

**Images of Royalty
in the Nineteenth
and Twentieth
Centuries.**

**Tradition
and Modernity
in Italy, Portugal
and Spain**

**Pierangelo Gentile
Leonardo Mineo
Miguel Metelo de Seixas
Isabel Corrêa da Silva
(eds.)**



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Dynastic Caskets, Arsenals of Authority, Laboratories of History: Royal Court Archives in Sabaudian Nineteenth-Century*

Leonardo Mineo

1. At the dawn of the restoration

Starting with the pioneering studies of Gian Paolo Romagnani dating back to the 1980s¹, the attention of historiography has long focused on the relationship between historical research and archives in Restoration Piedmont and, in particular, on the question of access to archives. The control of documentary memory was then at the centre of the reflections carried out during the nineties up until recent times from new perspectives². More generally, recent stud-

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* This paper is an updated and translated version of L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi di Corte all'Archivio di Stato. Strategie archivistiche e contesto politico-culturale a Torino (1831-1870)*, in A. Giorgi et alii (eds.), *Erudizione cittadina e fonti documentarie. Archivi e ricerca storica nell'Ottocento italiano (1840-1880)*, Florence University Press, Florence 2019, vol. I, pp. 223-257. The following abbreviations have been used: *Giornale di quanto accade nei Regi archivi di Corte* = Archivio di Stato di Torino, *Archivio dell'Archivio di Stato*, reg. 41, vol. I (1822-1832); reg. 42, vol. II (1833-1840); reg. 43, vol. III (1841-1846).

1. G.P. Romagnani, *Storiografia e politica culturale nel Piemonte di Carlo Alberto*, Deputazione subalpina di storia patria, Turin 1985.

2. U. Levra, *Fare gli italiani. Memoria e celebrazioni del Risorgimento*, Comitato di Torino dell'Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento, Turin 1992; A. Merlotti, *Negli archivi del Re. La lettura negata delle opere di Giannone nel Piemonte sabauda (1748-1848)*, «Rivista storica italiana», CVII (1995), no. 2, pp. 331-386; P. Gentile, *Le carte dei re d'Italia tra dispersioni, epurazioni, occultamenti e (parziali) ritrovamenti*, «Passato e Presente», 106 (2019), no. 2,

ies have assessed the organisational methods of the Savoy archival system during the Nineteenth century, relating the experience to the more general national context³. This occurred thanks to the fruitful convergence of a well-established scholarly tradition and certain new historiographical approaches which in the last decade have made the history of archives an interesting field of discussion between historians and archivists⁴.

As it is known, at the dawn of the Restoration, after the Napoleonic upheaval, the archival system of the Savoy monarchy was organised with various institutes again: for example, the Chamber of Accounts Archives (*Archivio Camerale*), which guaranteed access to private citizens for the protection of their rights; the archives of certain branches of the central administration, such as the Archives of finance (*Archivio di finanze*) or the Archives of Ministry of War (*Archivio di guerra e marina*); but, above all, the Royal Court Archives (*Regi Archivi di Corte*), which were closed to the public or accessible only under particular conditions⁵.

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pp. 73-89; P. Caroli, *Il fondo Casa di sua maestà all'Archivio di Stato di Torino. Storie di vuoti, di assenze, di dispersioni: il caso dell'Archivio dell'Intendenza generale della Casa di Eugenio di Savoia Carignano (1834-1888)*, in *Trous d'archives, trous de mémoire?*, actes du 9^e colloque des archivistes de l'Arc alpin occidental (Vaucluse, 17-19 octobre 2019), pp. 87-101 (available *on line* at <https://archives.vaucluse.fr/>).

3. See the two contributions recently published in Giorgi *et alii* (eds.), *Erudizione cittadina e fonti documentarie* cit., S. Vitali, *Dall'amministrazione alla storia, e ritorno: la genesi della rete degli archivi di Stato italiani fra la Restaurazione e l'Unità*, vol. I, pp. 21-63 and, regarding Piedmont, L. Minco, *Dai Regi archivi di Corte* cit.

4. On the intersection between the turn in Italian archival studies and the "archival turn" internationally, S. Vitali, *Premessa*, in M. Lanzini, *L'utile oggetto di ammassare notizie. Archivi e archivisti a Milano tra Settecento e Ottocento*, Cosme B.C., Naples 2020, pp. XX-XXIII e F. De Vivo, A. Guidi, A. Silvestri, *Introduzione ad un percorso di studio*, in F. De Vivo *et alii* (eds.), *Archivi e archivisti in Italia tra medioevo ed età moderna*, Viella, Rome 2015, pp. 9-39. For a recent summary of the intense period of studies at the international level, see O. Poncet, *Archives et histoire: dépasser les tournants*, «Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales», LXXIV (2019), no. 3, pp. 711-743.

5. On the Savoy archival system, see P. Rück, *L'ordinamento degli archivi ducali di Savoia sotto Amedeo VIII (1398-1451)*, trans. S. D'Andreamatteo, preface by I. Soffietti, Ministero per i beni ambientali e culturali, Rome 1977, pp. 25-32 and M. Carassi, I. Ricci Massabò, *Gli archivi del principe. L'organizzazione della memoria per il governo dello Stato*, in *Il Tesoro del principe. Titoli, carte, memorie per il governo dello Stato*, catalogue of the documentary exhibition (16 May-16 June 1989), Archivio di Stato di Torino, Turin 1989, pp. 21-39. On the tortuous archival itinerary of the Savoy records on both sides of the Alps, see the recent contributions published in the volume M. Gattullo (ed.), *Archivi sul confine. Cessioni territoriali e trasferimenti documentari a 70 anni dal Trattato di Parigi del 1947*, proceedings of the international conference (Turin, State Archives, 6-7 December 2017), Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali e per il turismo, Rome 2019, in particular L.C. Gentile, *I fondi*

The last-named, an institute of “history and government”, claimed of being the arsenal of authority as in the *ancient régime*: the Royal Archives contained a treasure trove of papers and were dedicated both to collecting records of any provenance selected to corroborate and certify the rights and prerogatives of the monarchy and also to performing the qualified function of supplying documentation in support of the political and institutional decisions taken by the Court and the steering system. This is how one should interpret the aspiration of Gian Francesco Galeani Napione (1748 – 1830)⁶, the head of the Royal Court Archives immediately after the return of the Savoy, to make it «a school, a nursery for young people, to whom he would teach the arts of government, precautionary measures, and the facts and reasons for which the public administration had, in the past, conducted itself in one way rather than in another»⁷.

Access to the records in this documentary arsenal, reserved for the sovereign and high officials, was granted, on an exceptional basis, to well-known scholars approved by the dynasty following a complicated admissions procedures, without any other formality than the *ad personam* concession of the sovereign⁸. In either case, the access to the documentation was strictly regulated and included the archivists’ involvement for assessing the research suitability and its political implications, controlling and expurgating the files

archivistici dell’Archivio di Corte, memoria di uno Stato sovraregionale, pp. 89-105 and M.P. Niccoli, *Da Chambéry a Torino: il lungo viaggio degli archivi camerati di Savoia*, pp. 107-120.

6. On Gian Francesco Galeani Napione, see P. Bianchi, *Introduzione*, in G.F. Galeani Napione, *Del modo di riordinare la Regia Università degli Studi*, introduction and notes by P. Bianchi, Deputazione subalpina di storia patria, Turin 1993, pp. 1-43 and G.P. Romagnani, «Fortemente moderati». *Intellettuale subalpini fra Sette e Ottocento*, Edizioni dell’Orso, Alessandria 1999, pp. 31-44.

7. «Una scuola, un vivaio di giovani, che dovevano essere da lui ammaestrati nelle arti del governo, nelle cautele da usarsi e nelle cognizioni dei fatti e delle ragioni per cui la pubblica amministrazione s’era condotta, nei tempi andati, piuttosto in un modo che in un altro» in L. Sauli d’Igliano, *Reminiscenze della propria vita*, edited by G. Ottolenghi, Società editrice Dante Alighieri, Milan-Rome 1909, pp. 316-317, also quoted in M. Carassi, I. Ricci Massabò, *I dilemmi dell’archivista ottocentesco tra strategie politiche, orientamenti storiografici e doveri professionali: il caso del Piemonte*, in I. Cotta, R. Manno Tolu (eds.), *Archivi e storia nell’Europa del XIX secolo. Alle radici dell’identità culturale europea*, proceedings of the international conference (Florence, 4-7 December 2002), Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, Rome 2006, pp. 411-421, in particular p. 414.

8. The regulation governing access to the Royal Court Archives, issued in 1822, largely repropounded the practices of the eighteenth century. On this regulation, G.P. Romagnani, *Storiografia e politica culturale* cit., pp. 44-45, 51.

made available. This procedure concerned only the capacity of simply viewing the papers: the authorisation to take notes or copies of the records required a further evaluation which, if successful, included the payment of fees, even large ones, intended to supplement the meagre salaries of the staff⁹. Nevertheless, these safeguards did not prevent users from grasping the omissions in their research, thus helping, in the early decades of the Restoration, to spread well beyond the borders of the Royal States both the fame of the wealth of the heritage preserved in the Court Archives and the difficulties of having recourse to it.

The 1823 visit to Turin of the Prussian scholar Georg Heinrich Pertz (1795-1876)¹⁰, who was working on his *Monumenta Germaniae Historiae*¹¹, was a symbolic representation of the entry of the Royal Court Archives into “the Century of History”. This event would come to undermine the practices and procedures typical of the *ancien régime*. Although subjected to the cumbersome process to obtain copies of numerous imperial diplomas, keeping silent about those that had been denied, Pertz, repaid the favours he received in Turin by promoting the admission to the Historical Society of Frankfurt of the president of the Royal Court Archives, Galeani Napione. A few months later Napione obtained authorisation from the sovereign,

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9. This was a common feature of the government archives of the rest of Italy on which, in general, S. Vitali, *Dall'amministrazione alla storia, e ritorno*, pp. 31-44 and D. Rando, *Il viaggio in Italia. Archivi e biblioteche dai resoconti e dalle corrispondenze dei Monumenta Germaniae Historica (1819 – 1876)*, in A. Giorgi et alii (eds.), *Erudizione cittadina e fonti documentarie* cit., pp. 167-202. On the difficulties encountered by scholars wishing to access Italian archives, see, for example, A. Luzio, *L'archivio Gonzaga di Mantova. La corrispondenza familiare, amministrativa e diplomatica dei Gonzaga*, A. Mondadori, Verona 1922, pp. 22-24; S. Vitali, *Pubblicità degli archivi e ricerca storica nella Toscana della Restaurazione*, in *Istituzioni e società in Toscana nell'Età moderna*, proceedings of the study days dedicated to Giuseppe Pansini (Florence, 4-5 December, 1992), Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Rome 1994, pp. 952-991, in particular pp. 965-975; S.A. Meyer, *The artist in the archive. Writing the History of Art with the Artists' Letters (Bottari, Fiorillo, Rumohr, Gaye)*, in M.P. Donato, A. Saada (eds.), *Pratiques d'archives à l'époque moderne. Europe, mondes coloniaux*, Classiques Garnier, Paris 2019, pp. 115-133, in particular 127-128.

10. On Georg Heinrich Pertz visit to Turin see G.H. Pertz, *Italiänische Reise vom November 1823 bis August 1824*, «Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde zur Beförderung einer Gesamtausgabe der Quellenschriften deutscher Geschichten des Mittelalters», 5 (1824-25), pp. 37-39 and recently G.P. Romagnani, *Storiografia e politica culturale* cit., pp. 174-175 and D. Rando, *Il viaggio in Italia* cit., pp. 172-173.

11. H. Bresslau, *Geschichte der Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, im Auftrage ihrer Zentraldirektion, Hannover 1921.

Charles Felix (1765-1831), «to give copies and communications of merely literary items to known persons» without further formality¹². The royal archivist Luigi Nomis di Cossilla (1793-1859)¹³, who was more cautious than his superior, immediately understood what could be, in probability, the consequences of this conferment for the jealous custody of the Royal Archives:

In this way, graduates and scientists will compete to found a colossus which, if it lets itself be reinforced, can over time repay with anything but gratitude those who, due to excessive weakness or fear, did not oppose its re-establishment in time¹⁴.

Thus from 1825 there began, at first silently, a procession into the Royal Court Archives of persons, such as Luigi Cibrario (1802-1870), Giuseppe Manno (1786-1869), Ludovico Sauli d'Igliano (1787-1874) and Federico Sclopis (1798-1878), to name but several of those who in a few years would cross the threshold of the Juvarra Palace with a very different mandate and for whom the practice of historical studies and documentary research would be at the heart of their careers as senior officials and leading politicians. The idea that the governance of the state had to be based on solid historical foundations belonged to Prospero Balbo (1762-1837), the mentor of this cohesive group of officials, which would go on to energise subalpine political and cultural life in the mid-nineteenth century. For Balbo, in fact, the profession of historian was «more a matter for a statesman than a man of letters or, to put it better [...] of a man who combines the two faculties»¹⁵.

12. «A dare copie e comunicazioni di cose meramente letterarie a persone conosciute» (L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi* cit., p. 227).

13. On Nomis, see A. Merlotti, *Negli archivi del Re* cit., p. 346, note 33 and A. Merlotti, *Nomis di Cossilla, Luigi*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma 2013, vol. 78, pp. 704-707. On his role in the Royal Court Archives, see L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi* cit.

14. «Così concorreranno ed i diplomati e gli scienziati a fondare un colosso che se si lascia rinforzare puote col tempo pagare di tutto altro sentimento che di riconoscenza quelli che per troppa debolezza o meto non si opposero a tempo al suo ristabilimento» in *Giornale di quanto accade nei Regi archivi di Corte* I, pp. 35-36 (30 March 1824).

15. «Più faccenda da uomo di Stato che di lettere o, per dir meglio [...] da uomo che unisca le due facoltà» in F. Odorici, *Il conte Luigi Cibrario e i tempi suoi. Memorie storiche*, Civelli, Florence 1872, pp. 37-38, which refers to a letter written by Prospero Balbo to Luigi Cibrario in 1825. On the members of the first generation of “sabaudisti” historians

2. The Royal Court Archives in the Century of History

The accession to the throne of Charles Albert (1798-1849) in 1831 significantly accelerated the changes in the nature of the Royal Court Archives that had begun in the very recent past. The new sovereign's cultural plans were clear. The first step was endowing the House of Savoy with a history that would illuminate its past and its military glories, that would give lustre to the reigning prince and his family line and that – breaking with a long-established historiographical tradition in the court – confirmed the Italian origins of the dynasty¹⁶. These were dynamics, already largely reconstructed, that would first lead to the creation in 1833 of the Deputation of Homeland History, the first of its kind in Italy, which was allowed free access to the records held in the archives and libraries of the kingdom up to 1560. This initially aroused stormy relations with some of the staff of the Royal Court Archives, who strenuously opposed¹⁷. But the new sovereign did not create only the Deputation opening the Royal archives: the cultural institutions created or relaunched in that period — the Royal Library, Royal Armoury, Albertina Academy and Royal Gallery¹⁸ — also enriched their collections with various kinds of antiquities

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and on the start of their studies, see G.P. Romagnani, *Storiografia e politica culturale*, cit. For an evaluation of the internal dynamics of this group from a different perspective, see U. Levra, *Gli storici "sabaudisti" nel Piemonte dell'Ottocento: personaggi, istituzioni, carriere, reti di relazioni*, in L. Lo Basso (ed.), *Politica e cultura nel Risorgimento italiano. Genova 1857 e la fondazione della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, proceedings of the conference (Genoa, 4-6 February 2008), Società ligure di storia patria, Genoa 2008, pp. 113-125.

16. G.P. Romagnani, *Deputazione, Accademia delle scienze, archivi e Università: una politica per la storia*, in *I primi due secoli dell'Accademia delle scienze di Torino. Realtà accademica piemontese dal Settecento allo stato unitario*, «Atti dell'Accademia delle scienze di Torino», 119 (1985), pp. 163-188, in particular 176. On the long-running and much-debated question, initially political rather than historiographical, on the origin of the Savoy dynasty, A. Merlotti, *Morte (e resurrezione) di Beroldo. Le origini sassoni dei Savoia nella storiografia del Risorgimento*, in M. Bellabarba, A. Merlotti (eds.), *Stato sabaudo e Sacro Romano Impero*, il Mulino, Bologna 2014, pp. 135-163 and Silvia Cavicchioli's essay published in this volume.

17. On the origins and early years of the Deputation of Homeland History, see G.P. Romagnani, *Storiografia e politica culturale* cit., pp. 81-171, 273-300 and G.S. Pene Vidari, *La Deputazione di storia patria di Torino*, in A. Bistarelli (ed.), *La storia della storia patria. Società, Deputazioni e istituti storici nazionali nella costruzione dell'Italia*, Viella, Rome 2012, pp. 117-143.

18. On some of these institutions, see G.P. Romagnani, *Storiografia e politica culturale* cit., pp. 6-37, as well as, with reference to the commissioning of artworks, S. Montaldo, *Celebrare il Risorgimento. Collezionismo artistico e memorie familiari a Torino 1848-1915*, Comitato di Torino dell'Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento-Carocci, Turin-Rome 2013, pp. 25-28.

of homeland history, including medals, illustrations and drawings, manuscripts, codices and relics, which hitherto had been kept in the Court Archives, thereby limiting the role they had traditionally played until that moment.

From the early 1830s, the Royal Court Archives were at the centre of attention of at least three key players destined to bring about changing alignments and sudden reversals of alliances, based on the contingencies that gradually presented themselves over the course of almost twenty years. For their custodian, Luigi Nomis di Cossilla, more a man of the *ancien régime* than of the century in which he lived most of his life, the Court Archives, should have continued to be the natural place to keep the papers «interesting the history and essentials of the government»¹⁹, often concealing them in the name of the higher interests of the state and the dynasty; for the sovereign Charles Albert they represented the dynastic casket from which to extract rarities for his collections, in which to find monuments to justify current choices with reference to the past or, if necessary, from which to remove memories considered uncomfortable, sometimes destroying them²⁰; for the members of the Deputation, finally, the Court Archives were a fertile ground to be exploited with intensive cultivation methods, in the interests of the monarchy, and an exclusive garden in which to curate with a certain autonomy their political and cultural interests and welcome their associates *savants* with the help of the archivists who were better prepared and less inclined to bureaucratic routine. Acting as a backdrop to this was the sabaudian institutional and administrative apparatus, which was set to definitively overcome the practices of the *ancien régime*.

The birth of the Deputation of Homeland History further consolidated the reputation of the liberality of the Royal Court Archives (and of those who frequented them) towards scholars, who in the Europe of the time did not

19. «Interessanti la Storia e l'essenziale del Governo» in *Giornale di quanto accade nei Regi archivi di Corte*, III, p. 124 (16 November 1843).

20. On the attitude of the sovereign, which oscillated between a liberal attitude to studies and the concealment or destruction of documents deemed inappropriate both for the image of the dynasty and for the contingent political situation, see G.P. Romagnani, *Storiografia e politica culturale* cit., pp. 217-218; U. Levra, *Fare gli italiani* cit., pp. 186-188; A. Merlotti, *Negli archivi del Re* cit., pp. 352-353.

have an easy life²¹. Already in 1832, that is, a year before the creation of the Deputation, the editors of Giovan Pietro Vieusseux's «Antologia» commented on a brief contribution by Luigi Cibrario with these meaningful words:

We owe this article to the kindness of one of the most active Piedmontese scholars of the homeland, whose many public duties include facilitating the most meticulous research, even when the public archives in Piedmont were not very liberally open to the learned and to scholars of all types²².

Such a reputation brought an increase in requests for admission from scholars and this grew significantly from the early 1840s, well beyond the initial plans and boundaries set out by Charles Albert himself. A new way of carrying out research had emerged in the Royal Court Archives, and this too brought important innovations in the role of the institute and the archivists who ran it: direct access to inventories, previously denied to scholars, became a formidable instrument in the hands of members of the Deputation and their network of relations, who were able to understand and to speculate on the gaps in the documentation consulted, and to ask for explanations and devise new strategies by addressing other series of records and other archives²³. The dense network of relationships that linked the community of scholars ensured that this information was widely circulated, acting as a prelude for further consultation requests²⁴. This was not only a Piedmontese phenomenon, although in Piedmont it undoubtedly was very peculiar and precocious compared to the rest of Italy. People and times were now

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21. See above note 9.

22. «Andiamo debitori del presente articolo alla gentilezza d'uno dei più attivi fra' piemontesi studiosi delle cose patrie, il quale fra' molti suoi titoli alla pubblica fiducia ha pur quello della carica da lui coperta, che gli faciliterebbe le più minute ricerche, anche quando i pubblici archivi non fossero nel Piemonte liberalissimamente aperti agli eruditi e agli studiosi d'ogni specie» in L. Cibrario, *Considerazioni sulla storia civile e sui fondamenti di essa nella Monarchia di Savoia*, «Antologia. Giornale di scienze, lettere ed arti», 138 (June 1832), pp. 40-49, in particular 40.

23. On the dense epistolary network that linked intellectuals and scholars throughout Europe in the central decades of the nineteenth century, see A. Giorgi, S. Moscadelli, «Leggo sempre volentieri le lettere del vostro bravo corrispondente». *Reti di persone e istituzioni nelle corrispondenze di storici ed eruditi nei decenni centrali dell'Ottocento*, in A. Giorgi et alii (eds.), *Erudizione cittadina e fonti documentarie* cit., vol. I, pp. 71-165.

24. L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi* cit., pp. 231-232.

irremediably changing throughout Europe, where all governments, even the most careful, began to open the doors of their archives²⁵.

As part of a new circuit, the Royal Court Archives ended up redefining its archival strategies (acquisitions, arrangements, regulations, internal organisation) in response to the mission that was becoming prevalent²⁶. As such, the Deputation's network of relations and, more generally, that of the scholars (in which, despite themselves, the Royal Court Archives had been entangled) became an instrument, for example, through which to become aware of the existence of records that should have been acquired in their own cabinets (*guardarobbe*)²⁷. The Royal Court Archives in this period pursued the recovery of documentation of relevance to the history and the government from several sources²⁸. This strong commitment can also be explained by the gradual weakening of the contribution, above all qualitative, of the institutions which, in theory, were meant to be the main sources of supply of repositories. We can remember, on the one hand, the secretariats of state and, on the other, the cabinet of the king, guardian of the secret archives that from the eighteenth century had been the temporary home of records of various provenance and nature collected by the sovereigns and sent to the Royal Court Archives at the time of every succession to the throne. On the first front, the change in the origin and scope of the Royal Court Archives was to a large degree the inevitable outcome of a process that directly influenced their relationship with the dicasteries. The archival model that came out of the eighteenth-century reforms and that was largely re-proposed

25. In general, on this process within the Italian context, see S. Vitali, *Dall'amministrazione alla storia, e ritorno* cit., pp. 44-50. On the case of Turin, L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi* cit., pp. 229-233, while on that of M. Lanzini, *L'utile oggetto di ammassare notizie* cit., pp. 321-331. On the French case, which influenced and inspired the model adopted in Piedmont, L.J. Moore, *Restoring Order. The Ecole des Chartes and the Organization of Archives and Libraries in France, 1820-1870*, Litwin Books, Duluth, Minnesota 2008.

26. L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi* cit., pp. 233-235.

27. On such strategies, *ibid.*, pp. 236-237.

28. Consider, for example, the actions taken to recover the papers preserved in the Archives of the Chamber of Accounts, those of the deceased senior officials, those transported to Paris in the Napoleonic era, those of the ancient Duchy of Monferrato preserved in Mantua and Vienna, and those of the of the Provisional Government of 1798-1799 traced to Grenoble, *ibid.*, pp. 238-241.

after the restoration made the Royal Court Archives a *trésor des chartes* rather than a real consolidated repository of records of the state secretariats, where only certain types of papers were allowed to be kept there permanently, after a careful and radical selection procedure²⁹. However, while from the first restoration the main occupation of the royal archivists was to remedy the confusion in which the papers of the *ancien régime* were deposited after the Napoleonic age³⁰, for the bureaucratic organisation of the ministries the clock of history could no longer be turned back to 1801.

The ministries had developed a different relationship with their archival assets compared to the model of the *ancien régime*, as the court archivists were well aware. The archives of the active administration in fact tended to become an internal system, an appendix, to which to turn for reasons of self-documentation, leading on the one hand to the creation of selected thesauruses of important files and plans to keep close by, and on the other hand sanctioning the crisis of the model of the archives as an autonomous institution of which the Royal Court Archives had been the archetype³¹. Thus becoming ever less effective as arsenals of authority, the Royal Court Archives found new legitimacy primarily as laboratories of history at the service of subjects who worked, albeit within the context of a broader political design, principally to satisfy their own inclinations and cultural interests. Due to the variety of purposes, the intense organisational activity carried out without interruption from the early 1820s and implemented in a declared ideal (and ideological) continuity with those of the eighteenth century, instead of reaffirming the role of the Royal Court Archives in the decision-making process of the Savoy political-administrative system, unwittingly played a large

29. On this process, *ibid.*, pp. 241-243.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234. On the transfer of the Court Archives and a large portion of the Archives of the Chamber of Accounts to Paris in the Napoleonic era, M.P. Donato, *L'archivio del mondo. Quando Napoleone confiscò la storia*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 2019, pp. 31-34. For a synthetic reconstruction of the events that occurred in the Napoleonic age in the Court Archives and of the reorganisation work carried out up to 1830, see G. Fea, *Cenno storico sui Regi archivi di Corte (1850)*, edited by State Archives of Turin's archivist, Archivio di Stato di Torino, Turin 2006, pp. 84-106, 131.

31. On the outcomes after unification of this process, which has its roots in the first half of the nineteenth century, see I. Zanni Rosiello, *Archivi e memoria storica*, il Mulino, Bologna 1987, p. 82 ff.

part in historicising them, inverting the hierarchy between the political-governmental spirit and the historical-cultural one that had always coexisted there. If the evolution of the relationship between the Royal Court Archives and the state secretariats was therefore mainly owed to the changes that occurred in the Savoy administration, it is certainly necessary to call into question the favours granted to historical and scholarly studies under the reign of Charles Albert in order to evaluate the interruption of the relationship between the Royal Court Archives and the sovereigns' cabinet and the so-called "archivi segreti." Paradoxically, it was precisely the greater accessibility of the archives that sealed the fate of the records relating to the most confidential sphere of the dynasty or to the erudite interests of the sovereign, which, at the behest of Charles Albert himself (who had been the driving force behind the opening of the archives), were henceforth preserved in the new confidential and private casket, the Royal Library, when not marked for destruction³².

3. From 1848 to the unification of Italy: The epilogue and the beginning

But at the end of the 1840s other events were knocking on the doors of the Royal Court Archives and the whole of the Kingdom of Sardinia. The proclamation of the 1848 statute was the definitive acceptance of a process, begun twenty years earlier, of the loosening of the ties between the Royal Court Archives and the Court. Noting without particular regret the end of their direct dependence on the sovereign, which they marked by promptly archiving the reports presented in audience with His Majesty from 1814 onwards, the royal archivists were concerned with resolving the question of the positioning of their institution, on the basis of an assumption that all government archives should be united as one body and rejecting the hypothesis of dependency on a single dicastery, that would have reduced the Royal Court

32. L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi di Corte* cit., p. 43. Not coincidentally, at the end of the nineteenth century, the urgency of removing from consultation the documents deemed most confidential relating to the Savoy family led to the creation of a commission that extracted them from the series of the ancient Court Archives, assigning them instead to the Royal Library. On this, see P. Gentile, *Le carte dei re d'Italia* cit.

Archives to the status of an entirely subordinate office (as will happen shortly thereafter...)³³.

In July 1850 the resignation of Nomis di Cossilla after 35 years of service ended an era in the life of the Royal Court Archives. The period which opened up would be characterized by elements of distinct continuity with the past, and by others of discontinuity. Ignazio Somis was established as the director general at the end of December 1850³⁴, after the formal institution of the General Archives of the Kingdom (under the competence of the Ministry of the Interior), on which the state archives of the other “capitals” of the kingdom depended: Cagliari, Genoa and Chambéry. In line with the policies of his predecessor, Somis pursued the attempt, which was to prove unsuccessful, to allow up the organic reorganisation of the General Archives with a specific legislative provision and regulation, which nevertheless were never officially ratified³⁵.

The project revived the old idea of National Archives in Turin, which would bring together all government records preserved in all the state archives of the kingdom, finally providing it with a staff which, compared to the recent past, would have specific abilities: «possession of the Latin language, especially as used in the middle age, and the ancient Gallic and Spanish languages [...], being well versed in political, civil and ecclesiastical history, especially in the history of our country [...], being initiated in paleography» («il possedere la lingua latina, massime quella adoperata ne' secoli di mezzo, le antiche lingua gallica e spagnuola [...], l'essere versato nella storia politica, civile ed ecclesiastica, massime nella storia del nostro paese [...], l'essere iniziato nella paleografia»). No longer a comfortable sinecure, the job of archivists was at least meant to be reserved for a specific professionalism that required training and updating through a regular school of paleography that would also be open to volunteers and external parties, subject to the authorisation of the director general. The new organization of the National Archives would then be based on uniform-

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33. L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi di Corte* cit., pp. 243-244.

34. On Ignazio Somis, a long-time official in the Savoy administration, *ibid.*, pp. 244-245.

35. *Ibid.*

ity: first in the method of archival arrangement, so as to make up for gaps in the records held by the institutes; and secondly, «in order to remove any shadow of suspicion of arbitrariness and partiality» («onde togliere ogni ombra di sospetto di arbitrio e di parzialità»), there was a recognition of the need to make clear the criteria for making records public to avert the «reproach of arbitrariness, partiality and secrecy» («taccia di arbitarietà, di parzialità, di segretume»), recognising that in most European archives «political records such as negotiations, diplomatic correspondence and the like» («le carte politiche come negoziazioni, carteggi diplomatici e simili») were not open to examination by scholars. As for communication, viewing and making copies of such records, along with those relating to the Royal Household, the regulation provided for written authorisation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was possible to obtain a copy or simply view other types of records if authorised by the director of the National Archives, who in the case of doubt had to refer the request to the Ministry. In order to act as a barrier «to the simply curious,» («ai semplici curiosi») who were increasingly interested in archival research, it was proposed to fix a modest compensation fee for the right to find, view and copy, which would no longer go to the staff but to the Exchequer and the budget of the kingdom's archival system³⁶.

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With the direct relationship with the sovereign at an end, the Royal Court Archives thus became the General Archives of the Kingdom which focused on the recovery of the most precious documentation relating to recent political and military upheavals, maintaining its self-representation as a symbol of dynastic continuity and custodian of its choicest historical memories in keeping with ancient responsibilities. After acquiring the acts of annexation of the Dukedom of Parma, Piacenza and Guastalla and of Lombardy and Veneto provinces sanctioned between 1848 and 1849, and the act of abdication of Charles Albert, the concern of the General Archives was to ensure worthy custody of, for example, the copious collection of the many political writings published

36. For the report accompanying the legislative bill and the regulation of the state archives, see ASTo, *Archivio dell'Archivio*, reg. 40, *Registro segreto di lettere e memorie dei Regi archivi di Corte*, III, pp. 70-90.

after the reforms of October 1847, in order to provide for future historical research³⁷. The clearest signs of discontinuity lay in the definitive completion of the process of opening up the Royal Court Archives that had begun almost thirty years earlier. In September 1852, the members of the Deputation of Homeland History were officially granted permission to see and examine every and any writing papers in the General Archives, without any chronological limitations³⁸. The role of the deputation in the admission of the most illustrious scholars was institutionalized, appointing the faithful archivist Celestino Combetti (1802-1880) of the researches for the foreigners which were recommended by the ministers and by other characters³⁹. Those who twenty years earlier had launched the deputation now sat on the benches of parliament or held prominent positions in the high administration, and maintained their attitude for archival research. It is therefore not surprising, for example, to find Luigi Cibrario consulting letters relating to the Piedmontese legation to Portugal to place the report of his mission to Porto at the service of the exiled Charles Albert, or to find Federico Sclopis consulting records useful for debates on laws being discussed in the Senate⁴⁰.

Alongside the definitive evolution of the former Royal Court Archives under the direction of Somis was the idea of establishing a real study room – «an *ad hoc* common room where users would be admitted on a set day and assisted by one of the archive's employees, who would be responsible for supplying them with their requested documents and providing necessary clarifications»⁴¹ — and the project

37. L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi di Corte* cit., p. 246.

38. The provision, issued by Somis, followed Federico Sclopis's request to consult the series *Lettere ministri d'Inghilterra dal 1745 al 1750* (*ibid.*, p. 247).

39. *Ibid.* State archivist from 1833 to 1875, Celestino Combetti, a collaborator and then member of the Deputation of Homeland History, was entrusted with the management of the most delicate archival tasks. He was also known for the dedication with which he dedicated himself to the concealment of documents deemed inconvenient to the dynasty, as well as for his deep knowledge of the assets of the Court Archives. On Combetti, see C. Danna, *Biografia di Celestino Combetti*, «Miscellanea di storia italiana», s. II, t. V, pp. 457-519 and U. Levra, *Fare gli italiani*, pp. 258-259.

40. L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi di Corte* cit., p. 247.

41. «Una sala comune ad hoc, dove verrebbero ammessi li richiedenti in giorno fisso e coll'assistenza di uno degli impiegati delli archivi che sarebbe incaricato di somministrarli documenti addomandati e li chiarimenti necessari» in ASTo, *Archivio dell'Archivio*, reg.

being developed for the «total reform of the old inventories and the subsequent formation of a general catalogue divided into subjects, which is so sought after in well-organised archives»⁴², that would keep busy at least a couple of generations of Turinese archivists, without ever reaching a conclusion. This instrument, Somis argued, would be «indispensable to facilitating the research of the man of letters, antiquarian, legal expert, historian, economist and finally all those who profess some part of human knowledge, since there are things reflecting the same subject, which have been scattered among a great many diverse writings spanning very distant eras»⁴³. Finally, the publication in the «Calendario generale del Regno» (the official yearbook of the Kingdom of Sardinia) of 1853 of a note inspired by the archivist Giuseppe Fea's work, *Cenno storico sui Regi archivi di Corte*⁴⁴, in which, in addition to a brief history of the Royal Court Archives, he listed their inventories⁴⁵, makes clear the distance from Nomis's opinion, expressed only eight years before, about the request from the Government of the Canton of Vaud to obtain a copy of the inventory of that country, a former Savoy dominion: «it may therefore be worth printing them and we would certainly be applauded by literary circles throughout Europe, an honour about which in truth I care little»⁴⁶.

40, *Registro segreto di lettere e memorie dei Regi archivi di Corte*, III, 63, *Relazione del direttore generale degli Archivi del Regno per il Ministero dell'interno sul progetto di regolamento per gli archivi di Sardegna* (5 May 1851).

42. «Riforma totale degli antichi inventarii e la successiva formazione di un catalogo generale diviso per materie, cotanto raccomandata in un ben ordinato archivio» (*ibid.*).

43. «Indispensabile onde facilitar le ricerche al letterato, all'antiquario, al legisperito, allo storico, all'economista ed in fine a tutti coloro che professano qualche parte dello scibile umano, avvegnaché vi sono cose riflettenti la stessa materia, le quali trovansi sparse in una grande quantità di scritture differentissime, e di epoche distantissime» in *ibid.*

44. Completed in 1850, it was published only in 2006: G. Fea, *Cenno storico sui Regi archivi di Corte* cit. On Fea's work and its influence on subsequent studies cf. L. Mineo, *Tra amministrazione, storia e genealogia. Prime riflessioni sul Seicento archivistico sabaudo*, in E. Guadagnin, M. Vivarelli (eds.), *Reimmaginare la Grande Galleria. Forme del sapere tra età moderna e culture digitali*, Accademia university press, Turin 2022, pp. 309-314.

45. G. Stefani (ed.), *Archivi Generali del Regno, Calendario generale del Regno del 1853 con appendice di notizie storico statistiche*, Tipografia sociale degli artisti, Turin 1853, 30, pp. III-XXXV.

46. «Tanto vale allora farli stampare e certamente otterressimo allora gli applausi di tutta Europa letterata, onore del quale poco mi curo per la verità» in *Giornale di quanto accade nei Regi archivi di Corte*, III, p. 184 (28 January 1845).

In July 1854, Michelangelo Castelli (1808-1875) was appointed director of the General Archives of the Kingdom. He was a senior official of the Ministry of the Interior⁴⁷ and a trusted lieutenant of Camillo Cavour (1810-1861), certainly more a man of state than a man of letters and essentially unconnected to the network that controlled the destiny of the principal cultural institutions of the city. Hence his appointment did not result in significant changes to the management of historical-archival matters, which by then had been entrusted to officials who were extremely loyal to the system to which they had been co-opted⁴⁸. It had nevertheless been the looming of «modern times» that suddenly brought back to mind the origin and purpose of the old Royal Court Archives, outlining a path from administration to history and back, as Stefano Vitali has recently observed with regard to Italian archives in the nineteenth century⁴⁹. Castelli's leadership was in fact marked chiefly by a decisive relaunch of the administrative role of the institute in terms of its relations with the ministries and its political role in the control of more recent documentation. As regards the first aspect, Cavour's 1853 reform of the central administration, which involved the transfer of the Royal Court Archives' role to the General Archives of the Kingdom, had placed the latter in the position of opposing with increasingly weak resistance, until eventually surrendering, the quantitative burden of merely administrative records that had suddenly ceased to have any practical use but which still had to be accommodated in some way⁵⁰.

In the meantime, however, a completely different revolution had brought up the highly political question of control over contemporary documents and the public use that

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47. At the time of his appointment, Castelli was an employee of the Ministry of the Interior with the title of «primo ufficiale per la parte politica». On his appointment to the General Archives, supported by Urbano Rattazzi, see R. Rocca (ed.), *Epistolario di Urbano Rattazzi*, Gangemi, Rome 2009, vol. I, 1846 – 1861, pp. 198-199 (17 July 1854). More generally on Castelli, see P. Gentile, *Sentimento, progresso, politica. Michelangelo Castelli, testimone del Risorgimento*, «Rassegna storica del Risorgimento», 98 (2011), no. 2, pp. 220-234.

48. On the changing of the guard at the top of the Royal Court Archives see L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi* cit., pp. 244-248.

49. S. Vitali, *Dall'amministrazione alla storia, e ritorno* cit.

50. L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi di Corte* cit., p. 252.

could be made of them. A visit to the Court Archives by another foreigner closes the circle of the events outlined here: the arrival in October 1850 of an exile from Reggio Emilia, Nicomede Bianchi (1818-1886), in the guise of a scholar working on his first essay on the history of the Duchy of Modena and Reggio from the Restoration to 1848⁵¹, represents a clear signal of the process that would make archives and historiography even more an instrument of political action and no longer merely a means of legitimising and glorifying the dynasty⁵². It was above the wave of annexations of central Italy and the military conquest of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies that would once more lead to the General Archives assuming the role of trusted custodian of confidential papers, this time from the pre-unification states. It was in fact in carrying out this role that the Piedmontese General Archives obtained a right which, in the course of the debate that had recently been launched on bringing the archives under the auspices of the unified state, would be decisive in the decision to place them under the Ministry of the Interior⁵³. The Castelli-Bianchi relationship had revived the historical role of the archivist, careful to preserve everything and, if necessary, to conceal papers the knowledge of which would have harmed the image of more or less well-known personages. Thus, for example, in 1862 while consulting as part of a diplomatic mission from Florence the papers of the cabinet secretariat of the Grand

51. N. Bianchi, *I ducati estensi dall'anno 1815 al 1850 con documenti inediti*, Società Editrice italiana, Turin 1852. For some biographical notes on Nicomede Bianchi and on the characteristics of his historiographical production, see W. Maturi, *Interpretazioni del Risorgimento. Lezioni di storia della storiografia*, Einaudi, Turin 1962, pp. 289-302.

52. On the political aims of Bianchi's early historiographical works, which were closely linked to the Cavour group, see U. Levra, *Fare gli italiani*, pp. 204-206 and *passim*. The publication of a pamphlet by Michelangelo Castelli dedicated to Sardinian policy on the question of the Orient between 1783 and 1784 belongs to the same period. The argument was highly topical due to the Sardinian intervention in the Crimean War: M. Castelli, *La politique Sarde sur la question d'Orient en 1783 au 1784, documents diplomatiques extraits des archives du Royaume* Imprimerie scolastique de S. Franco et fils et C., Turin 1855. On this work, see P. Gentile, *Sentimento, progresso, politica* cit., p. 230.

53. The long debate on the institutional location of the state archives in the post-unification age, as is well known, found its conclusion in the works of the commission appointed in 1870 and chaired by Luigi Cibrario, alongside whom Michelangelo Castelli sat as a representative of the government. On the subject, see the classic A. D'Addario, *La collocazione degli archivi nel quadro istituzionale dello Stato unitario. I motivi ottocenteschi di un ricorrente dibattito (1860-1874)*, «Rassegna degli Archivi di Stato», 35 (1975), pp. 11-115.

Duchy of Tuscany held in the prefecture⁵⁴, Bianchi agreed with Castelli that great care should be taken in making them public: Charles Albert's Metternich panegyrics, his hostility towards constitutional governments, the political opinions of public officials after the post 1848 restoration, the intimate letters of the Grand Duke's wife or the letters sent to the Grand Duke while in exile in Gaeta, by other figures who would go on to participate in post-unification politics. All these documents should have been placed in strict custody if transported to Turin, where they should have been kept out of memory for a long time⁵⁵.

The transfer of the capital of the kingdom first to Florence and then to Rome, after 1870 led to the transformation of the General Archives of the Kingdom into the State Archives of Turin, under the management of Nicomede Bianchi, who would play the role of trusted guardian of the memories of Savoy and of the Risorgimento for more than fifteen years until his death⁵⁶.

54. On the events related to the recovery and custody of the papers of the Grand Ducal cabinet secretariat, see S. Vitali, C. Vivoli (eds.), *Fra Toscana e Boemia. Le carte di Ferdinando III e di Leopoldo II nell'Archivio centrale di Stato di Praga*, Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, Rome 1999, pp. 45-86. Bianchi had obtained free access to the Tuscan archives for his research from the Minister of Education, Carlo Matteucci.

55. L. Mineo, *Dai Regi archivi di Corte* cit., p. 253 and U. Levra, *Fare gli italiani* cit., pp. 208-209.

56. On Bianchi's stewardship of the State Archives, see *ibid.*

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