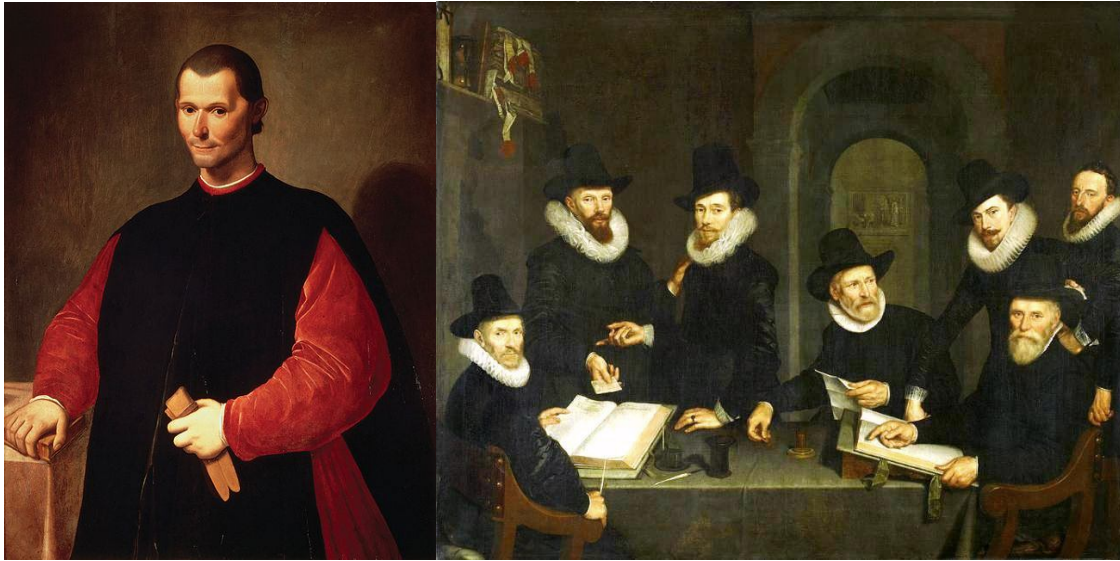


ARCHIVES

The Comparative History of Archives in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy



POLITICS AND THE ARCHIVES, POLITICS OF THE ARCHIVES A one-day conference

Monday 10 June 2013, Birkbeck, University of London, 11am-5pm
Birkbeck Main Building, Room 538

The history of archives reveals the evolving priorities of the institutions that assembled them; their shifting organization reflects changes in wider worldviews; and the conditions of their use point to developments not just in political but also in social and cultural history. A new project led by Filippo de Vivo at Birkbeck, University of London, studies the history of archives and of the chanceries that oversaw their production, storage and organization in late medieval and early modern Italy. More information at <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/history/archives/>. After workshops about recent tendencies in the history of archives, and about the role of archives in provincial communities, this conference investigates the relations between politics and archives. Why did governments invest so much energy in the preservation of astonishing amounts of records? How were the chanceries of republics different from those of principalities, and how did archives evolve following regime changes? When and where did secular institutions start relying on their own authority rather than utilising the services of imperial- or papal-notaries? And how Italy compare with other European cases?

Places are limited. There is no fee. Tea and coffee will be provided, but no lunch. If you would like to participate, please write to Dr Alessandro Silvestri at a.silvestri@bbk.ac.uk.

- 9.30 **Filippo de Vivo, Andrea Guidi and Alessandro Silvestri** (Birkbeck, University of London), Welcome and introduction, brief presentation of the team's work progress.
- 10.00- Chair: **Alison Brown** (Royal Holloway, University of London)
- 13.00 **Lorenzo Tanzini** (Università di Cagliari) 'Archives and the management of public records in 14th-century Florence'
Francesca Klein (Archivio di Stato, Florence) 'Chancellors and secretaries in early 16th-century Florence'
Marcello Simonetta (Paris College of Art) 'Closest to the Prince's Ear: Secretaries in Milan and Florence (1450-1494 & 1512-1521)'
Discussion
- 14.30- Chair: **Vanessa Harding** (Birkbeck, University of London)
- 17.00 **Randolph Head** (University of California, Riverside) 'Inventories as Political Acts: Shifts in recordkeeping practices at the end of the Middle Ages.'
Eric Ketelaar (University of Amsterdam) 'Accountability portrayed: Documents on regents' group portraits in the Dutch Golden Age.'
Discussion

Abstracts

Randolph Head, 'Inventories as Political Acts: Shifts in recordkeeping practices at the end of the Middle Ages.' The rapid formation of chancery archives in European political centers after 1400, the considerable resources Renaissance rulers put into managing these repositories, and the way they represented document collections in their deliberations and textual products all make it clear that archives around 1500 represented - among other roles - profoundly political phenomena. Recent research by Navarro Bonilla and others has highlighted representational changes in this era, and political historiography often assumes the salience of the emerging archives as tools for intensified dominion, but understanding of archival management as practice in this period remains largely tied to the functional perspectives of earlier scholarship. My presentation will explore one highly technical aspect of late medieval and 16th-century recordkeeping in chancelleries, the creation of inventories, as a site of political as well as functional choices. By investigating diverse approaches to the production of inventories, as seen in Paris, Innsbruck and the prince-bishopric of Würzburg, and connecting inventorying practices to the political circumstances prevailing in each case, I will seek to reconnect changes seen in the archives to the evolving political terrain of early modern governance.

Eric Ketelaar, 'Accountability portrayed. Documents on regents' group portraits in the Dutch Golden Age.' In 1617/18 Cornelis van der Voort painted the regents of three institutions in Amsterdam. Nearly all have documents, either in their hands or within hand's reach. On the table are registers, charters and other archival documents. This new way of depicting regents emphasized the efficiency and effectiveness of their handling the business of the charitable institutions. The new format became very popular: thirty three portraits of regents boards of charitable institutions in Amsterdam have been preserved from the years 1617 to 1686. The popularity of the genre decreases in Amsterdam during the last quarter of the 17th century and increases again some 50 years later. I argue that this was because of changing notions about accountability and governance. Van der Voort's format was followed in Haarlem, but there the documents on the regents group portraits served as mere props, reflecting a culture of accountability which was different from that in Amsterdam in the first decades of the 17th century.

Francesca Klein, 'Chancellors and secretaries in early 16th-c. Florence.' The Machiavellian moment has long been seen as the last period of flourishing political life and thought in republican Florence, forced to defend itself against the power of monarchies and principalities. In reality, the institutional changes in government organization were considerable during the 15th century. The constitutional scenario in 1498, when Niccolò Machiavelli was appointed Secretary of the Signoria, was very different from that of the medieval comune. The profile of the Chancellor changed too. This paper illustrates the role of the Florentine Secretary at the beginning of the 16th century and the relationships between him, his political interlocutors and his collaborators. During the rule of Pier Soderini, Machiavelli had a growing political role, dealing with the correspondence of officers and commissioners and with strategic missions. In these activities he was supported by several "coadiutori" such as Biagio Buonaccorsi and Agostino Vespucci. In particular, Vespucci shared with Machiavelli an unconventional approach to observing political affairs and enthusiasm for a renewal of institutional life under the authority of Soderini. He participated in this project with all his profound cultural resources, as witnessed by his interesting personal library.

Marcello Simonetta, 'Closest to the Prince's Ear: Secretaries in Milan and Florence (1450-94 & 1512-21).' This paper aims first to show the workings of the Sforza Chancery organized by Cicco Simonetta, who created a whole new system of archiving documents and dispatches, optimizing the web of Milanese ambassadors and agents around Italy and Europe. Cicco's counterpart in Florence was Chancellor Bartolomeo Scala, thoroughly studied by Alison Brown. Scala was the public face of the Florentine Republic, although diplomatic communications were exchanged on a private level between Lorenzo the Magnificent and his secretaries. After 1512, when the Medici returned to Florence and Leo X became pope, without the republican pretense a different role was to be played by their secretaries – such as Bernardo Bibbiena, Piero Ardinghelli, Goro Gheri and Francesco Vettori.

Lorenzo Tanzini, 'Ad reinveniendum iura communis. Archives and management of public records in 14th-c. Florence.' This paper aims to outline the evolution of the public archive of the florentine city-state during the 14th century, in close relation with the history of the growth of legislative activity of the commune. The daily deliberations of city councils (Provvisioni) were the backbone of the whole public documentation. This documentary production had to be managed, in order to make it a useful archive for public government: during the 14th century, Florence improved its systems of records management, and in particular Provvisioni and Statutes were provided with titles and indexes, in order to find out names and subjects among the great amount of deliberations lying in the archive (that is, 'ad reinveniendum iura communis'). An autonomous series of registers – the so-called Carte di Corredo – was drawn up and accurately updated as an inventory of terms and contents of the Provvisioni. At the same time, a central system was set up to gather all the charters and agreements with allies or subject towns: the Capitoli. As a consequence of the evolution here considered, a global inventory of communal archives was drawn up in the early 15th century. It was a mere description of registers, but such a huge material had already begun to be organized and ordered.