

The Medieval Genoese Consciousness between their Government and their Colonial World in Romania by the Analysis of a Letter

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1. Introduction

Recently the historians of medieval and Renaissance Italy often discuss on the view of “political language” (*linguaggi politici*) as new tendency of political history, in particular, as a way of analysis of political thought in its broad sense.¹ In relation to the Genoese medieval history, Giovanna Petti Balbi described the language of power in the governmental ceremony or celebration.² And some articles of Christine Shaw belong to this category. For example, she examined the various registers of some Genoese counsels and found the Genoese pragmatism based on the sense of the value of money.³

The subject of this paper treats the relationship between the mother city Genoa and its colonial people in Romania, whose world spreads in the coastal area of the Aegean and of the Black Sea largely. I try to reconsider each action and consciousness of the Genoese government staffs and of the Genoese in their colonial world through the analysis of a letter mainly. The letter has its particular style of phrase. In addition to the background and contents themselves, we would clarify their mentality.

2. The sources

The sources that we treat here are L. Balletto ed. *Liber Officii Provisionis Romaniae*.⁴ *Officium Provisionis Romaniae* is an office of the Genoese Commune in charge of its colonial administration. We can find its existence at least in 1377.⁵ In relation to the circumstance of

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¹ For example, Andrea Gamberini, *Lo stato visconteo: linguaggi politici e dinamiche costituzionali*, Milano, 2005.

² Her some articles are now included in the following book; Giovanna Petti Balbi, *Governare la città: Pratiche sociali e linguaggi politici a Genova in età medievale*, Firenze, 2007. In particular, pp.323-374.

³ For example, Christine. Shaw, “The language of Genoese political pragmatism in the Quattrocento”, a cura di Andrea Gamberini e Giuseppe Petralia, *Linguaggi politici nell’Italia del Rinascimento*, Roma, 2007. pp.171-186.

⁴ Laura. Balletto ed. *Liber Officii Provisionis Romaniae (Genova, 1424-1428)*, Genova, 2000.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. VIII.

its foundation, there are two different opinions. One insists that it was founded and developed as subordinate organization of *Officium Gazarie*, the similar preceding office (*Gazaria* means Crimean Peninsula). It also indicates that at first it took charge of the ship and navigation and that sometimes it had the jurisdiction over the almost all the Genoese colonies in the coastal area of the Black Sea. Another theory explains that this office had its peculiar institutional structure and that it occurred out of the military and economic necessity in the process of the battles against Venice as the battle at Chioggia in the second half of the 14th century.⁶

Laura Balletto, admitting the difficulty of the definitions of the exact date, *Officium Provisionis Romanie* functioned from the second half of the 14th century to the fall of Constantinople and to the cession of the Genoese colonies to the Banco di San Giorgio.⁷

The above-mentioned edited sources were the Latin copies of letters remaining in this office. They are composed of 297 letters and additional paper from 1424 to 1428.⁸ The senders of the letters are Doge (the highest official position of Genoese commune) or Milanese governor in the period when Milano occupied Genoa, together with the Counsel of Anziani (the counsels of elders) and *Officium Provisiorum Romanie* etc. Their receivers are mainly the officer (podestà, consul, caporali⁹, massarius, castellanus, capitaneus etc.) or counsel in the Genoese colonial world, as Pera (a quartiere in the suburb of Constantinople), Caffa (a city in Crimean Peninsula), Chios (an island in the Aegean Sea), Famagusta (a city in Chyprus), Sinop and Samastri (coastal colonies along the Black Sea) etc. Sometimes the receivers are foreign people, as emperor of Constantinople, that of Trebizonda (Byzantine affiliated dynasty), the Gattilusio in Lesbos¹⁰, Murad II, Turkish principal, etc. These contents are various, for example, the appointment and dismissal of the colonial officers, military or diplomatic affairs, money trouble etc.

3. The main source

In this paper, I focus on a letter of this sources. I try to translate the latin text to English as follows;

.....From.doge, governor, elder counsel and *Officium Provisionis Romanie*,

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. XXI-XXIII.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.XLIV.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.XI. Other than those in this edition, other manuscript registers between 1447-1449, and between 1450-29 may 1453 remain.

⁹ The names of the highest official post of the Genoese colonies are various. For example, it was Consul in Caffa, Poedstà in Pera and Chios, and the caporali (plural persons) in Famagusta.

¹⁰ This family is originally Genoese. They were given this island by the Byzantine emperor as a reward for their military contribution in the second half of 14th century. In regard to the recent study of this family, see Christopher Wright, *The Gattilusio Lordships and the Aegean World, 1355-1462*, Leiden and Boston, 2014.

To Dear prudent men, Thome de Premonitorio, podestà of our Pera, also Conrado di Pastino, Federico Scipiono, Zaccaria Spinola, and Leonardo de Franchi Bulgaro, counselors and provisor of our Pera

Without our anger and without our grave mental confusion, we have not heard anything until quite recently. But actually they are reaching the worst limit, we didn't know inside affairs in yours, and we have not heard the persuasion for you to push forward. The dominant Turkish princeps Murad Bey (Murad II) would give the limestone monument that was related once and 300 hyperpion to the Commune of Pera, and he would build the strong and high tower with the regulation about it. He would also be eager that the tower would be equipped with his "tugra" of Turkish princeps by the will of the Commune of Pera. Your imprudence and ignorance made us angry inordinately. But about your considerable negligence — that is, you lent an ear to repeat the similar mistake as in the past —, we decided not to punish you strictly. So you don't have to worry needlessly. We give a warning to you earnestly, in order that you should not corrupt our land and people by such an abnormal situation and conspire. We know that you choose every risky way according to your concern, but in relation to what belong to such a subject as turning point, your intension should never lead to the story that you would give the permission that the princeps of another area could invade, of course, if you are eager that our benefits would protect you and that you would avoid these grave and unwilling affairs. Don't anticipate us in pleading for the aid with another princeps in order to restore and fortify our land led by thoughtless braveness and by ignorance based on illusion. By the grace of god, our enough personnel against him are ready. We hope that present letter would be registered in the "curia" in order that not only the habitants but also officials in future would notice it.

Date, Genoa, 15/4/[1424]¹¹

4. The consciousness of Genoese government: only anger and ideal

In this letter, first, the Genoese government expresses their anger bitterly. The latin phrases as "cordis amaritudine ac gravi mentis" "in pessimum finem tendentes" seem very emotional. Normally the Genoese government don't use such an expression. For example, the same day the Genoese government wrote a letter to a Podestà of Chios in relation to a petition, the phrase is very cool (Ustis petitionibus inclinati, columus et mandamus quatenus egregio civi nostro Petoro Iustiniano de Rocha favorabilem justiciam ministretisadversus heredes et bona...).¹² And also another letter to consul, massarius, provisors of Pera in the same day was written without

¹¹ Laura. Balletto ed., *Liber Officii Provisionis Romanie*, N. 25, pp.31-32.

¹² *Ibid.*, N. 26, p. 33.

emotional phrases.¹³

What is the reason of their anger in our main letter? We can notice some points. First of all, we examine the pressure and the attitude of Ottoman Empire. Sultan Murad II ordered to build up the tower marked by his tugra. He would give some money to Pera, but he would want to build it perfunctorily by the cost of Pera, The cost would be more than 300 hyperpion given by him. But it would be a more serious problem. The tower with tugra would seem a symbol of the power of the Ottoman Empire. The tower would be a coercive existence originally and the tugra of Murad II would suggest and remind us that Pera would be under the domination of the Ottoman Empire, not of Genoa, nor of Byzantine Empire.

Also in this letter, Murad II ordered that the regulation in relation to the tower would include the phrase “by the will of Commune of Pera”. He would require the agreement and the consent of the people at Pera. I guess that he might expect that they would accept this pushy proposal. We would see this point later.

The Genoese government scolds the Genoese in Pera against their ignorance and negligence. The justice and the legitimacy of the Genoese commune is based on morality and intelligence. Of course, as the phrase “we know that you choose every risky way according to your concern” shows, the Genoese government knows their proper situation a little and pretends to understand the situation in Pera, but they say only “don’t worry” and the government doesn’t offer the concrete way to solve it. In their accusing words, the Genoese government could only present communal justice and idealistic theory and also only threaten their Genoese companion in Pera into submission.

In relation to this point, the phrase “in order that not only the habitants but also officials in future would notice it” shows an ideal of the governance; the continuity of the order. In other letters from the Genoese government to the colonial organization sometimes we can find these types of phrase “presenti et futuri”.¹⁴ But the phrase is not always added. The continuity of the order shows the strong desire, the ideal and the policy of the Genoese government, and at the same time, it also shows that the Genoese government needed to dare to say such a thing. This phrase means the difficulty for the Genoese government to force the Genoese in Pera into obedience.

5. The Genoese activity in Romanian world

We have already noticed the consciousness of Genoese government. Here I would analyze the consciousness of the Genoese in Pera. There are some notable aspects in this letter.

¹³ *Ibid.*, N. 27, p. 34.

¹⁴ For example, *Ibid.*, N. 12, pp.18-19. This is a letter to Consul and Marssari of Caffa, “presenti et futuri”. This letter contains a military order to a person and is written by rather restrict tone.

A. The colonial administration system

In this letter there appears that Murad II would show his offer to the Genoese in Pera and that the Genoese in Pera negotiate with the Murad II not through the Genoese government's mediation. And also the Genoese in Pera decided their answer to the offer by Murad II without letting it know to the Genoese government.

Why does such a phenomenon occur? In Genoese colonial world, the podestà or consul are generally appointed by the Genoese government. In our main sources, there are many letters in relation to the appointment of the colonial officials. In this type of letters, the salary, whether its concrete amount or that as custom, is referred to, are regulated and the phrase “for our good practice and order” (“ad nostrum beneplacitum et mandatum”) is often added.¹⁵ At least, the government has the consciousness to govern the colonies as their order.

But the reality of eastern colonies are different.

It is known that the choice of its officials was according to the intension of the Genoese government at first, but that its eastern colonies were far from Genoa, so that gradually its choice reflected the willingness of the Genoese in colonies.¹⁶ Now I don't have enough personal and political information of the podestà in Pera in 1424 in detail.¹⁷ But we have to remember the atmosphere in colonies. It was possible that the podestà and officials in Pera would prefer the politics in preference of the intention of the Genoese in Pera to those according to the order of Genoese government, even though each opinion would be opposite.

B. The relationship among Genoa, the Genoese, and the Turks.

Before we examine this main source from the international viewpoints, I explain some pre-history among Genoese government, the Genoese in colony, the Byzantine empire, and the Turks.¹⁸ Our story goes back to the period that the Genoese and the Ottoman Empire confronted in Romania. Pera was a colony constructed soon after the treaty of Nymphaion in 1261 that resulted in a fundamental alliance between Genoese government and the Byzantine Empire until the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Pera functioned as one of the principal Genoese colonies in Romania.¹⁹

¹⁵ For example, *Ibid.*, N. 91, the appointment of one of the caporali in Famagusta.

¹⁶ Yoko Kamenaga, “Chu-sei jenova Jin no Kokkai — Tagensei no Toposu to site —”, Hiroshi Takayama and Shun-ichi Ikegami eds. *Kyutei to Hiroba*, Tokyo, 2002, pp. 325-326. (亀長洋子「中世ジェノヴァ人の黒海 — 多元性のトポスとして —」高山博・池上俊一編『宮廷と広場』刀水書房、2002年、325-236頁)

¹⁷ In main sources, the name of podestà is not normally written.

¹⁸ In relation to these relationship, the huge studies have already published. I could referred to only a little aspects.

¹⁹ About Pera, for example, Yoko kamenaga Anzai, “Chu-sei Jenova jin no Kyoryu-chi Pera Kenkyu to Siryo —”, *Gakushu-in Daigaku Bungakubu Kenkyu Nenpou*, 63, 2017, 27-45 (「中世ジェノヴァ人の居留地ペラ — 研究と史料 —」『学習院大学文学部研究年報』第63巻、2017年、27-45頁。

The indirect cause of the political confront between Genoa and the Ottoman Empire are the several internal conflicts in relation to the throne in Byzantine Empire after about the middle of the 14th century. In the conflicts between Johannes V Palaiologos who succeeded to the throne in his young age and the Johannes VI Kantakouzenos who was the chief vassal and usurped the throne, some ottoman powerful figures supported each emperor separately. Next, the Ottoman emperor Murad I and the Genova were involved in the conflicts between Johannes V and his son Andronikos IV. For example, Andronikos IV escaped from the prison in Constantinople with his wife and children to Pera in 1376. In those days Johannes V conceded Tenedos Island to Venice, the rival of Genoa and it was a menace to Genoa. According to Necipoğlu, the close relationship between Johannes V and Venice was the reason that Andronikos IV wanted the aid of the Genoese in Pera. Murad I had concluded the peace agreement with Johannes V. But Andronikos IV wanted Murad I to aid himself and promised to pay the tribute in return for the use of the Ottoman cavalry and to marry his sister to him.²⁰

After the alliance between the Ottoman Empire and Genoa, Andronikos IV attacked Constantinople, usurped the imperial title, and imprisoned his father and brothers. He conceded Tenedos to Genoa as a reward and promised to broaden the territory of Pera.²¹

The next stage of the collaboration between the Ottoman Empire and Genoa is the problem of Gallipoli, which had been once seized by the Ottoman Empire about twenty years ago, and the European had been shocked by the news. The fortification of Gallipoli was seized again by the army of Amedeo VI of Savoia, cousin of Johannes V.²² Murad I was striving for seizure of Gallipoli again at least in 1371. In this situation Andronikos IV was on the side of Murad I, paid the tribute every year, and prepared the battle at Gallipoli for him as proof of submission. The Ottoman army seized Gallipoli again in about 1377, and the city became the principal Ottoman maritime base for Balkan expenditure etc.²³

Later Murad I changed his policy, broke with Andronikos IV, and allied with Johannes V. But Genoa kept the alliance with Andronikos IV, one of whose reasons was that Johannes V was allied with Venice. The strife under the opposition between Johannes V and the league of Andronikos IV with the Genoese in Pera resulted in the compromise in 1381.²⁴ Johannes V took back Andronikos IV and gave him some domain. And on 2nd November in 1382, Johannes V,

²⁰ Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins: Politics and Society in the Late Empire*, Cambridge, 2009, pp. 119-122.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.122.

²² Johannes V's mother is Anna Paleologina, who was Giovanna di Savoia. Her existence and the activity of her nephew Amedeo VI in Orient show the network between Savoia and the Byzantine Empire and also the ambition of Savoia in Romania. In regard to Anna, see Sandra Origone, *Giovanna: Latina a Bisanzio*, Milano, 1998.

²³ Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins.*, p.123.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.129.

Andronikos IV, and the Genoese in Pera made an agreement that they would help each other against the enemy “without Murad I and his Turk”.²⁵ But in 1385 the opposition between Johannes V and Andronikos IV began again. In the same year Andronikos IV died. His son Johannes VII, successor of his father’s domain wanted to overthrow his grandfather Johannes V. Johannes VII also allied with the Genoese and the Ottoman Empire. Johannes V complained to the Genoese government that after the death of Andronikos IV the Genoese in Pera were greeting to Johannes VII as if he would be the emperor. And also Johannes VII exported wheat to Genoa from his domain in Tracia.²⁶

Until now I have illustrated only a part of the complicated relationship among the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and Genoa in the internal and external conflicts and alliances. What impression did the rather later people had in relation to these situations? Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, a Castilian ambassador to the Empire of Timur, wrote, in his travel records when he passed the Canal Bosphorus, that Gallipoli was the first place in Europa conquered by the Ottoman Empire. He also suggests that the Genoese collaborated with the Ottoman Empire in the siege of Gallipoli.²⁷ Caselli insists that this is one of the rumors that were believed as a collective image in the Europeans in the 14-15 centuries.²⁸ People estimated the Genoese as the people that would cooperate with the Ottomans.

I also present the situation in regard to the relationship between the Genoese and the Ottoman Empire around 1424. Murad II ascended the throne in 1421. He faced with Mustafa claiming the throne as emperor that pretended himself as brother of the Mehmed I who was the father of Murad II.²⁹ Byzantine Empire Manuel II supported this pretender Mustafa.³⁰ Murad II restored Gallipoli that had been reoccupied by pretender Mustafa and by Manuel II.

In this reoccupation of Gallipoli, Murad II got the help by ship from New Focea that was an important Genoese colony by the Genoese commander Giovanni Adorno, podestà and Castellanus of New Focea. This victory was significant historically. Soon later Murad II attacked Constantinople in 1422 and defeated his younger brother Mustafa and achieved competitive advantage in this area.

A lot of studies referred to Giovanni Adorno in relation to his good relationship with Murad II. Giovanni, a son of ex-Doge Giorgio Adorno, was also a merchant of alum as a member of

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.130.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

²⁷ Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, trad. by Nobuo Yamada, “Timu-ru Teikoku Kikou”, Tokyo, 1979. (クラヴィエホ著、山田信夫訳『チムール帝国紀行』、桃源社、1966年、新版1979年、62頁)。C. Caselli” Genoa, Genoese merchants and the Ottoman Empire in the first half of the fifteenth Century: Rumours and Reality” *Al-Masāq*, 25-2, 2013, p. 254.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.254.

²⁹ Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: the classical age 1300-1600*, London, 1973, p. 18.

³⁰ Halil. Inalcik and J. H. Kramers, “Murad II”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed. Vol. VII, Brill, Leiden-New York, 1993, p.594.

Societas Folie Nove (a company of New Focea). Murad II exempted the tribute from Giovanni and from this company as a reward.³¹ The rich rewards were shown to Giovanni for his alliance with Murad II against Mustafa in 1422.³² According to Byzantine historian Doukas, Murad II considered Giovanni Adorno as “his brother and devoted friend”.³³ The Adorno family was active in Orient. For example, Giovanni’s brother Giacomo, who was decided to be next podestà and castellanus of New Focea, was sent as commissary (commissarius) of Genoese government to Murad II in order to persuade Murad II to make peace with Byzantine Emperor.³⁴ In fact, Barnaba Adorno, cousin of Giovanni executed the role of podestà and castellanus of New Focea waiting for the arrival of Giacomo after the death of Giovanni in 1423-1424.³⁵ Giacomo was active in Orient. The reconstruction of the fortification of Samsun was permitted by the Ottoman Empire to the Genoese government in 1423. That would also be a reward for the Genoese collaboration. Later in 1425, Giacomo became a executor of this reconstruction.³⁶ In regard to the governmental activities, Giovanni Adorno also played a role to manage Commune of Caffa.³⁷ The Adorno is a family that produced many doges and specialists in colonies. This family has network of both Murad II and the Genoese government.

As we have already seen some example, it would be natural activities for the Genoese in colonial world to cooperate with the Ottoman Empire and people in this area would understand that they were the Genoese character of their action.

C. The pressure by the Ottoman Empire to the Genoese colonial space.

In our main source, the Genoese government was angry about the pressure by the Ottoman Empire to Pera. It is well-known that the Ottoman Empire advanced in this area putting pressure on the various forces in Romania. Now we notice some examples of these aspects mainly on the infrastructure.

For example, Bayezid I required a lot of affairs in return for the admission as Byzantine emperor. He ordered Johannes V to destroy the fortification in the Golden Horn reconstructed by Byzantine Empire. Bayezid I also required the system of Cardy, that is a judge in Islamic law, for the purpose of court struggle for the Ottoman merchant in Constantinople. There exists the record of the payment for the arrival and for the hospitality of Cardy in a Genoese account book.

³¹ Enrico Basso, *Genova: un impero sul mare*, Cagliari, 1994 (Originally published, Idem., ‘Genovesi e Turchi nell’ Egeo medievale: Murad II e la “Societas Folie Nove”’ Quaderni medievali, n.36, 1993), p.75.

³² Christopher Wright, *The Gattilusio*, p.383.

³³ Ivan Djurić, *Il Crepuscolo di Bizanzio, I tempi di Giovanni VIII Paleologo*, Roma, 2009, p.131.

³⁴ Laura. Balletto ed., *Liber Officii Provisionis Romanie*, N. 15, pp.21-22; N. 159, pp.180-181.

³⁵ Enrico Basso. *Genova: un impero sul mare*, p.77.

³⁶ Laura. Balletto ed., *Liber Officii Provisionis Romanie*, N.1. p.4: N.46, p.60.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, N.1, p.4.

As a result, Cardy did not station there, but Bayezid I required the construction of Turkish district including Mosque in Constantinople in 1391.³⁸

Through these requirement, we can find that the Ottoman Empire was interested in the expansion and the enrichment of their life space in European Romania, as the Genoese or Venetians required in the colonial world. In regard to this main source, on the other hand, it does not refer to the requirement of the life space, but to the construction of the tower with tugra, symbolic building. Pera is a district in the suburb of Constantinople and given by Byzantine Emperor to Genoa. There would be a hint to think the stage of permission of the colonization in the Genoese attitude. What is a permissible condition or what is not? At least, the Genoese government could not endure the tower with tugra, but the Genovese in colony would be patient.

D. The Genoese autonomy in their colonial world

Finally we would try to think the consciousness of the Genoese in Pera. As we have already seen, one of the reasons of the anger of the Genoese government in this letter is that the government didn't know the negotiation between the Ottoman Empire and Pera that was made without the Genoese government nor without Byzantine Empire which is the idealistic owner of Pera. Some Genoese activities in their colony we have seen show that Genoese colonists have no deeper mental sense of resistance against the Ottoman Empire than that of the Genoese government. The Genoese colonists had the sense of autonomy. They acted according to their necessity in Romania. They don't find more value in the order of the mother government than in the severe and urgent reality in Romania, where the idealistic way of government is less valuable as what to protect in preference.

6. Conclusion

I treated only one letter as main sources. But there are many keys in this letter in order to think about the reality for the Genoese government and for the Genoese colonists in Romania. There exists the difference of consciousness among them. But there remains another problem. Both the Genoese government and the Genoese in Pera are mainly composed of the Genoese or the people who have Genoese origin. There are many types of them in Romania, such as merchant, official, colonist, soldier, pirate, subject of an emperor whether the Ottoman or Byzantine etc. Each Genoese could belong to plural categories of them. And also there are special Genoese governance system as "mahona" of Chios and as the territory of the Gattilusio Family in Lesbos who have Genoese origin. In this little paper I tried to analyze the Genoese consciousness according to the category as government or colonist. But we would have to notice the plurality of Genoese mentality. I hope I would challenge this difficult problem in the future.

³⁸ Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins.*, p.138.