

*Fonti per la storia degli archivi degli antichi Stati italiani.* Filippo de Vivo, Andrea Guidi, and Alessandro Silvestri, eds.

With Fabio Antonini and Giacomo Giudici. Pubblicazioni degli archivi di stato 49. Rome: Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo, Direzione generale Archivi, 2016. lxii + 630 pp. n.p.

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This book comes at the end of a research project devoted to the study of the archives of a number of Italian cities: Milan, Venice, Modena, Florence, Rome, Naples, and Palermo. “AR.C.H.I.ves: A Comparative History of Archives in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy” was the title of the project (2012–16), which was led by Filippo de Vivo at the University of London, with Andrea Guidi and Alessandro Silvestri in the team.

The idea that underpinned the research is that archives are not only repositories of documents where historians find the sources to write their works, but that they can also be considered historical sources in themselves. Viewed as a whole, archives provide information on the political, social, and cultural context in which they were established and for which they exist. Many aspects of their history turn out to be revealing when investigated: their formation and internal organization; the role played within the institutions to which they belonged; the education, literacy, and social status of the people they employed; the control over documents exercised by political power or, on the other side, the establishing of a system to guarantee their accessibility; and the care and preservation of documents as well as, on the other hand, their dispersal and destruction.

This perspective has been applied to the seven case studies, selected to represent the many political situations that could be found in Italy in the late medieval and early modern age, at a time when other countries, such as France, Spain, and England, had already started to acquire their territorial expansion. The selected cities, in fact, were all capitals in different forms of state organization: republics (Venice and Florence), kingdoms (Naples and Palermo), duchies (Milan and Modena), and the sui generis monarchy of the Papal State (Rome). Some of the cases have already been presented in a collection of essays along with a series of other case studies (*Archivi e archivisti in Italia*).

This volume focuses on the primary sources that have been explored during the research; about 320 documents are published here, arranged in six sections corresponding to the various aspects that the researchers have chosen to highlight: “Archives and Power,” “Management and Organisation,” “Material Aspects,” “The Staff,” “Archives and Society,” and “From the Consultation (of Primary Sources) to History Writing.” A general introduction is devoted to illustrating the historiographical context.

Within each section the documents are further rearranged in subsections. A final listing includes all the documents in chronological order; from this list the reader notices that the earliest document dates back to 1271 and the latest to 1814; the bulk, however, were produced in the fifteenth (seventy-four documents), sixteenth (eighty-seven), and seventeenth (seventy-eight) centuries. The purpose of the research and, possibly, the

great variety of the documents have determined the way they are presented in the volume: a date and a brief description of the content forms the heading for each document, which is introduced by a commentary instead of a more traditional *regestum*. Less space is devoted to the tradition of the text or the material aspects of the documents (although this is the subject of one of the sections): support (paper, parchment, etc.), measurements, and typology (letter, single leaf, register, etc.). Given the wide chronological range and the number and variety of documents, a synopsis covering the main elements would have improved the reader's ability to appreciate the connections between each case study and the amount and quality of the sources made available: date and place, the current arrangement within the archive, the material typology (charters, registers, files), and the typology of document (letter, reports, order, and recommendation).

All scholars, students, and historians of the medieval and early modern age will find much information in this volume, as well as direct access to the primary sources and hints for further research. Archivists will draw from the study a stimulus toward taking a comparative approach that they could usefully adopt, for example, when it comes to the history of the institutions to which they devote their working time. Finally, the historiographical aspects that are the focus of this book make it important for anyone interested in the methodological issues implied in the study and the writing of history.

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*Conduct Literature for and about Women in Italy, 1470–1900: Prescribing and Describing Life.* Helena Sanson and Francesco Lucioli, eds.

Women and Gender in Italy (1500–1900) 1. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2016. 438 pp. €32.

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Conduct literature written for, and often by, women provides a very interesting and useful insight into the evolution of the social role of women, as well as the cultural construction of the idea of femininity, throughout the centuries.

This book, which represents part of a renewed interest in the history of female education as demonstrated by the great deal of research currently being undertaken on this subject, begins with an analysis of some of the principal Italian texts published from the late fifteenth century to the postunification period (1861). Subsequently, as Helena Sanson stresses in the introduction, from the start of the twentieth century the subject of “conduct” underwent a number of changes both in its form and content. The development of new media, such as film and television, offered new models of femininity and created competition for the “old” models of conduct, which nevertheless continue to be a subject of discussion and reflection to this day.