

Review

Giuseppe De Gregorio, Marta Luigina Mangini, Maddalena Modesti, eds., *Documenti scartati, documenti reimpiegati. Forme, linguaggi, metodi per nuove prospettive di ricerca* (Notariorum Itinera. Varia 7), Genoa 2023, ISBN 978-88-97099-84-0 (print), 978-88-97099-85-7 (digital), [Open Access](#).

Reviewed by **William Duba**, University of Fribourg
william.duba@unifr.ch



The case for Fragmentology hinges on its status as an interdisciplinary: it does not address just handwritten sources but also printed ones; it concerns itself not merely with the content, intellectual and material of libraries, but also with that of archives. Yet, as the editors and authors of *Documenti scartati, documenti reimpiegati* underline, far less attention has been paid to documentary fragments, both in their concrete reality and in the theoretical and methodological approaches they require, “In spite of a few statements of principle, until now attention has focused on a single typology of recycled fragments, namely book fragments, and among these, most of the interest has fallen on reuse in bindings, and before that, on palimpsests” (10). This volume proposes to explore the typology of documentary fragments.

As the title implies, documentary fragments are charters, contracts, registers, and similar documents of record that were discarded and reused. The precise definition of such fragments, the terminology to examine them, the phenomena of reuse, their survival, and their extent constitute the area of inquiry for this volume. The studies gathered here focus principally on Latin-script

documentary fragments from an area that includes Northern Italy, from Savoyard documents on the shores of Léman (Buffo) to the archiepiscopal archives of Bologna (Napoletano), with further studies on the Apostolic Penitentiary (Allegría), Salerno (Capriolo), Byzantine fragments (De Gregorio), Ethiopian ones (Bausi), and Venetian Dalamatia (Lomagistro). The contributions range from studies of individual pieces (Vignodelli) to entire corpora and classes of fragments (Perani). In many cases, the studies publish preliminary results, the first fruits of many seasons of research.

The introduction, authored by the three editors, establishes the need for the discourse opened by the volume, observing that the solutions developed for the description of book fragments do not fit the needs of documentary fragments, in their legal nature (Mangini, 10), but that “a diplomatics of the discarded and reused medieval document is not only possible, but necessary.” Concretely, that means including in descriptions “elements extrinsically important to the legal act” (Modesti, 17), such as notarial signs, signatures, cancellations of documents and so on, as well as adapting the descriptions of the intellectual content: while a book has title and author, and we can argue for when and where it was produced, a document has a specific type, a series of associated dates and places, and a cast of persons, from the scribe and issuing authority to the parties involved in the transaction, to the witnesses and guarantors. Moreover, the nature and function of documents is bound to place and time, reflecting the unique circumstances of an evolving legal and social order; in this sense, comparing practices of discarding and reusing such fragments across cultures and time will help to illuminate the range of practice and the points of intersection (De Gregorio, 20).

As mentioned above, many of the studies focus on the conservation of fragments in particular archives and libraries, presenting documentary fragments in the context of their conservation in a collection. Thus Marta Calleri and Sandra Macchiavello (“Il reimpiego documentario in Liguria. Due realtà a confronto: Genova e Savona (secc. XIV-XVI)”) compare two very different approaches to notarial reuse. Macchiavello looks at the case of the Archivio di Stato of Genoa, which has a folder with 26 detached and uninventoried

documentary fragments from the fonds *Notai antichi*, dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Calleri comes to terms with a moving box containing over 200 detached and uninventoried documentary fragments removed from the *Fondo notarile* of the Archivio di Stato di Savona. Two contributions focus on fragments in Trent. Adriana Paolini (“Frammenti documentari nelle legature dei libri antichi. Prime indagini nelle biblioteche di Trento”), examines the case of documentary fragments in manuscripts and early prints, particularly in the Biblioteca comunale di Trento and in the library of the Observant Franciscan convent of San Bernardino. Matteo Cova (“Frammenti di manoscritti e frammenti di documenti: un confronto su reperti dall’Archivio di Stato di Trento”), presents some findings that arose from an inventory of fragments in the Archivio di Stato di Trento, discussing some 270 manuscript fragments and 367 documentary fragments, with dated examples ranging between 1421 and 1785. Giuliana Capriolo (“Frammenti documentari da coperte di protocolli di notai salernitani dei secoli xv-xvi”) examines documentary fragments from the Archivio di Stato of Salerno, and the Archivio della Badia di Cava de’ Tirreni.

Two studies apply work on archival fragments to address broader issues in Fragmentology. Christina Solidoro, in addition to addressing the case of the *Libri di Condanne*, uses her work on the fragments in the Archivio di Stato di Modena (“Frammenti di giustizia dai territori estensi: libri di condanne ‘perduti’ dei secc. xiv-xv”) to develop the language for discussing documentary fragments, starting with ‘fragment’ itself. Building on her 2021 study,¹ she argues that an entire document can be considered a fragment “when the document has lost its original function, or by the (mere) fact of having been decontextualized from its original documentary situation and or provenance, or even by having undergone a process of material repurposing” (202). On her model, a documentary fragment has three phases: its origins as a document, when it becomes discarded, and the moment of reuse. To the first phase (and presumably through to the second) can be considered what Solidoro calls ‘archivistic

1 C. Solidoro, “Fenomenologia dei frammenti di manoscritti”, in *Décrire le manuscrit liturgique. Méthodes, problématiques, perspectives*, ed. L. Albiero and E. Celora, Turnhout 2021, 73–93.

provenance' (or, in the case of codicological fragments, 'codicological provenance'); 'archeological provenance', in turn, pertains to for the last phase, namely for the reuse of the fragment and its history thereafter.

Similarly, Roberta Napoletano uses her research on the Archivio Arcivescovile of Bologna to explore the problems with describing documentary fragments in a digital environment ("Maculature documentarie dall'Archivio Arcivescovile di Bologna: un approccio alla loro metadattazione"). Her cataloguing work on part of the archive revealed that roughly 20% of the fragments she studied were documentary fragments. Nevertheless, on the platform *Fragmentarium*, less than 3% of published fragments are documentary fragments. Her criticism clearly shows that *Fragmentarium's* categories for the metadata and the structure of its description forms reflect a focus on codices that provides a poor fit for documents. Her observations and recommendations therefore are vital for any researcher working with sources that include both manuscript and documentary fragments.

A few contributions focus on single items. Giacomo Vignodelli ("Scarto e reimpiego all'Archivio Capitolare di Vercelli: i palinsesti del codice eusebiano CLXXI (secoli X-XIII)") looks at a single manuscript, codex CLXXI of the Biblioteca Capitolare of Vercelli, containing the *Liber contra Catharos* of Eckbert of Schönau. The manuscript was produced in the late twelfth/early thirteenth century and entered the library in 1210. Reporting the initial results of a multi-spectral imagery campaign still underway, Vignodelli confirms that the codex is almost entirely composed of palimpsested pages, and includes documentary material from the chapter archives dated to the tenth and eleventh centuries. Simone Allegría examines a former binding fragment recently acquired by the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Rome and identifies it as a document produced by the Papal Penitentiary at the end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century, providing dispensation for a marriage in Spain between a couple related in the fourth degree of consanguinity.

Others take a broader approach to documentary fragments. Paolo Buffo, ("I documenti reimpiegati come fonte per la storia degli apparati di governo: riflessioni a partire dal caso sabauda (secoli

XII-XIV”) examines documentary fragments from the County of Savoy. Fragments were used to attach seals to documents: in the jurisdiction of Chablais, acts were authenticated with the seal of the judge and systematically attached by a piece of parchment for a roughly forty-year period at the end of the thirteenth century. Of the 130 such acts kept in the archives of the Abbey of Saint-Maurice (now in the Swiss canton of Valais), nearly forty are attached with a strip cut from another document, usually an act between private parties from the same *curia*. By comparison, of the 90 acts sealed by the chapter of Saint-Maurice, only 10-16 have reused parchment strips, and their origin is much more heterogeneous than in the Chablais case. The practice of using documents as covers for archival material appears only rarely for secular archives, and then in the countryside; cases of discarding and reusing documents as covers are much more frequent for ecclesiastical archives, such as those of Saint-Maurice and San Giusto di Susa. Similarly, the resources available in ecclesiastical libraries served as covers.

Approaching documentary fragments more generally, Marta Luigina Mangini (“Testimoni isolati di protagonisti assenti. Protocolli notarili scartati e reimpiegati in Italia settentrionale”) provides an initial sketch of the challenges involving the dismembering and reuse of notarial registers in Northern Italy. After documenting surviving cases of reuse and legislation against the scraping or washing of registers, Mangini documents the range of reuses, using prohibitions on the purchase or receipt of registers to reveal the range of ephemeral uses for recycled parchment: wrappers for food and medication, covers for furniture and shields, liners for clothing, and so on. Finally, she presents methodological challenges for dealing with register fragments, where names and dates are only partially transmitted, in reference to a larger whole that is lacking. Mangini builds on her extensive experience with the sources to address the specific case of notarial registers.

The volume concludes with some comparative studies. Giuseppe De Gregorio (“Frammenti documentari di riuso: esempi dal mondo bizantino”) presents a handful of cases of Greek documents being reused and providing thereby precious witness to the operations of Byzantine secular and ecclesiastical chanceries, whose archives

largely did not survive the Ottoman period. Alessandro Bausi (“«Lingua franca notarile bizantina» in Etiopia? Su un tratto linguistico nel più antico testo documentario etiopico (le costruzioni del tipo *’əmfalaga falagu*, «lungo il fiume»”) looks at the “Donation of *Ṭaṇṭawədəm*”, a modern copy of a twelfth-century text, and argues on linguistic grounds for a common Byzantine scribal heritage across Arabic, Greek, and Latin documents. Mauro Parani (“Tipologia del riuso in Italia di documenti ebraici cartacei e pergamenei fra tardo XIV e XVI secolo”) begins his assessment of Hebrew documentary fragments in Italy with the observation that Jews could not reuse documents, as they might contain the name of God; he then provides a list of paper documents pertaining to loans from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries reused as cardboard in Italy and Gerona, as well as some parchment acts, mostly *Ketubbot* (marriage acts). Finally, Barbara Lomagistro (“Per una definizione di ‘frammento documentario’ nella documentazione in lingua e scrittura slava di Istria e Dalmazia”) examines the situation of Glagolitic notarial documents in Venetian Dalmatia. Until the sixteenth century, Latin or Italian was the language of government administration and culture. From the sixteenth century onwards, Glagolitic documents survive as fragments.

Most of the articles describe research in progress rather than producing final results. They show researchers not merely engaging documentary fragments, but their contexts: to work with documentary fragments, the researcher must become intimately familiar with the practices of the creation of documents, from manuals to abbreviations kept in registers, to the instruments themselves. These practices develop over time and depend on the chancery, notarial authority, and even the individual whim of those charged with keeping the documents. The administration of archives, both as legislated and as practiced, further shapes the record. Thus, each author takes pains to explain the unique documentary practices being analyzed, which, along with the extensive bibliographies, provides fragmentologists with the tools to assess documentary fragments in other contexts.