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# Guidi, Andrea. Books, People, and Military Thought: Machiavelli's Art of War and the Fortune of the Militia in Sixteenth-Century Florence and Europe

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convincing evidence that this modest but ubiquitous magistracy was critical to protecting both the health and livelihood of local populations.

The final chapter moves beyond the Italian peninsula to examine healthscaping practices in medieval Europe and the premodern world. Geltner rightly argues that the lack of broad regional studies, paralleling modern nation-states or major linguistic groups, hampers our ability to undertake meaningful comparative work. To address that situation, he brings the three Italian case studies noted above into conversation with findings from more distant geographical locales, ranging from western Europe to Byzantium and the Islamic world. Although the resulting analysis necessarily remains partial, the author persuasively argues that “healthscaping was both common and diverse in earlier societies” (131). Geltner not only does the scholarly community a service in assembling the available evidence; he also decisively cuts the Gordian knot tying public health to modernity. In documenting the investments medieval societies made in their own wellbeing, this book opens new ways of thinking about the long history of public health.

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**Guidi, Andrea.**

***Books, People, and Military Thought: Machiavelli’s Art of War and the Fortune of the Militia in Sixteenth-Century Florence and Europe.***

Thinking in Extremes: Machiavellian Studies 3. Leiden: Brill, 2020. Pp. x, 304 + 7 col. ill. ISBN 978-90-04-43209-3 (hardcover) €119.

Andrea Guidi’s *Books, People, and Military Thought* is a sterling contribution to the historiography of the Florentine Renaissance militias and Machiavelli’s *Art of War*. In this study, Guidi reassesses the little-studied Florentine militia of 1527 and provides the first comprehensive and systematic account of the diffusion of Machiavelli’s military thought into Europe. Following the tradition established by scholars such as John Pocock and Quentin Skinner, who have linked Machiavelli’s discourse on the militia to the foundations of republican

ideas in modern western politics, Guidi shows how Machiavelli's ideal of the *armi proprie* was assimilated into a specific monarchical context. Thus, the overall goal of Guidi's study is to show that via people and books, Machiavelli's military ideas spread far beyond Florence into Europe, where they left an indelible mark on the birth of the new conscript armies in France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire.

Guidi's book is structured in two parts, seven chapters in length, with an appendix of primary sources at the end. The first half of the book surveys the two Florentine Renaissance militias: one promoted and created by Machiavelli in 1506, and the other known as the *Ordinanza del contado* from 1527 to 1530. In the first two chapters, Guidi compares the weapons used by the two Florentine militias and traces their response to the evolution of new gunpowder weapons. He concludes that the use of handguns increased in the context of the renewed *Ordinanza* of 1527–30, which anticipated many aspects of the so-called "military revolution." Also, Guidi advances the possibility of Machiavelli being an advisor on the formation of the Florentine militia in 1527, shortly before he died. Chapter 3 examines Machiavelli's response to the integration of the Florentine peasant recruits into the Tuscan state. Guidi argues that Machiavelli intended to improve the social position of the peasants of the countryside by benefiting and rewarding conscripts within a wholly new and distinct administration of justice. In chapter 4, Guidi explores little-known interactions between Machiavelli's military ideas and his political thought. He proposes a bold claim, arguing that for Machiavelli, "raising a large popular infantry militia force was not just a practical solution: it was part of his general tendency to side with the 'people' against any aristocracy" (7). For Guidi, Machiavelli envisioned his militia to be a long-term project in creating a sustainable army of pikemen and arquebusiers capable of facing the powerful infantry formations of the Western monarchies.

The second half of Guidi's study addresses the *Art of War's* long-standing influence on military thinking and experiments with militias in early modern Europe until the end of the sixteenth century. In chapter 5, Guidi examines the *Art of War's* pivotal role in the translation and early circulation of Machiavelli's military ideas in Western Europe. He argues that the continuous re-use and re-elaboration of both Machiavelli's and ancient ideas on the militia were favoured by military authors of the time. Chapter 6 shows how the *Art of War*

contributed to a culture of beliefs and cultural representations of the heroic infantry that completely overturned the previous cultural tradition of medieval chivalry and the humanistic view of the militia as an exercise of individual virtues. Guidi makes insightful connections between Machiavelli's depiction of the battle of Ravenna (1512) and the woodcut of the battle scene made by the German painter Hans Holbein. This kind of imagery is for Guidi further evidence of the circulation of Machiavelli's military ideas in the artistic and intellectual circles Holbein frequented (187). Chapter 7 examines the ways Machiavelli's military thought contributed to the creation of new, larger armies and changes in the wider power structures of European states. Guidi claims that the militia model conceived by Machiavelli was a forerunner to the formation of the early modern conscript army. According to Guidi, the *Art of War's* discussion on the necessity of improving discipline, virtue, and confidence among militiamen and soldiers generally inspired strategists all over Europe to new readings of the classics (206).

Guidi's book is a well-written, detailed, and nuanced account of the circulation, application, and adaptation of Machiavelli's military ideas in Europe. One of the main strengths of this study is Guidi's outstanding command of the primary source material, which adds a considerable argumentative and analytical dimension to his scholarly survey. In the appendix, Guidi brings into the fore a range of previously unknown documentary evidence on the last republican militia that has survived in private archives such as *Carte Strozziiane*. Moreover, Guidi deserves praise for using an interdisciplinary approach in examining the influence of Machiavelli's military ideas in Europe. He traces various events, printing enterprises, cultural artifacts, connections, and exchanges between people and across the Italian peninsula, France, Spain, and Germany. Lastly, in making connections between Machiavelli's military ideas and important French and Spanish texts on military reforms, Guidi reads the texts in context and finds evidence of Machiavelli's influence in the language used by the authors. However, Guidi is less persuasive when he uses language alone to claim that French and Spanish authors "heavily drew" on Machiavelli. The echoes of Machiavelli's military thought in other works deserve more substantial evidence.

Overall, Guidi's book deserves credit for bringing attention to a less-explored side of Machiavelli's military doctrine and its place in early modern state-building and the "military revolution" in sixteenth-century Europe. There

is no doubt that this will be an invaluable reference book for many years to come.

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**Hart, Jonathan Locke.**

***Shakespeare, the Renaissance and Empire. Vol. 1, Geography and Language. Vol. 2, Poetry, Philosophy and Politics.***

London: Routledge, 2021. Pp. 251, 248. ISBN (vol. 1) 978-0-3676-3519-0 and (vol. 2) 978-0-3677-5990-2 (hardcover) \$160 each.

Hart's *Shakespeare, the Renaissance and Empire* investigates Shakespeare as a playwright and poet of local and global significance, examining both his influences and sources from the western tradition and his impact on cultures and readers around the world, including Asian cultures. Hart sees in Shakespeare "the paradoxical oxymoron of particular universals or universal particulars" (2:8). He was a writer whose work "shows an awareness of sea and land, geography and history, of movement and otherness" (1:15); a man "of England and of English" (1:7) who also "travelled across time and space" (2:205). Hart's book joins and contributes to a growing body of work on Shakespeare, empire, politics, and geography, including the collections *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys: Critical Encounters, Cultural Geographies, and the Politics of Travel* (Bi-qi Beatrice Lei, Judy Celine Ick, and Poonam Trivedi, eds., Routledge, 2017) and *Shakespeare and Greece* (Alison Findlay and Vassiliki Markidou, eds., Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017); Leah S. Marcus's *How Shakespeare Became Colonial: Editorial Tradition and the British Empire* (Taylor & Francis, 2017); Stuart Elden's *Shakespearean Territories* (University of Chicago Press, 2018); and Caroline Ritter's recent *Imperial Encore: The Cultural Project of the Late British Empire* (University of California Press, 2021). The key significance of Hart's work inheres in its global reach: its emphasis on the playwright's trans-cultural influence and appeal.

Volume 1, *Geography and Language*, focuses principally on Shakespeare, while including discussions of Spenser, Marlowe, and Donne to illuminate