness, when

“has given birth to her whelp, she brings it forth dead. And she guards it for three days until its sire arrives on the third day and, breathing into its face on the third day, he awakens it. Thus did the almighty Father of

<sup>210</sup> M. Detienne (1983), p. 66.

<sup>211</sup> Pliny the Elder (1997), book VIII, chapter XXIII, p. 49.

<sup>212</sup> *Physiologus* (1979), pp. 12-13: “When he [the eagle] grows old, his wings grow heavy and his eyes grow dim. What does he do then? He seeks out a fountain and then flies up into the atmosphere of the sun, and he burns away his wings and the dimness of his eyes, and descends into the fountain and bathes himself three times and is restored and made new again. Therefore, you also, if you have the old clothing, and the eyes of your heart have grown dim, seek out the spiritual fountain who is the Lord”.

all awaken from the dead of the third day the first born of every creature”<sup>213</sup>.

The association between the feline and Christ is then entirely fulfilled. As the lion’s offspring awakes “on the third day” (figs. 57-58), thus the Saviour on “the third day [...] shall rise again” (Luke 18: 33). Again, as in the case of the *scenting panther*, a fragrant breath reconfirms the prophesied Salvation. Hence, while contemplating the *Flight into Egypt*, the beholder is required to recognize the signs, to decipher the allegory and then believe the promise of “the first born of every creature”. He is required, to conclude, to pay heed to the wise suggestion of St John the Precursor, who not only draws our attention to the salvific revelation, but he also prophesies Christ’s eschatological mission by displaying the revealing scroll (“Ecce agnus dei”).

It has been proved that Mansueti intentionally included two distinctive elements of the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna* in his *Flight into Egypt*: concrete evidence that demonstrates how the painting depends on the vernacular Apocrypha. A dependence even more revealing than expected, since both the green parrot and the sleeping panther were not mentioned by Voragine and Pseudo-Matthew. Thus, although we cannot assure that the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna* was the very book in the hand of Mansueti, we can nevertheless assume that its contents were widely known by both the donor and the painter. Considering the private nature of the painting, so openly tailored to the devotional needs of the client, we shall now address the picture from a different perspective, looking for any visual element that could provide evidence about the social background of the donor himself.

While discussing *The Nativity with Shepherds*, I demonstrated how the painting projected the donor’s ideology toward Mamluks, actually mirroring the commercial frictions that in those years permeated the Venetian trade in the Levant<sup>214</sup>. On that occasion, the Mamluks, namely Venice’s commercial partners and religious opponents, were shown paying tribute to the Child, thus honouring the true God. I believe that the same idea also permeates the *Flight into Egypt*.

Far in the background, within an idealised vision of the Venetian

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<sup>213</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 4.

<sup>214</sup> See above pp. 52-54.

countryside, we have observed numerous turbaned characters who, although not wearing horned headgear, can however be recognized as Mamluks. This identification is supported by the comparison, for instance, with Mansueti's *Three Standing Mamluk Dignitaries* (fig. 59)<sup>215</sup>, where the draughtsman noted the distinctive clothes of the Mamluk grandees, or in his three canvases painted for the *Scuola Grande di San Marco*, in which the Evangelist's mission is intentionally set at the Mamluk Court (figs. 74-76). In all these examples, as Raby has already proven, Manueti displays his accurate knowledge of Mamluk costume, portraying traditional garments such as sleeveless mantles (*khil'a*), long robes (*kamiliyya*), tall domed hats (*tāqiyya*), red bonnets (*zamṭ*), and long white scarfs (*taylasan*)<sup>216</sup>. The distinctive dress is also worn by Cesare Vecellio's *Moro Nobile del Cairo* (fig. 60)<sup>217</sup>. As demonstrated, Mansueti was familiar with Mamluk costume; yet, we still need to evaluate the cultural motives that caused its inclusion within a *Flight into Egypt* undoubtedly set in a Venetian landscape; an inclusion that could in fact suggest a precise request by the donor.

According to Augusto Gentili, in Giovanni Bellini's *Virgin with the Blessing Child* at Brera (figs. 61-62) the spotted panther resting on the gravestone should be interpreted as a symbol of the infidels' astuteness and savagery, since its spots evoke the spots (*macule*) of the sinner lost in his depravity<sup>218</sup>. Building upon such an interpretation, we could draw an analogy between the spotted panther and the Mamluks portrayed in Mansueti's *Flight into Egypt*, and not with the three dragons that were traditionally employed to symbolise the Turkish menace to Christendom (figs. 63-64)<sup>219</sup>.

Marin Sanudo the Elder's *Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis*, written between 1308 and 1312, provides a surprising example<sup>220</sup>. In the treatise,

<sup>215</sup> *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 313 no. 51 (catalogue entry), with selected bibliography.

<sup>216</sup> J. Raby (1982), pp. 40-41; M.P. Pedani Fabris (1996), p. 7; R.E. Mack (2002), pp. 24-25; *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 305 no. 28 (catalogue entry).

<sup>217</sup> *Degli Habiti* (1590), f. 481r.

<sup>218</sup> Augusto Gentili, "Giovanni Bellini, la bottega, i quadri di devozione", *Venezia Cinquecento*, 2 (1991), pp. 53-56, 59 note 31; A. Gentili (1996), p. 165 note 36. See also George Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art*, London, A. Zwemmer LTD, 1955, p. 21; S. Cohen (2008), p. 144.

<sup>219</sup> A. Gentili (1996), pp. 78-82.

<sup>220</sup> Marino Sanudo the Elder, *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis*, BNM, Lat. Z, 547 (=1924). See also: Renata Cipriani, *Codici miniati dell'Ambrosiana. Contributo a un catalogo*, Milano, Neri Pozza Editore, 1968, p. 222; Angeliki E. Laiou, "Marino Sanudo Torsello, Byzantium and the Turks: the background to the ant-Turkish league of 1332-1334", *Speculum*, XLV (1970), pp. 374-392; Franco Cardini, "Per una edizione critica del *Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis* di

donated to Pope John XXII in Avignon, the Venetian merchant and diplomat suggested to impose a commercial embargo on the Egyptian sultan to regain control of the Holy Land. The manuscript, finely illuminated, allegorises the commercial embargo by portraying a clergyman who keeps a panther on the leash, thus discouraging it, physically as well as metaphorically, from trading materials such as iron, timber and coal-tar pitch (fig. 65)<sup>221</sup>. Although on this occasion the illuminator, according to medieval stylization, condenses the speckled fur into two large patches, other illustrations of the codex are more accurate. In the first case (fig. 66), we can observe the Mamluk army undoubtedly riding spotted panthers while attacking a Christian vessel fancifully fortified. Even more interesting is the second example (fig. 67), where the misery of Christian communities subdued by Muslims is represented by a kneeling Christian king at the mercy of four wild animals<sup>222</sup>. Sanudo leaves no doubt: the Mamluk empire, or better its sultan, is in fact compared to the panther (“Ab alia parte habet Pardum: videlicet Soldanum, qui quotidie dissipat Christianos et Regnum”), whereas Turks are described as wolves (*Lupum*), Tartars as lions (*Leonem*) and corsairs as snakes (*Serpentem*). The great Venetian merchant, and the miniaturist who followed his descriptions and instructions, thus demonstrate that at least by the beginning of the fourteenth-century the Venetian imagery on the Muslim menace was unquestionably established. The illuminations, as allegorical marginalia of the text, interpreted the public imagination, they gave shape to the Venetian fear of the Muslim ‘others’.

I have already demonstrated how in the *Flight into Egypt* Mansueti associated the *scenting panther* to *Christ the true panther* in order to evoke the Child’s eschatological mission. However, beyond such explicit symbolism, I suggest to identify in the same *revering panther* a metaphoric representation of the Mamluks worshipping *Christ the true God* as well. In other words, the panther, so theatrically prostrated in front of the Child, could be also seen as

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Marin Sanudo il vecchio”, *Ricerche Storiche*, VI (1976), pp. 191-250; Gaetano Curzi, “Allegoria dell’embargo e propaganda per la crociata nelle opere di Marin Sanudo il vecchio”, *Storia dell’arte*, LXXXIX (1997), pp. 5-26; D. Howard (2000), p. 175; C. Schmidt Arcangeli (2006), p. 122; *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 309 no. 41 (catalogue entry).

<sup>221</sup> Bernard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt, *Corpus der italienischen Zeichnungen 1330-1450, Teil II. Venedig. Addenda zu Sud-und Mittelitalien, Venedig 1300-1400*, Berlin, Gebr. Mann, 1980, p. 3.

<sup>222</sup> Marino Sanudo the Elder, *Liber secretorum*, I, 5,2.

the ineluctable fate of the infidels, metaphor of their inevitable submission to the *true panther*, the only God. A symbolism not new to Mansueti's work, and in fact already employed in his *Arrest of St Mark* painted in 1499 (fig. 4)<sup>223</sup>. Accordingly, in the foreground the whole of creation is converging to honour the coming of the Saviour, thus the wandering Mamluks in the background, although sometimes still dubious, are finding their way to renounce heresy and embrace Christ. Here, in the very moment the Child unveils the promised Salvation to the believers, Mamluks are offered the opportunity to deliver from their sin. An iconography, to conclude, that explicitly appropriates the symbolism of the heron roosting at the top of the stronghold far in the background:

“This beast [heron] is prudent beyond all other birds for it does not seek many nests, but, where it settles, there too it feeds, and returns there and sleeps. [...] And you, O citizen, let the Holy Catholic Church be your one and eternal nurse so that spiritual food and heavenly bread become easily digestible within you. Do not seek many places of foreign glory (that is, of heretics)”<sup>224</sup>.

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The present discussion has demonstrated that the three paintings require close-range observation in order to be understood coherently. Every picture has been deciphered in the light of minute details that, once located, have disclosed the devotional, cultural and ideological motives that imbued each iconography. We should admit, conclusively at this point, that Mansueti's three paintings were not intended to adorn the organ pipe chest of the church of San Martino: this is because, it is worth repeating once again, they intrinsically required an intimate contemplation evidently impracticable if placed at the considerable height of the choir.

In the case of both *The Betrothal of the Virgin* and *The Nativity with Shepherds* has been demonstrated that St Joseph was the beneficiary of a private, fervent devotion. In the former, Joseph's humility, continence and

<sup>223</sup> In this respect see: C. Schmidt Arcangeli (2006), p. 126. On the narrative cycle see: P. Humfrey (1983), pp. 82-84; P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 286-287. On Mansueti's painting see: S. Miller (1978), p. 91; *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 304-305 no. 27 (catalogue entry).

<sup>224</sup> *Physiologus* (1979), p. 40.

commitment were intended as virtuous *exempla*, moral precepts to which the beholder was required to conform. In the *Nativity*, Joseph the “earthly surrogate of the Creator”, the spouse and “protector of the Church”, was raised to the role of privileged intercessor with his Holy Child. It was Joseph, the first testimony of the Child’s divine birth, who eventually granted access to the contemplation of the Son of God. On the contrary, we have noticed how *The Flight into Egypt* restored priority to Christ, in fact cornering Joseph himself. On this occasion, although Joseph is portrayed while materially leading the Holy Family toward Egypt, the symbolism of the picture has focused on the Child as the promised Redeemer. Such a devotional gap was bridged by the presence, in both the *Nativity* and the *Flight*, of various Mamluks used to mirror the commercial/religious conflict between Venice and Egypt. A conflict that apparently affected the donors directly, thus providing the ideological motive to portray the Mamluks renouncing their faith and embracing Christianity.

Such heterogeneity of content, which in fact nourishes doubts on a desirable common provenance of the three paintings, is also flanked by a disparity in the identity and number of donors. If in the *Betrothal* we have located at least three portraits, the *Nativity* on the contrary features only a single portrayal who is no longer included, as the three good men, in the *Flight*. As far as we know, the only common denominator that associates the three paintings is the *Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna*, which has a marked disposition for naïve details and religious symbolism that affected the three compositions so profoundly. We could argue that that vernacular Apocrypha was consulted by different donors: a tenable theory because the book, as already demonstrated, was widely known in Early Renaissance Venice; or, we could also speculate, that the Apocrypha was instead in the hands of Mansueti, who then exploited it when required to meet the desires of the market.

The stylistic analysis, in conclusion, could be of some help. Although the lagoon setting would tend to suggest a certain affinity between the *Nativity* and the *Flight*, it must be kept in mind that this is due to Mansueti’s autography, and the stylistic uniformity that naturally follows. A closer examination demonstrates that *The Flight into Egypt* exhibits a portrait of Joseph which sharply contrasts with the other two pictures. In the *Flight*,

Joseph is a mature man approaching his forties and distinguished by bushy hair and unkept beard, as well as by a v-neck long robe and a pair of graceful leather sandals. A portrait, it is worth saying, that reminds us almost of the one in the Uffizi *Christ Among the Doctors*, rather than those in the Burano's *Betrothal* and *Nativity* (figs. 44-45). In these cases Joseph is visibly older, his beard is shorter, his hairline has receded, his dress does not feature the v-neck anymore, and the sandals have become common shoes (figs. 68-70). It is highly unlikely that Mansueti, if commissioned to paint three works featuring a chronological succession of events, would make one of the leading characters, Joseph, look younger in the final episode. Furthermore, it is also improbable that, in a cycle where Joseph had such a devotional prominence, the last scene would neglect to emphasize any symbolic allusion to him, not even mentioning his traditional role as Protector of *Maria-Ecclesia*<sup>225</sup>.

According to stylistic affinities and content uniformity, I would therefore suggest that *The Betrothal of the Virgin* and *The Nativity with Shepherds* were probably executed at the same time, perhaps commissioned by the same donors. We could even propose, in this respect, that the two paintings were part of a wider narrative cycle requested by a community devoted to St Joseph, whereas the *Flight into Egypt* could have belonged to a different cycle, possibly flanking the *Christ Among the Doctors*. If, conversely, the *Flight* instead joined the *Betrothal* and the *Nativity*, this should have happened at another time, as the result of a latter commission or acquisition. Apart from such hypotheses, all plausible but hardly verifiable, what we do know for sure is that the three paintings were separate commissions, representative of private and exclusive devotions originally unrelated to the church of San Martino. When the three paintings first met, and how they eventually ended up in the church, must be matter of future examination.

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<sup>225</sup> C.C. Wilson (2001), pp. 69-74.

## 2. THE *SCUOLA GRANDE DI SAN MARCO*: THE CONTEXT (1504-34)

### 2.1. Introduction: Cycle Arrangement, Criticism Overview and Methodological Approach

Between 1504 and 1533, the *Banca* (governing board) of the *SGSM* (fig. 71) commissioned seven *teleri* to decorate the *Sala dell'Albergo* (meeting room) with scenes from the evangelic mission of St Mark in Egypt. Although still debated<sup>226</sup>, it is currently believed that almost eight painters joined the ambitious venture; among them, however, only four names are disclosed by documentary evidence.

Following the unsuccessful offer (1492) to replace Jacopo Bellini's burned paintings (1485)<sup>227</sup>, on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1504 Gentile Bellini, at that time in charge as "vicario ala Banca", won the commission for the *Preaching of St Mark in Alexandria* (fig. 72)<sup>228</sup>. Almost a year later (9 March 1505), the canvas was said to be largely completed<sup>229</sup>, yet Gentile would not have the pleasure to see it finished. Because of the overload of commissions his workshop was engaged in<sup>230</sup>, when two years later Gentile passed away the *Preaching* was in fact still incomplete, yet the commitment had to be honoured. At his expressed wish, arguably shared with the *SGSM* as well<sup>231</sup>, Gentile entrusted his brother

<sup>226</sup> I am referring to the role that Giorgione and Palma il Vecchio respectively played in the execution of the *Sea Storm* canvases: Philip L. Sohm, "Palma Vecchio's *Sea Storm*: A Political Allegory", *Revue d'Art Canadienne-Canadian Art Review*, VI (1979-1980), pp. 85-96; Peter Humfrey, *Paris Bordon e il completamento del ciclo narrativo nell'albergo della Scuola Grande di San Marco*, in *Paris Bordon e il suo tempo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi* (Treviso, 28-30 ottobre 1985), Treviso, Edizioni Canova, 1987, pp. 41-46. Lionello Puppi, *La consegna dell'anello al doge. Anatomia di un dipinto*, in *Paris Bordon e il suo tempo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi* (Treviso, 28-30 ottobre 1985), Treviso, Edizioni Canova, 1987, pp. 95-108; Philip Rylands, *Palma il Vecchio*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 243-245 (list of attributions: pp. 244-245).

<sup>227</sup> Domenico Malipiero, "Annali Veneti dall'anno 1457 al 1500, ordinati e abbreviati dal Senatore Francesco Longo", *Archivio Storico Italiano*, VII (1843), p. 675; Pietro Paoletti, *La Scuola Grande di San Marco*, Venezia, Libreria Emiliana Editrice, 1929, p. 17; W.B. Wurthmann (1975), pp. 204-205; P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 269-270, 292.

<sup>228</sup> On Gentile's commission see: Frank Collins, *Gentile Bellini: a Monograph and a Catalogue of Works*, Pennsylvania, Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Pittsburgh, M.A. Dissertation, 1970, pp. 122-124; P. Sohm (1982), pp. 242-243, 272 doc. 62, 278 doc. 80; Jürg Meyer Zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, Stuttgart, F. Steiner Verlag Weisbaden, 1985, pp. 119, doc. 68; P. Humfrey (1985), p. 226 note 3; P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 293, docs. 2a-3.

<sup>229</sup> F.C. Collins (1970), pp. 124-125; J.M. Zur Capellen (1985), pp. 118-119, docs. 64-65, 68; P. Humfrey (1985), p. 226 note 3; P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 293, docs. 2a-3.

<sup>230</sup> F.C. Collins (1970), p. 126; J.M. Zur Capellen (1985), p. 119, doc. 73.

<sup>231</sup> Marco Pellegrini, the *Guardian Grande* who advocated the commission of Gentile, was appointed testamentary executor by both Gentile and Giovanni Bellini. An acquaintance that, we might assume, could suggest his role as guarantor of the completion of the works.

Giovanni with the completion of the canvas upon pain of waiving his right to inherit Jacopo Bellini's precious sketchbook<sup>232</sup>. Giovanni's engagement with the *SGSM* lasted more than a decade. Sometime after the *Preaching* was completed he was commissioned to undertake the commission for the second canvas of the cycle, the *Martyrdom of St Mark* (4<sup>th</sup> July 1515), which probably followed a model established by Gentile back in 1506<sup>233</sup>. Unfortunately, as in the case of his brother, also Giovanni died before concluding the painting (1516)<sup>234</sup>, and the *Martyrdom* had to be completed by Vittore Belliniano, one of Giovanni's pupils, who signed it in 1526 (fig. 73).

In contrast to the well-documented circumstances surrounding the *Preaching* and the *Martyrdom*, few documents confirm Giovanni Mansueti's commission for the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark* under the guardianship of Antonio di Maistri (1525-26; fig. 74). It is the case of a series of official claims that the heirs of Mansueti made at the beginning of the 1530s to acquire the money that the *SGSM* had not paid out after the premature death of the painter<sup>235</sup>. Once again, then, the cycle was affected by an unexpected delay, and once again the incomplete painting was finished by a substitute<sup>236</sup>.

So far any attempt to conclusively date or attribute the remaining four paintings of the cycle has proven ineffectual. However, in the absence of documents, some reasonable deductions as regards authorship may be made. On 2 September 1518, the *Banca* deliberated to undertake the execution of two unspecified paintings ("doi teleri in albergo")<sup>237</sup>, whereas in 1533<sup>238</sup>, January 18, it was decided to conclude the cycle, vaguely commissioning "uno over do

<sup>232</sup> Gentile's testament is published in F.C. Collins (1970), pp. 126-128 and J.M. Zur Capellen (1985), p. 120, doc. 75.

<sup>233</sup> P.L. Sohm (1982), p. 279 doc. 82; P.L. Sohm (1970-80), p. 89; P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 234-235; P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 293; I. Botti (1992), p. 55; D. Rosand (2001), p. 77. On Giovanni Bellini's commission see below pp. 86-90.

<sup>234</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 23, col. 256.

<sup>235</sup> ASVe, Scuola Grande di San Marco (henceforth *SGSM*), Reg. 133, *Circa quadri di Scuola*, ff. 6r-6v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 18, ff. 51b-52a, 63v. See also: Gustav Ludwig, "Archivalische Beiträge zur Geschichte der Venezianischen Malerei", *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 24 (1903), pp. 66-67; S. Miller (1978), p. 103-104; P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 226 note 3, and 231 (see also note 9); P.L. Sohm (1982), pp. 285-286, doc. 101; P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 294; F. Agostini (2013), pp. 20-24.

<sup>236</sup> Even if not documented, it is currently agreed that the substitute was Vittore Belliniano (see P. Humfrey (1985), p. 233 note 18).

<sup>237</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, unnumbered page.

<sup>238</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 294 doc. 14, and Charles E. Cohen, *The Art of Giovanni Antonio da Pordenone: Between Dialect and Language*, vol. I, Cambridge, Cambridge, University Press, 1996, p. 352.

teleri che manca in tel nostro albergo”<sup>239</sup>. On both occasions not a single artist was mentioned, nor were the iconographic subjects revealed. Nonetheless, on the basis of a series of secondary evidence, it is currently agreed that Mansueti was commissioned both the *Healing of Anianus* (fig. 75) and the *Baptism of Anianus* (fig. 76) in 1518, whereas Paris Bordone painted the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* (fig. 77) between 1533 and 1535<sup>240</sup>. On the contrary, the authorship and dating of the *Sea Storm* (fig. 78) are still disputed.

The attribution of the *Sea Storm* has been debated at length, following its mention in Giorgio Vasari’s *Vite* where the painting was initially attributed to Giorgione (1550), but subsequently given to Jacopo Palma il Vecchio (1568)<sup>241</sup>. Interestingly, Vasari not only changed his mind between one edition and the other, but when he attributed the canvas to Palma il Vecchio he explicitly used almost the same words and aesthetic concepts he had previously devoted to Giorgione. Furthermore, in the 1568 edition Vasari makes a significant mistake describing instead of the *Sea Storm* episode the *translatio* of St Mark’s relics to Venice: a misunderstanding that also casts doubt on Vasari’s attribution to Palma il Vecchio<sup>242</sup>. Besides Vasari’s arguments, Palma’s affiliation with the *SGSM* (1513) has been regarded as the only available evidence, at least from a documentary point of view, for his authorship of *The Sea Storm* canvas<sup>243</sup>. Yet, it is worth stressing that the *SGSM*’s membership was not a prerequisite to obtain a commission, even if previously appointed painters such as Gentile and Giovanni Bellini had joined it before<sup>244</sup>. In fact Giovanni Mansueti, whose contribution surpassed that of all his colleagues’, never joined the *SGSM*<sup>245</sup>. The membership, hence, cannot be used as a benchmark for establishing the

<sup>239</sup> I am quoting the emended version provided by C.E. Cohen (1996), p. 352; ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 18, f. 84r.

<sup>240</sup> P. Humfrey (1985); P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 291-295.

<sup>241</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de piu Eccellenti Architetti, Pittori et Scultori Italiani, da Cimabue insino a’ Tempi Nostri*, Florence, Lorenzo Torrentino, 1550, pp. 579-580; Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de’ più eccellenti architetti, pittori e scultori italiani da Cimabue insino a’ nostri tempi*, Firenze, Giunti, 1568, pp. 140-141. See also P. Rylands (1992), pp. 243-245.

<sup>242</sup> G. Vasari (1568), p. 140.

<sup>243</sup> P.L. Sohm (1979), pp. 85-96. On Palma’s membership see: ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 69r, Reg. 5, ‘J’; G. Ludwig (1903), p. 65.

<sup>244</sup> Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, “Bellini in der Scuola Grande di San Marco”, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 43 (1980), pp. 105 notes 8-9.

<sup>245</sup> P. Humfrey (1985), p. 238 note 42; P. Rylands (1992), p. 243. Giovanni Mansueti was instead a member of the *Scuola della Misericordia* (ASVe, Scuola Grande di S. Maria della Valverde o Misericordia, Notatorio no. 166, ff. 141v, 160r, 212r, 327r). See also P.L. Sohm (1979), p. 95 note 42, where it is explicitly stated that “none of the contracts specify membership as one of the prerogatives of the commission”.

attribution of the *Sea Storm* to Palma, and neither does stylistic analysis provide a conclusive answer, since the canvas has been heavily over-painted and badly damaged<sup>246</sup>. Therefore, at present, Vasari's original attribution to Giorgione should be considered as possible as that of Palma<sup>247</sup>. I will return to this issue later<sup>248</sup>, yet for the moment, it suffices to date the conception of the painting after 1509<sup>249</sup>, or at least not later than 1510 (that is before Giorgione's death), and its partial execution as from 1513 (when Palma entered the *SGSM*)<sup>250</sup>. Additionally, the identity of the third painter who, following tradition, concluded the *Sea Storm* left unfinished by its deceased authors (Giorgione and/or Palma), has been conclusively identified as Paris Bordone. When he was commissioned to execute "uno over due teleri" mentioned on 1533, while painting the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring*, he also retouched the severely damaged canvas<sup>251</sup>.

To sum up, either direct and indirect evidence suggests the following chronological sequence for the commissions: Gentile and Giovanni Bellini's *Preaching of St Mark in Alexandria* (1504), Giorgione's and/or Palma il Vecchio's *Sea Storm* (1509/13), Giovanni Bellini's and Vittore Belliniano's *Martyrdom of St Mark* (1515-26), Giovanni Mansueti's *Healing of Anianus* and *Baptism of Anianus* (1518), Giovanni Mansueti's and Vittore Belliniano's *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark* (1525-29)<sup>252</sup>, Paris Bordone's *Sea Storm* (retouching) and the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* (1533-34)<sup>253</sup>. According to this reconstruction, it is reasonable to assume that the sequence of commissions did not follow a thematic order; hence, it becomes important to establish how the canvases were arranged along the walls of the *Sala dell'Albergo*.

Beside Miller's analysis, whose reconstruction depends heavily on

<sup>246</sup> S. Moschini Marconi (1962), pp. 165-168.

<sup>247</sup> In this respect see Andrew John Martin, "Giorgione e Baldassar Castiglione: Proposte per l'interpretazione di un passo fondamentale del *Cortegiano*", *Venezia Cinquecento*, 3 (1993), p. 58, where it is demonstrated that Ludovico da Canossa saw "una tempesta di mare" painted by Giorgione (information kindly provided by Mattia Biffis).

<sup>248</sup> See below Chapter 3.I.

<sup>249</sup> On such dating see: P.L. Sohm (1979), p. 95; Lionello Puppi, *Iconografia di Andrea Gritti*, in *Renovatio Urbis. Venezia nell'età di Andrea Gritti (1523-1538)*, a cura di Manfredo Tafuri, Roma, Officina Edizioni, 1984, pp. 216-235, especially p. 226; L. Puppi (1987), pp. 99-100.

<sup>250</sup> P.L. Sohm (1979), p. 95.

<sup>251</sup> S. Moschini Marconi (1962), p. 167; P. Humfrey (1985), p. 232.

<sup>252</sup> On this attribution and dating see above p. 71 note 236.

<sup>253</sup> It is currently believed that Paris Bordone completed his painting by the end of the 1534: P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 226 note 3; P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 76, 294 doc. 15.

Vasari's inaccurate account<sup>254</sup>, Peter Humfrey and Patricia Fortini Brown have established the arrangement of the paintings on the basis of Marco Boschini's description (fig. 79)<sup>255</sup>. Boschini's exposition commences on the left side of the *Sala dell'Albergo* ("à mano sinistra"), and then turns clockwise. On the North Wall he describes the *Sea Storm* ("un temporale"), the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* ("l'istoria del Vecchio Barcaruolo"), and the *Healing of Anianus* ("San Marco, che guarisce dalla puntura della Lesina Sant'Aniano"). The entire surface of the East Wall, as requested at the time of its commission ("in testa de dito albergo per mezo la porta granda"), displays the *Preaching of St Mark in Alexandria* ("S. Marco, che predica la Fede di Christo"); whereas on the South Wall the *Baptism of Anianus* ("Sant'Aniano battezzato"), and the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark* ("azione del medesimo Evangelista") cover the available spaces between the two windows "dalla parte del Campo". Finally, opposite to the *Preaching of St Mark*, just above the main entrance of the *Albergo* ("Sopra la Porta del detto Albergo"), takes place the *Martyrdom of St Mark* ("il Santo Evangelista, strascinato per la Città, con funi da Gentili").

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Despite its artistic and historical interest, and despite the unquestionable prestige of the various artists involved in its execution, the cycle of the *Sala dell'Albergo* has been barely investigated, surely not exhaustively.

Peter Humfrey's article on the Bellinesque *Life of St Mark Cycle* remains the seminal piece of writing on the narrative series, in fact providing a well documented reconstruction of its chronology, authorship, material arrangement and stylistic features<sup>256</sup>. This study must be seen as the most recent

<sup>254</sup> S. Miller (1978), pp. 85-90, 110-11 notes 88, 96. Giorgio Vasari's account of the cycle is quite inaccurate. For example, he attributes to Giovanni Mansueti the *Preaching of St Mark of Gentile Bellini* (G. Vasari (1878), vol. III, p. 648).

<sup>255</sup> M. Boschini (1664), pp. 237-238. P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 227 (fig. 3), 229-231; P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 291-295. See also: ASVe, SGSM, b. 133 Quadri (1528-1686), ff. 1v-2r; ASVe, SGSM, b. 46 (*Invetario de Mobili 1681 sino 1744*), ff. 63r-v. In both cases Giovanni Mansueti's *Baptism of Anianus* is not mentioned.

<sup>256</sup> P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 225-242 and P. Humfrey (1987), pp. 41-46. Of some interest are: P. Paoletti (1929); *Le Scuole di Venezia*, a cura di Terisio Pignatti, Milano, Electa, 1981, pp. 129-150, especially pp. 145-149; P. Humfrey (1989), pp. 319-324; Giovanna Nepi Scire, *Gallerie dell'Accademia. I teleri della Sala dell'Albergo nella Scuola di San Marco*, Milano, Electa, 1994; *La Scuola grande di S. Marco: i saperi e l'arte*, a cura di Nelli-Elena Vanzan Marchini, Canova, Treviso, 2001, especially pp. 13-64; Silvia Gramigna e Annalisa Perissa, *Scuole Grandi e Piccole a Venezia tra arte e storia. Confraternite di mestieri e devozione in sei*

attempt to consider the cycle as a whole: the first analysis to have avoided the temptation to neglect *minor* paintings in favour of the long-celebrated masterpieces of the Bellinis and Paris Bordon. However, Humfrey's concern with the cycle does not stretch to a consideration of the social environment. His article does not investigate the people involved: he does not address the devotional needs and worldly preoccupations of the social group who advocated the canvases and supported (even economically) their troubled execution. In addition, the topical allusions of the cycle are left out of the debate, and this is where this thesis develops the argument further and offers a new perspective on Mansueti's contribution to the cycle.

The cultural context, at least according to the author's perception, was brought to the fore by Fortini Brown's *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio*<sup>257</sup>. With regard to the *SGSM*, the weakness of the analysis lies in the declared intention to debate the entire phenomenon of Venetian narrative painting, where the cycle is necessarily left on the sidelines. As a consequence, apart from brief reference to some of its members (e.g. Josafat Barbaro and Ambrogio Contarini)<sup>258</sup>, Fortini Brown neglects to address fully the social context of the *SGSM*. Her examination simply fails to debate the devotional purposes of the pictures in light of the social group who produced them. The study makes no attempt to investigate the cultural motives of that specific community, namely the contextual circumstances that prompted the iconographical formulation of the cycle.

Few studies, specifically dedicated to single paintings of the cycle, have tried to address this crucial issue. Of some interest are the analysis of Philip Sohm and Lionello Puppi regarding the two canvases picturing the *Legend of the Fisherman*<sup>259</sup>. In both cases the paintings are interpreted as visual responses by the *SGSM* to the threats that Venice suffered during the years of the League of Cambrai. According to Sohm, the evil galley would thus be a "symbol of the besieged Venetian republic", whereas the tempest would be an "allusion to war"<sup>260</sup>; Puppi, on the other hand, reads the *Sea Storm* in light of the portrait of

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*itinerari*, Venezia, Grafiche 2am, 2008, pp. 113-117.

<sup>257</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988).

<sup>258</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 125-132, 199-209. Fortini Brown also mentions Zaccaria Pagani's description of the diplomatic mission of Domenico Trevisan in Egypt.

<sup>259</sup> P.L. Sohm (1979); L. Puppi (1987).

<sup>260</sup> P.L. Sohm (1979), p. 94. A hypothesis in fact confuted by P. Humfrey (1985), p. 236.

Doge Andrea Gritti in Bordon's *Fisherman Delivering the Ring*, where the Doge is therefore celebrated as the *salvator patriae*<sup>261</sup>. Both scholars, as I have said, identify the League of Cambrai as the historical motive that prompted the commission and determined the subject-matter of the paintings<sup>262</sup>, but neither look at clues provided by a closer study of the context of these images<sup>263</sup>. This omission seems particularly significant with regards to the peripheral role the *SGSM*'s officeholders played during the years of the League of Cambrai<sup>264</sup>, or, more precisely, at the time of the siege of Padua.

The first scholar to factor this context into her discussion was Isabella Botti, whose remarkable article on Gentile Bellini's *Preaching of St Mark* deserves consideration<sup>265</sup>. By reversing the perspective of previous analyses, Botti's investigation focuses on the officers who made up the *Banca* that appointed Gentile (1504)<sup>266</sup>. Botti looks at the context of the financial and trading interests of some *SGSM*'s members in the Alexandrine market, and, by implication, its relations to the *Serenissima*'s Levantine trading policy. She tells a story of constant conflict with the Mamluk sultans on the price of pepper, and the necessary atonement (both worldly as well as spiritual) of the unfaithful Muslims as the goal. In Botti's article, Gentile's painting, depicting St Mark's Christianizing Egypt, becomes a rhetorical device, a metaphor to justify Venetian trading rights and privileges in the contemporary Egyptian market. St Mark stands as guarantor. At the *SGSM* the eloquence of the Holy Patron, his persuasive power, becomes a means to celebrate a diplomatic success: the trade treaty that, according to the persuasiveness of the *Serenissima*, marked the end of the litigation with the Mamluk Sultan Kansuh al-Ghuri (31 May 1507)<sup>267</sup>.

<sup>261</sup> L. Puppi (1987), p. 102.

<sup>262</sup> P.L. Sohm (1979), p. 95; L. Puppi (1984), p. 226; L. Puppi (1987), pp. 101-102. See also below Sections 3.I, 3.V.

<sup>263</sup> P.L. Sohm (1979), pp. 94-95.

<sup>264</sup> Although only briefly, Sohm acknowledges that the *Scuole* supported, either with men and funds, the *Serenissima* during the League of Cambrai (P.L. Sohm (1979), p. 95). I'll discuss this issue in Chapter 3.I.

<sup>265</sup> I. Botti (1992), pp. 33-73.

<sup>266</sup> Something similar was attempted by P.L. Sohm (1982), pp. 240-248, where the position of Gentile Bellini as *Vicario* at the time of the commission of his *Preaching of St Mark* is accurately discussed (on this matter see also P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 234-235). However, as discussed in the introduction, I believe that the *freedom* that Gentile arguably had in choosing the subject of his canvas is overemphasized (see above pp. 10-11).

<sup>267</sup> I. Botti (1992), pp. 54-60. For a detailed transcription of the treaty see: John Wansbrough, "A Mamluk ambassador to Venice in 913/1507", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 26 (1963), pp. 521-524.

Botti's study shows that any attempt to approach the narrative cycle must revolve round a detailed investigation of the governing body of the *SGSM*. Such an analysis, not previously undertaken, must focus on the men whose economic power and public prestige guaranteed the control of the confraternity: those officers who decided to undertake the decoration of the *Sala dell'Albergo* and, in all likelihood, outlined its iconographic programme as well. This last issue, the existence of a program, is of crucial relevance. Can we connect the narrative cycle, as in the case for the *Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista*, to a precise, predetermined project? Can we consider the *Cycle of the Life of St Mark*, whose execution lasted almost thirty years, as a unique structure where every single image is meant to form part of a wider design?

Current scholarly consensus seems to be that the cycle did not follow a prearranged plan<sup>268</sup>. Since it evidently “begins and ends at a quite arbitrary point”, it has been assumed that the paintings were not arranged according to a “coherent overall iconological program”<sup>269</sup>. According to such analysis, we should then take for granted that the numerous *Guardian Grandi* who succeeded each others during those years did not have in mind any coherent plan, not even a draft project. A hypothesis that we should not a priori discard, at least according to what Sohm has correctly demonstrated about “the vacillation of intentions by the S. Marco banche” during the reconstruction of the Hall, or the alleged absence of a certain stability and continuity “of patronage patterns”<sup>270</sup>.

However, beside the customary quarrels among opposite factions, it is hard to believe that an institution as prestigious as the *SGSM* could leave its patronage pattern to chance. At the beginning of the sixteenth-century there was too much at stake. It is quite unrealistic to assume that, at the time when the *Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista* had just accomplished a coherent

<sup>268</sup> W.B. Wurthmann (1975), p. 156; P. Humfrey (1985), p. 233 and note 19; Patricia Fortini Brown, “Honor and Necessity: the Dynamics of Patronage in the Confraternities of Renaissance Venice”, *Studi Veneziani*, XIV (1987), pp. 199-200; M.A. Shenouda (2009), pp. 68-69. The only exception can be found in Lionello Puppi and Loredana Olivato Puppi, *Mauro Codussi e l'architettura veneziana del primo rinascimento*, Milano, Electa, 1977, p. 136 note 187; however, some years later Puppi apparently changed his mind and argued that “l'avventura pittorica della sala dell'Albergo della Scuola prescinde, al momento dell'avvio, della definizione di un programma preciso ed articolato” (L. Puppi (1987), p. 96, see also pp. 99-100).

<sup>269</sup> P. Humfrey (1985), p. 233.

<sup>270</sup> P.L. Sohm (1982), p. 17.

celebration of its miraculous relic, the *SGSM*'s only worry was to commission a single (disconnected) painting to slake the ambition of a handful of officers. I believe, on the contrary, that the honour of the *SGSM* could not be compromised by the egoism of few. Neither could its competitors, least of all the *Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista*, whose *Procession in Piazza San Marco* (Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia) had to be outmatched by Gentile's *Preaching of St Mark in Alexandria*<sup>271</sup>. Everywhere, in Venice, *Scuole Grandi* and *Piccole* were commissioning narrative cycles accurately designed to celebrate the exploits of their patrons<sup>272</sup>, and thus it is hardly probable that the *SGSM* would move forward haphazardly. In my opinion, the *Sala dell'Albergo*, namely the *SGSM*'s centre of power, could not have an incongruous cycle, and, if that had ever been the risk, I believe that over the course of thirty years someone would have taken responsibility for remedying such a shameful failure. Otherwise, borrowing Jonathan Glixon's incisive title, how could such a glaring inconsistency honour God and the city<sup>273</sup>?

Much of the debate has focused on the inclusion of the two canvases that combine to tell the *Legend of the Fisherman*, depicting episodes that are extraneous to the Egyptian mission of Mark. As will be discussed below, far from obscuring the meaning of the cycle, these two canvases are crucial to reconstructing the meaning of the original programme. As already mentioned, the execution of the *Sea Storm* probably took no less than twenty years (c. 1510-34). According to the legend, as well as to a series of contextual motives that I will discuss further on, that episode had to be paired with the corresponding *Fisherman Delivering the Ring*. In this regard Humfrey is categorical: the decision to represent the *Sea Storm* could not "have been chosen independently of its sequel"<sup>274</sup>. Which establishes very clearly that by the time the *Sea Storm* was commissioned the two paintings together represented a coherent and thematic continuum. This hypothesis is explicitly corroborated by Paris Bordon's commission (1533), when, rather than choose a

<sup>271</sup> P. Humfrey (1985), p. 234 (see also note 22). To support this theory it is frequently mentioned Gentile Bellini's commission: "Et perche semo ben zerti che tal lavor [...] sara de piu perfetion e bonta che non e quello de l'albergo de san Zuane [Evangelista]" (See above p. 70 note 228). On the *Scuole*'s competitiveness see: P.L. Sohm (1982), pp. 20-39.

<sup>272</sup> See for instance: P. Humfrey (1985), p. 233; P. Fortini Brown (1988).

<sup>273</sup> Jonathan Glixon, *Honoring God and the City: Music at the Venetian Confraternities, 1206-1807*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003. On the concept of honour see also P. Fortini Brown (1987), pp. 179-212

<sup>274</sup> P. Humfrey (1985), p. 236. See also L. Puppi (1987), p. 100.

different subject, the *Banca* decided to have the *Sea Storm* restored.

The fact that the *SGSM* did not change its mind after more than two decades should prove, in my opinion, that some contextual motives determined the promotion of the paintings. In fact, the original conception dates back to 1498 when the *Guardian Grande* and his *Cancelliere* had transcribed, from the official records of the Ducal Chancery, the mysterious legend:

“Stupendissimo miracolo fatto dall’Evangelista San Marco del 1341 à 15 febraro essendo Doge messer Bortolomio Gradenigo, estratto dalla Cancellaria Ducale del 1498 dall’eccellente Dottore Bernardino de Grassi Guardian Grande della Scuola de San Marco et da messer Vettor Ziliol suo scivan.”<sup>275</sup>

Fortini Brown was the first to publish this excerpt, but she argued that the fact that the legend was transcribed into the *Mariogola* does not necessarily prove that the *SGSM* ever established a coherent pictorial program<sup>276</sup>. However, the fact that the *Guardian Grande* decided to copy the legend, and the fact that some years later that story was chosen to decorate the wall of the *Sala dell’Albergo*, cannot be seen as a coincidence. If the first scene chosen to be commissioned followed iconographical precedents already established elsewhere, it made sense to delay the execution of the obscure, and previously not depicted *Sea Storm*, to later. This does not deny the existence of an overarching programme; indeed, we should analyse the *Sea Storm* and the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* in light of the contextual history of the *SGSM* and, furthermore, we should undertake the analysis of the two paintings against the backdrop of the entire narrative cycle. Accordingly, we should avoid any partial investigation, whereas we should rather reconsider the cycle as the outcome of a pre-ordinated programme, no matter if nowadays its arrangement looks, to *our eyes*, arbitrary.

In order to do that, this chapter will firstly investigate the *SGSM*’s electoral system, its bureaucratic procedure and the institutional assignments involved. The aim of the survey is the location of those officeholders who, according to the *SGSM*’s practice, not only had the responsibility to submit,

<sup>275</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1987), p. 198; *Cronica delle Famiglie Venete*, in *Cronica Veneta di M. Paolo Morosini*, BMC, Cod. Cicogna 2306, ff. 114r-115v. Another source refers that the *Scuola* held in its *Mariogola* the account of the legend: Gian Carlo Sivos, *Cronaca Veneta*, BNM, vol. I, It. VII, 121 (=8862), f. 128v.

<sup>276</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1987), p. 198.

advocate and validate the commission of a painting, but were also appointed to supervise and guarantee the completion of the commission itself. The analysis will then be followed by a detailed reconstruction of the *SGSM*'s élite: those men who according to their social status, high-ranking connections and economic power took control of the *Banca* during the execution of the narrative cycle. The discussion intends to provide, as fully as possible within the constraints of this thesis, a series of biographical profiles of some of the officers in charge at the time of the commission. At first, in order to understand their social relevance and authority within the *SGSM*, I will define their personal career, the succession of their appointments as mirror of their actual influence on their fellow-brothers. At the same time, considering that the *SGSM*'s membership was commonly shared by family members, the analysis will also take into account the institutional role that the officers' relatives had within the confraternity. At the end of this preliminary survey I will be able to provide a documented portrait of the power élite, a reliable description of the actual pressure group who monopolized the governing body of the *SGSM*: the list of the families who constituted its oligarchic power. It will be the analysis of the economic interests and devotional needs of that oligarchy that will eventually reveal the real motives that inspired the cycle as a whole. The *Serenissima*, her foreign strategy and trade policy will provide the historical backdrop to this research. The Adriatic Sea, not only the Alexandrine market, will be the concrete battleground in which our officers will play their part. The implicit contradiction of being commercially dependent on, but religiously estranged from, their Muslims partners (Mamluks and Turks), as well as the unceasing frictions with the Holy See on the jurisdictional right over the *Gulf of Venice*, will eventually furnish the ideological motives that prompted the commission of the *Cycle of the Life of St Mark*. Finally, I will attempt an outline of a coherent programme that, although emended with the passage of time, I argue was in the mind of the officers who commenced the cycle itself.

## 2.II. Art Patronage: Decision-Making Procedure and Project Supervision

The historical origins and social component of the Venetian *Scuole Grandi*, as well as their financial administration and charitable functions, have been investigated in detail by Brian Pullan, whose *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice* remains, even after more than forty years, the most comprehensive study of the subject<sup>277</sup>. Another matter is, however, the art patronage that those restricted communities financed, the bureaucratic procedure that regulated not only the commission of a certain project, but also its execution and coveted accomplishment. In this respect, the works of both William B. Wurthmann and Philip L. Sohm are of great relevance: the former providing a documented survey on the broad subject of the *Scuole Grandi* and the Venetian art, and the latter narrowing the research field to a detailed analysis of the meeting house of the *SGSM*<sup>278</sup>. This section intends to provide a detailed reappraisal and, in some extent, even a necessary emendation of these two studies, mostly regarding the deliberative, executive and supervisory bodies that guaranteed the attainment of the *SGSM*'s narrative cycle.

Since 1410 (reconfirmed in 1438), the Council of Ten reserved the direction and control of the *Scuole Grandi* to the “cittadini originari per Nation” or “per natura”, excepting in fact those “per Privilegio”<sup>279</sup> whose candidacy to any office could be obtained only after twenty years of

<sup>277</sup> B. Pullan (1971), pp. 33-131. See also: W.B. Wurthmann (1975), pp. 30-128; R. Mackenney (1987), especially pp. 46-73; J. Glixon (2003), pp. 3-42.

<sup>278</sup> W.B. Wurthmann (1975); P.L. Sohm (1982), especially pp. 6-19; W.B. Wurthmann (1989), pp. 15-66.

<sup>279</sup> Antonio Milledonne, *Dialoghi, Ragionamento di doi gentil'huomini l'uno Romano, l'altro venetiano, Sopra il governo della Repubblica Venetiana, fatto alli 15 di Gennaro 1580 al modo di Venetia* [1581], BNM, ms. It. VII, 709 (=8403), f. 46r. See also: Giorgio Martino Thomas, “Cittadinanza veneta accordata ai forestieri”, *Archivio Veneto*, VIII (1874), pp. 154-156; B. Pullan (1971), pp. 99-106; W.B. Wurthmann (1975), pp. 108-109; Anna Bellavitis, “‘Per cittadini metterete...’ La stratificazione della società veneziana tra norma giuridica e riconoscimento sociale”, *Quaderni Storici*, 89 (1985), pp. 359-383; Luca Molà and Reinhold C. Mueller, *Essere straniero a Venezia nel Tardo Medioevo: accoglienza e rifiuto nei privilegi di cittadinanza e nelle sentenze criminali*, in *Le migrazioni in Europa secc. XIII-XVIII. Atti della Venticinquesima settimana di studi dell'Istituto Nazionale di Storia economica 'F. Datini'*, Prato, Le Monier, 1994, pp. 839-851; James S. Grubb, *Elite Citizens, in Venice Reconsidered. The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, ed. by John Martin and Dennis Romano, Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 2000, pp. 339-364; Anna Bellavitis, *Identité, Mariage, Mobilité Sociale. Citoyennes et citoyens à Venise au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Rome, Ecole Française de Rome, 2001, pp. 105-137; Blake de Maria, *Becoming Venetian. Immigrants and the art in Early Modern Venice*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 2010; Reinhold C. Mueller, *Immigrazione e cittadinanza nella Venezia medievale*, Roma, Viella, 2010.

membership<sup>280</sup>. At that time the emerging class of the *cittadini originari* was not legally established yet, and even if in 1507 the Senate classified a *cittadino originario* as a man whose fathers and grandfathers had already been “cittadini originari of this city”<sup>281</sup>, the Venetian *cittadini* had to wait more than a century to obtain legal recognition (1569)<sup>282</sup>. It has already been argued that restricting the control of the *Scuole* to the *cittadini originari* was intended to compensate for their frustration in being excluded from the administration of the *res publica*<sup>283</sup>, and yet we might assume that it also played a decisive role in fashioning their budding social identity. The *SGSM*'s membership, that is to say the belonging to a distinctive and elitist community with its rituals and, what is more, with its public acknowledgement, thus concurred to make the *cittadini originari* an active component of the social fabric they aspired to join<sup>284</sup>. To phrase it differently, holding certain offices within the *Scuole Grandi* was seen as a matter of pride and honour that, mostly because of their unconditional philanthropy, magnanimity and charity, would support the aspirations to acquire Venetian citizenship<sup>285</sup>.

Further criteria regulated, and in fact restricted, admission to the *SGSM*. As a rule, prospective candidates could be admitted only if they were not, or even had not previously been, members of rival confraternities. Moreover, to be considered they had to prove their good reputation (*buona fama*), to be in their 20s and, arguably to avoid the enrolment of moribund and thus insincere applicants, not older than 60 years old<sup>286</sup>. With yet stronger reason, even the

<sup>280</sup> ASVe, Consilio dei Dieci, Misti, Reg. 9, f. 44v, Reg. 12, f. 20; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 8, ff. 11v, 89r. See also W.B. Wurthmann (1975), pp. 75-79 and P.L. Sohm (1982), p. 20. On the *cittadini originari* see: B. Pullan (1971), pp. 72-73; Giuseppe Trebbi, “La cancelleria veneta nei secoli XVI e XVII”, *Annali della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi*, XIV (1980), pp. 65-126; Matteo Casini, *La cittadinanza originaria a Venezia tra i secoli XV e XVI. Una linea interpretativa*, in *Studi Veneti offerti a Gaetano Cozzi*, Vicenza, il Cardo, 1992, pp. 133-150; J.S. Grubb (2000); A. Bellavitis (2001), pp. 105-137; Andrea Zannini, *L'ordine imperfetto. Trent'anni di storiografia sulla cittadinanza nella Repubblica di Venezia*, in *Amicitiae pignus. Studi storici per Piero Del Negro*, ed. by Ugo Baldini e Gian Paolo Brizzi, Milano, Unicopli, 2014, pp. 387-400.

<sup>281</sup> Mary Frances Neff, *Chancellery Secretaries in Venetian Politics and Society, 1480-1533*, Los Angeles, University of California, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1985, pp. 15, 28 note 24. B. Pullan (1971), p. 99, quotes *Libro de la Republica* (1542).

<sup>282</sup> B. Pullan (1971), p. 103; M.F. Neff (1985), pp. 11-12; M. Casini (1992), pp. 196-207; J.S. Grubb (2000), p. 354.

<sup>283</sup> B. Pullan (1971), pp. 107-108. See also: *La Repubblica e i Magistrati di Vinegia di M. Gasparo Contareno, Nuovamente fatti volgari*, in *Vinegia per Baldo Sabini*, l'anno MDLI, pp. 123-127.

<sup>284</sup> M. Casini (1992), pp. 196-207.

<sup>285</sup> See above p. 78 note 273.

<sup>286</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, b. 215, unnumbered and undated page. B. Pullan (1971), p. 74; J. Glixon (2003), pp. 14, 17.

access to the *Banca*, the decision-making body of the *SGSM*, was regulated by a series of age restrictions. According to a document dated 1544, the *SGSM* set out the age required for any single office: 20 years to be elected *Degano Tutto l'anno* (in 1491 the age was 26)<sup>287</sup>, 30 years to compete for *Degano Mezzo anno*, *Scrivano* and *Guardian da Matin*, 40 years to become *Vicario* or join the *Zonta* (as from 1521)<sup>288</sup>, and at least 50 years to be appointed as *Guardian Grande*<sup>289</sup>.

The members of the *Banca* were elected twice per year; why, can be understood by focusing on the election of the *Scrivano*, since his role of accountant could explain why such a double election was observed, and in fact needed<sup>290</sup>. The *Scrivano* (together with two *Degani Mezzo Anno* and one *Masser*) was normally elected in August, that is to say some six months after his *Banca* had been elected; the following Easter, on the Sunday before the Palm Sunday (“Domenica di Lazzaro”)<sup>291</sup>, the same *Scrivano* then attended upon the newly elected *Banca* until the coming August. Such a peculiar electoral mechanism had a single justification which, as always in the case of the Venetian *Scuole*, has to do with the meticulous control and verification of expenditure. Given the fact that the *Scrivano* had the burdensome duty of preparing, as well as updating, the *SGSM*'s cash-flow statement, the *SGSM* entrusted him with the crucial responsibility of expense watchdog. Therefore, in order to avoid any sort of unwarranted costs, during the first half of his mandate he had to attend to the disbursement of the *Banca* he belonged to, whereas during the other part he had to superintend the activities of the following, unassociated one.

Unlike the *Scrivano*, whose election was apparently related to his numeracy, at the *SGSM* the access to high offices was subjected to adequate preparation. The *cursus honorum* initially started with the *Degano*: at first the *Degano di tutto l'anno* and then the *Degano di mezzo anno* or *Sindaco* – these offices were in fact considered the first step that allowed newly appointed to

<sup>287</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>288</sup> On the *Zonta*, its election and functions, see: B. Pullan (1971), pp. 68-70; P.L. Sohm (1982), especially pp. 15, 22; J. Glixon (2003), p. 292 note 50. With regard to the specific case of the *SGSM*, see: ASVe, *SGSM*, reg. 8, f. 282r.

<sup>289</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, b. 215, unnumbered and undated page (12 March 1544).

<sup>290</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 8, f. 281r; ASVe, *SGSM*, b. 125, ff. 1r-v. See also J. Glixon (2003), pp. 19-20.

<sup>291</sup> On the *Domenica di Lazzaro* see: *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, vol. 7, Roma, Istituto Giovanni XXIII della Pontificia Università Lateranense-Città nuova, col. 1140-1141.

achieve the subsequent post of *Guardian da Matin*. Once the candidate was considered dependable and trained in the *SGSM*'s administrative machinery, he could then aspire to the sought-after positions of *Vicario* and *Guardian Grande*<sup>292</sup>. After being appointed *Guardian Grande* the officer was then exempted from lower positions such as *Degano*, normally joining the *Zonta* or the guardianship again<sup>293</sup>. All offices could be held time after time, but in 1394 the Council of Ten imposed a series of precautionary periods of ineligibility (*contumacia*) which were meant to prevent the centralization of power, at least theoretically<sup>294</sup>. Thus new members could not have access to offices before their first year had passed, whereas former officers had to wait between three and five years before they could be eventually re-elected<sup>295</sup>. Additionally, the *contumacia* also restricted the simultaneous access to offices of members of the same family, even in the event of distant relatives<sup>296</sup>.

With regard to art patronage, the *Banca* had the exclusive right to discuss, evaluate and submit any proposed project. As Wurthmann put it, the *Banca* had the responsibility of “turning ideas into reality”: it was that group of men who had to define the “project fairly closely”, to estimate “time and expense”, to approach artists and “solicit their ideas in sketch or model form”, and to supervise the project’s execution<sup>297</sup>. Even if the *Banca* directly controlled the art patronage process, it did not have the final say. Its power, mostly regarding non-recurring expenditure, was in fact rigorously limited<sup>298</sup>. A certain project, although already passed unanimously at the *Banca*, had to be vetted by a separate Chapter that “had control over the financial resource of the confraternities”<sup>299</sup>.

In the specific case of the *SGSM*, the *Guardian Grande* was therefore required to summon the group of *Trenta huomini* (also mentioned as *Trenta huomini in su*) which was in charge of discussions and deliberations about any sort of expenditure that the *Banca* intended to undertake<sup>300</sup>. This group, whose

<sup>292</sup> See also the case of the *Scuola Grande di San Rocco*: M.E. Massimi (1995), pp. 6-8.

<sup>293</sup> J. Glixon (2003), p. 19.

<sup>294</sup> B. Pullan (1971), pp. 114-115, 120; W.B. Wurthmann (1975), pp. 48; P.L. Sohm (1982), especially p. 7; W.B. Wurthmann (1989), p. 33; J. Glixon (2003), p. 19.

<sup>295</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 81, b. A-B, f. 2r; ASVe, SGSM, reg. 8, f. 407r.

<sup>296</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 8, f. 281v. See also P.L. Sohm (1982), pp. 14-15 note 12.

<sup>297</sup> This section is based on W.B. Wurthmann (1975), pp. 192-209. See also B. Pullan (1971), pp. 70-72.

<sup>298</sup> B. Pullan (1971), pp. 70-71.

<sup>299</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 8, ff. 11v-12r; W.B. Wurthmann (1989), p. 32.

<sup>300</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 8, ff. 10r, 220r.

foundation goes back to 1330<sup>301</sup>, deserves a detailed discussion since scholars<sup>302</sup> have constantly mistaken it for the General Chapter from which it in fact originated, and whose plenary session was joined by the *Banca*, the *Zonta* and every former officer of the *SGSM*<sup>303</sup>. According to the *SGSM*'s regulations, the General Chapter could be summoned only three times a year: the first Sunday before the Assumption of the Virgin, the Sunday before Christmas and the Sunday before the Palm Sunday<sup>304</sup>. The group of *Trenta huomeni*, on the contrary, was apparently in charge for the time of its convocation only, it could be summoned any time that the *Guardian Grande* considered it necessary (“à suo piacimento”), and the members were required to be former officers with considerable experience (“che sia stadi longamente offitali”)<sup>305</sup>. It is also believed that once the group of *Trenta huomeni* vetted and indeed approved a proposed matter, was under obligation to get its decision ratified by the General Chapter<sup>306</sup>. Since 1427, however, at the *SGSM* the resolutions made by the group of *Trenta huomeni* needed to receive confirmation only in the event they were intended to alter the *Mariegola* (the statute book)<sup>307</sup>, whereas the *Trenta huomeni* had the exclusive power to make decisions on any sort of expenditure<sup>308</sup>.

Given its crucial function on delicate money issues, the access to the group of the *Trenta huomeni* was, if possible, even more restricted than that for the *Banca*. Those thirty men, often named *boni homini*, were in fact chosen according to their pristine reputation, consummate experience, exemplary right-mindedness and, which would not do any harm, their great means<sup>309</sup>. It is worth emphasizing once again that it was the group of the *Trenta huomeni* that, autonomously, had the last say in granting funds; the *Guardian Grande*, at this point of the decision process, merely acted as the chairman of the Chapter to which he had submitted the proposal promoted by his *Banca*.

Once funds were allocated, the project fell once again within the

<sup>301</sup> B. Pullan (1971), pp. 70-71; J. Glixon (2003), p. 22.

<sup>302</sup> W.B. Wurthmann (1975), pp. 196-200; P.L. Sohm (1982), pp. 6-7; P. Fortini Brown (1987), p. 22.

<sup>303</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 8, Index.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 9v.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibidem*, Index; ASVe, Consiglio dei Dieci, [26 February 1427].

<sup>306</sup> B. Pullan (1971), pp. 70-71; J. Glixon (2003), p. 21.

<sup>307</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 8, f. 220r.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 220r-v; see also ff. 11v-12r.

<sup>309</sup> W.B. Wurthmann (1975), pp. 196-197; W.B. Wurthmann (1989), pp. 19-20.

*Banca's* competence. The *Guardian Grande* and few additional officers purposefully elected, the *Provedadori* (or *Deputati*) *sopra la fabrica*, were in their turn the only group of people in charge to implement the project<sup>310</sup>. If the *Guardian Grande e compagni* have become familiar to us, we shall now focus on the *Provedadori sopra la fabrica*, we shall investigate who these *Provedadori* were, who elected them, and, more importantly, what kind of duties they were required to fulfil.

On 16 March 1443, during the on-going construction of the new meeting-house at *San Zanipolo*<sup>311</sup>, the General Chapter of the *SGSM* decreed to elect seven *Provedadori sopra la fabrica*<sup>312</sup>. Their duties were manifold, and burdensome in many cases. They had to accomplish what the *Banca* had deliberated, to supervise design projects, to collect money mostly, but not only, from the *Banca* itself, and then to pay off material expenses, workers and artisans. Additionally, one of the appointed *Provedadori* had to assume the responsibility for the money collected and expended, which had to be submitted every three months to the *Banca's* audit through the *Zornal della Scola* (ledger account)<sup>313</sup>. All things considered, as Sohm put it, it was the *Provedadori's* responsibility to assure a certain “degree of continuity” of the on-going project “in the face of fluctuating boards”<sup>314</sup>.

The precise role of the *Provedadori* remains uncertain at the moment – they may have just supervised the building activities, or they may have also supervised the commissions. A key issue that extant documents now allow to resolve definitively.

On 15<sup>th</sup> July 1515, the *Banca* of the *SGSM*<sup>315</sup>, at that time represented by Vittore Ziliol (*vardian grando*), Antonio de Giacomo (*vicario*), Francesco da Brazo (*vardian da matin*) and Andrea Ruzier (*provedador zeneral*), made a bargain with Giovanni Bellini to “far far uno teller” picturing the *Martyrdom of St Mark*<sup>316</sup>. While setting out the terms for the execution, the *Scrivano* added

<sup>310</sup> W.B. Wurthmann (1975), pp. 203-204.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>312</sup> ASVe, SGSM, b. 215, unnumbered page. See also W.B. Wurthmann (1975), pp. 203-204, 204 note 1.

<sup>313</sup> See also P.L. Sohm (1982), pp. 17-18, 40.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 15-17. Sohm (pp. 18-19 note 18) also provides an interesting list of officers who, he argues, had served as *Provedadori sopra la fabrica* between the end of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries. Unfortunately, archival reference is not provided.

<sup>315</sup> With regard to the officers who joined the *Banca* see ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 6v, 9v, 12v, 16r, 27v.

<sup>316</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, f. 60r. See also *Giovanni Bellini*, exhibition catalogue (Roma

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“siano anchora obligati i soprascitti vardian e compagni dar al ditto messer Zuanne de tempo in tempo danari secondo esso messer Zuanne lavorerà. El qual lavor deba de tempo in tempo el ditto vardian et esso messer Andrea provedador ut supra andare a vedere e secondo el proceder del lavor, tanto dar al ditto messer Zuanne”<sup>317</sup>.

The contract states that those who were in charge to supervise the work of Giovanni Bellini were “ditto vardian [Vittore Ziliol] et esso messer Andrea [Ruzier] provedador”. Even if the *Banca* was expected to pay Bellini regularly, the instalments were due to the unquestionable decision of Vittore and Andrea: it was their responsibility to pay the painter, and this depended on whether the work had progressed accordingly to the terms of the contract. Essentially, the *Guardian Grande* and his *provedador* were required to visit regularly Giovanni’s workshop and assess, independently, the state of the painting.

Few months after the contract was stipulated, 11 November 1515, the *Banca* decreed to elect two additional *Provedadori sopra la fabrica* to assist the existing supervisors<sup>318</sup>. This is a documentary evidence that offers a privileged sight of the electoral system that the *SGSM*’s statute required in order to appoint the new *Provedadori*. Even though the proposed election was called by the *Guardian Grande* and his *Banca*, it was the exclusive right of the group of *Trenta huomeni (in su)* – on that occasion made up by no less than 77 men<sup>319</sup> – to select the proposed candidates. Quite interestingly though, the same restricted group that had the authority to choose or reject art patronage proposals, was also in charge of nominating the officers who would have supervised the project itself.

In 1515 there were 17 candidates. Their names, although currently unknown to the reader, will soon become so familiar that a detailed list is needed<sup>320</sup>:

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2008-2009), a cura di Mauro Lucco and Giovanni Carlo Federico Villa, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana Editore, 2008, p. 358 no. 123 (with bibliography).

<sup>317</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, f. 60r.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 64r-65r.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 65r.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibidem*.

**TABLE 1. Election of two *Provedadori sopra la fabrica* (1515)**

AYES	NAMES OF CANDIDATES	NAYS
de si n. 64	Messer Vetor Ziliol	de no n. 10
de si n. 42	Ser Zuanstephano Maza	de no n. 33
de si n. 23	Ser Jacopo di Dardani	de no n. 53
de si n. 50	Ser Antonio de Jacomo	de no n. 26
de si n. 28	Ser Zuan Ferman	de no n. 48
de si n. 19	Ser Alvise Ascarellj	de no n. 56
de si n. 34	Ser Thadio Dalban	de no n. 41
de si n. 17	Ser Francesco di Franceschi	de no n. 59
de si n. 22	Ser Marco schinella	de no n. 54
de si n. 23	Ser Marco dala Pigna	de no n. 53
de si n. 14	Ser Zuanbattista Moranzon	de no n. 61
de si n. 12	Ser Hieronymo de Piero	de no n. 64
de si n. 17	Ser Piero defendente	de no n. 59
de si n. 26	Ser Domenego Ciera	de no n. 50
de si n. 24	Messer Hieronymo paraleon	de no n. 52
de si n. 16	Ser Zuanne Mussolin	de no n. 50
de si n. 29	Ser Antonio di maistri	de no n. 47

According to the ballot, the new appointed *Provedadori sopra la fabrica* were the then *Guardian Grande* Vittore Ziliol, and his *Vicario* Antonio di Jacomo<sup>321</sup>. Vittore Ziliol, quite surprisingly, was thus granted the supervision of Giovanni Bellini's work by the same group of *Trenta huomeni* that he himself had chaired when promoting the commission of the painting. Hence, we should assume that Vittore's power and influence not only guaranteed the patronage approval, but, moreover, it also assured his election as project supervisor: the guarantor of its completion. On the other hand the *Vicario*, namely Vittore's right-hand man, was then appointed to assure that the project would come to fruition even in the absence of his senior officer. If, as Sohm has argued, a certain project needed continuity in order to be accomplished, the present election was explicitly made to guarantee that Giovanni Bellini's *Martyrdom* would not be left unfinished<sup>322</sup>.

<sup>321</sup> On Antonio di Jacomo see below pp. 118-119.

<sup>322</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, f. 64r; ASVe, SGSM, b. 216, unnumbered page (2 and 15 November 1518).

As it happened, the *Banca* prescribed that the two new *Provedatori* had to be chosen among the most deserving members of the *SGSM* and, more interestingly, from among the most suitable to such task (“i pivi degni [...] et i pivj apti a simile imprexa”)<sup>323</sup>. It is not clear whether *pivj apti* stood for a desirable technical competence or for a prominent position of the candidate within the community. However, the latter seems to be more probable since Vittore Ziliol and Antonio de Jacomo were required to assure, arguably according to their power and social connections<sup>324</sup>, the completion of the project even under the aegis of the following *Banche*<sup>325</sup>. In this respect the document is explicit: too many projects were still uncompleted, and this because of the inability, ignorance and indecision of previous officers<sup>326</sup>. Therefore, the elected candidates, assisted by the *Provedador General* in charge, had the exclusive right to examine, deliberate and implement the work with all the freedom commonly accorded to their predecessors<sup>327</sup>. The appointed *Provedadori sopra la fabrica*, in other words, had to be men of great influence whose power could confront the disinterest, reluctance, or even hostility of the following *Banche*<sup>328</sup>.

If in 1515 Vittore Ziliol and Antonio di Jacomo eventually succeeded, this does not mean that the other candidates were men of no institutional weight and financial means. I will discuss extensively the social influence of these men, and many others, in the sections to come, yet at the moment it could be of some help to summarize the role they played in the commission of the *Sala dell’Albergo* narrative cycle.

An interesting example, mostly because of the subject of this research, is provided by Jacomo Dardani who, as *Guardian Grande*, promoted Giovanni Mansueti’s commission for both the *Healing* and the *Baptism of Anianus* (1518), not to mention that, starting from 1525, he was appointed *Provedadore sopra la fabrica* – the very year of Mansueti’s commission for the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark*. Yet Dardani was not the only officer who patronized Mansueti’s art. We can mention Antonio di Maistri who, as

<sup>323</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, f. 64r.

<sup>324</sup> P.L. Sohm (1982), p. 18.

<sup>325</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, f. 64r.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibidem*. In this respect see also P.L. Sohm (1982), pp. 16, 292-293 doc. 118.

<sup>327</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, f. 64r; ASVe, SGSM, b. 216, unnumbered page (2 and 15 November 1518).

<sup>328</sup> P.L. Sohm (1982), pp. 16-17.

*Guardian Grande*, commissioned Giovanni Mansueti's last canvas in 1525, and subsequently joined the *Zonta* that promoted Paris Bordon's painting (1533); furthermore, Zuan Battista Moranzon, acting alongside di Maistri, was member of the *Zonta* that promoted Giovanni Mansueti's *Three Episodes* (1525), and was successively elected *Provedadore sopra la fabrica* in 1532 (Paris Bordon's commission). The remaining candidates, although not involved with Mansueti's commission, had anyway direct relations with the narrative cycle: Alvise Ascarelli was the *Guardian Grande* who arguably confirmed the execution of the *Sea Storm* to Jacopo Palma il Vecchio (1513), whereas Marco dala Pigna was *Degano tutto l'anno* at the time of the commission of Gentile Bellini's *Preaching of Saint Mark* (1504). Evidently, most of the candidates that in 1515 competed for the position of *Provedadore sopra la fabrica* were going to have, or had already had, a significant part within the *SGSM's* art patronage. Moreover, as we will see, these men were frequently supported by their close brethren and relatives who, in order to ensure the success of the promoted commissions, alternately joined the most relevant offices of the *Banche* that followed each other<sup>329</sup>.

Before initiating such discussion, it is necessary to clarify a further issue regarding the term of office of the *Provedadore sopra la fabrica*. Wurthmann has remarked that, although "the deputies' tenure of office is not known", "when the pressure of construction work diminished somewhat their number was reduced [from seven] to five"<sup>330</sup>. On the contrary Sohm, who nonetheless did not provide any reference to substantiate his argument, maintained that the *Provedadori* "were elected to this position for the remainder of their lives"<sup>331</sup>. It is not clear if Sohm's speculations were deduced from the model of the *Procuratori di San Marco*<sup>332</sup> or from unquoted archival documents, nonetheless what is sure is that by 1546 the *Provedadori* tenure was restricted to a period of five years, and yet not subjected to any kind of *contumacia*<sup>333</sup>. With regard to the period of time prior 1546, we can assume that the office of *Provedadore* was extended over several years in order to prevent

<sup>329</sup> B. Pullan (1971), p. 120.

<sup>330</sup> W.B. Wurthmann (1975), p. 204.

<sup>331</sup> P.L. Sohm (1982), p. 19; also mentioned by B. de Maria (2010), p. 55.

<sup>332</sup> According to P.L. Sohm (1982), pp. 17, 21.

<sup>333</sup> ASVe, SGSM, b. 215, unnumbered page (10 August 1546).

the work being left unfinished<sup>334</sup>. This, evidently, does not imply that they were in charge for the “remainder of their lives”. It is more reasonable to assume, on the contrary, that the *Provedadori* were purposely elected to supervise projects that had been recently commissioned. This last assumption, in fact corroborated by the appointment of Vittore Ziliol and Antonio de Jacomo immediately after Giovanni Bellini’s commission, is definitively verified by the election of three new *Provedadori sopra la fabrica* in 1532.

Between 1532 and 1533 the *Banca* chaired by Zuan Alvise Bonrizzo undertook great works. It promoted the erection of a new altar<sup>335</sup>, the construction of a new doorway<sup>336</sup>, the completion/restoration of the *Sea Storm* and the execution of the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* from Paris Bordon (19 January 1533)<sup>337</sup>. Moreover, by the end of its mandate the *Banca* also promoted the gilding of the frames of some paintings, as well as their restoration (19 March 1533)<sup>338</sup>. As already observed in the case of Giovanni Bellini’s commission, such a substantial improvement, and the considerable expense necessarily involved, had to follow a series of unavoidable voting and confirmations. More interestingly, even on that occasion the *Banca* found itself compelled to summon the group of *Trenta huomeni* (20 October 1532) to appoint three new *Provedadori sopra la fabrica* (Zorzi Francho, Zuan Battista Moranzon and Stefano Bontempo) who had to guarantee the accomplishment of the planned works<sup>339</sup>. Again though, the *SGSM*’s commission was purposely followed by the election of three *Provedadori* who had the explicit authority to implement the will of the *Banca*; their tenure, however, was apparently limited to the accomplishment of those specific commissions.

The present discussion has described the decisional and executive bodies at the *SGSM* that promoted, endorsed and superintended art projects. I have also suggested how the decision-making procedure, although strictly regulated both by the Council of Ten and the *Mariegole*, could be nonetheless affected by some officers with great weight and (economic) power. The following section will thus focus on these men, their loyal relatives and

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<sup>334</sup> See above p. 89.

<sup>335</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 18, f. 83r.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibidem*; ASVe, SGSM, b. 202 (*Atti diversi 1301-1676*).

<sup>337</sup> See above p. 71 note 238.

<sup>338</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 18, f. 88r.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 79v.

prestigious connections. I will demonstrate how their social prestige, within as well as outside the confraternity, led them not only to monopolise the art patronage of the *Banca*, but also to manipulate the ratifications of the group of *Trenta huomini* in order to accomplish a narrative cycle that took thirty years, and involved no less than two generations, to be eventually completed.

### 2.III. Men, Families, and Offices: The Administration of Power

As I have already argued, Giovanni Mansueti's involvement in the narrative cycle of the *Sala dell'Albergo* has been seriously underestimated, despite the fact that he contributed more canvases than any of the other painters involved in the venture. Even more interesting is the fact that Mansueti, unlike most of his colleagues, was appointed without any official affiliation with the *SGSM*<sup>340</sup>, and nonetheless secured the commission for three canvases out of seven. If at the beginning of the century the Bellini brothers, as well as few officers of some account such as Marco Pellegrini and Pietro Borghi<sup>341</sup>, probably introduced Mansueti to the *SGSM*'s environment, by the time of his first commission (1518) most of them had already died. Hence we can but ask who, within such an elitist community, advocated Mansueti's candidacy, who believed in his artistic value or, to phrase it differently, who convinced the brethren that Mansueti was worth it.

On 6 March 1530, the *Magistrato della Giustizia Vecchia* ordered the *Banca* of the *SGSM* to honour the contract signed with Mansueti years before (1525), and hence liquidate his heirs (51 Ducats)<sup>342</sup>. The litigation had turned on the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark*, the canvas left unfinished because of the painter's untimely death and which, after the probable intervention of Vittore Belliniano, was eventually placed "tra tutti duj balchoni" of the *Sala dell'Albergo*<sup>343</sup>. Although subject, dating and location of the painting have been already discussed, it is nonetheless of great consequence to pay attention to the three officers who personally took care of the contract and then supervised its (protracted) execution<sup>344</sup>. According to the document Antonio di Maistri, one of the unsuccessful candidates for the election of two *Provedadori sopra la fabrica* held back in 1515, had now become the *Guardian Grande* who presided over the *Banca* that patronized Giovanni Mansueti. Antonio, moreover, was in good company. At that time he was in

<sup>340</sup> See above, p. 78 note 245.

<sup>341</sup> Giovanni Mansueti witnessed Marco Pellegrini's two testaments (2 October 1508 and 3 February 1509). See: ASVe, Notarile, Busenello Priamo, b. 66, no. 312; Gustav Ludwig, "Archivalische Beiträge zur Geschichte der Venezianischen Malerei", in *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 1905, Supplement, p. 64; with regard to Pietro Borghi, who witnessed Pellegrini's first will, see below pp. 116-117.

<sup>342</sup> See above p. 71 note 235.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>344</sup> See above p. 71 note 236; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notarorio 18, ff. 51b-51a.

fact assisted by two *Provedadori sopra la fabrica*, two old acquaintances indeed: Jacopo Dardani, umpteenth failed candidate of the 1515 election, and Vittore Ziliol who on the contrary won that vote. Three figures of great interest, since they attended, singularly as well as jointly, to the commission and implementation of no less than five paintings out of seven that made up the entire cycle. Three men who offer the unique opportunity to shed light over the social context that not only characterized the ruling class of the *SGSM*, but in fact advocated the decoration of the *Sala dell'Albergo*.

Respectful of the hierarchical order of the *SGSM*, the survey will start from the *Guardian Grande* Antonio di Maistri. This first example should be considered as a brief case study used to outline the analytical path employed while dealing with the considerable amount of data available: a model in fact applied to any single officer that I had the chance to investigate. Successively, the discussion will proceed with two key figures of the *SGSM*, Jacopo Dardani and Vittore Ziliol.

According to Giuseppe Tassini, whose manuscript *Cittadini veneziani* has been an invaluable mine of information, Antonio di Maistri *quondam* Michiel was member of a merchant family native from Treviso that settled in San Bartolomeo Parish in the fourteenth-century<sup>345</sup>. Tassini calls Antonio di Maistri *fustagner*, a noun that, despite its assonance with the Italian *fustagno* (fustian), should be instead considered a further vernacularization of *stagner* (tinsmith)<sup>346</sup>. A hypothesis partially confirmed by the fact that Antonio, as his father before him, resided in “confin de Santo Salvador” where he owned a property in “chale di Stagneri” – the present-day *Calle dei Stagneri* (or *Stagneria*) which owes its name, as Tassini puts it, “per le varie officine da *stagneri*, o *stagnai*, che vi esistevano”<sup>347</sup>. At the time he wrote his will (1537, 15 *zugno*), Antonio was not a mere artisan anymore but rather a man with great means. He possessed various properties: a house with workshop in San

<sup>345</sup> Giuseppe Tassini, *Cittadini veneziani*, 1888, ms. P.D. c. 4 1/5, vol. 3, pp. 139-140.

<sup>346</sup> With regard to the Venetian word *stagner* see: Giuseppe Boerio, *Dizionario del dialetto veneto*, Venezia, G. Cecchini, 1856 (anastatic copy, Firenze, Giunti, 1993, p. 699); Antonio Manno, *I Mestieri di Venezia. Storia, arte e devozione delle corporazioni dal XIII al XVIII secolo*, Cittadella (PD), Biblos, 1995, p. 108. See also F. Agostini (2013), pp. 39 note 75, 40 note 83.

<sup>347</sup> Giuseppe Tassini, *Curiosità veneziane, ovvero Origine delle denominazioni stradali di Venezia*, Verona, M. Fontana, 1882 (VIII edition, Venezia, Filippi Editore, 1970, pp. 623-624).

Salvador, one in “chale di Stagneri” nearby Campo San Bartolomeo and a further one in Mearne (near Mestre). Additionally, di Maistri had also his capital invested in the “monte nuovo”, “monte de susidio”, “monte vechio in sestier de San Marcho”, and “a l’ofizio de le Biave”<sup>348</sup>. His wealth is also confirmed by the location that had to house his coffin: the family vault in the respectable “giesia de Santo Salvador”, right in the middle of the economic heart of the city.

Notwithstanding, his death was not celebrated with magnificence. No baldachin was erected, whereas the *portadori* and *fatigenti* of the *SGSM* were explicitly required to avoid the ritual procession around the church, but rather accompany him “fuor de giexia [...] soto el portego per andar nel suo ingiostro” where the vault was located<sup>349</sup>. The *SGSM*, as usual on these occasions, was also the beneficiary of a dedicated *chomesaria*: 25 Ducats had to be given, annually, to four brides – Antonio’s daughter, Giustina, received on the contrary a dowry 1000 Ducats<sup>350</sup> – whereas on Christmas Day an unnumbered amount of cloaks, stockings and clogs had to be bestowed on the indigent. In both cases, exclusive recipients of such alms had to be the “poveri zitadini veneziani [and] non ad altri de niuna sorte”<sup>351</sup>. Charity, at the *SGSM*, was not unreserved, it was conditioned by the corporative identity.

Antonio di Maistri entered the *SGSM* in 1484<sup>352</sup>. According to the *Registro 6 bis*, his career was destined for the highest offices<sup>353</sup>:

**TABLE 2. Antonio di Maistri’s elections at the *SGSM***

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1484	1501	1489 1496	1502	-	1506	1517 1525	1521 1523 1530 1532 1534	1500 1502 1503 1504 1507 1509 1515	-

<sup>348</sup> ASVe, Notarile, Testamenti, Soliano Bonifacio, b. 937, no. 85. See also ASVe, 10 Savi alle decime in Rialto, Filza Redecima 1514, b. 24 (San Bartolomeo 1).

<sup>349</sup> ASVe, Notarile, Testamenti, Soliano Bonifacio, b. 937, no. 85.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>352</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 8r.

<sup>353</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 9v, 12v, 16r, 25r, 26r, 54r-55v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 12r, 20v, 22r, 23r, 25v, 39r, 40r, 41r-v, 42v, 44r, 47r, 57r, 66v, 89r, 91v.

TABLE 2. Continued

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
								1521	

It is evident that Antonio, once he had won access to power (1517 and 1525), concentrated his influence over the *SGSM*, in fact holding distinguished posts at the beginning of the 1520s, and the 1530s. An influence probably shared with his fellow-brothers (mostly Vittore Ziliol and Jacopo Dardani), rather than with his sons, since both Benedetto and Gerolamo di Maistri only joined minor offices in 1534 and 1535<sup>354</sup>.

With respect to the role generally played by relatives, it is important to emphasize that in 1525 Antonio di Maistri's *Banca* was joined by, among others, Gasparo Dardani (*Guardian da matin*), son of the *Provedadore sopra la fabrica* Jacopo Dardani. Although at that time Gasparo was at the beginning of his career, it would be a mistake to underestimate his presence. The Dardanis, in fact, were not a common family, either within or outside the boundary of the *SGSM* itself; on the contrary, their high-rank, social prestige and financial wealth were far above-average.

### 2.III.a. Dardani Family

According to various genealogists the Dardani family, whose origins were fancifully traced back to the Trojans, came from Cremona to Venice in the thirteenth-century, where they built the San Marciliano neighbourhood<sup>355</sup>. The public notary Alvise Dardani (c. 1429-1511), father of Jacopo, was the most eminent and famous member. In 1451 he was one of the guards of the Doge's son Jacopo Foscari, and in 1500 he acted the same for the Cardinal Ascanio Sforza. In 1509 (June 28), during the Paduan siege, he was appointed "per gratia" *Provveditore* of Mirano, Oriago and Stiano where he owned numerous

<sup>354</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, ff. 8r, 70v; ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 28v, 29v.

<sup>355</sup> *Famiglia Dardana*, BNM, It. Cl. VII, 366 (=7660). A modern edition was published in *Family Memoirs from Venice (15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries)*, ed. by James S. Grubb, with a contribution by Anna Bellavitis, Roma, Viella, 2009, pp. 105-228. *Cronaca di Famiglie Cittadine Originarie Venete*, BNM, It. Cl. VII, 27 (=7761), ff. 1r-6r; *Memorie concernenti l'origine delle famiglie de' Veneti Cittadini estratte da due codici del XVI secolo. L'uno d'autore incerto, l'altro del Ziliolo*, In Venezia, MDCCLXXV, per Giuseppe Bettinelli, p. 26; G. Tassini (1888), vol. 5, ff. 144-145; Paola de Peppo, "Memorie di veneti cittadini: Alvise Dardani, Cancellier Grande", *Studi Veneziani*, VIII (1984), pp. 413-453; M.F. Neff (1985), pp. 413-414.

properties<sup>356</sup>. On 17 July he entered Padua followed by 800 soldiers, while the *Provveditori Generali* Gritti and Dieto, also joined by Alvise's nephew Baldissera, recovered the city at the *Porta de Coalunga*. In 1510 (3 August), Alvise was gravely injured at Camposanpiero (near Padua)<sup>357</sup>. Once back to Venice, and despite his serious injuries, Alvise's reputation was so great<sup>358</sup> that on December 22 he was appointed *Cancellier Grande*<sup>359</sup>. Unfortunately, his ripe age and poor health did not allow him to take office: he was confined "in leto" when he heard about his appointment, suffering "di cataro". He finally passed away on 16 March 1511 "a hore 3"<sup>360</sup>.

According to his high-ranking echelon, the highest a citizen could ever aspire to, Alvise was honoured by a state funeral. The procession that left from the church of San Geminiano in St Mark's Square was attended by some of the leading figures of the Republic such as the Council of Ten and the notaries of the Chancery, as well as by the Chapter and the *Primicerius* of the Basilica San Marco. The Doge Loredan personally escorted Alvise's son Jacopo, whereas Alvise's nephew Baldissera proceeded together with the Pope's legate Michele Claudio; further in-laws were escorted by some Secretaries and thirty patricians<sup>361</sup>. Once the procession reached the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo – the church, flanking the *SGSM*, where the funerals of the doges were normally celebrated – Giovan Battista Egnazio, who had been personally chosen by Jacopo Dardani in the place of Lorenzo Rocca, delivered the funeral address<sup>362</sup>. Then the stately procession resumed its way to the church *de' Crosechieri* where the coffin was finally buried<sup>363</sup>.

In his will Alvise bequeathed, mostly to Jacopo and his numerous sons, the family's palace in *Fondamenta della Sensa* (Sant'Ermagora), two more

<sup>356</sup> Deborah Howard, "Contextualising Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love*: The Cultural World of the Venetian Chancery in the Early Sixteenth Century", *Artibus et Historiae*, 67 (2013), p. 188.

<sup>357</sup> *Storia delle famiglie cittadinesche di Venezia*, BNM, Ms. It. VII, 341 (=8623), ff. 39v-40v.

<sup>358</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XI, col. 679.

<sup>359</sup> P. de Peppo (1984), p. 435. P.L. Sohm (1982), p. 11, dates Alvise's election in 1504, a mistake derived by a misunderstanding of G. Tassini (1888), vol. 2, p. 144 bister: "Alvise [Dardani :] Canc. Grande. Testamento 1504 + 1511 sepolto ai Crociferi".

<sup>360</sup> P. de Peppo (1984), p. 438; D. Howard (2013), p. 188.

<sup>361</sup> P. de Peppo (1984), pp. 438-439.

<sup>362</sup> Ioannis Baptistae Egnatii, *Funebris oratio pro Aloysio Dardano Archigrammateo*, Venetiis, apud Bartholomaeum cognomento Imperatorem, 1554. On Egnazio see: Elpidio Mioni, "Giovanni Battista Cipelli", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. XXV, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, pp. 698-702.

<sup>363</sup> P. de Peppo (1984), pp. 438-439.

houses in Venice (in San Cassan and Sant'Agnese), some properties and lands in the city of Padua, in the Paduan territory (Mirano, Zianigo, Mercogliano and Vigonza), and in the districts of Treviso, Tessera and Mestre<sup>364</sup>. Among his possessions Alvise also had few coal and iron mines in Valle del Primiero (Eastern Trentino), and since 1483 he owned with Pietro Ciera the most important pyrite mine of Agordo<sup>365</sup>. In order to understand the measure of his livelihood, let's just say that in 1499, during the war against the Turks, Alvise ladled out to the Republic 26.000 Ducats lodged at the *Camera degli imprestidi*<sup>366</sup>.

Alvise's reliability and magnanimity were widely acknowledged. For instance, following the disastrous fire of the church *de' Crosechieri*, Alvise was appointed *procurator* for the reconstruction and restoration of the cloisters "in forma più ampia insieme al collegio" (5 June 1490), to which he also contributed financially<sup>367</sup>. There is no evidence suggesting that Alvise Dardani and Giovanni Mansueti ever met, however, as the one was in charge of the reconstruction of a building, Alvise surely knew both Mansueti's *Allegoric Representation of the Trinity* (fig. 1) and the *Arrest of St Mark* (fig. 4) located in the church. The same church, after all, where Alvise used to attend mass, and where some years later would have been buried. Therefore, if it seems too rash to assume that Alvise Dardani and Giovanni Mansueti knew each other, we shall admit that both Alvise and his son Jacopo had to be aware of Mansueti's paintings and that, at least in the case of the *Arrest of St Mark*, they should have made a favourable impression.

With regard to the *SGSM*, Alvise's position was, if possible, even more

<sup>364</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 444; D. Howard (2013), p. 188.

<sup>365</sup> P. de Peppo (1984), pp. 422-423. Marin Sanudo, *Itinerario per la Terraferma veneziana nell'anno MCCCCLXXXIII*, a cura di Roberto Bruni e Luisa Bellini, Padova, Terzomillennio, 2008, p. 278. On the Ciera family's membership and offices see: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 38r, 113v and ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 6v, 54r-54v, 55v-57r. On Domenico Ciera guardianship see: *Laudario Giustiniano*, a cura di Francesco Lusini, vol. I, Venezia, Edizioni Fondazione Levi, 1983, pp. 478-479 doc. 72. On the Ciera family see: *Arbori e Croniche delli Cittadini Veneti e d'alcune Case Patritie*, BNM, It. VII, 90 (=6141), f. 28v; G. Tassini (1888), vol. 2, p. 84; Reinhold C. Mueller, *The Venetian Money Market. Banks, Panics, and the Public Debt, 1200-1500*, in *Money and Banking in Medieval and Renaissance Venice*, vol. II, ed. by Frederic C. Lane and Reinold C. Mueller, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, pp. 220-223; Laura Giannasi, "Agostino Ciera", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. XXV, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1981, pp. 445-447.

<sup>366</sup> *Laudario Giustiniano* (1983), p. 445. On the Venetian Monetary system see J. Glixon (2003), p. xiii.

<sup>367</sup> Marin Sanudo, *Vite dei Dogi*, BNM, It VII, 801 (=7152), f. 250v; M.F. Neff (1985), pp. 414-415. P. de Peppo (1984), p. 420; D. Howard (2013), p. 188.

prestigious than the public one. In 1485, immediately after the fire that had razed the meeting-house, Alvise was entrusted with a mandate to supervise the rebuilding of the *SGSM* (*Provedadore sopra la fabrica*)<sup>368</sup>; a burdensome venture which he also supported financially<sup>369</sup>. His career, as suggested, was unrivalled<sup>370</sup>:

**TABLE 3. Alvise Dardani's elections at the *SGSM***

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1459	-	1461	1470	1472	-	1478 1484 1495 (1503) (1505)	-	1502 1503 1506 1507 1509	1485

His son Jacopo, as often happens, could not rise to Alvise's stature, at least not the public one. Like his father, Jacopo contracted a noble marriage with Polissena Balbi *quondam* Marcantonio, who gave birth to the formidable number of thirteen children<sup>371</sup>. Thanks to the good office of his father, Jacopo was employed at the *Auditori Nuovi* – a post that he subsequently bequeathed to his brother Baldissera (1529), and then to his sons Alvise and Baldissera<sup>372</sup>. He assisted his father during the governorship of Mirano (as *Viceprovveditore*), and, at the time of the League of Cambrai, he also worked on the fortification of Padua during its siege (1511)<sup>373</sup>; finally, he ran “satis modeste” for the office of *Cancelliere Grande* when his father Alvise was appointed<sup>374</sup>.

Jacopo's career at the *SGSM* was far more rewarding<sup>375</sup>:

<sup>368</sup> See above p. 98.

<sup>369</sup> In his will Alvise does not bequeath money to the *Scuola* since “ha in vita havuto assai da me come è noto a tutti” (P. de Peppo (1984), p. 443).

<sup>370</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 6v; ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3r-3v, 6r, 12r, 22v; ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, ff. 18r, 20v, 22r, 23v-24r, 32r, 37v, 41r-v, 42v, 44r; *Origine delle Scuole o Fraterne di Venetia; Serie de' Cancellieri Grandi; Serie de' Secretari del Consiglio di X, Raccolti da Giacomo Grillo a. 1584 con giunte posteriori*, BMC, Cod. Cicogna, 2795, unnumbered page.

<sup>371</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 2, p. 144bister.

<sup>372</sup> P. de Peppo (1984), p. 420; M.F. Neff (1985), p. 413.

<sup>373</sup> *Storia delle famiglie*, ff. 40v-41r; P.L. Sohm (1982), p. 12; P. de Peppo (1984), p. 440.

<sup>374</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XI, col. 674; P. de Peppo (1984), p. 436.

<sup>375</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 67r; ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 16r, 25r-26r, 54r-54v; ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, ff. 20v, 38v, 57r, 66v, 87v, 89r, 91v, 92v, 105r.

**TABLE 4. Jacopo Dardani's elections at the *SGSM***

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1485	1498	1486 1492 (1497)	-	-	-	1518 1523	1521 1528	1502 1507 1515 1519 1521 1524	1525

The career of the two Dardanis at the *SGSM* is of great interest. It in fact shows how social prestige and great means could guarantee access to power, or even better the actual control of the *Banca*. It is remarkable how two men, among almost 600 members, had the ability to win the guardianship five times (or seven, if we consider Alvisè's refusal in 1503 and 1505) over less than fifty years<sup>376</sup>. If we then broaden the analysis to all the Dardanis who joined the *SGSM* in a period of time of almost a century the figures get even more interesting.

According to the *Mariegola*, no less than seventeen members of the Dardani family entered the *SGSM* and, remarkably, between the 1460s and the 1570s they were elected 51 times<sup>377</sup>:

**TABLE 5. Dardani relatives at the *SGSM***

NAME	OFFICES	MEM.
Alessandro	D.A.: 1567	-
Alvisè	D.A.: 1461; SCR.: 1470; VIC.: 1472 G.G.: 1478, 1484, 1490, (1503, 1505)	-
Agostino q. Marin	D.A.: 1526	1519
Agostino	D.A.: 1576	-
Ascanio q. Baldissera Dott.	D.A.: 1553	1547
Baldissera Dott.	D.A.: 1512	1511
Camillo	D.A.: 1591; D.M.: 1595, 1599	-
Dardano	D.A.: 1549	-
Gasparo q. Giacomo	D.A.: 1515; G.M.: 1525	
Gasparo	D.A.: 1568; D.M.: 1573; ZON.: 1586, 1590, 1592, 1599	-

<sup>376</sup> P.L. Sohm (1982), p. 12, argues that they "held twelve appointments".

<sup>377</sup> Membership: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 6v, 14r, 19r, 22v, 67r, 70r, 168r. Offices: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3r-3v, 6r, 9v-10r, 12r, 16r, 22v, 25r-26r, 27v, 28v-29r, 31r, 32v, 33v, 34v, 54r-54v, 57v, 58v-60v, 62v-64r, 65r-65v.

TABLE 5. Continued

NAME	OFFICES	MEM.
Girolamo	D.A.: 1579; D.M.: 1583	-
Jacomo q. Alvisè	D.A.: 1486, 1492, (1497); D.M.: 1498; G.G.: 1518, 1523; ZON.: 1521, 1528	1485
Ippolito q. Giacomo	D.A.: 1529; ZON.: 1550	1524
Lunardo	D.A.: 1552; D.M.: 1556; ZON.: 1561, 1566, 1569, 1571; VIC.:1563	-
Piero	ZON.: 1589, 1591, 1593	
Giovan Battista q. Giacomo	D.A.: 1522; ZON.: 1548, 1556, 1558, 1560, 1562, 1565	1519
Giovan Paolo	D.A.: 1565	-

The table provides evidence of the astonishing attendance of the Dardanis within the *SGSM*. If we focus on the relevant years of the present discussion (1504-34), it comes out that the Dardanis concentrated all their efforts in the 1520s, when they joined the *Banca* six times. More interestingly, in those years the Dardanis involved were first-degree relatives: namely Jacopo Dardani and his sons Gaspare, Ippolito, Zuanbattista and Baldissera. Jacopo's authority, however, had already begun to bite by the end of the 1510s since, as already emphasized, in 1518 he was the *Guardian Grande* who promoted the commission of Mansueti's *Healing and Baptism of Anianus*<sup>378</sup>. Moreover, at the end of his first guardianship (January 1519 mv), Jacopo, together with some unnamed "procuratori dela fabrica" (probably Vittore Ziliol, Antonio di Giacomo and Zuan Alvisè Ruzier) petitioned Pope Leo X to secure indulgence to provide dowries to the "povere donzelle", so that they could eventually aspire to "à honesto matrimonio"<sup>379</sup>. The petition stresses no less than six times the need to distribute money for dowries. Yet, on the other hand, in just one passage the *Guardian Grande* Jacopo Dardani mentions how the indulgence would be also used in "augumento dela fabrica" that is, obviously, to increase the ongoing construction of the new ceiling and the two paintings commissioned in 1518. By March 17 of the same year, Leo X accorded the indulgence claimed. The appeal was thus successful: Jacopo Dardani, assisted by his loyal *Provedadori sopra la fabrica*, had found the financial sources

<sup>378</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, ff. 78r-78v, 79v-80r.

<sup>379</sup> BMC, Cicogna Ms. 3469/50. See also P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 294 doc. 10.

needed to fund the project<sup>380</sup>.

Beside Jacopo's role of *Provedadore*, in 1525 the Dardanis were also involved, personally, in the commission of the *Three Episodes from the Life of Saint Mark*. As already mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, in that year, among those officers who promoted Mansueti's commission, there was Jacopo's son, the *Guardian da Matin* Gaspare Dardani. Gaspare's presence cannot be resolved as a happy coincidence, on the contrary it shows a habit widespread among the men who controlled the *SGSM*. A control that, even if the Dardanis were remarkably numerous, could not be guaranteed by a single family – this at least because of the restraints enforced by the *contumacia*. The leadership, in order to assure continuity, had to be shared: Jacopo and his relatives needed allies. And, who better than Vittore Ziliol could play such a role. Vittore, whose family even outnumbered Jacopo's, had all the required credentials: inestimable means, a strong propensity for art, and a personal involvement in the narrative cycle of the *Sala dell'Albergo*.

### 2.III.b. Ziliol Family

The Ziliols moved from Ferrara to Venice in the thirteenth-century<sup>381</sup>. The family, “onorada di dignità di Conti”, owed its wealth to Pietro Ziliol, “ricchissimo huomo” who in 1258 had amassed a fortune worth 110.000 Ducats<sup>382</sup>. Pietro's descendants were “mercanti nobili, et grandi, et di prima reputatione” who manned trade vessels – as well as, if necessary, warships – and owned numerous “case di negozio et corrispondenze” in Constantinople, Alexandria, Syria, and England<sup>383</sup>. In Venice they possessed houses and palaces, mostly in the neighbourhoods of Santa Eufamia (Giudecca Island), San Geremia, San Salvador, San Geminiano, San Gregorio, and Santa Marina; in the mainland, they acquired estates in Cividale del Friuli and Veronese territories<sup>384</sup>. As in the case of the Dardani family, the Ziliols claimed to have loaned to the State the ruinous sum of 137.000 Ducats during the wars of

<sup>380</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1987), p. 204.

<sup>381</sup> Alessandro Zilioli, *Le due Corone della Nobiltà Viniziana*, BNM, It. VII, 5 (=7926), tomo II, f. 161r. The *Cronaca di Famiglie* (=7761), f. 77v, and the *Memorie concernenti* (1775), p. 62, even anticipate the arrival to 1080.

<sup>382</sup> A. Zilioli (=7926), f. 161r.

<sup>383</sup> *Cronaca di Famiglie* (=7761), f. 77v.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibidem*.

Chioggia, Genova and Ferrara (1258-1480)<sup>385</sup>.

According to the *Cronichetta da Ca' Ziliol*<sup>386</sup>, Alessandro Ziliol and Lucrezia Robobelli gave birth to ten children. Before approaching Vittore Ziliol, it is however necessary to spend few words on some of his brothers. Andrea Ziliol pursued the family's merchant vocation. Among countless expeditions, he became famous through his journey to England (1514) where, while trading *zoglie*, he tried to recover part of the family's ship merchandise that Henry V had confiscated from Zambon Ziliol back in 1417<sup>387</sup>. He became notorious to the general public for his *Commentari delle Guerre de Venetiani in Lombardia*, a work on the wars he joined under the command of Andrea Gritti. Unfortunately, at the end of his life Andrea was affected by senile dementia, and died at the age of 88<sup>388</sup>. His role at the *SGSM* was not of prime relevance<sup>389</sup>. No less important was his brother Daniele, who instead pursued an ecclesiastical career. In 1496 he was elected *Primicerius* of Zara, whereas a year later he obtained the canonry of San Francesco in Vicenza; he then moved to Rome to be appointed Apostolic Protonotary. Daniele was also granted with the benefice of the church of Campo Longo Maggiore nearby Padua and treasurer of Corone Island. He died prematurely in 1528, being buried in the Venetian church of San Geremia<sup>390</sup>. Although he did not join any *Banca*, he was admitted in the *SGSM* in 1517<sup>391</sup>.

Vittore Ziliol was a cultivated<sup>392</sup> man, extremely ambitious, and well-connected to the Venetian's aristocracy. In his childhood, like his brother Daniele, Vittore took vows and devoted his time to the study of philosophy, theology, law and music (he played the lyre)<sup>393</sup>. At the time his father died,

<sup>385</sup> Andrea and Alessandro Ziliol, *Cronichetta da ca' Ziliol copiata fedelmente ad aggiuntevi altre cose*, BMC, ms 963/5, f. 137-149v (extracted from: Anna Bellavitis (2001), Annexe 4, pp. 337-354). A new edition was recently published in *Family Memories*, pp. 337-363.

<sup>386</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), pp. 337-354.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 339. *Cronaca di Famiglie* (=7761), f. 78v; *Memorie concernenti* (1775), p. 62.

<sup>388</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 341.

<sup>389</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 25v-26r, 55r-56r, 57r; ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, ff. 22R-v, 47r.

<sup>390</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 341.

<sup>391</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 33r.

<sup>392</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 292. See also Francesco Sansovino and Giustiniano Martinioni, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, Venetia, Appresso Steffano Curti, 1663 (anastatic reprint, Venezia, Filippi Editori, 1998) p. 597.

<sup>393</sup> A cultural activity apparently inherited by his nephew Giovanni Paolo Cornaro "dale Anticaglie" (*Il collezionismo d'arte a Venezia. Dalle origini al Cinquecento*, a cura di Michel Hochmann, Rossella Lauber e Stefania Mason, Venezia, Fondazione di Venezia-Marsilio, 2008, p. 265). See also A. Bellavitis (2001), p. 342.

Vittore left the priesthood and, according to his legal studies, he was firstly appointed *segretario straordinario* of the Ducal Chancery (1479)<sup>394</sup>, and subsequently admitted in the *Camera degli imprestidi*<sup>395</sup> – as in the case of Jacopo Dardani, Vittore bequeathed his office to his relatives over a period of 150 years<sup>396</sup>. At some point, due to his social ambitions, Vittore left the trade for good and dedicated all his efforts to the chancellery career, where, according to his great “inzeppo, acquistò molte amicitie”<sup>397</sup>. Unfortunately such *amicitie* turned out to be insufficient. After all Vittore was aiming high, perhaps too high for him: he in fact ran for the office of *Cancellier Grande* no less than four times, all invariably unsuccessful (1516, 1523, 1524 and 1529)<sup>398</sup>. However frustrating those failures were, Vittore did not lose his resolution and, acknowledging his impotence, he then focused his means and connections on his favourite son, Cesare, who was raised to the post of *Cancelliere Grande* in 1566<sup>399</sup>.

According to the *Cronichetta*, Vittore did not follow up his own ambitions, his real aim was to promote his family to a higher rank. Vittore’s reiterated attempts to be elected *Cancelliere*, although unsuccessful, prove that he was familiar with a substantial group of nobles who evidently considered him a reputable candidate. The *Cronichetta*, as already mentioned, is particularly explicit on this point: Vittore “acquistò molte amicitie nella città, et in particular de patrizii”. And yet the patricianship was not just a social group with which to maintain profitable relations, it was on the contrary the target of Vittore’s personal ambition; it was, considering the (unfair) exclusion of the Ziliol family from Great Council in 1297, Vittore’s great regret<sup>400</sup>. And yet his conduct, not to mention his means, was so in accordance with the patrician stature:

“essendo che a quell tempo non vi era altra differentia che della ballotta tra quelli del consiglio et li altri cittadini che nascevano et vivevano

<sup>394</sup> *Tabelle nominative e cronologiche dei segretari della Cancelleria Ducale*, BNM, It. VII, 1667 (=8459).

<sup>395</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 342; *Libri di Varie Cose*, BNM, It. XI, 211 (=6735), f. 29r.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>397</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 343.

<sup>398</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXIII, col. 495; vol. XXXIV, coll. 362, 376-377; vol. XXXVI, coll. 465, 471, 475-476; vol. LI, col. 548.

<sup>399</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 348.

<sup>400</sup> *Cronaca di Famiglie* (=7761), f. 77v.

nobilmente, ne in quelli era tanta pretentione, essendo ancora la maggior parte di quel corpo povero et molte case humili, chi hora sono de piugagliardi”<sup>401</sup>.

No difference apparently existed, at least from the *Cronichetta*'s point of view, between citizens and nobles, except for a negligible detail: patricians, and only them, were entitled to legislate. However, quite astutely the author omits to stress this crucial exception, whereas he rather focuses on the *noble* values of citizens. After all only citizens, with their humble origin and despite their unparalleled success, had retained their modesty and lack of pretension. Nobles had not. This passage is of vital importance to understand the ideology and self-awareness of a group of men who, in those very years, was elbowing to establish its place in a society which still uncritically looked at them as mere *huomini plebei*<sup>402</sup>. A generalization that Vittore Ziliol did not accept at all, and in fact opposed with all his strength.

Accordingly, Vittore managed to give his daughters Ziliola, Samaritana and Cornelia (each of them with a dowry of 1200 ducats) in marriage to noble descendants such as Apiolan Corbelli, Almorò Corner, and Zaccaria Trevisan<sup>403</sup>. Yet his designs were much broader. As with the nobility, and unlike many of his fellow citizens, Vittore not only invested part of his family's fortune into the *Terra ferma* (1492), but he also abandoned the *mercatura* – although he left it in the safe hands of his brothers<sup>404</sup>. As a matter of fact being employed at the Ducal Chancery, an exclusive privilege granted to the *cittadini originari* by two decrees of the *Consiglio dei Dieci* (1478 and 1484)<sup>405</sup>, implied an education and a dignity certainly akin to aristocracy<sup>406</sup>.

Even his obsession for the post of *Cancellier Grande* corresponds to the same ambition. The *Cancellier Grande*, also known as *doge del popolo*, was the highest position a Venetian non-noble could aspire to<sup>407</sup>. As usual in

<sup>401</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 343.

<sup>402</sup> *La Repubblica e i Magistrati di Vinegia* (MDLI), p. 123.

<sup>403</sup> A. Bellavitis (2001), pp. 284; *Cronichetta* (2001), pp. 345-346; *Il collezionismo* (2008), pp. 265.

<sup>404</sup> Ugo Tucci, *Mercanti, navi, monete nel Cinquecento veneziano*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1981, pp. 68-74.

<sup>405</sup> M.F. Neff (1985), pp. 3, 12; Matteo Casini, “Realtà e simboli del cancellier grande veneziano in età moderna (Secc. XVI-XVII)”, *Studi Veneziani*, XXII (1991), pp. 195-251, especially p. 198.

<sup>406</sup> *Ragionamento di doi gentil'houmini l'uno romano, l'altro venetiano, sopra il governo della Repubblica venetiana*, BNM, ms. It., VII, 963 (=8236), 1581, ff. 48v-58r.

<sup>407</sup> Marin Sanudo, *De origine, situ et magistratibus urbis Venetae ovvero La Città di Venezia*

societies accustomed to the symbolic display of power, the prestige of the *Cancellier Grande* was assessed by his public appearance and official apparitions: he had the honour to attend the most relevant ceremonies and processions of the Republic, his funeral was commonly compared to that of the Doge, and, as only the *Procuratori di San Marco* did, he wore a distinctive robe (red “scarlato” or purple “pavonazzo”) regarded as a symbol “di grandezza e maestà, cosa molto grave e bella a vedere”<sup>408</sup>.

Such a distinctive demonstration of power through garments could not pass unnoticed, not in the case of Vittore. The *Cronichetta* stresses that, while in charge as *Guardian Grande* of the *SGSM*, Vittore used to wear “la veste senatoria cremesina tutto il tempo del suo reggimento”<sup>409</sup>. As Anna Bellavitis put it, such an attitude must be carefully considered, for it demonstrates how Vittore was a “citoyen conscient de son proper rôle”; it shows, notably, how Vittore highly estimated his appointment at “la plus importante des Scuole Grandi” which therefore “meritait bien le même habit que l’une des plus hautes dignités de l’État”<sup>410</sup>. In other words Vittore, deeply aware of the explicit symbolism of clothes<sup>411</sup>, did not renounce the privilege of wearing “la veste senatoria cremesina”. On the contrary, he proudly exhibited his symbols of status on any available occasion, and, which is even more remarkable, in any available space. If the direction of the Ducal Chancery was barred to him, the *SGSM* was on the contrary his domain: thus in the *Sala dell’Albergo*, the decision-making room that *he* controlled, was to be seen his portrait in which he wore, obviously, his “veste ducale cremesina”<sup>412</sup>.

As with the nobles, by 1489 Vittore also joined the *Compagnia della Calza dei Concordi*<sup>413</sup>, a custom traditionally practiced by young nobles only,

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(1493-1530), edizione critica di Angela Caracciolo Aricò, Milano, Cisalpino-La Goliardica, 1980, p. 277.

<sup>408</sup> F. Sansovino and G. Martinioni (1663), p. 330.

<sup>409</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 343.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 291.

<sup>411</sup> *Ragionamento di doi gentil’houmini* (=8236), f. 58r. See also: P. Sohm (1982), p. 22 note 22; Stella Mary Newton, *The Dress of the Venetians 1495-1525*, Aldershot-Brookfield, Scolar Press, 1988, pp. 16-31; D. Davanzo Poli (1996), especially pp. 29-31.

<sup>412</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 343.

<sup>413</sup> According to the *Cronichetta* (2001), pp. 343-344, and Apostolo Zeno, *Appunti genealogici e biografici di famiglie venete*, BNM, ms. It. VII, 351 (=8385), f. 368v, Vittore Ziliol joined the *Compagnia dei Fedeli*. However, transcriptions made by Cicogna (BMC, Cod. Cicogna 3276/13 and Cod. Cicogna 3278/24, *Compagnia della Calza*, f. 7r and f. 9r) demonstrate that Vittore probably joined the *Compagnia dei Concordi*. Other sources suggest that Vittore was not the only Ziliol who joined the *Compagnie della Calza* (*Memorie concernenti* (1775), p. 62).

who financed, organized, and attended private or public celebrations<sup>414</sup>. Interestingly, even on this occasion Vittore's social ambitions, his imitation and appropriation of the behaviour pattern of a class to which he desired to belong, was immortalized in a group portrait displayed in the "casa Ziliola" in Campo Longo, where Vittore and his fellows wore, once again, "vestiti alla dogalina"<sup>415</sup>.

Vittore's militant, charismatic and personalistic participation at the *SGSM*'s initiatives, explicitly reflects his thirst for public emancipation<sup>416</sup>:

**TABLE 6. Vittore Ziliol's elections at the *SGSM***

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
-	1498	1487 1492	1498	1509	-	1515 1524	1521 (1524) 1528 1530 1535 (1537) 1539 (1542)	1502 1503 1507 1517 1521 1525	1515

His first guardianship (1515) is of crucial relevance to understand his special contribution to the narrative cycle of the *Sala dell'Albergo*. We have already discussed his role in supporting (*Guardian Grande*) and supervising (*Provedadore sopra la fabrica*) the commission of Giovanni Bellini's *Martyrdom of St Mark*. Furthermore, additional information can now demonstrate why Vittore's professional occupation could also guarantee the funding of the project. Vittore's employment at the *Camera degli imprestiti* turned out to be surprisingly strategic for the *SGSM*, since the *Guardian Grandi* were required "dal dì ch'entreranno fino tutto Agosto investir Ducati

<sup>414</sup> Lionello Venturi, "Le Compagnie della Calza (sec. XV-XVI)", *Nuovo Archivio Veneto*, XVIII (1909), pp. 161-221; *Ibidem*, XIX (1909), pp. 140-233; Maria Teresa Muraro, *La festa a Venezia e le sue manifestazioni rappresentative: le Compagnie della Calza e le Momarie*, in *Storia della cultura. Dal primo Quattrocento al Concilio di Trento*, vol. III, Vicenza, Neri Pozza Editore, 1981, pp. 315-341; Ludovico Zorzi, *Carpaccio e la rappresentazione di Sant'Orsola. Ricerche sulla visualità dello spettacolo nel Quattrocento*, Torino, Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1988; Matteo Casini, *Le "compagnie della calza": adolescenza e nobiltà a Venezia (secc. XV-XVI)*, forthcoming.

<sup>415</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 344. The *Cronichetta* also says that another group portrait was displayed in Venice in the Balanzani's house (San Barnaba). On the Balanzani family see: G. Tassini (1888), vol. I, ff. 101-102.

<sup>416</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 150v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 6v, 12v, 25r-25v, 54r-56v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 19r, 20v, 24r, 40r, 41r-v, 75r, 89r, 110v.

100 all'anno intanti imprestidi, cioè Ducati 50 al monte nuovo et Ducati 50 al montevecchio"<sup>417</sup>. Interestingly though, in 1515 the *Guardian Grande* of the *SGSM*, Vittore Ziliol, had to lodge 100 Ducats with the *Camera degli imprestidi* where Vittore himself had been employed for several years. And that is not all. According to the contract stipulated with Giovanni Bellini, the interest the *SGSM* had earned that year was used as payment guarantee to complete payment for the *Martyrdom of Saint Mark*<sup>418</sup>.

Evidently, Vittore Ziliol's role was of major relevance not only in promoting Giovanni Bellini's art patronage, but also in funding it. Then furthermore, as we have seen, in the same year (November 18) Vittore Ziliol was even elected *Provedadore sopra la fabrica*, thus also assuring the necessary supervision of the project. A supervision that, according to the *Martyrdom's* protracted execution, lasted more than a decade (1515-26), thus probably including also the direction of Giovanni Mansueti's *Three Episodes from the Life of Saint Mark* commissioned by Antonio di Maistri's *Banca* in 1525<sup>419</sup>. A supervision, finally, to be carried out together with the newly appointed *Provedadore* Jacopo Dardani, the one who a few years earlier (1518) commissioned Mansueti's first two canvases for the cycle. Hence, even if we can not prove that a planned iconographical programme for the *Sala dell'Albergo* ever existed, we can nonetheless suggest that Vittore, Jacopo and Antonio pursued a common aim, and in fact guaranteed what Sohm described "a degree of uniformity of intention"<sup>420</sup>.

Vittore Ziliol and Antonio di Maistri shared other relevant affinities. During his first guardianship (1515), Vittore's *Banca* agreed to add four flautists to the regular processions that every first Sunday of the month used to parade around the square of Santi Giovanni e Paolo<sup>421</sup>. In 1524, during his second term, Vittore obtained a further enlargement of the performers, when it was decreed to hire four "cantori solenni"<sup>422</sup>. According to Francesco Lusini,

<sup>417</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 8, f. 16r. On the relation between the *Camera degli imprestidi* and the *Scuola* see: *Laudario Giustiniano*, vol. I, p. 414, and P.L. Sohm (1982), p. 12. With regard to the *Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista* see W.B. Wurthmann (1975), p. 144, especially note 1.

<sup>418</sup> On July 5<sup>th</sup> Giovanni received from Vittore a cash advance of 10 Ducats: ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, f. 60r; *Giovanni Bellini* (2008), p. 358, nos. 123-124.

<sup>419</sup> See above pp. 71, 90-92.

<sup>420</sup> P.L. Sohm (1982), p. 19.

<sup>421</sup> *Laudario Giustiniano* (1983), p. 477. On the ceremonies of the first Sunday of the month: J. Glixon (2003), pp. 70-71.

<sup>422</sup> *Laudario Giustiniano* (1983), pp. 415-416.

the increase in the musicians does not only mirror Vittore's interest in music, but it must be seen in light of his own personal ambitions, considering that the addition was made to meet the model of the *Compagnia dei Piffari* of the doge<sup>423</sup>. Vittore's obsession with power, or better with its ostentation, hence directly affected the *SGSM*'s appearance, its public identity: the processions, as Lusini put it, did not have to show a proper dignity, they had to display sumptuousness<sup>424</sup>. A need for social recognition explicitly pursued in those years by another influential *Guardian Grande* such as Antonio di Maistri. According to Vittore's previous management, in 1517 Antonio and his officers hired ten more singers of the Basilica whose role, beside their vocal talent, was to enhance the prestige of the *SGSM* itself<sup>425</sup>. Finally in 1525, during his second term of office, the four "cantori solenni" recruited by Vittore were eventually confirmed: Antonio's intent to "honorar il culto divino" was then accomplished<sup>426</sup>.

Although art patronage and procession performance apparently pertain to different cultural domains, in Early Renaissance Venice they on the contrary applied to the same guiding principle: honour. Glixon, mentioning the case of the *Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista*, has demonstrated that sponsoring the arts kept step with dispensing charity. Their ultimate aim was to pursue the honour of not only of Venice, but rather of all Christendom<sup>427</sup>. The concept of honour, Glixon claims, changed through the centuries. If at the origins God and the Saints, as well as the Doge and Venice were honoured by "religious devotion" and "charitable good works", by the end of the fifteenth-century the "scuole could best honour God and the city by earning honour themselves". Accordingly, if personal honour was considered a legitimate ambition, with yet stronger reason was "the honour gained by individuals" who poured great amount of money in the various activities of the *SGSM*<sup>428</sup>. Thus, if the *Guardian Grande*'s prestige was admitted as part of the means that the *SGSM* had to revere God, the Saint and the city, Vittore Ziliol and his companions were implicitly legitimated to patronize art, processions as well as

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<sup>423</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 415.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 477.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 478. Unfortunately, in 1526 the new *Guardian Grande*, Domenico Ciera, put an end to it.

<sup>427</sup> J. Glixon (2003), pp. 6-9. See also P. Fortini Brown (1987), pp. 179-212.

<sup>428</sup> J. Glixon (2003), p. 8.

anything else that could gain the most recognition for the *SGSM*. At the *SGSM* the honour of God hid a much more practical motive.

With regard to Vittore Ziliol, it is evident that his social ambitions, his proud exhibition of power, and, most importantly, his crucial role in the *SGSM*'s art patronage, were all excused by the honour they would confer on the institution itself. By holding ruling offices Vittore Ziliol, as well as his ambitious associates, had thus the right to flaunt their social influence, to proudly exhibit the status they had achieved.

Common purposes imply mutual endeavours and, consequently, a necessary partnership. So far the analysis has demonstrated how a very limited group of officers controlled, or at least heavily influenced, the patronage of the vast majority of the paintings that made up the cycle of the *Sala dell'Albergo*. Furthermore, it has also been demonstrated how Jacopo Dardani could avail himself of the backing of numerous relatives, who in their turn could monitor, if not directly affect, the intentions of the following (unsympathetic) *Banche*. As has been repeatedly stressed, only continuity could guarantee the project accomplishment. In this respect, Vittore Ziliol's family shows an interesting affinity with Jacopo's, and thus a complete list of those who joined the *SGSM* would clarify the discussion<sup>429</sup>:

**TABLE 7. Ziliol relatives at the *SGSM***

NAME	OFFICES	MEM.
Alvise	-	1498
Andrea q. Alessandro	D.A.: 1491, 1496; ZON.: 1531, 1534, 1536, 1538, 1540, 1545	-
Alessandro	D.A.: 1464	-
Alessandro q. Vittore	D.A.: 1525; VIC.: 1542; G.G.: 1551; ZON.: 1547, 1557, 1564, 1568, 1571	1523
Camillo	D.A.: 1565; D.M.: 1569; ZON.: 1573, 1589, 1591, 1595, 1597, 1599	-
Cesare q. Vittore	D.A.: 1532; VIC.: 1543; ZON.: 1558, (1565), 1577, 1579, 1581, 1583, 1587; G.G.: 1560	-
Cesare	D.A.: 1592	-

<sup>429</sup> Membership: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 8r, 10v, 14r, 33r, 67v, 70r, 108v, 117r, 150v, 159v. Offices: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3r-4r, 6r-7r, 9r-10r, 23r, 24r, 25v-26v, 28v, 29v, 30v, 32r-32v, 33v, 35r-35v, 54r, 55r-56r, 57r, 58v-65v.

TABLE 7. Continued

NAME	OFFICES	MEM.
Daniele	G.M.: 1445; VIC.: 1452	-
Daniele <i>Canonico</i>	-	1517
Fabio	D.A.: 1575	-
Giulio	D.A.: 1568; ZON.: (1592), 1596, 1598	-
Girolamo q. Alessandro	D.A.: 1489, 1495	-
Girolamo q. Vittore	-	1524
Girolamo	D.A.: 1593	-
Ottaviano q. Vittore	-	1539
Orazio	D.A.: 1579	-
Piero <i>Camera Imprestidi</i>	D.A.: 1497, (1504); G.M. 1511; ZON.: (1522); G.G.: 1522	1496
Scipione	D.A.: 1545; G.M.: 1550; VIC.: 1554; ZON.: 1555, 1582, 1584, 1585, 1588, 1590; G.G.: 1574	-
Scipione q. Alessandro <i>Dott.</i>	D.A.: 1577; ZON.: 1582, 1584, 1585, 1588, 1590	-
Tommaso q. Camillo	D.A.: 1599	-
Vittore q. Alessandro	D.A.: 1487; 1492; SCR.: 1498; VIC.: 1509; G.G.: 1515, 1524; ZON.: 1521, 1524, 1528, 1530, 1535, (1537), 1539, (1542)	-
Vittore	D.A.: 1559; VIC.: 1573; ZON.: 1578	-
Giovanni	G.G.: 1444	-

Between 1445 and 1600 no less than 21 Ziliols joined the *SGSM*. Over 150 years the family reached the guardianship 7 times, and, if we extend the research to the seventeenth-century, the number of *Guardian Grandi* rises to 9<sup>430</sup>. Even though the vast majority of the Ziliol members actively contributed to the *Banca* only during the second half of the sixteenth-century, two sons of Vittore, Cesare and Alessandro, took office in years of crucial relevance.

In 1532, the *Banca* that commissioned Paris Bordon's *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* was joined by an officer at his first appointment as *Degano Tutto l'anno*: Vittore's favourite son Cesare Ziliol. The same Cesare that, after a quite turbulent youth<sup>431</sup>, crowned Vittore's intimate desires of emancipation

<sup>430</sup> A. Bellavitis (2001), pp. 304-306.

<sup>431</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 347.

by being elected *Cancelliere Grande* (1566). The same Cesare, not surprisingly at all, whose dynastic leadership of the *SGSM* – he was elected *Guardian Grande* in 1560 – was visually imposed on the entire membership through the portrait of Vittore located “nell’albergo della scola di San Marco [...] con un puttino appresso, qual è M. Cesare Ziliolo il cancelliero”<sup>432</sup>.

Kinship, no matter what the *contumacia* prescribed, had a crucial weight at the *SGSM*, and the Ziliol certainly did not lack it. Cesare Ziliol’s brother, “messer Alessandro Ziliol dottor”, was in fact one of the executors of Paris Bordon’s last will in which he was mentioned as *zerman* (cousin) of his wife Cinzia Spa<sup>433</sup>. Thus, even though Ziliol members did not hold major offices at the time of Paris Bordon’s engagement, we have to admit that their influence was nonetheless of crucial relevance. In this respect it should not pass unnoticed that Bordon’s painting would bring to a conclusion the depiction of the *Miracle of the Fisherman*, whose account had been transcribed decades before by the then *Scrivano* Vittore Ziliol (1498). With this last-mentioned painting though, Vittore could eventually see the completion of a cycle whose execution he had personally supervised for fifteen years, and whose fulfilment had been made possible by the permanent collaboration of a loyal group of men.

The 1533 commission offers even further evidence. The *Banca* then in charge, governed by Zuan Alvise Bonrizzo “de ser Lorenzo”<sup>434</sup>, was in fact also joined by Antonio di Maistri, whose relevance in the commission of Mansueti’s *Three Episodes* (1525), as well the affinity with Vittore’s ambitions, have been extensively discussed. Conversely, it is of great interest to emphasize that Zuan Alvise Bonrizzo had already had his hand in the cycle commission, since in his capacity as *Vicario* he took part of the same *Banca* chaired by di Maistri in 1525. Again though, this preliminary analysis would tend to confirm the existence of a group of men whose corporate action was aimed to guarantee

<sup>432</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 343.

<sup>433</sup> On the meaning of the Venetian word *zerman* see: G. Boerio (1993), p. 811. Luigi Bailo and Gerolamo Biscaro, *Della Vita e delle Opere di Paris Bordon*, Treviso, Tipografia di Luigi Zoppelli, 1900, p. 56, suggested that Alessandro, who married Caterina Rizzo, had blood relations with Zuan Alvise Bonrizzo through his wife Caterina. Nonetheless, as Neff has demonstrated, Alessandro’s wife was the daughter of Sebastiano Rizzo (not Bonrizzo) and Franceschina Michieli q. Gian Giacomo (M.F. Neff (1985), p. 593).

<sup>434</sup> See below pp. 128-129.

continuity in the planned cycle. A group of *cittadini originari* led by two powerful and ambitious men such as Jacopo Dardani and Vittore Ziliol, and assisted by the concurrent efforts of their relatives and few additional officers (Antonio di Maistri and Zuan Alvise Bonrizzo). A group that, although highly influential, inevitably needed a broader support, that is to say a wider consent.

### 2.III.c. Middle-Influence Families: Major officers

Although extremely relevant, the discussed findings are inevitably partial, since the *Banca* was made up by sixteen officers plus the twelve members of the *Zonta* added in 1521<sup>435</sup>. In other words, despite the conspicuous role that both the Dardanis and the Ziliols played in the commission of the *SGSM*'s narrative cycle, the survey must be now extended to those men who similarly helped to shape the subject matter of the cycle itself. In order to do that, the following analysis will focus on other key officers, and introduce the significance of the *Quattro Capi di Banca* who were in charge at the time of each commission<sup>436</sup>:

**TABLE 8. *Banche* in charge at the time of the commissions**

YEAR	NAME	OFFICE	PAINTING
1504	Marco Pellegrini Gentile Bellini Agostino Negro Pietro Borghi Antonio Taiamonte	G.G. VIC. G.M. SCR. (1503-04) SCR. (1504-05)	<i>Preaching of St Mark</i>
1515	Vittore Ziliol Antonio di Jacomo Francesco da Brazzo Jacomo di Fornari Girolamo di Sandro	G.G. VIC. G.M. SCR. (1514-15) SCR. (1515-16)	<i>Martyrdom of St Mark</i>
1518	Jacomo di Dardani Domenico Armellini Luca di Giovanni Zuan Regolin Cristoforo Bonfioli	G.G. VIC. G.M. SCR. 1517-18 SCR. 1518-19	<i>Healing of Anianus</i>  <i>Baptism of Anianus</i>

<sup>435</sup> See above pp. 83-84.

<sup>436</sup> The only exception will be the commission of the *Sea Storm*. With regard to hypothetical identification of the *Banca* that commissioned it see below pp. 170-172.

TABLE 8. Continued

YEAR	NAME	OFFICE	PAINTING
1525	Antonio di Maistri Zuan A. Bonrizzo Gasparo Dardani Francesco Gruato Cristoforo Zanoti	G.G. VIC. G.M. SCR. 1524-25 SCR. 1525-26	<i>Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark</i>
1532	Zuan A. Bonrizzo Ludovico Usper Zuan M. d'Alban Zuan di Stefani Francesco Colombina	G.G. VIC. G.M. SCR. 1531-32 SCR. 1532-33	<i>Sea Storm</i> (restoration)  <i>Fisherman Delivering the Ring</i>

The discussion intends to provide a documented portrayal of the individuals who, by supporting the on-going narrative cycle, in fact constituted the oligarchy that most likely controlled the *SGSM's* art patronage.

#### **The Banca of 1504: The Preaching of St Mark in Alexandria**

Gentile Bellini was given the commission for the *Preaching of St Mark* on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1504, when the *Banca* was joined by Marco Pellegrini (*Guardian Grande*), Gentile Bellini himself (*Vicario*), Augustin Negro (*Guardian da Matin*), and Pietro Borghi (*Scrivano*)<sup>437</sup>. A *Banca*, it must be admitted, which is unfortunately characterized by a chronic lack of documentation.

Marco Pellegrini institutional weight is unquestionable, nonetheless his role apparently diminished after his guardianship<sup>438</sup>:

TABLE 9. Marco Pellegrini's elections at the *SGSM*

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1467	-	1478	1491	-	1502	1504	-	1503 1505 1506 1507	-

<sup>437</sup> I will not discuss the case of Antonio Tajamonte since he came into service on August 1504, far after the commission had been deliberated.

<sup>438</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 90v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 3v, 6v, 9v, 12r, 24r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 22r-23r, 29v, 33r, 37v, 38v-39r, 40v-41v, 42v, 44r. The *Scuola* was also joined by another Pellegrini family stranger to Marco Pellegrini's (Vincenzo Mancini, "I Pellegrini e la loro villa a san Siro", *Bollettino del Museo civico di Padova*, 80 (1991), pp. 174-175, pp. 173-196). Its most relevant member was Vincenzo Pellegrini: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 4r, 30r, 59r-61r. See also F. Agostini (2013), p. 35 note 37.

TABLE 9. Continued

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
								1509	-

Conversely, his son Antonio was actively involved in the *SGSM*, where he in fact repeatedly reached the highest offices available<sup>439</sup>:

TABLE 10. Antonio Pellegrini's elections at the *SGSM*

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1523	-	1527	-	1547	-	1552 1575	1446 1551 1560 1562 1564 1566 1568 1570 1573 (1575)	-	-

Antonio's adopted brother<sup>440</sup>, Zuane Marco, is the only Pellegrini who offers evidence, although slender, of the family's involvement in the commission of the following paintings. In 1518, at his first appointment (*Degano Tutto l'anno*), Zuane Marco attended the *Banca* that commissioned Mansueti's *Healing and Baptism of Anianus*<sup>441</sup>. No more Pellegrinis ever joined other relevant *Banche*, nor did Zuan Marco. Nonetheless in 1518, during a contested meeting that literally split the *Banca* into opposing factions, Zuan Marco supported the commission advocated by Jacopo Dardani<sup>442</sup>. An occurrence that would tend to suggest his personal interest in protracting his father's efforts.

The *Mariogola* does not specify when Gentile Bellini entered the *SGSM*, nonetheless we can assume that it probably happened in the 1460s. With regard to his attendance of the *Banca*<sup>443</sup>:

<sup>439</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 147v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 4r, 7r, 29r, 57r, 58r, 59r-61r.

<sup>440</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 4, p. 64.

<sup>441</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 165v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 28r-28v.

<sup>442</sup> See below, p. 154.

<sup>443</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 159r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 9r, 15v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 16 bis, ff. 3v, 8r, 10r, 17v, 22r, 29v-30v, 31v, 32v, 34r, 35r, 38r, 40r, 43r, 47r, 50v, 59r-59v. See also J.M. Zur Capellen (1985), pp. 112 docs. 22, 25, 27-28, 29 (wrong page reference), pp. 115-116 docs. 44, 46, 50. On Giovanni's membership see ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 161r; ASVe,

TABLE 11. Gentile Bellini's elections at the *SGSM*

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1460s	1484	-	-	1504	1492	-	-	- <sup>444</sup>	-

In 1492 “Zentil bellin K[night]” was appointed *Guardian da Matin*<sup>445</sup>, and it was while holding such a leading office that he proposed to paint “un solo telaro” to be placed “in testa dell'albergo” (15 July)<sup>446</sup>. Although his offer was rejected, his artistic expertise was not questioned, and in fact in that very year he intervened, together with a certain Zuan Trevisan and the emerging Vittore Ziliol, in a dispute on the salary of “messer moro taiapietra” (25 October)<sup>447</sup>. After a period of long institutional inactivity, the 1490s, Gentile joined the group of *Trenta huomini* at least seven times.

In the case of Augustin Negro, *Guardian da Matin* in 1504, we unfortunately grope for evidence. Although the *Mariegola* lists a certain “augustino negro strazaruol [from] san zulian”<sup>448</sup> who, as Gentile Bellini, probably entered the *SGSM* in the 1460s, his employment as *strazaruol* (rag-and-bone-man)<sup>449</sup> casts more than a shadow on his appointment at the *Banca*. It is hard to believe that a mere *strazaruol* could secure an office such as that of *Guardian Matin*. An incongruence that must have nagged Botti as well, who suspiciously promoted him to the (unrealistic) role of cloth trader<sup>450</sup>.

Quite disappointingly, documents have revealed even less about Pietro Borghi, the *Scrivano* of the *SGSM* who unexpectedly appeared out of nowhere in 1504. Even though the *Mariegola* introduces a certain Pietro Borghi “fo de ser zuane s. aponal” who entered the *SGSM* in 1494<sup>451</sup>, further surveys have

*SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 15v, 24r. On Gentile's office see ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 15v.

<sup>444</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 12r, 22r, 23r, 24r, 29v, 32r, 33r; J.M. Zur Capellen (1985), pp. 118, docs. 64-65.

<sup>445</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 9r.

<sup>446</sup> J.M. Zur Capellen (1985), pp. 112-113, doc. 31.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113, doc. 33.

<sup>448</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 6v. It has been impossible to relate him to any of the numerous Negro relatives mentioned by the *Mariegola*, see: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 6v, 9r, 10r, 12r, 51v, 103r, 104v, 115v-116r, 117r, 136r. On the Negro families see: G. Tassini (1888) vol. 3, pp. 260-267.

<sup>449</sup> G. Boerio (1993), p. 713.

<sup>450</sup> I. Botti (1992), pp. 57, 72 note 99.

<sup>451</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 116v.

been unprofitable, since the *Registro 6 bis* does not mention any Zuane Borghi from the parish of San Aponal<sup>452</sup>.

As initially warned, the analysis of this first *Banca* has revealed disappointing results. The *Guardian Grande* Marco Pellegrini has appeared not to be involved to any other commission of the cycle – a circumstance obviously related to his death in 1509<sup>453</sup>. According to the proven acquaintance between Mansueti and Marco Pellegrini<sup>454</sup>, I would nonetheless suggest that Zuane Marco's vote in support of Mansueti might be interpreted as a sign of respect of his father's will, as well as a probable appreciation of the painter's work<sup>455</sup>. However, we must admit that the Pellegrinis' influence on the *SGSM*, as well as their involvement within the implementation of the narrative cycle, was certainly minor. As minor was the role played by all the other officers who, at the current state of the research, were not involved in the *SGSM*'s art patronage at all, and certainly did not know (with the only exception of Pietro Borghi) Giovanni Mansueti. Apparently, the *Quattro Capi di Banca* who commissioned the *Preaching of St Mark in Alexandria* were not pursuing a long-term plan, and thus their efforts mostly faded away with Gentile Bellini's commission.

### **The Banca of 1515: The Martyrdom of St Mark**

In 1515, as already extensively discussed, the *Banca* was chaired by Vittore Ziliol, whereas Antonio de Giacomo was his *Vicario* and Francesco da Brazo the *Guardian da Matin*. According to the *SGSM*'s regulations, through the term of office the *Banca*'s expenses were supervised by two *Scrivani*: Giacomo di Fornari (August 1514-August 1515) and Hieronymo de Sandro (August 1515-August 1516). Hence, considering that the *Martyrdom of St Mark* was commissioned in July 4, preference will be given to Giacomo di Formari.

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<sup>452</sup> According to his role of book-keeper of a confraternity largely joined by merchants (see Section 2.IV), we could suggest to identify him as the "Piero borgi da venesia" who in 1484 published the *Nobel Opera de aritmetica*, Ratdolt, Venetia, 1484, see: Pincus Schub, "A Mathematical text by Mordecai Comtino (Constantinople, XV Century)", *Isis*, XVII (1932), pp. 54-70, and David Eugene Smith, "The first great commercial arithmetic", *Isis*, VIII (1926), pp. 41-49.

<sup>453</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, b. 5, f. 43r; F. Agostini (2013), pp. 35-36 note 37.

<sup>454</sup> See above p. 93 note 341.

<sup>455</sup> See below pp. 163-164.

There is no need, I assume, to deal with Vittore Ziliol again, thus what follows will be just a brief account of the major offices he and his relatives held. In 1498, as *Scrivano*, Vittore transcribed the *Legend of the Fisherman* into the *Mariegola* of the *SGSM*; in 1515 he promoted Giovanni Bellini's commission (*Guardian Grande*) as well as its actual execution (*Provedadore alla fabbrica*). In all likelihood Vittore also supervised the realization of Giovanni Mansueti's *Three Episodes*, since in 1525 he was still responsible for the completion of the *Martyrdom*. Finally, his sons Cesare and Alessandro were personally involved in the *SGSM*'s art patronage either in 1525 (Giovanni Mansueti) and 1533 (Paris Bordon)<sup>456</sup>.

According to the *Mariegola* Antonio di Jacomo was an “avvocato” (lawyer) who entered the *SGSM* in 1493 and lived in the parish of San Benedetto<sup>457</sup>. None of his relatives was registered in the *Mariegola*, and nothing is unfortunately known about his life and family. On the contrary, Antonio's career at the *SGSM* is better documented<sup>458</sup>:

**TABLE 12. Antonio di Jacomo's elections at the *SGSM***

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1493	1503	1495 1500	-	1515	1508	-	-	1507 1509 1517	1515

Among his various offices, it is worth lingering on his election as *Degano mezzo anno* in 1503:

**TABLE 13. Election *Degani mezzo anno* (1503-04)**

DATE	NAME	BANCA
Sept 1503	Andrea de la Scalla	<i>Banca</i> of Lorenzo Rizo Mar 1503-Mar 1504
Oct 1503	Andrea de la Scalla	
Nov 1503	Andrea de la Scalla	

<sup>456</sup> See above Section 2.III.b.

<sup>457</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 10r.

<sup>458</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 6v, 9v, 16r, 26r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 41r, 42v, 47r, 75r.

TABLE 13. Continued

DATE	NAME	BANCA
Dec 1503	Andrea de la Scalla	<i>Banca</i> of Lorenzo Rizo Mar 1503-Mar 1504
Jan 1504	Andrea de la Scalla	
Feb 1504	Andrea de la Scalla	
Mar 1504	Antonio de Jacomo avvocato	<i>Banca</i> of Antonio Pellegrini Mar 1504-Mar 1505
Apr 1504	Antonio de Jacomo avvocato	
May 1504	Antonio de Jacomo avvocato	
Jun 1504	Antonio de Jacomo avvocato	
Jul 1504	Antonio de Jacomo avvocato	
Aug 1504	Antonio de Jacomo avvocato	

According to the *Registro 6 bis*, even if Antonio di Jacomo was elected in August 1503, in all likelihood he effectively took office in the second part of the term (namely the following February 1504), just after Andrea della Scala had finished<sup>459</sup>. As in the case of the *Scrivano*, the *Degani mezzo anno* were selected in August, and yet according to the title the tenure most likely lasted no more than half year (*mezzo anno*)<sup>460</sup>. This last assumption would thus locate Antonio among the officers who in May 1504 commissioned Gentile Bellini's *Preaching of St Mark*. It would demonstrate, in other words, that Antonio's involvement in the *SGSM's* art patronage started at the very beginning of the cycle itself. What then followed is by now well-known. In 1515, Antonio vigorously advocated the commission of the *Martyrdom of St Mark* and, together with Vittore Ziliol, he was appointed *Provedatore sopra la fabbrica*. All things considered, we can argue that this mysterious lawyer had a certain weight in the *SGSM's* art patronage, whereas his elections as *Provedatore sopra la fabbrica*, as well as his attendance at the meetings of the *trenta huomini*, prove his personal involvement with, and influence on, the *SGSM's* decisional élite.

Francesco da Brazo, *Guardian da Matin* of Vittore Ziliol's *Banca*, finally offers a well-documented case study. The da Brazo was a large family

<sup>459</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 16 bis, f. 16r.

<sup>460</sup> See above p. 83. The *Degani mezzo anno*, therefore, probably had the same watchdog function of the *Scrivano*, since they had to serve under two different *Banche*. A hypothesis that, although devoid of relevant documentation, would provide the only explanation to distinguish between the *Degano* of *mezzo* and *tutto l'anno*.

of Tuscan origins whose members traded jewels. They lived in the parish of Sant'Alvise nearby the *ponte Brazo*, they owned various estates “così fuori come dentro della Città”, and had the family vault in the church of Santa Maria dell'Orto<sup>461</sup>. According to their tangible wealth, the da Brazo devoted themselves to the poor, and soon became one of the most prestigious families of the *SGSM*.

Zuffredo da Brazo, grand-grandfather of Francesco, was the *Guardian Grande* who negotiated with Dominicans the cession of a portion of *Campo Santi Giovanni e Paolo* to build the new *SGSM's* Hall (1437)<sup>462</sup>. According to the *Registro 6 bis* he was appointed *Guardian Grande* three times (1443, 1449 and 1456): an unquestionable sign of his great prestige that even challenges that of Alvise Dardani<sup>463</sup>. Zuffredo's son Zuanne, grandfather of Francesco, was certainly not inferior to his father, and he in fact stood out for his enterprise both within and outside the *SGSM*. Appointed *Scrivano* in 1446, he then forged ahead his career and reached the guardianship twice (1462 and 1471)<sup>464</sup>; meanwhile his influence among Venetian merchants also secured him the position of *Governatore della Scuola dei Mercanti*<sup>465</sup>.

No records has survived about Luca da Brazo's membership, yet all his sons (Francesco, Andrea and Vincenzo) not only joined the *SGSM*, but they also repeatedly held distinctive offices. Francesco da Brazo “zoelier” inherited the major part of the da Brazo's legacy and, according to his last will (7 October 1550), by the time he died he owned some “case de Venetia et fore da Venetia”<sup>466</sup>. Although the date of his membership remains unknown, his career is on the contrary quite detailed<sup>467</sup>:

<sup>461</sup> *Memorie concernenti* (1775), p. 19; G. Tassini (1970), pp. 95-96.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibidem*; I. Botti (1992), p. 57. On the edification of the *Scuola's* Hall see: P.L. Sohm (1982), pp. 79-97 and relating documents.

<sup>463</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 3r; *Origine delle Scuole o Fraterne* (Cod. Cicogna, 2795), unnumbered page.

<sup>464</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 12r.

<sup>465</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 1, f. 238.

<sup>466</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, b. 15 (Testamenti 1401-1597), ff. 68r-69r; b. 13, ff. 148r-151v.

<sup>467</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 6v, 9v, 16r, 26r, 54v-57v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 24r, 33r, 37v, 39r, 41r-v, 42v, 56v, 57r, 89r.

**TABLE 14. Francesco da Brazo's elections at the *SGSM***

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
-	1508	1497	-	1521	1515	1530	1527 1529 1533 1536 1538 1540 1542 1544 1546 1548 1550	1503 1506 1507 1512 1515 1521	-

Francesco's philanthropy and charitable deeds left a remarkable sign at the *SGSM*. In his testament, after asking his brethren to escort his coffin "in la giesia di san stai che ho li la mia contra", he entrusted to the care of his son Luca – he himself a brother of the *SGSM*<sup>468</sup> – the erection of six *casete* on a plot of land he owned "in la contra di san nicolo in venetia [...] per darle in perpetuo a prefati fratelli della mia scola de messer san marco per lamor de dio"<sup>469</sup>.

Vincenzo da Brazo, Francesco's brother, had a quite distinguished career<sup>470</sup>:

**TABLE 15. Vincenzo da Brazo's elections at the *SGSM***

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1504	-	1506	-	-	1523	-	1528 1530 1534	1509 1512 1515 1517 1519 1521	-

On the contrary the career of Francesco's second brother, Andrea, appears to be inconveniently unclear. According to the *Mariiegola* there were two Andrea da Brazo: one "Andrea da Brazo" who entered the *SGSM* in 1498, and a second Andrea *zoelier* whose membership date was not registered<sup>471</sup>. If

<sup>468</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 4r, 7r, 10r, 31r, 60r-61v

<sup>469</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, b. 15 (Testamenti 1401-1597), ff. 68r-69r; b. 13, ff. 148r-151r.

<sup>470</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 151r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 6v, 9v, 27r, 54v-55v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 44r, 56v, 66v, 75r, 87v, 89r, 93v.

<sup>471</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 9v, 11r.

the latter is more likely to be Francesco da Brazo's brother (*zoielier*), his role at the *SGSM* is however uncertain. The *Registro 6 bis* makes no attempt to clarify who, between the two "Andrea dabrazo", was the one appointed *Degano tutto l'anno* (1489 and 1504), *Degano mezzo anno* (1509) and *Guardian da Matin* (1516)<sup>472</sup>. Therefore, we must admit that it is not possible to claim, without any doubt, if Andrea da Brazo attended the *Banca* that commissioned the *Preaching of St Mark in Alexandria* (1504).

Before moving on, it would be worth mentioning an interesting relationship that the da Brazo family most likely formed at the *SGSM*. Among the numerous recipients of Francesco da Brazo's inheritance, the testator mentions his nephews Marin and Luca "darmano sono fioli di una mia sorela lucia"<sup>473</sup>. Lucia da Brazo had married Bartolomeo d'Arman (or Darmano), a member of a family of German origins that traded spice<sup>474</sup>, and, most interestingly, that had been involved with the *SGSM* at least since the 1480s<sup>475</sup>. Although their offices are not connected to any of the *SGSM* commissions under discussion, the relationship between two merchant families under the protection of St Mark demonstrates how the brotherhood was not just an institution of devotion and charity, but rather a place where good relations could be established, and fruitful trades could be done – there is no need to emphasize how marriages, or better *good marriages*, were traditionally celebrated to settle financial worries or to consolidate wealth.

Jacomo di Fornari, also known as *Dalle Fornaci*, belonged to a family of silk traders from Lucca that obtained Venetian citizenship in the late 1360s<sup>476</sup>. He entered the *SGSM*, as "Jacomo di Fornari da la seda", in 1501, and like the majority of his predecessors he only held the post of *Scrivano*<sup>477</sup>. According to *Registro 6 bis*, during Jacomo's tenure a certain "Lorenzo di fornari" filled the post of *Degano mezzo anno*<sup>478</sup>. However, seeing that the

<sup>472</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 9v-10r, 16r, 25r, 26v, 32v.

<sup>473</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, b. 15 (Testamenti 1401-1597), ff. 68r-69r; b. 13, ff. 148r-151v.

<sup>474</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 1, ff. 77-79.

<sup>475</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 92: "marin [father of Bartolomeo] darmano san martin retornado 1484". Bartolomeo was elected *Guardian da Matin* in 1505 (ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 9v). On his son Marin see: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 95v and ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 13r, 29v.

<sup>476</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 2, f. 231.

<sup>477</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 68v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 12v.

<sup>478</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 79v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 12v, 16r, 54v-56r). See also F. Agostini (2013), p. 40 note 87.

entry does not provide any additional evidence, it is not advisable to venture any sort of kinship with Jacomo, not least because Tassini lists three different families surnamed di Fornari<sup>479</sup>.

The analysis of the *Quattro Capi di Banca* in charge in 1515 has demonstrated a radical inversion with respect to the *Banca* of 1504. In 1515 the major part of the officers turned out to be members of highly distinguished families that had wielded their power for several generations, having promoted the construction of the *SGSM* meeting-house and then, arguably, the decoration of its *Sala dell'Albergo*. If the role of Vittore Ziliol is beyond question, a closer analysis of Antonio di Jacomo has provided evidence of his attendance at Gentile Bellini's commission in 1504. Finally, the da Brazo case has pointed out how the *SGSM*'s membership assured the formation of a series of social connections that had nothing to do with charity, or at least very little. The *SGSM*, as we will see, was also a place to form partnerships, make agreements and do business.

### **The *Banca* of 1518: The *Healing* and the *Baptism* of *Anianus***

I have already discussed the role that the *Guardian Grande* Jacomo Dardani played at the time of Giovanni Mansueti's commission<sup>480</sup>, not to mention the strong influence that his family exerted on the *SGSM*'s art patronage as a whole. The remaining *Capi di Banca* were, unfortunately, far less eminent than Jacopo, and yet a brief account of them is still needed. In 1518, together with Dardani there were Domenico Armellini (*Vicario*), Luca di Giovanni (*Guardian da Matin*) and Cristoforo Bonfioli who, appointed *Scrivano* in August 1518 in place of Zuan Trevisan, joined the voting that deliberated on the commission of "doi teleri in albergo" (September-November 1518).

"Domenego armelin de ser francesco [from] s. salvador" was, in all likelihood, a member of a family from Perugia that settled in Venice in the thirteenth-century<sup>481</sup>. Nothing is known about his relatives and occupation, and,

<sup>479</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 2, ff. 230-231.

<sup>480</sup> See also below pp. 160-166.

<sup>481</sup> *Memorie concernenti* (1775), p. 13; G. Tassini (1888), vol. 1, p. 80.

honestly, his career at the *SGSM* is the only piece of information we currently have. Domenico's membership was registered in 1494, he was elected *Degano tutto l'anno* in 1506, *Scrivano* in 1511 and *Vicario* in 1518; henceforth he attended the *Zonta* for several times until 1539<sup>482</sup>. Additionally, he won such a good reputation among his colleagues, that he attended the Group of the *Trenta huomini* no less than twelve times between 1507 and 1521<sup>483</sup>.

In 1518 a certain "Lucha di Giovanni" was appointed *Guardian da Matin*. This, at the moment, is the only fact we can be sure of. And yet, according to Isabella Botti, in 1504 a certain "Lucha di Zuane" was among the *Degani tutto l'anno* that commissioned Gentile Bellini's *Preaching of St Mark*. Furthermore, Botti has speculated that Luca di Zuanne was a wealthy furrier, whereas we could add that his son Zuan Alvise expanded the family's business and devoted himself to the import-export trade of fur and wool<sup>484</sup>. However, although Lucha and his son Giovanni were actually registered at the *SGSM* in 1479 and in 1511 respectively<sup>485</sup>, the *Mariiegola* mentions no less than three more "Luca de zuane"<sup>486</sup>. Under these circumstances, I believe it would be rash to admit Botti's proposal, and even more unreasonable to identify in "Lucha de zuane varoter" our mysterious *Guardian da Matin*.

Cristoforo Bonfioli had quite a mediocre career at the *SGSM*<sup>487</sup>:

**TABLE 16. Cristoforo Bonfioli's elections at the *SGSM***

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1513	-	1514	1518	-	-	-	-	-	-

However, his habitual attendance and devotional habits provide some remarkable evidence. Son of "messer andrea fisico" (physician), Cristoforo was a well-off Venetian who lived in the parish of San Simeone Profeta (or

<sup>482</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 38r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 6v, 12v, 27r, 54r-55r, 56r.

<sup>483</sup> He joined it in 1507, 1509, 1512, 1515, 1517, 1519, 1521, 1524 and 1525 (ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 41v-r, 44r, 56v, 57r, 75r, 87v, 89r, 92v, 93v, 105r, 110v).

<sup>484</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 5, f. 153; I. Botti (1992), p. 57.

<sup>485</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 78r, 166r.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibidem*, 79r-79v.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 31r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 12v, 27v, 55v.

*Grando*)<sup>488</sup>. In his last will, written in 1533 (1<sup>st</sup> March), Cristoforo set out to be buried in “la giesia de san Simion profeta con labito mio di batudi della schuola di misser san marco”<sup>489</sup>. As soon as 1537 the *archa* was located, as he explicitly required, nearby the Chapel of the Baptism<sup>490</sup> – a requirement most likely satisfied through the good offices of Bonifacio Soliano, in his turn a member of the *SGSM* since 1518, as well as one of the *Degani Mezzo anno* who commissioned Giovanni Mansueti in 1525<sup>491</sup>. Cristoforo’s usual attendance of the church of San Simeone Profeta documents much more than just his posthumous requirements. As mentioned in the Introduction, following the erection of the Cappella della Trinità (1505) Giovanni Mansueti was engaged to realize the *Trinity* altarpiece, nowadays located on the main altar of the Sacristy (fig. 7)<sup>492</sup>. A painting that, after all, Cristoforo must have known personally. A subject, if we pay attention to coincidence, which should have brought Mansueti a certain luck, since his *Allegorical Representation of the Trinity* at the *Crociferi* (1492; fig. 1) was proposed as the probable link between Mansueti and the Dardani’s family<sup>493</sup>. Having said that, it is nonetheless more than a coincidence the fact that both Jacopo Dardani (*Guardian Grande*) and Cristoforo Bonfioli (*Scrivano*) were among the *Quattro Capi di Banca* who commissioned Giovanni Mansueti’s *Healing and Baptism of Anianus*.

Yet Cristoforo’s testament abounds in contextual information. Among the testament executors was in fact named Stefano Bontempo book-keeper of the *Collegio* and steward of the *Procuratia di Citra*<sup>494</sup>, who had a reputable role in the *SGSM*<sup>495</sup>:

<sup>488</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 1, f. 206. ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 31r. A list of all his belongings is provided in ASVe, SGSM, b. 1, f. 36r, and in his testament: ASVe, Testamenti, Luigi Bonsaver, 63, ff. 19v-20v; ASVe, SGSM, b. 15, ff. 63r-64r; b. 13, ff. 141r-143v; *Mariiegola della Comunità di San Nicolò all’Angelo Raffael de Mendicoli*, BMC, Cicogna IV 112, ff. 147r-v.

<sup>489</sup> ASVe, Testamenti, Luigi Bonsaver, 63, ff. 19v-20v

<sup>490</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 1, f. 206; Giuseppe Cappelletti, *La Chiesa di san Simeone profeta*, Venezia, Melchiorre Fontana, 1860; Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna, *Corpus delle Iscrizioni di Venezia e delle Isole della laguna Veneta*, opera compilata da Pietro Pazzi e Sara Bergamasco, vol. II, Venezia, Edizioni Biblioteca Orafa di Sant’Antonio Abate, 2001, p. 1543, no. 8. ASVe, SGSM, b. 1, f. 36r; ASVe, Testamenti, Luigi Bonsaver, 63, ff. 19v-20v; ASVe, SGSM, b. 15, ff. 63r-64r; b. 13, ff. 141r-143v; *Mariiegola della Comunità di San Nicolò*, ff. 147r-v.

<sup>491</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 23r; ASVe, SGSM, reg. 6 bis, f. 16v.

<sup>492</sup> See above p. 4.

<sup>493</sup> See above p. 98.

<sup>494</sup> M.F. Neff (1985), p. 388. See also: *Cronaca di Famiglie* (=7761), f. 16r; *Memorie concernenti* (1775), p. 18.

<sup>495</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 6v,9v, 27v, 54r-55r, 56r.

TABLE 17. Stefano Bontempo's elections at the *SGSM*

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1460s	-	1514	-	1529	1524	1534 1542	1524 1528 1532 1538	-	1532

As far as this study concerns, it is worth stressing that between 1532 and 1533 Stefano not only supported the engagement of Paris Bordon, but he was also appointed among those *Provedadori sopra la fabrica* who had to guarantee Bordon's actual accomplishment of the commission just decreed<sup>496</sup>.

As already observed in the case of the da Brazo and d'Arman families, the membership of the *SGSM* tended to foster certain associations that would eventually turn into relations of mutual trust. Stefano Bontempo, after all, was not chosen by chance: Cristoforo Bonfioli needed a trustworthy member of the *SGSM* who would be able to put into effect his personal projects, his legacy to the confraternity.

Cristoforo generously appropriated a sum of money to marry off a nubile *donzella* yearly (15 Ducats); however, he dictates his own condition<sup>497</sup>. The General Chapter of the *SGSM* had to call the election of the *donzella*, but her candidacy was subjected to an elaborate selection procedure according to which social origin was the explicit yardstick. First of all the candidate was required to be the daughter of a member of the *SGSM*, and her father, additionally, had in his turn to be a former member of the *Banca*, but "povero deschazudo"; finally, he had to be "fradello venician originario"<sup>498</sup>. The fact that the candidate had to be a *cittadino originario* provides noteworthy evidence. This demonstrates Cristoforo's ideology, explicitly stated by the decision to make donation not to any poor, nor to any indigent member of the *SGSM*, but rather to the daughter of a fallen officer of the *Banca* who belonged, necessarily, to the same class as his benefactor. Evidently, Vittore Ziliol's preoccupation with social emancipation, his proud sense of belonging to the Venetian *cittadinanza originaria*, was quite a shared awareness among his

<sup>496</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 55r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 18, f. 79v.

<sup>497</sup> ASVe, Testamenti, Luigi Bonsaver, 63, ff. 19v-20v; ASVe, *SGSM*, b. 15, ff. 63r-64r; b. 13, ff. 141r-143v; *Mariogola della Comunità di San Nicolò*, ff. 147r-v.

<sup>498</sup> An additional selection was than prescribed. On this occasion, the Lucchese origins and an active role in the *Banca* of the *Scuola dei Lucchesi* were required.

brothers. If in those years a new social class was campaigning for its right, Cristoforo's will actually stood up for it.

### **The Banca of 1525: Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark**

Three out of four *Capi di Banca* in office in 1525 – Antonio di Maistri (*Guardian Grande*), Zuan Alvise Bonrizzo (*Vicario*) and Gasparo Dardani (*Guardian da Matin*) – have been fully discussed at the beginning of this section. Just to sum up, I shall draw attention to some of their most relevant offices:

**TABLE 18. Relevant offices of the *Capi di Banca* (1525)**

NAME	YEAR	OFFICE	PAINTING
Antonio di Maistri	1525 1532	G.G. ZON.	<i>Three Episodes</i> <i>Fisherman Delivering the Ring</i>
Giovanni A. Bonrizzo	1525 1532	VIC. G.G.	<i>Three Episodes</i> <i>Fisherman Delivering the Ring</i>
Gasparo Dardani	1515 1525	D.A. G.M.	<i>Martyrdom of St Mark</i> <i>Three Episodes</i>

At the same time two leading officers, indeed two unchallenged heavyweights of the *SGSM*, were pulling the strings of the narrative cycle. Since 1515 Vittore Ziliol, the *Guardian Grande* who commissioned Giovanni Bellini's *Martyrdom*, had been in charge as *Provedadore sopra la fabrica*, whereas Jacopo Dardani was engaged immediately after Mansueti's last commission (1525). Evidently, the *Banca* that promoted Mansueti's *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark* was run by men deeply involved in the patronage of the narrative cycle.

Some doubts remain with regard to the *Scrivano*, since no records attest when, in 1525, the commission precisely took place. As usual, two candidates are available. Francesco Gruato, in office between August 1524 and August 1525, probably belonged to a family of *cittadini originari* that “dedicavasi all'arte della lana”<sup>499</sup>. He entered the *SGSM* in 1482 and was appointed *Degano tutto l'anno* in the year when Giovanni Bellini's *Martyrdom* was

<sup>499</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 3, f. 73 bis. So far I have not been able to verify if Francesco had any relation with Paolo Gruato (mentioned in W.B. Wurthmann (1989), pp. 58).

commissioned<sup>500</sup>. His successor, elected *Scrivano* between August 1525 and August 1526, was a certain “Cristofaro zanoto” (he was then appointed member of the *Zonta* that commissioned Paris Bordon’s painting in 1533)<sup>501</sup>. Hence, whoever the *Scrivano* was, we can assume that he was also involved in at least a further commission.

### **The Banca of 1532: the Sea Storm and the Fisherman Delivering the Ring**

Fully documented is, finally, the *Banca* that engaged Paris Bordon. Together with Zuan Alvise Bonrizzo, in 1532 there were Ludovico Usper (*Vicario*) and Zuan Maria d’Alban (*Guardian da Matin*); furthermore, considering that the commission was granted on 18 January 1533, I will discuss the case of Francesco de la Colombina (*Scrivano* between August 1532 and August 1533) and not that of the following *Scrivano*, Zuan Battista Campanato.

I have just summarized the role that the *Guardian Grande* Zuan Alvise Bonrizzo played in the commission for the narrative cycle of the *SGSM*, whereas it is still needed to discuss his actual weight within the *Banca* itself. Zuan Alvise belonged to a family of *cittadini originari* that owed its name to a certain *Bon* commonly know as *Riccio*, or *Rizzo*, for his long curly hair (*Bonrizzo*)<sup>502</sup>. Of noble origin, most of the branches of the Borizzo were excluded from the Great Council in 1297, and then became wealthy members of the Venetian citizenship<sup>503</sup>. Unfortunately, the *Mariegola* does not make any distinction between *Bon*, *Rizzo* or *Bonrizzo*, though our understanding of Zuan Alvise’s family is rather inaccurate<sup>504</sup>. His role at the *Banca* can be summarized as follows<sup>505</sup>:

<sup>500</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 50v; ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 6 bis, f. 12v, 26v.

<sup>501</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 30v; ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 6 bis, f. 12v, 26v, 27v, 55r; G. Tassini (1888), vol. 5, p. 129.

<sup>502</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 4, p. 160; G. Tassini (1970), p. 553.

<sup>503</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 4, pp. 160-161. See also: *Cronaca di Famiglie Patrizie e Cittadinesche*, BNM, It. CI VII, 90 (= 8029), f. 17v; *Memorie concernenti* (1775), p. 20.

<sup>504</sup> In this respect it is worth stressing that Zuan Alvise’s father, Lorenzo “[from] s. martilian”, was initially registered as *rizo*, to which was subsequently added *bon* (ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 77r).

<sup>505</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 164v; ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 6v, 16r, 26v-27r, 54r-57r; ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, ff. 47r, 56v, 66v, 89r, 92v, 93v, 105r.

TABLE 19. Zuan Alvise Bonrizzo's elections at the *SGSM*

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1501	1511	1502 1508	-	1525	-	-	1522 1527 1529 1531 1536 1538 1542 1544 1546	1509 1512 1515 1521 1524	-

Ludovico, son of Jacopo Usper, was a grocer (*spitier*) with a shop “all’insegna delle Tre Corone” in the parish of San Bartolomeo (nearby the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*) and, according to his German origins, he was buried in the church of San Bartolomeo itself<sup>506</sup>. It is not clear what relation existed between Usper and Dardani, however in 1587 Ludovico’s grandson, imaginatively called Ludovico (*avocato*), purchased the Dardani’s family vault at the church of dei Crociferi<sup>507</sup>. Ludovico, the grocer, entered the *SGSM* in 1507; he was then appointed *Degano mezzo anno* in 1519, member of the *Zonta* in 1531, *Vicario* in 1532, and again member of the *Zonta* three more times (1536, 1538, 1540)<sup>508</sup>.

The *Guardian da Matin* Zuan Maria d’Alban, and his illustrious relatives, offer an unmissable opportunity to discuss the diffusions and entrenchment of a middle-influence family within the *SGSM*’s social fabric. Originally from Bergamo, the d’Alban family owned a grocer shop “all’insegna delle Rose” (again, as Usper, in Campo san Bartolomeo), they had a house in Calle delle Rose (parish of Santa Maria Mater Domini), and a “casa grande” in Rio Terà Santa Fosca<sup>509</sup>. There is no evidence on the d’Alban’s turnover, and yet we can assume that they did not restrict themselves to mere retail, since a certain Bonajuto d’Alban, brother of Gabriele, travelled, lived and traded in the East<sup>510</sup>. As a matter of fact the d’Alban was such a wealthy

<sup>506</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 5, p. 115.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>508</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 79v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 6v, 16v, 55r-56r. The *Zonta* was also attended twice by his son Matteo “Dottor” (1559 and 1563), who previously held the post of *Degano Tutto l’anno* in 1533 (ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 29v, 59r-59v).

<sup>509</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 1, pp. 18-19.

<sup>510</sup> Robert Finlay, “Crisis and Crusade in the Mediterranean: Venice, Portugal, and the Cape

family that in May 1520 it was able to accommodate in the house in Calle delle Rose “il signor marchese di Mantova” Federico Gonzaga<sup>511</sup>.

The wealthier the family was, the greater its members were involved in the *SGSM*. Accordingly, the d’Albans held three guardianships, fifteen *Zonta*’s membership and, as a whole, they attended major offices no less than thirty-six times between 1450 and 1600. Gabriele d’Alban, great-uncle of Zuan Maria, deserves to be mentioned even if his career concluded by the end of the 1480s. We do not know when Gabriele entered the *SGSM*, however he was elected *Degano Tutto l’anno* in 1448 (reconfirmed in 1456), *Degano Mezzo anno* in 1463, *Guardian da Matin* in 1469, *Vicario* in 1473 and finally *Guardian Grande* in 1483<sup>512</sup>. Apparently, Gabriele did not take part, at least officially, in the reconstruction of the *SGSM*’s Hall, and yet his career was distinguished enough to smooth the way for his descendants.

Excepting Tadio d’Alban, whose career at the *SGSM* unfortunately ended at the very moment he attempted to take over the *Banca* (1517)<sup>513</sup>, his brother Vincenzo, his nephew Zuan Maria and his great-nephew Alvisè held remarkable positions for several years. Vincenzo entered the *SGSM* in 1496, and then he reached the most prestigious offices available<sup>514</sup>:

**TABLE 20. Vincenzo d’Alban’s elections at the *SGSM***

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1496	-	1497	-	-	1520	1528	1523 1525 1527	1503 1506 1507 1510 1515 1519 1521 1524 1525	-

Route to India (1498-1509)”, *Studi Veneziani*, XXVIII (1994), pp. 59-60. See also *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. IV, coll. 544-545.

<sup>511</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXVIII, coll. 526, 548; G. Tassini (1888), vol. 1, p. 18.

<sup>512</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3r, 6r, 9r, 15r, 21v, 22v.

<sup>513</sup> He entered the *Scuola* in the 1490s (ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 143r). ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 6v, 9v, 16r. He repeatedly attended the Group of *Trenta huomeni* in 1500, 1503, 1504, 1507, 1509, 1512 and 1515 (ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 12r, 23r, 24v, 25v, 27r, 40r, 41r-v, 42v, 44r, 47r, 56v, 66v).

<sup>514</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 150v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 9v, 26r, 54r-54v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 22r, 33r, 39r, 48v, 66v, 87v, 91v, 93v, 105r, 110v.

His son Zuan Maria, *Guardian da Matin* of the *Banca* under discussion (1532), became *Degano Tutto l'anno* in 1521, and as from 1534 he joined the *Zonta* ten times; in 1541, although still in office at the *Zonta*, he was elected *Vicario*, whereas in 1545 he was elected *Guardian Grande*<sup>515</sup>. Finally, Zuan Maria's cousin, Alvise d'Alban, whose career was far less extended, joined the *Zonta* (1524 and 1526) in suspicious succession to his uncle Vincenzo (1523, 1525, and 1527)<sup>516</sup>. Evidently, some unveiled circumstances obliged them to get round the *contumacia*.

According to *Registro 6 bis* though, two members of the d'Alban family were in charge when the *Banca* deliberated on art patronage: Vincenzo joined the *Zonta* in 1525 (*Three Episodes*), and Zuan Maria was *Guardian da Matin* in 1532 (*Sea Storm* and the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring*). Moreover, according to the entries of the *Zonta*, the d'Albans were constantly in charge in the 1520s. Evidently, even though they were not as numerous as the Dardanis and Ziliols, the d'Albans persistently took part of the *SGSM*'s élite, and this might be one of the so called *unveiled circumstances*, when Mansueti's last commission was debated, granted and eventually accomplished.

Far less supporters had, unfortunately, Francesco de la Colombina who, beside his role of *Scrivano* in 1515, only served as *Degano Tutto l'anno* in 1519. He was a cloth merchant, his family owned a shop "all'insegna de la colombina" at the *Mercerie* nearby the church of San Salvador and, together with his brother Matteo, in 1531 he obtained the right to build a family vault in the San Salvador's cloister<sup>517</sup>.

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In his study on the *SGSM*, Sohm, admitting the then lack of information, wondered what could be "the precise effect of familial domination on confraternities' patronage": could it "lend a degree of cohesive stability, or [would it] merely magnify the instability of patronage patterns because each

<sup>515</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 168v; ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 7r, 9v, 28r, 55v-58v.

<sup>516</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 10v. ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 26r, 27r, 54r-54v.

<sup>517</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 2, f. 95.

family or clique was rivalling each other?"<sup>518</sup>.

I believe that the preliminary results of this survey, although determined by the documentation currently available, have started to answer Sohm's question. They demonstrate how the art patronage of the *SGSM*, at least by the time Giovanni Bellini was commissioned the *Martyrdom of St Mark* (1515), was managed by an exclusive circle of men whose power was exerted through a hierarchical structure. If the Venetian *cittadinanza originaria* was a necessary prerequisite to gain access to the *Banca*, the actual control of the *SGSM* was on the contrary subjected to more tacit, and yet mandatory, guiding principle. The institutional weight of an individual officer was in fact defined by his social prestige, his family's wealth, and the number of his relatives actively involved in the *SGSM* itself. In this respect, it has been proved that the unchallenged dominance of families such as Dardani and Ziliol was the result of a mixture of factors such as their public reputation, great means and an institutional influence won through the extended (generational) control of the *Banca*. In particular, eminent officers such as Vittore Ziliol and Jacopo Dardani had tangible command of the *SGSM*'s art patronage since they were able to push through projects (institutional influence), to raise funds (economic power) and guarantee their final execution (number of offices held).

Other men, as demonstrated, supported Vittore's and Jacopo's projects. They might have been less distinguished than their leaders, they surely held minor offices, nonetheless their social credit and resources (e.g. Bonfioli and d'Alban) opened the doors of the *Banca*. Sometimes they acted independently of their family support (e.g. Antonio di Maistri and Antonio di Jacomo), whereas on other occasions only few relatives in fact flanked them (e.g. Marco Pellegrini). Occasionally, their institutional authority had diminished radically by the end of the fourteenth-century, and yet their ascendancy over the *Banca* could be remarkable (da Brazo); in other cases, finally, their habitual association with a certain painter (Zuan Alvise Bonrizzo and Alessandro Ziliol), or their personal knowledge of the artist's values (Marco Pellegrini, Jacomo Dardani and Cristoforo Bonfioli) made them the ideal officers to muster up.

If this was the very exclusive circle of the *SGSM* that materially

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<sup>518</sup> P.L. Sohm (1982), p. 17.

managed the patronage of its narrative cycle, some account should however be granted to those men who, despite the minor offices they held, joined anyway the commission process. This is the case with countless *Degani* (either of *tutto* and *mezzo anno*), as well as legions of members of the *Zonta* whose weight was of some account. On this occasion, considering that the analysis would need to deal with no less than twenty-four officers for every single *Banca*, I believe that some guidelines must be adopted. Hence, the following discussion will not uncritically mention every single *Degano* or member of the *Zonta* who served at the *SGSM* during the first three decades of the fifteenth-century, but rather only those few officers who repeatedly attended (at least twice) the *Banche* that commissioned the narrative cycle of the *Sala dell'Albergo*. Furthermore, in order to be considered, the officers have to fit in two unavoidable criteria that take into account: the *quantity* of their assignments, that is to say when they served and, most importantly, how frequently they were in charge; and the *quality* of their families, namely the extent of their relatives in the *SGSM*'s venture. Additionally, the analysis will also discuss the case of men who, although not directly involved in the *SGSM*'s art patronage, had links to other families attending the *SGSM* or were personally associated with the painters under discussion.

Before starting, I believe that a case study would be useful in order to explain the methodology employed. The aim of this example is to show how even eminent candidates, in fact men who stood high in the favour of the Venetian society, would be nonetheless rejected if not matching the criteria required.

Marco Antonio Andriani *quondam* Alvise served as *Degano Tutto l'anno* when Vittore Ziliol's *Banca* deliberated to commission the *Martyrdom of Saint Mark* (1515). In addition to Antonio, no less than seven Andrianis joined the *SGSM*, and the family as a whole held 32 leading offices – quite a remarkable involvement, even if compared to that of the d'Alban family (36 offices). As the d'Alban, furthermore, the Andriani had a great reputation among the *cittadini originari*: Antonio's brother, Zuan Battista Andriani, not only was elected Secretary of the Council of Ten (1512), but this was in fact possible according to the strong favour of doge Leonardo Loredan himself. His public esteem was in fact such that he could compete, together with Vittore

Ziliol with whom he shared failure, for the post of *Cancelliere Grande* in 1516<sup>519</sup>. Unfortunately, Marco Antonio was the only of his family who in point of fact joined the *Banca* in the first three decades of the sixteenth-century<sup>520</sup>. All his numerous relatives held on the contrary different offices from 1539 onward<sup>521</sup>.

The present case demonstrates how even remarkable families such as the Andriani were inevitably rejected from the list of suitable officers admitted to this discussion. As we have seen, their role, although sizeable in the second half of the sixteenth-century, was nonetheless irrelevant if related to the commission of the cycle of the *Sala dell'Albergo*. This approach, far from providing a comprehensive understanding of the entire social fabric that made up the *SGSM*, intends to distinguish between those men who really had a say in the *SGSM*'s art patronage, and those whose presence in the *Banca* was just an isolated case. The officers that follow, ordered by institutional relevance, are the result of a survey of *Registro 6 bis* carried out in compliance with the criteria just stated.

#### **2.III.d. Middle-Influence Families: Minor Officers**

In 1504, the year of Gentile Bellini's commission, among the *Degani tutto l'anno* there was a certain Marco dalla Pigna, whereas twenty-one years later his nephew Ludovico joined, again as *Degano tutto l'anno*, the *Banca* promoting Mansueti's *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark* (1525).

Dalla Pigna, a family of spice traders native of Pesaro, owned a grocery business "all'insegna della Pigna", some houses nearby the *Sottoportego del Cappeler* (San Cassian), as well as few additional estates in the Paduan inland<sup>522</sup>. Zuan Matteo dalla Pigna, father of Marco, held offices of great responsibility at the *SGSM*: first of his family to enter it, he was elected *Guardian Grande* in 1502 and 1511<sup>523</sup>. Marco was not inferior to his father<sup>524</sup>:

<sup>519</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXIII, col. 495; G. Tassini (1888), vol. 1, f. 9; M.F. Neff (1985), p. 109 note 114.

<sup>520</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 94v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 6v, 9v, 16v, 27v, 54v-55v.

<sup>521</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 9v-10r, 30r, 31v, 34r-34v, 35r, 58r-62v.

<sup>522</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 4, ff. 85-86; I. Botti (1992), p. 57.

<sup>523</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 159v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 25r,

<sup>524</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 93v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 4r, 9v, 26r-26v, 54r-54v, 55v-56v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 22r, 32r, 41r, 42v, 47r, 56v, 57r, 66v, 91v, 92v, 93v, 105r, 110v.

TABLE 21. Marco dalla Pigna's elections at the *SGSM*

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1494	-	1498 1504	-	-	1519	1529	1524 1527 1533 1535 1538 1540 1542 1544	1503 1506 1507 1509 1512 1515 1521 1524 1525	-

Marco's brother Piero, father of Ludovico, served as *Degano tutto l'anno* for two terms (1497 and 1503), *Guardian da Matin* in 1517, and then held simultaneously the post of *Vicario* and *Zonta* in the year he eventually died (1523)<sup>525</sup>; his son Ludovico, as we have seen, was appointed *Degano tutto l'anno* three years after entering the *SGSM* (1522)<sup>526</sup>.

Others dalla Pignas were far less important, however the dalla Pigna family played a quite important role within the *SGSM*'s art patronage, since its members not only attended two relevant *Banche* (1504 and 1525), but were frequently in charge between 1519 and 1535<sup>527</sup>.

As in the previous cases of da Brazo and Bonfioli, dalla Pigna also provides the opportunity to demonstrate how the *SGSM* affiliation could be used to share much more than the devotion to St Mark. The dalla Pignas were deeply involved with the church of San Zulian and its community. On 16 February 1496, after having hired for 16 Ducats per year a house owned by the church itself, Zuan Matteo was accorded to erect his family vault in front of the altar of St Jerome. As from 1502, the year of its establishment at the church of San Zulian, dalla Pignas joined the *Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento*, in which they held some of the most important offices. Zuan Matteo, for instance, was elected *Gastaldo* in 1502 and twice *Guardiano* (1504 and 1508); his son Marco was appointed *Vicario* in 1507 and *Gastaldo* in 1530; Piero, finally, reached the guardianship in 1513<sup>528</sup>.

<sup>525</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 116v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 6v, 9v, 26r-26v, 54r. He also joined the Group of *Trenta huomeni*: ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 19r, 20v, 41r, 44r, 66v.

<sup>526</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 80r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 28v.

<sup>527</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 6r, 7r, 9r, 10r, 21r, 23r, 26v, 28v, 29r, 32r-v, 34v, 62r, 63v, 65r-v.

<sup>528</sup> For more information on the *Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento* and on the dalla Pigna's involvement see: Valentina Sapienza, (*Intorno a*) Leonardo Corona (1552-1596). *Documenti*,

Interestingly, the *Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento* was also joined by another family of the *SGSM*. It is the case of Luchadei (or Lucadello), a Bergamasque family by birth that owned an haberdashery and “due soleri et habitationi” nearby the *Ponte dei Baretteri* (San Cristoforo), as well as a family vault in the church of San Zulian, and one in San Salvador<sup>529</sup>. With regard to the *Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento*, Francesco, head of the Lucadelli family, was elected *Degano mezzo anno* in 1506 and 1511 (in this year flanked by his grandson Martino), *Vicario* in 1515, and *Guardiano* for four times (1516, 1520, 1525 and 1546)<sup>530</sup>. Francesco was also highly active at the *SGSM*, holding offices in succession to those of the *Scuola del Sacramento*<sup>531</sup>:

**TABLE 22. Francesco Lucadei’s elections at the *SGSM***

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1499	1516	1512	-	1530	-	1536	1528 1530 1533 1536 1540 1542 1544 1546	-	-

Even more interesting is the comparison with the appointments of his son Alessandro and his grandson Martino<sup>532</sup>, which demonstrates how the Lucadellis were often involved in the *SGSM*’s decision board between 1512 and the end of the 1530s, with an impressive escalation in the 1520s-30s.

Although there is no definitive evidence about the actual connection between dalla Pigna and Luchadei, it is nonetheless evident that their members not only joined similar offices alternatively both at the *SGSM* and the *Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento*, but in the case of the former they in fact served simultaneously six times between 1528 and 1544. A relationship which evidently aimed to maintain control of both the charitable institutions over the

*fonti e indagini storico-contestuali*, Università Ca’ Foscari (Venezia) and Université François Rabelais – CESR (Tours), Dottorato di ricerca, 2011, pp. 66-77, 254-281 docs. 10-11.

<sup>529</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 3, ff. 119-120; G. Tassini (1970), pp. 354-355.

<sup>530</sup> See V. Sapienza (2011), pp. 66-77, 254-281 docs. 10-11.

<sup>531</sup> He entered the *Scuola* in 1499 (ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 52r); ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 6v, 16r, 27v, 54v-57r.

<sup>532</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 17r, 28v, 29r, 56r, 65r.

*Banche.*

Of some account is also the case of a family named Grifo (or Grifoni). Of Florentine origins, Giacomo Grifo moved to Venice in 1365 where he carried on the cloth trade<sup>533</sup>. His descendants, generally known as *Grifo dalle Tele*, owned a family vault in the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo which was erected by Giovanni Grifo from Santa Maria Formosa probably in the late 1390s<sup>534</sup>. Two branches of the Grifo family served, simultaneously, at the *SGSM*: Pietro Grifo, great-grandchild of Giovanni from Santa Maria Formosa, joined the *Zonta* in 1525 (Giovanni Mansueti's commission), whereas his son Domenico was elected *Degano tutto l'anno* in 1511 and 1512<sup>535</sup>; on the other side "Vetor grifo da le tele", was *Degano mezzo anno* at the time of the commission of the *Preaching of St Mark* (1504), while his son Gerolamo held the same office when Giovanni Bellini was engaged to depict the *Martyrdom* (1515)<sup>536</sup>. Furthermore, Vittore and his son Gerolamo attended the Group of *Trenta huomeni* eight times between 1500 and 1521<sup>537</sup>.

Even though the Grifos did not join the confraternity on the long run, no less than two generations and two different branches of the same family shared offices directly involved in the commission of the *SGSM*'s narrative cycle. They might not have a legion of relatives on their side, and yet their contribution must not be ignored, nor even underestimated.

Although less involved than the Grifos, even the Moranzons deserve a brief description. Moranzon was a family of rich silk traders with a privileged relation to the church of San Salvador where they owned a family vault at least since 1487<sup>538</sup>. Similarly to many other families, two generations of Moranzons joined the *SGSM*: the head of the family, Vittore Moranzon, entered the *SGSM* in the 1460s, he was appointed *Degano tutto l'anno* in 1476 and 1485, and then *Scrivano* in 1490<sup>539</sup>. Both Vittore's sons, Ettore and Zuan Battista, were

<sup>533</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 3, ff. 69-70.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibidem*; I. Botti (1992), p. 57.

<sup>535</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 38v, 118r, 161r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 9v, 27r-27v, 54v.

<sup>536</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 69v, 150v. ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 16r, 26r. On Geronimo's son, Francesco, see ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 57r.

<sup>537</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 12r, 23v-24r, 32r, 48v, 56v, 75r, 93v.

<sup>538</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 3, f. 220.

<sup>539</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 150r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 12r, 24r, 25r.

admitted to the *SGSM*. If Ettore did not obtain great appointments – it is worth mentioning his appointment as *Degano tutto l'anno* in 1504<sup>540</sup> – his brother Zuan Battista on the contrary had a quite distinguished career<sup>541</sup>:

**TABLE 23. Zuan Battista Moranzon's elections at the *SGSM***

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
-	-	1491 1497	1505	1522	1513	1533	1525 1528 1531 1533 1535 1537	1506 1507 1509 1512 1515 1517 1519 1521 1524	1532

Evidently, Zuan Battista not only played a relevant role within the management of the *SGSM*, but he also joined the *Banca* that in 1525 commissioned Giovanni Mansueti's *Three Episodes* (1525), and assured the completion of the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* (*Provedadore sopra la fabbrica*, 1532). At the same time, his brother Ettore attended, at the very beginning of his career, the *Banca* that had accepted Gentile Bellini's offer (1504). However, with only Ettore on his side, Zuan Battista could hardly influence the *Banca* in the long run.

Anastasio Tinto is another stimulating case, since he shows how the *SGSM*'s membership was not only made up by merchants, but also by distinguished members of the Ducal Chancery. The *Mariegola* does not mention Anastasio's occupation, but according to Neff he was a *Secretario alle voci* with an extensive experience at the Ducal Chancery<sup>542</sup>. The Tinto family, native of Jesolo, was not new at the *SGSM*, having joined it for at least two generations. Anastasio's father, Francesco Tinto, entered in 1480 (he died one year later), whereas Jacomo Tinto, uncle of Anastasio, was admitted in the

<sup>540</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 43v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 9v, 26v. He also attended the Group of *Trenta huomeni*: ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 37v, 39r, 40r, 41r-v, 42v, 56v, 89r.

<sup>541</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 6v, 9v, 12v, 25v-26r, 54r-55v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 32r, 33r, 37v, 39r, 41v, 42v, 44r, 47r, 56v, 57r, 66v, 75r, 87v, 89r, 91v, 105r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 18, f. 79v.

<sup>542</sup> M.F. Neff (1985), p. 306 note 57.

1460s<sup>543</sup>. Anastasio was accepted in 1509 and, although his career was not outstanding, he nonetheless joined two crucial *Banche*: *Degano tutto l'anno* in 1525, and member of the *Zonta* in 1532<sup>544</sup>. His brother Zuan Francesco, finally, entered the *SGSM* in 1500, and then held a series of leading office such as *Scrivano* (1508), member of the *Zonta* (1522, 1526, 1528) and *Vicario* (1526)<sup>545</sup>. According to the date of the different appointments, it is quite probable that the Tinto relatives, as already observed on previous occasions, joined offices alternatively in order to guarantee continuity to two commissions such as Giovanni Mansueti's and Paris Bordon's.

A further example should be added to that of Anastasio Tinto. Zorzi Franco was an employee of the Ducal Chancery who, having started as carrier of white ballots (1477), soon pursued a brilliant career of secretaryship joining prestigious diplomatic envoys to Milan, Genoa, Rimini and Naples, as well as the international mission of Giorgio Pisani to the Emperor (1498)<sup>546</sup>. Zorzi Franco entered the *SGSM* in 1493. Appointed *Degano mezzo anno* in 1502, his career only thrived by the 1520s, when he joined the *Zonta* for nine times<sup>547</sup>. As in the case of Anastasio Tinto, Zorzi Franco joined the *Banche* that engaged both Giovanni Mansueti (1525) and Paris Bordon (1533), thus showing a regular attendance at the decisional board of the *SGSM*. Unlike Anastasio, however, Zorzi also had the remarkable competence to be elected, in 1532, as one of the three *Provedadori sopra la fabbrica* who had to supervise Paris Bordon's commission<sup>548</sup>.

The Longinis offer a stimulating case not because of the number of *Banche* they attended, but because of their personal relationship with Giovanni Mansueti<sup>549</sup>. Marco Longini, uncle of Giovanni Mansueti's wife (Laura Longini), was the first of his family who joined the *SGSM* and, although his career was not extend, he nonetheless had access to distinguished offices such

<sup>543</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 66r, 91v.

<sup>544</sup> Even though Anastasio was elected *Degano Mezzo anno* in 1514 (August 1514-August 1515), he was still in office when Giovanni Bellini's *Martyrdom of Saint Mark* was commissioned (July 1515). ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 16r, 27r, 54v-56r.

<sup>545</sup> *Ibidem*, 6v, 12v, 54r-54v.

<sup>546</sup> M.F. Neff (1985), pp. 439-440.

<sup>547</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 163v. ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 16r, 54r-55v.

<sup>548</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 18, f. 79v.

<sup>549</sup> See above pp. 2 note 8, 32 note 110.

as *Guardian da Matin* (1464) and *Vicario* (1470)<sup>550</sup>. His son Francesco, cousin of Mansueti's wife, also attended the *SGSM*: he entered in 1492, he was elected *Degano tutto l'anno* in 1498 and *Degano mezzo anno* in 1509, and then in the 1520s he repeatedly joined the *Zonta* (1523, 1525, 1530 and 1533)<sup>551</sup>. Finally, Francesco's son, Zuan Girolamo, reached the guardianship in 1554<sup>552</sup>. Surprisingly though, in 1525 Giovanni Mansueti's cousin-in-law attended the *Banca* that eventually commissioned the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark*. This is a proof of exceptional interest. It is the first time that we are able to single out a relative, although only by marriage, of Mansueti in a crucial *Banca* of the *SGSM*. We have already seen how Mansueti was on familiar terms with eminent members of the confraternity (e.g. Marco Pellegrini, Giovanni and Gentile Bellini), we have also suggested that some other prestigious officers probably knew and appreciated his artistic value (e.g. Dardani and Bonfioli). And yet this last evidence revolutionises our understanding of Mansueti's relationship with the *SGSM* itself. On this occasion a concrete family tie demonstrates not only secure support of Mansueti's last commission (1525), but it documents the existence of a kinship that had to play a crucial role in Mansueti's acceptance within the restricted, élitist circle of the *SGSM*. As in the case of Paris Bordon, Mansueti's engagement was thus facilitated, if not guaranteed, by his family support.

These few cases have introduced a series of officers whose involvement in the *SGSM*'s art patronage assured, either according to their families' support or to their associations with other esteemed officers, the necessary continuity for the accomplishment of the narrative cycle. Beside the *SGSM*'s membership, and the different extent of influence on the *Banca*, all the officers discussed shared a common source of income derived from various kinds of trade or the government bureaucracy. In this regard, it would be worth discussing a final example, namely the case of Ettore Ottobon, whose employment at the Ducal Chancery and the concurrent *pratica della mercatura* would provide a useful opportunity to refine the anthropological profile of the *cittadini originari* who made up the *SGSM*'s élite.

<sup>550</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 6r, 9r, 12r, 22r.

<sup>551</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 51v. ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 16r; 26r; 54r-55r.

<sup>552</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 4r.

Although excluded from the Great Council in 1297, the Ottobon family gave birth to “soggetti qualificatissimi” such as three Great Chancellors (Zuan Francesco, Lorenzo and Marco), one Cardinal (Pietro) and even a Pope (Alexander VIII)<sup>553</sup>. Some relatives shined amongst others for the commendable courage they showed while serving the State. Ettore’s grandfather, Antonio Ottobon, rose to fame after a fortuitous incursion of his warship in the harbour of Negroponte (Euboea) during the siege of Muhammad the Conqueror in 1470<sup>554</sup>. His son Stefano, Ettore’s father, was not so lucky, for he burnt to death in 1499 after four hours of battle between his warship *Pandora* and a “nave grossa de bote 5000. de Turchi” near Capo Zonchio (Morea)<sup>555</sup>.

Ettore’s life was far less adventurous, and yet commendable. Thanks to his father’s immolation, in 1499 Ettore was granted “in vita sua l’oficio dil sal”<sup>556</sup>, whereas in 1515, as usual among the *cittadini originari*, he bought the right to pass his office to his eldest son Giacomo by a payment of 430 ducats<sup>557</sup> – one of his other sons, Zuan Francesco, entered the Chancery in 1524 and as soon as 1559 he was elected *Cancellier Grande*<sup>558</sup>. In 1518 Ettore was appointed *Gastaldo* of the *Procuratori de ultra*, and in 1520 Sanudo bitterly wondered how a common *scrivan*, Ettore, and not a real *Provedador*, could be sent to Crema “a incantar quell dazio del Sal”<sup>559</sup>. Despite Sanudo’s jealous grievance, Ettore’s career went on growing, and in 1522 the *Capitano generale* Domenico Trevisan, he himself a member of the *SGSM*, appointed Ettore *armirao*<sup>560</sup>. As in the case of Vittore Ziliol, Ettore’s service of the State was flanked by the inevitable *mercatura*. In the same year he was appointed *al Sal* (1499), Sanudo in fact named Ettore as *patron* of a trade ship at that time docked in Ancona, whereas in 1500 the *Senato* acknowledged his “servitii stati

<sup>553</sup> *Famiglie Patrizie Venete*, In Venezia, Giuseppe Bettinelli, MDCCLXXIV, p. 66; G. Tassini (1888), vol. 4, ff. 22-22bis.

<sup>554</sup> *Lamento di Negroponte*, in *Guerre in ottava rima. IV. Guerre contro i Turchi (1453-1570)*, a cura di Marina Beer and Cristina Ivaldi, Ferrara-Modena, Edizioni Panini, 1988, pp. 45-47; A. Gentili (1996), pp. 111-113.

<sup>555</sup> *Genealogia della famiglia Ottobon*, BMC, Ms Cicogna 3425/IX, page unnumbered (12 August 1499). I. Botti (1992), p. 57; A. Gentili (1996), pp. 112-113.

<sup>556</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. III, col. 66 (1499 December 15); A. Gentili (1996), pp. 113, 185 note 66.

<sup>557</sup> M.F. Neff (1985), p. 494.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>559</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXVIII, col. 527; A. Gentili (1996), pp. 104-105.

<sup>560</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXXIII, col. 268; A. Gentili (1996), p. 105. On Domenico Trevisan’s membership see ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 33v.

in armada” as *patron* of Alvise Priuli’s vessel<sup>561</sup>. Finally in 1519, his new ship “di bote zerca 500”, bought in partnership with Agostino Gritti, while coming back to Venice from Cyprus, was wrecked somewhere in the Adriatic Sea<sup>562</sup>.

Ettore’s career at the *SGSM* was quite similar to that of the brethren discussed above. Even though some of his relatives joined the *Banca*, none of them was appointed while Ettore was in office<sup>563</sup>; his contribution to the narrative cycle, in itself of a certain interest, was therefore independent<sup>564</sup>.

**TABLE 24. Ettore Ottobon’s elections at the *SGSM***

MEM.	D.M.	D.A.	SCR.	VIC.	G.M.	G.G.	ZON.	30	P.FAB.
1501	-	1504	-	-	-	1521 1527	1523 1526	- <sup>565</sup>	

In addition to his prestigious appointments, it is worth mentioning that in 1515 he was among those who deliberated on the appointment of Vittore Ziliol and Antonio di Jacopo as *Provedadori sopra la fabrica* (18 November 1515)<sup>566</sup>.

<sup>561</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. III, coll. 51, 114-115; A. Gentili (1996), p. 104.

<sup>562</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXVI, col. 403.

<sup>563</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 43v, 70r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 4r, 7r, 17r, 29r, 31v, 32v-33r, 57v-59v, 60v, 61r-62r, 63r.

<sup>564</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 26v, 54r-54v.

<sup>565</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 37v, 41r, 65r, 89r, 105r.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 65r.

## 2.IV. Centralization of Power: the *Scuola's* Mercantile Oligarchy

According to Botti, Gentile Bellini's *Preaching of St Mark* was commissioned and executed with such a remarkable timeliness with the last trade dispute between Mamluks and the *Serenissima* to "far supporre che fra gli eventi politico-economici ed il quadro vi sia un rapporto di causa-effetto"<sup>567</sup>. A close correlation in fact demonstrated not only by the acrimonious controversy on pepper price eventually won by Venetians, but by the substantial involvement, both financial as well as personal, of numerous members of the *SGSM*.

Botti provided a long list of *SGSM's* members, counting several patricians and a number of non-nobles. With respect to the former, Botti mentioned outstanding figures including diplomatic mediators (Stefano Malipiero *quondam* Nicolò, Francesco da Monte), shipmasters (Paolo Vallaresso *quondam* Gabriele, Pietro Nadal *quondam* Giovanni, Antonio Morosini *quondam* Francesco and Marco Bragadin *quondam* Giovan Alvisè), ship contractors (Francesco Morosini *quondam* Nicolò, Benedetto Erizzo *quondam* Francesco), and wealthy merchants (Matteo Sanudo *quondam* Benedetto)<sup>568</sup>. The citizen members, although not personally involved in trade negotiations, were nevertheless "danneggiati dalle balzane pretese del sultano" since Botti demonstrated that they were ship patrons (Ettore Ottobon), jewellers (Andrea da Brazo), spice traders (Marco dalla Pigna), silk traders (Ettore Moranzon), and cloth traders (Vittore Grifo)<sup>569</sup>.

To this group of men – indeed made up, as we have seen, by figures directly involved even in the commission of the paintings that followed Gentile's – we can now add a respectable number of grocers (Tadio d'Alban, Bartolomeo d'Arman and Jacopo Usper), as well as merchants or retailers trading in jewels (Ziliol), iron (Dardani), tin (Antonio di Maistri), silk (Jacomo di Fornari), cloth (Francesco de la Colombina and Luchadei), and wool (Francesco Gruato). Notably, this new group of brethren, which in its turn oversaw the completion of the project originated in 1504, shared with the former a single, essential interest: they all dealt with commodities that were

<sup>567</sup> I. Botti (1992), pp. 55.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 56.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 57.

traded or purchased in the Levantine seaports.

Venice, as it is well-known, made her fortune from the trade with the Eastern Mediterranean. In the Levant the convoys of Venetian galleys (*mude*)<sup>570</sup> used to bring, among various products, large amounts of golden ducats and bullions of silver and copper with which spices and silk were purchased<sup>571</sup>. Different groups of traders invested diverse amounts of money in accordance with their means. If a patrician could spend up to 10,000 Ducats per year, merchants of the middle class could embark on ventures worth 2,000-5,000 Ducats<sup>572</sup>. To get a sense of the involvement of some members of the *SGSM* in the trade with Egypt and Syria, it would be worth mentioning the case of the Malipiero family<sup>573</sup>. Lunardo and Anzolo Malipiero, members of the *SGSM* since 1482 and 1501 respectively<sup>574</sup>, traded with the Levant either independently or in *fraterna* (family partnership)<sup>575</sup>. As it has been shown by Eliyahu Ashtor, in 1476 Lunardo Malipiero spent 36,859 Ducats in Damascus in purchasing spices, silk and cotton. Three years later his brother Anzolo exported cloth and tin to Aleppo to the value of 2,402 Ducats, plus 8,171 Ducats of cash on hand, that were eventually reinvested in silk and spices (9,690 Ducats)<sup>576</sup>. Because of the extensive experience gained while trading in Syria<sup>577</sup>, Anzolo was elected “Consolo a Damasco” (27 June 1518)<sup>578</sup> where he was flanked by “ser Zuanstephano maza [...] mio Cancelier”<sup>579</sup> – himself an influential member of the *SGSM*<sup>580</sup>. Again though, at the *SGSM* the establishment of opportunistic networks, even inter-class indeed, were common occurrences.

<sup>570</sup> On the *muda* see Frederic C. Lane, *Fleets and Fairs: the Functions of the Venetian Muda*, in *Studi in onore di Armando Saporì*, Milano, Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1957, pp. 651-659. On its etymology see Georg Christ, *Trading Conflicts. Venetian Merchants and Mamluk Officials in Late Medieval Alexandria*, Leiden, Brill, 2012, p. 88, especially note 156.

<sup>571</sup> G. Christ (2012), pp. 19-20.

<sup>572</sup> Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Age*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983, pp. 365-371.

<sup>573</sup> E. Ashtor (1983), pp. 367-369.

<sup>574</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 2r, 73v. On Anzolo Malipiero's family see: ASVe, Marco Barbaro, *Genealogie delle famiglie patrizie venete*, IV, 20, f. 420.

<sup>575</sup> On the Venetian *fraterna* see: Frederic C. Lane, “Family Partnerships and Joint Ventures in the Venetian Republic”, *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 4 (1944), pp. 178-196.

<sup>576</sup> E. Ashtor (1983), p. 368 Table XXXVII.

<sup>577</sup> On this topic see: D. Howard (2000), pp. 19-22, especially 21.

<sup>578</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXV, col. 498.

<sup>579</sup> ASVe, Notarile, Testamenti, Giacomo Grasarario, 1185, ff. 73r-v.

<sup>580</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 159r; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, f. 3v. Both his sons Gasparo and Marco Antonio were members of the *Scuola*: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 58r, 93v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 6v, 12v, 26v-27r, 54r-55v.

Among countless emporia, Alexandria was the most lucrative, the “chief western outlet from the Red Sea”<sup>581</sup>. In Alexandria the Venetians held an unrivalled monopoly. Given the fact that they were those who made the greatest investments<sup>582</sup>, not only were their ducats accepted as official currency of exchange, but the Venetians were the only Western community that could boast two luxurious warehouse-palaces (*fondaci*) supplied with drinking-water<sup>583</sup>. Along with ducats and various metals, Venetians usually conveyed cloth, brocade, silken goods, silverwares, crystal-wares and other commodities, whereas the Alexandrine market offered sugar, dates, balsam, silk, cotton, alum, indigo, ivory and gems<sup>584</sup>. Spices, anyway, were the main trading staple, and indeed Alexandria provided plenty of cloves, nutmegs, cinnamon, ginger and, above all, pepper<sup>585</sup>.

Once in Venice, spices were sold, transferred to different galleys and then shipped by sea to various marketplaces in Central Italy, Central Europe and England<sup>586</sup>. Germans, however, were the main customers, therefore residing in the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi* situated in the economic core of the city, the Rialto. During the Christmas season German merchants set up an informal fair<sup>587</sup>, but they nonetheless attended the Venetian market throughout the entire year, and as a matter of fact by the end of the fourteenth-century the “firms of Nürnberg already had their agents in Venice”<sup>588</sup>. As Germans had their reserved lodging and warehouse near the Rialto market, the surrounding area developed into specialised shopping streets purposely dedicated to the sale or craft of selected commodities and merchandise<sup>589</sup>. With regard to the trade in spices, it is of some interest to remember that numerous members of the *SGSM* had their shops in this area. It is the case of Tadio d’Alban, who owned a grocer’s shop “all’insegna delle Rose” at San Salvador; Jacopo Usper, whose shop

<sup>581</sup> Frederic C. Lane, *Venice. A Maritime Republic*, Baltimore and London, The John Hopkins University Press, 1973, p. 287.

<sup>582</sup> E. Ashtor (1983), pp. 125-126.

<sup>583</sup> Guglielmo Heyd, *Storia del commercio del Levante nel Medio Evo*, (*Biblioteca dell’Economista*, Serie V, vol. X), Torino, Unione Tipografica Editrice Torinese, 1913, pp. 997-998; F.C. Lane (1973), p. 287; D. Howard (2000), pp. 15-16, 35-36, 120-131; M.A. Shenouda (2009), pp. 44-47; G. Christ (2012), pp. 72-74.

<sup>584</sup> G. Heyd (1913), p. 1008; E. Ashtor (1983), pp. 10, 205, 462-465; G. Christ (2012), pp. 19-20.

<sup>585</sup> G. Heyd (1913), p. 1010.

<sup>586</sup> E. Ashtor (1983), p. 172; G. Christ (2012), p. 21.

<sup>587</sup> G. Christ (2012), p. 89.

<sup>588</sup> E. Ashtor (1983), p. 171.

<sup>589</sup> D. Howard (2000), p. 116.

“all’insegna delle Tre Corone” was located in the parish of San Bartolomeo; and Bartolomeo d’Arman, himself of German origin, whose retail store was again situated in the San Bartolomeo neighbourhood<sup>590</sup>.

Germans in turn brought great amounts of metals to Venice – mostly copper, but also silver, iron and tin<sup>591</sup>. Copper, sold by auction at the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*, was the principal metal that Venetians exported to the Levant<sup>592</sup>, nonetheless good quantities of tin had been shipped from Venice to Egypt since the middle of the sixteenth-century<sup>593</sup>. Germany did not hold the monopoly for tin, and in fact by the end of the fourteenth-century Cornwall and Devon provided large amount of it, mainly traded with spices and further commodities that Venetians brought to England<sup>594</sup>. As in the case of grocers, even tinsmiths (e.g. Antonio di Maistri)<sup>595</sup> had their houses and workshops just a few steps from San Bartolomeo, in *Calle degli Stagneri*<sup>596</sup>. With regard to iron, itself an article highly required by Moslems since the thirteenth-century, Venetian merchants such as the Dardanis surely contributed to the satisfaction of the Mamluk rulers’ needs<sup>597</sup>.

The most remunerative commodity that Europeans exported to the Near East, again predominantly through the Venetian market, was woollen cloth produced in Catalonia, Flanders, Southern France, England, Germany, Brescia and Florence – *tintillani*, the Florentine cloth made of English wool, were among the most sought after commodities by the upper classes of Oriental societies<sup>598</sup>. The Rialto market induced the concentration of specialized retail business in its proximity. This is the case, for example, with Francesco de la Colombina, who had his shop “all’insegna de la colombina” at the *Mercerie* (nearby San Salvador), Francesco Lucadei, who had his haberdashery nearby

<sup>590</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 1, pp. 18-19, 77-79; vol. 5, p. 115.

<sup>591</sup> Deborah Howard, *Venice as an “Eastern City”*, in *Venice and the Islamic World 828-1797*, ed. by Stefano Carboni, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 58-71, especially 64.

<sup>592</sup> F.C. Lane (1973), pp. 61-64; E. Ashtor (1983), pp. 156-159; Palmira Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and the Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1994, pp. 149-155.

<sup>593</sup> ASVe, Notarile, Testamenti, Soliano Bonifacio, b. 937, no. 85.

<sup>594</sup> E. Ashtor (1983), pp. 108, 159. See also Frederic C. Lane, *I mercanti di Venezia*, Torino, Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1982, p. 25.

<sup>595</sup> ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, Soliano Bonifacio, b. 937, no. 85. G. Tassini (1888), vol. 3, pp. 139-140.

<sup>596</sup> G. Tassini (1970), pp. 623-624.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 8, 10.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 152-153, 205, 462.

the *Ponte dei Baretteri*, and it is most likely that even Vittore Grifo *dalle Tele* had his shop in the same neighbourhood<sup>599</sup>.

The trade in precious stones was less predominant, yet greatly lucrative. Although poorly documented – merchants judiciously preferred to conceal them for fear of being robbed – a great quantity of gems were brought to the Egyptian markets from the Persian Gulf, the province of Badakhshan and other regions of India<sup>600</sup>. Prestigious members of the *SGSM* traded in gems. One of them was Andrea da Brazo “orefice e gioielliere” whose workshop, although not documented, was probably located not far from those of his goldsmith colleagues, also, in the *Mercerie*<sup>601</sup>. Andrea Ziliol is also known to have operated a shop of unknown location – he personally looked after the gems trade between Venice and England<sup>602</sup>.

There are manifold issues arising from this discussion. In the first instance, it offers a precise cross-section of the élite of the *SGSM*, since it has been proved that it was formed by men who not only were involved in the Levantine market, but had their stores and workshops in the neighbourhood of San Salvador. The *Mercerie*, namely the route that connected the administrative centre of the city (Piazza San Marco) with its financial heart (Rialto)<sup>603</sup>, was the *calle* where those men spent their days side by side, attracting customers, selling their merchandise and haggling animatedly over prices. On Sunday (the so-called *ordained day*)<sup>604</sup>, once they had cast off their worldly weeds, they then put on “labito di batudi” and came together at the *SGSM*'s meeting hall. There, under the aegis of their Holy Patron, this group of officers administered the resources of the confraternity, looked after their poor brothers, supplied dowries to indigent maidens and, for the sake of God and the City, promoted the embellishment of their *Sala dell'Albergo*.

The present discussion has also broadened Botti's argument. As stated, the majority of the officers in charge during the execution of the narrative cycle

<sup>599</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 2, f. 95; vol. 3, ff. 69-70, 119-120. G. Tassini (1970), pp. 354-355.

<sup>600</sup> Guglielmo Heyd, *Le colonie commerciali degli italiani in Oriente nel Medio Evo*, Venezia and Torino, G. Antonelli and L. Basadonna Editori, 1864, p. 79; E. Ashtor (1983), pp. 180, 360; R.E. Mack (2002), p. 20; *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 337 no. 144 (catalogue entry).

<sup>601</sup> G. Tassini (1970), pp. 95-96.

<sup>602</sup> On the Venetian trade of gems between Egypt and England see the case of Biagio Dolfin as described by G. Christ (2012).

<sup>603</sup> On this subject see: Ennio Concina, *Una fabbrica “in mezzo della città”: la chiesa e il convento di San Salvador*, in *Progetto S. Salvador: un restauro per l'innovazione a Venezia*, a cura di Fulvio Caputo, Venezia, Albrizzi, 1988, pp. 73-153.

<sup>604</sup> J. Glixon (2003), p. 44.

were intimately involved, whether as merchants or retailers, with the Egyptian trade. All those officers, personally or indirectly, benefited from Egyptian commerce. A trading vocation not just limited to the *Banca* that commissioned Gentile Bellini's *Preaching of St Mark*, but shared by all the following *Banche* that year after year retained the power of the *SGSM* itself. It was therefore this group of merchants that, espousing the project began in 1504, guaranteed the completion of the narrative cycle on the evangelic mission of St Mark in Egypt.

These new findings, if contrasted with Pullan's analysis of the social component of the *SGSM*, also pinpoint the distribution of power among the members. Pullan's survey, although representative of the second half of the sixteenth-century, has demonstrated how the greatest percentage of the *SGSM*'s membership was made up of textile and clothing traders (12,6%), then followed by seamen and boatmen (9,3%), labourers in the construction and furnishing (5,7%), luxury traders (3,1%), wood and metal traders (2,1%), and grocers (0,6%)<sup>605</sup>. Pullan's conclusion was that "textile workers and clothiers formed the largest single identifiable occupational group" of the *SGSM*.

Despite this large social group, the new figures demonstrate that the ruling class of the *SGSM* was much more exclusive. As a matter of fact textile workers and clothiers affected the *SGSM*'s art patronage only marginally, seeing that it was the smallest group that tangibly conditioned the numerous commissions. Grocers (dalla Pigna, d'Alban, d'Arman, Usper), as well as metal and luxury traders (Dardani, Ziliol, da Brazo, di Maistri) were those who advocated the necessity of the narrative cycle. It was an exclusive group of merchants that developed the project, allocated funds, hired the painters, and supervised the completion of the cycle. On the other side, cloth and silk traders (de la Colombina, Luchadei, Grifo, and di Fornari) were minor both in numbers and, with the macroscopic exception of Zuan Battista Moranzon, in institutional stature. They did attend relevant *Banche*, they did also take part in the commission of few paintings, and yet their contribution was nonetheless inferior to others'.

According to Pullan, the *SGSM* was also attended by a significant amount of clerical workers and civil servants (3,1%)<sup>606</sup>. In the previous section I have introduced administrative clerks somehow involved in the narrative

<sup>605</sup> B. Pullan (1971), pp. 96-97.

<sup>606</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 95-96.

cycle such as Anastasio Tinto (*Secretario alle voci*), Zorzi Franco (notary at the *Cancelleria Ducale*) and Ettore Ottobon (*Scrivano al Sal*), as well as outstanding officials like Vittore Ziliol (notary at the *Camera degli Imprestidi*) and Jacopo Dardani (employed at the *Auditori Nuovi*)<sup>607</sup>. These two last figures offer the chance to plunge into the social fabric of the *SGSM*'s élite and shed light over the common habit of its citizen members.

Vittore and Jacopo had, at least as familial heritage, a trading vocation: the gem trade between Egypt and England had made the fortune of Vittore's ancestors, whereas the Dardani had owned for generations various mines of coal, iron and pyrite<sup>608</sup>. Such occupations, however, did not prevent Vittore and Jacopo from pursuing a career at the Ducal Chancery. On the contrary, we can see from the records that their commercial takings probably supplied a significant supplementary income – we should keep in mind, in this respect, that the official mean salary was somewhere around 100 and 200 Ducats annually<sup>609</sup>. In the case of Vittore and Jacopo though, we can assume that the fortune that their families had amassed over the decades was partially used to fund their coveted social emancipation. Being members of the Ducal Chancery would guarantee a well-established position in Venetian society, the access to lower State offices and, with some more (economic) efforts, even a constant income for the next generation<sup>610</sup>. After all, in Early Renaissance Venice it was a standard procedure to inherit, or even buy, offices. Ettore Ottobon, for instance, was granted “in vita sua” a position at “l'oficio dil sal” thanks to his father's immolation<sup>611</sup>, whereas some years later he paid 430 Ducats to guarantee his son Giacomo's succession<sup>612</sup>. And no different was the case of Vittore Ziliol, who bequeathed his post at the *Camera degli imprestidi* to his descendants for 150 years<sup>613</sup>; nor was that of Jacopo Dardani, whose employment at the *Auditori Nuovi*, granted thanks to his father Alvise, was then handed down to his brother and sons<sup>614</sup>.

Appointment by dynastic succession was not limited to State offices.

<sup>607</sup> M.F. Neff (1985), pp. 414, 439-440, 494, 563, 594.

<sup>608</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001) pp. 341-343; P. de Peppo (1984), pp. 422-423. M. Sanudo (2008), p. 278.

<sup>609</sup> M.F. Neff (1985), pp. 181-183.

<sup>610</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 156-205.

<sup>611</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. III, col. 66.

<sup>612</sup> M.F. Neff (1985), p. 494.

<sup>613</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 342; *Libri di Varie* (=6735), f. 29r.

<sup>614</sup> P. de Peppo (1984), p. 420; M.F. Neff (1985), p. 413.

Remarkable similarities can be observed in the administration of the *SGSM* where a limited number of families, although frequently obstructed by the constraints of the *contumacia*, realised an effective monopolization of power. Legions of Ziliols, Dardanis, da Brazos, Pignas, d'Albans and many others alternatively held, generation after generation, the leading posts of the *Quattro Capi di Banca*. An habit that, in the face of the decrees of the *Consiglio dei Dieci*, was pursued to implement a familial colonization of the *SGSM*'s decisional board. An habit so deeply embedded in the *SGSM*'s mentality, to be even immortalized by a double portrait of Vittore Ziliol and his favourite son Cesare hung in the *Sala dell'Albergo*<sup>615</sup>. On that occasion though, one of the most influential *Guardian Grandi* of the first half of the sixteenth-century delegated his portrait to proclaim in the decisional hall of *his* confraternity who had ruled the *Banca* and, even more impudently, who *he* had designated to rule the *SGSM* in the years to come. Vittore's portrait demonstrates that, although charitable deeds could elevate one's reputation to the eyes of contemporaries, it was nonetheless his enduring effigy that could eventually leave a mark to posterity. Accordingly, even if the narrative cycle of the *Sala dell'Albergo* was designed to celebrate St Mark's deeds, it is nonetheless clear that those countless portraits staring at the beholder affirmed who had had the means and strength to commission it. Their power, to be publicly granted, had therefore to be visually imprinted in the hall where it was normally exerted.

The use of pictures as explicit devices of visualizing power have significant repercussions not only regarding the way in which we should look at the paintings, but also with respect to what should be regarded as the object of our examination. We should no longer refer to individual officers, but we should rather expand the research horizons to household groups, or, furthermore, to the united front of those associated families. We should thus reflect on those clans as groups of devoted partners who joined an exclusive devotional partnership to assure, by a series of paintings where they were all necessarily immortalized, the due honour they bestowed to God, St Mark and the City. Those paintings, after all, flaunted the group of men who had concretely commissioned them.

As already discussed, the commission of a painting was the result of a

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<sup>615</sup> *Cronichetta* (2001), p. 343.

wide-ranging discussion, since it was necessary to apply to two separate committees in order to release the required funds. Once the *Banca* granted its permission, the project had to be submitted to the examination of the group of *Trenta houmini*, which in its turn had the exclusive right to assent or reject the commission. In addition to their immaculate reputation, the *Trenta houmini* were required to be experienced men – which means, according to the *SGSM*'s jargon, that they had to be former influential officers. Although fragmentary, registrations of the commission of Giovanni Mansueti's *Baptism* and *Healing of Anianus* provide an instructive example to evaluate the good terms that that group of *Trenta huomini* kept with the *Banca* in charge.

On 2 September 1518, Jacopo Dardani summoned his *Banca* to deliberate on a sensitive issue<sup>616</sup>. As a result of “le grave occurrentie de la guera sono state”, the *SGSM* had suffered many economic troubles; however, “mediante lavuorio divino et di questo glorioso stato”, it was now time to resume the project at hand. The officers in charge had thus the chance to allocate new funds to charity, as well as to the accomplishment of the Meeting House. Following the footsteps of “li nostri veteri progienitori [who had] constructo questo sumo et tal edificio”, the *Banca* of Jacopo was asked to stand by such an honourable inheritance – after all, it was Alvise Dardani one of those “veteri progienitori” who had started the rebuilding of the *SGSM* in 1485.

Honour and discerning expenditure were the two key issues. The bad condition of the Meeting House endangered the reputation of the *Scuola* and, as a consequence, it dishonoured “questo illustre stato et [...] misser San Marco”. During the annual feast of St Mark (25 March) all the *Scuole Grandi* used to visit, after the official procession in *Piazza San Marco*, to the *SGSM* where further celebrations were performed<sup>617</sup>. Unfortunately, “le grave occurrentie” had left the building unfinished, thus the *SGSM*, to keep up appearances, was obliged to cope every year with

“spesa grandissima qual se fa per el conzier per el dì de misser San Marco che è spesa excesiva et piuttosto *ut ita dicere* gità via per quelli

<sup>616</sup> The following transcription can be found in ASVe, *SGSM*, Notatorio 17, ff. 78r-v.

<sup>617</sup> J. Glixon (2003), pp. 47-50, 53-54.

se atrovano a le banche de anno in anno de la sua borsa”.

As I said, honour and discerning expenditure were two sides of the same coin. No more ducats had to be “gità via”: the *SGSM* deserved an appropriate building. The members of the *Banca* were thus asked to express themselves on three different issues. On the agenda there were the construction of the coffered ceiling of the Hall together with the execution of two canvases, the commission of a new bronze door, and, finally, the edification of a chapel. The officers had to come to a decision, and yet their opinions were quite divergent. At last, after gallant resistance, the majority voted in favour of the ceiling and the two canvases (“si n° 7 / de no n° 4”). These were the officers in charge:

**TABLE 25. The *Banca* in 1518**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>OFFICE</b>
Messer Jacomo di dardani	G.G.
Ser Domenego Armellini	VIC.
Ser Lucha de Zuanne	G.M.
Ser Zuanne Regolin	SCR.
Ser Piero de fendente	D.M.
Ser Santo Botti	D.A.
Ser Nadalin di Zuanne	D.A.
Ser Gasparo da molin	D.A.
Ser Marco Antonio Augustini	D.A.
Ser Zuanfrancesco marchon	D.A.
Ser Zuan Marco Pellegrini	D.A.

At first glance the list causes some difficulties, since it quotes a series of men who, at least according to *Registro 6 bis*, were not supposed to be in charge that September 1518. This is due to two different reasons. First, with regard to both the *Scrivano* (Zuan Regolin)<sup>618</sup> and the *Degano Mezzo anno* (Pietro Defendente), some bureaucratic obstacles apparently delayed the appointments of their successors expected to take over on previous August (Cristoforo Bonfioli and Antonio di Piero). Even more startling is the fact that many other officers deserted the meeting. It is the case of no less than five *Degani tutto*

<sup>618</sup> On Regolin see F. Agostini (2013), p. 41 note 90.

*l'anno* (Ludovico de Oratio, Alvise Polacho, Pasqualin di Stefani, Inocese Rizzo, and Marco di Conti) who were partially substituted by Nadalin di Zuanne and Zuan Francesco Marcon. The *Mariogola* in fact required the *Guardian Grande* to appoint replacements to join the voting on condition that “siano stati in Officio”<sup>619</sup>.

Even if with a narrow majority, not to mention the numerous defections, Jacopo’s perseverance was rewarded: both the ceiling and the paintings were commissioned and, consequently, each member was required to make a donation in three instalments. The document provides a detailed list of the contribution made by every single officer<sup>620</sup>:

**TABLE 26. Donations made by the *Banca* in 1518**

NAME	OFFICE	DUCATS
Messer Jacomo di dardani	G.G.	20
Ser Domenego Armelin	VIC.	10
Ser Lucha de Zuanne	G.M.	15
Ser Zuane Regolin	SCR.	10
Ser Piero de fendente	D.M.	8
Ser Julio sirazini	D.M.	10
Ser Santo Botti	D.A.	10
Ser Nadalin di Zuanne	D.A.	5
Ser Ludovico de oratio	D.A.	5
Ser Gasparo da molin	D.A.	5
Ser Marco A. Augustini	D.A.	5
Ser Alvise Polacho	D.A.	6
Ser Zuan F. marchon	D.A.	5
Ser Zuan M. Pellegrini	D.A.	10
Ser Inocese rizo	D.A.	-
Ser Marcho di conti	D.A.	-

The whole of the *Banca* was required to make a contribution, whether its members had attended the voting or not. A decision which evidently relieved someone’s unrest, considering that the four officers absent at the first voting

<sup>619</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 8, ff. 16r-16v.

<sup>620</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, f. 78v.

offered the ridiculous sum of 11 Ducats together<sup>621</sup>. On the other hand, according to the stinginess of Nadalin de Zuane, Gasparo da Molin, Marco Antonio Augustini and Zuan Francesco Marcon, we can speculate that these were the officers who had voted against Jacopo Dardani's proposal ("de no n° 4"). Jacopo Dardani, as expected, donated more than every one (20 Ducats). This provides strong evidence of Jacopo's role as first supporter of Giovanni Mansueti's commission, as well as direct continuator of his father's legacy. Other major officers submitted almost the same amount (10 Ducats), but Lucha de Zuanne showed himself particularly generous paying 15 Ducats alone. Of some interest, finally, is the case of Zuan Marco Pellegrini who donated the remarkable amount of 10 Ducats. This shows, as already discussed, the evident interest of Zuan Marco in perpetuating the venture started by his father Marco Pellegrini fourteen years before<sup>622</sup>. Ultimately, the *Banca* raised 124 Ducats.

On 14 November Jacopo Dardani summoned the group of *Trenta huomini* to receive confirmation. All of them, as it happened at the *Banca*, were required to make a contribution, thus it is quite unforgivable that the ducats paid were not registered. On that occasion there gathered 35 *boni homeni* who, after the inevitable debate, ratified the commission of "el sofitto dela sala cum do telleri in lalbergo / Fo de la parte de sì n° 24 / de no n° 11"<sup>623</sup>.

We are already familiar with most of *boni huomeni* who attend that meeting<sup>624</sup>. Vittore Ziliol stands out in sharp relief, not only for his unmatched prestige but also because of the presence of his brother Piero – himself employed at the *Camera degli imprestidi* and subsequently appointed *Guardian Grande* in 1522<sup>625</sup>. Evidently, in addition to the plentiful offices they held, the Ziliols were also deeply entrenched in the group of *Trenta huomeni*, thus assuring the necessary continuity for the completion of the narrative cycle as a whole. It was not by chance, after all, that Vittore and Piero sat among the *Trenta huomeni* no less than twenty times between 1500 and 1525<sup>626</sup>.

Vittore, needless to say, was flanked by the usual suspects who in fact

<sup>621</sup> I am referring to Ludovico de Oratio, Alvise Polacho, Inocese Rizo and Marcho di Conti.

<sup>622</sup> See above p. 115.

<sup>623</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, f. 79v.

<sup>624</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 78v.

<sup>625</sup> Unfortunately, Piero died prematurely the following year (*I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXXV, col. 99).

<sup>626</sup> Vittore and Piero Ziliol shared the *Chapter* membership no less than twenty times between 1500 and 1525 (ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 17, ff. 19r, 20v, 24r, 40r, 41r-41v, 48v, 56v, 66v, 75r, 87v, 89r, 91v, 92v, 93v, 110r).

had already joined, or were going to join, relevant *Banche*:

**TABLE 27. Relevant officers of the *Group of trenta huomeni* in 1518**

NAME	PAINTING
Marco da la Pigna	<i>Preaching of St Mark</i> (1504)
Hieronimo Grifo Lorenzo di Fornari	<i>Martyrdom of St Mark</i> (1515)
Antonio di Maistri Zuan Battista Moranzon Vincenzo d'Alban Anastasio Tinto	<i>Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark</i> (1525)
Antonio di Maistri Anastasio Tinto	<i>Fisherman Delivering the Ring</i> (1533)

Those who could not attend personally were nonetheless represented by their relatives, as testified by the presence of Filippo de la Colombina (allegedly associated with Francesco), Vincenzo da Brazo (brother of Francesco) and his brother-in-law Bartolomeo d'Arman. Nor were these sorts of association an exception:

**Table 28. Kinship within the *Group of trenta huomeni* in 1518**

NAME	KINSHIP	PAINTING
Zuan Battista Moranzon	Brother of Ettore Moranzon	<i>Preaching</i>
Vittore Grifo	Father of Girolamo Grifo	<i>Preaching</i>
Ludovico dalla Pigna	Nephew of Marco da la Pigna	<i>Three Episodes</i>
Zuan Maria d'Alaban	Son of Vincenzo d'Alban	<i>Fisherman</i>
Gasparo Dardani	Son of Jacopo Dardani	<i>Martyrdom</i> <i>Three Episodes</i>

At last it is worth mentioning Francesco Luchadei, whose strong association with the dalla Pigna family went even beyond the *SGSM* itself (*Scuola del Santissimo Sacramaneto* at the church of San Zulian).

It seems evident that the influence of any single officer was necessarily subordinated to the capacity of his family: the more numerous the relatives were, the more effortless the success of a certain project would have been. Continuity, once again, was an imperative. Hence the *Banca*, before adjourning the meeting, enforced its conditions: the money so piously donated had not to

be wasted, not even in the unfortunate event that the work would extend over several years. In other words, Jacopo Dardani and his officers made sure that the commission they advocated, a not unanimous commission indeed, would have been sponsored and encouraged even by the *Guardian Grandi* who would follow<sup>627</sup>. If the *Provedadori sopra la fabrica* were those who had the responsibility for the accomplishment of the enterprise, the consistent attendance of sympathetic officers in the following *Banche* would not do any harm.

A further, definitive example would remove any residual doubts. On 10 July 1525, the same *Banca* that commissioned Mansueti's *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark* also decreed to replace the processional banner by that time worn out<sup>628</sup>. The expenditure, although reasonably limited, had nonetheless to be confirmed by the group of *Trenta huomini* which, not surprisingly, included familiar figures such as Vittore Ziliol, Lorenzo di Fornari, Marco da la Pigna, Vincenzo d'Alban, Vincenzo da Brazo, Cristoforo Bonfioli, Ludovico de Oratio, Zufredo da Brazo and many others<sup>629</sup>.

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The analysis has shown how an exclusive group of merchants and retailers channelled the power of the *SGSM* into their own hands, thus controlling and in fact conditioning the work of the *Banca*. A selected group of *cittadini originari* who shared, beside the devotion to St Mark, a common (financial) interest in the Egyptian market. The same group of merchants that by the time the relationship with the Mamluks deteriorated alarmingly, decided to commence the decoration of the *Sala dell'Albergo* with a series of paintings commemorating the evangelic mission of St Mark in Egypt.

I consider Gentile's *Preaching of St Mark*, celebrating the Venetian's diplomatic victory over Mamluks, as the prologue of this discussion, its point of departure. The analysis will thus resume from the occurrences that followed Kansuh al-Ghuri's warm welcome of the new spice trade agreement (9

<sup>627</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Notatorio 17, ff. 78r-78v.

<sup>628</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 109v.

<sup>629</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 110r-110v.

September 1507)<sup>630</sup>. The aim of the discussion will be the commercial conflicts and jurisdictional disputations that marked the Venetian's Levantine trade during the first three decades of the sixteenth-century. In order to do that, a switch in perspective will be necessary. I will thus put aside the fractional cases of our citizen officers to focus on the trading strategies that the *Serenissima* put into effect to check the (commercial) enemies' advance. The *SGSM*'s members, involuntary cogs in the vast political machine of the XVI century, will have to give way to those who personally influenced the Republic's decisions, to those who dominated the play. It is therefore time for the patrician brothers of the *SGSM* to take the floor. It is time to investigate how their personal involvement in the *Serenissima*'s trading policies could mirror, on a larger scale, the mercantile preoccupations of their citizen brethren. It is time, finally, to analyse how those troubled years affected the *SGSM*'s imagery of the infidel trading partners (Mamluks), how the rising of stronger competitors (Turks) influenced the conception and execution of a narrative cycle explicitly auguring a new (Christian) conquest of Egypt.

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<sup>630</sup> I. Botti (1992), pp. 55. On Molin's arrival in Alexandria see *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. VII, col. 182.

### 3. *FISHERS OF MEN: THE APOSTOLIC MISSION OF ST MARK AT THE SCUOLA GRANDE DI SAN MARCO*

#### 3.I. Securing the Gulf of Venice: *The Sea Storm*

There is no need to emphasize the difficulties that previous scholars have found in dealing with the *Sea Storm* (fig. 79)<sup>631</sup>. If Vasari's inconsistent attributions have left room for a never-ending dispute on its authorship (Giorgione and/or Jacopo Palma il Vecchio), the lack of even the slightest document on its commission has also compromised any attempt to date its execution. Three diverging theories in particular stand out: according to Sohm the painting was commissioned from Palma il Vecchio in 1513, the year of his entry at the *SGSM*, as a visual celebration of the treaty that Venice signed with France on 22 May<sup>632</sup>; Puppi, although endorsing the political allegory, has brought forward the execution of the canvas to 1509 (Giorgione), adducing Domenico Dolfin's donation of a ring of St Mark as support for his argument<sup>633</sup>; Humfrey, finally, has postponed the commission to Palma il Vecchio for several years (1526) in the light of a bold decision of the *SGSM* to leave behind its traditional conservative visual manner in favour of an up-to-date cinquecentesque one<sup>634</sup>.

My reconstruction will put authorship aside for the moment, to focus on the only evidence we currently have: the transcription of the legend in the *Mariogola* (1498) by the then *Scrivano* Vittore Ziliol and his *Guardian Grande* Bernardino de Grassi<sup>635</sup>. This act foregrounds not just the role of an ordinary brother, but showcases the involvement of the leader of a group of merchants that pinned all its hopes (and income) on the Levantine market, or better on the trade route that through the Gulf of Venice led to the Egyptian seaports. The discussion will thus frame the analysis of the painting in the light of Venice's trading strategies and maritime expansionism, starting from the ten Capitula enforced by Pope Julius II on 24 February 1510. I will demonstrate how the

<sup>631</sup> See above pp. 72-73. On the painting see: S. Moschini Marconi (1962), pp. 165-168; P.L. Sohm (1979), especially pp. 85-96; P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 238-239; P. Humfrey (1987), pp. 41-46; L. Puppi (1987), pp. 95-108; P. Rylands (1992), pp. 137-140, 242-245; Enrico Maria Dal Pozzolo, *Giorgione*, Milano, Federico Motta Editore, 2009, pp. 353-354.

<sup>632</sup> P.L. Sohm (1979), especially pp. 95-96.

<sup>633</sup> L. Puppi (1987), pp. 99-100.

<sup>634</sup> P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 238-239. Humfrey's theory is mainly based on the Rylands analysis (P. Rylands (1992), pp. 242-244).

<sup>635</sup> See above p. 79.

*Sea Storm* was designed to be a visual response to the calamitous repercussions of Julius' Capitula, mirroring a much wider concern in a period when the *Serenissima's* control of her Gulf was dangerously challenged. Only at the end of the historical reconstruction, and once a coherent iconological interpretation of the picture has been provided, I will propose which *Banca*, in my opinion, most likely commissioned the painting itself.

In his *Cronica Brevis* the Venetian Doge Andrea Dandolo (1343-54) noted that on 25 February 1340, during the dogeship of his predecessor Bartolomeo Gradenigo (1339-43), a storm had flooded Venice with “aqu[is] duobus pedibus altior[ibus] ultra solitum”<sup>636</sup>. It is unclear how an evening of nasty weather would soon become retold as a miraculous event, but already by the end of the fourteenth century an anonymous chronicler mentioned the story in the *Cronaca di Venezia dalle origini al 1396*, re-contextualizing the incident as taking place in the night when the city was miraculously saved from a potentially devastating squall brought forth by demonic forces<sup>637</sup>.

The legend, as first told in 1396, tells that on that stormy February night a stranger approached a poor fisherman who had found shelter alongside the Ducal Palace, asking to be ferried to the Island of San Giorgio. Once arrived on San Giorgio, the boat took aboard a second stranger, and the fisherman was asked to brave the storm once more and row to the church of San Nicolò at the Lido. As soon as a third stranger got on board, the fisherman was told to make for the harbour mouth of the Lido, the so-called *Due Castelli* site, where the little boat found itself attacked by a frightening galley possessed by evil spirits (fig. 80). Confronted with this threat, the three strangers revealed themselves to be St Mark, St Nicholas, and St George, made the sign of the cross and suddenly the demonic galley precipitated into the depths of the sea. Thereby the sea storm immediately died down, and Venice was safe. Then the little boat

<sup>636</sup> *Andrea Danduli ducis Venetiarum Chronica Brevis*, a cura di Ester Pastorello, Reale Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo (*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. XII), Bologna, Zanichelli, 1938, col. 415 note \*\*.

<sup>637</sup> *Cronaca di Venezia dalle origini al 1396*, BNM, It. VII, 2051 (=8271). See also: Antonio Carile, *La cronachistica veneziana (secoli XIII-XVI) di fronte alla spartizione della Romania nel 1204*, Firenze, Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1969, pp. 17-18; Marin Sanudo, *Le vite dei dogi*, edizione critica e note a cura di Angela Caracciolo Aricò, Padova, Editrice Antenore, 1989, pp. XXXV-XXXVI; Carlo Campana, *Cronache di Venezia in volgare della Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana: Catalogo*, Venezia, Il Poligrafo, 2011, p. 140 no. 214. This chronicle is also mentioned by L. Bailo and G. Biscaro (1900), pp. 178-179, and L. Puppi (1987), pp. 95-108.

turned back and left the holy passengers at their own eponymous churches. Once docked at the *Piazzetta San Marco*, St Mark told the fisherman to go to the *Signoria* to tell what he had witnessed, slipped his ring off and gave it to the fisherman to show the doge as a token for the truth of the story. From that night onward, State celebrations were performed every year in memory of the miraculous salvation<sup>638</sup>.

By the fifteenth century the intervention of the Holy Patrons became a key feature in the fashioning of a Venetian self-identity. Numerous chroniclers retold the legend, whereas Marco Antonio Sabellico even included it in his *Decades*<sup>639</sup>. Its crucial inclusion within the Venetian History was also reflected in official documents issued by the Venetian Ducal Chancery where, as already mentioned, in 1498 it was transcribed into the *SGSM's Mariegola*<sup>640</sup>. Thus, by the beginning of the sixteenth-century, a simple account of a flood that occurred in 1340 had first become a legend of Venice's invulnerability, and then developed into a concrete episode of Venetian self-proclaimed history. So concrete, that evidence of its authenticity could be found in chronicles, historical treatises, official State records, and ceremonials<sup>641</sup>.

Following the account in the chronicle, the *Sea Storm* depicts the threat of a demonic galley in turbulent sea nearby *Due Castelli*. Sea monsters and evil rowers in the foreground are moving toward the small boat of the fisherman where the Saints are striking at the devil galley. In sharp contrast to the turbulent scene in the foreground, a smooth lagoon harbours the city of Venice set safe under a crepuscular sky in the background. Thus in the picture, even if the miraculous salvation is still in progress, its outcome is taken for granted: Venice's safety is in fact a certainty; it is indubitably guaranteed by the miraculous assistance proffered by her Holy Patrons. What is not certain yet is the nature of the threat, or, more specifically, the meaning assigned to the evil galley.

As mentioned above, previous studies have related the scene to the years of the League of Cambrai mainly because of the portrait of Doge Andrea

<sup>638</sup> Marco Antonii Sabellici, *Rerum Venetarum Decades*, Venetiis, Andreas Torresanus de Asula, 1487, p. 291; Marin Sanudo, *Vite dei Dogi*, BNM, It. VII, 800 (=7151), f. 172v.

<sup>639</sup> *Ibidem*. See also: Marin Sanudo, *Vite dei Dogi sino al 1378*, BNM, It. VII, 787 (=8178); Marin Sanudo, *Vite dei Dogi sino al 1378*, BNM, It. VII, 1607 (=8699).

<sup>640</sup> See above, p. 79.

<sup>641</sup> On the use of images as historical evidence see above *Introduction*.

Gritti who, as I will discuss further on, was included in Paris Bordon's *Fisherman Delivering the Ring*<sup>642</sup>. However, this study suggests that the distinctive iconography of the *Sea Storm* cannot be related to the Cambrai wars since hostilities were concentrated on the mainland and naval forces were barely involved. Nor can we endorse, as Sohm proposed, that the galley sailing through the stormy sea was designed as a generic "symbol of the besieged Venetian republic" during the stormy years of Cambrai<sup>643</sup>. The chronicle, after all, described a galley full of evil forces that was directly threatening Venice's survival ("era vignudi con una Gallia sul porto, per abissarla"), and the salvation of the city was due to the galley's submersion ("subito la Gallia se profondo sotto aqua, e li demoni si disperse in l'aire: e subito cessado el vento fo fatto tranquillità")<sup>644</sup>. In accordance with the chronicle's narrative, the artist depicts a galley full of evil spirits: we can spot one at the top of the forecastle sounding the alarm, whereas most of his companions are disporting themselves on the deck, moving along the mainmast, brandishing weapons in the burning crow's nest, or already falling into the churning waves. In the *Sea Storm* the evil galley is thus the eminent threat, the very menace that the Holy Patrons are called to conquer.

This difference in the reading of the subject-matter refocuses its interpretation, and it is significant in that it radically changes the devotional function of the painting. Such a reading can be supported by precedent. This is the case, for instance, of Bicci di Lorenzo's *St Nicholas of Bari Rebuking the Storm* (fig. 81), where the miraculous intervention of St Nicholas casts out evil menaces (the mermaid), calms down the storm, and rescues the terrified crew. In the *SGSM's Sea Storm* it is not the galley, or its crew, that needs to be rescued: it is rather the city of Venice that needs to be saved from the direct menace of the evil galley. Hence, according to both the chronicle narrative and the specific iconography of the canvas, the demonic galley can no longer be interpreted as a generic metaphor for the *Serenissima* during the stormy years of Cambrai. On the contrary, it needs to be understood in light of specific State rituals that, as will be elucidated below, go back to the very origins of the Myth

<sup>642</sup> P.L. Sohm (1979), p. 87; L. Puppi (1984), pp. 225-226; L. Puppi (1987), pp. 95-108. See below Section 3.VI.

<sup>643</sup> P.L. Sohm (1979), p. 94. Even more speculative is Sohm's identification of the galley as a ship captured by "a demonic pirate crew" (P.L. Sohm (1979), p. 94).

<sup>644</sup> *Cronaca di Venezia* (=8271), f. 31v.

of Venice.

Among various civic rituals that the Venetian élite performed annually, great relevance was accorded to the *Sposalizio del Mare* (fig. 82), a ceremony commemorating the legendary victory of Doge Sebastiano Ziani, on behalf of Pope Alexander III, against the Armada of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I in 1177 (fig. 83)<sup>645</sup>. According to tradition, on that occasion the Pope met the triumphant Doge at the *Due Castelli* on Ascension Day, giving him a gold ring as symbol of the Venetians' ownership of the Adriatic Sea. This gift came to establish an annually recurring civic ritual designed to affirm Venice's ongoing jurisdictional rights over the Adriatic Sea<sup>646</sup>.

The ceremony commenced early in the morning when the doge boarded his state barge (*Bucintoro*) from a wooden pier where representatives of both the *Nicolotti* and the *Povegiotti* kissed his hand. Then the *Bucintoro* would begin its ritual journey to the high sea escorted, among others, by the boats of the *Nicolotti* and the *Povegiotti*<sup>647</sup>. The first stop of the journey was in front of the church of San Nicolò al Lido where the doge met the patriarch; thereafter the procession headed for *Due Castelli* where the real ceremony would be performed. Interestingly, the *Due Castelli* site was not just perceived as the place where Pope Alexander III had granted Ziani a gold ring symbolizing Venetians' supremacy on the Adriatic Sea<sup>648</sup>, but also as the water door that linked Venice to her peripheral domain: the *door* from where trade routes departed and through which the national wealth came in (fig. 84). Thus, the fact that the *Sposalizio del mare* was performed at such a symbolic location, conferred on the ceremony multi-level meanings mostly confirming Venetian jurisdictional rights over the Adriatic Sea<sup>649</sup>.

When the site was reached, the patriarch first blessed the doge (the

<sup>645</sup> For the different versions of the legendary victory see: Marin Sanudo, *Le Vite dei Dogi di Marin Sanudo (Rerum Italicorum Scriptores)*, a cura di Giovanni Monticolo, vol. I, Città di Castello, Editore S. Lapi, 1900; Agostino Pertusi, "La presunta concessione di alcune insegne regali al doge di Venezia da parte del papa Alessandro III", *Ateneo Veneto*, 15 (1977), 133-155.

<sup>646</sup> Lina Urban Padoan, "La festa della Sensa nelle arti e nell'iconografia", *Studi Veneziani*, 10 (1968), p. 312; Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, Princeton, University Press, 1981, pp. 119-134; Lina Urban Padoan, *Il Bucintoro: La festa e la fiera della "Sensa" dalle origini alla caduta della Repubblica*, Venezia, Centro Internazionale della Grafica di Venezia, 1988, pp. 31-50; Matteo Casini, *I gesti del principe: La festa politica a Firenze e Venezia in età rinascimentale*, Venezia, Saggi Marsilio, 1996, p. 169.

<sup>647</sup> M. Casini (1996), pp. 315-316.

<sup>648</sup> Girolamo Bardi Fiorentino, *Delle Cose Notabili Della Città di Venetia*, Libri III, In Venetia, Appresso Felice Valgrisio, 1587, p. 39.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibidem*. See also F. Sansovino (1581), p. 501.

groom) with an olive branch, then he blessed the sea (the bride) by pouring holy water; finally the doge dropped his golden ring into the waves. The symbolic marriage between the doge and the sea was intended as a legal contract that, according to Venetian law, conferred on the doge the full possession of his bride (the sea) and her dowry (the tax imposed to maritime colonies)<sup>650</sup>. The *Sposalizio* was hence established as an imperial rite and performance in which the Republic renewed every year her economic rights over her subjects, and her role of defender of the Adriatic Sea<sup>651</sup>. Furthermore, according to their personal attendance at the “all’atto pubblico della dispositione, possesso et dominio della Signoria sopra il Mare”, guests implicitly legitimated Venetians’ seizure of power<sup>652</sup>.

With the *Sposalizio* finished, the *Bucintoro* embarked on the return journey to the Lido, where a mass was celebrated in the church of San Nicolò (fig. 85). This church was believed, at least among the Venetians, to treasure the relics of St Nicholas, the seagoing patron commonly invoked during sea storms<sup>653</sup>. Then the ceremony would end where it had begun, with the *Bucintoro* docking at *Piazzetta San Marco* and the doge disembarking to visit the *Sensa*’s market. On the doge’s return to the Ducal Palace a wedding banquet would be held attended by Venetian admirals, Arsenal officers, and foreign ambassadors whose presence expressly legitimated Venice’s seizure of power over the Adriatic Sea<sup>654</sup>.

As Edward Muir argued, the *Sposalizio del Mare* was marked by symbolic stops retracing, at least ideally, those kept by the old fisherman during the stormy night in 1340<sup>655</sup>. In effect the little boat traced a symbolic

<sup>650</sup> Gina Fasoli, *Liturgia e cerimoniale ducale*, in *Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV*, a cura di Agostino Pertusi, Firenze, vol. I, O. Olschki, 1973, pp. 274-275; E. Muir (1981), pp. 130-131; M. Casini (1996), pp. 169.

<sup>651</sup> G. Bardi Fiorentino (1587), p. 39.

<sup>652</sup> *Scrittura di Francesco Vianello a favore della Giurisdizione del Serenissimo Principe di Venetia sopra il Golfo Adriatico contra la Capitulatione che si dice essere stata formata del MDX in tempo di Papa Giulio Secondo*, in *Miscellanea*, BNM, It. VII, 785 (=7292), f. 139r.

<sup>653</sup> *Culto dei santi a Venezia*, a cura di Silvio Tramontin, Venezia, Edizioni Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1965; Patricia H. Labalme, *Holy Patronage, Holy Promotion: The Cult of Saints in Fifteenth-Century Venice*, in *Saints. Studies in Hagiography*, ed. by Sandro Sticca, Binghamton-New York, Medieval and Renaissance texts and studies, 1996, pp. 233-249.

<sup>654</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XVI, col. 215. See also: Paolo Sarpi, *Articolo delle ragioni del dominio che ha la Serenissima Republica di Venetia sopra il suo Golfo per ilius belli*, in Venetia, Evangelista Deuchino, MDCXVIII, p. 10; *Scrittura di Francesco Vianello* (=7292), f. 139r; *The Pilgrimage of Arnolf von Harff Knight, from Cologne through Italy, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, Ethiopia, Nubia, Palestine, Turkey, France and Spain (1496-99)*, trans. by M. Letts, London, Hakluyt Society, 1946, p. 59.

<sup>655</sup> E. Muir (1981), pp. 130-131.

route through the *Bacino San Marco* to culminate at the *Due Castelli*. The fact that the holy salvation of the city was set in such a crucial venue conferred on the legend, and the *Sea Storm* canvas by implication, multiple meanings directly related to a civic ritual designed to legitimate Venice's jurisdictional claims over her Gulf. Rightful claims indeed, yet by 1510 they were unexpectedly brought into question.

On 13 February 1510, letters from the Venetian envoys in Rome informed the *Signoria* that Pope Julius II had decided to revoke the excommunication announced on 27 April 1509 at the formation of the League of Cambrai<sup>656</sup>. At first the Venetians rejoiced at the news but Marin Sanudo warned that there was not much to celebrate<sup>657</sup>. Even though the envoys, Domenico Trevisan “el Kavalier” (a noble member of the *SGSM*) and Gerolamo Donato, thought they had convinced the Pope on the Adriatic issue, Sanudo said that the peace treaty comprised few “capitoli molto vergognosi”<sup>658</sup>. Nonetheless, Venice was struggling against such powerful rivals that she did not have any chance to refute Julius II's offer, hence on 15 February the Republic reluctantly agreed terms on the peace treaty. Less than ten days later (24 February), under the porch of the Roman Basilica of San Pietro, the papal court performed a ritual humiliation of vanquished Venice: the Venetian envoys had to genuflect in front of Julius II, kiss his foot, and then spend an hour listening to the new agreement<sup>659</sup>. The curial notary mumbled the capitulation at the presence of the College of Cardinals, the Papal Court and such a multitude of people that Domenico Trevisan himself complained how “molti per sua comodità ne tenia le man sopra le spalle”<sup>660</sup>. The only envoy, out of six, who was not subjected to this humiliating performance was Paolo Pisani, member of the *SGSM* since 1499, who had passed away a few days before (3

<sup>656</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. VIII, col. 134; F.C. Lane (1973), pp. 240-249; Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571). The Sixteenth Century to the Reign of Julius III*, vol. III, Philadelphia, The American Philosophical Society, 1984, p. 57 note 37.

<sup>657</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol IX, coll. 528-530.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibidem*. See also: Federico Seneca, *Venezia e il Papa Giulio II*, Padova, Liviana Editrice, 1962, pp. 121-122. On Domenico Trevisan's membership see above p. 141 note 560. On his diplomatic mission see: *Somario della Relazione di Roma di Domenico Trevisano (1 Aprile 1510)*, in *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, a cura di Eugenio Albèri, vol. VII (series II, vol. III), Firenze, Società Editrice Fiorentina, 1846, p. 29.

<sup>659</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. X, coll. 9-13.

<sup>660</sup> Antonio Battistella, “Il dominio del Golfo”, *Nuovo Archivio Veneto*, XXXV (1918), p. 33; *Somario della Relazione di Roma* (1846), p. 29.

February 1510)<sup>661</sup>.

The peace treaty, whose Venetian version was drawn up by Zuan Battista Andriani (brother of the *SGSM*'s member Marco Antonio)<sup>662</sup>, was particularly vexatious for the Venetians. They had to waive their right for appeal to a council and admit the legitimacy of the excommunication, they had to renounce the Romagnole territories, to restore the right of full immunity to the clergy from taxation, and to recognize various jurisdictional rights to the Pope within Venice' domain<sup>663</sup>. But it was Chapter VI that was perceived as a real injustice, declaring the free navigation of Ferrarese citizens and of all papal subjects of Ancona and Romagna<sup>664</sup>: an imposition which effectively refuted Venice's traditional role of Adriatic controller and defender.

During the months preceding the agreement, Domenico Trevisan had tried repeatedly to convince Julius II not to impose that clause; his attempts proved repeatedly unsuccessful<sup>665</sup>. For example, Marco Foscarini, during his diplomatic service at the court of Adrian VI (1523), defended the Venetian "jurisdiction [...] nel Colpho adriatico" providing evidence recently elaborated by the Greek humanist Tommaso Diplovatazio in his *Tractatus de Venetae urbis libertate et eiusdem imperii dignitate et privilegiis*<sup>666</sup>. Diplovatazio, who knew personally some distinguished *SGSM*'s members such as bishop Jacopo Pesaro, argued that Venice irrefutably held both the *iurisdictio* and *protectio* of the Adriatic Sea<sup>667</sup>. Among numerous arguments, Diplovatazio gave great relevance to the annual ceremony of the *Sposalizio del Mare*, claiming on the base of Andrea Dandolo and Obone Ravennate that Venice's jurisdictional rights over the Gulf had been gained according to her heroic rescue of the

<sup>661</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. IX, col. 529. On Paolo Pisani's membership see ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 110r.

<sup>662</sup> On the Andrianis' membership and offices see above pp. 133-134.

<sup>663</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. IX, coll. 574-592; K.M. Setton (1984), p. 78; Robert Finlay, "Venice, the Po expedition, and the end of the League of Cambrai, 1509-1510", *Studies in Modern European History and Culture* 2 (1976), pp. 58-59.

<sup>664</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. IX, col. 583.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. IX, coll. 409.

<sup>666</sup> Aldo Mazzacane, *Lo Stato e il Dominio nei giuristi veneti durante il secolo della Terraferma*, in *Storia della cultura veneta. Dal primo Quattrocento al Concilio di Trento*, vol. 3/1, Vicenza, Neri Pozza Editore, 1976, p. 645 note 235. See also *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXXIV, col. 123. On Tommaso Diplovatazio see: Enrico Besta, "Tommaso Diplovataccio e l'opera sua", *Nuovo Archivio Veneto*, 6 (1903), pp. 261-361; Hermann Kantorowicz, *La vita di Tommaso Diplovataccio*, in *Studia Gratia X. Thomae Diplovatatii Liber de claris iuris consultis, pars posterioris*, Bologna, Institutum Gratianum, 1968, pp. 1-140; A. Mazzacane (1976), pp. 622-648.

<sup>667</sup> On Jacopo Pesaro and his brother Francesco see: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 46r, 60v, and R. Goffen (1986), pp. 125, 233 note 57.

papacy's domain"<sup>668</sup>.

The obstinate efforts of Venetian diplomats in Rome, continuing ceaselessly for many years after Pope Julius II's imposition of the decree, demonstrate that Chapter VI was perceived as a concrete threat to Venice's crucial trade monopoly<sup>669</sup>. Its enforcement surely troubled the *SGSM*'s citizen members, whose primary income was intimately embedded with the Adriatic trading routes linking Venice to the Levant. If Chapter VI had tangible repercussions on these families' commercial activities, yet in all likelihood their patrician brothers of the *SGSM* shared the same anxiety. It was the case, for example, of Giovanni Bembo, Girolamo Cappello, Nicolò Donato, Francesco Giustinian, Pietro Lion, Andrea Minotto, Paolo Pisani and Domenico Trevisan, who not only had regularly invested great capital in the Levantine trade, but had also personally managed the *Serenissima*'s spice trade strategies (*Additio specierum*) since the time of its establishment<sup>670</sup>. It can be thus assumed that from the *SGSM*'s point of view Chapter VI, if not firmly countered, would have brought down the curtain on their lucrative commerce.

Evidently, by 1510, all the historical motives and devotional needs had converged for a commission that placed the prodigious salvation of the city exactly in the place where the *Sposalizio del Mare* annually re-claimed Venice's jurisdictional rights over the Adriatic traffic. The result was, at least according to Vasari's testimony, a painting that was annually shown to the general public during the "mostra dell'Ascensione"<sup>671</sup>. Thus the *Sea Storm* canvas gave the *SGSM* the chance to portray the miraculous intervention of the Holy Patrons at the symbolic site of the *Due Castelli*: the place where, according to the will of Pope Alexander III, Venice was given her imperial

<sup>668</sup> A. Mazzacane (1976), pp. 632-648.

<sup>669</sup> A. Battistella (1918), p. 34, 52; Adele Camera, "La polemica del dominio sull'Adriatico nel secolo XVII", *Archivio Veneto*, XX (1937), pp. 269-270; Roberto Cessi, *La Repubblica di Venezia e il problema Adriatico*, Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1953, p. 182; M. Casini (1996), p. 318.

<sup>670</sup> On the role that these nobles had in the foundation of the *Additio specierum* see: ASVe, Consiglio dei X, Deliberazioni, Miste, Reg. 29, f. 247r; Reg. 30, ff. 27v, 47r, 120r, 165r, 255r-v; Reg. 31, f. 76v; Reg. 32, f. 56r. See also Giuseppe Gullino, *Le frontiere navali*, in *Storia di Venezia dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima. Il Rinascimento. Politica e cultura*, vol. IV, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1996, p. 95. On their membership see ASV, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 1v, 46r, 61v, 97r, 110r, 154r. On the relationship between Venice and Portugal at the beginning of the sixteenth-century see R. Finlay (1994), pp. 45-90.

<sup>671</sup> G. Vasari (1568), p. 140.

prerogatives over her *Stato da Mar*. Prerogatives that another pope, Julius II, suddenly had brought into question. A Holy Watching was then required, and so a chronicle of the legendary salvation of Venice provided the occasion to picture the *SGSM*'s devotional invocations. St Mark and St Nicholas, whose relics were treasured in Venice, were invoked by the *SGSM*'s members who felt their trading business under threat; then St George's prodigious abilities to defeat and exorcize evil forces were sought to defend the city from external assaults<sup>672</sup>. The demonic galley did not allegorise the Venetian State<sup>673</sup>, but rather stood for the threat to Venice's jurisdictional right over her maritime dominion and trading empire.

### ***St Nicholas and the Old Fisherman***

The *Sea Storm*, by setting the miraculous salvation of Venice in front of the *Due Castelli*, makes great play with the Fortress of San Nicola that dominates the left side of the picture soaring at the extreme end of the Lido Island. It was in front of the church of San Nicola at the Lido that the patriarch performed the *benedictio* during the *Sposalizio del Mare* – a ritual initially designed to invoke the protection for seagoing from storms and shipwrecks<sup>674</sup>. A specific protection intimately embedded with the *Sposalizio* itself, for Ziani's legendary victory over the Armada of Frederick I was facilitated, according to Obone Ravennate, by a propitiously breaking sea<sup>675</sup>. And, finally, it was the alleged shrine of St Nicholas that was chosen to celebrate the very conclusion of the *Sposalizio* ceremony by a mass attended by the doge and his followers. In other words, St Nicholas had a central role within a State ceremony whose political and religious functions were deeply related to a hydromantic rite staged to propitiate meteorological events<sup>676</sup>. Hence in the *Sea Storm* the demonic galley comes to denote more than just a threat to Venice's rights over the Adriatic: it specifically recalls the unpredictability of long sea journeys, and

<sup>672</sup> J. de Voragine (1993), vol. I, p. 238: "Or again, the name comes from *gerar*, holy, and *gyon*, struggle; so a holy fighter, because he fought against the dragon and the executioner". On George as exorcist see A. Gentili (1996), p. 49.

<sup>673</sup> P.L. Sohm (1979), p. 94.

<sup>674</sup> L. Urban Padoan (1988), p. 36.

<sup>675</sup> *Ex Obone Ravennate historico*, in Marin Sanudo, *Le Vite dei Dogi di Marin Sanudo (Rerum Italicorum Scriptores)*, a cura di Giovanni Monticolo, vol. I, Città di Castello, Editore S. Lapi, 1900, pp. 455-488. See also Girolamo Bardi, *Vittoria navale ottenuta dalla Repubblica venetiana contra Federigo I Imperatore per la restitutione di Alessandro III Pontefice Massimo*, Venetia, Antonio Pinelli, 1619, pp. 24-25.

<sup>676</sup> G. Fasoli (1973), pp. 274-275; E. Muir (1981), pp. 130-131; M. Casini (1996), pp. 168-170.

thus relates to the *SGSM*'s members who embarked for a journey or invested in a *muda* as part of their trade.

Pullan noted that in the second half of the sixteenth-century the *Scuola* was joined by a considerable amount of fishermen and fishmongers (1.6%)<sup>677</sup>. This percentage can now be explained by the special relationship that the *SGSM* established in the early years of its foundation with the fisherman community of the *Nicolotti* – the same community so instrumentally involved with the *Sposalizio* ritual.

According to a long-established tradition, at the time the primitive building of the *SGSM* was under construction the entire membership was required to submit a voluntary subscription to fund this. On one occasion “uno di questi Vecchi di S. Nicolò” turned up at the building yard accompanied by a few porters: he had decided to pay out of his own pocket 400 pounds of fine silver<sup>678</sup>. Faced by such a great charity, it was decreed that from that day forward among the *Degani tutto l'anno* of the *SGSM* had to be co-opted, for perpetuity, an affiliate fisherman of the *Nicolotti* community<sup>679</sup>. A traditional custom that soon became a concrete prerogative of a selected few, creating in fact an oligarchic control of this specific office by families such as the Balao, Nani, Tinto, and Zusto, who in effect monopolized the deanery office during the first three decades of the sixteenth-century<sup>680</sup>.

The most explicit tribute paid by the *SGSM* to the *Nicolotti* occurred during the festival of Santa Marta (29 July), when the leading officers of the *SGSM* joined the religious procession in the fishermen's neighbourhood. At some point during the celebration, the *Nicolotto* in charge as *Degano tutto l'anno* used to visit the nuns of the monastery to whom he showed his confraternity's devotion. The ceremony then continued at the house of the *Nicolotto*, where he offered “una lauta colatione” as a token of his affection to his pious brothers<sup>681</sup>. Such a special relationship is also demonstrated by numerous works of charity such as, for instance, the construction of twenty-

<sup>677</sup> B. Pullan (1971), pp. 95-98.

<sup>678</sup> Francesco Braccolani, *Breve Notitia Della fondatione dell'Isola di S. Nicolò detto de' mendicoli, e di molte altre cose à quella appartenenti*, in Venetia, Appresso Pietr'Antonio Zamboni, & Alessandro Zatta, 1664, p. 57.

<sup>679</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>680</sup> *Mariiegola della Comunità di San Nicolò*, ff. 143r-v. With regard to their membership see: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 2r, 4v, 7r-7v, 9r, 14v, 20v, 23v, 37r, 38r, 102v, 136v, 151r, 166v.

<sup>681</sup> F. Braccolani (1664), pp. 58-59; Roberto Zago, *I Nicolotti. Storia di una comunità di pescatori a Venezia nell'età moderna*, Padova, Francisci Editore, 1982, pp. 50-51 note 80.

four houses in the Corte San Marco, where humble members of the *Nicolotti* community were eventually accommodated (figs. 86-87). An edification made possible according to the *SGSM*'s member Pietro Olivieri who in his last will demanded to buy “un terren, over più, sopra el qual, ò sopra i quali loro farrà fabbricar tante Case” (1515)<sup>682</sup>.

If such was the social bond between the *Nicolotti* and the *SGSM*, a different procession shows another remarkable relationship, this time with the Venetian State itself. By the time the miraculous salvation of Venice was acknowledged, a State procession to the *Nicolotti*'s parish church (San Nicolò dei Mendicoli; fig. 88) was performed annually in the St Nicholas's day festival<sup>683</sup>. This was the way the State expressed its appreciation to the *Nicolotti*, who were believed to have given birth to the legendary fisherman who ferried the Saints at the *Due Castelli*. According to Francesco Braccolani the dogal procession had been in use until a “gran borasca” threatened the *Bucintoro* during its way through the Giudecca Canal. Even on this occasion St Nicholas arguably had a part in averting the shipwreck, since by that day the *Cappella del Doge* was erected in the Ducal Palace in honour of St Nicholas himself<sup>684</sup>.

Although the procession was abolished, the *Nicolotti* kept celebrating this crucial episode for their social identity. Thus, during the St Nicholas's day festival, various rings bearing St Mark's effigy were placed on the high altar of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli in remembrance of those rings donated by the doges<sup>685</sup>. Moreover, the main features of the legend were pictured in two canvases placed under the organ of the church: one representing the delivery of the “anello detto del Pescatore”, and the other commemorating the first visit of Doge Bartolomeo Gradenigo.<sup>686</sup>

In this respect, the inclusion of the fisherman in the *Sea Storm* (fig. 89) fulfils a key function in foregrounding the significant role of the *Nicolotti*

<sup>682</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Atti, 14 (Testamenti), unnumbered pages, 15 September 1515; ASVe, *SGSM*, Atti, Reg. 43 (Commissaria Pietro Olivieri), ff. 1r-7r. Regarding Pietro's membership see: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 113v. E.A. Cicogna (1982-83), vol. III, pp. 466-467. See also the case of Francesco da Brazo pp. 128-129.

<sup>683</sup> F. Braccolani (1664), pp. 48.

<sup>684</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 48-49; M. Casini (1996), p. 317.

<sup>685</sup> F. Braccolani (1664), p. 49.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 46, 50; Andrea Gallo, *San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: Guida Sorico-Artistica*, Venice, ScuolaSGSM Tipografica Emiliana Artigianelli, [date missing] p. 21; *Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Mendicoli: Arte e devozione*, testi di Andrea Gallo e Stefania Mason, Venezia, Marsilio, 1995, p. 23.

community within Venice's social fabric, and in turn his pious deeds automatically conferred honour on the *SGSM*. It was the fisherman, as already emphasized, who had ferried the Saints toward *Due Castelli*, hence his loyalty had contributed to the salvation of Venice. Therefore, as the *Nicolotti* eternized the fisherman's deeds in the church of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, so the *SGSM* commissioned the portrayal of the two main episodes of the legend. Yet, while conceiving the *Sea Storm* iconography the *SGSM* decided to adapt the traditional narrative to meet its specific devotional needs, and thus assigned to St Mark and St Nicholas the role of main protagonists, effectively sidelining St George's contribution. Such an alteration of the narrative of the chronicle has to be seen as an intentional contribution of the *SGSM* to celebrate the active role that the two Saints played in the salvation of Venice. On the other hand, from the *SGSM*'s point of view, the *Nicolotto* chosen by St Mark, and patronized by St Nicholas, was not an ordinary fisherman but rather a distinguished ancestor of the confraternity itself. By commemorating his gallantry, the *SGSM* symbolically claimed a part in the miraculous salvation of Venice; one that eventually found an expression in the final image of the narrative cycle where the humble fisherman was admitted, on behalf of his brothers, into Doge Andrea Gritti's presence.

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When Pope Julius II laid down the terms of Chapter VI, the merchants members of the *SGSM* began to fear calamitous consequences. With regard to the *Sea Storm* commission, we can thus assume that sometime between February 1510 (the date of the Papal edict) and July 1515 (the commission of the *Martyrdom of St Mark*) a group of brethren decided to invoke the intervention of their Holy Patrons. In the absence of specific documentation, pinpointing a precise moment is surely problematic, but a glance at the constitution of the *Banca* in 1511 could offer an interesting spur for discussion:

TABLE 29. The *Banca* in 1511

NAME	OFFICE
Zuan Mattio da la Pigna [substituted by Andrea Ruzier]	G.G.
Iacomo di Dardani	VIC.
Piero Ziliol	G.M.
Domenico Armellini	SCR.
Zuna Alvise Bonrizzo	D.M.
Marco Schinelli	D.M.
Benedetto di Franceschi	D.A.
Cristoforo Zanotto	D.A.
Francesco de Zorzi	D.A.
Vincenzo de Girardo	D.A.
Gasparo (sic)	D.A.
Bernardin da Ponte	D.A.
Piero Griffon	D.A.
Julio Saracini	D.A.
Zuan de Jacomo Surian	D.A.
Piero Defendente	D.A.

The *Banca* of 1511 was joined by a series of officers of outstanding stature, both according to the prestige of their families as well as with regards to the single role they played in the commission of the entire narrative cycle. They are, once again, old acquaintances we have previously encountered.

We do not know what forced Zuan Matteo da la Pigna, at his second guardianship, to renounce the appointment; however it is worth reminding that his son Marco joined the commission of Gentile, whereas his grandson Ludovico contributed to the commission to Mansueti in 1525. We have already met Andrea Ruzier. Besides his eminent social status – in that very year he obtained permission to construct the chapel of the *Santissimo Salvatore* in the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo<sup>687</sup> – Andrea in fact superintended, alongside Vittore Ziliol and Antonio de Jacomo, the execution of the *Martyrdom of St Mark*. There is no need to retrace the *cursus honorum* of Jacopo Dardani who commissioned Mansueti in 1518, and superintended his work in 1525. Nor is it necessary to dwell further on the role that the Ziliol family played in the *SGSM*

<sup>687</sup> G. Tassini (1888), vol. 4, p. 182.

(e.g. commission of Giovanni Bellini, 1515), but it is important to remember that it was Piero's brother, Vittore Ziliol, who had transcribed the legend of the *Sea Storm* more than a decade earlier. Not to mention the relevance of Zuan Alvise Bonrizzo, whose dogged determination led to the commission of the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* in 1533, the last canvas of the cycle. The rest of the officers played minor roles. Nonetheless, extant documents suggest that at least three of them had direct interest in the Levantine trade, since Piero Griffon (*dalle Tele*) belonged to a family of cloth traders, Julio Saracin traded in silk<sup>688</sup> and Benedetto di Franceschi in spices<sup>689</sup>.

However conjectural the picking out of this *Banca* might seem, it should be admitted that it fits the patronage pattern discussed in the previous chapter, especially with regard to the role that most of its members had in the entire pictorial project. The main result of this analysis is the exclusion, although only hypothetical, of Giorgione's alleged execution, or design, of the *Sea Storm*. Under this circumstance, I shall here agree with the attribution of the painting to Palma il Vecchio; an attribution which nonetheless requires further examination to be conclusively confirmed.

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<sup>688</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 212.

<sup>689</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 22r.

### 3.II. In the Shade of a False Church: *The Martyrdom of St Mark*

At first glance the *Martyrdom of St Mark* (fig. 73)<sup>690</sup> has nothing in common with the *Sea Storm*, except perhaps for its commission (1515) which occurred just a few years after that of Giorgione/Palma (1511-13). Their chronological proximity should be carefully considered, at least regarding the contextual motives that very probably prompted the commission of both the paintings in the first place. The aim of this section will be the analysis of the *Martyrdom* by reading it in the light of the Venetians' jurisdictional claims, as well as the resultant commercial preoccupations of the *SGSM*'s members, already pinpointed in the case of the *Sea Storm* canvas.

After being captured, imprisoned, and then heartened by Christ in the middle of a lonely night, the day of Mark's extreme sacrifice eventually came. According to Symeon the Metaphrast, the sultan's henchmen went at first light to his prison and, after tying up St Mark with a rope, they started the torment by dragging his body along the roads of Alexandria<sup>691</sup>. In spite of the vigorous efforts of his tormentors, St Mark appeared peaceful. Having been informed that his soul was destined to heaven and his relics would have been treasured in Venice<sup>692</sup>, the Evangelist followed the example of Christ on the Cross and commended his spirit into the hands of God<sup>693</sup>.

There has been much speculation about the authorship of the *Martyrdom*, mostly because of Giovanni Bellini's death the year after the commission for the canvas (29 November 1516), not to mention the fact that Vittore Belliniano took the liberty to sign the finished canvas (1526)<sup>694</sup>. Given such peculiar circumstances, to which we should also add the role allegedly played by a sketch by Gentile<sup>695</sup>, it is currently believed that Giovanni

<sup>690</sup> On the painting see: S. Moschini Marconi (1955), pp. 91-92; Rodolfo Pallucchini, *Giovanni Bellini*, London, William Heinemann LTD, 1962, pp. 116, 164 fig. 232; Giles Robertson, *Giovanni Bellini*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, p. 125; J. Raby (1982), pp. 38-40; P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 225-242; P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 75, 295; R. Goffen (1989), pp. 271-273; I. Botti (1992), p. 64; Anchise Tempestini, *Giovanni Bellini*, New York-London-Paris, Abbeville Press Publishers, 1999, p. 233 no. 126; C. Schmidt Arcangeli (2006), p. 129.

<sup>691</sup> Symeon the Metaphrast, *Martyrium sancti Marci apostoli et evangelistae*, in Jacques P. Migne, *Patrologiae Graeca*, vol. 115, col. 170.

<sup>692</sup> *Ibidem*, coll. 167-170. See below pp. 226-227.

<sup>693</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Luke 23: 46. See also Bruno Bertoli, *Le storie di San Marco nei mosaici e le ragioni dell'agiografia*, in *La Basilica di San Marco. Arte e simbologia*, Venezia, Edizioni Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1993, p. 102.

<sup>694</sup> "MDXXXVI / VICTOR / BELLINIÄUS".

<sup>695</sup> See above p. 71.

conceived and designed most of the composition, whereas Vittore's role should be reduced solely to colouring in the composition<sup>696</sup>. The present discussion will demonstrate how Vittore, who acknowledged his exclusive authorship without even mentioning Bellini's contribution<sup>697</sup>, not only completed the unfinished design of his master, but even conceived the entire right-hand portion of the canvas. I argue that by 1526 newly contextual motives prompted the *SGSM*'s members to ask to Vittore to include the Anconitan church of San Ciriaco in the far background of the martyrdom scene (fig. 90-91)<sup>698</sup>. An inclusion that, even if openly derived from Bellini's workshop prototypes (fig. 92-93), at the time of Giovanni's commission had no reason to be represented.

If the authorship is still cause of debate, the iconographic source is on the contrary easily identifiable. As in the case of Mansueti's *Arrest of St Mark*<sup>699</sup>, the *Martyrdom of St Mark* finds its prototype in the vault of the Cappella Zen in the Basilica di San Marco (fig. 94)<sup>700</sup>. The pose of the Martyr is very similar, and the two tormentors, the one flaying the Saint or those pulling the rope, are almost identical. Even the setting, although expressing a different artistic language, follows the example of the mosaic: a palace in fact occupies the left of the canvas, whereas the prophesied martyrdom is fulfilled on a barren slope among naked rocks. In the case of the painting, however, the location is used to partition the narrative of the martyrdom into two distinct moments, as well as into two different places surprisingly far away from each other.

On the left-hand side the painter has portrayed a fictional view of Alexandria where a porticoed building, evoking Gentile Bellini's structures facing the square of the *Preaching* (fig. 72), functions as backcloth to the scene. Restless Oriental figures, witnessing the martyrdom, animate the spacious terrace and the countless windows decorated with hanging rugs. In the foreground crowds cram the street. A group of *SGSM*'s members, cordoned off

<sup>696</sup> S. Moschini Marconi (1955), pp. 91-92; R. Pallucchini (1962), pp. 116, 164 fig. 232; G. Robertson (1968), p. 125; P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 226 note 1, 229-230, 238; R. Goffen (1989), pp. 271-273; I. Botti (1992), p. 64; A. Tempestini (1999), p. 233 no. 126.

<sup>697</sup> S. Moschini Marconi (1955), p. 92; I. Botti (1992), pp. 64, 73 note 117; A. Tempestini (1999), p. 233 no. 126.

<sup>698</sup> S. Moschini Marconi (1955), pp. 91-92; G. Robertson (1968), p. 114; I. Botti (1992), pp. 64-65; A. Tempestini (1999), p. 233 no. 126.

<sup>699</sup> See below pp. 220-221.

<sup>700</sup> Otto Demus, *The Mosaics of San Marco in Venice, 2 The Thirteenth Century*, vol. II, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1984, pp. 185-187, 190.

by a line of turbaned characters, struggles in an attempt to get free. Incredulity and dismay cross their faces. At their feet, impressed on the stone pavement of the street, a long trail of blood is all that is left of Mark's agony (fig. 95)<sup>701</sup>.

On the opposite side the martyrdom has been consummated and the body of the Evangelist lies lifeless on the floor (fig. 96). The worst is over: some tormentors are still pulling the rope, the torturer is still persisting in his shameful action, and yet the blank look of the Martyr confirms his death. The Oriental bent over the Saint has no choice but confirm the execution. In the foreground, within a sort of theatrical pit, a pious pair of *SGSM* members is absorbed in the contemplation of their Holy Patron. Just a few steps away from the corpse of the Evangelist two high-ranking infidels have already lost interest in the event – one of them has even dared to turn his back on the Martyr while trying to persuade his companion to avert his gaze.

Far in the background life goes on as usual: turbaned figures move on a hilly landscape among cows, sheep, donkeys and dromedaries. The Egyptian setting is however westernized by the inclusion of verdant mountains, and the faithful depiction of the church of San Ciriaco of Ancona at the top of a hill on the right-hand side. Ancona and Alexandria are thus explicitly associated. Ancona, at that time a papal subject, is surprisingly associated with the city where St Mark was killed: it has been turned into the place where the infidels committed their ignominious crime. Thus, at the *SGSM*, the blame for the murder of the Holy Patron was not put on the infidels, or at least not entirely, but it was explicitly shifted to Ancona. So explicitly that at the top of the central dome of the Roman Catholic cathedral of San Ciriaco towers a majestic Muslim Crescent, surprisingly overlooked by previous scholars (fig. 97).

Since 1499 the Anconitans were able to offer Ragusian and Florentine merchants custom duties at 1%, whereas the Turks were granted such special rates by 1518; these undercut the rates the Venetians were charging<sup>702</sup>. In such a way Ancona became an international market where foreign merchants could finally sell to their clients directly, rather than load goods on board their vessels and send them to agents abroad. Accordingly, the Florentines were able to

<sup>701</sup> J. de Voragine (1993), vol. I, p. 244.

<sup>702</sup> Peter Earle, "The Commercial Development of Ancona, 1479-1551", *The Economic History Review*, 22 (1969), pp. 40-43.

bring to the city woollen cloths, silks, velvets and jewellery, whereas the Ragusans, the Greeks and the Ottomans could sell camlets, raw silk, hides, and a wide range of dyes and spices<sup>703</sup>. Following such a development – from a transit trade to a real market – Ancona became a cosmopolitan city where trade was controlled mostly by Italian and Ragusan merchants, but also by an ever-increasing number of Turks. The Anconitan/Turkish trading relationship was so advantageous for both parties that in 1529 Suleiman the Magnificent decreed that all his merchants heading toward the annual fair of Recanati had to unload their goods in Ancona<sup>704</sup>.

However modest the Recanati fair might look nowadays, in the 1520s it was able to attract a great deal of merchants and goods, so great as to even trouble the *Serenissima* herself. For example, according to the Venetian *Savii alla Mercantia*, in 1524 Venice lost no less than 30,000 Ducats, normally earned from import/export duties, due to current wars but also as result of “altri corsi che ha preso le mercadantia”. “Uno de le principal sono le fiere de Lanzan et Recanati”, warned the *Savii*, where Greeks, Turks and Levantine merchants now met with Florentines and Milanese, but also with Germans and Englishmen: all the foreign merchants, needless to say, that in the past had commonly attended the Venetian market<sup>705</sup>. Such a dramatic situation did not only trouble the *Savii alla Mercantia*, but in all likelihood worried the merchant members of the *SGSM* who, according to their social networks, could easily obtain first-hand information about their trading competitors.

In this regard it is worth dwelling on the former Captain of Candia Marco Dandolo (1516-19)<sup>706</sup>; the same “marco dandolo dottor e chavalier” who entered the *SGSM* in 1522<sup>707</sup>. A year later, Dandolo and five more envoys were sent by the Republic to congratulate Adrian VI after ascending to the papal throne<sup>708</sup>. During his journey Dandolo spent a night in Ancona (March 1523)

<sup>703</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 34-36. See also: Cemal Kafadar, *A Death in Venice (1575): Anatolian Muslim Merchants Trading in the Serenissima*, in *Merchant Networks in the Early Modern World*, ed. by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Aldershot, Variorum, 1966, pp. 97-124, especially p. 101; Jean Delumeau, “Un ponte tra Oriente e Occidente: Ancona nel Cinquecento”, *Quaderni Storici*, 13 (1970), pp. 26-47; Luca Molà, *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2000, especially pp. 64-68.

<sup>704</sup> Jean Delumeau (1970), pp. 34-35.

<sup>705</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXXVI, coll. 406-407; C. Kafadar (1966), p. 102.

<sup>706</sup> Giuseppe Gullino, “Marco Dandolo”, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. XXXII, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2008, pp. 487-492.

<sup>707</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 85v.

<sup>708</sup> According to *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXXIII, coll. 419-420, the other five envoys

where he had the chance to visit the local market and harbour. Dandolo describes the city as a flourishing market where foreign merchants, mainly Greeks and Turks, “fanno faccende assai”<sup>709</sup>. Furthermore, having stumbled across a group of Venetian merchants, Dandolo was told that the year before the market turnover had been 500,000 Ducats, whereas in the last days arrived in no less than “sette schierazzi grossissimi dei Turchi, molto ben carichi”. The situation could not be worse, Venice had to take immediate measures.

Apart from friendly congratulations extended to the new pope, Dandolo and his colleagues sought to reclaim the Venetian territories seized by Julius II (Ravenna and Cervia), as well as to re-establish the Republic’s traditional jurisdictional rights over the *Gulf of Venice*. Even though preliminary talks were apparently ineffective<sup>710</sup>, Venetians partially succeeded on the occasion of the Peace of Venice (29 July 1523). A treaty that, apart from other agreements, established Venice’s jurisdictional rights over her subjected territories<sup>711</sup>. The Chapter did not refer to the *Golfo* explicitly, nor were Ravenna and Cervia even mentioned, and the whole jurisdictional dispute with the Holy See was not even touched on either. However, just at the end of the Chapter, the words “in praesentiarum” left space for ambiguous interpretation, and in fact Marin Sanudo did not lose the opportunity of explaining that the Venetians were allowed to keep peacefully all their “de praesenti” possessions<sup>712</sup>. What those possessions were was not clarified, and yet such omissions could leave room for legal claims.

In 1596, for instance, Francesco Vianello referred to such events to substantiate his argument against the Anconitans’ unconfined passage through the Adriatic Sea<sup>713</sup>. Vianello, who was granted the chance to consult Tommaso Diplovatazio’s work<sup>714</sup>, at first claimed that Julius II’s capitulation, if it had ever existed, was the only legal act disclaiming Venetian jurisdictional rights

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were Antonio Giustiniani, Luigi Mocenigo, Pietro Pesaro, Vincenzo Cappello and Marco Foscarini – the latter appointed as replacement of Alvise Gradenigo (*Ibidem*, vol. XXXIV, col. 95).

<sup>709</sup> *Sommario del viaggio degli Oratori Veneti che andarono a Roma a dar l’obbedienza a papa Adriano VI [1523]*, in *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, a cura di Eugenio Albreri, vol. VII (series II, vol. III), Firenze, Società Editrice Fiorentina, 1846, pp. 77-120, especially p. 87.

<sup>710</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXXIV, col. 116, 122.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibidem*, coll. 302, 316-335.

<sup>712</sup> *Ibidem*, coll. 333-335, especially 334.

<sup>713</sup> A. Mazzacane (1976), p. 645 note 235.

<sup>714</sup> *Scrittura di Francesco Vianello* (=7292), ff. 136v, 145r.

over the *Golfo*. The fact was that such capitulation was not available – it is well-known, however, that the capitulation had been hidden in the Ducal Chancery immediately after its stipulation – and, what is more, on the occasion of the peace treaties of Venice (1523) and Bologna (1529)<sup>715</sup> it was not mentioned at all<sup>716</sup>. Vianello claimed that the new agreed chapters invalidated those imposed by Julius II in 1510 simply because they did not mention them<sup>717</sup>. Therefore, given that not a word was ever written to confirm or even evoke such a dubious chapter, it had to be considered invalid. Moreover, according to the fact that both in 1523 and 1529 different conditions were stated over the Adriatic navigation, former capitulations had to be reputed, revised and amended<sup>718</sup>.

According to Isabella Botti, Giovanni Bellini's *Martyrdom of St Mark* (fig. 73) was commissioned to celebrate the rebuttal of Chapter VI formulated by Pietro Trezza and Tommaso Zanetti in 1515<sup>719</sup>. The painting, given the inclusion of the Anconitan church of San Ciriaco, would therefore celebrate the Venetians' recovery of their traditional right over the Adriatic: "la rivincita legale di Venezia su Ancona"<sup>720</sup>. It is however crucial to consider that the execution of the painting continued for almost eleven years (1515-26) during which, as I have just discussed, not only the jurisdiction of the Adriatic Sea was never settled definitively, but the Anconitan market became one of the greatest competitors of Venice. Therefore, if, at the time of its commission the *Martyrdom of St Mark* could be meant to commemorate the invalidation, although arbitrary, of Chapter VI, by the mid-1520s setting the Evangelist's martyrdom in Ancona had acquired different implications. In actual fact there is no evidence, neither contextual nor iconographical, to argue that in 1515 the painting should include the Anconitan church of San Ciriaco, whereas by the time Vittore Belliniano began re-working Giovanni's initial design, Ancona's

<sup>715</sup> *Maneggio della pace di Bologna tra Clemente VII, Carlo V, la Repubblica di Venezia e Francesco Sforza (1529). Scrittura originale del doge Nicolò da Ponte*, in *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, a cura di Eugenio Albreri, vol. VII (series II, vol. III), Firenze, Società Editrice Fiorentina, 1846, pp. 231-233.

<sup>716</sup> *Scrittura di Francesco Vianello* (=7292), f. 137r.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 138r.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 138r, 142v-143r.

<sup>719</sup> I. Botti (1992), pp. 64-66. On Venice's rebuttal of Chapter VI see: A. Battistella (1918), p. 34; R. Cessi (1953), pp. 178-179.

<sup>720</sup> I. Botti (1992), p. 66.

growing market had won the apprehensive attention of the Venetian merchants – mostly regarding the (infamous) economic alliance with the Turks.

While describing the *Martyrdom* scene, we have spotted countless Oriental figures. If the vast majority of the turbaned characters on the left-hand side can be recognized as Mamluks (fig. 95) – mainly because of their tall domed hat (*tāqiyya*) and long white scarfs (*taylasan*)<sup>721</sup> – in the frenzy of the struggle at least two Turks stick out. It is the case of the unsteady bearded old man on the extreme left, whose white turban is wrapped around a red cap (*tāj*); whereas at the right-hand side of the same scene, near the edge of the canvas, the one wearing a colourful striped robe has an identical turban which ribbed red *tāj* is even bigger than his companion's (figs. 98-99)<sup>722</sup>.

The right-hand side of the painting, where the martyrdom has just concluded, offers an even more detailed cross-section of Levantine costumes. First of all, the characters carrying out the sinful crime are all, undoubtedly, Mamluk soldiers. The distinctive feature being the red bonnet (*zampī*), that according to Raby was “frequently wound around the base and over the top” by a kerchief (figs. 100-101)<sup>723</sup>. If Mark's executioners are mere Mamluk soldiers, the actual instigators are on the contrary high-ranking officials of the Ottoman administrative hierarchy. Behind the flagellant soldier two imposing figures, made even more majestic by their elevated location, stand out for the nobility of their garments (fig. 102). Both being lavishly dressed with brocade patterned gowns, the figure portrayed from the back demonstrates his higher rank by the display of an ermine fur shoulder cape. Even more interesting is the fact that this character, unlike his companion, wears a cumbersome white turban enclosing a red *tāj* enriched by a golden pearl – peculiar headgear that, as stated by Raby, was never worn by Mamluks but was exclusive of the Turks<sup>724</sup>.

Around them, we see turbans of different colours and shapes merging into the crowd, and yet we can still observe some Turks with their traditional *tāj* (fig. 96). In this regard, a couple conversing vivaciously behind the two noble Officials are of great interest, one wearing a golden mantle over a red robe, and the other wearing a peculiar red cap with a golden stripe around the

<sup>721</sup> See above p. 65.

<sup>722</sup> J. Raby (1992), p. 21; *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 296 no. 5 (catalogue entry).

<sup>723</sup> J. Raby (1992), p. 41.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40.

base (fig. 102). If the former can be easily identified as an Ottoman according to his turban, the latter features a quite precise Turkish dress which was worn exclusively by janissaries. His headgear is unmistakable, the so-called *börk*, which according to Raby was a “broad felt flap rising at the front and folding over to fall loosely behind”<sup>725</sup>. Even more precisely rendered is his white dress, featuring two open-sleeves flowing behind and tied at the waist by the belt – the same dress drawn by Gentile Bellini during his stay in Istanbul between 1479 and 1481 (fig. 103), and re-used by Pinturicchio in the Borgia Apartments (1505-07)<sup>726</sup>.

This right-hand portion of the *Martyrdom of St Mark* seems to evoke, quite precisely, Marco Dandolo’s account of the Anconitan market pictured as “pieno di mercadanti di ogni nazione”<sup>727</sup>. The depiction of San Ciriaco has already been remarked upon, here shown from the top of *Colle Guasco* and overlooking the city harbour where, moored at the docks, a galley is waiting to set sail. Then, secondly, the hills around the church are animated by knots of foreign people, “massime [...] Turchi”, who appear to be involved in “faccende assai”.

Evidently, the painting does not provide any clue to suggest that the *Martyrdom of St Mark* was designed to commemorate any diplomatic achievement. On the contrary, it can be suggested that in the picture the city of Ancona, and the business with the infidels that her market encouraged, was so sharply criticized by the *SGSM*’s merchant community as to be transformed into the place where St Mark was executed. In the eyes of the *SGSM* such a commercial relationship was not just a dangerous attempt to Venice’s trading empire, it rather corresponded to a sinful conspiracy. The Anconitans and the Turks were thus equally responsible, and so the ignominious killing of St Mark was moved to the sinner city of Ancona. In other words the Anconitans, by going into business with the Ottomans, sinfully disavowed their Christian faith. This is the only contextual motive that can explain the surprising inclusion of a Muslim Crescent placed at the top of the main dome of the church of San

<sup>725</sup> J. Raby (1982), p. 21.

<sup>726</sup> Carolin Campbell and Alan Chong, *Gentile Bellini in Istanbul*, in *Bellini and The East*, exhibition catalogue (Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 14 December 2005 – 26 March 2006; London, National Gallery 12 April 2006 – 25 June 2006), ed. by Caroline Campbell and Alan Chong, Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 99-102 no. 25.

<sup>727</sup> *Sommario del viaggio degli Oratori* (1846), p. 87.

Ciriaco (fig. 97). In the *Martyrdom of St Mark* the fruitful deals between Anconitans and Turks are thus closed under the favourable auspices of a *false* Church: a Church which has lost her spiritual vocation and is in fact replacing it with deplorable worldly interests. A Church to which now even the infidels can rely on, at least according to the janissary who is persuading his companion to notice the Muslim Crescent suddenly sprouted up on the top of the dome (fig. 104). Finally, it is the reason why the noble Turk is drawing the attention of his partner away from the cruel execution of the Evangelist to the city harbour where a galley is waiting to re-establish the profitable trade. The annoying Evangelist, himself embodiment of his Venetian worshippers, has been finally silenced, and thus business can now thrive more than ever. In the *Martyrdom*, Ancona has become not just the place where the infidels murdered the Holy Patron of the *SGSM*, but rather the city where the sinful partnership with the Turks is metaphorically tormenting the agonizing *SGSM*'s merchant members: the place where all their worldly preoccupations originated.

As observed, the members of the *SGSM* so dramatically felt the Adriatic jurisdictional issue, and its economic repercussions, that after five years from the enforcement of Chapter VI they commissioned a devotional image, the *Martyrdom of St Mark* (1515), explicitly projecting their strong condemnation of the new Anconitan competitors (1520s). Despite the *Preaching of St Mark*, where the Evangelist's persuasive powers had been used to celebrate the Venetian's new trade agreement with the Mamluk Sultan Kansuh al-Ghuri<sup>728</sup>, by the beginning of 1510 the narrative cycle of the *SGSM* underwent a major change. A radical revolution of its iconological programme which was intimately correlated with the dangerous challenges placed by new trade competitors to Venice's traditional rights and livelihood. In other words, if in 1510 there were all the contextual motives to commission the first episode of a legend that placed the prodigious salvation of Venice exactly at the gates of her harbour mouth (*Sea Storm*), by 1526 there were also all the necessary conditions to re-locate the last episode of the cycle (*Martyrdom*) in the proximity of another, antithetic, harbour. The two paintings, originally conceived to be flanking each other, were thus designed to create a narrative continuum where the water, itself the means of wealth as well as threats,

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<sup>728</sup> I. Botti (1992).

functioned as metaphorical junction. As in the *Martyrdom* the galley docked at the harbour of Ancona embodied the evil partnership with the Turks that was menacing the Venetian trading monopoly, thus at the *Due Castelli* the survival of the *Serenissima* was endangered by an evil galley coming from the open sea. The jurisdictional menace allegorised by the harbour/galley in the *Sea Storm* canvas was thus re-contextualised in the *Martyrdom*, where Ancona was turned into the city that harboured the evil enemies of Venice.

### 3.III. The *Blindness of the Sultan: The Healing of Aninaus*

St Mark's mission in Egypt started under the most favourable auspices. As stated by Symeon the Metaphrast, once the Evangelist stepped in Alexandria<sup>729</sup> one of his sandals suddenly tore leaving him barefoot<sup>730</sup>. The incident, far from irritating the wise traveller, was on the contrary welcomed as an auspicious token, a concrete sign of divine providence.

Although Symeon only provides a terse comment<sup>731</sup>, others indeed went into a detailed analysis of its symbolic ramifications. In the Venetian *Legendae Sanctorum*, largely employed during daily officiations at the Basilica of San Marco, the event was explained with a Pauline interpretation where the Evangelist had to begin his mission free from his previous sins<sup>732</sup>. This exegesis was also followed by Bernardo Giustiniani who in his appendix of *De origine urbis Venetiarum* interpreted the breaking sandal as a biblical evocation: on one side it recalled the episode of Moses in front of the burning thorn bush (Exodus 3: 5b), but it also evoked the so-called *Mission of the Apostles* as described by the Gospel of Matthew (10: 9-10)<sup>733</sup>.

However pleasant the event might have been, St Mark nevertheless needed to have his sandal repaired. Once again providence had a hand in it, and so it was that the Evangelist came across a cobbler, Anianus. While fixing the sandal, Anianus pricked his own hand with an awl and yelled: "Unus Deus est!"<sup>734</sup>. Mark could not believe his ears. An Egyptian misbeliever, in fact an idolater, had unexpectedly invoked the only God. "Prosperum fecit Dominus iter meum", reflected Mark, and thus decided to move into action: he picked up a pinch of dust, mixed it with his own saliva, and once he had obtained the desired unguent he spread it on the bleeding wound which immediately

<sup>729</sup> It is not clear if St Mark ever went to Alexandria, nonetheless his apostolic mission was firstly mentioned by Eusebius in the VI century, see: Giuseppe Pavanello, "San Marco nella leggenda e nella storia", *Rivista della città di Venezia*, VII (1928), pp. 293-324, and now M.A. Shenouda (2009), p. 26.

<sup>730</sup> Symeon the Metaphrast, *Martyrium sancti Marci*, col. 166.

<sup>731</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>732</sup> *Passio beati Marci evangelistae et martyris*, in *Legendae Sanctorum*, Ms. Lat. Z, 356 (=1609), ff. 252v-253r. See also B. Bertoli (1993), pp. 98-99. This exegesis was also followed by J. de Voragine (1993), vol. I, p. 244.

<sup>733</sup> Bernardo Giustiniani, *De origine urbis Venetiarum...*, Venetiis, MDXXXIII; *Passio beati Marci* (=1609), f. 253r. See also B. Bertoli (1993), pp. 98-99. *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005).

<sup>734</sup> Symeon the Metaphrast, *Martyrium sancti Marci*, col.166; *Passio beati Marci* (=1609), f. 253; B. Giustiniani (1534).

healed<sup>735</sup>. As a consequence of the miracle, Anianus invited the stranger to dinner at his home where, once seated at the table, St Mark introduced the Word of God<sup>736</sup>.

Giovanni Mansueti's *Healing of Anianus* (fig. 75)<sup>737</sup> sets the miracle in contemporary Mamluk Egypt. The miraculous recovery of the cobbler is depicted in a crowded, busy square packed with gesticulating turbaned characters. A monumental palace, which stands as a stage-like architectural background, hosts a multitude of Mamluks gathered around to watch what appears to be a learned disposition. The crowned sultan, perched on his elevated throne, debates with a younger subject in a green robe, while his secretaries note the wise world excitedly. The debate finds widespread admiration, and yet someone is gazing elsewhere. From the two lateral stairways of the palace, as well as through the bars of a cell right under the sultan's throne, a few characters are in fact eyeing the square where something unusual is happening. Here, introduced by a stoned staircase<sup>738</sup>, St Mark is publicly healing the injured hand of Anianus. Incredulity, vacillation and admiration fill a group of turbaned onlookers witnessing the event: the miraculous deed has stolen the attention from the Sultan, at least in the *piazza*.

Mansueti was not new to exotic settings, nor was this the first time he depicted a scene of the Egyptian mission of St Mark. As already mentioned, in 1499 Mansueti signed the *Arrest of St Mark* for the cycle of the *Arte dei Setaiuoli* at the church *dei Crociferi* (fig. 4) – a cycle also joined by, among others, Cima da Conegliano<sup>739</sup>. Cima's *Healing of Anianus* surely impressed Mansueti's imagery (fig. 105)<sup>740</sup>. Even if Mansueti employed a different point of view, it is patent that the scene, pivoting on the miraculous event, mirrors Cima's model where Anianus extends his injured hand to the Saint at the presence of amazed Mamluks<sup>741</sup>. Beside such compositional borrowings, Miller

<sup>735</sup> Symeon the Metaphrast, *Martyrium sancti Marci*, col.166.

<sup>736</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>737</sup> S. Moschini Marconi (1955), pp. 138-139; S. Miller (1978), pp. 85-90; J. Raby (1982), pp. 35, 42-43, 52-53; P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 225-242; P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 197-203; C. Schmidt Arcangeli (2006), p. 129.

<sup>738</sup> According to S. Moschini Marconi (1955), p. 138, the staircase was not originally designed by Mansueti but was rather "un'aggiunta posteriore".

<sup>739</sup> See above p. 4.

<sup>740</sup> S. Miller (1978), p. 91; P. Humfrey (1983), pp. 36-37, 82-84 no. 14; *Cima da Conegliano poeta del paesaggio*, a cura di Giovanni Carlo Federico Villa, Venezia, Marsilio, 2010, pp. 148-150.

<sup>741</sup> It appears that Cima's compositions could be influenced by a drawing of the same subject

has demonstrated how Mansueti reused the figure of the Mamluk soldier looking at the miracle from the saddle of his horse<sup>742</sup>; and Cima's motive of the turbaned character portrayed from behind, with his left hand raised in token of surprise, was reversed and placed by Mansueti on the left of the staircase that introduces the scene (figs. 106-108). Cima, however, was not the only source. Mansueti derived, and then distorted, the Mamluk emblem<sup>743</sup> from the *Reception of a Venetian Delegation in Damascus* at the Louvre (fig. 109)<sup>744</sup>, and he also copied, simplifying it, the tame dromedary and its keeper. Furthermore, as suggested by Julian Raby, Mansueti also borrowed from the same painting the figure of the archer with a red *zamṭ* who he then placed on the right-hand side of the barred window<sup>745</sup>.

The peculiar healing of the injured hand goes back to the New Testament. Voragine, while describing the miracle performed by St Mark, quotes an interesting passage from Ambrose where it is said that the Evangelist “Imitò [...] il miracolo del cieco da colui di cui predicava il vangelo”<sup>746</sup>. The miracle, commonly known as the *Miracle of the Man Born Blind*, describes how Christ gives sight to a blind man by spreading some mud on his eyes made by a mixture of saliva and dust<sup>747</sup>. As stated by Ludolph of Saxony, the miracle was meant to demonstrate the holy nature of Christ, thus giving pagans a chance to *see* the true faith or, in the event of their obtuse *blindness*, to punish them even more severely<sup>748</sup>. By giving sight to the born blind, Christ *illuminated* entire humanity whose original sin effectively shut off the vision of God<sup>749</sup>.

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currently attributed to Giovanni Bellini (Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin). See P. Humfrey (1983), p. 84; *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), pp. 312-313 no. 50 (catalogue entry).

<sup>742</sup> S. Miller (1978), p. 90.

<sup>743</sup> J. Raby (1982), pp. 52-53; *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 320-321 no. 69 (catalogue entry).

<sup>744</sup> *Bellini and The East* (2005), pp. 22-23 no. 2; *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), pp. 305-306 no. 29 (catalogue entry); Caroline Campbell, *Un Vénitienne à Damas: représentation de Piero Zen et relations entre Vénitiens, Mameluks et Ottomans*, in *Venise et la Méditerranée*, a cura di Sandro G. Franchini, Gherardo Ortalli, and Gennaro Toscano, Venezia, Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere e Arti, 2011, pp. 83-101.

<sup>745</sup> J. Raby (1982), pp. 41, 51.

<sup>746</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, a cura di Alessandro and Lucetta Vitale Brovarone, Torino, Giulio Einaudi Editore, 2007, pp. 334 (This passage is not mentioned in the English translation: J. de Voragine (1993), vol. I, pp. 242-248). See also B. Giustiniani (1534).

<sup>747</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), John 9: 1-38.

<sup>748</sup> *Vita di Giesu Christo Nostro Redentore scritta da Landolfo di Sassonia dell'Ordine Certosino. Et di nuovo tradotta da M. Francesco Sansovino*, in Venetia, Appresso Iacopo il Giovane, MDLXX, f. 221r.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibidem*.

After the miracle was performed, Metaphrast said that Anianus invited his healer to join him for dinner at his house. Once there, Anianus urged Mark to explain who he was and where such powerful words came from. St Mark's answer left Anianus astonished, for it revealed the futility of human wisdom: "mundi sapientiam stultitiam esse apud Deum"<sup>750</sup>. Worldly erudition, he argued, is nothing if compared to Holy Scripture, it is useless in front of both Christ's and God's wisdom<sup>751</sup>. This is the salvific message that eventually led Anianus and his family to the *spiritual illumination* ("illuminata est"). A message that did not pass unnoticed in the *Legendae Sanctorum*<sup>752</sup>, and which found its origins in the Bible. In his *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Paul in fact warns Christians of the vanity of worldly wisdom ("For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God"), using a phrase subsequently evoked by St Mark<sup>753</sup>. And yet Paul is not the only source. The vanity of human wisdom is also condemned in the *Miracle of the Man Born Blind*, where Christ stressed that those who believed to *see* were on the contrary *blind*, and lived inevitably in sin<sup>754</sup>. Ludolph of Saxony's comment is even more unmistakable. In agreement with John Chrysostom, he explains that only the humble who confess their *blindness* ("che non veggono") and look for the healer ("cercano il medico") would be *illuminated* by the faith, and would finally reach the truth. On the contrary the haughty wise and learned people who assume to *see* ("che presumono di vedere") and do not look for the healer ("non cercano il medico"), but rather stay in *blindness*, would not stand the light of truth. A dual metaphor then explained by the conversion of the Gentiles and the dullness of the Judeans<sup>755</sup>.

In his version Mansueti captures St Mark at the very moment he is performing the miracle (fig. 110). Anianus, seated on his working stool, raises his pierced hand to the Evangelist whose benediction is about to cure the wound. Mamluks observe the event in surprise; one of them, crouching over

<sup>750</sup> Symeon the Metaphrast, *Martyrium sancti Marci*, col.166.

<sup>751</sup> J. de Voragine (1993), vol. I, p. 243.

<sup>752</sup> *Passio beati Marci* (=1609), f. 252r: "Tunc cepit beatus marcus evangelicare domini iesu christi quod vere sit dei filius. declarans per scripturas quod sapientia huius mundi stulticia est apud deum". See also: *Vita, Traslatio et Apparitio Sancti Marci*, BMC, Cod. 1498, f. 9v: "Incepit [beatus] marcus evanglicare domini iesu christi quod vere sit dii filius. declarans per scripturas quod sapientia huius mundi stulticia est apud deum".

<sup>753</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), 1 Corinthians 3: 16-23.

<sup>754</sup> *Ibidem*, John 9: 39-41.

<sup>755</sup> *Vita di Giesu* (1570), ff. 220v-221r.

Anianus, even stares directly at the pierced hand: the wound is offered to the sight of all the witnesses, within and outside the painting. At the same time, however, the healing is overshadowed by the Sultan's palace<sup>756</sup>: its magnificence, not to mention the countless coloured Mamluks who crowd it, inevitably catch our eyes. We might admit, as stated by Fortini Brown, that Mansueti chose such an option to convey “a sense of fortuitous”, offering to the viewer a picture of a plausible, even though imaginary, Alexandria<sup>757</sup>. And yet the argument is weak, the palace asserts St Mark's prominence. Its awkward presence must have a purpose, it can not be only an artifice to stimulate the imagination of the beholders.

Behind the miraculous healing Mansueti portrayed the meeting of the sultan with his counsellors (fig. 111). The representation is openly borrowed from the iconography of the *Christ Among the Doctors* (fig. 13), but here there is no Christ to disprove. The sultan, wearing his horned turban, is seated on his *maṣṭaba* with his legs crossed, whereas in front of him a green-dressed Mamluk is portrayed from behind: this standing figure not only has his back on St Mark's miracle, but he materially marks off the area of the disputation. The discussion appears to be extremely absorbing, and in fact the whole audience pays great attention (fig. 112). Those who had the chance to have a ringside seat are listening carefully, orderly; those less fortunate, who crowd the lateral aisles of the atrium are on the contrary commenting animatedly; at last, those confined on the balustrade are trying to overhear as much as they can. In other words, the sultan, his interlocutor and the attentive audience, do not pay attention to the prodigious healing of Anianus' hand. By focusing the discussion among themselves the Mamluks intentionally choose *blindness*, they refuse to acknowledge the healer. The fracture between the back and the foreground is subtle but decisive: the two different spaces do not communicate each other. The debate and the prodigy, although simultaneous, progress separately. Accordingly, the two lateral staircases do not mediate the events either, since the Mamluks and the members of the *SGSM* standing on the stone steps have already switched their attention from the sultan to the Saint (fig. 75).

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<sup>756</sup> The palace does not represent the condemnation of St Mark. As a matter of fact the Sultan's pronouncement did not follow, chronologically, on the healing of Anianus, and Mansueti portrayed it only some years later in the *Three Episodes of the Life of St Mark* (S. Miller (1978), p. 90).

<sup>757</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 125-132.

As far as they are concerned, the decision has been already made.

The infidel's unawareness unfolds along the central axis of the picture. In the balcony at the top of the building, right above the vain discussion of the sultan, three veiled women are having a private matter (fig. 113). Although their costume documents, once more, the Venetians' detailed knowledge of Egyptian garments<sup>758</sup>, their dresses could also symbolise the obliviousness of the infidels, their inability to *see* the truth<sup>759</sup>. What it is sure, anyway, is that even on this occasion the chat remains confined, the three women do not even notice the miracle unveiling under their eyes. The talking-point, as in the case of the sultan, is pointless. On the opposite side, right under the sultan's meeting, another threesome acts quite differently. From behind the prison bars three figures, one turbaned (probably a Jew)<sup>760</sup> and two Venetians, are in fact staring at the prodigious healing occurring in the square. By witnessing the miracle they evidently demonstrate an understanding of the relevance of the event. Furthermore, their deliberate attention to St Mark's deed brings into disrepute the sultan, who not only ignores the ongoing miracle, but because of his inattention he is also accountable for the unjust detention.

A dual interpretation is then provided. On the one hand the painting follows the Bible narrative condemning the *blindness* of the infidels who are not able to, or do not intend to recognise the healer; whereas at the same time the condemnation of their misjudgement is projected to something much more concrete such as the unfair imprisonment of the merchants. In both cases, anyway, it is the ineptitude of the Mamluks that is under indictment. As on the occasion of the *Preaching of St Mark* (fig. 72), the members of the *SGSM* decided to use the *Healing of Anianus* to exorcize something decidedly real such as the numerous unfair detentions, not to mention the abuses of power, systematically inflicted by the sultan and his admirals. Once again the merchant community of the *SGSM* entrusted St Mark with looking after their (worldly) interests in Alexandria.

Venetians and Mamluks had a troubled business relationship which, at least according to the former, repeatedly led to injustices and unwarranted

<sup>758</sup> I. Botti (1992), pp. 41-43, 69 note 29.

<sup>759</sup> A. Gentili (1996), pp. 132-135, 191 note 18.

<sup>760</sup> *Relazioni del S. Pietro* (1564), f. 32r.

internments. An overview of the most striking contentions of the first two decades of the sixteenth-century would thus help to set Mansueti's *Healing of Anianus* in its historical context.

Botti has already demonstrated how between 1502 and 1507 the trading alliance became very fraught<sup>761</sup>. The bones of contention, as usual, were the price of pepper and the amount of ducats that the Venetians had to lodge with the Sultan's Treasury. According to the Venetians' version, in those years they had to put up with a lot of injustices. In December 1502, for instance, the Mamluk Sultan Kansuh al-Ghuri "commandò fusseno retenute le galie, patroni et merchadanti" until they would have paid 150 ducats for each ton of pepper<sup>762</sup>. Beside the deplorable economic loss, the Venetians resident in Syria complained about the way they had been treated by the Sultan and his officers, threatening to leave the country<sup>763</sup>.

Among the countless disputes of those years, largely discussed by Botti, it is worth mentioning the diplomatic mission of Alvise Sagundino who in July 1505 was sent to Cairo to negotiate with Kansuh al-Ghuri<sup>764</sup>. At first Sagundino's talks did not prove successful at all, since the Sultan had demanded 50,000 ducats to be paid in four months time<sup>765</sup>. Nonetheless, years of bribery and injustice had finally left a mark on Venetian attitudes, and the Sultan started to notice it. "Che vol dir", asked Kansuh al-Ghuri the new orator, "che toi mercadanti non vien nel mio paese come prima?". Sagundino's answer was firm: "Per le manzarie fanno i to mori". As a matter of fact the Venetians, who were fed up with the Mamluks' *manzarie*, had started to boycott Egyptian ports and markets. Kansuh al-Ghuri this time understood that if the Mamluks continued to oppress the merchants, the Venetians would transfer their ducats to a safer market, and thus decided to discipline his officers for having harassed the Venetian merchants<sup>766</sup>.

But, in subsequent years the situation did not improve. On August 1510 Rhodian corsairs raided Egyptian trade convoys en route to Ayâs for the

<sup>761</sup> I. Botti (1992), pp. 33-73.

<sup>762</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. IV, col. 240.

<sup>763</sup> Girolamo Priuli, *I Diarii di Girolamo Priuli (1499-1512)*, a cura di Roberto Cessi (*Rerum Italicorum Scriptores*, 24, part. 3, Bologna, Zanichelli), 1933-37, p. 218.

<sup>764</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. VI, col. 267; I. Botti (1992), p. 53.

<sup>765</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. VI, col. 317; I. Botti (1992), p. 53.

<sup>766</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. VI, col. 321; I. Botti (1992), p. 53.

purchase of timber<sup>767</sup>. In reprisal, Kansuh al-Ghuri closed his harbours to Western merchants, sealed up their storehouses and started collecting his debts<sup>768</sup>. Even though the Venetians were popular in Damascus, on 29 July they received the committal order anyway, and thus the Consul Pietro Zen and his merchants were put under house arrest for several days. In November 1510 Zen was then called urgently to Cairo; he wrote immediately to his colleague in Alexandria, Tommaso Contarini, asking for help, totally unaware that the diplomat himself had already been imprisoned in Cairo together with his fellow-merchants<sup>769</sup>. Time had come for a new ambassador to go to Cairo.

On 17 November 1511 “Domenego Trivixan”, the same distinguished member of the *SGSM* who had treated with Pope Julius II about “la jurisdiction dil golfo” (1509), was appointed new “orator” to the Mamluk Court<sup>770</sup>. The envoy reached Alexandria on 17 April 1512, and Zaccaria Pagani wrote a stark description of a desolated city. He noted that Alexandria, a city bigger than Treviso, was left in ruins by “le tirannie grandissime delli Signori” which had forced the inhabitants to leave the country<sup>771</sup>. On 20 March 1512, Ascension Day, Trevisan was granted an audience with the Sultan. Talks began badly with Kansuh al-Ghuri charging Pietro Zen with conspiracy. Trevisan talked persuasively about the justice of Venice. The meeting then got more amicable, but not relaxed, and in fact Kansuh al-Ghuri insisted that the agreement signed in Venice back in 1507, and proudly commemorated by Gentile’s *Preaching of St Mark*, had to be reviewed<sup>772</sup>.

On 30 June Kansuh al-Ghuri granted Trevisan an umpteenth audience on the trade treaty<sup>773</sup>. On this occasion the Sultan’s trading agent (*khoja*) charged Trevisan with boycott, claiming that the Venetians were not trading

<sup>767</sup> Francesca Lucchetta, “L’affare Zen in Levante nel primo Cinquecento”, *Studi Veneziani*, X (1968), p. 159; P. Brummet (1994), pp. 40, 43. On the Zen affair see also: C. Campbell (2011), pp. 83-101.

<sup>768</sup> F. Lucchetta (1968), p. 159; P. Brummett (1994), p. 41.

<sup>769</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XI, coll. 825-826; F. Lucchetta (1968), pp. 163-169; P. Brummett (1994), p. 41.

<sup>770</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XIII, col. 248; Rinaldo Fulin, “I Portoghesi in India e i Veneziani in Egitto (Dai Diarii di Gerolamo Priuli)”, *Archivio Veneto*, XXII (1881), pp. 244-245; G. Heyd (1913), p. 1105; F. Lucchetta (1968), p. 172; K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, p. 27; P. Brummett (1994), p. 42; D. Howard (2006b), pp. 84-86. With Trevisan there were, among others, his son Marco Antonio (*I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XV, coll. 193-209), the ducal secretary Andrea de’ Franceschi (M.F. Neff (1985), pp. 429-435), and Zaccaria Pagani (*Viaggio di Domenico Tevisan* (1875), p. 1. See also K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, p. 30).

<sup>771</sup> *Viaggio di Domenico Tevisan* (1875), p. 14.

<sup>772</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XV, col. 200; K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, p. 32.

<sup>773</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XV, col. 202.

with Alexandria as usual, since they had recently purchased even less than the Catalans<sup>774</sup>. Trevisan did not let himself be overawed by such defamation, and, after having rebutted the charge<sup>775</sup>, he complained directly to the Sultan that “soi ministri” oppressed and extorted money from Venetians<sup>776</sup>. Talks proceeded apace for weeks. Initially the Sultan wanted 10,000 ducats to be paid in order to let the Venetians free to trade in Egypt for the next three *mude*; by the end of the bargaining an agreement was found on 5,000<sup>777</sup>. The Venetians gained an assurance that they could trade freely at any rate<sup>778</sup>. The agreement was so widely shared that Trevisan secured the release of all the jailed monks in Jerusalem, the detained pilgrim galleys, and all the Venetians resident in Kansuh al-Ghuri’s domain<sup>779</sup>.

Despite these promises and friendly agreement, the following years were not economically fruitful. As from March 1513 the Portuguese incursions provoked a jump in prices, and so in Cairo pepper prices peaked at 120-150 ducats per tonne, whereas at the same time Kansuh al-Ghuri claimed 15,000 Ducats to be paid by the Venetians (5,000 annually). On the last day of March the 5 *Provedadori sora la merchadantia* Andrea Foscarini, Alvise Malipiero, Alvise Priuli, Vittore Pisani and Andrea Basadona (the last two being members of the *SGSM* since 1482 and 1485 respectively)<sup>780</sup>, wrote a letter to the Egyptian Sultan complaining that Venetians were not free to trade due to the high pepper price, and the unreasonable taxes they were still forced to pay<sup>781</sup>. On 3 May 1515 arrived in Venice a letter written by the Consul in Alexandria Tommaso Venier. Although the sultan had decided to review all the previous

<sup>774</sup> G. Heyd (1913), p. 1108.

<sup>775</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XV, col. 202.

<sup>776</sup> *Ibidem*, col. 203.

<sup>777</sup> G. Heyd (1913), p. 1109.

<sup>778</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XV, col. 205. See also K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, p. 32.

<sup>779</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XV, coll. 206-207; K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, pp. 32-33; Carl F. Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt’s waning as a Great Power*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1994, p. 58. A full transcription of the chapters can be found in Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, “Gli ultimi accordi tra i sultani Mamelucchi d’Egitto e la Repubblica di Venezia”, *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, XII (1994), pp. 49-64.

<sup>780</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 146v. On the membership of Vittore’s relatives: *Ibidem*, ff. 1v, 33v. In *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XX, *Index*, col. 266, are mentioned two different Andrea Basadonna: Andrea q. Filippo, *alias* q. Pietro; and Andrea q. Pietro. According to Girolamo Alessandro Cappellari Vivaro, *Campidoglio Veneto*, vol. I, BNM It VII, 15 (=8304), f. 127r, Filippo Basadonna had a son called “Andrea fu di Pietro Contarini”. On Andrea’s membership see ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 1v; on his relatives’: *Ibidem*, ff. 1v, 61v, 154r.

<sup>781</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XX, coll. 82-83; Yutaka Horii, “The Mamluk Sultan Qansuh al-Ghawri (1501-16) and the Venetians in Alexandria”, *Orient*, XXXVIII (2003), pp. 178-199, especially p. 192.

agreements, Venier had obtained a legal act of 15 Chapters concerning Alexandria, and 8 Chapters regarding Damietta. In short, Kansuh al-Ghuri confirmed the last agreement with Domenico Trevisan assuring the Venetians, among other things, the freedom of trading with anyone and their protection from Mamluks' aggressions<sup>782</sup>.

Alexandria, however, was no more the great outlet of the past<sup>783</sup>, and a fatal menace was about to subvert what had remained of the Mamluk Empire. On 1<sup>st</sup> December 1516, news on Selim's conquest of Syria arrived in Venice<sup>784</sup>. The letter, written by Nicolò Aurelio and Giacomo di Zulian (the latter probably a member of the *SGSM* since 1513)<sup>785</sup>, informed that on 25 August the Mamluk sultan Kansuh al-Ghuri was killed and his head cut off. As early as 21 January 1517 Selim conquered Cairo, and between 12,000 and 15,000 Ottomans entered the city. Tumanbey, who had succeeded his father Kansuh al-Ghuri, was captured while on the run. The last Mamluk Sultan was then escorted back to Cairo where, after a ride on a mule across the city with a chain placed around his neck, he was hanged on at the Zawilah gate<sup>786</sup>.

The economic interests of the Venetians were comparatively unaffected by the dramatic political changes, as since the very beginning of Selim's conquest numerous ordinances ensured that the Venetian merchants were liberally treated, even better than anyone else. Venice signed with the Ottomans a useful trade treaty that explicitly guaranteed her economic interest<sup>787</sup>.

As discussed, during the first two decades of the sixteenth-century the Venetians suffered several unjustified imprisonments, as well as a number of impositions and abuses of power. Numerous agreements were signed in

<sup>782</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XX, coll. 169-174.

<sup>783</sup> See the description of Ibn Iyas in C.F. Petry (1994), p. 119. See also David Ayalon, *Some remarks on the economic decline of the Mamluk sultanate*, in *Islam and the Abode of War: Military slaves and Islamic adversaries (Variorum Collected Studies Series)*, Farnham, Ashgate, 1994, VIII, p. 120.

<sup>784</sup> On such a topic see: Michael Winter, *The Ottoman occupation*, in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. by Carl F. Petry, vol. I (*Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 490-516.

<sup>785</sup> ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 69r.

<sup>786</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXIV, coll. 162, 171, 203, 221-222, 223-224, 254, 368-369, 387-388; vol. XXV, coll. 651-669.

<sup>787</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. XXIV, coll. 162, 205, 290-291, 297-298, 650-651; vol. XXV, coll. 79-80, 416; G. Heyd (1913), pp. 1110-1111; Samuele Romanin, *Storia di Venezia*, Venezia, Pietro Naratovich, 1853-61 (III reprint, Venezia, Libreria Filippi Editore, 1972-75), vol. IV, pp. 268-269; K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, pp. 165-180.

consequence of such injustices, promising a series of expressed warranties that were however systematically disregarded. A precarious situation that surely worried even the merchant members of the *SGSM*.

It has been suggested that such a state of anxiety was mirrored in Mansueti's *Healing of Anianus* by the three prisoners portrayed right under the foolish sultan (fig. 113). As the worldly erudition of the sultan and his advisors had proved useless in front of God's wisdom, thus their *blindness* had resulted in an inexcusable misjudgement. The Mamluks' guilty ignorance, after all, had sent innocent Venetian merchants to jail. The *SGSM*'s denunciation of the gratuitous abuses was thus resolute: the Mamluks' blameworthy ignorance, their dullness and incompetence in discerning the truth were in the dock. This unappealable censure was eventually corroborated by two additional figures.

At the extreme right of the canvas, a Mamluk is portrayed on horseback apparently coming out from the basement of the sultan's palace (fig. 114). Although marginal, this figure deserves consideration, at least according to the gesture of the *SGSM*'s member standing on the first stairhead who encourages us to pay attention to the riding Mamluk. Unlike the other four riders, all soldiers brandishing ironshod sticks and wearing red *tāqiyya*, our Mamluk undoubtedly belongs to a different social class: he does not carry any weapon, and his dress differentiates him from ordinary people. Mansueti, there is no doubt, portrayed a distinguished exponent of the Mamluk Court. And yet, the stateliness of his bearing is surprisingly challenged by the inappropriate mount: an implausible mule rather than a noble horse.

Male members of the Egyptian élite, like their Western counterparts, did not ride on mules. For instance Caterino Zeno, while describing in his *Scritti* (1550) the pilgrimage to Mecca, noticed at the rear of the horse-train countless numbers of ordinary pilgrims, not nobles, riding donkeys and mules<sup>788</sup>. In 1553 Pierre Belon claimed that only the noble Mamluks were allowed to ride horses, whereas women normally used donkeys<sup>789</sup>. And it is extremely revealing that the last Mamluk Sultan, Tumanbey, before being executed was placed upon a mule and then paraded up and down through the

<sup>788</sup> Ennio Concina, *Dell'arabico. A Venezia tra Rinascimento e Oriente*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1994, pp. 109-110.

<sup>789</sup> Nicolas Warner, *The True Description of Cairo. A Sixteenth-Century Venetian View*, London-Oxford, The Arcadian Library in association with Oxford University Press, 2006, vol. II, p. 149.

streets of Cairo<sup>790</sup>.

According to Democritus mules were artificial animals, a man-made product; Aristotle considered them *mostrum*, Pliny the Elder described them as barren hybrids<sup>791</sup>, and Rabanus Maurus, quoting the Psalm 32, claimed that the mule was an animal devoid of intelligence<sup>792</sup>. Such a negative reputation made mules a symbol of heresy<sup>793</sup>. In Filippo Piccinelli's *Mundus Symbolicum* the mule was the sterile fruit of fertile parents thus symbolizing the degenerate sons<sup>794</sup> – a symbolism of great relevance in this context, considering the widespread belief that Mamluks had disavowed the Christian faith of their parents<sup>795</sup>.

The negative symbolism of the mule, as an embodiment of ignorance and heresy, does not rehabilitate our Mamluk rider. The censure, even on this occasion, is clear: not only he, but also his people, had abjured the Christian faith, but according to his foolishness he has not been able to reconcile with it even in the presence of Mark's miracle. We can thus affirm that Mansueti's depiction of a high-ranking Mamluk riding a mule was a symbolic device employed to visualize the opposition between God's wisdom and the Mamluks' senselessness – an allegory in fact deployed a few years later during the Mardi Gras in Piazza San Marco where “a l'incontro de la Sapientia venirà l'Ignorantia a cavallo de un aseno con la coda in mano” (1532)<sup>796</sup>.

At the opposite side of the “Ignorantia a cavallo de un aseno”, seated upon the first step of the stairs, Mansueti portrayed a retailer of vases (fig. 115). A harmless old retailer who, if framed within the severe accusations made against the undiscerning Mamluks, could on the contrary be subjected to a different reading. Unlike the two distinguished Mamluks behind him, the retailer is indifferent to the ongoing miracle. Although Mark is unveiling the

<sup>790</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXV, col. 669.

<sup>791</sup> Pliny the Elder (1997), book VIII, chapter LXVIII, p. 121.

<sup>792</sup> Mirella Levi d'Ancona, *Lo zoo del Rinascimento. Il significato degli animali nella pittura italiana dal XIV al XVI secolo*, Lucca, Maria Pacini Fazi Editore, 2001, pp. 164-165.

<sup>793</sup> Giovanna Cresci Marrone and Francesca Rohr Vio, *Muli e mulattieri tra pregiudizi sociali e polemiche politiche*, in *Animali tra zoologia, mito e letteratura nella cultura classica e orientale*, a cura di Ettore Cingano, Antonella Ghersetti and Lucio Milano, Padova, S.A.R.G.O.N., 2005, pp. 249-265, especially p. 249.

<sup>794</sup> M. Levi d'Ancona (2001), pp. 164-165.

<sup>795</sup> *Relationi del S. Pietro* (1564), f. 37r; Pauli Justiniani and Petri Quirini, *Lettera al papa, Libellus ad Leonem X (1513)*, notizie introduttive e versione italiana di Geminiano Bianchini, Modena, Artioli Editore, 1995. In this respect see below pp. 202-203.

<sup>796</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. LVII, coll. 530-531.

righteous path under his eyes, the retailer deliberately turns his attention to the *SGSM*'s member on his right to whom he tries to sell his refined jug. For him, considerations of interest come before everything, nothing can discourage his proposition to satisfy the insatiable greed for the material world, not even a miracle. His *blindness* leads him to neglect, once again, the Architect<sup>797</sup>. Furthermore, in the *Wisdom of Solomon* (13: 1-2) the potter is described as a cynic, greedy for money, and, what is worse, conscious of his sin. Therefore, if on the right-hand side of the painting the visual association of the Mamluk with the mule allegorises the foolishness of his people, the figure of the Idolater Potter on the left side visualizes the Mamluks' rapacity, their *inquietudo mentis*<sup>798</sup>. If, furthermore, their ignorance and iniquity had brought innocent merchants to jail, their avidity had repeatedly cleaned the Venetians out. An unequivocal stance on the countless abuses of power and greenmails the *SGSM*'s members had suffered for decades from the Mamluks Sultan and his officers.

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So far I have focused on the countless Mamluks spread all over the painting, praising Mansueti's ability and accuracy in representing their dresses, turbans, and military equipments. However, it is worth remembering that by the time Mansueti was commissioned (September 1518), the Turks, not the Mamluks, were Venice's new trading partners. The Ottoman Sultan, Selim I, was their new infidel counterpart. It could be argued that, once the Mamluks had been defeated and their most dangerous exponents executed, the Turks left some loyal officers of the former regime to deal with administrative exigencies<sup>799</sup>. It could be also claimed, moreover, that when Mansueti painted his canvas the Ottoman succession to power was too recent to be included in the painting. However that may be, in 1518 the miraculous healing of Anianus was set in the Mamluk Court, and the characteristic blazons, although

<sup>797</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), *Wisdom of Solomon* 15: 7-13.

<sup>798</sup> St Gregory the Great, *Magna Moralia*, in Jacques P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 76, col. 621.

<sup>799</sup> *Mamluks*, in *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, par C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, B. Lewis et Ch. Pellat, Tome VI, Leiden-Paris, E.J. Brill/G.-P. Maisonneuve & Larose S.A., pp. 299-315, especially p. 309; M. Winter (1998), pp. 504-516.

fancifully reworked, were in fact placed behind the horn-turbaned sultan. And yet the new rulers were not entirely excluded.

At the top of the right staircase, portrayed in a prominent position, Mansueti placed two curious figures wearing extravagant conic-shaped turbans (fig. 116). The iconographical relevance of this detail is carefully stressed by the painter. Three *SGSM*'s members escort our attention to the top of the stairs where a fourth black-dressed brethren emerges from behind the two strangers, whereas a Mamluk wearing a green robe creates a noticeable association with the one questioning the sultan in the middle of the composition. Evidently, Mansueti left nothing to chance, everything was minutely considered. The two strangers were not passing through accidentally.

Beside their Ottoman headgear, in fact already observed in the *Martyrdom* episode (figs. 102-103), the two strangers have handlebar moustaches: a fashion adopted by Ottoman janissaries to appear more ferocious to their enemies<sup>800</sup>. Furthermore, as the “Capi, e Capitani, e Caporali” of the *giannizzeri*, even our strangers probably had a distinguished horse since the one on the right features two remarkable spur-rowels. If they were members of the janissaries, our two held a specific position and, according to Cesare Vecellio, can be identified as two *capugi* (fig. 117). Interestingly, the janissaries were born Christians. Once grown up, they were taken away from their family and faith, and then cajoled into the false dogma of Islam<sup>801</sup>. Even on this occasion though, we find ourselves in front of a further example of converts: two distinguished Turks who had abandoned the straight path to follow the false wisdom. Two infidels, who were members of a military force mainly known for the violence committed against Jews and Christians<sup>802</sup>.

As demonstrated, in Mansueti's *Healing of Anianus* two Turks, or rather two distinguished exponents of the Turkish military (and governmental) apparatus, are chatting nearby. Their discussion, as with the one in progress before the Mamluk sultan, does not allow them to be distracted, certainly not by a noisy square where a stranger is doing a piece of witchcraft. At the *SGSM* Mamluks and Turks committed the same sin. Following Rudolph of Saxony's lesson, we can affirm that those Mamluks and Turks whose supercilious

<sup>800</sup> *Degli Habiti* (1590), ff. 386r-387r.

<sup>801</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 386r.

<sup>802</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 387r.

attitude and futile discussions *blinded* the appreciation of the healer would not be saved<sup>803</sup>. Thankfully, not all of their fellows are lost. A group of Mamluks has in fact congregated around St Mark and Anianus. The crowd gesticulates, bends down to better observe the miracle, opens its astonished eyes to examine the miracle: their quest for the healer had led them to the Evangelist. None of the inconclusive debates can distract them anymore: St Mark's miracles and powerful preaching has eventually illuminated them "per fede, et per cognitione della verità"<sup>804</sup>. God's wisdom has overcome the infidels' vain knowledge, and the members of the *SGSM* are there to testify it. Most of them look outward at the beholder, they invite their pious brothers to contemplate the deeds of their Holy Patron. At least the infidels in the foreground have been reconciled with the true faith, and thus the tame dromedary, commonly reputed as symbol of the Gentles, kneels down and honour the true God<sup>805</sup>.

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<sup>803</sup> *Vita di Giesu* (1570), f. 221r.

<sup>804</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 220v.

<sup>805</sup> Rabanus Maurus, *Allegoriae in Universam Sacram Scripturam*, in Jacques P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 112, col. 912 C.

### 3.IV. The *Sight of Anianus: The Baptism of Anianus*

As stated by Symeon the Metaphrast, the conversion of the Egyptians was inspired by St Mark's preaching at the table of Anianus<sup>806</sup>. Spiritual enlightenment was used as metaphor for the actual Baptism. After being educated by the wise Evangelist, Anianus "et magna ejus regionis multitudo" – not just "ejus domus" – embraced the true faith. Metaphrast thus narrated the Christening of the Egyptians with few concise words, and nothing relevant was subsequently added by those who wrote after him<sup>807</sup>.

As Humfrey and Fortini Brown have shown, Mansueti's *Baptism of Anianus* (fig. 76) was originally placed on the right wall of the *Sala dell'Albergo* in the narrow vertical space between the left corner and the adjacent window<sup>808</sup>. Such a difficult location not only explains its small size, but it also demonstrates the intention of the *SGSM* to follow a prearranged design. Evidently, both the *Healing* and the *Baptism of Anianus* were intended as pendants to the *Preaching of St Mark*. In the *Sala dell'Albergo* the miraculous deeds (the *Healing*), together with their coherent consequence (the *Baptism*), were subordinated to the *potens* of the Evangelist's *oratio* (the *Preaching*)<sup>809</sup>.

However relevant the *Preaching* was, the *Baptism* had nonetheless to be represented. Despite its cramped location, the conversion of the infidels from the sin (*aversio a Deo*) to the state of grace (*conversio ad Deum*)<sup>810</sup> had a decisive role in celebrating the triumphant mission of the Venetians' Holy Patron on Egyptian soil. In this respect St Mark, mentioning Christ's own words, wrote: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned"<sup>811</sup>. The narrative cycle thus visualized Christ's admonition, since it explicitly offered the infidels the opportunity, through St

<sup>806</sup> Symeon the Metaphrast, *Martyrium sancti Marci*, col. 166.

<sup>807</sup> *Passio beati Marci* (=1609) ff. 252v-253r; B. Giustiniani (1534); J. de Voragine (1993), vol. I, pp. 242-248.

<sup>808</sup> See above pp. 71-72. On the painting see: S. Miller (1978), pp. 85-90; J. Raby (1982), pp. 35, 46; P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 225-242; P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 197-203; Peter Humfrey, *La pittura veneta del Rinascimento a Brera*, Firenze, Cantini, 1990, pp. 95-97; Peter Humfrey, "Giovanni Mansueti", in *Pinacoteca di Brera. Scuola Veneta*, Milano, Electa, 1990, pp. 176-177; *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 305 no. 28 (catalogue entry).

<sup>809</sup> Symeon the Metaphrast, *Martyrium sancti Marci*, col.166. See also J. de Voragine (1993), vol. I, pp. 243.

<sup>810</sup> *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, vol. IV, Città del Vaticano, Ente per l'enciclopedia cattolica e il libro cattolico, p. 492.

<sup>811</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. VI, p. 1935; *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Mark 16: 16.

Mark's miraculous deeds and wise words, to disavow their superstitions and false religion.

Mansueti's composition reflects his own *Miraculous Healing of Niccolò Benvegnudo's Daughter* (fig. 3) painted around 1506 for the *Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista*<sup>812</sup> – a compositional borrowing made necessary by the vertical size of the canvas which obliged Mansueti to partition the scene into different overlapping storeys<sup>813</sup>. In the foreground two affable characters, a turbaned Mamluk and a richly-dressed member of the *SGSM*, give a warm welcome to the festive occasion, inviting the beholder to linger in the luxurious porch. The staircase attracts several characters. Two Mamluks at the bottom of it gesticulate vivaciously: a child, with a swallow on a leash, has blocked their way to the vestibule, which in turn is already packed by a group of debating companions. To the right of them, and yet invisible to their eyes, the baptism of Anianus is taking place under a golden groined vault crammed with moved Mamluks. Few others, finally, observe the scene from the balconies of the second floor.

Mansueti's *Baptism of Anianus* evokes explicitly a version sculpted by Tullio Lombardo for the *SGSM's* façade (fig. 118)<sup>814</sup>. In both cases Anianus is portrayed naked, kneeling devoutly in front of a removable baptismal font. St Mark, standing in front of him, is pouring holy water on the head of the neophyte, whereas in the background a praying acolyte rises his hands<sup>815</sup>. Despite Lombardo's classical sobriety, Mansueti has however set the scene in a luxurious over-decorated palace, a place of fiction that does not reflect any account of extant sources – Metaphrast, followed by the succeeding hagiographers, just mention that the event took place in the house of Anianus, presumably the humble house of a common cobbler<sup>816</sup>. In the picture, on the other hand, everything is lavishly decorated: the pilasters and the countless

<sup>812</sup> On the *Miraculous Healing of Niccolò Benvegnudo's Daughter* see: S. Moschini Marconi (1955), p. 137; S. Miller (1978), pp. 78, 83-84; P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 203; Ronda Kasl, *Holy Household: Art and Devotion in Renaissance Venice*, in *Giovanni Bellini and the Art of Devotion*, ed. by Ronda Kasl, Indianapolis, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, 2004, pp. 59-90, especially p. 66; G. Matino (2010), p. 14.

<sup>813</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 203.

<sup>814</sup> P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 225-242.

<sup>815</sup> Laura Corti, *I Lombardo e un episodio di iconografia marciana*, in *I Lombardo: architettura e scultura a Venezia tra '400 e '500*, in *I Lombardo: architettura e scultura a Venezia tra '400 e '500*, a cura di Andrea Guerra, Manuela M. Morresi e Richard Schofield, Venezia, Marsilio, 2006, pp. 195-215, especially pp. 197-198.

<sup>816</sup> Symeon the Metaphrast, *Martyrium sancti Marci*, col. 166.

little columns, but also the trceries, the architraves, the tympana and the arcades are all minutely carved with gold. Even more impressive is the lushness of the place where St Mark is administering the baptism (fig. 119). Here gold does not simply underline the architectural structure but it rather spreads over it, covering the entire surface of the trussed roof. Then, through the chain of a golden hanging lamp, it flows down to the shining baptismal font where the holy water poured by the Evangelist collects. A flood of gold that undoubtedly suits a non-secular structure rather than with the house of a cobbler. A consecrated place marked by the inclusion, surely intentional, of the peculiar lamp hanging above the head of the baptised<sup>817</sup>. Evidently, although hagiographers meant the baptism to be administered in the humble house of Anianus, at the *SGSM* such a pivotal event had to be set in a more suitable place. Not just in a lavish palace however, but rather in a golden chapel: a place in fact deliberately recalling the golden Baptistery of the Basilica di San Marco. An affinity that, as we will see, is not merely confined to the evocation of the Baptistery's golden dome, but is shown by the actual materialization of a portion of its mosaic decoration.

On the cupola, directly above the baptismal font of the Basilica's Baptistery, a mosaic illustrates the baptising Apostles surrounding the figure of Christ (fig. 120). The Saviour, placed at the centre of the mosaic, holds a scroll quoting a precise passage of the Gospel of Mark: "Evntes in mv[n]dv[m] vnive[r]svm. Predichate evangelivm om[n]i creatvre. Q[v]i [et] crediderit baptizati [will be saved]"<sup>818</sup>. An evangelic induction carefully visualized in the mosaic of the Baptistery, where Christ, while expressing his will, explicitly points to St Mark himself<sup>819</sup>. Accordingly, at his right the Evangelist has already accomplished the mandate: encircled by an Egyptian-like building, St Mark is portrayed while baptising Anianus at the presence of a representative of the Egyptian people.

As stated by the Gospel of Mark<sup>820</sup>, the mission instructions were quite

<sup>817</sup> *Dizionario Terminologici. 4 Suppelletile ecclesiastica*, a cura di Benedetta Montecchi e Sandra Vasco Rocca, Firenze, Centro Di, 1988, pp. 246-247.

<sup>818</sup> According to Debra Pincus, *Geografia e politica nel Battistero di San Marco: la cupola degli apostoli*, in *San Marco: aspetti storici e agiografici*, a cura di Antonio Niero, Venezia, Marsilio, 1996, pp. 459-473, especially pp. 262, 471-472 note 22, the passage was extracted from the Gospel of Mark (16: 15-17), rather than from Matthew (10: 9-10).

<sup>819</sup> D. Pincus (1996), p. 471 note 22.

<sup>820</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Mark 16: 15-17.

clear, with religious teaching and miraculous deeds at the core of the mission to convert the infidel. A mission already observed in the *Sala dell'Albergo*, where St Mark's prodigious acts (the *Healing*) and salvific message (the *Preaching*) necessarily led to the Mamluk's conversion (the *Baptism*). Such an emphasis on St Mark's evangelism, on his predestined regeneration of the Egyptian infidels, was thus an explicit visualization not only of the Gospel of St Mark, but rather of the order given by Christ from the vault of the Baptistery. An order that, in the mind of the designers of the mosaic, was given by a victorious commander-in-chief.

Christ's flag has been already related to the iconography of the *Ascension of Christ*, metaphor of his, and his Apostles' victory over the souls of the Gentiles<sup>821</sup>. A victory also related to the sacral justification of the Venetians' trading expansionist policies<sup>822</sup>. As Debra Pincus has demonstrated, the baptising Apostles portrayed around Christ feature three distinctive attributes: a native-like character, an evocative building, and the *titulus* of the *locus* where the baptism is taking place<sup>823</sup>. Their evangelic mission, in other words, is geographically characterized, any single Apostle has reached a different part of the world to "preach the gospel to every creature"<sup>824</sup>. However, Pincus has concluded that the vault of the Baptistery does not represent the lands traditionally reached by the apostles, but it rather portrays a modified geography of salvation, where the *Mission of the Apostles* actually set out the establishment of a Christian trade empire.<sup>825</sup> The Apostles' evangelism, namely Christ's order to convert "every creature", was thus compared and in fact superimposed on Venice's mercantile expansionism: their convoys and shipments, however loaded with tangible wealth, were nonetheless legitimated by the declared effort to divulge the Christian faith<sup>826</sup>. The baptism administered in the Basilica was therefore a *dynamic* baptism. A baptism that implicitly sent the Venetians as prophets among people<sup>827</sup>. Trade and

<sup>821</sup> Timothy Verdon, *Il Battistero: arte e teologia*, in *La Basilica di San Marco. Arte e simbologia*, a cura di Bruno Bertoli, Venezia, Edizioni Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1993, pp. 81-84.

<sup>822</sup> Magdalena Stoyanova, "La preistoria ed i mosaici del Battistero di San Marco", in *Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti (Atti, Classe di Scienze Morali, Lettere ed Arti)*, CXLVII (1988-89), pp. 17-28, especially pp. 23-24.

<sup>823</sup> D. Pincus (1996), pp. 462-463.

<sup>824</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>825</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>826</sup> T. Verdon (1993), p. 75.

<sup>827</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 77-79.

evangelism, at least in the Baptistery of the Basilica di San Marco, could coincide without contention. Trade, in fact, becomes missionary.

Although full of good intentions, the Venetian merchants had to deal with harsh reality. Trade relationships with the Muslim counterpart were not so uncompromising, and, what is more, the *Serenissima's* commercial expansionism often conflicted with the interest, whether economic or spiritual, of the whole Christendom.

As already discussed, Selim's conquest of Syria (1516) and Egypt (1517) did not jeopardize Venetian trade in the Levant<sup>828</sup>. As a matter of fact Venice signed a fruitful trade treaty that would guarantee her economic interest. Yet, such an agreement found a great opponent in pope Leo X: first of all the Ottomans had wiped out Mamluks while they were asking the Holy See for military aid<sup>829</sup>; while secondly, the Venetian-Ottoman renewed alliance was going to contradict Leo X's crusade projects against the great infidel friends of Venice<sup>830</sup>. The Crusade project, even if never implemented, had been on Leo X's mind since the beginning of his pontificate<sup>831</sup>. Venice, on the other side, never explicitly agreed with such plans. The fact is that the truce between Venice and the Ottomans signed on 17 October 1513 asserted Venice's neutrality. The treaty said that, in order to maintain free trade and possession of conquered colonies, Venice agreed not to interfere with any Turkish military actions against non-Venetian territories<sup>832</sup>.

In 1513 two Venetian Camaldolese hermits, Blessed Paul (Thomas) Giustiniani and Peter (Vincent) Querini published the *Libellus ad Leonem X. Pontificem Maximum*, a memorandum mainly conceived as a reformist treatise of the Church, but which also dealt with the conversion of the Muslims<sup>833</sup>. According to the authors the Muslims, even if strenuous enemies of the Christendom, were not all similar. The Mamluks, for instance, had been

<sup>828</sup> See above p. 192.

<sup>829</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXIV, col. 143; K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, p. 166.

<sup>830</sup> Ludovico Von Pastor, *Storia dei Papi dalla fine del Medio Evo*, vol. IV parte I (*Leone X*), Roma, Desclée & C. Editori, 1926, pp. 136-163; K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, pp. 172-197.

<sup>831</sup> K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, pp. 142-171; Nelson H. Minnich, *The Fifth Lateran Council (1512-17). Studies on its Membership, Diplomacy and Proposal for Reform*, Aldershot-Brookfield, Variorum, 1993.

<sup>832</sup> K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, p. 156 note 59, 157.

<sup>833</sup> N.H. Minnich (1993), IV, pp. 222-223; B. Pauli Justiniani and P. Quirini (1995); Eugenio Massa, *Una cristianità nell'alba del Rinascimento. Paolo Giustiniani e il "Libellus ad Leonem X" (1513)*, Genova-Milano, Marietti 1820, 2005.

baptised before being forced to disavow their faith and follow the Islamic heresy<sup>834</sup>. The two Camaldolese thus suggested that Pope Leo X should send a delegation of wise envoys to the Mamluk sultan in order to convert him to the true faith. The sultan, Gistiniani and Querini argued, was born “da genitori cristiani”, he had received “il grande sacramento cristiano del battesimo”, and in all likelihood he had even followed and believed in the true faith before being converted by force to the wicked superstition of Muhammad<sup>835</sup>. The two Camaldolese argued that the Mamluks had embraced heresy because of their blind ignorance, and because of their incomprehension of the truth. The purpose of the evangelic mission was then the return of the sultan to the bosom of the Church “con argomentazioni razionali, chiare e persuasive”<sup>836</sup> – the same persuasiveness, we shall add, once employed by St Mark himself. Apparently aimed at the establishment of an evangelic mission to the Levant, the *Libellus* had also more strategic purposes. Considering the fact that the sultan, together with his dignitaries and admirals, had abandoned the true faith only to seize power within the Mamluk governing body, Leo X was advised to guarantee them, in return for their abjuration, an extension of such powers to the detriment of the Turks<sup>837</sup>. If, the authors argued, the sultan had abandoned the true faith according to his lust for power, he would surely not be afraid “di abbandonare Maometto e di tornare a Cristo se gli sono promessi gli aiuti dei cristiani per una sicura successione di quell’Impero”<sup>838</sup>. Before attempting any belligerent action, Leo X had therefore to send “oratori, ambasciatori e messaggeri” to preach the Gospel and persuade the infidels to the conversion<sup>839</sup>.

The *Libellus ad Leonem X* was enthusiastically welcomed among Giustiniani’s Venetian companions. It is the case, for instance, of Giovanni Battista Egnazio, an old acquaintance of the same *Guardian Grande* who commissioned Mansueti’s *Baptism of Anianus* – it was Jacopo Dardani, after all, who had personally chosen Egnazio to deliver the funeral address in

<sup>834</sup> B.P. Justiniani and P. Quirini (1995), p. 41 [639]. See also David Ayalon, *The Mamluk novice: on his youthfulness and on his original religion*, in *Islam and the Abode of War. Military slaves and Islamic adversaries (Variorum Collected Studies Series)*, Farnham, Ashgate, 1994, V, pp. 1-8. In this respect see also *Relationi del S. Pietro* (1564), f. 37r.

<sup>835</sup> B.P. Justiniani and P. Quirini (1995), pp. 50-51 [645].

<sup>836</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 49 [643].

<sup>837</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 51 [645]; E. Massa (2005), pp. 314-330.

<sup>838</sup> B.P. Justiniani and P. Quirini (1995), p. 51 [645].

<sup>839</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 54 [648].

memory of his father Alvise<sup>840</sup>. Egnazio praised the intellectual achievement and the novelty value of the matters discussed (12 June 1514)<sup>841</sup>. The day after Nicola Tiepolo congratulated the authors for their treatise, praising two ideas he considered crucial: the ecumenicism and, on the top of that, the missionary preaching<sup>842</sup>. Unfortunately, the *Libellus* was not equally welcomed by the Holy See, nor its projected crusade against Turks was ever implemented.

A few years later, while the Turks were engaged with the Mamluks, a new proposition for a Christian crusade was put forward at the Fifth Lateran Council (16 March 1517)<sup>843</sup>. On 22 April the Venetian Consul in Rome, Marco Minio, informed he had had a brief meeting with the Cardinal Giulio de' Medici questioning the *Signoria's* intention about the new crusade promoted by the pope. The consul did not answer at all, perhaps because of the fact that had not received any official instruction on such matter, or just because of Venice peaceful relationship with the Porte<sup>844</sup>.

On 4 November 1517 Leo X summoned the Sacred College, and all the foreign diplomats and military strategists, in order to quicken his crusade purposes. Since Selim's recent conquests, the pope claimed, not just Italy but the all of Christendom was endangered. The time was ripe to intervene, and so the European Princes were required to join a new war against Moslems: they had to answer promptly to this new appeal providing evidence of their actual contribution<sup>845</sup>. Despite the ultimatum, Minio did not join the meeting<sup>846</sup>. On 17 November new letters arrived from Rome. The Venetian ambassador reported that a new meeting on the crusade had been summoned, and indulgences specifically devoted to the crusade were issued<sup>847</sup>. Even on that occasion he boycotted the meeting, but this time according to an explicit commission he had received from the Council of Ten<sup>848</sup>. Later on, that 17 November, Minio had a brief talk with Leo X exploiting all his diplomatic ability to advocate Venice's good inclination and loyalty. The ambassador claimed that he had not attended the meeting because Venice was at peace with Selim, reminding the

<sup>840</sup> See above p. 97.

<sup>841</sup> E. Massa (2005), p. 21.

<sup>842</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>843</sup> L. Von Pastor (1926), pp. 139-141; K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, pp. 169-170.

<sup>844</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXIV, col. 678; L. Von Pastor (1926), p. 141.

<sup>845</sup> K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, pp. 172-173.

<sup>846</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXV, col. 76.

<sup>847</sup> K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, p. 174.

<sup>848</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXV, col. 71.

Pope that Venetian territories bordered dangerously with Ottomans. In short, Venice would stand up on behalf of Christians as she had always done, but she would also stand off in case of detriment to her own interests<sup>849</sup>.

The Pope, well-aware about the Venetians' delicate diplomatic situation with the Ottomans, refrained from involving Venice directly, and so he did not send his envoy to the lagoon<sup>850</sup>. Nonetheless, during the third procession in support of the crusade Giacomo Sadoletto delivered a long speech mentioning, among others, a "laude di la Signoria nostra [...] contra il Turcho"<sup>851</sup>. Already by 23 March a letter addressed to Cristoforo Marcello, Archbishop of Corfu, informed that Sadoletto was going to publish his oration. At this point, anyway, the Venetian envoy to Rome had already instructed the Secretary of the Pope (20 March), recommending him not to release such a compromising words<sup>852</sup>. Therefore, even if the *Serenissima* had pledged time and time again her loyal engagement in the crusade, at the presence of the first official evidence she immediately denied any effective support. The Venetian relationship with the Porte was too vulnerable, and, as a consequence, the economic interests involved were too considerable.

As this discussion shows, the ideological association between trade and evangelism that had been at the heart of the Baptistery decoration in the fourteenth-century, by the beginning of sixteenth-century clashed with Venetian pragmatism. Apparently, good relationships with the infidels had priority over idealistic plans for evangelism. After all thousands of Ducats were at stake, and thus religious faith could not preclude fruitful business, no matter who the counterpart was and, notably, what he believed in. Therefore, the Venetian doge could be simultaneously addressed as an example of the Christian faith ("doge degli esempi della fede del battesimo"), as well as friend of kings and sultans ("amico dei Re et Soldani")<sup>853</sup>. Not to mention that right after the excruciating defeat of Agnadello, the *Serenissima* debated and eventually assented to Selim's offer of military assistance<sup>854</sup>. This decision was passionately

<sup>849</sup> *Ibidem*, col. 85.

<sup>850</sup> On 3 March 1518 four cardinals were sent to the most powerful states of the Christendom to promote the imminent crusade.

<sup>851</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXV, coll. 310-311, 321-322.

<sup>852</sup> *Ibidem*, coll. 321-322.

<sup>853</sup> *Viaggio di Domenico Tevisan* (1875), p. 47.

<sup>854</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. VIII, col. 509. See also: F. Seneca (1962), pp. 126-135;

advocated by supporters such as the son of the doge Lorenzo Loredan<sup>855</sup>, Marin Sanudo<sup>856</sup>, as well as few noble members of the *SGSM* such as Anzolo Malipiero “*quondam sier Thomaxo*”<sup>857</sup> and Marin Zustignan<sup>858</sup>. The Venetians, even some pious members of the *SGSM*, apparently did not notice any contradiction.

Such a dualistic behaviour, however, could not find room, at least not undisguisedly, in a place of devotion such as the *SGSM*, even less within a narrative cycle explicitly devoted to St Mark’s Christianising Egypt. Here, far away from the *Serenissima*’s Realpolitik, St Mark had still to accomplish his mission, he still had to baptise Anianus, to convert his people and lay the foundations of the Egyptian Church. The Turks might have become Venice’s new partners in Egypt, and nonetheless they still were the real threat – “*el Gran cam prenderà tuto*”, predicted the prophecy submitted by Antonio Ascarelli, a former *Guardian Grande* of the *SGSM*, to the Doge Leonardo Loredan in November 1516<sup>859</sup>. It might be too late, and nonetheless the conversion of the Mamluks, together with their consequent alliance, had to be tried in any case. At the *SGSM* the evangelism declared in the Basilica Baptistery, and fervently recommended to Leo X in the *Libellus*, was still a practicable option. The *SGSM*’s members, namely the pious repositories of St Mark’s inheritance, could still follow the example of their Holy Patron and bring Mamluks back to the true faith.

Giovanni Mansueti’s *Baptism of Anianus* (fig. 76) openly mirrors such evangelic militancy. Its iconography embraces the Baptistery’s ideological programme, engaging the mosaic in a metaphorical confrontation. In the painting, the *Mission of the Apostles* commanded by Christ from the vault of the Baptistery has become St Mark’s exclusive mission. The canvas establishes a series of iconographical exchanges with the mosaic. On one side the fulcrum of the scene, the sacred place where the baptism is administered, directly evokes the Baptistery of the Basilica itself, whereas on the other side it

Paolo Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, Firenze, Sansoni Editore, 1975, pp. 36-39.

<sup>855</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, col. 511; P. Preto (1975), p. 38.

<sup>856</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. VIII, col. 266; P. Preto (1975), pp. 37-38.

<sup>857</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. VIII, col. 284; K.M. Setton (1984), vol. III, p. 61. On Anzolo Malipiero and his family at the *SGSM* see above p. 144 note 574.

<sup>858</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. VIII, col. 548. On the membership of Marin and his relatives see ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 16v, 73v, 85r, 146v.

<sup>859</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXIII, coll. 154-155. On Ascarelli see: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 9v; ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 6 bis, ff. 3v, 9v, 16r, 25v-26r.

relocates the medieval representation of Anianus' baptism into a Renaissance Egyptian-like building. As a consequence, Mansueti's sumptuous palace takes the place of the stylized structure in the mosaic, while the medieval witness becomes a solid crowd of Mamluks ready to follow Anianus' example.

In the painting, St Mark, on behalf of his devout brothers, is carrying out Christ's order; and yet the merchant brothers of the *SGSM* are in their turn required, as it was stated on a larger-scale in the Baptistery, to follow their patron's example. In the *Sala dell'Albergo* the recipient of Christ's command is not solely the Evangelist, nor the Venetians in general, but the brothers of the *SGSM* themselves. Their trading venture in Egypt cannot be restricted to worldly profits, on the contrary such fortune has to be merited: the Mamluks, the *SGSM*'s infidel partners, must be converted to Christianity. The brethren are thus required to give their commitment, and this is what their distinguished representative on the foreground is asking for (fig. 121). Wearing a red robe with ermine-lined sleeves, what appears to be the *Guardian Grande* of the *SGSM* invites the beholder to take responsibility, he requires him to confirm the commitment and stay loyal – the same loyalty metaphorically expressed by the little dog sitting beside the *Guardian Grande*<sup>860</sup>. However arduous the task could be, the Mamluks have to be brought back to the true faith they once abandoned: “la durezza del loro cuore [and] la sozzura delle loro colpe”, their sins, have to be cleansed<sup>861</sup>. Their souls must be healed. In this respect, the figure of the *Guardian Grande* performs a precise assignment: he is in fact the rhetorical device that grants access to the subject-matter of the *Baptism*. His gesture (the right hand touching his breast, and the left one stretched toward the beholder) is an explicit invitation to the beholder to reflect and meditate upon the scene. A gesture of such a crucial relevance to be replicated by the majority of the characters surrounding the staircase. Remarkable is the case of the turbaned Mamluk placed behind the *Guardian Grande*, whose identical waving produces an intentional redundancy. Then the gesture is copied by the black-dressed brethren seated beside the staircase, and echoed by the two Mamluks placed at the bottom of the stairs.

<sup>860</sup> On the dog as symbol of loyalty in the Venetian context see Flavia Polignano, “Maliarde e cortigiane: titoli per una *damnatio*. Le *Dame* di Vittore Carpaccio”, *Venezia Cinquecento*, 2 (1992), pp. 5-24, especially pp. 16-17. See also G. Ferguson (1955), p. 15.

<sup>861</sup> B.P. Justiniani and P. Quirini (1995), p. 42 [639].

The particular gesture, its evident iteration from the *Guardian Grande* to the Mamluks far in the background, fulfils a precise function: it purposely draws the beholder's attention to the stairs where, directly beneath the baptism itself, a Mamluk is appealing to his companion at the top of the flight. These two characters, placed on the farthest steps of the staircase, reflect two antithetical attitudes: at the bottom, an encouragement to *see* the reason, and on the opposite side the *blind* reluctance to it. In the middle, imperturbable, sits a child attending to a domesticated swallow (fig. 122).

Even if unmentioned by the hagiographers of St Mark, children were integral features of the baptism both in the New Testament and, quite interestingly, at the *SGSM* itself. With regard to the latter, it is worth mentioning the public celebration of the Holy League (10 October 1511), when the members of the *SGSM* paraded through the Piazza San Marco carrying some *soleri*<sup>862</sup>. Among numerous characters allegorising the forged alliance, Sanudo's attention was attracted by the rear of the procession where, followed by Saracens, Moors and Mamluks, St Mark was portrayed while baptising a naked child ("et havia uno puto nudo davanti e lo batizava")<sup>863</sup>. An allegory, Sanudo argued, which embodied the Christian baptism itself. Thus, the *SGSM* allegorised the conversion of the Egyptian infidels by portraying their Holy Patron baptising a child. A rhetorical device whose origins went back to the Gospels. According to Christ's words children belong to the kingdom of God. Therefore, anyone who aspires to enter it must follow their example, must give up his vanity and "receive the kingdom of God as a little child"<sup>864</sup>. Even more interesting is a further passage of the Gospels, this time from Mathew (18: 1-5), where it is stated that heaven is reserved only to those who become as innocent as children, only to those who convert to childhood simplicity. As a consequence, only those who renounce worldly vanity ("humble himself as this little child") can eventually take part in "the kingdom of heaven".

Christ's words, if associated with Mansueti's painting, unveil the role of the child seated in the middle of the staircase, in fact showing to the infidels

<sup>862</sup> On the meaning of *solero* see: G. Boerio (1993), p. 671; Salvatore Battaglia, *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, Torino, Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, p. 319 with bibliography.

<sup>863</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XIII, coll. 135-136.

<sup>864</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Mark 10: 13-16. See also: Mathew 19: 13-15 and Luke 18: 15-17.

how they have to present themselves before the true God. The *Baptism of Anianus* evokes and brings to conclusion the eschatological theme suggested by the preceding *Healing*, where the infidels are required to make a decision. Their conversion, namely the denial of their vain knowledge/blindness, is the necessary first step to take toward Salvation. A Salvation only granted to those who humble themselves and repent their sins, to those who, allegorically, follow the example of the pure child and the tamed swallow<sup>865</sup>.

As stated by Rabanus Maurus, the swallow used to live and feed itself on the wing, and the creaking of its call was commonly associated with the sinner who cries for his sins; Hugh of Saint Victor did not tone down the association, since he likened the swallow to the penitent soul<sup>866</sup>. In Mansueti's *Baptism of Anianus*, however, the negative nature of the swallow is rendered ineffective by the control that the child has over the bird. The swallow, who used to live on the wing, is unexpectedly resting on the step in the painting, and accepting the supervision of the youngster. The immoderate bird, kept on a tight leash by the little boy, has been tamed: the pure soul of the child has thus subjugated the nature of the swallow. Such a semantic inversion finds the symbolism of the Saviour in its legitimation. *Physiologus*, for example, argued that the swallow gave birth only once, as "my Savior was conceived but once [...] was carried once, crucified once, and once rose from the dead"; the metaphor was then continued by quoting the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians (4: 5): "One Lord, one faith, on baptism"<sup>867</sup>. Following the baptismal symbolism, Cecco d'Ascoli explained that the swallow was also considered a symbol of the remission of sin, for it was believed to cure its offspring's blindness<sup>868</sup>. At the same time the swallow could also symbolise the Resurrection of Christ, for it was believed to survive the winter by staying hibernated in the mud, and was then reborn in the spring<sup>869</sup>. Furthermore, the healer swallow was then compared to Christ, who according to his miracles and words restored the *sight* to *blind* sinners ("che rende lo lume a li suoi

<sup>865</sup> On children symbolism in Renaissance Venice painting see: A. Gentili (1996), pp. 131-133, 190 note 12.

<sup>866</sup> Rabanus Maurus, *De Universo*, in Jacques P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 111, col. 252 A; Hugo de S. Victore, *De Bestiis et Aliis Rebus*, in Jacques P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 177, col. 42 (both mentioned in M. Levi d'Ancona (2001), p. 191).

<sup>867</sup> *Physiologus* (1979), p. 58;

<sup>868</sup> Cecco d'Ascoli, *L'Acerba*, Lib. III, Cap. IX, pp. 273-277 (mentioned in M. Levi d'Ancona (2001), p. 191).

<sup>869</sup> G. Ferguson (1955), p. 27; R. Lightbown (2004), p. 479.

filioli”; fig. 123)<sup>870</sup>.

In a context where infidels are being converted, and, what is more, in an episode preceded by a miracle where mud is used as instrument of revelation, the humble child and the tamed swallow embody a remarkable *Allegory of Salvation*: only a pure soul, who “humble[s] himself as this little child”, can be allowed to *see* the truth and “enter into the kingdom of heaven”. This, to go back to the two Mamluks arguing on the staircase, must be their bone of contention. This, evidently, is the *exemplum virtutis* shown by the white-turbaned Mamluk to the sceptic at the top of the stairs. His gesture, which reflects the one that the *Guardian Grande* is making toward the beholder, is meant to persuade his companion to *see*, to aspire to the innocence of the child, to redress his sins, and thus achieve the *sight* of the truth. What for the beholder is a thoughtful reminder, to the dubious Mamluk is on the contrary an undelayable necessity. The Mamluk’s dithering, as well as the hesitation spread among his debating companions in the vestibule, has to be overcome, it is time to rid themselves of false superstition and embrace the Christian faith.

In the *SGSM*’s cycle, forgiveness, at least in the case of Mamluks, is on hand. Following the *Libellus*, the Mamluks, even if “avviati a seguire quell’eresia e ad impegnarsi in essa”, have nonetheless the chance to be “ricondott[i] a Cristo, che ha[nn]o lasciato con l’inganno”<sup>871</sup>. The Turks, on the contrary, are inevitably excluded, and in fact their exclusion is unequivocal. The Turks do not even deserve to join the scene, their conversion is not considered. The Mamluks, on the contrary, still have the chance to follow the example of Anianus, and reject mundane aspirations. This is the purpose of Anianus’s nudity. His *previous life*, metaphorically embodied by the black tunic under his knees, has been abandoned to “receive the tunic of incorruptibility which Christ is offering” him<sup>872</sup>. The foundation stone of the Egyptian Church has thus been placed, now all the Mamluks will make their decision, for “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be

<sup>870</sup> *Il “Libro della natura degli animali” (Bestiario toscano)*, in *Bestiari Medievali*, a cura di Luigina Morini, Torino, Luigi Einaudi Editore, 1996, especially pp. 450-451.

<sup>871</sup> B.P. Justiniani and P. Quirini (1995), pp. 42 [639], 50 [645].

<sup>872</sup> See Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Ann Arbor (Michigan), Servant Book, 1956, pp. 37-38, who mentions Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homilies*, XIV, 1, 8; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catecheses*, in Jacques P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 33, 1077A; Pseudo Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, P.G. I, 401 A; Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermon against those who put off their Baptism*, in Jacques P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 46, 420 C.

damned”<sup>873</sup>.

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<sup>873</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Mark 16: 16.

### 3.V. In the Shade of the Holy Cross: *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark*

Commonly referred to as the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark*, the canvas depicts the prologue of the Evangelist's martyrdom, the hours that preceded his cruel execution (fig. 74)<sup>874</sup>. At first glance the narrative structure of the composition proves barely identifiable, since Mansueti has filled the scene with legions of colourful characters who disorient, rather than amuse, the bewildered beholder. Turbaned Mamluks cluster, argue and gesticulate vivaciously throughout the composition: many of them congregate along the available balconies that face the square, and in the middle of the earthen piazza, among armed horsemen and wild animals, Mamluks and *SGSM*'s members are competing for the limelight. Once the beholder has penetrated into the bustle of the main square and forced his way through the crowd, his disorientation unfortunately does not dispel. The composition, unexpectedly, is organized contrary to (Western) common sense, thus obliging the perplexed spectator to follow an anticlockwise reading. Accordingly, at the extreme right of the composition the first episode is staged in the shade of a sumptuous *aedicule*, where the sultan is portrayed commanding the arrest of St Mark. Simultaneously, in the middle of the canvas, a group of resolute Mamluk soldiers carry out the sultan's order: the Evangelist, caught at the altar of a majestic Christian church, is being arrested amidst the general bewilderment of his followers. Then, finally, facing the sultan's *maştaba*, Christ and an angel are paying a visit to the prisoner before the stunned eyes of his Mamluk warder.

Although undoubtedly chaotic, the painting follows a precise course of events. The beholder is therefore required to sharpen his wits and detect the numerous signs that Mansueti has concealed in the multitude; he is required, in other words, to locate a series of characters purposely placed by the artist to attract and usher the spectator through the crowd. The first of them is located in the middle of the piazza, behind the *SGSM*'s members who crowd in the foreground (fig. 124). Wearing a golden cloth covered by a sleeveless black overgarment, a white-turbaned Mamluk is waving to attract our attention. His

<sup>874</sup> S. Miller (1978), pp. 85-90. On the painting see also: S. Moschini Marconi (1955), pp. 137-138; J. Raby (1982), pp. 35, 44-45, 52-53; P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 225-242; P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 197-203; D. Howard (2005), p. 24; C. Schmidt Arcangeli (2006), p. 129.

eyes, frankly gazing outward, engage the beholder directly, whereas his left hand asks us to give ear to the words of the sultan under the *aedicule*. An invitation repeated by his blonde Venetian neighbour wearing fashionable multicoloured stockings. Once he is attracted to the scene of the *Conviction*, the beholder is instructed to turn his eyes away and focus on the church far in the background. His attention is drawn to a red-dressed Mamluk on horseback, who is theatrically encouraging his blue-turbaned companion to observe the *Arrest of St Mark* occurring in front of the high altar (fig. 125). The enactment eventually ends at the extreme left of the canvas, where the scene of the *Visitation* is staged. This time the beholder, still astonished by the ignoble brutality suffered by St Mark, needs emphatic encouragement to move on, to forgive the insult, and thus Mansueti has situated a group of ushers acting in concert. It is the case of the archer and his turbaned companion placed at the feet of the church stairs (fig. 126): the latter miming our surprise in front of the *Arrest*, and the former encouraging us to get ourselves together and head for St Mark's prison. An invitation finally reiterated by the turbaned rider seated on a runaway horse (fig. 127).

The analysis of Mansueti's oeuvre has already highlighted his predilection for gesticulating characters. In the specific case of the *Three Episodes*, however, we have to admit that the painter has made a remarkable use of this repertoire, entrusting the characters with a performative function targeted to draw the beholder across the sequence of the scenes. The role of the characters, far from being even remotely decorative, is of prime importance to keep pace with the ongoing stories, especially in a painting unexpectedly organised in an anticlockwise order. A function not unknown in Renaissance Venice painting, but which nonetheless had its roots in theatrical performances where figures such as the *didascali* (or *coraghi*) were used to make sure that the public could follow the scenes<sup>875</sup>.

There is no evidence to prove that Mansueti designed a pictorial version of a miracle play, nor, as in the case of Vittore Carpaccio's *Cycle of St Ursula*, can we recognize among the countless characters any member of a *Compagnia della Calza*<sup>876</sup> (the only figure wearing multicoloured stocking, and vaguely

<sup>875</sup> L. Zorzi (1988), pp. 46-49. See also M. Baxandall (1988), especially pp. 71-73 about the role of *festaiuolo*.

<sup>876</sup> See above p. 107 note 414.

acting as a *didascalo*, must be identified as an ordinary Venetian youth, and not as a member of the *Calza*)<sup>877</sup>. However, it is worth remembering that some of the most distinguished brethren of the *SGSM* joined the *Compagnie della Calza* during their youth. This is the case of Sebastiano Contarini, who on his wedding launched the *Compagnia dei Contenti*<sup>878</sup>, or of Vittore Ziliol and Piero Olivieri, who joined the *Compagnia dei Concordi*<sup>879</sup>. It is also well-known that Vittore Ziliol, who had studied music while attending seminary, was very keen on sumptuous processions that commonly paraded with extravagant tableaux vivant. This interest was also shared by Antonio di Maistri, the *Guardian Grande* who commissioned Mansueti's *Three Episodes* and who, at the same time, increased the number of singers and musicians involved in the processions<sup>880</sup>. If, therefore, the painting did not explicitly visualize a miracle play, it would be highly plausible that Mansueti's imagery, as well as that of his donors, was influenced by the theatrical events that in those years animated the Venetian *campi, calli* and palaces. It is highly plausible, in other words, that a painting featuring three distinct episodes happening simultaneously in a fictional piazza could be modelled on stage sets and scenery designed for the contemporary *momarie* (mumming)<sup>881</sup>.

At least two characters demonstrate Mansueti's reference to the plays. I have already stressed how a few *didascali*, placed in the crowded piazza, were employed to direct the viewer attention to the three main scenes. According to Zorzi, by the beginning of the sixteenth-century the *didascalo* was required to read aloud the scrolls bearing the title of the venues where the scenes were staged, and developed into a sort of "didascalia vivente" that physically replaced the caption itself<sup>882</sup>. And I believe that there is no need to emphasize how a Mamluk drawing attention to a scene featuring the condemnation of St Mark by the Mamluk sultan exactly fulfils this role. However, the

<sup>877</sup> *Degli Habiti* (1590), f. 47r. See also: D. Davanzo Poli (2001), pp. 61-62, ill. 26.

<sup>878</sup> On Sebastiano Contarini's membership see: ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 131r. On the *Compagnia dei Contenti* see: *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. VI, coll. 99-100.

<sup>879</sup> See above p. 106 note 413.

<sup>880</sup> See above pp. 108-110.

<sup>881</sup> There is no room, unfortunately, to dwell on such a fascinating theme. However, numerous passages of Sanudo's *Diarii* provide descriptions of *momarie* easily associable with Giovanni Mansueti's imagery: *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. IV, col. 297; vol. XVI, coll. 206-207; vol. XIX, col. 441; vol. XXIII, col. 583; XXVI, col. 482; vol. XXIX, coll. 253-255. See also: *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo*, fondata da Silvio d'Amico, vol. IX, Roma, Casa Editrice Le Maschere, p. 1533-1534; M.T. Muraro (1981), pp. 338-339; L. Zorzi (1988), p. 49-52.

<sup>882</sup> L. Zorzi (1988), p. 49.

“conservative” Mansueti also reverted to the use of scrolls: one was placed in the hands of the visiting Christ, and another was shown by a little Mamluk boy nearby St Mark’s jail (figs. 128-129). Mansueti was no stranger to the use of such outdated devices, and in fact numerous instances can be discerned in his contemporary *Healing of Aninanus*<sup>883</sup>. It is nonetheless remarkable that in the *Visitation* Christ performs simultaneously as actor and *didascalo* of the final act, whereas the Mamluk child – again following theatrical praxis<sup>884</sup> – is used to highlight Mansueti’s signature.

### ***The Conviction***

According to Metafraste, on 24 April, the same day that the Egyptians used to sacrifice to the Alexandrine God Serapis, a handful of corrupt men captured St Mark while celebrating Easter mass<sup>885</sup>. Mansueti had therefore no choice with regards to the date, and, although only briefly mentioned by the hagiographer, the ignoble order of the sultan had to be represented. At the *SGSM* the *blindness* of the Egyptian ruler, his unwise judgement, had to be denounced. In accordance with the ideological re-contextualization of the narrative cycle, Mansueti therefore relocated the setting of the *Conviction* to the Mamluk Court (fig. 130).

In the shade of a porched *aedicule* bearing Mamluk-like emblems, we can observe the horn-turbaned sultan portrayed while delivering the decree to an emissary. Three counsellors are placed behind their sovereign, and two of them even dare to stare, shamelessly, at the astonished beholder. All around bearded Mamluks are shown while paying attention to, or even taking note of, the unjustified decision. Others, finally, are sitting exhausted on the platform awaiting their turn to speak with the sultan.

Iconographically, Mansueti’s *Conviction* follows Carpaccio’s *English Ambassadors Taking Leave* depicted for the cycle in the nearby *Scuola di Sant’Orsola* (fig. 131). In both pictures the ambassador/emissary, hierarchically placed at the feet of the throne, is accepting his commitment by raising his palms, and the chancellor is minuting the decree and a few

<sup>883</sup> S. Miller (1978), p. 90, provides transcriptions of the *cartellino*, of a Latin inscription at the feet of St Mark, and of a further inscription located on Anianus’ tool-box.

<sup>884</sup> L. Zorzi (1988), p. 45.

<sup>885</sup> Symeon the Metaphrast, *Martyrium sancti Marci*, col.167.

councillors are witnessing the event from behind their sovereign. This representation followed the formalities then in vogue, or at least their external features. Fortini Brown has demonstrated how the Venetians' imagery of the Levant was based upon colourful accounts provided by Venetian merchants and pilgrims. More precisely, her study has demonstrated how distinguished members of the *SGSM* (Josafat Barbaro), or eminent nobles of the *Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista* (Andrea Dario), were able to provide a series of vivid accounts that surely slaked the lively mind and curiosity of their hungry audience<sup>886</sup>.

In the previous chapter, I have established that the majority of the *SGSM*'s ruling class was made up of a community of merchants who directly traded with the Levant, and who had a precise knowledge of it. It is now possible to add a couple of case studies to these accounts, in order to deepen our understanding of the *SGSM*'s actual knowledge of Egypt. Two examples demonstrate how the *SGSM* was joined by men who were familiar not only with the Egyptian markets, but even with the Mamluk Court. Two men of different extraction whose personal experience of the Mamluk society was put at the *Serenissima*'s service in a series of diplomatic and spying missions.

On 27 June 1504 the Council of Ten decreed, in strict confidence, to send Francesco Teldi to Cairo<sup>887</sup>. Teldi, a member of the *SGSM* since 1492<sup>888</sup>, was a jeweller familiar with Cairo. He was so used to the city, that when Francesco II Gonzaga asked the apostolic protonotary Lodovico Agnello to find someone who might provide him with a view of Cairo, it transpired that Francesco Teldi was the most suitable<sup>889</sup>. In 1504, however, Teldi's knowledge of Cairo was used for different purposes. The Republic required him to travel under cover and pretend to carry out his habitual business<sup>890</sup>; no one, not even

<sup>886</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 126-130.

<sup>887</sup> ASVe, Consiglio dei Dieci, Misti, no. 30, f. 49 (24 May 1504); P. Brummett (1994), pp. 34-35.

<sup>888</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 50v.

<sup>889</sup> Jurgen Schulz, "Jacopo de' Barbari's View of Venice: Map Making, City Views, and Moralized Geography before the Year 1500", *The Art Bulletin*, 60 (1978), p. 466 note 144; Molly Bourne, "Francesco II Gonzaga and Maps as Palace Decoration in Renaissance Mantua", *Imago Mundi*, 51 (1999), pp. 51-82, especially p. 78 doc. 24.

<sup>890</sup> Louis De Mas-Latrie, *Traité de Paix et de Commerce et Documents Divers concernant les Relations des Chrétiens avec les Arabes de l'Afrique Septentrionale au Moyen Age*, Paris, Henri Plon Imprimeur-Éditeur, 1896, pp. 259-263 doc. XXI; S. Romanin (1972-75), pp. 388-391 doc. VIII.

Venetian rectors, knew his real intention<sup>891</sup>. Teldi was required to meet, secretly, the Mamluk sultan to discuss urgent spice trade issues. Threatened by the new Portuguese's routes to the Indies, Venice needed to persuade the Mamluks to increase the amount of spices annually brought to Cairo in order to defeat, or at least weaken, the thriving Portuguese's trade<sup>892</sup>. Unfortunately Teldi never reached Cairo, for by the time he was appointed he fell ill, and so the Council of Ten chose in his place Bernardino Giova (11 June 1504)<sup>893</sup>.

The second case, the well-known mission of Domenico Trevisan in Egypt, deserves to be discussed here in the light of the latest evidence. Fortini Brown, among others, has stressed the relevance of Zaccaria Pagani's account of the mission, and his descriptions of major Mamluk sites<sup>894</sup>. However, Pagani's report, together with the letters written by the ambassador's son Marco Antonio Trevisan, do not only describe a sojourn in the Mamluk Court, but the visit of one of the most distinguished members of the *SGSM*<sup>895</sup>. Domenico Trevisan's mission, beside its remarkable diplomatic success, allows us to see the Mamluks through the eyes of a *SGSM* member, to understand the actual information that nourished the imagery of the brethren.

On 1512 Domenico Trevisan was sent to Egypt in order to resolve the so-called *Zen Affair*<sup>896</sup>. On 7 May 1512 Trevisan entered Cairo, and soon after Kansuh al-Ghuri granted him a series of audiences to resume negotiations. The description of the first audience (10 May) provides countless details of the Sultan's luxurious citadel. Trevisan and his following had to go through four consecutive doors and squares before they could meet, seated "sopra un Mastabe", the Admiral of the Castle<sup>897</sup>. Henceforth, before he could present himself to the sultan, Trevisan had to cross no less than "cinque porte colle sue piazze" in order to reach the last crowded square, a vast courtyard "maggiore assai della piazza di San Marco", where Kansuh al-Ghuri was sitting on his

<sup>891</sup> S. Romanin (1972-75), pp. 388-391 doc. VIII.

<sup>892</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>893</sup> Rinaldo Fulin, "Il Canale di Suez e la Repubblica di Venezia (1504)", *Archivio Veneto*, 2 (1871), pp. 194, 210-211 doc. VI. According to P. Brummett (1994), pp. 34-35, 193 note 18, Teldi went to Cairo and fulfilled his appointment, however she does not corroborate her argument with any documentation.

<sup>894</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 206-207; P. Brummett (1994), pp. 40-43; M.A. Shenouda (2009), pp. 72-73. D. Howard (2006 b), pp. 72-89, especially pp. 84-86.

<sup>895</sup> On his membership see above p. 141 note 560.

<sup>896</sup> F. Lucchetta (1968), pp. 109-219; C. Campbell (2011), pp. 83-101.

<sup>897</sup> *Viaggio di Domenico Tevisan* (1875), p. 21.

*maṣṭaba*<sup>898</sup>. According to the importance of the event, the sultan was wearing his enormous horned turban, and behind him stood twenty admirals who wore white suit and horned turbans and assisted the ceremony<sup>899</sup>. Further accounts describe in detail the specific throne of the Mamluk sultan. On 12 May the Tervisan was invited to the second audience, this time given privately in the “giardino del Soldano” near the hippodrome. On this occasion Kansuh al-Ghuri reclined on a white cushion under a loggia supported by stone columns, and covered with lush vegetation and curtains<sup>900</sup>. On another occasion (20 March 1512), Trevisan was summoned to a wide courtyard beside the Citadel: Kansuh al-Ghuri, wearing a white suit and his horned turban, was seated on a high *maṣṭaba* surrounded by his admiral, *diodar* and influential officers<sup>901</sup>.

The vivid reports of both Pagani and Trevisan’s son provide a fair idea of the account that Domenico Trevisan most likely delivered to his brothers of the *SGSM*. We can speculate that his tales were filled with colourful details, providing information on the crowded squares and courtyards he had come through, on the size and shape of the numerous *maṣṭaba* he had seen, and also on how the sultan and his officials were dressed during official meetings. On the other side Teldi, although he did not have the chance to fulfil his delicate mission, must be regarded as a priceless mine of information, and his expertise was reported even in Rome. Both cases have relevant ramifications. First of all Teldi’s mission demonstrates, beyond all doubt, that the *SGSM*’s membership, even the citizen component, was highly sensitive, if not personally involved, in the economic troubles that were challenging Venice’s survival. The declining of Venice’s spice trade necessarily affected all the Venetian merchants, whether patricians or citizens. At the same time, both cases prove that the *SGSM* had detailed and extensive knowledge of Mamluk society. By the time Gentile Bellini initiated the *SGSM*’s narrative cycle his awareness of the Ottoman Court could be helpful, but not strictly necessary to provide a reliable portrayal of Egypt. He could, as suggested elsewhere, even turn to Breydenbach’s *Peregrinationes* to design Alexandria<sup>902</sup>, and yet Teldi’s detailed knowledge of

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<sup>898</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 22.

<sup>899</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>900</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27; *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XV, col. 198.

<sup>901</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XV, col. 199; K.M. Setton (1984), p. 31.

<sup>902</sup> J. Raby (1992), p. 41; C. Schmidt Arcangeli (2006), p. 128.

the Egyptian capital was surely incomparable, undoubtedly better than any second-hand description; whereas Trevisan's accounts were certainly not inferior, on the contrary they were even more up to date.

However that might be, since the very beginning of the cycle the Evangelist's mission was set in a place similar to Mamluk Egypt. Gentile Bellini, for instance, designed a fictional church halfway between a pagan temple and the Basilica di San Marco (fig. 72)<sup>903</sup>. Giovanni Bellini and Vittore Belliniano even dared to set the *Martyrdom* in an imaginary Egyptian Ancona (fig. 73), whereas Mansueti's extravagant constructions had surely little in common with Mamluk architecture (figs. 74-76). According to Raby, the Mamluk blazons depicted by the *orientalist painters* who worked at the *Sala dell'Albergo* were mere variations of a single prototype borrowed from the Louvre *Reception*<sup>904</sup>. What Raby could not know, however, is that the *Reception* was executed in 1511, instead<sup>905</sup>. The fact that even Gentile Bellini designed, before the *Reception* was commissioned, a "ludicrous distortion of the original"<sup>906</sup>, demonstrates that accuracy was not at the top of his agenda, nor was it in the *SGSM's* mind. The Mamluk-like emblems, in other words, were not depicted to represent a reliable portrayal of contemporary Egypt, but were merely employed to convey a Mamluk guise. This is the case, for instance, in Mansueti's *Conviction*, where the *aedicule*, although quite similar to the *maṣṭaba* described by Pagani ("tuta in colone atorno atorno")<sup>907</sup>, is nothing more than a Western revisitation of an exotic structure, whereas the emblems are exaggeration of the model<sup>908</sup>. Evidently, the narrative cycle depicting St Mark's mission in Egypt at the *SGSM* did not have to provide a realistic image of the Mamluk Court. The Egyptian infidels, even if portrayed in a fictitious setting, were the subject of St Mark's evangelism. Their peculiar garments, so minutely described by Mansueti, allowed the beholder to identify the infidels, whether they were Mamluks or Turks. Garments, according to Bronwen Wilson, were "charged with articulating geographical differences",

<sup>903</sup> I. Botti (1992), p. 40, 43-45; D. Rosand (2001), pp. 76-77; D. Howard (2005), p. 24; M.A. Shenouda (2009), pp. 85, 91-99.

<sup>904</sup> J. Raby (1982), pp. 49-53. See also R.E. Mack (2002), pp. 161-162.

<sup>905</sup> D. Howard (2006 b), p. 84.

<sup>906</sup> J. Raby (1982), p. 52.

<sup>907</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XV, col. 198. See also *Viaggio di Domenico Tevisan* (1875), p. 27.

<sup>908</sup> J. Raby (1982), p. 52.

the “extraordinary sartorial display [...] provided the means to distinguish between bodies, to highlight cultural differences”<sup>909</sup>. Mamluks and Turks were thus easily recognizable even if portrayed within an imagined, unrealistic Alexandria.

In the opinion of Howard, *emulatio* rather than *imitatio* had characterized the Venetians’ imagery since the decoration of St Mark’s shrine<sup>910</sup>. The *SGSM*’s narrative cycle, whose iconographical root must be traced back to the same mosaics, thus reinvented the urban appearance of Alexandria by creating a new Venetian version<sup>911</sup>. As Fortini Brown put it, the result was not “what Venetians saw, but what they wished to see”<sup>912</sup>. Venice, the new Alexandria, was thus turned into the sacred city where St Mark’s relics had always belonged<sup>913</sup>. This theme, St Mark’s *praedestinatio*, intimately informed the meaning of the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark*.

### ***The Arrest***

In the middle of the canvas, within a Christian church packed with converted Mamluks, a handful of soldiers are furiously assaulting St Mark at the altar (fig. 132). The wretched Saint has been surrounded and immobilized, some of his tormentors are shoving him while another has even raised his fist in a fit of hatred. Despite the ferocity of the attack the audience is surprisingly unperturbed: the women, on the right, observe the shameful arrest quite passively, whereas on the left a faltering protest is nipped in the bud – the reinforcements, after all, are surely about to intervene. Even more unexpected is St Mark’s serene reaction: the Evangelist does not try to put up any resistance, he does not even tense at the outrage, on the contrary he offers himself docilely to his persecutors.

It is not by accident that the *Arrest of St Mark* is set at the foot of a *Crucifixion* altarpiece, nor is St Mark’s pliable posture casual at all (fig. 133). As in the case of Bellini’s *Martyrdom*, the iconography of the *Arrest* is derived from the mosaics of the Cappella Zen (1270s) in the Basilica di San Marco

<sup>909</sup> B. Wilson (2003), p. 38.

<sup>910</sup> D. Howard (2000), pp. 66.

<sup>911</sup> C. Schmidt Arcangeli (2006), p. 126; M.A. Shenouda (2009), pp. 84-99, especially 98-99.

<sup>912</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 240.

<sup>913</sup> D. Rosand (2001), pp. 76-77; D. Howard (2005), p. 24.

(fig. 94)<sup>914</sup>. There the Evangelist is portrayed in front of the altar while celebrating Holy Communion: the pair of goblets – holding the *blood* and the *body* of Christ respectively – together with the Gospel and the white cross synthesize the sacramental renewal of Christ's sacrifice<sup>915</sup>. In Mansueti's painting, however, another token of selflessness is about to be consummated. St Mark's hands are raised up, the palms turned outward to demonstrate his conscious acceptance of God's will<sup>916</sup>.

Although the Cappella Zen was the iconographic prototype, Mansueti did not avoid vying with it. According to the fact that the *Arrest* had to be seen from outside the church, and, what is more, considering that it was conceived as the narrative heart of the composition, Mansueti had necessarily to rework the Medieval model. And yet neither the arrest, nor the Eucharistic sacrifice could be left aside. Mansueti's St Mark had therefore to bend the rules, and turn his back on the high altar. This deviation from the iconographic model allowed the painter to create a visual relationship between the ministrant (St Mark) and the Eucharist (the *Crucifixion*) by placing the Evangelist at the foot of the cross imitating the example provided by the crucified Saviour. Such a solution allowed Mansueti to hide the altar behind the *Arrest*, but not to neglect the Eucharistic sacrifice towering above the tabernacle itself. Incidentally, the *Arrest* also created a direct association with the devout beholder, who was explicitly required to recognize and follow, although only spiritually, St Mark's *exemplum*. In the painting St Mark does not pay any attention to his persecutors. His eyes are fastened outward, frankly engaging the pious beholder. The representation of his tame, and yet noble, composure thus served as an example to his devout brothers: the aim of a good Christian, it was visually stated, was the altar and the victim, it was Christ himself. St Mark's figure, in other words, functioned as a visual intercessor between the brethren and Christ's sacrifice.

Through a series of visual reference between St Mark and the *Crucifixion* behind him, Mansueti engaged the beholder personally, he

<sup>914</sup> O. Demus (1984), vol. II (*Text*), pp. 185-191.

<sup>915</sup> *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, vol. VIII, pp. 758, 774.

<sup>916</sup> His posture could also evoke the gesture commonly made by ministrants during mass celebrations, see: Galit Noga-Banai, *The Trophies of the Martyrs. An Art Historical Study of Early Christian Silver Reliquaries*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 73 note 47; Chiara Frugoni, *La voce delle immagini. Pillole iconografiche dal Medioevo*, Torino, Giulio Einaudi Editore, 2010, pp. 94, fig. 87-88.

encouraged the pious brethren to imitate their Holy Patron, to identify themselves with the Saint in his hour of need. In the *Three Episodes* the imitation of the Evangelist led to the direct contemplation of the cross, the contemplation of the extreme sacrifice offered to Christianity. And as a matter of fact Christ's sacrifice was so deeply-rooted in the *SGSM's* religious beliefs, that low-reliefs portraying brothers at the feet of the cross were sculpted in the lateral façade of the confraternity itself (fig. 134). Ever since the guardianship of Bernardino de Grassi (1498), the *SGSM* has treasured a relic of the true cross brought from Constantinople by the devoted brother Ambrogio Contarini<sup>917</sup>. It might not be as miraculous as the one owned by the *Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista*, yet monthly celebrations were held in 1505 to venerate it<sup>918</sup>, not to mention that it was proudly paraded during the celebrations of the Holy League in 1511<sup>919</sup>. It can thus be argued that the *Crucifixion* depicted behind St Mark was much more than a standard altarpiece embellishing the apse, on the contrary it had a series of symbolic functions: it evoked the impending martyrdom of the Evangelist and also, simultaneously, the spiritual goal to which all the brethren were required to aspire. An invitation to a salvific sacrifice that, once again, originated in the mosaic decoration of the Basilica Baptistery.

While discussing Mansueti's *Baptism of Anianus*, I have shown how the main theme of the composition was based upon the order that Christ delivered from the vault of the Baptistery. The Baptism, according to the Venetian political and religious ideology of the thirteenth-century, was thus a dynamic sacrament: the neophyte was explicitly required to meet people and disseminate the Word<sup>920</sup>. The example to follow, evidently, was St Mark himself: it was the Evangelist, after all, who Christ indicated in the Baptistery vault. Nonetheless, the Baptistery vault contained a further message to the baptised.

As Timothy Verdon has demonstrated, among the disciples the figure of James the Less, and the peculiar cross-like font beside him, showed where the

<sup>917</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1987), pp. 199-200. On Ambrogio Contarini's membership see: ASVe, SGSM, Reg. 4, f. 17.

<sup>918</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1987), p. 200-201. See also ASVe, SGSM, reg. 17, f. 27, and Reg. 75, f. 16v.

<sup>919</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XIII, col. 135.

<sup>920</sup> D. Pincus (1996), pp. 459-473.

salvation offered to the neophytes had come from (fig. 120)<sup>921</sup>. Interestingly, the shape of James' baptismal font is based upon a peculiar cross typology that illustrates, literally, St Paul's epistle to the Romans:

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection [...] For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in death he liveth, he lieveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our God”<sup>922</sup>.

In the Baptistery the salvific regeneration of the neophyte is thus intimately related to the extreme sacrifice of the cross. The vault shows the resurrected Christ, with his victorious vexillum, ordering the apostles to preach and convert the people of the world, whereas on the wall in front of it, just upon the altar, a great *Crucifixion* is being contemplated by the kneeling doge Andrea Dandolo (fig. 135)<sup>923</sup>. Here the doge, whose sarcophagus was located nearby, follows the Pauline letter: having being baptised in Christ's death, Dandolo asks to take part to the Resurrection.<sup>924</sup>

In Mansueti's *Three Episodes* the same request unfolds before the eyes of the beholder. As repeatedly stated, the narrative cycle displays the mission of the Evangelist from his miraculous signs (the *Healing of Anianus*) to his forceful preaching (the *Preaching of St Mark*) until the ultimate conversion of the idolaters (the *Baptism of Anianus*)<sup>925</sup>. In the middle of the *Three Episodes*, the Egyptian neophytes have eventually gathered to attend Easter mass, to take part in the mystery of Christ's Resurrection and join the salvific revivification. By attending Easter mass the Egyptians are therefore called to relive the sacrifice and the resurrection of the Son of God: the Eucharist, metaphorically represented by the *Crucifixion* behind St Mark, finds its coherent peak in the

<sup>921</sup> The following section is based upon T. Verdon (1993), pp. 81-87.

<sup>922</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Romans 6: 3-11.

<sup>923</sup> Debra Pincus, *The Tombs of the Doges of Venice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 134.

<sup>924</sup> T. Verdon (1993), p. 82. See also Jules Cambier, *La libertà dei battezzati*, in *Triduo pasquale/3 Venerdì Santo, Sabato santo e Domenica di Pasqua*, Brescia, Queriniana, 1970, pp. 71-80.

<sup>925</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Mark 16: 15-17.

paschal celebrations, the ritual commemoration of Christ's victory over the death.

Ever since the origins of Christianity the paschal mystery was interwoven with baptism, which in turn symbolized the mystical transition of the neophyte from the death of sin to new life (Romans 6: 5)<sup>926</sup>. Furthermore, as from the fourth-century baptism was commonly celebrated during the night between Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday<sup>927</sup>, and, since the beginning of Lent, those who were going to receive baptism were commonly known as *photizomemioi* ("those who are coming into the light")<sup>928</sup> – the same *light*, evidently, which was disclosed to the *blind* infidels in Mansueti's *Healing of Anianus*. Even more interestingly, the ritual that preceded the Baptism in the night of the Holy Saturday symbolically lay in the repudiation of Satan<sup>929</sup>. Accordingly, in Mansueti's *Baptism*, once taken into the Baptistery Anianus divested himself of "his last attachments to things here below" in order to "receive the tunic of incorruptibility" offered by Christ<sup>930</sup>. During the Baptism, in other words, the neophyte symbolically got rid of Satan's control over him, as Christ had done through his Crucifixion<sup>931</sup>.

The Venetians, in this respect, did not make exceptions, and in fact spiritual illumination and promised regeneration deeply informed State ceremonies. During the night of Holy Saturday the *Serenissima Signoria* joined "la cerimonia della benediction della fonte"<sup>932</sup>. The ceremony, performed by the highest authorities of the Venetian Church, is accurately described by Giovanni Battista Pace's *Cerimoniale Magnum*, where it is observed how benediction was commonly followed by the rite of the baptism itself<sup>933</sup>. A liturgical

<sup>926</sup> *Rito dell'Iniziazione Cristiana degli adulti*, Roma, Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1978, p. 19.

<sup>927</sup> J. Daniélou (1956), p. 19.

<sup>928</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>929</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26; see also Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catecheses*, coll. 1068-1069.

<sup>930</sup> J. Daniélou (1956), pp. 37-38, mentioning: Pseudo Dionysius's *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and Gregory of Nyssa's *Sermon against those who put off their Baptism*.

<sup>931</sup> J. Daniélou (1956), p. 38.

<sup>932</sup> *Vita di S. Marco Evangelista, Protettore Invitissimo della Serenissima Repubblica di Venetia: Con la Traslatione, & Apparitione Del Sacro suo Corpo; Fatta nella Nobilissima Chiesa, al nome suo dedicata. Opera scritta già, & divisa in III. Libri da Giovanni Stringa di essa Chiesa Canonico, & Maestro delle Ceremonie. Con una breve Descrizione di detta Chiesa; & delle cose più notabili, che vi si contengono, posta in fine, & separatamente.* In Venetia, per Francesco Rampazzetto. M.D.C.X., f. 14v; F. Sansovino and G. Martinioni (1663), p. 521. See also: John Bettley, "The Office of Holy Week at St Mark's, Venice, in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the musical contribution of Giovanni Croce", *Early Music*, XXII/1 (1994), pp. 45-60; *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, vol. IX, p. 898.

<sup>933</sup> Giovanni Battista Pace, *Cerimoniale Magnum, Raccolta universale di tutte le cerimonie*

procedure practised even nowadays by the Catholic Church in the event of the baptism of adults.<sup>934</sup>

As demonstrated, in Venice the rite of Baptism was directly associated with Paschal celebrations and, as a consequence, the rebirth of the neophyte was in turn intended as the prelude to the promised resurrection through the crucifixion of Christ. Such salvific symbolism, so openly revealed by the Venetian liturgical praxis, could not be unknown to the members of the *SGSM*, since all the *Scuole Grandi* had to take part in the celebrations of Holy Week<sup>935</sup>. Baptism and Easter, illumination and resurrection, were therefore themes familiar to the *SGSM*'s members who surely understood the symbolic ramifications of an episode, the *Arrest of St Mark*, that so providently occurred during the celebration of Easter mass. Its representation, in other words, could not leave anything unexpressed.

In Mansueti's *Arrest of St Mark* (fig. 132) the vocation of the neophyte reverberates through the entire composition, and, notably, it purposely establishes a special relationship with the beholder. The community gathered to commemorate the Resurrection of Christ is in fact the same community of neophytes who wisely followed Anianus' example; the same community of redeemed who, having been baptised in the death of Christ, now wishes to join his revivification. The Mamluks, converted to Christian faith according to St Mark's miracles and preaching, are thus admitted to the mystery of the Resurrection of Christ, to the prophesied Salvation of the believers. At the same time, however, the mystagogic message of the *Arrest of St Mark* is not designed to teach Mamluks who, evidently, could not have access to the *Sala dell'Albergo*. The message is instead addressed to the *SGSM*'s membership. St Mark's example, his conscious acceptance of the supreme sacrifice, is conceived to urge the brethren to pursue the vocation they all agreed to at the time of their baptism: the rejection of their worldly sins and the mystical ascension to the Cross "for if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection"<sup>936</sup>.

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*spettanti alla Ducal Regia Cappella di S. Marco, alla persona del Serenissimo, de Eccellentissimi Procuratori, et circa il suonar del Campanile, MDCLXXVIII, BNM, ms. Cl. It. VII, 369 (=7423), pp. 48-49.*

<sup>934</sup> *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, vol. II, p. 1034; *Rito dell'Iniziazione* (1978), pp. 19-23.

<sup>935</sup> F. Sansovino and G. Martinioni (1663), p. 520; J. Glixon (2003), pp. 44.

<sup>936</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Romans 6: 5.

### *The Visitation*

After being captured and ignobly dragged around the roads, St Mark was put in prison to wait for his execution. It was midnight when the city was hit by an earthquake and an angel appeared to the Evangelist carrying a message<sup>937</sup>. The angel's words encouraged the listless Evangelist. His mission, the divine messenger said, was going to end gloriously: his martyrdom was in the offing, soon his soul would be brought to Heaven and his body, his relics, would not be wasted either. St Mark's joy was irrepressible, he raised his hands to the heavens to give thanks to the Lord and express his gratitude. Suddenly Christ appeared in the likeness of his human nature; prophetic words were uttered with solemnity: "Pax tibi, Marce evangelista meus"<sup>938</sup>.

Mansueti's *Visitation* captures the moment when St Mark receives Christ's salute (fig. 136). The angel, devotedly flanking the Son of God, has already delivered his message, the Evangelist has already been informed of his glorious destiny. The scene thus portrays Christ's confirmation, and in this respect the scroll, although blank nowadays, must have expressed in writing the dialogue in progress<sup>939</sup>. Accordingly, the peculiar iconography of Christ – his right hand raised with both the annular and the little finger bent<sup>940</sup> – demonstrates that he is the one who has taken the floor: "Pace be with you, Mark, my evangelist".

To the eyes of the *SGSM*'s members, Christ's words immediately recalled a pivotal episode in the Venetian mythology: the *Dream-Vision of St Mark in the Venetian Lagoon*. According to the mosaic inscription of the Cappella Zen, which we consider the earliest description of the subject, an angel announced to the Evangelist how his body was predestinated to rest in Venice (fig. 137)<sup>941</sup>. The prophecy, commonly known as St Mark's *praedestinatio*, was soon versified by Martino da Canal in his *Cronaca* (1267-1275)<sup>942</sup>. Martino da Canal provides a series of precise items of information. St Mark, it is said, had his vision on his way to Rome, just after having left

<sup>937</sup> Symeon the Metaphrast, *Martyrium sancti Marci*, coll. 167-170.

<sup>938</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>939</sup> S. Miller (1978), p. 111 note 90.

<sup>940</sup> C. Frugoni (2010), pp. 67-87.

<sup>941</sup> O. Demus (1984), vol. II (Text), pp. 186-187. See also: G. Pavanello (1928), pp. 312-313.

<sup>942</sup> "Cronaca Veneta del maestro Martino da Canale dall'origine della città sino all'anno MCCLXXV tratta da un codice della Biblioteca Riccardiana per cura di Filippo-Luigi Polidori con la versione italiana del conte Giovanni Galvani", *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 8 (1845), pp. 229-776, especially pp. 671-673 (CCCXVII).

Aquileia. More precisely, the angel appeared to the Evangelist when his boat reached Venice: “Qui poserà il tuo corpo ed avrai tua magione”. By the fourteenth-century Andrea Dandolo enlarged the narrative of the legend and established, once and for all, St Mark’s *praedestinatio*<sup>943</sup>. While waiting nearby “Rivoaltus” island for a storm to stop, an angel paid visit to the Evangelist in dream, predicting his future martyrdom: “Pax tibi Marce, hic requiescet corpus tuum”. St Mark’s return to Venice, however, would not occur before the Evangelist had honoured Christ’s command to preach the gospel to every creature.

In Mansueti’s *Visitation* the mission is about to end: although legions of infidels were convinced and converted, the unbelieving have arrested and tortured the Evangelist. Now, in the throes of despondency, while awaiting his death sentence, the prophesy is pronounced anew. At first the angel assures St Mark that his body would never perish (“et reliquiae tuae in terris non peribunt”)<sup>944</sup>, thus confirming the words pronounced during the storm at *Rivoaltus*. Then secondly, Christ’s salutation, “Pax tibi Marce”, makes certain that his shrine, Venice, is still waiting for her patron<sup>945</sup>. These three words, in fact dominating the insignia of the city, were thus exploited to mark both the beginning of the Evangelist’s mission in Egypt, as well as the end of the completed assignment. St Mark’s successful Christianising of the Egyptian people was thus intended as the necessary prerequisite in order to return to the city where he had always belonged<sup>946</sup>.

According to the *Lezionario* of the Basilica of San Marco, during his visit Christ did not just confine himself to greeting his Evangelist, but he added few words of crucial relevance: “Noli timere quia ego tecum sum Salvator tuus ut eruam te”<sup>947</sup>. If the first part of the sentence followed the words prophesied by the angel in the Venetian lagoon, the part appended by the *Lezionario* in

<sup>943</sup> Andrea Dandolo, *Chronica per extensum descripta aa. 46-1280 p. c.*, a cura di Ester Pastorello, Reale Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo (*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. XII), Bologna, Zanichelli, 1938, p. 10. See also Silvio Tramontin, “Realtà e leggenda nei racconti marciani veneti”, *Studi Veneziani*, XII (1970), pp. 35-58, especially pp. 45-46.

<sup>944</sup> Symeon the Metaphrast, *Martyrium sancti Marci*, coll. 167-170.

<sup>945</sup> S. Tramontin (1970), pp. 45-46; B. Bertoli (1993), p. 101; D. Rosand (2001), p. 51.

<sup>946</sup> “Cronaca Veneta” (1845), p. 673. The legend, as described by Dandolo, had a great fortune and circulation: *Cronaca Zancarola*, BNM, It. VII 49 (=9274), f. 67v; Giorgio Dolfin, *Cronica di Venezia dall’origine sua fino all’anno 1458*, BNM, Ms. It. VII, 794 (=8503), positive 143, ff. 114r-v; Ioannis Baptistae Egnatii, *De exemplis Illustrium Virorum Venetae civitatis atque aliarum Gentium*, Venetijs, MDLIII, p. 20 (liber I, Cap. III).

<sup>947</sup> B. Bertoli (1993), p. 101.

turn mentioned the *Vocation of Jeremiah* (1: 8), when God said: “Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee”. Accordingly, Christ’s patronage of his Evangelist was considered as an implicit patronage of St Mark’s devoted city, of the city that treasured his relics (“And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee”; 1: 19). St Mark, needless to say, did not renege on his responsibility, and accepted eagerly his role of intercessor by echoing the Psalm (38: 10): “Lord, all my desire is before thee: and my groaning is not hid from thee”<sup>948</sup>.

Hence, in Mansueti’s *Visitation* Christ is not just relieving the Evangelist in his moment of need, but he is commanding the Holy Patron of Venice to protect his devoted city. By being protected by Christ, St Mark is in a position to extend the miraculous patronage over the *Serenissima*: his Holy Watching guarantees that Venice will be free from external threat, from any extraneous domination<sup>949</sup>. In such a way the Venetians could share and unify themselves with their Evangelist, for their belief in the supernatural aid of St Mark would endorse their power and glory<sup>950</sup>. St Mark, in other words, was there to supply “what Venice had originally lacked” – walls, gates, fortifications, and heroic founders. St Mark’s protection made Venice invulnerable<sup>951</sup>. This was the last mission of St Mark, this was the intercession that his loyal worshippers were beseeching. A commitment that, if we pay attention to the *Visitation* painted by Mansueti, is devotedly received by the Evangelist himself, who is touching his breast in visible token of acceptance. Around his prison a solid group of *SGSM*’s members stands proudly for his oath, whereas the infidels appear almost indifferent – with the only exception of the prison warder who stares open-mouthed at the miraculous manifestation (fig. 136). His companions, packed along the balustrade, are on the contrary suspicious, even indifferent. Three Mamluks emerge from the loggia, one of them tries to lean out probably following the example of the shaved Turkish lad at his left. At the top of the barred *aedicule* two figures are engaged in a conversation: a Mamluk soldier, with a red sleeveless overgarment and a

<sup>948</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>949</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>950</sup> G. Pavanello (1928), p. 316.

<sup>951</sup> P.H. Labalme (1996), pp. 233-249. See also *Devoti sermoni delle solennità de Santi del Beato Lorenzo Giustiniano primo Patriarca di Venezia*, ridotto in lingua volgare dal Reveren. M.P. Andrea Picolini Fiorentino, In Venetia, Appresso Francesco Franceschi Sanese, MDLXV, f. 82r.

voluminous *tāqiyya*, who looks fixedly at us, whereas his companion with a blue robe and handlebar moustache, in fact a Turkish *giannizzerotto civile*<sup>952</sup>, is still rambling in vain. Both the Mamluks and the Turks seem abstracted, absent-minded, a bearded soldier has even fallen asleep. Their inability to recognize the signs (the *Conviction*), their *blindness* in front of the promised salvation (the *Arrest*), and, finally, their indifference to Christ's apparition (the *Visitation*), leave them no hope of redemption.

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Mansueti's *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark* visualizes an *Allegory of Choice*: the choice to give credence to, or to dispute, St Mark's promise of Salvation. As the unfaithful who sought the healer are admitted to join the mystery of the Resurrection during Easter celebrations, those who failed to *see* the truth, who refused to recognize the signs, have now no where to take refuge any more. At the moment the Sultan pronounced against the Evangelist, he proclaimed his own damnation.

The allegory, as usual in Mansueti's work, is visualized through the use of three symbolic animals at the feet of the *maştaba*. It has been already discussed how the panther, although image of the Saviour, could symbolize the depravity and vanity of the infidels<sup>953</sup>. Among the numerous sources that corroborate the negative connotation of the feline, it is of some interest to mention a passage from the *Divine Comedy* where a *lonza* – widely interpreted as a panther – impedes Dante's ascent (figs. 138-139)<sup>954</sup>. Interestingly, in Mansueti's painting we can observe a panther that, borrowing Dante's words, "leggera e presta molto" appears "dinanzi al volto" of a tamed stag. Unlike previous examples such as Vittore Carpaccio's *Christ Between Four Angels and the Instrument of the Passion* (figs. 140-141), or Leonardo Bellini's *Book of Hours* in Cambridge (fig. 142), where the feline mauled his helpless prey, in

<sup>952</sup> Francesco Sansovino, *Informatione della militia Turchesca, & de gli habiti de soldati Turchi*, In Venegia, Presso Altobello Salicato, MDLXXXII, ff. 14r-v. See also the Turkish turbans of the Magi in Andrea Mantegna's *Adoration of the Magi* (John Paul Getty Museum).

<sup>953</sup> See above p. 65.

<sup>954</sup> *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Inferno*, a verse translation, with an introduction by Allen Mandelbaum, New York, Bantam Books, 2004, Canto I, 31-36 (pp. 4-5). On the *lonza* as *pardus* see: Sally Musseter, "Dante's Three Beasts and the Imago *Trinitatis*", *Dante Studies*, 95 (1977), p. 52 note 15.

the *Three Episodes* the panther is trying to subjugate the stag: it metaphorically stops the stag from ascending.

The horned animal, generally known for its helpless meekness<sup>955</sup>, had frequently been employed, especially in the legends of St Hubert and Eustace, to symbolise the meekness of Christ himself<sup>956</sup>. Mansueti's gentle stag, which presents itself tamely to the panther, is thus a metaphor for Christ who offers himself "for sacrifice, who suffers pain and sorrow for all mankind" (fig. 143)<sup>957</sup>. At the same time the peacefulness of the animal, in turn also an image of the whole of Christianity<sup>958</sup>, in Mansueti's painting explicitly stands for St Mark whose evangelic mission among Egyptians has led to his brutal martyrdom. The stag/evangelist, whose *sapientia* has shown the truth to those seeking to *see*, is thus confronted by the panther/sultan, whose bumptiousness has on the contrary decreed St Mark's execution<sup>959</sup>. A choice must then be made, and thus between *sapientia* and bumptiousness Mansueti has placed a third animal giving the beholder a last chance of Salvation.

In the foreground, close to the edge of the canvas, Mansueti has depicted a little bear grappling with something unfortunately made indecipherable by time. Although ruined, it can be suggested that the bear was modelled on the imagery of Medieval bestiaries, where formless blind cubs were licked into shape by their mother bear (fig. 144)<sup>960</sup>. A peculiarity, previously observed in the case of lions, which finds a propagator in Pliny the Elder<sup>961</sup>, and which soon became a metaphor of the transforming, regenerating power of Christianity over the heathen<sup>962</sup>. In this respect it is worth mentioning the *Bestiario Moralizzato* where the she-bear that gives shape to her *blind* cubs is associated with the Church that restores the "original peccato" of the

<sup>955</sup> Pliny the Elder (1997), book VIII, chapter XLIX, pp. 81-82. See also A. Gentili (1996), p. 164 note 34.

<sup>956</sup> *Ovide Moralise* mentioned in S. Cohen (2008), p. 143. See also *Physiologus* (1979), pp. 58-60.

<sup>957</sup> S. Cohen (2008), pp. 143-144.

<sup>958</sup> A. Gentili (1991), pp. 53, 59 note 32.

<sup>959</sup> On the symbolism of the panther as "antithetical figure of the *sapientia* of the Son" of God see S. Musseter (1977), pp. 45-46.

<sup>960</sup> Beril Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces. A Guide to Animal Symbolism*, Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, 1973, pp. 31-35, especially 35; H. Friedmann (1980), pp. 194-197; Beril Rowland, *The Art of Memory and the Bestiary*, ed. by Willene B. Clark and Meredith T. McMunn, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989, pp. 12-25, especially p. 16.

<sup>961</sup> Pliny the Elder (1997), book VIII, chapter LIV, p. 91, book X, chapter LXXXIII, p. 405.

<sup>962</sup> On the Christian symbolism of bears see: G. Ferguson (1955), p. 12; H. Friedmann (1980), pp. 194-197.

neophyte through “lo sacramento / del[o] santo baptismo virtuoso”<sup>963</sup>.

The *Allegory of Choice* is thus completed. St Mark the Healer has come among the Egyptian to restore the *sight* and redeem them from the original sin (the bear); a choice is thus offered: to *see* the true God (the stag) whose extreme sacrifice assures the final salvation, or on the contrary to pay heed to the *blind* Sultan (the panther) and thus be condemned to eternal damnation.

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<sup>963</sup> *Il “Bestiario Moralizzato”*, in *Bestiari Medievali*, ed. by L. Morini, Luigi Einaudi Editore, Torino, 1996, p. 502. See also S. Cohen (2008), p. 220 note 53.

### 3.VI. Re-securing the Gulf of Venice: *The Fisherman Delivering the Ring*

Once saved Venice from the flood caused by the evil galley, and taken St Nicholas and St George to their respective churches, the old fisherman at last reached the “riva de San Marcho”. The “pescador vecchietto”, unaware of the identity of his last passenger, demanded payment for his service and thus St Mark answered: “tuor questo anello, e dallo à messer lo Dose, e Procuratori [...] e dilli da mia parte che lor te debbia pagar”; then he suddenly disappeared. The next morning the *Signoria* “fece cercar dove era el corpo de San Marcho” and, once ascertained the veracity of the fisherman’s account, “donosi tanto haver, che ne lui, ne soi heredi non li bisognò più el peschar”<sup>964</sup>. According to the legend, the revelation of the Evangelist occurred at the “riva de San Marcho”, while the concrete moment at which the Evangelist’s ring was taken back to the doge was on the contrary set indoors, arguably inside the Ducal Palace. Two options were offered to painters, and yet in both cases the *area marciana* could not be left out. It can be argued that the setting of the painting, together with the necessary iconographic conformity with pre-existing pictures, was therefore the guideline adopted by the *Provedadori sopra la fabrica* (Zorzi Franchò, Zuan Battista Moranzon and Stefano Bontempo) to screen the “più hover piu j sufizientj depentori che sia posibele aver”<sup>965</sup>.

No less than three painters entered the competition: Lorenzo Lotto, Giovanni Antonio da Pordenone and Paris Bordon. Lotto opted for the indoor alternative (fig. 145). The *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* was thus situated within an ecclesiastical building with a marked barrel vault – an extremely fascinating iconography that induced Rearick to hypothesize the direct intervention of Jacopo Sansovino<sup>966</sup>. Although in Lotto’s mind the composition was probably intended to evoke Mansueti’s *Conviction of St Mark*, the excessive close up most likely determined his failure, since the picture would hardly combine with the perspectival space employed by all the previous painters. Pordenone, on the contrary, set the scene outdoors<sup>967</sup> under a porch supported by two mighty columns (fig. 146). Unlike Lotto, Pordenone

<sup>964</sup> *Cronaca di Venezia dalle origini* (=8271), f. 32r.

<sup>965</sup> See above p. 91.

<sup>966</sup> William R. Rearick, *Il disegno veneziano del Cinquecento*, Milano, Electa, 2001, p. 93

<sup>967</sup> C.E. Cohen (1996), vol. I, p. 357; P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 239-240; P. Humfrey (1987), p. 45.

endeavoured to adapt his picture to the pre-existing narrative cycle, thus submitting a *modello* in which the background was occupied by a perron crowded by animated people – a tangible evocation of the congested pictures already depicted. However, the comparison with the existing paintings would have been merciless, for Pordenone conceived a picture too monumental to be flanked, for instance, by Mansueti's fragile architecture<sup>968</sup>.

Although we cannot examine Bordon's *modello*, his *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* (fig. 77) demonstrates how the painter was able to synthesize his rivals' attempts and outstripped their drawbacks. He conceived a "stage-set-like architecture, half-interior and half-exterior"<sup>969</sup>, which allowed him to depict the doge's audience under a fictional loggia of the Ducal Palace, as well as the "riva de San Marcho" where the old fisherman had received the ring from the Evangelist. The same *riva*, it is worth emphasizing, where the pair had initially met<sup>970</sup>. Bordon's painting, in other words, succeeded both in conflating the two scenes of the Chronicle and in representing the *area marciana*, no matter if a fictional version of it. In this manner Bordon found a way to include his painting within the pre-existing cycle coherently<sup>971</sup>, and, furthermore, to give the *SGSM*'s membership the opportunity to celebrate Doge Andrea Gritti (1523-38), who was portrayed in the place of the fourteenth-century Doge Bartolomeo Gradenigo (figs. 147-149)<sup>972</sup>.

If the identity of the doge can hardly be disputed, his role in a painting celebrating Venice's miraculous rescue from submersion is anything but clear. As the *Sea Storm* did not directly allude to the besieged *Serenissima* during the war of Cambrai, neither the *Fisherman Delivering the ring* feature any Paduan architecture metaphorically related to Gritti's exploits in 1509. The painting, on the contrary, displays an ideal portrayal of the Venetian *area marciana*: a

<sup>968</sup> P. Humfrey (1985), p. 241; P. Humfrey (1987), pp. 44-45.

<sup>969</sup> P. Humfrey (1985), p. 240-242. On the painting see also: S. Moschini Marconi (1962), pp. 70-72; P. Humfrey (1985), pp. 225-242; P. Humfrey (1987), pp. 41-46; Giordana Mariani Canova, *Paris Bordon: problematiche cronologiche*, in *Paris Bordon e il suo tempo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi* (Treviso, 28-30 ottobre 1985), Treviso, Edizioni Canova, 1987, pp. 137-138; Loredana Olivato, *Paris Bordon e Sebastiano Serlio. Nuove riflessioni*, in *Paris Bordon e il suo tempo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi* (Treviso, 28-30 ottobre 1985), Treviso, Edizioni Canova, 1987, pp. 33-40; L. Puppi (1987), pp. 95-108; P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 237-239.

<sup>970</sup> *Cronaca di Venezia dalle origini* (=8271), f. 32r.

<sup>971</sup> P. Humfrey (1985), p. 240-242.

<sup>972</sup> Giordana Canova, *Paris Bordon*, Venezia, Edizioni Alfieri, 1964, pp. 93-94, p. 19; Antonio Foscari, "Schede veneziane su Jacopo Sansovino", *Notizie da Palazzo Albani*, X (1981), pp. 15-21; L. Puppi (1984), pp. 225-226; L. Puppi (1987), p. 101.

fictitious loggia, vaguely reminding the arcade of the Ducal Palace, under which the *Signoria* has gathered to receive the esteemed relic. An ideal reinvention of the surroundings of the Ducal Palace possibly mirroring Gritti's plan commissioned of Jacopo Sansovino that, according to Nicolò Barbarigo, should have embraced "le case oltre il canale di Palazzo [...] et altri Regij alloggiamenti"<sup>973</sup>. As just noted, by portraying Venice's ideal urban renewal the *Delivering* would hardly fulfil a visual celebration of Gritti's heroic acts during the League of Cambrai, and it could better embody the *renovatio* that Gritti undertook in reforming the Venetian State. A celebration that, considering the peculiar marine setting of the *Sea Storm*, could be related reasonably to Gritti's rearrangement of the Venetian defence system of the *Stato da Mar*<sup>974</sup>.

From the end of the 1520s onwards Venice's Captain General Francesco Maria della Rovere started implementing Gritti's strategic designs for a *renovatio rei militaris*, which culminated in his three military reports delivered in 1532<sup>975</sup>. Among different concerns, della Rovere advocated the role of intellectual skill (*ingegno*), against those of a common engineer (*inzegnero*), in projecting an effective defensive plan which would embrace both political and military issues. In vaunting *ingegno*, della Rovere was giving voice to theories developed with Vettor Fausto, a humanist, mathematician, and distinguished doctor of Greek who played a prominent role in the new humanistic vocation of military science promoted by Andrea Gritti<sup>976</sup>. It was Vettor Fausto who offered Gritti the chance to lay the foundation of a new Venetian *renovatio marittima* in order to assert, once again, Venice's supremacy over the Adriatic Sea.

<sup>973</sup> Cecil Gould, "Sebastiano Serlio and Venetian painting", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 25 (1962), pp. 56-64, especially p. 61; *Da Tiziano a El Greco: per la storia del Manierismo a Venezia 1540-1590*, exhibition catalogue (Venezia, Palazzo Ducale September-December 1981), a cura di Rodolfo Pallucchini, Milano, Electa, 1981, pp. 120-121; Giordana Mariani Canova, *Paris Bordon: profilo biografico e critico*, in *Paris Bordon*, Milano, Electa, 1984, pp. 28-50; L. Olivato (1987), p. 35. Nicolò Barbarigo, *Vita del Serenissimo Andrea Gritti Principe di Venetia*, Venice, 1686, BNM, ms Cl. VII, 1590 (=1976), p. 85; A. Foscari (1981), pp. 31-32; Manfredo Tafuri, "Renovatio urbis Venetiarum": il problema storiografico, in *Renovatio Urbis. Venezia nell'età di Andrea Gritti (1523-1538)*, a cura di Manfredo Tafuri, Roma, Officina Edizioni, 1984, pp. 53-54 note 99; Manuela Morresi, *Jacopo Sansovino*, Milano, Electa, 2000, pp. 228-229.

<sup>974</sup> M. Tafuri (1984), pp. 17-18.

<sup>975</sup> Ennio Concina, *La macchina territoriale: La progettazione della difesa nel Cinquecento Veneto*, Roma-Bari, Biblioteca di Cultura Moderna Laterza, 1983, pp. 26-30.

<sup>976</sup> E. Concina (1983), pp. 53-55, 92; Ennio Concina, *L'Arsenale della Repubblica di Venezia*, Milano, Electa, 1984, p. 108; M. Tafuri (1984), p. 20.

In January 1526 the Venetian Senate promoted the fitting up of three new war galleys to face the corsairs' raids, and to counter the growing threats of both Ottoman and Imperial fleets<sup>977</sup>. The construction of two of those galleys was committed to the Arsenal *protomaestri* Leonardo and Matteo Bressan, whereas the third was granted after several contested discussions to Vettor Fausto (September 1526)<sup>978</sup>. Fausto had already submitted a model of “una galia qual vogerà 5 remi per banco” back in 1525 (15 August) to Doge Andrea Gritti<sup>979</sup>. On 17 September, in the presence of the *Signoria*, the *Collegio* and the *patron dell'Arsenale* Leonardo Emo, another model was judged by the *proti* who questioned the disposition of the five rowers assigned to each bench, confessing they themselves would not be able to design it<sup>980</sup>. All things considered, it was problematic to give credence to a humanist rather than a shipwright. And Fausto's oblation on 23 May 1526 was humanistic in describing his warship (*quinquereme*) as a colossal galley based upon Roman examples that would make Venice the unquestioned “Signora del mare” (fig. 150)<sup>981</sup>.

From Gritti's perspective Vettor Fausto, together with Adrian Willaert (*maestro* of Saint Mark since 1527) and Jacopo Sansovino (*proto* of the *Procuratia de Supra* since 1529), were pawns in a wider revival plan aimed to put off empirical methods in favour of the *scientia*. Going back to antiquity was thus a fracture with the Venetian tradition where the study of the *humanae litterae* became the theoretical approach employed to found a factual *renovatio*<sup>982</sup>. The introduction of Vitruvianism into the Arsenal had the same destabilizing effect. Vettor Fausto was well aware of it, and in fact in 1530 he wrote to his friend Giovan Battista Ramusio (himself a member of the

<sup>977</sup> *Degl'istorici delle cose veneziane... che comprende I quattro ultimi libri della parte prima, e la parte seconda dell'Istorie veneziane scritte da Paolo Paruta, cavaliere e procuratore*, tomo III, Venezia, Lovisa, 1718, pp. 301, 528; E. Concina (1984), pp. 108-110; Ennio Concina, *Navis: L'umanesimo sul mare (1470-1740)*, Torino, Einaudi, 1990, pp. 46-48.

<sup>978</sup> The following section is based upon E. Concina (1984, 1990). The decision to leave out Frederick C. Lane, *Navires et Constructeurs à Venise pendant la Renaissance*, Paris, S.V.P.E.N., 1965, especially pp. 59-65, is due to Concina's emendation of occasional oversights made by Lane.

<sup>979</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXXIX, col. 322; E. Concina (1990), p. 50.

<sup>980</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXXIX, col. 440; vol. XLII, coll. 756-766; E. Concina (1984), p. 108; E. Concina (1990), pp. 50-53.

<sup>981</sup> E. Concina (1990), p. 53, quotes Fausto's *supplica* to the Council of Ten (ASVe, Consiglio dei X, Secreta, filza I, 23 maggio 1526).

<sup>982</sup> M. Tafuri (1984), pp. 26-28.

*SGSM*)<sup>983</sup> praising architecture as an intellectual discipline, but also promoting naval architecture as the achievement of advanced specialized studies – nothing to share though with the empirical method of the *inzebrero*<sup>984</sup>. The construction of the *quinquereme*, and the cultural values of such an initiative, was thus an indication of the attention that Gritti paid to the development and improvement of the Arsenal as part of the *revolutio rei militari* in both the *Stato da Terra* and *da Mar*.

At the end of 1526 Vettor Fausto finally succeeded. The positive result was due to the support of the doge Andrea Gritti himself, as well as according to the efforts of his close advisers Gasparo Contarini, Daniele Renier and Bernardo Navagero (the last two were distinguished members of the *SGSM*)<sup>985</sup>. It was the *Savio agli Ordini* Navagero who advocated Fausto's project enthusiastically, and eventually persuaded the doubtful Senate. Fausto's proposal was passed on September 1526, and already by 16 December Gritti paid his first visit to the shipyard<sup>986</sup>.

The construction of the greatest galley ever manufactured in the Mediterranean lasted no less than two years, and on 23 May 1529 an official celebration of the invincible galley, or better of Venice as the invincible “Signora del mare”, was carefully staged during a public rowing race<sup>987</sup>. The race route spanned the Canal Grande to the Fortress of Sant'Andrea, and finished in front of the Ducal Palace (fig. 80). The *due castelli*, the very site where the *Sposalizio del Mare* was annually performed, was once again at the centre of a State celebration. Accordingly, the harbour mouth of Venice accommodated the vast majority of the public: the *Signoria* and Senators were settled down in the shade of tapestry, whereas Procurators, cardinals, and archbishops were on board of private boats. The entire area was packed with “barche infinite”, some of them had come from Padua purposely, and the *gondole* had been hired for no less than 8 lire “*solum per veder tal cossa*”<sup>988</sup>. Vettor Fausto, relying on the unrivalled speed of his *quinquereme*, gave an

<sup>983</sup> On Ramusio's membership see: ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, f. 172r.

<sup>984</sup> According to M. Tafuri (1984), p. 24, in this letter Fausto echoes Leon Battista Alberti's debate against the common *artifex*.

<sup>985</sup> ASVe, *SGSM*, Reg. 4, ff. 16v, 33v.

<sup>986</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XLVI, col. 379; XLIX, col. 357.

<sup>987</sup> This followed the actual launch of the *quinquereme* occurred at the beginning of that year: *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. L, coll. 343, 345, 346; E. Concina (1990), pp. 55-56.

<sup>988</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. L, col. 363; E. Concina (1990), pp. 56-57.

advantage of two galleys length to his competitor, the “galera Cornera”. The first part of the competition was handled by the Cornera, but once the two boats approached the *Due Castelli* Fausto’s galley overcame its opponent in front of Andrea Gritti, and then went back triumphantly to the *Bacino San Marco* followed by such a great number of boats “che pareva una armata”. The austere doge Andrea Gritti himself could not hold back tears. A lavish ceremony followed the extraordinary undertaking: the *quinquereme* waited for the *Signoria* in front of the *Piazzetta San Marco* and then it paraded through an overcrowded Gran Canal until it reached Ca’ Foscari Palace. Celebrations continued late into the evening<sup>989</sup>.

According to Ennio Concina, the official race was not necessary, nor was it part of a traditional ritual devoted to a galley’s launch. Yet, according to its successful direction, the race took on a specific significance intimately associated with Venice’s jurisdictional rights over the Adriatic<sup>990</sup>. The race was therefore designed to evoke the route of the *Sposalizio del Mare*, culminating near the *Due Castelli* where, as during the wedding ceremony, the entire Venetian establishment and foreign envoys had gathered. As Paolo Paruta argued, the event had been explicitly staged in order to warn Charles V about the current nautical power of the Republic<sup>991</sup>. In other words, as soon as news of an armada manned by the Emperor arrived in Venice, the Republic reacted quickly demonstrating her never diminished power. Therefore, the audience gathered round the *Due Castelli* was perfectly aware of the symbolic implications of that unusual race with the Venetian civic ritual of the *Sposalizio del Mare*. A ritual, it is crucial to emphasize, that marked Gritti’s *dogado* from the very beginning of his installation in office.

There is no need to stress anymore the symbolic value of the *Sposalizio del Mare* for fashioning Venetian history, and yet it is worth mentioning the particular relevance that such a civic ritual had in Gritti’s mind. Gritti’s election occurred when the *Festa della Sensa* was almost finished, but according to those busy times there was no chance to celebrate the annual *Sposalizio del Mare*. Nonetheless, as soon as Gritti put on the *corno dogale* he decided to extend the *Sensa* festivities of eight more days. The new Doge thus inaugurated

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<sup>989</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>990</sup> E. Concina (1990), p. 58.

<sup>991</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 59; E. Concina (1984), p. 112.

his reign with the symbolic ceremony of the *Sposalizio del Mare* (“vol andar a sposar il mar”): one of the first Gritti’s public acts was immediately designed to stress the Venetian dominance over the Adriatic<sup>992</sup>. In short, in the exact place where for centuries the *Sposalizio da Mare* had been performed, Andrea Gritti inaugurated his dogate, and then he celebrated his *renovatio marittima*, the persisting Venetian dominance over the Adriatic Sea. The symbolic race thus served as a reminder to contenders such as the Emperor or the Ottomans who was the real possessor of the Gulf, who had the economic, intellectual, and technical skills to maintain such dominance. Venice still was, or at least acted as if it was, the unchallengeable *Regina del Mare*, the main nautical power of the Mediterranean.

The long-lasting dispute on jurisdiction over the Gulf of Venice was started decades before by Pope Julius II, and not only demonstrates how the *Sea Storm* was still topical at the beginning of the 1530s, but also shows how Andrea Gritti’s portrayal in the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* was a consistent inclusion. Gritti’s *renovatio marittima*, his efforts in claiming Venice’s dominance over the Adriatic, was celebrated in a painting where St Mark’s miraculous patronage assured his divine benevolence toward the *Serenissima* and her *Stato da Mar*. If Gritti was the representative of Venetian wise leadership, the one who patronized the *humanae litterae* to a factual *renovatio*, the old fisherman was in turn the emblematic embodiment of the *SGSM* whose courage, devotion, and faith had assured the supernatural rescue of Venice. And in fact, in the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* it is the fisherman who, surrounded by his proud brothers, restores the ring to Gritti: an image that commemorates the delivery itself, but also recalls the ring annually given by the doges during the traditional procession to the church of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli<sup>993</sup>. The picture had therefore various, complementary functions. On the one hand it allowed the *SGSM*’s brothers to form a special relationship with Gritti who explicitly grants the function of privileged interlocutor with the city’s Patron Saints to the lay confraternity; but at the same time it also acknowledges the *SGSM*’s role of coastguards both according to the patrolling employment of the *Nicolotti* during war times, as well as to the financial and

<sup>992</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XXXIV, col. 184.

<sup>993</sup> See above pp. 169-170.

human aid provided by the *SGSM* since the beginning of the fifteenth century.<sup>994</sup> The painting thus combines Gritti's reformist policy in re-establishing Venice's unceasing role as *Regina del Mare* with the devotion of the *SGSM* toward the *Serenissima* and her Holy Patron. Venice's rights over the Adriatic Sea were not only legitimized by her revived maritime power, but also the miraculous patronage of her Holy Saints who, from the Venetian point of view, invested the *Serenissima* with the role of ultimate stronghold of Christendom.

In this regard, a crucial example is provided by a diplomatic report written on 1 April 1516 by the Venetian Ambassador in England Sebastiano Giustiniani to the Council of Ten<sup>995</sup>. While discussing the Venetian foreign policy, Giustiniani had to face a defamatory allegation in which the Venetians had been described as ordinary fishermen. The Venetian ambassador's answer was immediate, but carefully pondered. By quoting the *Calling of Peter and Andrew*, Giustiniani coined an erudite rebuttal revolving around the metaphor of the evangelic *fisher of men*<sup>996</sup>. If, Giustiniani said, fishermen founded the Christian faith, the Venetians were those fishermen who had preserved it against the infidels' attack. The fishing boat they used – an inspired Giustiniani kept saying – was the Venetian fleet (“galee e navi”), the fish hooks employed were the Venetian ducats (“i denari nostri”), and the baits offered in sacrifice were the flesh of the Venetian citizens (“le carni dei cittadini nostri”) who had fought to defend not just the *Serenissima*, but all of Christendom<sup>997</sup>.

Giustiniani's simile has surprising ramifications since it offers an opportunity to associate the evangelic *fishers of men* not only with generic Venetians, but with the old fisherman of the *SGSM*. From the Venetians' perspective the fisherman of the Chronicle could represent, among different multilevel meanings, an explicit metaphor of the Evangelic *fishers of men*, symbol of Venice's struggles to defend Christianity, the reason why the Adriatic Sea had to be kept under her control. In other words, the old fisherman, by delivering the ring to Gritti, demonstrated the benevolence and

<sup>994</sup> R. Zago (1982), p. 120 note 28; M. Casini (1996), p. 315; B. Pullan (1971), pp. 146-156; W.B. Wurthmann (1989), pp. 57-64.

<sup>995</sup> Bartolomeo Cecchetti, *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Corte di Roma nei rapporti della religione*, vol. I, Venezia, Premiato Stabilimento Tipografico di P. Naratovich, 1874, p. 324.

<sup>996</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Matthew 4: 18-22; Mark 1: 16-20; Luke 5: 1-11.

<sup>997</sup> B. Cecchetti (1874), vol. I, p. 324.

indeed the appreciation of St Mark toward the sacrifices that the doge and his community had made to defend Christianity. St Mark's good will was therefore granted following to the devotion demonstrated by the Venetians, a devotion effectively performed by their patrolling of the Adriatic Sea. And, after all, it is not a case if the same iconography was then re-used some decades later when, in order to celebrate both Carlo Magi's maritime adventure and the Venetians' victory at Lepanto, an anonymous miniaturist copied Paris Bordon's *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* (fig. 151)<sup>998</sup>.

To conclude, in two centuries' time the Chronicle of a sea storm that threatened, but did not overcome Venice, became an integral feature of the Serenissima's myth-making, an ideological device to lay claims over the Adriatic Sea jurisdiction. A right, that according to the Venetian ideological manipulation of history was granted by Pope Alexander III, miraculously preserved by Venice's Holy Patron Saints, proudly reaffirmed by Gritti's *renovatio marittima*, and visually celebrated by the direct descendants of the primitive *fishers of men* during the entire History of Venice.

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The analysis of the *SGSM*'s paintings has demonstrated how the spiritual *illumination* of the infidels, their necessary conversion, constituted the very heart of the narrative cycle. The Mamluks, not the Turks, were the entitled recipients of the salvific message. Under their eyes St Mark revealed the only way of salvation: his powerful preaching and miraculous deeds were performed in order to redeem the Mamluks from their sins, to make them embrace the true God. The mission of the Evangelist, which had already been proselytized once, was therefore made topical in order to make the Mamluks disavow their truthlessness, concretely (the abjuration of their heresy) as well as metaphorically (the atonement of their dishonest behaviour). The healing of Anianus' wound and the purification of his soul were thus within range of those who would aspire to seek the healer. In this respect, the narrative cycle explicitly revolved around the metaphoric pursuit of *illumination*. St Mark's

<sup>998</sup> *Le voyage de Charles Magius 1568-1573*, ed. by Ariane Isler-de Jongh and François Fossier, Arcueil, Anthèse, 1992, pp. 50-51. See also *Venezia e la difesa del Levante. Da Lepanto a Candia 1570-1670*, Venezia, Arsenale Editrice, 1986, pp. 205-206.

preaching, his teaching of the *blind* Egyptians, was intended as image of the Baptism as mentioned by St Justin Martyr: “Vocatur autem lavacrum illud illumination, eo quod mente illuminentur qui haec discut”<sup>999</sup>. The Mamluk catechumens, those who had received the World/light in the Baptism (John 1: 9), were thus believed to be “the children of light” (1 Thessalonians 5: 5), “ye light in the Lord” itself (Ephesians 5: 8). The conversion of the Mamluks, by means of preaching and miraculous deeds, found in the sacrament of Baptism, “by the washing of regeneration” (Titus 3: 5), access to the kingdom of God (John 3: 5).

If the *Baptism of Anianus* had to flank, together with the *Healing*, the prodigious *Preaching of St Mark* in order to visualize Christ’s evangelic mandate stated from the top of Basilica Baptistery, the actual representation of the “washing of regeneration” was on the contrary placed at the very beginning of the narrative cycle. The *Sea Storm* and the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* were thus used as a metaphoric prologue of the renewed evangelic mission of St Mark in Mamluk Egypt. And yet the recipients of the regenerative immersion were, quite surprisingly, not the Egyptian infidels but the Venetians themselves.

Ever since the Old Testament deluges and floods were considered as types “for the future judgement of the world”, whereas in the New Testament they were instead used as evidence of God’s punishment of sinners (2 Peter 2: 6)<sup>1000</sup>. Conversely, the First Epistle of Peter provided a baptismal interpretation of the Deluge<sup>1001</sup>. As discussed by Jean Daniélou, the parallels between the Baptism and the Deluge were much more than a mere “analogy of images”, but rather embodied the “baptismal rite”<sup>1002</sup>. As expressed by the mosaic of the Basilica Baptistery, the sacrament of baptism was intimately embedded with the death and resurrection of Christ. In this regard, the immersion of the catechumen in the water was intended, according to St Paul, to mirror his burial into Christ’s death<sup>1003</sup>. Accordingly, as at the time of Noah the sinful humans were submerged by the deluge commanded by God, likewise during

<sup>999</sup> Iustinus, *Apologia Prima*, in Jacques P. Migne, *Patrologiae Graeca*, vol. 6, col. 421.

<sup>1000</sup> Bo Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits and the Christian Baptism. A Study of 1 Pet. III. 19 and Its Context*, København, Ejnar Munksgaard, 1946, especially pp. 70-92.

<sup>1001</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), 1 Peter 2: 18-21.

<sup>1002</sup> J. Daniélou (1956), p. 76.

<sup>1003</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Romans 6: 3-4.

the Baptism the old man, the sinner, is annihilated by the sacramental water and regenerated as a Christian<sup>1004</sup>. The episode of Noah, as discussed by the First Epistle of Peter, not only explains the meaning of the Deluge, but it also unveils the mission that the neophytes are called to fulfil. The passage mentions the descent and preaching of the victorious Christ “unto the spirits in prison” as exhortation, to the neophytes, not to fear pagans. In other words, as Christ braved the disobedient spirits, similarly the regenerated Christians have to face the paganism and its demons, no matter if it means agony or even death<sup>1005</sup>.

By the beginning of the sixteenth-century, deluges and floods prelude the last judgement did not only sustain prophetic publications of various sorts<sup>1006</sup>, but they entered into the private letters of worried Venetians whose imagination was already deeply shaken by the devastating defeat of Agnadello. Remarkable are, in this respect, a series of letters written by Martino Merlini between March and April 1511. On 29 March a worried Sanudo noted that, following the terrible earthquake occurred three days before, “gran pioza e l’acqua vene grandissima di sopra le fondamenta”<sup>1007</sup>. Merlini, writing to his brother then traveling for business in the East, described those days as follows:

“Semo reduti a tanto strachezo et fastidio che non credemo pivi zero, e mancho se ne raxon [...] et à chontinuado fino ora i taramoti in questa tera quaxi ogni zorno, e s’el non hè stado al zorno, l’è stado la note, e se non grando chome el primo, che quello non li hè chomperazion, l’è stado di mezan e de picholi, e gran diluvio de aque sì dal ziello chome dal mar, cresudo le aque molto grosse chon pioze grandissime, spauroxe, et ultimate chon tempeste. [...] Non se intende de paxe alchuna chon veritade; fo ben dito a questi zorni pasadi che se chontratava paxe con l’imperator, Spagna, Ongaria, intravegnando la Santità del papa e la nostra illustrissima Signoria [...] De qui per sti traramoti (sic) se sta chon gran paura et afani che messer domine Dio non sia del tuto chorozado chon nui. [...] L’è da do mexi che non hè stado un zorno chiaro e neto; o l’è stado niuolo, o à piovesto, o pian, o forte, te digo chontinuando di e note, et chon fredì ch’el par el sia de inverno [...] Ogni zorne se fa prezision per le chontrade e se porta el Corpo de Christo, et chui altre reliquie chon le letanie, chon molti omeni e done driedo, chon grande luminarie, pregando el Salvator che

<sup>1004</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 77. See also *Veglia Pasquale, Benedizione dell’acqua*, in *Messale Romano*, Città del Vaticano, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993 pp. 177.

<sup>1005</sup> B. Reicke (1946), pp. 130-131; J. Daniélou (1956), p. 76.

<sup>1006</sup> Giancarlo Petrella, *La Pronosticatio di Johannes Lichtenberger. Un testo profetico nell’Italia del Rinascimento*, Udine, Forum, 2010.

<sup>1007</sup> *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. XII, col. 89.

ne deliberi da mal de guere, peste e fame. Avemo chon l'ajuto di messer domine Dio ch'el morbo è pur zesado [...] Che messer domine Dio fazi zesar chusi ogni altro nostro mal"<sup>1008</sup>.

Loredana Olivato has already demonstrated how this passage should be interpreted as a symptom of a widespread sense of helplessness felt by the Venetians during the troubled years of the League of Cambrai<sup>1009</sup>. The climatic fury, interestingly associated with the dreadful contingencies of those days, had for Merlini unworldly origins (“che messer domine Dio non sia del tuto chorozado chon nui”). Therefore, not only the unlucky planetary conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter and Mars in Scorpion (1484) and in Cancer (1503-04) were still influencing the destiny of the *Serenissima*<sup>1010</sup>, but a divine punishment had been hurled on the sinful Venetians themselves. Everybody, Merlini claimed, had seen the terrible earthquake as a sentence of God “per i nostri gran pechadi”, and therefore devout processions were performed daily.

If this was the price to pay for the atonement of sin, then redemption was nonetheless available to the Venetians who, claiming to having conformed their constitution “to God’s order to Moses”, in fact considered themselves the embodiment of the Chosen People<sup>1011</sup>. Just as the people of Israel had been persecuted to expiate their guilt, so the Venetians had to stand up to the League of Cambrai. And yet, as the Israelites had been led toward salvation, similarly the Venetians would eventually succeed against the ferocity of their oppressors. The parallel with the Chosen People, far from being confined to erudite oratory alone, finds supplementary evidence in Titian’s *Drowning of Pharaoh’s Army in the Red Sea* (fig. 152), where the Egyptians/oppressors are providentially submerged/annihilated by the waves of the Red Sea poured by the divine providence<sup>1012</sup>. This is a salvation in extremis of the Chosen People which,

<sup>1008</sup> Giuseppe Dalla Santa, “Commerci, vita privata e notizie politiche dei giorni della lega di Cambrai (da lettere del mercante veneziano Martino Merlini)”, *Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere e Arti*, LXXVI (1916-1917), pp. 1600-1601; Loredana Olivato, *La Submersione di Pharaone*, in *Tiziano e Venezia. Convegno internazionale di studi (Venezia, 1976)*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza Editore, 1980, p. 534.

<sup>1009</sup> L. Olivato (1980), pp. 530-537.

<sup>1010</sup> Augusto Gentili, *Traces of Giorgione. Jewish Culture and Astrological Science*, in *Giorgione. Myth and Enigma*, exhibition catalogue (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum 23 March – 11 July 2004), ed. by Silvia Ferino-Pagden and Giovanna Nepi Scire, Milano, Skira, 2004, pp. 57-70, especially pp. 61-63; G. Petrella (2010), pp. 19-22.

<sup>1011</sup> Staale Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall. Studies in the Religious Iconography of the Venetian Republic*, Roma, “L’erma” di Bretschneider, 1974, p. 141, especially note 2. On the Venetians as Chosen People see also A. Mazzacane (1976), pp. 632-634.

<sup>1012</sup> L. Olivato (1980), pp. 530-537; David Rosand and Michelangelo Muraro, *Titian and the*

interestingly, comes from the sea, or better from the waves of the lagoon, itself the celebrated and impregnable defence of Venice<sup>1013</sup>.

David Rosand, noting that a *Submersion of the Pharaoh* was included in the *SGSM*'s narrative cycle destroyed in 1485, has suggested an affinity between Titian's woodcut and the *Sea Storm* canvas<sup>1014</sup>. An affinity of motif, the miraculous salvation of the city and its people, which nonetheless cannot be mistaken for a correspondence of theme. Evidently, the providential water that saves Venice by submerging the pharaoh cannot be associated, at least not uncritically, with the water that on the contrary menaces the survival of the *Serenissima*. In the *Sea Storm* the Deluge represents primarily the punishment, not the recompense – accordingly, St Mark saves Venice from the destruction, not from the flood. And in this respect Merlini's words on God's chastisement are of great interest: earthquakes, floods, unceasing downpours, not to mention the endless war, were all consequences of “i nostri gran pechadi”<sup>1015</sup>. If floods and storms were considered the punishment that a *chorozado* God inflicted on the sinful Venetians, the Chosen People could still cherish hope of salvation. In this respect the *Sea Storm*, and the salvation that follows, must be interpreted as a metaphor of the Deluge in the wake of the First Epistle of Peter: the Venetians can atone their sins only after having been submerged by the “washing of regeneration”. As the catechumen immersion in the sacramental water symbolizes his burial into Christ's death, similarly the submersion of the city pictured by the *Sea Storm* allegorises the regeneration of the sinful Venice. Such regeneration, however, could not be free of charge.

The Venetians, as described by Merlini in 1509, had to renounce earthly joys, they had to relinquish their vainglory and devote themselves to “far prezision per le chontrade [and] pregando el Salvator che ne deliberi da mal de guere, peste e fame”<sup>1016</sup>. In other words, sinful Venetians had to purify their souls in order to obtain forgiveness. Following the baptismal parallel already

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*Venetian Woodcut*, Washington D.C., International Exhibition Foundation, 1976, pp. 70-73; D. Rosand (2001), pp. 80-81.

<sup>1013</sup> L. Olivato (1980), pp. 536-537, see especially note 50.

<sup>1014</sup> D. Rosand (2001), pp. 80-81 mentions J.M. Zur Capellen (1985), pp. 106-107 doc. 6. See also P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 269 doc. 6.

<sup>1015</sup> Such a religious reading of the worldly events afflicting Venice was not a peculiarity of Merlini. See: Ottavia Niccoli, *Profeti e popolo nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1987, pp. 34, 139 (quoting *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. VIII, col. 48-49; vol. XXV, col. 338-339).

<sup>1016</sup> L. Olivato (1980), p. 533.

seen in the *Baptism of Anianus*, the Venetians had to abandon their previous life in order to receive “the tunic of incorruptibility”<sup>1017</sup>. The *Serenissima*, to be regenerated, had to be submerged/buried in Christ’s death: itself an image, on the authority of Paul, of the neophyte’s rebirth during the Baptism<sup>1018</sup>.

Once regenerated by purificatory submersion the Venetians are finally asked, once again following the First Epistle of Peter, to “face without fear the world of paganism and its demons”<sup>1019</sup>. The *Sea Storm* thus not only represents the metaphorical Deluge as image of the Baptism, but it also suggests the evangelic call of the neophyte symbolized by Christ’s descent into the lower world. Therefore, the evangelic mission ordered by the Saviour from the top of the Baptistry vault, and indeed renewed by the entire narrative cycle of the *Sala dell’Albergo*, finds its decisive investiture in the *Sea Storm*. By placing the *Sea Storm* and the *Fisherman Delivering the Ring* at the opening of the cycle, the *SGSM* celebrates the new foundation of Venice, that is to say the foundation of the new Alexandria: the predestinated city of the Evangelist. An iconographic model so accurately conceived to be replicated in the *Arazzi Marciani* commissioned from the Flemish weaver Giovanni Rost (1550) to decorate, on the side of the doge’s throne, the presbytery of the Basilica di San Marco<sup>1020</sup>. A series of hangings dedicated to the Evangelist’s mission in Egypt, in which the scene of the *Baptism of Anianus* is flanked by a representation of the *Sea Storm* at the gates of Piazzetta San Marco (fig. 153)<sup>1021</sup>.

To conclude, by 1498 the *SGSM* started to establish a narrative cycle whose allegorical meanings and symbolic functions would affect, even after fifty years, the decoration of the doge’s stall in the Basilica di San Marco. This seminal cycle, ultimately, celebrated the rebirth, or the *renovatio*, of the

<sup>1017</sup> J. Daniélou (1956), p. 38.

<sup>1018</sup> *The New Cambridge Paragraph* (2005), Romans 6: 3-11.

<sup>1019</sup> J. Daniélou (1956), p. 76.

<sup>1020</sup> Rodolfo Gallo, “Il Tesoro di San Marco. Gli Arazzi”, *Rivista Mensile della Città di Venezia*, V (1926), pp. 9-82, especially pp. 34-42; Rodolfo Pallucchini, *Arazzi dei secoli XV e XVI*, in *Il Tesoro di San Marco. Il Tesoro e il Museo*, a cura di Hans R. Hahnloser, vol. II, Firenze, Sansoni Editore, 1971, pp. 235-253, especially pp. 249-253; Antonio Manno, *San Marco Evangelista. Opere d’arte dalle chiese di Venezia*, Venezia, Commissione Chiese-Curia Patriarcale, 1995, p. 66; Doretta Davanzo Poli, *Gli arazzi marciani del XVI secolo*, in *Arazzi della Basilica di San Marco*, a cura di Loretta Dolcini, Doretta Davanzo Poli and Ettore Vio, Milano, Rizzoli, 2000, pp. 129-152, especially pp. 148-150.

<sup>1021</sup> Francesco Sansovino and Giovanni Stringa, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, In Venetia, appresso Altobello Salicato, 1604, ff. 35v-36r.

*Serenissima* as the only Chosen City that according to divine origins and the protection of unequalled Holy Patrons was entitled to dominate the Adriatic Sea and the East. The descendants of the biblical *fishers of men*, in fact dead and re-born into Christ by the salvific Deluge, were thus the Chosen People who according to Tommaso Diplovatazio (1520s) deserved to hold both the *iurisdictio* and *protectio* of the Gulf of Venice<sup>1022</sup>; the only people who, following the *exemplum* of their Holy Patron, were entitled to face up to the danger of the infidels. An unsolved problem, the jurisdiction of Gulf of Venice, which fifty years later found in the worlds of Francesco Vianello the same arguments:

“Se dice con potentissima ragione che la custodia che la Signoria tiene del Golfo è causa che il Signor Turco non manda come senza dubbio manderebbe sue Fuste, et Legni armati in esso [...] Il che di quanto danno e ruina potesse ritornare alla Christianità, alla Sede Apostolica, et à tutta Italia, e meglio considerarlo con l’intelletto che metterlo in scrittura. Chi altri farebbe tante spese. Chi tenerebbe armate de continuo tante Galere et altri Legni; Chi spargerebbe tanto Sangue quanto fa la Signoria per assicurare il Golfo, et ogni sorte di persone che navighi in esso”<sup>1023</sup>.

<sup>1022</sup> A. Mazzacane (1976), p. 645 note 235.

<sup>1023</sup> *Scrittura di Francesco Vianello* (=7292), f. 144v.

## Conclusion

This dissertation began asking how to approach the work of Giovanni Mansueti. Much of the discussion was devoted to the analysis of his paintings as a means of devotion with functions other than aesthetic satisfaction as an end in itself. Once the ground shifted from the formalist analysis to the study of cultural ramifications of this particular vocabulary, the discussion has disclosed an artistic production anything but mediocre, minor or insignificant. Such an alternative approach has on the contrary proved how Mansueti's inventions contain unsuspected surprises. In particular, Mansueti has emerged as a man of his time, an artist able to interpret the profound consciousness of his society through a visual language of proven efficacy. An efficacy that, after all, found its inner reasons in what criticism has identified as the very cause for criticism: Mansueti's conservatism. A conservatism not to be intended, however, as stylistic backwardness, but rather as a deliberate reuse of tradition, the vigilant adherence to a linguistic orthodoxy distinctive of the Christian lexicon. If nothing else, this dissertation has shown Mansueti's unexpected disposition for erudite allegories and cryptic iconographies, for the sensitive use of a symbolic imagery whose origins went back to Medieval bestiaries and their classical sources.

The *Cycle of the Life of the Virgin and the Child* in Burano has turned out paradigmatic in this respect. The analysis of the pictures has unveiled Mansueti's ability for illustrating the narrative source (*Vita di Gesù Cristo e della Madonna*) and, concurrently, in coining visual allegories removed from it. An imagery obtained by the conscious modification of accepted codes, indeed able to reveal the intentions of the donors and reflect the versatility of the painter. It was the case, for instance, of the *Betrothal of the Virgin*, in which the traditional iconography was turned into a moral allegory where the contrast between the *moderate* Joseph and the *intemperate* youth showed the appropriate *exemplum* to follow. A moral teaching ultimately given by Joseph's good men – most likely the donors of the painting – who simultaneously embodied the modification of the textual source as well as the cultural purposes of its reshaping.

Similar results have come out from the examinations of the *The*

*Nativity with Shepherds* and the *Flight into Egypt*. In the first case, the replacement of Joseph's traditional stick with an unexpected axe has unveiled a quite unusual attribute of the putative father of Christ, himself intended as the earthly surrogate of the Divine Architect. A type quite rare in Renaissance Venice, and yet repeatedly employed by Mansueti who apparently specialized in niche iconographies of this sort. At the same time, Joseph's drowsiness, so theatrically represented in such a revealing moment within the History of Salvation, has proved Mansueti's thorough awareness of another peculiar iconography of the Carpenter, this time portrayed as the elected recipient of God's commandments. The analysis of the painting has shown Mansueti's proficiency in tailoring his extensive repertoire of St Joseph's multifaceted iconography to the special devotional needs of his donor, himself proudly portrayed beside his exemplar Patron.

Even more interesting was the case of the *Flight into Egypt*, where Mansueti's symbolism in fact attained the summit. Although traditionally criticized for spoiling compositions "by an over-insistence on details such as [...] the menagerie let loose"<sup>1024</sup>, Mansueti's personal bestiary has on the contrary shown to be embedded in the Medieval tradition. The discussion has demonstrated how Mansueti not only followed the scheme provided by the Apocrypha – itself instructed in light of *Physiologus* – but made use of its imagery to design an *Allegory of Salvation* aimed, at least ideally, at the Mamluk infidels. In this respect the painter showed an outstanding artfulness in developing two layers of meaning: the first, more superficial, represented by countless Muslims wandering the streets of the Venetian *terraferma* in search for the real God; whereas the second, deciphered in light of Marin Sanudo's *Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis*, concretised in the tame panther at the feet of Christ mirroring the inevitable subjugation of the infidels. The same infidels, to conclude, who portrayed in the Magi's place were obliged to worship the newly-born God in the episode of the *Nativity*. The interpretation of the cycle has demonstrated how Mansueti was able to project the finer points and anxieties of his time, to contrive religious pictures with multiple meanings and functions. His *Cycle of the Life of the Virgin*, as in the work of many of his celebrated contemporaries, concealed a symbolic vocabulary resulting in the

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<sup>1024</sup> See above p. 18.

ideal conversion of those infidels who by the end of the fifteenth-century were threatening Venice herself<sup>1025</sup>. According to this preliminary investigation, it can thus be assumed that if, as criticism has repeatedly argued, Mansueti's style was obsolete, his comprehension and visual interpretation of Venetian society was on the contrary entirely up-to-date.

In contrast to the case of San Martino, where the devotional requirements of Mansueti's donors emerged from the analysis of the paintings, the investigation of the narrative cycle of the *SGSM* has followed an inverse process giving priority to the patrons and their context. Among the various questions addressed, I here focus on the *SGSM*'s art patronage procedure, since I believe it could provide an alternative reason for Mansueti's engagement, so far merely explained in the light of his *Bellinesque* style. It is evident that the *Bellinesque* comparison, although reasonable, avoids a discussion of why and how Mansueti, among all the others *Belliniani*, was the one eventually selected.

It has been shown that the recruiting system of the *SGSM* was anything but undemanding. Specifically, it has emerged that the successful painter was selected through an open competition in which the candidates had to meet the approval of a dedicated jury probably joined by the *Quattro Capi di Banca*. In order to obtain a consensus, special connections with the *SGSM*'s community could surely turn out decisive – the Bellini brothers and Palma il Vecchio were all members of the *SGSM*, whereas Paris Bordon was familiar with some of its leading officers. However, we must admit that the successful candidate could not only count on his social connections, but he also had to submit a very compelling model. After all, the selected painter was not just required to contribute to an ordinary narrative cycle, but he rather had to exceed the decoration of rival confraternities. At stake, needless to say, there was the honour of the *SGSM*.

Unlike the Bellini brothers, Mansueti was not a member of the confraternity and, besides the intimacy with his former masters, the analysis has shown few connections with the *SGSM*'s membership. The special relationship with the Bellinis, both unfortunately dead by 1516, was of little account at the time of Mansueti's first commission (1518), and the acquaintance with Marco Pellegrini was not decisive either, since the *Guardian*

<sup>1025</sup> A. Gentili, "Smontando e rimontando le costruzioni simboliche delle pale d'altare", *Venezia Cinquecento*, 4 (1994), pp. 71-92, especially pp. 80-81.

*Grande* had died nine years before. At the same time the presence of Mansueti's cousin-in-law, Francesco Longini, among the members of the *Zonta* in 1525, cannot explain the commission of the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark*. Inevitably, a second option arises. An option that would surely attract criticism, but which is nevertheless self-evident: Mansueti's models succeeded because they fulfilled all the necessary requirements of the *SGSM*. More precisely, his "conservative" and "insignificant" style, his deplorable "mancanza di penetrazione", ultimately beat all the other competitors, whoever they were. As a consequence, Mansueti's stylistic conformity with the *Bellinesque* manner can not be regarded as the only explanation of his success, and, if it really was the only criterion employed by the *SGSM*, it should be recalled that at that time there were many other epigones available – not least, for instance, Vittore Belliniano.

As is well-known there are no extant documents that can elucidate how Mansueti won his commissions, nor is there any direct evidence about the criteria employed to select his work. However, if the scrutiny of the *SGSM*'s documents has proved inconclusive, the analysis of its membership has on the contrary provided profitable clues.

Among the numerous men involved in the commission of the narrative cycle has stood out the figure of Jacopo Dardani who, together with his father Alvise, held the post of *Guardian Grande* five times – not to mention the two occasions when Alvise turned down the appointment. Besides his devotion for St Mark, Alvise elected the church of Santa Maria Assunta *dei Crociferi* as his special place for worship. It was in fact at the *Crociferi* that Alvise used to attend mass; and his involvement with that church was so intimate that after the disastrous fire in the cloister in 1490 he personally supervised, and financed, its restoration. Finally, it was at the *Crociferi* that the *Cancellier Grande* Alvise Dardani decided to be buried (1511). Although we know very little about the private life of Jacopo Dardani, it is highly probable that he joined his father during church services. The presence of such distinguished members of the *SGSM* at the church *dei Crociferi* suddenly provides an unexpected link with Giovanni Mansueti. As previously mentioned, the church *dei Crociferi* contained two paintings from Mansueti: the *Allegorical Representation of the Trinity* (1492) and the *Arrest of St Mark* (1499; fig. 4). If such a coincidence

does not necessarily prove that Alvise and Jacopo appreciated Giovanni Mansueti's work, it does however suggest that the two of them were at least familiar with the two paintings. Furthermore, given the involvement of Jacopo Dardani in the art patronage of the *SGSM*, it is highly probable that during mass his eyes lingered looking at the chapel of the Guild of the Silk-weavers flanking the main altar. A chapel where by the end of the fifteenth-century contained a brand-new narrative cycle of St Mark's mission in Egypt, including Mansueti's *Arrest of St Mark*<sup>1026</sup>.

It is not my intention to speculate any longer about unverifiable circumstances, least of all about variable issues such as the aesthetic sense of a man of whom we know so little. However, it is certain that Mansueti's painting shows all the features that most likely secured the commission of the three paintings at the *SGSM*: an elaborate and circumstantial knowledge of Mamluk clothing, a plausible repertory of Mamluk-like elements such as the emblem and the *maṣṭaba*, a wide variety of postures and attitudes, and, finally, the use of animal symbolism to stir the excitable imagination of the learned beholders. Although speculative, the hypothesis turns out plausible once related to the official role that Jacopo Dardani had in accomplishing the *SGSM*'s narrative cycle. It was Jacopo the *Guardian Grande* who controlled the *Banca* when Mansueti obtained the double commission of the *Healing and Baptism of Anianus* (1518); the same one who in 1525, this time as *Provedadore sopra la fabrica*, personally superintended the execution of the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark*. Thus, if it appeared impulsive to attribute to Jacopo a direct appreciation of Mansueti's style, we should at least assume that Mansueti's personal rendering of the Mamluk world was considered suitable for the narrative cycle of the *SGSM*. A competency that in 1518 was probably considered in line with contemporary examples of the Mamluk Mode: Gentile and Giovanni Bellini's *Preaching of St Mark in Alexandria* and the partial execution of the Giovanni Bellini's *Martyrdom of St Mark*.

The investigation of the *SGSM*'s social context has also produced crucial evidence about its leading officers. Expanding upon the seminal article by Botti, whose analysis was confined to the Alexandrine interests of the *Banca* at the opening of the sixteenth-century, my dissertation has proved how

<sup>1026</sup> M. Boschini (1664), pp. 421-422; P. Humfrey (1983), pp. 82-84; P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 287.

such commercial connections were still topical in the 1530s, when the narrative cycle was eventually completed. Such a broader investigation has therefore provided a reliable portrayal of the officers depicted in the canvases, resulting in an oligarchy of *cittadini originari* whose wealth and social prestige derived from manning cargo ships (Ottobon), as well as from trading spices (dalla Pigna), jewels (Ziliol), silk, fur (Moranzon), wool (Grifo), and tin (Maistri). The aim of the survey was to discover the cultural and ideological motives that led the officers of the *SGSM* to represent their commercial partners as the modern beneficiaries of St Mark's evangelism.

With regard to Giovanni Mansueti's contribution, this dissertation has discussed his extraordinary ability in interpreting the major theme of the narrative cycle, in fact only drafted by Gentile. If the *Preaching of St Mark* was meant to celebrate the power of the Evangelist's word, it was the work of Mansueti which eventually expanded on the miraculous deeds of St Mark in Egypt. As a consequence, Mansueti's involvement has appeared remarkable both for the number of canvases he painted – three out of five representations of the Egyptian mission – and for bearing the burdensome responsibility for visualizing most of St Mark's activity in Alexandria. After all it was Mansueti, not the celebrated masters of his times, who was asked to complete the most extensive cycle ever undertaken on the Evangelist's mission since the mosaics in the Basilica were concluded. And, as demonstrated, Mansueti's success laid not just in his "inventorial approach" to narrative painting<sup>1027</sup>, but rather in his ability in merging history with legend, in creating *istorie* where the donors' needs were intimately interwoven with the miraculous deeds of their Holy Patron. An unsuspected talent that most likely made Mansueti the best candidate among his competitors.

The first episode of the mission, the *Healing of Anianus*, has stood out as the manifesto of Mansueti's artistic manner. The discussion has demonstrated how the painter designed an allegorical structure without precedent, obtained according to an acute reinterpretation of the hagiographic tradition. If the *Preaching*, as already argued, celebrated St Mark's ability in teaching and disseminating the Word of God, the *Healing* visualized the Evangelist's curative powers as means of conversion. Following a well-

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<sup>1027</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), pp. 152-156.

established literary tradition, Mansueti conceived a picture where the cure of Anianus's wound explicitly mirrored the *Miracle of the Man Born Blind*, thus creating a surprising parallel between Christ's miraculous restoration of the spiritual *sight* of the *blind* unbelievers and Anianus' specular recognition of his false faith. Mansueti then developed the hagiographic narrative into an astonishing symbolic structure. The episode was portrayed in the shade of a palace in which conceptual significance and allegoric cogency should finally restore the sight of Mansueti's denigrators, rather than that of the harmless Mamluks. As discussed, the palace of the sultan, represented as the place where the Mamluk intelligentsia had gathered, was used to visualize a crucial passage of the Basilica's *Legendae Sanctorum* where the Evangelist finally revealed the truth of the Christian Faith to Anianus and the fallaciousness of the (sultan's) speculative knowledge. Accordingly, the crowded palace was turned into a colossal monument to the ignorance of the Mamluks, a vigorous censure of their foolishness and misjudgement. A condemnation to be interpreted in the light of the injustices and misfeasances repeatedly suffered by the *SGSM's* members while trading with Egypt, and in fact represented by the Western merchants (unjustly) imprisoned at the feet of the throne of the (ignorant) sultan.

If in the *Healing of Anianus* the animal symbolism was confined to the tame dromedary, in both the *Baptism* and the *Three Episodes* Mansueti made a more refined use of it. In the first case a child keeping a swallow on the leash was used to create an allegorical structure where two Mamluks, facing each other at the opposite sides of a staircase, were invited to abandon their worldly corruption. An allegory mirrored in the figure of the kneeling Anianus, whose naked body symbolically rises from his black tunic, his previous sinful life. Secondly, in the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark*, Mansueti's use of allegory offered a visual key to interpret the main theme of the painting through the representation of a curious set of three: a deer, a panther and a bear. Re-working a symbology deeply-rooted in the work of Vittore Carpaccio, and Giovanni and Leonardo Bellini, as well as substantiated by the imagery of Medieval bestiaries, Mansueti set forth an astonishing *Allegory of Choice*. As the Evangelist came to Egypt to redeem the infidels from the original sin (the bear), thus the Mamluks were offered the chance whether to *see* the true God

(the stag), or on the contrary to listen to the *blind* sultan (the panther). Ultimately, the three animals epitomized not just the moral of the painting, but they rather encompassed Mansueti's entire work for the *SGSM*. The theme of the Testamentary restoration of the *spiritual sight*, carefully displayed in the *Healing of Anianus* and then subtly evoked by the curative swallow in the *Baptism*, found in the *Three Episodes from the Life of St Mark* its necessary completion. Such a unique ability of coining polymathic allegories eventually condensed Mansueti's artistic legacy: an invitation to go beyond immediacy, to look past appearances.

If such an unsuspected metaphoric language has compelled me to reformulate the methodological approach toward Giovanni Mansueti's work, his personal interpretation of the Venetian society has not been left unexploited either. As in the case of the *Healing*, where the painter gave voice to the countless injustices and abuse suffered by the Venetian merchants in Egypt, in the two following paintings Mansueti was able to merge Venice's expansionist ideology with contemporary theorization on Levantine evangelism. It was the case of the *Baptism of Anianus*, which explicitly mirrored the *Mission of the Apostles* as designed in the Basilica Baptistery, where Venice's mercantile colonialism was legitimated by no less than Christ himself. This was an interpretation to be understood in light of the *Libellus ad Leonem X. Pontificem Maximum*, in which a new evangelic mission in the Levant was considered as a necessary precondition of the imminent crusade against the Turks. And, in this regard, it was the intentional portrayal of the Turks within the pictures that eventually unveiled Mansueti's ability to translate his patrons' ideology. A moderate inclusion, never too conspicuous indeed, but which nonetheless revealed the increasing concern of the *SGSM* toward the new rulers of the former Mamluk empire. It was the case, as demonstrated, of the presence of two *capugi* in the palace of the *Healing of Anianus*, where through a series of formal references the painter associated the Turks with the foolish Mamluk sultan. Or, furthermore, it was the case of the *giannizzerotto civile* placed at the top of St Mark's prison in the *Three Episodes*, where his indifference, even in front of the apparition of Christ, inevitably left him no hope for redemption. A theme, the Turks' exclusion from the Divine Design, also represented in the *Bellinesque Martyrdom of St Mark*, where the Ottomans were portrayed as the

very instigators of the Evangelist's murder.

Mansueti's pronounced use of allegory has proved how Fortini Brown's concept of *eyewitness style* must be subjected to a critical reframe, especially regarding the investigation of its cultural motives. If it is irrefutable that the Venetian painters of *istorie* aimed to create pictures as "truthful as possible according to prevailing standards of evidence and proof", it is likewise patent that such ignorance had different purposes from just preserving "the memory of historical events"<sup>1028</sup>. Accordingly, my dissertation has not just attempted to understand *istorie* as projections of what "artist and viewer both saw", but it has rather pursued a higher aim investigating "what [artists] wanted others to see"<sup>1029</sup>. As attempted in the analysis of the *SGSM*, the intentions of the artists were therefore regarded as the result of a pictorial translation of the demands of their patrons, a truthful representation of a specific context with its unique requirements and aspirations. Fortini Brown's concept of *documentary* truthfulness, or the "period version of the truth"<sup>1030</sup>, has been therefore readdressed in terms of *contentual* truthfulness, in view of the ability of the painters in representing their donors' ideology, not in picturing a plausible reality. Ultimately, this dissertation has tried to reopen the discussion from where Fortini Brown ended it, trying to locate and interpret the "host of related ideological and cultural tendencies that no modern viewer can claim to share"<sup>1031</sup>.

In the case, for example, of the Mamluk riding a donkey in the *Healing of Anianus*, my analysis did not dispose of such detail as the naivety of Mansueti's "copious style", but it rather tried to question the historical and cultural motives that most likely prompted the painter to slight the distinguished admiral in such a graceless way. Accordingly, my analysis initially referred the detail to the derisory parade on a mule's back of the last Mamluk Sultan, and, consequently, I investigated the symbolism of the animal in light of the culture that produced the picture. The discussion eventually resulted in a reinforcement – not a forced interpretation – of the principal theme of the painting, where the inability of the ignorant sultan to discern the

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<sup>1028</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 125, 132.

<sup>1029</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 132.

<sup>1030</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>1031</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 240.

Truth was indeed reflected by the foolish mule, itself an established Christian metaphor of ignorance and heresy. And the same can be said in the case of the vase seller portrayed on the opposite side of the canvas, here interpreted as visual embodiment of the Mamluks' greed and thirst for money. An interpretation initially deduced from the observation of the old retailer himself, so ostentatiously indifferent toward the ongoing miracle, but fully absorbed by the pursuit of his own profit. A sinful attitude eventually interpreted in light of the Idolater Potter of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, as well as by the revealing comparison with the rapacious sultan unable to *see* the righteous path unveiled under his eyes by the prodigious Healer.

With regard to the *Orientalist* phenomenon, this dissertation has shown how Mansueti represented Mamluk society according to a series of literary and verbal accounts which apparently provided him with all the necessary evidence to depict an acceptable portrayal of Egypt. As discussed, plenty of *SGSM*'s members were familiar with the Mamluk world, and a merchant brethren such as Francesco Teldi was indeed so well-informed about Cairo that his expertise was famed even outside the *Serenissima*'s borders. Besides the various ramification of the *SGSM*'s direct knowledge of Egypt, it is my concern to dwell on a crucial matter such as the origins of the Venetian *Oriental Mode*, notably on the misinterpreted role played by Giovanni Mansueti.

Although generally related to Gentile Bellini's stay in Istanbul (1479-81), Venetian Orientalist Painting was indeed concerned with Mamluk Egypt, at least in its first manifestations<sup>1032</sup>. But Gentile's direct knowledge of the Levant was limited to the Ottoman population, and, as demonstrated by the cycle of the *SGSM*, his understanding of the Mamluk costume was no more detailed than that of his colleagues. Certainly not more refined than that of Giovanni Mansueti. Additionally, it is worth emphasizing that among the numerous drawings directly or indirectly attributed to Gentile there is no trace of any Mamluk, whereas at present the only faithful sketch of their costumes can be found in a drawing undoubtedly made by Giovanni Mansueti<sup>1033</sup>. A *simile* which was surely part of Mansueti's own repertoire of Mamluk

<sup>1032</sup> J. Raby (1982), pp. 35-65; C. Schmidt Arcangeli (2006), pp. 120-139.

<sup>1033</sup> Although only *attributed to* Giovanni Mansueti in *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 313 no. 51 (catalogue entry), I believe there is no reason to doubt his authorship anymore.

garments<sup>1034</sup>, and not a pastiche derived from Gentile's *Preaching* and the anonymous *Reception of the Venetian Ambassadors in Damascus*<sup>1035</sup>. Furthermore, despite his current fame, Gentile's Mamluk production was in fact quite moderate. Even if in 1492 he offered to paint a series of *teleri* for the *SGSM*, it must be noticed that his first, and indeed only, depiction of Mamluk East was realized in 1504, that is to say some five years after Mansueti and his colleagues decorated the chapel of the Guild of the Silk-weavers in the church *dei Crociferi*. A cycle in which Giovanni Mansueti on the contrary demonstrated his precocious mastery of the Mamluk idiom.

Already identified as the painting that most likely secured Mansueti's engagement at the *SGSM*, the *Arrest of St Mark* (fig. 4) has therefore turned out to be the evidence of Mansueti's crucial role in developing Venetian Orientalist Painting. As a matter of fact Mansueti was the leading exponent of such a unique *movement*, and, in this regard, the comparison with Cima da Conegliano's *Healing of Anianus* (fig. 105), the only surviving painting of the series along with Mansueti's, confirms such impression.

Rightly considered as a major achievement in reshaping the image of Venice as the new Alexandria<sup>1036</sup>, Cima's *Healing* nonetheless features a simplistic version of Mamluk garments. Most of the figures show generic white turbans, whereas the only exception is represented by the riding soldier with a tall domed red *tāqiyya*<sup>1037</sup>. On the contrary, Mansueti's *Arrest of St Mark* presents a memorable version of the Mamluk world. Not only Mansueti depicted an incredible array of colourful materials with an extraordinary accuracy in reproducing damask fabrics, but his replication of the Mamluk headgear is here unparalleled. Following the hierarchical order, the painter has portrayed the sultan with his typical horned turban (*al-takhfīfa al-kabira*) placed on the *maṣṭaba*, whereas the military counsellors on his right are wearing characteristic tall domed "bearskin" turbans (*tāqiyya*); in the foreground, finally, among distinguished Mamluks wearing oversize headgear, a handful of soldiers pulling the Evangelist shows a type of traditional red

<sup>1034</sup> Bellini and *The East* (2005), p. 23; *Venice and the Islamic* (2006), p. 313 no. 51 (catalogue entry); Caroline Campbell (2011), pp. 92-93.

<sup>1035</sup> H. Tietze and E. Tietze-Conrat (1979), pp. 189-190; J. Raby (1982), p. 60.

<sup>1036</sup> C. Schmidt Arcangeli (2006), p. 126.

<sup>1037</sup> Far in the distance there is however a wandering Turk wearing his distinguished turban topped by a red *tāj*.

bonnet (*zampŧ*) rounded with white kerchiefs. In addition to the accuracy of Mansueti's repertoire, what really strikes one here is his evident awareness of the hierarchical values of the depicted turbans, his truthful portrayal of the Mamluk's society. A truthfulness which even exceed what Fortini Brown indicated as *index of credibility*, namely the sufficient evocation "of men and places unseen"<sup>1038</sup>.

Mansueti's accuracy certainly had no equals on this occasion. Only the work of Gentile and Giovanni Bellini would eventually match his skills, and yet this happened several years later. The same should be said in the case of the *Reception of the Venetian Ambassadors in Damascus*, which new dating in 1511 has thwarted Raby's efforts to use it as the prime source for the narrative cycles at the *Crociferi* and at the *SGSM*. Once failed even the last attempt to relate the origins of Venetian Orientalism to a documented portrayal of the Mamluk world, we are therefore obliged to acknowledge the indisputable truth: Mansueti's *Arrest of St Mark* cannot be considered anymore the "earliest painting to reflect the influence of the Louvre *Reception*"<sup>1039</sup>, but is in fact the earliest and, significantly, the most accurate Venetian example of the Mamluk Mode currently available<sup>1040</sup>.

Principally concerned with the investigation of Mansueti's ability in projecting his own society, this dissertation has naturally left unexploited a series of crucial issues. If in my article on the *Miracle of San Lio*<sup>1041</sup> I outlined Mansueti's artistic relation with, and emancipation from, Gentile Bellini, further investigation of his contribution at the *Scuola di San Giovanni* is required – not to mention the necessary redefinition, both chronological as well as stylistic, of his entire oeuvre<sup>1042</sup>. At the same time, however, I believe that the present discussion has at least contributed to a decisive re-evaluation of a painter labelled, by no less than his greatest connoisseur, as a *little painter*. A belittling label which, now that the analytical criteria applicable to Mansueti's work have been reformulated, has in fact proved unfortunate and indeed unfounded. This, I believe, should be the prerequisite for further investigation.

<sup>1038</sup> P. Fortini Brown (1988), p. 132.

<sup>1039</sup> J. Raby (1982), p. 62.

<sup>1040</sup> C. Campbell (2011), pp. 92-93.

<sup>1041</sup> G. Matino (2010), pp. 5-18.

<sup>1042</sup> According to F. Agostini (2013), p. 31 note 1, Giovanni Mansueti's catalogue currently count not less than seventy paintings.

An analysis finally emancipated from stylistic constraints and critical preconceptions, but rather aware of dealing with one of the most valuable artists of Early Modern Venice. No more the eccentric exponent of the Bellinis' circle, surely not one of their ungifted pupils, but rather an esteemed artist of his time: in fact “magistrum Iohannem de Mansuetis pictorem”<sup>1043</sup>.

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<sup>1043</sup> ASV, Giudici del Petizion, Sentenze a giustizia, b. 210, f. 126v.

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