

ANONYMOUS, *Relationi delli Principi de Italia* (Accounts of the Rulers of Italy)

In Italian, manuscript on paper

Italy (Tuscany?), 1605

16 folios on paper, modern foliation in pencil bottom right recto corner, complete, two watermarks, first, 1-10, a bird in a circle standing on mound, similar to Briquet no. 12247, Pisa, 1598-1604, 11-16, second, 11-16, bird in a circle with a six point star atop, similar to Briquet no. 12251, Salerno 1590, (collation i¹⁶), catchwords on each verso, blind ruling on vertical margins, no line ruling (ruled space 153 mm)., written in Italian cursive script in brown ink in 24 long lines, at the beginning of each paragraph capitals are written outside the vertical bounding line, tear at the bottom of f. 12, top right of f. 13, top of f. 14, and top right of f. 16, otherwise good condition. Modern binding, blue paper cover with typed title pasted on the front cover, *Relatione [sic] delli Principi de Italia*, Dimensions 260 x 196 mm.

Modern diplomacy with our embassies and their ambassadors come into focus in this modest paper pamphlet. It belongs to an understudied category of Early Modern documents that consist of records known as *Relazioni* that ambassadors compiled on their travels and residencies, a practice that began already in the fifteenth century. Most likely written by an Italian ambassador of the early 17th century in an irregular cursive script, this set of unpublished diplomatic records offers a snapshot of the Italian political scene at the time of its creation and survives as an excellent reminder of the pervasive manuscript culture that existed after the popularization of print.

PROVENANCE

1. We know that the manuscript was produced in 1605 based on internal evidence on f. 9, where the eldest son of Carlo Emanuele I, the *principe* of Savoy, is said to be eighteen years old. The son can be identified as Vittorio Amedeo, who was born in 1587. The fact that the text spends little time discussing Tuscany might be an argument for the localization of the manuscript there, since an ambassador would not concentrate on his own region.
2. Name added in pencil below the typed title pasted on the front cover, "Pla<n?>t<u?>."
2. Owners' or booksellers' annotation inside of the back cover in pencil, "3535 ike."

TEXT

f. 1-16, *Relationi delli Principi de Italia*, incipit, "La Provincia di Italia è divisa in undici Principati, li altri Signori quacunque habtino il puro, e mero, et misto Imperio con autorità di fabricar moneta di oro, et di argento... La signoria de Genova si era contentata di riceverlo feudatario, mà egli ha amato meglio di vivere libero e pieno di sospetto."

The text of *Relationi delli Principi de Italia* is unpublished, but it does mention the popular political handbook, *Thesoro Politico*, first published in Paris in 1589 (f. 7). The text of this manuscript also

shares a similar title and *incipit* with two texts found in Italian manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS Rawlinson D.623, saec. XVII, f. 325, title, *Relatione dello stato e forze di tutti li principii*; and MS Rawlinson D.624, saec. XVII, f. 254, title, *Relatione dello stato e forze di tutti gli principii d'Italia*; both texts include the *incipit*: "La provincia d'Italia e divisa in undici principati..."). These other *Relationi* probably share a similar structure, but different particulars based on their date and place of composition.

During the fifteenth century, cities throughout the Italian peninsula had established stable and permanent embassies. Ambassadors from one city would stay in residence at the embassy in another city and maintain political relations between both cities. By fostering ambassadorial relations, Italian cities and their politicians could peacefully resolve disputes and disagreements without the bloody expedient of war, although as Machiavelli's *The Prince* attests wars were still initiated on the peninsula by foreign and domestic combatants. The Italian Wars (1494-1559), involving France, Spain, and Italy, marked a turning point for the employment and use of international embassies. The information ambassadors could supply about foreign affairs in Italy proved to be invaluable to the French and Spanish (Dover, 2015, p. 670). At the end of the sixteenth century, embassies and ambassadors became common fixtures in many European cities, and a recognizable form of modern politics and international law came into focus.

One of the principal duties of ambassadors was to report their findings to the city government that had authorized their diplomacy. At the end of the fifteenth century, ambassadors were expected to compile *Relazioni* (in this MS *Relationi*), i.e. brief notes detailing what the ambassador learned during their travels and residences in foreign cities. This set of *Relationi* identifies the eleven *principii* of Italy as "the Pope, the Catholic King [i.e. Philip III of Spain], the three Republics Venice, Genoa, and Lucca, and the six Duchies: the Grand Dukes of Tuscany, Savoy, Mantua, Modena, Parma, and Urbino" (f. 1). The ambassador then outlines the territorial holdings, number of men in vassalage, the military expenditures of each *principio*, including payments from one *principio* to another for military protection, and brief family histories. The author of these *Relationi* goes into the most detail regarding the Republic of Venice (f. 3v-5v), noting its ambassadorial relationships with Spain, France, and even Constantinople.

Italian history from the seventeenth century is not as well studied as the previous two centuries. These *Relationi* are therefore a valuable documentary source to the political status of Italy at a time when the country was still under the threats, pressure, and influence of Spain and France, but beginning to assert its independence. This is best seen in the *relatione* of the Duke of Savoy, Carlo Emanuele (f. 8-9). Carlo Emanuele was an indefatigable leader with royal ambitions, who had led embassies to France and Spain early in his tenure as Duke and had taken the strategic important city of Saluzzo in 1588. Following a botched invasion of Geneva in 1602, his political fortunes turned and in 1605 he was all but bankrupt, but still maneuvering for political gain.

In sum, the *Relazioni* found in this manuscript offer a privileged glimpse into the geopolitical interests of an Italian city at the start of the seventeenth century. With further linguistic and historical research it is likely that this manuscript can be better localized and contextualized within the broader historical currents of Seicento Italy.

LITERATURE

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