

# Nuova Rivista Storica

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## Abstracts

MARIA CONCETTA CALABRESE, *Consoli genovesi in Sicilia. Paolo Gerolamo Pallavicini a Palermo (1650-1654)*

*The consular post of Paolo Gerolamo Pallavicini, in Palermo, is a particularly interesting case study, for several reasons.*

*The first concerns the congruence between the status of the personage in his own country, and the importance of the consular seat which he held. During the central decades of the seventeenth century, Palermo clearly required the presence of characters with a network of correspondents and support for the leaders of the Genoese ruling class. In a phase of tension between Genoa and the Spanish imperial system, it was necessary to rely on characters with experience in financial matters who were respected at home. Naturally, this functioned better if the candidate had personal and family interests to cultivate on the spot, as was the case with the Pallavicini. Cases similar to his, of a former consul who had risen to the apex of government of the Republic, were certainly very rare. Perhaps it was the importance of Palermo, in that particular temporal context, which suggested the choice of an exceptional representative, one able to activate and sustain a network of his own acquaintances, not only in Sicily but also in Madrid. In the previous generation, another Pallavicini, Camillo, had presented similar traits. He did not become consul in Palermo (this task fell to another homonym, who died accidentally in the same year, 1644), but worked in Sicily tightening cordial relations with the viceroy, then Los Vélez, and doing business both with other Genoese and Tuscan financiers, and with Sicilians, including members of the magistrature. Appointed consul in Naples, he died soon after.*

*The delicacy of the historical context, a phase of the Republic that, after the quiebras of 1627 and 1647, saw the emergence among the Genoese ruling class of a push towards the loosening of financial ties with Spain and private mercantile ambitions, allows us to appreciate the congruity of the choice of Pallavicini. According to the correspondence, he shared the conviction of his peers, that the Republic could make the prospect of their removal from the Crown's financial obligations weigh on the Spanish authorities, in order to soften their attitude towards the Genoese. As we know, those ambitions had weak foundations, because they did not consider the changing power relations and profiles of the many actors by now operating in the Mediterranean scenario. Unquestionably, only a person of his local importance could try to develop a line of conduct that defended the interests of the Genoese mercantile and financial community, while at the same time it made itself felt in Madrid.*

*Pallavicini's correspondence indicates the existence of a project for the acquisition of status and insertion among the local Genoese elite in Sicily, which could go against the directives of the consulate. The Genoese were not necessarily a compact group; indeed, there were also acute divisions and rivalries between them, and different strategies of social promotion and placement with respect to the local ruling classes. For some, the acquisition of a noble title was not only functional to better protection of their own interests, but could also mean the passage from a mercantile to an aristocratic ethos.*

*For all these reasons, it seems appropriate that the story of Pallavicini, which we have tried to outline in these pages, should sooner or later be closely compared with those of other Genoese consular representatives.*

**Keywords:**

*Genoa*

*Palermo*

*Political affairs*