

the State, etc.). We may agree or not with the author's stance—perhaps living in a populist age gives one less certainty on the intrinsic value of the *popolo* construct—but for sure, the book is a major contribution in rethinking early modern Italian politics.

Simone Maghenzani, *University of Cambridge*  
doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.454

*Reason and Experience in Renaissance Italy*. Christine Shaw.  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. viii + 362 pp. \$120.

---

In the last decades, plenty of books on the political thought of the Italian Renaissance have been published. Christine Shaw's monograph tries to deal with this widely explored subject from a slightly different and original perspective, looking not at the political theory but at the practiced governance of several Italian republics in the second half of the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth century. In so doing, the author highlights two concepts that were fundamental in practice, even if they did not have a particularly strong definition in Renaissance political theory—that is, experience, the leading notion for political governors who handled political affairs and grounded their actions on expertise about contemporary political matters and on evidence of the past, and reason, the ability to face political problems by finding an ad hoc solution without relying on predetermined rules.

The cases taken into account are those of the Republic of Florence, the most articulated and complex republic at the time, in which political changes were frequent thanks to the role of the Medicis; Venice, the steadiest model of republican government in early modern Europe; Genoa, exactly the opposite of Venice, governed by a system of factions that exhibited internal conflict among parties; Siena, another unstable republic; and Lucca, a small republic, almost politically isolated.

Shaw's work, founded more on primary sources than on secondary literature, is impressive for the size and quality of its archival work, which allows the author to give fresh insight on the practice of republican government. Her aim is not to explore how the political concepts established in the celebrated theoretical treatises of the time were concretely adopted, but, on the contrary, to investigate to what extent political practice stimulated new approaches to political thought and influenced the development of political theory, sometimes even in a deductive way. Still, the author usefully remarks on the fact that the governors of Italian republics were not interested in developing a systematic theory of the nature of state, but just wanted to solve concrete problems linked to the political functioning of their policies.

Chapters are devoted to key concepts of the Renaissance republican thought, such as the idea of *unione*, opposed to that of division into factions; the limits of the freedom of speech; participation in the government, conceived in certain cases as an honor based on

merit, while in others as a duty that needed a reward; the problem of where the locus of sovereignty was in the republic and who was the supreme authority within a republican political context; and the relationship between public finance and private profits. The author's conclusions are often not very original—for instance, at the end of chapter 1, the author argues that the desirability of union, always expressed in almost every republican context, does not imply a total consequent refusal of the logic of factions—but it is appreciable that these conclusions are always supported by mentions of rich dossiers of interesting archival documents.

Another stimulating element of the monograph is the comparison between republican and monarchical policies that lays behind several chapters. Even though on the back cover it is argued that the book finally breaks the long-lasting tradition of stressing the commonalities of republican and princely regimes, stating that there were distinctive features in the practices of republican government, Shaw seems to claim quite the opposite. The author does not follow the critical path designed by the Cambridge school of intellectual history, according to which the political theory of early modern republicanism was established in opposition to the absolutist thought; in fact, Shaw proves that “republican citizens did not shy away from the vocabulary of monarchy and lordship” (82), and that they normally conceived the presence of a princely figure within their constitution.

Enrico Zucchi, *Universita degli Studi di Padova*  
doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.458

*The Pucci of Florence: Patronage and Politics in Renaissance Italy.* Carla D'Arista. The Medici Archive Project 6. Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2020. iv + 360 pp. €200.

---

This book masterfully combines art and history to bring to life Renaissance Italy through the lives of the Pucci family. While the Medici family may have been the most prominent in Renaissance Italy, if you look closely, several famous Renaissance paintings reveal that the figure next to the major subject of the painting is often a Pucci. Numerous paintings and frescoes bear this out: Vasari's *Cosimo il Vecchio and His Entourage Return from Exile* (Cosimo is prominent; Puccio Pucci is to his right); Ghirlandaio's *The Confirmation of the Rule* (Lorenzo de' Medici is centered; Antonio Pucci is to his right); and Vasari's *Clement VII Crowns Charles V in San Petronio* (Charles V is crowned, with Cardinal Lorenzo Pucci just below).

The Puccis rose to become one of the wealthiest and most influential Florentine families. The Pucci name is renowned in several ways: as supporters of classical education, humanism, art and architecture; for participation in conspiracies, murders and papal wars; and as a house that produced three cardinals and influenced Italian religion and politics in the Quattrocento and Cinquecento. The book starts with a helpful Pucci family tree showing the descendants through several centuries. While