Conti, Daniele. 2023. *I 'quadernucci' di Niccolò Machiavelli. Frammenti storici Palatini. Introduzione, edizione critica e commento*. Pisa: Edizioni della Normale. ISBN 978-88-7642-709-1. Pp. 676. Paper. € 45.

Among the many merits of the commendable projects for the electronic cataloguing of library manuscript collections (to name just one, *Manus On Line*), besides making codices inventories digitally available (and sometimes, depending on how the project is structured, their codicological descriptions as well), is that of bringing to light hidden treasures, stored for centuries on silent shelves, unknown to scholars. This is what happened to Daniele Conti in August 2020 during the final stage of the cataloging of the Palatino collection of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence, when he discovered the codex marked Pal.E.B.15.9 striscia 1413, a manuscript composed of three distinct units but structured as one volume brought together by a single *concepteur*: one of these sections, consisting of circa one hundred papers containing writings on the history of Florence, includes the note "Niccolò Machiavelli", written by Giuliano de' Ricci, Machiavelli's nephew. Conti's impressive work provides scholars with a critical and annotated edition of these papers (and more).

The *Indice* is followed by a *Tavola delle abbreviazioni* divided into two macro-sections: the first contains the acronyms of the *Archivi, biblioteche e fondi* consulted; the second presents the *Abbreviazioni bibliografiche* relating to the *Opere* of Niccolò Machiavelli, to the *Fonti ed edizioni di riferimento* and, eventually, to *Letteratura critica e strumenti bibliografici* (this latter section, a reasoned and selected bibliography, within the *maremagnum* of contributions on the Segretario's work, is of great usefulness). Finally, we find the *Sigle* of the six examined codices repeatedly cited in the volume and of the printed works of the years 1796–1799.

Placed at the opening of the volume as a preface is an interesting contribution (*Qualche riga su una biblioteca fiorentina*) by David Speranzi, librarian of the Central Library of Florence. Here Speranzi retraces the sequence of events related to the Ricci di Santa Croce library collection and the discovery of the codex mentioned above. He appropriately recalls that "catalogazione, studio delle biblioteche antiche, dei loro inventari, dei segni di possesso, riconoscimenti di mani, ricostruzione di rapporti stemmatici, edizioni di testi sono tutte attività inestricabilmente legate l'una all'altra; che non possono fare a meno dell'altra. Sono, forse, semplicemente, soltanto filologia" ["cataloguing, the study of ancient libraries, their inventories, signs of ownership, recognition of hands, reconstruction of

stemmatic relations, and editions of texts are all inextricably linked to one another; which cannot do without the other. They are, perhaps, nothing but philology"] (xxix).

In the *Premessa*, the author draws attention to the need to locate Machiavelli's historiographical work within the intellectual milieu of the Florentine Cancelleria at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Cancelleria was a veritable laboratory in which, through a collective process, a new way of thinking about politics from an historical point of view (and from a political one about history) was formed and from which came a new genre of writings on the contemporary history of Florence: unfinished texts with a hybrid status, halfway between historiographical compilations and government writings. The Florentine Cancelleria was an environment in which historical research proceeded side by side with administrative tasks, in a productive exchange between private and bureaucratic desks. The author notes that, among the challenges associated with this work, there is, in addition to digging into the archival sources, the reflection on the relationship between autography and authorship in a text that is stratified in multiple draftings (not all of which can be traced back to a single compiler) and, by its very nature and origin, open to reworkings throughout its various phases of transmission. Indeed, the same degree of commitment should be made both to the study of these working and service materials and to the reconstruction of the Segretario's real library, as these writings "furono presenza costante, pronti a essere compulsati, sullo stesso tavolo su cui venivano strutturandosi i manoscritti originali dei capolavori del pensiero politico e militare machiavelliano" ["have been a constant presence, ready to be perused, on the same table on which the original manuscripts of Machiavelli's masterpieces of political and military thought were being structured"] (xxxiii).

We also consider indeed worthy of attention Conti's reflection, placed in the acknowledgments section, on the fact that the discovery of the codex at issue did not occur by mere chance but as part of a structured and well-directed cataloguing project. The enhancement of the library's cultural heritage and the scientific research will only be able to proceed fruitfully in the presence of a systematic — and not episodic — research into the fonds.

The volume continues with *Parte I*, which contains a very thorough *Studio introduttivo* divided into seven sections that document the stages of the critical editor's meticulous work by systematizing the proper tools of philology, palaeography, and history.

The first section, entitled *Tradizione e percorsi editoriali del 'laboratorio' storiografico della Cancelleria*, reminds the reader that, by provision of the Cancelleria reform of 1483, one of the Signoria's secretaries was entrusted with the task of drafting an annalistic chronicle of the city of Florence: a simple compilation, in which the dates were followed by brief textual nuclei. This work did not cease even after the fall of the regime in 1494 and during the subsequent, discontinuous governments it also saw, among its drafters, Machiavelli himself.

The Segretario was in fact the protagonist, together with his colleagues and the various assistants of the Cancelleria, of a perusal of documents to be considered preparatory to the actual historical writing that was carried out on chancery documents and on summaries of dispatches from Florentine ambassadors abroad. These notes were drafted into the so-called "quadernucci", a term that can have the double meaning of "register" or its codicological subspecies "fascicles", of different consistencies lacking both binding and aesthetic quality These notes were left in a disordered and fragmentary state, the same condition of the Machiavelli archive generally, until they were inherited by Machiavelli's grandson Giuliano de' Ricci, who was the first to organize his grandfather's papers; in fact, with the help of five assistants, he not only reorganized the papers, ordering them into "filze", but also assembled the most famous Machiavellian manuscript (marked Pal. E.B.15.10) known as Apografo Ricci, in which he brought together all the material that gradually emerged from the "quadernucci" organized in "scatole". He devoted particular care to the page layout, to prefixing introductory notes to the individual copied texts, and to accompanying them with brief exegetical notes.

A further and singular merit of De' Ricci was, moreover, the prudence he showed in conferring authorship credentials on writings whose autograph writings he had not inherited. In that regard, the authorship itself was the principle upon which he decided whether or not to accept inherited documents into the Apografo Ricci.

Thanks to his expertise and precision, Conti provides concrete examples of the exegetical and ecdotical strategies implemented by Giuliano, and retraces the tortuous paths of the handwritten and editorial transmission of the historical drafts. This scholarly labor recalls that involved in erudite preparation of the *editiones principes* of Machiavelli's writings in the six volumes of the *Opere* published by Cambiagi (1782–1783), and in the six volumes of the *Opere complete* edited by Gaetano Milanesi and Luigi Passerini, published by the Cenniniana Typography between 1873 and 1877.

In the second section, *Un'appendice all'Apografo Ricci*, the author provides an accurate codicological description of the Palatino codex examined, a manuscript that took on its current features on De' Ricci's desk in the second half of the sixteenth century and that, as previously mentioned, consists of three parts: the first a *Cronica domestica* by Donato Velluti; the third a fragment of the *Istoria fiorentina* by Domenico Buoninsegni; and the second, the Machiavellian section, the fragment "*Settenbre '96*", followed by historical excerpts, unpublished and unknown, covering a chronological span from April 1497 to September 1499, and a chronicle of events from June 1498 to September 1515. In the following pages, Conti pieces together the history of this codex, identifies, where possible, its copyists, and adduces philological, codicological, and historical evidence in favor of the Machiavellian authorship of the codex's antigraph.

In the third section, called *Frammento I*, the author examines the passage included in the first quadernuccio concerning the diplomatic mission of Cosimo de' Pazzi and Francesco Pepi to the imperial court, and analyzes the relationship between this witness and the printout made about it in 1796.

The fourth section, *Nuovi spogli storici*, covers a chronological span between May 1497 and September 1499, corresponding to the stay of some Florentine diplomats with Ludovico Sforza, and gives an account of the Segretario's work that consisted in filing the dispatches they received. The narrative cores are linear, their focus on the events of that time is internal, as it is filtered through the testimonies and judgments on those diplomatic negotiations expressed by the Florentine ambassadors. Conti, deepening his investigation into the archives, skillfully identifies the direct sources chosen and used by Machiavelli within the vast chancery documentation, and provides concrete examples by juxtaposing the narrative core with the original source. He even goes so far as to note that such a work of first-hand information perusal must necessarily be attributable to the period prior to the Segretario's removal from office, when he still could have access to all the documents preserved in the Republic archives.

The author thus underlines the importance of Machiavelli's work notes. According to Machiavelli, listing "le moderne cose" was not only the carrying out of an official duty, but also the beginning of a process of the historicization of a single event that had to be framed in terms of a detached critical evaluation. At the end of this section, there is also a *Nota al testo* in which the author explains the reasons behind his choices as an editor in relation to the *Nuovi spogli storici*, characterized by numerous reading uncertainties.

The fifth section *(Il Summario Palatino e Biagio Buonaccorsi tra Summario Riccardiano, Storia Fiorentina e Diario)*, perhaps the most complex and consistent one, introduces the figure of Biagio Buonaccorsi, coadjutor of the Segreteria and friend of Machiavelli, and traces the editorial process by which Buonaccorsi started from the information recorded in the *Summario Palatino* (as the third section of the Machiavellian part of the codex we are interested in is called) and arrived at drawing up his own, autonomous historical narrative. The latter is written, in an initial editorial phase, in the codex Riccardiano 1920 (defined as *Summario Riccardiano*: this is a terse annalistic compilation that serves as a starting point for the subsequent work); it then passes through an intermediate editing — which is revised in terms of content and form — reported in the codex Corsiniano 320, called *Storia fiorentina de' suoi tempi*, before leading to the *Diario*, which is structured as a fully developed historiographical work.

In this chapter, Conti skillfully reconstructs the relationships between the witnesses of the various drafting phases, arguing that the Palatino codex displays the original editing that is the basis for the subsequent versions of Buonaccorsi's historiographical work. According to the author's tight argumentation, the lost Palatino antigraph is Machiavelli's authentic handwriting, and must therefore be placed at the top of the manuscript tradition.

In addition to the more specifically philological aspects described above, what is of great interest in this chapter is not only the importance of the many consonances that exist between the historical elements present in the *Summario Palatino* and the cores of thought found in the Segretario's major works (the disapproval of the use of mercenary troops; the outlining of some peculiar features in Cesare Borgia's character; the description of Ramiro de Lorca's murder), but also the considerations of Machiavelli's behavior after his removal from office. He was not secluded in the exile of the Albergaccio, but, on the contrary, managed to keep abreast of the latest news in international and domestic politics.

This fifth section ends with a further reflection on the historiographical work carried out in the Cancelleria ("sotto lo scheletro narrativo del *Summario Palatino* [. . .] si può intravedere la molteplicità delle voci degli autori dei suoi ipotesti: un lavoro collettivo condotto gomito a gomito da segretari, coadiutori e altri funzionari" ["under the narrative skeleton of the *Summario Palatino* [. . .] one can glimpse the multiplicity of the voices of the authors of its hypotexts: a collective work carried out side by side by secretaries, assistants and other officials"] [clxxix]), and on the connection between autography and authorship, together with a *Nota al testo*, in which

Conti explains that his editorial choices were driven by a conservative criterion in relation to a text with various types of corruptions.

The sixth section of the introductory study features a *Nota linguistica:* after having reaffirmed with almost absolute certainty that the Palatino codex descended directly from a lost autograph by Machiavelli, the author analyzes the handwriting aspects (identifying two copyists employed in the preparation of the codex), the phonetic peculiarities (in terms of vocalism and consonantism), the morphology and syntax of the text (the latter presenting a degree of formalization "lontano dalla prosa d'arte e più vicino ai modi del parlato tipici della prosa media che caratterizza anche molta produzione cronachistica" ["far from art prose and closer to the speech patterns typical of the average prose that characterizes a lot of the chronicle production"] [ccxv]).

The seventh section contains the *Criteri di edizione* of the text: among the choices made by the editor we should point out the essentially conservative criteria for the transcription, the dissolution of the abbreviations and the adaptation to the prevailing extended form, the paragraphing of the texts according to the *cola* that correspond to a syntactic sentence, and the organization of the *Summario Palatino* into chapters in an attempt to follow the original chronological subdivision. Moreover, the extensive commentary is intended to serve as an aid to understanding the texts. It includes, among other information, the discussion of the sources that underlie the recounted elements. It is also worth emphasizing the decision to adopt peculiar typographical solutions to mark the references used in the *Summario Palatino* and *Riccardiano.*

The *Parte II* finally presents *Testi e Commento*, respectively of the *Frammento I*, the *Nuovi spogli storici,* and the *Summario Palatino.* The *Appendice I (Summario and Storia fiorentina XI–XV)* contains Biagio Buonaccorsi's texts, namely a new complete edition of the *Summario* and the re-edition of the section of the *Storia fiorentina* referring to the years 1508–1512, while the *Appendice II* contains the *Memorie delle guerre d'Italia dal 1498 al 1500* (an unknown witness of the textual history that led from Machiavelli's *Summario Palatino* to Buonaccorsi's *Diario*). The list of *Crediti Fotografici*, the *Indice dei manoscritti,* and the *Indice dei nomi* close the volume.

Among the many merits of this book — in addition to the obvious one of having given voice to Machiavelli's hitherto silent writings — are the numerous synoptic comparisons between different versions of a text, as well as the rich selection of images (which are provided, for example, where the transcription of a passage is reported) that allow us, in a way, to visualize

the page (or a part of it) of the codex and get a glimpse of its physical dimensions which, otherwise, one could only experience by analyzing the manuscripts *de visu* in the consultation rooms of libraries.

The expertise in the use of tools typical of different disciplines, the philological acuity, and the analytical depth make this volume a true lesson in method. The author's wish will certainly not fall on deaf ears: once the texts have been brought to light, "il testimone può passare agli storici della cultura politica, letteraria e storiografica fiorentina tra Quattro e Cinquecento" ["the baton can pass to historians of the Florentine political, literary and historiographical culture between the 15th and 16th centuries"] (clxxxii).

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