

**HISPANIC–GENOESE GEOPOLITICS & REPRESENTATIONS OF
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY GENOA**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes visual representations of the navigator Christopher Columbus (1451–1506), a major historical figure known for his “discovery” of “America” in European colonial discourse, and later, a Eurocentric history of the Americas. In the first half of the seventeenth century, fresco paintings and silver sculptures depicting different moments of Columbus’s transatlantic expeditions emerged in the Republic of Genoa. At the time, Genoa was a major economic power and port city in the Mediterranean with deep ties to the Spanish empire. The alliance made in 1528 between Genoese leader Andrea Doria (1466–1560) and Charles V (1500–1558) resulted in strong bonds between Habsburg Spain and Genoa, with both empire and republic mutually benefiting from each other. Despite this reciprocal relationship, geopolitical tension emerged, and representations of Columbus soon followed.

In this dissertation, I investigate how painted and sculpted depictions of Columbus functioned as agents negotiating Genoa’s position in the Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds. Within newly built palaces, these representations of Columbus were created to express their patrons’ values, which encompassed loyalty or dissent towards the Habsburgs, Christian devotion, and capitalistic desires from the Spanish colonization

of the Americas. Although these artworks share similar iconography largely inspired by the navigator's first transatlantic voyage, I argue that they embodied their Genoese patrons' anxieties about Genoa's shifting aristocracy, political independency, and commercial success, all of which were connected to the republic's relationship to Spain. These artworks not only helped negotiate patrician standing within a precarious social order dictated by local values and international relations, but they also enacted geopolitics—the ways geography, boundaries, and natural resources impacted human behavior, administrative decisions, and security matters.