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Pietro Bembo's Bias: Patronage and History During the Italic Wars

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of History

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

the requirements for the degree

of Master of Arts in History

by

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May 2013

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ABSTRACT

Pietro Bembo's Bias: Patronage, History, and the Italic Wars

by

Zachary M. Lizée

During the Italic Wars, the Italian peninsula experienced foreign invasions and internal discord between rivaling duchies and city-states. Florence and Venice both faced internal and external discord due to the constant wars and political infighting. Venetian Pietro Bembo wrote historical accounts of this period during the Renaissance. His contemporaries, Marino Sanudo, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Francesco Guicciardini, also wrote historical accounts of this time.

My research spotlights Bembo's history of the Venetian Republic. This history was written in a supposedly objective fashion, yet, scholarship shows that historical writing from this time contained bias. I focused on Bembo because there is a lack of scholarship that looks at his historical writings. This bias can be linked with the socio-political ties these men had.

Examining his accounts of historical events and comparing them with the other three historians, Bembo's slanted accounts illustrate the effect and importance of having a strong patronage network.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GLOSSERY

Camerlengo. A fiscal official of the Venetian government that functioned as a tax collector and distributor of funds.

Condottieri. A mercenary captain paid by the various powers to fight in wars.

Doge. The elected leader of the Venetian Republic voted in by the Great Council.

Great Council. The body of patricians numbering around 180 families that made up the Venetian nobility.

HRE. The Holy Roman Empire/Emperor.

Popolini. The upper-middle-class of the Venetian and Florentine Republics not of the nobility.

Risorgimento. The unification of the Italian peninsula to create the country of Italy in the mid 1800s.

Savi Grande. A group of six that made important decisions for the Venetian senate who reported to the doge.

Stato da Mar. The Adriatic and Aegean Sea territories under Venetian rule.

Terra Firma. The subject territories of the Venetian Republic on the Italian peninsula.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1508, the major powers of Europe aligned together with the goal of reducing the expanding power of the Venetian Republic, a wealthy and influential state with a formidable empire that included many of the eastern Mediterranean Sea ports and a large swath of the Italian peninsula. In May, 1509, the Venetian army was routed at the Battle of Agnadello and all of the *terra firma* Venetian subject territories were swiftly conquered within three weeks. This League of Cambrai, initiated by Pope Julius II, was just one of the many alliances that arose out of the turbulent era between the 1490s to the 1530s often called the Italic Wars.¹ During this time, the Italian peninsula experienced a continual influx of foreign invasions and in-fighting between the rival powers in Italy, which created a unstable political and social atmosphere. This trend of political insecurity remained a disruptive force until the *Risorgimento* united Italy in the late 1800s.

The League of Cambrai was initiated by Pope Julius II after being rebuffed by the Venetians when he asked them to relinquish the areas of the Romagna taken after the demise of Cesare Borgia. In 1508, Julius II, known to have French sympathies, engaged in negotiations with Louis XII, Emperor Maximilian, and the Spanish, offering them territories to which they had either claim or had lost to the Venetians. Likewise, the various duchies and city-states like Florence and Milan also lobbied Pope Julius II to make war against the Venetian Republic.² As Robert Finlay noted in, “Myth of Venice during Italian Wars”, many Italian and European powers feared the rising Venetian republic, for kings and dukes came and went, but, the Venetian senate was perpetual.³ This alliance proved to be successful at first but quickly degenerated into

¹ M. E. Mallett and J. R. Hale. *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State: Venice 1400 to 1617*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 221-227.

² Mallett and Hale, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State*, 221-227.

deceit and trickery by all parties involved. This turbulent environment began the slow demise of the Venetian Republic's dominancy in Italian politics, eventually with their power being made all but impotent with the Peace of Bologna in 1530, where the King Francis I and Hapsburg's Charles V signed a peace treaty.⁴

Various men of the patrician rank recorded the events that occurred during the Italic Wars in personal diaries, correspondences, and official chronicles that historians of the Renaissance era have relied on as primary sources for their research. Venetian patricians Pietro Bembo and Marino Sanudo compiled contemporary histories of the Venetian Republic, which contained a patriotic bias towards their native country. Likewise, in the Republic of Florence, Francesco Guicciardini and Niccolo Machiavelli recorded the history of this tumultuous time-period in histories and private correspondences from a Florentine perspective.

These four men belonged to the patrician class. Thus they had access to information to which most people were not privy. Pietro Bembo's work stands out among these four men for a number of reasons. Bembo, while a member of the Venetian patria, found his success through two primary patrons, the Florentine Medici family and Venetian Doge Andrea Gritti. The other three men, Sanudo, Machiavelli, and Guicciardini, have been well researched. The majority of research regarding Bembo, besides the 2004 biography by Carol Kidman, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, focused on the literary contributions of Bembo, or his prolific romantic affairs. This mass of research on Bembo dates from the sixteenth-century to the twentieth-century and primarily focused on his literature.⁵ My research will delve into his

³ Robert Finlay, "The Immortal Republic: the myth of Venice during the Italian Wars" in *Venice Besieged: Politics and Diplomacy in the Italian Wars, 14-94, 1534*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2008), 932-944.

⁴ Elizabeth G. Gleason, "Confronting New Realities: Venice and the Peace of Bologna, 1530" in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, ed. John Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000), 168-184.

⁵ Kidwell, Carol. *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), ix-523.

historical accounts, a work that the Venetian Republic commissioned Bembo in 1529 to write about the history of the Republic of Venice.⁶ This will highlight the use of biased historical recording by Bembo and acknowledge that bias appeared within many historical accounts from this time period as a socio-political tool, a topic that needs further scholarship.

These accounts of historical events, the actors that shaped and influenced the policies and actions taken by the various powers involved in the Italic Wars, and their portrayal by Renaissance historians has been a focus of some Renaissance scholars during the twentieth-century. However, lacking is an assessment and contrast of Pietro Bembo's written works, compared against a fellow Venetian, Sanudo, and two Florentines, Machiavelli and Guicciardini, which could offer a window from Venetian and Florentine views into the complicated linkages of patronage and loyalty, the inner gears of the Renaissance world. Additionally, the pathways that each man took as they attempted to advance their political lives would shape what they wrote.

⁶ Bembo Pietro. *History of Venice*. Vol. 1, bks. I-IV trans. and ed. by Robert W. Ulery, Jr. of *History of Venice*, ed. by Robert W. Ulery, Jr. and James Hankins, trans. by Robert W. Ulery, Jr. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), ix.

CHAPTER 2

THE POWER OF PATRONAGE

Pietro Bembo, Marino Sanudo, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Francesco Guicciardini wrote about the values of liberty, equality, and the need for great men to wield power in a just and righteous fashion. Yet, all of these men consciously knew that the rulers they served, whether it was the Venetian or Florentine Republics or as clients of various popes and nobility, often had to tailor their historical accounts to evade criticism, even potential accusations of treason when compiling their public histories.⁷ My research, by looking through a lens of the nature of the patron-client relationships, from the person-to-person micro-historical level, to the macro political relationships that Florence and Venice had with their client cities and foreign rulers examines the historical accounts of Pietro Bembo. Comparing and contrasting how the other three men viewed and wrote about this pivotal period during the Renaissance era will show the intentional biased accounts in Bembo's historical writings.

This will show how biased rhetoric functioned as a tool that could curry favor, express personal support for patrons, or attack one's enemies. The supposedly objective *vera historia* these men felt they wrote were shaped by the internal socio-political climates within Venice and Florence and the disruptive Italic Wars. The primary goal of this research will be to show how Venetian patrician Pietro Bembo's *History of Venice*, a *vera historia*, contained many biased accounts that can be traced back to the patronage network he relied upon to further his ambitions of wealth, power, and fame. The majority of scholarship on Bembo only focused on

⁷ *Cita Excelentissima: Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, ed. Patricia Labalme and Laura Sanguineti-White, trans. by Linda L. Carroll (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 441-449; Robert Finlay, "Politics and History in the Diary of Marino Sanudo" in *Venice Besieged*, 585-598; Gilbert, Felix, "The Venetian Constitution in Florentine Political Thought" in *History; Choice and Commitment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 179-214; Gilbert, "Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine*: An Essay in Interpretation" in *History*, 135-153. Sanudo, Bembo, Guicciardini, and Machiavelli's historical writings were examined in various manners to explain the personal motivations, the socio-political environment during their lives, and how the Florentine and Venetian republics sponsored historical recording.

his humanist literary contributions. The secondary goal will be to illuminate how bias worked in the favor or detriment to the fortunes of these four contemporaries, not being an anomaly only found in Bembo's work.

My research uses a multifaceted approach. Broadening the scope by contrasting Venetian and Florentine views, I highlight the influence and bias in each man's accounts due to their particular socio-political alignments, focusing on Bembo's accounts of Venetian and Florentine history that was prejudiced due to his primary patrons, the Medici family and Doge Andrea Gritti.⁸ Only Bembo had deep connections to patrons from both republics.⁹ Also, highlighting the bias found in the other three historians' works will show how important the networks of patronage were in the Renaissance era. This work furthers and improves the research of Gilbert, Finlay, Muir, Kidwell, and other Renaissance historians. Felix Gilbert researched Florentine topics, such as Machiavelli and Guicciardini, their friendship, politics, and their contributions to historical writing.

In Gilbert's *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, he referred to previous scholarship on these two men that relied on biographical analysis. Gilbert chose a different approach by outlining the political and historical trends of sixteenth-century Florence and then placing both Machiavelli and Guicciardini within those parameters.¹⁰ Gilbert also commented on the subjective bias and fictionalized conversations in both Machiavelli's and Guicciardini's historical accounts, a tradition taken from Classical Latin and Greek writers.¹¹ My goal is to show the many subjectively biased accounts found in Bembo's work while using the other three men's historical accounts that also contained biased accounts as a comparative counterweight. This will

⁸ Bembo, *History of Venice*. Vol. 1-3, Bks. I-XII

⁹ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, ix-523.

¹⁰ Gilbert, Felix. *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965),

¹¹ Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 82-83, 161, 272-278.

illuminate the importance and effect the patronage system made on the recording of historical accounts during this era.

Gilbert addressed the methodology of historians from this era. He noted that humanist scholars who produced histories often relied on one source for their entire publication. Another type of historical recording, family annals or private diaries, often provided a humanist writer with his information. They would transform this raw data into a neo-classical imitation of Classical Era authors, such as Livy or Cicero.¹² His comparison of Sanudo and Bembo illustrated this difference. Sanudo kept a copious diary that spanned from 1494 till 1533 with the hopes of transforming his work in to a *vera historia*. After being passed over as the official Venetian historian twice, he reconciled himself knowing that his prolific works could provide the needed data for an acceptable and publishable history.¹³ Pietro Bembo did just that, as the official Venetian historian in 1529, he mined much of Sanudo's work to create his *History of Venice*.¹⁴ I hope to take examples of these two men's works and illuminate how the links of patronage promoted bias in each of their accounts of the same events, then compare the works of Machiavelli and Guicciardini to show a Florentine perspective.

Gilbert also published a number of contributions to Venetian Renaissance research that used information from Sanudo's diaries. Gilbert emphasized the unique value that Sanudo's personal diaries made to Venetian studies, for Sanudo's accounts read like a modern reporter's observations, offering a very personal and introspective insight into Venetian politics and society.¹⁵ Gilbert's enthusiasm inspired a number of Renaissance historians to translate parts of Sanudo's diary in to English with the 2008 *Cita Excelentissima*. The editors included

¹² Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 221-223.

¹³ Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, xxvii.

¹⁴ Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 225-226.

¹⁵ Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 225-226.

analysis of Sanudo's recordings, noting possible motivations, events, and patronage links that could explain how Sanudo's biases manifested in his diaries. This translation with editorial comments was critical to my research. Sanudo wrote in an obscure Venetian dialect that still has not been completely deciphered.¹⁶

Robert Finlay, a Venetian scholar, wrote a number of articles and books on Venetian Renaissance history, also relied heavily on Sanudo's writings, as seen in his, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*. Finlay and Gilbert both wrote about the usefulness of diaries in flushing out a more honest view of Venetian politics and society. The reason modern scholars use Sanudo, instead of Bembo, is the wealth of information, unmolested by the humanist style of selectively choosing what material to include in Renaissance historical writings.¹⁷

Finlay's *Venice Besieged* examined various aspects of social, political, and military history, with many of his sources coming from Venetian senate documents, diary's entries including Sanudo's, which delved deeper into the reasons, actions, and outcomes of the actors during the Italic Wars. I must confess that some of my citations of Sanudo came from his work, when the information was not available in *Cita Excelentissima*.¹⁸ Historians must use all material available, whether the data come from published histories, semi-public diaries, or private letters published centuries later to gain the widest perspective possible. That is my intention, to parallel, show divergence, and postulate why Bembo and the other three men would write about the same events, yet, when compared, evidence of personal bias demonstrates the power of one's personal connections and the obligations of loyalty that accompany patronage.

Eric Cochrane's 650 page *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance*

¹⁶ Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, xv-583.

¹⁷ Finlay, Robert. *Politics in Renaissance Venice* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980),5-13; Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, vx; Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 219.

¹⁸ Finlay, *Venice Besieged*, xxi-302.

made a thorough but unwieldy attempt at tracing the lineage, events, and the people who recorded history during the Italian Renaissance. This book contains a wealth of information on the majority of people whose works are now in print from this time-period. While it attempted to relate and juxtapose as many Renaissance historians as possible, it is not a user-friendly source. The grand scale of this book makes using it impractical; still, there are valuable insights to be found. My work pares down the ambition of this work, narrowing the focus to compare four men from two rival republics, Venice and Florence. Cochrane's work is vast, while I take a more micro-historical lens to highlight the effect of the patron-client networks and how the power of patronage and the political instability created biased historical recordings during the Italic Wars.¹⁹

Scholarship on Venetian and Florentine topics during the last fifteen years improved and expanded on research by earlier Renaissance scholars. David Chambers's, *Individuals and Institutions in Renaissance Italy*, written in 1996, contained two perceptive chapters on Marino Sanudo's early political life and his prolific diaries. This biographical analysis of Sanudo gave my research vital information to trace the patronage networks and political connections Sanudo had.²⁰ Carol Kidwell's biography, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, also provided some useful information, although a pro-Bembo slant is found throughout the book. He is portrayed as a truth-seeking intellectual who dutifully finds employment through the Papacy, yet, in his heart, he was a literary romantic in a unstable political world. The Bembo I found appeared to be a typical patrician, interested in power, position, and luxury, who maximized his patronage networks to his benefit, unconcerned with the effects of his actions, words, and deeds.

¹⁹ Cochrane, Eric. *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), ix-603.

²⁰ Chambers, D. S. *Individuals and Institutions in Renaissance Italy* (Brookfield, MA: Ashgate Variorum, 1998), IX-1-33, VIII-37-58.

James Atkinson and David Sices translated and edited personal correspondences to and from Machiavelli in *Machiavelli and his Friends*, which included translations, editing, and commentary on Machiavelli. This book offered personal and private insights into both Machiavelli and Guicciardini's friendship, politics during the Italic Wars, their mutual regard for each other as intellectuals and politicians, and a window into their personal thoughts that did not appear in their published histories. These private correspondences illustrated the need for bias when writing, *vera historia*, due to the political climate in Florence as power shifted between pro-Medician and anti-Medician factions. These letters gave my research a window into the inner thoughts of Machiavelli and Guicciardini, aiding my comprehension of the complex nature of Renaissance patricians and their burdens.²¹

Each man's affiliations with different patrons, civic loyalties, and personalities colored these accounts, which have contributed to the overall understanding of the mercurial political scene during the Renaissance era in Italy. The trends in Renaissance studies have started to focus on the complex networks of kinship, marriage, and political alliances and their effect on the small percentage of people who made up the nobility. Likewise, the larger networks of ruling states and their relationship with their client states, the political and social dynamics also became themes of interest in the scholarship on this time-period.²²

Comparing Bembo to the other three men's written accounts illustrates the mechanics of the patron-client network of rule over subject cities common during the Renaissance. Highlighting how social networks and civic loyalties shaped the way these four men wrote about the same event demonstrates the influence of the climate of Renaissance era politics on supposed

²¹ James B. Atkinson and David Sices eds. and trans. *Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence* (De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois Press, 1996), ix-587.

²² Nexon, Danial H. *The Struggle For Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1-19, 28-137.

objective historical writing. All four of these men had ambitions to attain prominent positions within either their city's governments or within the Catholic Church's Papal government. Each of these men's historical accounts of the Italic Wars were colored by their civic loyalties and their patronage networks. The Republic of Venice and the Republic of Florence both actively pursued imperialistic policies of expansion and subjugation of neighboring cities, effectively incorporating client cities and their populations under the banner of the Republics of Venice and Florence.

The Republics of Venice and Florence, as well as the Papacy, often installed a variety of men who functioned as the official representatives in the assorted client cities and their surrounding territories. To ensure that the local nobles, wealthy merchants, and peasant communes continued to adhere to the will of their patron states, these overseers used political tools, either negotiations with local power brokers or threats of military force that kept Venice, Florence, and the Papal States client territories nominally loyal.²³ All four of these men held various posts within the various republics, subject cities, or foreign courts. Using the accounts given in the written histories compiled by Bembo, Sanudo, Machiavelli, and Guicciardini, we see how these socio-political relationships were portrayed within the Republics of Venice and Florence and, likewise, how the events during the time period during the Italic Wars affected each of these republics' client city-states.²⁴

How Bembo and the other three men portrayed the internal events of their respective native republics and the corresponding accounts of external events during the Italic Wars offers a

²³ Edward Muir, "Was There Republicanism in the Renaissance Republics?" in *Venice Reconsidered*, eds. by John Martin and Dennis Romano, 137-167.

²⁴ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 1-3; Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, xv-583; Guicciardini, Francesco. *The History of Italy*. Trans. and ed. by Sidney Alexander (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), xiii-457; Machiavelli, Niccolo. *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 1-3, trans. by Allan Gilbert (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965), vvi-1465.

view into the social fabric of the patrician classes of Venice, Florence, and other invading European powers. The complex web of loyalty, compromise, selective omissions and additions, biased perceptions, and civic identity that ultimately coalesced and were reflected in Bembo's and the other three historians' accounts of this decisive time during the history of the Italian peninsula needs re-examination. Their bias was a product of the environment that they lived in. Survival in such a world is hard to imagine in the twenty-first century. There is a psychological component to the effect war, socio-political strife, and patronage networks would have on a person. We can see this reflected through the bias in their writing.

It was in this era of shifting loyalties, secret negotiations, military expeditions, and gains and losses of territories experienced by both the Republics of Venice and Florence that Pietro Bembo, Marino Sanudo, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Francesco Guicciardini lived and wrote about in their private letters, diaries, and histories of the Italic Wars. The third chapter will focus on the Venetian perspective, featuring the writings of Pietro Bembo, with contrasting accounts from Sanudo's Venetian perspective and Machiavelli and Guicciardini from their Florentine perspective. The fourth chapter will feature Florentine events, focusing on Bembo's biased accounts, with Machiavelli and Guicciardini's histories and a private letter, and examples of contrasting Venetian outlooks from Sanudo on the same events. Comparing Bembo to the other three men's written accounts illustrates the mechanics of the patron-client network and how it was reflected in their historical accounts during the Renaissance. These accounts derived from the primary sources of these four historians will also show that bias existed in all of these men's writings due to the influence of their particular socio-political patronage networks.

CHAPTER 3

THE VENETIANS

This chapter will examine the written works by Pietro Bembo and Marino Sanudo, two members of the ruling class of Venice, with a focus on Bembo's accounts. By examining their written histories of the Venetian Republic and comparing how each man chose to represent the same historical events, we will see how the networks of patronage and family affected and influenced their accounts. To emphasize the power that these social networks played in how these patricians chose to record events during the Italic Wars, I also will use examples from Machiavelli and Guicciardini to show that bias worked as a socio-political tool, a vital part of Renaissance society. Biased rhetoric could laud one's patrons or insult rivals and enemies.

Pietro Bembo and Marino Sanudo both came from old patrician families that had lived in Venice for hundreds of years. The Venetian patria was made up of around 180 families who could claim to have been a part of what was called the Great Council. This Great Council was closed to any new families in the mid-1200s. Only in rare occasions did this exclusive group allow new families to join, and when they did, they did not hold the same sway as the forty oldest families that predominantly ran the government.²⁵

During the lifetimes of Pietro Bembo and Marino Sanudo, Venice experienced a number of invasions, wars over territories, and Papal aggression both as enemies and allies. The Venetian Republic, concerned with its image, hired a number of men to document the history of Venice from a Venetian perspective. Bembo was one of the few men during this time given the honor of writing a history of Venice. Sanudo, who was also known in Venice to have kept a very detailed diary of Venetian events, had been passed over twice for the post of official

²⁵ Stanley Chojnacki, "In Search of the Venetian Patriciate: Families and Factions in the Fourteenth-Century" in *Renaissance Venice*, ed. by J. H. Hale (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973), 49-51.

historian. Sanudo's work was written in the Venetian vernacular. Therefore, it was not deemed suitable for a state-sanctioned history.²⁶

During Sanudo's life, his tenacious keeping of his diaries was not as well received as other Venetian historians, such as Bembo, Contorini, or Sabillico. Modern scholars over the last century have recognized the wealth of information in Sanudo's diaries about all aspects of life in Venice. His work recording the majority of the political and social events starting with the invasion by the French King Charles VIII, the war with neighboring duchy Ferrara, the life of the Doges of Venice, and events during the Italic Wars have been cited by contemporary historians numerous times in the last century.²⁷ His fellow patrician, Bembo, also wrote on the same time period.

Many Renaissance historians agree that Bembo's *History of Venice* lacked any deep introspection or analysis. Gilbert referred to Bembo's *History* as "a lifeless, rhetorical exercise."²⁸ Yet, Bembo's fame as a humanist scholar made this work a popular work during the Renaissance era.²⁹ In contrast, Marino Sanudo's *Diarii* and earlier works did not garner much attention by the Venetian senate, though his works are now considered to be among the best sources for Venetian history of the late fifteenth to sixteenth-centuries.

When compiling his *History of Venice*, Bembo petitioned the Venetian senate to order Marino Sanudo to turn over his prolific diaries, much to the vexation of Sanudo, and used them as one of his primary sources in compiling the officially sanctioned work as the historian of Venice. As a final affront, Bembo had promised to give credit to Sanudo for use of his diaries. Yet, no mention of him can be found in Bembo's *History of Venice*. Sanudo, although

²⁶ Labalme, Sanguinetti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, xxx.

²⁷ Labalme, Sanguinetti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 10; Finlay, *Venice Besieged*, III-585-598.

²⁸ Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 226.

²⁹ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 386-389.

upset by yet another slight from the Venetian senate, did his best by extolling himself in his diaries. He wrote about the fact that if anyone wished to compile a proper history of Venice, his work had to be consulted. Sanudo wrote that many of his patrician peers and a number of doges encouraged him to continue writing his diaries, which would be his ultimate legacy. Sanudo's fame as a historian would not be recognized until the 1800s.³⁰

These actions by Bembo and the Venetian senate show the benefits of having strong links of patronage and being part of a respected and influential family. Sanudo's diaries were a source of pride for the unfortunate patrician. The very act of having the senate order him to turn over his diaries to the famous humanist Bembo, who would mine Sanudo's opus and write the *History of Venice* as the official historian-the position Sanudo pursued for many years-illuminated the inner social and political atmosphere in Venice. Patronage, one's family name and position, and the trading of favors were important socio-political currency. In this case, Bembo's fame as author, courtier, and member of a well-known and wealthy family all played an influential role in this incident between Sanudo, the senate, and Bembo. Bembo wrote a letter to complain about Sanudo's reluctance to hand over his diaries to Doge Gritti, who then ordered Sanudo to lend them to Bembo.³¹

Bembo and Sanudo both experienced their share of disappointments in Venetian politics, though, when compared to Sanudo's career, Bembo's life was much more successful. Early in Bembo's adult life he entered the Venetian patria but had little success gaining any prominent offices in the government. He abandoned Venice to pursue his true interest, literature, and travelled to study in Sicily and then at the university at Padua. His pursuit of intellectual interests created networks with influential humanists, which led to his connection with a number

³⁰ Labalme, Sanguinetti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 36-41.

³¹ Chambers, *Individuals and Institutions in Renaissance Italy*, IX-39.

of various nobles from wealthy and prominent cities, such as Florence, Urbino, and Rome.³²

In 1513, he was made a secretary to Pope Leo X, a Florentine and member of the Medici family.³³ This made him an important and powerful man, something he was not able to obtain through his many family connections in the Venetian government. His father's links to the Medici family when Bembo was young and his friendship with Leo X's brother, Giuliano gave him access to and partiality from the newly elected pope. Over the next thirty years, Pietro Bembo parlayed his papal connections with both Medici popes, Leo X and Clement VII, to gain twenty-seven benefices, and eventually was promoted to cardinal, even though he had a live-in mistress and children made legitimate by Pope Clement VII.³⁴ He wrote the official *History of Venice*, which was published after editing in 1457.³⁵

The Venetian Republic, whose senate had made anti-Venetian statements and writing illegal and even punishable by death, actively promoted its idealized image of a collective republic with profit and commerce being most important, also fostered the myth of Venetian power. When comparing Bembo's *History of Venice* and Sanudo's diaries, much of the information and recounting of Venetian history appears to mirror each other. This can be explained by the reliance on Sanudo's works. The Venetian senate forced Sanudo to turn over his diaries to Bembo. Sanudo protested because he wanted the position of official historian.³⁶

While Bembo's officially sanctioned history contained well-written prose, it reflected many biases, omissions, and, subjective accounts about the events, people, and places during the Italic Wars. Likewise, Sanudo's diaries, which covered approximately the same time-period,

³² Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 163-164.

³³ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 166.

³⁴ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 174-206.

³⁵ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 1, xxi.

³⁶ Finlay, *Venice Besieged*, III-585-598.

contained his own personal biases and opinions on certain people and events. Ironically, Sanudo recorded in his diary that he endeavored to write a true history without any biased accounts of persons or events.³⁷ This subjective bias reflected the complex patron-client relationships that were common during that era, knowing that the audience would be one's peers, city, and its government. Bembo and Sanudo were well aware of this.

The fact that Pietro Bembo's career, particularly his early position as a papal secretary to Pope Leo X, where he drafted a number of letters that dealt with Pope Leo X's anti-Venetian strategy, demonstrated Bembo's reliance on his non-Venetian networks. In 1514, Bembo was even sent to the Venetian senate as a papal representative to explain Leo X's desire for Venice to end its alliance with the French. At this time, most Venetian patricians felt that Bembo had abandoned Venice and greeted him with a cold and rude welcome. Bembo appeared in front of the senate and related Leo X's wishes and then quickly left the city out of fear without even notifying his father.³⁸ However, thirteen years later, Bembo was hired as the official Venetian historian. This can only be explained by his patronage by Doge Gritti, plus other influential Venetian patricians who supported the doge, and his family and friends that held important offices in the Venetian government.

When Pietro Bembo submitted his final drafts of his *History of Venice*, the Venetian government edited it at least twenty times to eliminate biased comments, in particular, about Antonio Grimani, an ex-doge and military commander. During a war against Turkish incursions into the *stato da mar*, Grimani failed to keep Turkish forces from taking the important Aegean Sea port of Zonchio in 1499. Even though Bembo's history had been edited twenty times by the Venetian senate to exclude most of the anti-Grimani statements, some of these biased opinions of

³⁷ Labalme, Sangiunetti-White, Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, xxv-xxx.

³⁸ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 180-183.

Grimani's actions and character made their way into the *History of Venice*.³⁹

The 2007, *History of Venice, I-XII*, edited and translated by Robert Ulery, Jr., contains many of the omitted original writings and, when compared to the sanitized edition, we can see and compare Bembo's original statements where the bias is quite obvious. Grimani happened to be a relative of Sanudo's and a rival of Bembo's patron, Doge Alvise Gritti. When comparing Bembo's and Sanudo's accounts on Grimani, we see the importance of familial connections, civic loyalties, and patronage networks that definitely colored their recordings.

Modern historians agree that the Battle of Zonchio in 1499 was a failure of an ill-prepared Venetian navy that responded to a surprise attack by the Turkish fleet in the Greek port of Zonchio. This war ended in 1503, with a peace treaty where the Ottoman Turks annexed many cities in Greece and Albania from the Venetians.⁴⁰ When Bembo's and Sanudo's accounts are compared, the bias is quite striking. Doge Andrea Gritti commissioned Bembo to write this official Venetian history in 1529 and Bembo did not disappoint his patron.

Gritti and Grimani did not care for each other. Bembo's acknowledgement of Gritti's patronage was evident when one reads his accounts of the events surrounding Grimani's fall from power. Bembo recounted the blow-by-blow events during the Battle of Zonchio, including many negative comments about Grimani's cowardice, incompetence as an admiral, vanity, and disgrace when he was ordered back to Venice. Bembo's account of the days before the Battle of Zonchio demonstrated his bias against Grimani and also included the heroic actions of a then-young Andrea Gritti, who at that time was a grain merchant in Constantinople. Gritti had been instrumental in informing the Venetian senate on the Turk's military preparations to attack Venetian Aegean seaports. Gritti, while imprisoned with other Venetians merchants in

³⁹ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 382; Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 1, xii.

⁴⁰ Lane, Fredric C. *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 242.

Constantinople, wrote letters in code that informed the Venetians on the Turkish naval strength, which prompted Grimani's election by the senate to be the commander of the naval force sent to repel the attack.⁴¹

Bembo's critique of Grimani painted him in a negative light. He wrote, "In a few days, it happened that the Turks emerged from port, caught sight of the Venetian fleet, and returned to the same harbor... Grimani led out his ships for a fight, decided against, not daring to engage the enemy... permitted them to (escape)... when this happened two or three times, the Turks became more adventurous, since they thought Grimani to be afraid."⁴² Bembo continued on and told of the reaction of Grimani when the governor of Corfu, Andrea Loredan, a rival of Grimani's, arrived with a fleet of ships and soldiers. "(Loredan) made straight for Grimani and explained that he had come to assist... Loredan had great spirit and courage, with very wide experience of war and maritime affairs... the entire fleet was plainly overjoyed to see him and he was given an extraordinary reception."⁴³

Then Bembo inserted his own anti-Grimani bias, "Grimani resented the arrival of a man who in virtue of the people's favor... might snatch... all the credit for any successful outcome."⁴⁴ The next few pages detailed three more failed attacks led by Grimani, where with Venice's allies, the French, attempted to drive back the Turkish fleet. Grimani was blamed for a lack of courage and brash tactical mistakes, of which Bembo was quick to write that the French allies also agreed with Bembo's assessment of Grimani's failure as commander.⁴⁵ Bembo also recorded the reactions of the Venetian senate and people, mirroring Sanudo's account of the

⁴¹ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 3-7.

⁴² Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 9.

⁴³ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 11.

⁴⁴ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 11.

⁴⁵ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 11-17.

anger and shock expressed by the loss at Zonchio by Grimani, but with more unfavorable bias.

Bembo wrote,

“This news... upset the citizens... they had been expecting a different very outcome... as generally happens to commanders of failed enterprises, it was this Grimani who was lashed by the curses of the... Senate and citizenry... there was not a single person... who did not think he was worthy... of every penalty and every punishment.”⁴⁶

Bembo continued on to expound the outrage of Grimani losing the majority of the Greek Venetian territories, which would not have been as painful since, “letting slip such an opportunity... of extending the empire that they so longed for, which heaven had...virtually delivered to (him)...if Grimani had beaten the enemy in a fair fight, as he could have...(but) now that everything had turned out... the opposite... with the death of Loredan (governor of Corfu) ... everyone felt... revulsion for Grimani.”⁴⁷ Even after twenty revisions by the Venetian Senate, this amount of negative commentary about Grimani survived in Bembo’s, *History of Venice*. It could be that the Venetian senate felt that a long dead doge should be kept in the history to contain an example of what happens to those who fail the Republic.

Sanudo’s account of the Venetian Senate’s events before Grimani was convicted revealed his loyalty and partiality towards the Grimani family. He wrote, “Vicenzo Grimani, son (of Antonio Grimani)... spoke well and strongly... he excused his father by attributing his failure to his not wanting to take the life of any patricians... he begged the senators not to act in haste.”⁴⁸ Sanudo continued to describe Grimani’s son’s sincere defense of his father in the face of harsh critique. In November 1499, Antonio Grimani was brought by ship from Greece in chains for his trial in front of the Great Council, which all members of the Venetian patria

⁴⁶ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 19.

⁴⁷ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 19.

⁴⁸ Labalme, Sanguinetti-White, Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 9.

could attend and participate in. Sanudo noted that the people in the city were heard to say that Grimani should be hung from “a thousand gallows” for his failure and the loss of life at the Battle of Zonchio.⁴⁹ He then noted that by the spring, Grimani was still alive in prison and still retained much support from his friends and family. Sanudo wrote, “the trial of Grimani is being conducted... by the state attorneys, yet, the other evening a beautiful serenade was sung for him at the prison by all the virtuosi.”⁵⁰ This highlights the influence of patronage as seen in the difference between Bembo’s and Sanudo’s accounts of the same events.

Sanudo and Bembo both recognized the failure of Grimani, yet, their personal affiliations and biases become quite apparent when their accounts are compared. Sanudo downplayed the failures of his relative Grimani, while Bembo took the opportunity to insert into the official history of Venice his own subjective negative bias and extolled his patron Gritti at the same time. The Florentine perspective, as reported by Machiavelli and Guicciardini, lacked most of the personal biases found in Sanudo’s and Bembo’s accounts of this battle and the consequences of the loss.

Guicciardini’s account of Grimani’s loss at the Battle of Zonchio reflected a less biased view, being a uninvolved Florentine. His account reported the failure of Grimani’s fleet to stop the Turkish ships, the long deliberation by the Venetian courts, the attempted influence the powerful Grimani family used during the debates, the moving of the trial to exclude the influence of the Grimani family, and then his subsequent verdict: exile on the Croatian isle of Ossaro. Guicciardini eluded that Grimani’s conviction was swayed by the voice of popular opinion, or the common people, verses the wiser minds of the Venetian Senate.⁵¹ Guicciardini also was

⁴⁹ Labalme, Sanguinetti-White, Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 150.

⁵⁰ Labalme, Sanguinetti-White, Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 150.

⁵¹ Guicciardini, *History of Italy*, 155.

once a soldier, commanding a division of the Papal Army in 1526.⁵² He probably sympathized with Grimani, a fellow commander of troops, whereas Bembo most likely never raised a sword in his life. The statement by Guicciardini about the senate being swayed by the people also revealed his support of a strong aristocratically ruled republic. Machiavelli also commented on Grimani's commission as the naval commander sent by the Venetians to combat the Turkish threat without noticeably slanted commentary.

A letter written by Machiavelli in April 1499 to the commander of the army of the Florentines, who were involved with a war to subjugate the port city of Pisa back under the control of the Florentine Republic, mentioned the Venetian military mobilization under Grimani. That same month the Venetians had made a truce with the Florentines, who they had been fighting in support of the rebellious Pisans, which Machiavelli referred to in this same letter.⁵³ Letters written to Machiavelli after the defeat of the Venetian fleet in the summer of 1499 kept him informed of the Venetian Republic's losses to the Turks.⁵⁴ Not having any personal stake or connections to Venice, other than concern with the Turkish threat to the Italic peninsula, his letters regarding Grimani's failure lack any of the examples of bias found in Sanudo's and Bembo's accounts of the Battle of Zonchio. This is not to say that Machiavelli held pro-Venetian feelings, still, he probably applauded the Venetian navy that only used Venetian citizen-soldiers for their ships.⁵⁵

Pietro Bembo's patronage links with Andrea Gritti and the personal bias reflected in Bembo's accounts of Grimani and Gritti illustrated the need to have powerful men in one's

⁵² Ridolfi, Roberto. *The Life of Francesco Guicciardini*, trans. by Cecil Grayson (New York: Alfred Knoff, 1968), 137-175.

⁵³ Machiavelli, *Machiavelli and his Friends*, 13.

⁵⁴ Machiavelli, *Machiavelli and his Friends*, 19-22

⁵⁵ Mikael Hornqvist, "Machiavelli's military project and the *Art of War*" in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, ed. by John N. Najemy, 118-119.

social networks. A month after the Venetian's loss at the Battle of Agnadello in 1509 Antonio Grimani's family, and in particular, his brother, Cardinal Grimani, petitioned the Venetian senate to repeal the sentence of exile placed after Grimani's loss at the Battle of Zonchio.⁵⁶ In the accounts by Bembo and Sanudo, again, we see how the same event could be written about and reflect how networks of patronage and family ties produced more biased historical chronicling. At this time, Pope Julius II had been in contact with the Venetians, primarily through Cardinal Domenico Grimani, to make offers of peace to the Venetian state. Exiled Antonio Grimani had been told to reside on an island off the coast of Dalmatia, but not liking the isolation moved to Rome and with his brother the cardinal and built a grand palazzo for the Grimani family. Antonio Grimani resided there until his sentence of exile was lifted in July, 1509.⁵⁷

Pietro Bembo wrote in his *History of Venice* on the rescinding of Grimani's exile, noting that, "the children of Antonio Grimani humbly requested my father Bernardo Bembo... (and the other two state attorneys) to agree at last to restore his citizenship."⁵⁸ He continued to explain that Grimani's many acts of service and loyalty to the Republic convinced the attorneys and the senate to allow Grimani to live in Venice again with all honors that a noble patrician deserved. Bembo's assessment of Grimani's reasons for wanting his exile to be lifted had a patronizing tone, "in his grievous old age he might...be able to find burial in his own country."⁵⁹ A brief mention of the senate vote to place Grimani on the *savi grandi*, a board of six, who oversaw many important decisions of the Republic was followed by Bembo's comments about the service and obvious influence Antonio Grimani's brother, Cardinal Domenico Grimani, played in his

⁵⁶ Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 150; Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 333.

⁵⁷ Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 167-172.

⁵⁸ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 1, 333.

⁵⁹ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 1, 335.

brother's redemption. Cardinal Grimani's work, with the Venetian diplomats to the papacy of Julius II, was well known and applauded by the Venetian patria.⁶⁰ Bembo's portrayal of this event contained a demeaning tone. The 'frail man' Grimani went on to become the doge a few years later, beating Bembo's patron Andrea Gritti. Sanudo's account of this same event reflected his loyalty to the Grimani family, his relatives, and allies.

Sanudo recorded the proposal and vote on whether Grimani should be recalled from exile, "Vicenzo Grimani (and his family)... ask(ed) the (senate) to put to the vote the bill... concerning his father... because of the merits of ser Antonio Grimani... and those of(his brother) the reverend cardinal... it was proposed that Antonio Grimani... be permitted to enter this city and live a one of our patricians."⁶¹ Sanudo continued to extol Grimani's turn of fortune, "the stars have taken a turn that favors this family, which suffered the nine year exile of its most prominent citizen... he is a great enemy of our doge (Lunardo Loredan)... had he not been exiled, the present doge would have never been elected."⁶² Loyalty, family, and having the support of powerful patrons were ever present, and we see this in Sanudo's slanted accounts.

Bembo's account of Grimani's return from exile, due to his old age, was written many years after Antonio Grimani gained the doge's cap in 1521.⁶³ Finlay wrote in *Politics in Renaissance Venice* about the status of patrician families, the complexities of loyalty through blood and marriage, and the existence of social bias within the patrician class. Antonio Grimani's mother was a *popolini* from the mercantile class, which diminished his standing within the older, more exclusive families, such as the Bembo family.⁶⁴ We can speculate that

⁶⁰ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 1, 335.

⁶¹ Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 150

⁶² Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 151.

⁶³ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 1, 335.

⁶⁴ Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*, 84.

Pietro Bembo had reasons due to his networks of family connections and patronage by Andrea Gritti to dislike the Grimani family. Or perhaps it was pure arrogance that spurred his rancorous statements in his chronicles.

Sanudo was by no means immune to exhibiting the same type of subjective biases in his prolific diaries. His account of the election of Antonio Grimani to the dogeship overflowed with laudations and frivolous detail about every speech, article of clothing people wore, the food that was served after the ceremony, and his personal pride of being invited to the celebratory dinner, since he was a member of the family.⁶⁵ Doge Grimani, elected when he was eighty-seven years old, died within two years. During this time, Sanudo's career as a politician did not advance as he thought it should, being a relative of the doge. Scholars familiar with Sanudo's life speculated that his abrasive and arrogant personality, his constant keeping of his diary, and a previous brush with scandal during his post as the *camerlengo* of Verona kept Sanudo's career from ever rising to any prominence.⁶⁶

Bembo's *History of Venice* exhibited examples of his bias that we can connect with his personal social network, particularly against Antonio Grimani. Sanudo made more than a few negative comments and analysis of Andrea Gritti in his diaries, who was elected doge in a contested election after the death of Doge Grimani in 1523.⁶⁷ Not surprising, Andrea Gritti was portrayed favorably in Bembo's *History of Venice*.

Andrea Gritti, after a successful career as merchant and later during wars with the

⁶⁵ Labalme, Sanguinetti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 62-64.

⁶⁶ Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*, 251-280; Labalme, Sanguinetti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 13-20; Chambers, *Individuals and Institutions in Renaissance Italy*, VIII-37-58. All these accounts of Sanudo's lack of success contained analysis of potential reasons why he never reached a position of prominence. Finlay and *Cita* cited his abrasive personality and his constant inquires for information to fill his diary. Chambers recounted Sanudo's early career as a fiscal officer in the subject city of Verona, where a financial scandal involving Sanudo, Pietro Bembo's father, and another prominent patrician occurred. Chambers also pointed to Sanudo's vain behavior as *camerlengo* and some sexual tendencies that could have caused Sanudo's unpopularity for the rest of his career.

⁶⁷ Labalme, Sanguinetti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 64-67.

Ottomans and the League of Cambrai, exhibited his patriotism by serving as a general for the Venetian army for the duration of aggression against Venice by the League of Cambrai.⁶⁸

His long service to Venice as a general during the Cambrai war, although rarely successful on the battlefield, garnered him fame that culminated with his election as doge. As a general, Gritti was well-liked by his soldiers, plus his influence with the senate ensured that his army received its payment.⁶⁹

Gritti was one of the generals who personally experienced the shocking defeat of the Venetian army by the French at the Battle of Agnadello in May 1509. A *condottieri* of considerable fame, Bartolomeo Alviano, wanted to attack the French camp across the Adda River. His commander, the Count of Pitigliano, Gritti, and the other captains and generals all were not in favor of making a pre-emptive attack, believing the French would soon break camp and leave the area. Alviano's success in prior battles inflated his ego and he defied his peers and crossed the river and engaged the French forces. He was unaware that the French had re-enforced their army and Alviano's company was cut down by cannon fire. Alviano was captured and the remainder of the Venetian army fled to defend the fortress in the city of Brescia.⁷⁰

When we look at the accounts of the Battle of Agnadello from Bembo, Sanudo, and also the writings of Guicciardini and Machiavelli about this decisive battle that was followed with the loss of the Venetian *terra firma*, again, biased chronicling revealed their personal social networks. Also evident were the perceptions and accounts of how Venetian subject cities reacted to the aggression by the League of Cambrai, especially in Bembo's and Sanudo's accounts. Just as these men all had their networks of patrons, family, and friends who played important roles in

⁶⁸ Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 64-67

⁶⁹ Finlay, *Venice Besieged*, IX-993.

⁷⁰ Finlay, *Venice Besieged*, IX-994.

their personal fortunes, the numerous subject city-states under Venetian rule reacted in various ways when confronted with the aggression by the League of Cambrai. Venice depended on the fealty of its subject cities for help in the defense of Venetian territories and interests. This patron-client network relied on the local nobles and Venetian administrators in these cities to keep the populace loyal to Venice. Starting with accounts of the Battle of Agnadello and the swift fall of the Venetian *terra firma* territories that followed, the importance of personal and civic loyalties revealed themselves through these men's writings.

Bembo's account of the lead up to the Battle of Agnadello recounted the preparations by the Venetians and their subject cities for the coming armies of the League of Cambrai. Of the people elected to be a general in the Venetian army, Gritti predictably was mentioned as one who was, "(given) the honor (that) would encourage him to give the Republic good service".⁷¹ Bembo mentioned the various cities, Brescia, Verona, Padua, and other Venetian subject territories contributions of soldiers and the loyal citizens of these subject cities as something to be commended.⁷² The reports of the various cities and towns under Venetian rule as they came under attack featured brave acts by patriotic and selfless Venetian subjects. Likewise, plots of treacherous men who attempted to negotiate with the enemy were discovered and Venetian retribution was swift and harsh.⁷³

As the drama built in Bembo's account, we see the planning by the generals and captains of the Venetian army as they prepare to face the French army. Bortolo Alviano, a Venetian *condottieri* who was blamed for the loss at Agnadello, insulted his general, the Count of Pitigliano, which caused him to leave the field of battle and weakened the Venetian position.

⁷¹ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 261.

⁷² Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 265-273.

⁷³ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 273-281.

Curiously absent in Bembo's recounting was General Gritti's name. The only reference to Gritti was his election as a general of the Venetian army. There was no mention of Gritti even though he was present during this battle and fled with the rest of the remaining Venetian army, leaving Alviano to be captured by the French. Bembo named other generals and captains who fought, so, his purposeful omission of Gritti's name appeared suspect.⁷⁴

Bembo knew his audience and used this selective recounting of this battle in order to not offend his patron by removing his involvement in this tremendous failure by the Venetian army.⁷⁵ Gritti fled to Brescia immediately after the loss at Agnadello but had to abandon the city to the French as the League of Cambrai forces swept across the Venetian *terra firma*. Only the city of Treviso was retained, where Gritti was installed as the protector of this last Venetian mainland stronghold in the summer of 1509.⁷⁶ In both Bembo's and Sanudo's descriptions, the reaction by the people of Venice upon hearing the news of the loss of the majority of the *terra firma* cities illuminated the shock and worry they collectively felt. The Venetian senate deliberated about what actions to take to try and safeguard the little territory in the Veneto they still controlled. Sanudo and Bembo recounted various senators and other officials' speeches about Venetian fortune, how God would reverse this terrible war, and commented on the reports given by returning ambassadors to the various leaders of the League of Cambrai.⁷⁷

Sanudo recounted the senate's bill in 1513 to renew Gritti as the head general of the army. He wrote, "A bill was read... to elect... a general for Padua... he could be chosen from any position or office. He should... report for service and leave immediately... Andrea Gritti... protested, saying this bill was directed at him and that he had borne enough burdens and

⁷⁴ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 261-281.

⁷⁵ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 290-295.

⁷⁶ Finlay, *Venice Besieged*, IX-994. This was an account from Sanudo's diaries.

⁷⁷ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 297-321; Labalme, Sanguinetti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 90-96.

could not serve... there was no need... he spoke vigorously against the bill... a letter from the governor of the army says that sir Andrea Gritti is needed.” Gritti, was elected against his will, but he served Venice well, securing three *terra firma* cities back under Venetian control.⁷⁸

This illustrated Sanudo’s willingness to write what he observed in the senate, however negative it may have portrayed Gritti. Compared to Bembo’s careful selection of only writing about Gritti’s success while downplaying his failures, again shows the bias linked to the patronage system. Machiavelli and Guicciardini also wrote about their perceptions on the effect of this battle and reasons Venice incurred the wrath of the League of Cambrai that showed their own civic pride and biases.

The two Florentines, Machiavelli and Guicciardini, shared the belief that much of the blame for the thirty-plus years of the Italic Wars fell on the imperial designs of the Venetian Republic. During the conflict Florence had with Pisa beginning in 1497, Venice had allied with Pisa using their powerful maritime fleet to supply Pisa and threaten Florence.⁷⁹ Machiavelli stated in *The Prince* and *The Discourses* his observations on the causes for Venice’s fall from being the most powerful state on the Italian peninsula. He blamed the Venetians reliance on using hired *condottieri* instead of sole reliance on soldiers from Venetian territories. He noted that when Venice conquered their *stato da mar* in the Adriatic and Aegean Seas, they used soldiers from their own citizenry.⁸⁰ Then in an often quoted phrase from *The Prince*, “as it was finally evident at Vaila (Agnadello), where in one battle they (Venice) lost what in eight hundred years they had won with so much effort. From these (mercenaries) come only slow, late, and slender winnings, but sudden and astonishing losses.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 92.

⁷⁹ Najemy, John M. *A History of Florence, 1200-1575*. (Singapore, Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 402.

⁸⁰ Machiavelli, *Machiavelli: the Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 1, 49.

⁸¹ Machiavelli, *Machiavelli: the Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 1, 50.

In another passage from *The Prince* regarding the treatment of subject territories, he used the example of the Venetian tactic of allowing the ruling factions of Venetian subject cities to be at odds with each other but never let them actually fight. Machiavelli approved of this divide-and-rule tactic as a means of controlling a subject territory's people, especially the non patrician classes. He noted that after the rout at the Battle of Agnadello, many of the subject cities' people remained loyal to Venice.⁸² Sanudo and Bembo likewise remarked on numerous incidents in the cities that fell to the armies of the League of Cambrai that often the nobles of the cities would willingly side with the League forces, while the people would display their steadfast loyalty to Venice. Both Venetians wrote about the subjects of many *terra firma* cities shouting, "Mark, Mark, Mark" and displaying the symbol of Venice, the lion of St. Mark. St. Mark was the patron saint of Venice, where his bones supposedly lie in the Cathedral of St. Mark.⁸³

With Machiavelli's comments about the Venetian uses of mercenary armies, their divide-and-rule tactics with their subject territories, and his chiding of both Venice and the League of Cambrai members in his *Second Decennale*, he addressed the mechanics of the patron-client network used by Venice and the League of Cambrai. Machiavelli wrote in his numerous works about the weakness of using hired armies instead of training and maintaining an army of loyal citizens.⁸⁴ His friend Guicciardini wrote a less-harsh evaluation on Venetian ambition and their role in bringing chaos upon the Italic peninsula.

Guicciardini's observations on the Venetian defeat at Agnadello, written in hindsight some twenty-plus years after the fact illuminated his admiration for the republican ideals of Venice, while noting the reasons for the aggression by the League of Cambrai. He wrote that

⁸² Machiavelli, *Machiavelli: the Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 1, 78.

⁸³ Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 94-95; Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 39, 51, 87.

⁸⁴ Machiavelli, *Machiavelli: the Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 3, 1457-1462.

many non-Venetians found the demise of the Venetian *terra firma* territories in 1509 to be a happy occasion. Also, he commented that the formation of the League of Cambrai was due to the unbridled lust for power the Venetians displayed in years before. When he wrote his *History of Italy*, the Italian peninsula fell under the yoke of Hapsburg domination, a power he participated in attempting to stop as a commander in the Papal Army, with no success.

Guicciardini lamented the loss of power the Venetians experienced, since they represented a “glorious member of the Italian state, which more than any other (Italic power) maintained the fame and reputation of them all.”⁸⁵ Here we see the aristocratic Guicciardini, who obviously felt sympathy for the beleaguered Venetian Republic, showing his bias favoring the Venetians.

Unlike Machiavelli, he witnessed first hand the sack of Rome, which was a terrible blow to the growing Italian group consciousness that started to form when French king Charles VII invaded in 1494.⁸⁶

After the near total loss of Venetian territories on the Italic peninsula in 1509, the Venetians, led by General Gritti, began a protracted number of battles, switching of allies, gains and losses of territory, which saw the Venetians regain almost all the territory they lost in 1509. Soon after the loss at Agnadello, Gritti took control of the strategic city of Padua, which surrendered to Emperor Maximilian’s forces without resistance. This perceived treachery by the subject city of Padua, which was under Venetian rule for a century, was answered by Gritti’s forces retaking the city, rounding up the anti-Venetian Paduans, and defended a ill conceived siege against Padua by HR Emperor Maximilian’s army.⁸⁷

This victory for the Venetians was an important morale boost for the beleaguered city. In

⁸⁵ Guicciardini, *History of Italy*, 202.

⁸⁶ Ridolfi, *The Life of Francesco Guicciardini*, 151-161.

⁸⁷ Mallett and Hale, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State*, 221-232.

1510, Pope Julius II, alarmed at the power the French now held over the Italian peninsula, broke with the League of Cambrai and allied with Venice and the HRE, with other allies to stop the growing power of the French. Bembo wrote of the numerous victories Gritti orchestrated from 1509 to 1512, as the Venetians re-conquered some of the lost *terra firma* cities.⁸⁸ Sanudo noted in his diaries about the progress Gritti made in retaking of lost Venetian subject cities. One quip about Gritti's tactics again shows the effect of personal loyalties and civic identity.

General Gritti used a tactic that earned him the nickname "Fabius Maximus", after the Roman general who used a "defend and delay" approach to fighting Hannibal and his army during the Punic Wars.⁸⁹ Sanudo recorded Gritti's vocal reluctance to put any of the Venetian forces on the offensive. The Venetian senate received a letter from French occupied Brescia that pro-Venetian nobles promised to open the gate during the night. Gritti balked at the idea preferring his cautious approach of relying on fortifications, defensive patrols, with the idea of conserving the army until it was truly needed. Sanudo wrote, "(his misgivings put) him in the bad graces of the city, with complaints about his feeble courage."⁹⁰ Bembo's account recounted the same scene, but he argued Gritti's reluctance was due to information that the pro-Venetian nobles from Brescia were not as enthusiastic. Yet, Gritti obeyed his orders from the senate and took the city from the French garrison. Within a few days, the French responded and sent King Louis XII's nephew, Gaston de Foix, who retook the city, including capturing General Gritti and allowing the French army to pillage and rape the city for three days.⁹¹

This episode of the 1512 Battle of Brescia was the last mention of Gritti in Bembo's *History of Venice*. The last chapter tells of more developments in the League of Cambrai war

⁸⁸ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 2, 325-375.

⁸⁹ Finlay, *Venice Besieged*, IX-988-990.

⁹⁰ Finlay, *Venice Besieged*, IX-999. This was an account from Sanudo's diaries.

⁹¹ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 3, 290-313.

and ends with the retaking of Florence by the Medici and the death of Julius II and the election of Pope Leo X, the very man who first gave Bembo his *entre* in to the ecclesiastical profession.⁹² This is curious since his history ends with both the election of a previous patron Leo X and no more mention of Gritti, who would play a large role in forming an alliance with King Louis XII.⁹³ Bembo lived until 1547, so it was suspect why he would end his *History of Venice* at such a point. In the fall of 1513, Gritti came back with the French army and participated in a failed attempt at invading Novarra, protected by Swiss mercenaries for Pope Leo X. Gritti, as he had many times before, fled to a fortress, narrowly escaping death. This type of incident again was not included in Bembo's history.⁹⁴

Gritti returned to Venice to a hero's welcome. Yet, as a general he had more losses than victories. The fortunes of the Venetians followed the same pattern of losing and gaining territories. In 1513, Pope Leo X and Maximilian ravaged the Veneto, pushing the Venetians back till all they held was the city itself. The Venetians with their French allies then regained much of their previous *terra firma* holdings. In his last post as a general in the Venetian army in 1522, Gritti fought the armies of the new HR Emperor Charles V and Leo X, losing Milan. This caused the Venetian senate to reconsider its alliance with Francis I, Louis XII's successor.⁹⁵ In 1523, Gritti, though as a general not very successful, used his reputation and wealth to garner the needed votes to win the dogeship in a very contested election. Sanudo did not harbor known anti-Gritti feelings until the election of 1523, when his patron Antonio Tron lost by a narrow vote.⁹⁶

⁹² Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 3, 337.

⁹³ Finlay, *Venice Besieged*, IX-1003. This was an account from Sanudo's diaries.

⁹⁴ Finlay, *Venice Besieged*, IX-1001. This was an account from Sanudo.

⁹⁵ Finlay, *Venice Besieged*, IX-1001-1011.

⁹⁶ Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*, 251. This was an account from Sanudo.

Sanudo's ally and fellow patrician Antonio Tron, the eldest member of the senate, was popular with many patricians and also with the citizens of Venice. As the elder statesman, it was his duty to announce the winner of the election. When Tron proclaimed Gritti as the winner, Sanudo recalled that as Tron made the pronouncement, "everyone shouted 'Tron, Tron, Tron'" and when Gritti appeared in front of the crowd in ill-fitting ducal robes and crown, very few people cheered.⁹⁷ Sanudo made a number of recordings regarding the distrust many felt towards Gritti, the dislike of his arrogant attitude, his pro-French stance, and the reactions of the populace who scrawled anti Gritti graffiti.⁹⁸ These types of events occurred after Bembo ended his Venetian history and point to his patron loyalty, protecting Gritti's name from appearing in a negative light.

Many patricians feared that Gritti would act like a tyrant. Sanudo wrote of an exchange between Gritti and fellow patrician Alvise di Priuli, "Alvise di Priuli said in... committee that it was inappropriate to make someone doge who had three bastards... Gritti sought out... Alvise... saying he wished to speak with him. Gritti... regretted, since they were close relatives, that Priuli had used such words about him and hoped he would accept him as doge. Priuli said, 'Sir Andrea, it is true I said that, and I never wanted, nor will ever want you (to be doge) because I do not want... a tyrant a doge.'⁹⁹ This election exemplified the importance of social networks, the political environment within Venice, and the biased choice of accounts by Sanudo as he recorded the lively atmosphere surrounding this event. It is not surprising that Pietro Bembo chose to end his *History of Venice* where he did at 1513. It excluded the reign of his patrons Gritti and the two Medici popes, all men who were unpopular with many Venetians. During

⁹⁷ Labalme, Sangiuneti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 65; Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*, 160.

⁹⁸ Labalme, Sangiuneti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 66.

⁹⁹ Labalme, Sangiuneti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 65.

Gritti's reign as doge, Venice lost much of its power, as the Italic peninsula became a veritable chessboard for the major powers of Europe.

After the Italic Wars ended, Venice began a long decline as its power and territories shrank. The decline of the once formidable Venetian Republic was not unique. The Florentine Republic experienced its share of turmoil during the period of the Italic Wars. They too faced the ever-changing winds of Fortune as the ambitions of popes, kings, and rival Italic states kept the people and their republic in a constant state of flux. The following chapter will examine the Florentine history of the same period, where again we will see the biases from Bembo based on his loyalties to his patrons, the Medici and Gritti, and how it was reflected in his writing. Machiavelli's, Guicciardini's, and Sanudo's views on Florentine affairs will also be compared to emphasize the importance of the social network of patronage, family, and power and provide a contrast to Bembo's work.

CHAPTER 4

THE FLORENTINES

In the city of Florence, another republic that had their own ambitions of expanding control over the lands surrounding their city, Bembo's and Sanudo's contemporaries, Niccolo Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini, also produced historical accounts of their city. They likewise commented on the volatile Italic Wars through a lens of patriotic loyalism of their native city.¹⁰⁰ This chapter will again show biased accounts in Bembo's historical writings. His version will be compared with the two Florentines and Sanudo, highlighting how his patronage loyalty to the Medici family shaped and skewed his account of the fall of the Florentine Republic in 1512 and other Medici related events. Also, we will see how civic identity and patronage slanted the accounts of Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and Sanudo.

Niccolo Machiavelli served in numerous political positions for the Florentine Republic that ousted the Medici family in 1494, the same year the Florentine ally, French king Charles VIII, invaded Italy. He served in various diplomatic, administrative, and military positions, gaining the most recognition under the Florentine Republic ruled by Piero Soderini from 1502-1512. The Soderini Republic was quickly overthrown by the return of the Medici brothers, Cardinal Giovanni and Giuliano, who had support from Pope Julius II and a Spanish army.¹⁰¹

Although Machiavelli experienced some success in his political career, for politics were of the greatest interest to him, after the Medici reasserted their rule in 1512, he was arrested and then retreated to his family farm in the Tuscan countryside. During his self-exile, he produced most of his well-known writings: *The Prince*, *Discourses on Livy*, *The Art of War*, and after

¹⁰⁰ Ridolfi, Roberto. *The Life of Niccolo Machiavelli*, trans. by Cecil Grayson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), vii-337; Ridolfi, *The Life of Francesco Guicciardini*, ix-336; Gilbert, *Machiaveilli and Guicciardini*, v-339; John M. Najemy, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), vii-274.

¹⁰¹ Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolo Machiavelli*, 15-131.

eight years of obscurity, Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, later Pope Leo X, commissioned Machiavelli to write *The Florentine Histories* in 1520. He later served Florence and the Papacy as a military advisor until his death in 1527.¹⁰²

His friend and contemporary Francesco Guicciardini had a rather more successful career, primarily by rising through the Papal court, much like Pietro Bembo. He acted as an ambassador for the Florentine Republic to the powerful court of King Ferdinand in Spain in his first position in 1511.¹⁰³ After the Medici re-established rule in Florence, he became governor and eventually President of Romagna from 1516-1524, then a lieutenant-general for the Papal army, during the anti-HRE League of Cognac in 1526.¹⁰⁴ When the League of Cognac failed to stop Emperor Charles V's armies from invading and conquering most of Italy, Guicciardini, who supported the Medici rule, returned to a Florence that again tried to oust the Medici for a short time from 1527-1530. He left until the Papal and Imperial armies reinstated Medici rule in Florence. He then fell out of favor with the Medici, who sought to establish a principdom, instead of a reformed republican government that he supported. He retreated into self-exile to write his opus, *The History of Italy*, dying in 1540.¹⁰⁵

Pietro Bembo had enjoyed a long relationship with the Medici family. In fact, they were his primary patrons. His father, Bernardo Bembo, was the Venetian ambassador to Lorenzo de' Medici's Florentine government, which was well known for Lorenzo's humanist inspired court. Bernardo, besides being an astute diplomat, was a humanist scholar. He blended well with Lorenzo de' Medici's court that collected some of the finest humanist scholars, a focus of many Renaissance historians for many years. During his two terms as the Florentine ambassador

¹⁰² Najemy, *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, xvi-xvii; Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolo Machiavelli*, 180-185.

¹⁰³ Ridolfi, *The Life of Francesco Guicciardini*, 37-47.

¹⁰⁴ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, xxi-xxiii.

¹⁰⁵ Ridolfi, *The Life of Francesco Guicciardini*, 188-200, 246-256.

from 1475-1476 and 1477-1478, Bernardo brought in his son, Pietro, where he received a fine humanist education. Pietro made connections with some of the most famous scholars of the time, an asset that aided his fame as a humanist author later in life.¹⁰⁶ His association with the Medici family fostered Pietro Bembo's successes in life as a humanist and as a functionary of the Papacy.

Pope Julius II initiated the fall of the Soderini-led Florentine Republic, with his newly installed papal legate, Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici and his brother Giuliano. In 1511, French King Louis VII convened a council in the city of Pisa, a Florentine subject city, where he tried to organize a plot to topple Julius II from the Papacy. This did not bode well for the increasingly isolated Florentine Republic, which had already angered Julius II in 1510 for keeping its French alliance. In 1511, Julius II, with the Spanish, Venetians, and Swiss, created the Holy League to oust the French from the Italic peninsula. Again, Soderini displeased Julius II by refusing to join with him against the French. As the Holy League re-took the majority of the French conquests of the Italic peninsula, King Louis pulled his troops back over the Alps, leaving Florence without any allies. Julius II turned his martial rage, with the advice of his legate, Cardinal de' Medici, and ordered the Viceroy of Naples, Ramon de Cardona a Spaniard, to take his army and oust the Soderini Florentine Republic and re-install the Medici family as rulers of Florence.¹⁰⁷

The Viceroy and the Medici brothers along with a combined Spanish and Papal army marched on Florence. Machiavelli, who was the secretary to Soderini, had himself trained an army of Florentine citizens, and sent the army to the nearby city of Prato. As the Spanish and Papal troops approached Prato, Soderini sent couriers to try to strike a deal with the Viceroy that

¹⁰⁶ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 6-9.

¹⁰⁷ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 418-421.

would keep him in power and not allow the Medici back into Florence. This did not work and the Spanish viciously sacked Prato, shocking all of Florence. The Florentines realized they needed to oust Soderini, and so, led by pro-Medici supporters, armed men arrested Soderini and allowed the Medici and Spanish army to enter Florence. Soon thereafter the Medici reasserted their power over the city. They summoned the people to a parliament where the people of Florence, surrounded by armed Spanish troops, ‘voted’ the Medici back into power. They set up a similar government to that of Lorenzo de’ Medici, effectively ending the Florentine Republic. Soderini fled to Ragusa on the Dalmatian coast and Machiavelli after a short imprisonment retired to his country farm.¹⁰⁸

As a client of the Medici, Pietro Bembo, wrote about the fall of the Florentine Republic, in his *History of Venice*, between his constant laudations of his patron, Andrea Gritti. He made a statement about Cardinal de’ Medici obtaining the papal legate post in 1512. Then he wrote about Pope Julius II’s and the Viceroy of Naples, “passion to change the government of of the Republic of Florence. No matter how the city then governed itself, it had always leaned strongly to the French side in every war. They judged... the best way... would be to bring back the Medici family from exile... Julius, making all the arrangements... resolved to use all their forces to... bring this about... the viceroy and Julius’ representatives’ (Medici brothers) came to the town of Prato... this rich community was taken and plundered, full... of all... the comfortable and luxurious ways of life.”¹⁰⁹ There was no mention of the brutality, killing, rape, and ransom that appeared in Guicciardini’s and Machiavelli’s writings for a reason. Bembo again was quite aware of who his patrons were, powerful men like Andrea Gritti, and the soon to be Pope Leo X of the Medici family, the very man who gave him his first real position of power

¹⁰⁸ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 422-426.

¹⁰⁹ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 3, 327.

as his personal secretary.¹¹⁰ Bembo's slanted historical account emphasized his acknowledgement and deference to his patrons.

Bembo continued to tell of the panic stricken Florentine people who, upon hearing of the sack of Prato, removed Piero Soderini, "an enemy of the Medici... voting to condemn him ... owing to crowd violence... he was nearly killed by his political enemies. They (Florentines) sent (for) Cardinal Giovanni and his brother Giuliano, not merely permitting them to enter the city, but, positively longing for it, and amid vast and jubilant throngs of the citizens at large, they entered the city... and were received at their family home."¹¹¹ There was no mention of the parliament of the populace surrounded by menacing Spanish troops fresh from their violent sacking of Prato and no mention of their restructuring of the government to resemble the corrupt government seen during Lorenzo and Piero de' Medici's rule. This account portrayed this pro-Medici coup as if they liberated an oppressed Florentine populace.

This bias truly reflected the power of the patron-client network and its tentacles of power that spanned throughout the Renaissance world. The final words of Bembo's *History of Venice* tell of the election of Bembo's Medici patron, Leo X. He wrote, "The (Venetian) senate sent the college of cardinals a letter begging them to consider the good of the whole world in choosing a pontiff, offering them support... under the influence of enthusiasm... they elected Giovanni de' Medici pope."¹¹² Bembo really had a talent for spin and when it was needed could slip into quite biased commentary on many historical events. One must, nevertheless, begrudge him credit for honesty in the final statement, "And before he (Leo X) left the conclave, he named me... who was in Rome at the time, his secretary."¹¹³ From 1512 until his death, Bembo worked

¹¹⁰ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 164.

¹¹¹ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 3, 327.

¹¹² Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 3, 327.

¹¹³ Bembo, *History of Venice*, Vol. 3, 327.

for two Medici popes and gained wealth and power. He never failed to laud his patrons throughout his *History of Venice*.

Bembo does not disappoint one looking for an example of biased historical accounts, masked as *vera historia*. He successfully maximized his patronage and familial networks to climb the ladders of the Papal court, having Pope Clement VII legitimize his children with his live-in mistress, and then becoming a cardinal in 1539. In the contradictory world of the Renaissance Papacy, being an ordained man of God and having children was not an uncommon event, in fact, Clement VII himself was illegitimate. It was at the Peace of Bologna, in 1530, where Pope Clement VII, HR Emperor Charles V, and French king Francis I signed a treaty that effectively sidelined Venice as a dominant power and gave much of the Italic peninsula to the Hapsburg HR Emperor. This was where Bembo obtained a brief from Pope Clement to legitimize his children.¹¹⁴

One wonders at the depths the ambitious Bembo would go to in his quest for wealth, fame, and power. Appearing at an event wherein one's homeland was being relegated to a second-class state to have one's illegitimate children made whole without trying to advance the cause of one's homeland was disreputable. Bembo ended his official history at this point. Kidwell's pro-Bembo biography eluded that Bembo was exhausted from writing such a long and detailed history. Yet, stopping at this point avoided having to write about the despotic takeover of the Florentine Republic, the failures of both Clement VII and Doge Gritti in halting HR Emperor Charles V's sacking of Rome, and consequent Peace of Bologna, which divided up most of the Italic peninsula primarily under Hapsburg rule.¹¹⁵ He avoided writing any critique

¹¹⁴ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 257, 320.

¹¹⁵ Martin and Romano, *Venice Besieged*, 168-180. The Hapsburg HRE under Maximilian before 1509 only held a very small area of the northeastern corner of the Italic peninsula. HR Maximilian joined the League of Cambrai (1509) with hopes of expanding Hapsburg power on the peninsula. HR Maximilian was not very successful. His successor and grandson HR Charles V after being elected HRE (1517) had legal claims to the Duchy of Milan, the Kingdom of Naples and

about his primary patrons by ending the history at this point.¹¹⁶ Fellow Medici client, Guicciardini, gave his account, which appeared a bit more balanced, yet, his bias that supported Cardinal de' Medici again reminds us of the power the patron-client system.

Guicciardini's account of the Medici's re-entry into Florence in 1512, with the blessings of Pope Julius II, and the assistance of a Spanish army lead by the Viceroy of Naples, took up a considerable number of pages in his *History of Italy*. His account contained many observations and biases that reflected his patriotism towards his native city, his patron Cardinal de' Medici, and his dislike of Pope Julius II. He began by explaining the situation of how Julius II decided to back the Medici brothers desire to reclaim their right to live in Florence as supposed private citizens. Now the Medici had the pope's ear and persuaded him to support their wish to rule over Florence.¹¹⁷

Guicciardini portrayed Julius II as an impulsive and power-hungry despot bent on subduing all who stood in his path. As he described the major powers of Europe: HRE, Spain, and France carving up the Italic peninsula, he wrote of Pope Julius II, "the Pope, goaded by his hatred against (Soderini) and by the ancient desire of all pontiffs to hold power over the Republic (of Florence), earnestly requested the restitution of the family of the Medici to their previous glory... he used different... facts with the Florentine ambassador, the King of (Spain), ... for fear any disturbance... in Florence might cause them to lean in favor of the King of France (because) of (Soderini)."¹¹⁸ Guicciardini continued on to explain that Julius II wished for his legate, Cardinal de' Medici to march with the Viceroy of Naples towards Florence and

Sicily, and other smaller duchies. After HR Charles V's subjugation of his Italic and French enemies the Peace of Bologna (1530) Treaty gave him lands from Venice, Florence, and the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily. He effectively ruled three-quarters of the Italic Peninsula. The Hapsburgs retained control of these areas till the eighteenth-century.

¹¹⁶ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 362; Finlay, *Venice Besieged*, IX-1025-1026.

¹¹⁷ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 234-239.

¹¹⁸ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 255.

demand, under the pretense of forcing Florence to allow the Medici to enter and reclaim their position as full citizens, not as exiles or conquerors.¹¹⁹ Portraying the Medici as humble men, wishing to re-enter Florence as simple citizens, could be couched in sarcasm or reflect his loyalty to the Medici, who were responsible for his wealth and position, much like his Venetian contemporary, Pietro Bembo.

Guicciardini's attention to detail can be tedious to read, yet, it is important to examine all his writings. His subtle style of inserting subjective commentary could be missed by less attentive readers. He continued to describe the efforts of the head of Florence, Soderini, to try and negotiate with the Viceroy with offers of money and provisions, with the stipulation that the two Medici, the cardinal and brother Giuliano, not be allowed entry in to the city. Soderini and the Florentine government appealed to Pope Julius II, who promptly lied and said, "he was not responsible for this campaign, and that it was being carried out without his forces."¹²⁰ The narrative continued with detailed accounts of the populace of Florence debating over the Viceroy's offer, which was: no harm shall come to the Florentines if they oust Piero Soderini and allow the Medici brothers to reside back in Florence as private citizens. His dislike for Pope Julius II was obvious, portraying him as dishonest and crafty, which was not too far from the truth.¹²¹ To survive in the high politics of the Renaissance, one needed to be quick on one's feet.

A year before, Guicciardini was sent as an ambassador, an entry-level position for a man of his aristocratic birth, by the government led by Soderini.¹²² When he returned, the Medici were back in power and he found patronage through Cardinal de' Medici, later Pope Leo X. As he narrated the details of the coup against Soderini's Republic, we can see his biases, due to his

¹¹⁹ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 256.

¹²⁰ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 257.

¹²¹ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 258.

¹²² Ridolfi, *The Life of Francesco Guicciardini*, 34.

links with the Medici and other powerful aristocrats loyal to the Medici family. Following the humanist tradition of inserting invented speeches that mirrored actual events, Guicciardini attempted to present Soderini in the most objective light he could feel comfortable writing, without besmirching his loyalty to his Medici patrons. Soderini appeared to be a man stuck between fulfilling his responsibility of caretaker of the Florentine Republic, but, with reservations about losing his place of power and facing exile or death.¹²³ This reflected Guicciardini's political opinions. He supported an aristocratic led republican government in the style of the Venetian Republic.¹²⁴

The council governing the Republic refused the Viceroy's offer, yet, they did wish the Medici family to be allowed to live in the city. Guicciardini then sets up the stage, the free citizens of Florence want to remain free, so, they start to mount a defense that included sending an armed garrison to Prato, a city close to Florence. The battle tested troops of the Viceroy of Naples approached Prato and when they reached the city walls, they demanded provisions and money, which Soderini had offered through ambassadors sent from Florence to speak with the Viceroy.¹²⁵

This support never materialized, Guicciardini wrote, "Nothing flies faster than opportunity... nothing more harmful than immoderate suspicion. All the leading citizens wanted an agreement... to... defend their liberty against iron with gold... they requested the ambassadors to... depart... but (Soderini) persuaded himself against his natural timidity... or fearing the Medici might return... to be the cause of his own ruin... delayed."¹²⁶ Summarizing Guicciardini's account, the Viceroy attacked Prato, breached the walls, and sacked the city.¹²⁷

¹²³ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 258-260.

¹²⁴ Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 277.

¹²⁵ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 261

¹²⁶ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 262.

Soderini was made to look helpless, probably not untrue, yet, without the backing of the rest of the Florentine patria, Soderini quickly lost power and fell out of favor. Guicciardini and Bembo seemed to hold the same opinion about Soderini, yet, who can blame them, for their patrons were the Medici.

He made a point to write that, “The Spaniards, amazed that military men... should show such cowardice and so little skill... began to race through the town... only cries, flight, violence, sack, blood and killing... nothing would have been spared, the avarice, lust and cruelty... had not the Cardinal de’ Medici placed guards at the main church and saved the honor of the women.”¹²⁸ Guicciardini’s account accomplished a number of tasks. He made Soderini look like a weak and selfish fool. He admonished the army that Machiavelli himself had trained and made his patron Cardinal, later Pope Leo X, look like a benevolent savior. What he does not mention was that, besides the 2000 men killed, were all the rest of the women not protected by the altruistic Cardinal de’ Medici, who stood by while the Spanish troops slaughtered the people and raped many women, even nuns as they went on a rampage of bloodlust, subduing the city.¹²⁹ Even though Machiavelli and Guicciardini were friends, they came from different levels of the patria and disagreed on the use of local conscript armies and the usefulness of truly republican government.

We can see Guicciardini’s bias and ego as the account continued to depict Soderini’s apparently unpopular government collapse as the city of Florence rose up and overwhelmingly supported the re-entry of the Medici, his patrons.¹³⁰ The final scenes involved the account of the Medici faction calling for a parliament, with the Florentines surrounded by Spanish troops

¹²⁷ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 262-263.

¹²⁸ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 262.

¹²⁹ Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 2, 897. This was a personal letter from Machiavelli recounting the Sack of Prato where he described mass killings, rapes, and looting.

¹³⁰ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 262-266.

and voted to let the Medici set up the same type of government the people of Florence had changed when they ousted Piero de' Medici in 1494. Guicciardini then wrote, "the liberty of the Florentines was oppressed by arms... that situation primarily as a result of the disagreements among the citizens... I pass over the neutrality they had so unwisely maintained... that (Soderini) had permitted."¹³¹ The final passages described a lightning strike that knocked the golden lilies, the symbol of the French and another strike that entered Soderini's ex-office, as if God had willed such divine intervention.¹³² He, much like Bembo, displayed his biases according to his loyalties to the Medici while both softened the harsh reality of the autocratic takeover of the Florentine Republic. While Guicciardini was lauding his patrons and native city, Bembo's pro-Medici slant came strictly from his patronage obligations. The extra addition of the ill augurs by Guicciardini, by way of the lightning strikes, added for some dramatic flair.

We can see Guicciardini's bias, his self-image, pride, and extolling of his patrons, the Medici, even though by the time he wrote his history, he was not in favor with the current Medici family, which made Florence into a princely state much to his chagrin.¹³³ Machiavelli also wrote about the transfer of power that demoted him from a high position within the Florentine government to near obscurity. He would not regain the status and recognition he craved until the later years of his life. Because of his delicate position with the ruling Medici family, post-Republic 1512, Machiavelli needed to be able to wear multiple masks. During his self-exile between 1512-1520, he wrote an number of treatises, poems, and plays. Finally, he was commissioned by Pope Leo X's cousin, Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, to write *The History of Florence*.¹³⁴ Many Renaissance historians speculate that he found writing a history that would

¹³¹ Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 267.

¹³² Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, 267.

¹³³ Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 267.

¹³⁴ James B. Atkinson, "Niccolo Machiavelli: a portrait" in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, ed. by John N. Najemy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 14-28.

eulogize the very people who had taken his beloved life in politics away from him to be irony.¹³⁵

Because of the situation Machiavelli faced after losing his position as the secretary to Piero Soderini in 1512 when the Medici reasserted their control over Florence, we must take care to glean the subtle nuances from his published writings that appeared to be pro-Medici on the surface.¹³⁶ In the twenty-first century, we have the luxury of access to his private correspondences, which give us a contrary view when compared to his public works. As he labored to re-ingratiate himself with the Medici family with offers of service in any capacity, his letters reveal his private thoughts, which do not always concur with his public voice, illustrating the bias he chose to use as it suited his needs. Guicciardini wrote without such constraints. At the time he composed his *History of Italy*, his life was nearly over and his works were published after his death.¹³⁷

Historian Felix Gilbert focused much of his work on Renaissance Florence and Venice. He postulated that when one reads Machiavelli, “an attentive reader can discover (anti-Medici) feelings behind the praise and glorification.”¹³⁸ An example, in Machiavelli’s, *Discourses*, there is a passage that refers to ancient Roman history, about the need to kill Brutus’ sons to maintain liberty that alludes not too subtly, to the fall of the Florentine Republic in 1512. He wrote, “those who read ancient history will always observe that after a change of government, either from republic into tyranny or from tyranny into republic, the enemies... must suffer some striking prosecution. For he who seizes a tyranny and does not kill Brutus, and he who sets a state free and does not kill Brutus’ sons, maintains himself... a little while.”¹³⁹ This, read alone,

¹³⁵ Felix Gilbert, “The Historian’s Machiavelli” in *History: Choice and Commitment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 142.

¹³⁶ Gilbert, *History: Choice and Commitment*, 139.

¹³⁷ Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 282.

¹³⁸ Gilbert, *History: Choice and Commitment*, 142.

appears to be a humanist commentary about the death of Julius Caesar, yet, the next passage stated,

“in our native city (there) is worthy of notice... Piero Soderini, who believed with patience and goodness he could overcome the longing of Brutus’ sons to get back another government, but he deceived himself... he recognized the necessity... though the chance and ambition of those who assailed him gave him opportunity to destroy them... he never made up his mind to do so... such action... would greatly alarm the people... this scruple was wise and good, yet on the other hand, he should have never allowed an evil to continue for a good sake... but he was deceived... since he did not know that malice is not mastered by time... not having the wisdom to be Brutus-like he lost... his native city, his position and his reputation.”¹⁴⁰

With that statement so blatantly in one of the only works he published during his lifetime, it was surprising that he did not suffer more abuse. The passage that preceded this homage to Soderini takes on even more significance when thought of in a subversive context. He wrote, “Men of rank cannot decide to sit quiet even when they decide... without ambition, because they are not believed... you must... play the fool like Brutus... often you play the madman, praising, speaking, seeing, and doing things contrary to your purpose, to please the prince.”¹⁴¹

The words speak for themselves, as part self-assessment of his own condition, but, also his audacity to insert a potentially subversive, even provocative statement in a published work. Brutus would be Piero de’ Medici, who was ousted by the Soderini Florentine Republic in 1494, after he made concessions to invading French King Charles VIII.¹⁴² Brutus’s sons would be Piero’s brother Giovanni, the later Leo X and other brother Giuliano, who became the head of Florence after 1512, and Piero’s son, Lorenzino, who would become the Duke of Urbino.¹⁴³ Machiavelli referred to them in this way, since, when the uprising in 1494 against Piero de’

¹³⁹ Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 1, 425.

¹⁴⁰ Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 1, 425.

¹⁴¹ Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 1, 424.

¹⁴² Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 378-379.

¹⁴³ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 378-379.

Medici occurred, all of them escaped Florence unharmed.¹⁴⁴ As for his statements about playing a fool, praising the prince, contrary to his personal beliefs, show Machiavelli's admission of wearing two faces, his public attempts to regain his status through Medici patronage, and his private anti-Medici feelings. Much like Bembo and Guicciardini, he knew the rules of the patronage game and played it to his advantage in the end.

Yet, ten years before, in a private letter, Machiavelli had written to an unknown noblewoman about the sack of the city of Prato in 1512 that heralded the fall of the Florentine Republic. He wrote about the terrible treatment of the people of Prato, the horrors they experienced, the rapes, killings, and how the "magnificent" Medici forced the people to the parliament, surrounded by Spanish soldiers and made them vote for the same type of government the people had ousted when Piero de' Medici and his family were exiled in 1494.¹⁴⁵ The "magnificent" Medici remark could be seen as a sarcastic description of the descendants of Lornezo de' Medici, who many referred to him as 'the Magnificent One' because of the social, political, and artistic achievements Florence experienced during his rule.

Either his thinly veiled contempt did not get noticed or no one important thought the writings of a disgraced man would make much impact. The next year, he began to write his *History of Florence*. Perhaps the Medici respected his versatile prose and wit; he certainly had a reputation for being a pragmatic political operative. Machiavelli, regardless of how he may have felt about the Medici, was back where he loved to be, in the thick of the action. He achieved this through clever marketing of himself and by working his patron-client networks in Florence and Rome, regardless of his loyalty to his former disgraced patron, Piero Soderini.¹⁴⁶ In the same

¹⁴⁴ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 378-379.

¹⁴⁵ Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 2, 894.

¹⁴⁶ Najemy, *The Cambridge Guide to Machiavelli*, 25.

way Pietro Bembo parlayed his connections with the Medici family and Doge Gritti to enrich himself and garner fame and immortality through his written works, Machiavelli accomplished a similar task, although perhaps not nearly as grand as Bembo.

Comparing Guicciardini's and Bembo's accounts, we see the bias slanted towards their Medici patrons, especially Bembo, who does not seem to have any objections to slip into such subjective bias when composing an official history for the Venetian government. Machiavelli made selective and clandestine comments when he could and privately held contempt for the Medici conquerors. Yet, because they held the reins of power, he had no choice but to bow to their will if he wanted to ever make his mark in history. For these three men, one does not bite the proverbial hand that feeds it. Meanwhile in Venice, Sanudo noted the events in Florence, the fall of Soderini's republic, without much fanfare. Yet, he held some biased opinions about the Medici popes, his first comments upon seeing Leo X were, "a big man, but with an ugly face, not much presence and unrefined."¹⁴⁷

Sanudo did comment on the death of Giuliano de' Medici, Leo X's cousin, ruler of Florence, and good friend and patron of Pietro Bembo, writing that he was a good and humble man, well loved and missed. He made some sarcastic remarks when Leo X died, commenting on the graffiti left on Leo X's tomb, "never had a pope so closely resembled the Trinity as Leo, and this because he had distributed the funds of three papacies, namely Julius who...left a balance of 600,000 ducats... his successor will have to rise to heaven before he will have paid Pope Leo's debt."¹⁴⁸ Sanudo's final diary entry about Leo X stated, "The crowd went to San Marco to hear the miraculous and excellent news for our Republic, and (everyone) rejoiced as if some great victory had been won, because in effect (Leo) was our great enemy, being a

¹⁴⁷ Labalme, Sanguinetti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 177.

¹⁴⁸ Labalme, Sanguinetti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 180-181.

Florentine. He sought to diminish this state in order to exalt Florence and his own Medici family... the whole city was happy... nor could any better news come, people were saying this was done by God... we heard about the sickness and death at the same time... may the Lord God be blessed for all.”¹⁴⁹

Sanudo’s comments do reflect his own civic loyalty and patronage, just as do the writings of Guicciardini, Machiavelli, and Bembo. Yet, Sanudo’s patronage links only extended within the Venetian Republic and this is reflected in his recordings of Medici, Leo X, who did pursue for a time to subjugate the Venetians. Leo X eventually allied with them, as did his cousin Giulio de’ Medici, Pope Clement VII, in the League of Cognac. The League of Cognac was another of the mercurial twists of fate that occurred during the Italic Wars. Very similar to Julius II’s Holy League, again, Pope Clement, Venice, Florence, France, and the deposed Duke of Milan, allied against Hapsburg Charles V’s Spanish-Germanic army that was moving south in 1526. At this time, Doge Gritti, Bembo’s patron, instructed the head of the Venetian army to use the same tactics of avoiding battle that earned him the nickname, “Fabius Maximus”, which was described in the previous chapter.¹⁵⁰

The end result culminated with the brutal 1527 sacking of Rome and the Peace of Bologna in 1530. Sanudo recounted the terrible conditions in Rome, where Clement VII was locked in the Castel Sant’Angelo as the Imperial army sacked, burned, raped, and killed the defenseless citizens of Rome. During this time, Doge Gritti’s protégé and head of the Venetian army, Francesco della Rovere, did next to nothing to stop the marauding Imperial army, which did not endear Doge Gritti to the Venetians and the rest of the Italic peninsula.¹⁵¹ All of this

¹⁴⁹ Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 181.

¹⁵⁰ Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 183.

¹⁵¹ Labalme, Sanguineti-White, and Carroll, *Cita Excelentissima*, 183-184.

information was known to Pietro Bembo, being a part of the Church, a Medici client, a Gritti client, and also having Sanudo's diaries. Yet, he ended his history before any of this with good reason.

It does not take much imagination to realize why Bembo chose to end his *History of Venice* on an upbeat note. The burden of writing about the failures of two of his main patrons was avoided. He probably felt he left a positively portrayed historical account of the Venetian Republic that would garner him fame for posterity. If he knew that his *History of Venice* would be regarded as a literary mediocrity, perhaps he would have had more courage to write the events as they occurred, like Sanudo did. Following the trend of humanist writing, picking and choosing select events and spinning them to favor one's patrons was not uncommon. Pietro Bembo happened to be quite talented at it, for in the pursuit of earthly and material glory, he manipulated his networks of patronage for his own nepotistic needs. But, in the ever shifting political landscape during the Italic Wars, perhaps Bembo could be considered a success.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 387.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this tale of two city-states during the Italic Wars, 1494-1530, we see how a patrician's social networks of family and patronage influenced and produced biased historical recordings by these four contemporaries. Connected to both Venice and Florence through his patronage links, Pietro Bembo's skewed historical accounts reflected his loyalties, rather obligations, to portray his patrons in a positive fashion. His social network likewise prompted Bembo to paint his patron's enemies in an unfavorable light. Bembo was not alone, for there is considerable scholarship on Sanudo, Guicciardini, and Machiavelli that focused on their biographies, the historical accounts they produced, and the biases these men held. The scarce scholarship on Pietro Bembo inspired my pursuit for a deeper look in to his life, social and family links, and the patrons that supported him to show another perspective on this famous humanist aristocrat. We can only gain greater understanding by looking closer at Renaissance historical writings with the advantage of hindsight, with the advances in historical methodology, and understanding of this influential time-period.

How his patronage system directly influenced his biased accounts in his *vera historia*, *History of Venice* furthers the scholarship of earlier Renaissance historians that have undertaken similar ventures. Pietro Bembo will always be known for his numerous humanistic writings, his talent as a courtier and lover, and his contributions to expanding the use of the Tuscan vernacular as the primary *lingua* still used in Italy today.¹⁵³ My intent is that this new research exposes the intentional use of biased historical recording in Pietro Bembo's histories. I hope that other scholars will examine less researched historians from the Renaissance to discover their patron-

¹⁵³ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 387-389.

client networks that will give us an even broader understanding of the social and political arrangement during the Renaissance. Also, re-evaluating previously examined written histories, diaries, and personal correspondences from this era can possibly yield new and exciting assessments and conclusions behind the decisive time-period during the Italic Wars.

The most recent scholarship on Bembo, Carol Kidman's biography, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, illuminated the numerous ways that Bembo exploited his patronage networks and family connections to enrich himself, his family, and his friends. While Kidwell's pro-Bembo slant came through in her account of this successful and manipulative patrician, she does occasionally point out the faults of Bembo. Still, the overall tone of the book essentially lauded Bembo as a wily and intelligent patrician while minimizing the many faults he had. His consistent womanizing, bowing and scraping to his Medici patrons, and his arrogant attitude towards his peers did not endear him to me, yet, if one wanted to survive the socio-political atmosphere during the Renaissance this type of behavior was called for.¹⁵⁴ It would be too simple to create a polemic against Bembo without taking into account the fact that he was not a rarity. Instead, he was actually a successful example of a effective patrician who used his social and political connections to his benefit. This patronage network exposed itself within the historical writings he constructed.

The other three men, Marino Sanudo, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Francesco Guicciardini, also made the most of their patronage networks while attempting to climb the social and political ladders in Renaissance society. I have endeavored to use Bembo's state sanctioned history as an example to illuminate the use of biased historical recording as a vital tool that could gain favor, create ill will towards rivals and enemies, and also immortalize the author by leaving his mark on

¹⁵⁴ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, ix-523.

history. By focusing on Bembo, I attempted to not downplay the use of biased accounts by the other three men's historical writings but illuminate someone who is primarily known and lauded for his humanistic literary contributions to show that he could be just as petty and biased as anyone else. We see this reflected in his written historical works that contained more than a few examples of biased historical accounts. When his accounts were compared with one another, undoubtedly all four men shaped their writing to influence people, gain support, and create a legacy for posterity. Focusing on Bembo's historical work initiates the opportunity for others to re-examine Bembo and other men of this era who wrote histories during this turbulent time-period.

Baldassare Castiglione's work, *The Courtier*, a work that immortalized the court of the Duchy of Urbino, outlined for many of the Renaissance world the correct conduct, by which a member of the noble class should engage oneself. Witty discussions about the nature of true love, ladies and gentlemen dancing, drinking, and clever intellectual games were celebrated in this well-read book during the Renaissance. Pietro Bembo, with his friend and patron Giuliano de' Medici, became some of the characters in this widely published book, undoubtedly enhancing his fame and reputation as a learned and noble patrician.¹⁵⁵ However, Pietro Bembo also desired wealth, power, and fame, and he achieved his goals by cleverly building on his fame as an author, intellectual, and courtier, to catapult his career in the Papacy of Leo X. Later in his life, Doge Gritti bestowed the honor of writing the official histories of Venice on Bembo, where we again observed his intentional slant in support of his patron.

With someone like Bembo and his illustrious legacy and reputation, we gain a larger lens into his life and into the mechanics of patronage when we examine his historical account of

¹⁵⁵ Kidwell, *Pietro Bembo: Lover, Linguist, Cardinal*, 127-132.

the history of Venice. The examples of biased historical recording found in his *History of Venice* emphasizes the need to re-examine our historical understanding of the past. Historians rely on a combination of governmental documents, authorized histories, and personal annals or diaries when attempting to piece together the events that took place in our past. Much of this research makes valid points, but the benefit of re-visiting people, events, and locations with fresh eyes can potentially uncover new possibilities, explanations, and motivations behind the slanted accounts these men left in their writings.

Felix Gilbert wrote, “To the humanists, the purpose of history had been to give man moral guidance. With the realization that politics had its own rules and its own laws this belief was shaken, and to many the past became chiefly a guide to successful political action.”¹⁵⁶ I hope that my research illustrated the importance of having a strong political and social network, vital to survival and advancement during the tempestuous Renaissance era. I also endeavored to emphasize the need for vigilance and scrutiny to fully comprehend the motivations behind the bias found in historical writings, such as Bembo’s *History of Venice*. Historical accounts will always contain an element of bias and subjectivity regardless of any effort to create an objective and unbiased portrayal. Historians strive to present the truest portrayal of historical events, still as human beings we all hold our own personal perspectives. This will be reflected in the research historians produce.

¹⁵⁶ Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 299.

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