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Piracy and the Venetian State: The Dilemma of Maritime Defense in the Fourteenth Century

By Irene B. Katele

The favored economic position that Venice enjoyed in the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea following the Fourth Crusade lasted only until the fall of the Latin Empire of Constantinople in 1261. During the next century the republic sought to reinstate its hegemony over the waterways and engaged in a prolonged struggle for maritime supremacy with its Ligurian rival, Genoa. The two cities were unable to resolve their debates over commercial privileges in key ports until 1381, following the conclusion of the War of Chioggia. One of the features of this contest was a sharp rise in the instances of piracy and warfare between corsairs, particularly along the critical routes of Levantine trade.¹ Genoa, however, was not the only power to challenge Venetian trade and domination. Robbery on the seas increased markedly as new adversaries edged their way onto the naval stage with greater intensity after 1300. The fourteenth century may have been a watershed in the history of naval plundering, marking a transitional phase during which the difference between pirates and corsairs crystallized.² Moreover the years preceding

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¹ George I. Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois dans la Mer Noire au XIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1929), pp. 54 and 58–59; Michel Mollat, Philippe Braunstein, and Jean-Claude Hocquet, “Réflexions sur l’expansion vénitienne en Méditerranée,” in Agostino Pertusi, ed., *Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV*, 1/2 (Florence, 1973), p. 529; Peter Charanis, “Piracy in the Aegean during the Reign of Michael VIII Paleologus,” *Annuaire de l’Institut de Philologie et d’Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 10 (1950), repr. in Peter Charanis, ed., *Social, Economic, and Political Life in the Byzantine Empire* (London, 1973), pp. 128–29; Michel Balard, *La Romanie génoise (XII^e au début du XV^e siècle)*, 2 vols., *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, n.s. 18 (Genoa, 1978), 2:587 and 592; Camillo Manfroni, *Storia della marina italiana*, 3 vols. (Leghorn and Rome, 1897–1902), 1:444 and 2:3.

² Michel Fontenay and Alberto Tenenti, “Course et piraterie méditerranéennes de la fin du moyen-âge au début du XIX^e siècle,” in Michel Mollat, ed., *Course et piraterie: Etudes présentées à la Commission Internationale d’Histoire Maritime à l’occasion de son X^e colloque internationale pendant le XIV^e Congrès International des Sciences historiques (San Francisco, août 1975)*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1975), 1:95; Michel Mollat, “De la piraterie sauvage à la course réglementée (XIV^e–XV^e siècle),” *Mélanges de l’Ecole française de Rome* 87 (1975), 9. Briefly, a corsair may be differentiated from a pirate

the War of Chioggia reveal how Venice responded to the growing instability, how the commune implemented measures to deal effectively with multiplying threats, and, above all, how the republic's naval affairs reflected both remarkable elasticity and cohesion within the scope of state policies.

Despite the impact of medieval piracy on the contours of maritime relations, historians who tackle the issue generally agree that few works thoroughly examine the subject.³ Those authors who do note the effects of piracy on Venice argue that the commune was most often the victim, rather than the perpetrator, of raids led by pirates or corsairs.⁴ The prevailing view maintains that the use of corsairs by Venice was sporadic, abnormal, and exceptional.⁵ This traditional interpretation requires modification. The Republic of St. Mark played an important role in the construction of new foundations for the professions of pirates and corsairs, both in its defensive efforts to contain the problem and in its outright participation in the activity itself. Venetian responses to piracy and sponsorship of plundering ventures hinged on the activities of the city's captains. By and large the republic bypassed the use of true corsairs and instead bestowed upon its captains the

insofar as he obtained some form of permission from the mother state to commit aggressive acts. These assaults could take place only during times of war and only against enemy vessels: diverging from either of these two conditions would be piratical. A pirate, on the other hand, ravaged the seas of his own accord without precise legal sanction, chose his targets more or less indiscriminately, and amassed his prizes or booty only for his own (or his investors', if they existed) profit. See Fontenay and Tenenti, "Course et piraterie," p. 78; Alberto Tenenti, "Venezia e la pirateria nel Levante: 1300 c.–1460 c.," in Pertusi, ed., *Venezia e il Levante*, pp. 708–9; Michel Mollat, "Guerre de course et piraterie à la fin du moyen âge: Aspects économiques et sociaux. Position des problèmes," *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 90 (1972), 1; Charles LaMache, *La guerre de course dans le passé dans le présent et dans l'avenir* (Paris, 1901), p. 10; Ferruccio Sassi, "La guerra in corsa e il diritto di preda secondo il diritto veneziano," *estratto from Rivista di storia del diritto italiano* 2 (1929), 30; Pitman B. Potter, *The Freedom of the Seas in History, Law, and Politics* (New York, 1924), p. 142.

³ Marie-Luise Favreau, "Die italienische Levant-Piraterie und die Sicherheit der Seewege nach Syrien im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert," *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 65 (1978), 461; Robert S. Lopez, "Dieci documenti sulla guerra di corsa," in Robert S. Lopez, *Su e giù per la storia di Genova*, Collana Storica di Fonti e Studi 20 (Genoa, 1975), p. 313; Gian Giacomo Musso, *Navigazione e commercio genovese con il Levante nei documenti dell'Archivio di Stato di Genova (secc. XIV–XV)* (Rome, 1975), p. 108, n. 4; Alberto Tenenti, *Piracy and the Decline of Venice, 1580–1615*, trans. Janet and Brian Pullan (Berkeley, Calif., 1967), p. xv.

⁴ E.g., "On the seas the most frequent victims of piracy were the Venetian merchants"; Charanis, "Piracy in the Aegean," p. 133. "Both Genoese and Venetians were notorious throughout Europe for their acquisitiveness, but one gets the distinct impression that the Genoese enjoyed the less complimentary reputation in this respect"; Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Merchants in Crisis: Genoese and Venetian Men of Affairs and the Fourteenth-Century Depression* (New Haven, Conn., 1976), p. 10. "Les Génois . . . sont peut-être moins victimes de pirates que leurs rivaux vénitiennes"; Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, 2:598. Other discussions exclude Venice in their reviews of Mediterranean pirates of the period: "A survey of this record of piracy in which the Genoese easily take the first place and the Pisans the second . . ."; John K. Fotheringham, "Genoa and the Fourth Crusade," *English Historical Review* 25 (1910), 32. "Inoltre, i più attivi, o almeno i più noti tra questi pirati non erano Greci, ma Pisani e Genovesi . . ."; Silvano Borsari, "Il commercio veneziano nell'Impero bizantino nel XII secolo," *Rivista storica italiana* 76 (1964), 1009–10.

⁵ Tenenti, "Venezia e la pirateria," p. 716. See also Peter Earle, *Corsairs of Malta and Barbary* (Annapolis, 1970), p. 11; Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, 2:596; Kedar, *Merchants in Crisis*, p. 30.

freedom to raid enemy merchandise. Venetian documents, predictably, do not refer to their captains as corsairs. Only the actions committed by these captains, not the names the sources assign to them, can reveal whether they ever behaved like corsairs. The example of Venice offers a glimpse at a flexible system in which counterpiracy flowed easily into what some might call piracy. The evidence suggests that the fourteenth century was a critical period during which the scope of maritime aggression shifted to include broader and sharper forms of acknowledged and legitimate interaction.

In matters relating to piracy the pivotal maritime authority was the Venetian captain of the gulf. Unlike the captains assigned to particular voyages, such as to Romania or Alexandria, the captain of the gulf's responsibilities were not limited to a narrow route. Instead his duties varied widely, ranging from the surveillance of the Adriatic Sea and the waters of Romania and the Levant to the escorting of merchant galleys when a threatening situation arose.⁶ Although there are indications that Venice used policing fleets in the Adriatic Sea by 1224, if not earlier,⁷ we first begin to hear about the captain of the gulf regularly after 1300.⁸ His protective maneuvers are especially critical, since often the origins of piracy can be traced to counterpiracy.⁹ The captain of the gulf, for instance, organized and implemented searches for enemy contraband aboard vessels sailing the Adriatic Sea. But Venice's claims to superiority over the Adriatic were not uncontested by other powers, and the captain of the gulf's right to stop, search, and seize unwelcome vessels may have appeared aggressive to some, particularly since the task of checking for contraband fell to corsairs in other maritime cities.¹⁰ Roberto Cessi argued that the *capitaneus culfi* fulfilled a dual function, serving both as the com-

⁶ Tenenti, "Venezia e la pirateria," pp. 747–55.

⁷ Louise Buenger Robbert, "A Venetian Naval Expedition of 1224," in David Herlihy, Robert S. Lopez, and Vselvolod Slessarev, eds., *Economy, Society and Government in Medieval Italy* (Kent, Ohio, 1969), pp. 147–48; Roberto Cessi, *Storia della repubblica di Venezia*, 2 vols. (Milan and Messina, 1944–46; repr. Milan, 1968), 1:218. Hélène Ahrweiler suggests that the "escadres de police" began as early as 1204: "Course et piraterie dans la Méditerranée orientale aux IV^{ème}–XV^{ème} siècles (Empire byzantin)," in Mollat, ed., *Course et piraterie*, 1:21.

⁸ Frederic C. Lane, "Venetian Merchant Galleys, 1300–1334: Private and Communal Operation," *Speculum* 38 (1963), repr. in Frederic C. Lane, *Venice and History: The Collected Papers of Frederic C. Lane* (Baltimore, 1966), p. 214; Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore, 1973), pp. 67–68; Cessi, *Storia della repubblica di Venezia*, 1:299; Manfroni, *Storia della marina italiana*, 2:66–67; Tenenti, "Venezia e la pirateria," pp. 747–49.

⁹ Musso, *Navigazione e commercio genovese*, pp. 110–112; Giovanni Forcheri, *Navi e navigazione a Genova nel trecento: Il "Liber Gazarie"*, Collana Storica di Fonti e Studi 17 (Genoa, 1974), p. 35; Mollat, "Guerre de course et piraterie," p. 1; LaMache, *La guerre de course*, pp. 13–14; Fredric L. Cheyette, "The Sovereign and the Pirates, 1332," *Speculum* 45 (1970), 47–48.

¹⁰ On questions about Venice's lordship of the gulf, see Jorjo Tadić, "Venezia e la costa orientale dell'Adriatico fino al secolo XV," in Pertusi, ed., *Venezia e il Levante*, pp. 689–90, who traces objections to Venetian claims over the Adriatic to the ninth and tenth centuries; Jean Merrien, *La course et la flibuste: Des origines à leur interdiction* (Lausanne, 1970), p. 12; Potter, *The Freedom of the Seas*, pp. 43–44; Giovanni Italo Cassandro, *Le rappresaglie e il fallimento a Venezia nei secoli XIII–XVI*, Documenti e Studi per la Storia del commercio e del diritto commerciale italiano 14 (Turin, 1938), pp. 29–30; Lane, *Venice*, p. 65; Cheyette, "The Sovereign and the Pirates, 1332," p. 45.

mander of a maritime patrol and as an organizer of defensive operations in the event of attack.¹¹ Venetian sources confirm the two-sided nature of these obligations.¹²

The captain of the gulf, like other Venetian captains, operated in conditions which often forced him to rely heavily on his own judgment in matters of defense and offense. The Republic of St. Mark defined “enemies” rather broadly, regarding any armed vessels appearing in the Adriatic without its consent as piratical and considering them legitimate objects of harm and seizure.¹³ But in an age when most merchant ships had some arms on board for protective purposes,¹⁴ it could be tricky to distinguish between an unarmed vessel and an armed one. Identification of neutral vessels or merchandise presented another difficulty. The idea of maritime neutrality had not been completely formulated by the fourteenth century.¹⁵ Although an ally was not to engage in any commerce with a hostile state or transport its merchandise,¹⁶ conventions developed to accommodate the reality that friendly vessels often carried enemy goods and vice versa. A peaceful carrier loaded with enemy merchandise could be confiscated after a search and the questionable items on board apprehended as contraband. By custom, goods not draped with the friendly or neutral state’s flag or insignia were subject to inspection and possible seizure.¹⁷ Members of the crew originating from friendly territory as well as any persons from a neutral state traveling on a belligerent vessel were to be released.¹⁸ In such

¹¹ Cessi, *Storia della repubblica di Venezia*, 1:261.

¹² E.g., Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter cited as A.S.V.), Consiglio di Dieci, Miscellanea Codici, Regestrum (Super negotia guerra Aquileia, conte di Gorizia e Trieste, 1290 m.v.–1291) (hereafter cited as “Consiglio di Dieci super negotia guerra.”) I am indebted to Dr. Alessandra Sambo and Dr. Alan M. Stahl for drawing my attention to this unusual document), fol. 13v (9 March 1291); *Le deliberazioni del Consiglio dei Rogati (Senato)*, Serie “Mistorum,” ed. Roberto Cessi and Paolo Sambin, 1: *Libri 1–14*, Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Venezie, in Monumenti Storici, n.s. 15 (Venice, 1960), 1:51, no. 183 (5 April 1302); A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Capricornus, fol. 165r (copia, fol. 431r) (31 December 1307 and 2 January 1307, m.v.); *ibid.*, Clericus Civicus, fol. 72r (21 December 1316) (copia, fol. 179v); A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 17, fol. 106v (31 August 1338); *ibid.*, fols. 83v–84r (18 August 1337); *ibid.*, Reg. 18, fol. 46v (11 July 1339); *ibid.*, Reg. 19, fol. 31v (24 August 1340); A.S.V., Miscellanea Ducali ed Atti Diplomatici, B. 12, no. B-7 (8 April 1363).

¹³ Lane, *Venice*, p. 198; Tenenti, “Venezia e la pirateria,” p. 748. This explains why the captain of the gulf bears his title: the republic considered the Adriatic Sea its “gulf.”

¹⁴ Richard Unger, *The Ship in the Medieval Economy, 600–1600* (London, 1980), p. 123.

¹⁵ Chayette, “The Sovereign and the Pirates, 1332,” p. 57; Potter, *The Freedom of the Seas*, pp. 47–48.

¹⁶ Xavier Martin, *Etude sur le blocus maritime* (Paris, 1909), pp. 13–14.

¹⁷ Laura Balletto, “Mercanti, corsari e pirati nei mari di Corsica (sec. XIII),” in *Miscellanea di storia italiana e mediterranea per Nino Lambaglia* (Genoa, 1978), pp. 262–63; Laura Balletto, *Genova nel duecento: Uomini nel porto e uomini sul mare*, Collana Storica di Fonti e Studi 36 (Genoa, 1983), p. 79; Georg Caro, *Genua und die Mächte am Mittelmeer, 1257–1311: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des XIII. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Halle, 1895–99), trans., repr., and updated by Onorio Soardi as *Genova e la supremazia sul Mediterraneo (1257–1311)*, 2 vols., Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, n.s. 14–15 (Genoa, 1974–75), 2:61.

¹⁸ For a complete discussion of the neutrality issue, see the *Consolato del mare* in *Collection des lois maritimes antérieures au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Jean Marie Pardessus, 6 vols. (Paris, 1828; repr.

a context it is difficult to determine where protection ends and aggression begins.¹⁹

One way to begin assessing whether Venetian captains ever crossed the fine line between counterpiracy and outright assault is to compare their orders with those designed for individuals whom the republic actually sent off *in cursu*. Fortunately, full commissions issued to both do exist. Although instructions to the captain of the gulf appear consistently throughout fourteenth-century Venetian documents, the earliest complete commission, detailing all of his obligations succinctly, dates from the early 1390s. It is basically a summary of previous directions to the captain.²⁰ The discussion opens with an expression of confidence in the captain of the gulf, on the basis of which he is granted full liberty to do whatever is best for the honor of Venice and the persecution of pirates.²¹ If Venetian citizens might be or had been harmed, the captain was to capture the robbers and punish them according to the severity of their crime, as he saw fit.²² However, if they had not injured Venetians, the culprits should not be killed, but the captain of the gulf could burn the vessel if he chose to.²³ Any armed vessel threatening Venetians, or their ships and merchandise, should be apprehended and its men treated as public corsairs, “pro bono exemplo aliorum.” If individuals were found on the vessel who had not participated in any raids, they were to be released

Turin, 1959), 2:303–6; A.S.V., Libri Commemorativi, Reg. 1, fol. 3v (3 July 1300); Sassi, “La guerra in corsa,” p. 42; LaMache, *La guerre de course*, p. 23; Carl J. Kulsrud, *Maritime Neutrality to 1780: A History of the Main Principles Governing Neutrality to 1780* (Boston, 1936), pp. 111–13.

¹⁹ Frederic C. Lane, “The Economic Meaning of War and Protection,” *Journal of Social Philosophy and Jurisprudence* 7 (1942), repr. in Lane, *Venice and History*, pp. 388–89; Musso, *Navigazione e commercio genovese*, p. 21; Caro, *Genova*, 1:392; Lane, *Venice*, p. 128. The chroniclers discussing the conflicts between Genoa and Venice in the 1260s point to the same combination of offense and defense: e.g., *Annali genovesi di Caffaro e dei suoi continuatori*, Italian edition of Ceccardo Roccatagliata Ceccardi and Giovanni Monleone, 9 vols. (Genoa, 1923–30), 6:97 and 122; Martin DaCanal, *Les estoires de Venise: Cronaca veneziana in lingua francese dalle origini al 1275*, ed. Alberto Limentani (Florence, 1972), pp. 206–8; Andrea Dandolo, *Chronica*, ed. Ester Pastorello, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ser. 2, 12/1 (Bologna, 1938), p. 317.

²⁰ A.S.V., Senato, Secreta, Commissioni-Formulari, Reg. 4, fol. 3r–v. A commission existed by 1337: “Quod non est tempus dandi formam commissionis strictam capitaneis culfi, set potius largam, eo quod melius poterit capitaneus scire et cognoscere quod utilius fuerit. Vadit pars, quod addatur in suam commissionem”; A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 17, fol. 72r (11 March 1337).

²¹ “. . . pro quibus de tua industria plurimum confidentes, damus tibi libertatem, eundi, ordinandi et disponendi, ac faciendi sicut tibi melius videbitur pro honore nostro et persecutione piratarum, in omnem partem”; A.S.V., Senato, Secreta, Commissioni-Formulari, Reg. 4, fol. 3r.

²² “Et si eundo vel redeundo, inveneas aliquem vel aliquos cursarios, qui offensissent gentem nostram, vel damnificassent, debeas eos capere, damnificare et punire sicut tibi videbitur, considerata offensione, quam fecissent”; *ibid.*, fol. 3r. The punishment for captured pirates was established in 1303, by the “Mandatum de pyratibus”: “Demergant in mari . . . qui nostros offendissent”; *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:104, nos. 13 and 16. See also *ibid.*, 1:105, no. 23, and 1:114, no. 144. Yet often captives were to be sent to Venice: *ibid.*, 1:332, no. 94 (February 1327). On these early directions, see Tenenti, “Venezia e la pirateria,” p. 763.

²³ “. . . et si aliquos cursarios Inveneas, qui essent manifesti et publici cursarii et non offensissent gentem nostram, debeas homines permittere abire, et de lignis sit in tuo arbitrio comburendi vel non comburendi, sicut tibi melius videbitur”; A.S.V., Senato, Secreta, Commissioni-Formulari, Reg. 4, fol. 3r. Again, however, Venice was to receive the prisoners.

after careful examination, with a word of caution about ever joining such fleets again. Finally, to ensure the freedom of movement for all within the confines of the Adriatic Sea, the captain of the gulf had orders to follow any vessel as far as the point between Otranto and Saseno and to attack the lands from which the enemy had originated.²⁴

This commission bears close resemblance to an earlier set of instructions issued in 1355 to three corsairs sailing from Venice to Modon during the War of the Straits (1350–55).²⁵ The corsairs were to search the waters for enemies, refrain from harming friends, and could keep the booty they secured, with the exception of vessels and territory.²⁶ Like the captain, they were told to follow up all news of enemies by injuring them however and wherever possible.²⁷ Moreover the corsairs were just as responsible for defensive operations:²⁸ “E se andando o tornando vui trovare alquanti liquali havesse offexo la nostra Zente, debie quelli branchar, danificar e punir, si como a vui o ala maçor parte considerata la offension, la qual elli havesse fata, ela soa condicion parera. E si vui trovare alquanti Corseri, liquali fosse manifest e publici Corseri, e no havesse Offexo la zente nostra, debie lagar andar li homeni, e deli ligni, sia in vostra libertade de bruxarli, o no.” Had this passage been written in Latin, it would have matched exactly part of the orders submitted to the captain of the gulf.²⁹

The commissions, in their similarity, point out the extremely fine line between counterpiracy and assault. The duties of corsairs and the captain combined protection and aggression.³⁰ It appears that the captain's instructions were flexible enough to allow him to act like a corsair without stepping beyond the limits of his regulations. Like the captain of the gulf, the corsair worked to defend Venice's security; like the corsair, the captain was to destroy the enemy as he chose. The liberty to proceed according to his own discretion linked the captain's actions with those of a corsair. Venetian documents acknowledge the “libertate contenta in suis commissionibus,”³¹ noting that the captain of the gulf could operate “sicut sibi videbitur.”³² The loosely

²⁴ Ibid., fol. 3r–v. The broad strait between Otranto and Saseno was known as the “bucha culfi,” or the spot at which Venice's traditional dominance over the Adriatic ended.

²⁵ A.S.V., Senato, Secreta, Commissioni, B. 2, no. 41 (14 January 1354, m.v.).

²⁶ The corsairs could share “tuti li beni mobeli de li nimixi.” By the end of the year they had indeed returned home with loot; *ibid.*; A.S.V., Miscellanea Ducali ed Atti Diplomatici, B. 11, no. B-11 (17 January 1354, m.v.); A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 27, fol. 48r (7 December 1355).

²⁷ “. . . et in ogni altra parte, seguendo la novelle che vui havere, debie procedere, andare, et intendere, a damno de linimixi in ogni parte, o, et si chomo a vui, alamacor parte meio apparera, con vostram [*sic*] segurtade”; A.S.V., Senato, Secreta, Commissioni, B. 2, no. 41 (14 January 1354, m.v.).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ See above, p. 869, n. 22 and n. 23.

³⁰ The 1355 corsair armament was also directed to try to intercept Genoese corsairs; A.S.V., Miscellanea Ducali ed Atti Diplomatici, B. 11, no. B-11 (17 January 1354, m.v.).

³¹ A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 19, fol. 15v (27 May 1340).

³² E.g., A.S.V., Consiglio di Dieci super negotia guerra, fol. 13v (9 March 1291); *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:51, no. 183 (5 April 1302); A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, *Deliberazioni*, Clericus Civicus, fol. 104v (copia, fol. 154r–v) (22 August 1316); A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 17, fol. 3r (6 March 1335), fol. 72r (11 March 1337), fol. 84r (18 August 1337), and fol.

defined direction and full license to harm and punish the enemy however he wished compensated for the limits of independent action imposed on a Venetian captain.³³

One difference between the two commissions is that the captain of the gulf's does not openly mention booty. Although it is generally agreed that Venice issued no legislation regulating the division of plunder until the 1350s,³⁴ one should not jump to the conclusion that methods for parceling out prizes did not exist earlier. Of the Italian cities Venice was one of the first to compile a comprehensive body of maritime laws. Elsewhere, as in Pisa and Genoa, broader experience influenced later compilations. The Republic of St. Mark, by contrast, developed two parallel usages: one that was codified and one that followed custom.³⁵ Questions of booty fell under the blanket of custom.³⁶ Raimondo Morozzo della Rocca uncovered the power of custom among corsairs in Crete;³⁷ it prevailed in other sectors of Venetian society as well.³⁸ The first comment about the spoils of a naval captain dates from 1282 and notes that he should have his share "sicut fuit consuetudo."³⁹ When the republic hired its captains "cum salario et conditionibus consuetudinis," it surely must have referred to booty.⁴⁰

There were three possible ways in which a captain of the gulf could be liable for plundering enemy vessels. First, as the authority responsible for organizing and leading those detachments of corsairs occasionally sponsored by the republic, he could be held at least partially accountable for any crimes committed by such fleets. Second, his duties of ferreting out contraband periodically resulted in misidentification or unlawful confiscation and

86r (30 September 1337); *ibid.*, Reg. 18, fol. 12r (14 March 1339); *ibid.*, Reg. 19, fol. 29r (27 July 1340); *ibid.*, Reg. 28, fol. 74r (26 September 1358); A.S.V., Miscellanea Ducali ed Atti Diplomatici, B. 12, no. B-2 (24 May 1363).

³³ In contrast to the broader boundaries of a privately sponsored Genoese captain. See Caro, *Genova*, 1:203.

³⁴ Mario Brunetti, "La battaglia di Castro (1350) ed il regolamento delle prede marittime della repubblica di Venezia," *Rivista marittima* 43 (1910), 269–82; Lopez, "Dieci documenti sulla guerra di corsa," p. 316; Sassi, "La guerra in corsa," pp. 39–40 and 49; Lane, *Venice*, p. 176.

³⁵ Riniero Zeno, *Storia del diritto marittimo italiano nel Mediterraneo*, Fondazione Vittorio Scialoja per gli Studi Giuridici 3 (Milan, 1946), pp. 89 and 155–56.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 349; Sassi, "La guerra in corsa," p. 37.

³⁷ Raimondo Morozzo della Rocca, "Consuetudini di corsari veneziani del secolo XIV," *Atti del IV Congresso nazionale di Arte e Tradizioni popolari* (Udine, 1943), pp. 329–37.

³⁸ The consiliarii, rectors, ambassadors, castellani, and other Venetians serving in official posts often received salaries "cum conditionibus consuetudinis"; e.g., A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Presbiter, fol. 60r (copia, fol. 192r) (20 November 1311); *ibid.*, fol. 126v (copia, fol. 326r) (28 June 1314); *ibid.*, Clericus Civicus, fol. 140v (copia, fol. 209r) (19 May 1317); *ibid.*, fol. 180v (copia, fols. 261v–62r) (31 December 1317); A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 18, fol. 94v (7 March 1340).

³⁹ *Deliberazioni del Maggior Consiglio di Venezia*, ed. Roberto Cessi, 3 vols., Accademia dei Lincei, Commissioni per gli Atti delle Assemblée costituzionali italiane dal medio evo al 1831, ser. 3, sez. 1 (Bologna, 1934–50), 3:15 (7 January 1282, m.v.).

⁴⁰ E.g., A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Presbiter, fol. 106r (copia, fol. 280v) (13 September 1313); *ibid.*, Clericus Civicus, fol. 76r (copia, fol. 98v) (13 January 1315, m.v.); *ibid.*, fol. 180v (copia, fol. 262r) (31 December 1317).

prompted neutrals to protest to the republic about the hostile assaults. Third, the captain of the gulf's antipiratical operations may have treaded the waters separating defense and offense. Here we will consider only the second and third types of cases: where captains operated without auxiliary wings of corsairs and were thus entirely responsible for any inappropriate seizures. These are particularly significant since they illustrate how captains carried out raids with the commune's sanction.

Venetian captains engaged in belligerent actions with greater vigor after the War of Curzola (1294–99). This intensification resulted in part from the terms of the Treaty of Milan, which formally ended hostilities between Venice and Genoa. In reality the treaty was little more than a truce because, while it obligated the two powers to refrain from entering each other's territorial waters in the event of war, it left the question of supremacy unresolved.⁴¹ The peace that ensued, moreover, was destabilized by a sharp rise in plundering in the waters of the Levant as other rivals jockeyed for positions. First led by Don Fadrique, bastard son of Frederick II of Sicily, then by Roger de Flor ("Fra Ruggero"), and later by Raymond Muntaner, the Catalan Company established a foothold in the Duchy of Athens and threatened to expand its base in Romania. Genoese corsairs and pirates plied these same thoroughfares, both as mercenaries of the Greek emperor and independently, striking at the Catalans and at the Guelf or Ghibelline victims they targeted, depending on their loyalties.⁴² With the situation completely out of control and safe trade disrupted, Venice appointed three *savi* in 1301 to consider the growing insecurity.⁴³ But the efforts of these investigators did not ease the tensions. Threatened by the conflicts between Angevins, Sicilians, Genoese, Greeks, and Catalans, the commune soldered an alliance with Charles of Valois in 1306 in an effort to restore the Latin Empire of Constantinople and finally rid the Levant of piracy. A corollary to this formal cooperation was a rise in the number of cases in which protection and aggression converged. With Charles's support the Republic of St. Mark armed twelve galleys "pro custodia maris et dampno inimicorum" under the command of the Venetians Marco Minotto and Giovanni Querini.⁴⁴

⁴¹ The treaty of 1299 established that Genoa controlled the waters between Nice and Civitavecchia, including Corsica and Sardinia, and acknowledged Venetian domination of the Adriatic Sea. The treaty is in *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig*, ed. G. L. Fr. Tafel and G. M. Thomas, 3 vols. (Vienna, 1856–57; repr. Amsterdam, 1967), 3:391–92. See also *Trattati e negoziazioni politiche della repubblica di Genova (958–1797): Regesti*, ed. Pasquale Liscandrelli, *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, n.s. 1 (Genoa, 1960) p. 98, no. 473, and Lane, *Venice*, p. 84.

⁴² For the struggles between the Genoese and Catalans in Romania, see Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, 1:63–64. On Venetian relations with the Catalans, see Tenenti, "Venezia e la pirateria," p. 728, and Kenneth M. Setton, *Catalan Domination of Athens, 1311–1338* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948). On problems experienced by Venetians in the Aegean as a result of the Catalan expeditions, see William A. Miller, *Essays on the Latin Orient* (Cambridge, Eng., 1908; repr. Amsterdam, 1964, and Chicago, 1967), pp. 167–68.

⁴³ A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Magnus et Capricornus, fol. 16r (copia, fol. 126v) (6 July 1301).

⁴⁴ The dual objective of the fleet was expressed in the response to the legate of the king;

Although one of the objectives of the armament was “to plunder profitably Byzantine territories in the Aegean,”⁴⁵ the strongest protests against this fleet came from Genoa and the Catalans. During the custodial voyage of the summer of 1308, Marco Minotto paused in Negroponte, where he and Giovanni Querini obtained financial backing for their expedition, drawn on loans from the island.⁴⁶ Just over a month later, on 25 September, Venice sent both captains word of their “excessum factorum in mari.” We hear no more on what the excess could have been, but the previous May Genoa had presented a list of individuals “damnificati” by the Venetians.⁴⁷ In addition a Genoese ambassador accused Querini of having captured a merchant vessel in October 1308 with seven of the galleys in his command.⁴⁸ He presented sufficient evidence to prove the allegations, and, consequently, Venice agreed to grant the victims a hearing, according to the terms of the existing treaties between the two cities. The republic, however, insisted that the case be heard before the court of the Forestieri, the commune’s tribunal for foreigners with grievances against Venetian vessels. When the Genoese envoy bluntly demanded full compensation without the intervention of the Forestieri, Venice argued that the petitioners should be satisfied with the republic’s efforts to enforce justice and had no choice but to accept its terms. Genoa rejected the offer and resubmitted the complaint, leading the Republic of St. Mark to maintain that it could not be held liable for failing to provide a route to resolution.⁴⁹ After finally agreeing to appear before the court and then changing his mind abruptly, the Genoese representative departed in protest. The last word we have on the incident is that Venice simply sent all of the papers pertaining to the episode to Genoa, commenting that the republic only wanted to follow correct procedure and would be willing to deal with the issue in a legal

A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Magnus et Capricornus, fol. 165r (copia, fol. 431r) (2 January 1307, m.v.). For the purposes of the alliance, see also Cessi, *Storia della repubblica di Venezia*, 1:279–80, and Manfroni, *Storia della marina italiana*, 1:229–30.

⁴⁵ Lane, “Operation of Merchant Galleys,” p. 203. Lane points out that conditions during this period led the republic to order that all mercantile voyages be government operated. Early in 1308 unarmed vessels were not to go farther south than Corfu until Minotto had reached the island because “periculosum esset multum nostris Navigiis disarmatis ire, et ostendere se ad Corfu”; A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Magnus et Capricornus, fol. 169v (copia, fol. 439r) (5 March 1308).

⁴⁶ They also arranged for the islands of Crete and Coron to send similar contributions while they were in Negroponte; A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Magnus et Capricornus, fol. 180r (copia, fols. 463v–64r) (14 July 1308) and fol. 182r (copia, fol. 468v) (16 August 1308).

⁴⁷ *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:130, no. 40 (May 1308), and 1:132, no. 60 (25 September 1308).

⁴⁸ The republic organized a hearing in 1309 at the request of the Ligurian commune on the “derobatione facta” by Querini. Marco Minotto was not implicated in the charges. *Ibid.*, 1:133, no. 71 (22 October 1309); A.S.V., Libri Commemorativi, Reg. 1, fol. 142r (22 October 1309); *I Libri Commemorativi della repubblica di Venezia: Regesti*, ed. Riccardo Predelli, 8 vols., Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Venezia, in Monumenti Storici, ser. 1: Documenti (Venice, 1876–1913), 1:96, no. 413.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*; A.S.V., Libri Commemorativi, Reg. 1, fol. 143r (22 and 27 October 1309); *I Libri Commemorativi*, ed. Predelli, 1:96–97, nos. 414 and 415.

manner.⁵⁰ Querini, however, was still in Venetian service as a captain the following year.⁵¹

In 1308 the Catalan Company protested that after being allowed safe passage through the canal of Negroponte by the Venetian *bailo* of the island the previous year, Minotto and Querini assaulted their contingent.⁵² Raymond Muntaner claimed losses exceeding 25,000 ounces of gold in cash, jewelry, and “all there was [in his galley], which was a great deal.”⁵³ On behalf of the Catalans, Frederick III of Sicily filed a plea with the Venetian republic for complete compensation.⁵⁴ As before, Venice proposed that its tribunal should settle the matter, and again the petitioners turned down the suggestion.⁵⁵ The case dropped from sight until April 1309, when King James of Majorca assured Venice that the republic’s citizens would be treated properly in his territories and that they should no longer fear traveling to his lands.⁵⁶ Yet in 1350, just as Venice was negotiating an alliance with Aragon for the war against Genoa and was in need of mercenaries for its armament, Muntaner’s granddaughter, who lived in Valencia, reopened the suit.⁵⁷ Peter IV of Aragon argued that Muntaner had been tricked by the officials in Negroponte, and this time he threatened to issue a letter of marque if the petition was not settled on behalf of Muntaner’s heir.⁵⁸

The threat of a letter of marque or reprisal enhanced the urgency of the situation, eliciting an immediate response from Venice.⁵⁹ The doge, saying

⁵⁰ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 1, fol. 141r (22 November 1309); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:97, no. 417.

⁵¹ A nuncio of Charles of Valois asked for and received a promise from the republic that Querini would return the items from one of the king’s armaments that had been consigned to his custody; A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Presbiter, fols. 31v and 32v (copia, fols. 133v–34v and 135v–36r) (27 November and 8 December 1310).

⁵² Raymond Muntaner, *The Chronicle of Muntaner*, trans. Lady Goodenough, 2 vols., Hakluyt Society, 2nd ser., 47 and 50 (London, 1920), pp. 563–64, and Goodenough’s introduction, p. lxxxv. Muntaner was on this expedition, under the command of Ferrando, son of James I of Majorca. He implies that the Venetians were after booty: “the Venetian galleys came against ours, and especially against mine, for there was a rumor that I was bringing the greatest treasures of the world from Romania”; *ibid.*, p. 564; A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 1, fol. 128v (20 June 1308); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:87–88, no. 374.

⁵³ *Ibid.* A later petition claimed total losses of 103,000 Florentine fiorini of gold; A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 4, fol. 178v (25 November 1350); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:186, no. 361; Tenenti, “Venezia e la pirateria,” p. 730.

⁵⁴ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 1, fol. 128v (20 June 1308); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:87–88, no. 374.

⁵⁵ And again the doge gave his usual response to this refusal; *ibid.* and 1:88, no. 375; A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 1, fol. 129r (9 August 1308).

⁵⁶ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 1, fols. 139v–40r (19 and 26 April 1309); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:94–95, nos. 407 and 408.

⁵⁷ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 4, fol. 178v (25 November 1350); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:186, no. 361.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; Giuseppe Meloni, *Genova e Aragona all’epoca di Pietro il Cerimonioso*, 1: (1336–1334) (Padua, 1971), p. 63; Tenenti, “Venezia e la pirateria,” p. 730.

⁵⁹ Letters of marque and reprisal legitimized attacks on vessels under certain circumstances during peacetime. First developed during the ancient period, reprisal provided a victim with an avenue of authorized vengeance if he had been harmed unjustly by the subjects of another state.

he was amazed that such an old case had risen to the surface, retorted that Venice had settled all possible claims with Sicily long ago and added that the *bailo* of Negroponte should not be held accountable for any wrongdoing, since Venice did not even rule that island at the time in question. Noting that Muntaner himself had declined to have the issue handled in a legal fashion, the doge insisted that reprisal should not be considered and suggested that the episode be forgotten.⁶⁰ The Aragonese king gave the republic another nine months to pay for the damages before approving a reprisal, explaining that he did this out of respect for the existing alliance and friendship between the two powers.⁶¹ Although we do not know whether the king granted any letters of marque when Venice failed to reply within the prescribed period, later claims submitted by the Republic of St. Mark about damages sustained from Aragonese assaults imply that he did.⁶² A Majorcan court heard the case and ordered Venice to pay 11,000 florins to Muntaner's descendant, or about one-ninth of the total damages initially sought.⁶³

Reprisals and petitioners' unwillingness to submit their cases to the Venetian court reappeared as continuing themes throughout the period under review. In 1312 the republic dispatched fleets under the command of Fiofo

The letter of marque was similar to patents granted to corsairs, but it was issued to a specific individual in response to a particular incident and valid only for a limited time. The reprisal could allow him to assault either the particular vessel which had originally attacked him or all vessels originating from the aggressor's territory. The danger of reprisal and letters of marque was their sanction of small-scale private wars with foes who were not necessarily a government's declared enemies. See Henry A. Ormerod, *Piracy in the Ancient World: An Essay in Mediterranean History* (London 1924; repr. Chicago, 1967), pp. 62 and 64–65; Sassi, "La guerra in corsa," p. 5; Loup Durand, *Pirates et barbaresques en Méditerranée* (Aubanel, 1975), p. 13; Louis LeFur, *Des représailles en temps de guerre: Représailles et réparations* (Paris, 1919), pp. 7–8; LaMache, *La guerre de course*, pp. 15–16; Kulsrud, *Maritime Neutrality to 1780*, pp. 17–18 and 38; Ahrweiler, "Course et piraterie," pp. 15–16; Gabriella Airaldi, "Marinai, etnie e società nel Mediterraneo medioevale: Il caso di Genova," in Rosalba Ragosta, ed., *Le genti del mare Mediterraneo*, 2 vols., Biblioteca di Storia economica 5 (Naples, 1980), 1:78; Giovanni Italo Cassandro, "La Curia di Petizion," *Archivio veneto*, ser. 5, part 2, 20 (1937), 71; Merrien, *La course e la flibuste*, pp. 18–19; Mollat, "De la piraterie sauvage à la course réglementée," pp. 11–12; Cheyette, "The Sovereign and the Pirates, 1332," pp. 56–57; Pompeo Molmenti, *Venice: Its Individual Growth from the Earliest Beginnings to the Fall of the Republic*, 1: *The Middle Ages*, trans. Harold F. Brown, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1906–8), 1:122; A. Del Vecchio and E. Casanova, *Le rappresaglie nei comuni medioevali e specialmente in Firenze* (Bologna, 1894), p. 1; Cassandro, *Le rappresaglie e il fallimento a Venezia*, pp. 18–19; Fontenay and Tenenti, "Course et piraterie," p. 96.

⁶⁰ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 4, fol. 179r (1 April 1351); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:190, no. 375; Tenenti, "Venezia e la pirateria," p. 730.

⁶¹ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 4, fol. 203r (18 February 1352); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:197–98, no. 409.

⁶² A.S.V., Senato, Sindicati, Reg. 1, fol. 74r–v (17 February 1358); A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 6, fol. 3r (16 April 1358); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:278–79, no. 14. Although Tenenti provides no evidence on this point, he does note that "Le minacce del sovrano aragonese furono tuttavia tali" that Venice was forced to pay for the Muntaner claim; "Venezia e la pirateria," p. 730.

⁶³ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 5, fol. 63r (3 February 1356) and fol. 61r (12 May 1356), where Venice accepted the sentence; *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:250, no. 173, and 2:246, no. 158; Tenenti, "Venezia e la pirateria," p. 730.

Morosini, Guido DaCanal, and Pietro Grimani to curb rebellions in Zara.⁶⁴ Early the following year Genoa sent an envoy to Venice, who outlined the arrest, shipwreck, and burning of a merchant vessel owned by Pietro Revello and commanded by Raffo Fornaio. The charges implicated Guido DaCanal.⁶⁵ Venice asserted that the Genoese had not presented their claims accurately and that there would have to be a formal examination of the issue.⁶⁶

When the republic offered to put the matter before the Forestieri, the Genoese ambassador noted that he had not come to litigate, but rather to secure rightful compensation.⁶⁷ The doge and his advisers decided to assume responsibility for the Genoese losses, but paid only the cost of the lost vessel.⁶⁸ DaCanal, however, was not indicted, although the council had considered that possibility.⁶⁹ In vain Fornaio and Revello disputed the judgment.⁷⁰ Although Venice attempted to prevent any subsequent Genoese reprisals,⁷¹ the Ligurian comune did issue a list citing persons with reprisals against Venice, and Pietro Revello's name appeared on it.⁷²

It is not certain whether Pietro Revello and Raffo Fornaio had engaged in any piratical maneuvers in the waters near Zara before DaCanal arrested them. Despite the Catalan Company's notorious image, the Venetian documents relating to Muntaner's contentions and those of his heirs do not mention any wrongdoing on his part. Yet concurrently a wave of pirates who did injure Venetians poured into the eastern Mediterranean. The Grimaldi family of Monaco, banished from the Republic of St. George, found support among the monarchs of Naples, who used them and their Provençal compatriots to fuel the fires against their enemies. When they operated independently, it was often at Venice's expense, in vengeance for the republic's rejection of their support, or against the Ghibelline party from home.⁷³ For

⁶⁴ See A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Presbiter, fol. 81r (copia, fol. 233v) (30 September 1312).

⁶⁵ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 1, fol. 193r (1 March 1313); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:125, no. 557.

⁶⁶ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 1, fol. 193r (3 March 1313); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:126, no. 559.

⁶⁷ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 1, fol. 193r (3 March 1313); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:126, no. 559.

⁶⁸ A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Presbiter, fol. 113r (copia, fol. 294r-v) (18 January 1313, m.v.).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 91v (11 March 1313); A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 1, fol. 195v (12 March 1313); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:126, no. 560.

⁷⁰ A.S.V., Miscellanea Atti Diplomatici e Privati, B. 11, no. 371 (9 April 1313).

⁷¹ By sending representatives "Ianuam pro videndo, et expendo, et facendo totum, quod eis videbitur pro predictis, et pro aliis rebus"; A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Presbiter, fol. 123v (copia, fol. 319r) (19 May 1314).

⁷² A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 1, fol. 217v (September 1314); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:144, no. 633.

⁷³ The Grimaldi made Monaco their base after 1297, when they were driven from their Ghibelline city. After the end of the War of Curzola in 1299, Venice briefly maintained the ties it had established with them in alliance against the Genoese during the conflict. When the republic abandoned its support of them, however, the Grimaldi refused to accept the peace Genoa signed with Venice and proceeded to menace Venetian shipping as a mechanism of

however tarnished a reputation Genoa itself has earned for fourteenth-century piracy, it was not only the city's loyal citizens who were at fault but the exiles on the southern coast of France as well.

From the turn of the fourteenth century the exiled Genoese committed acts of violence against Venetian merchants while operating on their own or in concert with Naples. Between 1300 and 1318 Venice submitted frustrated complaints to both Charles of Valois and Robert of Naples, charging them with sponsoring the plunderers.⁷⁴ After the Guelf faction gained control of the Genoese government in 1318, responsibility for the crimes committed by the Grimaldi pirates became unclear. Ultimately the Neapolitans refused to settle Venetian claims and redirected the injured to Genoa.⁷⁵ But that same year Genoa maintained that it was not accountable for the attacks of the *fuorusciti*, noting that earlier it had been victimized by the same fleets.⁷⁶ Still later the Ligurian commune argued that it would not initiate proceedings against the Guelfs, since Genoa had just made peace with the exiles.⁷⁷ Finally, although the Republic of St. George's temporary shift to the Guelf side tempered its relations with Naples and perhaps calmed some of the Grimaldi activity, portions of its holdings, especially Kaffa and Pera, remained loyal to the Ghibelline cause. There was no authority to appeal to in the event of assaults on Venetians by these vessels. In short, no one seemed willing to take the blame.⁷⁸

unofficial warfare. See Lane, *Venice*, p. 84, for a summary, and Manfroni, *Storia della marina italiana*, 2:217, n. 1. On the use of the Grimaldi by Sicily, see Caro, *Genova*, 2:240–41; Sassi, “La guerra in corsa,” p. 46; Francesco Carabellese and A. Zambler, *Le relazioni commerciali fra la Puglia e la repubblica di Venezia dal secolo X al XV: Ricerche e documenti*, 2 vols. (Trani, 1897–98), 2:35, and Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois*, pp. 188–89, who notes how they enlisted the support of the Tartars in the east to promote their piratical cause.

⁷⁴ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 1, fol. 3r–v (June and July 1300), fol. 4v (July 1300), fol. 33r (23 March 1303), fol. 85v (n.d. [1306?]), and fol. 124r (n.d. [March 1308?]); all summarized in *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:8, no. 23, 1:9–10, nos. 25 and 26, 1:26, no. 108, 1:67–68, no. 298, 1:85, nos. 362–63, and 1:145, no. 634; A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Magnus et Capricornus, fol. 22v (copia, fol. 147r) (23 February 1301, m.v.) and fol. 56r (copia, fol. 224), (26 October 1303); *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:50, no. 182 (March 1302), 1:159–63, nos. 155, 167, 177, 178, 186, 189, 190, 201, and 1:198–99, nos. 255 and 260; Caro, *Genova*, 2:258 and 302; Tenenti, “Venezia e la pirateria,” pp. 724 and 739–40.

⁷⁵ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 2, fol. 92r (12 November 1320), fol. 99v (20 April 1321), fol. 109r (14 July 1321), fol. 117r (14 January 1321), fol. 132v (17 February 1322, m.v.); *ibid.*, Reg. 3, fol. 67r (23 February 1331) and fol. 76r (25 March 1332); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:229, no. 268, 1:232, no. 284, 1:248–49, no. 354, 2:36–37, no. 209, and 2:42, no. 246; A.S.V., Senato, Secreta, Sindicati, Reg. 1, fol. 4r (2 October 1329), fol. 7v (29 September 1330), fol. 8r (September 1330), and fol. 9r (30 September 1330); Carabellese and Zambler, *Le relazioni commerciali fra la Puglia e la repubblica di Venezia*, 2:44–45; Tenenti, “Venezia e la pirateria,” pp. 726–27.

⁷⁶ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 2, fol. 33r–v (5 August 1318); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:196, nos. 121–22; Sassi, “La guerra in corsa,” pp. 24–25; Tenenti, “Venezia e la pirateria,” p. 726.

⁷⁷ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 3, fol. 70r (15 October 1331); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:39, no. 228.

⁷⁸ Carabellese and Zambler, *Le relazioni fra la Puglia e la repubblica di Venezia*, 2:45–46; Lane, *Venice*, p. 175.

With the scourge of piracy seemingly resistant to diplomatic prescriptions, the Republic of St. Mark turned to the other available option: counterpiracy.⁷⁹ This step could be justified in terms of self-defense, of course, but it brought in its wake a flood of petitions from merchants and other individuals whose goods were confiscated along with pirate vessels. In 1313, for example, the republic's patrolling fleet seized the vessel of Carlotto Grimaldi, who confessed that he had entered the port of Ravenna against the terms of the agreements stipulated between Venice and Genoa.⁸⁰ A Neapolitan merchant on board, however, received compensation for the merchandise damaged during the arrest.⁸¹ A longer series of negotiations examined the actions of Pietro Zeno, captain of the gulf. As early as 1315 Robert of Naples complained about the injuries inflicted on his Provençal subjects by Zeno and the galleys scouring the Adriatic.⁸² In 1324 the king requested that Venice leave his vessels traveling at the mouth of the Adriatic unharmed, and three years later his son, Charles, duke of Calabria, implored Venice to allow the carriers transporting supplies to Neapolitan armies to pass without interruptions.⁸³ Evidently there was fear on the part of Naples that the patrolling fleet might mistake such expeditions for piratical ones or might carry out offensive attacks in the context of its policing activities.

In order to keep tabs on suspected raiders, Venice in 1325 entered the names of certain Provençal captains into its register of known pirates.⁸⁴ When Pietro Zeno's fleet encountered one of these, Emanuele Grimaldi, near Rhodes, his men captured the galley and executed the plunderer. The republic's investigation into the matter began in 1330 when Robert of Naples submitted a petition to the Venetian consul in Apulia about the Grimaldi seizure.⁸⁵ Venice declared that Zeno's actions were within the scope of legitimate operations, since Grimaldi was a recognized pirate.⁸⁶ Although the commune denied Luchetto, Emanuele's brother and heir, any repayment for the episode, Venice awarded 400 florins to Tommaso Lomellino, a *socius* of Grimaldi, since he had been traveling on the galley as a private citizen and

⁷⁹ As Ferruccio Sassi suggests, after 1300 diplomatic assurances for safe maritime passage were no longer effective, and the Mediterranean powers sought new means for dealing with the problem; "La guerra in corsa," pp. 8–13.

⁸⁰ See above, p. 872, n. 41.

⁸¹ A.S.V., Miscellanea Atti Diplomatici e Privati, B. 11, nos. 376 and 376 bis (2 July 1313).

⁸² *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:159, no. 152 (September 1315).

⁸³ A.S.V., Libri Commemorativi, Reg. 2, fol. 151r (2 September 1324), and *ibid.*, Reg. 3, fol. 18r (13 February 1327); *I Libri Commemorativi*, ed. Predelli, 2:18, no. 110; Carabellese and Zambler, *Le relazioni fra la Puglia e la repubblica di Venezia*, 2:42.

⁸⁴ *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:306, no. 98 (September 1325). On the *libro dei pirati*, see Tenenti, "Venezia e la pirateria," p. 762. The register does not seem to be extant, and Tenenti does not mention when the practice of listing the pirates first appeared.

⁸⁵ *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:432, no. 234 (November 1330).

⁸⁶ A.S.V., Libri Commemorativi, Reg. 3, fol. 72v (1 June 1332); *I Libri Commemorativi*, ed. Predelli, 2:43–44, no. 256; *Le deliberazioni del Consiglio dei Rogati (Senato)*, Serie "Mistorum," 2: *Libri 15–16*, ed. Roberto Cessi and Mario Brunetti, Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Venezie, in Monumenti Storici, n.s. 16 (Venice, 1960), 2:33–34, no. 113; Tenenti, "Venezia e la pirateria," p. 727.

had not been involved in any assaults.⁸⁷ Subsequently others from the vessel submitted their appeals for reimbursement to Venice. The three *savi* appointed to examine the seizures questioned Zeno about the circumstances of the capture, but there is no evidence that the investigators charged the captain with any wrongdoing.⁸⁸ Yet they found a *comitus*, Marco Panza, “culpabilis derobationis,”⁸⁹ and the documents issuing payments to some of the victims named the two men who commanded the galley which actually captured Grimaldi, Marco DaLezze and Giovanni Sanudo.⁹⁰ In addition to the sum Lomellino received, Venice compensated many of the other petitioners.⁹¹

In 1315 the Venetian senate declared that the *capitaneus culfi* should sink all pirate vessels from Ischia and conduct the captives back to the lagoons.⁹² During the period when Giovanni Michele served as captain of the gulf, he, like Pietro Zeno, had been entrusted with the republic’s formal list of raiders.⁹³ Although Michele was implicated in the capture of a galley belonging to the Hospitalers, for which the Venetian commune paid 40 florins in damages,⁹⁴ it was his seizure in 1324 of a vessel from Ischia that led to prolonged entanglements with the Neapolitan kingdom.

Michele’s report on the value of the Ischian galley he arrested concluded with a comment about the gains won at the expense of the enemies of the church.⁹⁵ The Venetian senate relayed the information to the consul in Apulia,⁹⁶ who was negotiating a settlement for the damages Venetians had incurred at the hands of Neapolitan pirates.⁹⁷ The king, however, turned the issue of his harmed subjects back to Venetian jurisdiction.⁹⁸ After studying

⁸⁷ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 3, fol. 72v (1 June 1332); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:43–44, no. 256; *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Brunetti, 2:34, no. 113 (4 June 1332), 2:37, no. 120 (8 June 1332), and 2:37–38, no. 122 (11 June 1332); Tenenti, “Venezia e la pirateria,” p. 727.

⁸⁸ *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:461–62, nos. 260, 266, and 267 (November 1331); A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 3, fol. 65r (18 February 1330, m.v.); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:36, no. 208. By 1332 Zeno was *bailo* in Negroponte; *ibid.*, 2:45, no. 265.

⁸⁹ *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:445, no. 54 (May 1331).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:454, no. 167 (July 1331); *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Brunetti, 2:33, no. 110 (1 June 1332); A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 3, fol. 181r (27 November 1340); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:90, no. 517.

⁹¹ *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:445, no. 53, and 1:455–56, nos. 176 and 195 (August and September 1331); A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 3, fol. 66r (8 April 1331) and fol. 181r (27 September 1340); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:37–38, no. 215, and 2:90, no. 517; *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Brunetti, 2:53, no. 190 (18 July 1332), and 2:57, no. 209 (28 July 1332); A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 19, fol. 32v (2 September 1340).

⁹² *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:159, no. 153 (September 1315).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1:238, no. 205 (November 1321).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:208, no. 366 (June 1319); 1:211, no. 398 (July 1319); 1:213, no. 424 (October 1319); 1:290, no. 88 (September 1324).

⁹⁵ He noted that the Ischian losses were worth 150 *onze*; A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 2, fol. 154r (n.d.); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 1:263, nos. 422–23.

⁹⁶ *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:294, no. 148 (January 1325), and 1:313, no. 176 (February 1326).

⁹⁷ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 3, fol. 11v (4 March 1325); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:10, no. 64.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, and A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 3, fol. 5r (9 March 1326); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:12, no. 76.

an inventory of the merchandise,⁹⁹ Venice restored the galley and its contents to the victims, Bono della Torre and Nicolò Assanti.¹⁰⁰ Evidently the two men were not operating as pirates. Had they been, Michele would have taken them back to Venice in accordance with the recent instructions on raiders. The republic's willingness to settle the claim without any reference to crimes the Ischians may have perpetrated suggests that they were not at fault. Michele, ordered to search for pirates from Ischia, must have grown overly zealous in his hunt for vessels from the island.¹⁰¹

Pirates raiding with the backing of Naples continued to menace Venetian shipping. In 1333 Venice instructed the captain of the gulf to follow all galleys of King Robert as far as Apulia and, if necessary, to make use of any of the terms of his commission "che sembrassero opportune al governo."¹⁰² In the meantime, reports of attacks by pirates from the kingdom filtered back to Venice. Several mariners sacked in Neapolitan waters, for example, testified to the republic's consul how Casani Spinola and his associates assaulted their Venetian cog "modo piratico" during the night and robbed them of everything in their vessel.¹⁰³ The situation was particularly tense in 1339. After learning of the attacks "datis per duas galeas Ianuensium piratarum de monacho," the captain of the gulf received instructions to sail "ad damnum et destructiones dictarum duarum galearum."¹⁰⁴ All persons on board Venetian vessels who were not in clerical orders were to assist in defending themselves from "aliquibus galeis vel lignis piratarum, seu Inimicorum."¹⁰⁵

Even under these circumstances Venetian captains were often accused of having gone beyond the limits of their policing duties. While serving as

⁹⁹ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 3, fol. 11r (n.d. [1325]); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:11, no. 71.

¹⁰⁰ Both men were Ischian. A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 3, fol. 11r (17 October 1326); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:15, no. 95. In 1343 another Neapolitan protest about the 1339 capture of an Ischian vessel named Giovanni Michele as the assailant. The complaint cites a number of other attacks by Venetians but does not name the captains involved: in 1333, it argues, some of the republic's galleys assaulted a vessel under the command of Corradino Spinola, a Genoese Guelph in Neapolitan service, without being first provoked. Near Trani in 1337 and again near Otranto in 1339, six Venetian galleys followed and attacked Marino Cossa; A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 4, fol. 48r (n.d. [December 1343]); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:135, no. 104. See below, on this page and the next.

¹⁰¹ His boast about profiting from the misfortune of his prey supports this interpretation.

¹⁰² *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Brunetti, 2:179–80, no. 101 (14 June 1333). A similar instruction appeared later; A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 18, fol. 77r (2 December 1339).

¹⁰³ A.S.V., Senato, Secreta, Dispacci antichi di Rettori ed altre cariche, B. 2, Archivio proprio del console veneto in Puglia, fol. 12v (currently located, however, in Lettere di Rettori, B. 1) (April 1336).

¹⁰⁴ A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 18, fol. 46v (11 July 1339) and fol. 51r (23 July 1339); on later dangers, see *ibid.*, Reg. 25, fol. 20r (19 March 1349), and A.S.V., Deliberazioni-Consilii Rogatorum pro factis Istriae (hereafter cited as Secr. Cons. Rog.), Reg. B (C) (1348–50), fol. 68r (12 September 1350).

¹⁰⁵ A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 18, fol. 35r–v (18 May 1339); summarized in *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie*, ed. Freddy Thiriet, 3 vols. (Paris and The Hague, 1958), 1:41, no. 92.

captain of the gulf, Nicolò Pisani captured what he thought was a pirate cog from Monaco. Genoa argued that the vessel actually belonged to one of its loyal citizens, Clemente Bestagno, not to the exiled rebels. Venice corrected the error, releasing the captives taken during the seizure and promising to return the cog to its owner.¹⁰⁶ In 1339 Venice complained that three years earlier off the coast of Trani four galleys from Monaco had plundered its vessels returning from Flanders. Robert of Naples replied that he had intentionally hired some *fuorusciti* to apprehend the Catalan pirate Raimondo of Peralta, who had attacked Venetians and Neapolitans alike while working for Frederick of Sicily. But the king firmly maintained that the Grimaldi responsible for the Trani assault were not part of this sanctioned armament. The predators that had harmed the republic, he asserted, were corsairs in the service of Sicily. Robert assured the commune that he had intercepted and sequestered the Sicilian galleys and confiscated the stolen property, but refused to accept the blame for any other damages the Venetians suffered. The king strengthened his position by alleging that Venice's gulf patrol had killed Cristiano Grimaldi, one of the commanders of his sponsored Peralta hunt, and cited the fleet's other attacks on Neapolitan subjects in 1337 and 1339. In his conclusion Robert proposed a bargain to the republic: if Venice did not insist on satisfaction for the Trani incident, he would not contest the seizures by its policing fleet.¹⁰⁷

Nicolò Pisani went on to serve as captain general during the War of the Straits with Genoa. Naples charged that he sacked their merchant vessels during that conflict, and Venice repaid the victims when the kingdom threatened reprisal against the republic.¹⁰⁸ In the course of the same war Pisani targeted carriers from Aragon and Majorca, allies of the republic, and again Venice settled the matter when the king of Aragon threatened to grant a letter of marque.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 3, fol. 161r (29 December 1339), fol. 164r (16 March 1340), and fol. 163r (3 April 1340); A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 18, fol. 78v (9 December 1339) and fol. 81v (11 January 1339, m.v.); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:80, no. 464, 2:83, no. 482, and 2:84, no. 484; Tenenti, "Venezia e la pirateria," p. 727. In 1336 Ancona charged that Pisani seized one of its merchant vessels; A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 3, fol. 136v (n.d. [1336?]); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:68–69, no. 391.

¹⁰⁷ See above, p. 880, n. 100. The documents do not name Nicolò Pisani, but the dates coincide with the period during which he was a captain of the gulf; A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Spiritus, fol. 88r (copia, fols. 267r–68r) (23 March 1337); A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 18, fol. 46r (11 July 1339), fols. 46v–47r (11 July 1339), fol. 51v (25 July 1339), fol. 76v (27 November 1339) and fol. 91r (21 February 1339, m.v.), which names the new captain of the gulf to succeed Pisani, Pietro Morosini; A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 3, fol. 153r (n.d. [1339]) and fol. 194r (n.d. [1339]); *ibid.*, Reg. 4, fol. 48r (n.d. [1343]); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:80–81, nos. 465–67, and 2:135, no. 104; Carabellese and Zambler, *Le relazioni fra la Puglia e la repubblica di Venezia*, 2:46–47; Tenenti, "Venezia e la pirateria," pp. 725–26; Lane, *Venice*, p. 127.

¹⁰⁸ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 5, fol. 95v (22 February 1356), fol. 94v (1 March 1356) and fol. 93r (5 May 1357); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:240–41, no. 132, 2:242, no. 139, and 2:262, no. 230; Tenenti, "Venezia e la pirateria," p. 726.

¹⁰⁹ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 6, fol. 60v (1 April 1359), fol. 73v (24 August 1358), fol. 74r (23 December 1359 to 7 January 1360), fol. 86v (13 March 1360), fol. 90v (22 March 1360), fol. 113r (16 June 1361), fol. 133r (14 March 1362), and fol. 139r (19 and 31 May 1362); *I Libri*

A series of letters from the doge to Domenico Michele highlights the republic's continuing problems with pirates from Naples and Sicily in the decade following the War of the Straits. Although the existing evidence names Michele in only one complaint of wrongful seizure,¹¹⁰ some of his instructions further illustrate the extent to which a Venetian captain could occasionally launch aggressive assaults.

Domenico Michele was captain of the gulf from at least 1359 until 1364. His contact with the Venetian government while serving in this capacity demonstrates the ways in which the republic kept its captains abreast of current situations and relayed news to them of impending crises. In 1359, for example, Doge Giovanni Dolfin informed Michele that a hostile expedition had been launched from the shores of southern France and was heading toward Naples. Corsairs had already captured a Venetian roundship near Majorca, the doge continued, and although it was not known whether the corsairs might proceed to the Adriatic, he wanted to alert Michele so that the captain would be ready to act "ad honorem nostrum."¹¹¹ Four years later Doge Lorenzo Celsi warned Michele about the Grimaldi-organized fleets originating from Nice.¹¹² The following year Celsi told Michele that once he reached the base of the Adriatic he was to sail to Crete and then write back to Venice about threats in the area.¹¹³

A letter of 1363 from the doge was more specific about what actions Michele might take. Responding to the captain's correspondence from Glarentsa which detailed the approach of Rainerio Acciaiuolo, who intended to occupy the islands of the archipelago, Celsi directed Michele to move against the invader. As usual the doge authorized the captain to operate as he chose, instructing Michele to use any galleys already at his disposal in Glarentsa. In the event that the fleet was unable to prevent the occupation, Michele was to continue assaults on the region however he saw fit.¹¹⁴

Perhaps the most interesting instructions to Domenico Michele outlined what the captain should do in the event that the Republic of St. Mark failed to secure compensation for the assaults on its vessels sponsored by the Sicilians. In 1363 the captain of the gulf received orders to obtain reimbursement for the injuries inflicted upon Venetians over the course of several years and valued in all at about 21,000 ducats.¹¹⁵ In this instance Venice did not use a regular ambassador to plead its case but instead commissioned the captain himself to go to Sicily seeking reparation. The letter to Domenico Michele

Commemoriali, ed. Predelli, 2:284, no. 40, 2:298, no. 113, 2:306, no. 160, 2:310, nos. 184 and 187, 2:323, no. 253, 2:330, no. 302, and 2:333, no. 318; Meloni, *Genova e Aragona*, p. 79.

¹¹⁰ By residents of Constantinople who argued that they had rented one of their vessels to a group of Turks and that Domenico Michele plundered it. Attacks against Turks, however, were generally considered legitimate under almost any circumstances; A.S.V., *Libri Commemoriali*, Reg. 7, fol. 51r (27 August 1363); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 3:17, no. 80.

¹¹¹ A.S.V., *Miscellanea Ducali ed Atti Diplomatici*, B. 12, no. A-9 (27 June 1359).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, nos. B-6, B-13, and B-16 (26, 25, and 22 August 1363, respectively).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, no. B-9 (8 October 1364).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, nos. B-2 and B-3 (24 May and 12 June 1363).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, no. B-7 (8 April 1363).

indicates that if the Sicilians did not act upon the complaints within eight days, the captain should inform the king:¹¹⁶ “quod habebamus ipsum pro Inimico nostro, cum subditis, locis, bonis et fidelibus, et Intendebamus, Ipsum, suos, loca et bona sua, offendere et damnificare usque ad Integram satisfactionem et emendam damnorum et Iniuriarum predictarum nostrarum.” If such threats were still not enough to persuade the monarch, the captain was to put force behind these words, attacking Sicilian vessels and their goods, even those of nonpiratical targets. For security reasons, however, the Venetian crews were not to descend onto Sicilian territory, not even for the purposes of stripping or burning the vessels they captured. The only other condition noted was that the captain must, as always, keep the security of his men and his galleys in mind as he pursued pirates. If the Sicilians continued to deny satisfaction or did not at least set up a timetable for repaying the Venetians, the republic would use the booty seized to make up for its losses.¹¹⁷

This correspondence is peculiar for several reasons. Although the actions threatened by the doge bear many of the features of a reprisal, not once is the word mentioned in the text. Here Venice was making use of the same sort of warning that had earlier been used against it. But it was a warning with a twist: the republic did not grant the letter of marque to the individual merchants listed in the correspondence who had suffered truly substantial damages. Moreover the commune had not even gone through the usual formality of first sending an ambassador to Sicily.¹¹⁸ The immediate issue of the captain of the gulf and his right to assume the job of vindicating the damages quite clearly links the republic with potentially offensive maneuvers. This is one obvious instance where the two elements spawning hostile operations — counterpiracy and reprisal¹¹⁹ — fused under the captain of the gulf. Michele’s tenure in this office establishes the Venetian government’s direct role in and sponsorship of aggressive expeditions, far surpassing the more benign concession of letters of marque to a group of its private citizens.

As the Domenico Michele exchange indicates, Venice had just as many problems with corsairs in Sicilian hire as with Neapolitan ones. Similarly the Ghibellines of Genoa could be as menacing as their Guelf counterparts from

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ The document does not indicate whether the captain would receive any portion of these goods, but it was his responsibility to record their value and draw up the “publicum et autenticum Instrumentum” for the division of the loot; *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ This was not the only time the captain of the gulf acted in a diplomatic capacity. In 1332 Pietro DaCanal negotiated a peace treaty with the Greek emperor; A.S.V., *Libri Commemoriali*, Reg. 3, fol. 73r (6 September 1332), and *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:45, no. 264. That same year he went to Cattaro seeking retribution; *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Brunetti, 2:8, no. 16 (10 March 1332). In 1348 Giovanni Foscarini received orders to secure compensation from the Genoese of Pera and Kaffa; A.S.V., *Senato, Sindicati*, Reg. 1, fol. 53r (13 April 1348), and in 1372 the captain went to Durazzo to seek restitution for assaults against the Venetians; A.S.V., *Senato, Misti*, Reg. 34, fol. 13r (4 June 1372), also in Cassandro, *Le rappresaglie e il fallimento*, pp. 80–81, doc. 34.

¹¹⁹ Musso, *Navigazione e commercio genovese*, pp. 111–12.

Monaco. Although the two factions sealed a brief truce in 1341,¹²⁰ the Republic of St. George would often warn Venice to be wary of the pirates from the Riviera,¹²¹ perhaps as a measure to protect itself from future suits. Yet during the period when the Guelfs controlled Genoa, the Ghibellines of Pera and Kaffa made travel to Trebizond and Tana unsafe for Venetian merchants.¹²² Attacks sponsored by Genoa persisted through the 1340s and on into the 1370s.¹²³

Venetian captains, in turn, plundered Ghibelline and Genoese mercantile vessels. In 1320 Marino Bembo burned a Genoese vessel and in 1325 a Ghibelline one, during the period when the Ligurian city was under Guelf control.¹²⁴ In 1327 Giustiniano Giustiniani left Venice commanding forty galleys in an antipiratical venture aimed at the Genoese of Pera.¹²⁵ The following year Giustiniani targeted Genoese vessels in the course of his voyage to Pera, disrupting Ghibelline commerce between that stronghold and Kaffa. In a manner probably similar to that later used by Domenico Michele against the Sicilians, Giustiniani secured an indemnity for previous Ghibelline assaults.¹²⁶ Although Venice did establish a board of five *savi* to study the damages wrought by Giustiniani and his fleet,¹²⁷ the commune evidently did not reprimand the captain. In 1339 Giustiniani himself was a member of a group of *savi* checking into the movements of corsairs near Apulia,¹²⁸ perhaps

¹²⁰ *Trattati e negoziazioni*, ed. Lisciandrelli, p. 108, doc. 528.

¹²¹ A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 5, fol. 58r (30 March 1356) and fol. 108r (18 July 1357); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:245, no. 150, and 2:265, no. 247.

¹²² *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Sambin, 1:347, no. 258 (November 1327), and 1:390, no. 38 (May 1329); A.S.V., Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Reg. 22 bis, fol. 20v bis (May 1329), and *ibid.*, Reg. 22 ter, fol. 31r (May 1329); A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 17, fol. 17v (19 July 1335), fol. 48r (20 February 1335, m.v.), fol. 51r (28 February 1335, m.v.), fol. 62r (16 July 1336), fol. 65v (19 and 20 September 1336), fols. 83v–84r (18 August 1337), and fol. 85v (16 September 1337); *Régestes du Sénat*, ed. Thiriet, 1:37, no. 70.

¹²³ E.g., A.S.V., Miscellanea Atti Diplomatici e Privati, B. 15, nos. 505 and 505 bis (22 October 1344); A.S.V., Senato, Sindicati, Reg. 1, fol. 53r (13 April 1348) and fol. 75v (26 June 1358); A.S.V., Lettere di Rettori, B. 1, no. 6 (6 August 1354), also in *Dalla guerra di Chioggia alla pace di Torino: Catalogo della mostra documentaria dell' A.S.V.* (Venice, 1981), p. 18 doc. 7; A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 27, fol. 29r (19 September 1355) and fol. 73r (30 September 1358); A.S.V., Libri Commemoriali, Reg. 5, fol. 76r (5 March 1356), and *ibid.*, Reg. 7, fol. 164r (12 October 1372); *I Libri Commemoriali*, ed. Predelli, 2:242–43, no. 141, and 3:105, no. 678; A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Novella, copia fol. 201r–v (16 September 1361); Antonio Lombardo, *Cittadini di Creta e commerci cretesi a Cipro nella seconda metà del sec. XIV da un cartolare notarile a Famagosta (1360–1362)* (Athens, 1968), pp. 133–34, doc. 22 (15 November 1361); Jean Richard, “Chypre du protectorat à la domination vénitienne,” in Pertusi, ed., *Venezia e il Levante*, p. 662; Miller, *Essays on the Latin Orient*, p. 316; Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, 1:156–57.

¹²⁴ A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Fronesis, fol. 53r (31 October 1320) and fol. 154v (11 June 1325); Manfroni, *Storia della marina italiana*, 2:255.

¹²⁵ Or at least Andrea Dandolo called it antipiratical. Dandolo, *Chronica brevis*, p. 371; Pietro Giustiniani, *Venetiarum historia vulgo Petro Iustiniano Iustiniani filio adiudicata*, ed. Roberto Cessi and Fanny Bennato, Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Venezie (Venice, 1964), p. 215; A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Spiritus, fol. 15r (19 March 1327); Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois*, pp. 286–87; Manfroni, *Storia della marina italiana*, 2:255–56.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*; Cessi, *Storia della repubblica di Venezia*, 1:291; Lane, *Venice*, p. 175.

¹²⁷ *Deliberazioni (Senato)*, ed. Cessi and Brunetti, 2:112, no. 394 (19 January 1333).

¹²⁸ A.S.V., Senato, Misti, Reg. 18, fols. 45v and 51v (8 July 1339).

acknowledging his intimate familiarity with such affairs, and in 1348 he served as commander of the fleet launched against the Turks.¹²⁹ In the end the only captains punished for the 1328 voyage were two who had failed to assault an enemy cog; banishment was their penalty.¹³⁰

Venice, however, did punish Marco Ruzzini, captain general of the sea, for an operation in which his crews appeared more intent on snatching booty than engaging in battle. After falling victim to a number of Genoese raids launched from Kaffa in the spring of 1350, Venice sent a fleet commanded by Ruzzini to seek out enemies in the waters of Romania and thus essentially initiated what would become the War of the Straits. In September the Ruzzini expedition captured ten of fourteen Genoese galleys at Castro. Yet instead of pursuing the remaining four vessels, the Venetian sailors, mostly hired mercenaries, occupied themselves exclusively with sacking the seized ones for the merchandise they contained. Meanwhile the unharmed Genoese galleys were met by other Ligurian armaments and sailed to Negroponte, where they sacked and burned Venetian possessions. Ruzzini's punishment barred him from holding any Venetian office or deriving any benefits from such a position for three years and from commanding any fleets.¹³¹ Although the republic instituted formal regulations on the division of spoils shortly afterward,¹³² the booty grabbed by the crew was not what led to Ruzzini's prosecution. Rather it was his inability to control and direct his men. Complaints against Ruzzini and petitions from the assault's victims materialized only after he had already been judged guilty by the commune.¹³³

Many of the episodes examined above illustrate how Venice responded with alarm at the threat of reprisal. A foreigner with a letter of marque had the right to target more than a specific Venetian vessel. Reprisal could legitimately allow him to execute raids against any of the republic's vessels or merchants, unleashing a flurry of authorized assaults that could easily balloon into private warfare. The attempt to avoid reprisals is a recurrent theme in fourteenth-century Venice and one that surfaces when examining the activities of those whom the republic hired as true corsairs. In most of the incidents

¹²⁹ Ibid., Reg. 24, fol. 69 (27 March 1348); A.S.V., Secr. Cons. Rog., Reg. B (C) (1348–50), fol. 2v (8 April 1348).

¹³⁰ A.S.V., Avogaria di Comun, Raspe, Reg. 3641/1, fols. 7r–8r (17 to 26 May 1328); Manfroni, *Storia della marina italiana*, 2:256, n. 3.

¹³¹ A.S.V., Secr. Cons. Rog., Reg. B (C), fol. 72r (10 and 11 October 1350), fol. 74r–v (12 and 15 October 1350), fol. 81r (3 December 1350), fol. 85v (13 December 1350), fol. 91v (23 December 1350); A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Novella, fol. 8r (copia fol. 18r) (11 January 1350, m.v.); A.S.V., Avogaria di Comun, Raspe, Reg. 3642/2, fols. 33v–35r (11 to 19 January 1350, m.v.) and fols. 73r–75r (3 January to 11 February 1352, m.v.); Giustiniani, *Venetiarum historia*, pp. 231–32; Brunetti, “La battaglia di Castro,” pp. 269–77; Meloni, *Genova e Aragona*, 1:59–60; Cessi, *Storia della repubblica di Venezia*, 1:309–10; Lane, *Venice*, pp. 175–76.

¹³² See Brunetti, “La battaglia di Castro,” where he links the rush for plunder by the Ruzzini crew with Venice's decision to create standards for splitting up loot. For earlier regulations concerning booty, see above, p. 871.

¹³³ A.S.V., Libri Commemorativi, Reg. 4, f. cl. 223r (13 November 1352) and fol. 225r (25 November 1352 and 10 February 1354, m.v.); ibid., Reg. 6, fol. 120r (19 September 1361); *I Libri Commemorativi*, ed. Predelli, 2:204–7, nos. 443, 444, and 459, and 2:325, no. 268.

the captains themselves were not charged with misconduct. But even the possible dishonor of a few captains who might or might not have acted like corsairs in the line of duty was a small price to pay if reprisal was the alternative. The commune recognized that reprisals against Venice and any subsequent responses by its subjects would ultimately diminish the republic's ability to oversee its maritime enterprises.

Parties contesting counterpiratical assaults by Venetian captains rarely threatened to invoke reprisals. The Venetian government had nothing to fear in a suit for compensation if the victim was a known pirate. Yet if merchants had suffered damages while traveling with such expeditions, the republic restored their losses. In a sense such uncontested restitution suggests that Venice at least recognized the errors made by its captains. By opting to avoid reprisals the victims' states may have conceded that Venetian captains served in the context of the blurred lines of maritime neutrality. Shippers allied at least nominally to one power regularly consigned their merchandise to the vessels of Venice's official enemies. Conversely a Venetian captain's right to board friendly vessels to search for contraband may have appeared hostile in certain contexts. Mistakes were inevitable.

The commune infrequently punished its officials for unlawful seizures; in all likelihood a *capitaneus culfi* charged with a robbery would still be functioning in the same capacity in the following years. Venice either considered such captures a normal part of maritime operations or acknowledged the special skills of these captains by keeping them in its service. The republic's captains were able to carry out questionable assaults thanks to the broad limits assigned to them by custom and decree. Commissions formulated to guide a captain's activities during antipiratical undertakings allowed him to make a variety of decisions on his own, as one would expect. But oftentimes these decisions were no different from those which a true Venetian corsair could reach in the course of his counterpiratical work. The parallels between the freedom granted to the captain of the gulf and to a Venetian corsair are startling and lead to the conclusion that very little difference between the two existed in practice. By making the captains' commissions flexible, the commune avoided the need to employ corsairs frequently, perhaps diminishing the number of potential claims. Simultaneously the republic left the door open for unsavory actions. Venetian captains knew that they could carry out a plundering raid with the blessing and support of the commune.

Unfortunately, few of our sources provide graphic accounts of victims' reactions to many of the raids or how the bold plunderers defended their actions. We can only speculate on how contemporaries reacted to what must have seemed like mounting aggression on the high seas. To the victims it made little difference whether they had fallen prey to pirates, corsairs, or captains;¹³⁴ instead they were concerned with the Venetian commune's re-

¹³⁴ Similarly when a state suffered losses it would view its aggressors as pirates, whereas when it undertook offensive maneuvers of its own, it might apply the less pejorative term of corsair to the armaments; Mollat, "Guerre de course et piraterie," p. 2; René Coulet du Gard, *La course et la piraterie en Méditerranée* (Paris, 1980), p. 199.

sponse to their pleas for compensation. The relationship of the Venetian government to the expanded use of plundering techniques is paramount. Elsewhere in the Mediterranean it is easier to set the state apart from direct involvement in operations of this nature. If a power granted a reprisal or hired a mercenary, the terms of the license outlined the limitations of the government for accepting any blame for assaults by compelling the corsair to furnish a cautionary payment. True reprisals, however, were the exception in Venice, and the majority of assaults occurred in the context of government service.

The tendency to overlook Venetian aggression may derive in part from the sparse discussion of pirates and corsairs in the republic's maritime laws. Elsewhere legislation outlining the employment of corsairs was common by the fourteenth century.¹³⁵ Venetian laws, by contrast, are silent on the matter.¹³⁶ Only one chapter in Doge Ranieri Zeno's code of 1255 discusses plundered vessels, and it does so only in the context of Venetian losses.¹³⁷ Similarly the 1232 criminal statute deals primarily with shipwreck and the penalties for assaulting friends of the republic.¹³⁸ There is a possible explanation for the absence of laws designed for Venetian corsairs. Strictly "private" maritime operations rarely existed in the republic: even after the commune turned part of its commercial voyages over to the general public in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, captains on the state's payroll still commanded the trading ventures, and the operations themselves were subject to the scrutiny of the Venetian senate.¹³⁹ Security measures remained under the watchful eye of the republic.¹⁴⁰ During especially dangerous times the preparations and regulations for commercial expeditions could be reassumed almost completely by the government.¹⁴¹

It seems probable that the lack of laws relating to corsairs or pirates in Venice stems directly from this public nature of its maritime organization. Other cities, Genoa among them, relied heavily on private initiative and

¹³⁵ See Forcheri, *Navi e navigazione*, pp. 36–38, and Balletto, *Genova nel duecento*, chap. 1, for Genoa; for Aragon, see *Collection des lois maritimes*, ed. Pardessus, 5:349, 393–96, 465–72, 396–450; for Sicily, *ibid.*, 5:257; for Castile, *ibid.*, 6:53–54.

¹³⁶ See Sassi, "La guerra in corsa," p. 37.

¹³⁷ *Gli statuti marittimi veneziani fino al 1255*, ed. Riccardo Predelli and Adolfo Sacerdoti, appeared originally in *Nuovo archivio veneto*, n.s. 4–6 (1902–3), repr. (Venice, 1903), p. 152. In September 1329 Doge Francesco Dandolo expanded this chapter; A.S.V., Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Spiritus, fol. 38r (copia, fols. 147v–48r), and *Collection des lois maritimes*, ed. Pardessus, 5:60. On Dandolo's amplifications of maritime law, see Frederic C. Lane, "Maritime Law and Administration, 1250–1350," in *Studi in onore di Amintore Fanfani*, 3 (Milan, 1966), reprinted in Lane, *Venice and History*, pp. 227–28.

¹³⁸ In *Collection des lois maritimes*, ed. Pardessus, 5:19–20, and Sassi, "La guerra in corsa," pp. 9–10.

¹³⁹ Lane, *Venice*, p. 129. After the introduction of what historians have come to call the system of "free voyaging" in Venice, communal authorities continued to exert a marked influence over a number of expeditions; *ibid.*, p. 132, and Lane, "Operation of Merchant Galleys," pp. 194–95.

¹⁴⁰ Ugo Tucci, "La navigazione veneziana nel duecento e nel primo trecento e la sua evoluzione tecnica," in Pertusi, ed., *Venezia e il Levante*, p. 825.

¹⁴¹ Lane, "Operation of Merchant Galleys," pp. 204–5 and 226.

financial backing for both their commercial and military undertakings; Venice did not. A maritime power with a large share of its enterprises carried out by entrepreneurs was more likely to engage freebooters or mercenaries, whether intentionally or not. In turn it would be pressed to deal with their activities in a legislative fashion, perhaps in an attempt to circumvent suits by victim states or charges of complicity. The Genoese *Officium robarie*,¹⁴² for example, may have been created to handle the excesses of individuals not affiliated with state service, thereby clearing the Ligurian government of direct responsibility.

The situation was quite different in Venice, where the state intervened frequently in galley voyages and participated directly when “military demands” of any nature arose.¹⁴³ If corsairs were to serve aboard Venetian galleys, they would have to be part of the republic’s official expeditions. Yet pirates and corsairs do not fall into the category of open, legitimate naval operations. It is one thing to codify legislation pertaining to them when they are private citizens, quite another when they are members of a state-sanctioned venture. As a result it is not difficult to understand why rules regulating their behavior do not appear in the conventional codes. Inclusion of corsairs in a discussion of maritime law might imply that Venice formally approved of their activities. Since the commune played an immediate and traceable role in all military voyages, this association could lead to a variety of political repercussions. Instead the Republic of St. Mark apparently resorted to dealing with pirates and corsairs more sporadically, issuing judgments as the need or opportunity required.¹⁴⁴ This method may make the instances of piracy or corsair armaments more difficult to uncover, but it concurrently establishes a very interesting relationship between the Venetian government and the problem.

The republic was clearly concerned with its ability to retain control over the Adriatic Sea. Both the extent to which Venice took measures to safeguard those waters and the occasions in which pirates or corsairs were able to filter into the “gulf” suggest that this control was not uncontested.¹⁴⁵ Increased use of the captain of the gulf in the fourteenth century clearly indicates that the commune took new steps to protect its interests. But the captain’s ability to bridge both protection and aggression in the course of his duties suggests that Venetian policy focused sharply on both flexibility and effectiveness. By employing one official to carry out a variety of functions the Venetian government worked for a directed and cooperative execution of its goals. Instead of regularly relying on the services of hired foreign mercenaries or corsairs whose allegiances were suspect, temporary, or nonexistent, Venice retained

¹⁴² See Louis de Mas Latrie, “L’*Officium robarie* ou l’office de la piraterie à Gênes au moyen âge,” *Bibliothèque de l’Ecole des chartes* 53 (1892), 264–72.

¹⁴³ Lane, “Operation of Merchant Galleys,” pp. 215–16.

¹⁴⁴ Sassi, “La guerra in corsa,” pp. 13 and 37. Occasionally legislation in Genoa also appeared in response to specific circumstances; Airaldi, “Marinai, etnie e società,” p. 71.

¹⁴⁵ Borsari, “Il commercio veneziano,” pp. 1009–10; Kedar, *Merchants in Crisis*, p. 30; Cassandro, *Le rappresaglie e il fallimento*, pp. 29–30; Tadić, “Venezia e la costa orientale,” p. 695; Lane, *Venice*, p. 65.

the service of a loyal and dependent officer while simultaneously granting him the liberty to determine when an assault might be to his or Venice's advantage. Whether inadvertently or not, this system gave the republic one immediate added benefit. When charged with an improper attack, the Venetians could argue that their captains had been innocently engaged in guarding Venice's interests. Defensive measures slipped easily into offensive maneuvers, and on the eve of the War of Chioggia Venice was well prepared to incorporate plunder as a regular part of its naval operations. By using state officials to carry out actions that were fulfilled by private enterprise elsewhere, the Republic of St. Mark demonstrated that it was more precocious than its contemporaries.

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