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Personifications of the Sacred and the Sovereign Represented in the Art of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Palazzo Ducale

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By

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of

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Lindenwood University

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PERSONIFICATIONS OF THE SACRED AND THE SOVEREIGN REPRESENTED IN THE ART OF THE SALA DEL MAGGIOR CONSIGLIO IN PALAZZO DUCALE

By

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ABSTRACT

PERSONIFICATIONS OF THE SACRED AND THE SOVEREIGN REPRESENTED IN THE ART OF THE SALA DEL MAGGIOR CONSIGLIO IN PALAZZO DUCALE

Susan Sholar Hanny, Master of Arts in Art History and Visual Culture, 2022

Thesis Directed by: Dr. James Huston, PhD

The aim of this research is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of why the Venetian Republic incorporated specific personifications in the art of the *Sala del Maggior Consiglio* (Chamber of the Great Council) **(fig. 1)** in *Palazzo Ducale* (Doge's Palace) **(fig. 2)** created after 1577 (when a fire destroyed most of the existing artwork in the room) to promulgate the sacredness and sovereignty of the Venetian Empire. In addition, the research seeks to connect the personifications to events in Venetian history that influenced the use of specific figurative images within the artwork and to the message the Venetian Republic was attempting to communicate to the viewer, including Venetian citizens and foreign visitors, at the time in which the paintings were created. No other building in Venice exemplifies the unification of the political and religious ideologies of the Venetian Republic as much as the Palazzo Ducale, which served as the historic seat of power for the Venetian Empire from the tenth century (although the structure as we see it today dates to the 1400s) until it fell to Napoleon on May 12th, 1797, during the French Revolutionary Wars.

The research methodologies utilized in the analysis will include the more traditional qualitative approaches of structuralism, iconography, and iconology. In addition, the innovative methodology of new historicism is employed to allow for a more contextualized interpretation of the personifications as it examines the polysemic historical narratives of Venice that existed in the sixteenth century and influenced the artwork and the images included in the paintings. It is important to note that the incorporation of the methodological approach of new historicism in the analysis of the artwork of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Palazzo Ducale is lacking in existing scholarship on the topic and in the field of art history, and by using this approach, this research will further the understanding of the intended meaning of the imagery (including personifications) of the room and the Palazzo Ducale.

It was in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio that the Venetian Senate (also referred to as the Council) met to make critical political decisions and hold elections for the doge and other elected officials. The Venetian Republic proclaimed that its political system was under the guidance of Christ and the Virgin Mary because Venice had been founded as a Christian city with ties to the Christian Byzantine Empire. Venice believed that it had received investiture from God to rule the Adriatic Sea and viewed itself as the protector of the independence of the Veneto region and the liberty of its citizens. These are contributing factors to the decisions to include specific personifications as representations of the righteousness and divinity of the Venetian Empire in the artwork of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio.

The four paintings discussed in the analysis include the ceiling paintings *Venice Crowned by Victory Welcomes the Subject Provinces* (1582-1584) **(fig. 14)** by Palma il Giovane, *Voluntary Submission of Cities and Regions* (1584) **(fig. 11)** by Jacopo Tintoretto, *Apotheosis of Venice* (1582) **(fig. 13)** by Paolo Veronese, and the tribunal wall mural *Il Paradiso* (1592) **(fig. 12)** by Tintoretto, his sons, and assistants from his workshop. These four paintings exemplify the

use of personifications as representations of the political, religious, and cultural ideologies of the Venetian Republic and symbolize a triumphant and divine Venetian Empire. Wolfgang Wolters (2010) stated that "it was the professed aim of the Venetian Republic to enhance its reputation through the painting and sculpture of the Doge's Palace, and to do this, allegories and history paintings were used."[1] It is important to note that the wall paintings (excluding the tribunal wall and doge votive paintings) of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio depict the historiography of the Venetian Republic, and the paintings located on the ceiling and the tribunal wall are intended to be a triumphant display of its sacredness and sovereignty. Through its civic artwork, the Venetian Republic intended to demonstrate to the world that it had become powerful because of its military and maritime successes, virtuous as evident by the conduct of its citizens, and was righteous and moral from its very inception because of its Christian birth. It is the examination of the deliberate iconographical and iconological choices made by the Venetian government to include specific personifications in the paintings of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Palazzo Ducale after 1577 to communicate their political and religious ideologies that is the central aim and purpose of this research.

[1] Wolfgang Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010), 137.

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First and foremost, I would like to give the most heartfelt of thanks to my husband of 22 years, Kimball Hanny. He has been with me on this crazy journey of life for quite some time and has never stopped supporting me or cheering me on to follow my own path. He is always very kind when I go on forever about anything having to do with art history (or Harry Potter). I would also like to thank my two sons, Brendan and Griffin, as they have been the most easy-going and coolest teenagers ever to raise, making my life so much easier in every way. I cannot forget to thank my miniature schnauzer Higgins, who has lovingly sat by my side on the couch for the endless hours I have spent working on my thesis. I have to thank my committee chair, Dr. James Hutson, for always being positive, kind, supportive, and quick to respond. He has been a beacon of knowledge, and I am very fortunate that he agreed to take me on in this process. Also, a big thank you to Dr. Camara for giving excellent feedback on my topic because of her expertise regarding Venetian art, and to Dr. Cody for being honest and helpful and for teaching me not to use the word symbology. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my father, Bob Sholar, who passed away from COVID in July of 2020 without knowing I would be studying for my MA in Art History. He would be very proud of me for following my passion and trying to achieve my dreams.

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Introduction/Background

The objective of this research is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of why the Venetian Republic incorporated specific personifications in the art of the *Sala del Maggior Consiglio* **(fig. 1)** in *Palazzo Ducale* **(fig. 2)** created after 1577 (when a fire gutted the room and destroyed almost all of the existing artwork) to promulgate the belief in the sacredness and sovereignty of its empire. Additionally, the research seeks to connect the personifications to the historical events and polysemic narratives that influenced the use of specific figurative images within the artwork and to the message the Venetian Republic was attempting to communicate to the viewer, including Venetian citizens and foreign visitors, at the time in which it was created. No other building in Venice exemplifies the unification of the political and religious ideologies of the Venetian Republic as much as the Palazzo Ducale, which served as the historic seat of power for the Veneto Region for more than seven hundred years beginning in the tenth century. There was no separation of religion and state for the Venetian Republic, as its political decisions were based on Christian principles.

Through the art of Palazzo Ducale, particularly through the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, where some of the most critical political functions were carried out, the Venetian Republic propagated the idea that its hegemonic power was rooted in divinity and used art as a means to communicate its political and religious ideologies. Venice believed that it had been chosen by God to rule the Adriatic Sea and viewed itself as the protector of the independence of the Veneto region and the *libertà* (liberty) of its citizens. These self-proclaimed beliefs contributed to the decisions made by the artists and the creators of the artistic program of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio to include specific personifications in the artwork as representations of the sacredness and sovereignty of the Venetian Empire. The four paintings discussed in the analysis include the

ceiling paintings *Venice Crowned by Victory Welcomes the Subject Provinces* (1582-1584) **(fig. 14)** by Palma il Giovane, *Voluntary Submission of Cities and Regions* (1584) **(fig. 11)** by Jacopo Tintoretto, *Apotheosis of Venice* (1582) **(fig. 13)** by Paolo Veronese, and the tribunal wall mural *Il Paradiso* (1592) **(fig. 12)** by Tintoretto, his sons, and assistants from his workshop. These four paintings were chosen to be examined for this research as they exemplify the use of personifications as representations of the political and religious ideologies of the Venetian Republic and visually symbolize a triumphant and divine Venetian Republic.

The research methodologies utilized in the analysis will include the more traditional qualitative approaches of structuralism, iconography, and iconology. In addition, the innovative methodology of new historicism is employed to allow for a more contextualized interpretation of the personifications as it examines the polysemic historical narratives of Venice that existed in the sixteenth century and influenced the artwork and the images included in the paintings. It is important to note that the incorporation of the methodological approach of new historicism in the analysis of the artwork of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Palazzo Ducale is lacking in existing scholarship on the topic and in the field of art history, and by using this approach, this research will further the understanding of the intended meaning of the imagery (including personifications) of the room and the Palazzo Ducale. The analysis is structured so the historical events and polysemic narratives discussed first will aid in understanding the intended meaning of the personifications within the artwork examined. For the Venetian government, there was no separation between the state and the church. Claiming to be the first republic born in the Christian era, Christianity influenced the conceptualization of their political, religious, and cultural ideologies, evident in the allegorical, mythological, and spiritual personifications in the artwork that decorates the Sala del Maggior Consiglio.

To consider any aspect of Venetian art, culture, religion, or politics without first considering the history of the city's founding, or what is widely called "the Myth of Venice," would be ignoring the ideological structures that brought about the very things that created the Venetian ethos. As Finlay states, the "Myth of Venice" is the self-glorifying creation myth of the city that "celebrates its providential destiny, constitutional excellence, and political wisdom of the city-state."[2] In 421 AD, Venice declared the feast day of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, March 25th, as the date of its birth. By choosing the date of the celebration of the announcement to the Virgin Mary by the angel Gabriel that she would conceive the Son of God through divine conception, Venice was declaring that it too had been divinely conceived.

Also central to the divine narrative of the founding of the Republic of Venice is the acquisition of the body of Saint Mark **(fig. 3)**. Venice had become a Byzantine province in 476 AD and remained as such until the signing of the Pax Nicephori in 814 AD, when it gained independence along with the trading rights along the coast of the Adriatic Sea. With a newfound independence, Venice wanted to establish itself as one of the principal European cities and sought to obtain an artifact that would symbolically represent its religious and political ideologies. Having established trading ties with Alexandria in Egypt, the Venetians were familiar with the city and had heard and seen what treasures and holy Christian relics existed there, including the remains of Saint Mark.

Because Alexandria had fallen to the Arabs in the seventh century after the Muslim conquest of Egypt, the city was no longer under Christian rule. The Christian Venetians decided that the body of Saint Mark would be the ideal relic to obtain to gain such a reputation in Europe

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[2] Robert Finlay, "The Immortal Republic: The Myth of Venice during the Italian Wars (1994-1530)," *The Sixteenth Century Journal,* 30, no. 4 (1999): 932.

and beyond. After Venetian merchants successfully smuggled the saint's body to Venice from Alexandria in 829 AD, its arrival signaled the city's protection of Christianity and its relics. The arrival also sent a powerful political message to the Byzantine Empire. Replacing the Byzantine appointed patron saint of the city, Saint Theodore, with one of their own choosing, "symbolized the Venetian state's break-away from Byzantine rule."[3] Venice adopted Saint Mark as the patron saint of the city and made his symbol, the winged lion, the symbol of the Venetian Republic.

The date of its founding and the acquisition of the relics of Saint Mark are applicable inclusions in the analysis of the art of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio as they are two fundamental elements that create the framework upon which deliberate iconographical choices, including personifications, were made to represent the sacredness and sovereignty of the Venetian Republic. As stated previously, there was no separation of religion and state in Venice as it was religion on which political decisions were based. Even the relocation of the seat of the government (Palazzo Ducale) from the Rialto area of Venice in 1340 AD to *Piazza San Marco* next to the *Basilica di San Marco* **(fig. 4)** (where Saint Mark's relics are enshrined) was intended to represent the unification of the sacred with the sovereign and of God and the Republic.

It is perhaps *Venetia Figurata* that iconologically epitomizes the idealism of the Venetian city-state more than any other emblematic personification. *Venetia Figurata* is the figure of the Queen of the Adriatic (*Venetia*), and she is the amalgamation of both religious and pagan matriarchal models based upon their associative virtues. According to David Rosand, the "main constituents of the figure of Venetia include the figure of the Virgin Mary and the personification of the cardinal virtue of Justice (*Justitia*) to the pagan figures of the goddess Roma and Venus,

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[3] Deborah Howard, *The Architectural History of Venice* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 18.

the goddess of love."[4] While the imagery of Saint Mark illustrates the piety and devotion to God and the Catholic Church of the Venetian Republic, *Venetia Figurata* encompasses the Republic's political, religious, and cultural ideologies. In other words, she came to characterize the sacredness and the sovereignty of Venice, and her image would take a place of honor within the halls (and in the artwork) of Palazzo Ducale and the Sala del Maggior Consiglio.

However, the personification of Venetia was only one of the emblematic images the Venetian Republic used to promulgate its ideologies. It is imperative to recognize that Venice was a city wed to the sea. From its inception, it was the Adriatic Sea that provided Venice protection from its enemies, sustained the lives of Venetian citizens, and gave the city the means to acquire abundant wealth. It was in the lagoon from which Venice sprang forth. As Thomas Madden states, "No one with options would willingly build a city on a group of marshy islands set in the middle of a brackish lagoon. Venice was a child of necessity, built by the survivors of an ancient world that was quickly passing away."[5] The Venetians established their republic in such a seemingly forbidding environment because they felt it would protect them from enemy invasion. The difficult early years of the Venetian Republic helped shape the Venetians' enduring character. Perhaps in gratitude to the sea itself, Venice appropriated the goddess born of the sea, Venus, and took her as a mythological figure of their city-state.[6]

In 1577, a great fire gutted a large portion of the Palazzo Ducale. As a part of the reconstruction, new paintings were commissioned to replace those destroyed, and it was in the

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[4] David Rosand, *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 3.

[5] Thomas F. Madden, *Venice: A New History* (New York: Penguin Books Australia, 2015), 9.

[6] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 3.

Sala del Maggior Consiglio that the most renowned Late Renaissance Venetian artists such as Jacopo Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, and Palma il Giovane were commissioned to create the most ambitious cycles within the palace. Through the paintings, the Venetian state aimed to "show the world in memorable pictures that the Republic has been distinguished by military success and the virtuous conduct of its citizenry from its very beginning up to the present day."[7] This purpose for the new artwork was significant given that the Republic was experiencing a decline in power after suffering military and economic losses throughout the sixteenth century. The deliberate choices made by the government to include specific personifications to communicate their political and religious ideologies during a time of waning hegemony is central to the purpose of this research.

[7] Wolfgang Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010), 137.

Literature Review

This literature review aims to examine the body of existing scholarship relating to how the Republic of Venice promulgated perceptions of its sacredness and sovereignty through the personifications included within the artwork of the *Sala del Maggior Consiglio* **(fig.1)** in *Palazzo Ducale* **(fig. 2)**. This literature review follows a thematic approach. First, the history of the Republic of Venice and the Palazzo Ducale will be established with supporting literature as it creates a foundation for understanding the religious and political ideologies visually represented in the Chamber's artwork. Second, an investigation of the political function of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio will be discussed structured around sources relating to this topic. Third, scholarly literature will create the framework to examine the historical, iconographical, and iconological meaning of specific visual representations, including personifications, within the Sala del Maggior.

To fully comprehend the art of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, it is imperative to understand the history of the Republic of Venice and the history of Palazzo Ducale, which was the seat of its government from the tenth century until the fall of the Venetian Empire after the Napoleonic Wars in 1797. Erica D'Amico (2017) analyzes scholarly sources from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries regarding the historiography and archeology relating to the incipiency of Venice, asserting that "the lagoon played a crucial role in the development of the societal, cultural, and political ethos of the city."[8] The Venetian lagoon was a refuge for residents of the surrounding mainland who were escaping the invading Germanic and Hun forces in the second through the fifth centuries. Most refugees settled on the lagoon island of Torcello, which became

[8] Erica D'Amico, "Approaches and Perspectives on the Origins of Venice," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 62 (2017): 210.

the parent island for *Venezia* (Venice). The noble families inhabiting the island of Venice elected the first doge in 697 AD, and with that, the Republic of Venice was born, although not yet a sovereign entity.

Venice remained under a number of empires' rule at different times until 814 AD with the signing of the Pax Nicephori treaty after a failed attempt by Charlamagne (Emperor of the Carolingian Empire) to seize control of Venice. Venice was under Byzantine rule at the time of the siege, and the treaty granted Venice its independence from Byzantium and trading rights along the coast of the Adriatic Sea. Throughout the early period of the city, Venice desired to remain sovereign, ruled by an elected government instead of a King or Emperor, and its foundational core republican principles.[9]

Much scholarly literature regarding the history of the Venetian Republic has focused on the "Myth of Venice." The "Myth of Venice" refers to the "story" of the city's founding, and debates exist concerning the idea that these accounts may not be as historically accurate as they claimed to be. Despite the probability of some historical inaccuracies of Venice's origins, these "myths" give an understanding of the Republic's ethos. One narrative that allows for a contextual understanding of the Venetian ethos is the acquisition of the relics of Saint Mark. Author Erica D'Amico (2017) asserts that "Venice, being an entirely new city, had to create its own origin myth. Nevertheless, it had to be anchored to the past and to offer something spiritually significant, such as Saint Mark, to satisfy the need for cultural memory."[10] Historical chronicles assert that Venetian merchants smuggled the body of Saint Mark out of Alexandria

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[9] D'Amico, "Approaches and Perspectives," 210.

[10] D'Amico, "Approaches and Perspectives," 213.

and brought it back to the city in 829 AD. With the attainment of the relics of Saint Mark, Venice's standing grew globally, and it was decided that Saint Mark would become the city's new patron saint, and his symbol, the winged lion, would become the symbol of the Republic of Venice.[11]

In addition to the history of the Venetian Republic, it is also essential to understand the history of the Palazzo Ducale as it aids in contextualizing the intended meaning and purpose of the personifications used in the paintings of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. In an article by Daniel Savoy, the author examines the renovation of Palazzo Ducale that began in 1340. According to Savoy (2015), a decision was made to move the seat of government from the Rialto area in Venice to Piazza San Marco to locate the palace next to the Basilica di San Marco, connecting it to the original residence of the doge.[12] The Basilica di San Marco was originally constructed in the late ninth century to house the relics of Saint Mark after bringing them to Venice from Egypt. The Basilica, as it presently stands, was rebuilt in 1060 after a fire destroyed the original building. Savoy (2015) establishes that the purpose of the renovation was for "formal harmony and preservation of the new Palazzo Ducale to convey the same message of ducal continuity, thereby expressing the mythographic vision of the Venetian state at San Marco and the Palazzo Ducale, the unified chapel and palace of the doge."[13] This move united the sacred with the sovereign in an expression of the unification of God and government. The representations of Venetia, the Virgin Mary, and Saint Mark included in the artwork of the Sala

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[11] D'Amico, "Approaches and Perspectives," 210.

[12] Daniel Savoy, "Keeping the Myth Alive: Andrea Dandolo and the Preservation of Justice at the Palazzo Ducale in Venice," *Artibus Et Historiae* 36, no. 71 (2015): 10.

[13] Savoy, "Keeping the Myth Alive," 10.

del Maggior Consiglio, created both before and after the fire of 1577, illustrate how connected the Venetian Republic was to its Christian faith.

While the primary intention of Savoy's article (2015) is to explore how the architecture and exterior artwork of the Doge's Palace exhibits the hegemonic power of the Venetian Republic, the author argues that "by preserving the original, mid-fourteenth-century design of the Palazzo Ducale to mirror the continuity of the government's foundational principles, it places the monument at the beginning of a widespread Venetian architectural practice."[14] By understanding the symbolic intent of the architecture of the Palazzo Ducale, one becomes cognizant of the intended iconographical meaning of the cycles of the art within the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. Themes of the sacredness and sovereignty of the Republic of Venice can not only be seen in the architecture and the artwork of Palazzo Ducale but throughout much of the Veneto.

In his book, David Rosand (2012) discusses how the Venetian Republic shaped the visual imagination of its political thought. *La Serenissima Repubblica* (the Most Serene Republic of Venice) used visual imagery, including personifications, to embody a different set of ideas and beliefs about its political identity than other empires during the time of its reign.[15] Palazzo Ducale was the seat of the government, and all of the decisive political functions were carried out within its walls. Venice claimed to be the first Republic born after the era of the fall of the Roman Empire, birthed in Christian liberty, and the true successor to pagan Rome.[16] After being granted independence from Byzantium authority in the late 800s, playing a pivotal role in the fall of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusades, and Doge Ziani negotiating a peace treaty

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[14] Savoy, "Keeping the Myth Alive," 22.

[15] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 2.

[16] Rosand, *Myths of Venice,* 3.

between Pope Alexander III, the ruler of the Papal States, and Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, in 1177, Venice gained its sovereignty and the right to rule itself. According to Rosand (2012), "Venice stood on Europe's political stage as a third sword, as an equal to the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire."[17] As a representation of this, Venice adopted the personification of *Justitia* (Justice). During the reconstruction of Palazzo Ducale in the 1340s, Filippo Calendario, the first architect of the Doge's Palace, created a tondo of *Venetia* (Venice) **(fig. 5)** as *Justitia* (Justice) with the sword of Justice in her right hand pointing upwards to heaven, symbolizing the sacredness of la Serenissima, while two prisoners placed on each side of her throne look upon her with emotional trepidation. Beneath her throne are waves from the sea of which she rules. Two lions (the symbol of Saint Mark) flank her sides as her constant guardians, linking the Republic of Venice to the idea that she was divinely granted the right to rule from God. The tondo is located on the western façade facing the piazzetta of San Marco, symbolizing that she is the protector of the Republic and ruler of the sea.

On December 20th, 1577, the palace's eastern wing, where many institutional rooms are located, including the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, was ablaze. It took two days to extinguish the flames completely. Almost the entirety of the wing was gutted, but the walls still stood, even though the intense heat left them deformed. Numerous works of art by Venetian artists such as Bellini, Tintoretto, Titian, and Veronese were destroyed. The Senate was tasked with overseeing the reconstruction of the eastern wing. In his book *The Doges Palace in Venice,* Wolfgang Wolters (2010) states that "a debate ensued as some Senate members wanted to tear down the remaining structure and construct a new building, while other Senators wanted to keep the

[17] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 22.

structure and add new additions to it."[18] It was determined that the rooms were not beyond repair, and Senate member Francesco Sansovino argued that "Palazzo Ducale should be preserved on the basis that the forefathers of Venice had built it, and the Republic had flourished since then."[19] According to Wolters (2010), when presented with this argument, fellow Senate members agreed, and the eastern wing was not demolished, nor were any additions added to it. It was preserved to symbolize the perseverance of the Republic.[20]

There is perhaps no institutional room within the palace representing the ideologies of the Republic of Venice more than the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. Measuring over 53 meters long and 25 meters wide, it was not only the largest room in Palazzo Ducale but was said to be one of the largest rooms in all of Europe at the time. The Council dates back to 692 AD, when a few families of nobility began electing a doge (Chief of State). Over the following millennia, the Grand Council grew to over two thousand members, and the Sala del Maggior Consiglio had more than enough space to hold them all. The Council was tasked with electing the doge, the Senate, and the Council of Ten. To become a member of the Consiglio, one had to be a male member of a Venetian family of nobility and over the age of twenty-five. Because the Sala del Maggior Consiglio was the room within the palace that had more visibility than any other room or chamber, replacing the cycles of art within it was of paramount importance. It was an opportunity for the Venetian state to promote its self-image, helping all those who entered the Chamber of the Great Council comprehend what the Republic valued and the role the government had in preserving the sovereignty and the sacredness of Venezia.

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[18] Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice*, 5.

[19] Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice,* 5.

[20] Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice,* 6.

After the fire in 1577, the Senate was responsible for selecting the artists to replace the eastern wing's destroyed artwork. Due to the gravity of the task, only the most sought-after Venetian Renaissance artists of the time would be chosen, and their task was to propagandize the Republic and boast its accomplishments and divinity through visual imagery. Jacopo Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, Palma il Giovane, and Francesco Bassano were among the artists commissioned. Paolo Delorenzi (2014) discusses the history of Palazzo Ducale in-depth and the works of art within the palace, the function of the room where the art was created, and the iconographical and iconological meaning of the artwork. Delorenzi states that:

> The Palazzo Ducale was a kind of grand celebratory manifesto of the Most Serene Republic of Venice, or La Serenissima, of its glories, its enterprises, its characteristics, its ambitions, and its protagonists. In short, Palazzo Ducale celebrates the history of Venice. No part of the complex architectural arrangement or collection of paintings or sculptural cycles that complete Palazzo Ducale is casual. Every painting, sculpture, fresco, fireplace, or doorway had its own meaning and justification.[21]

Nothing was placed on its walls, ceilings, facades, or colonnades which did not serve to promulgate the principles, the ethos, the self-identity, the wealth, the power, the sovereignty, and the sacredness of the Republic.

The Republic of Venice championed its sovereignty, proud to be under the rule of no emperor or king, having an elected Chief of State (the doge) working with other branches of the government as a means of checks and balances. The self-sufficient character of Venice originated in its formative years spent in the Venetian lagoon trying to escape the invading Hun and Germanic forces. Venice learned to govern itself in the lagoon while creating a thriving society in an unforgiving marshland. Venice wanted to be individualistic and wanted the right to

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[21] Paolo Delorenzi, *Venice: The Doge's Palace* (Venezia, IT: Fondazione Musei Civici, 2014), 10.

rule itself without the interruption of other empires. Being a sovereign republic, according to Delorenzi, Venice was "unique in that it was a sort of aristocratic democracy, restricting excessive egoism in order to serve the greater good and to deter malfeasance. For centuries, the Republic maintained its liberty, able to hold its head high as equals to kings, emperors, and popes."[22]

The Republic of Venice was fiercely independent, unashamedly wealthy, and unapologetically ostentatious. These traits are exhibited in the art of Palazzo Ducale and the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. In an article by Edward Muir (1974), the author examines past scholarly publications relating to the justification of self-promotion through visual imagery by La Serenissima during the Renaissance. Muir presents an argument by Jacob Burckhardt that states:

> In comparison to other late-medieval and Renaissance city-states that were turbulent places- faction-ridden, prone to creating ad hoc institutions, and accustomed to street-fighting as glorified in *Romeo and Juliet*, *La Serenissima*, the Most Serene Republic of Venice, seemed secure and politically unified under the rule of a hereditary patriciate, whose members styled themselves as nobles. Its constitutional arrangements lasted for around four hundred years, an extraordinary continuity coupled with Venice's unfounded reputation for unsullied liberty, unwavering religiosity, social harmony, and unfailingly peaceful intentions."[23]

Based upon this statement, it seems the Republic of Venice was deserving of its high opinion of itself.

Three years after the fire of 1577, the walls and ceiling of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio were still devoid of any paintings, even though the Great Council was again using the chamber for its assemblies. Jacopo Contarini and Jacopo Marcello, two patrician experts in Venetian

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[22] Delorenzi, *Venice: The Doge's Palace*, 100.

[23] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, (Unknown): 46, quoted in Edward Muir, "Images of Power: Art and Pageantry in Renaissance Venice," *American Historical Review*, no. 84 (1974): 15.

history and painting, along with monk and historian Girolamo Bardi, developed the "new" iconographical program for the chamber. According to Wolters (2010), the overall aim of the art of the chamber was to "showcase to the world through the painting that the Republic of Venice had been distinguished by military successes and the virtuous conduct of its citizenry from its very beginnings."[24] It was also decided that the blue and golden star-covered ceiling would not be reproduced. Instead, a pictorial ceiling program would be created, illustrating the personifications of the Virtues, examples of Venetian heroism, and scenes celebrating the "Myth of Venice" as a city favored by God.[25] The walls were to be adorned with scenes from Venetian history, showing how it fought for its sovereignty and the Republic's link to the church, the papacy, and the Holy Roman Empire. Even though the authors of the visual program for the Sala del Maggior Consiglio established the directive for the room's artwork, the artists were allowed some creative and stylistic freedoms.

Holly Hurlburt (2009) discusses the reasons for the choice of subjects for the pictorial cycles on the chamber walls. Hurlburt infers that the cycles were influenced by continuous threats from adversaries to the Republic and anxiety about its place in evolving geopolitics that prompted the creation of this triumphant program, which featured thirty-five historical scenes on the walls surmounted by a chronological series of ducal portraits.[26] The depiction of the Fourth Crusade was the primary cycle of the Chamber of the Great Council's walls, and the chief objective was to celebrate the military victories of the crusades. As a consequence of these

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[24] Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice*, 137.

[25] Delorenzi, *Venice: The Doge's Palace*, 107.

[26] Holly Hurlburt, "Body of Empire: Caterina Corner in Venetian History and Iconography," *Early Modern Women*, no. 4 (2009): 61.

triumphs, other empires understood that the Venetian Empire was a commanding adversary willing to fight fiercely to maintain its sovereignty and the liberty of Venetian citizens.

Paintings of the cycle include the *Capture of Zara* (ca. 1580) **(fig. 6)** by Andrea Vicentino, the *Fall of Constantinople* (ca. 1580) **(fig. 7)** and the *Sea-Battle off Punta Salvore* (ca. 1580) **(fig. 8)** by Domenico Tintoretto, and the *Storming of the Walls* (after 1577) **(fig. 9)** by Palma il Giovane. These are only a few examples of the historiographical paintings in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio intended to represent the military strength of the Venetian Republic. Domenico Tintoretto had an intimidating task before him with the painting of the *Sea-Battle off Punta Salvore.* The previously destroyed painting of the same battle had been done by Giovani Bellini and was renowned in its time. The painting is a mass of soldiers battling it out on top of and around the Venetian and Holy Roman Empire's fleets, with only the top one-fifth of the work showing any background or sky. In the lower one-third of the painting, just off to the viewer's left on the stern of the boat, is the Holy Roman Emperor's son, Otto, bowing to the doge as a sign that he knows they have lost, and the Adriatic Sea will remain under the sovereign territorial rule of the Venetian Republic. The *Sea-Battle off Punta Salvore* exemplifies how the Republic of Venice used art to communicate its hegemonic power and that it was a sovereign city-state and independent from the rule of the Holy Roman Empire.

There is ongoing scholarly discussion regarding the historical correctness of the paintings. In particular, the pictorial cycle of the crusades was used as propaganda to justify Venice's actions during the crusades.[27] Wolters (2004) said of the cycle, "the interpretations of attitudes, ideas, and castings, whether handed down or alleged, secret or open, are there that we

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[27] Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice*,142.

must ask ourselves (the viewer) if we can recognize behind these smoke screens what could be the historical truth."[28] Even if it is impossible to verify the historical correctness of the subject matter of the paintings, what is known is that the Republic used art as a means to self-propagandize its desire to remain independent from imperial rule.

Not all of the paintings of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio walls depicted triumphal battles. In the painting *Entrance of the Doge Andrea Contarini after the Successful Defense of Chioggia Against the Genuese* (ca. 1580) **(fig. 10)** by Paolo Veronese, the artist illustrates the return of the doge after a successful defense of Chioggia (a city in the Veneto region) against its enemy Genoa in 1380. Wolters (2004) describes that painting as a commemoration of the victory of the defense of the coastal town of Chioggia against its archenemy. The doge, who acted as the Admiral of the Venetian fleets, had saved his native land from the Republic's cruel rivals.[29] The painting portrays the town at peace due to the triumph. At the lower center is the doge, dressed in his traditional red robe, surrounded by citizens, soldiers, and clergy members. In the background, the Venetian fleet remains still as they are not engaged in battle anymore, having once again protected the sovereignty of the Republic of Venice.

The centerpiece of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio's ceiling was Tintoretto's *Voluntary Submission of the Provinces to Venice* (ca. 1584) **(fig. 11)**. In the rectangular painting, Venetia is receiving palm fronds, a symbol of peace, triumph, and eternal life, from the lion of Saint Mark. The lion holds a laurel crown in his mouth, symbolizing Venetian victory. The doge is positioned atop a "tribunal" staircase set back into the distance, receiving ambassadors from Greece,

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[28] Wolfgang Wolters, "The Cycle of the IV Crusade in the Sala Del Maggior Consiglio of the Doge's Palace in Venice," *Art History Essays and Memoirs* 28 (2004): 111.

[29] Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice*, 151.

Dalmatia, and Istria as they surrender the keys to their lands as a sign that they voluntarily submit to the rule of the Republic. Since the creation of the work, a debate has surrounded the personification of Venetia. Richard Mackenney (1998) gives evidence of this with a passage written by Elizabethan traveler and writer Thomas Coryat. Upon viewing the painting in the early 1600s, Coryat identified Venetia as the Virgin Mary with "a crown on her head, attended by two angels as she feeds the winged lion an olive branch, which signifies peace."[30] In reviewing contemporary scholarly writings regarding the meaning of the painting, Mackenney (1998) notes that Wolfgang Wolters stated, "He (Coryat) had mistaken the laurel crown for olive, and confuses Venice with the Virgin. The confusion may have been deliberate: Venice had become the Queen of Heaven."[31] It is important to note that while there are paintings elsewhere in Palazzo Ducale that illustrate the Virgin Mary and the personification of Venice individually, the paintings in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, except Tintoretto's *Il Paradiso* **(fig.12)**, picture the *Venetia Figurata*. The Venetian Figurata was the amalgamation of the Venetia, the Virgin Mary, and the Greek and Roman goddesses Justitia and Venus.

The painting *Apotheosis of Venice* **(fig. 13)** by Paolo Veronese, although not in the center, takes the place of prominence on the ceiling directly above the doge's seat in the Chamber of the Great Council. The composition of the painting mimics the circular frame surrounding the work. Following the iconographical program, Veronese painted the Venetia Figurata with the Virtues of Peace, Abundance, Liberty, and Security surrounding her elevated throne. Barely visible beneath the monumental throne on which Venetia sits is the orb of the

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[30] Richard Mackenney, "Public and Private in Renaissance Venice," *Renaissance Studies* 12, no. 1 (1998): 123.

[31] Mackenney, "Public and Private," 123.

world. The personification of the virtue Victory brings her a crown as Venetian citizens celebrate the prosperity that the Republic has afforded them. Of the painting, Holly Hurlburt states, "Veronese's *Apotheosis*, located directly above the tribune of the doge, a regal female personifies the triumphant city of Venice, borne to heaven."[32] Through the personifications included in the work, the *Apotheosis of Venice* promulgates both the sacredness and sovereignty of the Republic. Although not included in the approved artistic program for the painting, Veronese added men in armor atop fiery steeds to signify that peace, sovereignty, and prosperity could not be maintained without a strong military.[33]

No other painting in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio signifies self-propagandizing belief in the sacredness of the Venetian Republic more than Tintoretto's enormous *Il Paradiso.* The painting visually dominates the chamber and occupies the entire tribunal wall directly behind and surrounding the seat of the doge. All eyes of the over two thousand members of the Great Council would have viewed the work numerous times during the assemblies, contemplating its meaning and how it related to their beloved La Serenissima.

More scholarship has been written about *Il Paradiso* than any other work in Palazzo Ducale regarding its meaning, composition, and imagery. The composition is a tightly compressed mass of Blessed figures, seemingly struggling with each other to take up space within the painting. At the time of the painting, Jacopo Tintoretto was advanced in age and would have had difficulty carrying out the work independently. His son Domenico and assistants from his workshop completed the painting, but Jacopo composed and oversaw the work,

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[32] Hurlburt, "Body of Empire," 62.

[33] Wolters, *The Doges Palace in Venice*, 159.

ensuring his plans were followed as he had intended. Carlo Ridolfi (2019) wrote about Tintoretto's contribution to the work, stating:

> Tintoretto observed the order of the litanies in the placement of the Saints, since the viewer sees the Virgin Mary in the center, praying to her son for the Venetian Republic, and the angels, archangels, and blessed spirits around the throne of God. He then placed the Apostles, Evangelists, Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins, fill the spaces on the side of the encircling clouds with men and women saints of the Old and New Laws, and in the middle, he placed numbers of the Blessed, angels dressed gracefully, and nude infants yielded in radiance.[34]

Given this description, it is easy to recognize how the work could be visually puzzling and how correctly identifying the figures would have been difficult. Paolo Delorenzi (2014) describes the work as "celestial circles that contain a host of saints, blessed, and angels, drawing towards the apex of the empyrean, where divine light enfolds the Virgin and Christ: Venice- the illusion is obvious- is considered to be invested with a heavenly mission and, with the power of images, Venice is presented as heaven on earth."[35] This statement summarizes with great eloquence how the Venetian Republic viewed itself and how it wanted to be viewed by other empires. Given the unique relationship between Venice and the Virgin Mary since the foundation of the Republic of Venice, one can assume that the Virgin Mary intercedes on the behalf of Venice in a special way. By examining the iconography of *Il Paradiso*, the viewer can infer that Christ sends his directives for the Venetian Republic and its government through the Virgin Mary. Both Veronese's *Apotheosis of Venice* and Tintoretto's *Il Paradiso* demonstrate how personifications were used effectively to illustrate the sacredness of the Venetian Republic.

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[34] Carlo Ridolfi, "Life of Tintoretto*," Lives of Tintoretto,* edited by Alexander Fyjis-Walker *(*London: Pallas Athene Publishers, 2019), 228-229.

[35] Delorenzi, *Venice: The Doge's Palace*, 100.

The literature discussed in this review supports the promulgation of the sacredness and sovereignty of the Venetian Republic through the use of personifications in the art of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Palazzo Ducale created after 1577. Further exploration of why specific personifications were chosen to illustrate the republic's political and religious ideologies will be discussed in the analysis section of this research with the subsequent purpose of filling gaps in current scholarship, which seems to be deficient of the exploration of the iconological meaning of the personifications.

Research Methodology

The research presented is qualitative and draws upon the methodologies of structuralism, new historicism, and iconographical and iconological analysis. These methodologies will be applied to the analysis of the paintings of the *Sala del Maggior Consiglio* **(fig. 1)** in *Palazzo Ducale* **(fig. 2)** created after a fire gutted the chamber in 1577. It is important to note that this research will focus on the use of allegorical, mythological, and religious personifications within the art. Additionally, the research will draw upon related disciplines such as sociocultural anthropology, historical studies, religion, and politics to provide a more contextualized understanding of the artwork.

Using the methodological approach of structuralism, the political, religious, and cultural structures of the Republic of Venice from 497 AD to 1592 AD (the years from its foundation through the creation of the paintings in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio) will be examined to understand how they (the structures) shaped Venetian identity and how this was represented through the inclusion of personifications in the paintings of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. Venice was a city born on the water and served as a refuge for mainland residents fleeing the invading Hun and Germanic forces during the second through the fifth century. D'Amico asserts that "the lagoon played a critical role in developing the societal, cultural, and political ethos of the city."[36] In the analysis, special attention will be given to the origins of Venice and how the circumstances surrounding its foundation played a critical role in the creation of the political and religious structures of the Venetian Republic. Subsequently, these structures led to the political

[36] D'Amico, "Approaches and Perspectives," 210.

and cultural ideologies of the Republic of Venice, and we will examine how these ideologies were illustrated as personifications in the artwork of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio.

Scholar David Rosand asserts that "Venice claimed to be the first republic of the new era, born in Christian liberty, hence a true historical successor to pagan Rome." He continues to state that "God's intervention in the affairs of man was manifest in the spectacular city (Venice) the He (God) caused to rise from the waters."[37] This belief in Venetian divinity was reinforced with the acquisition of the relics of Saint Mark around the year 829 and boosted the "institution" of Venice to a more significant standing on an international level. When we look at these factors in the context of the meaning and contextualization of the personifications within the paintings of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio*,* we begin to see the foundational structures of the Venetian Republic and its belief in being divinely granted the right to rule depicted through symbolic and existent figures.

By the end of the twelfth century, the Republic of Venice was the main center of trade between Europe and the rest of the world and rose to even greater maritime power and wealth, having transported the Papal troops of Pope Innocent III during the Fourth Crusades and earning priceless relics and spoils of war. These structures established political patterns and cultural identity that led to the construction of the Venetian ethos illustrated in the chamber's paintings. In his book on the art of the Palazzo Ducale, Wolfgang Wolters discusses the Venetian government's aims for the artwork of Palazzo Ducale. He states that "it was the professed aim of the Republic to enhance its reputation through the painting and sculpture of the Doge's Palace as well as the officially authorized historiography."[38] He continues to state that while the council

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[37] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 6.

[38] Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice,* 137.

was in session in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, which during the Renaissance numbered over two thousand members, "the members could study the pictures, thus receiving memorable lessons on the high points of Venetian history and the ideals espoused by the Republic and the establishment."[39] With Wolter's statements, not only does the application of the methodological approach of structuralism in the investigation of the meaning of the paintings of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio seem valid, but the approach of new historicism also appears to be a suitable means of exploration given the intended purpose of the artwork.

New historicism gained influence in the 1990s with the writings of literary historian Stephen Greenblatt. New historicism can best be understood when contextually placed aside "old" or traditional historicism. Traditional historicism in art history seeks to explain works of art by looking at the history and historical events that influenced their creation and are illustrated through the work's images and subject matter. These histories can be cultural, societal, political, or religious. When investigating the meaning of a work, new historicists ask how events (cultural, political, or societal) have been interpreted and what do these interpretations tell us about the time and society in which it was created, and this may include the artist who created it. New historicism challenges the accuracy of these historical influences (and events) and argues that "history" is not always accurate and views much of history as a narrative rather than factual. New historicists also believe that it is impossible to look at history objectively.

When applying new historicism as a method of analysis for the works of art within the Sala del Maggior Consiglio and the personifications used, a critical component is to examine what is known as the "Myth of Venice." According to Franco Gaeta:

> The tradition of the Myth of Venice dates back to the fourteenth century, celebrating the providential destiny, constitutional excellence, and political wisdom of the city-state.

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[39] Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice*, 137.

> Some historians identify a parallel tradition, a countermyth that highlights the imperialism, corruption, and treachery of the Republic. Whether they admired the Republic or not, all agreed that its extraordinary duration and stability made it appear virtually immortal.[40]

Examining the specific language used in this statement, the words themselves present a viable argument for the relevancy of applying the methodological approach of new historicism to the critical analysis of the chamber's art as it was used as an instrument of the promulgation of the Venetian Republic's political and cultural ideology.

When creating the programs for the Sala del Maggior Consiglio paintings, the artists were instructed to incorporate images and personifications representing the Venetian Republic and their ideals of the sacredness and sovereignty of their state. By using iconographical and iconological approaches to the analysis of the artwork, the personifications within the artwork can be identified (using iconography), and their intended and intrinsic meaning can be contextualized and understood (using iconology). It was not until the nineteenth century that art historians began to routinely employ iconography as a method of deciphering the symbols common in Christian art (and later non-Christian art). In the early part of the twentieth century, followers of the German art historian and cultural theorist Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl elaborated and instituted the use of iconography to identify motifs within works of art as a method to understand their meaning.[41] In the 1950s, Panofsky would take iconography a step further and develop the iconological approach to the analysis of art by looking beyond the identification of the symbolic meaning of image(s) and examining the historical, cultural, and

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[40] Franco Gaeta, "Alcune Considerazioni sul Mito di Venezia," *Bibliothèque D'Humanisme Et Renaissance* 23, no. 1 (1961): 58.

[41] W. Eugene Kleinbauer and Thomas P. Slavens, *Research Guide to the History of Western Art* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1982), 66. https://archive.org/details/researchguidetoh00klei_0/page/n12/mode/1up?q=warburg&view=theater

social background of the place and time the work was created and interpret the meaning of the work or image based upon these factors.

Erwin Panofsky, in *Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art*, defines the three strata of iconography and iconology as pre-iconographical, iconography, and iconology. Summarizing Panofsky, D'Alleva states that:

> At the first level, pre-iconographic analysis, the viewer works with what can be recognized visually without reference to outside sources, a very basic kind of formal analysis. At the second level, iconographic analysis, the viewer identifies the image as a known story or recognizable character. At the third level, iconological analysis, the viewer deciphers the meaning of the image, taking into account the time and place the image was made, the prevailing cultural style or style of the artist, or the wishes of the patron.[42]

In his own words, Panofsky describes iconology as the "intrinsic meaning of content" of a work of art and states that "it [the meaning] is apprehended by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveals the basic attitude of a nation, class, period, religious, or philosophical persuasion-qualified by one personality and condensed into one work."[43] It is important to note that there is ongoing scholarly debate surrounding the differences between iconographical and iconological analyses. However, they will be applied as two distinct methodological approaches for this research. Iconography will be used to identify personifications as images whose apparent meanings are understood, and iconology will be used as a "method of interpretation which arises from synthesis rather than analysis"[44] to examine how the history and culture of the Venetian

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[42] Anne D'Alleva, *Methods and Theories of Art History* (New Jersey: Lawrence King Publishing, 2013), 20.

[43] Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), 30, https://archive.org/details/meaninginvisuala00pano/page/n4/mode/2up.

[44] Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts,* 32.

Republic at the time in which the artwork influenced the intended meaning of the personifications illustrated in the paintings of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio created after 1577.

ANALYSIS

Qualifying Information and Historical Background

Measuring 53 meters long and 25 meters wide, the *Sala del Maggior Consiglio* (Chamber of the Great Council) **(fig. 1)** in Palazzo Ducale (Doge's Palace) **(fig. 2)** was one of the largest rooms in Europe during the Renaissance period. Capable of seating over 2,000 people at once, the room was the epicenter of the political life of the Venetian Republic. The noblemen from aristocratic families who made up the Great Council and carried out their duties in the large hall considered themselves to be the guardians of the laws that enabled Venice to remain a sovereign state and a maritime republic, independent from the rule of any other empire or even the Pope. The exultant artistic program consisted of thirty-five historiographical scenes mounted by a chronological series of ducal portraits, twenty-one narrative scenes decorated the ceiling, bordered by smaller illustrations of Venetian achievements spanning almost seven hundred years. Each work was created to boast of the accomplishments, vivacity, and moral authority of the Venetian Republic.

It is the objective of this research to gain an understanding of how the personifications included in the artwork of the Sala Del Maggior Consiglio created after 1577 (the year that fire almost destroyed the room and a new artistic program was required) were used by the Venetian Republic to promulgate the belief in the sacredness and sovereignty of its empire. The approach employed to achieve this aim is first to examine the history of Venice and how specific events were critical to the creation of the Venetian ethos. Next, the polysemic narratives of Venice, of which some are considered factual, and some are considered manipulations of the history of Venice constructed to serve the self-aggrandizing image of the Venetian Empire, are analyzed to gain a contextual understanding of the personifications. Finally, an in-depth analysis of the four

paintings in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio that best express the religious and political (or the sacredness and sovereignty) ideologies of the Venetian Empire through personifications will be conducted. The four paintings included in the analysis are Palma il Giovane's *Venice Crowned by Victory Welcomes the Subject Provinces* (1582-1584) **(fig.14)**, Jacopo Tintoretto's *Voluntary Submission of Cities and Regions* (1584) **(fig. 11)**, Paolo Veronese's *Apotheosis of Venice* (1582) **(fig. 13)**, and Tintoretto's *Il Paradiso* (1592) **(fig. 12)**. The analysis is structured so the historical events and polysemic narratives discussed first will aid in understanding the intended meaning of the personifications within the artwork examined.

Before beginning an in-depth analysis of the inclusion of specific personifications in the art of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Palazzo Ducale, it is essential to clarify the meaning of the word "personification." According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, personification is the attribution of personal qualities, primarily representing an idea or abstraction through the human form. The definition also extends to a divine or imaginary being representing ideas or abstractions. The Venetians were not the first culture to include personifications in their art to convey the meaning of abstract concepts. Evidence of personifications being employed to communicate environmental phenomena, individual qualities, immaterial ideas, and even emotions has been around since the inception of art. In the ancient world, the Greek gods and goddesses symbolized abstract concepts such as war (Ares), wisdom (Athena), time (Kronos), and victory (Nike). Almost every culture has utilized personification to visually express meaning, as is evident in sculptures and paintings throughout history.

An important question to ask when examining the personifications included in the art of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Palazzo Ducale is what message was the Venetian Republic attempting to communicate at the time in which the work was created? The political climate of

the Venetian Republic during the latter part of the sixteenth century must be considered to answer this question. It has often been said that every great empire will fall, and the Venetian Empire was no exception. The Venetian Republic would not see the culmination of her decline until May 12th of 1797, when Doge Ludovico Manin surrendered to Napoleon after his French troops had occupied most of the Venetian state. On that fateful day in May of 1797, the Major Council of the Venetian government declared the official end of the Venetian Republic, and the Most Serene Republic of Venice was no more.

However, the decline of the Republic of Venice did not happen quickly. Scholars have asserted that Venice's long decline began in the fifteenth century when Sultan Mehmed II declared war upon the Venetian state after Venice had played a substantial role in the battle to prevent the fall of Constantinople in May of 1453 to the Ottomans. The following Ottoman-Venetian wars, dating from 1463 to 1479, would cost Venice much of its eastern Mediterranean custodies, including holdings in Greece, Albania, and the island of Euboea. The Venetians would no longer hold supremacy of the Aegean Sea. The Ottoman navy was now capable of challenging the Venetian fleets and had even confiscated four Venetian carracks (a three- to four-masted ocean sailing ship) from Candia in Crete in 1462 to reinforce the Ottoman's armada.[45] This act by the Turks ultimately led to Venice's decision to officially go to war. Although the Venetians would continue to hold onto some territories in the Aegean Sea and recoup most of their losses from the wars, it came at a financial and political cost.

In August 1537, Venice would lose trading posts in the Grecian islands, including Nauplia, Malvasia, Skiros, Aegina, and Astipalia, greatly attributing to its economic decline.

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[45] Stefan Stantchev, "Devedo: The Venetian Response to Sultan Mehmed II in the Venetian-Ottoman Conflict of 1462–79," *Mediterranean Studies* 19 (2010): 50.

Also, in 1537, the Ottoman Empire allied with the French, a Venetian ally. However, the Venetian Republic rejected joining the alliance, and the Ottomans punished Venetian merchants with severe import and export tariffs. The Ottoman Empire again declared war on the Venetian Empire by threatening to take over the Greek island of Corfu, which had been under Venetian control since Medieval times. For centuries, Corfu had acted as a barricade between the European states and the Ottoman Empire. Corfu was critical in defense of the Adriatic against Ottoman incursions. The Venetians would again prevail, but the conflict only added to its waning economic status.

Throughout the sixteenth century, the Venetian government teetered on the verge of bankruptcy due to years of warfare, crusades, defending its trading rights, and the rise of other European trading powers. Richard Mackenney states that:

> By the end of the sixteenth century, the city was declining relative to other Italian states. The disruption of Eastern markets by the Ottoman advance, the upheavals of the Italian wars which had brought France and Spain to the peninsula, and though their impact was by no means sudden, the rise of the economies looked to the Atlantic rather than to Mediterranean routes; all threatened Venetian prosperity. The problem for the Venetians was that for most of the sixteenth century, it was impossible to distinguish between periods of declared wars from periods of peaceful commerce. These events were a severe drain on Venetian resources.[46]

Additionally, the Venetian Republic was not only suffering economically during the time in which the art of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio was created, but they were also seeing their political and military reputation decline on the world stage. However, it is critical to note that the Venetian Republic was able to reclaim and maintain its hegemonic power for many more years.

One of the most significant defeats the Venetian Republic would suffer in the sixteenth century would occur in 1571 with the loss of the island of Cyprus to the Ottomans. This defeat

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[46]Richard Mackenney. "In Place of Strife: The Guilds and the Law in Renaissance Venice," *History Today* 34 (1984): 20.

deepened Venetian fears about "future threats, losses, and its place in evolving geopolitics."[47] Venice had considered Cyprus as one of the brightest jewels of its empire, and losing it influenced the nostalgic and triumphal program developed for the new paintings of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio after the fire of 1577. The new paintings were not only intended to act as a tribute to past military victories but also to the sacredness and sovereignty of its empire. The Venetian government sought to have the spectators of the artwork of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio see the Venetian Republic as a formidable adversary backed by the power and grace of God, despite its economic, political, and military losses.

The historical events leading up to the renovation of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in 1577 greatly influenced the subject matter and the iconography included in the new paintings. It can also be stated that the self-aggrandizing image and narrative that the Venetian Empire fashioned for itself played an equally influential role in the imagery and iconography included in the art. The Venetian Republic considered itself as having been divinely christened with the waters from the marshy lagoon in the Adriatic Sea from which it was born. Venice believed itself to be the ideal political entity, for it was founded in the Christian faith and devoted to the protection of freedom and justice for its citizens. After electing its first doge in 697, a little more than two hundred years after the fall of the Roman Empire, Venice became a republic, and "more than a new Rome or a new Constantinople, Venice was a new Jerusalem, a city beloved by God, who caused her to rise from the humble mud, resplendent, above the waters, a beacon of Christian liberty."[48] The belief in Venetian sacredness and sovereignty would serve as the foundation for the inclusion of specific personifications in the art of the Sala del Maggior

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[47] Hurlburt, "Body of Empire," 61.

[48] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 13.

Consiglio to visually communicate the hegemonic and holy power of the Venetian Republic, which saw itself as immortal, despite any economic, political, or military losses it suffered.

The use of art by the Venetian Republic as political propaganda can be considered what has been termed by many scholars as "statecraft." Statecraft can be understood as the manipulation of political thought by a government. While the Venetian Republic was not the first empire to use art as statecraft, the undeniable talent of the artists such as Jacopo Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, and Palma il Giovane, who were commissioned to create the paintings of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, undoubtedly enabled Venice to become one of the most effective governments to use art to convey its ideologies. The Venetian government used all of the art of Palazzo Ducale to convey their political and religious ideologies and whoever viewed it, whether they could read or not, was able to understand the message that the Venetian Republic was seeking to propagate through the art that adorned the palace walls. David Rosand states that "More than any other political entity of the early modern period, the Republic of Venice shaped the visual imagination of political thought; just as she had instructed Europe- and ultimately, the independent colonies of America- in the idea that statehood, so she taught to give that idea eloquent pictorial form, especially through the figuration of the state."[49] It was within the walls of Palazzo Ducale that the art of statecraft would be on full display, and the Venetian Republic had a message it was urgently seeking to convey towards the end of the sixteenth century.

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[49] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 1.

Iconographical, Iconological, and Narrative History

The Republic of Venice not only used art as political propaganda but also to reflect the traditional values of Venetian citizens. These traditional values were embedded into Venetian society due to a strong foundation in the Christian faith. The Venetian government not only represented these moral values through Christian images such as the Virgin Mary, Christ, and the winged lion of Saint Mark but also through the appropriation of Greek and Roman gods, goddesses, and deities. Venetian artists of the Renaissance period employed these mythological gods, goddesses, and deities as personifications of moral and religious principles. Tom Nichols states that the civic art of the Venetian Republic dating from the sixteenth century onward followed "many of the visual conventions and meanings established for the official art of the state (Venice) in earlier periods were continued, however, the inclusion of classicizing *renovatio urbis* was a new innovation."[50] With this statement, Nichols emphasizes that it had been commonplace to employ Christian images to symbolize the virtuousness of the Venetian Republic and its citizens. However, the appropriation of the gods of the classical period as emblems of morality came about in the 1500s. The employment of mythological gods, goddesses, and deities being used for Venetian self-imaging is also supported by Venetian scholar David Rosand, who points to the implementation of the Roman goddess Venus becoming part of the unified personifications of the *Venetia Figurata* in addition to the Virgin Mary and Justitia (Lady Justice). This additional representation is easily understood in that Venus, like Venice, had been born of the sea. He asserts that:

> Venice had figured herself first as Justice and as Virgin, and to those aspects was now added a venereal dimension. The identification with the goddess of love (Venus) was part of a larger programmatic appropriation of the Olympian deities that marks Venetian self-

[50] Tom Nichols, *Renaissance Art in Venice: From Tradition to Individualism* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd., 2016), 148.

> imaging in the Cinquecento, a part of the increasingly deliberate application of classical visual language to the glorification of the Republic.[51]

Not only did the Venetian Republic identify with Venus because of her miraculous birth from the sea, but saw itself exemplifying her ascribed characteristics of prosperity, victory, beauty, and love. By adopting the Roman Venus to represent its city-state, the Venetian Republic was sending a message to Rome that Venice had replaced it as the Western epicenter of power and wealth.

An examination of other personifications used in the art and architecture of the Palazzo Ducale will allow for a more thorough understanding of the personifications used in the four paintings to be analyzed and their intended meaning as symbols of the Venetian state. As stated previously, the Venetia Figurata (the figure of Venice) was an amalgamation of the Virgin Mary, Venetia, Venus, and Justice. The Venetia Figurata symbolized the virtuosity of the Venetian Republic and her citizens, but Justice would also singularly represent the state in other artwork of the Palazzo Ducale as the government of Venice saw justice as its highest civic and non-religious virtue. Patricia Fortini Brown states that "Justitia (the personification of justice) made her first explicit appearance as an emblem of the state in a sculpted roundel on the Piazzetta façade of the Doge's Palace above the seventh column from the southwest column in the middle of the fourteenth century."[52] In this position overlooking the city's main square, she served as a reminder to Venetian citizens that their government was fair and just, and with her watching over them, they could be secure knowing that she was protecting their city-state.

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[51] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 119.

[52] Patricia Fortini Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Italy* (New Jersey: Lawrence King Publishing, 1997), 82.

Two of the earliest examples of the appropriation of the classical gods as personifications of the Venetian state are two massive statues **(fig. 15)** created by the Italian sculptor Jacopo Sansovino (1554-1567) that stand as eternal guards at the entrance of Palazzo Ducale on the interior courtyard stairway. On one side stands Mars, the Roman god of war, and Neptune, the Roman god of the sea. Tom Nichols explains that:

> Their exaggerated muscularity recalled the enormous colossi sculptures of the Ancient Roman Empire, indicating that Venice was its (Rome's) natural heir. The sculptures were conceived by Sansovino as exemplars of heroic physical strength and placed them on either side of a traditional winged lion of St. Mark. Neptune references Venice's *Stato di Mar* (the name given to Venice's domains of the seas), and Mars its *Stato di Tera* (Venice's mainland domains). The sculptures display a more thought-through adaption of mythological pagan imagery to the demands of official context.[53]

The adoption of the mythological imagery of the classical gods, goddesses, and deities as personifications of the Venetian state would be carried on throughout the interior of the Palazzo Ducale, including the renovated Sala del Maggior Consiglio after the fire of 1577.

In addition to the appropriation of classical gods as personifications of the Venetian Empire used in civic artwork, polysemic narratives, both created and factual, proclaiming the sacredness and sovereignty of Venice, found their way into the iconography (including personifications) of the artistic programs of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. In the thirteenth century, in order for the Venetians to sanction their new position of power, they began to fabricate a pseudo-history of their city.[54] These narratives (or myths) functioned as propaganda for the Venetian Republic by creating a self-aggrandizing history that served as a political and moral model for others to follow. Ellen Rosand states, "Although there are several aspects to the

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[53] Nichols, *Renaissance Art in Venice*, 148.

[54] Muir, "Images of Power," 21.

myth of Venice, they all focus on the perfection of the Venetian Republic, its uniqueness and virtues. Its official epithet of La Serenissima epitomized the image of this splendid city, founded miraculously upon the waters, unwalled yet unconquered for more than a thousand years, and remarkably undisturbed by internal strife."[55] These narratives were not constructed at any one point in Venetian history but were created over a millennium when needed for political purposes and to construct historical justifications for Venetian control of the Adriatic Sea. This point is strongly argued by Filippo de Vivo, who emphasizes:

> Like many other regimes, Venice thrived on certain assumptions about its past. The (Venetian) patricians turned to their ancestors in the quest for uplifting models; they looked at past glories to remind themselves and the world of the status they deserved. In the process of recounting their stories, they put together a full-fledged myth, the two aspects of which consisted in antiquity and freedom.[56]

De Vivo also states that "Regardless of its truth, the myth of Venice both underpinned and regulated a specific political system, and it motivated works of art and political theory."[57] It can be argued that the creation of such myths as they relate to Venetian society not only served to promulgate the political ideologies of the state but also the religious ideologies of its government and citizens. Religion and politics in Venice went hand-in-hand. Its Christian foundation made Venice distinct from the Roman Empire, whose religious foundation was based on a pagan polytheistic theology. To the Venetians, there was no Venice without Christianity and its guiding principles in both politics and morality.

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[55] Ellen Rosand, "Music in the Myth of Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1977): 511.

[56] Filippo de Vivo, "Historical Justifications of Venetian Power in the Adriatic," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64, no. 2 (2003): 159.

[57] De Vivo, "Historical Justifications of Venetian Power," 159.

The earliest of these guiding and justifying narratives is the Venetian creation myth. As discussed in the literature review, David Rosand asserts that Venice claimed to be the first Republic born after the era of the fall of the Roman Empire, birthed in Christian libertà, and the true successor to pagan Rome.[58] This belief, along with its miraculous (as they saw it) lagoon birth, shaped how Venice viewed itself from the beginning. The personifications that represent these narratives would be illustrated innumerable times in the civic and religious art and architecture of the Venetian Empire, including the art of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Palazzo Ducale, which is the focus of this research.

It is critical to clarify the narrative of the Venetian creation myth to understand the personifications that represent it. Perhaps the opening lines of the book *Venice Triumphant* best describe the underlying influences of the ethos of Venice by stating-"Venice was born in the water, Venice was born of the water, and today as yesterday, Venice triumphs over the water."[59] These lines clarify that the sea is at the center of the Venetian creation myth. It was the sea that made Venice unique, and it was because of the sea that Venice gained its hegemonic power. After all, the Venetians tamed the unhealthy marshlands of the northern gulf of the Adriatic and built their city in a harsh and unforgiving environment, and its earliest citizens were seeking refuge from Barbarians invading the mainland (although this is a debate among current scholars). It was not just any city but a city overflowing with beauty, art, freedom, integrity, and wealth. Assigning the date of its founding in 421 AD with the feast day of the Annunciation of the

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[58] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 22.

[59] Elisabeth Crouzet-Paven, *Venice Triumphant* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 1.

Virgin Mary on March 25th, Venice was espousing its divine conception, just as Christ had been divinely conceived. For the Venetians, its miraculous birth can only be attributed to being divinely conceived and formed by the hands of God, and as a result, the Venetians had the God-given right to rule its waters. Due to Venice's connection to the sea, to God, and the Virgin Mary, the illustrated personification of the city, would take on the characterizations of the Virgin Mary and later on as the goddess Venus (born from the sea). Venice would also be portrayed as the allegorical personification of Justitia (Lady Justice) as the Venetian government-held justice as its highest non-religious civic virtue.

Equally as significant as the narrative of the Venetian creation myth for the self-imagery of the Venetian Republic is the story of the acquisition of the body of Saint Mark. The symbol of Saint Mark, the winged lion, is arguably the most important icon of Venice as they chose to make it the symbol of the state. As discussed in the literature review, Venice became a Byzantine province in 476 AD and remained under Byzantine rule until the signing of the Pax Nicephori in 814 AD. Once Venice became free of the rule of any empire, it sought to establish itself as one of the principal cities in Europe. With the trading rights Venice had been granted along the coast of the Adriatic as part of the Pax Nicephori treaty, the city accumulated wealth, which in turn enabled Venice to build more ships to be employed in the expansion of its trading and maritime empire. With the establishment of Venice as the gatekeeper of the main European trade routes to the East, they were able to earn the recognition they were seeking. Their new status and independence inspired them to replace Saint Theodore with a new patron saint. Saint Theodore had been chosen for Venice by the Byzantine Empire when it had been under their control. Venice wanted to choose their own patron saint who would symbolically represent their

newfound prominence along with their faith-based religious and political ideologies, and not just any saint would do.

Having established trading ties with Alexandria in Egypt, the Venetians were familiar with the Christian relics that existed there, including the remains of Saint Mark. Saint Mark had been buried in Alexandria not only because he died there in 68 AD but because it is thought he founded the Christian Church of Alexandria, which was one of the most important pontifical sees of the early Christian period. Additionally, with Saint Mark being one of the writers of the four Gospels of the New Testament, he would bring with him the status that Venice was seeking to obtain. The Venetians believed their acquisition of the body of Saint Mark was justified because Alexandria had fallen to the Arabs during the Muslim conquest of Egypt and was no longer under Christian rule. Another justification for bringing the body of Saint Mark to Venice was based on Medieval hagiographic texts that speak of Saint Mark being sent to Aquileia (an ancient Roman city at the head of the Adriatic located about 75 miles east of Venice) by Saint Peter to preach the gospel.[60] A long-held narrative is that a major storm occurred during his journey to Aquileia by boat. He took refuge on a small lagoon island, which some believe would later become Venice. The chronicle claims that while taking shelter on the lagoon island, an angel materialized in front of Mark and said, "Pax tibi Marce, evanglista meus, hic requiescat corpus tuum," meaning "Peace to you Mark, my evangelist, rest your body here." The Venetians asserted that they were fulfilling a divine prophecy by bringing Saint Mark's body to Venice. Like so many narratives invented throughout time, this is impossible to confirm and is likely to have been invented to gain status.

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[60] Thomas E. A. Dale, "Inventing a Sacred Past: Pictorial Narratives of St. Mark the Evangelist in Aquileia and Venice, ca. 1000-1300," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48 (1994): 55.

In 829 AD, the body of Saint Mark was successfully smuggled out of Alexandria by Venetian merchants by hiding it in a basket covered with pork, which the Muslims would not touch by decree of their religion. By the relics of Saint Mark now being located in Venice, the Venetians very likely saw this as another representation of their city becoming the new Jerusalem. The obtainment of the body of Saint Mark and his replacement of Saint Theodore as the city's Patron Saint would, in addition, send a powerful political message to the Byzantine Empire that they were no longer under Byzantine rule. The narrative account of how Saint Mark's body came to the lagoon city plays a critical role in the creation of the self-constructed image of La Serenissima and the Venetian Republic's belief in the sacredness and sovereignty of its empire. This approach to self-promotion was visually evident in the art and architecture of Piazza San Marco with the arrangement of symbols of sovereignty to represent the idea that any territories conquered by the Venetians would now be under the rule of Saint Mark and that the administration of divine justice had become the temporal duty of an imperial Venetian state.[61] The multiple portrayals of Saint Mark and the winged lion in the art of Piazza San Marco served as visual reminders to Venetian citizens and foreign visitors of the Venetian Republic's divine and just authority. Saint Mark and his symbol, the winged lion, would become prominent personifications of the political and religious ideologies of the Venetian Empire and would be iconographically represented throughout the city, including in the art of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Palazzo Ducale.

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[61] Edward Muir, "Images of Power: Art and Pageantry in Renaissance Venice," *American Historical Review*, no. 84 (1974): 21.

Analysis of Paintings

The purpose of the artwork of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio created in the last quarter of the fifteenth century was intended to "identify themselves (Venetians) as God's chosen people, and their city as ultimately justified and victorious. This was stated in no uncertain terms, especially in the domain of official patronage of the Ducal Palace (and the Hall of the Great Council)."[62] As scholars have noted, the Venetian Republic was the least unsure of its future as an empire than it had been at any other time in its history. In response, the artwork created during this period would be void of any displays of the military and economic failures it had encountered. The government sought to create a glorious narrative of the sacredness and sovereignty of the Venetian Empire to illustrate that they were still deserving of the title *Serenissima Repubblica di Venezia* (The Most Serene Republic of Venice) and the political and economic power that it represented.

To conduct a comprehensive analysis of the use of specific personifications as representations of the political and religious ideologies of the Venetian Republic in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, we will examine three ceiling paintings and one wall painting located in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. This approach draws upon four analytical methodologies. Structuralism allows for an understanding of the underlying political, religious, and cultural structures that shaped the Venetian identity and how this was represented through personifications. New historicism allows for a perceptivity of how the personifications relate to the narrative history of the Venetian Empire. Using iconography, the specific personifications can be identified, and the methodology of iconology can aid in deciphering the intended meaning

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[62] Nichols, *Renaissance Art in Venice*, 184-185.

of the personifications. A comprehensive and contextual assessment of the paintings will be achieved by approaching the analysis using these four methodologies.

A year after the fire of 1577 in Palazzo Ducale, a program of the redecoration of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio was planned by government officials and Venetian historian Girolamo Bardi. As stated by Holly Hulburt,

> When completed, the schema would recount Venetian history in terms of its international stature, its victories, and particularly its conquests. The Sala del Maggior Consiglio was the center of republican authority, and it became a showplace for the historical paintings that would underscore the deeds of men: clothed, in armor, partially nude, frontal, and foreshortened, fighting, dying, deliberating. Their efforts had created and maintained the Venetian Empire. However, the female form was sometimes employed to denote the abstract values of victory and triumph."[63]

Wolfgang Wolters quantified that "The professed aim of the Republic was to enhance its reputation through the paintings and sculptures in Palazzo Ducale as well as the officially authorized historiography. To do this, allegories (including personifications), as well as history paintings and state portraits, were used."[64] Artists including Jacopo Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, and Palma il Giovane were commissioned to create the glorification of the Venetian Empire visually. These artists were not only considered to be masters of Venetian painting but masters of Italian Renaissance painting. The program would begin with the historiographical paintings that cover three of the interior walls and conclude with the triumphal portrayal of Venice on the ceiling and Venice immortal and blessed on the tribunal wall behind the seat of the doge.

While the historical murals are essential components of the victorious pictorial narrative history of the Venetian Empire created by the authors of the visual program of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, they will only be briefly touched upon in the analysis since they portray

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[63] Hurlburt, "Body of Empire," 61.

[64] Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice*, 137.

"historical" accounts of military and political victories, including battles and crusades, and do not include personifications. It is important to note that while they retell historical episodes, liberties were taken regarding the archival accuracy of the paintings, and the series of the Fourth Crusade (1202-1204) is particularly problematic. Thomas Madden states that "the lack of Venetian perspective on the Fourth Crusade does not simply constrain a complete understanding of the event itself but also deprives the historian of an element in the formation of Medieval Venice's civic and religious identity."[65] While Pope Innocent the III did pressure the Venetians to join the crusade to aid in the recapturing of Jerusalem after it had fallen to Muslim control, it seems the Venetians did not do so for the honor and benefit of the Pope or Christendom. Against the plans of the Pope, Doge Dandolo diverted Venetian ships to the city of Zara (with which the Venetian Republic had a long-standing feud), where they captured, pillaged, and destroyed the city before piloting their fleets to Christian Constantinople. In Constantinople, they aided Alexios V, the son of the recently disposed Byzantine emperor, in its capture and sack.[66] This deliberate act of defiance by the Venetians led the Pope to excommunicate the Venetian crusaders. During the diversions to Zara and Constantinople, the Venetian crusaders destroyed churches, slaughtered Byzantine priests, and pillaged numerous valuable artifacts. The artifacts seized by the Venetians included the four large bronze horses known as the *Triumphal Quadriga* **(fig. 16),** the porphyry carving of the *Four Tetrarchs* **(fig. 17)**, the ancient bronze doors and precious marble columns that now adorn the entrance to the Basilica di San Marco, the upper section of the *Pala d'Oro* **(fig. 18)**, and vast amounts of jewels, gold, and silver.

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[65] Thomas F. Madden, "The Venetian Version of the Fourth Crusade: Memory and the Conquest of Constantinople in Medieval Venice," *Speculum* Vol. 87, no. 2 (2012), 314.

[66] Madden, "The Venetian Version of the Fourth Crusade," 314.

The Venetians' actions during the Fourth Crusade do not appear to have been for moral and just purposes, thereby making the decision to include the crusade and its battles in a pictorial program intended to promulgate the glory of the Venetian Empire a perplexing one. Because the murals dedicated to the Fourth Crusade in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio were intended to illustrate glorious and triumphant outcomes of such events due to the admirable and pious reasons for the Venetian Republic's involvement in the crusade, the viewer does not get the factual retelling of Venetian history. We can only assume that similar purposeful acts of visual manipulation were done with other paintings of the Great Council Hall. However, historical episodes such as the Venetian Republic's involvement (on the side of the papacy) in the battles and diplomatic negotiations that led to the Peace of Venice Treaty in 1177 between the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, and Pope Alexander III were more deserving of their resplendent visual representations. The Venetian Republic had played critical political and military roles in all stages of the successful campaign against Emperor Barbarossa, and by doing so, Venice's political power and influence in Europe rose. It would be negligent not to point out that Venetian scholars have exposed some elements of historiographical manipulations in the murals depicting the events of the Peace of Venice Treaty.

Even if most of the historical wall paintings in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio produced after 1577 were subject to some form of pictorial narrative fabrications, they effectively served the purpose of the promulgation of the Venetian Empire as a commanding political and military entity. However, the ceiling paintings and Tintoretto's grandiose *Paradise* on the tribunal wall above the seat of the doge would display the strongest visual representations of a sacred and sovereign Venetian Empire. These paintings would employ personifications to illustrate these political, religious, and cultural concepts. By design, the ceiling paintings were arranged so the

three largest canvases (all featuring the Venetia Figurata) culminate in the colossal work *Il Paradiso* by Tintoretto over the tribune. Regarding the three ceiling paintings of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, David Rosand explicates that:

> The sequence moves from the militant triumph of Palma's Venice victorious, enthroned on earth, through the stately piety of Tintoretto's apparition of Venice descending from heaven to the doge and councilors before the church of San Marco, to the joyous celebrations of virtue in Veronese's enskied Olympian figure. At the base of each composition, the progress is from conquered provinces to voluntary allegiance to jubilant thanksgiving for the blessings of Venetian rule.[67]

The three paintings that Rosand is describing include Palma il Giovane's *Venice Crowned by Victory Welcomes the Subject Provinces* (1582-1584), Jacopo Tintoretto's *Voluntary Submission of Cities and Regions* (1584), and Paolo Veronese's *Apotheosis of Venice* (1582). It is these three paintings, along with Tintoretto's *Il Paradiso* (1592), that will be analyzed (using the methodological approaches mentioned previously) to show how the Venetian Republic represented the sacredness and sovereignty of its empire through the inclusion of personifications in the artwork of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio.

The analysis will be organized by first discussing the ceiling paintings and ending with the glorious climax of *Il Paradiso* on the eastern tribunal wall. To begin the analysis, Palma il Giovane's work *Venice Crowned by Victory Welcomes the Subject Provinces* (also known as the *Subjugation of Cities and Regions* and the *Triumph of Venice*) will be examined as it is located furthest from the tribunal wall (sometimes referred to as the ducal wall as it is where the doge would sit during council meetings). Wolfgang Wolters states that Giovane's painting "shows the outcomes of the battles (depicted on the walls) and the subjugation of the cities and regions by force of arms, choosing a visual formulae familiar since antiquity from representations of

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[67] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 41.

military triumphs."[68] The narrative elucidated in the painting is a conflation of the consequences of the clashes pictured in many of the wall murals of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. The cities and regions that came under the authority of the Venetian Empire were as close as Padova (25 miles from Venice) and as far away as Cyprus (1311 miles from Venice). The subjugated territories were mainly islands or regions near the coasts of the Adriatic, Aegean, Ionian, and Mediterranean Seas because Venice's military dominance was due primarily to its naval power. The cities and regions are represented by the diversity of the figures in the painting that surround the raised throne of Venice and the stairs. Suits of armor and other spoils of war lie at Venetia's feet, symbolizing that these are not voluntary subjects, but were forced to submit to Venetian rule. Several men who look beaten, bloodied, bound, and defiant appear to be of middle-eastern descent. These men may be Ottoman prisoners of war, as it was during the Ottoman-Venetian wars that some of the most brutal and hard-fought battles occurred. Despite the chaos occurring below her, the personification of Venice remains strong and stoic, believing that she has remained moral and just in her military involvements. The lion of Saint Mark gazes upon her from below with a look of approval. Iconographically, the lion represents Saint Mark in his feudal role as *dominus Venetiae,* the sovereign lord of Venice.[69] The iconological meaning of the winged lion appearing in the painting with a look of validation communicates to the viewer that not only Saint Mark but Christ, approves of the actions taken by the Venetian Republic, thus connecting the Venetian Republic's divine right to rule with its Christian foundations.

As Venice sits on her elevated throne surrounded by her trophies of war, the winged angel, Victory, is getting ready to place a laurel crown upon her head. Victory as a

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[68] Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice*, 158.

[69] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 47.

personification was first associated with Roman and Greek (referred to as the goddess Nike) mythology. According to ancient mythology, Victory would be sent to earth by the Olympian gods to place a crown on the head of a victor "both in battle and in peaceful competition: a *nicephorus in stricto sensu.* As Nike (Victory) is the embodiment of an abstract idea, it does not possess a legend of its own."[70] The Roman version of Victory would be later adopted as an early representation of an angel in Christian art of the Middle Ages. In the painting, Venetia is seated underneath a baldachin of red cloth decorated with cherubim or seraphim angels. The iconography of the baldachin as an indicator of the high social status of the figure seated beneath it can be traced back to Roman antiquity, where it first appeared on the imperial coinage of the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius (r. 138- 161 CE).[71] The baldachin is sometimes referred to as the "arch of heaven," thereby, we can infer that the inclusion of the angels on the cloth communicates God's guidance in Venice's military victories. The elevated throne (also a symbol of sovereignty) that Venice sits upon is reminiscent of the throne that the Virgin Mary is often pictured sitting on in Catholic Marian iconography. If we recall David Rosand's statement of the "Venetia Figurata as an amalgamation of the Virgin Mary, the personification of the cardinal virtue of Justice (Justitia), and the pagan figures of the goddess Roma and Venus,"[72] we can iconologically connect Venice to the Virgin Mary and understand how the painting promulgates the divine and righteous political nature of the Venetian Republic through the use of

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[70] María Isabel Rodríguez Lopez, "Victory, Triumph, and Fame as the Iconic Expressions of the Courtly Power," *Music in Art* 37, no. 1/2 (2012), 9.

[71] Nathan T. Elkins, "A Note on Late Roman Art: The Provincial Origins of Camp Gate and Baldachin Iconography on the Late Imperial Coinage," *American Journal of Numismatics* Vol. 25, (2013), 295.

[72] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 3.

personifications. For the viewer, *Venice Crowned by Victory Welcomes the Subject Provinces* serves as a visual reminder that even in military matters, the Venetian Republic was supported by God and the likely outcome was for her to be victorious due to Venice's moral superiority over the subjugated peoples.

The next work to be analyzed is the large rectangular ceiling painting *Voluntary Submission of Cities and Regions* attributed to Jacopo Tintoretto but was later discovered to be the work of the painters of his studio. However, the "multitudes of inventions and ideas in the design of the work" point to Tintoretto having been involved in its planning.[73] The main focus of the painting occurs in the top half of the work, with Venetia in the upper register encircled by the winged lion of Saint Mark and heavenly angels as she looks down upon the doge who stands underneath a ceremonial canopy on an elevated platform at the top of a set of tribunal stairs surrounded by his attendants and foreign officials. In the background is a limited view of the upper façade of the Basilica di San Marco, placing the event in Piazza San Marco. As directed by the program's authors, Venetia dressed in white (alluding to Venetia being the personification of the biblical virtues purity and honesty) is positioned upon a bank of clouds hovering above Doge Nicolo da Ponte (r. 1578-1585) and foreign ambassadors from the cities and regions that have voluntarily submitted to Venetian rule. By wearing white and being placed upon the clouds, Venetia appears to personify a divine entity rather than an earthly figure as she appears in Giovane's painting discussed previously. When examined together in an iconographical context, these portrayals of Venetia from the two works illustrate that she is both Godly and worldly, equally apportioned as the personifications of the sacred and the sovereign. The doge appears to

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[73] Norbert Huse and Wolfgang Wolters, *The Art of Venice: Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, 1460-1590* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 320.

be the only individual that can see Venetia as he alone looks directly at her, and the officials are looking towards the doge or at each other. This action is allegorical of how the doge looks to the heavens and to God for his directives on how to lead the Venetian Empire and its citizens. Some scholars have suggested that this could signal the apotheosis, or deification, of the doge. However, he is not kneeling, a gesture that symbolically signifies the apotheosis of a living person, to Venetia. The lack of this gesture indicates that an apotheosis of the doge is not occurring. Instead, he is standing erect while pointing with his right hand at his attendants as if he is conducting state affairs.[74]

As in *Venice Crowned by Victory Welcomes the Subject Provinces* by Palma il Giovane, the lion of Saint Mark appears at the lower right side of Venetia, giving her a look of both approval and veneration, again iconologically symbolizing the heavenly approval of the actions taken by the Republic of Venice that have led to the moment being depicted in the painting. The numerous keys appearing in the work are significant iconographical images that add context and meaning to the painting. At the top of the staircase, an ambassador willingly holds out the keys of his city towards the doge as an angel holds another set of keys. Regarding the imagery of the keys, Monique O'Connell states that "a female Venice, depicted as the Queen of Heaven, leans down from the clouds above; her outstretched hand and the presence of an angel holding a second set of keys to her left suggests that the symbols of submission are being offered to the doge as a representative of the Venetian state."[75] Further down the staircase, figures holding keys, scrolls, and seals anxiously await their turn to voluntarily turn over their governments to

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[74] Huse and Wolters, *The Art of Venice,* 320.

[75] Monique O'Connell, "Voluntary Submission and the Ideology of Venetian Empire," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 20, no. 1 (2017): 35.

the doge. The reclining military men seem relatively relaxed, indicating that they feel secure in knowing they are joining the powerful Venetian military ranks. To avoid any misunderstanding of the submissions to the Venetian Republic as voluntary, Venice published a guide for the artistic programs of the Palazzo Ducale, including the ceiling paintings of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in 1587 detailing the narrative meaning of Tintoretto's *Voluntary Submission of Cities and Regions.*[76]

While the personifications in Tintoretto's *Voluntary Submission of Cities and Regions* are limited, Paolo Veronese's *Apotheosis of Venice* would stand out from the other two ceiling paintings discussed not only because of its extreme splendor, permeation of rich colors, and Mannerist aesthetics, but because of the use of a multiplicity of personifications that signify the sacredness and sovereignty of the Venetian Empire. Of all of the paintings in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, the *Apotheosis of Venice* is the most effective at illustrating the "myth of Venice" and the glorification of the Venetian Republic. Unlike other faction-ridden and socially turbulent republics of the late Medieval and Renaissance periods in Italy, the Venetian Republic appeared secure and politically unified. Their constitutional arrangements remained generally unchanged for centuries, an unheard-of continuity of the rule of law. Whether based in reality or not, the Venetian Republic had a reputation for "unsullied liberty, unwavering religiosity, social harmony, and unfailingly peaceful intentions."[77] These principles were celebrated characteristics of the Venetian Republic, and it is these principles that are celebrated in Veronese's *Apotheosis of Venice*.

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[76] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 41.

[77] Muir, "Images of Power," 16.

The enthroned Venetia Figurata takes center stage in the *Apotheosis of Venice* wearing her most regal regalia, the robe of a doge. She ascends towards heaven while crowned by Victory with a golden laurel crown. A small portion of a globe of the world (a symbol of Venetian sovereignty) can be seen on her throne, and at both her sides are large ornate twisting helical columns. Venice appears as her most noble and exalted figuration- an earthly royal, an Olympian goddess, and a holy figure (the Virgin Mary). She oversees her citizens with the authority of a queen and the morality of a celestial deity. She sits upon her throne in a bank of suspended clouds, placing her both in the heavens and on the earth. From this position, she can communicate with God and her people.

Along with Saint Mark, the Venetia Figurata is the most important symbol, or in the case of the Venetia Figurata, the personification, of Venice. She personifies the political and religious values of justice, Christian fortitude, and liberty- the values that the Venetian Republic honored above all others. From her high position in the painting, she watches over the soldier, the citizen, and the soul. Richard Mackenney stresses that:

> Venice's 'private' interests were consistently identified with the public weal through the mediation of the sacred, and this may be demonstrated by pointing to a dense cross-reference not only in archival documentation, but within the fabric of the city, that is to say the public space, and then in the self-fashioning of the Republic's iconography. The resultant complex of interrelationships suggests plenty of tension and conflict as well as a certain harmony.[78]

This statement is visually expressed in Veronese's painting as the celebration is occurring in a public space, and we can see that while most of the participants are upbeat and joyful, others are less gleeful and have been relegated to the sides of the painting. They appear apprehensive, almost as if they were not invited to join in the festivities, but desperately want to participate.

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[78] Mackenney, "Public and Private," 109.

These figures could plausibly symbolize cities or regions that desired to come under Venetian authority but were denied or were jealous of the peace, liberty, and prosperity that Venice and her citizens were able to experience. Venetians were able to enjoy a serene life because the Venetian Republic lauded the virtues of Peace, Abundance, Liberty, Honour, and Security, which are personified as the figures that surround Venetia's throne. The Venetian Republic incorporated these virtues into its political, religious, and cultural ideologies. It is important to point out that Justice is not included in the personifications of the Virtues as the idea of justice was so valued by the Venetian Republic that its personification, Justitia, or Lady Justice, was incorporated into the Venetia Figurata.

From her lofty position, Venetia oversees the triumphant celebration occurring below, alluding to the religious aspects of the iconographical representations of Venetia as the Virgin Mary. The placement of Venetia in this position upon her throne is a reference to the Madonna enthroned and to the Virgin Mary as the Queen of Heaven. The Madonna enthroned symbolizes Mary as the Mother of the Church who oversees all humanity with her unfailing wisdom, just as Venetia oversees her citizens. Venetia's enthroned positioning in the clouds, as well as the angel with a trumpet, denotes the assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven. The incorporation of the Virgin Mary into the Venetia Figurata is also a direct iconological connection to the founding of Venice as the first empire to be Christian from birth. To Venice, their Christian foundation set them apart from all other empires founded in the pagan and pre-Christian eras.

Its Christian birth is also why Venice saw itself as the true successor to Jerusalem after the fall of Rome.[79] To convey this belief iconologically, the twisting helical columns in the painting were modeled directly after the columns of the baldacchino of the altar in Saint Peter's

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[79] Rosand, *Myths of Venice*, 3.

Basilica in Rome. The columns were believed to have been brought by Emperor Constantine to Rome and were once used in Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem; therefore, they symbolize that Venice saw itself as the "modern" capital city of Christianity. In support of the contextual meaning of the Solomonic columns appearing in the *Apotheosis of Venice,* Douglas Stewart (2007) states that in Veronese's *Apotheosis of Venice* "the column relates to Solomon as the ideal ruler, the exemplar of Justice, which was one of the main ingredients in that richly complex image of herself which Venice personified. The column(s) in the painting also relates to those notions of the divine origins of Venice."[80] Placed directly over the tribune, the highest-ranking government officials, including the doge, could ponder upon the *Apotheosis of Venice* while in session and contemplate the miraculous and divine history of their republic, undoubtedly influencing their political decisions. Veronese's *Apotheosis of Venice* is a Mannerist masterpiece that visually celebrates the religious and political ideologies of the Venetian Republic through the use of personifications and allegory. The Venetian government's belief in protecting the sacredness and the sovereignty of its empire allowed its citizens to live in relative social peace and harmony despite any setbacks it faced.

While the *Apotheosis of Venice* depicts both the religious and secular, the imagery in Jacopo Tintoretto's *Il Paradiso* (c.1592)*,* the last painting that will be analyzed, is composed of purely religious iconography, but because for the Venetian Republic there was no separation of church and state, the work has political connotations as well. Tintoretto's version of *Il Paradiso* was based on the painting that hung in the same place over the ducal tribune by the artist Guariento. Guariento's *Paradise (Coronation of the Virgin)* (c. 1365) sustained severe damage

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[80] J Douglas Stewart, "Rome, Venice, Mantua, London: Form and Meaning in the 'Solomonic' Column, from Veronese to George Vertue," *The British Art Journal* 8, no. 3 (2007), 17.

in the fire of 1577 but was not totally destroyed. There were some arguments among the authors of the artistic program of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio about preserving Guariento's painting, but it was ultimately decided that it would remain in place as is and covered up by the new version. In 1903, it was cut into pieces and moved to the *Sala dell' Armamento* (Armament Hall) in the palace. Wolfgang Wolters notes that the "iconographic program written for the Grand Council Chamber after the 1577 fire indicates what was expected: the wall (where Tintoretto's *Il Paradiso* is located) with its assembly of the Blessed in Paradise was to be decorated as before with the assembly of the Blessed in Paradise."[81] This clearly states that the new painting was supposed to look very much like the old painting. However, Tintoretto integrated his ideas on how the Assembly of the Blessed in Paradise should look.

The commission for the painting was not immediately awarded to Tintoretto. The council held a contest for numerous artists to submit their designs, and the commission was first awarded jointly to Veronese and Bassano. However, their "styles did not harmonize, and Veronese died soon afterward (from pneumonia) before either of them had begun the work, making it necessary to have a new election."[82] Tintoretto again had to campaign for the commission. Being towards the end of life, he told the council that he "had prayed to Our Lord to grant him *Paradise* in this life, trusting in his mercy to also obtain it in the next."[83] Tintoretto received the contract by referencing the theme of the painting in his petition for the commission, along with the claim by many of his friends in the government who insisted that no one else was more suitable for the

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[81] Wolters, *The Doge's Palace in Venice*, 160.

[82] Ridolfi, "Life of Tintoretto*," Lives of Tintoretto,* 222.

[83] Ridolfi, "Life of Tintoretto*," Lives of Tintoretto,* 222.

work. Tintoretto completed preliminary sketches and paintings to work out the final composition. Because the painting was extremely large at thirty feet high and seventy-four feet long, it was necessary to have all of the visual elements worked out before any actual painting took place. Given his advanced age, Tintoretto was not able to paint much of the mural himself since it required long hours of labor and constant climbing up and down scaffolding. Tintoretto would oversee the work while his son Domenico (and assistants from his workshop) carried out the painting of the mural.

Unlike Guariento's earlier version of *Paradise* (1365-67) **(fig. 19)** which depicted the *Coronation of the Virgin* with Mary being crowned by Christ while they sit upon thrones surrounded by an assembly of the Blessed, Tintoretto opted for a portrayal of the *Coronation of the Virgin* with the theme of the *Assumption* with Christ as *Judge*. Christ as Judge plays an important iconological role in connecting the Venetian Republic to the virtue of justice as Christ judges virtuously (like Venice saw itself in the deliverance of justice), and only those who are righteous in his eyes will be able to join him in heaven. Tintoretto's rendering still allowed for an assembly of the Blessed as before, but the Virgin Mary would be the focus, rather than both Mary and Jesus as in Guariento's version. Because Venetia Figurata, the personification of the Venetian Republic, included the Virgin Mary as one of her incorporated embodiments, the focus would iconographically be on the Venetian Republic as well. However, the importance of Christ and the role he portrays, as well as his placement, cannot be overlooked. In the painting, Christ's hand is upon a crystal globe surmounted by a cross. According to Staale Sinding-Larsen, this "symbol conveys the Christological image of *Salvator Mundi* (Savior of the World). The Salvator Mundi is an image usually intended to impart the reassuring message to mankind that he

is the Savior who has created and conquered the world."[84] The shining light from both Christ and Mary can be seen emanating directly to where the doge would sit during council meetings, signifying that the doge receives guidance on how to "save" the Venetian Republic directly from Christ.

The end result of Tintoretto's *Il Paradiso* is a litany of saints, angels, archangels, evangelists, martyrs, apostles, confessors, virgins, blessed spirits, and innocents, all filling the encircling clouds around the Virgin Mary in the center, praying to her Son, Jesus Christ, for the Venetian Republic.[85] Tintoretto had accomplished the visual transmission of "the order and the union that is thought to exist in Paradise."[86] In the context of the new pictorial program of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, the painting was the triumphant culmination of the events depicted in the other paintings in the room. The numerous figures in the composition personify Venetian citizens being guided by the Virgin Mary and Christ, and by iconographical and iconological association with its history and polysemic narratives, the Queen of the Adriatic, Venice herself. Tintoretto's *Il Paradiso* is perhaps the most effective painting in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio at promulgating the belief in the sacredness and sovereignty of its empire and how the Venetian Republic desired to be seen for all of eternity.

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[84] Staale Sinding-Larsen and Annette Kuhn, *Christ in the Council Hall: Studies in the Religious Iconography of the Venetian Republic*, L'Erma di Bretschneider (1974), 77.

[85] Ridolfi, "Life of Tintoretto*," Lives of Tintoretto,* 228-29.

[86] Ridolfi, "Life of Tintoretto*," Lives of Tintoretto,* 229.

Conclusion

Through the comprehensive analysis of the use of personifications in four works of art located in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Palazzo Ducale, it has been established that the political and religious ideologies of the Venetian Republic centered around upholding power through its foundation in Christianity, military and maritime strength, and its adherence to the ideas of justice, liberty, and freedom. Venetians were immensely proud, and deservedly so, that no one had given them their political rights; rather, they had created those rights for themselves after gaining their independence from the Byzantine Empire. Blessed by God to have been born on the coast of the Adriatic (as the 'myth of Venice' attests), they used their geographic position to their political and economic advantage. The Venetian Empire owed its hegemonic power and the ability to become one of the wealthiest empires in the world to God and to the sea, and it was the Venetia Figurata that, more than any other figure, would personify the sacredness and sovereignty of the Republic of Venice by combining religious, political, and mythological iconography.

While there is no argument that many liberties and manipulations were taken with the visual representations of the historical events taking place in the paintings of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio after the fire of 1577, the purpose for these works were contrived to be used for more than just the accurate retelling of Venetian history. They were predetermined to convey the political, religious, and cultural ideologies of the Venetian Empire at the time in which they (the paintings) were created. Additionally, the historiographical murals were designed to showcase the power and strength of the Venetian Republic through military might and God's support of Venice and her self-proclaimed righteous and moral causes. The ceiling paintings were intended to communicate the outcomes of the hard-fought battles and wars that had enabled

the Venetian citizens to live their lives knowing that Venice, with her fierce defense of justice, afforded them to live with a sense of security, freedom, and liberty. Tintoretto's *Il Paradiso* spanning the tribunal wall would be the magnificent climax of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio's pictorial program, symbolizing that following the teachings of Christ, which were included in the political and religious ideologies constructed by the Venetian Republic, one would inherit the kingdom of heaven, joining the Blessed Beings, the Virgin Mary, and Christ in an eternal paradise.

As critical as the Sala del Maggior Consiglio was to the political and civic functioning of the Venetian Republic was the communication of its political and religious ideologies through its artwork. There are other works of art in Palazzo Ducale, including sculptures, that serve this purpose in addition to what has been presented in this research. In his book on the iconography of the Venetian Republic and the Palazzo Ducale, Staale Sinding-Larsen states:

> An examination of the relevant iconography (of Palazzo Ducale) makes it perfectly clear that the pictures (and sculptures) are intended to convey a definite and unequivocal theological (and political) message which in each case is in perfect accord with the character, function, and other decorations of their respective rooms. The phenomenon, therefore, cannot be considered merely a byproduct of the planning process but as inherent in it.[87]

A comprehensive analysis of the paintings and sculptures located in other rooms of Palazzo Ducale would allow for an even more contextualized understanding of how the Venetian Republic used personifications included in civic art to communicate and shape political, cultural, and religious thought. It would also be a worthwhile endeavor to focus on the use of gendered personifications and what the intended meaning was through male and female representations.

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[87] Sinding-Larsen and Kuhn, *Christ in the Council Hall*, 3.

The ideas of the sacredness and sovereignty of the Venetian Empire seemingly covered every inch of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. All those who gazed upon the images within its walls, whether they be a Venetian citizen or a foreign visitor, would, through visual narratives and personifications, understand the immense pride that the Venetians felt for their city-state. They would also understand that the Venetian Republic would do what was needed to uphold its way of life, guided by their Christian faith and tenacity stemming from its miraculous birth in an uninhabitable brackish lagoon. The communication of this message was more important during the late sixteenth century (when the paintings were created) than at any other time in Venetian history. As previously discussed, the Venetian Empire's economic and political power was starting to wane because of the republic's involvement in numerous wars and crusades. The Venetian Republic used the art of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio and the personifications included in the artwork as political propaganda to convey that they were still a formidable force and its hegemonic power was still intact. Despite encountering some economic and political setbacks, the Venetian Republic was able to bounce back and stay an important player in geopolitics until it fell to Napoleon Bonaparte during the French Revolutionary Wars on May 12th, 1796, a day on which Venetia must have held her head in her hands and wept.

FIGURES

Figure 1. *Sala del Maggior Consiglio*, after 1577, Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy. https://library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822003338132.

Figure 2. 1309-1424. *Palazzo Ducale*, Venice, Italy, aerial view from southwest. https://library.artstor.org/asset/AHSC_ORPHANS_1071314194.

Figure 3. Jacopo Tintoretto, *Discovery of the Body of Saint Mark*, 1518-1594. 1562-66 Place: Pinacoteca di Brera. https://library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000640084.

Figure 4. *Façade Basilica di San Marco* (Basilica of Saint Mark), ca. 1063. Architecture. https://library.artstor.org/asset/ASJAMES_10313460324.

Figure 5. Possibly by Filippo Calendario, *Tondo of Venice as Justice*. 1350. Palazzo Ducale west facade towards Piazzetta, Venice, Italy. https://library.artstor.org/asset/QUILL_1039908013.

Figure 6. Andrea Vicentino, *Capture of Zara*, ca. 1580, Wall Mural in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy, Oil on Canvas.
https://www.wga.hu/html_m/v/vicentin/lepanto3.html

Figure 7. Jacopo Tintoretto, *Fall of Constantinople*, ca. 1580. Wall Mural in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy, Oil on Canvas. https://www.jacopotintoretto.org/The-Capture-Of-Constantinople-In-1204.html.

Figure 8. Domenico Tintoretto, *Sea-Battle off Punta Salvore,* ca. 1580, Wall Mural in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy, Oil on Canvas. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/25/Domenico_Tintoretto_-_Battle_of_Salvore_-_WGA19632.jp.

Figure 9. Palma il Giovane, *Storming the Walls of Constantinople*, after 1577, Wall Mural in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy, Oil on Canvas. https://www.meisterdrucke.us/fine-art-prints/Palma-Il-Giovane/223131/The-Taking-of-Constantinople-.html.

Figure 10. Paolo Veronese, *Entrance of the Doge Andrea Contarini after the Successful Defense of Chioggia Against the Genuese*, ca. 1580, Sala del Maggior Consiglio, Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy, Oil on Canvas.
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4a/The_Doge_Andrea_Contarini_Returning_Victorious_from_Chioggia.JPG

Figure 11. Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Voluntary Submission of Cities and Regions*, ca. 1582-1584, Ceiling of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy, Oil on Canvas. https://jstor.org/stable/community.14450379.

Figure 12. Jacopo Tintoretto, Domenico Tintoretto, and Assistants, *Il Paradiso*, ca. 1592, Sala del Maggior Consiglio, Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy, Oil on Canvas, 27 meters x 7 meters. http://www.scalarchives.com/web/dettaglio_immagine.asp?idImmagine=0016406&posizione=12&inCarrello=False&numImmagini=915&.

Figure 13. Paolo Veronese, *Apotheosis of Venice*, 1585, Ceiling Panel in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy, Oil on Canvas. https://library.artstor.org/asset/SCALA_ARCHIVES_1039779686.

Figure 14. Palma il Giovane, *Venice Crowned by Victory Welcomes the Subject Provinces*, c. 1584, Ceiling Panel in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy, Oil on Canvas. https://www.wga.hu/html_m/p/palma/giovane/1/4ducale2.html

Figure 15. Jacopo Sansovino, *Colossal statues of Mars and Neptune on the Scala dei Giganti*, ca. 1554-1567, Inner Courtyard of Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy.
https://library.artstor.org/asset/SS34144

Figure 16. *Triumphal Quadriga (The Four Horses of St. Mark's),* 2nd-4th Centuries CE, Façade of Basilica di San Marco, Originals from Constantinople in the Museum of Basilica di San Marco, Bronze. https://library.artstor.org/asset/SS773087

Figure 17. *The Four Tetrarchs*, originally from Constantinople, ca. 300-315 AD, Corner Façade of the Basilica di San Marco, Venice, Italy, Porphyry. https://jstor.org/stable/community.11929955.

Figure 18. *Pala d'Oro*, 11th Century AD, Altar of Basilica di San Marco, Venice, Italy, Gold, Enamel, Jewels. http://www.scalarchives.com/web/ricerca_risultati.asp.

Figure 19. Guariento, Original *Paradise (known as the Coronation of the Virgin)* Fresco (sustained damage in the fire of 1477 and later moved to the Sala dell' Armamento, c. 1365-67, Palazzo Ducale, Venice, Italy, Fresco. http://www.scalarchives.com/web/dettaglio_immagine.asp?idImmagine=CP00492&posizione=11&inCarrello=False&numImmagini=11&.

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