ITAL.QUART.17

Binding:

Hard cover binding of the Berlin Library, 19th-century. Cardboard covered with brown marbled paper. Supralibros of the Königliche Bibliothek stamped in gold on the front cover. On the spine, a label with the title.

History:

The manuscript was created in 1731 or 1732, in Cesena, as evidenced by an expression used at the beginning of the text. The binding is probably not the first one; it was made in the Prussian Library in the first half of the 19th century and the cards were cut in a way, which caused parts of letters to be missing. The ital.quart.17 manuscript has no accession number. The old catalogue of the Königliche Biliothek, Cat 557, 13, notes that it came from the Rudolphische Bibliothek, i.e. the library of Karl Asmund Rudolphi (1771-1832), biologist and physician, professor of the Berlin University, among others. His library was purchased by the Königliche Bibliothek in 1833. Traces of previous owners are absent, however.

Content:

It is a description of the mysterious death of countess Cornelia Zangheri, the grandmother of Pope Pius VI, on 20th March 1731. The countess retired to her bedroom and the next day only charred remains were found. The author is interested in the scientific and medical aspects of the death. He considers the possibility of a lightning strike or spontaneous combustion. The sensationalism of this event caused many comments to appear. The character of the text allows the supposition that the author was a physician or biologist (he refers to writings of his contemporary scientists, e.g. Antonio Vallisneri). The event was described in detail in G. Bianchini's book "Parere sopra la cagione della morte della signora Cornelia Zangari e Bandi", per Pierantonio Berno, Verona 1731, 1733, Roma 1743, 1758, but the text of the manuscript is not identical with the print. The text was never published.

With reference to the manuscript, cf. Lemm p. 79.