

GENE A. BRUCKER

# The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence



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THE  
CIVIC WORLD  
OF  
EARLY  
RENAISSANCE  
FLORENCE



BY GENE BRUCKER

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*For Marion*



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*I began work on this book in 1960, when a sabbatical leave from the University of California at Berkeley and a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation allowed me to spend a year in Florence. That pattern was repeated four years later, when the American Council of Learned Societies awarded me a fellowship to continue my research in Florence. While enjoying the hospitality of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton in 1968–1969, I completed the transcription of microfilmed documents and began to write the first chapters of the book. In 1973–1974, I was awarded a grant from Berkeley's Humanities Institute, which gave me free time to complete the manuscript. To all these institutions, their administrators, and their staffs, I express my gratitude. I would also like to thank the personnel of the state archives in Florence, Prato, and Siena, the Biblioteca Nazionale and the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana in Florence, and the Vatican archives in Rome for their help in providing me with the archival material on which this book is based.*

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*My wife Marion, to whom I dedicate this book, has helped me to persevere in an enterprise that at times seemed to have no end. I am deeply grateful to her and to my children, who have given me so much support and encouragement.*

G. B.





## *Abbreviations*

<i>ACP</i>	<i>Atti del Capitano del Popolo</i>
<i>AEOG</i>	<i>Atti dell' Esecutore degli Ordinamenti della Giustizia</i>
<i>AP</i>	<i>Atti del Podestà</i>
<i>APG</i>	<i>Archivio di Parte Guelfa</i>
<i>Ashb.</i>	<i>Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, Florence; MS Ashburnham</i>
<i>ASI</i>	<i>Archivio storico italiano</i>
<i>BNF</i>	<i>Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze</i>
<i>Conc.</i>	<i>Archivio di Stato, Siena; Concistoro</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Consulte e Pratiche</i>
<i>CRS</i>	<i>Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse</i>
<i>Datini</i>	<i>Archivio di Stato, Prato; Archivio Datini</i>
<i>DBCMLC</i>	<i>Dieci di Balla, Carteggi, Missive: Legazioni e Commissarie</i>
<i>DBRA</i>	<i>Dieci di Balla, Relazioni di Ambasciatori</i>
<i>Delizie</i>	<i>Delizie degli eruditi toscani, ed. Ildefonso di San Luigi (Florence, 1770-1789)</i>
<i>DSCOA</i>	<i>Deliberazioni dei Signori e Collegi, Ordinaria Autorità</i>
<i>Flor. Studies</i>	<i>Florentine Studies. Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence, ed. N. Rubinstein (London, 1968)</i>
<i>GA</i>	<i>Giudice degli Appelli</i>
<i>Lana</i>	<i>Arte della Lana</i>
<i>LF</i>	<i>Libri Fabarum</i>
<i>Magl.</i>	<i>Magliabechiana</i>
<i>MAP</i>	<i>Mediceo Avanti il Principato</i>
<i>Merc.</i>	<i>Tribunale di Mercanzia</i>
<i>Minerbetti</i>	<i>Cronica volgare di anonimo fiorentino già attribuita a Piero di Giovanni Minerbetti, ed. E. Bellondi, <i>Rerum Italicarum Scriptores</i>, new ed., xxvii, part 2 (Città di Castello, 1915-1918)</i>
<i>Panc.</i>	<i>Fondo Panciatichiano</i>
<i>Pres.</i>	<i>Archivio delle Prestanze</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>Registri delle Provvisioni</i>
<i>RRIIS</i>	<i>Rerum Italicarum Scriptores</i>
<i>SCMC</i>	<i>Signori, Carteggi, Missive, I Cancelleria</i>
<i>SCMLC</i>	<i>Signori, Carteggi, Missive, Legazioni e Commissarie</i>
<i>SCRRO</i>	<i>Signori, Carteggi, Rapporti e Relazioni di Oratori</i>

- Stefani      *Cronica fiorentina di Marchionne di Coppo Stefani*, ed.  
              N. Rodolico, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, new ed.,  
              xxx, part 1 (Città di Castello, 1903–1955)
- Strozz.      *Carte Stroziane*

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, archival references are to the *Archivio di Stato*, Florence. All dates cited are New Style.

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*The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence*



## INTRODUCTION

### *The Historiography of Early Renaissance Florence*

FLORENCE, the premier city of the Renaissance, has long been a subject of scrutiny by her own prideful citizens, by other Italians, and by admiring foreigners. Most students of the city's past have felt, with Voltaire, that Florence occupies a central place in the history of Renaissance Italy, of Renaissance Europe, indeed of Western civilization. They have traced the lines of her evolution from a small provincial town in the eleventh century to a city that, by 1300, was one of Europe's largest and richest. They have studied, too, the political developments that paralleled this demographic and economic growth: the rise of the autonomous commune, the vicissitudes of republican government, the establishment of a princely dynasty. They have been attracted by the reputations of her famous sons: Dante and Boccaccio, the galaxy of artists from Giotto to Michelangelo, Medici bankers and statesmen, the Ferrarese friar Savonarola who adopted the city and there experienced martyrdom. Nourishing this interest in Florence's past is a reservoir of source material that, for richness and variety, is unmatched by that for any other European community. In the documentation that has survived from the Renaissance centuries can be found information for every taste and temperament, illuminating every facet of human experience. The extraordinary size and quality of Florence's historical patrimony is due partly to the intellectual curiosity of her population, and partly to her good fortune in escaping many (though not all) of the perils that have afflicted other parts of Europe in modern times: war, revolution, social upheaval, natural disasters.

Since the end of World War II, the study of Florentine history has developed into a large-scale enterprise. No other European city in the pre-industrial age has been explored so intensively. To a remarkable degree, this massive scholarly enterprise has been unstructured and uncoordinated, without the guidance of an established tradition. Contributing to this situation has been the predominance of foreign scholars in the field, and the absence of any local institutional structure to promote and guide research.<sup>1</sup> Methods and perspectives imported from abroad (positivism, Marxism, *Geistesgeschichte*, struc-

<sup>1</sup> R. Starn, "Florentine Renaissance Studies," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance*, xxxii (1970), 678.



turalism) have left traces in the scholarship, but none has become so deeply entrenched as to establish a school of Florentine studies. There has been little agreement on method, or on the assignment of priorities to research problems. Critics have often noted that Florentine historians tend to explore their own bailiwicks, with scant reference to the work of their colleagues, and with slight interest in the study of similar problems elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Thus Florentine history is characteristically parochial and non-comparative. It is no accident that Florentine scholars have not joined together—as their counterparts in Milan, Venice, and Rome have done—to write a collective history of the city.<sup>3</sup> The spirit of individualism (some might say of anarchy) is too strong for such collaborative effort.

There are, however, discernible patterns and trends in this untidy and heterogeneous body of historical writing: concentrations of research on specific periods and problems. The decades after the Black Death have been more intensively studied by the current generation of scholars than the medieval centuries, which had been the primary concern of prewar historians: Davidsohn, Salvemini, Ottokar, Saporì. And within the time-span of the Florentine Renaissance, from the mid-fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, scholars have focused upon particular moments of crisis, when the city's experience changed (or appeared to change) sharply and decisively.<sup>4</sup> One conjuncture, particularly favored by demographic and economic historians, is the decade of the 1340s, when Florence's pattern of growth was abruptly reversed by famine, plague, and economic dislocation. The beginning of the fifteenth century is another turning-point, from a "medieval" to a "Renaissance" age, most clearly marked in the plastic arts and in education, but with shifts and realignments in other spheres. The third crisis is most precisely and dramatically marked by the French invasion of 1494, and the subsequent efforts of Florentines—and other Italians—to preserve their civilization from the onslaught of the ultramontane barbarians.

The schemes of periodization that are built around these "crises"

<sup>2</sup> A rare exception is Lauro Martines' comparative analysis of Florentine and Milanese governments in his *Lawyers and Statecraft in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, 1968), ch. 11. Cf. the comparative treatment of Tuscan fiscal systems by William Bowsky, *The Finance of the Commune of Siena 1287-1355* (Oxford, 1970), ch. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Starn, 678-79. Starn's review of *Florentine Studies* edited by Nicolai Rubinstein (London, 1968), is an excellent if brief analysis of recent Florentine historiography.

<sup>4</sup> On the current predilection of historians for "crises," see Starn's suggestive analysis in *Past and Present*, no. 52 (Aug. 1971) 3-22.

have not gained the universal acceptance of Florentine historians, who disagree sharply about their significance. Illustrating these discordant viewpoints are the writings of David Herlihy and Philip Jones, both specialists in the economic history of late medieval Tuscany. Herlihy has formulated a model of economic development characterized by distinct phases and clearly defined turning-points.<sup>5</sup> He insists that the demographic reversal of the 1340s was a critical moment in Tuscan history, signifying the end of three centuries of growth and the beginning of a long period of economic stagnation followed by a gradual recovery. He stresses the differences between the old agrarian regime—characterized by high rents and interest rates, rising grain prices, and an exploited peasantry on the bare edge of subsistence—and the new order of the *mezzadria* that, he argues, brought prosperity and stability to the Tuscan countryside. In Herlihy's view, the Renaissance was a distinct phase in Florentine (and Tuscan) history, marked by a modest demographic and economic recovery, the reallocation of wealth in both country and town (the aristocracy richer, merchants and artisans poorer), and significant changes in life styles and mentalities. Jones examines the agrarian history of Tuscany from a different point of view and arrives at different conclusions. His recent article on the disintegration of the Tuscan manor is a dense, massively documented study that stresses the complexity and eccentricity of medieval agrarian developments, in which he sees no clear trends and no sharp, decisive breaks.<sup>6</sup> He places greater stress on continuity, and on variety and vicissitude, than does Herlihy, and he is less inclined to see the *mezzadria* as the panacea for rural Tuscany's ills. Jones' skepticism about the concept of Renaissance is most clearly expressed in his essay on communes and despots, where he argues that political structures and attitudes did not change significantly from the eleventh to the eighteenth century. In Italy, he writes, "the 'Renaissance state' is a fiction to be banned from the books."<sup>7</sup>

Most Florentine historians would dispute Jones' assertion that the Renaissance, as a periodizing concept, has neither validity nor utility. The majority would probably accept Denys Hay's dictum that "there was a Renaissance," though some might question his statement that the evidence for its reality was "overwhelming."<sup>8</sup> Within this area

<sup>5</sup> In his article on S. Maria Impruneta, *Flor. Studies*, 242-76, and his *Medieval and Renaissance Pistoia* (New Haven, 1967).

<sup>6</sup> *Flor. Studies*, 193-241.

<sup>7</sup> *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., xv (1965), 95.

<sup>8</sup> *The Italian Renaissance in its Historical Background* (Cambridge, 1966), 1.

of rough consensus, however, there are disagreements over defining these concepts, medieval and Renaissance, and over locating them on Florence's temporal grid. Students of the plastic arts—and more generally, of Florentine culture—are most strongly persuaded that the changes they observe in their special fields signify a radical transition from one age to another. George Holmes, for example, perceives the Renaissance as a Florentine creation, an intellectual movement “of rather extreme and sudden secularization of ideas, under the auspices of the classics, over a broad spectrum of interests . . . and a sudden blossoming of highly original attitudes in a transitory movement.”<sup>9</sup> To students of population and productivity, of social and political structures, the transformations are not so abrupt nor so dramatic. But change there was, from *trecento* to *quattrocento*, in the material environment as well as in the realms of thought and sensibility.<sup>10</sup>

In recent studies of Florentine politics in the early Renaissance (which I shall define arbitrarily as the period from the Ciompi Revolution in 1378 to the advent of the Medici in 1434), three themes have received particular emphasis. First, scholars have noted the contraction of the social base of politics, and the concentration of power in the hands of an oligarchy, after the collapse of the guild regime in 1382. Paralleling this change in the social foundations of political power was the transformation of the structure, and also the spirit, of government: the disintegration of the medieval commune and the rise of a territorial state, characterized by the centralization of authority and the establishment of a bureaucratic administration. A third important issue is the emergence of an intense civic spirit, which transformed the parochial and partisan loyalties of the medieval commune into a patriotic commitment to the institutions and values of a secular, republican community. Each of these themes has a history: an initial formulation, a critical evaluation of varying degrees of intensity, and, after reservations and qualifications, integration into the historiographical tradition. The most venerable (and probably the most widely accepted) is the elitist hypothesis, which can be traced back to Machiavelli and other sixteenth-century historians, and which has reappeared in the nineteenth-century syntheses of Capponi and Perrens, and in the twentieth-century interpretations of Schevill, Martines, and Tenenti.<sup>11</sup> More controversial is the statist theory formulated in

<sup>9</sup> *The Florentine Enlightenment 1400–50* (London, 1969), xix.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Starn, “Florentine Renaissance Studies,” *op. cit.*, 683.

<sup>11</sup> See A. Molho, “The Florentine Oligarchy and the *Balie* of the Late Trecento,” *Speculum*, XLIII (1968), 23–25.

its most extreme form by Marvin Becker. The intensity of the debate over this hypothesis testifies to its significance for the history of Renaissance Italy, and indeed for all Europe. The "civic" thesis is the creation of Hans Baron, whose seminal work, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (1955; second edition, 1966), has stimulated a flood of laudatory and critical comment.<sup>12</sup> The scholarly controversies arising from this book have been quite as spirited as those over the territorial state; they constitute a staple element in recent Florentine historiography.

Ever since Gaetano Salvemini published his classic study on the struggle between magnates and *popolani* in the late thirteenth century, students of Florentine history have been sensitized to the problems of class conflict, and to the impact of these tensions upon politics, religion, and culture.<sup>13</sup> This materialist focus is most pronounced in the writings of Alberto Tenenti and Lauro Martines. These scholars have argued that the most significant development in Florentine history during the late fourteenth century was the achievement of total control of the state by Florence's entrepreneurial class. This process, Tenenti asserts, was the consequence of changes in the Florentine economy and, specifically, the trend toward a greater concentration of wealth and a more centralized control over economic activity by that mercantile elite. Tenenti insists that a genuinely popular government in Florence was never possible, and that some form of oligarchic government was inevitable, given the economic conditions of the second half of the *trecento*. Camouflaging the stark realities of a class ruling exclusively for its own benefit was an antiquated constitutional structure that, in its operations and its ideology, perpetuated the myth (widely accepted and cherished in Florence) of a regime based upon the whole guild community. Some progress was made by the oligarchy in reorganizing the administrative structure to insure more rational and efficient government, and thus more effective control over the city and its territory. The ruling elite thus began, though it did not complete, the process of transforming the medieval commune into a modern bureaucratic state.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> N. Rubinstein, in *Flor. Studies*, 10-11. For bibliographical references to a contrary viewpoint, see L. Martines, "Political Conflict in the Italian City States," *Government and Opposition*, III (1968), 73-74.

<sup>13</sup> This perspective also predominates in Peter Herde's analysis; see his "Politische Verhaltensweisen der Florentiner Oligarchie 1382-1402," in *Geschichte und Verfassungsgefüge: Frankfurter Festgabe für Walter Schlesinger* (Wiesbaden, 1973), 156-249.

<sup>14</sup> *Florence à l'époque . . . Medicis: de la cité à l'état* (Paris, 1968).

Like Tenenti, Martines focuses his attention upon those wealthy Florentines who constituted the city's ruling class and who exercised control over every aspect of life. Their regime was unequivocally oligarchic: "By oligarchy I mean government where only the few have a voice and where among these the rich tend to hold the most authoritative positions."<sup>15</sup> Although economic and social conditions in the late *trecento* promoted this oligarchic trend, the basic impulse came from the aristocratic families whose members resisted the pressures for a more broadly constituted regime, pressures that were particularly intense during the Ciompi revolution and its troubled aftermath. "From the 1380's," Martines writes, "the upper-class families moved to reverse things, partly by fostering the concentration of power in certain offices." He emphasizes the dynamism of this ruling class, which enlisted the services and the loyalties of the professional groups in Florentine society, the humanists and the lawyers, whose knowledge and expertise were exploited for the benefit of the oligarchy. In his study of Florentine statecraft in the fifteenth century, Martines develops the concept of an inner oligarchy of 400–700 citizens that "constituted the effective ruling class," and the Florentine perception of the state as the personal possession of the men who controlled it.

Tenenti and Martines view the centralization and rationalization of authority as a consequence of the drive by the Florentine mercantile aristocracy to strengthen its control over the state, and thus over the territory (and its inhabitants) governed by the state. The prime mover in this process is the energy and will of a ruling elite. Both trends, oligarchic and statist, are gradual, but the critical stages occur in the years after 1382. Marvin Becker moves the critical moment back a half-century, to the 1340s; that decade marks, in his analysis, the transition from a loosely organized and tolerant regime to a polity that was hostile to privilege and immunity, and austere and puritanical in spirit. The social group that accomplished this transformation was not the aristocracy, but the guildsmen from the middle strata of society, who demanded government that was strict, impartial, and efficient. Though Becker incorporates all facets of Florentine experience—the emotional and the aesthetic as well as the tangible and the concrete—into his conceptual vision, his scheme is based upon material foundations and specifically upon the fiscal system. The fisc was the ligament uniting public and private interests; in a very real sense, the ruling class owned the state through its investment in the funded debt. These "owners" pursued a statist policy designed primarily to increase

<sup>15</sup> *Lawyers and Statecraft*, 387. For his general argument, 387–404, 467–76.

revenues and thus to promote the solvency of the regime and protect the investments of the shareholders in this public enterprise.<sup>16</sup>

Becker connects the intensification of civic feeling in Florence in the late fourteenth century to the breakdown of the corporate order; citizens gave their allegiance increasingly to the state because the older collectivities had become too weak to command loyalty. Hans Baron attributes this civic revival to the effect of external events and, specifically, to the Visconti threat to the republic's independence that reached its climax in the summer of 1402. It is this peril, Baron argues, that transformed Leonardo Bruni into a passionate defender of the Florentine republic and of the political and moral values that he associated with republicanism. Born of a diplomatic and military crisis, civic humanism became the quasi-official culture of the Florentine ruling class. Its point of view was secular; its program included a justification of the active life, and of mundane concerns generally; and the formulation of a new historical outlook that described Florence's experience—the experience of a dynamic, independent republic—in very positive terms.<sup>17</sup>

Before these themes—elitism, statism, and civism—can be fully integrated into a coherent interpretation of Florentine politics in the early Renaissance, they should be reexamined in the light of recent criticism, and of new evidence. They do not fit neatly together, either logically or chronologically. Several scholars have noted, for example, the anomaly of an intensified civic spirit emerging at a time when the social base of Florentine government was contracting, when fewer citizens were participating in political life.<sup>18</sup> Becker has argued that the statist trend intensified after the 1340s; Tenenti and Martines view this development as a phenomenon of the fifteenth century. Most fundamental are the disagreements over what might be called the priorities of causation. Baron sees external stimuli as the key catalyst

<sup>16</sup> Becker's thesis is developed in the two volumes of his *Florence in Transition* (Baltimore, 1967–68), but is most succinctly formulated in "The Florentine Territorial State and Civic Humanism in the Early Renaissance," *Flor. Studies*, 109–39. Cf. the critiques of Becker's analysis by L. Martines, P. Jones, R. Starn and P. Herde, in *Speculum*, XLIII (1968), 689–92; *English Historical Review*, LXXXV (1968), 410–13; *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance*, xxx (1968), 624–27; and *Historische Zeitschrift*, CCX (1970), 745–47.

<sup>17</sup> Some positive appraisals of Baron's thesis are in *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Hans Baron*, ed. A. Molho and J. Tedeschi (Dekalb, Ill., 1971), xi–lxx; for critical reviews, see P. Jones in *History*, LIII (1968), 410–13; A. Tenenti in *Annales*, xxv (1970), 1396–98; and P. Herde in *Historisches Jahrbuch*, xc (1970), 385–87.

<sup>18</sup> Jones, in *History*, LIII, 412; Molho, *Speculum*, XLIII, 24; D. Hay, in *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Hans Baron*, xxvii–xxviii.

in changing Florentine ideas and values; for Martines and Herde, the dynamic element in Florentine history is the entrepreneurial class. Underlying each of these interpretations is a set of assumptions about the historical process that is rarely articulated by their authors, and not always exposed by their critics. Historical relationships, Geoffrey Barraclough has written recently, "are never direct or obvious; there is always something mysterious and intangible about the way things relate."<sup>19</sup> Florentine historians have been no more successful in clarifying these mysteries than their brethren in other fields.

Clarity and precision of terminology, and analytical rigor, have not been distinctive trademarks of Florentine historians, who have been criticized for relying too heavily upon subjective impressions, and for neglecting to examine and classify data carefully.<sup>20</sup> It is doubtless true, as Daniel Waley has written, that "a great deal more counting will have to be done before Florentine economic and social—and even ecclesiastical—history can be given convincing analytical treatment."<sup>21</sup> But the ideal of a Florentine *histoire totale*, with its roots in statistical analysis and its goal the study of all dimensions of human experience over the *longue durée*, may not be feasible, at least for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The fragmentary nature of the evidence limits our ability to answer some elementary questions about population size, birth and death rates, immigration and emigration, and prices of foodstuffs, raw materials, and industrial products before the sixteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Though some of this evidence is buried in notarial records and *Mercanzia* volumes, and the account books and correspondence of individuals, business companies, and ecclesiastical foundations, it may not be adequate for this kind of analysis.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *The New York Review of Books* (4 June 1970), 55.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Jones' criticism of Becker's methodology; *Eng. Hist. Review*, LXXV, 565–66. Such terms as "aristocracy," "patriciate," "oligarchy," "bourgeoisie," "gente nuova," and "family" have rarely been defined with precision by Florentine historians; cf. R. Goldthwaite's comments on "family" in *Private Wealth in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, 1968), 260–61. The most precise terminology concerning families is employed by F. W. Kent, in *Family Worlds in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, 1977), 3–17.

<sup>21</sup> *Eng. Hist. Review*, LXXXV (1970), 836.

<sup>22</sup> For a sanguine view of the possibilities for quantitative history in late medieval and early Renaissance Tuscany, see D. Herlihy, "The Tuscan Town in the Quattrocento: A Demographic Profile," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, new ser., no. 1 (1970), 81–84. On the state of our knowledge of Florentine economic history, see Goldthwaite, *Private Wealth*, 235–36.

<sup>23</sup> When the scholarly enterprises of Elio Conti, Charles de la Roncière, and David Herlihy are eventually completed, a comprehensive analysis of Florence's material foundations in these centuries may be feasible. Conti has published two

With so much that we do not know (and perhaps cannot know) about Florence's material foundations in these decades, we may need another viewpoint to comprehend the transition from a medieval to a Renaissance city, and to relate those developments—the triumph of oligarchy, statism, an intensely civic ethos—to other facets of Florentine experience. The key to that understanding, I shall argue in this book, is the changing social order: the transformation of the forms of association that underlay politics. I agree with those scholars who have argued that the corporate foundations of the commune grew weaker in the fourteenth century; the historical significance of the Ciompi revolution was its revelation of that erosion.<sup>24</sup> But these collectivities never withered away entirely: indeed, they displayed a remarkable capacity for survival, and for influencing the political process on behalf of their social constituencies. The history of Florentine politics after 1378 is the story of this community's efforts to sustain a polity that was firmly anchored in the past, institutionally and psychologically, but that could adapt to changes in the social and economic order, as well as to discrete events. Florence's constitution remained quite static in these decades, because her citizens were extremely conservative and reluctant to sanction any significant alteration of their institutions. But in very important ways the political system had been transformed. Those who governed the republic in 1427 came from the same social groups as their counterparts of 1382, but they wielded power differently. Moreover, their perception of politics had changed, to one that Machiavelli would have found familiar. To chart these innovations in Florence's political style, and to relate them to changes in the economy, the social order, and the culture, is a primary goal of this study.

The book's main thesis is the transformation of Florentine politics from corporate to elitist: from a polity controlled and guided by corporate interests to one governed by a cadre of statesmen—experienced, skilled, professional. The restructuring of the political system was certainly stimulated by events—by internal challenges to those who governed, as well as by foreign threats—but it was also, and

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volumes of his *La formazione della struttura agraria moderna nel contado fiorentino* (Rome, 1965–1966). For Herlihy's enterprise, see his "Tuscan Town." R. Goldthwaite has recently published an article on Florentine grain prices, using data from the records of the hospital of S. Maria Nuova and a manuscript in the *Conventi Soppressi*; "I prezzi del grano a Firenze dal XIV al XVI secolo," *Quaderni storici*, x (1975), 5–36.

<sup>24</sup> A point of view that I did not emphasize sufficiently in my article on the Ciompi; *Flor. Studies*, 314–56.



perhaps more fundamentally, a response to social change. In the first chapter, I shall attempt to show how the corporate entities that constituted the traditional social order had lost cohesiveness and vitality in the years after the Black Death.<sup>25</sup> Corporate politics did not disappear with the Ciompi revolution, but that crisis revealed the flaws in the old order and the need to alter the political system. The process of adjustment began during the tenure of the guild regime of 1378–1382 and continued throughout the 1380s and 1390s. The internal history of these realignments is described in the second chapter, the impact of foreign affairs in the third. By the first decade of the fifteenth century, an elitist regime had developed from the old corporate chrysalis. Its distinctive features emerged during the crisis years of the Visconti wars (1389–1402); its vitality was demonstrated by its aggressive campaign to expand Florentine territory in the years following the death of Giangaleazzo Visconti (chapter iv). I have selected the year 1411, when this regime might be said to have achieved maturity, to identify the elite's membership, and to describe its style. There followed three years of crisis (1411–1414) when the regime's capacity for survival was severely tested (chapter vi). Having emerged from that ordeal, the republic enjoyed a respite from war for nearly seven years, when another constellation of troubles—economic, political, military—again threatened its existence (chapter vii). The year 1427 was the regime's climacteric: the moment when its fortunes turned downward until, seven years later, it fell.<sup>26</sup> The final chapter analyzes the process of disintegration and the leadership's inability to shore up the tottering regime.

The sources for this study are now quite familiar. They have been cited in the published work of Florentine scholars who have diligently explored the documents, public and private, that have survived for these decades. Perhaps the best guide to the official records is Lauro Martines' recent study on lawyers, which also contains valuable references to the private *fondi*—letters, diaries, memorials—that add much to our knowledge of Florentine politics after 1380.<sup>27</sup> One particular

<sup>25</sup> I have discussed this phenomenon briefly in my *Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1969), 97–101; it is an important theme in Becker's analysis; *Flor. Studies*, 110–16.

<sup>26</sup> The political development of these years is described by Dale Kent; *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence 1426–1434*, to be published by the Clarendon Press. The problems of the fisc are discussed by A. Molho, *Florentine Public Finances*, ch. 5–7.

<sup>27</sup> *Lawyers and Statecraft*, 57–61, 112–15, 215–19. Fewer chronicles were written (or have survived) after 1380 than before; L. Green, *Chronicle into History* (Cambridge, 1972), *passim*. But private sources are incomparably richer for the

source has been fundamental to this analysis: the *Consulte e Pratiche*, the record of Florentine political deliberations. Though known and exploited by scholars for more than a century,<sup>28</sup> these debates have not been systematically studied, nor their historical value fully appreciated. They constitute the most complete record of the political thought of any European community—urban, regional, national—prior to the English Civil War.<sup>29</sup> For the years between 1382 and 1434, that record is comprehensive, with only a few lacunae.<sup>30</sup> These records identify the leading statesmen of the regime: the men whose opinions and judgments were most frequently solicited and heard in the palace of the Signoria. They also reveal the problems confronting the republic—the significance attached to them, the controversies they provoked, their solutions. Finally, they register change: in the balance of power, in the methods of exercising authority and making decisions, in the ways that Florentine politicians perceived reality—how they saw themselves and their world.

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later period; G. Brucker, ed., *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: the Diaries of Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*, trans. Julia Martines (New York, 1967), 9–12.

<sup>28</sup> Cesare Guasti published selections from this source in his edition of the *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi*, 3 vols. (Florence, 1867–1873).

<sup>29</sup> Brucker, *Florentine Politics and Society, 1343–1378* (Princeton, 1962), ix. Felix Gilbert used the *Consulte e Pratiche* very extensively in his “Florentine Political Assumptions in the Period of Savonarola and Soderini,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xx (1957), 187–214. For a perceptive evaluation of the historical value of these protocols, see Herde, “Politische Verhaltensweisen,” 175–77.

<sup>30</sup> The inventory of the *Consulte e Pratiche* is printed in D. Marzi, *La Cancellaria della Repubblica fiorentina* (Rocca S. Casciano, 1910), 515–16.

## CHAPTER I

### *Corporate Values and the Aristocratic Ethos in Trecento Florence*

#### SOCIAL AGGREGATIONS

FROM the beginnings of their documented past, medieval Florentines (like other Italian city-dwellers) had displayed a strong and persistent impulse to band together into associations, and to invest those bodies with a corporate character. They drafted constitutions specifying the rights and obligations of membership; they exacted oaths of fealty; they convened assemblies; they levied dues and services. These organizations gave their members a measure of security in a turbulent world where public authority was weak, and where survival depended upon cooperation and mutual assistance. In addition to providing support, both material and psychic, they performed an important social function by resolving conflicts and restraining violence among their members. As Florence grew in size, and her society and polity became more complex, new associations were formed in response to changing needs. A citizen of Dante's generation (c. 1300) would customarily belong to several of these societies: a guild, a confraternity, the Parte Guelfa, the commune.<sup>1</sup>

The commune of the *trecento* was a composite of these collectivities, and the institutional embodiment of the corporate spirit. Its legislative councils, of the *Popolo* and the Commune, were the organs of political associations that had been formed in the past. Membership in the commune was restricted to citizens who were matriculated into one or more of the city's twenty-one guilds. Comprising the supreme executive, the Signoria, were eight priors chosen as representatives of the guild community, and the standard-bearer of justice. Among the groups which advised the Signoria on policy, and voted on legislation, were agents of corporations that had been integrated into the communal structure: the Sixteen standard-bearers of the militia companies who represented the city's neighborhoods; the captains of the Parte Guelfa; the guild consuls. Every magistracy—from the Signoria to the officials charged with collecting gabelles at the city gates or

<sup>1</sup> Of the vast literature on this subject, four recent works may be cited: P. J. Jones, "Communes and Despots," *op. cit.*, 71-96, and esp. 85; D. Waley, *The Italian City-Republics* (London, 1969), ch. 5; J. K. Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy* (London, 1973), ch. 4, 5; and *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities, 1200-1500*, ed. L. Martinez (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1972).

those responsible for internal security—functioned collegially: debating issues, promulgating edicts, levying fines.<sup>2</sup>

The corporate ethos was fundamentally egalitarian. Members of a guild, political society (*parte*), or militia company (*gonfalone*) were assumed to possess equal rights and privileges, and to bear equal obligations to the society and their fellows. "If any one of us is offended or outraged by any person," so read a clause in the charter of a fourteenth-century Guelf association, "each and every one is obligated to help, defend and avenge him with his life and property, and to respond to that quarrel as though it were his own person."<sup>3</sup> By joining a corporation, the Florentine acquired "brothers" who, individually and collectively, could make claims upon him that he had sworn an oath to acknowledge. These obligations took no account of differences in wealth, social status, or personal qualities. "Members of late medieval confraternities and *corpora mystica*," Lionel Rothkrug has written, "were compelled by oath of entry to treat every other person in the community according to a whole set of reciprocal rights and duties without regard to personal choice."<sup>4</sup> In theory if not always in practice, that principle applied to every corporate society in Florence, whether religious or secular.

This corporate spirit was revealed most graphically during the celebrations honoring Florence's patron, John the Baptist. Every year, on the day before the saint's feast (24 June), the guilds displayed the finest examples of their wares and skills: in cloth-making and leatherwork, in gold ornaments and woodcarving. Competing for the public's attention were members of religious confraternities, "who assemble [Gregorio Dati reported] at the place where their meetings are held, dressed as angels, and with musical instruments of every kind and marvelous singing. They stage the most beautiful representations of the saints, and of those relics in whose honor they perform."<sup>5</sup> Later that day, representatives from each of the city's sixteen electoral districts (*gonfalon*i) brought candles to the Baptistry, as offerings to their patron saint. On the feast day itself, a more formal procession moved through the streets, headed by the captains of the Parte Guelfa,

<sup>2</sup> F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini* (Princeton, 1965), 12–14. Good examples of this collegiate mentality are the accounts of the deliberations of the cathedral *operai*; C. Guasti, *Santa Maria del Fiore* (Florence, 1887).

<sup>3</sup> C. Guasti, ed., *Le Carte Strozzi* del R. Archivio di Stato di Firenze (Florence, 1884–1899), 1, 99; trans. in Brucker, *The Society of Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1971), 85.

<sup>4</sup> In his unpublished manuscript, "Popular Religion and Holy Shrines," part II, iv.

<sup>5</sup> This account in G. Dati, *Istoria di Firenze dall'anno MCCCXXXXX all'anno MCCCCV* (Florence, 1735), 84–89, partly trans. in Brucker, *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 75–78.

their standard carried by a page on horseback. Behind the captains were representatives of the towns in Florence's dominion, and the nobles of the *contado* and district, required by the terms of their submission to the republic to bring their insignias and candles to the Baptistry. Then came the Signoria, accompanied by their collegiate associates, the Twelve *buonumini* and the Sixteen. Preceding the priors in the procession was the great flag of justice, the symbol of the commune's authority, which left the palace of the Signoria only on these formal occasions, or when civic turmoil threatened the regime's security.

During those times of crisis, armed citizens rushed to join those associations which appeared to offer the greatest security, and for which they felt the strongest affinity. For many, the family was the cornerstone of their world, and the palace of the family's patriarch, or its loggia, the place of assembly. Others banded together with neighbors into militia companies, to protect their district from riots, and, if summoned by the priors, to march to the palace of the Signoria. During the Ciompi revolution (July–August 1378) and again in January 1382, the guilds formed the most important blocs in the street battles that were fought in the square in front of the palace of the Signoria. On 31 August 1378, armed guildsmen led by the butchers defeated the cloth-workers, the Ciompi, recently organized into their own guild, and overthrew the popular republic that had governed Florence for six weeks.<sup>6</sup> The regime established after the Ciompi revolution was itself overthrown three years later, when members of the cloth manufacturers' guild defeated contingents from the lower guilds led, once again, by the butchers.<sup>7</sup> In each of these disorders, the flags of the guilds, the commune, and the Parte Guelfa played a prominent role: as assembly points for their members, as symbols of legitimacy. These banners were used to bolster allegiance to the existing regime; they were also employed by dissidents to rally support for corporate values and institutions that (so the rebels argued) had been suppressed by those in power. "Long live the *popolo* and the guilds!": that cry reverberated through the city during every political crisis from the 1370s to the end of the century and beyond.

The armed guildsmen mobilized around their standards had deter-

<sup>6</sup> Brucker, "Ciompi," *Flor. Studies*, 315–16, 326, 329, 347–51.

<sup>7</sup> See below, 60; Brucker, *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 78–80. But families and their dependents also played an important role in political strategy and consciousness. In April 1382, Simone Capponi offered to the Signoria the services of himself, "et omnes habiles de domo de Caponibus, et centum famulos et quinquentos florenos"; *Diario d'anonimo*, 441.

mined Florence's destiny in the summer of 1378; thereafter, the power of the guild community waned rapidly. Its impotence was dramatized by a putative rebellion in October 1393, the last moment in Florentine history when guild loyalties and aspirations played an important if ultimately unsuccessful role in a political crisis. The revolt began when a debtor, seeking to avoid capture by the police, shouted: "Long live the *popolo* and the guilds!" Upon hearing this clamor, artisans and shopkeepers seized their arms and rushed to the piazza della Signoria. A goldsmith named Giovanni Ottinelli left his shop and ran through the streets urging his colleagues to "close down your shops . . . for this is the day that we shall be free!" A dyer, Leonardo di Niccolò, assumed the leadership of the rebellious artisans; he and his followers invaded the palace of the captain, seized that official and mounted him on a horse with a banner displaying the arms of the *popolo*. Defending the regime against this mob were citizens identified by the chroniclers as "good Guelfs," together with contingents of the civic militia and mercenaries in the commune's service.<sup>8</sup> If the testimony of a certain Starmine di Amideo can be believed, two rival youth gangs, called the *Berta* and the *Magrone*, took advantage of this imbroglio to attack each other.<sup>9</sup> In the fighting between the rebels and the regime's supporters, Sandro di Niccolò was killed; the banner of the *popolo* was seized from the artisans by Messer Michele de' Medici and carried to the palace of the Signoria. One artisan later confessed that he had urged Michele "to raise that banner and hold it upright . . . and the artisans will follow and defend you."<sup>10</sup> But Michele declined this opportunity to become a hero of the lower guildsmen. Demoralized by the death of their leader and the seizure of the flag, the artisans fled from the square in disorder. That evening two

<sup>8</sup> These details from *BNF, Panc.*, 158, ff.174v-175r; and from the convictions of the participants; *ACP*, 1988, ff.5r-15r, 90r-91r.

<sup>9</sup> From Starmine's petition for absolution in Oct. 1422; *Prov.*, 122, ff.166v-168r: "Ipse Starnina cum multis aliis fuit criminatus et causa fuit non ea que fuit inserta, sed pro eo quia fiebant certe pugne manibus vacuiis inter cives in maxima copia pro qualibet parte, quarum una vulgo dicebantur 'L'Aberta,' reliqua, 'E Magroni.' Et quod ipse ut iuvenis aptus ad similia partem cum multis sequacibus tenebat della Berta intantum quod multi ex alia qui eum hodie habuerunt ipsum penes rectorem inculpaverunt pro dicto tractatu, sperantes ipsum ponere in manibus rectoris. . . ." For other details on the role of these gangs in this uprising, see *Acquisti e Doni*, 140 (7), no. 56.

<sup>10</sup> "O domine Michael! Erigatis istam banderiam et teneatis eam rectam, nec teneatis aliquid, quia ista est banderia cum armis populi; artifices vos sequuntur et deffendent"; *ACP*, 1988, ff.14v-15r. Minerbetti wrote in his chronicle that the artisans appealed to Messer Vieri de' Medici to lead them; Minerbetti, *anno* 1393, ch. 22.

prominent citizens, Messer Rinaldo Gianfigliuzzi and Messer Donato Acciaiuoli, carried the banners of the *popolo* and the Parte Guelfa around the square, followed by a large crowd shouting: "Long live the *popolo* and the Parte Guelfa!"<sup>11</sup>

The failure of the guilds to sustain their political authority has led some historians to minimize their role in the political and social life of early Renaissance Florence.<sup>12</sup> But evidence does exist to suggest that the corporate spirit was not moribund, and that the commune had not become the sole repository of the allegiances that these associations had once inspired. Lauro Martines has noted how strongly and aggressively the guilds defended their privileges, even against the commune.<sup>13</sup> Although the guilds may have suffered some diminution of their autonomy in the late *trecento*, they continued to exercise substantial control over their members: forcing them to abide by the rules regulating their crafts, adjudicating disputes, levying assessments, requiring their presence at the funerals of fellow guildsmen.<sup>14</sup> Confraternities proliferated in the decades after the Black Death, a trend which suggests that the religious sodality became increasingly important in the lives of the Florentines.<sup>15</sup> The only corporate body to experience a permanent loss of its authority and prestige, and its capacity to attract recruits in these years, was the Parte Guelfa.<sup>16</sup>

To perceive the family, the lineage, as a corporate unit in a social order formed by collectivities is to grasp an important truth about this urban community. Though the family had no charter or constitution, nor formal rules and regulations, it was—and remained—the most cohesive force in Florentine society through the Renaissance and beyond.<sup>17</sup> Lineages were held together by *fidei commissum*; by jointly

<sup>11</sup> *Panc.*, 158, f.174v.

<sup>12</sup> That theme is fundamental to Becker's interpretation of Florentine history in these years; see "Individualism in the Early Italian Renaissance: Burden and Blessing," *Studies in the Renaissance*, XIX (1972), 292-93; "The Florentine Territorial State," *Flor. Studies*, 110-15.

<sup>13</sup> *Lawyers and Statecraft*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., the *Statuti delle arti dei fornai e dei vinattieri di Firenze*, ed. F. Morandini (Florence, 1956). The most recent study of the Florentine guilds is J. Najemy, "The Guilds in Florentine Politics, 1292-1394," Harvard Ph.D. dissertation, 1972.

<sup>15</sup> R. Trexler, "Ritual in Florence: Adolescence and Salvation in the Renaissance," *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. C. Trinkaus and H. Oberman (Leiden, 1974), 205-06; R. Hatfield, "The Compagnia de' Magi," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xxxiii (1970), 143-44.

<sup>16</sup> *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 84-89.

<sup>17</sup> The authoritative work on the Florentine family in the Renaissance is now F. W. Kent, *Family Worlds in Renaissance Florence*. The critical reader will note

owned property and businesses; by common political interests and objectives; above all, by identification with, and loyalty to, a family tradition. The bonds of kinship had changed significantly since the halcyon days of the *consorterie* in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The infiltration of "new men" into the city, the rise of the *popolo*, the enactment of legislation concerning magnates, the demographic and economic crises of the mid-fourteenth century: these developments had combined to transform, and perhaps to weaken, kinship ties.<sup>18</sup> Florentines in 1400 were rather more reluctant than formerly to participate in vendettas, less willing, perhaps, to risk money on behalf of relatives plagued by economic misfortune<sup>19</sup> or threatened by neighbors or the commune. In 1373, Foligno de' Medici recalled with nostalgia a past time when his family was strong and unified, "and every man feared us."<sup>20</sup> But some scholars have exaggerated the disintegration of the lineage in the fourteenth century, just as they have emphasized too strongly the debility of other corporate bodies. The trend is not a simple declension from strength to weakness, from cohesion to fragmentation, but a more complex pattern of flux and reflux, of breakdown and reconstitution.

A moment in the history of the Strozzi illustrates the problem. In 1387 that large and very potent lineage was severely damaged, and its political authority jeopardized, by the senseless act of a kinsman, Pagnozzino, who killed Piero Lenzi, a member of the Sixteen. Pagnozzino, his brother Nofri, and their sons were all placed under the communal ban; they could be killed with impunity by any of the Lenzi. In

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how sharply my own views concerning the family have changed, after reading Dr. Kent's work, since I wrote on the subject in *Renaissance Florence*, 97-99, 264-65. Among the distinctive merits of Kent's study are the precision of his definitions, the distinction that he draws between household and lineage, and his sensitive treatment of the relationship between family structure and the larger community. Diane Hughes' article, "Urban Growth and Family Structure in Medieval Genoa," *Past and Present*, no. 66 (Feb. 1975), 3-28, makes some instructive comparisons between family organization in Genoa and Florence. Cf. J. Heers, *Le clan familial au moyen âge* (Paris, 1974).

<sup>18</sup> Kent notes, *Family Worlds*, 11, 297-98, that historians have assumed that the medieval *consorteria* was a monolithic unit, but that the evidence to support this hypothesis is very thin and ambiguous. On this question, see D. Herlihy, "Family Solidarity in Medieval Italian History," *Explorations in Economic History*, vii (1969-1971), 173-84.

<sup>19</sup> Brucker, *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 106-20; G. Morelli, *Ricordi*, ed. V. Branca (Florence, 1956), 237, 242.

<sup>20</sup> Brucker, "The Medici in the Fourteenth Century," *Speculum*, xxxii (1957), 1. Foligno attributed the Medici decline to the plague, but internal discord also played a part; *ibid.*, 17-19.



April 1388 the Lenzi ambushed a party of Strozzi on horseback, wounding one of their servants. By the terms of the law authorizing the vendetta, that was an illegal assault for which the Strozzi immediately claimed damages from the Lenzi. Currado Strozzi reported the incident in a letter to his cousin Leonardo; he was hopeful that the judge would cancel the penalties against the Strozzi, "and we will free ourselves from them." Currado then described the revival of family solidarity among the Strozzi as a result of those events:

We are seeking for ways and means to satisfy our honor. We will see how this affair develops, and according to what occurs, we will proceed prudently to protect ourselves. We have everything in order. . . . There are twenty of us, and eight servants, and we have sent all of the children away. . . . Everyone has rallied round to help, and Messer P[azzino] and N[ofri] act as though one of their sons was wounded. They denounce G[iovanni Lenzi] in the strongest terms. We will not suffer this indignity. Our lawyers are prepared, and there is plenty of money. I deplore this incident for its effect on the family, but it has been like a tonic for us. I see those who were asleep now aroused, as a result of this incident. I see everyone united and generous with money.<sup>21</sup>

Rare, however, were such occasions when the resources of a lineage, and particularly one so large as the Strozzi, could be fully mobilized. Not since 1343 had the great patrician families fought as blocs in civic disorders.<sup>22</sup> In the late *trecento* and early *quattrocento*, families might still be treated by the commune as units; for example, in 1394, when the Corbizzi and the Pitti were forced to end their vendetta and make peace, or when (1411) the Alberti were expelled from the city.<sup>23</sup> More frequently, the commune made distinctions among kinsmen, by giving *popolano* status, for example, to individual magnates who had merited the commune's benevolence;<sup>24</sup> or by separating delinquents from their more respectable cousins.<sup>25</sup> Excluded from the penalties imposed

<sup>21</sup> The provision penalizing the Strozzi in *Prov.*, 76, ff.121r-125r; Currado's letter in *Strozz.*, 3rd ser., 13, no. 1; partly trans. in Brucker, *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 111-15. The reference to 20 Strozzi suggests that only one or two branches of the family were actively involved in this imbroglio.

<sup>22</sup> G. Villani, *Cronica*, ed. F. Dragomanni (Florence, 1844-1845), xii, ch. 16, 17.

<sup>23</sup> *ACP*, 1990, ff.83r-85r, 3 July 1394; *Prov.*, 100, ff.61v-63r. On the peace imposed on the Rucellai and the Barbadori, see *CP*, 43, f.185v, 3 Apr. 1418.

<sup>24</sup> M. Becker, "A Study in Political Failure: the Florentine Magnates (1280-1343)," *Medieval Studies*, xxviii (1965), 267-68, 273.

<sup>25</sup> Petitions to separate branches of families were numerous in the 1380s and 1390s; e.g., *Prov.*, 72, ff.208v-209r (Canigiani); 76, ff.126r-127r (Ricoveri); 78,

on the Strozzi in 1387 were Messer Pazzino and his male descendants, and the heirs of Rosso and Messer Umberto di Geri, "who are called, in the vernacular, the branch of the Strozzi *armati*."<sup>26</sup> In that same year of 1387, three Alberti households—the sons of Messer Niccolò di Jacopo, Francesco di Messer Jacopo, and Marco di Francesco—were exempt from the ban on officeholding that had been imposed on the remainder of that lineage.<sup>27</sup>

But the slackening of kinship bonds did not lead inexorably to that existential situation described by Goldthwaite: the Florentine "left exposed and isolated, unencumbered with the old social obligations and loyalties."<sup>28</sup> Supplementing the family as a focus of loyalty, and a bastion of support, were smaller, more informal coalitions of individuals bound together by ties of kinship and, equally important, of friendship and of neighborhood. The blood connection was a cohesive element in these informal associations, but it was usually limited to close relatives—brothers or first cousins—and not more distant kin.<sup>29</sup> Relations between cousins—between Francesco di Jacopo and Giovanni d'Amerigo del Bene, between Giovanni di Bicci (and later his son Cosimo) and Averardo di Francesco de' Medici—were often the key links in the nuclei "of relatives and friends and neighbors" that formed around these men.<sup>30</sup> Marriage alliances were important means of recruiting others into these groups. The lawyer Rosso d'Andreozzo Orlandi had married a Davanzati girl, and thus became an intimate associate of that branch descended from Chiarino Davanzati. He wrote (September 1396) to his nephew, Piero di

ff.94r-95v (Pucci); 84, ff.162r-163v (Nobili); ff.229v-231r (Salterelli); 86, ff.75r-77r (Pecori); 95, f.85r (Velluti); f.117r (Strozzi).

<sup>26</sup> *Prov.*, 76, f.124v.

<sup>27</sup> L. Passerini, *Gli Alberti di Firenze* (Florence, 1869), II, 236.

<sup>28</sup> *Private Wealth*, 261. Cf. M. Becker: "The burgher now stood in greater isolation than ever before"; "An Essay on the Quest for Identity in the Early Renaissance," *Florilegium Historiale: Essays Presented to Wallace K. Ferguson* (Toronto, 1971), 302. For one illustration of a cohesive lineage in the early *quattrocento*, see D. Kent, *Rise of the Medici*, ch. 1, ii.

<sup>29</sup> Referring to the descendants of his uncle, Giovanni Morelli wrote: ". . . I non sono avvisato bene di loro natività e di lor cose. E perche e' non credino ch'i' voglia misurare loro gli anni, non ne voglio domandare; e però faremo fine in quanto a quel lato, non seguendo più di lor innanzi che sia istato fatto"; *Ricordi*, 200. On the distinction between *proximi consorti* and more distant kinsmen, see F. W. Kent, *Family Worlds*, 61-62.

<sup>30</sup> The phrase "de' parenti e degli'amici e de'vicini," in a letter from Tommaso to Forese Sacchetti; *Ashb.*, 1842, vol. 1, no. 169. The close bonds between the Del Bene is revealed in their correspondence in the Carte del Bene; examples in Brucker, *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 32-37.

Chiarino Davanzati in Venice, to congratulate him on the marriage of his son Bartolomeo to the daughter of Andrea Peruzzi. "I do not know of a finer marriage connection (*parentado*)," he said, adding that Bartolomeo's father-in-law was the most highly regarded member of that distinguished house, "a liberal, virtuous, and worthy man, whom you will do well to treat as a blood relative."<sup>31</sup> The Davanzati had followed the counsel that Giovanni Morelli gave to his sons: "Take care to arrange marriages with well-regarded citizens, who are not needy . . . and who are not arrogant, but who come from ancient stock, and are respected and good Guelfs. . . ."<sup>32</sup> The godfather-godson connection was another kind of social cement. Cristofano Bagnesi addressed Forese Sacchetti as his *compare*, and his letters reflect a sense of affinity as strong as any blood relationship.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the mutual obligations in these associations were substitutes for the kinship tie, and were so recognized by those who contracted them. "You may consider me your brother and your particular friend," Giovanni Morelli wrote to Forese Sacchetti (February 1427), "as I have regarded you. . . ."<sup>34</sup> Morelli had formulated the rationale, and the method, for winning friends like Sacchetti in his memorial to his sons:

If there is someone in your *gonfalone* who can help you and push you ahead, first try to become intimate with him, if possible, by means of a marriage. If that is not practicable, then have dealings with him and his [relatives]; try to serve him, offer him aid, if

<sup>31</sup> ". . . Andrea, padre dela fanciulla, è tenuto et è il da più di chasa Peruzzi et grande cittadino, da bene, libero et bonissimo parente, et da poterne fare chonto, e farete bene e grande senno sapervelo ritenere per parente"; CRS, 78 (Badia), vol. 315, no. 226, 6 Sept. 1396.

<sup>32</sup> *Ricordi*, 264. On marriages as sources of support, see F. W. Kent, *Family Worlds*, 93-99.

<sup>33</sup> "Chiarissimo fratello e honorevole compare chiarissimo"; CRS, 78, vol. 324, no. 94. Also *ibid.*, no. 89, 93. A certain Piero, like Bagnesi a close friend of Sacchetti, wrote the latter: "Quanto dite avete più fidansa in Christofano che in persona, e chosi o io, perchè o veduto ciò a fatto e fa in de' nostri fatti; che se fussi istato io, non arei fatto tanto"; *ibid.*, vol. 323, no. 264, 5 Sept. 1412. The relationship between Francesco Datini and Ser Lapo Mazzei was equally close; see my *Renaissance Florence*, 109-13.

<sup>34</sup> CRS, 78, vol. 326, no. 39, 4 Feb. 1427. Cf. Donato Velluti's statement about his relations with a former enemy: "e per lui aooperai come fratello. . . . Di che da poi in qua siamo stati fratelli"; *La cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti* (Florence, 1914), 20-21. A common sentiment in Florentine correspondence is Piero Baldovinetti's statement to Forese Sacchetti: "Fratello chiarissimo, quando i chasi e bisogni acchorono, e di nicistà a' parenti e agli amici e a quele persone in chui l'uomo a fidanza richorere"; CRS, 78, vol. 323, no. 213.

you can do so without too much harm to yourself, when you see that he is in need; give him presents; honor him by inviting him often to dinner.<sup>35</sup>

Morelli cited approvingly the example of his father Paolo, who was exceptionally skilled in the art of making friends among the powerful. Paolo honored those men by entertaining them at banquets, by acting as godfather to their children, by advising them about their private affairs. "And by such wise and provident means, he had so arranged matters that, in his time of great need, he had friends, and not only relatives, who gave him help and support. . . ."<sup>36</sup> Leon Battista Alberti once complained that he had been maltreated by relatives during his youth, and that he had received more assistance from friends than from kinsmen.<sup>37</sup>

The diary of Paolo d'Alessandro Sassetti, written between 1364 and 1400, describes one of these social agglomerates. Paolo was descended from a prominent mercantile family in the quarter of Santa Maria Novella that, by his time, was much reduced in size and political influence. Neither he nor any of his kinsfolk qualified for the Signoria, though their social standing, as measured by their marriages, was quite respectable.<sup>38</sup> A schedule of forced loans compiled in 1378 lists five Sassetti households,<sup>39</sup> but Paolo's diary suggests that the bonds uniting his kinsmen were not strong. The plague of 1383 claimed the lives of seven Sassetti;<sup>40</sup> two were buried with none of their relatives present. Pierozzo di Doffo Sassetti died in a neighbor's house in the Via Maggio "with none of us at the funeral, and this we did because we felt ourselves shamed by his desire to die in someone else's house against our will." Letta, the daughter of Federigo di Pollaio Sassetti, died unmourned by her kin because she lived with her paramour, Giovanni Porcellini: "May the devil take her soul, for she has brought shame and dishonor to our family." Rinaldo di Pollaio Sassetti lay moribund in his sister Fiondina's house, but "she did not permit any

<sup>35</sup> *Ricordi*, 253.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>37</sup> Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, ed. Renée Watkins (Columbia, S.C., 1969), 5-6.

<sup>38</sup> On the early history of the Sassetti, see P. Jones, "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century," *Papers of the British School at Rome*, xxiv (1956), 184-85; and Martines, *Social World*, 217-18.

<sup>39</sup> *Pres.*, 334, ff.95r-99r, 122r.

<sup>40</sup> Paolo's diary; *Strozz.*, 2nd ser., 4, ff.66v-68v, parts trans. in Brucker, *Society of Renaissance Florence*. Two of the seven deaths were Sassetti wives.

of us to visit him . . . and has treated us as though we were mortal enemies." Only marriages brought together the members of this fragmented family,<sup>41</sup> but the nuptial celebrations did not sustain the feeling of kinship. The significant family unit to which Paolo belonged comprised his household, those of his brothers Niccolò and Bernardo (and the latter's daughter Lena), and the children of Federigo di Pierozzo: Lisabetta, Tommaso, and Bernardo.<sup>42</sup> Although the Sassetti were linked by marriage to other prominent lineages (Strozzi, Peruzzi, Gondi, Covoni), they did not develop intimate ties with them, nor did these connections bolster their political status.<sup>43</sup> Paolo and his kinfolk received more support from, and identified more closely with, their neighbors in the *gonfalone* of the White Lion, and particularly the Anselmi. Gino di Bernardo Anselmi was a prominent politician in the district, whose death in 1390 was noted by Paolo, who expressed the hope that Gino's last testament "would be satisfactory to all of his relatives and friends."<sup>44</sup> Six years earlier, Paolo recorded the details of the marriage between Lisabetta, the daughter of Federigo di Pierozzo Sassetti, and Filippo d'Anselmo Anselmi. "It is a fact," he wrote, "that this marriage was contracted for love of relatives and neighbors"; it was forged to strengthen the affective bonds that held neighborhoods together.<sup>45</sup>

A similar pattern emerges from the diary, written between 1375 and 1427, of Lapo di Giovanni Niccolini, a wealthy merchant and cloth manufacturer in the quarter of Santa Croce.<sup>46</sup> Lapo's circle embraced only his nearest kinfolk, the descendants of his brother Niccolino and his sister Fia, and a select group of relatives by marriage. He apparently had no contact with descendants of his great-grandfather

<sup>41</sup> Descriptions of three Sassetti weddings in Paolo's diary; *Strozz.*, 2nd ser., 4, ff.73r-74r, 111v-112r, 113r-113v.

<sup>42</sup> Excluded were those who had died in 1383, and Piero di Sassetto Sassetti. Manente di Gino Sassetti had some contact with Paolo and his kinfolk; *ibid.*, ff.73r, 99v, 104r, 105r, but the degree of intimacy is not clear.

<sup>43</sup> The Sassetti women had married Verano Peruzzi, Antonio and Lionardo di Simone Gondi, Jacopo di Paolo Covoni, Cambio Arrighi, Bartolomeo Galilei, Giovanni d'Ugo Vecchietti, and Pagnozzino Strozzi; *ibid.*, f.113r.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, f.105v. On Gino's political career, see my *Florentine Politics and Society*, 33, 69, 334-35, 359.

<sup>45</sup> Paolo's diary; *Strozz.*, 2nd ser., 4, f.73r: "conciò sia chosa che questo parentado si fe' con amore di parentado e di vicinanza. . . ." At a Sassetti wedding, Paolo reported that the procession included "huomini assai, parenti, amici e vicini"; *ibid.*, f.113r.

<sup>46</sup> Edited, with an introduction on the Niccolini, by C. Bec, *Il libro degli affari proprii di casa de Lapo di Giovanni Niccolini de' Sirigatti* (Paris, 1969).

Rucco's brother Lucchese.<sup>47</sup> And though he did recognize the members of another collateral branch, the descendants of Ser Piero Gucci dei Sirigatti, as his blood relations, his ties with those distant cousins were not close.<sup>48</sup> Among those whom he called his "most trusted relatives and friends" were men linked to him by marriage (Rinieri di Bagno Bagnesi, Bese di Guido Magalotti, Messer Zanobi da Mezzola, Giovanni di Bernardo Ardinghelli) and friends from his *gonfalone*: Jacopo di Sandro Covoni, Giovanni di Messer Forese Salviati, Simone Buonarroti, Domenico di Domenico Giugni, Francesco d'Agnolo Cavalcanti, Cristofano del Bugliasse.<sup>49</sup> His wealth and connections with the leading families in Santa Croce gave a powerful stimulus to his political career; by 1400 he had joined the regime's inner circle.<sup>50</sup> With his political eminence buttressing his socio-economic standing, Lapo was able to arrange marriages for his dependents with other families in the ruling elite. When his first wife, Ermellina da Mezzola, died, he married the widow of Rinaldo Gianfigliuzzi's son Antonio. His brother Filippo married a Spini and then a Rucellai; his daughters, an Altoviti and an Albizzi; his nieces, a Rucellai, an Ardinghelli, and a Da Filicaia; his nephews, a Bischeri and a Tosinghi.<sup>51</sup> From this large circle of intimates, Lapo selected the godfathers of his children, the executors of the estates of his relatives who had died without leaving wills, and the guardians of their minor children.<sup>52</sup> Such men as the notary Ser Antonio di Niccolò d'Ancisa, whom Lapo described as his "godfather and most intimate and well-disposed friend,"<sup>53</sup> were also selected as *arbitri*, to settle differences among relatives over property and inheritances, and *mallevadori*, who guaranteed that dowries would be delivered or restored, or that loans would be repaid, or that the vendors of real estate possessed a legitimate title to their property. To ask anyone to serve as bondsman, and so risk his own money for a friend or relative, placed a particular strain upon these relationships. Lapo agreed to be a *mal-*

<sup>47</sup> "Di quello Luchese e de' suoi figliuoli disciese molta gente e sonno assai a miei dì, ma, perchè non ne anno a ffare alla nostra materia, gli preterisco e ritorno a Ruzza, mio principio e di mio lato"; *ibid.*, 56.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 96, 101-02, 116. These relatives lived in Lapo's *gonfalone* but did not achieve any political distinction; *Tratte*, 45, ff.45r-47v.

<sup>49</sup> *Libro degli affari*, 129. Bec states that Lapo's circle numbered about 60 men, perhaps too large an estimate; *ibid.*, 24, 47-48.

<sup>50</sup> See below, ch. v, 268.

<sup>51</sup> *Il libro degli affari*, 71, 88, 92, 94, 98-100, 108, 113, 139.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 63, 70, 77, 80-81, 93, 105, 109, 121, 129, 133-34.

<sup>53</sup> "Mio compare e intimo amico e benivolo"; *ibid.*, 130.

*levadore* for his father-in-law, Messer Zanobi da Mezzola, but only after the latter had promised, "as a trustworthy knight, that I would not be damaged or molested. . . ." <sup>54</sup> He reluctantly agreed to be a guarantor for the debts of a bankrupt nephew, thereby violating Giovanni Morelli's rule against such obligations, "even for relatives or friends, unless you can see with your own eyes that they can repay forty soldi per lire. . . ." <sup>55</sup> Giovanni di Simone Buonaccorsi was that rare phenomenon, a friendless man, who could not find a guarantor for the sale of property to dower his daughters, and so had to petition the commune to approve that transaction. <sup>56</sup>

There is no reference, in Lapo Niccolini's diary, to politics; that important aspect of his career can only be reconstructed from public records. In the voluminous correspondence of the Del Bene family, however, there is some data on the links between these coalitions of *parenti, amici e vicini*, and the political system. <sup>57</sup> The Del Bene were a small family from Santa Maria Novella, making up only three urban households in 1378: Giovanni d'Amerigo, Francesco di Jacopo, and Francesco and Berto di Tano. <sup>58</sup> The key connection linked the two first cousins, Giovanni d'Amerigo and Francesco di Jacopo; neither had close relations with the descendants of Tano. But Giovanni and Francesco were as intimate as brothers, in arranging marriages for each other's children and in protecting the interests of nephews and nieces. <sup>59</sup> The political careers of these men rose and fell with an abruptness unusual even for these years. In the Signoria during the 1370s, they were both proscribed by the Parte Guelfa in 1378. They were active and prominent in the guild regime that followed the Ciompi revolution but then, in 1382, they were exiled by the regime

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86. See the petition of Piero di Masino dell'Antella: "Propter fideiussionem per eum large et amicabiliter facta pro Antonio ser Martini, vinaceterio ad gabellam vini de qua damnificatus est in quantitate florenorum 1500"; *Prov.*, 88, ff.217v, 27-28 Oct. 1399. See also *Prov.*, 92, f.137v.

<sup>55</sup> *Libro degli affari*, 132; Morelli, *Ricordi*, 238, 242: "Se se' richiesto di danari o di malleverie o d'alcuna obbrigagione la quale ti potesse fare danno, guardatene quante dal fuoco. . . . Non t'obbrigare mai per niuno fallito, assai ti sia egli parente o amico; non mai, se tu vedessi coll'occhio ch'egli avesse da rendere quaranta soldi per lira non vi ti affidare mai. . . ."

<sup>56</sup> *Prov.*, 78, ff.177r-179r, May 1389.

<sup>57</sup> On the Del Bene, see H. Hoshino, "Francesco di Iacopo Del Bene cittadino fiorentino del Trecento"; *Istituto giapponese di cultura*, Rome; *Annuario*, iv (1966-1967), 29-119.

<sup>58</sup> *Pres.*, 333, ff.5v, 11v; 334, f.4v.

<sup>59</sup> On their marriage negotiations, see my *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 32-37; and *Acquisti e Doni*, 301, unpaginated, letters of 23 Feb., 14 and 20 March and 25 May 1391.

that came to power in that year.<sup>60</sup> To regain their political status was their primary goal in the 1380s, and one that required a sustained effort by friends and neighbors.

Two men from their quarter, Branca Guidalotti and Bernardo di Giovanni Strozzi were most assiduous in organizing support for the exiles; they may have been connected to the Del Bene by marriage.<sup>61</sup> If so, they displayed more concern for the welfare of their families than did members of other houses (Altoviti, Medici, Cavalcanti, Spini, Guasconi) who had also contracted marriages with the Del Bene.<sup>62</sup> Neighbors—Giovanni Lenzi, Amedeo Adimari, Filippo Bombeni, Nanni di Ricci—sent messages of encouragement and advice to Francesco in Venice, and to his son Ricciardo, a law student at Bologna. Their letters also identify others who were sympathetic to the Del Bene: Bartolino Bartolini, Messer Palmiero Altoviti, Donato Acciaiuoli, Francesco Ardinghelli.<sup>63</sup> Letters on their behalf poured out of Bologna, sent by local notables and law professors to prominent Florentines. Francesco del Bene wrote to his son Borgognone in Padua that “a number of citizens have visited the priors and the Ten [the war magistracy] to speak for me, including Messer Filippo Adimari, Francesco Ardinghelli, Jacopo di Francesco Ventura, Bernardo Strozzi, Meo Bartolini, Leone Acciaiuoli, Bindo Altoviti, and Giovanni Lenzi.”<sup>64</sup> In October 1391, a formal petition to cancel the ban against the Del Bene was presented to the Signoria by Leonardo dell’Antella. Another Del Bene partisan, Domenico Lenzi, visited one of the priors, Caccino del Caccia, who promised to support the petition.<sup>65</sup> When an artisan, Francesco di Piero Bartoli, voiced his opposition to the measure, “We sent

<sup>60</sup> Stefani, 775, 918.

<sup>61</sup> Branca's letters are in *Acquisti e Doni*, 301, unpaginated, and *Carte del Bene*, 49, no. 132, 133, 137. Examples of Bernardo's letters in *ibid.*, 49, no. 169; 52, unpaginated. For Jacopo's comments on Bernardo Strozzi, *ibid.*, 52, unpaginated, letter to Ricciardo del Bene of 26 May 1391. See also Ricciardo's letter to Jacopo; *Acquisti e Doni*, 301, unpaginated, 13 May 1391. Coluccio Salutati was a good friend of the Del Bene in 1381, but their relations may have cooled after their exile: “E specialmente abi riguardo a ser Coluccio, che io il truovo tutto nostro e serveci volentieri in ogni nostro caso e di parole e di facto, e si facti amici si voglono pur riserbare a bisogni”; Giovanni d'Amerigo to Francesco di Jacopo del Bene, 2 Apr. 1381, *Carte del Bene*, 51, unpaginated.

<sup>62</sup> *Carte dell'Ancisa*, CC, f.811v, KK, ff.263v–264r.

<sup>63</sup> The letters that discuss the rehabilitation efforts are scattered through several files of the *Carte del Bene* (vols. 49, 52, 53) and *Acquisti e Doni*, 301. Only the letters in vol. 49 are numbered; the others can be cited only by date.

<sup>64</sup> Letter of 18 Aug. 1391; *Carte del Bene*, 53. Bernardo Strozzi wrote to Ricciardo, *ibid.*, 52, 19 Aug.: “Asai uomini auno per voi adoperato per modo ch'io mi rendo certo che voi non recevete torto.”

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 53, 21 Oct. 1391.



several of his friends to him [Filippo di Giovanni wrote to Francesco del Bene] and also to the other priors, each one using arguments that seemed appropriate. But they have been criticized for their action, and so are responding quite negatively. Bernardo [Strozzi] went directly to Messer Rinaldo [Gianfigliuzzi] and asked him to talk to the priors, and I have heard that he responded favorably. . . ."<sup>66</sup> Eventually, in November, the Del Bene won their struggle for rehabilitation, after the Alberti and the Rinuccini had first been reintegrated into the regime.<sup>67</sup> Those lineages also had their coteries of supporters who had suggested to Bernardo Strozzi that he postpone his campaign to rehabilitate the Del Bene until their friends had been restored to the *reggimento*. "I have been told," Bernardo wrote to Francesco del Bene, "that I have antagonized the Alberti and the Rinuccini by seeking to include you in the group [of the rehabilitated], and they tell me, 'Another time, and soon, your friends will be served.'"<sup>68</sup> Refusing to be intimidated by these pressures, Bernardo wrote to his friend that he would do everything within his power to demonstrate that "you are not inferior in rank to the Alberti and the Rinuccini."<sup>69</sup>

Whether based upon blood or friendship, the ties binding Florentines together in these associations were as important in the political arena as in their private affairs. Behind every petition to the Signoria for an office, a grant of immunity, or a tax reduction was a group of supporters acting on behalf of the appellant. Every officeholder had to find *guarantors* to give surety for his good conduct as prior, or castellan, or keeper of the communal accounts.<sup>70</sup> Men arrested and convicted of non-capital offenses solicited their relatives, and often their friends, to guarantee the payment of their fines so that they could leave prison.<sup>71</sup> The records of the criminal courts thus provide

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> See below, ch. II, 86-87.

<sup>68</sup> *Carte del Bene*, 52, letter of 29 Apr. Cf. Giovanni Lenzi's letter to Jacopo, *ibid.*, letter of 11 May: "Sappi che quivi si mosono parechi cittadini per fare ristituire gl'Alberti, ed altri per fare i Rinuccini." Another letter, undated and unsigned, from that volume contains this remark: "I fatti degli Alberti e Rinuccini erano tirati innanzi pegli amici loro."

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, letter of 18 May: "Non so che seghuirà, ma tanto ti dichò, che giusta mia posa, si farà che voi non siate de'pegore condizione ch'Alberti e Rinuccini. . . ."

<sup>70</sup> Francesco Giovanni listed his *mallevadori* when he was a prior (1436), captain of Pisa (1436) and captain "della Montagna di Pistoia" (1439); *Strozz.*, 2nd ser., 16, ff.12r, 14v, 18r.

<sup>71</sup> Bartolomeo Valori posted bond for Strozza Strozzi; Giovanni di Ciampino da Panzano for Bernardo di Andrea Peruzzi; Tommaso di Neri Ardinghelli for Filippo Soldanieri; *ACP*, 1496, ff.241r-242r; *AP*, 3178, ff.195r-195v, 255r-255v. Bereft of such support was Matteo di Lodovico Covoni, convicted of assaulting

clues to these bonds of blood and friendship. By far the greatest burden that could be placed upon these chains of obligation involved the posting of bonds for the good behavior of exiles. When Donato Acciaiuoli violated the conditions of his exile in 1397, he betrayed his relatives and friends—three Acciaiuoli (Michele di Zanobi, Donato d'Albizzo, and Lodovico d'Adoardo), three Cavalcanti (Giovanni di Messer Amerigo, Carlo and Otto di Messer Mainardo), Luigi Guicciardini, Nicola di Messer Vieri de' Medici, Niccolò Sinibaldi and Matteo Malatesta—who had posted 20,000 florins as surety for his compliance.<sup>72</sup> Citizens who helped relatives and friends accused or convicted of political crimes were motivated by a strong sense of obligation, for they were risking not only money, but their reputations and status.<sup>73</sup>

These coalitions appear to have been as cohesive as were the *consorterie* and factions in Dante's time. The mutual bonds of obligation between the Niccolini and the Del Bene and their friends were as strong as those uniting the Donati and the Cerchi, or the Blacks and the Whites, in 1300.<sup>74</sup> And they may have contributed as much to the psychic—as well as the physical—security of their members. The differences, however, were substantial. Ties of friendship, particularly between neighbors, were quite as important as blood in cementing these coalitions. And, unlike the factions that had proliferated in the city in Dante's age and before, these associations possessed no ideological dimensions. They were less concerned with Guelfism than with profit, with promoting the material well-being (*utile*) of their members.<sup>75</sup> Rarely did they use violence or the threat of violence against

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his cousin Lapa: "et quia dictus Matheus fideiuxores prestare non potuit, ideo ipsum pro dicta quantitate recommandatus est in carceribus Stincarum"; *AEOG*, 1060, f.72v, 15 July 1388.

<sup>72</sup> Donato left Barletta, his designated place of exile, for Venice; *ACP*, 2073, ff.3v–6r; *CP*, 32, f.151r, 23 Oct. 1397. For the names of his *fideiussori* and the amount of their bonds, *ACP*, 2011, unpaginated, 12 Jan. 1396.

<sup>73</sup> When Luca da Panzano's cousin Matteo was exiled in 1434, Luca pledged 200 fl. (of a total of 500) to guarantee that he would keep the terms of his confinement; *ASI*, 5th ser., iv (1889), 157. When Buonaccorso and Bartolomeo Pitti were arrested (1413) as a result of a charge of treason against their brother Luigi, their friends offered to post bond to obtain their release from prison; *CP*, 42, f.53v, 1 Aug. 1413.

<sup>74</sup> For a different viewpoint, see M. Becker, "Individualism in the Early Italian Renaissance," *Studies in the Renaissance*, xix, 273–97.

<sup>75</sup> For the organization, personnel and goals of the Medici "party" in the late 1420s, see D. Kent, *Rise of the Medici*, ch. 1.

their enemies; as Barna Valorini wrote to his father Valorino, "Today vendettas are fought in the palace [of the Signoria] and not with knives."<sup>76</sup>

#### CORPORATISM AND THE ARISTOCRATIC SPIRIT

The Florentine impulse to seek security through association had persisted throughout the fourteenth century, although the nature of the bonds linking men together had changed. While older corporate bodies had lost some of their cohesiveness and magnetism, new groupings had emerged to attract clientele. The priorities of allegiance and obligation, so clearly defined and understood at the beginning of the *trecento*, had become confused and blurred by its end. Competition between corporate groups within the commune had also intensified. Central to the commune's function was the premise that its corporate components, representing the interests of particular groups, would reconcile their differences within its ambit and under its guidance. Once defined, the common good (*il ben comune*) was expected to take precedence over the interests of any specific group or constituency. But that principle was challenged with increasing frequency and intensity by factions which identified their own interests with the *ben comune*, and which sought to exclude their rivals from the government. The most pertinacious attack upon the corporate ideal—with its assumptions concerning political equality and the superior claims of the whole community over any single part—was sustained by coalitions of aristocratic families. From their entrenched position in the city's economic and social hierarchy they sought to dominate the commune. They cultivated a distinctive life style and a value system which set them apart from their neighbors of less exalted lineage. They became conscious of belonging to an exclusive social caste: an aristocracy, an elite.

Signs of an aristocratic mentality can be found in Florentine sources long before Dante traced his own ancestry back to Cacciaguida in the twelfth century. But not until the later fourteenth century did the idea of an elite based on blood and social distinction achieve maturity. In the years after the Black Death, members of old and prominent Florentine families began to search for documents that would establish their ancestry, and to construct the genealogies and the records of officeholding (*prioristi*) that would support their claims to social and political distinction. "Today everyone is descended from very

<sup>76</sup> BNF, *Magl.*, VIII, 1392, no. 44, undated.

ancient origins," Giovanni Morelli wrote ironically in 1393, "and so I want to record the truth about ours."<sup>77</sup> Nostalgia contributed to this preoccupation with ancestry, particularly in those houses of magnates—Rossi, Tornaquinci, Adimari, Agli, Frescobaldi—whose status and power had declined since the thirteenth century. But the strongest motive in this search for family origins was the more practical objective of establishing membership in the city's aristocracy. Blood—not wealth nor professional status nor personal virtue—was the basic criterion for locating individuals on the ill-defined rungs of Florence's social hierarchy.

Determining membership in an urban aristocracy was not a simple matter in this community without a legally defined nobility, in which the status of magnate was not a privilege but a penalty. In a dialogue (c. 1380) between the eminent canon lawyer, Lapo da Castiglionchio, and his son Bernardo, that question was examined in some detail. The Castiglionchi were a branch of a prominent family in the Valdisieve east of Florence, where they held fiefs with vassals and serfs, and where they "were considered to be the greatest and most noble men of that region." Sometime in the late twelfth century, the Castiglionchi were separated from their kinsmen, the Volognano, who had resisted the commune's efforts to extend its control over the *contado*. The Castiglionchi were "more gentle and modest" than their violent, unruly kinsmen, and more willing to accommodate themselves to the urban world that was encroaching on their district. Eventually, in the 1270s, the Castiglionchi came to live in Florence, but they did not follow the path of so many landed families that migrated into the city in these decades. They never practiced any trade or business except that of the international merchant who trafficked in cloth and wool "as do all of the greatest and worthiest men of the city"; they preferred to live in the country, to hunt and supervise their estates. They did not participate actively in civic affairs, and so did not become as influential

<sup>77</sup> *Ricordi*, 81. As early as 1350, the Alberti were searching for family papers to throw light on their origins; L. Passerini, *Gli Alberti di Firenze*, II, 7-9. The Strozzi asked Leonardo Bruni to search for ancestral documents while he was doing research on his Florentine history; *BNF, Fondo principale*, II, v, 10, no. 218, 6 Jan. 1424. That such investigations were not common before the late *trecento* is suggested by a passage in Lapo da Castiglionchio's treatise on his family: "Non ti debbe maravigliare se di più a drieto non truovo memorie, nè scritta, perocchè non è in costume di queste parti di fare di ciò sì lunga e continua memoria; e molti cittadini sono che non potrebbero dare a' loro figliuoli informazioni sì antica de' loro progenitori"; *Epistola o sia ragionamento di Messer Lapo da Castiglionchio*, ed. L. Mehus (Bologna, 1753), 52. On this issue, see Martines, *Social World*, 57.

in Florence as the Ricasoli who, like the Castiglioni, were descended from the feudal nobility, but who did play an active role in urban politics.<sup>78</sup>

Though intensely proud of their ancestry, Lapo and his son realized that antiquity alone was not sufficient to maintain their family's status. They had witnessed the decline of many noble houses; they saw signs of decay in their own family. The Castiglioni's reputation was still high in their rural district of Cuona, but they had lost property, wealth, and legal jurisdiction over the peasants who cultivated their land. To sustain their fortunes, they had to become more involved in urban life. Lapo's grandfather Albertaccio, and a kinsman Ruggiero, were the first Castiglioni to participate in communal politics; the latter, a lawyer, was a prior in 1289. Albertaccio's son Lapo was twice chosen to the Signoria, in 1319 and 1322; his son described him as "a peaceful man of good reputation, much loved by all, and a man who liked city life."<sup>79</sup> With this generation, the urbanization of the Castiglioni was complete, and Lapo followed the pattern established by his grandfather. He studied canon law in Bologna and took minor orders, but after the plague of 1348 had decimated his kinsmen, Lapo left the church to marry and raise a family.<sup>80</sup> He practiced law in Florence and lectured in the university; his earnings enabled him to purchase the property in the quarter of Santa Croce that had once belonged to his ancestors, "the better to conserve and enlarge it."<sup>81</sup> Deeply involved in urban politics and in the Parte Guelfa, Lapo became the leader of the aristocratic forces in the commune from the early 1360s until the Ciompi revolution in 1378.<sup>82</sup>

Strongly committed to the principles of hierarchy and elitism, Lapo believed that the commune should be governed by the city's aristocracy, composed of old and worthy families with a long and unblemished record of allegiance to Guelf principles and service to the Guelf republic. Florence's political hierarchy should coincide with her social order, at the apex of which were families like the Castiglioni, "which had always pursued an honorable existence, had possessed the castle of Castiglione with many of its ancient holdings adjacent, which had retained control of the [local] churches . . . which still held its ancient site in Florence . . . and which has kept its citizenship and its relations with noble citizens and its share of the city's

<sup>78</sup> *Epistola*, 31-48, 148.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-60; Stefani, 179, 335, 342.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 56: ". . . Veggendo la nostra famiglia quasi mancare di persone, per zelo della nostra famiglia, e per avere famiglia, presi moglie. . . ."

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-42.

highest offices. . . ."<sup>83</sup> Family antiquity, wealth, a respectable profession like the law or international trade, a dignified life style:<sup>84</sup> these were the marks of social distinction, and also the appropriate qualifications for a political career. Lapo relished the deference shown him by a fellow-student at Bologna, whose own family was as old as the Castiglioni, but had been servile dependents of Lapo's ancestors. Such men never lost the stigma of their origins, even though they (or their forebears) had moved to Florence and prospered, and even gained membership in the Signoria.<sup>85</sup> They might be tolerated in the commune, if their families had always been loyal to the Guelph cause, and if they accepted the leadership of their social superiors.<sup>86</sup> The fastidious Lapo never expressed, in writing, the anger that he must have felt over the participation in the government of artisans and shopkeepers, the practitioners of lowly trades (*vili arti*). But his distaste for such men was certainly as strong as that expressed by Giovanni Guinigi, who wrote in 1413 to his brother Paolo, the lord of Lucca, about his experiences in Siena, "governed by a hundred tyrants—stocking-makers, locksmiths, and other low types (*gentaglia*)—who behave like pigs, so that when one shouts, the rest come running to help him. . . ."<sup>87</sup>

In varying degrees, every well-born Florentine shared these feelings about the guildsmen who could not boast of a distinguished ancestry, nor obtain help from supportive kinsmen. Many of these craftsmen and retailers were "new men" who had recently migrated to Florence from the *contado* and beyond; others had risen from the ranks of the urban poor.<sup>88</sup> A handful were rich or nearly so; the majority enjoyed a modest but not comfortable livelihood. For such men, the guild connection was a prime source of security and status. They habitually supported the commune's authority against all forms of privilege: the church, the Parte Guelfa, the noble clans like the Ubertini and the counts of Poppi. Though considering themselves loyal Guelphs, they

<sup>83</sup> *Epistola*, 147, statement by Lapo's son Bernardo.

<sup>84</sup> See Martines, *Social World*, ch. 2.

<sup>85</sup> *Epistola*, 43.

<sup>86</sup> *Epistola*, 116: "Aveno fatta menzione di queste vili e piccole parole per esempio che nullo cittadino, e massimamente popolano, o uomo di piccolo affare, quando ha signoria, non deve essere troppo ardito, nè persuntuoso, ma udire le due e le tre voce in consiglio."

<sup>87</sup> *Carteggio di Paolo Guinigi*, ed. L. Fumi (Lucca, 1925), 316, 2 Feb. 1413.

<sup>88</sup> On the *gente nuova*, see Brucker, *Florentine Politics*, 20–24, 40–46, 53–56, 114–15, 135–38, 161–63; Becker, "An Essay on the 'Novi Cives' and Florentine Politics, 1343–1382," *Medieval Studies*, xxiv (1962), 35–82. For examples of upward mobility, Brucker, *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 17–18.

were suspicious of—and hostile to—the Guelph party that tried to exclude them from communal office. In the priorate and the colleges, and in the legislative councils, they tended to follow the lead of men from prominent families who were, like themselves, committed to corporate values. They demonstrated their hostility to the aristocrats by voting against legislation that served their interests, and by reporting their delicts to the authorities. “Be it known to you, Lord Executor,” one anonymous informant reported, “that Nofri di Pagno Strozzi . . . is a potent, arrogant, evil, and violent man, who has already killed and wounded many men and women of the city of Florence. . . .”<sup>89</sup> Aghinolfo de’ Bardi was described by his anonymous accuser as the most villainous man in Florence; no one had “a worse reputation or condition, nor . . . has done more harm to his commune or to citizens and residents of the *contado*.”<sup>90</sup> Another citizen denounced the entire Bardi clan as “a great and arrogant family” whose members committed acts of violence against their social inferiors every day. They allegedly threatened witnesses called to testify about their misdeeds, and bribed the judge to quash the cases against them.<sup>91</sup> Africhello de’ Medici was accused (1377) of exploiting and terrorizing his neighbors in the Mugello, forcing them to surrender their property to him so that he could “live like a nobleman from the possessions of the poor.” By such tactics (it was alleged), he had doubled the value of his property, even though “he neither pursues a business career nor any other trade and has never earned a penny honestly.”<sup>92</sup>

The artisans, merchants, and notaries of modest social standing—the *mezzana gente* who constituted the bulk of the guild community—were very conscious of the differences, in life style and in outlook, between themselves and those whom they described as “*grandi e possenti*.”<sup>93</sup> When Andrea de’ Pazzi sought *popolano* status (June 1422), he reminded his fellow-citizens that “since childhood he has been continually involved in mercantile activities and in honest affairs, and

<sup>89</sup> Brucker, *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 125. This accusation was made in 1381; six years later Nofri was placed under the communal ban for his brother’s crime; *ibid.*, 111–12; below, 84–85. Nofri’s miserable death, by his own hand while inebriated, is described in *Prov.*, 91, ff.26r–27r, 28–29 Apr. 1402.

<sup>90</sup> *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 123.

<sup>91</sup> *AEOG*, 1223, f.4r, 19 Nov. 1394: “Sapiate come questa famiglia di Bardi sono una famiglia grande e arrogante e non churanno a persona e a ‘gni omo danno de’ le busse tuto di e minacciono ogn’uomo.” Lodovico Giandonati was characterized, in another accusation, as a “homo superbo, altero e arrogante”; *ibid.*, 892, f.88r.

<sup>92</sup> Brucker, *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 120–21.

<sup>93</sup> The phrase is often found in these documents, e.g., against Jacopo di Bindello de’Bardi; *AEOG*, 404, f.99r, 4 Apr. 1363.

he has tried always to imitate the life and the mores of *popolani*. . . ."<sup>94</sup> In his petition to be separated legally from his kinsmen whose behavior he deplored, Andrea Salterelli spelled out in detail his conception of the life style appropriate for a worthy *popolano*: "He has always been and remains a young man of good reputation and of peaceful temperament, who exercises the craft of woollen cloth manufacturer, and who intends to live in peace and quiet, and to have good relations with everyone. . . ."<sup>95</sup> In describing the virtues and vices of their relatives, the lawyer Donato Velluti (d. 1370) and the merchant Giovanni Morelli (d. 1444) defined their conception of the ideal citizen. He should be a competent businessman, capable of enlarging his patrimony without taking excessive risks, and thus able to provide amply for his heirs. Sobriety, honesty, prudence, loyalty, devotion to family: these were the supreme *popolano* virtues, just as infidelity, untrustworthiness, extravagance, and immoderation were, together with *prepotenza*, the gravest flaws in the moral code of the *popolani*. Men who squandered their fortunes, or who failed to maintain the status that they had inherited, were objects of contempt and condescension, rarely of charity and compassion.<sup>96</sup> Giovanni Morelli warned his sons against contracting a marriage with any family that had spawned a traitor, robber, murderer, or bastard: "They should be clean and without blemish, with a reputation as good and loving kinsmen who are not too avaricious, but who are temperate in their hospitality, and are prudent men and worthy citizens."<sup>97</sup>

The Guicciardini did not fully meet these criteria, in the 1390s. When his kinsman appealed for help to obtain his release from prison, Messer Luigi Guicciardini compiled a lengthy catalogue of the "vile and abominable deeds" committed by "the accursed Simone di Machirone Guicciardini."<sup>98</sup> These included a series of assaults on his neighbors, the illegal occupation of a Machiavelli house, the organiza-

<sup>94</sup> *Prov.*, 112, f. 37v. Ridolfo and Guido Cavalcanti described themselves as "mercatores pacifici et quieti et inter artifices et mercatores continue conversati; nunquam . . . alicui nocuerunt vel iniuriam intulerunt et de eorum industria et labore vivere quesiverunt"; *Prov.*, 68, ff. 57r-57v, 13-14 June 1379.

<sup>95</sup> *Prov.*, 84, f. 229v, Dec. 1395. In July 1406, several Strozzi petitioned the commune for legal separation from their kinsman, Francesco di Giovanni di Messer Niccolò Strozzi, "qui quotidie querit alios offendere indebite et iniuste, et ipsi nollunt quod sub umbra favoris consortium ipse faceret iniuriam alicui"; *Prov.*, 95, f. 117r.

<sup>96</sup> See Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 104-06. Velluti condemned Piero Pitti and Baldo Frescobaldi for wasting their inheritances; *Cronica*, 100, 137.

<sup>97</sup> *Ricordi*, 208-09.

<sup>98</sup> *Strozz.*, 1st ser., 16, ff. 4r-4v, Simone's letter; 5r-5v, Luigi's catalogue, partly trans. in Brucker, *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 127-29.



tion of a jailbreak. Donato Velluti described the career of a kinsman by marriage, Piero di Cione Pitti, who had fallen so low that he had worked as a laborer in a cloth factory and had married a woman named Bartolomea, "the grand-daughter of Bongianni, the wine seller, who had been the whore of other men and with whom he lived in a miserable state."<sup>99</sup> Another relative, Gherardino di Piero Velluti, was criticized for his addiction to the pleasure-loving, spendthrift ways of the nobility. "He is a good horseman and equerry, and expert at everything save business. . . . He is always dressed and shod well, and he rides with his friends, and keeps horses, dogs and hawks. . . ."<sup>100</sup> These aristocratic extravagances, Donato implied, were not appropriate for the Velluti, who for generations had been committed to the work ethic and to capital accumulation.<sup>101</sup>

No political or social dichotomy is ever so neat in reality as in its defining schema; this Florentine model is no exception. Giovanni Morelli was loyal to his commune, his lineage, and his *gonfalone*; he also embraced aristocratic values that his ancestors—men of worthy but humble stock whose stained hands revealed their trade as dyers—would have deplored. Morelli had a keen sense of his social place, just below the highest ranks of the hierarchy, and separated by a wide gulf from the "new men, the artisans, and those involved in petty affairs."<sup>102</sup> Morelli cautioned his sons against ostentation in dress and deportment, but he also advised them to choose their friends from the aristocracy, and to adopt their habits and life style. They should learn to sing and dance, to hunt, even to joust. They should attend weddings and feasts, and in turn invite their friends to dine and drink, "and so you will possess the social graces, and you will make friends among your peers, and will gain a reputation as a man of culture and gentility."<sup>103</sup> Like others from his social milieu, Morelli was unaware of the contradictions between his ascetic and par-

<sup>99</sup> *Cronica*, 137–39.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 34–36.

<sup>101</sup> See his comments on his brother Filippo, who returned to Florence from Sicily, "tanto borioso di vestimenti, di cavallo, di famiglia, la qual cosa non si convenia"; *ibid.*, 142–43. Morelli warned his sons against those luxuries: "che si guardi di non vestire di soperchio, nè seta nè panni ricchi, che non tenga fante nè cavallo"; *Ricordi*, 257. Concerning his son Niccolò who died in 1417, Lapo Niccolini wrote: ". . . Non avea niuno proprio e avea dissipato e llogoro del mio molto più non gli toccava in parte . . . ma troppo grande gittatore del suo e dell' altrui, che poco si curava di nulla se non seguire i suoi appetiti e volontà, e a me diede assai fatiche"; *Libro degli affari*, 137.

<sup>102</sup> *Ricordi*, 196.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 257, 260–62. On the necessity of entertaining friends, see L. B. Alberti, *Opere volgari*, ed. C. Grayson (Bari, 1960), 1, 161.

simonious instincts, derived from mercantile habits and practices, and the aristocratic impulses to entertain lavishly and to spend without restraint.<sup>104</sup> In his diary devoted largely to purchases of real estate and his tax payments, the merchant Francesco Giovanni described the jousts in which he and his brother had participated in the late 1420s. These tournaments had become very popular with upper-class Florentines like the Giovanni brothers, providing them with an opportunity to display their military prowess, but above all, their wealth. Francesco Giovanni described, in lavish detail, the jeweled costumes and trappings worn by himself and his retinue, and furnished "entirely at my expense."<sup>105</sup> In 1430, the vogue for building large and magnificent palaces had scarcely begun, but rich Florentines were discovering other ways to flaunt their wealth and advertise their social eminence.<sup>106</sup>

In seeking outlets for their elitist impulses, Florentine aristocrats were confronted by a suspicious and hostile community of guildsmen, who used legislation and the pressure of public opinion to thwart their social superiors. By the sporadic enforcement of sumptuary legislation, they imposed limits on any public display—in dress, wedding celebrations, or obsequies for the dead—that would publicize the wealth and prestige of a family.<sup>107</sup> Only citizens who died while serving in office were honored at their burial by the display of the communal insignia.<sup>108</sup> Official policy prohibited the burial of citizens in the reconstructed cathedral of Santa Reparata. Vieri de' Medici did receive permission to be buried there next to his ancestors, but his tomb was to be placed in the pavement and "not in the wall or in any prominent place." Relatives of Cardinal Piero Corsini were likewise authorized

<sup>104</sup> On those contradictions, see my *Renaissance Florence*, 103–09, 121–24.

<sup>105</sup> *Strozz.*, 2nd ser., 16, ff.3v–4v. After a hiatus of several years, tournaments were held in Florence in 1368, 1372, and 1377; *Manoscritti*, 222, p. 232; *Diario d'anonimo*, 325. By the 1390s, they had become very common; *Panc.*, 158, ff.169r–170r; *BNF, Magl.* viii, 1392, no. 62. Alberti discusses the pros and cons of participating in tournaments; *Opere*, I, 159–60.

<sup>106</sup> R. Goldthwaite, "The Florentine Palace as Domestic Architecture," *American Historical Review*, LXXVII (1972), 977–1012.

<sup>107</sup> *Statuta populi et communis Florentiae* (Fribourg, 1778–1783), II, 357–84; Brucker, *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 179–83. Violations of sumptuary laws are recorded in *AEOG*, vols. 71, 98, 115, 160, 208 (1346–54), and in *GA*, vols. 28, 60, 61 (1384–85).

<sup>108</sup> Martines, *Social World*, 239–41. Cf. the comment of Niccolò Busini, for the Sixteen, CP, 38, f.51v: "Circa licentiam que petitur pro honorando corpus domino Caroli de Cavalcantibus, videlicet, de deferendo signum communis ad sepulturam, quod audiverunt hec esse prohibitum ab ordinamentis et quod non esse honestum contra illa facere, sed si esse permissum, quod libenter concurrerent. . . ."

to bury that prelate in the cathedral, but they could not exhibit the family insignia on the wall, but only "in the enclosure of the tomb."<sup>109</sup> Though the carving of family escutcheons in churches was not formally prohibited by statute, the prejudice against displaying these symbols was so strong that, as late as the 1440s, the Medici were criticized for emblazoning their arms in every church they had rebuilt.<sup>110</sup> By that time, however, the struggle by civic authorities to contain the aristocratic impulse had been largely abandoned.<sup>111</sup>

The widespread acceptance of the axiom that some citizens, by virtue of their birth, were superior to others limited communal efforts to restrain elitism.<sup>112</sup> The republic recognized distinctions among its citizens based upon guild membership, social rank, and knighthood. Lower guildsmen could not hold the office of standard-bearer of justice, nor the most important vicariates and captaincies in the territory. An innkeeper, Cenni di Marco, once suggested that different standards of behavior should be expected of the two groups: "The lower [guildsmen] should act with reverence and humility, and the greater, with benevolence. . . ." Speaking in 1382 for the consuls of the Lana guild, Guido del Palagio enunciated the principle that "everyone in the city should have his portion, according to his quality or rank."<sup>113</sup> In recommending citizens for office or for special consideration by foreign states, the Signoria emphasized their family origins, as well as their personal qualities. Messer Lorenzo de' Ricci was descended from "a well-born and celebrated family of our city"; Messer Antonio Peruzzi came from "one of the most noble and exalted families . . ."<sup>114</sup> The relatives of a young Florentine convicted of theft, Chiovo

<sup>109</sup> *Lana*, 47, 26 June 1392; 85, ff.70r-70v, 12 Dec. 1389; *Prov.*, 80, ff.15r-16r. The provision authorizing the Corsini tomb was initially rejected in the Council of the Commune, and then approved; *LF*, 43, ff.204r-206v.

<sup>110</sup> E. Gombrich, "The Early Medici as Patrons of Art," in *Italian Renaissance Studies*, ed. E. F. Jacob (London, 1960), 286-87, 291, 299.

<sup>111</sup> In his article, "Further Observations on Masaccio's Trinity," *Art Bulletin*, XLVIII (1966), 382-84, J. Coolidge notes that the building of monumental tombs again came into fashion in Florence in the 1420s, after a long hiatus.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. J. Kirschner, "Ars imitatur naturam: a Consilium of Baldus on Naturalization in Florence," *Viator* (1974), 10: "One must not view political inequality in Florence as a pathology or as a residue of social and political institutions that were dysfunctional. The politics of inequality . . . were in keeping with the hierarchical structures of the tre- and quattrocento. A society conceived and structured hierarchically and a society obsessed with ancestry militated against a true florescence of civic equality in late medieval and Renaissance Florence."

<sup>113</sup> *CP*, 20, ff.117r, 118r, 4 Feb. 1382. On an earlier occasion, Cenni said: "Quod sicut Deus precipit, pro unitate civitatis detur quilibet quod suum est"; *CP*, 16, f.73v, 10 Jan. 1379.

<sup>114</sup> *SCMC*, 27, f.4r; 34, f.33r.

Machiavelli, petitioned for the mitigation of his penalty, arguing that "he should receive some consideration for the many worthy deeds that his Machiavelli ancestors have performed on behalf of the Commune. . . ." <sup>115</sup> After confessing to his involvement in a plot to overthrow the regime in 1396, Messer Donato Acciaiuoli pleaded for mercy: "I am a Guelf and born of Guelf blood." That argument was compelling for the members of the war *balia*, whose spokesman, Andrea della Stufa, proposed that "on account of his merits and those of his relatives," Donato's life should be spared. <sup>116</sup> In 1407, the Signoria asked Marcello Strozzi to help Cappone Capponi "out of respect and for the honor of his family, the status of which in our city we are certain will be known to you." <sup>117</sup> When Buonaccorso and Bartolomeo Pitti were held as hostages for the return of their brother Luigi, charged with treason, a collegiate spokesman appealed to the Signoria to warn the rector not to maltreat them, "considering the status and the virtues of the prisoners and their ancestors. . . ." <sup>118</sup>

#### THE CIOMPI REVOLUTION

Ever since the commune had been established in the twelfth century, prominent and well-born Florentines had tried to limit its membership to their kind, while popular elements fought to breach the barriers erected to keep them out of the government. The struggle between these rival groups, with their antithetical value systems and life styles, was particularly intense in the 1250s, when the regime of the *primo popolo* dismantled the towers of the great families, and again in the 1290s, when the guild regime enacted the Ordinances of Justice to restrain the power of the most lawless and violent magnates. Subsequent to the passage of this punitive legislation, periods of equilibrium alternated with periods of crisis, when pressures within the society became too great for the commune to contain them.

One such moment occurred in the 1320s, when the arrogance of the magnates inspired a popular reaction against these prepotent houses. The 1340s witnessed another confrontation between corporate and aristocratic elements. In November 1340 the Bardi headed a group of magnates that sought to expand their authority in the commune and ward off their impending bankruptcy. Two years later, a coalition of magnates and wealthy *popolani* was responsible for the establishment of the dictatorship of Walter of Brienne, the duke of

<sup>115</sup> Brucker, *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 178.

<sup>116</sup> CP, 32, ff. IV, 2r.

<sup>117</sup> F. W. Kent, *Family Worlds*, 199.

<sup>118</sup> CP, 42, f. 53v, 1 Aug. 1413.

Athens, who paid for their support by canceling bans against magnates, granting them lucrative offices, and weakening the punitive clauses in the Ordinances of Justice. Not content with these boons, the magnates joined an alliance of *popolano* families—Medici, Altoviti, Ricci, Rucellai, Strozzi—in a revolt against the duke (July 1343), and as a reward they received the privilege of membership in the Signoria. But their triumph was short-lived. Two months later, a popular revolt broke out against this aristocratic regime. The magnates and their supporters were defeated in street battles; their palaces were burned and looted. From these disorders emerged a popular regime from which magnates were excluded and which contained a substantial number of lower guildsmen, artisans, and shopkeepers who were strongly committed to the idea of a corporate polity.<sup>119</sup>

Although the 1343 revolution did mark the momentary ascendancy of popular and collective interests in Florentine politics, it did not signify the permanent victory of these principles. Within five years of this regime's establishment, an aristocratic resurgence occurred in the wake of the Black Death. The number of lower guildsmen and "new men" in communal offices was sharply reduced; their places were taken by members of old and distinguished *popolano* families who now replaced the discredited magnates as the advocates of aristocratic politics. Their objectives were, first, to increase the representation of the great families in the commune, and second, to promote Guelf ideals in domestic and foreign affairs.<sup>120</sup>

The most intense phase of this conflict between guild corporatism and elitism began in the 1360s; it reached its climax with the Ciompi revolution of 1378. Recalling in 1420 a scene from his childhood fifty years before, Gino Capponi described how he and his schoolmates would chant political slogans in the streets: "Long live the hats"—that is, those members of aristocratic families whose headgear symbolized their exalted social status—and "Death to the capes," which meant (he explained) "Death to the guildsmen and to those of lowly condition." The tables were turned fifteen years later, at the height of the Ciompi disorders, when throngs of artisans and laborers were burning the palaces of their aristocratic enemies, shouting "Death to the hats and long live the capes!" Capponi described another gambit employed by his aristocratic friends to demean guildsmen who sat in the councils and the magistracies. They taunted the *lanaiuoli* by shouting, "Go

<sup>119</sup> These events summarized by Becker, "The Florentine Magnates: 1280-1343," *Mediaeval Studies*, xxvii (1965), 246-308.

<sup>120</sup> Brucker, *Florentine Politics and Society*; Becker, *Florence in Transition*, 1, ch. 5.

back to your cloth-making," and to the druggists, "Go and grind the pepper."<sup>121</sup> In less formal contexts, the gibes were even sharper. A magnate, Ceppo degli Agli, allegedly referred (1381) to the *arteficiali de la merda*, those upstarts (*artifici pidocchiosi*) who had recently come to power; Francesco degli Albizzi spoke derisively of "those louts (*gaglioffi*) who are sitting in the Signoria."<sup>122</sup> Since many artisans had joined the cloth-workers in the Ciompi uprising, aristocrats tended to lump them together into an undifferentiated crowd of "robbers and traitors and murderers and assassins and gluttons and malefactors."<sup>123</sup>

The political struggle between aristocratic and corporate elements in these years centered upon the Parte Guelfa, which was dominated by members of aristocratic houses, of both magnates and *popolani*. The Parte launched a campaign to purge the regime of undesirables; the excuse was their Ghibelline ancestry, and the weapon, proscription (*ammonizione*). Some victims of this political vendetta were indeed "new men" of uncertain origins; others, like Matteo Villani and Francesco del Bene, came from old Guelf stock. The arrogance of these *arciguelfi*, and the arbitrary nature of their tactics, infuriated citizens like the chronicler Marchionne Stefani, who wrote that no one was safe from their vindictiveness, "even if he were more Guelf than Charlemagne."<sup>124</sup> Men like Stefani, from the middle echelons of the guild community, realized the precariousness of their political status, and they organized a campaign against the Parte and against the factionalism that its policies had spawned. In 1366 the Parte's authority to purge suspected Ghibellines was restricted; the two most factious families (the Albizzi and the Ricci) were barred from office for ten years.<sup>125</sup> These measures were adopted and implemented by a civic group organized to defend the commune, and its corporate values, against those who "sought to hold the merchants and artisans of Florence in a state of vassalage. . . ."<sup>126</sup> That coalition included artisans and tradesmen, bankers and *lanaiuoli*, and also men from old and prominent families: Salvestro de' Medici, Sandro da Quarata, Andrea Rondinelli, Filippo Bastari. Around these leaders had formed groups of citizens whose vision of the corporate ideal may have been blurred by their thirst for power and prestige. When it launched an attack on the papacy in 1375, the "civic party" violated the spirit, if

<sup>121</sup> "Ricordi di Gino di Neri Capponi," in *Miscellanea di studi offerti a A. Balduino e B. Bianchi* (Padua, 1962), 37.

<sup>122</sup> *AEOG*, 889, f.136r; 892, f.34r.

<sup>123</sup> *Diario d'anonimo*, 394.

<sup>124</sup> Stefani, 766, 788.

<sup>125</sup> Brucker, *Florentine Politics and Society*, 202-21, 244-65.

<sup>126</sup> Velluti, *Cronica*, 248.