



# Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice

*Thomas F. Madden*

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Between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, Venice transformed itself from a struggling merchant commune to a powerful maritime empire that would shape events in the Mediterranean for the next four hundred years. In this magisterial new book on medieval Venice, Thomas F. Madden traces the city-state's extraordinary rise through the life of Enrico Dandolo (c. 1107–1205), who ruled Venice as doge from 1192 until his death. The scion of a prosperous merchant family deeply involved in politics, religion, and diplomacy, Dandolo led Venice's forces during the disastrous Fourth Crusade (1201–1204), which set out to conquer Islamic Egypt but instead destroyed Christian Byzantium. Yet despite his influence on the course of Venetian history, we know little about Dandolo, and much of what is known has been distorted by myth.

The first full-length study devoted to Dandolo's life and times, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice* corrects the many misconceptions about him that have accumulated over the centuries, offering an accurate and incisive assessment of Dandolo's motives, abilities, and achievements as doge, as well as his role and Venice's in the Fourth Crusade. Madden also examines the means and methods by which the Dandolo family rose to prominence during the preceding century, thus illuminating medieval Venice's singular political, social, and religious environment. Culminating with the crisis precipitated by the failure of the Fourth Crusade, Madden's groundbreaking work reveals the extent to which Dandolo and his successors became torn between the anxieties and apprehensions of Venice's citizens and its escalating obligations as a Mediterranean power.

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