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978-0-521-67846-9 - The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli

Edited by John M. Najemy

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
MACHIAVELLI

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) is the most famous and controversial figure in the history of political thought and one of the iconic names of the Renaissance. *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli* brings together sixteen original essays by leading experts, covering his life, his career in Florentine government, his reaction to the dramatic changes that affected Florence and Italy in his lifetime, and the most prominent themes of his thought, including the founding, evolution, and corruption of republics and principalities, class conflict, liberty, arms, religion, ethics, rhetoric, gender, and the Renaissance dialogue with antiquity. In his own time Machiavelli was recognized as an original thinker who provocatively challenged conventional wisdom. With penetrating analyses of *The Prince*, *Discourses on Livy*, *Art of War*, *Florentine Histories*, and his plays and poetry, this book offers a vivid portrait of this extraordinary thinker as well as assessments of his place in Western thought since the Renaissance.

JOHN M. NAJEMY is Professor of History at Cornell University. His previous work includes *Corporatism and Consensus in Florentine Electoral Politics, 1280–1400* (1982), *Between Friends: Discourses of Power and Desire in the Machiavelli–Vettori Letters of 1513–1515* (1993), *A History of Florence, 1200–1575* (2006) and essays on Machiavelli and Renaissance political thought.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book

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JN
Florence

CHRONOLOGY

- 1434 Cosimo de' Medici assumes power in Florence.
- 1464 Cosimo dies and is succeeded by his son Piero.
- 1466 Piero de' Medici is unsuccessfully challenged by former Medici allies.
- 1469 May 3: Niccolò Machiavelli is born in Florence; December: Piero de' Medici dies; his son Lorenzo assumes leadership of the regime.
- 1476 The Tuscan translation by Donato Acciaiuoli of Leonardo Bruni's *History of the Florentine People* is published in Venice; it will be published in Florence in 1492.
- 1478 April: Pazzi conspiracy against the Medici; Lorenzo's brother, Giuliano, is assassinated; savage reprisals carried out by Lorenzo.
- 1483 Francesco Guicciardini is born.
- 1492 April: Lorenzo de' Medici dies; his son Piero assumes leadership of the regime; August: Rodrigo Borgia, father of Cesare, is elected Pope Alexander VI.
- 1494 September: French invasion of Italy under Charles VIII; the French allow Pisa to declare its independence from Florence; November: the Medici are expelled from Florence; December: Girolamo Savonarola influences the resolution of the political crisis in Florence; the Great Council is instituted.
- 1495 July: Battle of Fornovo between France and a league of Italian states; October: the French leave Italy.
- 1497 Possibly in this year, Machiavelli copies the *De rerum natura* of Lucretius.
- 1498 January or February: Savonarola publishes the *Treatise on the Constitution and Government of the City of Florence*; March:

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- Machiavelli analyzes two of Savonarola’s last sermons in a letter to the Florentine ambassador in Rome; May: Savonarola is accused of heresy and executed; June: Machiavelli is elected head of the second chancery and soon thereafter secretary to the Dieci (Ten), the magistracy that supervised foreign and dominion policy.
- 1499 March: Machiavelli is sent as envoy to the lord of Piombino; June: Machiavelli writes the “Discourse on Pisa”; July: his legation to Caterina Sforza Riario, countess of Forlì and Imola; October: second French invasion of Italy, under Louis XII; the French occupy the Duchy of Milan and Cesare Borgia begins his conquest of the petty principalities of the Romagna.
- 1500 Louis XII sends troops to assist Florence in its war to regain Pisa; the attack fails and the troops are withdrawn; July (to January 1501): Machiavelli’s first legation to the French court; November: agreement between France and Spain to divide Naples.
- 1501 April: Machiavelli writes the “Discourse on peace between the emperor and the king [of France]”; May: Cesare Borgia invades Florentine territory, but soon departs; July: Machiavelli sent to Pistoia (under Florentine rule) to quell factional conflicts; in the fall Machiavelli marries Marietta Corsini.
- 1502 February: another mission to Pistoia; March: Machiavelli writes the memorandum “On the affairs of Pistoia”; May: legation to Giovanni Bentivoglio, lord of Bologna; June: rebellion of Arezzo and the Valdichiana against Florentine rule fomented by Cesare Borgia’s lieutenants, followed by Machiavelli’s first legation (with Francesco Soderini) to Cesare Borgia; August: Machiavelli is sent to Arezzo after its recovery; September: Piero Soderini is elected lifetime Standardbearer of Justice in Florence and assumes office in November; October–January 1503: Machiavelli’s second legation to Borgia; December: Machiavelli is present as Cesare Borgia traps and kills the former lieutenants who conspired against him.
- 1503 March: Machiavelli may have drafted the “Words to be spoken on the law for raising money [for defense]”; April: legation to Siena; August: Pope Alexander dies; after the brief pontificate of Pius III, Giuliano della Rovere is elected Pope Julius II in November; October: Machiavelli’s first legation to the papal court to observe the conclave; December: Spain defeats France in southern Italy and takes control of the Kingdom of Naples; Piero de’ Medici dies in

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- exile; Machiavelli present in Rome, observes Cesare Borgia's sudden collapse at the hands of Pope Julius.
- 1504 January–March: Machiavelli's second legation to the French court; April: second legation to Piombino; November: Machiavelli dedicates the first *Decennale* to Alamanno Salviati.
- 1505 April and June: legations to Perugia and Mantua to negotiate mercenary contracts with Giampaolo Baglioni and Francesco Gonzaga; July: legation to Siena; Florence's war to recapture Pisa again goes badly; Machiavelli's urgent proposal for the institution of a homegrown militia becomes politically controversial.
- 1506 Early in the year, the first *Decennale* is published, but without the dedication to Alamanno Salviati; Soderini allows Machiavelli to begin recruiting and training troops for the militia; September(?): Machiavelli writes the "Discourse on the organization of the Florentine state for arms," also known as "La cagione dell'Ordinanza," on the militia; August–October: second legation to the papal court, during which he witnesses Julius's audacious seizure of Perugia and writes the "Ghiribizzi" to Giovanbattista Soderini; November: Julius retakes Bologna; December: Machiavelli writes the law instituting the militia and its civilian board of overseers, the Nine.
- 1507 January: Machiavelli becomes chancellor of the Nine; Soderini's intention to send Machiavelli to the Emperor Maximilian is blocked by *ottimati* who oppose his foreign policy; Francesco Vettori is chosen instead, although Machiavelli joins him at the imperial court at the end of the year.
- 1508 January–June: Machiavelli and Vettori serve on their joint mission to the imperial court; June: Machiavelli writes the "Report on German affairs"; spends much of the rest of the year in the field supervising the campaign against Pisa; December: Julius forms the League of Cambrai against Venice.
- 1509 May: Venetian armies are routed by the League of Cambrai; June: Pisa surrenders to Florence, with Machiavelli among the Florentine signatories; he supervises the occupation; receives congratulations from his friends for the success of his militia in the recovery of Pisa; November–December: Machiavelli is sent to Mantua and Verona to attend to matters relating to the Emperor Maximilian's descent into Italy.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1510 Julius turns against France to expel the “barbarians” from Italy; June–September: Machiavelli’s third mission to the French court.
- 1511 September–October 1511: Machiavelli’s fourth legation to the French court; writes the “Portrait of French affairs” either in this year or in 1510; October: Julius forms the Holy League (papacy, Spain, and Venice) against France.
- 1512 April: France defeats the league at the battle of Ravenna; May–June: the Swiss attack the French, who withdraw from Italy; August: the league sends into Tuscany a Spanish army to punish Florence; the Spaniards sack Prato and Piero Soderini is forced from office; September: Cardinal Giovanni de’ Medici and his brother Giuliano return to Florence; November: Machiavelli writes the “Memoir to the Mediceans” but is quickly dismissed from his posts and confined to the Florentine dominion for one year.
- 1513 February: Machiavelli is arrested, incarcerated, and tortured for suspected complicity in the Boscoli–Capponi plot against the Medici; Pope Julius dies; March: Giovanni de’ Medici is elected Pope Leo X; Machiavelli is released from prison and goes to live at the family’s country home in Sant’Andrea in Percussina, south of Florence; the correspondence with Francesco Vettori begins; August: Lorenzo de’ Medici the younger, Leo’s nephew, assumes control of the regime in Florence; Machiavelli writes most or all of *The Prince* in the second half of the year.
- 1514 Likely date of composition of Machiavelli’s second *Decennale*.
- 1515 January: Louis XII dies and is succeeded by Francis I; September: Francis invades Italy, defeats the Swiss at Marignano, and occupies Milan; possibly in this year or the next, Machiavelli joins the largely republican literary and historical discussions in the gardens of the Rucellai family and begins writing the *Discourses on Livy*.
- 1516 January: King Ferdinand of Spain dies; March: Giuliano de’ Medici dies; Pope Leo orchestrates the conquest of Urbino by his nephew Lorenzo, who becomes duke of Urbino; Machiavelli dedicates *The Prince* to Lorenzo; Ludovico Ariosto publishes the first edition of the *Orlando furioso*.
- 1517 Likely date of composition of Machiavelli’s *Asino*; *Discourses on Livy* probably complete by this year.

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- 1518 Machiavelli writes *Mandragola*, possibly also in this year the *Favola*, called *Belfagor*.
- 1519 Lorenzo de' Medici dies; Cardinal Giulio de' Medici assumes control of Florence; possibly in this year Machiavelli finishes writing the *Art of War*; June: Charles, king of Spain since 1516, is elected Holy Roman Emperor.
- 1520 August: Machiavelli writes the *Life of Castruccio Castracani of Lucca*; November: he receives the commission, approved by Cardinal Giulio, to write the *Florentine Histories*; December: he writes the *Discourse on Florentine Affairs after the Death of the Younger Lorenzo de' Medici*.
- 1521 May: Machiavelli is sent as observer to the chapter general of the Franciscans in Carpi and begins his correspondence with Francesco Guicciardini, papal governor of Modena since 1516; Guicciardini begins writing the *Dialogue on the Government of Florence* (completed in 1524); August: Machiavelli's *Art of War* is printed in Florence by Giunta; war renews between Spain and France for control of Milan; November: imperial forces occupy Milan; December: Leo X dies.
- 1522 January: Adrian of Utrecht is elected Pope Adrian VI; May: an anti-Medici conspiracy led by Zanobi Buondelmonti and involving several members of the Rucellai circle (but not Machiavelli) is revealed; all talk of reform ends; Piero Soderini dies in Rome.
- 1523 Agostino Nifo plagiarizes much of *The Prince* in his *De regnandi peritia*; November: Giulio de' Medici is elected Pope Clement VII.
- 1524 October: the French retake Milan; Machiavelli continues writing the *Florentine Histories*.
- 1525 January: Machiavelli's play *Clizia* is performed; February: Emperor Charles V's armies inflict a massive defeat on the French at Pavia, taking King Francis prisoner and reoccupying Milan; May: Machiavelli presents the *Florentine Histories* to Pope Clement in Rome; June: Machiavelli proposes to Clement the organization of a militia for the defense of the Romagna; Clement sends him to hear the views of Guicciardini (now papal president of the Romagna) on its feasibility; Guicciardini dissuades the pope from the idea.

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- 1526 Antonio Brucioli publishes the first edition of his *Dialogi*, representing Machiavelli as a central participant in the discussions of the Orti Oricellari some years earlier; March: King Francis is released by Charles V; May: the League of Cognac (France, papacy, Venice, and, unofficially, Florence) is formed against Charles; Machiavelli is appointed to a magistracy instituted to strengthen Florence's walls and fortifications; June: Guicciardini is named lieutenant-general of the papal armies of the League of Cognac; July–October: Machiavelli is at the camp of the league to coordinate Florence's defenses with Guicciardini.
- 1527 February–April: Machiavelli is again sent to the camp of the league; April: an imperial army invades Tuscany and threatens Florence; Guicciardini rushes forces of the league to Florence's defense; a revolt against the Medici regime begins; May: the imperial army sacks Rome, making Clement a prisoner; in Florence the Medici are expelled and the republic, including the Great Council, is restored; June 21: Machiavelli dies.
- 1528 A revived and expanded militia is instituted by the Florentine Republic; Baldassare Castiglione publishes *The Book of the Courtier*.
- 1529 June: in the Treaty of Barcelona, Charles agrees to restore the Medici in Florence; October: the ten-month siege of Florence by imperial forces begins; Machiavelli's *Art of War* is published again.
- 1530 August: Florence surrenders to the imperial forces; the emperor begins the process, completed two years later, of terminating the Florentine Republic and instituting a formal principate under the Medici.
- 1531 First printing of Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*.
- 1532 First printing of the *Florentine Histories* and *The Prince*.
- 1559 Machiavelli's works are placed on the Papal Index of Prohibited Books.