

Writing history in Renaissance Italy: the Venetian chronicle of Gian Giacomo Caroldo

NICOLA FAZIONI

Università di Bologna, Alma Mater Studiorum

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Sumário

A crónica de Veneza escrita pelo diplomata veneziano Gian Giacomo Caroldo (1480ca.-1539) é reconhecida como uma das fontes mais precisas para a história da cidade no século XIV, especialmente em relação ao norte de Itália, à Dalmácia e à zona do Egeu. Abrange os anos 421-1382 e a sua importância deve-se à grande utilização de documentos oficiais do Estado, que parecem ser a principal base sobre a qual Caroldo constrói a sua obra. Apesar de não ser um aristocrata, Caroldo teve acesso ao arquivo do Estado devido ao seu papel como diplomata e secretário do Conselho dos Dez, uma das mais importantes assembleias venezianas. Esta crónica, que ainda não tem uma edição adequada e nunca foi estudada em profundidade, tem uma tradição textual particular: dispomos de dois exemplares autógrafos, ambos conservados na Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana de Veneza, um deles é o rascunho e o outro a cópia fiel do mesmo; ambos estão incompletos e apresentam algumas lacunas. Existem muitos outros manuscritos completos espalhados pela Europa, mas que apresentam um texto bastante diferente do autógrafo, tanto no conteúdo como na linguagem: sendo evidente que existiu algum tipo de revisão. Confrontando o autógrafo principal com dois dos principais manuscritos completos, tentei determinar a natureza e a extensão destas revisões, que foram provavelmente efectuadas por um sobrinho de Gian Giacomo, Niccolò, em 1585, quando este terá encontrado a obra do tio e a publicou. Em comparação com o autógrafo, podemos encontrar datas diferentes, informações acrescentadas ou retiradas, maior ênfase na retórica e nos discursos das personagens; do ponto de vista linguístico, o autógrafo possui uma maior proximidade ao dialeto veneciano e à ortografia do Latim.

Palavras-chave: Crónicas; Veneza; Mediterrâneo; Filologia.

Abstract

The chronicle of Venice written by the Venetian diplomat Gian Giacomo Caroldo (circa 1480-1539) has been recognised as one of the most precise sources for the history of the city in XIVth century, especially in relation to northern Italy, Dalmatia and Aegean area. It covers the years 421-1382 and its importance is due to the large use of official state documents, that seem to be the main base on which Caroldo builds his work. Although not an aristocrat, Caroldo had access to state archive owing to his role as a diplomat and secretary of the Council of Ten, one of the most important Venetian assemblies. This chronicle, which does not yet have a proper edition and has never been studied in depth, has a particular textual tradition: we have two autographs, both preserved in Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice, one of them is the rough draft and the other the fair copy of it; both are incomplete and have some gaps. Many other complete manuscripts are spread across Europe, but they present a quite different text from the autograph, both in content and in language: it's clear that some kind of revision took place. Confronting the main autograph with two of the principal complete manuscripts, I have tried to determine the nature and extent of these revisions, which were probably made by a nephew of Gian Giacomo, Niccolò, in 1585, when he must have found his uncle's work and published it. Compared to the autograph, we can find different dates, added or removed information, more emphasis on rhetoric and character's speeches; then, on linguistic side, the autograph is nearer to Venetian dialect and to Latin spelling.

Keywords: Chronicles; Venice; Mediterranean; Philology.

1. Gian Giacomo Caroldo in the Venetian context

Contrary to other mediaeval Italian cities, Venice has given us an enormous number of chronicles. These are narratives of the city's history, in Latin or Venetian, mostly from its origins to the author's time, and covering a time span that extends from the 10th until the 18th century. These chronicles are of fundamental importance as documents identifying the historical view of the patrician class, within which they developed and flourished. Every noble family possessed one or more of these texts, which were gradually updated or replaced with newer ones: together they constituted what Dorit Raines has called the "political archive of the patriciate"¹. For the most part

1 Dorit Raines, "Alle origini dell'archivio politico del patriziato: la cronaca 'di consultazione' veneziana nei secoli XIV-XV", *Archivio Veneto* serie 5, 150 (1998): 5-57.

these are anonymous texts, very similar to each other, and it is nearly impossible to fully understand the relationship between them.

Among the important chronicles that have not received enough attention there is the one of Gian Giacomo Caroldo, composed in the beginning of 16th century, which narrates, in a mixed Venetian-Italian dialect, the history of Venice from its origins until 1382. Since the 19th century², scholars have appreciated it for its particular reliability and accuracy in describing especially the events of the second half of the 14th century; recently it has also been praised by Freddy Thiriet³, Vittorio Lazzarini⁴, and Antonio Carile⁵.

Gian Giacomo Caroldo was born around 1480 and died in 1538. He was Venetian, but he was a citizen, not a patrician, and therefore access to major public offices was forbidden to him. However, this did not prevent him from dedicating his entire life to the state, which he served first as a diplomat and later as secretary of the Council of Ten, a powerful office that dealt with everything that concerned the security of the state and its system of power. Both of these roles were fundamental in defining his personality and determining the tone of his work. As a diplomat, he participated in delegations to England, Spain and Constantinople. In Italy, his major role was to reside for many years in the Venetian embassy in Milan, where, according to archival evidence and the words of Marin Sanudo and Pietro Bembo, he was directly involved in the politics about the war of the League of Cambrai (1508- 1516)⁶.

After 1520, he was allowed to finish his missions outside his homeland and worked in Venice, where he served the Council of Ten. Having arrived at a quieter and more stable state in his life, he then probably began writing his chronicle, a job that undoubtedly occupied him for many years to follow, although we do not know exactly how long it lasted. His role as secretary to one of the most powerful and important offices in Venice was absolutely crucial to the work that Caroldo was about to compose, because it gave him access to the state archives and first-hand sources.

2 Marco Foscarini, *Della letteratura veneziana* (Venezia: T. Gattei, 1854), 152-153.

3 Freddy Thiriet, "Les chroniques vénitiennes de la Marcienne et leur importance pour l'histoire de la Romanie gréco-vénitienne", *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 66 (1954): 241-292.

4 Vittorio Lazzarini, "Il testamento del cronista Gian Giacomo Caroldo: per un'edizione della sua cronaca" in *Scritti storici in onore di Giovanni Monticolo*, ed. Carlo Cipolla (Padova: C. Ferrari, 1922), 283-288.

5 Antonio Carile, *La cronachistica veneziana (secoli XIII-XVI) di fronte alla spartizione della Romania nel 1204* (Firenze: Olschki, 1969).

6 Loredana Arvati, "Gian Giacomo Caroldo e la sua cronaca", (Tesi di Laurea, Università di Padova, 1962), 2-38.

The chronicle looks interesting for several reasons. First of all, from a historiographical perspective, in order to identify the narrative and documentary sources used by Caroldo, to understand whether and how much they were distorted, and what the actual accuracy of the chronicler's narration was, given his possibility to use public archives and to rely on documents more than other chronicles. Moreover, from a literary and philological point of view, a more in-depth analysis of the chronicle, which has never been done so far, may add new light on the research and writing methods of a 16th century Venetian diplomat, namely: understanding his linguistic, stylistic and rhetorical choices; recognising which aspects he prioritised and why; trying to identify the reason or the person that prompted him to write. Last but not least, scholars have been expressing for years the need for a reliable edition of the chronicle made with a right method⁷, something that has so far always been unfortunately lacking.

2. Studies on the chronicle of Caroldo

Because of their complexity Venetian chronicles have never been studied as a whole, except for Antonio Carile's controversial attempt⁸. Each text has been treated in its own right and studied for different reasons. Caroldo's chronicle, like others, has been studied mainly by scholars interested in Byzantine history and the empire's relationship with Venice. Indeed, it is well known that medieval Venice was a city without countryside and strongly oriented towards the sea and trade with the East: following the Fourth Crusade in 1204, it had gained control of the island of Crete, Negroponte and the castles of Corone and Modone in the Peloponnese. It is not surprising then that these texts were mainly exploited by Byzantinists as a source to learn about the history of Greece and the Eastern Empire. Caroldo is no exception: his chronicle has often been consulted by historians because of its completeness and reliability as a source for events involving Byzantium, but specific studies on it and its author are very few and mostly outdated. Some initial considerations on the figure of Caroldo and his chronicle can be found in an article by Vittorio Lazzarini published in

7 Freddy Thiriet, "Les chroniques vénitiennes de la Marcienne et leur importance pour l'histoire de la Romanie gréco-vénitienne", *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 66 (1954): 272; Lazzarini, "Il testamento del cronista Gian Giacomo Caroldo: per un'edizione della sua cronaca" in *Scritti storici in onore di Giovanni Monticolo*, ed. Carlo Cipolla (Padova: C. Ferrari, 1922), 288.

8 Antonio Carile, *La cronachistica veneziana (secoli XIII-XVI) di fronte alla spartizione della Romania nel 1204* (Firenze: Olschki, 1969).

1922⁹, whereas Freddy Thiriet examines some manuscripts for the first time¹⁰. Remarkably, the most complete work on Caroldo's is still unpublished to this day: it is Loredana Arvati's master dissertation, discussed at the University of Padua in 1962¹¹.

In the following years, the very few studies on the chronicle once again followed the interest in Veneto-Byzantine relations after 1370: Raymond-Joseph Loenertz¹² and Julian Chrysostomides¹³. It is to the latter in particular that we owe a more careful examination of the manuscript tradition and an edition of some extracts through a comparison of the main manuscripts: Chrysostomides' contribution, on the basis of Arvati's dissertation, makes it possible to establish that two incomplete autograph codices have arrived to us, and that all the others bear a text modified by a reviser which are less precise than the two autograph codices. All the knowledge then available on Caroldo is summarised by Antonio Carile in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* in 1977¹⁴.

The chronicle of Caroldo was completely forgotten by scholars until recent years, when the Romanian researcher Serban Marin wrote a few articles comparing him with other chronicles about some episodes of Byzantine and Venetian history¹⁵. This research is also responsible for the only complete edition of the chronicle that exists today, in five volumes¹⁶. However it is made with a non-critical method: although he knows Caroldo's textual tradition in depth, S. Marin does not use the autographs at all, neglects the study of other codices and bases his text only on the transcription of two random manuscript held in Paris whose microfilm reproduction are held at the

9 Lazzarini, "Il testamento del cronista Gian Giacomo Caroldo: per un'edizione della sua cronaca" in *Scritti storici in onore di Giovanni Monticolo*, ed. Carlo Cipolla (Padova: C. Ferrari, 1922), 283-288.

10 Freddy Thiriet, "Les chroniques vénitienes de la Marcienne et leur importance pour l'histoire de la Romanie gréco-vénitienne", *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 66 (1954): 266-272.

11 Loredana Arvati, "Gian Giacomo Caroldo e la sua cronaca" (Tesi di Laurea, Università di Padova, 1962).

12 Raymond Joseph Loenertz, "Jean Paleologue à Venise (1370-1371)", *Revue des études Byzantines* 16 (1958): 217-232.

13 Julian Chrysostomides, "Studies on the Chronicle of Caroldo, with special reference to the history of Byzantium from 1370 to 1377", *Orientalia christiana periodica* 35 (1969): 123-182.

14 Antonio Carile, "Gian Giacomo Caroldo", *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 20 (1977): 514-517.

15 Serban Marin, "Caroldo's byzantine emperors before the fourth crusade", *Porphyr* 16, no. 1 (2011): 51-74; Serban Marin, "A 16th century Venetian chronicle in France Microfilm Collection of the National Archives of Romania. The case of Giovanni Giacomo Caroldo and his compilers", *Revue roumaine d'histoire* 46 (2007): 41-68; Serban Marin, "Un transilvano a Venezia: il vaivoda Stefano Lackfi II e la guerra del 1372-1373 tra Venezia, Padova e Ungheria nella cronaca di Giovanni Giacomo Caroldo" in *L'Italia e l'Europa Centro Orientale attraverso i secoli*, ed. Cristian Luca, Gianluca Masi and Andrea Piccardi (Braila: Istros, 2004), 61-80.

16 Giovanni Giacomo Caroldo, *Istorie venețiene*, ed. Seban Marin, 5 vol. (Bucarest: Arhivele Naționale Ale României, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012).

National Archives of Romania. The two codices, as far as we know, are of no particular importance within the tradition, and were most likely chosen only because they were more accessible to the scholar. The edition lacks an adequate historical-literary introduction and commentary, and is only enriched by an index of person and place names. Thus, to date, although the chronicle has been recognised by many as of great importance as a historical source, it lacks a critical edition and a detailed analysis.

3. Research object and methodology

From a philological point of view, my study focuses on the text and tradition of Caroldo's chronicle. It has come to us in a large number of manuscripts; among them there are two autographs, both of which are unfortunately incomplete due to material losses:

- *Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, It. VII, 803*. As Chrysostomides notes, this is a rough draft, difficult to read and full of corrections. It covers the years from 1367 to 1382.
- *Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, It. VII, 2448*. This is a fair copy derived from the rough copy, and is the basis of all subsequent tradition. It covers the years from 1289 to 1381, but has two material gaps in between, corresponding to the periods of 1310-1345 and 1348-1351.

All around Europe there are more than forty non-autograph manuscripts that bear a complete version of the text. Apart from one case that can be left out, these are always reworkings of *ms. 2448*, with major stylistic changes and the addition of more information and the alteration of other, such as some dates or the number of ships and soldiers engaged in certain operations.

Whoever reviewed the work was a cultured man and acted critically, doing further research to deepen the narrative, even if maybe utilising worse sources than Caroldo, which resulted in a deterioration of certain information.

According to available studies the complete manuscripts include:

- *Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, It. VII, 128A*. It is a beautifully written codex and, according to Chrysostomides, linguistically closer to the autograph. It dates back to the 16th century.
- *Padua, Biblioteca Civica, CM 107*. Manuscript belonging to the Caroldo family (it bears the family coat of arms) and in particular to Niccolò Caroldo (it bears his

monogram), a relative of Gian Giacomo who died in the early 17th century. It dates back to the 16th or early 17th century.

On a philological level, there is actually no *stemma codicum* and it is not really known which of the many complete manuscripts are closest to the autograph text, or whether any codex introduces significant innovations of its own. The few studies have chosen these two because of their antiquity, their aesthetic features and the fact that the second belonged to the author's family. Anyone wishing to undertake a critical edition of the non-autograph version would first have to proceed to a more detailed census of the manuscripts and the construction of a *stemma*.

Having the aim to prepare the edition of the autograph version of the chronicle, my work focuses primarily on the codex *ms. 2448* (the fair copy), the transcription of which will form the basis of the edition work. This manuscript, starting from the middle, shows many signs of revision and additions by the author's hand, which involve only style and grammar. These are attempts to bring the language more in line with the literary Tuscan dialect, on which all subsequent Italian language was based after the publication of Pietro Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525), a real turning point for Italian language and literature. Caroldo therefore attempted to revise his work to make it fashionable for future publication. This revision, however, involved only the second half of the chronicle, and the reason for this is unclear: perhaps Caroldo did it in his old age and wasn't able to complete it before his death. As far as possible, it is important not to mix different stages of the text: the edition should then present the last definitely finished autograph version available, i.e. the text of *ms. 2448* without the linguistic revisions. But these should all be noted in the critical apparatus: that means it will account for a more recent version than that of the main text.

For the final part of the chronicle, it is necessary to utilise *cod. 803*, as it is the only autograph witness for that section of the text. Despite the focus on autographs, comparison with the main complete codices is a must, in order to investigate the work of the reviser as accurately as possible.

As far as historical research is concerned, my purpose is mainly an identification of sources. Since the chronicle is too long to make a detailed investigation of the whole text, it is necessary to focus on a few episodes of major interest chosen according to a specific theme. Following the history of studies and my own interest, I intend to focus on Caroldo's chronicle as a source for the history of the Eastern Mediterranean, but not specifically Byzantium. Talking about Eastern Mediterranean means coming into contact with different civilisations: Genoese, Byzantines, Turks, Sicilians, Mamluks, Knights Hospitallers, Cypriots. All these peoples appear in Caroldo's chronicle, but

not with the same importance: it is mainly the Genoese who are the protagonists, and their rivalry with Venice is at the centre of large sections of the text. The Eastern Mediterranean space, in short, is often treated in relation to conflicts and relations with Genoa. In this regard, therefore, my attention will turn mainly to two episodes, which represent the largest wars between the two powers in the years covered by the text: the War of the Straits (1350-1355) and the War of Chioggia (1378-1381).

In addition, there is another interesting episode unrelated to the conflict with Genoa on which I would like to focus: the revolt of St. Titus in Crete (1363-1367). I master it quite well as it was my master's dissertation subject. It is a very important event, as it is the largest medieval revolt in Crete and the only one in which Venetian settlers fought against their homeland alongside the Greeks; it ends with a complete repression by Venice and no help to rebels from the outside.

This investigation into the sources first requires reading the main Venetian chronicles that narrate the events mentioned, namely those of Raffaino de Caresiniis, Daniele Chinazzo, Lorenzo de Monacis and the *Venetiarum Historia*. By reading the passages that report the events of my interest, the aim is to understand whether and, if so, how much Caroldo uses information from these works in some way. Indeed, it has been shown how the Venetian chronicles sometimes tend to follow their sources very closely, both in terms of content and language. For example, according to Chrysostomides¹⁷, Caroldo's version in the complete manuscripts is influenced by Daniele Chinazzo.

From a documentary point of view, the starting point is undoubtedly Freddy Thiriet's fundamental volumes containing the summary of Venetian deliberations on Romania (the previous Byzantine lands)¹⁸, which are useful to gain an overview and quickly identify documents concerning episodes of interest. Among the documentary series to be consulted directly the most important is undoubtedly the *Misti* deliberations of the Venetian Senate, which up to the year 1381 were the object of an immense edition work (23 volumes) that lasted twenty years by the Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti. Another archival series that must surely be examined is that of the Council of Ten, the magistracy for which Caroldo worked and which he was probably able to consult more easily than the others. Other series are still to be defined.

17 Julian Chrysostomides, "Studies on the Chronicle of Caroldo, with special reference to the history of Byzantium from 1370 to 1377", *Orientalia christiana periodica* 35 (1969): 133.

18 Freddy Thiriet, *Délibérations des assemblées vénitiennes concernant la Roumanie*, 2 vols. (Paris: Mouton & Co La Haye, 1966, 1971); Freddy Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie*, 3 vols. (Paris: Mouton & Co La Haye, 1958, 1959, 1961).

4. Provisional structure of the thesis

The structure of the thesis will likely be based on the following scheme:

1. Introduction: Venetian chronicles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.
2. Gian Giacomo Caroldo and the diplomat figure in 16th century Venice.
3. The manuscript tradition of the chronicle.
4. Comparative stylistic analysis of the two different versions.
5. The sources: some examples through the examination of events in the history of the Eastern Mediterranean in the 14th century.
6. Edition of the autograph text of the chronicle.
7. Conclusions.

5. The information provided by the exam of the autograph

My work so far has focused on the philological part of the thesis: I have completed the transcription of *cod. 2448* and the final part of *cod. 803*, and I have in the meantime been able to compare the text with the two major complete manuscripts and gain a general overview of Caroldo's style.

The chronicle, which mostly seems to take the form of a continuous summary of documents, is still structured following the succession of doges as in the medieval tradition rather than an annalistic principle. However the dates are meticulously noted in a complete form (day\month\year) as Caroldo finds them in the documents. Despite these medieval habits, Caroldo participates in his own way in the new humanistic culture: he inserts direct speeches at certain moments considered particularly significant and emotionally intense; speeches that are almost always delivered by generals for their troops on the model of classical authors. Between the years 1345 and 1377, for example, there are five such speeches. These speeches, varying in length, are not very elaborate rhetorically: they mostly consist of an exhortation to the troops to fight hard in defence of life, honour, state and family. Therefore there is no ideological depth, no psychological insight worth mentioning: they are pure literary ornaments. However hard Caroldo tried literary value was not to be the primary goal of our diplomat, who for the most part maintains a flat and direct approach, without too many frills. In any case, the elements listed here show that Caroldo received a good education in Latin and in Italian, and that he was aware of the contemporary literary fashions of imitating the classics.

Caroldo's diplomatic profession underlies the stylistic element that perhaps most of all emerges from reading the chronicle. The text particularly insists on the diplomatic missions throughout the history of the Republic: in telling them, Caroldo does not just mention the event, but very often lingers on formal details and etiquette. For example, the refusal that the Venetians gave the Papal Legate in 1361 when he asked them to stop all trade with the Visconti of Milan sounds more or less like this: "May his lordship excuse them as other times the Holy Church had accepted their apologies: for the honour and growth of the Holy Church have always been an aim for the Venetian to pursue by any means" Again, during the war between Venice and Hungary in 1356-1358, the many embassies of protest sent by the Venetians to Francesco I da Carrara, an ally of the Hungarians, resulted in a continuous profusion of love and affection from the lord of Padua, who declared that he wanted the good of the Venetian state as much as his own, but in the meantime was blocking its wheat supplies and stopping its trade. This bombast seems to be perfectly natural for Caroldo: the pleasantries often obscure a clear and direct explanation of what a given diplomatic mission wants and succeeds (or fails) to achieve.

Speaking of style, Caroldo's one is often messy, confuse and intricate; sometimes certain sentences lack the main verb, lost in the excessive syntactic complexity. The chronological order in which the events are told does not always help to follow the thread: in maintaining this order, Caroldo often jumps from one thing to another, dealing with different scenarios. The reviser partially solved this problem trying as much as possible to make the narrative organic by shifting episodes positions and putting together those relating to the same scenario, so that the reader can follow it continuously from beginning to end. This operation, which undoubtedly makes the text more fluent from a narrative point of view, nevertheless suffers from less historiographical precision, since events belonging to different years or months are all presented one after the other, without giving an exhaustive account of the passage of time. Moreover, in the name of stylistic elegance, the reviser often omits dates (or parts of them) that the autograph instead shows in full. Therefore, trying to simplify and improve the text, the reviser inevitably corrupts it to some extent, especially when the original itself is unclear, causing misinterpretations, as Chrysostomides rightly pointed out¹⁹. But this is not an ideological operation. It must also be said that the complete manuscripts sometimes present an addition of new content, which can be very long and detailed. This is a sign that the text has undergone some kind of information check, and whoever made it added to the chronicle news (from sources to

19 Julian Chrysostomides, "Studies on the Chronicle of Caroldo, with special reference to the history of Byzantium from 1370 to 1377", *Orientalia christiana periodica* 35 (1969): 144-145.

be verified) that in his opinion would have made the original better. These additions seem to concern mostly general non-Venetian history (e.g. the background of the fall of Acre in 1291, or the complete story of the succession crisis of Ferrara in 1308); then names of foreign kings and popes that the autograph leaves implicit, the complete electors list of the new doges, and the introduction of direct speeches in some important events of Venetian politics, such as the conspiracies of Marin Falier and Baiamonte Tiepolo. And it seems unlikely that Caroldo could have made a new version of his work totally different from the previous one with no autograph come to us.

All that leads me to suppose that Caroldo, an educated man but not a scholar neither a philologist, a man - above all - of international politics, composed his chronicle in Venice once his diplomatic missions were over (i.e. in the 1520's). Out of noble family needs, his aim was probably to write a history of his city using as many reliable sources as possible that he could check, focusing on what interested him most: diplomacy. He was perhaps planning to go on writing to touch his era, but a work like that is long, demanding and time-consuming for a man who was already busy working at the Council of Ten. Especially since at some point, influenced by the fashion of Pietro Bembo, he must have expended energy on the language revision of the work, which was never completed by him personally. Therefore, for some reason Caroldo stopped the narration in 1382 and never published the work. After his death someone, either on his own initiative or on Gian Giacomo's instructions, undertook a revision of the chronicle in order to publish it in a more readable version: he completed and improved the "Italianisation" of the language, modified the poorly written and obscure sentences, lightened the style, added information from other chronicles or non-Venetian sources and, while generally respecting the original, added a personal touch.