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LA VENEZIA DI MARCO POLO IL CODICE DIPLOMATICO POLIANO (1280-1388)

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Unveiling Marco Polo's Diplomatic Codex Online. A Critical Presentation

Abstract

The goal of the *Codice Diplomatico Poliano* (CDP) project is to create a complete and diverse collection of archival documents related to Marco Polo. This collection includes multispectral and multimodal reproductions, uniform critical editions with consistent ecdotics, updated archival references, and trilingual summaries (Italian, English, and Chinese). The CDP uses two main selection criteria to determine which documents to include. Firstly, they focus on documents that provide information about Marco Polo and his family, such as biographical information, social relationships, properties, economic activities, and legacy. Secondly, they only consider documents that have already been published or have been accepted for publication by August 2023. As of now, 81 documentary units of evidence have been identified in 59 documents, all dated between 1280 and 1388. Most of these documents are held by the *Archivio di Stato di Venezia* (ASVe), with four at the *Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana* (BNM), and one at the *Archivio di Stato di Treviso* (ASTv).

In terms of methodology, the accomplishment of such a CDP is grounded in consistent and thorough compliance with the teaching imparted at the ASVe School of Archival Studies, Palaeography and Diplomatics (SASPD) and the editorial practice established by the Committee for the Publication of the Sources for the History of Venice (CPSHV). The SASPD, founded as a School of Palaeography in 1854 and started in April 1855, is among the oldest schools of its kind in Italy (Salmini 2015). The origins of the CPSHV, as a private cultural institution created by Luigi Lanfranchi in 1947, can be traced back to the tradition of research on documents established by the SASPD. This tradition finds its landmarks in the publications of the *Deputazione di storia patria per le Venezie* between 1873 and 1900 when it twinned with the ASVe (Orlando 2016), and in the directorships of Bartolomeo Cecchetti (1876-1889), Raimondo Morozzo della Rocca (1952-1968), Luigi Lanfranchi (1968-1973), Maria Francesca Tiepolo (1977-1990), Paolo Selmi (1990-2003). The archive of the SASPD is its long-lasting testimony. The *Quaderni della Scuola* (1988, 1991, 2021) catch a glimpse of this archive, whose mostly unpublished materials deserve to be surveyed, rearranged, inventoried, and valorised. These materials, which are far more than mere teaching aids, embody the research methods and pedagogical legacy of the SASPD and its instructors. They would be a valuable complement to the online CDP in promoting the study of Marco Polo and Venetian history. Besides this very conservative tradition, the CDP is also empowered by computational technologies with the support of the international initiative Engineering Historical Memory (EHM; Nanetti 2023). EHM calls for free access to primary historical sources in collaboration with about 130 researchers, several funding agencies (e.g., EU, Singapore Ministry of Education), the industry (e.g., Microsoft, Ruifeng Culture), and leading online repositories of scholarly publications (e.g., Scopus-Elsevier, Taylor&Francis Group) sharing their APIs. Specifically, the CDP uses the computational tools experimented by Andrea Nanetti in the EHM web-based application for the privilege that pope Gregory X granted to the Holy Monastery of St Catherine of Sinai on 24 September 1274 (Nanetti & Vu 2020, Nanetti & Benvenuti 2021).

This online application shows how diplomatics can become a gateway to research and education and share the methods of the SASPD's legacy internationally.

In fact, besides a traditional printed book published by IVSLA, the CDP will be available online with open and unrestricted access. Moreover, for each document, where the printed CDP has a complementary photographic production, the online CDP also offers high-definition digital images taken with different lighting techniques (visible spectrum, ultraviolet, tangential, infrared) in the ASVe Photoproduction Laboratory directed by Salvatore Alongi, and 3D images processed in the Laboratory for Cartography and GIS directed by Caterina Balletti at IUAV University of Venice. Furthermore, the traditional index of names of places, people and notable things that serves the printed book is translated into interactive infographics to geolocate and critically visualise place names, identify people and notable things, and dynamically search for publications, images, and videos, related and pertinent to the queries set by the user (Nanetti 2023, 13-20).

Furthermore, the online project is conceived as open to integration with documents still unpublished or yet to be identified. It is also available for amendments to established editions. Ultimately, we want to explore and test if and how blockchain technology can help the world of digital critical editions (Micheloni 2021) share digital assets and promote participatory research practices online (Nanetti, Benussi, Erbooso, Niyato 2023).