Merchants and their hometown: Florentines in Antwerp and the duchy of Florence (ca 1500-1585)

Christophe Schellekens

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization of the European University Institute

Florence, 10 December 2018
Merchants and their hometown: Florentines in Antwerp and the duchy of Florence (ca 1500-1585)

Christophe Schellekens

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization of the European University Institute

Examinating Board
Professor Luca Molà, University of Warwick & EUI (Supervisor)
Professor Regina Grafe, EUI (second reader)
Dr. Francesco Guidi-Brunelli, University of Florence
Dr. Maartje van Gelder, University of Amsterdam

© Christophe Schellekens, 2018
No part of this thesis may be copied, reproduced or transmitted without prior permission of the author
I Christophe Schellekens certify that I am the author of the work Merchants and their hometown: Florentines in Antwerp and the duchy of Florence (ca 1500-1585) I have presented for examination for the Ph.D. at the European University Institute. I also certify that this is solely my own original work, other than where I have clearly indicated, in this declaration and in the thesis, that it is the work of others.

I warrant that I have obtained all the permissions required for using any material from other copyrighted publications.

I certify that this work complies with the Code of Ethics in Academic Research issued by the European University Institute (IUE 332/2/10 (CA 297)).

The copyright of this work rests with its author. Quotation from it is permitted, provided that full acknowledgement is made. This work may not be reproduced without my prior written consent. This authorisation does not, to the best of my knowledge, infringe the rights of any third party.

I declare that this work consists of <109 872> words.

**Statement of inclusion of previous work:**


**Statement of language correction:**

This thesis has been corrected for linguistic and stylistic errors. I certify that I have checked and approved all language corrections, and that these have not affected the content of this work.

2 August 2018
Abstract

This dissertation investigates the ties between Florentine merchants in Antwerp and their hometown in the sixteenth century. It demonstrates that such ties were of great importance to them and are crucial to understand their actions and strategical decisions. Despite being an outdated institution, the Florentine nation in Antwerp remained an important point of reference for the merchant community, and depending on its concrete strategical value it was treated with either indifference or great attention by its home government in Florence. The members of the nation in Antwerp predominantly had a background in the Florentine Office Holding Class, which indicates that social dynamics in Florence resonated in the composition of the community in Antwerp. Apart from the nation, merchants also were guided by their Florentine background in forming their business ties. In their partnerships, they relied strongly on investments from other Florentines, and in Antwerp they largely selected collaborators with a Florentine background. This also goes up on a long-distance level, where a large number of their international contacts were with Florentines in other centres of commerce in Europe. Their ties with their hometown were stronger than has been assessed thus far. Apart from commercial ties with their hometown, Florentine merchants in Antwerp also sought to develop patronage ties with their home ruler, Duke Cosimo I through the provision of various services. As demonstrated by the case of Gaspare Ducci, also merchants that developed strong ties in the Low Countries and settled there, sought to maintain ties with their region of origin. By pointing to the importance of merchants' hometown, this thesis contributes to debates about the relation between politics and commerce, the relation between informal networks and formal institutions, as well as the explanatory value of diaspora and cross-cultural trade.
# Table of Content

Abstract................................................................................................................................. i

Abbreviations: ........................................................................................................................ v

List of Tables and Graphs..................................................................................................... vii

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. ix

Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 1

Family in Business and Cross-Cultural Trade........................................................................ 7

The Hometown and its Relation to Commercial Networks and Merchant Communities .......... 13

Family, Social Relations and Institutions in Florence ............................................................. 19

Florence and its Commercial Network .................................................................................. 23

Research Questions and Outline .......................................................................................... 26

A note on sources, heuristic strategy and chronological boundaries ..................................... 29

Chapter 1. The Florentine Nation in Antwerp (ca. 1500-1585): The Membership and Meaning of an Institution .......................................................................................................................... 33

Merchant Corporate Organisations in The Low Countries at The Beginning of The Sixteenth Century ...... 36

From Bruges to Antwerp: Nation and Norms ........................................................................... 41

The Nation’s Membership and Governance: A Social Analysis ................................................ 46

The Relevance of The Nation for its Members ....................................................................... 58

The Meaning of The Nation for The Home Government .......................................................... 61

The Florentine Nation as an Institution: Conclusions ............................................................. 73

Chapter 2. The Social and Commercial relations of Florentine Merchants in Antwerp and The Low Countries ................................................................................................................................................... 75

Social and Commercial Ties of Florentine Merchants in Antwerp ............................................ 78

Searching Suppliers and Buyers: Florentines and The Antwerp Market. .................................. 96

Residence in Antwerp ............................................................................................................. 103

Conclusion ................................................................................................................................ 106

Chapter 3. The Florentine Commercial Network: Goods and Letters between Antwerp, Florence and Europe .............................................................................................................................................. 109

Italians and Trade Networks from The Low Countries in The 1540s: the One Hundredth Penny Tax .......... 113

The Ways of Commerce: Florentine Transport ...................................................................... 119
Abbreviations:

ACA: Antwerp City Archive
ASF: Archivio di Stato Firenze
AS: Archivio Salviati

CASNS: Centro Archivistico della Scuola Normale superiore (Pisa)
Cert: Certification books
Fol: Folio

LCF: Libri di Famiglia e di Commercio
MdP: Mediceo del Principato
Merc: Mercanzia

Misc Med: Miscellanea Medicea

NAC: Notarile Antecosmiano
Pk: Priviliegekamer
List of Tables and Graphs

Table 1.1: OHC Membership of Florentine Merchants in Certificates edited in Doehaerd (p 50)
Table 1.2: OHC Membership of Florentine Merchants in The Carteggio di Cosimo (p 52)
Table 1.3: OHC Membership in the outgoing letters of Cosimo I (p 54)
Table 1.4: OHC Membership of Florentine Merchants in Antwerp Mentioned in The Papers of
The Magistrate of The Consulates (p 55)
Table 1.5: Consuls Retrieved from Various Sources and Secondary Literature (p 57)
Table 2.1: Accomandita Partnerships involving Antwerp based Florentines (Appendix)
Table 3.1: A List of Florentine Exporters in The One Hundredth Penny Tax Register (p 116)
Table 3.2: Destinations of The Rinieri Letters (p 125)
Table 3.3: Salviati Letters to Italy 1541-’42 (p 129)
Table 3.4: Salviati Letters outside Italy 1542-’44 (p 130)
Table 4.1: Letters Traced by Sender from Antwerp to Cosimo I (p 160)
Graph 4.1: The Number of Letters per Year Sent from Antwerp to Cosimo I (p 162)
Acknowledgments

This dissertation was written with financial support from a grant provided by the Belgian Service of Foreign Affairs and a fourth year completion grant provided by the European University Institute. I also benefitted from the Institute’s financial support to conduct archival research and to attend conferences. For their additional funding of the RSA panel in which participated in 2016, I acknowledge the Fryske Akademie.

Financial support is important, but institutions and above all people have been crucial in the period that I worked on this dissertation. I have spent many hours in libraries and archives, whose staff facilitated my research. The EUI library hosts an excellent collection on Early Modern Italy and allowed me to dig into economic and social scientific literature when needed. I am particularly grateful to history information specialist Serge Noiret and to Ruth Nirere-Gbikpi and her team of the ILL service, who were always responsive to my requests. What I could not find at EUI, I almost always found in the library of the INSR or in the Berenson library of Villa I Tatti, and I am grateful to the staff of both institutions for their helpfulness. In Antwerp, the Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrick Conscience offers an excellent collection on all topics related to the local urban history, and a stimulating setting to write. I always enjoyed doing archival research in the Antwerp city archive, and I am grateful to its friendly and ever helpful staff. In Tuscany, the larger part of my archival research took place in the Archivio di Stato of Florence and at the Archive of the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. I thank the staff of these institutions, and in particular Maddalena Taglioli (SNS) to enable me to work in pleasant conditions. The language centre of the EUI provides excellent support and coaching for researchers coming from various linguistic backgrounds. I am grateful to all those who taught me Italian and academic English. I would like to acknowledge in particular the late Nicky Owtram, who convened the writing workshop sessions in which my colleagues and I discussed our work in progress. Lisa Dallavalle provided very helpful and necessary corrections to the penultimate draft of this thesis. Throughout my time at the institute, I could always count on the helpfulness and bureaucratic clarity of the administrative staff of the history department. I would like to thank Anna Coda for running such a tight ship in an ever friendly manner, and Miriam Curci for being pro-active and approachable in the run-up towards the PhD-defence.

I could not have written this thesis without the advice, support and encouragements of a wide range of people in Florence, in Belgium and beyond. My supervisor Luca Molà offered important guidance in the world of Italian archives and introduced me to bodies of
historiography that were unknown to me when I arrived in Florence. In the various stages of writing, he provided constructive feedback that has substantially improved the quality of this thesis. Most importantly, he gave me the freedom to explore academic trajectories and to organize my work in a way that suited me best. My second reader Regina Grafe eagerly challenged me throughout the whole process to push my analysis to a higher level, and to engage with fields of historiography and other scientific literature that widened my view. Also her comments on the various chapters that I wrote in the first three years and especially on the first full draft of the thesis have substantially improved it. I also strongly benefitted from the research seminars in the department’s doctoral program that the two of them organized together in the winter and spring of 2015 and 2016. I am grateful to my two external readers, Francesco Guidi Bruscoli and Maartje van Gelder, for making time to read and assess this dissertation. Their pertinent comments and questions have been stimulating and helpful in the final revision.

The idea for this doctoral project was born in the autumn of 2012, during my time as a teaching assistant in the research unit of history in Leuven. In particular my conversations with Hans Cools about this topic have helped me in developing this project. When I started my doctorate in Florence, he continued to follow the development of this project with great interest, and I was always welcome when I had doubts or questions about this project and about academic life. I am also indebted to Nina Lamal, whose ongoing work on exchanges between Italy and the Low Countries was crucial in developing my own interest in that topic. Most importantly, she was always interested in my progress, and encouraged me when it was lacking.

Numerous senior scholars showed interest in my work and provided constructive suggestions and criticism. At the EUI, I am grateful to Jorge Flores, An Thompson and in particular Stephane Van Damme for their interest in my work and their comments and suggestions in various seminars. Richard Goldthwaite listened to my plans in a very early stage and shared valuable archival suggestions. Nicholas Baker offered stimulating suggestions at a time when the project was taking its current shape. I also strongly benefitted from attending the panels on ‘rethinking sixteenth century Florence’ that he organized at the Renaissance Society of America meeting of 2016. I am grateful to Francesca Trivellato for her advice, archival generosity and encouragements. Dina Aristodemo generously invited me to discuss my research over tea in Le Cure. The doctoral workshop ‘European history across boundaries’ organized by the Instut für Europäische Geschichte in Mainz in autumn 2015 was the first venue outside the EUI to test my ideas in front of a group of researchers with mixed backgrounds. I am also grateful to the fellow participants and the audience of the panels in which I presented at the RSA and the SCSC in 2016 and GRACEH 2018 for their questions and remarks.
The community of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers at the history department of the EUI is a unique mix of scholars, many of which listened to my ideas and helped me in my struggle with different kinds of questions. I was lucky to have such an encouraging peer group. I explicitly would like to mentioned Francisco Apellániz, David Do Paço, Meha Priyadarshini, Alejandro Garcia Monton, Sandra Toffalo, Carolina Obradors Suazo, Brian Kjaer Olsen, Ievgen Khvalkov, Lisa Dallavalle, Brice Cosart, Donal Ò Haise, Luca Scholz, Bram Hoonhout and Vibe Martens as generous seniors in the initial stages of my project and my time at the Institute. I am also strongly indebted to colleagues in my own cohort of historians that started to pursue our PhD in 2013. In Suzanne Lasalle, Francesco Malfatti, Miguel Rodrigues, Mikkel Munthe Jenssen, Annelie Grosse, John-Erik Hansson, Noelle Richardson, Uros Zver and Grigol Gegelia I found engaging conversation partners about all things Early Modern (and many other subjects as well). I also benefitted from conversations with Koen Docter, Andreas Sanders, Grazia Sciacchitano, Olia Gnudiek, Katia Burkush, Anita Buhin, Paschalis Pechlivanis, Ola Insett, Kimon Markatos and Trudy Schütz.

I also was happy to find new and engaged conversation partners in the new cohorts of historians that arrive every year at the institute: Pablo Hernandez Sau, Nick Mithen, Jonathan Fink-Jenssen, Pedro José Herades Ruiz, Alberto Sanchez Camacho, Martin Vailly, Kirsten Kamphuis, Andi Shehu, Aina Palarea Marimon, Bruno Marthino, Benoit Valloit (a helping hand in decyphring the name of an obscure town in Lorraine), Heloisa Rojaz Gomez, Gertjan Schutte, Mikko Toivonen, and Emilie Fiorucci. I am particularly indebted to Giorgio Tosco and Maarten Draper, who both share my interest in Italian merchants and the Low Countries and thus became excellent intellectual sparring partners.

The organization and the geography of the EUI, but above all the academic openness of many of its inhabitants taught me that I could learn a lot from conversations with social and political scientists, economists and lawyers. Przemek Palka, Filipe Brito Bastos, Marcin Baranski, Sofie Moller, Rutger Birnie, Radek Michalski, James Dennison, Lorenzo Piccoli, Martijn Van den Brink, Edgars Eihmanis, Agnieszka Ształdel, Ieva Grumbinaitė, Patrice Wangen, Shpend Kursani, Grzegorz Krzyzanowski, Irene Paneda Fernandez, Raphaelle Xenidis, Patricia and Janto McMullin, and my flatmates Anders Aagaard and Viktor Marinkov made me appreciate the distinctive qualities of their respective fields and projects over the lunch table and at other social occasions.

It goes without saying that with many of the people listed here, I enjoyed our non-academic conversations, Fiasco drinks and shifts, nights at Fiorentina games, as well as trips in
Tuscany and beyond (from Amalfi to Trondheim) at least as much. Many of them have become dear friends.

Outside of Florence, various groups of friends and colleagues showed interest and support throughout my trajectory. When I was back in Leuven, Sophie, Bram, Alexander, Brecht, Elwin, Valerie, Cesar, Liesbet, Gert, Veronique, Joris, Lynn and many others welcomed me there as if I had never left. With some of them I shared preliminary sections of this dissertation, and I am grateful for the time they took to comment and discuss my work. Violet Soen also continued to show interest in my research.

Andries and his family, as well as Peter, Sebastiaan and Bert, my oldest friends in Antwerp, continued to follow my adventures abroad from near and far and were a source of continuous support. Also Maarten, Maïka and my other Antwerp friends, took effort to continue our friendship from afar. My family has always supported me in whatever I did, logistically and above all with encouragements when I went through rougher seas. My sister, my parents and my grandmother always were there for me. My last words of gratitude are for Heleen. She joined my PhD journey in the later stages, and her companionship and support, from near and far, has been crucial ever since. For that and much more I am grateful every day.
Introduction

In the sprawling historiography on early modern long distance commerce of the last decades, Italian merchants, and Florentines in particular, provide a case that points to the limits of existing explanatory models. Historians and other scholars, primarily economists, who have worked on pre-modern commerce have so far been preoccupied with numerous aspects of the hazardous successes and continuous functioning of commercial transactions between long-distance merchants of various backgrounds within Europe and beyond. Institutions, both formal and informal, the rise of the state, the endurance of kinship and community ties, evolutions in a company’s organization and advancements in commercial and financial techniques are but the most recurrently invoked explanations for how merchants overcame the problems that trade over long distance and time caused. Such a variety of problems can be brought back to three main groups: the need to assure personal safety, to protect goods from predatory hosting governments and to enforce agreements.¹ For a long time, the debate about which of the abovementioned solutions would result in commercial success has tended to oppose private order solutions, such as diaspora networks, kinship ties and merchant coalitions to open access institutions, which were often provided or guaranteed by a state. Over the past decade, both models have been subjected to critique and nuances that point to the embeddedness of private order solutions in open-access institutions and vice versa, thus pointing to a scale of complementary solutions rather than an opposition between the two models. Moreover, it has been argued that the urban competition to attract merchants, rather than private or institutional solutions, should be considered as the driving force behind institutional evolution as well in improvements in catering towards the needs of merchants.²

All of these arguments and approaches have offered additional insights into the debate about the different choices that merchants had to make when dealing with the three main types of problems that they encountered. However, all of these explanatory models of explanation have been developed by focusing on particular case studies where the angle of respectively state institutions, diaspora’s and cross cultural exchange, or urban agency is a fitting approach.

---

Confronting cases of Italian merchants in the early modern age with these historiographical bodies makes it clear that the idiosyncrasies of the historical context on which such explanatory schemes were based highlight the limited nature of these models. In terms of the Italian case, the model that focuses on the creation of institutions, which related to the process of state formation—a contested concept in itself—has mainly been applied in relation to the development of a financial and fiscal infrastructure and market integration.\(^3\) However, the creation of ‘open-access’ institutions as an explanation for commercial success seems to have been largely reserved for Northern European cases from the seventeenth century onwards.\(^4\) Conversely, the diaspora approach been largely reserved for studying religious and ethnic minorities of various kinds, and thus only seems to fit to Italians in exceptional cases. Urban competition is an innovative model for explaining how institutions evolved to serve merchants better, but since this is the most recent contribution to the debate, it has not yet been applied to the Italian case.\(^5\)

Moreover, the approach is strongly based on the assumption that merchants were footloose actors with relatively few ties to bind them to a particular place.

Moreover, these three types of approaches and the urban competition approach in particular have tended to look primarily at the behaviour of long distance merchants in their host environment. There are many good reasons and explanations for the primacy of the host city in these models, but overall less attention has been paid to the home region or town of long-distance merchants. In this dissertation, I propose to take the home-town of merchants, or broadly the place where they came from, more into account when studying them. Together with the host government and market circumstance, the home government has been considered as one of the three determining variables which explain the choices made by long distance merchants, yet it has received the least attention. By inserting the hometown, as a social, economic, political and cultural environment that affected long distance merchants more explicitly into the debate on the relation between private order solutions and open-access

\(^3\) It should be stressed that Epstein critically engaged with the model proposed by New Institutional Economists. Stephan R. Epstein, *Freedom and Growth: The Rise of States and Markets in Europe, 1300-1750* (London: Routledge, 2000).


\(^5\) In his discussion of Gelderblom’s book, Daudin has pointed to the relevance of a comparison with Italy: Guillaume Daudin, ‘Cities of Commerce: How Can We Test the Hypothesis?’, *Tijdschrift Voor Sociale En Economische Geschiedenis* 4, no. 11 (2014): 105–6; It should be noted that the work of Epstein did engage with urban policy as a variable, though not in the way Gelderblom did. S. R. Epstein, ‘Cities, Regions and the Late Medieval Crisis: Sicily and Tuscany Compared’, *Past & Present*, no. 130 (1 February 1991): 3–50.
institutions, I aim to nuance parts of the debate relating to these explanations. Moreover, as both networks and formal institutions were not static but evolved and accumulated a history and a form of memory, I will call attention to how that history and memory also served as a variable in merchants’ choices and course of action.

On a concrete level, the inspiration to focus more on the impact of the merchants’ home background is threefold. Primarily, it was caused by my reading of the two main bodies of historiography on the central topic of this thesis, namely that on merchant communities in the Low Countries between the fifteenth and seventeenth century, and on political and social transitions in Italy, and in Florence in particular, during those centuries. Thus far, the position of Italian merchants in the Low Countries has been investigated primarily from the angle of the host city and from the market’s circumstances, with little attention being paid to the merchants’ home region. Conversely, the literature on political and institutional transitions in Florence only occasionally mentions the experience and involvement of Florentine merchants abroad in those transitions. This dissertation calls attention to that historiographical gap and seeks to contribute to bridging it.

A second, more theoretical and general source of inspiration is the body of scholarship that engages with the question to what extent is and was economic behaviour embedded in social structures, cultural repertoires and politics. Already from the rise of sociology as an academic discipline, the foundations that led to the rise of capitalism and the conditions under which it developed have been a central theme of research. Historians have also engaged with this question, although generally from a less theoretical point of view. A seminal article of the sociologist Mark Granovetters proved to be the impetus for the development of a disciplinary subfield, the so-called new economic sociology. In that article, Granovetter rightly warned scholars about the perils of under- or oversocializing economic action and called for a careful analysis of such action through a relational lens. My aim throughout this dissertation is therefore not merely to make a case for the embeddedness of Antwerp based Florentines in their

---


7 As an excellent example, see Martha C. Howell, Commerce before Capitalism in Europe, 1300-1600 (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

hometown, but rather to question to what extent home town embeddedness and the policies of their home government provides an explanation for their behaviour.

Third, I was motivated to focus on the role of the merchants’ home society and polity because of the surprising echoes but also contrasts between what I observed in the primary sources on the one side and the observations that have been made in recent ground breaking works on cross-cultural trade and diasporas on the other. For a long time, diaspora merchants such as the Armenians and Sephardim have been depicted as economically successful because they belonged to closed groups with distinct norms and beliefs, and therefore could count on strong internal monitoring. Over the past decade, that perception has been strongly nuanced, if not severely corrected by pointing to surprising cross-cultural agency relations over a long distance. Yet, merchants from ethnic and religious minority groups were not the only groups that had to balance between closing themselves off while remaining open as a group. As I will show throughout this thesis, Florentine merchants in some respects acted surprisingly similar to diaspora merchants and, at least in the case I investigate here, seem to have been a more closed group than for instance some Sephardim in Livorno. Such observations raise the question, to what extent can a common home background and the mere fact that, in contrast to many diaspora merchants they had a clear hometown, serve as an explanation for this mix between their open and closed off nature. This dissertation thus engages with the historiography on cross-cultural trade as a mirror to analyse the actions of a group of merchants that at first sight do not appear to fit the category of diaspora merchants. Yet it also seeks to question the overly strong distinction between diaspora groups and those who were not politically and socially marginalized due to their faith or ethnicity.

In order to engage with questions about the hometown embeddedness and the impact of home politics and social circumstances on merchants, Florentines in sixteenth-century Antwerp offer an excellent case. Historians have often considered the Low Countries and northern and central Italy in the Middle Ages as well as the first part of the early modern period as sibling regions. The two areas share some striking common features. Both regions were – and are – densely populated and urbanized compared to other parts of Europe. Moreover, the two regions


were the richest and most economically prosperous ones in Europe. These structural dynamics in the two regions did not occur independently from one another. Mobile groups such as the clergy, artists and students crossed the Alps and acted as connectors between the Low Countries and Italy. However, merchants were arguably the most prominent group that connected North and South. In the High Middle Ages, the Champagne fairs in the North of France offered a middle ground for merchants from both regions to meet. The war in France and the need for a more permanent meeting ground were the main causes for the decline of the fairs. A new central meeting place was found in the Late Middle Ages in Bruges. This Flemish port city became the marketplace where Italians could do business with locals and other Northern Europeans. In the sixteenth century, Antwerp took over the position from Bruges as the central meeting place and marketplace. In terms of the trade between the two regions, Italian merchants were generally the more active and mobile group. The cities of the Low Countries offered a space where the most intense and face to face business interactions could take place. It thus comes as no surprise that these features –the Italian merchants as active commercial agents and the cities of the Low Countries as hosts- have had an impact on the vast historiography of the subject.

Italian mercantile activity in the Low Countries has been the subject of numerous monographs. The majority of such works were pioneering studies on the subject and are

---

11 The literature on the artistic and cultural exchange between the Low Countries and Italy is vast and ever growing. Some of the more recent contributions: Ad Tervoort, The Iter Italicum and the Northern Netherlands: Dutch Students at Italian Universities and Their Role in the Netherlands’ Society (1426-1573), Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, v. 21 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2005); Frederica Veratelli, A La Mode Italiane. Commerce Du Lune et Diplomatie Dans Les Pays-Bas Méridionaux, Archives (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Pu du Septentrion, 2013); Ingrid Alexander-Skipnes, ed., Cultural Exchange between the Low Countries and Italy (1400-1600) (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007); Paula Nuttall, From Flanders to Florence: The Impact of Netherlandish Painting, 1400-1500 (London and New Haven, 2004); Elena Parma, Rapporti artistici tra Genova e le Fiandre nei secoli XV e XVI (Compagnia dei librai, 2002); Ralph Dekoninck, ed., Relations Artistiques Entre Italie et Anciens Pays-Bas ( XVIie et XVIIIe Siècles): Bilan et Perspectives, Artes 3 (Bruxelles: Institut historique belge de Rome, 2012).

empirically rich. Often these studies focus primarily on the interplay between the host city, the higher echelons of government in the Low Countries as well as institutions in the Low Countries on the one hand and the Italian merchants and their corporate institutions on the other hand. To a large extent, these studies are based on archival records that were generated by institutions in the Low Countries and today are kept there. Although not completely absent from the historiography, the importance for, impact of and relation of Italian merchants in the Low Countries with their hometowns has been investigated to a much lesser extent.13

Putting this historiographical heritage to one side, a more compelling reason to tackle the main question of this dissertation by studying the case of Florentines in Antwerp is the strong intersection between social, commercial and political dynamics in Florence. Throughout the fifteenth century, Florence was governed by a republican regime. A substantial amount of scholarship has convincingly argued that within such a political constellation, families—more than individuals and other units that tied individuals, such as parishes, neighbourhoods or corporative institutions—acted as—at least informally—primary points of reference and unifying structures.14 The case of the Florentine Republic as a city-state, which was informally ruled by an oligarchy of families is well known and has been extensively investigated.15 Unlike in the Low Countries or in other regions in Europe, noble or patrician families did not have a key position as a middle group in the political constellation of the Tuscan city states. In Florence, the so-called magnate families had been excluded from political power during the Middle Ages and were integrated into the popolo.16 This vacuum of power was filled by families that were active in international trade and banking. In the urban republic of Florence, the polity was heavily intermingled with and shaped by mercantile families. In order to understand the extent to which the home town played an important role for Florentine merchants abroad, it is thus necessary to pay more attention first to the role of family and kinship ties in Florentine politics, social structures and in commerce.

13 The work of Sabbatini on the Lucchese is more written from the perspective of Lucchese society: Sabbatini, Cercar esca; Also the work on the Genoese in Antwerp relies on a balanced corpus of sources, see Beck, “La nation genoise à Anvers de 15 28 à 1555.”
16 Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, Retour à la cité: les magnats de Florence, 1340-1440 (Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2006).
Throughout the rest of this introductory chapter, I will first go into the historiography on the relation between family, ethnic background and commerce, with particular attention being paid to recent works on cross-cultural trade and on diasporic groups. Then I will turn to the place given to home polities in the historiography on merchants and commercial activities. Having discussed these general debates on family, hometown and commercial networks, I will then focus specifically on the case of Florence and examine the historiography on the Florentine (merchant) family and on Florentine commercial networks. I will conclude the introduction by elaborating on my research question and how I intend to develop that question into several sub-questions that will become the subject of the respective chapters of this dissertation.

Family in Business and Cross-Cultural Trade

It is clear to any observer of the European economic landscape that family matters in business today as much as it did during the Middle Ages. Close kinship ties are still considered to be legal ties in most European jurisdictions, and this was also the case during the early modern period. The family was—and still is—a unit that shared the ownership of property and capital. The transfer of capital from one generation to the next went—and today still goes—mainly through family structures. These legal conditions could enable and stimulate cooperation via investments in a family firm. Moreover, marriage enabled different families to tie themselves, their interests and their capital together for future generations. Various regimes of dowries shaped the exchange of capital between families. Marriage strategies could lead to social inclusion or exclusion of particular families in the economic and political fabric of society. The impact of marriage strategies and patrons, as well as other forms of familial inclusion- and exclusion on economic performance can be a subject of debate, but it seems fair to state that

---


there is a consensus about familial ties as a variable worth taking into account.\(^{19}\) As Julia Adams has shown, even the Dutch Republic, often seen as the most advanced and modern economy in seventeenth century Europe, does not neatly fit the Weberian ideal-type of a faceless market and a state administered by anonymous bureaucrats.\(^{20}\)

Although a direct line between family and mutual trust is sometimes drawn all too quickly, kinship could be an asset for acquiring a better and more profound view on someone’s character qualities, reliability and his commercial abilities. The closeness and density of familial ties could allow for more thorough knowledge of such qualities and flaws of kin. Family members could also provide the necessary investments to set up a business. Moreover, families could also function as bodies of (tacit) knowledge about particular business practices and spaces in which such knowledge was transferred. Important mercantile knowledge and skills, such as how to write proper business letters, keep account books and to monitor partners and other collaborators could be learned informally from family members. Yet, it would be wrong to assume therefore that the family was by definition the ‘natural’ and most suited environment for business cooperation. Incapable and uninterested family members could be brought into a family firm and retain their position despite their flaws, because their position within the family prevented their removal. Strong family ties could also burden a firm and its operations.\(^ {21}\)

In the recent historiography on long-distance trade, kinship, ethnic and religious ties, have received renewed attention.\(^ {22}\) Francesca Trivellato’s work, in particular, has pointed to the enduring importance, but also the limits, of such ties in international trade.\(^ {23}\) It comes as no surprise that the Weberian ideal type of rising formalization is an important subject of critique in her work.\(^ {24}\) Trivellato’s work is positioned between a line of historiography that stresses the importance of generally accessible institutions on the one hand and a literature that points to

\(^ {19}\) For a recent discussion on the impact of the European marriage pattern on economic performance, see: Tracy Dennison and Sheilagh Ogilvie, ‘Does the European Marriage Pattern Explain Economic Growth?’, \textit{The Journal of Economic History} 74, no. 03 (September 2014): 651–693, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050714000564.


\(^ {22}\) Aslanian, \textit{From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean}; Davikhen Studnicki-Gizbert, \textit{A Nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal’s Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492-1640} (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).


the advantages that diasporas offered in creating trade networks on the other hand. According to Trivellato, and others, the model of diasporas as being closed systems that tightly monitored the behaviour of the merchants among its members is untenable, for it fails to explain how the necessary commercial interactions between members of the diaspora and outsiders were possible. Conversely, the literature that envisages institutions and a solid legal framework as the motors for commercial development all too often sees the history of trade as the sequential story of such institutions coming into being and gives little to no importance to actors that were not tied to a state.25 Avner Greif’s work, which is situated on the intersection of the historiography on diasporas and on formal institutions, was an important point of reference in the development of Trivellato’s own position.26 One of the ground-breaking points of The Familiarity of Strangers is that these two historiographical positions and debates in themselves do not suffice to understand cross cultural trade. Also, Greif’s work, which confronts these two positions and stresses the superior qualities of formal institutions like the Genoese partnership model over the informal coalition model that Greif studied in his work on Maghrebi merchants, leaves us with an insufficient conclusion.

Trivellato’s work has brought renewed attention to the role of ethnic, kinship and religious ties in the organization of long distance commerce. Her appraisal of kinship ties and trust as being potential black box explanations for successful commercial ties has been an important contribution to the debate about what enabled or inhibited long distance trade. Moreover, her emphasis on the limits of the literature that sees institutions as the necessary, primary, if not the sole enablers of commercial development and success is also a welcome nuance. Yet, as the subtitle of her book indicates, it aims to contribute primarily to a better understanding of the mechanisms and dynamics that governed cross-cultural trade. One of the merits of Trivellato’s book is that she often seeks to form a comparison between her findings and those from other cases, like those of Armenian merchants in the Persian Empire or the Greeks in the eastern Mediterranean. How relevant then are Trivellato’s questions and conclusions in the context of an investigation of the Florentine community in sixteenth century Antwerp?

25 Trivellato, The Familiarity of Strangers, 13; Nobel price winner Douglas North is often considered as the spokesperson of this research line, see Douglass C. North, Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance (Cambridge University Press, 1990).
The problem of a comparison between the case of the Florentines in Antwerp, which will be investigated in this dissertation and that of Trivellato and other scholars working on groups such as the Sephardim, Armenians or Greeks is the blurriness of the concepts of cross cultural trade and diaspora. These concepts are very present in research on groups that are often intuitively recognisable as religious or ethnic minorities, but the terms are rarely used substantially in the historiography on groups of merchants who originated from polities in Western Europe. Although the term diaspora is sometimes also used to designate groups of merchants such as those who fled the Southern Low Countries after 1585, a group that indeed met with religious prosecution, or Genoese merchants in Southern Italy, the label is mostly used without much explicit reflection about its value in such contexts. Philip Curtin, who introduced the term cross-cultural trade to a wider academic audience, was deliberately vague in his definition of the phenomenon. Trivellato’s definition of cross cultural trade is narrower and therefore more clear: “(...) the expression designates prolonged credit relations and business cooperation between merchants who shared implicit and explicit agreements about the rules of exchange but who, because of historical patterns beyond their control -, belonged to distinct, often legally separated communities. More specifically, I look at commission agency between merchants who shared no blood, kinship, or ethnic ties.” However, this definition still leaves space for debate about whether particular groups may or may not be categorized as diasporic groups.

The observation that the literature on diasporas is often focused on ‘classic’ diaspora groups and that the term is at times used without much precision calls for the question, to what extent is this body of historiography of relevance to the central case of this dissertation. As indicated above, by the sixteenth century Tuscan merchants already had a long history of

29 The phrasing in Curtin’s work that is the closest example of a definition of cross cultural trade, is the description that it is ‘the way people exchanged goods with other people who had a different way of life’. Philip D. Curtin, Cross-Cultural Trade in World History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), x.
trading in the Low Countries and of interacting with the government of the Low Countries. A majority of them were Catholics, thus adhering the single officially accepted confession of their host environment.\textsuperscript{31} Considering Italians as ethnically different from the inhabitants of the Low Countries is also a difficult, if not an untenable premise. In general, in the historiography of the Florentine commercial presence throughout Europe, the term diaspora is rather uncommon.\textsuperscript{32} Although there are numerous notorious cases of Florentines who were exiled for political reasons, their position was substantially different to the groups of merchants that were collectively driven out of a place because of their ethnic or religious background and who faced the perspective of prosecution or at best some degree of ‘tolerance’ elsewhere.\textsuperscript{33} Thus, at first sight, the term does not seem suitable for this case. Nevertheless, Florentines arguably belonged to a community that because of historical patterns was different from that of their host society.

One of the aims of this dissertation is to assess the extent to which some of the claims from research on diasporic groups can also be applied a group of merchants that are less likely to be considered by scholars as a diaspora group, such as Florentines. In that sense, the stimulating research on such groups is helpful for formulating new research questions on the activities of distinctive groups who were active in long-distance trade, as well as in cases that do not focus on groups of ethnic minorities. Trivellato’s work indicates that it is all but sufficient to use family as a black box explanation for the creation and enabling of commercial cooperation and as a solution for the problems of trust that come with long distance exchange. Her work has pushed for a greater clarity on the precise qualities of kinship and other ties that were distinctive for those who shared a common background, the effects of such ties on (potential) business cooperation and the ‘networks within networks’ within diaspora’s.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} Several forms of Protestantism were implicitly tolerated by the Antwerp city government, which caused tensions with the echelons of higher government in the Low Countries. In the decade between 1576 and 1585, Antwerp was a Protestant republic, before it was retaken by the Habsburg army and went definitly back to catholicism. Guido Marnef, ‘Multiconfessionalism in a Commercial Metropolis: The Case of 16th-Century Antwerp’, in A Companion to Multiconfessionalism in the Early Modern World, ed. Thomas Max Safley (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2011), 75–97, http://hdl.handle.net/10067/9060001511162165141.


\textsuperscript{33} Alison Brown, ‘Insiders and Outsiders. The Changing Boundaries of Exile.’, in Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence, ed. William J. Connell (University of California Press, 2002), 337–83; The case of a substantial number of Lucchese families – or parts of them – that had to leave the city because of their conversion to Protestantism is different, and it is therefore more common to refer to a Lucchese diaspora. See Ole Peter Grell, Brethren in Christ: A Calvinist Network in Reformation Europe (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Simonetta Adorni-Braccesi, Una Città Infetta. La Repubblica Di Lucca Nella Crisi Religiosa Del Cinquecento (Firenze: Olschki, 1994); Simonetta Adorni-Braccesi and Carla Sodini, eds., L’emigrazione Confrontionale Dei Lucchesi in Europa (Firenze: Edifir, 1999).

\textsuperscript{34} Calafat, ‘Familles, réseaux et confiance dans l’économie de l’époque moderne’, 525.
terms of the case under scrutiny here, this raises questions about the endurance and permanence of the settlement of Florentines in Antwerp, and the degree to which a shared Florentine background affected the creation of business alliances, partnerships and relations as business agents. By investigating who the clients, collaborators (agents, factors, ...) and partners of Florentine merchants in Antwerp were, the importance of a shared hometown, a shared familial background and the interplay between these variables can be assessed.

Obviously, the debate on the relative importance of group ties for commercial success did not begin with the recent innovative work on commercial diasporas. Two cases on family and group ties in the so-called diaspora of Antwerp merchants after 1585 provide an interesting comparative perspective. They do not deal with merchant groups belonging to ethnic minorities, but with merchants that had a somewhat clearer home polity than merchants from ‘diaspora’ groups. For the case of merchants from the Low Countries who traded in Venice, Maartje Van Gelder has shown that familial dynamics are important for understanding how a foreign merchant community functioned and succeeded in a host city. These merchants were considered to be part of a ‘Flemish diaspora’ of merchant families that had risen to commercial success in the second half of the sixteenth century. After the ‘fall’ of Antwerp in 1585, branches of these families sprawled out over Europe and created a successful commercial network. Van Gelder has stressed the continuity in the ‘Flemish’ merchant community in Venice before and after the Dutch Revolt and the foundation of the Dutch Republic. This suggests that profound political shifts in the hometown and region may only have had a limited impact on merchant communities abroad. Family ties that were developed in a common hometown—in this case Antwerp—mattered more.

A similar relevant case is that of the rise of Amsterdam as a central market place at the end of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth century. The role of merchants from the Southern Low Countries in that rise has been the subject of a substantial debate. In their respective studies, Oscar Gelderblom and Clé Lesger have disagreed about the importance of family networks and common Antwerp ties. Gelderblom has stressed the importance of internal

36 The seminal article on this so-called diaspora is Brulez, ‘De Diaspora Der Antwerpse Kooplieden Op Het Einde van de 16de Eeuw’.
37 Van Gelder contradicts Jonathan Israel’s position, who claims that the ‘Olandesi’ were a new group that entered Venice in the seventeenth century. Van Gelder, Trading Places, 108.
38 Oscar Gelderblom, Zuid-Nederlandse kooplieden en de opkomst van de Amsterdamse stapelmarkt (1578-1630) (Uitgeverij Verloren, 2000); Clé Lesger, The Rise of the Amsterdam Market and Information Exchange: Merchants, Commercial Expansion and Change in the Spatial Economy of the Low Countries, c.1550-1630, trans. J. C. Grayson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) (Originally published in Dutch in 2001); See also the debate articles
institutional developments in Amsterdam as an explanation for its rise, whereas Lesger has pointed to the prevailing impact of family ties, especially for immigrant merchants from the Southern Low Countries and of the continuing importance of family members in their former hometown Antwerp. Lesger’s findings indicate that even in the only commercial centre of Europe which provided open access institutions and prohibited corporative mercantile organisation, informal networks and kinship ties still mattered and resulted in the formation of distinctive groups of merchants.

The Hometown and its Relation to Commercial Networks and Merchant Communities

Both the Dutch merchants in Venice and the Southern Low Countries merchants in Amsterdam have been investigated primarily to assess the effect of the hosting city on the group of merchants. The extent to which the newly established Dutch Republic actively engaged in monitoring the community in Venice and the entanglement of that community with the ruling groups in the Low Countries is less clear. Although Lesger points to the enduring importance of relatives in Antwerp for the Southern Low Countries merchants in Amsterdam, their relationship with the two polities in the Low Countries also calls for further research. Their case shows that a ‘hometown’ could potentially be a blurry point of reference. The diversity, overlap and unclear hierarchies between polities in early modern Europe indeed makes it difficult, if not undesirable to provide a standard definition of what a hometown, home polity or home region – terms that I use interchangeably throughout this dissertation - meant for various merchants. However, what I will seek to make clear in the following section and throughout the thesis, is that often political and legal boundaries defined merchants’ hometown, but that their link to their hometown was not merely political. In fact, for Florentine merchants in Antwerp, social and cultural ties to their place of origin were at least as important.

Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulty to define what a hometown was, it is clear that it could have a different meaning for different groups. For both the Southern Low Country merchants and Florentine merchants abroad, their hometown was a different point of reference than the city of Livorno or other cities in the Sephardic network were for groups of Jewish merchants, or the city of New Julfa was for Armenian merchants. Although by the eighteenth century numerous Sephardic families had been living in Livorno for generations and the

community had its own institutions, its relation to Livorno as a hometown was different from the relation that Florentines had with their hometown. Sephardic merchant families had hardly any say or hand in political matters in Livorno or in the other places where they settled. Even though at times they occupied important positions as financers for the Iberian monarchies, their position as a religious minority made them vulnerable to prosecution. In Livorno, the position of the Sephardim was relatively favourable, but they remained outsiders in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the polity in which they had settled. Of course, Sephardic merchants and other groups of merchants from ethnic or religious minorities had a different legal relationship with their hometown, than groups like Florentine merchants had to theirs. A major question throughout this dissertation will be whether having a relatively clearly defined hometown also differentiated the behaviour of Florentines from these minority group merchants.

An interesting approach to move away from the diaspora paradigm has recently been offered by Sebouh Aslanian in his work on the Armenian merchants of New Julfa. In Aslanian’s approach, the place of a ‘hometown’ holds greater importance than in that of other scholarship on ‘diaspora’ groups. Inspired by the work of Claude Markovitz on Northern Indian merchant networks, he adopted the model of a circulation society. According to Aslanian, in general two types of such a circulation society can be distinguished. There are those societies that have one strong and clear central node that ‘regulated the identity and the economic vitality of the network as a whole’. Aslanian’s own case of the Armenian commercial networks that sprawled from New Julfa in the Persian Empire and far beyond is an example of that model. Opposed to that type are polycentric commercial networks that had multiple synchronically important nodes, none of which however was the centre on which all the others depended. According to Aslanian, the best example of such a network is the one that was formed by the Sephardic Jews after their expulsion from the Iberian monarchies. Neither Amsterdam, Livorno, Venice, Salonika nor any other of the cities where large groups of the Sephardim gathered would ever become the predominant centre around which all commerce by its members would evolve.

As Aslanian acknowledges, this model could run the risk of oversimplifying the differences between and particularities of commercial networks and the place of centres in them. Nevertheless, this perspective on commercial networks offers an interesting yardstick to assess the position and importance of what is considered to be the hometown of a group of

40 Aslanian, From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean, 15.
merchants. Despite the prominence of Florentine merchants in medieval and early modern Europe, Florence itself never became a commercial centre that served as a central meeting place and primary centre of a network. The prominence of Florentines in other commercial centres, like Lyon, and the fact that some of their operations did not have any relation to Florence, are arguments for categorizing the networks of Florentine merchant as one with multiple synchronically important nodes. Conversely, the city of Florence remained an important, if not primary, point of reference for Florentine merchants, and the products of Florentine industry were primarily traded by Florentines. Categorizing the networks of Florentines in Antwerp as one of these types is thus not an easy exercise. However, investigating the international contacts that Florentine merchants in Antwerp maintained, can contribute to a better understanding of the extent to which the group falls into either of these two categories of networks. Whereas research on diasporic groups has stressed the limited legal rights of merchants who belonged to such groups and implies the absence of a hometown in that sense, the model of the circulation society has the quality to clearly question the place of a city as a hometown.

In relation to the focus on the place of a hometown in merchants’ networks is the question, whether having a hometown in which merchants had rights as citizens, and were to some extent part of the polity or a member of the ruling middle group mattered in their commercial operations outside of their hometown. And more importantly, how such a distinction mattered to them. In dealing with this question, we should be aware that merchants who belonged to groups with a relatively clear home polity could develop a very varied type of relationship with that polity. Such variations could occur in their level of participation in government, in social structures as well as in the practices of monitoring merchants abroad. The hometown’s government could include or consist entirely of citizens with mercantile interests, as was the case in Republican Florence or Venice. Yet it could also be on the opposite of the spectrum and remain (relatively) closed for members of the merchant class, like in Antwerp. However, in Antwerp the patrician city government created a political climate that was favourable to commerce, both at home and abroad. Even so, merchants could suffer from the consequences of the politics of their hometown. If merchants originated from a city that in


42 An Kint has demonstrated that Antwerp, despite being ruled by non-merchant patricians, was a ‘community of commerce’ in which an ‘ideology of commerce’ affected many of the city’s policies. An M. Kint, ‘The Community of Commerce: Social Relations in Sixteenth-Century Antwerp’ (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1996).
itself was not a meeting point for trade or a market centre, like Florence, that puts its merchants a different, asymmetric position.\textsuperscript{43} Retaliation against merchants of cities that hosted a Florentine community, or bargaining for similar rights and privileges in such cases was not possible. The inclusion of Florence into the larger system of the Habsburg monarchy after the siege of the city by Charles V in 1529-30 in theory offers an interesting change of relations in that perspective. However, apart from a conflict in the ceremonial sphere, there are but few indications that Florentine merchants in Antwerp were systematically used as pawns or agents in that international political relation.

In relation to the historiography on commercial networks, the place of a home region in it is part of an elaborate but sprawling body of literature on various foreign merchant communities in medieval and early modern Europe. In that literature, the hometown or region is mostly discussed as a unifying force that brought together merchants with a shared background in corporative institutions. The genesis of such communities is primarily conceived of as a bottom-up process.\textsuperscript{44} In sixteenth-century Antwerp, as in many other European centres of trade, foreign merchants did indeed unite in mercantile corporations that were based on their hometown or region.\textsuperscript{45} Yet the extent to which a home government actively interfered in the operations of these corporations differed strongly. The cases of the relations between the merchant community and the hometown for the three ‘pillar’ merchant communities of the Antwerp market, the English, the Portuguese and the High German communities, illustrate well the possible differences in such relations. The English merchants in Antwerp fell under the authority of the Company of Merchant Adventurers. This was primarily a London related institution, which was subject to the authority of the monarch. The trade between England and Antwerp was therefore very much influenced by political events an important subject of political tensions.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{43} E.g. Antwerp merchants who were displeased with the privileged position of the English Merchant Adventurers at one point during the 1565-1566 negotiations demanded similar privileges and corporative organization in London. G. D. Ramsay, \textit{The Queen’s Merchants and the Revolt of the Netherlands}, First edition (Manchester Univ Pr, 1986), 23.


\textsuperscript{46} The first monograph on the English nation in Antwerp is Oskar De Smedt, \textit{De Engelse natie te Antwerpen in de 16e eeuw: (1496-1582)} (De Sikk, 1950); A detailed study on English politics and its interaction with the Antwerp market can be found in Ramsay, \textit{The Queen’s Merchants and the Revolt of the Netherlands}. 
The Portuguese community in Antwerp had its nation, but the Portuguese monarch also had a factor in Antwerp to take care of the auctioning of spices. These two institutions were separated, but sometimes the Portuguese royal factor was also the consul of the Portuguese nation. The relationship between them is not always clear, and neither is the extent to which the nation was monitored by the Portuguese monarch. Yet the good relations between the rulers of Portugal and (parts of) the Low Countries in the Middle Ages was echoed in the good treatment of the Portuguese community in Antwerp.

The case of the High Germans is one where the involvement of the home government with its merchant community was completely absent. This group was very much on the rise in Antwerp. However, they did not form a nation or any other formal corporative institution, although they were sometimes referred to as the South German nation. Their home region, the South of Germany, was part of the Holy Roman Empire. Cities like Augsburg were growing centres of trade but there are no indications whether or how they protected, monitored, influenced and disciplined their merchant communities abroad.

These examples highlight the role of merchant guilds and nations in the relations between merchants and their home polity. In the extensive historiography on such institutions, their efficiency and effect on the general performance of a sector or on the economy as a whole is a recurring issue of debate. It is not my primary aim to actively intervene in these debates, but research on how the Florentine merchants community related to the government of their hometown, will offer an additional angle to them. For example, based on the existing historiography, Sheilagh Ogilvie points to a proportional relation between the strength of mercantile nations and the occurrence of endogamy and exogamy in Bruges and Antwerp respectively. In order to explain such phenomena, the effect of the status of mercantile corporations in the host town should of course be taken into account. However, also the influence that merchant families had on their home government, the importance of family structures and the policies that shaped the form of family ties should be more prominent points

47 On the Portuguese nation in Antwerp, see Goris, Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567, 37–55; For the later part of the sixteenth century, see Hans Pohl, Die Portugiesen in Antwerpen: 1567-1648 (Steiner Franz Verlag, 1977) It should be noted that the Portuguese presence and their activities in Antwerp throughout a major part of the sixteenth century barely have been studied in the past decades and that the topic awaits its historian.
48 Donald J. Harreld, High Germans in The Low Countries: German Merchants and Commerce in Golden Age Antwerp (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2004).
50 Ogilvie, 10.
of attention when assessing the functioning of mercantile institutions and of commercial networks.

An attempt to investigate the intersections and interactions between mercantile organization and the effect of its hometown will also contribute to debates on the relationship between networks and institutions. Networks have received more attention in scholarship as a reaction to the prominence of institutions as an explanation for the success of particular commercial groups and environments in historiography. Institutions are often considered to be too static and hierarchical to fully explain the dynamics of states and markets. Networks, on the contrary, are often seen as flexible and more horizontal. However, based on the triangle of commercial relations between the Spanish Atlantic coast, North Western Europe, and the Americas, Regina Grafe has made it clear that an opposition between these two analytical concepts does not contribute to a better understanding of trade and politics.51 Following upon that observation, in this dissertation I will not oppose formal institutions such as the merchant nation, courts and official registrations of partnerships, to informal networks –at times also referred to as ‘informal institutions’- such as correspondence relationships and those between kin, but rather pay attention to the intersections between these two types of ties and institutions. Moreover, by looking into the letters that Florentine merchants wrote to their home ruler, I explicitly introduce a political culture perspective into this research. At times, such as during the crisis on the rank of Florentines in the joyous entry of Charles V in Antwerp, the institution that was the Florentine merchant nation in Antwerp served as a node in a network of people and knowledge that was mobilized to defend the respectability of the nation and above all their home ruler Cosimo I.

Thanks to a long tradition of scholarship on social ties in Florence, the political culture of the city, and its international commercial network the case of the Florentine merchant community in Antwerp can be inserted into this debate. In particular the historiography on the shapes, qualities, and structures of Florentine social and political ties is exceptionally rich and offers an invaluable point of reference that enables to understand the social and political component of merchants’ ties when operating abroad. As families were a crucial link between

individual merchants abroad and their hometown, in the following section I pay attention to the place of families in the social and political organization of Florence.

Family, Social Relations and Institutions in Florence

Florentine politics in the Late Middle Ages and the early modern period was dominated by the large merchant families of the city. After pushing the so-called ‘Magnates’ – the all too eagerly quarrelling urban nobility- out of power, a new section of the popolo, the large merchant families known as the popolani grassi took over control of the city in the first half of the fourteenth century. In the fifteenth century, the Medici family was able to create and head an informal network of support with other families who were active in international trade and ruled the city.\(^{52}\) This system survived until the end of the fifteenth century, despite contestations by other prominent Florentine families, such as the Pazzi and the Strozzi. The disruption of the Medici system at the end of the century did not threaten to end the crucial role of the mercantile elite families in Florentine politics. As Nicolas Baker has recently shown, the merchant families that held the offices in the Florentine government remained a constant factor that determined the shape of that government in the turbulent period that was the end of the fifteenth and the first four decades of the sixteenth century.\(^{53}\) Also the commercial successes of Florence are strongly associated with the names of prominent families. Unlike other cities, these ruling Florentine merchant families did not come and go throughout the centuries, instead the cohort of families that dominated urban politics remained remarkably stable.\(^{54}\)

As noted above, historians should be careful in not using family as a black box concept to explain economic dynamics like the shaping and transforming of trade networks. Nor should families be considered as units that were merely subjected to and determined by such dynamics. In order to better understand how the structure of families influenced economic behaviour and to what extent a class of families formed a closed social group within a community, current scholars of Renaissance Italy in general, and of Florence in particular, can rely on a large body of historiography on the family. This literature is far too vast to be discussed exhaustively here, yet it is possible to distinguish and discuss some key debates and characterizing features of that

---

historiography. A first important debate is that on the structure of the family in Renaissance Florence. Richard Goldthwaite and Francis Kent have been the two pioneers in this field. Both authors used case studies of respectively four and three Florentine families to gain a better understanding of evolutions in familial relations. Goldthwaite’s primary interest was the accumulation of wealth and its transfer through generations, but his research has also brought forth the thesis that there was an evolution in the structure of Florentine families towards smaller, nuclear family units that were independent of one another. According to Goldthwaite, these nuclear families seldom shared real estate with other family members and, when active in business, they also generally preferred to engage in partnerships with non-kin.

The work of Francis Kent, on the contrary, has stressed the continued importance of kinship ties beyond the nuclear family. His work at several points explicitly questions Goldthwaite’s claims and observations, in particular their all too linear interpretation. Kent observed that affective and sentimental ties as well as shared property were still evident in the period when Goldthwaite saw the decline of these phenomena. According to Kent, the will of a pater familias still mattered to members of the extended family. Overall, his work has stressed the complex and cyclic character of household structures. Kent’s claims have been scrutinized and criticized in turn by Goldthwaite for their impressionist nature and for the lack of attention to the large economic, legal and political framework in which family structures and relations took shape. Despite this polemic, the work and claims of both authors remain relevant. They teach us that in order to understand the impact of a hometown background and in particular the social component of that on commerce and the organization of a merchant community various family related variables should be taken into account: the structure of the family and the household, the qualities of ties with kin outside of the household, and the degree of openness to collaborate with outsiders as well as the existence and management of common property and business interests.

Because of their historiographical polemic, Goldthwaite and Kent remain the dominant voices on the subject of social ties in Renaissance Florence and of the place of kinship in

---

57 Goldthwaite, 255–56.
58 The introduction of Kent’s work is very explicit in questioning Goldthwaite’s positions: Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence*, 3–15.
particular. Yet numerous other historians have contributed to the field. One of the main points of Goldthwaite’s criticism about Kent’s work was its limited attention to the legal framework and other structures in which families organized themselves. Through the work of Anthony Molho and Isabelle Chabot these issues received more attention in the historiography at the end of the twentieth century. Chabot’s work focuses primarily on the legal position of women in Florence, stressing their limited legal abilities to manage their own capital, yet pointing to opportunities for female agency. Molho focused on marriage in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, basing his research on the Dowry fund of Florence, an urban institution that encouraged and created favourable circumstances for the provision of a dowry. He concluded that by the fifteenth century the Florentine ruling class was marked by a strong pattern of endogamy. This practice contributed to the formation of a closed elite. Since many of these families were also active in commerce, Molho’s work calls for attention to the importance of entanglements between members of this elite and for social class in the Florentine merchant community that settled in Antwerp at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Recently, the historical sociologist John Padgett has provided a substantial contribution to these debates. Based on a massive dataset which still is currently being expanded, Padgett provides a quantitative and statistical analysis of the correlation between lineage size, marriage, social class, wealth, neighbourhood, and political participation. His findings are explicitly situated in the abovementioned historiography, and they provide refreshing new insights that nuance and clarify some of the claims made by Goldthwaite, Kent, and Molho. With regard to the Goldthwaite-Kent debate, Padgett’s findings suggest that the conclusions of both authors were correct in regards to the importance of lineage. Goldthwaite’s conclusion that the importance of lineage declined is according to Padgett true in the economic field: overall, lineage mattered less in business cooperation and in the core of older elite families. Paradoxically, Kent’s claims have also been supported by Padgett: the importance of lineage increased for families that were able to climb the social ladder. Moreover, in the field of

60 ‘In this respect it is telling that such basic family practices as emancipation, marriage, dowry arrangements, wills, and property settlements are not discussed as legal institutions with social ramifications (...)’ Goldthwaite, 818.
61 Molho, Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence; Isabelle Chabot, ‘La Dette Des Familles: Femmes, Lignages et Patrimoines À Florence Aux XIVe et XVe Siècles’ (European University Institute, 1995); Isabelle Chabot, La Dette Des Familles: Femmes, Lignage et Patrimoine à Florence Aux XIVe et XVe Siècles, Collection de l’École Française de Rome 445 (Roma: École française de Rome, 2011).
62 Molho, Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence, 338–39.
Florentine politics lineage became more important. In regard to the degree of openness of the Florentine elite, Padgett’s assessment is more positive than Molho’s. His findings confirm the endogamous character of the Florentine elite and confirm that endogamy was used as a survival strategy of lineages, but nuance this observation by pointing to a high degree of social mobility within that elite in the fields of wealth and politics.

A noteworthy feature of this historiography on the family in Florence is its focus on the Late Middle Ages and in particular on the fifteenth century. This may partially be explained by the source base of the research of particularly for Molho’s work as well as for his late colleague David Herlihy. Both, as well as other historians, relied heavily on the famous catasto of 1427, an exceptional tax register that offers an incomparable wealth of demographic, social and economic data. Also Molho’s other main source, the dowry find papers, mainly cover the fifteenth century. The extent to which the demographic dynamics, legislation, and practices that were observed and analysed for the fifteenth century also ran into the sixteenth century and survived the profound political and economic shifts that occurred in between remains a largely open question. Padgett and Molho suggest that the sixteenth century witnessed a relative closure of the elites. This is also confirmed in the work of Burr Litchfield and Baker. Their books on the Florentine ducal bureaucracy and the political culture of the office holding class throughout the sixteenth century respectively suggest that there was more continuity than rupture in the constellation of those who populated the government. Both Litchfield and Baker, however, are primarily focused on dynamics within the city of Florence.

Probably as a consequence of the prominence of the fifteenth century in scholarship on social, economic and political ties in Florence recent scholarship on Florentine families and companies outside of the city in the sixteenth century barely engages with the above-mentioned historiography on the distinctive characteristics of Florentine social and political organisation. As mentioned, Padgett has concurred with Goldthwaite in showing that family and lineage became lesser determining variables in the creation of business partnerships in the fifteenth

---

64 Padgett, 359–60; 395–96.
65 Padgett, 358–59; 402–3.
68 It should be mentioned however, that Baker points to the role of Florentine office holders in international commerce, see: Baker, The Fruit of Liberty, 222–24.
69 Recent work on the family strategy of the Gondi family in France does not take into account the abovementioned literature: Joanna Milstein, The Gondi: Family Strategy and Survival in Early Modern France (Ashgate, 2013).
century. However, in international commerce lineage and family partnerships returned as determinants in the 1480’s. These findings thus call for further testing in the sixteenth century, for which the Florentine community in Antwerp offers a suitable case, although the limited historiography and lack of databases on Florentine family relations in the sixteenth century hinder the extensive reconstruction of familial relations between Florentines in Antwerp. Despite the fact that international commerce was often the engine of success and wealth for these families, the position of family members who were active abroad in trade and banking is seldom discussed explicitly within the larger whole of the family. It seems that Florentine merchants abroad aspired to return to their hometown, even after a long career outside of the city. Exiled family members, like Filippo Strozzi in the fifteenth century, returned to Florence as soon as possible when their ban was lifted, despite having made their fortune largely outside of the city. In contrast, branches of the Gondi family aspired and succeeded into entrenching themselves into the circles of French nobility. They left Florence forever. For now, we lack substantial research on how these different social, political, and familial strategies evolved in the sixteenth century. A balance of what was the rule and what the exception is thus far missing. It is the aim of this dissertation to question to what extent the Florentines in Antwerp were still part of a larger Florence based system of joint economic and political interests and to what extent kinship ties were part of that. As I will demonstrate, a common Florentine background, which often had a familial dimension, was crucial for Florentines in Antwerp who engaged in partnerships. Collaborators like factors and lower employees were likewise mainly sought from within their own circles. Moreover in their international commercial contacts a common Florentine background was of great importance.

Florence and its Commercial Network

By engaging with the question to what extent did having a hometown matter for merchants abroad, we should take that hometown’s place within larger European and global commercial dynamics into account. Unlike Bruges, Antwerp, and Amsterdam in Northern Europe or Venice in the Mediterranean, Florence was never a central meeting or market place in the European trading network. Yet the city is inseparably associated with commerce in the Late Middle Ages and the early modern period. The Florentine network, a common but debatable term has been

70 Padgett, ‘Open Elite?’, 399.
71 Goldthwaite, Private Wealth in Renaissance Florence, 52–57.
72 Milstein, The Gondi.
used to indicate the web of commercial contacts of Florentines who were outside of Florence, and for parts of those periods it was the most ramified and extensive one in Europe.\textsuperscript{73} As mentioned above, this network also covered Northern Europe, where Italian merchants had had a long history of presence at least since the period of the Champagne fairs (twelfth and thirteenth centuries). The historiography on this Florentine network is characterized by many of the same features as the scholarship on family in Florence discussed above. Also here the sixteenth century has received comparatively less attention than the fourteenth and fifteenth.

The best overview of the geography of the Florentine network, its genesis, driving forces and its shift through time is provided by Richard Goldthwaite in his synthesis on the economy of Renaissance Florence.\textsuperscript{74} According to Goldthwaite, the network originated from the demographic growth of the Florentine population. That growing population was employed in industries that required raw materials. Also the search for markets that were interested in the output of the urban economy –mainly wool cloth, but later also other types of textile– drove the development of the network.\textsuperscript{75} Later, banking and financial services such as money transfers between different nodes of the Florentine network became an important additional component. Given Italy's and Florence’s geographical position on the European continent the peninsula was a connector between two economic poles: the Levant and North Western Europe. However, in the long term, the importance of the Levant in the network declined.\textsuperscript{76} The area used to supply exclusive high-value goods such as silk and spices, but shifts in the global economic flows and the growth of silk production on the Italian peninsula severely changed the position of the Levant in the Florentine network. Also changes in the Florentine textile industry and in politics, both in Florence and the Levant, contributed to the decline of exchange between the regions.\textsuperscript{77} Moreover, the actual presence of Florentines in the area was limited and occurred mainly in the slipstream of other Italian commercial communities that had a stronger maritime infrastructure, like the Venetians, Genoese and Pisans.\textsuperscript{78}

The network was more densely developed in Western Europe. Florentines were present in London, Bruges, and later in Antwerp. In addition, the Iberian Peninsula hosted several

\textsuperscript{73} Richard A. Goldthwaite, \textit{The Economy of Renaissance Florence} (Baltimore, MD: JHU Press, 2009), 37 A more elaborate discussion on the term ‘Florentine network’ is provided in chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{74} Goldthwaite, 37–202.

\textsuperscript{75} Goldthwaite, 31–32.

\textsuperscript{76} Goldthwaite, 175–93.

\textsuperscript{77} Goldthwaite, 190–92.

\textsuperscript{78} Goldthwaite, 178.
Florentine communities. However, by the sixteenth century one of the Florentine network’s most important hubs was Lyon. The end of the fifteenth century, the city at the confluence of the rivers Rhône and Saône had taken over Geneva’s position as the market city of that region. As a result, its population grew spectacularly and the urban economy was promoted by the royal court. As a financial centre, the city attracted numerous groups of Italian merchant-bankers. Moreover, Lyon also offered an interesting outlet for the growing Florentine silk industry. The Italian wars at the end of the fifteenth and the first decades of the sixteenth century influenced the position of the Florentines in Lyon, sometimes for the better, and sometimes for the worse. The geographical situation of Lyon also made the city a suitable stop for merchants travelling between the Italian peninsula and the Low Countries.

Recently, the operations of Florentine merchant-bankers in Lyon have started to draw the attention of historians. Case studies on the Salviati and Gondi have enriched the historiography on Florentine commercial activities there. These new studies are primarily aimed at gaining a better understanding of the business operations of these firms and deeply analyse the technicalities of their banking and financial services. However, how and to what extent the Florentine companies there worked in relation to the Florentine government remains an open question. By giving that question a central place in this dissertation, I will be able to demonstrate that numerous Florentines in Antwerp did indeed develop a relationship with their hometown as well as their home ruler and that apart from commercial exchanges various forms of knowledge exchange also drove that relation. Moreover, following the leads provided by the historiography on patronage, both in Florence and elsewhere in early modern Europe, I will show that various Florentines in Antwerp invested time and attention in cultivating such a

81 The standard work on Lyon in this period is Richard Gascon, Grand commerce et vie urbaine au XVie siècle: Lyon et ses marchands (Paris; La Haye: S.E.V.P.E.N.; Mouton, 1971).
relationship with their home ruler and that their investments were thus not only in the sphere of ever developing finance and trade, but also had a social and political dimension.

Research Questions and Outline

Analysing networks is not a neutral historiographical operation. In itself, the choice to focus on networks has, at least implicitly, an ideological ground. Moreover, networks can be investigated and reconstructed from various angles. They can be approached from a spatial perspective, where the geography and hierarchy of cities are central. Also goods can offer a starting point for the analysis of a network. Human actors are a third category that one can focus on in order to (re)construct and understand the functioning of networks. It is obvious that there is a strong interplay and overlap between these three categories and that they can be broken down into subcategories. Yet historical research on networks always seems to have one of the three types of units as a starting point.

In this dissertation, the units of analysis that were used as a starting point are human actors: Florentine merchants who did business in sixteenth-century Antwerp. The main research question is to assess how important a hometown was for these merchants, and how their embeddedness at home affected their actions and choices in Antwerp. Since Florence was a social sphere, an economic centre, and a polity with distinct institutions and a political culture, I will investigate various spheres and aspects of these merchants’ activities in order to understand their relation to Florence. Social and commercial ties on the one hand and their relation to their home government and its institutions, on the other hand, are my two focal points. In particular, I aim to gain a better understanding of the interplay between the social connections of the Florentine merchants and the home government. The review of the historiography makes it clear that despite the abundant literature on the role of social ties, and in particular of the family in Florence, its place in the Florentine commercial network has barely been studied, especially for the sixteenth century.

84 Donald J. Harrell, ‘Merchants and International Trade Networks in the Sixteenth Century’ (XIV International Economic History Congress, Helsinki, 2006).
85 An example of this is the work of Hancock on Madeira wines: David J. Hancock, ‘L’emergence d’une économie de réseau (1640-1815)’, Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales 58, no. 3 (2003): 649–72.
The Florentines who were active in commerce in Antwerp offer a suitable test case from which to gain a better insight into the influence of a home town, both as a polity and a space with distinct social dynamics, on a merchant community abroad. As the main commercial meeting place in sixteenth-century Europe Antwerp was at the vanguard of the changes to business practices and was an environment of cut-throat competition. Florentines and other established groups of merchants such as the Lucchesi were confronted with rising groups, like the Genoese and High German traders and bankers, as well as merchants from the Low Countries. Moreover, the Antwerp market was of key importance for the Habsburg monarchy, to which the newly established Florentine Duchy was tied. By investigating Florentines’ attitude towards operating in this commercial environment and by focusing on their operations in Antwerp this dissertation will contribute to a better understanding of how important the city’s commercial web remained to Florentine society in this pivotal period. On a larger level, I aim to offer a better understanding of the extent to which ties with an identifiable hometown mattered for commercial actors. Through this approach, recent insights on the importance of kinship in commerce, for ‘diasporic’ groups, can be related to and confronted with cases of merchant groups for which the label of ‘diaspora’ is far more problematic.

The first chapter of this thesis will focus on the nation, the merchant institution of the Florentine community in Antwerp. I investigate the membership of this organization and assess the impact that the merchants’ social background in their hometown had on it. I will also examine to what extent the home government interfered in the organisation of the merchant community in Antwerp. Through this focus on the nation, I aspire to answer the question whether the profound changes in the organization of the home government that came with its transition from a republic to a duchy affected attitudes towards the community in Antwerp and vice versa. Related to that, the disciplining and monitoring practices of the home government will be investigated.

The following two chapters focus on the commercial contacts and networks of the Florentine merchants, who operated in Antwerp, respectively on a local and long distance scale. The second chapter will focus on the business practices and the social ties of Florentines in Antwerp. The main aim of this chapter will be to assess how Florentine social, and in particular family ties affected the organization of their business in Antwerp. The extent to which business cooperation and other ties within the community in Antwerp were shaped or conditioned by

---

kinship and a shared Florentine background is the central question of this chapter. Moreover, in order to put such ties and interactions into the right perspective, I will also investigate how Florentines engaged in business with other local and foreign merchants based in Antwerp. The third chapter addresses similar questions on the level of the interregional commercial networks of Florentine merchants in Antwerp. It aims to understand to what extent these networks were ‘Florentine’, both in terms of geography and of actors involved. Also here the importance of family ties and a common Florentine background is assessed. Though goods are not my main point of attention, I will assess the place of ‘Florentine’ goods in these long distance networks.

The fourth chapter will focus on the services that Florentine merchants provided to their hometown and that their home ruler expected of them. It will shed light on the importance of Florentine merchants abroad for their home government and home ruler. Moreover, this chapter will also engage in the debate about the extent to which members of elite Florentine families reshaped their identity from citizens into courtiers. The importance of patronage and knowledge provision are primary points of attention in this chapter. The fifth and final chapter focuses on Florentine merchants who came from a relatively anonymous background, often outside of the city of Florence. Focusing primarily on the case of the notorious merchant Gaspare Ducci, this chapter questions the particularities of a Florentine background and identity. The main lens to investigate this case is that of credit provision. By focusing on a particular case, this chapter offers a counterpoint to the analytical focus on a group of merchants that guides the previous four chapters.

My decision to focus on the merchants’ hometown embeddedness implies that there will also be aspects of that will receive less attention in this dissertation, particularly in regards to the Florentine merchant community, its members, and their activities. The most important consequence is that Antwerp and the Low Countries, the host environment of the community, will not be at the foreground but will instead be considered as the important context in which the Florentines operated. The distinctive qualities of Antwerp as a hosting environment for foreign merchant communities and as an environment that stimulated the rise of local merchants has been relatively well investigated. Based on that historiography, my findings about the relation of Florentine merchants with their hometown can be contextualized.

The second consequence of my decision to focus on the social and political relations of Florentine merchants is that attention to financial flows and the exchange of goods will only be given in so far as they offer a better understanding of how such exchanges affected social and political relations. Though merchant bankers are the central group in this thesis, the reader will not find an exhaustive investigation and evaluation of their commercial performance here. The
private papers, and in particular the letters, of Florentine merchants in Antwerp form a central corpus of sources in this thesis, but this dissertation is not a multiple business history. The papers of the best documented Florentine firm in sixteenth century Antwerp, the Salviati, have already been used to a considerable extent for that purpose, and the material on other companies is too limited. Parallel to my approach on the host context of Antwerp, I will engage with the available quantitative data and with evidence on the day to day running of their businesses in secondary literature and in sources in terms of the main questions I try to tackle in this thesis.

Finally, it should be noted that this thesis deliberately focuses on a group of commercial actors in a period when they were neither dominant nor on the rise. Rather than focusing on their decline or seeking to reevaluate the importance of Tuscan commerce in the sixteenth century, I argue that it is of primary importance to keep in mind that they were a group of merchants with a long history and that that history mattered to them. Of course, they had concerns about their future and for their hometown, but in their manner of thinking and their ways of dealing with challenges, a strong and at times explicit reliance on their repository of techniques and knowledge provided them with a distinctive point of reference. Their embeddedness in their hometown was also a rootedness to a particular form of commercial history.

_A note on sources, heuristic strategy and chronological boundaries_

I end this introduction with a brief discussion on the source base of this dissertation and the heuristic strategy as well as the selection process that led me to choosing this corpus and the chronological boundaries that have guided this selection. A more detailed discussion of the qualities of particular series of sources that affect the value of the sources, is offered throughout the chapters, but here I provide the general contours of the body of sources. In a relatively early stage of this project, it became clear to me that research on merchants in Antwerp often relies primarily on sources kept in the Low Countries and specifically on Antwerp records, but that there is a diverse set of sources kept in Italy that allows to look at merchants’ activities from another angle. Giving primacy to these under- or unexplored sources has been a first important selection criterion. Although I have done substantial archival research in Antwerp and have also explored in the State archives in Brussels, the larger part of the sources for this dissertation are kept in Tuscany. This selection has been guided mainly by the focus of this thesis to understand how Florentines in Antwerp related to the various dimensions, be it social, cultural as well as the political, of their hometown. As a consequence, sources that might have shed light on their
relation with Low Countries and Antwerp institutions, such as requests to the Antwerp magistrate or papers of the higher courts in Brussels have not been extensively explored.

In a relatively early stage, I identified three main bodies of sources that provide the richest empirical evidence to identify Florentine merchants in Antwerp and about their activities and relation with their place of origin. The correspondence of Cosimo I, the second duke of Florence and later grand duke, has rarely if ever been used to trace and document Florentine merchants abroad, and therefore became a first important part of my corpus. The duke’s carteggio has been partially inventoried, and allowed me to identify numerous Florentines in Antwerp. The original archival records of the carteggio are not available for consultation in the Florentine state archive, and initially I had to consult them through microfilms of poor quality. However, about half-way this project, the larger part of the bound letter books that were of interest to me became digitally available via the BIA-platform of the Medici archive project. Apart from the duke’s incoming correspondence, I also consulted the minutes of his outgoing letters, and I took samples in the copialettere of the ducal secretaries’ outgoing correspondence in function of cases I explored in more detail.

Florence is exceptionally well endowed with private and business records that have survived through time. The existence of the Salviati archives came to my attention thanks to the work of a group of French scholars, notably Nadia Matringe, which was doing research based on these records. Thanks to the advice of Richard Goldthwaite, I was able to trace two volumes of the books of Dietisalvi Rinieri in the miscellaneous series of Libri di Commercio e di Famiglia that is kept in the Florentine state archive. As these records offer an exceptional window on the extent to which a Florentine background mattered in the development of commercial ties and to what extent contacts with Florence and Tuscany mattered in commercial exchange, these series of merchants’ letters have become a second main body of sources.

A third important series of sources are Antwerp records that document the various individuals that Florentines engaged with in this city and beyond. In particular the Antwerp Certificatieboeken, a miscellaneous series of documents that record very diverse transactions and situations that are certified by the Antwerp city government have allowed me to gather a better understanding of the ties of Florentines in Antwerp. The palaeographical difficulty of these documents and the fact that they are only available on microfilms are partially compensated by an extensive but incomplete flipchart that allows for searching and crosschecking names that I found in various Italian records. That way, I was at various stages able to check names that I found in Tuscan records for traces in Antwerp records. The Antwerp city archives contain a set of only superficially inventoried records of notaries. My initial
prospections in these series brought about very few results. For example, the recurring references in Florentine sources, notably in partnership records, to the papers of the Antwerp notary Van Lare, proved fruitless as his records are lost.

Apart from these three main bodies of sources, I have also used a fourth, be it less substantial, serial set of sources, namely the *accomandite* records that have been kept by the Florentine merchant court. I have checked these registrations for partnerships registered between 1490 and roughly 1590. Other additional sources were the *Miscellanea Medicea*, the *Testamenti Forestieri* as well as sections of the *Privilegkamer* in the Antwerp city archive that I consulted to deepen a case study but did not investigate systematically. In Antwerp, I checked the entries of the *poortersboeken*, the list of foreigners who applied for Antwerp citizenship.

Apart from these archival sources, I have also relied on edited sources and databases. The papers of the Magistrate of the Consulates, a short-lived initiative to gain an overview on Florentine merchant communities abroad, which touch upon Florentines in the Low Countries have been edited by Armand Grunzweig in 1932 but have been largely forgotten since then.\(^87\) I consulted the earliest Antwerp certificates as well as *schepenbrieven* (letters from the aldermen) through the three volume edition published by Renée Doehaerd.\(^88\) The statutes of a number of Florentine merchant communities, among which those of the Florentine communities in Bruges and Antwerp, have been edited by Gino Masi.\(^89\) The letters that Giovan Battista Guicciardini sent to Cosimo I and Francesco I, have been edited by Mario Battistini.\(^90\) Apart from edited sources, I have also relied on a set of databases. Unfortunately, data on social ties in Florence have been much less processed for the sixteenth century than they have been and continue to be processed for the fifteenth century. However, the data on the composition of the Florentine office holding class compiled by Anthony Molho, Nicolas Baker and Richard Burr Litchfield have offered me a yardstick to get a better understanding of the social background of Florentines in Antwerp.\(^91\)

I should also briefly touch upon the sources that I have not included in this project. First of all, I have not explored the records of the Florentine merchant court, the *Mercanzia*. The

---


\(^{89}\) Gino Masi, ed., *Statuti delle colonie fiorentine all’estero* (Milano: Giuffrè, 1941).


\(^{91}\) These data are provided in the appendices of the following monographs: Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence*; Baker, *The Fruit of Liberty*; Litchfield, *Emergence of a Bureaucracy*. 
question how that court actually functioned has puzzled scholars since long, and very few have dared to explore its records.\textsuperscript{92} I have also not exhaustively explored the records that document Florentine diplomacy in the Low Countries. The single miscellaneous folder that contains such correspondence holds very few information on the period prior to the Dutch revolt and suggests that there was little diplomatic exchange between Florence and the Low Countries, especially when the Imperial Court was not residing in the region.\textsuperscript{93} Samples that I took in the \textit{Carteggio di Cosimo} of letters sent from Brussels to Cosimo I suggest that that city hosted a different group of correspondents. However, I should stress that this subject and these sources still await a historian.

Finally, I will briefly discuss the timeframe of this thesis. I investigate the group of Florentine merchant in Antwerp from the point in time when that city took over the role of primary centre of commerce in the Low Countries from Bruges, until the city was taken back by the Habsburg regime in 1585, a time at which the city was already over its high days as a commercial hub. In Florence, the political order was already in a turbulent phase at the turn from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century, and in 1530 the last republic fell and turned into a princely state. The first decades of the ducal regime, especially the 1540’s and 1550’s, overlaps with a period in which the Antwerp market was at its zenith, and the three main bodies of primary sources to investigate the activities of Florentine merchants in Antwerp also intersect in these decades. Therefore this period figures prominently in this thesis.

\textsuperscript{92} Goldthwaite, \textit{The Economy of Renaissance Florence}, xiv.

\textsuperscript{93} ASF, MdP 4253, is inventoried as “Relazioni con Stati Italiani ed Esteri / Stati Esteri / Fiandra e Olanda”
Chapter 1. The Florentine Nation in Antwerp (ca. 1500-1585): The Membership and Meaning of an Institution.

When Emperor Charles V and his son Prince Philip entered Antwerp in a Joyous Entry in 1549, the various bodies of Antwerp’s civic life took part in a parade and in the construction of decorations with which to present themselves to the sovereign of the Low Countries and his heir. The printed accounts of the Entry offer an interesting insight into the way that the corporative world of Antwerp was structured and how boundaries between groups were drawn. Apart from Antwerp’s local civic groups, the groups of foreign merchants who were based in the city also engaged in the festivities. Merchants from all over Europe presented themselves to Charles and Philip, but not just as the inhabitants of Antwerp or as one body representing all foreign merchants. Instead, as they belonged to separate groups and nations, these various commercial actors rode in delegations in the parade and they erected separate decorative constructions. The official account of the Entry, composed by the Antwerp city secretary Cornelius Grapheus, lists the delegations of the merchants of Lucca, those of Milan, then the English nation, the Spanish nation, the Hansen and the High-Germans. Three delegations were not admitted to the parade but were described nevertheless in Grapheus’ account: the Portuguese, the Genoese and the Florentines.94 This list is a good illustration of the ways in which foreign merchants in Antwerp were organized into communities and corporative bodies of different kinds.

Merchant organizations and institutions have been the subject of historical research since the rise of interest in long distance commerce in the historiography. The rise of ‘New Institutional Economics’ since the 1970’s also brought these forms of merchant organization to the attention of economists and has led to intense historiographical debates on them.95 In such debates a distinction is often made between public and open access institutions on the one hand and corporate, more closed institutions on the other hand. Scholars in this field have mainly engaged with the question to what extent merchant corporative organizations, usually considered as part of the second category, were beneficial or burdensome to trade organization and commercial flows and growth.96 These debates resonate centuries-old discussions on the

---

95 North, Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance.
96 Ogilvie, Institutions and European Trade.
legitimacy and efficiency of corporations for the public good. The application of a methodology from economics, such as game theory has challenged historians to deepen their analysis of merchant organizations, by showing how and why merchants might have delegated the control of their business to some extent to an external body.\(^{97}\) Such new questions have kept merchant institutions on the agenda, but some of these new approaches mean that relatively less attention is paid to the historical context in which these institutions operated and the specificity of each of them. As the list of merchant groups that joined the 1549 festivities in Antwerp shows, part of that specificity lay in how boundaries were drawn between merchants. What is clear from the list above, is that place of origin was the criterion that was used to draw the boundaries between merchants in Antwerp and was the basis on which various institutions were organized. Whereas corporative organizations in producing sectors of the early modern urban economy were normally organized according to the raw materials that were used in the production process or the end products, the organization of merchant corporations lay at the intersection of geography and politics. Some were organized by urban background –merchants from Italian city-states like Genoa or Lucca–, others by region –merchants from parts of Germany– or by what is now a nation state, such as the merchants from Portugal or England. Apart from a difference in home polity, internal organisation and the conditions for membership also differed strongly for each merchant organization.\(^{98}\)

Despite all these differences, there is a historiographical consensus about the origin of such institutions. In the time of the so-called commercial revolution of the High Middle Ages they came into being in order to protect against predatory rulers, and they served as tools for contract enforcement and for the prevention of cheating. These ‘fundamental problems of exchange’ required a remedy that individual merchants alone could not develop or bear the cost of alone.\(^{99}\) In a society that had weak measures against violence on a state level, individual merchants were easy targets, and their goods and money were often seized by both rulers and private individuals. However, once they belonged to a group with some form of collective organization, retaliation in the form of boycotts offered a powerful tool to reduce and prevent

\(^{97}\) Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy*.

\(^{98}\) For an overview of the diversity in terms of the organization and background of the merchant institutions in Antwerp in the Middle Ages and the early modern period, see the appendix of Gelderblom and Grafe, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Merchant Guilds: Re-Thinking the Comparative Study of Commercial Institutions in Premodern Europe’.

such forms of danger, uncertainty and risk. Internal discipline and forms of ostracism in case of disobedience were crucial for maintaining a strong bargaining position.

A common thread, both in contemporary narrative sources, such as those on the Entry Ceremony of 1549, and in the historiography on merchant corporations and communities is the self-evidence of home background as an organizing category. That self-evidence also derives from the fact that in other spheres, like the pre-modern university, corporations were organized according to the place where people had grown up. In this chapter, I investigate how this common background contributed to group and community formation between Florentine merchants in Antwerp, and what was the place of its corporative institution, the Florentine nation, in that community organization. First, I shed light on when and how the community and the nation settled in Antwerp at the end of the fifteenth century. Then I focus on the composition of the community and the relation between the merchant community and its institution. The last and most important part of the chapter deals with the relation between the community and nation in Antwerp and the government of Florence. Throughout this chapter, I will make two main observations. First, in order to understand how the Florentine nation in Antwerp functioned, it is of key importance to take into account that it was an institution that came with a long history and that that history mattered to its members. Second, the nation served as a repository of historical knowledge that offered contemporaries a starting point for thinking about the reform of commercial institutions. Moreover, in line with recent historiography that calls for a less rigid distinction between networks and institutions, we must consider an institution like the Florentine merchant nation in Antwerp as being part of a network on which it could draw. As I will demonstrate, a crisis such as that on the place of Florentines in the Joyous Entry provides an exceptional insight into the network and knowledge dimension of the nation. Before focusing on these points, it is important to engage with the historiography on merchant organizations in the Low Countries and beyond between the Middle Ages and the seventeenth century. That elaborate historiography has been of great importance in the debates on merchant organisations in general and has also affected the current historiographical perception of the Florentine nation in Antwerp. 100

Merchant Corporative Organisations in The Low Countries at The Beginning of The Sixteenth Century

When Antwerp became the commercial heart of Northern Europe in the first decades of the sixteenth century, Italian merchants had already been present in the region for a long time. Although initially Northern European merchants also regularly travelled south, the commercial exchange between the North Sea area and the Mediterranean was primarily carried out by Italian merchants. Merchants from Lombardy were probably the first to frequently travel in Northern Europe and settle there, but in their slipstream, merchants from other cities of the northern and central parts of the Italian Peninsula followed. Initially, the cities of the Champagne region offered the infrastructure where Northern European products could be exchanged for the variety of goods that southern merchants had to offer. There Flemish and English merchants met with Italians and Provençal traders. The cycle of six fairs per year enabled various developments in commercial infrastructures and techniques, of which Italians were the initiators. At the fairs, merchant courts and corporative institutions were developed at various levels and in different forms. The combination of war in France, easier naval access and the benefits of a stable meeting place rather than a cyclical rhythm led to the decline of the fairs at the commercial heart of European exchange at the end of the thirteenth century. As commercial meeting grounds, fairs would not disappear for centuries, but a more permanent place of encounter for exchanges between the Mediterranean and the North Sea area came to prominence in the Flemish city of Bruges. The establishment of a maritime connection between Genoa and Bruges contributed to the rise of that city, and to its importance in Italian commercial networks.

Bruges arguably became the first commercial city in Northern Europe that was comparable to Venice and other earlier developed centres in the Mediterranean area. Driven by the presence of long-distance merchants from all over Europe, the Flemish city near the North Sea coast developed a commercial infrastructure to cater to the needs of these merchants. That the Bruges exchange would give its name –Bourse- to that institution for future generations, reveals the innovative nature of the infrastructure at the time. Inn keepers and brokers provided merchants with infrastructure, information and intermediary services that benefitted trade. However, the mercantile infrastructure was by no means only provided by local Bruges agents. Merchant corporations were powerful players in the institutional landscape of the city, and boycotts, most notably by the Hanseatic League, were used to enforce privileges and to abolish

overly burdensome taxes.\footnote{Rudolf Hapke, Brügges Entwicklung zum mittelalterlichen Weltmarkt (Berlin: Curtius, 1908); James Murray, ‘That Well-Grounded Error: Bruges as Hansestadt’, in The Hanse in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ed. Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz and Stuart Jenks (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012), 181–90.} The presence of important Florentine bankers, most notably the Medici bank, has been well investigated, but the institution of the nation has only been structurally documented through its statutes (cfr. infra).\footnote{de Roover, Money, Banking and Credit in Mediaeval Bruges - Italian Merchant Bankers, Lombards and Money Changers - A Study in the Origins of Banking.}

By the end of the fifteenth century, Bruges lost its place as the most important centre of commerce in the Low Countries and beyond to Antwerp. The timing and especially the causes of the rise of Antwerp as the centre of trade in the Low Countries and the related decline of Bruges have been the subject of an elaborate historiographical debate.\footnote{Jean Maréchal, ‘Le Départ de Bruges Des Marchands Étrangers (XVe et XVle Siècles)’, Annales de La Société d’Emulation de Bruges 88 (1951): 26–74; Jan A. Van Houtte, ‘Bruges et Anvers, Marchés “Nationaux” Ou “Internationaux” Du XIVe Au XVle Siècle’, Revue Du Nord 34 (1952): 89–108; Jan A. Van Houtte, ‘The Rise and Decline of the Market of Bruges’, The Economic History Review 19, no. 1 (1 January 1966): 29–47, https://doi.org/10.2307/2592791; Jan A. Van Houtte, ‘Anvers Aux XVe et XVle Siècles : Expansion et Apogée’, Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations 16, no. 2 (1961): 248–78, https://doi.org/10.3406/ahess.1961.420705.} Although the natural deterioration of the Zwin estuary that connected Burges to the North Sea is sometimes invoked as the determining push factor, political factors are generally considered to have been of greater importance. The conflicts that the city of Bruges experienced with the county of Flanders on the one hand and with Archduke Maximilian, on the other hand, created an atmosphere of political instability at the end of the fifteenth century, which also affected its commercial organization. Throughout that period of conflict, Maximilian ordered the various foreign merchant communities to move from Bruges to Antwerp. Recently, Oscar Gelderblom has argued that the competition between the urban governments of the commercial cities in the Low Countries –that is between Bruges and Antwerp- was the motor that powered the shift of primacy. Merchants, especially foreign ones, were supposedly footloose and went where profit and the most optimal conditions for trade were most likely to be found.\footnote{Gelderblom, Cities of Commerce, 28–33.} According to Gelderblom, the shift in primacy from Bruges to Antwerp took place primarily because Antwerp offered merchants a better infrastructure for trade. It should be stressed, however, that long before the political conflicts at the end of the fifteenth century, foreign merchants based in Bruges already regularly visited the Brabant fairs of Bergen op Zoom and Antwerp. English merchants, in particular, were already frequently present in Antwerp throughout the fifteenth century. Recent findings suggest that Bruges, Antwerp and other middle-sized centres of trade
into the region were integrated in a commercial network in which Italian merchants also moved from the early fifteenth century onwards.  

In Antwerp, foreign merchant communities were welcomed by the urban government as an economic answer to the decline of the city's textile production. As is made clear by the list of merchant communities that participated the Joyous Entry of 1549, the Florentine nation was but one of many merchant institutions that had settled in Antwerp. Three of these groups, the English Merchant Adventurers, the Portuguese factory and High German merchants, are often represented as the ‘pillars’ of the rise and success of Antwerp as a commercial centre. High German and English merchants already regularly visited the Brabant Fairs, where they supplied wool-cloth and various products from the Rhineland. The development of mining in Central-Europe, driven by High German merchants and bankers, led to an important influx of precious metals, most notably copper, from that region to Antwerp. It was probably due to that supply as well as the large concentration of merchants from all over Europe that the king of Portugal decided to distribute the spices that Portugal had acquired on the coasts of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean in Antwerp instead of Lisbon. There, the Portuguese spices were auctioned in large volumes and then resold by its buyers. The Florentine nation in Antwerp was one of the many alien trading nations that the city hosted. These nations, consulates, or other forms of merchant institutions were all corporate organizations that united ‘foreign’ merchants with common origins (regional or urban) and common interests. Forms of merchant organisations had probably originated in the Middle Ages as a response to problems that were related to long distance trade. Nations offered merchants the kind of protection that they themselves could not provide on a company or individual level, nor were public authorities willing or able to offer. Commerce abroad was indeed a dangerous undertaking: robbery, being cheated by other merchants with whom they had agreements, and the predatory behaviour of the host government, via confiscations, were the most common dangers associated with long-distance trade in pre-modern world. The collective action gave merchants a stronger bargaining position when dealing with these various problems and in preventing them. Internal discipline was aimed at protecting each member and at deterring members from cheating outsiders, thus preserving the reputation of the collective group of merchants who shared a particular background. As with many other corporate institutions in

---

the medieval and early modern world, they were often granted juridical privileges by their host town or region but also by their government of origin.

In the historiography on trading nations in the Low Countries and on these institutions in general sixteenth-century Antwerp is at times presented as a place where the importance of these corporative institutions declined.\textsuperscript{108} In the long-term narrative of commercial cities in the Low Countries, Antwerp stands between medieval Bruges and seventeenth century Amsterdam. In the former, mercantile corporative institutions had a strong position and to a large extent had their own jurisdiction. In Amsterdam, such corporative mercantile institutions were prohibited and individual merchants were served by general open-access institutions, which were accessible to all regardless of their ‘national’ background, thus doing away with privileges and corporate jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{109} In that narrative, Antwerp in its ‘Golden Age’ (ca. 1500-1585) is considered as a place where some of the residue of Bruges’ corporative structures mixed with innovations in open generally accessible institutions and infrastructures that would be further developed in Amsterdam.\textsuperscript{110}

This powerful historiographical narrative is based on sound research, and it is difficult to counter its linear nature. However, this perspective on merchant institutions with its emphasis on the limits of corporative institutions and their decline is not always useful for promoting a better understanding of the actual organization and the day to day working of mercantile nations in Antwerp. Moreover, despite an elaborate body of historiography on the groups of foreign merchants in Antwerp in many respects we still lack a proper understanding of how these institutions functioned and what was the composition of their membership.\textsuperscript{111}

\begin{footnotes}

\item[109] Blondé, Stabel, and Gelderblom, ‘Foreign Merchant Communities in Bruges, Antwerp and Amsterdam, c. 1350-1650’; Gelderblom, \textit{Cities of Commerce}.


\end{footnotes}
metanarrative of the decline of corporative institutions, a scattered archival situation, and the linguistic diversity of both sources and historiography seem to have discouraged further research, especially into the Italian communities and their institutions. Moreover, the historiography presented above is very much focused on the effect that Antwerp as the host city and the Low Countries as a host region, and their market conditions had on the way mercantile institutions were organized. Both are two powerful conditioning contexts and act as relevant points of reference for a community of foreign merchants. However, because of that focus the role of the hometown/region, a third important point of reference for trading nations, is relatively understudied and has had less of a place in the analysis of their actions and performance.\textsuperscript{112} The merchants’ ties with their hometown and the effects of economic shifts, as well as the social, institutional, and political dynamics of the hometown on the organization and composition of the Florentine trading nation in Antwerp will be the subject of this chapter.

First I will turn to the normative framework of the Florentine community in Antwerp. In order to understand how the nation worked, the degree of autonomy of the institution and the role of its office holders, it is important to analyse the normative documents of the institution in detail. Since these documents were adapted and created after the settlement of the Florentine nation in Antwerp, I will also pay attention to the rise of Antwerp as a commercial centre and the position of foreign merchants during the commercial and political changes in the Low Countries. In the subsequent section, I turn to those who were subjected to these regulations and will partially reconstruct the membership of the nation through a scattered body of sources. The main question of that section is to what extent was a particular social background in Florence prevalent among the members and office holders of the Florentine nation.

Unfortunately, we do not have the kind of sources at our disposal that allow to reconstruct quantitative data about the nation throughout the sixteenth century, nor do any sources provide a cross section of the nations’ membership at a particular point in time. However, by combining various bodies of sources, it is possible to get a better understanding of the composition of the nation. The following two sections will further examine the meaning and relevance that the nation had. First, I present and analyse the evidence about the meaning and relevance of the

\textsuperscript{112} Gelderblom and Grafe have identified three main variables that affected the willingness of merchants to delegate control to merchant institutions: the attitude of their political rulers at home towards traders, the attitudes of political rulers in their host country towards foreign traders, and market conditions. Gelderblom and Grafe, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Merchant Guilds: Re-Thinking the Comparative Study of Commercial Institutions in Premodern Europe’, 494; The importance of the home government has also been stressed by Ogilvie: Ogilvie, \textit{Institutions and European Trade}, 25.
nation for its members. Then I investigate the attitude of the government in Florence towards the nation in Antwerp.

From Bruges to Antwerp: Nation and Norms

The debates on the main causes of the shift from Bruges to Antwerp as the primary commercial meeting place in the region have not offered conclusive insights as to when and why exactly the respective foreign merchant communities left Bruges and moved to Antwerp. With regard to the case of the Florentine nation, it is important to note that the prevalence of political and economic forces in the host environment offers the most plausible explanation for the Florentine nation’s move towards Antwerp. We lack indications that suggest that the Florentines were at any point an active driving force in leaving Bruges for Antwerp, in fact any form of explicit reflections on the move are absent. The reason why the nation joined the move to Antwerp thus arguably lies in the standard answers about the transition. The inconclusiveness about the exact motives also applies to the timing of the transfer, as the evidence about when the nation moved from Bruges to Antwerp is also ambiguous. In his famous description of the Low Countries, the Florentine merchant and intellectual Lodovico Guicciardini stated that the definite transfer of the nation took place in 1516. A year before that, the Florentine nation had participated in the Joyous Entry of Charles V to Bruges. However, more than two decades earlier in 1490, the consul of the Florentine nation had already turned to the Antwerp magistrate to inform them of Florentine customs regarding marriage and dowries. This indicates that the nation at that time already considered Antwerp to be a part of their field of operation and instead of pinpointing an exact date, it is important to stress the gradual nature of the transfer of the nation.

The available sources also suggests that the move of the nation within the Low Countries to Antwerp was not perceived as an internal institutional rupture. Rather, it must have been considered as the continuation of the same institution in another city. The primary evidence to interpret the move to Antwerp in terms of the continuity of the nation is provided in the nation’s

---

113 Lodovico Guicciardini, Descrittione di tutti i paesi bassi, altrimenti detti germania inferiore (G. Silvius, 1567), 84; Quoted in Maréchal, ‘Le Départ de Bruges Des Marchands Étrangers (XVe et XVIe Siècles)’, 43.
statutes, the normative framework of the institution.\textsuperscript{116} It was through these statutes that the day to day working and organization of the nation was managed, both in Bruges and Antwerp. The statutes were transferred from Bruges to the city on the banks of the Scheldt without any adaptation to the new commercial environment that Antwerp offered. Moreover, these regulations had been the subject of previous revisions and thus were not set in stone. The first version of the nation’s internal regulations during its settlement in Bruges was drafted in 1426, and two adaptations took place in 1461 and 1498 respectively. However, seventy years later, in 1568, the regulations remained unchanged from those drafted at the end of the fifteenth century, and no amendments had been made to deal with new issues brought up by their move to Antwerp.

The lack of adaptations over such a long period suggests that they were of little actual use in serving the needs and in tackling the problems of Florentines in Antwerp. Moreover, some of the articles, notably those on the passage of the Florentine galleys in the harbours near Bruges, had already become irrelevant before the transfer of the nation to Antwerp. This lack of evidence about a concrete use of the statutes in Antwerp raises doubts about the actual relevance of the document, both for the nation’s members in Antwerp and for the nation in relation to its home government. However, the statutes must have remained the primary normative framework for the nation’s operations in Antwerp. They were still presented without any nuance or comment to the government in Florence during the second half of the sixteenth century, which suggests that they were not merely an empty box. Therefore, it remains important to understand what their key features were and to what extent they were distinctive from those of other mercantile organizations.\textsuperscript{117} Looking at this normative document is thus a first step in assessing what was Florentine about the Florentine nation.

The organization of the leadership and the governance of the nation offers a starting point for analysing the statutes. The leadership lay in the hands of a consul and two advisors, who each had a one year term and, by the time the nation operated in Antwerp, they were elected by the members of the nation.\textsuperscript{118} One of the main duties of the consul and his advisors was to act as judges in cases of civil litigation between members of the nation. Appeals against their

\textsuperscript{116} The statutes have been edited by Masi. The original document is kept in Archivio di stato di Firenze (ASF), Consoli del mare, reg. IX, cc. IOO-II2 (Classe XI, distinzione 4, n. 78) (r). Masi, \textit{Statuti delle colonie fiorentine all’estero}, 1–33.

\textsuperscript{117} A discussion of the statutes can also be found in Laura Galoppini, “‘Nationes’ toscane nelle Fiandre”, in \textit{Comunità forestiere e ‘nationes’ nell’Europa dei secoli XIII-XVI}, ed. Giovanna Petti Balbi (Liguori Ed., 2001), 152–54.

\textsuperscript{118} Masi, \textit{Statuti delle colonie fiorentine all’estero}, 6.
ruling were not possible, which placed them in a powerful position.\textsuperscript{119} Although arbitration by third parties was possible when accepted by the consul and his advisors, any attempt to turn to the local jurisdiction in such a conflict was strongly forbidden.\textsuperscript{120} The leadership of the nation, of course, had to rely on the members of the nation. Membership was obligatory for all Florentines who lived in Bruges or Antwerp or wanted to do business there.\textsuperscript{121} For these members the nation was thus a closed and, in theory, autonomously functioning juridical entity. Also in dealings and conflicts between the members of the nation and outsiders, the Florentine community was supposed to act as a collective body. In case a non-Florentine had harmed a Florentine merchant, the nation had to organize a collective boycott against that non-Florentine merchant.\textsuperscript{122} The nation’s collective discipline could also operate against its own members: Florentine merchants who had a bad reputation and embarrassed the Florentine community were forced to leave the Low Countries for a period determined by the consul and the advisors, in order to maintain the reputation of the nation.\textsuperscript{123}

Although the authority of the consul and his advisors is stressed repeatedly, their position was that of a temporary \textit{primus inter pares}. Their responsibilities towards the nation were strongly stressed. The statutes also provided mechanisms to check the consuls’ authority in cases when he was personally involved in litigation. Apart from the internal authority within the nation, its relation to the hometown is also discussed in the statutes. In theory, the nation was supposed to be monitored by and be accountable to the \textit{capitani di parte guelfa}, one of the most important Florentine governing institutions in the Republican period, but we have no indication of the extent to which this accountability was enforced at the end of the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{124} The nation was thus inserted into the larger institutional framework of the republic. In its organization, the features that were discussed above – the election of the head of the nation, checks on his power, communal responsibility and collective boycotting – are all characteristics of a bottom up, communal organization.

Now that I have discussed the key features of the Florentine nation, I can tackle the question to what extent its qualities are distinctive when compared with other merchant nations and corporations. Many of the observations listed above, like the bottom up form of the organization, echo descriptions of the standard qualities of foreign merchant institutions. Also,

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{119} Masi, 6–7.
\bibitem{120} Masi, 7–8.
\bibitem{121} Masi, 8.
\bibitem{122} Masi, 9.
\bibitem{123} Masi, 9–10.
\bibitem{124} Masi, xix–xx.
\end{thebibliography}
the prescription to boycott those who cheated members and to exclude members who cheated, are considered to be some of the essential tools of medieval and early modern trading nations that had some degree of cohesion.\textsuperscript{125} What makes the Florentine nation and its statutes more distinctive, is its relative openness in terms of membership. In particular, the space that the regulations left for social mobility is not a given in many merchant nations or corporations. The Florentine nation did not restrict or monopolize any trades in specific goods, in the way that the English Merchant Adventurers did with the wool trade with the Low Countries.\textsuperscript{126} Moreover, unlike the Genoese nation in Antwerp, which restricted membership to those belonging to one of the twenty-eight Genoese Alberghi after their reform in 1528, the Florentine nation did not exclude any Florentines based on their social or political position in the hometown.\textsuperscript{127} Every merchant who came from the Florentine territory could—and in fact was obliged—be included in the nation for the time of his presence in Bruges or Antwerp. In its statutes, the Florentine nation thus reflected the theoretical openness for \textit{uomini nuovi}—economic newcomers—that historians have ascribed to Florence.\textsuperscript{128}

The openness of the Florentine nation was of course relative. The critics of private order mercantile institutions like the Florentine nation in Antwerp have stressed that such institutions were always rent-seeking institutions, thus capitalizing on their privileges, with some degree of exclusiveness that inhibited outsiders from making a fair profit.\textsuperscript{129} Indeed, membership was inclusive to all Florentine merchants doing business in the Low Countries, but had a price: Florentines had to pay consular rights on their commercial transactions.\textsuperscript{130} However, as I will show below, such costs were mainly for internal community organization and day to day costs. Moreover, as the vivid debate about the allegedly extractive characteristics of corporate organizations in the productive sectors such as guilds has made clear, there are convincing counterarguments against the extractive interpretation, on which I will touch on more elaborately below.

The nation was not only a relatively open institution in comparison to some other commercial corporative institutions. Its relative openness, at least in normative terms, also made the nation an institution with substantially fewer formal hurdles for acquiring membership and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{125} Gelderblom and Grafe, \textit{The Rise and Fall of the Merchant Guilds: Re-Thinking the Comparative Study of Commercial Institutions in Premodern Europe}, 481.
\item \textsuperscript{127} Beck, \textit{La nation genoise à Anvers de 1528 à 1555}, 163.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Goldthwaite, \textit{The Economy of Renaissance Florence}.
\item \textsuperscript{129} This argument is elaborated extensively in Ogilvie, \textit{Institutions and European Trade}.
\item \textsuperscript{130} Masi, \textit{Statuti delle colonie fiorentine all’estero}, 17–18.
\end{itemize}
holding office than many other Florentine institutions. Restrictions like the *divieto*, which prohibited members of the same lineage from holding office at the same time during the sixteenth century, and applied to numerous Florentine institutions, did not apply to the nation.\(^{131}\) It should in itself not be surprising that an institution that was so distant from its home polity and its local political and social tensions was not subjected to regulation of that kind. Yet it is important to add this perspective to grasp the degree to which the nation in Antwerp was a distinctly Florentine institution.

Whereas the nation’s statutes referred primarily to the Bruges context where the nation in the Low Countries was originally founded and to the contemporary Florentine context, an additional normative document related to Florentine mercantile activity in the Low Countries was issued half-way through the sixteenth century. From then on the operations of the Florentine nation in Antwerp were also supposed to be governed by a privilege granted by Emperor Charles V.\(^{132}\) This charter was issued and made public on 26th June 1546, long after the actual settlement of the nation in Antwerp had occurred, and it would take another four years for the charter to reach the Florentine home government.\(^{133}\) The text was mainly a legal recognition and approval of the Florentine nations’ well-established infrastructure. The rights to annually elect a consul, two advisors, and a treasurer were confirmed, as were their right to judge Florentine merchants and their factors or representatives. The ability to tax commercial and financial transactions were also granted to the nation. This right was given on the basis of the nation’s intent to set up a chapel or a church in Antwerp and for the future maintenance costs of such an infrastructure. However, the indications that the Florentine nation actually founded a chapel are scarce and contradictory.\(^{134}\)

An analysis of the nation’s statutes and the privilege given by the Emperor makes it clear that the two normative documents of the Florentine nation were to a large extent compatible. Yet the two documents depict a very different impression of the nation’s primary loyalty and the foundation of the institutions’ right to exist. The statutes stress the relations

\(^{131}\) Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence*, 169.


\(^{133}\) A letter from a ducal secretary acknowledges its reception to Magalotti, the consul at that time. ASF, MdP 193, c 86 r, February 17 1550. Secretary to Galeotto Magalotti

\(^{134}\) Grunzweig indicates that after the transfer from Bruges to Antwerp, the Florentine nation remained loyal to the Franciscans and opened a chapel in their church in Antwerp. It is not clear however on which source this claim is based. Grunzweig, ‘Les Papiers Du Magistrat Des Consulats Aux Archives D’État de Florence.’, 55, there n 1; The chapel of the Portuguese nation in the Franciscan church of Antwerp is discussed in Linnig’s overview on Antwerp’s Early Modern churches, but no indications of the presence of the Florentine nation are mentioned. Benjamin Emmanuel Linnig, *Oud Antwerpen: Kerken en Kloosters* (L. Opdebeek, 1925). 42.
within the community and to a lesser extent those with the home government, while the privilege of the Emperor focuses on the position of the nation in the host region. The privilege had a top-down character: the authority and autonomy of the nation were derived from the Emperor. In the statutes, the organization of the nation is presented as bottom-up under the supervision of the hometown. The extent to which the nation and the community was actually monitored by their home government will be discussed further down in this chapter. First, I will follow up on the theoretical openness in the statutes which allowed Florentines of any background to become members of the nation in Antwerp. In order to examine this point, I will focus on the nation’s membership and the composition of the Florentine community in Antwerp.

*The Nation’s Membership and Governance: A Social Analysis*

Based on a reading of its statutes, the Florentine nation was an institution that included any citizen and subject of Florence that came to Antwerp to do business. Unfortunately, since the internal records of the nation are not directly available, we do not know to what extent Florentines actually registered as members of the nation and participated in its activities, or whether in spite of this theoretical openness there were any boundaries between Florentines in Antwerp. In recent historiography, it has sometimes suggested that there was a distinction between the Florentines, under the general claim that Italian nation organizations in Antwerp usually consisted of a mercantile elite, but by no means represented the whole body of Italians from a particular city. Also, their institutional relevance and added value have been questioned. Juxtaposing the Italian communities with the successful Southern German community, which had no formal nation and very limited privileges, previous authors have suggested that privileged alien merchant institutions offered little additional value to their members.\(^{135}\) Such claims go back to Paola Subacchi’s work, which was based on the observation that only roughly one fourth of the Italians who did business in Antwerp between 1550 and 1590 were listed as members of the nation. This claim has bolstered the notion that many more Italians were active in other occupations than in the higher circles of trade and finance.\(^{136}\)

---

\(^{135}\) Blondé, Stabel, and Gelderblom, ‘Foreign Merchant Communities in Bruges, Antwerp and Amsterdam, c. 1350-1650’, 166; The case of the South German community in Antwerp is analysed in Harreld, *High Germans In The Low Countries*.

Subacchi’s claims are valid in the particular context in which they were made but have sometimes led to overly bold generalizations of the Italian communities in Antwerp, which do not take into account the particularities of each of the communities. Yet apart from these generalizations, there are two main problems that complicate an analysis of the membership of the Florentine nation in Antwerp. First, since no nation records have survived, we can only grasp the dimensions of the nation’s membership through other records.\(^\text{137}\) This problem can thus be solved by collecting data sets which are broader and only indirectly indicate the nation’s membership. The second and more important problem of these claims is that they are unclear on what criteria were used to categorize someone as a prominent merchant. Success in business in Antwerp is one obvious but very difficult criterion to assess. Since the nation was a Florentine institution, even though it was different to those in Florence itself, it is worth paying more attention to the members’ social status within that hometown and using that criterion as a point of reference for assessing the qualities of the nation’s membership.

In order to trace the social status of Florentines in Antwerp, we have at our disposal the relatively rich datasets that have been collected on the Florentine political and social elite. Recently, Nicolas Baker has argued that the Florence elite, the so-called ‘office holding class’ (in tables referred to as ‘OHC’), was the key middle group of Florentine society throughout the regime switches of the late fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century.\(^\text{138}\) Building further on previous scholarship, Baker defines the office holding class as all those who could potentially access formal political power.\(^\text{139}\) Throughout the last years of the fifteenth century and during the first half of the sixteenth, the interplay between the families in this group, the Medici family as well as the larger political shifts on the Italian Peninsula and in Europe in general determined the course of Florentine politics. Baker’s focus on the political culture of this class certainly offers a new angle from which to understand the turbulence of the first decades of the sixteenth century. His primary cases are the members of this group who were involved as political actors in the city of Florence. As the Florentine trading network is considered to be one of the densest in Europe and the Mediterranean region, Baker’s innovative

---

\(^{137}\) Subacchi’s observation is a general one for all the Italians in Antwerp and does not go into detail about the Florentine nation. Her comparison is based on the very partial and incomplete data that Goris offers on the membership of the nation in 1551. Subacchi, 78; See Goris, *Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567*, 618.


\(^{139}\) Baker, 9.
approach raises the question, to what extent this network and its trading nations did serve as an additional space in which the social dynamics of the Florentine civic world were also at play.\textsuperscript{140}

To tackle this question about the social background of the membership of the Florentine nation in Antwerp, the substantial datasets on the Florentine office holding class provide a useful yardstick for assessing the situation. These datasets on the composition of the Florentine office holding class were published as appendices in monographs and later online making them easily accessible. They were initially collected by three scholars of Renaissance Florence – Anthony Molho, David Herlihy and Richard Burr Litchfield– who were affiliated to the history department of Brown University in the 1980’s.\textsuperscript{141} Molho, relying partially on Herlihy’s data, focused on the Late Middle Ages, whereas Litchfield gathered data on office holders during the period of the (Gran) Ducato (sixteenth-eighteenth century). Baker’s data on the office holding class in his recent book rely extensively on the data that these three scholars collected, combined with the data provided in a substantial article by Roslyn Pesman Cooper, and on his own findings for the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{142} Based on the data collected by Molho, Baker and Litchfield it is thus possible to categorize the Florentines in Antwerp as being members or outsiders of the office holding class in their hometown.

In order to interpret these categorizations, some additional context on the meaning of the office holding class as a category should be kept in mind. When one of the Florentine merchants in my study is categorized as a member of the office holding class, this indicates that the name of his family is listed in one of the databases and that the family was eligible for holding an office in the Florentine state. It does not necessarily mean, however, that the family was actually holding offices at that particular moment. The concrete serial data that would allow for such a crosscheck are not available for the sixteenth century, and to crosscheck the names via other archival sources would require an intensive archival labour that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Only when there is a sufficient amount of secondary literature on a particular family, is it possible to go further into a family’s position in Florence. However, the inclusion of a family lineage in one of these databases remains revealing, for only a minority of the total

\textsuperscript{140} It should be noted however, that Baker in his work does refer briefly to the continuing involvement of Florentines in commerce abroad. Baker, 222–24.


Florentine population, sometimes estimate around 20 percent, was eligible to hold office.\textsuperscript{143} Moreover, since family names were not spelt uniformly and consistently and were often turned into a more Dutch or French way of writing in Antwerp’s records, it is sometimes difficult to judge whether a Florentine in Antwerp had an office holding class family name. In cases where the Dutch/French spelling of a name was so deviant from the Italian one, I have indicated to which Florentine name I have linked it. Finally, it should also be taken into account that surnames offer a valuable, but imperfect tool with which to trace the familial background of Florentines abroad.\textsuperscript{144} Florentine families sprawled across several branches, and not all of them were involved in politics at home or commerce abroad. However, when reading supplications from Florentines of various backgrounds to Duke Cosimo I, it becomes clear that those who had office holding class names lived in a different social world than those with non-office holding class names, and only rarely if ever do we encounter Florentines with such names in professions like craftsmen, servants or housekeepers.\textsuperscript{145}

With this background knowledge we can turn to a first test case, which will be based on the earliest records we have on trade in Antwerp: the Antwerp certificates, which are documents similar to notary records but were issued by city clerks, and the registers of the aldermen for the period between 1488 and 1514.\textsuperscript{146} These sources cover a variety of business transactions by merchants who were from all kinds of origins.\textsuperscript{147} Renée Doehaerd’s edition of these sources contains 33 certificates and 70 letters from the aldermen in which Florentines are identified. Table 1.1 indicates that 25 individuals identified as Florentines can be retrieved in the certificates. Twelve other Florentines also appear exclusively in the registers of the aldermen. A large majority only occasionally appears in the sources: only seven Florentines return in more than two certificates and only nine appear in more than two of the aldermen’s letters.

\textsuperscript{143} The number of around 20 percent is based on Guidi’s estimate of the Florentine population in 1494 as being 55000 and the number of potential office holders as 12750. Retrieved in Baker, \textit{The Fruit of Liberty}, 300 It should be noted that the overall quantitative data on the relation of the office holding class to the whole of the Florentine population are scarce.


\textsuperscript{145} This observation is based on a survey of three folders with such supplications that are related to cases under the jurisdiction of the Mercanzia in Florence (ASF, Merc 11516, 11517 & 11518). These sources are elaborately used and discussed in James E. Shaw, ‘Writing to the Prince: Supplications, Equity and Absolutism in Sixteenth-Century Tuscany’, \textit{Past & Present} 215, no. 1 (1 May 2012): 51–83, https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gts005; Guillaume Calafat, ‘La somme des besoins : rescrits, informations et suppliques (Toscane, 1550-1750)’, \textit{L’Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques. Revue électronique du CRH}, no. 13 (12 June 2015), https://doi.org/10.4000/acrh.6558.

\textsuperscript{146} Edited in Doehaerd, \textit{Études anversoises}, 1963.

\textsuperscript{147} Whereas the certificates were mainly used for the registration of commercial and financial transactions, the registers of the aldermen primarily registered deals in real estate.
Table 1.1: OHC Membership Florentine Merchants in Certification books 1-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>First name</th>
<th>OHC Molho</th>
<th>Name in Molho</th>
<th>OHC Baker</th>
<th>Name in Baker</th>
<th>OHC Litchfield</th>
<th>Name in Litchfield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total: 38</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acheol</td>
<td>Symon</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Acciaiuoli</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Acciaiuoli</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Acciaiuoli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambrosij</td>
<td>Looys</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ambroggi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ambroggi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ambroggi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltoli</td>
<td>Emergo</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandini</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bardi</td>
<td>Mariot de</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batiloro</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berthy</td>
<td>Michiele</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Berti</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Berti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethyny</td>
<td>Jeronimus</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Bettini</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betry</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnegrace</td>
<td>Victor</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Buonagrazie</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnegrace</td>
<td>Jan Albert</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Buonagrazie</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonsani</td>
<td>Alexandre</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonsani</td>
<td>Gaspar</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonsani</td>
<td>Augustyn</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonsani</td>
<td>Loys</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosini</td>
<td>Balthasar</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caponi</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaceta</td>
<td>Camille de</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fini</td>
<td>Galias Serafin de</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frescobaldi</td>
<td>Jeronimus</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frescobaldi</td>
<td>Lenardo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frescobaldi</td>
<td>Anthonis</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galteroti</td>
<td>Philippe</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galteroti</td>
<td>Benedictus</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galteroti</td>
<td>Anthonis</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgii</td>
<td>Petro Anthonius</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Giorgi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghyny</td>
<td>Matheus</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Gini/Ghini</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideti</td>
<td>Alleman</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paganelli</td>
<td>Berthelmeus</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A striking feature of almost all the certificates is that they do not contain references to the Florentine nation. None of the merchants are described as being members of the Florentine nation but as a merchant of Florence. Only the document in which the consul of the nation presents Florentine customs on female property ownership to Antwerp’s city government refers to the nation. However, this should not be considered as a surprising finding for two reasons. First, as mentioned above, the nation was not yet settled permanently in Antwerp during this period. Second, the qualities of the source, a general, non-standardized document that was issued by the Antwerp city government—make it unlikely that explicit and elaborate references to the nation would have been included.

As can be seen in table 1.1, eight of the thirty-seven Florentines carry a name that cannot be retrieved or associated with names in at least one of the three databases on the Florentine office holding/ruling class. Of the 29 Florentines with an office holding class background, almost half (14) have a name that appears in the three databases of office holding class members. Since the period under scrutiny is more closely related to Molho’s and Baker’s data than to the period of Litchfield’s data, it is more relevant to use their databases as the main yardsticks. More than half-21 out of 37-of the Florentine merchants mentioned in the Antwerp documents have a name listed in Molho’s dataset and even more (23) have a name that is included in Baker’s list. Based on these observations, the claim that the Florentine community in Antwerp was an ‘elite’ community seems to be justified. As the discussion of the statutes on the nation has made clear, in theory all Florentine merchants who were based in Bruges or Antwerp should also have been members of the Florentine nation, but whether that was actually the case is unfortunately not traceable.

A second window into the Florentine community in Antwerp and the nation is the Florentine Duke’s correspondence. The ‘Carteggio di Cosimo’ contains close to 200 letters that
were sent from Antwerp to the duke between 1545 and 1571. Not all of the correspondents were merchants, nor were all of them Florentines. For example, one of the letters was sent by Emperor Charles V when he resided in Antwerp. However, this body of sources can also allow us to understand to what extent members of office holding class families in Antwerp were dominant among the Florentine correspondents of the duke. The duke received letters from thirty-three different correspondents. As can be seen in table 1.2, nine cannot be associated with office holding class lineages. Seventeen of the thirty-three correspondents to the duke wrote more than two letters to Florence. Four of those seventeen cannot be linked to an office holding class family. Twelve of the duke’s correspondents carried the name of a lineage that was part of the office holding class in all the periods covered by the three databases, and eleven names are retrievable in at least two of them. Overall, it is clear that a majority of the Florentine merchants in Antwerp who wrote to the duke in the middle of the sixteenth century were members of the office holding class.

Table 1.2: OHC Membership Florentine Merchants in Carteggio di Cosimo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname sender</th>
<th>Name sender</th>
<th>OHC Molho</th>
<th>Name in Molho</th>
<th>OHC Baker</th>
<th>Name in Baker</th>
<th>OHC Litchfield</th>
<th>Name in Litchfield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total: 32</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barberino</td>
<td>Raffaelo da</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barducci</td>
<td>Alessandro</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baroncelli</td>
<td>Tommaso</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalcanti</td>
<td>Bernardo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cioci</td>
<td>Taddeo</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compagni</td>
<td>Vincenzo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbinelli</td>
<td>Tommaso</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corsini</td>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dati</td>
<td>Giorgio</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ducci</td>
<td>Gaspar</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galli</td>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gechardt</td>
<td>Filippo</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

149 The ‘Carteggio’ forms the primary source base of chapter four of this dissertation and the qualities and quantitative dimensions of these sources are discussed in detail there.

150 I have left out the letter by Charles V, those by anonymous correspondents and by the consul of the Florentine nation (to be discussed in a section on nation’s governing body).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Antionio di Giovanni</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Giovanni</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Giovanni</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giulii</td>
<td>Giovan Pietro di</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giunta</td>
<td>Niccolò</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gondi</td>
<td>Giovan Battista di Filippo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grimel</td>
<td>Alessio</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guicciardini</td>
<td>Giovan Battista</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guicciardini</td>
<td>Lodovico</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotti</td>
<td>Francesco</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magalotti</td>
<td>Galeotto</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mager</td>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaspina</td>
<td>Alberico I Cibo</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manelli</td>
<td>Galeotto</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marchi</td>
<td>Tommaso</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasi</td>
<td>Francesco</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinadori</td>
<td>Filippo</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinieri</td>
<td>Dietisalvi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinuccini</td>
<td>Carlo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rondinelli</td>
<td>Niccolò</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rustich</td>
<td>Francesco</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tornabuoni</td>
<td>Alfonso</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from the duke’s incoming correspondence, the minutes of outgoing his correspondence have also been kept. The number (44) of the letters that were sent from Florence to Antwerp is substantially lower. Apart from merchants, the duke also sent letters to the Antwerp city government, to a Florentine diplomat in Antwerp (Bernardo Antonio de’ Medici) and to the house of Fugger. Table 1.3 shows that apart from Gaspare Ducci, all the Florentine recipients in Antwerp had an office holding class background. Based on the duke’s correspondence during the middle of the century, we must thus conclude that a large portion of the Florentines in Antwerp that had contacts with the ruler of their hometown was from office holding class lineages.
Table 1.3: OHC Membership in the Outgoing Letters of Cosimo I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname recipient</th>
<th>First name recipient</th>
<th>OHC Molho</th>
<th>Name in Molho</th>
<th>OHC Baker</th>
<th>Name in Baker</th>
<th>OHC Litchfield</th>
<th>Name in Litchfield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total: 11</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baroncelli</td>
<td>Tommaso</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbinelli</td>
<td>Tommaso</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ducci</td>
<td>Guaspari da Pescia</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giunta</td>
<td>Niccolo di</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Bindi/Giunta</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Giunta Bindi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guicciardini</td>
<td>Giovan Battista</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magalotti</td>
<td>Gaetano</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medici</td>
<td>Averardo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megalotti</td>
<td>Galeotto</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Magalotti</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Magalotti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasi</td>
<td>Francesco</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinuccini</td>
<td>Carlo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rustici</td>
<td>Francesco</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rustichi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rustichi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last set of records at our disposal offers the best and most revealing test case to investigate whether the Florentine community of merchants and the nation in Antwerp can be considered as an elite community and institution. Between 1568 and 1570, a new institution, the Magistrate of the Consulates, was founded and set up in Florence. Its goal was to gain a better overview of the various Florentine trading nations throughout Europe. The project failed, but still, it generated a small and unique set of archival records on the Florentine nations that were active throughout Europe in the decades before 1568.\(^\text{151}\) The Magistrate had ordered that the members and the governing body of the Florentine nation in Antwerp provide insights into the working of the nation in the previous period so that outstanding taxes could be collected. Also from this exceptional set of records information on the membership of the nation can be extracted. These records are more closely related to the actual institution of the trading nation.

\(^{151}\) The papers of the Magistrate are kept in the State Archives in Florence (ASF), Capitani delle Parte Guelfa, 1815-1816. Those related to the Florentine nation in the Low Countries have been edited: Grunzweig, ‘Les Papiers Du Magistrat Des Consulats Aux Archives D’État de Florence.’
than the two previous sets of data on Florentines in Antwerp, and they also more clearly reveal the composition of its membership.

The names of forty-two Florentine merchants who were at one point or another active in Antwerp appear in documents and correspondence related to the nation in Antwerp (see table 1.4). Only three of these merchants carry a name that cannot be linked to an office holding class lineage. Apart from the already mentioned Gaspare Ducci, those merchants were Salvestro Scarini and Giovanni Santa Croce. More than half, 23 to be precise, of the merchants with an office holding background can be linked to a lineage that appears in the three databases. The impression that the Florentine nation in Antwerp was mainly populated by merchants with a background in the Florentine office holding class is thus also confirmed by this dataset.

Table 1.4: OHC Membership of Florentine Merchants in Antwerp Mentioned in The Papers of The Magistrate of the Consulates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>First name</th>
<th>OHC Molho</th>
<th>Name in Molho</th>
<th>OHC Baker</th>
<th>Name in Baker</th>
<th>OHC Litchfield</th>
<th>Name in Litchfield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total: 42</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barberini</td>
<td>Raffaelo</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Barberino</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barducci</td>
<td>Alessandro</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartoli</td>
<td>Giovannantonio</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bencini</td>
<td>Giovanni</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benvenuti</td>
<td>Carlo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berti</td>
<td>Francesco</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biliotti</td>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carducci</td>
<td>Bernardo di Agnolo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carducci</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalcanti</td>
<td>Bernardo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalcanti</td>
<td>Stiatta</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cini</td>
<td>Cosimo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cini</td>
<td>Jacopo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbinelli</td>
<td>Tommaso</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corsini</td>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Father's Office</td>
<td>Mother's Office</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diacieti</td>
<td>Camillo da</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diacieto</td>
<td>Camillo da</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dini</td>
<td>Agostino</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ducci</td>
<td>Gaspare</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortini</td>
<td>Bartolommeo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giacomini</td>
<td>Jacopo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giunta</td>
<td>Niccolo di</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gondi</td>
<td>Giovan Battista</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gualterotti</td>
<td>Giovan Battista</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guicciardini</td>
<td>Giovan Battista</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guicciardini</td>
<td>Lodovico</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanfranchi</td>
<td>Jacopo</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanfranchi</td>
<td>Carlo</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maghalotti</td>
<td>Galeotto</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Magalotti</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Magalotti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marucelli</td>
<td>Carlo</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasi</td>
<td>Francesco d’Alessandro</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasi</td>
<td>Giovambatista</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pescioni</td>
<td>Francesco</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pescioni</td>
<td>Luigi</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinieri</td>
<td>Dietisalvi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinuccini</td>
<td>Carlo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rustici</td>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rustich</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rustich</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Croce</td>
<td>Giovanni</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarini</td>
<td>Salvestro</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinelli</td>
<td>Piero</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taddei</td>
<td>Leonardo</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernacci</td>
<td>Giovanni</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Da Diaceto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from the social background of the nation’s membership, it is also important to understand to what extent the governance of the nation, the consuls and their advisors, also had an office holding class background. Unfortunately, no serial sources on this aspect of the nation’s administration are available. In the Magistrate of the consulates’ correspondence, a list
of all the consuls that had been sent to Florence at the behest of the Magistrate was requested, but unfortunately, this list was not kept in the remaining records of that institution. However, based on a mixed set of records and secondary literature, it is possible to partially reconstruct who was appointed as consul of the nation. I have been able to retrieve twelve consuls (see table 1.5). Only two of those twelve were not part of the office holding class during the late Middle Ages, so it is safe to claim that all of them had a strong family background in the class. That the consuls retrieved in this sample were active within a wide timespan –Frescobaldi was consul in 1490, and Rondinelli in 1568- strengthens the hypothesis that having an office holding class background was a valuable quality for securing the leading position in the nation, be it for the social capital or because of the level of wealth that often came with it.

Table 1.5: Consuls Retrieved from Various Sources and Secondary Literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>First name</th>
<th>OHC Molho</th>
<th>OHC Baker</th>
<th>OHC Litchfield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total: 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barducci</td>
<td>Alessandro</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartoli</td>
<td>Giovannantonio</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benvenuti</td>
<td>Carlo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billiotti</td>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalcanti</td>
<td>Bernardo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corsini</td>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frescobaldi</td>
<td>Girolamo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotti</td>
<td>Francesco</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magalotti</td>
<td>Galeotto</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinieri</td>
<td>Dietisalvi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rondinelli</td>
<td>Niccolo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taddei</td>
<td>Leonardo</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the three windows that show the composition of the Florentine merchant community and the nation and through a sample of the consuls, it is abundantly clear that a large majority of the Florentine merchant community in Antwerp and its leadership had an office holding class background. The rather loose claims about the elite character of the Florentine community and the nation in Antwerp that one finds spread throughout the secondary literature are thus confirmed here for the first time through a more substantial analysis. The
nation’s theoretical openness to any Florentine regardless of their background did not prevent it from becoming in practice an institution that consisted of offspring of the Florentine political and bureaucratic elite. Since this group largely overlapped with the commercial elite of Florence, it seems that, exceptions notwithstanding, for those who did not belong to that elite, engaging in commerce abroad was a much less attractive and unfeasible path to take.

Now that we have a better understanding of the social background of the nation’s membership, we can proceed to other questions about the organization of the nation and the community of Florentines in Antwerp. Though the documentation on it is scarce, it is possible to engage with the question how the nation actually functioned and what was its meaning and relevance, for its members and for the hometown and its government.

*The Relevance of The Nation for its Members*

The statutes of the nation give the impression that the Florentine nation in Bruges and later in Antwerp was the primary institutional point of reference for Florentine merchants. However, normative sources should of course always be approached as an ideal rather than a real outline of how an institution functioned. Moreover, because of the outdated character of the statutes and the complementary commercial infrastructure that Antwerp offered, it is also questionable whether Florentine merchants did indeed prefer the institutional service of the nation. In Antwerp, various kinds of open or semi-open access institutions that facilitated commercial exchange were aimed at preventing or resolving conflicts related to such transactions, and were available to merchants. They could turn for instance to both notaries as well as to the Antwerp aldermen and their clerks to have transactions certified in the certification books. Southern European merchants were said to be more accustomed to turning to notaries, but also the books in which minutes of the certificates were registered contain numerous transactions in which Florentines were involved.\(^{152}\) Moreover, in the statutes of the nation, only limited attention is paid to business with outsiders. It goes without saying that trade could only flourish through such transactions.

A larger portion of the transactions that were conducted by Florentine merchants and recorded in the Antwerp certificates from 1488-1513 did indeed cover transactions that transcend the boundaries of the nation. The documents are a testimony of the international

---

character of trade in Antwerp during early stage of the rise of the Antwerp market. However, one case is particularly revealing about the limits of the nation’s relevance and its power to enforce its will. On the 29th December 1512, Allemano Guidetti requested and obtained two certifications for the seizure of Jan Capponi’s—a Dutch adaptation of the Italian Gianni-goods. Guidetti worked as the factor of Giralomo Frescobaldi. In one of the transactions, goods belonging to Bernaert Stechner, an agent for Southern German merchants, were seized via the argument that the goods were actually the property of Capponi. The other document registers the direct seizure of Capponi’s goods by Guidetti. According to the statutes of the nation, a case like this should have been handled within the nation. It is even more striking that this transgression of the nation’s jurisdiction was performed by the representative of a former consul. As mentioned above, Giralomo Frescobaldi was the consul of the nation in 1490, and during the last years of the fifteenth century and the first decade of the sixteenth century, Frescobaldi was among the most active Florentine merchants in Antwerp.

The actions of Frescobaldi’s factor went against the regulations of the nation, but fall in line with the recurring observation in the historiography that merchants seldom relied on only one institution to safeguard their interests and solve their problems. That is also confirmed by another certificate issued by the Antwerp magistrate. In that document dated the 3rd December 1512, Frescobaldi had registered with the Antwerp city government that he had designated four representatives, two of which had a Florentine name, to act as his representatives in a dispute on the ownership of two houses. In itself, this was not an exceptional request. However, the dispute involved two houses in Bruges and the case was handled by the aldermen of that city. To conclude, these two cases illustrate that the nation was just one of the many options available to Florentine merchants and that institutions of urban governments in the Low Countries often offered an alternative to the nation.

The papers of the Magistrate of the Consulates also provide us with insight into the meaning and relevance that the Florentine nation in Antwerp had for its members in the period

154 See also the chapter on the family in Denucé, Italiaansche koopmansgeslachten te Antwerpen in de XVle-XVIIe eeuwen., 19–25.
155 This argument was developed by Frederic Lane. Frederic C. Lane, ‘Economic Consequences of Organized Violence’, The Journal of Economic History 18, no. 04 (1958): 401–17, https://doi.org/10.1017/S00220507000107612; It has been taken up again recently by Gelderblom & Grafe: Gelderblom and Grafe, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Merchant Guilds: Re-Thinking the Comparative Study of Commercial Institutions in Premodern Europe’, 478.
156 Van Houtte has noticed that also in Bruges, deals and conflicts of members of the same nation were recorded in the records of the Bruges city government. Van Houtte, ‘Bruges et Anvers, Marchés “Nationaux” Ou “Internationaux” Du XIVe Au XVIe Siècle’, 94.
around 1568. A first striking fact is that the detailed regulations of the nation and the related policy of fining had not been put into practice in the period covered by the Magistrate’s papers: an account of the fines issued could not be sent to Florence since no fines had been given.\textsuperscript{157} There are three possible explanations for the lack of issuing fines. First, it can indicate the outdated character of the regulations, which would mean that the office holders of the nation did not consider fining their members as an appropriate and relevant practice anymore. Second, and in relation to the first explanation, it can be seen as an indication of the low level of internal monitoring. In that case, for various possible reasons, the effort of monitoring the nation’s members was not considered to be worth the potential revenues. Third, it can be considered in correlation to the relatively low number of Florentines who were active in trade in Antwerp and their limited success. None of these explanations are mutually exclusive, and a lack of internal records prevent us from grasping what was the exact cause.

The absence of a frequent practice of fining was part of a larger problem that the nation apparently had: a lack of financial liquidity. Many of the merchants who were asked to send in their accounts of the nation’s related debts and credits concluded that they were creditors of the nation and that they hoped that they would finally be reimbursed.\textsuperscript{158} One should keep in mind that such statements were uttered towards a new institution whose mission it was to discipline and tax more efficiently, and therefore it is likely that these were attempts of tax avoidance. However, the overall impression of the nation’s role at that time remains that it was an institution that took more from its members than that it offered in return. A description of both the regular recurrent as well as the exceptional costs that the nation had to bear adds some concrete clarity to this impression.\textsuperscript{159} The ordinary costs listed were the celebration of the day of Saint John, the Florentine patron saint, a donation of alms to the ‘the Friars’, the celebration of a banquette, the celebration of the Holy Week and Easter, the annual contribution of consular rights to the Capitani delle parte Guelfa and the payment of a tavoloccino, a ceremonial position. The extraordinary costs were variable, but consisted of feeding various needy Florentines in Antwerp—it is not clear whether these were merchants-, maintenance costs of the church, expenses for festive occasions such as Joyous Entries and funerals, restorations after

\begin{flushright}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{157}‘E circa a’ conti delle condennagione che dite si sono fatte,non troviamo che ve ne sia nessuna.”, The consul and advisors of the Florentine nation in Antwerp to Tomasso Baroncelli in Florence, ASF, Capitani di Parte Guelfa, f 1816, nr 275, edited in ‘Grunzweig, ‘Les Papiers Du Magistrat Des Consulats Aux Archives D’État de Florence.’, 29.
  \item \textsuperscript{158}Corsini, Guinta, Ducci, Santa Croce and Billioti all concluded that the nation owed them money. Grunzweig, 33, 37, 40, 41, 49.
  \item \textsuperscript{159}Grunzweig, 53–56.
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
the Wave of Iconoclasm of 1566 and the maintenance of the Loggia that the nation apparently still had in Bruges. All these costs can be categorized as relating to ceremonial and social occasions. Although sociability and ceremonial presence might have contributed to developing informal contacts and benevolence from the local authorities and other groups, which in its turn may have benefited commerce, trade seems to have been so minimal in those days that for its members the nation was mainly a cause of additional costs. However, it seems that abstaining from paying one’s contribution to the nation was not an issue, and indeed the records of the Salviati firm and that of Rinieri do contain entries that document their payments to the nation.\footnote{E.g. ASF, Libri di Commercio e di Famiglia (LCF) 4416, fol. 114 v; CASNS, AS 987, fol. 139 r} Moreover, in times of crisis and conflict, the nation functioned as an interlocutor with the Antwerp city government and thus gave the group of Florentine merchants in Antwerp a stronger bargaining power.\footnote{See for example the reassurance that Florentine merchant would not trade in stolen goods after the Sack of Antwerp in 1576 \textquoteleft Index Der Gebodboeken, Berustende Ter Secretary Der stad Antwerpen, Beginnende Met 8 February 1489, En Eindigende Met Het Jaer 1794 (Vol. A Tot Vol, Q), Geredigeert Door P. van Setter, Raed-Secretaris Der stad Antwerpen, Geadmitteert Op 7 December 1773., in \textit{Antwerpsch Archievenblad} (Veritas, 1864), 331.}

\textit{The Meaning of The Nation for The Home Government}

As has been discussed in the general introduction of this dissertation, attitudes of a home polity towards their merchant community abroad could vary strongly. Up to now, the case of Florentine politics in relation to its merchant’s communities abroad has been studied relatively little. The cause for that can be found in the relatively liberal reputation –if one may use that anachronistic term- that Renaissance Florence has in the historiography on political economy. Contrary to Venice, the archetype of an Italian city state with a well-functioning bureaucracy that strongly monitored various aspects of its economy and its economic interests, the Florentine state is considered to have monitored these aspects to a much lesser extent and in a less systematized way. Historians who have engaged with the political economy of early modern Italian regional states in general and of Florence and Florentine Tuscany in particular have focused their attention almost exclusively on the attitude of the governments towards the economy within their territories.\footnote{Luca Molà and Franco Franceschi, \textquoteleft Regional States and Economic Development\textquoteright, in \textit{The Italian Renaissance State}, ed. Andrea Gamberini and Isabella Lazzarini (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 444–66; Tom Scott, \textquoteleft The Economic Policies of the Regional City-State of Renaissance Italy. Observations on a Neglected Theme\textquoteright, \textit{Quaderni Storici}, no. 1/2014 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1408/76677; I have borrowed the term \textquoteleft Florentine Tuscany\textquoteright from Connell and Zorzi’s volume with that title: William J. Connell and Andrea Zorzi, eds., \textit{Florentine Tuscany: Structures and Practices of Power} (Cambridge University Press, 2000).} Although it has convincingly been shown that Grand Duke
Cosimo I had a well-developed economic policy for the Grand Duchy, we know next to nothing about his attitudes towards the Florentine merchant communities abroad. It goes beyond the aims and ambitions of this dissertation to provide a complete assessment of such attitudes and policies, but focusing on some of the most important aspects of the relation between the Florentine government and the nation in Antwerp is a revealing first step.

A first case that sheds light on the attitude of the government in Florence towards the nation in Antwerp is related to the most elaborate ceremonial event in sixteenth century Antwerp: The Joyous Entry of Charles V and Philip to Antwerp in September 1549. During the preparations for this exceptional event, a conflict about precedence in the parade occurred between the Florentine nation and the nation of Genoese merchants in Antwerp. This conflict found its way into the official account of the entry that was published a year after the event by the main organizer Cornelius Grapheus. Also Cristobal Calvete de Estrella, the chronicler of Prince Phillip’s journey through his father’s empire refers briefly to the quarrel. Neither of these two main narrative sources on the Entry provides details about the cause and development of the conflict. The main narrative source that contains details on the conflict is Lodovico Guicciardini’s Descrittione di tutti I Paesi Bassi. There we read that the Emperor did not want to settle the conflict despite the fact that a year earlier the Florentine nation had received precedence over the Genoese at the Joyous Entry of the French king in Lyon.

Although the Florentine’s participation in the Joyous Entry of 1549 and in particular the allegorical meaning of the Florentine arch in the trajectory of the procession have been the subject of substantial scholarship, the rank conflict has not received any further attention and thus far no other sources than the three narratives have been consulted or invoked. However, several letters in the series of Duke Cosimo I’s incoming and outgoing correspondence

165 Juan Cristóbal Calvete de Estrella, El Felicissimo Viaje d’el... Príncipe Don Phelippe, Hijo d’el Emperador Don Carlos Quinto Maximo, Desde España à... Alemania, Con La Descripcion de... Brabante y Flandes (En Anvers: en casa de Martin Nucio, 1552).
166 Guicciardini, Descrittione di tutti i paesi bassi, altrimenti detti germania inferiore, 84–88.
explicitly go into the subsequent stages of the conflict. This correspondence between the Florentine nation in Antwerp and members of the Florentine government thus enables us to trace the strategies that the Florentines in Antwerp and at home in Florence developed and deployed to gain precedence in this particular parade. Therefore, the case offers exceptional insights into the extent to which the nation was followed up on and monitored by its home government and how that government understood the relevance of the institution.

The correspondence on the conflict between the nation and its home government started on 3rd August 1549 when Nicolo Rondinelli, the consul of the Florentine nation in Antwerp, together with his two advisors wrote a lengthy letter to the Duke of Florence. They informed their home ruler that within a month a Joyous Entry would be organised in honour of the Prince of Spain.\(^{168}\) The Antwerp government had called upon the foreign trading communities to participate in this event.\(^{169}\) However, the Genoese nation’s claim that it should have precedence over the Florentine nation had become a cause of trouble between the two nations: ‘et intra l’altri di andati in lor compagnia ad incontrarla et riceverla è nata difficolta che la natione Genovese pretende dover preceder’ alla nostra, et con ogni industria et diligenza si sforza di rimostrare tale precedentia ad essa appartenersi’.\(^{170}\) The remainder of the letter provides details of the arguments that the Genoese nation used and about the Florentine’s counterarguments.

Two days later, Rondinelli sent a similar letter to Bernardo Antonio de Medici, the Bishop of Forli who was also active as a Florentine diplomat in the entourage of Charles V.\(^{171}\) With these two letters, the consul of the Florentine nation in Antwerp thus informed both the highest authority in his hometown, and the most important Florentine representative to the Emperor of the dispute. Directly involving them was apparently considered the best strategy for gaining information that could benefit the case of the nation in Antwerp. Moreover, the letters indicate that the consul and his advisor felt directly accountable to their home ruler.

Rondinelli’s letters provide a good insight into the development of the Florentine’s arguments to counter claims made by the Genoese nation. Both his letter to Cosimo and that to Bernardo elaborated upon the Genoese’s claim and related it to the precedence the Genoese

\(^{168}\) ASF, MdP 394, fol 15 r – 16 r

\(^{169}\) ‘havendo li Siignori del governo di detta villa richiesta insieme con l’ altre natione forestiere la nostra ancora di volere honorandia Sua Altezza’, MdP 394, fol 15 r.

\(^{170}\) ASF, MdP 394, fol 15 r “and between the others that go in company to meet him and receive him has risen difficulty, that the Genoese nation pretends to have precedence over ours, and with all industry and diligence it forces itself to demonstrate that precedence belonging to them”

claimed to have gained from Charles V in Granada in 1525/6, in accordance with the Genoese precedence at the Roman court under the pontificate of ‘Julio’, Julius II (1503-1513). Then, 17 years later, at the coronation of Charles V in Bologna in 1530, the Genoese had also held a similar precedence.\textsuperscript{172} The Genoese case for precedence was thus built on previous concessions that had been given roughly a quarter of a century earlier in a different polity. Rondinelli and his advisors countered these claims explaining that there had not been any Florentines present in either Granada or Bologna. Moreover, they were critical of the Genoese’s claim to precedence under Julius II, who was ‘of their nation’, suggesting that because Julius had been born in Savona, a city within the Genoese territory, he was not a neutral arbiter.\textsuperscript{173}

Apart from countering the Genoese’s claim’s for precedence, the Florentine consul also referred to two cases where the Florentine \textit{natio} had gained precedence over the Genoese: at the Roman court in an undated papal procession for Corpus Christi, and in 1548, when they had obtained a confirmation from the French king at his Entry into Lyon:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Ma che possiamo ben noi mostrare’, che nella corte Pontificale nel portar’ il Baldacchino del Corpus Divino alla processione Papale divine intervengono per grado et per dignità tutte le Nationi che vi si trovano, la nostra Natione doppo la Milansese ha preceduto allo Genovese et la Genovese haver preso il Baldacchino dopo la nostra, come ultimamente nel tempo del presente Pontefice: et frescamente dal Re cristianissimo nella entrata di Lione, que luna et laltra nation’ era punte essere stato dichiarato che la nostra dovesse precedere alla loro.}\textsuperscript{174}
\end{quote}

These two letters from the beginning of August 1549 do not, however, reveal how consul Rondinelli gathered the information to counter the Genoese precedents and to develop a solid argument for the Florentine’s priority. It seems likely that the Entry of the French king to Lyon a year earlier and the role that the Florentine community had played in this context had come to the attention of the members of the Florentine nation in Antwerp. Since Lyon was at that time a centre of commerce with an important Florentine mercantile community, the city was well connected to Antwerp. Therefore, we may assume the nation in Antwerp benefited from that connection by acquiring information about the precedence that their compatriots had been given there. As Bonner Mitchell has shown, the iconography of the triumphal arches that the

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{172} ASF, MdP 394, fol 15 r. In the letter of the consul to Bernardo Antonio de’ Medici this argument is also mentioned: “etche tra li acti delli Ambasciadori, come ultimamente in Bologna nella coronation di S.M il medesimo era stato confermato”, ASF, MdP 393, fol 772 r
\item \textsuperscript{173} ASF, MdP 393, fol 772 r
\item \textsuperscript{174} ASF, MdP 394, fol 15 r-v
\end{footnotes}
Florentine nation in Lyon and Antwerp had erected, was also strikingly similar.\textsuperscript{175} It remains far less clear how Rondinelli obtained his factual knowledge on the other events that he referred to in order to repudiate the Genoese’s arguments. Nevertheless, his two letters and the answers from Florence provide us with some insight into the Florentine means of promoting their case for precedence, which was further crafted in the weeks that followed.

An important aspect of the quarrel was the demand for written proof that supported their respective claims. This was needed, since both the Antwerp city government—referred to as ‘gli signori della villa’ by consul Rondinelli—and Maria of Hungary, the governess of the Low Countries, were reviewing the case and the arguments.\textsuperscript{176} Rondinelli mentions in his letter that in front of the ‘signori’, the Genoese nation delivered an oral testimony about their claims.\textsuperscript{177} In reaction to this, the Florentines asked the ‘signori’ for written proof of the Genoese claims.\textsuperscript{178} As a consequence of requesting this proof from the Genoese, the Florentines, on their part, were quick and eager to assemble the necessary documents to support their own case. Rondinelli asked Duke Cosimo I to support their cause by delivering written proof of any case where Florentines had held precedence over the Genoese.\textsuperscript{179} The consul in Antwerp had already figured out that the Siennese held precedence over the Genoese, and since Florence held precedence over Sienna that would be an extra argument in favour of his case. Thus an authentic copy of the document that could prove this claim was requested.\textsuperscript{180} Documents that could prove Julius II’s hostility towards Florence and the Roman master of ceremonies’ preference towards the Genoese in the days of Julius II were also demanded in order to further discredit the Genoese arguments.\textsuperscript{181}

Unfortunately, Bernardo Antonio de’ Medici’s outgoing correspondence has not been kept in the Medici archive, but the surviving minutes of Cosimo’s outgoing correspondence to the Florentine nation in Antwerp and to Bernardo Antonio demonstrate how the case was

\textsuperscript{175} Mitchell, ‘Firenze Illustriissima: L’ Immagine Della Patria Negli Apparati Delle Nazione Fiorentine per Le Feste Di Lione Del 1548 e Di Anversa Del 1549’.
\textsuperscript{176} “perche la Majesta della Regina d’ Ungheria come Governatrice del paese per la instanza prima fatta a sua Majesta cesare per supplica, dalla nostra natione, che ne fusse conservato la precedenza gia in altri luoghi acquistata, ha scritto qui alli prefati del governo della villa che intendono le ragione delle parti, et à lei riferiscano per deliberarli seconda trovera per consiglia”, ASF, MdP 393, fol 15 r
\textsuperscript{177} “la nation di Genova ha soto verbalmente allegati le cose sopradette in favor suo, ne ha per ancora prodotto per iscritto alcune delle predette ragioni alternate”, ASF, MdP 394, fol 15 r
\textsuperscript{178} “Per ilche habbiamo ultimamente fatto instanza alli predette signori della villa che dinuovo richieggiamo li Genovesi à produrre in scritto quelle chierezze con le quale intendono valersi et’ ricusando la che cene diano un Atto et cosi han detto di fare”, ASF, MdP 393, fol 15 v
\textsuperscript{179} ASF, MdP 394, c. 15 v
\textsuperscript{180} ASF, MdP 394, fol 16 r
\textsuperscript{181} ASF, MdP 394, fol 16 r
followed both in Florence and in Rome. In Florence, the public records were searched for any documents that could support the case. A courier was sent to the Florentine ambassador in Rome to notify him that he needed to find proof of the cases where the Florentines had held precedence over the Genoese at the Papal court. The letters detailed how the ambassador had to obtain such documents, with the master of the papal household being urged to check his papers. Any document that was favourable for the Florentine case had to be copied by an authorized notary and then sent to Florence as quickly as possible. Aside from these instructions to the Florentine ambassador in Rome, Bernardo Antonio de’ Medici was also urged to influence the Duke of Alva, a relative of Duke Cosimo I and at that time the major-domo of Charles V in his capacity as the King of Spain, to look for any arguments in favour of the Florentine nation.

The efforts of the Florentine ambassadors in Rome were fruitful. On the 20th August, the Duke sent a letter to the heads of the natio in Antwerp. The search in the Florentine archives had not resulted in any relevant findings but the previous night a courier had returned from Rome with a fede, a trustworthy document from the master of ceremonies of the Holy See. This document confirmed that for years, the Florentine delegation had held precedence over the Genoese delegation in the annual Corpus Christi procession in Rome. In Cosimo’s view, this statement, in combination with the argument that the King of France had granted precedence to the Florentine nation in Lyon a year earlier, strengthened the Florentine’s case considerably. The documents were duly sent to Antwerp where they were presumably well received by the consul.

As we know from printed narrative sources, all these efforts did not result in the desired outcome for the Florentine delegation: Charles refrained from judging the conflict and together with the Genoese delegation they were prohibited from riding in the parade. Yet both the effort that was invested into obtaining precedence and the process through which it was done is revealing about the meaning of the nation for its home government. The nation’s position in the event in Antwerp was considered to be of such importance that considerable resources were put into retrieving documents to support their case. It is telling that this happened for a case that was not directly related to a commercial matter but was situated in the ceremonial sphere. The recently established Medici princely government at that time was less than two decades old,

---

182 ASF, MdP 14, fol 200 r-v & MdP 14, fol 200 v-201 v
183 ASF, MdP 14, fol 201 r
184 ASF, MdP 14, fol 207 r
185 ASF, MdP 14, fol 207 r
and relied heavily on the support of the Holy Roman Emperor. The newly established Duchy also engaged in numerous conflicts with other princely governments on the Italian Peninsula, especially with the Este of Ferrara, to gain an acknowledgement of their superior position among Italian princes and polities.\textsuperscript{186} Scholars have investigated the role of Florentine diplomats in such conflicts, but the involvement of a Florentine merchant nation in disputes of rank has been documented far less. As will be shown in the fourth chapter, members of the Florentine merchant community in Antwerp regularly wrote to their home ruler. However, consul Rondinelli’s letter written in August 1549 is the only example in the Carteggio di Cosimo that a Florentine consul in Antwerp ever wrote \textit{ex officio} to Cosimo I. We must, therefore, conclude that direct reporting by the nation to its home ruler was a very exceptional occurrence. Also in Cosimo’s outgoing correspondence with members of the nation in Antwerp, the Entry was the dominant theme.

The exceptional case of the Entry provides a first indication that monitoring the Antwerp nation as an institution and maintaining any contact with them was not of interest to the Florentine government. A second case enables us to gain a somewhat more structural view on the extent to which the Antwerp nation as an institution was monitored by its home government and how it related to that government. Apart from documenting the meaning of the nation for its members, the Magistrate of the consulates’ papers also contain valuable revelations about the way that the Florentine government followed up on the nations abroad, and how the creation of this new institution caused a shift in attitude towards the foreign merchant communities.

Since the driving figure behind the Magistrate, Tommaso Baroncelli, was a Florentine merchant with ties in Antwerp, it is relevant to go briefly into his biography.\textsuperscript{187} We do not know exactly when Baroncelli was born. His parents had married in 1514, and the Baroncelli were a well-to-do office holding class Florentine family that had a history in international commerce and had been prominently present in Florence since the Middle Ages. Tommaso’s father Bartolommeo had been an ally of the Medici during their struggle with the last Florentine republic.\textsuperscript{188} It has been suggested that Tommaso Baroncelli had moved to Antwerp at a young

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{188} Grunzweig, ‘Les Papiers Du Magistrat Des Consulats Aux Archives D’État de Florence.’, 5.
\end{itemize}
age, but my own additional findings of Baroncelli suggest that he was mainly active in Tuscany and Naples and its surroundings prior to his arrival in Antwerp.\textsuperscript{189} There he married Chiara, the daughter of Giovan Battista Gualterotti, one of the most prominent and successful Florentine merchants in Antwerp.\textsuperscript{190} In the 1560’s, he became notorious mainly because of his project to set up a large lottery in the Low Countries.\textsuperscript{191} He also gained a reputation as an importer of wines in Antwerp.\textsuperscript{192} Despite these versatile activities, his operations were only very rarely recorded in the certifications of the Antwerp magistrate.

In the second half of the 1560’s, he returned to Florence, where he became a courtier of the Florentine Duke and quickly assumed the position of \textit{major domo} to the Duke.\textsuperscript{193} It was probably in that position that he set up, or was very directly involved in setting up the Magistrate of the consulates.\textsuperscript{194} Although the Magistrate’s papers were partially edited in 1932 and as a result have been brought to the attention of historians, they have never been used in research focusing on the Florentine merchant communities abroad in the sixteenth century. A substantial number of the papers have been lost, but it is still possible to gain a good understanding about the scope and operations of the new institution based on the remaining records as they document the contacts of the nation in Antwerp with the Magistrate. The new Florentine institution’s contact with the various nations abroad began on May 6\textsuperscript{th} 1568, when Prince Francesco I of Florence wrote to ‘his consuls in various countries’ that he had ordered Baroncelli to compile an overview of all ‘his’ consulates. The consuls were instructed to collaborate fully.\textsuperscript{195} A letter from Baroncelli, to the various consuls, further explained that five Florentine citizens, all members of the council of 48, had been appointed to reform the consular rights.\textsuperscript{196} The consuls had to convoke and inform their nations of this new initiative. Later that month, a \textit{bando}, an official announcement, was issued by Dominicus Bonaccorsius, the chancellor of the Florentine

\textsuperscript{189} The first surviving letter from Baroncelli in the \textit{Carteggio di Cosimo} that was sent from Antwerp dates from 1556: ASF, MdP 457, fol 535, January 30 1556 (Florentine calendar). We know that throughout 1548 and 1549 he was corresponding with Cosimo I from Florence, Livorno and Naples: ASF, MdP 386, fol 363, fol 582, MdP 390, fol 79, fol 80, fol 288, fol 855, MdP 391, fol 416, fol 741, fol 948-949, fol 977

\textsuperscript{190} On Baroncelli’s habit to share personal developments like his marriage with Cosimo I, see chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{191} On Baroncelli’s project for a lottery and some of his other projects in the Low Countries, see Goris, \textit{Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567, 367, 409–24.}

\textsuperscript{192} An Antwerp certificate documents his involvement in the acquisition of wine for governess Margaret of Parma: ACA, Cert 20, fol 114 r, June 14 1564.

\textsuperscript{193} The return of Baroncelli and his family was certified by a group of Florentine merchants in Antwerp: ACA, Cert 26, fol 389 v, February 4 1567

\textsuperscript{194} Grunzweig plausibly assumes that since Baroncelli was the first commissioner of the Magistrate, he probably drove the creation of the institution. Grunzweig, ‘Les Papiers Du Magistrat Des Consulats Aux Archives D’État de Florence.’, 6.

\textsuperscript{195} Grunzweig, 10.

\textsuperscript{196} Grunzweig, 10.
Magistrate. In that announcement, the newly founded institution publicly requested that all Florentines who had traded outside Florentine territory since 1530, the year in which the Duchy was created, had to submit their accounts and pay their consular rights.\textsuperscript{197} It is striking that even Florentines who traded in places where no Florentine nation was active were explicitly subjected to the obligation of paying consular rights on their activities. This clearly indicates that the project was primarily aimed at generating additional revenues for the government in Florence. The nations were apparently in the best position to enforce this demand in practice, but closer monitoring and inclusion of these institutions in the new institutional landscape of the Ducato were in itself not the primary goals of the Magistrate.

The Magistrate nevertheless began to rigorously monitor whether the nations abroad had complied with their own internal regulations. As noted above, it was through this institution that the statutes of the Florentine nation in Antwerp and Bruges reached Florence and have reached us through time. Moreover, the accounts of the nation in Antwerp were clearly thoroughly checked, as an operation that was not in line with the rules of the nation was the subject of some discussion. The nation’s account had been debited for 75 Flemish pound to Giovambattista Gualterotti. This had happened without the explicit or formally recorded consent of two thirds of the heads of the companies, which was against the regulations of the nation. Since it was clearly implicitly approved, this offence would not be prosecuted, but it was stressed that the nation should follow its own rules.\textsuperscript{198}

Overall, the Magistrate’s project was not a success: after two years, the new institution had collected less than it cost to run the institution itself. The Tommaso Baroncelli’s unexpected death, due to his overwhelming joy when he had welcomed back Cosimo after his coronation as Grand Duke in Rome, further debilitated the capacities of the Magistrate. Not surprisingly, the new institution could not count on the collaboration of those who were subjected to the taxation. Their evasive behaviour and outright refusal took several forms. One of the more recurring arguments for why it was impossible to collaborate with the Magistrate was insufficient record keeping by merchants. The Magistrate had a mandate to retrospectively collect taxes from 1530 onwards, and therefore requested the merchant’s old accounts and other papers. This was difficult for smaller and occasional merchants – whose names, apart from Francesco d’ Alessandro Nasi, are not mentioned – who were difficult to trace. Due to ‘failures, death or other accidents’, their papers had gone lost or were unavailable. Therefore, such

\textsuperscript{197} Grunzweig, 12–13.
\textsuperscript{198} Grunzweig, 15–18.
merchants were taxed based on assumptions about their trade, based on the qualities and timespan of their trade abroad. Francesco d’ Alessandro Nasi accepted that form of taxation since his books were in the hands of Giovambattista Nasi, who had left for India.199

The magistrate’s papers contain numerous other cases of exchange between Florentines in Antwerp and the Magistrate about the need to provide a clear insight into the consular rights that they were due. Giovan Battista Guicciardini, for instance, claimed not to be able to send his papers because he felt too sick. Moreover, since he had been out of business since 1543, and the only commerce related activity he still performed was the litigation from it, he believed himself to be exempt from the taxation of the Magistrate.200 Probably the most revealing case of the merchant’s resistance to collaborate with the Magistrate is that of Giovambattista Gualterotti. As mentioned above, Gualterotti was the father in law of Tommaso Baroncelli and they thus had a common history in Antwerp. When Gualterotti, in his position as the most senior and knowledgeable Florentine merchant in Antwerp, was asked to help search the papers of other companies that had been based in the Low Countries, he plainly refused to occupy himself with anything of the sort.201 Apart from indicating his refusal to the consul of the nation in Antwerp, he also wrote directly to his son in law to make it clear that he would not collaborate. As we have already seen above, he also indicated sometime later that he was, in fact, a creditor of the nation and therefore of the Magistrate.

The project of the Magistrate of the Consulates has rarely if ever been substantially inserted into historiography about the relation between the newly established Duchy of Florence and the Florentine nations abroad. However, the project was part of a broader series of institutional reforms. The reformist attitude of the first duke is so striking that the historian Nicholas Terpstra described Cosimo I as someone who ‘believed in big data’.202 The list of projects to monitor parts of urban life, such as how and where people lived, provisions of food, and the ecclesiastical organisation that was developed under the rule of Cosimo I is indeed long.203 According to Terpstra, the practical organization of these projects was in the hands of

199 Grunzweig, 17.
200 Grunzweig, 27.
201 ‘Giovambatista Ghualterotti, come più antichio della nazione, che facessi diligentia di sapermene nuove e che, poi li avessistrovati, se gli è offerto di dargli ogni assistenza che si può acciò avessino quello a desiderate. Quale ci à risposto non volersene travagliare come dicie avervi scritto’ Grunzweig, 23–24.
203 Terpstra and Rose, 2–3.
a ‘brain trust of now long forgotten courtiers’.\textsuperscript{204} Although not listed by Terpstra, it is plausible to assume that Baroncelli was also part of that brain trust.

The correspondence between the Magistrate in Florence and the nation in Antwerp and its members makes it clear that the nation as an institution was considered to be rather weak and out of date. Moreover, the community of merchants by the end of the 1560’s was thought to be small and not commercially successful. However, the resistance to reform and defeatism of the situation that can be observed in the papers of the Magistrate were not the only attitudes and approaches to this situation. An anonymous memorandum in the miscellaneous papers of the Medici dynasty contains an elaborate reflection on the state of the nation in Antwerp.\textsuperscript{205} The author also strongly suggests an alternative and additional institutional organization, which points to the fact that for contemporaries and users the merchant nation was not the only institutional option to bring together and defend the interests of the Florentine merchant community in Antwerp. Unfortunately, the memorandum is undated, but since it contains references to the Magistrate of the Consulates and to the imperial privilege of the nation in Antwerp, stating that the privilege was in force for 23 years, the document was presumably drafted in 1569. The title of the memorandum –“Declaratione delle commodita et benefisii che seguirebbono stando in Anversa Il fattore di Loro eccellenitissime Illustrissime”- immediately makes it clear that the installation of a factor in Antwerp was considered by the author to be the best remedy to resolve some of the problem that Florentine merchants experienced in Antwerp.

According to the author of the memorandum, the Florentine merchants’ problems in Antwerp were numerous and diverse. A substantial amount of the consular contribution that the other foreign nations, according to the Imperial privilege, were due to pay to the Florentines was in fact never paid. This was because the other foreign nations questioned the privilege of the Florentine nation. It was proposed that a Florentine factor in Antwerp could pay more attention to safeguarding the Imperial privilege. Moreover, maintaining and defending the privilege would bring in more consular revenues, which would also be more profitable for the Magistrate of the Consulates.

A second major problem was that the lax enforcement of the privilege created the possibility for Florentine merchants to evade paying their consular rights themselves by joining other nations. Bringing them back to their own nation would thus be an important task for a Florentine factor in Antwerp. The author also referred to a case pending in the chancellery of

\textsuperscript{204} Terpstra and Rose, 2.
\textsuperscript{205} ASF, Misc Med, 27 III, fol 970-972. I am grateful to Nina Lamal for pointing my attention to this document.
Brabant, where apparently the Imperial privilege was the subject of a court case that according to the author could only be won if a factor would follow it up. According to the memorandum, if this was done then disputes between Florentines could also again be judged by the Florentine merchant court, the Mercanzia, where disagreements ‘are heard and considered in a better way than anywhere else in the world’. The author of the memorandum was also convinced that other nations would compete to come under the jurisdiction of the Florentine factor as well.

A Florentine factor in Antwerp would likewise better serve the interests of the Florentine textile industry and its Florentine exporters. The author lamented that now the export of rascie, a type of wool cloth mainly produced in Florence, was to a large extent in the hands of the ‘Lombards, Genovese, Lucchese, and other nations who do not have this merciful consideration about the public good of our city’. A Florentine factor would be able to implement and enforce a policy that inhibited these groups from exporting Florentine pannine – wool cloth – at excessively low prices. The factor would also be able to provide the necessary raw materials for the territories under the rule of the Florentine Duke: big pieces of leather – quoiani grossi - from the ‘Eastlands’, Denmark, Scotland, Holland and other countries, as well as linen and other necessary things such provisions, wine, and munitions. At the Antwerp exchange, the factor would be able to discreetly collect the necessary capital for the Duke. Finally, the factor would also reliably inform of the duke about the various affairs that were occurring in the Low Countries.

According to the author of the text, it was clear that only a factor would be capable of providing these services, because the present structures of the nation did not suffice. The current institutions had ‘declined a lot and almost reduced to nothing’. Consuls changed each year and with them their credit and reputation. Moreover, they were not always the most capable actors and were first and foremost focused on their own businesses, which also caused them to move away from Antwerp at times that might be unsuited to the duke. The factor, on the contrary, would be focused solely on serving the duke.

Cleary, all the arguments for installing a factor in Antwerp that were raised in the memorandum were framed in a narrative that gave primacy to the interests of the Florentine Duke and his territories. Florentine home institutions, like the Mercanzia, were considered to

---

206 “ciascuno ha[v]rebbe ricorso alla mercatanti di firenze dove tale differenze sono intese et considerate meglio che in altro loco del mondo terminate con brevita et poca spesa”, ASF, Misc Med, 27 III, fol 970 r-v

207 “Procede per che venendo le rascie in piu parte in mano di lombardi, gienovesi, lucchesi, et altre natione, che non han[n]o quel pietoso riguardo al bene publico della nost[ra] citta”, ASF, Misc Med, 27 III, fol 971 r

208 “al presente molto declinata et quasi ridotta a niente’/ne’ Impoco potria il console operare et eseguire le cose disopra narrate”, ASF, Misc Med, 27 III, fol 971 v-972 r
be better at serving the commercial interests of the community in Antwerp than the local Low Country institutions. Yet, the interests of the Florentine merchants in Antwerp were clearly of a minor importance; the primary motivator for pushing institutional reform was to benefit the Florentine ruler. On the one hand, given that the document exhibited a certain knowledge of the community’s situation in Antwerp, and the primacy of the duke’s interests in it on the other hand, it seems plausible that the text was written by Baroncelli, or at least by someone who had a similar profile of being both a courtier and a former merchant in Antwerp.

The Florentine Nation as an Institution: Conclusions

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated that the functioning and the membership of the Florentine nation in Antwerp was affected by two main elements. On the one hand, the nation was the product of its institutional history in the Low Countries, and on the other hand, it was shaped by the social and political dynamics of its home region. Unlike some of the other foreign merchant institutions and communities in Antwerp, the Florentine nation had a long and continuous presence in the Low Countries prior to its installation in Antwerp. The functioning of the institution had taken shape and was regulated in the context of fifteenth-century Bruges, a time and a place where Florentine merchants had a different role in commercial flows and where the institutional landscape of the host environment was different. That institutional heritage was never adapted, but on the contrary, was largely echoed in the privilege that the nation received from Emperor Charles V in 1546. Despite mild forms of evasive behaviour like that of Gianni Capponi and his patron Giralomo Frescobaldi, a lack of enforcement of the nation’s regulations through fines and the nation’s various expenditures, the institution remained active, and merchants like Rinieri and the Salviati firm paid their consular dues. The case of the Florentine nation in Antwerp thus demonstrates that merchants continued to see the benefits of an institution that at the same time was perceived by some to be outdated. Its social function and its ability to officially speak as an institution to both its host and home government must have motivated the Florentine merchants in Antwerp not to abandon the nation. Moreover, as the case of the Joyous Entry, and that of the Magistrate of the Consulates makes clear, the nation also served as a body of knowledge. These moments of crisis and reform show this historical knowledge about Florentine institutions and about relevant precedents from elsewhere in the Florentine merchant world were kept partially via the nation and the Florentine institutions that interacted with it.
Institutional history and the social and cultural prestige associated with a continuous existence did not just affect the day to day functioning of the nation. As the case of the dispute about the Florentine’s precedence in the Joyous Entry of 1549 demonstrates, the place of the nation in such an event was not just of importance to its members, but also to its home government. As the Florentine home government had been the subject to profound changes in the first decades of the nation’s activity in Antwerp, these changes were also felt on the level of the nation. The consul and advisors pro-actively sought support for the dispute over precedence and collaborated with various actors at the Florentine court and elsewhere to defend the prestige of the nation and of their home region in the parade. As a large portion of the Florentine merchant community in Antwerp, were theoretically also members of the nation, and in particular the consuls of the nation were all sons of Florentine office holding class families, it should not come as a surprise that they were sensitive to defending the cultural and political prestige of their home ruler.

The Florentine court’s interest in the nation in Antwerp, however, was not just limited to matters of ceremony and prestige. The brief experiment of the Magistrate of the Consulates and the proposal to install a Florentine factor in Antwerp indicate that attempts to adapt and reform the Florentine nation in Antwerp were driven more by changes in the political and institutional organization in the home region rather than by merchants’ frustration with the inadequacy of the institution in the context of the Antwerp market. Aspirations to gain a better control of the nation’s activities and to ensure that the requests and interests of the Florentine duke would be followed up drove the calls for, and experiments with institutional reform. As Antwerp unlike Venice, Bologna and to some extent Lyon did not harbour notorious Florentine exiles in its merchant community, fiscal gains were clearly the main motive for this increasing interest in the nation.
Chapter 2. The Social and Commercial relations of Florentine Merchants in Antwerp and The Low Countries

In Lodovico Guicciardini’s famous description of the Low Countries, published in 1567, he dedicated the largest part of his discussion on the various cities of the region to Antwerp. Apart from the city’s history, urban geography and demography, the Florentine merchant who had become a humanist also presented the crucial moments of how Antwerp rose to its dominant position. Guicciardini stated that in addition to the arrival of Southern German merchants, the rise of the annual fairs in both Bergen op Zoom and Antwerp, the development of the Portuguese naval connection to India and the decision to install a Portuguese factor were the main causes for Antwerp’s unique position at that time. Still, in the *Descrittione* he also provided rich descriptions of the other groups of merchants and the goods they brought.\(^{209}\) Guicciardini had not been successful in that commercial environment himself, but that did not withhold him from sketching a colourful picture of the vibrancy of Antwerp’s market. The way in which Florentines engaged with each other and with other actors during their social and commercial transactions and ties in Antwerp’s flourishing commercial setting is the main focus of this chapter.

In the previous chapter, I focused on the Florentine nation in Antwerp as an institution and as a community. Its members mainly came from the Florentine commercial elite and the nation was at times, though not in a consequential way, monitored by its home government. The formal impact and influence of the Florentine home government on the community in Antwerp was thus relatively limited and very ambiguous. Yet, given that the majority of its members were of a particular social background, the impact of their hometown consisted of more than just political monitoring. In this chapter, I will follow up on this social angle and investigate who Florentines chose to engage with in their commercial and social relations in Antwerp. To what extent did they prefer to forge commercial ties with other Florentines or with outsider groups? Were these ties formed during particular types of transactions? And if so, why?

The long-distance trade in which Florentines engaged had both a local and an international dimension. Merchants, therefore, had to combine local contacts with long-distance business relations. The latter type of contacts of Antwerp based Florentine merchants will be the subject of chapter three. In the present chapter, I try to grasp why they were active in

Antwerp, with whom and how. Unlike groups of merchants from religious minorities in European centres of commerce, Florentines in Antwerp were not constrained by discriminatory regulations that forced them into a particular type of trade or prevented them from engaging in another kind. Nor were they prohibited from developing social ties with non-Florentines. However, external formal religious and legal exclusion and discrimination were not the sole causes for patterns of specialisation and network formation, as such issues were not based exclusively on ethnicity or being from a particular background. For example, for the group of Southern Low Countries merchants in Amsterdam, Lesger has demonstrated that within that pool, patterns of endogamy were recurrent. These were caused by the attitude of the older Amsterdam elite that did not want to forge such ties with newcomers, as well as by the benefits that such internal marriage patterns offered to the group of Southern Low Countries merchants in Amsterdam and beyond. Is such behaviour or variations of it likewise observable within the community of Florentine merchants in Antwerp?

Apart from social and commercial ties, foreign merchants also had to find a form of residence in their host city. Ghetto formation usually only took place in area’s with a Jewish community. However, apart from this extreme type of segregation, many degrees of spatial exclusion and separation could exist. In Venice, the German and Turkish merchants were restricted to live in their respective ‘Fondaco’. Moreover, without any formal obligations, Italian merchants, the Lucchesi in particular, in Bruges clustered around the Naaklenstraat, where their nation also had its seat. Such dynamics could thus be driven by both the policies of the hosting government as well as by reasons that related to a shared hometown background. In Antwerp, the English Merchant Adventurers resided together in the Hof van Liere, which had been provided to them by the city of Antwerp. The Hanseatic League built its own complex, which however was only ready for use when Antwerp began to decline.

Evidence on the maintenance of a Florentine chapel in the Franciscan church of Antwerp is ambiguous, and that neighbourhood, not far from the old English exchange, was not known as a distinctly Italian area. Still, we do have indications about the housing acquisitions that were made by merchants in the early sixteenth-century. These sources, together with the findings from the Antwerp certificates allow us to observe the kind of commercial and social ties that

211 Galoppini, “‘Nationes’ toscane nelle Fiandre”, 156.
212 De Smedt, *De Engelse natie te Antwerpen in de 16e eeuw*, 187.
213 Walter Evers, *Das Hansische Kontor in Antwerpen* (Kiel: Graphische kunstanstalt L. Hansdorff, 1915).
Florentines in Antwerp engaged in.\textsuperscript{214} The certificates have only partially survived through time, but for the 1550’s and 1560’s, the documents have been serially preserved and made accessible. It should be taken into account that Southern European merchants held some distrust towards these documents.\textsuperscript{215} Also, scattered notary records are available, but those of the Antwerp notary that was preferred by the Florentine community have been lost.\textsuperscript{216} Moreover, both historians of trade in the Low Countries and those specialised in Florentine commerce have claimed that registrations of transactions with a notary or the public authorities had become less relevant by the sixteenth century, due to the fact that courts acknowledged private business papers as valid evidence.\textsuperscript{217} Apart from records from Antwerp, the account books of Florentine firms that were active in Antwerp and the *accomandita* partnerships that were registered in Florence at the Merchants Court offer additional insights into the deals and ties of Florentines in Antwerp.

By analysing samples of these documents, I will provide an understanding of whether Florentine merchants in Antwerp showed a distinct type of behaviour that can be related to and explained by their hometown background. Given the scale of analysis in this chapter and the sources that I intend to use, the general context of commerce in Antwerp will figure relatively prominently, and it will be based on the relevant historiography on the commercial, social, and political history of the city. The first and longest part of the chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the types of ties that Florentines in Antwerp developed, both commercially and socially. In order to understand to what extent they were primarily embedded in Antwerp, Florence, or elsewhere, I also briefly establish their settlement patterns in the city.

Following on from what I observed earlier about network analysis, in the day to day practice of merchants, ties with people were often entangled with their dealings in particular types of goods and were also related to a particular geography. Since this chapter and the next deal with similar questions and dynamics, but on a different scale, I have decided to focus

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{215} Oosterbosch, ‘Overheidsbemoeiingen Met Het Antwerpse Notariaat Tijdens de XVIde Eeuw’.
\textsuperscript{216} Based on references in the Florentine *accomandita* partnership contracts, it seems that Petrus Van Lare alias van Leuven was the regular notary for Florentines in Antwerp. Unfortunately, his protocols have not been kept. Van Lare also served the Lucchese community, see: Sabbatini, *Cercar esca*; There are also indications in Spanish archives that Van Lare was a preferred notary of the Spanish community in Antwerp: Raymond Fagel, ‘Spanish Merchants in the Low Countries : Stabilitas Loci or Peregrinatio?’, in *International Trade in the Low Countries (14th-16th Centuries): Merchants, Organisation, Infrastructure.*, ed. Peter Stabel, Bruno Blondé, and Anke Greve (Leuven: Garant, 2000), 97.
\textsuperscript{217} The situation in Antwerp was ambiguous. On the one hand, the demand for notarial services grew spectacularly, up to a point that the city took measures. On the other hand, the number of registered acts only very partially covers the total volume of trade. See Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce*, 92–94; For Florentine attitudes towards the use of notaries, see Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, 90–91.
\end{footnotes}
primarily on their social and commercial relations in this chapter. The goods that were the subject of trade will figure more prominently in the next chapter, which deals with commercial exchange on an international scale. Rather than presenting a separate section of context, I provide the necessary information on the wider economic, social, political and cultural evolutions in Antwerp, Florence and beyond in a concise way in the sections where this information will be most relevant. In this way, the choices that Florentines in Antwerp made, the options that were available to them and the restraints put upon them can be more clearly understood.

*Social and Commercial Ties of Florentine Merchants in Antwerp*

Throughout time, merchants engaged in various types of relations. These relations could overlap and be both of a social—often familiar—and commercial nature, or conversely be strictly separate. Moreover, such relations were subject to change over time because of the evolution in the organisation of trade. For the Dutch merchant colony in the Russian port city of Archangelsk, Jan-Willem Veluwenkamp has observed a four-stage evolution in the organisation of that community and its international contacts.218 First, there was the business travel pattern, in which merchants travelled with their goods. This was followed by the representative pattern, in which an employed representative did the traveling. Then there was the commission agent pattern, where an agent abroad received a commission to represent a merchant abroad in transactions. And finally the direct correspondence pattern meant that a merchant abroad dealt directly with a client or supplier abroad via correspondence without intermediaries. Veluwenkamp’s case covers a much longer period than the one under scrutiny here, and the geographical context is also very different, but his model has the advantage of providing a clear overview of the evolutions that also to a large extent took place in other areas of Europe in an earlier period. These evolutions affected several particular aspects of the organisation of commerce: the organisation of collaboration between merchants in companies and partnerships, the remuneration for work, investments and services, the place where merchants conducted their trade, their choices in organising long-distance exchange and their degree of mobility. How did the Florentines in sixteenth-century Antwerp deal with these various organisational aspects at the local level?

---

Medieval and early modern Florence and its inhabitants have often been considered as one of the most innovative sites and group of actors in the development and implementation of new commercial techniques and forms of association and collaboration. In particular the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are often considered to be the era when Florence became the leading centre in Europe in terms of business organisation and institutions.\textsuperscript{219} The sixteenth century is seen as a period in which its organisation of business was not fundamentally altered, but when new industries, especially silk production, became prominent.\textsuperscript{220} As discussed in the general introduction of this dissertation, the relation between familial and commercial ties is a heavily debated subject in the historiography of late medieval and early modern Florence. Therefore, focusing on the way in which Florentines organised their commercial undertakings in Antwerp offers us a better understanding of the extent to which they continued their habitual way of trading or whether Antwerp as a commercial environment pushed them towards new ways of organising themselves.

In what follows, I will discuss the various forms of commercial collaboration in which Florentines engaged in Antwerp. First, I turn to the structural collaboration that existed between merchants in partnerships. Then I delve into the various aspects of the internal organisation of Florentine firms in Antwerp, giving particular attention to the various forms of service, employment, and collaboration within these firms. Finally, I look at a group of relatively poorly documented but crucial commercial actors with whom Florentines interacted, namely that of clients and suppliers.

Partnerships

It is commonplace in the historiography of Florentine business to consider the collapse of the ‘supercompanies’ of the fourteenth century as a turning point in the organisation of commercial cooperation. Together with the devastating demographic consequences of the plague of 1347, the failure of companies like the Bardi and Peruzzi, which were highly integrated for that time and were conceived as being monolithic firms, contributed to a shift towards a more flexible organisation of collaboration. Instead of bringing together the various aspects of their involvement in production and exchange into one company that also functioned as a legal entity,


\textsuperscript{220} Goldthwaite, \textit{The Economy of Renaissance Florence}, 295.
Florentines began to prefer smaller partnerships with specific purposes. Although merchants still engaged in multiple ventures, both in Florence and abroad, these were more often legally separated and only bound to each other through the person of the merchant who invested capital or work in each of these partnerships or via a holding company that owned stakes in other partnerships. This fragmented way of organising one’s investments was better suited to protecting oneself against the risk of failure in an unlimited liability partnership.

Whether the evolutions described above are uniquely Florentine is debatable and above all awaits a comprehensive comparison, but it is clear that investments for mercantile enterprises elsewhere in Europe were also acquired through partnerships. This was similarly the case in the Low Countries. Recent research by Bram van Hofstraeten and Jeroen Puttevils has provided a better understanding of the use of partnerships in sixteenth-century Antwerp, and that they were an instrument for collecting capital to set up a business. Since there were no formal obligations in Antwerp to register a partnership at the Antwerp bench of aldermen or with a notary, only the contracts that were voluntarily registered or were the subject to litigation have reached us. Despite such limits, these documents offer us some insights into the attitude that Florentines had towards registering their partnerships in Antwerp. The exhaustive list of registered partnerships that Van Hofstraeten’s was able to compile is dominated by the names of Low Countries merchants and does not contain a single Florentine active partner. His work has also shown that limited liability partnerships were used relatively little in Antwerp at that time and that the exact modalities of Antwerp partnerships varied strongly.

This brings us to the substantial qualities of partnerships. It should be stressed that the partnership was not a single or uniform legal concept. An important distinction here is that between unlimited and limited liability partnerships. Unlimited liability partnerships were private agreements between two or more parties to engage in a commercial venture together. The risk of liability in case of failure was a strong incentive for all partners involved to oversee the running and to follow up on the partnership and to choose trustworthy partners. Due to their

223 Puttevils, Merchants and Trading in the Sixteenth Century, 82–83.
224 Van Hofstraeten has mined all the available Antwerp notary records for the period 1482-1620 and has retrieved 144 agreements. It should be stressed again here that the records of the notary Van Lare, who most likely was the preferred notary for Tuscan merchants for at least the middle decades of the sixteenth century, have not been kept. Van Hofstraeten, ‘Limited Partnerships in Early Modern Antwerp (1480-1620)’, 12–21.
private nature, unlimited liability partnership contracts are more difficult to trace, and I have not been able thus far to retrace any such documents that involve Florentines doing business in Antwerp in either the private or public records. Yet, through the investigation of concrete day to day business it is possible to grasp whether Florentines in Antwerp had such partnerships, be it only to some extent.

We are better informed about Florentine limited liability partnerships, because of the more regular registration of this type of formally organised business collaboration. This form of partnership, known primarily under their Italian name of *accomandita* contracts, were registered by the Florentine merchants’ court from 1408 onwards.225 The extent to which this form of commercial collaboration was used by Florentine merchants before that date remains largely opaque. Although *accomandita* are distinct from *commenda* contracts, their medieval predecessors, both contracts limited the liability of the investors. Venice is often indicated as the European birthplace of the limited liability partnership, and its development is lauded as an important contribution as it allowed those with skills and ideas but a lack of capital to engage in commercial enterprises.226 The distinctive feature of an *accomandita* contract is that it made it a relatively safe to passively invest in a partnership, as opposed to a *commenda*, where the limited liability lied with the active agent. It protected the investor from any liability beyond his investment, and the registrations of Florentine *accomandita* contain a standard phrase which states that this limitation of liability is the main motive for the registration of the contract.227

An important consequence of limited liability is that this type of contract enabled wealthy investors with a more conservative attitude to engage in uncertain ventures and to provide funding to those in less affluent positions that had a bolder attitude towards commerce.


It has also been assumed that *acaccomandita* contracts could enable collaboration between partners who had relatively weak ties, such those from a different religious or social background. Paradoxically, the innovative qualities ascribed to this instrument did not automatically lead to a sharp turn in preference for this type of partnership. On the contrary, Florentine merchants seem to have been rather late in adopting the *acaccomandita* contracts and they do not appear to have been used as a tool for organising commercial collaboration in the sixteenth century. For now, comprehensive data on the number of registered partnerships are lacking, but it is telling that all the contracts that were registered in the first two centuries after 1400 all fit into four archival folders.\textsuperscript{228}

Despite the general limited preference for the *acaccomandita*, by browsing the registers of these contracts, which kept by the Florentine merchant court, it becomes clear that the Florentines who traded in Antwerp and in the Low Countries regularly engaged in such contracts. For the period between 1532 and 1585 I have retrieved 32 registered partnerships (renewals, adaptations and prolongations included) that aimed to conduct commerce in Antwerp and in the Low Countries or that had an Antwerp based Florentine as a silent investor (All data in table 2.1, appendix). In general, the scope of their businesses was defined rather vaguely. Exercising various trades, exchanges, and sometimes insurances are the most recurring descriptions of the purpose of these partnerships. Occasionally, Florentine *conduttore*, carriers and transporters who were based in Antwerp, also received a sum from a limited liability partnership.\textsuperscript{229} Geographically, the partnerships largely aimed at conducting business in Antwerp and various other parts of the Low Countries. Only very rarely did Florentines explicitly prefer to settle in other cities in the Low Countries. For instance, Piero di Lutiano engaged in a partnership to trade in Middelburg, a city in Zeeland in the delta of the Scheldt River and an outport of Antwerp.\textsuperscript{230} In another partnership from 1541, Giovambattista Giovanni gave a sum in an *acaccomandita* to Giovanni Giraldi, who had the specific aim of selling *drappi*, luxurious cloths, at the Imperial court in Brussels.\textsuperscript{231} In the most turbulent phase of the Dutch revolt for Antwerp, that of the Calvinist republic (ca. 1576-1585), Florentines engaged in partnerships that were based in Cologne and also had the purpose of trading in Antwerp when

---

\textsuperscript{228} It should be stressed that the historiography on the *acaccomandita* in Florence is very limited at this point. Francesca Trivellato is currently in the process of developing a database on the Florentine limited liability series. On the use of *acaccomandite* in the sixteenth century, see Carmona, ‘Aspects Du Capitalisme Toscan Aux XVI\textsuperscript{e} et XVII\textsuperscript{e} Siècles’.

\textsuperscript{229} ASF, Merc 10832, fol 103 r & fol 113v-114 r, July 5 1554 & December 2 1556

\textsuperscript{230} ASF, Merc 10832, fol 90 r, April 16 1551

\textsuperscript{231} ASF, Merc 10832, fol 35 r, September 15 1541
the situation allowed them to.\footnote{ASF, Merc 10833, fol 164 r, February 20 1585} At that time, Cologne was an important centre for Catholic exiles from the Low Countries, some of whom were also merchants.\footnote{On Cologne as a centre of catholic exile, see Geert H. Janssen, ‘The Counter-Reformation of the Refugee: Exile and the Shaping of Catholic Militancy in the Dutch Revolt’, \textit{The Journal of Ecclesiastical History} 63, no. 04 (2012): 671–92, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046911002557.}

The partners, both the investing and the receiving ones, involved in these Antwerp oriented partnerships were almost all Florentines or subjects of the (Grand) Duchy of Florence/Tuscany. The Cini and Lanfranchi family from Pisa, a city that had already been under Florentine authority for a long time, were the most recurrent non-Florentines who engaged in \textit{accomandita} contracts aimed at funding trading in Antwerp. The Florentine Marco Attavanti exceptionally received an \textit{accomandita} from another Florentine to trade in Antwerp as part of a company led by Domenico del Zaccharia, a Cremonese merchant.\footnote{ASF, Merc 10832, fol 186v & fol 210 v, June 7 1566 & August 13 1569} Given the nature of these contracts, it may not come as a surprise that almost all parties involved in these partnerships were Florentines. However, the Florentine \textit{Mercanzia} also registered partnerships in which one or even all of the partners had a non-Florentine background.\footnote{Carmona, ‘Aspects Du Capitalisme Toscan AuxXVIe et XVIIe Siècles’, 84.} From this perspective, the preference of Florentines to engage almost exclusively with other Florentines in \textit{accomandita} to work in Antwerp is rather revealing. That no limited liability partnerships between passive investors from the Low Countries and active Florentine merchants were registered by the Florentine merchant court is understandable. Even if such partnerships were formed, and there is no indication that they were, it seems unlikely that they were registered by the court in Florence. Such a registration mainly benefitted the passive investor, who in this case was probably unfamiliar with or uninterested in the legal protection of a court in his active partner’s home town. However, that no contracts were registered between a passive Florentine investor and an active merchant with a different background or origin is even more revealing. It provides a strong case for the hypothesis that Florentines with sufficient capital to act as investors were only willing to finance other Florentines. Based on this observation, it is clear that a common Florentine background thus mattered in the choice of partners in Antwerp.

That partners were sought out from among other Florentines raises further questions about the qualities of the relations between the active merchants and passive investors. Before turning to the ties between these two categories of parties, is should be noted that on a spatial level, these relations were not limited to Florence and Antwerp. Although the \textit{accomandite} partnerships under scrutiny here mainly consisted of agreements between Florentines, which
were registered in Florence, that did not necessarily mean that the parties involved were present in Florence at the time. It was very common for the active party of the *acomandita* who received the investment, to be already in Antwerp at the time of the registration of the agreement. This was the case for example, when in 1534 Niccolò Rondinelli received a sum from Giovambattista Nerli and Lorenzo Rondinelli in Florence.\(^{236}\) A proxy holder, in this case the same Lorenzo Rondinelli, represented the active merchant. A likely explanation for this recurring approach is that a merchant who was already present in Antwerp was more likely to make a better and more concrete case to a potential passive investor for funding his enterprise than someone who was bound for Antwerp without any concrete experience or perspectives. However, also the passive investor of the partnership was sometimes away from Florence and likewise used a proxy holder for the registration at the *Mercanzia*. Sums were given to Florentines in Antwerp by Florentine merchants based in Avignon and Lyon.\(^{237}\) One of the most frequent cases, however, are those in which both the passive and active merchants were based in Antwerp and both used a proxy holder –sometimes even the same person- in Florence to register the partnership in Florence at the *Mercanzia*.\(^{238}\)

The regularity of these practices is revealing in at least three ways. First, it demonstrates the relatively integrated and multi-nodal character of the Florentine commercial world, which will be investigated more in the following chapter. Second, it is indicative of the importance of hometown institutions –in this case the Florentine merchant court- and Florentine legal tools for Florentines based abroad. Sixteenth-century Antwerp has often been acknowledged as a breeding ground for innovations in commercial techniques and tools.\(^{239}\) It is clear, however, that the formal registration of a limited liability partnership between two Florentines, even when both had been based in Antwerp for a long time, was considered to be a safer option than merely relying on Antwerp’s and the Low Countries’ institutions. Last, it indicates Florentines’ preference to engage mainly with other Florentines in commercial partnerships of this kind. It was also plausible that Florentines in Antwerp gave funds in *accomandita* to non-Florentine merchants and that they still turned to the *Mercanzia* to register such partnerships. As I will show later in this chapter, in other forms of commercial collaboration, Florentines often

\(^{236}\) ASF, Merc 10832, fol 9 v, September 16 1534

\(^{237}\) For Lyon: ASF, Merc 10832, fol 6 r, August 12 1533; Avignon: ASF, Merc 10832, fol 28 v, May 21 1540;  

\(^{238}\) E.g. Carlo Rinuncinni and Galeotto Magalotti were in Antwerp and represented by two family members in Florence when they gave a sum in *accomandita* to Luca Rinieri and Antonio degli Albizzi, who also were both in Antwerp and used a proxyholder in Florence. ASF, Merc 10832, fol 144 v, August 29 1561

engaged with other Italians and other groups of merchants. Limited liability partnerships, however, were seemingly an almost exclusive intra-Florentine tool.

Given this observation it is worth paying more detailed attention to the ties between partners. These ties were not always described in an explicit or detailed way, but the contracts give us some indications of the relations that existed between the active merchants and the passive investors. Although *accomandite* were considered to be particularly suitable for commercial collaborations between relatively unfamiliar partners, and the limited success of this type of partnership in Florence is explained by the importance of kinship in choosing partners, limited liability investments between kin were regularly registered. The activities of Dietisalvi Rinieri in Antwerp and beyond, which will receive more attention in the following chapter, were initially financed solely by an investment from his father Cristofano. At a later stage, Dietisalvi’s Lyon based brother, Andrea, also gave him a sum in an *accomandita*, while Dietisalvi was in Antwerp. However, cases of limited liability partnerships which involve kin exclusively were rather rare. A phenomenon that occurred more frequently was the involvement of one or more partners that shared kinship ties with an investor or recipient that bore another surname. Giovan Battista Guicciardini and his active partner Gugliemo Natoli received money from Giovan Battista’s father Jacopo, Girolamo Guicciardini and Francesco Guicciardini, but also from a certain Domenica Vernacci. Niccolo Rondinelli, who we already encountered earlier as the consul of the Florentine nation in Antwerp, received funding under the form of an *accomandita* from Lorenzo Rondinelli, arguably a relative, and Giovambattista Nerli. Moreover, after the death of Lorenzo, the partnership was continued by his widow.

Besides these recurrent cases of partnerships in which kin invested in each other’s commercial enterprises, some Antwerp partnerships consisted of active and passive partners with different surnames. Such partnerships were especially recurrent when both the active and passive investors were Florentines based in Antwerp or the Low Countries. Anthonio Berti’s transport company, for instance, was financed by the Biliotti brothers’ company in Antwerp.

---

240 ASF, Merc 10832, fol 55 v, September 9 1545
241 ASF, Merc 10832, fol 67 v, May 28 1547
242 ASF, Merc 10832, fol 8 r, January 19 1533 (reference generously shared by Francesca Trivellato). The Guicciardini had already received a sum from a certain Giovanni Vernacci, see Goldthwaite, *Private Wealth in Renaissance Florence*, 147.
243 ASF, Merc 10832, fol 9 v, September 16 1534. Nicollo’s full name is written as ‘Nicholo di Lorenzo Rondinelli’, which makes it a reasonable assumption that the Lorenzo who gave the accomandita was his father.
244 ASF, Merc 10832, fol 18 v, November 21 1537
245 ASF, Merc 10832, fol 113 v, December 2 1556
The undertaking of Lutiano in Middelburg was financed by Giovambattista Nerli and Nicollo Rondinelli in Antwerp. Usually, we are left in the dark about how the ties between these parties had come about. It is possible that the passive and active parties shared a familial tie that is not traceable through a surname, but none of the partnership contracts described any of the parties as being in-laws.

Business and Company Organization

Through their function of providing capital, partnership arrangements established the foundations of commercial undertakings. However, as mentioned above, these contracts, in general, did not contain many specifications about the day to day operations of the business. For the local side of the Florentine undertakings in Antwerp, the private papers of merchants and especially their various registrations with the Antwerp city government offer better insight into the concrete workings of Florentine companies in the city. Based on these diverse sources, in this section, I provide a better understanding of how Florentines in Antwerp organized their business and why they worked in that particular way.

In partnerships, the active partners were normally the core of the company, and therefore also those who directed its operations. However, the bank of Averardo and Piero Salviati in Antwerp was not led by the two Salviati themselves, but was governed by Tommaso Corbinelli. We only have a few indications that Averardo and Piero ever spent time in Antwerp to lead or follow up on the company in person. Apart from partners, two other main categories of business collaborators can be distinguished: salaried employees and collaborators whose work was remunerated based on their performance. Florentines in Antwerp are sometimes described in terms that suggest that they fall into one of these two categories, but more often than not it is difficult to grasp what someone’s role in a company was exactly.

Before turning to the various sprawling examples of the types of collaboration and service, it is worth paying more attention to the activities of the Frescobaldi, a Florentine family that was active in Antwerp in the last years of the fifteenth century and the first decade of the sixteenth century. The family’s operations have been relatively well documented and therefore offer interesting insights and a concrete introduction into Florentine business organization and the various functions and forms of service and collaboration that came with it. Girolamo

246 I have only retrieved one document in which ‘Everardo’ Salviati is described as ‘a merchant in Antwerp’, ACA, Cert 5, fol 133 v, May 25 1542. On the management of the Antwerp branch of the Salviati, see Matringe, ‘L’entreprise Florentine et La Place de Lyon’, 92–95.
Frescobaldi, who seems to have been the core of the company in Antwerp, was an offspring of one of the most illustrious Florentine merchant families. The Frescobaldi had gained fame in the first decade of the fourteenth century when they were the bankers of the English monarchy. Although they would later lose that position because of the crisis of their banking operation, they remained an office holding class family with a high status in Florence in the fifteenth century. In medieval Bruges, the family had also held a branch of their company. Relatively little is known about the role of the family in Florence for the early sixteenth century.

Their position in Florence may be somewhat unclear, but from the sources we have in Antwerp, it seems that the Frescobaldi were the most active Florentine merchants there in the first decades of Antwerp’s prevalence. Girolamo Frescobaldi’s business interests and actions are examples of the variety of types of commerce in which the Florentines in Antwerp engaged. Girolamo –known in Dutch as Jeronimus- had been the consul of the nation in 1490 and in 1502, he was considered to be the wealthiest merchant of the Italian community in Bruges. He collaborated in Antwerp with his son Leonardo –referred to as Lenaerd in the Dutch documents. Unfortunately, we do not know what kind of arrangement or partnership they worked together in.

The Frescobaldi family and Girolamo, in particular, had private and commercial relationships with numerous other Florentine merchants in Antwerp. Girolamo had at least four so-called factors working for him there throughout the years: Victor Bonnegrace, Allemano Guidetti, Bernaerd Rousselay, and Anthonis Nicquet. Guidetti, Rousselay, and Bonnegrace are explicitly mentioned as Florentines in the Antwerp sources. Guidetti –in Dutch referred to as Alleman- belonged to the Florentine family of that name and Bonnegrace most plausibly was a French translation of the Florentine name ‘Buonagrazia’, as was Russelay for Rucellai.

247 The most renowned study on the Frescobaldi at their zenith is Armando Sapori, *La compagnia dei Frescobaldi in Inghilterra*. (Firenze: Olschki, 1947).
248 Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence*, 370.
249 Galoppini, “*Nations*” toscane nelle Fiandre”, 78; 238.
253 Molho categorized the Guidetti as members of the Florentine high society in the fifteenth century Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence*, 374.
The encounter of business ‘factors’ in the sources raises questions about the function of his position. Raymond De Roover has observed that in the Middle Ages a factor was a salaried employee of a company, who might lead a branch of the company in a particular location and often held a proxy to act (semi-) independently under stipulated instructions. Regardless of variations, such as the possibility of a performance related additional remuneration, the distinctive quality a factor was that they were not paid a share of the company’s profit. Later, when is not exactly clear, the factor’s function shifted to that of a commission agent. Such an agent was remunerated based on his performance with a share in the profits of his actions.

What function the term designated in the case of the Frescobaldi is not completely clear, but there are more indications of a relation of commission agency rather than of work as a paid employee for one company. In one document, Bonnegrace, together with the presumably non-Florentine merchants Symoen De Fevre and Alfonche Auria de Palma is said to have worked both for Frescobaldi and independently. Moreover, we have proof that he also took care of the interests of another Florentine family, the Boinchani, and that he followed up a claim of a Lyonese merchant. A similar observation can be made for Guidetti. We have no concrete information, about the background of the third factor, Anthonis Nicquet, but based on his name we may assume that he was a Low Countries merchant. Apart from working for the Frescobaldi, we know that Nicquet also served a Genoese and a Venetian merchant, as well as a Bruges based merchant from the Low Countries. That he was a salaried employee of the Frescobaldi thus seems rather unlikely, and instead, it was likely that Niquet was paid in relation to his performance by the various merchants that he had served.

The Florentine collaborators of the Frescobaldi in Antwerp that we have encountered in the sources thus largely came from the same social world. Based on the available sources it is difficult to value the durability, intensity and quality of the relationship between all these

255 For later periods, I have retrieved five documents in which a Florentine is designated explicitly with that term as a factor of someone in Antwerp: Tommaso Corbinelli as the factor of the Salvati, (ACA, Cert 5, fol 26 r), Michaele Rustici of the Lucchese company Balbani and Guinigi (Cert 6, fol 156 r), Carlo Benvenuti of Lodovico Pescioni (Cert 19, fol 370 v) Francesco Cambi of the company of Giacomini and Gondi (Cert 19, fol 514 v) and Alexander Barducci for Giovanbattista Gondi (Cert 16, fol 121 v). None of these cases, show how the factor was remunerated.
256 On commission agency, see Goldthwaite, The Economy of Renaissance Florence, 89.
parties, and to securely apply an analytical model on the strength of different forms of ties. The qualities of such relations have been placed on the scholarly agenda since the publication of Granovetter's article on that topic, which has inspired numerous scholars of long-distance trade. His main observation is that individuals and organizations with a large web of relatively infrequent and loose but enduring ties are more successful than those that mainly have a web of strong ties.\(^{261}\) However, the Frescobaldi's case provides a relatively well-documented insight into the business organization of a Florentine firm in Antwerp. The question that this raises is how representative was the Frescobaldi case for the more general Florentine pattern of business organization. For young Florentines who were embarking on a career in international merchant banking, serving a senior merchant abroad or at home was usually the first step in learning the trade. Already as young and not yet legally emancipated teenagers, they started working as lower clerks. From rather simple and repetitive accounting chores, their work evolved into more complicated and responsible tasks like taking care of the correspondence.\(^ {262}\) The function of a factor or that of a governor of a local branch was already quite high up in the hierarchy of a commercial operation, and would normally be taken up by a relatively experienced man. When Francesco Cambi appeared for the first time in an Antwerp document as a collaborator of the Giacomini and Gondi partnership, he was described as being 22 years old, and his colleague Alessandro Barducci as 24 years of age.\(^ {263}\) Unfortunately, references to the age of the actors involved are rare and thus we are left mostly in the dark about the age of the collaborators of Florentine firms in Antwerp.

Despite a lack of exhaustive and extensive biographical data, which inhibits a proper understanding of how apprenticeship functioned, for later periods of the sixteenth century we also have some valuable indications about the career track of the employees of Florentine companies in Antwerp. Throughout their apprenticeship, it was not uncommon that collaborators switched from one principal or employer to another or eventually started working and trading independently or in a partnership. When Dietisalvi Rinieri ran his merchant bank in Antwerp, he was served by Giovambattista Frescobaldi, who kept the books of that firm but also undertook travels within the Low Countries for his employer.\(^ {264}\) After the operations of


\(^{263}\) ACA, Cert 13, fol 153 v, March 10 1558. Neither Cambi nor Barducci’s role and relation to Giacomini and Gondi is described explicitly in that document, but other certifications are more clear about their functions (cfr. infra).

\(^{264}\) In the Rinieri firm’s only account book, Frescobaldi is mentioned as the one keeping the book, see ASF, LCF, 4416, fol 1 r. Further into the accounts, the cost of a horse for his travel to Brussels is charged, see c 114 v.
Rinieri in Antwerp ceased, Giovambattista remained in Antwerp to start up and run his own transport and shipping company, which he did for more than a decade. Also Tommaso Corbinelli, the governor and factor of the Salviati in Antwerp, continued to make a living in the Low Countries for at least a couple of years after the Salviati branch ceased trading there, by partially serving the Lyon branch of the Salviati. The linear career path of moving from a low serving position in a company into a responsible governing one, to culminate in setting up one’s own company or engaging in a partnership was not possible for everyone. The Guicciardini brothers are an evident example of Florentines whose company went out of business and as a result they took up other employment in commerce, and refashioned themselves as news writers and humanists. Simone Pecori followed a somewhat similar path, being more successful. He received money in an accomandita from three Lyon based Florentines in 1532 for a company to trade in textile and to bank in Antwerp. At that time he had already been in Antwerp for at least a year. Whether he went out of business or if the partnership was just not renewed is not clear. However by 1540, he had taken up the position of governor and factor of the Antinori Company in Antwerp, a function he held until at least 1553. Pecori’s case is but one of many, apart from the collaborators of the relatively well documented Salviati and Rinieri companies, which shows that the career track of some Florentines that only appear in the Antwerp records can be reconstructed to such an extent that it contributes to our understanding of their role and work. In the oldest certification in which we encounter Carlo Benvenuti, he is described as a factor of ‘Loys’ Pescioni, another Florentine, but his later activities suggest that he eventually became an independent merchant.

265 He received funding in an accomandita for this enterprise from Galeotto Magalotti, another Florentine in Antwerp, see ASF, Merc 10832, fol 103 r, July 5 1554. The transport related activities of the Frescobaldi are also documented in ACA, Cert 11, fol 293 v, September 10 1556; Cert 26, fol 304 r, October 4 1567. See the section on transport in chapter 3.

266 In 1548 and 1549, Corbinelli wrote four letter from Antwerp to Duke Cosimo I (cfr chapter 4): ASF, MdP 387, fol 750, June 30 1548; MdP 390, fol 1014, November 17 1548; MdP 392, fol 84, March 16 1548; MdP 394, fol 30, August 3 1549. Corbinelli’s contacts with the Salviati mother branch of Lyon are extensively documented in Matrinè’s work on that company, see in particular Matrinè, ‘L’entreprise Florentine et La Place de Lyon’, 112-113 and117-119.


268 ASF, Merc 10832, fol 6 r, August 12 1533

269 In 1531, Pecori was one of the 42 assurers of a transport. See A. Hofmeister, Eine Hansische Seeversicherung aus dem Jahre 1532, Hansische Geschichtenblätter, XV, 1888, p. 169-177. Quoted and retrieved in Goris, Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567, 181.

270 ACA, N 3133, minutes notary Willem Stryt, fol 63 v-64 r, March 13 1540, edited in: Goris, 628; ACA, Cert 5, fol 206 r, August 13 1542 & Cert 8, fol 39 v, January 18 1553.

271 ACA, Cert 19, fol 370 v, September 2 1563
transactions that testify to his international contacts and about his dealings with the inhabitants of Antwerp. Benvenuti also took up the position of consul of the Florentine nation in Antwerp, but as mentioned earlier, given the small size of the community in the 1560's, that was not necessarily an indication of his commercial prosperity or capacity as a merchant. The already briefly mentioned Francesco Cambi also regularly collaborated with Benvenuti, and seems to have started in Antwerp as the employee and factor of the partners Giacomini and Gondi. However, in between his work for that partnership, he also engaged in transactions in which he seemed to have acted independently from his principals. In one of the last documents in which we encounter Cambi, he was working for another principal. During his time as the factor of Giacomini and Gondi, Cambi was not the only representative of that company in Antwerp. Alessandro Barducci is also mentioned as working for Giacomini and Gondi, and sometimes the two collaborated together. Similar to Cambi, Barducci also performed tasks that were not explicitly related to his function as collaborator of Giacomini and Gondi. For instance, in 1562 he and a certain Augustijn Lazzario de Mouglia are mentioned as the ‘curators and administrators’ of the goods and credits of Giovambattista Fornari and the Genoese Bartolomeo Doria. Although the factors and representatives of Florentine companies mentioned thus far were all Florentines, we know that the Giacomini and Gondi partnership also had a factor from the Low Countries, who collaborated with Cambi and Barducci.

The various cases of the factors and representatives investigated here point to the presence of a pool of Florentines in Antwerp that made a living mainly by serving Florentine companies and individual merchants, but occasionally also other, mainly Italian companies. Whereas Corbinelli, Giovambattista Frescobaldi, and Simone Pecori seem to have worked exclusively as factor in the service of one company, the majority of the factors discussed here

---
272 Benvenuti gave a mandate to a Florentine merchant in Paris, to follow up his claims on an outstanding debt: ACA, Cert 25, fol 374 r, October 7 1566. A couple of months later, he was also involved in a case about the debt owed to him by inhabitants of Antwerp, related to the ownership of housing: Cert 26, fol 72 r, February 24 1567.
273 In the copialeterre of Dietislaw Rinieri, Giacomini and Gondi are a Lyon based partnership, see: ASF, LCF 4417, fol 19 v & 66 v. In 1558 Giovambattista Gondi and ‘Jacques’ Giacomini were present in Antwerp and together with Cambi registered a case of piracy, see: ACA, Cert 13, fol 153 v, March 10 1558. On the career of Giovambattista Gondi in France, see Milstein, The Gondi, 62–63 In a later stage, Cambi was accompanied by another member of the Gondi family in Antwerp: Cert 22, fol 50 v, July 6 1565.
274 In a registration of a shipment of Rascie from the Low Countries to Spain, Cambi is said to have represented his company ‘Francesco Cambi and Philippe Boniani’, see: ACA, Cert 20, fol 134 v (undated)
275 Bernardo Carducci is explicitly named as Cambi’s principal in ACA, Cert 28, fol 99 v, March 26 1568.
276 ACA, Cert 13, fol 153 v, March 10 1558; Cert 16, fol 114 r & f 121 v, May 16 1560 & June 20 1560;
277 ACA, Cert 18, fol 271 r, July 20 1562.
278 Jehan Lousson from the region of Hainaut is mentioned twice as a collaborator in transactions for Giacomini and Gondi: ACA, Cert 13, fol 153 v, March 1558 & Cert 16, fol 189 r, November 29 1560.
had multiple and possibly fluctuating relations with various employers and principals. For such employers, the trustworthiness of their factors or commission agents and their familiarity with the commercial context that the company operated in must have been two important determinants when they selected their staff. The fluctuating and multiple relations that some of their collaborators had, were apparently not an inhibition. However, the cases that I have discussed make it clear that having a common Florentine background was apparently an asset for finding employment in a Florentine company in Antwerp. Having a non-Florentine agent or factor was very much the exception to the rule to prefer to work with Florentine staff. This preference for co-Florentines was all but distinctive or exceptional for the Florentine community in Antwerp. Unfortunately, we have little comparative historiography that documents such relations for other groups of foreign merchants in Antwerp, but we know that also Genoese merchants in Antwerp mainly selected their staff among their compatriots.279 The studies conducted on merchants from religious and ethnic minorities over the past decade have focused on whether their agents and factors were from within or outside their religious or ethnic group. Such merchants were often restricted by legal and social norms when selecting their employees. Julfa Armenians had exclusively Julfa factors who travelled for them.280 The Sephardic Ergas and Silvera Company of Livorno had non-Sephardic commission agents in Lisbon and Goa, but they also relied heavily on Italians in Lisbon and the majority of their correspondents were Sephardim.281 The case of Florentines in Antwerp makes it clear that having a preference for employees with a common background was not limited to merchants of such minority groups. Also for those who were not inhibited by formal rules, it was more desirable and common to work with factors and agents that came from the same city or region as their patrons.

Proxies, Temporary Representation and Identification: Occasional Collaboration and Interactions

The fluctuating roles of Florentines in merchant companies were not limited to the position of factors. There are numerous cases of Florentines who received temporary and specific mandates and of Florentine companies that appointed someone for a specific task and had their

280 Aslanian, From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean. See especially chapter 6.
appointment registered in the certifications. The case of the Frescobaldi Company is again a good starting point to investigate such relationships. Apart from his designated factors, Girolamo Frescobaldi also regularly used other relations of cooperation or service. He used agents to ‘recuperate his claims’ in the Low Countries on a recurring basis, a phrasings which suggests that his stay in the region was not a permanent one. 282 Two out of these four agents have Florentine names: Nicolas Spinelli and Anthonis Frescobaldi. 283 Girolamo’s son Leonard was also active as one of those representatives. 284

Girolamo also had people who performed particular tasks for him. In order to collect the toll of Iersekeroor, a tax farm that Frescobaldi had obtained, he had at least eleven subordinates with an official mandate. Seven of those were Florentines: Berthelmeeus Paganelli, Jan and Bernaerd de Pijle – likely a translation of the Florentine name Pigli, his son Lenaerd Frescobaldi, and his usual factors Victor Bonnegrace, Bernaerd Rucellai, and Allemane Guidetti. 285 Apart from these Florentines, he also nominated an Irishman, an Englishman and two people presumably from the Low Countries. Moreover, when Frescobaldi’s right to collect the toll was contested, he nominated nine people to defend his right in front of the council of Brabant. 286 It is striking that for such a task, the majority of the nominees were people with Netherlandish names. 287 A couple of years later, he again nominated four people from the Low Countries to defend his case in the same court. 288

Frescobaldi’s habit of having nominations for particular tasks registered was a common practice during the whole period under scrutiny here. Throughout the whole series of certification books such registrations often recur. When Giovan Battista Guicciardini had a case in front of the court of Holland, he nominated a certain Jan van Velthem. 289 His brother Lodovico mandated someone with a French name to take care of his claims in Calais. 290 Such registrations did not only cover the Low Countries. Charles de Cordes gave a mandate to Laurentio Guicciardini in Ferrara. 291 The Antwerp based Perugian merchant, Alessandro

283 The Spinelli are considered as part of Florentine high society in the fifteenth century. Molho, Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence, 374. The relation of Anthonis Frescobaldi to Jeronimus and Lenard is not clear.
287 The nominees: Jan Symoenssone, Anthonis Nijquet, Godevaerd de Hane, Michiel Daems, Claus van Heyst, Lenaerd Frescobaldi, Allemano Guidetti, master Steven Callaender and Jan Haquet.
289 ACA, Cert 5, fol 204 r (undated)
290 The nominee was named Guillaume Home: ACA, Cert 9, fol 348 v, February 2 1554
291 ACA, Cert 13, fol 170 v, September 20 1558
Cavaretti gave a proxy to the heirs of the late Florentine merchant Luca Antonio Scarino to recuperate a sum in the Low Countries. Such mandates were sometimes given by the factor of a company, rather than the leading partners themselves.

We rarely find any details in the sources about why a particular person was selected for an assignment, nor are any details about the remunerations registered. However, the cases listed make it clear that the criteria of selection for such mandates were different from those used to select more permanent employees or representatives. Whereas when Florentine companies selected factors, they almost exclusively appointed other Florentines, this was not the case for those with a specific mandate. For such concrete functions, a particular level of experience and familiarity with the task that was to be performed and with the setting – the urban, regional and legal context – were probably valued more than a common background.

Apart from ad-hoc mandates and proxies, Florentines also engaged in other temporary ties of commercial collaboration. Through the performance of commerce-related tasks like the ones mentioned above or by making deals merchants developed a reputation among their peers, clients and buyers. Such a reputation was of high importance for them in long-distance trade (see chapter 3), but also on a local level. Some of the historiography on the topic tends to oppose informal trust networks like diaspora’s to the use of formal institutions like registered partnerships, but a set of certified acts registered throughout the Antwerp certification books points in a different direction. Florentines in Antwerp were regularly involved in the formal registration of the good reputation of a fellow merchant. In that way, trustworthiness was thus formalized through an Antwerp urban institution with an official document.

Antwerp certificates of this type offer an additional insight into the web of relations that Antwerp based Florentines had and maintained. When Mario Antonio Federigi arrived in Antwerp, his background as a Florentine who had previously been based in London was confirmed by three members of the Florentine community in Antwerp. A striking observation about these registrations is that Florentines often confirmed the good reputation of merchants with an Italian, but not a Florentine background. For instance, in 1543, the reputation of a Veronese merchant was confirmed by Giovan Battista Guicciardini and a Genoese merchant.

---

292 ACA, Cert 15, fol 177 r, February 27 1550
293 Alessandra Barducci gave such a mandate to three people with Flemish names in his function of factor of Giovanni Battista Gondi to recuperate debts from an English company: ACA, Cert 16, fol 121 v, June 20 1560
295 ACA, Cert 9, fol 322 r, September 27 1554.
296 ACA, Cert 5, fol 106 r, May 18 1543.
Together with Lucchese, Parisian, and Venetian colleagues, Giovan Battista Gondi confirmed the good reputation of a certain Pierre Martin Pellizani. Remarkably, Pellizani's city of origin is not mentioned in the document.297 Together with other non-Florentine merchants, Galeotto Magalotti confirmed the good reputation of two Milanese merchants.298 Florentines were also the subject of such proofs of trustworthiness. When Mario Frescobaldi and Tommaso Bissolo wanted to travel back to Italy, the Milanese Francisco Bonanoni and Giovan Battista Guicciardini certified that the two were in fact Florentines.299 In that last case, the war between France and the Habsburg armies was probably an incentive to register their background and motives for travelling.

A comparison of the four types of commercial collaboration – (limited liability) partnerships, structural business collaboration (factors and commission agents), ad hoc collaboration and certification of reputation- shows that for each of these forms of ties, different priorities governed the choices that were made. Florentines sought the capital necessary for their undertakings almost exclusively from among their compatriots. The same holds for their structural business collaboration, where a common Florentine background seems to have been equated with trustworthiness. Almost all the surnames of both the factors and principals were those of office holding class families, which suggests that there was a preference for selecting those with a similar background as factors. However, for the Lyon branch of the Salviati, Matringe has shown that boys with a relatively poor background were more likely to be recruited than members of the family.300 Again relying on surnames as the primary indicator, family ties were not a clear asset in getting selected as a factor of a firm. On the level of ad hoc collaboration, the main criterion for selecting someone was the person's familiarity with the task or the context in which it had to be performed. For certifications of trustworthiness, a common experience in commerce was the most important determinant. Those documents indicate that the circles in which Florentines were involved were mainly Italian.

297 ACA, Cert 11, fol 166 v, December 17 1556.
298 ACA, Cert 13, fol 68 r, October 15 1558.
299 ACA, Cert 5, fol 218 r, November 14 1543. The two also confirmed that neither of them was a soldier or an enemy.
300 Matringe, 'L'entreprise Florentine et La Place de Lyon', 81.
Searching Suppliers and Buyers: Florentines and The Antwerp Market.

The forms of ties and collaboration that have been discussed in the previous three sections of this chapter are all related to the organization of Florentine companies in Antwerp. Recruiting and choosing reliable partners, investors, as well as structural and ad hoc collaborators were obviously important for the success of a commercial enterprise. However, it goes without saying that a company would be aimless and dysfunctional if it did not interact with suppliers and buyers of materials, products, and services. In this section, I analyse the Florentine merchants’ interactions with such actors in Antwerp and the Low Countries. Both those from whom and to whom Florentines in Antwerp sold products are less present in the Antwerp sources than the groups discussed earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless, it is possible to retrieve indications about the merchants with whom Florentines traded. The private papers of merchants, especially their account books, often offer a better insight into this than the Antwerp (semi-) public records. The presence and interest of potential clients and sellers were of course also affected by larger economic, political and social dynamics. Therefore, these contextual aspects will figure prominently in this section.

Florentines trading in Antwerp could encounter merchants from very diverse backgrounds. Sixteenth century Antwerp was a meeting place for merchants from all over Europe who dealt in products from across the whole continent and far beyond. As mentioned earlier, traded goods will receive more attention in the following chapter. For now, it will suffice to briefly discuss the classic historiographical narrative on the most prominent groups of merchants and the nuances of that narrative. As Guicciardini’s description of Antwerp at the beginning of this chapter already has shown, the success of the Antwerp market is often ascribed to the so called three pillar groups: the Portuguese, the English, and the High Germans, who were associated with spices and extra-European products in general, wool and wool cloth, and bullion and banking respectively. In the older historiography especially, the concurrent presence of these three groups on the banks of the Scheldt is considered as the main cause of the rise of the Antwerp market.301 Moreover, it has also meant that Antwerp was depicted as a passive market, with an exogenous growth in the historiography. This image of Antwerp is often contrasted to that of Amsterdam as an active centre of commerce with an endogenous growth.302 Later, the importance of local merchants was also stressed, but that group has been

---

302 For the historiographical background of this mirror image and a nuance of it, see Lesger, Handel in Amsterdam Ten Tijde van de Opstand, 9–17.
associated more with a later phase of growth.\textsuperscript{303} Compared to their prominence in Bruges, Italian merchant groups have been perceived as being of lesser importance in Antwerp. However, according to Renée Doehaerd, if the presence of Italians is considered cumulatively rather than by city then their presence in Antwerp was higher than that of any other merchant group apart from Germans.\textsuperscript{304} Apart from the Aragonese nation, Spanish merchants and their institutions never officially changed their residence in the Low Countries from Bruges to Antwerp, but they were also prominently present in Antwerp.\textsuperscript{305}

Let us now investigate to what extent a Florentine pattern of engaging with clients and suppliers can be observed in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the earliest stage for which we have sources. The most recurrent group with whom Florentines traded at that time were merchants whom we know or assume had a Low Countries background. Florentine merchants engaged in various types of transactions with members of this group. Lodovico Ambrogi engaged in a credit transaction with two bankers from the city of Maastricht in which jewels were used as a collateral.\textsuperscript{306} Jan Moffet, whose background was not specified but based on his name must have been a Low Countries or a French merchant, bought velvet from the factor of the Frescobaldi firm.\textsuperscript{307} Additionally, Gianni Capponi apparently owed a substantial debt of 50 Flemish pounds to Jan de Morcourt the younger, for his father requested the seizure of Capponi’s goods in compensation.\textsuperscript{308} Capponi himself was also a creditor to a Low Countries merchant, and the debtor of a Lucchese.\textsuperscript{309} Apart from this one Lucchese debtor, the other group of Italians with whom the Florentines engaged were Genoese merchants.\textsuperscript{310}

More than showing recurrent patterns and proving that there was a clear preference for engaging with particular groups of merchants, the cases from the earliest period of Antwerp’s

\textsuperscript{303} The Monograph of Wilfried Brulez on the Della Faille family is considered as the first substantial study on local merchants in sixteenth century Antwerp. Wilfrid Brulez, 	extit{De Firma Della Faille En de Internationale Handel Van Vlaamse Firma’s in de 16e Eeuw.} (Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, 1959); Herman Van der Wee, 	extit{The Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy: (Fourteenth-Sixteenth Centuries)} (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1963), 321–23; The most elaborate and recent contribution to the rise of local merchants is the recent monograph of Puttevils: Puttevils, 	extit{Merchants and Trading in the Sixteenth Century.} There, see pp 4-5 for a more detailed discussion of the historiography.


\textsuperscript{305} Fagel, ‘Spanish Merchants in the Low Countries : Stabilitas Loci or Peregrinatio?’ Despite his own work and that of Gons, Fagel warns us that there is relatively limited information (caused by limited documentation) about the activities of Spanish merchants in Antwerp. See pp. 97-98.

\textsuperscript{306} Doehaerd, 	extit{Études anversoises,} 1962, vol. II, sec. 850.

\textsuperscript{307} Doehaerd, vol. II, sec. 1849.

\textsuperscript{308} Doehaerd, vol. II, sec. 2461.

\textsuperscript{309} Doehaerd, 	extit{Études anversoises,} 1962, vol. III, sec. 2872.

\textsuperscript{310} Doehaerd, vol. III, secs 2081 & 2407.
rise in the certificates points to the very diverse contacts that Florentine merchants had in that commercial environment. Lodovico Ambrogio was involved in a complex deal that was settled in the city of Mechelen, south of Antwerp, and involved, among others, a merchant from Geneva. For a shipment of wheat, Girolamo Frescobaldi had –probably indirect- dealings with the King of Castile. Later, Frescobaldi’s goods were seized by merchants who represented the Bishop of Glasgow. Any particular specialization in goods cannot be observed in these decades. Remarkably, records of exchanges of wool and wool cloth with English merchants are scarce. Similarly, records that point to the Florentines’ dealings with Portuguese and High German merchants are also rare. We have but one indication in the certificates that a Florentine, Giovanni Caponi, had indirect dealings with the Fuggers of Augsburg. The Gualterotti firm was strongly orientated towards the spice trade and the Portuguese’s supply of these products, but indications of their transactions with the Portuguese in the certificates are minimal. An explanation for this may be the fact that the Portuguese presence in Antwerp was primarily to trade and auction spices, and it was the officers that guarded and managed that royal monopoly, rather than a flourishing Portuguese merchant community.

The limits of the small corpus of sources for this period should be kept in mind, but it is reasonable to make two observations based upon the certificates. First of all, according to the certificates the three ‘pillar’ groups of foreign merchants in Antwerp were not the preferred trading partners for Florentines. The success of Antwerp at that time is ascribed rather to the interplay between these three pillar groups, than to their concurrent presence in the city, which apparently did not lead to much recorded interaction with Florentines. Only at a later stage, after the transfer of their nations, did southern European merchants also allegedly substantially engage with them. As plausible as this explanation may be, it does not provide an answer for what may have caused and stimulated the presence of Florentines at the Antwerp market. Based

316 Doehaerd, vol. II, secs 2081 & 1696; On the Gualterotti in Antwerp, see the chapter in Denucé, Italiaansche koopmansgeslachten te Antwerpen in de XVle-XVIIe eeuwen., 11–17; Members of the family had also participated in Portuguese explorations. Goldthwaite, The Economy of Renaissance Florence, 159; The voyage of Giovanni da Empoli was made in the service of the Gualterotti, who were based in the Low Countries. Marco Spallanzani, Giovanni da Empoli: un mercante fiorentino nell’Asia portoghese (Studio Per Edizioni Scelte, 1999).
on their interactions, Florentine interactions with commercial actors from the Low Countries may have had a more important weight than assumed until now. Second, and somewhat related, indications of targeting particular groups of merchants, be it foreign or local, as buyers of Florentine export products are absent as well.

The image of the dealings that Florentines had in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century is sketchy, but the more varied sources we have at our disposal for a later period provides a more secure image of their suppliers and clients. For the 1520’s and 1530’s, barely any sources are available.\textsuperscript{319} The period between 1521 and 1535 is considered as a period of decline and crisis in Antwerp, but due to the scarcity of sources, we do not know if and how Florentines in the Antwerp market dealt with these bad prospects.\textsuperscript{320} Throughout and after this crisis, the driving forces of Antwerp’s success had shifted more, but not exclusively, towards endogenous sources of growth.\textsuperscript{321} Before going into the groups of buyers and sellers with whom Florentines engaged in later periods, it is relevant to briefly go into the evolution of the Antwerp market at the time.

Antwerp was originally a market and fair town but began to evolve more into a permanent centre of commerce after the 1510’s when foreign merchants transferred from Bruges and settled in the city. The public commercial infrastructure available in the city is a good indicator of this evolution. A demographic increase went hand in hand with the influx of foreign merchants, and this created tensions about the use of public spaces.\textsuperscript{322} It is in this light that the building and opening of the new Antwerp Exchange in 1531, also known in English as the ‘bourse’, must be understood. The building was quickly considered to be the embodiment of Antwerp’s success. However, apart from the Exchange, other commercial buildings like the so-called ‘Panden’, which were semi-private places of gathering and exposition, also began to cater to the needs of merchants.\textsuperscript{323} Unfortunately, there are hardly any traces of the extent to which Florentines used and valued these new forms of infrastructure. It is clear, however, that

\textsuperscript{319} The Antwerp certification books for the period 1512-1542 are lost. Apart from the records of the notary Adriaan’s Hertoghen (1534-1559), who did not have many Italian clients, we do not have any notary records for this period either. The same goes for Florentine’s private records.

\textsuperscript{320} On this period, see Van der Wee, The Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy, 143–66.

\textsuperscript{321} Van der Wee points to rising agricultural revenues, more trade with Southern Europe, a boom in English export and a flourishing of the industry in the Low Countries and urban prosperity in Antwerp, as well as an increasing importance of Antwerp as a money market. Van der Wee, 166–207.


\textsuperscript{323} The ‘Panden’ were also the sites where art that was produced for buyers at the market was offered for sale, see Filip Vermeulen, ‘Marketing Paintings in Sixteenth-Century Antwerp: Demand for Art and the Role of the Panden.’, in International Trade in the Low Countries (14th-16th Centuries): Merchants, Organisation, Infrastructure., ed. Bruno Blondé, Anke Greve, and Peter Stabel (Leuven: Garant, 2000). 193–212.
providers of other commerce related services, like notaries also settled near the Exchange.\textsuperscript{324} In a registration of a partnership, the recurrent notary of the Florentine community, Pieter Van Lare, is said to operate “appressa la borsa o vero piazza di mercanti di detto luogo”.\textsuperscript{325}

Apart from economic shifts and infrastructural enlargements, the rise of religious heterodoxy throughout Europe affected Antwerp. When in 1550 Dietisalvi Rinieri explained to one of his Florentine correspondents why his business was anything but flourishing, he blamed it on the prospect of the inquisition being introduced in the Low Countries.\textsuperscript{326} The proclamation of the perpetual edict of 1550, which confirmed previous anti-heresy ordinances and imposed stricter provisions, such as the introduction of the inquisitors, did cause real concerns in Antwerp.\textsuperscript{327} However, it seems that the rumours about the inquisition also provided Rinieri with an easy scapegoat for his commercial troubles, which were a recurring theme even in his earliest surviving letters.\textsuperscript{328} Nevertheless, his laments are in line with Van der Wee’s analysis, which suggests that the period in which Rinieri operated was the end of Antwerp’s economic boom and the beginning of a temporary slowdown in growth.\textsuperscript{329}

Despite the repressive rhetoric of the edict, throughout the period between 1550 and 1566, Protestantism was on the rise in Antwerp.\textsuperscript{330} The city government, concerned about Antwerp’s reputation as a suitable commercial centre, was relatively pragmatic in its policy of prosecution, realizing that too harsh an attitude might scare off merchants with Protestant sympathies. About a decade after Rinieri’s laments, the Venetian merchant Zonca, who had heterodox sympathies, wrote enthusiastically about the religious freedom that one could enjoy in Antwerp.\textsuperscript{331} Moreover, the 1560’s was the last period of economic growth, before Iconoclasm severely hit Antwerp in 1566.\textsuperscript{332} The arrival of the Duke of Alba and his army in the Low Countries in 1567 was the beginning of a harsher policy of persecution. This tense atmosphere led to a more cautious attitude among merchants. When a group of Italians left Antwerp in 1569

\textsuperscript{324} Gelderblom, Cities of Commerce, 92.
\textsuperscript{325} “near the exchange or real square of merchants in this place” ASF, Merc 10832, fol 6 r, August 12 1533
\textsuperscript{326} “non si fa facenda per nessuno ne si tiene esperanza alle nostre affaire causa che sua Majesta Cesare vuole mettere in questiapaei bassil’ inquisizione come in Spagna”, ASF, LCF 4417, fol 262 r, July 19 1550, Rinieri in Antwerp to Santa Croce in Florence.
\textsuperscript{328} A more elaborate analysis of the Rinieri letters is presented in Chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{330} Marnef, Antwerp in the Age of Reformation, 61–87.
\textsuperscript{332} On Iconoclasm in Antwerp, see Peter J. Arnade, Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt (Cornell University Press, 2008), 133–48.
to travel back to the peninsula, they spontaneously certified with the Antwerp city government that none of them had in any way broken the anti-heresy legislation. As the laments that were written in the correspondence between the Magistrate of the Consulates and the Florentine merchants in Antwerp already made clear, by the end of the 1560’s, commerce in Antwerp was anything but flourishing for Florentines. For Leonardo Taddei, this was a motive for leaving the Low Countries for France.

Despite fears of persecution and the effects of anti-heresy measures, the commercial atmosphere in Antwerp was one of comparative tolerance, and the city experienced waves of economic growth and a continuous presence of both local and foreign merchants. However, throughout the period between the 1540’s and 1560’s, registrations that would provide a profound understanding of the dealings that Florentines had with local and foreign merchants as buyers and sellers are scarce. In the certifications, we mainly encounter transactions related to transport (cfr chapter 3). However, similarly to the earliest decades of the period under scrutiny, these voluntary registrations of transactions by the Antwerp city government give us a sense of the groups with whom Florentines dealt from the 1540s’ onwards. The registration of conflicts about debts and the settlements of such quarrels are a recurrent phenomenon. A substantial amount of such cases were between Florentines and local merchants or citizens. In 1558, Galeotto Magalotti was involved in a case concerning a debt that was owed to him by merchants with Flemish names. Magalotti had already been involved earlier in a similar case when the Antwerp merchant, Oste vanden Bussche had owed him and several other Florentines money for the goods they had provided. The Antwerp silk cloth buyer Guillelmo Willemsso ne also had a series of debts with numerous Italian merchants, among whom were the Florentines Bernardo Cavalcanti and Raphaelo Barberini. Carlo de Benvenuti also regularly had local debtors in Antwerp. Florentines likewise engaged in credit relations with inhabitants from other cities in the Low Countries. Raphaele Barberini, for example, had a debtor in Malines.

---

333 ACA, Cert 30, fol 25 r, October 12 1569. Among that group was a certain Simon Berti, who based on his surname was likely a Florentine. Also Antonio Benvenuti registered his return to Italy, without invoking the anti-heresy laws however: Cert 29, fol 200 r, September 2 1569
334 ACA, Cert 29, fol 7 v, November 6 1569. Also Marco Atananti and Filipo Corsini saw more prospects in trading in France: Cert 29, fol 224 r, August 22 1569
335 ACA, Cert 13, fol 362 r, November 14 1558. The exact details of the credit relations in this transaction remain opaque, but it is clear that Magalotti had dealings with Flemish merchants.
336 ACA, Cert 23, fol 187 v, December 23 1550. Apart from Magalotti, the Florentines Jacomo Giacomini, Giovanbattista Gondi, Nicolla Rondinelli and Giovanbattista Nerli were also creditors of Vanden Bussche. The goods are not mentioned in detail.
337 ACA, Cert 19, fol 121 v (undated) & fol 190 r, September 16 1563
338 ACA, Cert 23, fol 392 v (undated); Cert 26, fol 72 r, February 24 1567
339 ACA, Cert 31, fol 353 r, March 31 1570
Credit relations could also go the other way: Alessandro Carducci was a debtor of an Antwerp alderman and later, Anthonio Rustici also had debts with an Antwerp couple. Apart from credit relations with local merchants, there is evidence to suggest that Florentines had similar conflicts with foreign merchants trading in Antwerp. In 1544, Bernardo Cavalcanti had a Paris merchant arrested for a debt in which a tapestry producer was also involved. A certain Charles de Cordes, whose background we do not know, owed a sum to the Florentine Giovanni Santa Croce for the provision of ‘merchandise and money’, and gave rents on real estate as a deposit for his payment. Jacomo Lanfranchi was likewise involved in an exchange operation with Southern German and Genoese merchants.

The relatively strong recurrence of local Low Country merchants and buyers as debtors may be related to the qualities of the sources. Since local merchants and buyers were not united in a merchant guild there, turning to the Antwerp city magistrate to register that a debtor was failing or had engaged himself in a plan for repayment might have been the best step for them to take. However, the impression from transactions in the certificates is strikingly incongruent with that given by the private papers of the Florentine merchants in Antwerp. In his correspondence, Dietisalvi Rinieri stressed that the main buyers of his products were English merchants, a group that barely appears in the Florentine’s certified transactions. The account books of the Rinieri and Salviati allow for a somewhat better understanding of the day to day interactions of these two firms with clients and suppliers. The fact that both companies were substantially engaged in banking means that a large portion of their entries were related to financial transactions. However, it is still possible to retrieve some entries of their trade in goods.

A group with whom both companies engaged were textile producers from the Low Countries. The account books of both companies contain numerous entries of ‘oltrafini’, cloths from Armentieres and Hondschoote, and linen from Flanders. Apart from textile producers in the Low Countries, supplies of English textiles –kerseys- sometimes appear in the accounts. Rinieri’s laments about the lack of English buyers in his letters, seem to be in line

---

340 ACA, Cert 19, fol 555 v, July 20 1563; Cert 25, fol 618 r, August 14 1566; The goods of the Florentine Raphael Barberino were also partially seized by a certain Herman Bolleman, Cert 30, fol 60 v, June 14 1569
341 ACA, Cert 6, fol 36 r, October 17 1544.
342 ACA, Cert 11, fol 139 v (undated)
343 ACA, Cert 17, fol 264 r, August 22 1561
344 “li inglesi e quali sono che comperano e consumano al fonte della nostra drapperia”, ASF, LCF 4417, fol 5 v-6 r, November 5 1549, Rinieri in Antwerp to Corbinelli in Florence.
345 E.g. ASF, LCF 4416, fol 108 r-111 r lists spending on numerous of such types of textiles, unfortunately without providing the names of the suppliers.
346 ASF, LCF 4416, fol 103 r lists two expenditures by Rinieri on kerseys.
with the relative absence of this group in his accounts. Other than foreign merchants, a strikingly recurrent group of clients seem to have been local mercers and textile workers. People with Dutch names who are described as ‘drapiere’ or ‘pelletiere’ regularly bought from the Salviati and Rinieri. It is especially noteworthy that many of them are described as living in Lille or Malines.347

My discussion on the clients and suppliers of the Florentines in Antwerp has made it clear that they came from very diverse groups who were present at the Antwerp market. However, the recurrence of locals as commercial interlocutors in the early decades of the century as well as in the high days of the Antwerp market has not received much attention thus far. Apart from the Brussels court, local consumption and the further processing of textiles did not seem to have been an explicit target for the Rinieri or Salviati Company, but this group has been clearly more important than assumed thus far.

*Residence in Antwerp*

In order to operate in Antwerp, Florentine merchants had to take up a form of residence in the city and sometimes also needed their own space for doing business and storing their wares.348 As mentioned earlier, some of the groups of foreign merchants in Antwerp, especially Northern European ones, had a form of collective residence and storage. Members of these groups, the English, in particular, rarely had the habit of taking up structural residence in the city.349 Instead, they travelled regularly between their home country and Antwerp, which given the distance was not an overly onerous way of operating. Also, Southern German merchants often travelled between their home region, to the Rhineland where they also were active in trade, and to Antwerp. In late medieval Bruges, hostels and their owners still had an important role as temporary places of residence for merchants and as sites where knowledge and contacts could be gathered.350 To some extent, this was also still the case in Antwerp.351

---

347 E.g. ASF, LCF 4416, fol 18 v, 42 v, 43 v, 51 v
349 Harreld, ‘Trading Places’.
350 Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce*, chap. 3.
A pattern of regular travel similar to the English model was less feasible for Italian merchants. Tracking their itinerary is very difficult and is often only possible when a merchant left a narrative source about his undertakings. However, due to their appearance in various Antwerp sources throughout the years, it is possible to acquire a glimpse about their stay in Antwerp. Some of the most notable members of the Florentine community in Antwerp, like the Guicciardini brothers and members of the Gualterotti family seem to have stayed in the Low Countries for most of their careers as merchants, and some even died in Antwerp. From about 1548, Guicciardini shared a house in Antwerp with the Florentine merchant Francesco Pescioni, an arrangement that lasted at least until 1554. The Salviati probably resided in the Hof van Liere, a large urban palace that they would later rent to the Merchant Adventurers. Based on the list of household goods that were publicly auctioned at the end of their activities in Antwerp, they accommodated an extensive household there. Some Florentines combined their stay in Antwerp with investments in real estate in their hometown. The records of the *decima* tax of 1561, for example, contain the names of nine Florentines that were active in Antwerp and held property in Florence that year.

Similar to the previous sections of this chapter, the case of the Frescobaldi family in the early decades of the Antwerp market offers a well-documented insight into the pattern of a Florentine merchant family’s settlement and investment in Antwerp. By 1506, Girolamo was a resident—but as far as we can trace not a citizen—of Antwerp and the owner of a house. Throughout his carrier in Antwerp, his investments in houses were numerous. In 1506, he sold part of a house to an Antwerp baker. An agreement with his neighbours in 1507 proves that he also owned a house at another location in the city. In 1508, Girolamo exchanged his house

---

352 The diary of Gherardo Burlamacchi enabled Sabbatini to gain an insight into the travel habits of that Lucchese merchant, see Sabbatini, *Cercar esca*.

353 The case of Lodovico Guicciardini, who died in Antwerp and was honored there for his work as humanist is a common example, see Aristodemo, ‘GUICCIARDINI, Lodovico’.


355 It has been noted that the English Merchant Adventurers rented the Hof van Liere from the Salviati, but it remains unclear on which sources that claim is based. See De Rock, Puttevils, and Stabel, ‘Handelsnetwerken, Stedelijke Ruimte En Culturele Omgeving in Het 16de-Eeuwse Antwerpen’, 33.

356 CASNS, AS 991, fol 14 r–17 v

357 Thanks to the DECI‐MAP project, that digitalized the data of the Florentine decima tax registers of 1561 on a map, I was able to quickly check the names of real estate owners in the city of Florence for that year. (see http://decima-map.net/). Tomasso Corbinelli, Piero Salviati, Giovannbattista Gondi, Dietisalvi Rimieri, Francesco d’Alessandro Nasi, Tommaso Spinnelli, Giovannbattista Nerli, Nicolas Frescobaldi and Matteo Benvenuti appear in both sources that point to their activities in Antwerp and in the *decima* of 1561.


–unfortunately we do not know where it was located– with a certain Claus Gielis.\textsuperscript{361} Later that year he had a dispute with a widow when he sold her house to one of the priests of the Antwerp Our Lady church.\textsuperscript{362} A year later, in 1509, he acquired the house of one of his failing debtors.\textsuperscript{363} Also his son Leonard Frescobaldi was active in the Antwerp real estate market: he bought three houses in 1510 from the widow with whom his father had had a dispute in 1508.\textsuperscript{364} Based on these transactions, it seems that the Frescobaldi family was building up a housing imperium in the neighbourhood around the Antwerp cathedral: in 1511, Girolamo as a third party again opposed the sale of a house in that area.\textsuperscript{365}

Given the frequency of their investments and involvement in real estate, it seems that the Frescobaldi’s acquisitions were not merely for the practical motives of accommodating themselves and their company. The purpose of acquiring this large patrimony of real estate seems to have been, at least partially, to make a profit by setting up constructions in which the rent of those houses were sold as an income to third parties.\textsuperscript{366} The secondary literature on the Frescobaldi in Antwerp suggests that their investments were even larger.\textsuperscript{367} Though more research on such cases is needed, there are indications that in later periods of the sixteenth century members of the Florentine community continued to engage in similar investments.\textsuperscript{368} Although housing in the early modern period was relatively cheap compared to luxury goods, housing prices in Antwerp were very much on the rise throughout the sixteenth century. For those members of the Florentine community with enough reserve capital, real estate was probably a good and relatively safe additional investment that might have served as collateral and as a source of constant income.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{361} Doehaerd, vol. III, sec. 3537.
\item \textsuperscript{362} Doehaerd, vol. III, sec. 3568.
\item \textsuperscript{363} Doehaerd, vol. III, sec. 3575.
\item \textsuperscript{364} Doehaerd, vol. III, sec. 3627.
\item \textsuperscript{365} Doehaerd, vol. III, sec. 3697.
\item \textsuperscript{366} There are at least three cases of such practices: Doehaerd, vol. III, secs 3711, 3785 & 3788.
\item \textsuperscript{367} Denucé, \textit{Italiaansche koopmansgeslachten te Antwerpen in de XVIe-XVIIIe eeuwen}., 20 Denucé’s work does not contain any concrete references to the precise sources on which he bases his claims. His chapter on the Frescobaldi is thus highly informative, but frustratingly elusive.
\item \textsuperscript{368} E.g. Galeotto Magalotti is regularly mentioned in registrations related to real estate and land in and around Antwerp, see for instance ACA, Cert 7, fol 312 r, January 3 1552.
\end{itemize}
Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the various groups with whom Florentines developed ties through their undertakings in Antwerp and have investigated what this reveals about their embeddedness in their hometown. The operations of the Frescobaldi family in the first decades of the rise of Antwerp has been a guiding case throughout my analysis. Therefore, in this conclusive section, I will also use this case to recapitulate my findings. First, it is important to weigh the importance of family ties. Girolamo Frescobaldi worked together with his son Anthonis in Antwerp, and they also had kinship ties with the Gualterotti, the second most well to do Florentine family in the city. Since there are no indications that the Frescobaldi developed kinship ties with any non-Florentines, and the only ones we know about are with members of the Florentine commercial elite, we may assume that for them forging such a connection was of a relatively exclusive nature. The analysis of the limited liability contracts has shown that investments by family members often helped sons from prominent Florentine families to set up a business in Antwerp. Kinship was thus still at the core of Florentine companies. These ties must have been part of a larger web, where women also must have played a crucial role, as research on long distance merchants as well as on social ties in Florence in the fifteenth century has demonstrated. Unfortunately, only very rarely do we get a glimpse of such ties in the sources that I have scrutinized here.

The second category of ties in the Frescobaldi’s Antwerp network was that of the agents and factors with whom they had a structural form of collaborative relations. For these kinds of tasks, kinship ties mattered to a much lesser extent. A common Florentine background in the office holding class, however, was clearly an asset in getting hired as a factor. Only very occasionally did Florentine companies have non-Florentine factors. Members of the third category, occasional agents and collaborators, were mainly used for specific tasks that had some kind of local character, such as defending the interests of Girolamo before the Council of Brabant, or the practicalities of collecting the toll rights that the Frescobaldi had farmed in Zeeland. For such tasks, experience and expertise seem to have outweighed preferences for kin or compatriots.

These observations thus point to a three-tiered structure in the ties that Florentines had and developed in Antwerp. Interactions with other Florentines were at the core of this three-

---

level structure, and interactions with other commercial groups remained limited to trading in goods and short term credit. The Florentine’s structural commercial collaboration in Antwerp was also limited to their own circles. Let us relate these observations to the scholarship on kinship and commercial ties in Renaissance Florence that I discussed earlier in the dissertation. Anthony Molho’s observation that Florentine society in the fifteenth century was a relatively closed one with little room for social mobility, and Padgett’s nuance that this goes up especially during the beginning of the sixteenth century seems to be confirmed by the observation that Frescobaldi’s Florentine collaborators and those from other well documented companies in Antwerp were exclusively the offspring of Florentine commercial elite lineages.

A reconstruction of the various types of ties that Florentines had in Antwerp, makes it clear that their embeddedness in the social structures of their home region mattered a great deal to them, even in one of the most open commercial centres of Europe of the time. It is beyond doubt that Antwerp offered them opportunities to trade and collaborate with merchants from all over Europe. The city’s institutions were in many respects open and innovative, and they allowed for relatively safe collaborations transcending the boundaries of groups. However, that such collaborations were so rare, not just in the Florentine case that I have investigated here in detail, but based on the available historiography also in the case of other groups of merchants, suggests the very real impact that a hometown background had on merchants’ undertakings. Based on the data from the limited liability partnerships that I investigated, it was common to use not only the court of their hometown as a safety measure, but also to rely largely on investments from relatives. As the confirmations of reputation show, relations of familiarity outside of the circle of Italian merchants were rare. A combination of their reliance on Florentine capital and social and cultural acquaintances within their own circles allowed Florentines in Antwerp to act as a separate group. As cosmopolitan as Antwerp may have been, for most of them Florence remained a primary point of reference.

*Da Firenze ci mandano I drappi d’ oro, & d’ arieto a riccio & senza riccio, broccati & altri drappi di seta ricchi & belli, ori & arienti filati, i panni che si chiamano rasce buona & durabili, sete capitoni, doppi & filugello, pelle bassett & martore e saihe: & inoltre molte gentilezze di lavori fini & d’ altro/ Et noi mandiamo a loro saie di piu forte, mzze ostate, telerie, & lini, suentono, fregi & lane d’ Inghilterra quantunque per via del Mare del luogo medesimo, ne sieno in maggior’ parte provveduti.*[^371]

Based on Lodovico Guicciardini’s description of the commercial exchange between Florence and Antwerp in the sixteenth century, textiles dominated the imports and exports of the Florentines in Antwerp. Although his work has regularly been invoked to document the trade between Antwerp and Italy, it goes without saying that a narrative source like the *Descrittione* provides a limited view of the commercial ties between Florence and Antwerp.[^372] Luckily, we have various sources at our disposal that provide more direct insights into the day to day running of the commercial flows to which Guicciardini hinted. For example, between the beginning of May 1549 and September 1550, the bank of Dietisalvi Rinieri sent 842 letters from Antwerp to various correspondents in Europe. His letters have survived and now provide an important insight into the long-distance commercial undertakings of a Florentine in Antwerp.[^373] As discussed above, Rinieri was initially funded by a limited liability partnership that was financed by his father. He was a long term member of the Florentine community in Antwerp: he served as consul in 1545 and was still in business in the city 25 years later in 1570.[^374] His correspondence demonstrates that together with his long-term presence in Antwerp he also established connections with merchants throughout Europe. By using the case of Rinieri as well as other Florentines in Antwerp, in this chapter, I will assess the qualities of the commercial networks that Florentine merchants used in the middle of the sixteenth century.

By focusing on Florentine networks during this period, I aim to insert an innovative perspective on a relatively well-documented case. Florentines are sometimes considered to have

[^371]: Guicciardini, *Descrittione di tutti i paesi bassi, altrimenti detti germania inferiore*, 120.
[^373]: Rinieri’s register of letters is kept in the Florentine State Archive: ASF, LCF 4417.
been the most omnipresent and spread out group of commercial actors in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.\footnote{Goldthwaite, The Economy of Renaissance Florence, 37.} Due to their prominent position, but also because of Florence’s privileged place in the historiography on the Renaissance and the comparative richness of the Florentine archives, Florentine merchants and their enterprises in the fourteenth and fifteenth century are relatively well studied. However, probably because of their perceived position as a relatively declining group, the structure of the Florentine mercantile network in the sixteenth century has not received that much attention in the historiography thus far.\footnote{Reflections on the decline of Tuscany and Florentines on the international stage are a recurrent topic in the work of Paolo Malanima, see in particular: Paolo Malanima, ‘Florentine Nobility and Finance in the Age of Decline’, in Cities of Finance, ed. Herman Diederiks and David A. Reeder (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1996).} Apart from an empirical gap, this has also led to the absence of the Florentine case in recent debates on commercial networks and diasporas.\footnote{It should be noted that Heinrich Lang has published on the question of Florentine networks and diasporas in the sixteenth century. Lang’s article is empirically rich and conceptually dense, but does not provide a definite answer to the question to what extent is it valid to refer to a Florentine diaspora Lang, ‘Netzwerke und Kaufmannsdiaspora: Florentinsische Kaufleute in Lyon und Antwerp im 16. Jahrhundert’; For Lang’s use of the term ‘diaspora’, see also: Heinrich Lang, ‘Kaufmannsdiaspora 6. Florentinsische Kaufmannsdiaspora’, Enzyklopädie Der Neuzeit (Stuttgart, 2007).}

Those debates and the literature on early modern commercial networks have grown exponentially in the past two decades. As Curto and Molho observed in their introduction of a theme issue of the journal Annales on commercial networks, the term ‘network’ was rarely used in the days of Braudel and others of his generation, but it rose spectacularly at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the current one.\footnote{Diogo Ramada Curto and Anthony Molho, ‘Les réseaux marchands à l’époque moderne’, Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales 58, no. 3 (2003): 569–79.} In the decade after their observation, the interest in commercial networks in the early modern period has only proliferated further.\footnote{See for example a discussion of the historiography published in the period around 2010 in Aaron Graham, ‘Mercantile Networks in the Early Modern World’, The Historical Journal 56, no. 01 (March 2013): 279–95, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X1200043X; An elaborate discussion about the historiography on long-distance trade from an urban history perspective is provided in Jeroen Puttevils, ‘Waarom Deden Sommige Handelssteden Het Zo Goed? Een Overzicht van Het Historisch Onderzoek Naar Handel En Instituties in Nederlandse En Europese Steden, 1300-1800’, Stadsgezchiedenis 10, no. 1 (2015); A critical reflection on networks is given in Hancock, ‘The Trouble with Networks’.} Ground breaking work on cross-cultural trade, the role of different types of goods in creating or changing networks, the importance of ethnic and religious minorities and of new centres and spaces of commerce has substantially enriched our understanding about long distance commerce.

Despite this growing interest in the importance and structure of commercial networks, cases of Florentines and their international commercial networks have remained relatively absent in the historiography that engages with this recent analysis. Instead, scholars have had
to rely mainly on the recent synthesis by Richard Goldthwaite on the economy of Florence between 1300 and 1600, which discusses the forms and geographies of Florentine networks. Goldthwaite’s work is a more than welcome overview that connects the numerous detailed studies of Florentine communities across Europe into an elaborate and elegant synthetic overview. However, despite the synthetic and analytical qualities of that overview, it is somewhat detached from the recent debates about commercial networks. By focusing on the networks that Florentine merchants in Antwerp established and maintained in the sixteenth century, this chapter thus aims at confronting a ‘classic’ group of merchants with some of the observations and claims that recent historiography on commercial networks has raised.

As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, Francesca Trivellato’s work on cross-cultural trade, and in her footsteps that of Sebouh Aslanian, has reassessed the added value and limits of religious and ethnic diasporas, family ties, and institutions as solutions to the problems of trust and monitoring in long distance trade. Since trade cannot be contained and conducted solely within the boundaries of ethnic and family networks, commercial contacts with outsiders that do not belong to the closed networks of a diaspora or a family were necessary to sustain their trading activities. Therefore, the ways in which a group defines, establishes and (re)negotiates its boundaries and the way in which it engages in commercial and other contacts with actors that have a different social, religious or regional background are thus particularly revealing. Following up on these stimulating new directions in the historiography, this chapter aims to observe and analyse the long distance commercial networks of Antwerp based Florentines. The main preoccupation of this dissertation, the hometown embeddedness of Florentine merchants abroad, will also guide the analysis of this chapter. Whereas the previous chapter focused on ties between Florentine merchants and various others on a local Antwerp level, the scope of this chapter will look at the long distance component of their commercial contacts. In that analysis, special attention will be paid to the place of the city of Florence and of Florentines in other commercial centres.

380 Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*.
381 This observation has recently been made by Heinrich Lang as well. See Lang, ‘Networks and Merchant Diasporas: Florentine Bankers in Lyon and Antwerp in the Sixteenth Century’, 107.
In the historiography about long distance merchants as well as in contemporary sources, the overarching network of a particular group of commercial actors is sometimes referred to as a ‘Nation’. In that sense, the term is not limited to a particular (mercantile) institution in a particular place, but to the connected community formed by a distinct group. For example, the various Iberian Sephardim communities in the Atlantic world have been presented and investigated in recent scholarship as the ‘Portuguese nation’, a sprawled but highly integrated network of which merchants were the backbone. Following that approach and taking the existence of an overarching integrated Florentine network or an international ‘Florentine nation’ for granted and as a starting point is tempting but problematic. The scholarly focus on networks also comes with potential blind spots and assuming all too readily that Florentine commercial networks existed is, therefore, a flawed starting point. It is more accurate and fruitful to start from the observation that merchants with a Florentine background in Antwerp set up and maintained international commercial contacts and forms of exchange. Whether the aggregate of these contacts and exchanges may be labelled as a, if not the Florentine network and whether that network can or should be categorized as a diaspora is better kept as a question, until after the sources that document the international contacts of Florentine merchants in Antwerp have been analysed.

Antwerp-based Florentines like Rinieri indeed corresponded frequently with various commercial actors who were based throughout Europe. Thanks to the so-called copialettere, their registers of outgoing letters, we are able to reconstruct their particular correspondence contacts. Such records will serve as the most important sources for this chapter. The correspondence of Rinieri and others offers several indicators that enable us to grasp the extent to which their network of contacts were Florentine. The names of correspondents, where they were based, the frequency of the correspondence, the kind of information that they shared and requested, and the service that was provided are but the most relevant issues for this chapter, and they will guide the structure of what follows. Also the goods that were exchanged offer us a better understanding of how Florentine the contacts of Rinieri and other Florentines in Antwerp were. Apart from the registers of correspondence from the Antwerp-based Florentine firms, their account books and the registrations of their dealings in the Antwerp certificates offer us additional insights about their international contacts.

Throughout this chapter, these questions will be assessed in six main sections. I will start by turning to a well-established body of historiography on commercial exchange between

---

383 Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea*. 
the Low Countries and Italy, which build on one particular source. These previous findings, based on tax records, offer an important yardstick to compare the new evidence presented in this chapter. Then I pay attention to the practical organization of international exchange through transports over land and water. After these introductory sections, the core sections of the chapter focus on the correspondence of the Rinieri and Salviati. First I provide a general overview of the places with which these two firms corresponded. Then I move to the qualities of pre-modern business correspondence, its use by historians and other scholars and assess what was distinctive about the two bodies of correspondence used here. The profile of the correspondents stands central in the next section. The last and most substantial sections goes into two cases, that of the relationship with Florence and with the Adriatic region.

*Italians and Trade Networks from The Low Countries in The 1540s: the One Hundredth Penny Tax*

Our current understanding of the role of Antwerp-based Florentines in international trade networks is strongly shaped by one particular source: the One Hundredth Penny tax (1543-’45). These exceptional tax records offer a unique view on the flows of trade in the Low Countries during a period in which Antwerp was at its zenith as a commercial centre. It should not come as a surprise that the registers have been used by numerous historians working on various aspects of commerce in the Low Countries. Moreover, the source has received particular attention of historians working on trade between the Low Countries and Italy, which began with Goris’ use of a sample of the registers. After Goris, the current historiographical understanding of trade relations between Antwerp and Italy was mainly shaped by the scholarship of Wilfrid Brulez and more recently by the work Jeroen Puttevils, who both relied strongly on this exceptional source. Before going into the parts of their findings that are

---

relevant for our understanding of the Florentine’s involvement in international trade during that period, two points should be raised: a first one on the work of both authors and, more importantly, a second about the source itself.

First of all, the primary research interests of both Brulez and Puttevils, the rising importance of local merchants from the Low Countries in Antwerp’s international trade, has shaped the way that the data from this source were presented in their writings. Brulez’s monograph on the Della Faille family, a Low Countries family of modest origins that made a fortune in international commerce, primarily with Venice, presented the first systematic analysis of data from the registers. A more general article on exports from the Low Countries to Italy in the *Annales* made those findings available to an international audience of scholars. Recently Puttevils has turned again to the tax records in order to process them more systematically with database software and to confront his findings with the evolutions that have occurred in the historiographical debate over roughly the last fifty years since Brulez published his work. Also, his research is primarily focused on how merchants from the Low Countries broke through as international traders. This focus, combined with a greater interest on the trade between Antwerp and Venice, has obscured the data on the role of Italian merchants and of the trade between Antwerp and other destinations in Italy somewhat. It is therefore relevant to return to their scholarship and their processed data with a particular focus on the role of other groups of Italians, and here in particular Florentines.

A second comment is related to the implementation of the tax and the source itself. The One Hundredth Penny was an exceptional and temporary one percent tax on all international exports from the Low Countries that was implemented to provide additional funding for the Habsburg war effort against France. Export to France was more heavily taxed (6%) and registered in a separate register. Moreover, the English Merchant Adventurers, an important group of foreign merchants in the Low Countries, were exempted from the tax. Both features, combined with the climate of war that depressed trade, had an effect on the flows of traffic that are represented in the source, and consequently in the historiography that is built on


388 It must be stressed however that Puttevils recent article, in which the data from all the registers have been processed for the first time (and not just for particular destinations, as previously was the case) the scope is more general: Puttevils, “Eating the Bread out of Their Mouth”.

389 On the genesis of the tax, see Puttevils, 5–6.
it. The commercial flows between Antwerp and French centres of commerce like Lyon, where Florentines were prominent, have remained opaque thus far. Since the penny was an export tax, only a one-sided view of the international trade activities of merchants in the Low Countries is visible. Given the absence of a similar source, the data on import activities are thus much sketchier.\textsuperscript{390}

Despite these limits, the scholarship based on the source offers an interesting starting point from which to investigate the involvement of Antwerp-based Italian and in particular Florentine merchants in international trade.\textsuperscript{391} First of all, the registers offer the names of merchants that sent goods from Antwerp to destinations in Italy. In the list of the 77 largest exporters that Brulez calculated, eight names of merchants are listed who are doubtlessly Florentines.\textsuperscript{392} Another five names of Florentines are listed among the minor exporters.\textsuperscript{393} Table 3.1 lists the names of these Florentines and, when provided, the value of their exports.

\textsuperscript{390} An attempt to grasp the contours of imports in the Low Countries for this period is made in Brulez, ‘De Handelsbalans Der Nederlanden in Het Midden van de 16de Eeuw’.

\textsuperscript{391} Unlike Goris, both Puttevils and Brulez have processed the register for the period 1544-45, which offers the richest data.


\textsuperscript{393} Brulez, 489–90.
Table 3.1 A List of Florentine Exporters in The One Hundredth Penny Tax Register. Source: Brulez, 'L'exportation', p 479 & 489-490

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Export value (£ Flemish)</th>
<th>Ranking by share in export³⁹⁴</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicolo</td>
<td>Rondinelli</td>
<td>18948</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giovanni-Battista</td>
<td>Nasi</td>
<td>8070</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everardo e Piero</td>
<td>Salviati</td>
<td>7717</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alessandro</td>
<td>Antinori</td>
<td>6429</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giovanni-Battista</td>
<td>Gondi</td>
<td>5160</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giovanni-Battista</td>
<td>Guicciardini</td>
<td>2607</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernardo</td>
<td>Cavalcanti</td>
<td>1335</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Pecori</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galeotto</td>
<td>Magalotti</td>
<td>500-1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaspar</td>
<td>Ducci</td>
<td>&lt;500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guicciardini-Michaeli</td>
<td>&lt;500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francesco</td>
<td>Pescioni</td>
<td>&lt;500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michiel</td>
<td>Rustici</td>
<td>&lt;500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data to calculate the exact relative share of these Florentines in the total export registered in the tax ledgers, which allow to put their number in perspective, are lacking in the publications of both authors. Among the most important and notorious Italian exporters, no Florentines are listed or discussed by either author.³⁹⁵ However, the total number of merchants exporting to Italy is known -185 merchants- , as is their relative share in the total value of exports to Italy (62,90 %).³⁹⁶ The tax revenues thus show that trade between the Low Countries and Italy was dominated by Italians, followed by merchants from the Low Countries (56 exporters, 22,90 % of the total export value) and by Germans (21 exporters, 8,20% share). The two conclusions to be drawn from this –dominance by Italians in both number and value of trade between the Low Countries and Italy - is reinforced by Puttevils’ recent analysis of the total - not limited to export to Italy - export values from the tax. Italians account for a relatively low number of merchants (5,73 %) mentioned in the register- but have a high share of 20,83 %

³⁹⁴ The first ranked merchant, Giovanni-Carlo degli Affaitadi, is sometimes considered as Florentine. However, since his origins lay in Cremona, I have not included him.
³⁹⁶ Table 1 in Puttevils, ‘Klein Gewin Brengt Rijkdom In’, 33.
of the total value of the export trade. That high share was gained mainly because they dominated the export to Italy. England was the only other noteworthy export destination by Italians in the Low Countries.398

Concentrating on the exports to Italy, we have data at our disposal to grasp which destinations in Italy were the most important. Ancona and Venice were the most recurring and important targets of export with respectively 34.9% and 29.3% of the total value of the exports to the peninsula.400 These two Adriatic ports served as gateways for re-export to the Levant. That re-export was the main purpose of exports from the Low Countries to Italy, is made clear by the relatively low share of inland urban centres like Milan (6.6%), Lucca (1.6%) and Florence (1.1%).401 The limited volume of exports to Florence was dominated by Italian merchants.

The export to Ancona was mainly in the hands of Italians. They exported for a value that was ten times higher than that of Flemish merchants. Iberian merchants were also involved in the export to Ancona. The export trade to Venice, however, was dominated much more by non-Italians: Flemish merchants exported almost the same value as Italians, and Germans were a third important group.403 The standard explanation for this striking discrepancy between the export flows to Ancona and Venice is that Venetians, who had a monopoly on re-export in their hometown, were almost absent in the Low Countries by the sixteenth century. Low Countries merchants had supposedly filled the gap in the commercial flows that the Venetians had left behind. Trade in Ancona, in contrast, was subject to fewer barriers and was more in the hands of Florentine merchants.404

A final set of data in the publications on tax provides an insight into the types of goods that were exported. Brulez’s and Puttevils’ analysis shows that one can differentiate between a cluster of products that were exported by Italians and the package of products exported by merchants from the Low Countries. Whereas in the total volume of their export to Italy, Flemish

397 Table 5 in Puttevils, “‘Eating the Bread out of Their Mouth’”, 13.
398 Puttevils, 14. See Table 7 there for the destinations of export by merchant group.
399 Brulez states that the destinations in Italy are known for 62.8% of the exported value. Brulez, ‘L’Exportation Des Pays-Bas Vers l’Italie Par Voie de Terre, Au Milieu Du XVIe Siècle’, 475.
400 Brulez, 475–76.
401 Brulez suggests that the real number for Florence as an end destination must have been higher, but elaborate arguments to follow up on this theory have not been given. ‘En tout cas, des villes comme Florence, Naples et Messine ont eu, dans ce commerce, une importance beaucoup plus grande que nos chiffres ne le font apparaître.’ Brulez, 476.
402 Italians export for 100275 £, Flemish, Flemish for 9791 £ and Iberians for 17350 £ to Ancona. Brulez, 477.
404 Puttevils, ‘Klein Gewin Brengt Rijkdom In’, 44.
merchants had a substantial share of Low Countries products, this was much less the case for the exports organized by Italian merchants. Although the absolute volumes of Low Countries exports by Italians were still higher, Low Countries products like sayes, tapestries, and draperies from the region were relatively more important for ‘Flemish’ exporters. For transit products, like kerseys, wool, and pepper, the dominant share of Italian exporters was both absolute and relative.

The data of the One Hundredth Penny thus offers some interesting insights into the general features of the commercial behaviour of Italians who were active in the trade between the Low Countries and Italy. The low number of Italian merchants, and that of Florentines in particular, combined with their large share of the export suggests that, unlike the Low Countries merchants, small-scale Italian merchants were few. Within the Florentine community in Antwerp, international commerce remained a field that was dominated by those who were able to trade on a large scale. The dominance of non-Low Countries products in their exports indicates that they came to Antwerp primarily because it was an international commercial gateway and much less because of the products that the Low Countries had to offer.

In spite of the source’s exceptional value, there are also important questions about the place of Antwerp in the Florentine network that are not answered by the One Hundredth Penny registers and by the Low Countries sources in general. The relatively marginal position of Florence and the high share of Adriatic destinations in the flow of exports suggests that the commercial interests of Florentines were rather detached from their hometown. Moreover, their primacy in exporting to Italy combined with a small share in exports to other destinations suggests that they had a specialization in that trade. The question that remains open is to what extent Florentines in Antwerp did have ties with other centres of commerce in Europe. In order to engage with these questions, the following sections of this chapter will turn to the business correspondence of long-distance Florentine merchants in Antwerp. However, prior to that, it is important to briefly pay attention to how these volumes of goods were actually transferred throughout Europe.

---

405 Merchants from the Low Countries exported for 40.62% local products and 59.38% foreign products, whereas Italians exported 25.79% and 74.21% of products in the respective categories. Puttevils, 49.

406 Puttevils, 49.
The Ways of Commerce: Florentine Transport

The One Hundredth Penny provides us with a unique snapshot of the commercial outflows in the first years of the 1540s. However, this is a structural image and leaves open questions about the day to day organization of commerce. Moreover, due to the war with France, commercial flows in the period that were covered by the tax were severely distorted. In this section, I turn to other sources to understand how Florentines in Antwerp organized their long-distance exchanges, and in particular how they arranged for the transportation of their goods. In line with the main focus of the chapter, I mainly seek to understand here to what extent Florentine merchants were involved in the organization of transport themselves or whether a separate group of non-Florentine specialized transporters took over that chore from them. Related to this question is the debate whether transport over continental roads overtook the transport over sea.407

The shift from Bruges to Antwerp at the turn of the fifteenth century concurred with what has been perceived as a shift from the predominance of transport over water to wagon transport over land routes. The geography of both cities, the predominance of foreign merchant groups who were active there, as well as the main types of goods that were transported were all elements that explain this shift. Whereas Bruges was situated near the North Sea and relatively outside of the network of important roads that crossed the region, Antwerp was accessible both by sea through the Scheldt delta and was at the same time well connected to continental roads. Apart from geography and infrastructure, safety was also an important issue in the choice between road and water. Transporting goods over land often meant crossing multiple polities with different and sometimes contested toll and customs regimes. Moreover, especially in times of war, transport convoys ran the risk of being robbed. Sea routes suffered less from tolls and customs, but weather conditions and piracy were always potential risks. Due to all these conditions and the fact that it was cheaper to transport goods in bulk by sea, it has been commonly assumed that road transport was relatively more costly than shipping. As a consequence, for luxury goods in small volumes with a high price, overland transport was comparatively less costly than for lower-priced bulkier goods.

Based on his work with the One Hundredth Penny, Brulez has claimed that trade between the Low Countries and Italy was almost exclusively conducted overland. According to his analysis, in the middle of the sixteenth century there were two main trade routes between the Low Countries and the Italian Peninsula. A first ran from the Low Countries to Cologne and from there along the banks of the Rhine to Basel into Switzerland, further over the Alpine crossings to Milan and then through the plain of the Po to end in Ferrara or further down the Adriatic to Ancona. The part between Antwerp and Basel sometimes followed a different route that passed across Luxembourg and Lorraine. A second route went from Cologne over the Southern German towns to the Brenner pass, Salzburg, and then up to Trento and the Veneto.

The tracks of these transport routes gave way to a dominance of specialized carriers who mainly came from Italian and German cities around the Alps. These professionals of international transport supposedly took over the merchants’ burden to organize all stages of the transport. Technological improvements in wagons and infrastructural developments also contributed to better and faster overland routes. The so-called Hessen wagons, wide carriages with a larger capacity, enabled higher volumes to be transported. In Antwerp, the ‘Hessenhuis’, the house of the Hesse, formed an important terminus of their continental routes.

Although Brulez was careful enough to put his findings in the right perspective and context, his analysis has shaped the dominant image in the historiography on transport. Florentines have no place in that image. Without wanting to cast doubt on Brulez’ structural analysis for the period covered by the One Hundredth penny, I will turn here to the Antwerp certificate books to get an additional view on transport in the period under scrutiny. Apart from information on the concrete organization of transport, these sources also provide insights into traffic from the Low Countries that was not directed to the Italian Peninsula. The sources allow us to engage with three main questions. First, let us see whether Florentine merchants had a preference for particular transporters who were from a particular background. For transport to and from Italy, the certificates indeed document that Florentines preferred to use the services of Italian operators. In particular, the D’Annoni company of Milan usually shipped

---

409 Brulez, 469.
410 The largest firm that Brulez encountered was the Milanese D’Annoni firm, followed by that of the German family Cleinhans. Brulez, 467–68; On D’ Annoni, see also Puttevils, ‘A Servitio de Vostri Sempre Siamo. De Effecten van de Handel Tussen Antwerpen En Italië Op de Koopmansfamilie Van Der Molen (Midden Zestiende Eeuw)’, 287.
the goods that Florentines sent from the Low Countries to cities like Ferrara or Ancona. The former city, in particular, was used as a hub to distribute loads further South in Italy. Apart from the large Milanese transporters, numerous operators appear only once or twice in the certifications. Often, their background is not given explicitly, leaving us with only surnames as an indication. However, in light of the historiography on the topic, it is especially striking that prominent German firms or smaller carriers with German names are absent. It is therefore likely that the D’Annoni had a better reputation among Italians and that they covered the western route up to Milan more efficiently.

Now that we know that Florentines had a diverse pattern of preference for carriers, but preferred the services of Italian transporters, a second question needs to be assessed, namely to what extent Florentines themselves were involved in organizing transports. If they were, did they have a particular clientele? And to what extent did it intersect with their co-Florentines in Antwerp? Two Florentine carriers occasionally recur in the certificates: Giovan Battista Frescobaldi and Tommaso de Berti. As mentioned earlier, Frescobaldi first operated as Dietisalvi Rinieri’s factor, before he received a sum in an accomandita to work on his own as a conductor in 1554. At that time, his work as a collaborator for Rinieri must have given him substantial experience and an understanding of the organization of exchange between the Low Countries and the Italian Peninsula. That he decided to improve his fortune in the transport business indicates that there was room in that market for smaller carriers besides the large German and Northern Italian companies. Unfortunately, we only have two documents that give us insights into his work and his clients. The enterprise of Tommaso de Berti is documented slightly better. In the first document in which we encounter him, he is explicitly described as a Florentine carrier. Unlike most of the shipments recorded in the Antwerp communal records, that transport was directed from Florence to Antwerp for the Florentine Antinori Company. The

---

413 Giovan Battista Guicciardini had his ‘drapes’ shipped to Ferrara by the D’ Annoni: ACA, Cert 6, fol 7 r, undated. Another large transport with the goods of numerous Florentines was performed by the D’Annoni: ACA, Cert 14, fol 146, May 26 1559. Tommaso Baroncelli had a vase transported from Antwerp to the duke in Florence via a ‘condotta’ of the D’Annoni: ASF, MdP 485, fol 474 r, June 28 1560.
414 The textiles of the Florentine Alexander Corini were shipped further from Ferrara to Naples: ACA, Cert 16, fol 138, March 5 1560.
415 For the transport of goods to France, the factor of the Antinori firm worked with two conductors with a French name: ACA, Cert 5, fol 79 r, August 8 1542.
416 Frescobaldi’s company of transport was funded by a limited liability investment of Galeotto Magalotti, who at that time was also based in Antwerp, see: ASF, Merc 10832, fol 103 r.
417 The first registration is that of an overland transport to Livorno that Frescobaldi organized for the Michaeli company of Lucca. ACA, Cert 11, fol 293 v. A second document of little more than a decade later shows that he was still involved in transports, but any information about the destination and the client are lacking: ACA, Cert 26, fol 304 r, October 4 1567.
418 ACA, Cert 5, fol 206 r, August 13 1542.
phrasing in the registration also seems to imply that de Berti himself undertook the journey, and
that he was not merely a coordinator of the shipments, as was often the case.\footnote{419} Overall, it seems
that de Berti and Frescobaldi were specialized in transporting shipments to destinations that
were the Italians, and in particular the Tuscans’ field of operations.\footnote{420} However, we do not have
any indications that they were serving Florentines predominantly, and apart from Italians, a
merchant with an Iberian background also made use of de Berti’s service.\footnote{421}

A third and final question related to transport is whether travelling to Italy by road was
indeed the preferred way of transport, or whether this image has been shaped by the exceptional
conditions of the first half of the 1540s. Based on the certifications, transports to Italy by ship
were indeed only marginally used by Florentines. In 1558, Giacomini and Gondi had a varied
load of textiles and spices shipped from the Scheldt delta in Zeeland to Livorno.\footnote{422} That
Florentines rarely used waterways to transport their goods between Italy and the Low Countries,
however, did not mean that they were not using waterways at all. Once goods arrived in Italy,
they were often shipped further from a Northern- or Central-Italian port to the South of the
Peninsula, to Sicily or to the Eastern Mediterranean.\footnote{423} Moreover, Italy was not the only
destination that Florentines sent goods to from Antwerp. Although Antwerp hosted a large
community of English merchants, as we will see, Florentines had intensive contacts with
London and organized shipments of Florentine goods to England via Antwerp.\footnote{424} Moreover,
various goods were also sent to other destinations on the coasts of the North Sea and Atlantic.
Giovan Battista Nasi shipped alum from Antwerp to Normandy.\footnote{425} Giacomini and Gondi
bought iron from Namur in the Low Countries, loaded it on a ship and sent it to the Nasi in
Lisbon, and they sent rasce wool cloth to Spain.\footnote{426}

\footnote{419}“…(Berti) a recue en la ville de Florence de Laurentio Antinori”, idem
\footnote{420} Frescobaldi and de Berti also served Lucchesi. For Frescobaldi cfr supra, for de Berti ACA, Cert 5, fol 248 v, March 3 1543. De Berti also had merchants from Messina who transported textiles to Naples as clients: Cert 6, fol 408 r, July 28 1547.
\footnote{421} De Berti carried two packs with textiles, utensils and various goods owed by ‘Edouart’ Henriques to Ancona. Near Mantua, the packs were seized because authorities had suspicions that Henriques was a ‘Maran Jew’: ACA, Cert 6, fol 410 v, August 12 1547.
\footnote{422} ACA, Cert 13, fol 153 v, March 10 1558. The shipment was seized by French authorities near Marseille.
\footnote{423} I have not retrieved the registration of such an act by Florentines, but the shipment of ‘drapes de Flandres’ from Antwerp to Lucca was registered to be followed by a shipment from Livorno to Naples on the ship of the Florentine captain Francesco Rustici, indicating that it was likely that Florentines also used a similar trajectory: ACA, Cert 10, fol 275 r, July 7 1556.
\footnote{424} E.g. Galeotto Magalotti in Antwerp shipped ‘rasce’ to England on an Antwerp ship: ACA, Cert 7, fol 357 r, March 10 1552.
\footnote{425} ACA, Cert 6, fol 72 v (undated)
\footnote{426} ACA, Cert 15, fol 216 r, September 22 1551; Cert 20, fol 134 v (undated). Both shipments were registered because they were lost because of piracy.
The organization of transport was thus a part of commerce in which Florentines had relatively varied contacts with numerous transporters from diverse backgrounds. Although some of their co-Florentines also provided these types of services, Florentine merchants based in Antwerp did not have a preference for them. The large D’Annoni Company of Milan was the most recurring provider of transports to Italy, but they did leave room for smaller carriers. In early modern Europe, the transport of goods was one of the most risky parts of long distance commerce: war and piracy were recurring threats. For much of the period under scrutiny here the French monarchy and the Habsburg dynasty fought out conflicts in the regions that spanned the continental transport routes. Both in the North Sea area as well as in the Mediterranean piracy reached a high from the end of the century, but the threat was a constant in the area. A trustworthy carrier was therefore of great importance, but given the external nature of these dangers, a shared hometown background may only have had a very limited added value when choosing a transporter.

The Destinations of The Salviati and Rinieri Correspondence: A General Overview

In the previous sections, I have presented and questioned the current historiography on Italians in the Low Countries and their performance in international trade. A fiscal source like the One Hundredth Penny Tax provides us with interesting data on the flows of goods and the actors involved in organizing those flows, but it obscures the day to day practice of organizing and running that commercial exchange. The recipients of the exports and the contacts that a merchant may have had do not appear in them. The registrations of shipments have provided an opportunity to acquire a more concrete understanding of the organization of international exchange. In the following sections, I turn to other sources to shed a better light on the concrete aspects of trade. For international commerce, the private papers of merchants offer a welcome additional angle from which to observe and analyse the various aspects of trade. Rather than the general perspective of a tax register, or the very concrete view provided by registrations of shipments, such documents offer an insight into the peculiarities of the enterprise of an individual or a related group of merchants. Therefore, the papers, and in particular the correspondence of two Florentine firms that were active in Antwerp in the 1540’s, the
merchant-bank of the Salviati brothers and that of Dietisalvi Rinieri, will serve as the main body of sources.\textsuperscript{427}

Our understanding of medieval and early modern commerce is to a large extent based on the papers of merchants who became figureheads in the historiography on pre-modern long distance trade, Francesco di Marco Datini probably being the best known and studied case.\textsuperscript{428} Also in the historiography of trade between the Low Countries and Italy such sources have already been used.\textsuperscript{429} Recently, the focus on networks in the historiography, which has been discussed above, has brought a renewed interest to these types of sources. When sufficient records are kept, merchant correspondence can provide a concrete understanding of the relations a firm maintained on an international scale, both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view. The registers of the letters of the Salviati branch in Antwerp and that of the bank of Rinieri enable us to acquire an overview of their international contacts. Although the archive of the Antwerp branch of the Salviati has received some attention, the operations of these two Florentine firms has not been used extensively by scholars of Florentine commerce in the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{430} The letters of the two merchant banks will be used first to reconstruct their correspondence network, assuming that that network mirrors their international commercial network. After this overview, I will turn to the substance of the network, by focusing on the content of the letters for some selected cases. However, first, let us turn to the geography of their correspondence networks.

\textsuperscript{427} The remaining papers of Rinieri are kept in in the Archivio di Stato in Florence: ASF, Libri di commercio e di famiglia (LCF), 4416 (‘entrata e uscita’ accountbook) & 4417 (‘copialettere’ correspondence). The papers of the Antwerp branch of the Salviati are part of the Salviati family archive, which is deposited in the archival centre of the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa: Centro Archivistico della Scuola Normale Superiore (CASNS), Archivio Salviati (AS), books (‘filze’) 980-996. The copialettere are filze 988 (copialettere per Italia, 1541-‘42), 994 (copialettere per Italia, 1542-‘44) and 995 (copialettere per fuori d’ Italia, 1542-‘44)


\textsuperscript{429} Especially the letters of the Van der Molen family have received some attention, see Puttevils, ‘A Servitio de Vostri Sempre Siamo. De Effecten van de Handel Tussen Antwerpen En Italië Op de Koopmansfamilie Van Der Molen (Midden Zestien de Eeuw)’; Edler-De Roover, ‘The Van Der Molen, Commission Merchants of Antwerp : Trade with Italy, 1538-44.’; Also the activities of the Della Faille family have been studied through private records, among which are series of correspondence: Brulez, \textit{De Firma Della Faille En de Internationale Handel Van Vlaamse Firma’s in de 16e Eeuw}.

\textsuperscript{430} The Salviati in Antwerp have been studied in the section of a ‘tesi di laurea’ and a brief subsequent article: Valeria Pinchera, ‘Mercanti toscani ad Anversa nel Cinquecento : il Banco Salviati dal 1540 al 1544’ (Tesi di laurea, Universita degli studii di Pisa, 1988); Valeria Pinchera, ‘Mercanti Fiorentini Ad Anversa Nel Cinquecento: I Salviati’, \textit{Incontri. Rivista Europea Di Studi Italiani} 4 (1989): 157–66; Recently, Matringe has also turned to these sources in her study of the Salviati of Lyon: Matringe, ‘L’entreprise Florentine et La Place de Lyon’; Matringe, \textit{La banque en Renaissance}; Also Lang has used their records Lang, ‘Networks and Merchant Diasporas: Florentine Bankers in Lyon and Antwerp in the Sixteenth Century’.
Table 3.2 Destinations of The Rinieri Letters (Source: ASF, LCF, 4417)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination (place)</th>
<th>Number of Letters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firenze</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuremberg</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valladolid</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancona</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middelburg</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferrara</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragusa</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seville</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bordeaux</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicenza</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiera di Maggio(^{431})</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augsburg</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villalon</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toulouse</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracow</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiera di Ottobre(^{432})</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{432}\) On the fair of October, see supra
The bank of Rinieri had correspondents in 26 cities throughout Europe. Table 3.2 lists those cities, ranked by the total number of letters per destination. With respectively 132 and 130 correspondents, London and Florence were the most frequent destinations of their letters. For Rinieri and his collaborators, their home town was thus an important node in their web of correspondence. London had long been connected to trade in the Low Countries, but not just via the presence of a large group of English merchants on the continent. Also in the English capital, which at that point was not yet the flourishing commercial centre it became in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, a group of Italian merchants were active.\footnote{G.D. Ramsay, ‘The Undoing of the Italian Mercantile Colony in Sixteenth Century London’, in \textit{Textile History and Economic History: Essays in Honour of Miss Julia De Lacy Mann}, ed. Julia De Lacy Mann, Negley B. Harte, and Kenneth G. Ponting (Manchester University Press ND, 1973), 22–49.} That correspondence with Lyon was also frequent should not come as a surprise. The city on the confluence of the Rhône and Saône was the most important market place in the Kingdom of France in the sixteenth century.\footnote{Gascon, \textit{Grand commerce et vie urbaine au XVIe siècle: Lyon et ses marchands}; Goldthwaite, \textit{The Economy of Renaissance Florence}, 165.} Moreover, it was a commercial centre where Italians, and especially Tuscans, were the most important group of foreign merchants.\footnote{Orlandi, \textit{Le Grand Parti}; Angela Orlandi, ‘Affaire et Petites Vanités. Un Marchand Florentin à Lyon Au XVIe Siècle’, in \textit{Commerce, Voyage et Expérience Religieuse, XVIe-XVIIIe Siècles.}, ed. Albrecht Burkardt, Gilles Bertrand, and Yves Krumenacker (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2007).} Somewhat striking is the frequency of the letters to Paris, which was not primarily a commercial centre, but the city’s size, the recurrent presence of the French court and relative vicinity to the Low Countries are possible explanations for the high degree of contacts. In general, the number of French destinations, Toulouse and Bordeaux in particular, is striking, and given the absence of data on trade with France in the One Hundredth Penny Tax these data shed additional light on Antwerp’s commercial entanglement with its Southern neighbour.\footnote{On the diverse commercial flows between Antwerp and France, see Coomaert, \textit{Les Français et le commerce international à Anvers (fin du XVIe-XVIIe siècle)}.}

Apart from Florence, other destinations on the Italian Peninsula are recurrent in Rinieri’s correspondence. These destinations will be scrutinized in more detail below, but for now, it suffices to say that the numerous letters sent to Venice are surprising in the light of the data

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calais</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anansi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankfurt</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>842</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from the One Hundredth Penny Tax. Moreover, this high volume stands somewhat in contrast to the moderate number of letters sent to Ancona, the Adriatic port that was supposedly preferred by Florentine merchants. Ragusa, another Adriatic port, was often a destination for Florentine shipments from Ancona. That Rome, Milan and Ferrara were frequent destinations is in line with our expectations. The two last cities lay on the routes from the North to Ancona. Rome was the centre of the bureaucracy of the Catholic Church and home to the papal court. The city thus had a large pool of potential consumers of luxury objects and of those in need of international merchant-banking services.437

Of the numerous middle-sized destination, Augsburg and Nuremberg in Southern Germany lay on one of the routes from the Low Countries to Italy.438 Nuremberg also hosted a Florentine community of mainly textile merchants, some of whom used the city as a gateway to the Central European markets.439 Rinieri also had a correspondent in one of these Central European markets, the city of Cracow. More than Central Europe, it were Spanish destinations that dominated the list of middle sized destinations. The Rinieri wrote mainly to Castilian inland cities that were part of the Castilian fair system, and Seville was the only port of the peninsula that hosted recipients of their letters. This points to the importance of financial transactions in his correspondence. Finally, Rinieri also had correspondents in Brussels and Middelburg, both situated a day’s journey from Antwerp. In the sixteenth century, Brussels hosted the court of the emperor. When Emperor Charles V was away, the Low Countries were ruled by a governor, a position that was held at the time of Rinieri’s correspondence by Maria of Hungary, who also held court in Brussels.440 Also the higher institutions of government and the higher nobility were concentrated in the city, and there was thus potential for luxury consumption.441 Middelburg, situated in the Scheldt estuary, was the second most important commercial city and an important complementary port for Antwerp.


Let us now compare Rinieri’s correspondence with that of the Salviati firm. This firm kept a more elaborate correspondence, and we also may assume that what is left of their records is more complete than the one book of the Rinieri that has survived through time.\textsuperscript{442} A first striking difference between the books of the Salviati and that of the Rinieri is the organization of the correspondence. Whereas all of Rinieri’s letters, regardless of the destination, were recorded in the same book, the Salviati split up their correspondence into separate books: a \textit{copialettere} for their letters to Italy and another one for their letters ‘outside Italy’. This division is in itself telling, for it points to the prominence of the peninsula in the Salviati’s trade network. Moreover, we must take into account that the Antwerp branch of the Salviati and its network were highly integrated with the company that the family held in Lyon.\textsuperscript{443} Nevertheless, the Antwerp Salviati had a wider network of correspondents in the middle sized and minor Italian commercial centres that the bank of Rinieri had at the end of the decade.

\textsuperscript{442} The section ‘Libri della ragione di Averardo di Alemano Salviati e Compagnie di Banco in Anversa’ of the Salviati archive contains 17 bound volumes of which four are registers of letters. Unfortunately, one of these four books (AS 994, with the correspondence to Italy for 1542-'44) is severely damaged, making a substantial amount of the letters unreadable. Although restored, this makes the book unsuited for a systematic quantitative processing of the data on recipients and destinations.

\textsuperscript{443} Matringe, ‘L’entreprise Florentine et La Place de Lyon’.
Table 3.3 Salviati Letters to Italy 1541-’42 (CASNS, AS, 988)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City of destination</th>
<th>Number of letters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancona</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firenze</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pisa</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messina</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siena</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferrara</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragusa</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pistoia</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesaro</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankfurt</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bari</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>637</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 lists the Italian destinations of the Salviati correspondence for 1541-’42. The four most frequent Italian destinations come as no surprise. However, the hierarchy between these four destinations was different, and when compared to the Italian destinations from the Rinieri correspondence, Venice and Ancona are much more prominent. When comparing the letters sent by the Salviati and the Rinieri, both Adriatic ports, but especially Ancona, were more frequent destinations—in both absolute and relative numbers—. For the Salviati in Antwerp, their hometown was a relatively more frequent destination than for the Rinieri (18.52% vs. 15.44%). Among the less frequent but still recurring destinations of the Salviatì in Italy, there is an overlap with those of Rinieri. Most striking is the absence of Milan and the relatively

444 Evidently, Frankfurt is not an Italian destination, but apparently the transcript of one letter was accidentally recorded in the wrong register. CASNS, AS 988, fol 42 v
prominent place of Messina. The presence of Pisa, a destination completely absent in the Rinieri network, can be primarily explained by the letters that were sent to the local Salviati branch there. By that time, Pisa had already been part of the Florentine territory for a long time, so it can be considered as a destination in the home polity. In Pistoia, a town near Florence mainly known for its metal industry, we also find a Salviati correspondent, a certain Rospigliosi, with whom they corresponded mainly about financial issues and the sale of skins. The presence of both smaller Tuscan cities indicates that not everyone with an interest in long-distance exchange in the Ducato was based in Florence. Somewhat surprisingly, Siena, which at that time had not yet been acquired by the Florentine Duchy, was also home to a Salviati correspondent. By that time, the city had lost much of its commercial potential and was overshadowed by its larger rival to the North. A last interesting observation is that for the Salviati in Antwerp, Ragusa was part of Italy.

Table 3.4 Salviati Letters outside Italy 1542-'44 (ASNS, AS, 995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City of destination</th>
<th>Number of letters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villalon</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valladolid</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgos</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medina del Campo</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gran Canaria</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espagna</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middelburg</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadix</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The destinations of the Salviati letters outside of Italy differ substantially from those of the Rinieri bank in the sense that centres of finance and banking were clearly much more important for them. More than two-thirds of non-Italian letters were sent to London, thus overshadowing all the other destinations. Although Lyon was home to the mother branch of the
Antwerp Salviati, the firm also had numerous other correspondents there with whom they corresponded irregularly and at a low frequency. Paris was home to a small group of correspondents, one of which received regular letters from the Salviati in Antwerp. Commercial and financial centres in Castile complete the list of infrequent but recurring destinations. Middelburg and Gran Canaria were occasional destinations. Compared to the destinations of the Rinieri letters, there are two striking absences in the list of the Salviati destinations. First of all, Brussels is completely absent from the list. Although it would be a mistake to assume that the company therefore had no interest or connection in this potential market of luxury consumption and state finance, they did not have a fixed correspondent there. More revealing is the absence of any Southern German destinations, like Nuremberg and Augsburg.

The geography of both Rinieri’s and the Salviati’s correspondence network was thus Western European, with a dominance of Italian destinations. These Italian destinations were more important to the Salviati, whereas Dietisalvi Rinieri had a more diverse non-Italian international network. Later in this chapter I will turn to a selection of these destinations in order to assess the background of their correspondents, their relationship with the two companies in Antwerp and the commercial flows between these correspondents and the Salviati and Rinieri in Antwerp. Yet before turning to these cases, it is important to pay some attention to the formal particularities of the Rinieri’s and the Salviati’s business letters.

Structure, Style and Information: Business Letters as Instruments in Maintaining Ties and Generating Trust.

Commercial correspondence not only serves to reconstruct networks of exchange and the importance of correspondents and commercial centres. Business letters are also a physical testimony of the day to day practices of long-distance trade and the way that merchants organized their contacts throughout Europe and beyond. The letters that the Salviati and Rinieri sent from Antwerp to their international contacts have survived through time in the form that they were recorded in, in their own letter books. These so-called copialettere were part of the records that merchants usually kept. In order to keep track of their own commitments, such as debts, goods to be sent and payments to be made, and demands, like claims of credit, goods they were supposed to receive, merchants had a habit of keeping the minutes of their outgoing correspondence. Often, and also in the case of the Salviati and Rinieri, these minutes were kept in bound volumes in which the letters were inscribed chronologically. As the Salviati’s practice
of separating their correspondence between Italian and non-Italian destinations shows, separate books could be held for particular destinations.

Unfortunately, the incoming letters of the companies have not been kept, and it seems that it is rather rare to retrieve such series of incoming correspondence in private archives. The consequence is that we can only grasp one side of the dialogue from the ongoing correspondence. However, just like when one overhears one side of a telephone conversation, the content and phrasing of that side of the dialogue can to some extent betray the information and questions, and at times also the mood and tone of the messages of the other party. Moreover, the format of early modern business correspondence was such that references to previous incoming letters were often explicitly present in the subsequent outgoing letters. The majority of the Rinieri and Salviati letters begin by referring by the date of the last letter that they had received from that correspondent and also to the last one they had sent themselves.

All letters sent by the two companies were registered in Italian in their letter books. As I will discuss more elaborately below, this should not come as a surprise given the dominance of Italians—or at least the number of people with an Italian name—in their pool of correspondents. Moreover, in the sixteenth century, Italian still prevailed as a, if not the common language of international trade, especially in Southern Europe but also in centres of trade like Antwerp. Whether Adriaan de Poppendamme, a Rinieri correspondent in Middelburg who, based on his name, was a native of the Low Countries, actually was able to understand Italian, however, is doubtful. Other well studied series of copialettere do contain outgoing letters in various languages, indicating that recording letters in the language in which they were actually sent was a common practice. The Italian in which the letters were written was strongly syncopated, especially in the Rinieri letters, and often a majority of the words were abbreviated. It is also rather unclear who actually wrote the letters. The letter books contain a statement on the first page about the company to which they belonged. Yet who actually held the pen remains opaque. Merchants often hired one or more people to serve as their clerks or secretaries. Young men with a similar background were often hired for such

---

446 The letters of the Sepharic partnership Ergas and Silvera were recorded in Portuguese and Italian Trivellato, The Familiarity of Strangers, 179.
447 “Questo libro leggato in carta bianca pecorina con tre coregge tane prositante di chuoi bianchi e di dietisalvi Rinieri a citta d’ Anversa et si chiama suo libro copie di lettere” ASF, LCF, 4417, front page; “Questo libro è di Averadro et Piero Salviati citta d’ anversa et chiamasi copie di lettere Ste a corebbie verde, sul quale sara copie di tutte le lettere che schriverreno in Italia.”, ASNS, AS, 988
positions, mainly as a way to take their first steps into commerce and to learn about the day to
day practice of running long-distance trade.\footnote{Goldthwaite, The Economy of Renaissance Florence, 83–85.}
Since neither the minutes of the Salviati nor those of the Rinieri were ever signed, we have no names of these scribes at our disposal per
letter. However, the recurrent phrasing ‘nostro magistro Dietisalvi’ in the Rinieri letters is an
indication that those letters were written by one or more of his employees, rather than Rinieri himself.\footnote{E.g. ASF, LFC, 4417, fol 4r, Rinieri in Antwerp to Niccolo Gerardi in Florence, May 11 1549; fol 60 v, Rinieri in Antwerp to della Foresta in Venice, August 10 1549.}
Variations in handwriting indicate that at least two hands were at work in the
\textit{copialettere} of Rinieri. As already mentioned, we know from the company’s account book that
one of the collaborators of Rinieri was Giovan Battista Frescobaldi.\footnote{“Chominera l’ entrata tenuto p[er] mano d[i] Gan[battista] Frescobaldi”ASF, LCF 4416, front page.}

As my discussion of the Datini archive has already made clear, business letters have
been an important source for historians of commerce for a long time. In the foundational work
of older generations of historians, letters have been crucial in the reconstruction of the activities
of medieval and early modern merchants and their companies. Recently they have received
renewed interest in the historiography. The (re)discovery of their potential to generate mutual
trust and as tools for maintaining it, have put their importance again on the agenda, notably in

Letters could be crucial instruments in
developing and maintaining commercial ties, especially in contexts where institutions like
courts or religious or ethnic networks were absent on a local level. Such contexts have often
been considered in the light of ‘cross-cultural’ trade, such as the contacts between Sephardim
in Livorno and Hindu’s in Goa that Trivellato has investigated. The relations that Florentines
in Antwerp had with their correspondents throughout Europe were not of that order, but they
still needed to maintain trust through correspondence. Unfortunately, the relatively short
timespans for which the correspondence of the two companies under scrutiny has survived does
not enable us to chart a long-term evolution of the qualities of the content of their letters.
Moreover, we remain ignorant about the level of mobility of the Salviati brothers and Dietisalvi
Rinieri, and whether and to what extent they also met in person with their correspondents in
addition to writing to them.
Regardless of other possible channels through which relations of trust might have been established and maintained, correspondence must have been an important tool, if not the primary one. It is worth providing some general observations about their letters. Only rarely if ever did they contain information that was not related to commerce. Any news about personal matters that did not directly affect or relate to commerce is very exceptional. The tone of the messages was direct and the letters were drafted according to a recurring model. After acknowledging the reception of the last letter from the correspondent and referring to the last one that the company had sent from Antwerp, of which sometimes a copy was added, business matters were brought up directly. The reception of a shipment, a bill (to be) settled, or a follow up on goods that were to be sold in Antwerp are examples of the most recurring topics brought up in the first lines of a letter. Sometimes a letter was extremely concise and limited to just one message consisting of a couple of lines.\footnote{e.g. ASF, LCF 4417, fol 2 v, Rinieri in Antwerp to del Ravalis in Rome, and Rinieri in Antwerp to della Torre in Genova, both May 11, 1549, are respectively three and five lines long.} Yet the sequence of business-related messages could also be longer. Information in these longer letters was tailored to the interests of that particular correspondent, and in the case of Rinieri’s letters, often apologetic for the limited success of their business in Antwerp.\footnote{E.g. “Ma in verita le cose vanno molto stretto e non ci cognisciamo molto profitto”, ASF, LCF 4417, fol 6 v, Rinieri in Antwerp to Barberino in Ancona, May 11 1549.} In the Salviati’s letters, acknowledgements and expressions of gratitude about news about the piazza, the market, in which their correspondents operated, is recurrent in the last paragraphs of their letters.\footnote{See the letters to the Strozzi in Venice (cfr. infra)} All these direct business communications were sometimes knitted together with phrases to ensure that their correspondents knew about their diligence. Occasionally, commercial activities were described as being performed “per amore Vostro”.\footnote{CASNS, Salviati, 988, f 25 v, Salviati in Antwerp to Lottini and Amolfi in Ancona, September 17, 1541: “li guardereno sempre il piu potente e per voi si fana come per li nostri medisimi noi potete credere”. A similar remark is made in a subsequent letter between the same correspondents (f 29 v, October 15, 1541)} That family ties remained a primary point of reference is clearly shown by a reassurance that the Salviati gave about their eagerness: they “would do their best, and for you one does like for our own the same, you can believe us”.\footnote{ASF, 4417, fol 207 r, Rinieri in Antwerp to Gherardi in Ancona, March 1 1549} Despite the rhetorical formality and feeling of obligation to reassure one’s correspondents that probably drove such remarks, a comment like that also suggests that family ties on their own were not necessarily an additional real incentive to commit an extra effort for one’s kin.

Previous scholarship on business letters has indicated that apart from conveying forms of information like those mentioned above, they also operated as a mechanism for checking on
a person’s reputation and seeking recommendations about potential agents. Avner Greif’s work on the letters of the Cairo Genizah in particular has examined the use of letters as tools to spread information on the reliability of fellow merchants. By corresponding with multiple co-religionists, medieval so-called Maghrebi merchants could exchange information on the reliability of their agents and representatives and check on their reputation. According to Greif, both individual rational calculation and collective boycott mechanisms relied on such information. In the letters of the Rinieri and Salviati, such extensive and recurrent reputation mechanisms cannot be traced. Occasionally, we have indications that a correspondent checked on another Antwerp based merchant. For example, in a letter to their family members in Florence, the Rinieri in Antwerp replied that they did not know about the “Neapolitan gentleman” whom their Florentine correspondent had apparently asked or supplied information about. The names of other merchants are also a recurring element in the correspondence of both firms. However, such references can be mostly retrieved in the context of a concrete commercial or financial transaction, conferring the impression that since no introductions or descriptions were added, the correspondents already had some level of familiarity with that merchant. Thus it seems that for the Rinieri and the Salviati in Antwerp, correspondence was primarily a tool for maintaining ties that they had already built up earlier, but that did not mean that trust was a given in their contacts. The ways through which trust and familiarity between the Rinieri and Salviati and their correspondents throughout Europe were built and maintained, deserve to be investigated in greater depth in separate cases.

The Profile of The Salviati and The Rinieri Correspondents

Before going into cases of the ties that the Salviati and Rinieri maintained with their respective correspondents, I provide a general overview of these pools of recipients. In order to understand the impact of a common Florentine background on the formation of commercial networks, we need to know the extent to which their international correspondents had a similar background. Surnames are the primary indicators for assessing how many Florentines were part of the

---

457 Greif, Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy; Greif’s ground breaking work is not uncontested. For example, his model has been critically assessed in Trivellato, The Familiarity of Strangers, 156–57; See also a critical assessment of Greif’s approach in Jessica L. Goldberg, ‘Choosing and Enforcing Business Relationships in the Eleventh-Century Mediterranean: Reassessing the “Maghribi Traders”*’, Past & Present 216, no. 1 (1 August 2012): 3–40, https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gts018.

458 ASF, LCF 4417, fol 43 r, Rinieri in Antwerp to Rinieri in Florence, July 1 1549

459 E.g. in a letter to the Torrigiani in Nuremberg, Rinieri in Antwerp referred to “your Francesco Vitella” who was based in Brussels, ASF, LCF 4417, fol 1 r, May 4 1549
Salviati and Rinieri networks. Although not as distinctive as those of ethnic or religious minorities, a substantial number of Florentine merchant families’ names are easily recognizable. Also here, the databases on the Florentine office holding class provide a good primary yardstick from which to understand to what extent families who were involved in politics also dominated long-distance trade. The limits of this approach, which I discussed earlier in more detail in chapter 1, should nevertheless be kept in mind.

The majority of the regular recipients of the Rinieri’s letters had an office holding class background. It is especially striking that for those families who had multiple, and often regular Rinieri correspondents throughout Europe, almost all were members of the Florentine elite. The members of the Antinori family mainly wrote to the Rinieri from the Castilian October and May fairs in Medina del Campo, from Valladolid, where the Castilian court was predominantly based, and Villalon, another fair town, as well as from Lyon and Nuremberg. The partnership of Cavalcanti & Giraldi, two office holding class families, was among the most regular correspondents in Rome and London, and members of the Cavalcanti family who were in Seville and Florence occasionally received letters. The Compagni family had members in Florence and London who corresponded with the Rinieri in Antwerp, and so did the Corbinelli in Florence and Ancona. The same goes for the Gherardi in Ancona, the Gianfigliazzi in Toulouse and the Mannelli in Lyon, who all also had a family member in Florence who occasionally corresponded with the Rinieri. Members of the Strozzi family in Venice, Paris and Castile, but strikingly not in Florence, likewise received letters from the Rinieri in Antwerp.

Some of the most frequent recipients of the Rinieri letters, however, did not have a background in the Florentine office holding class or come from families that rose within that class. Their most frequent correspondent in Ancona was a member of the Da Barberino family, who was not an established member of the office holding class, and the same holds for Camillo Della Foresta, their most frequent correspondent in Venice. In Castile, they corresponded with a certain Francisco Deduenas. Similar observations can be made for the correspondents of the Salviati, although they had a larger pool of occasional correspondents with non-office holding class names in various commercial centres. To conclude, especially on the Italian Peninsula, Florentines seem to have been the preferred correspondents of the Florentine companies in Antwerp. However, they also had frequent correspondents of whom we must assume were not Florentines, especially in places with where corresponded less frequently, like Naples and Siena.

460 Molho, ‘Names, Memory, Public Identity in Late Medieval Florence.’
The Salviati and Rinieri and Their Ties between Antwerp, Florence and The Adriatic

In what follows, I concentrate on a selection of the letters’ destination. The most frequent destinations of the Salviati’s and Rinieri’s letters will be discussed most elaborate and profound. Given that the focus of this dissertation is on the merchants’ relation with their hometown, I begin by going into the correspondence between Antwerp and Florence, and then I concentrate on the Adriatic centres of commerce. As the presentation of the data from the One Hundredth Penny has shown, the commercial relationship between Florence and Antwerp has remained largely undocumented thus far, whereas its relation with the Adriatic centres is perceived as being divided between small and middle-sized Northern European exporters for Venice and a smaller pool of larger Italian exporters to Ancona. Moreover, the Adriatic city of Ragusa hosted correspondents of both firms. My guiding questions relate to the kind of relationship that the Rinieri and Salviati built or maintained through their letters with their various correspondents in these four centres.

Florence

The 130 letters that were sent to Florence by the Rinieri were directed to a relatively large group of about 24 correspondents.461 Half of those correspondents only received one or two letters from the Rinieri in Antwerp. On the other side of the spectrum, a group of four correspondents regularly received letters – i.e. more than ten over a period of about one and a half years.462 The most frequent correspondents all bore names of office holding lineages, whereas, among the less frequent ones, the names of such lineages are less prevalent. Although it should be stressed that families with such a name had branches spread all over the different economic strata of Florence, it still remains indicative of the level of entanglement within the Florentine office holding class that the majority of letters were directed to members of these families. In general, the letters are the only sources through which we can establish who these correspondents were, and what their commercial interests and fields of activity were. The industries in which they seem to have been involved in – the production of silk and woollen cloth – are not studied to such

461 Given the fact that some letters were directed to two correspondents (e.g. ‘Guinti e Allesandrini’) and others to one of those two (e.g. ‘Lorenzo Guinti’), a clear count of individual correspondents is problematic. Moreover, abbreviations of surnames and slight variations in spelling leave it up to the interpretation of the reader to judge if we are dealing with the same correspondent.

462 These four correspondents belonged to the Giunti e Alessandrini, Gherardi, Corbinelli and Rinieri families.
an extent for the sixteenth century that any systematic documentation of the correspondents is possible.\footnote{About the state of the historiography on the Florentine wool industry for the sixteenth century, see Richard A. Goldthwaite, ‘The Florentine Wool Industry in the Late Sixteenth Century: A Case Study’, \textit{The Journal of European Economic History} 32, no. 3 (2003): 527–28; On the shift from wool to silk as the dominant textile industry in Tuscany, see Paolo Malanima, ‘An Example of Industrial Reconversion: Tuscany in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.’, in \textit{The Rise and Decline of Urban Industries in Italy and in the Low Countries: Late Middle Ages-Early Modern Times}, ed. Herman van der Wee (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 63–74.}

Of all their Florentine correspondents, ‘nostri Rinieri’, their family members in their hometown, received the highest number of letters. Sometimes, the recipient of those letters is specified as Cristofano Rinieri. As we know, Cristofano was Dietisalvi’s father who in 1545 had provided him with capital through an \textit{accomandita} partnership. On average, the merchant bank of Dietisalvi sent one or two letters per month to members of the Rinieri family in Florence. In the last months that were covered by the \textit{copialettere}, the frequency decreased. After an elaborate first letter with several references to previous transactions and communications, which indicates that this was not the opening of their correspondence, the following ones are shorter. The letters sent from Antwerp do not give the impression that there was a clear hierarchical relation between the two parties. Sometimes instructions were given about what should or should not be sent from Florence to Antwerp in the light of how the market in Antwerp evolved. Yet it is clear that the Rinieri in Antwerp also received instructions from their Florentine correspondents and followed these up. For instance, a case of goods that was sent from Florence to Antwerp was ordered to be forwarded to Galeotto Rinieri in London.\footnote{ASF, LCF 4417, fol 43 r, Rinieri in Antwerp to Rinieri in Florence, July 1, 1543} A similar observation can be made about expressions of diligence. The Rinieri of Antwerp assured their Florentine correspondents about their eagerness to act to the benefit of their family members in Florence, and every once in a while also invoked the same kind of diligence from their counterparts.

The company of Dietisalvi in Antwerp was often the recipient of cargo that was sent by family members in Florence. Most of the letters begin with an acknowledgement of the reception of one or more cases, always with a tracing number, of goods that originated from Florence.\footnote{E.g. ASF, LCF 4417, fol 33 r, Rinieri in Antwerp to Rinieri in Florence, July 1, 1543} The exact content of these cases is not always completely clear, but often we find references to “vostri drappi”, your draperies.\footnote{E.g. ASF, LCF 4417, fol 149 v, Rinieri in Antwerp to Rinieri in Florence, December 7 1549} This implies that woven silk cloth was transported from Tuscany to Antwerp. For the company in Antwerp, it was not always easy to find buyers for these cloths. Instructions about which colours were not appreciated anymore
make it clear that the distance between the site of production in Florence and the market in Antwerp was a handicap.\footnote{make it clear that the distance between the site of production in Florence and the market in Antwerp was a handicap.} The most important buyers of these goods seem to have been the English in Antwerp. Lamentations about the declining demand from that group and their dependence on them as their most important buyers are recurrent subjects in the letters to their kin in Florence.\footnote{They seem to have been the English in Antwerp. Lamentations about the declining demand from that group and their dependence on them as the most important buyers are recurrent subjects in the letters to their kin in Florence.}

That silk drapes are so recurrent in the correspondence with Florence, is in line with previous historians’ observations about the prominence of these textiles in exports from Italy to Antwerp.\footnote{That silk drapes are so recurrent in the correspondence with Florence, is in line with previous historians’ observations about the prominence of these textiles in exports from Italy to Antwerp.} Their observation that a larger part of the silk cloth that entered the Low Countries found buyers there and only a limited amount was re-exported, puts the recurrent lamentations of the Rinieri Company on their dependence on English buyers in a different perspective, but the correspondence does not contain many comments about local buyers. Apart from receiving ‘drappi’, ‘rascie’ from Florence also reached Antwerp. This type of wool cloth would become the most expensive and luxurious of its sort in Antwerp.\footnote{That silk drapes are so recurrent in the correspondence with Florence, is in line with previous historians’ observations about the prominence of these textiles in exports from Italy to Antwerp.}

The production of ‘rascie’ had started in Florence in the late fifteenth century. Made of high-quality Castilian wool through a labour-intensive method, these cloths brought the Florentine wool industry its last period of success. For most of its history, that industry had mainly found its export markets in the Mediterranean area. However with these new cloths, in the sixteenth century Florentines were able to penetrate Northern markets for the first time. The scarce historiography on the subject indicates that the most successful period of that export occurred between the 1550s and 1580s, the period immediately after that covered by Rinieri’s letters.\footnote{The production of ‘rascie’ had started in Florence in the late fifteenth century. Made of high-quality Castilian wool through a labour-intensive method, these cloths brought the Florentine wool industry its last period of success. For most of its history, that industry had mainly found its export markets in the Mediterranean area. However with these new cloths, in the sixteenth century Florentines were able to penetrate Northern markets for the first time. The scarce historiography on the subject indicates that the most successful period of that export occurred between the 1550s and 1580s, the period immediately after that covered by Rinieri’s letters.}

Sometimes also more finished goods like gloves, bags (‘orse’) and even tableware – be it for personal use by Rinieri and his children—were sent from Florence to the Rinieri in

\footnote{“sono el forte cholore che ci aviteranno spedire perechi per di neri che ci troviamo impero saideitelli e i avenire non lapostate ne chomperate piu chelle chose di qua vanno magramentne che iddio migliore stagione”, ASF, LCF 4417, fol 57 v, Rinieri in Antwerp to Rinieri in Florence, August 10 1549.}

\footnote{E.g., “con questi ingiles non e molto sicuro negotiare”, ASF, LCF 4417, fol 51 v, August 3 1549, Rinieri in Antwerp to Rinieri in Florence.}


Antwerp. However, goods were also sent in the other direction. Linen, in particular is mentioned as a good that was regularly directed to Florence. These exchanges were combined with banking operations that ran through the company’s network. Given the elaborate letters with updates to their family members in Florence about the credit given and outstanding debts, we can assume that these operations were coordinated and followed up there.

Apart from family members, the bank of Dietisalvi Rinieri in Antwerp also had other regular correspondents in Florence. Francesco Corbinelli, their second most frequent correspondent, received seventeen letters. The content of these letters is largely similar to those that were sent to Rinieri’s family members in Florence. Also Corbinelli had sent drappi to Antwerp for which they were searching for potential buyers. Apparently, this process did not go fast enough for their Florentine correspondent, and the Rinieri had to justify their actions in Antwerp more to Corbinelli than to their kin in Florence. In their letters to Corbinelli, their dependency on the English merchant community in Antwerp as buyers of silk cloth is stressed even more: ‘other nations’ barely bought such cloths, they claimed. An offer by Corbinelli to provide rascie for the Rinieri in Antwerp was refused because they still had it in stock, indicating that this new type of cloth indeed was still working its way on to the market. Although the main subject in the letters were textiles that were being exported from Italy to the Low Countries, it is clear that good were also being sent in the other direction. Corbinelli, for instance, was the recipient of a shipment of linen and madder, a dyestuff.

Similar traffic and styles of writing can be observed in Rinieri’s correspondence with Niccolò Gerardi, another Florentine correspondent. Gerardi was another of his correspondents who mainly sent silk cloth from Florence to the Low Countries, where the Rinieri had a hard time finding buyers for it. Again reassurances were made that every good opportunity would be grasped and diligence would be shown. Apart from the main traffic in silk that was sent from Florence to the north, some shipments from Antwerp to Florence were arranged for Gerardi, again in linen and madder. Similar observations can be made for the other frequent and regular Florentine correspondents. As mentioned earlier, the Joyous Entry of Philip of

---

472 ASF, LCF 4417, fol 83 v, September 7 1549; “Cotella e Forcheta per il nostro maggiore e filie”, Idem, fol 99 r, Rinieri in Antwerp to Rinieri in Florence, October 5 1549
473 E.g. a reference to “6 pachi da Lino” in ASF, LCF 4417, fol 168 v, January 1 1549.
474 “li inglesi e quali sono che comperano e consumamono al fonte della nostra drapperia”, ASF, LCF 4417, fol 5 v, Rinieri in Antwerp to Corbinelli in Florence, May 11 1549.
475 “quello tocera alle robbie e lini mandatevi”, ASF, LCF 4417, fol 116, Rinieri in Antwerp to Corbinelli in Florence.
476 “et quando ventura vengha, si prendera, et lo sapete”, ASF, 4417, LCF fol 231 v, Rinieri in Antwerp to Gerardi in Florence, April 26 1550
Spain created high expectations with the Rinieri in Antwerp as they believed that it would create an improvement in demand, and they did not hesitate to communicate those expectations to their Florentine and other correspondents.477

The Salviati had a wider pool of correspondents in Florence of about 35 recipients.478 However, they also had a small core group of regular correspondents, of which their relatives, often just indicated in the copialettere as ‘nostri’, being the most frequently recurring ones. Unlike the Rinieri, the Salviati did not primarily discuss the export of wool and silk cloth from Florence to the North. The most recurrent good in their correspondence was pelle, leather, which was sent from Florence to Antwerp to be sold and/or being processed further there.479 Also, financial transactions filled large sections of their letters. Occasionally, also luxury goods from the Low Countries were requested and shipped to Florence. The Salviati in both Antwerp and Florence recurrently discussed an order of tapestries by Piero de Medici.480 For Giralomo da Somaia, their second most frequent correspondent in Florence, they shipped feathers to Italy, but also served as intermediaries in the sending of kerseys from London via Antwerp to Ancona.481

The Adriatic Ports: Venice, Ancona and Ragusa

The presentation of the data from the One Hundredth Penny has made it clear that the Adriatic ports were important destinations in the exports from the Low Countries to Italy. The division between the growing exports to Venice that were organized by smaller Low Countries exporters and exports to Ancona that were dominated by a relatively small group of mainly Florentine merchants is the image that has thus far dominated the historiography. The frequency of the Rinieri’s and the Salviati’s letters to the destinations that I presented above at least calls for a more nuanced and in depth look at the position of Florentines in both ports. Venice apparently mattered more for Florentines in Antwerp than we may assume based on the export records. Moreover, the presence of correspondents in Ragusa indicates that contacts with that port were

477 ASF, LCF 4417, fol 82 r, Rinieri in Antwerp to Rucellai in Florence, September 7 1549 & fol 83 r, Rinieri to Gherardi in Ancona, September 7 1549
478 Also here, abbreviations, irregular handwriting and inconsistent spelling of names leave it up to the interpretative judgment of the reader to count how many recipients the Salviati had in Florence.
479 CASNS, AS 988, fol 65 r, Salviati in Antwerp to Salviati in Florence, January 7, 1541
480 CASNS, AS 988, fol 65 r, Salviati in Antwerp to Salviati in Florence, January 7, 1541
481 CASNS, AS 988, fol 1 r, fol 114 r & 147 r, Salviati in Antwerp to Da Somaia in Florence, respectively July 23 1541, May 13 152 & July 8 1542
not exclusively followed up from ports in the Italian side of the Adriatic, but also directly from
other places where Florentines were active like Antwerp.

For most of its history, Ancona was a port of regional importance, which connected its
own hinterland with other parts of the Adriatic and participated in exchanges of local goods.
However, at three brief moments in its history the port rose to a role that transcended its patterns
of exchange in the Adriatic area. The most successful of those three periods was the first half
of the sixteenth century. The moments of growth beyond the regional exchange in the port were
termed as so-called passive growth, which were enabled by exogenous commercial dynamics.
Local merchants were never the driving actors behind the rise of the city, nor were the local
industries. Florentine long-distance merchants were the group that was primarily responsible
for the growth and consolidation of Ancona in this period. Yet also merchants from Ragusa,
Greece, and Anatolia also visited the port in order to exchange goods with Florentines there.⁴⁸²

Throughout its successful period, three flows of goods can be distinguished in Ancona’s
trade: the local agrarian exchange that remained a constant element, the supply of textiles from
North Western Europe, and the import of hides from the Balkan and other parts of the Eastern
Mediterranean. Of these three flows, the supply of textiles from North Western Europe was the
most vibrant one in volume and importance. Whereas hides were still dominant in the 1520s,
through to the 1540s, textiles were outgrowing that exchange. Within the flow of textiles to
Ancona, the cloth that was produced in Florence lost its share almost completely. In its first
phase, the cloth that found its way to Ancona and beyond was mainly cloth from Central and
Southern France, which Florentines in Lyon acquired. Later in the decade which was covered
by the letters of the Salviati and Rinieri, cloth from the Low Countries and England gained a
larger share in Ancona. This growth occurred to the cost of other smaller ports in the area.⁴⁸³

Florentines had had a long history of presence in Ancona, which started at least in the
High Middle Ages. Together with other groups of Italian merchants, they enjoyed substantial
reductions in customs, which made the port more attractive than other Adriatic harbours, and
in particular Venice.⁴⁸⁴ Despite the rising traffic and the prominence of Florentines in the city

⁴⁸² Peter Earle, ‘The Commercial Development of Ancona, 1479-1551’, The Economic History Review 22, no. 1
Fattori, ‘The Greek Confraternity of Sant’Anna Dei Greci in Ancona - Demographic Structure and Social
Responsibilities (1524-1580)’, in Early Modern Ethnic and Religious Communities in Exile, ed. Yosef Kaplan,
⁴⁸⁴ Giovanni Cherubini, ‘I Toscani Ad Ancona Nel Basso Medioevo’, in Atti Del XXX Convegno Di Studi
Maceratesi, 1994 (Pollenza, 1996), 166.
during that period, for the sixteenth century the community has not been the subject of substantial research. The papers of the Magistrate of the Consulates contain indications that the Florentine community was organized in a nation. Moreover, they point to the case of a Florentine merchant, Luigi Pescioni, who after being based in Antwerp moved to Ancona.

As noted above, in the light of the historiography that stresses the importance of Ancona for Florentines, the low number of letters sent by the Rinieri to the port is striking, especially given the importance of textiles in his trade. The 34 letters that the company wrote were mainly aimed at two regular correspondents, whereas two other correspondents only received two and one letter(s) respectively. The Salviati on the contrary had a large pool of correspondents who together formed the largest group of their correspondents in an Italian town. A core group of regular correspondents there was accompanied by a larger pool of occasional recipients of the Salviati’s letters from Antwerp. Since the Salviati brothers were listed among the most active Florentine exporters in the One Hundredth Penny, this should not come as a surprise. Textiles bought at or transferred through the Antwerp market, and especially English kerseys, together with spices and Camelot textiles that were sent from Ancona to the north were the main commodities referred to in the Salviati’s letters.

Ancona was an important commercial centre in the Adriatic and served as a connector between North Western Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, but Venice remained by far the most important port in the region. The city in the lagoon hardly needs any introduction as an early modern commercial centre. Despite the fact that its own mercantile elite began to retreat from commerce and invested more conservatively in the Venetian terraferma, the city remained an important centre of commerce well into the seventeenth century. It continued to host and attract communities of foreign merchants, and given the presence of a Jewish community, merchants from the Eastern Mediterranean and from Northern Europe, it was probably one of the most diverse populated commercial centres in Europe. Throughout the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, the city also hosted a community of Florentine merchants that was united in a nation. Unfortunately, this community has also barely investigated for the

485 The letter to the Florentine communities abroad that explained the working of the magistrate was also addressed to the nation in Ancona Grunzweig, ‘Les Papiers Du Magistrat Des Consulats Aux Archives D’État de Florence.’, 10.
486 Grunzweig, 25.
487 References to Kerseys can be retrieved in e.g. ASF, LCF 4417, fol 46 r & 226 v; fol 4 v & 25 r contain references to Camelots.
489 Reinhold C. Mueller, ‘Mercanti e imprenditori fiorentini a Venezia nel tardo medioevo’, Società e storia, 2001; Paula Clarke, ‘The Identity of the Expatriate: Florentines in Venice in the Late Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth
sixteenth century. Apart from long-distance merchants, Venice also attracted Florentine craftsmen and entrepreneurs in the textile industry who sought to make their fortunes there. Moreover, the combination of a relatively dense Florentine community, a stable hosting polity, and the vicinity turned the city in the Laguna into a safe haven for Florentine exiles.490

For the Rinieri, Venice was the second most frequent Italian destination for the letters that they sent from Antwerp, after their hometown. One correspondent, Camillo della Foresta was the recipient of almost half of those letters. Apart from him, the Nasi and Strozzi were also regular recipients. A small group of other correspondents completes the list. The letters directed to della Foresta were in general long ones, packed with information and instructions. Most of that information deals with exchange operations, and also the numerous entries in the one Rinieri account book we have at our disposal points in that direction.491 This indicates that Venice was an important financial centre for the Rinieri in Antwerp and that the underrepresentation of Florentines in export from the Low Countries to Venice is due to the financial nature of their engagements there. However, as della Foresta was also a regular recipient of kerseys, it remains important to take into account that this division between one Adriatic centre used for banking and finance and another for the shipment of goods was anything but absolute.492 Moreover, diamonds and pearls were sometimes also discussed as objects to be traded by della Foresta.493

As for the qualities of their relationship with della Foresta, expressions in the letters to this Venetian correspondent make it clear that, unlike their relations with the correspondents in their hometown, it was the Rinieri in Antwerp that expressed requirements and expectations from della Foresta. A lack of any confirmations or refusals of the proposals in the letters that they sent from Antwerp to him, indicates that the initiatives to engage in transactions came mainly from the Rinieri in Antwerp. A remark like “One expects you have done something good, you having such a wide field in which to engage in diverse trade; we do not doubt that

490 Goldthwaite, The Economy of Renaissance Florence, 179–82.
491 The first 50 folios of the ‘Entrata’ and the ‘Uscita’ section of the accountbook contain respectively 21 and 18 references to della Foresta. All these entries cover financial transactions. ASF, LCF 4416, fol 6 r, 9 v, 13 v, 14 r, 16 v, 20 v, 22 v, 23 r, 25 r, 26 v, 28 r, 30 v, 31 r, 35 r, 38 r, 40 v, 41 r, 42 r, 46 r, 47 r, 47 v (Entrata), 103 r, 120 r, 121 r, 122 r, 126 r, 128 v, 130 v, 131 v, 133 v, 137 r, 137 v, 139 v, 140 v, 142 r, 142 v, 145 r, 148 r, 149 v, 150 r (Uscita)
492 E.g., ASF, LCF 4417, fol 10 v & 46 v Rinieri in Antwerp to della Forresta in Venice, May 18 1549 & July 6 1549
493 ASF, LCF 4417, fol 60 r & 110 r, Rinieri in Antwerp to della Forresta in Venice, August 10 1549 & October 26 1549
you have found a good counterproposal”, is but one example of such an exhortation. This comment shows that the diversity of Venice as a marketplace was a major incentive for corresponding regularly with della Foresta, and again that it was not merely a financial hub. Although the correspondence is the only source to document this, and a literal confirmation of this hypothesis cannot be retrieved, we must assume that della Foresta served as an agent for the Rinieri. How he was remunerated for his performances, unfortunately, remains unclear. Unlike the tone of the letters that they sent to their Florentine correspondents, the Rinieri in Antwerp were not apologetic to their most frequent Venetian correspondent. Whether della Foresta was a Florentine, a Venetian, or whether he had another background cannot be deduced based on the letters, but the della Foresta’s were a lineage in the Florentine office holding class of the late Middle Ages. Regardless of whether he was a Florentine or not, the tone of the first letter to him in the register of letters makes it clear that at that point he was already a regular correspondent.

The second most frequent Rinieri correspondents in the Lagoon were members of the Strozzi family. After the Medici, the Strozzi family was probably the richest and politically most relevant one in Renaissance Florence. Members of the family had made a fortune under the Medici popes in the first half of the sixteenth century, but the relations between the two families had always been tense and fluctuated. Parts of the Strozzi network have been studied, and we know that they had a long history of commercial presence in Venice. The prominence of the family, however, was not reflected in the letters of the Rinieri. The ten letters to the Strozzi were brief, often no more than four or five lines. They contained information on banking and exchange operations, without referring to any trade in goods. Exhortations and engagements were absent.

Earlier that decade, the brothers Alessandro and Lorenzo Strozzi had been the most regular correspondents in Venice, and in fact in Italy in general for the Salviati in Antwerp. Their letters are generally longer than Rinieri’s ones and they go into a variety of topics, all of

---

494 “si attende abbiate fatto qualchecosa buona che certo avendo voi il campo tanto largo di potere afrontarvi con diverse merchanzie non si fa dubbio che avete trovato qualche buono riscontro (...),” ASF, LCF 4417, fol 192 r, Rinieri in Antwerp to della Foresta in Venice, February 1, 1549.
495 Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence*, 369 In Baker’s and Litchfield’s reconstructions of the office holding class for the sixteenth century and the period of the Gran Ducato, the Della Foresta are not listed anymore.
497 ASF, LCF 4417, fol 147 r, 164 r, 186 r, 226 v, 228 v, 241 v, 251 r, 257 r, 264 v, 270 r
which were directly related to long-distance exchange. Settling banking operations was the main subject, and references to the bills and accounts of Florentine, but also Lucchese and Genoese merchants are recurrent. The two companies regularly exchanged information about prices and exchange rates on their respective market places in their letters. Contrary to Rinieri’s letters, the ones written by the Salviati indicate that goods were also exchanged between the Strozzi in Venice and their correspondents in Antwerp. Cheap Capitoni silk threads were sent from Venice via Antwerp to London, and in Antwerp, various spices – ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon and pepper - arrived from Venice to be sold in Antwerp. That spices were of great interest to both the Salviati in Antwerp and their correspondents in Venice is in itself not surprising. The presence of the Portuguese ‘staple’ of spices in Antwerp is often considered to be one of the three main pillars of the success of the Antwerp market in the sixteenth century. The rise in importance of Antwerp as a market for spices supposedly came at Venice’s expense, which prior to the development of the sea route to the Indian Ocean by Portuguese merchants was the main supplier of these luxury goods in Europe. However, in her pioneering research, Florence Edler has already shown that the Antwerp market and the Venetian one were to some extent entangled. Moreover, the sending of spices from Venice to Antwerp in the period under scrutiny should be understood in the light of the backlash in Antwerp’s commerce in the first years of the 1540’s because of the war between the Habsburg and the Valois. Also in the Salviati’s letters to the Strozzi, this was invoked as one of the major disturbances in the Low Countries during that period.

In the Rinieri’s letters, the spice exchange seems to have been directed mainly at Venice. In their letters to Ancona, these products are only brought up very occasionally. Concurring with the data from the One Hundredth Penny, exchanges of textiles dominated the trade with that port. The Rinieri had had two frequent correspondents in Ancona, Niccolo Barberino and Bartolomeo Gherardi, to whom they sent 17 and 14 letters respectively. As mentioned above, kerseys sent from the Low Countries to the Adriatic were the most frequently traded goods. The importance of these textile trades is stressed by the Rinieri routinely towards the end of their letters to these two correspondents when they expressed their latest perceptions about the

\footnote{498}{E.g. CASNS, AS 988, fol 115 r, Salviati in Antwerp to Strozzi in Venice, May 16, 1542; fol 152 v, Salviati in Antwerp to Strozzi in Venice, September 2 1542}
\footnote{499}{E.g. CASNS, AS 988, fol 71 v & fol 107 r, Salviati in Antwerp to Strozzi in Venice, April 15 1542 & January 1 1541}
\footnote{500}{Edler-De Roover, ‘The Market for Spices in Antwerp, 1538-1544’.
501}{Edler-De Roover, 218.}
\footnote{502}{E.g. CASNS, AS 988, fol 152 v, Salviati in Antwerp to Strozzi in Venice, September 2 1542}
success of particular cloths and the current prices at the Antwerp market.\textsuperscript{503} Expressions of gratitude and diligence also recur in the letters. However, there was no clear hierarchical relationship between the Rinieri in Antwerp and either of their two Ancona correspondents. Yet similar to what can be observed for their correspondents in Florence and Venice, their most regular correspondent received the most elaborate and detailed letters. Whether Barberino, therefore, was their official agent cannot be firmly established, but he was clearly their best informed Ancona correspondent, who also was updated in detail on other transactions that the Rinieri correspondents had conducted.

For the Salviati, Ancona was their most frequent destination of letters in Italy, and they had a wide pool of correspondents there. Four of their correspondents received about the same number of letters.\textsuperscript{504} The flow of goods is largely similar to that observed for the Rinieri: kerseys, camelots and \textit{oltrafini}. Unlike the Rinieri, the Salviati also informed their correspondents in Ancona about spices in Antwerp, thus dealing with them in a more similar way as their Venetian correspondents. Although most of the letters that they sent to their pool of correspondents in Ancona were largely similar, Lottini and Arnolfi received letters that were usually longer and were provided with more details about the market situation in Antwerp and the practicalities of the trade. Again, the characteristics of the relation between the Salviati and these correspondents are difficult to grasp solely from the exchange of letters. Neither of the parties were solely the principal or the agent. Both parties provided services to each other and charged one another for them.

Ancona and Venice were not the eastern limits of the Salviati’s and Rinieri’s networks in Antwerp. Both companies also corresponded with merchants in the Dalmatic port city of Ragusa (nowadays Dubrovnik). Although not situated on the Italian peninsula, the city had been strongly inserted into the Italian commercial world since the Middle Ages. Originally under Venetian rule, the city gained its independence and later fell under the dominance of the expanding Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{505} Like the other Adriatic port cities, Ragusa was also a meeting

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{503} E.g. “Carise stanno in buon riputazione e divizione a fl. 49 e l’ altre secondo bonta alla venante panni holtrafini (sic) s. 5. 14 – Cambelotti anno ragionevole domanda”. ASF, 4417, fol 6 r, Rinieri in Antwerp to Gherardi in Ancona, May 11 1549.
\bibitem{504} Lottini & Arnolfi, Gerini and Giacomini each received sixteen letters in the period covered, Di Gondola and Ragionati received fifteen.
\end{thebibliography}
place for merchants from Western Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. In the late Middle Ages, the city also hosted a community of Tuscan merchants.\textsuperscript{506} Several Florentine companies were involved in trade in Ragusa.\textsuperscript{507} Moreover, the natives of Ragusa also actively engaged in long-distance commerce and were sprawled throughout the Adriatic, Balkans and beyond.

In Ragusa, or ‘Raugia’ as they named it in their correspondence, the Salviati had three correspondents with which they had a limited contact, whereas the Rinieri only wrote to one more regular correspondent there, Lorenzo Miniati. The goods that Rinieri traded with Miniati are the same we came across in the correspondence with Ancona. It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that the shipments from and to Ragusa were mainly handled by Barberino, the Rinieri correspondent in Ancona, and also financially through Nasi in Venice.\textsuperscript{508} Moreover, Miniati’s orders were also occasionally reported to what must have been his Florentine associate, Spinello Martini who followed up on the payments.\textsuperscript{509}

\textit{Conclusion: A Distinctly Florentine Network}

Over the past two decades, in depth case studies on early modern firms have shed a new light on the subject of long-distance commercial networks. Related to that rise in interest in long-distance trade, questions about cross cultural trade and the importance of diaspora networks have been prominent on the research agenda. In this chapter, I have used the same kind of source material that such historians have given a central place. However, here I have not aspired to provide a detailed in depth reconstruction and assessment of the long distance networks of the Salviati and Rinieri merchant banks in Antwerp. Instead, I have used their business records, and, in particular, their correspondence to engage with questions about Florentine long-distance trade in the sixteenth century. In the aftermath of a historiography that has focused primarily on merchants belonging to religious minority groups and groups like the Portuguese that allegedly formed a ‘nation’ that was detached from state institutions, we have been left with the question how groups like Florentines, who were neither a religious minority nor detached from a particular polity, should be assessed and deserve their place in these debates. The observations


\textsuperscript{507} Goldthwaite, \textit{The Economy of Renaissance Florence}, 184–89.

\textsuperscript{508} E.g. ASF, LCF 4417, Rinieri in Antwerp to Minati in Ragusa, February 1, 1549, fol 187 v: “Avete ricevuto la balla mandetevi per via d’ Ancona e mane (sic) del Baberino”

\textsuperscript{509} Again, the letters do not make clear what kind of partnership or commercial relation Martini and Miniati actually had.
presented in this chapter provide us with relevant indications about the distinctive qualities of Florentine long-distance trade and allow us to engage with these questions.

Starting from the historiography based on the One Hundredth Penny, which until now has set the tone in our understanding of the Low Countries’ place in long-distance Florentine trade, I have now provided a new insight into that trade. Using the services of a group of Italian transporters, Florentines in Antwerp exchanged letters, money and goods with merchants based in various parts of Western Europe. Although some of their correspondents in places like Castille had local surnames, the most substantial number of their contacts in important commercial centres like London, Lyon and Rome as well as in Southern Germany had recognizable Florentine names. With these Florentines spread over Europe, the Salviati and Rinieri in Antwerp exchanged commercial information, expressed expectations and placed and followed up orders. Through their business letters, they maintained and consolidated ties that largely predated the available correspondence. The primary bedrock of their long-distance commercial contacts thus was a common Florentine background.

The importance of a common Florentine background is also demonstrated by the number of letters that the Salviati and Rinieri exchanged with correspondents in Florence. Although their networks were by no means completely centred on their city of origin, their connection with Florence was more important than what has been traced through other sources. Whereas Florence is almost absent in the data from the One Hundredth Penny registers, the letters of both firms make it clear that correspondents in Florence and the goods that they sent from Florence to Antwerp were of greater importance than has been previously understood. By also focusing on the Adriatic contacts of both firms, it has become possible to nuance the observations –largely based on the data of goods that were exported- about the role of Florentines in the exchange between North-Western Europe and this crucial area in the commercial flows between east and west. The letters of the Salviati and Rinieri give a better understanding of the continuous importance of Venice in the Florentine commercial web. To be sure, Ancona was indeed a crucial centre of trade for Florentines, but the contacts about both finance and the exchange of goods that Rinieri in particular maintained with Venice call for a more in-depth study of the complementary role that both the Adriatic ports may have had for Florentine merchants.

Based on these observations, the case of Florentine long-distance trade calls for a reassessment of what networks and diasporas were and meant in early modern Europe. The networks that the Salviati and Rinieri developed and maintained from Antwerp had a high density of Florentine and Italian correspondents, and only a few had a distinctively different
background. This means that contacts with members of other groups mainly occurred on the local level, but as shown in the previous chapter, that also occurred only to a limited extent. The way that Florentines organized their commercial enterprises resembles more the way that ‘diaspora merchants’ such as Armenians organized their undertakings. This throws into question our tendency to distinguish ‘diaspora’ merchants and cross-cultural trade from groups with a more clear home background, who were not the subject of structural religious or ethnic discrimination. Indeed, Florentines were rarely if ever prosecuted for religious reasons and were also not the subject of ethnic discrimination in their host environment. Although some were exiles, discrimination or prosecution that they received in their hometown was not a decisive push factor for their entry into long-distance trade. Therefore, categorizing them as diaspora merchants is of little help in understanding and comparatively assessing the case of the Florentine commercial network. However, the most important conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is that religious or ethnic prosecution or differences were not determining factors in the level of intra-Florentine integration and their relative segregation from other networks. A common hometown background was what mattered most, followed by a shared familiarity with Italian and with the world of finance. In light of these observations, Florence can be considered as a centre in a circulation society that consisted of men with a common background who left their hometown, but whose ties were primarily based on their hometown background. As shown in this chapter, these ties were familial, commercial, and financial. However, as I will demonstrate in the following chapter politics, political culture, and patronage also bound these merchants to their city of origin.
Chapter 4. Correspondence and Patronage: Florentines in Antwerp and Cosimo I

On May 12, 1544, a certain Antonio di Giovanni Merciante sent the first dated letter from Antwerp, which was kept in Duke Cosimo I’s correspondence in Florence.\textsuperscript{510} It was the only message from that correspondent to the duke. For that, but also for other reasons it was a striking letter. The Antwerp-based Merciante had not directed the letter straight to the ruler of his city of origin, but had sent the message to a certain Pietro Berti in Florence. He did so to notify Berti that he had information that might be of interest to the duke. Berti, who described Merciante as his ‘client’, then in his turn copied Merciante’s letter and sent it to Cosimo.\textsuperscript{511} Berti’s use of the term ‘client’ to refer to Merciante is a clear indicator of the hierarchical ties between the two Florentines who must have been engaged in a patron and a dependent client relationship. Moreover, the fact that the letter ended in Cosimo’s carteggio indicates that the duke was at the top of this chain of patronage. Apart from the indirect trajectory through which the letter reached the duke, its content was also noteworthy: Merciante reported on the presence of an artist-engineer in Antwerp, a relatively uncommon subject in the letters that were sent from Antwerp to the duke.\textsuperscript{512}

Due to these features and because it is the first dated letter that was sent from Antwerp in the duke’s correspondence, Merciante’s message is eye-catching. In this chapter, Merciante and the other direct and indirect Florentine correspondents in Antwerp are my central case. The focus of the analysis lies, in particular, on the qualities of the relation between these Antwerp-based Florentines, the majority of whom were merchants, and the ruler of their hometown. In the Low Countries, they developed a variety of ties with actors in their local Antwerp context and on a long-distance level with people in their hometown and beyond in commercial environments where they had interests. Throughout the analysis of their relations in Antwerp, I have mainly engaged with the question if and to what extent the home government and the social structures of their Florentine home region affected the formal and informal organization of the Florentine nation and the merchant community in Antwerp.

In this chapter, I continue to focus on the relational dimension of their activities outside of Florence by placing their attitudes towards their home ruler and their interactions with him,

\textsuperscript{510} ASF, MdP 368, fol 350 r, May 12 1544.
\textsuperscript{511} Berti described Merciante as “mio com[m]ettente”, idem
\textsuperscript{512} Merciante described the man as “uno excellente artefice” (sic), idem
his court and his administration at the centre. I show that apart from the institutional and social context of their hometown, merchants also related to and were affected by the policies, the interests and attitude of their ruler. By investigating the diverse profiles of the duke’s correspondents in Antwerp, the different kinds of services that they provided to their ruler, and what their ruler requested of them, I aim to comprehend the motives that primarily drove these interactions. In this way, we can gain a better understanding of the impact of a home ruler on merchants abroad. More particularly, I pay attention to the importance of patronage in these relations, and to the variations in the form and qualities of interactions that come with patronage. Whereas patronage relations have been extensively investigated with the purpose of gaining additional insights into the functioning of early modern politics and into the production and trade of art, long-distance merchants have rarely been the subject of research that deals with patronage. By putting patronage relations and the actions and attitudes that came with them at the centre of this chapter and by demonstrating their importance for merchants abroad, I thus propose a new analytical point of view in order to acquire a better understanding of the social and political world of sixteenth-century Florence within and beyond its borders. Moreover, I also demonstrate that in order to understand the relations between merchants abroad and their home region, we should not only look at the institutional and social level but also at more informal political ties and at the political culture of their home polity.

My analysis in this chapter is divided into five sections. First, I discuss the key features of the political and social evolutions that took place in Florence at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, paying special attention to the changes in the social relations and the place of patronage in these evolutions. I also reflect on the historiography of patronage, both for Florence in this period and on a more general level. The second section of the chapter looks at the quantitative dimensions of the correspondence kept in the carteggio di Cosimo and at the profile of the people that directly and indirectly sent letters from Antwerp to the duke and his administration. It presents the general and distinctive contours of the central sources and the qualities of the central actors of the chapter. The third section moves to a qualitative level and examines the news and information that was provided by correspondents in Antwerp. In particular, I pay attention to the place of commercial news and information, a focal point that serves us well for gaining an understanding of the relation between the Florentines in Antwerp and the duke. In the fourth section, I then turn to the rhetoric and the style of the letters that were written to the duke. In order to understand the distinctive qualities of their relation with their home ruler, it is important not to look merely at what they wrote and what kind of service they provided, but also how they conveyed their messages. The fifth and
final section turns to a concrete case and focuses on the supply of goods and expertise that lay outside of the set of goods that the Florentines in Antwerp generally traded in. Paying attention to some of the atypical services that the Florentines in Antwerp provided to Cosimo and to the duke’s requests for such services, allows us to see in detail how willing they were to serve their home ruler and what kind of expectations they had when they provided them.

As a final point in this introductory section, I need to elaborate briefly on the source base of this chapter. The period under scrutiny here is that between 1544 and 1567. The letters that were sent from Antwerp to Cosimo covers the period up to the outbreak of the Dutch revolt. By 1567, Cosimo had already passed on the day to day rule of Tuscany to his son Prince Francesco for about three years. The majority of the letters that I use here date from the 1550s and 1560s, thus covering two decades for which a corresponding series of private business correspondence like that of Rinieri and the Salvati lacks. The most important corpus of sources for this chapter is the incoming correspondence of Duke Cosimo I, which has been collected in his *carteggio universale*. Apart from this series, the surviving minutes of the duke’s outgoing correspondence, samples of the outgoing letters drafted by his ducal secretaries and some letters kept in the *Miscellanea Medicea* are also investigated to provide an additional context, from which to compare and further document the contacts between Antwerp-based Florentines and Cosimo I.

*Political and Social Change and The Importance of Patronage: Florence and Beyond*

In order to understand the relevance of patronage for Florentines abroad, it is important to place it in the context of the political and social evolutions that occurred in Florence in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. To do so, we need to turn first to the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century. In the two centuries prior to the period under scrutiny in this thesis, two events occurred that are considered by historians and sociologists as the basis of how social and political relations were organized in Florence: the reaction to the Ciompi revolt of 1378 and the ascent of the Medici family in 1434. First, as a reaction to the exceptionally democratic system that woolworkers – the Ciompi – tried to install in the summer of 1378, the political and economic elite of Florence began to reconfigure itself and became more oligarchic.\(^{513}\) Initially that oligarchy was dominated by the Albizzi family, but it was the

\(^{513}\) The argument that the Ciompi revolt was a moment in which the Florentine elite closed itself is made in Padgett and Mclean, ‘Organizational Invention and Elite Transformation’.
members of the Medici family who informally ruled for most of the fifteenth century. The start of Medici dominance over Florence is usually situated in 1434, the year in which the Medici’s pater familias, Cosimo the elder returned to the city after a brief exile.\textsuperscript{514} The success of the family in establishing its informal rule over Florence is ascribed to their skilful construction of a web of patronage relations. The heads of the family masterfully developed alliances and relations with other Florentine families through marriages and favours. However, by the end of the century, their system of rule ended, due to pressures from internal and external forces.

This phase of instability started with the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent and the succession of his son Piero, which was then followed by the passage of the French army through Florence in 1494, the fall of Medici rule, and the rise of Savonarola in 1494. These events were but the beginning of a turbulent era—the last years of the fifteenth and the first three decades of the sixteenth century—that saw the coming and going of experimental forms of popular government and of shifting pro and anti-Medici alliances in power.\textsuperscript{515} This period of instability partially ended in 1530, when the last Florentine republic was sieged and defeated by the Imperial army of Charles V. In the treaty of Barcelona of 1529, the Emperor made an agreement with the Medici family to bring them back to power in Florence. From their return to power in 1530 until the extinction of the family in the eighteenth century, they enjoyed an uninterrupted rule over Florence. However, the modalities of their rule changed substantially in this period of transition: from their informal control of the republic and its office holders, they moved to formal dominance and acquired the official title of rulers of the city, first as Dukes of the Florentine republic and from 1569 onwards as Grand Dukes of Tuscany.

The Medici did not obtain that position autonomously: the decision about the new political order of the city-state lay largely in the hands of its conqueror and ally, the Holy Roman Emperor. He eventually installed Alessandro de’ Medici as the first ‘duce’ of the Florentine republic. Throughout his first years in that position, Alessandro had to govern Florence with the Medici pope, Clement VII who was the informal head of the family. Alessandro’s rule ended abruptly when he was assassinated in 1537 by his cousin Lorenzino. His successor Cosimo I, an unprepared young man from a side branch of the family, would unexpectedly but durably develop the Florentine duchy into an authoritarian state.\textsuperscript{516} Although the turbulence of the first decades ended more or less in 1530, it was only under Cosimo that Florence’s political order


\textsuperscript{515} A good narrative presentation on this succession of events is provided in John M. Najemy, \textit{A History of Florence 1200-1575} (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2006).

\textsuperscript{516} I borrow the term authoritarian state from Baker. He specifies that he uses that term to refer to a ‘specific political culture: nonparticipatory, centralized, and antidemocratic.’ Baker, \textit{The Fruit of Liberty}, 3.
stabilized definitely. The crushing of the anti-Medici forces at the battle of Montemurlo in August 1537 is generally considered as the final episode of substantial resistance against the new political order. As has been exemplified earlier by the case of the Magistrate of the Consulates, Cosimo moved away from a republican system of rule with rotating committees to a more bureaucratized state apparatus at the service of a single ruler.\textsuperscript{517}

These changes to the formal organization of the Florentine city-state on the previous social, political, and cultural relations, where patronage had been so important, and on the social dynamics as well as the textual and visual discourses. These issues have been widely investigated and discussed, guided mainly by the question, whether the transition was primarily a rupture or a continuation in these respective fields.\textsuperscript{518} Recently, Nicholas Baker has brought the subject back to the forefront of the historiography on Florence by approaching it from a political-cultural angle.\textsuperscript{519} His analysis points to a continuity in the composition of the office holding class, combined with elements of continuity in the political culture of Florence, particularly in the language and images expressing that culture. According to Baker, the main change was situated in the meaning that members of the office holding class gave to liberty and other concepts at the heart of political discourse and representation.\textsuperscript{520} Prior to Baker, numerous historians had already engaged with the question about the main characteristics of the transition from a republic to a (Grand) Duchy. With regard to the composition of the Florentine ruling elite, Robert Burr Litchfield has pointed to the continuity between the urban elite and office holders of the republic, and the nobility, courtiers and bureaucrats of the (Grand) Duchy.\textsuperscript{521} However, his observations were not uncontested. Based on their investigation of the knightly order of Santo Stefano, Paolo Malanima and Franco Angiolini have pointed to the openness of Florentine society and to the possibilities for social mobility.\textsuperscript{522} Their claims also somewhat


\textsuperscript{518} Apart from the anglophone literature I explicitly discuss bellow, see also Olivier Rouchon, ‘L’ invention du principat médicéen (1512-1609)’, in Florence et la Toscane : XIVe-XIXe siècles : les dynamiques d’un État italien, ed. Jean Boutier, Sandro Landi, and Olivier Rouchon (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004), 65–90.

\textsuperscript{519} Baker, The Fruit of Liberty, 2.

\textsuperscript{520} Baker, 2; 231.


\textsuperscript{522} Franco Angiolini and Paolo Malanima, ‘Problemi Della Mobilità Sociale a Firenze Tra La Metà Del Cinquecento e i Primi Decenni Del Seicento’, Società e Storia, no. 4 (1979): 17–47.
contradicted the observation that Samuel Berner made in his study of the *decima* registers and of the *accomandita* partnerships. \(^523\) Berner observed that indications of continuity in the investment behaviour of Florentines prevailed over rupture.

I have already engaged with elements of these debates. Here I primarily engage with questions about the social dimension of politics and power and their place in the lives and actions of Florentines. These questions offer a prism from which to assess the impact of the region of origin of the Florentine merchants abroad. Scholars of Florence have convincingly demonstrated that the social order and structure of Florence in the Middle Ages and the early modern period had a strong relational component in which patronage, entangled with intermarriage and financial relations, had a crucial role. Also in the political sphere, such relations shaped the contours and composition of the office holding class. Throughout the fifteenth century, patronage relations were crucial for the success of the Medici family to rule informally over Florence. \(^524\) According to Baker, in the decades of transition up to 1540 the success of the Medici in eventually obtaining rule of Florence also depended strongly on maintaining their basis of support with the office holding class. Duke Cosimo I came from a branch of the family that had little experience in governance and in leading the system of alliances. That his rule was accepted by the protagonists of the Florentine ruling families was partially because they believed that his inexperience would be to their benefit. \(^525\) The fact that Cosimo I would become a relatively autocratic ruler went against their expectations. However, his rule also relied on the support of urban middle groups and on that of the Holy Roman Emperor, and his success lay in the fact that he was able to gain a central position in the lives and ambitions of the office holding class. \(^526\) In an altered form, the relational dimension of

---


\(^{526}\) ‘(...) the person of the Medici prince constituted the central and most important connection for members of the office-holding class. To be in Cosimo’s grace and favor, to protect his honor and serve his interests became the
Florentine politics that has been well documented for the republican period thus remained in force under ducal rule.

These social and political developments in Florence and the continuing importance of patronage in them, have rarely if ever been linked to members of merchant communities abroad. Whether they displayed the same forms of patronage-seeking behaviour as Florentines did at home has remained an open question until now. That observation holds true not just for the case of Florence and the historiography on Florentine merchant communities. The relations that merchants maintained with the ruler of their place of origin has rarely been the subject of research, and groups of merchants abroad, in particular, have rarely been approached from that perspective in the historiography. The cause of this limited attention seems to be the separate tracks that the historiography on patronage in early modern society on the one hand and that on commerce have taken.527 Research on patronage—largely a reaction to the historiography on early modern politics that was too narrowly focused on institutions and state-building—has mainly focused its attention on the domains of politics and artistic production. In the historiography that focuses on commerce and economic relations the attention for patronage has remained very limited and has been focused mainly on the role of agents and brokers in various forms.528 Related to the predominance of the political domain in research on patronage,
is its primary focus on particular groups and spaces. The groups that have traditionally been placed at the centre of this research are primarily members of the nobility and to a lesser extent the elites of early modern republics. The spaces in which patronage has been observed and analysed are mainly in the developing princely and monarchical courts and the factionalized and layered governmental bodies in the republican systems, as well as in their local organizations, such as neighbourhoods.

Somewhat surprisingly, in the work on the political economy of early modern polities and their supposed rent-seeking behaviour, the concept of patronage has rarely been inserted in a substantial manner. Those studies that do focus on the intersection of political patronage and the activities of merchants often concentrate on the case of one exceptional merchant or agent who engaged in a variety of activities, and it was their diversity that stimulated the interest of scholars.\(^{529}\) Such an approach can be of value in providing deep insights into the behaviour and the motives of such figures. However, the question remains open to what extent such behaviour was common among large numbers of merchants abroad or whether a patronage relationship with a home ruler was exceptional or rather common. Exploring the case of Florentine merchants in Antwerp thus not only contributes to a better understanding of an additional context to which Florentine merchants abroad related, but it also inserts questions about patronage and their relation with their home ruler into the historiography on long-distance trade.

More broadly, by tackling this topic, I seek to understand to what extent long-distance merchants abroad were affected not only by the formal institutions of their home town and were in dialogue with these institutions, but also to what extent they relied on a more informal network with political actors in their home region. Now that I have sketched the political context of Florence in the period under scrutiny and have assessed our current understanding—or lack thereof—of the relationship between patronage and commerce, I can turn to the letters that Florentines in Antwerp sent to Cosimo.

The case that I opened this chapter with — Merciante’s letter to Berti and the duke — had different features than the majority of the letters in the duke’s series of received correspondence from Antwerp, but that does not make it a mere curiosity. As exceptions often shed a better light on what was normal, the features of the letter by Merciante and Berti offer a suitable starting point from which to discuss the general quantitative features and the qualities of the correspondence that was sent from Antwerp and of the duke’s correspondents there. The number of correspondents, the volume of letters sent, and the relation between these two quantities are the first indicators of that relation. However, we should keep in mind that behind these numbers was a more complicated reality. Some correspondents sent similar or identical letters twice for example. Others were involved in the joint provision of a service, but the correspondence about it was performed primarily by one of them. Nevertheless, from a quantitative perspective, the first noticeable aspect of Merciante’s letter is that it was the only letter that he sent from Antwerp to the duke. Also Berti, his intermediary in Florence, did not send any other correspondence to Cosimo in the five years before and after that one letter. This lack of continuity stands in contrast with the majority of letters that were sent from Antwerp to the duke: they were part of a longer series of letters sent by the same correspondent. In total, the inventoried parts of the Carteggio contain 189 letters that were sent from Antwerp to the duke in Florence by a total of 34 correspondents.

The number of letters per correspondent was far from even. Table 4.1. lists the names of the 34 senders and the volume of their letters in the Carteggio, and illustrates that uneven distribution. The four most regular correspondents have more than a 50% share of the total volume. However, from this quantitative point of view, it makes more sense to consider the two most frequent writers, Giovan Battista Guicciardini and Gaspar Ducci, more as agents than just correspondents. Based on the volume of sent letters, it is debatable whether Baroncelli should also be included in that group of exceptional letter writers who acted more as agents. Contentwise their letters fall into a similar category, as Baroncelli and Guicciardini were confidants of

530 In the inventories of the Carteggio that cover the period 1541-1549, no other correspondence by Berti can be traced: covering Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carteggio Universale Di Cosimo I de Medici: Archivio Di Stato Di Firenze: Inventario, ed. Anna Bellinazzi and Claudio Lamioni, 1a ed, Inventari e Cataloghi Toscani; Serie Dell’Archivio Di Stato Di Firenze 9-1-<2, 4, 9 > (Firenze: Giunta regionale toscana : La nuova Italia, 1982).
531 Apart from 16 folders (MdP 416-430, covering brief periods between 1553 and 1556) that will be made accessible in volume 6 of the inventory (publication pending), all folders of the Carteggio for the period between 1536 and 1567 have been scrutinized. A sample check in the dense folder MdP 417, provided one additional letter from Magalotti.
the duke. Below these three most regular correspondents is a group of five of which ten letters are kept, followed by a cohort of ten senders who wrote between five and two archived letters each. Finally, a quarter of Cosimo’s Antwerp-based correspondents—ten in total—only sent one letter from Antwerp to the duke. A substantial group of the correspondents in Antwerp thus did not maintain a continuous relation with their home ruler.

Table 4.1 The Traced Letters per Sender from Antwerp to Cosimo I. Sources: Inventoried Sections Carteggio di Cosimo (MdP 330–529, Apart from MdP 416–430)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname Sender</th>
<th>Name Sender</th>
<th>Letters Sent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guicciardini</td>
<td>Giovan Battista</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ducci</td>
<td>Gaspar</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baroncelli</td>
<td>Tommaso</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giunta</td>
<td>Niccolò</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grimel</td>
<td>Alessio</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magalotti</td>
<td>Galeotto</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marchi</td>
<td>Tommaso</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medici</td>
<td>Averardo de’</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinieri</td>
<td>Dietisalvi</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalcanti</td>
<td>Bernardo</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbinelli</td>
<td>Tommaso</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guicciardini</td>
<td>Lodovico</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rondinelli</td>
<td>Niccolò</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cioci</td>
<td>Taddeo</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dati</td>
<td>Giorgio</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinadori</td>
<td>Filippo</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rustichi</td>
<td>Francesco</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compagni</td>
<td>Vincenzo</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barberino</td>
<td>Raffaelo da</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barducci</td>
<td>Alessandro</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles V</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Console e consiglieri della Naz. Fiorentina in Anversa</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corsini</td>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apart from the distribution per correspondent, the frequency distribution of the 189 letters throughout the period under scrutiny also deserves attention. Graph 4.1 shows the number of letters that were received per year (Florentine calendar). Similar to the distribution per correspondent, the frequency of letters per year is also very uneven. On the upper side of the spectrum, four years have an exceptional peak, with the 22 and 26 letters that were received in 1548 and 1549 being particular eye catchers. Exact quantitative data on the whole of the duke’s carteggio are not readily available, but a sample for the 1544-1549 period suggests that the incoming correspondence was roughly 10,000 letters.532 The 27 letters from Antwerp listed for that period thus count for less than 0.5 percent of the duke’s total incoming correspondence.533 Browsing through the inventories, it becomes clear that an overwhelming number of the letters were sent from places on the Italian peninsula, and especially from cities and villages within the ducato. Lyon, the commercial centre outside Italy with arguably the densest and active Florentine merchant community, and therefore a relevant case for comparison with Antwerp, counted for 43 letters in the sample.534 In terms of quantity, contact with commercial centres throughout Europe was thus by no means a significant part of Cosimo’s epistolary contacts. However, these limited numbers should not be used to draw a

532 I took a sample from vol. 3 of the inventory of the carteggio, which covers MdP 373 up to 391A. The number of carte (folio’s) is provided per folder (‘filza’), and on average a letter equals a carta, with occasional longer letters that take more than one carta. In total these folders contain 10,973 carte, suggesting that the incoming correspondence for those five years lies around 10,000 letters.

533 A substantial number of the Antwerp letters of 1544 and 1548–49 fall beyond the scope of the inventory on which I based my sample, hence the deviance from the numbers in the graph.

534 Inventory Carteggio vol 3, p 235.
conclusion about contacts between Cosimo and the Florentine merchant community in Antwerp, let alone lead to the perception that there was hardly any regular contact between Antwerp based Florentines and their home ruler. Geographical distance, the size of the community in Antwerp and a more limited possibility of immediate action on either side are the most evident explanations for this limited number.

Graph 4.1 The Number of Letters per Year that were Sent from Antwerp to Cosimo I, Sources: Inventoried Sections Carteggio di Cosimo (MdP 330-529, apart from MdP 416-430)

More than these quantitative data on the correspondence in the carteggio, it is important to have a general understanding of the background of the correspondents, before going into the content of the letters. Also from this perspective, Antonio di Giovanni Merciante, who sent the first dated letter to the duke via Pietro Berti, was an exceptional case. Neither Merciante nor Berti had an office holding class background, unlike the majority of the Antwerp correspondents. The surnames of the Antwerp correspondents listed in table 4.1. make it clear that the majority had an office holding class background. However, not all of the senders were individual Florentines based in Antwerp. Some letters have two or more senders, whereas others were

---

535 Twelve correspondents have a surname that is listed in Molho, Baker and Litchfield as OHC and another ten have a name that is listed in two out of three lists as OHC. See table 1.2 (appendix) for full information.
signed by the governing body of the nation. Apart from such co-authored letters, some non-Florentines also wrote to the duke. In that category, a letter from Charles V that was sent from Antwerp is clearly the most exceptional and for my analysis the least relevant piece of correspondence. More noteworthy and substantial is the recurrence of correspondents that had a non-Italian background, such as Alessio Grimel, Martin Mager, and Filippo Gechartt. Unfortunately, Mager's and Gechartt's background remains opaque, but Grimel is referred to in the certificates as a German merchant living in Antwerp. Their letters concern financial transactions with the duke in which they were involved, but also complaints about Florentine merchants in Antwerp. The most eye-catching non office holding class Tuscan that regularly corresponded with the duke was Gaspare Ducci. Niccolo di Giunta, who had an important role in the organisation of loans, was also a frequent correspondent but his family only became part of the office holding class when Florence was already a princely state. It should be stressed that although the majority of the correspondents have a traceable background as Florentine merchants in Antwerp, some of the correspondents with Tuscan names were in Antwerp for other reasons. Taddeo Cioci and Francesco Rustichi, for example, were ship captains who performed assignments for the duke, and apart from carrying their ships to the North Sea they were mainly active in the Mediterranean.

A final point of attention about the contours of the correspondence is the trajectory through which the letters reached their final recipient, Duke Cosimo I. Antonio di Giovanni Mercante’s letter to Pietro Berti, which was forwarded to the duke in a later stage, is an example of indirect correspondence with the duke and is also in that sense an exceptional case. About two-thirds of the incoming letters from Antwerp were directly addressed to the duke. Given the fact that a substantial minority of the letters in the duke’s correspondence reached him via an indirect trajectory, the forms and modalities of those trajectories require some additional attention. As these indirect letters reveal how Florentines in Antwerp thought about the relationship with their home ruler, they bring us closer to the core points of this chapter.

536 E.g. ASF, MdP 500, fol 754, July 17 1563 is signed by “Raffaello da Barberino console, Ludovico Guicciardini cons., Leonardo Taddei cons.”
537 E.g. ACA, Cert 15, fol 112 r
538 I discuss Ducci elaborately in chapter 5
539 In the duke’s outgoing correspondence, references are made to Cioci as ‘captain of the Galley’: ASF, MdP 186, fol 50 r; and to Rustichi as ‘Captain of the ship of His Excellence’: MdP 194, fol 115 r
The most frequent indirect trajectory through which letters from Florentines in Antwerp reached the duke, was by writing to Bernardo de’ Medici. Bernardo was a Florentine diplomat and as such was an important intermediary. Born in the early sixteenth century in a side branch of the Medici family, he combined an ecclesiastical career with performing diplomatic functions for his family. In 1528, he was appointed as the Bishop of Forlì. After several ecclesiastical and diplomatic assignments in Italy, Spain, and France, he joined the Imperial court in Germany in 1547. When Emperor Charles V travelled to the Low Countries in 1548, Bernardo followed the court. It was in that position that he became an important liaison between the Florentine merchant community and Cosimo I between 1548 and 1549. Over half of the letters from Antwerp in Cosimo I’s carteggio for that period, which also included those dealing with the conflict on the Joyous Entry of 1549, were originally sent to Bernardo. This trajectory of correspondence was intense but short-lived. After 1549, we have no more evidence of contacts between Bernardo and the members of the Florentine community in Antwerp. No traces are left to suggest that in the following two decades Florentine diplomats took up a similar role as liaison between the community and the duke. Yet the fact that such a substantial number of letters sent by Florentines in the Low Countries to Bernardo Antonio de’ Medici ended up in Cosimo’s correspondence shows that he must have had a habit of forwarding documents that were of interest to the duke and the administration in Florence.

Apart from going through a diplomat, two Antwerp based Florentines – Ducci and Tommaso Marchi – also directed some of their letters to a secretary of the duke. Cosimo I’s secretaries had a position somewhere in between the private household of the duke and the public administration of his government. In the period under scrutiny here, the function of a ducal secretary and his tasks were still very much under development. It seems plausible to assume that the majority of the letters that were directly sent to the duke were also initially read and processed by a secretary. The extent to which the duke himself actually laid eyes on the letters and paid attention to their content and senders, therefore, remains opaque. However, the number of letters from Antwerp in the carteggio that were addressed directly to the duke far outnumber those directed to a secretary, and also for Ducci and Marchi it was exceptional not

\[540\] Apart from the letters to Bernardo in the Carteggio, two letters sent to him also ended up in the series of ‘avvisi’ sent from the Low Countries: ASF, MdP 4254, fol 2 r & 3 r, both sent by respectively Ducci & Di Giunta and by Rinieri (then consul of the Florentine nation) on December 10 1548.

to direct their writings to the duke.\textsuperscript{542} In assessing the trajectory through which letters reached Cosimo, it is important to keep in mind that the duke – especially in the later phase of his life and rule- cultivated a reputation for being very accessible to his subjects. He regularly dined with Florentine patricians, attended mass on a daily basis without much of a retinue, which enabled anyone on the street to approach him with complaints and requests, and he held audiences where people could present their problems.\textsuperscript{543} Supplications to the duke gave subjects a channel through which they could request direct revisions of sentences that they considered to be unjust.\textsuperscript{544}

Both secretaries and diplomats held officials functions that made them intermediaries between the duke and groups in Florentine society and abroad. However, apart from such officials, other less evident Florentines also occasionally acted as the intermediaries of messages from Antwerp that at a later stage were redirected to the duke. In the case of Merciante and Berti, it was clearly through a patron-client relation that his letter reached Florence. Another possible relation through which letters could be sent to the duke was kinship. For instance, the otherwise undocumented Giorgio Dati sent three newsletters from Antwerp to his father Nicolo, who then forwarded them on to the duke.\textsuperscript{545} A copy of a letter with the news sent by Lodovico Guicciardini to his older brother Agnolo di Jacopo Guicciardini in Florence, also ended up in the \textit{Carteggio di Cosimo}.\textsuperscript{546}

Apart from news, seeking potential favours from the duke was also a subject of such indirect communication via kin. For instance, in 1548 Francesco Nasi in Antwerp wrote an elaborate letter filled with lamentations to Francesco di Luttozzo Nasi, arguably a family member with a similar name. He described the hostility towards his business that he encountered in the Low Countries and his improving physical health, which however was regrettable accompanied by a deterioration of ‘his spirit’.\textsuperscript{547} Given his difficult circumstances,
he wrote that he was very grateful that the duke had reduced his contribution to a forced loan.548 However, he continued his discourse to his kin in Florence by suggesting that if the duke had known about the details of his precarious state of business and of the difficulty of his situation, which he described elaborately, a complete exemption of the ‘unbearable’ loan would certainly be granted. He then ended his letter by stating that writing to the duke himself to ask for such a complete exemption was beyond his dignity. However, his dignity did not stop him from continuing to complain about his situation in his letter to Francesco di Lutozzo. The fact that his private letter to his family member in Florence eventually ended up in the duke’s correspondence indicates that these lamentations must have led Francesco di Lutozzo to undertake further action in Florence on behalf of his family member in Antwerp.

In the light of Cosimo’s image of accessibility, it seems that Tommaso Marchi, one of the two correspondents directing letters to the ducal secretaries, wrote his first letter to a secretary as a careful first step before directly approaching the duke. Gaspare Ducci also sent his first traced letters to a secretary, but then after that mostly wrote directly to duke. Both of them were away from Florence since long, and thus writing a secretary seems to have been either a step towards direct communication or a measure to keep the administration in the information loop. The indirect approach through a relative or patron in Florence is of a different order. There, the intermediary was not a part of the bureaucratic apparatus but an acquaintance who, based on his own judgment, passed on a message to the duke. In such cases, the use of an intermediary might offer the sender the benefit of gaining (part of) the credit for supplying a service to the duke to someone in Florence with whom the duke could establish a more personal connection or already had such a connection. Florentines in Antwerp and at home thus consciously developed strategies and tactics to approach the duke and to maintain their relationship with him.

In order to gain a more profound understanding of the various forms of patronage-seeking and service provision that drove such strategies, we should turn to the substance of the letters that the Florentines in Antwerp sent to the duke. As the discussion on the frequency of their correspondence and the direct and indirect trajectories of the letters show, news from the Low Countries had an important place in the letters that were sent to the duke. In the following section, this news stands central. First, I turn to the position of Giovan Battista Guicciardini, the regular Medici news correspondent in the Low Countries. In particular, I investigate the place of commerce in his writings. Since he also spent considerable time elsewhere in the Low

548 Nasi in Antwerp wrote that he was grateful that his share in an accatto was reduced to 500 scudi.
Countries but regularly passed through Antwerp and retained his contacts there, I take into account all of his letters to the duke and thus do not limit myself merely to the letters that he sent from Antwerp.\footnote{Guicciardini’s letters have been edited. However, more than merely relying on this edition, I have also traced a substantial part of the replies to these letters in the minutes and registers of the dukes correspondence. Battistini, \textit{Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini}.} Guicciardini, however, was not the only correspondent that wrote about politics and commerce. Apart from his relatively well studied – be it not so much from a commercial perspective – case, I will also turn to other cases of news providers, such as that of the thus far unknown Tommaso Marchi, whose obstinate writings about commercial and political economic opportunities offer a valuable comparative case.

\textit{News and Advice from Antwerp}

On September 8 1564 Giovan Battista Guicciardini wrote to Prince Francesco of Tuscany for the first time.\footnote{Battistini, 233–38.} This letter was by no means the first one that Guicciardini wrote to the ruler of his hometown. From the previous five years he had written regularly from Brussels, where he was living at the time, as well as from Antwerp to the Duke of Florence. Nonetheless, Guicciardini’s first letter to Prince Francesco is noteworthy, both because of its recipient and because of its content. Although Duke Cosimo remained the official ruler of Florence and the Tuscan territory, Guicciardini’s letter makes it clear that he had been notified that Cosimo had left the day to day affairs of government to his son Francesco. From then on, instead of writing his reports from the Low Countries to Cosimo, Guicciardini had to send his letters to the Prince. Due the succession of his regular recipient in Florence, he decided to write an exceptionally long letter. At the time when Guicciardini wrote the letter, nothing noteworthy was happening and according to him, everything in the region was at peace. However, the five years since 1559, the moment around which Giovan Battista had started to write regularly, had been eventful. Therefore, he thought it wise, to sum up the most noteworthy events that had happened in the previous five years. After such a long summary, Francesco would be able to understand better the context of future events and Guicciardini’s subsequent updates about the situation in the Low Countries.

This first letter to Francesco offers an interesting insight into what Guicciardini believed was the most relevant information that the Florentine ruler had to obtain every once in a while from the Low Countries and its commercial centre Antwerp. His narrative was dominated by a
series of political and ecclesiastical events that had happened in the region in the previous years. He started his chronology of events with Philip II’s departure from the Low Countries to Spain. Philip had left at the end of the French-Habsburg conflict, which after decades of tension and warfare was finally settled with the peace of Cateau Cambresis in 1559. In order to pay the Habsburg army in the aftermath of this peace, the Estates of the Low Countries had given subsidies to Philip. In return, they demanded to retain their voice in the governance of the region. This delicate political balance had been an important recurring theme in Guicciardini’s letters and in his long summary of events to Prince Francesco. The demands and prerogatives of the important nobles and of the estates of each of the provinces, which had marked the balance of power in the Low Countries for a long time, were stressed in the letter. Related to this subject, Guicciardini pointed towards the ecclesiastical reforms and reorganizations in the region, and he also regularly touched upon the policy towards the concerning rise of non-Catholic forms of religious praxis.

For Guicciardini, news provision had become a central part of his relationship with his home ruler, but other Florentines in Antwerp also engaged in such practices, though less frequently. Throughout this section, I seek to demonstrate that a crucial motive for Guicciardini and other merchants who provided news was to gain patronage. First I present two important contextual explanations for their news provision, that of the relation between Florence and the Habsburg world and that of Antwerp as a commercial centre. Then I turn to an analysis of the content of their letters, in particular the relationship between political and commercial news, to demonstrate their eagerness to serve the duke. Apart from the case of Guicciardini and that of occasional writers, I pay particular attention to the writings of Tommaso Marchi. Yet before going into the explanations for this recurrence of news, I need to turn first to the background of Giovan Battista Guicciardini.

When Guicciardini started writing to the duke in 1559, he had already been based in the Low Countries for more than three decades. In 1527, he had joined the commercial enterprise of his uncle Girolamo in Antwerp. Later, his brothers Agnolo, Rafaello, and Lodovico also

---

551 E.g. throughout 1560, Guicciardini wrote numerous letters with updates on the departure of Spanish soldiers from the Low Countries, about the trouble the Estates had in consenting to their payment, and about problems of heresy in Flanders Battistini, 126, 133, 137, 139, 144.

moved to Antwerp and became part of the company. In 1534 Giovan Battista took up the function of consul of the Florentine nation. Up to the early 1540s, the Guicciardini’s enterprise seems to have been going quite well. However, financial problems started to hit the Guicciardini’s Antwerp firm after a ship transporting their goods was seized, and the continuing payment problems after that loss eventually led to a bankruptcy. After the breakdown of their undertaking in Antwerp, they had difficulties in regaining credit from Gaspar Ducci. At the time, Giovan Battista probably began to turn his attention more to humanist circles in Antwerp, where he published a now lost cartographic work in 1549. In the 1550s, his ongoing trials in Brussels, which were related to the recuperation of credit led him to move there. Moreover, Brussels was certainly the most interesting city in the Low Countries for picking up political news.

It remains unclear when exactly he started writing newsletters to his home ruler. In the oldest of his letters kept in the Carteggio di Cosimo, Giovan Battista referred to an untraceable previous newsletter that he had sent. Since he never referred directly to his reasons for providing this constant flux of news from the Low Countries, we must indirectly deduce his motives. Financial remuneration for his news provision was never brought up in his correspondence. Also in a letter from Cosimo that dates from the period for which we have Guicciardini’s first newsletters, the subject of payment is not directly brought up, and the encouragements by Cosimo in that letter suggests that Guicciardini had only just begun his correspondence with the duke. Guicciardini continued to receive letters from the court in Florence that acknowledged the reception of his letters and encouraged him to write more about a topic of interest, but remuneration for writing the letters was not brought up. Therefore, a contextualization of Guicciardini’s practice of news writing in the wider context of merchants’ involvement in information exchange in Antwerp is needed to understand why Florentines who came to Antwerp for commerce also engaged in news provision to their home ruler.

Unfortunately, we do not know much about the information networks of small and middle-sized Italian polities in the sixteenth century, especially with regard to Northern

---

553 Aristodemo, ‘GUICCIARDINI, Giovan Battista’.
554 Giovan Battista regularly wrote about his trial with Ducci to Cosimo, see Battistini, Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini, 215, 217, 222.
555 ‘Alli X del presente scrissi a Vostra Excellentia per la posta’, September 17 1559 Battistini, 113.
556 ASF, MdP 51, c 111 r, September 25 1559 Cosimo I to Giovan Battista Guicciardini
557 Between late June 1561 and September 1563, ducal secretaries sent 21 letters to Guicciardini to follow upon his letters. On average, Guicciardini received a reply for every 2 or 3 letters he sent. ASF, MdP 216, fol 4, 26, 41, 57, 75, 86, 112, 123, 136 & MdP 217, 17, 20, 35, 41, 58, 87, 104, 125, 134, 142, 152, 172
Europe. However, the information flow from the Low Countries to Italy for the last third of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth century—the period of the Dutch Revolt—has recently been investigated in depth. It has become clear that from the beginning of the Revolt in 1566, news from the Low Countries was of particular importance and interest for the Medici dynasty. In line with his previous dependence on Emperor Charles V as the arbiter of power relations in Florence, Cosimo at the time had a strong interest in cultivating a prosperous relationship with the Spanish king and ruler of the Low Countries, Philip II. Therefore, being informed about the turbulent events in the region was of critical importance for making the right and most beneficial foreign policy decisions. For the period of the Revolt, it has been observed that it were Tuscan soldiers and officers who took part in the war effort of the Habsburg army throughout the Revolt, rather than merchants who wrote news from the Low Countries to Florence. In their privileged position as military insiders, they offered a unique source of information from the Low Countries in times of military turbulence. However, as the letters from Guicciardini and others make clear, before the outbreak of the Revolt and the arrival of the Habsburg armies in the region, news from Antwerp and the Low Countries reached the Florentine court primarily via merchants.

The structural entanglements between Florentine and Habsburg politics are an important part of the explanation why Florentine merchants in Antwerp sent news to the duke. Another explanation for the regular news provision lies in Antwerp and the Low Countries. It is important to keep in mind that the Dutch Revolt did not mark the beginning of the flow of information from the Low Countries to the ducal court, but rather an accelerator. The relatively easy and privileged access to a constant flow of information that circulated in Antwerp and Brussels explains why Guicciardini and others were writing to the duke already well before the Revolt. In Antwerp, an exceptional concentration of information circulated in various forms and through different media, because of the city’s function as a commercial hub where merchants, carters and sailors, as well as labour migrants from all over Europe and beyond encountered one another. Based on the case of seventeenth-century Amsterdam, Lesger has

560 Lamal, 16, 38–42.
argued that such a concentration of information was a crucial quality of commercial centres and a pull factor in attracting merchants, an observation that can arguably also be applied to Antwerp.\footnote{Lesger, The Rise of the Amsterdam Market and Information Exchange see in particular chapter 6; Clé Lesger, ‘The Printing Press and the Rise of the Amsterdam Information Exchange around 1600.’, in Creating Global History from Asian Perspectives: Proceedings of Global History Workshop, 14th - 16th December 2007 in Osaka; Cross-Regional Chains in Global History; Europe-Asia Interface Through Commodity and Information Flows, ed. Shigeru Akita (Osaka: Osaka Univ., 2008), 87–102.} It is a telling example of Antwerp’s importance as a hub of news that the narrator in Thomas More’s \textit{Utopia} – published in 1516 in the Low Countries- hears about the imaginary island for the first time from a sailor in an Antwerp inn.\footnote{Thomas More, \textit{Libellus Vere Aureus Nec Minus Salutaris Quam Festius de Optimo Reip. Statu, Deq[Ue] Noua Insula Vtopia} (Louvain: Arte Theodorici Martini ... typographi almac Louaniensium Academiae, 1516).}

Both an interest at home and the exceptional availability of news in the Low Countries explains why Guicciardini and others wrote Cosimo with news. However, these two factors do not account for why Florentines in Antwerp regularly wrote newsletters. Their habit of writing was also part of their effort to construct and maintain a patronage relationship with their home ruler. In the case of Guicciardini, it has rightly been suggested that he sought patronage from the duke with regard to his ongoing conflict and litigation with Gaspare Ducci.\footnote{Battistini, \textit{Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini}, 66.} However, his patronage-seeking went beyond that concrete case and also holds for other Florentines that provided news. In order to demonstrate how they sought patronage through news letter writing, we need to turn to how they organized the content of their letters. More particularly, analysing the balance between political news and commercial news offers us a better understanding of their patronage-seeking behaviour.

Given Antwerp’s position as hub, it should not come as a surprise that the writers did not restrict themselves to news from the Low Countries. A recurrent subject of particular attention in Giovan Battista Guicciardini’s letters, for example, was the political and military situation on the British Isles.\footnote{E.g. A letter from January 2 1562 contains news from England, and a letter of April 30 1563 contains rumors about Elisabet I’s marriage plans Battistini, 107, 203.} He regularly updated his ruler about the tensions between England and Scotland and paid particular attention to France’s involvement in that conflict.\footnote{Military conflict in Scotland is recurrent in his letters of late 1559 and 1560, e.g. Battistini, 119–20, 122, 125–26, 128, 132–33.} In order to acquire information on these subjects and to receive regular updates, he relied on his brother Vincenzio in London and on other Florentines there.\footnote{Guicciardini referred to ‘lettere di nostri fiorentini’ as a source for news. Battistini, 116–17; 152; 158.} When Giorgio Dati, an occasional news letter writer – but for whom we have no traces in the other sources- sent information from Antwerp to the duke via his father, he reported respectively on the battles and
sieves in the border region between the Low Countries and France and on military events in the Rhineland.\(^{568}\) Letters sent from Antwerp thus did not contain merely local, military and political news, but on the contrary often provided news and information from the whole of Northern Europe.

That merchants were keen to acquire information about both local and international politics, war, and religious prosecution or tolerance is to be expected was in line with them looking out for their own concerns and priorities. Such turbulence and changes in policy could have a profound impact on long-distance trade. The introduction of the One Hundredth Penny in the early 1540s for example, was a direct consequence of the war with France and it affected exports from the Low Countries to the rest of Europe. Thus merchants’ writing about political and religious developments was anything but restricted to their relatively exceptional letters to their home ruler. Also in their commercial correspondence, Florentine merchants occasionally referred to political, military and religious events and turbulence. There, such news mainly served as an explanation for why commerce was restrained, and why they were not performing to the standards and expectations of their correspondents. In those letters, the news that they related was directly and unreservedly related to their personal interest and was provided as such. However, Guicciardini’s and the other Florentines’ letters, such news had a much more central position and was framed differently. As the examples above make clear, political news dominated the letters.

When commercial and financial issues were discussed, these were often connected to political events. This holds especially for Guicciardini’s reporting on the events in the British Isles. In the letters that he sent between 1559 and 1562, the policies and decisions of the English monarch and their effects on commerce in Antwerp are often mentioned. One of his first surviving letters, of October 1559, reports that Elizabeth I blocked the ships of English merchants who wanted to leave for the Brabant fairs with a high volume of wool cloths.\(^{569}\) Only if the English merchants agree to repay Elizabeth’s loans in Antwerp would they be allowed to travel across the Channel. The message was the first part of a longer series of comments on the evolution of commercial relations between England and the Low Countries. In March 1560, Guicciardini reported on the large sums that the English factor was collecting at the Antwerp bourse and how that had disturbed the financial market. A couple of months earlier, Tommaso

\(^{568}\) Giorgio Dati in Antwerp wrote three letters to Nicolo Dati in Florence with news, which ended up in the duke’s carteggio: ASF, MdP 368, fol 348 r, August 11 1544; MdP 369, fol 758, November 8 1544; MdP 380, fol 123, August 28 1546.

\(^{569}\) Battistini, Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini, 117–18.
Baroncelli had already notified the duke about the expected arrival of the English factor in Antwerp. 570

The prevalence of relations with England in these letters does not come as a surprise. I already pointed to the importance of English merchants in Antwerp for the Rinieri and Salviati firms in the 1540s and the recurrence of references to it in their correspondence. Yet Guicciardini’s and Baroncelli’s style of reporting on the subject is substantially different from what we read in the letters from the two firms. Whereas the Rinieri’s and Salviati’s letters contain explicit reflections and comments on the effect of English merchants’ activities on their own trade in textiles, Guicciardini’s reporting was strongly focused on state finance. The financial situation of the English crown was of political importance for the power relations in Northern Europe as well as for the financial stability and the availability of credit on the Antwerp market. 571 Later, I will go more into the financial involvement of Florentine merchants in credit seeking on behalf of their home government. For now it is enough to indicate that Guicciardini’s focus state finance was his way of catering to the interests of the duke in Florence and that in his writings he did not relate such events to his own activities and that of the Florentine merchant community in Antwerp.

Direct reflections about the consequences of English actions on the commercial interests of Florentines in Antwerp and on the politics of the duke are very rare in Guicciardini’s letters. In October 1559, he wrote that Elizabeth I had prohibited English merchants from attending the Antwerp fairs. 572 About half a year later, he reported how the English royal factor, who represented the polity with the worst government finances in the region and was confronted with high interest rates, had drained the Antwerp financial markets and thus how a situation of financial abundance in the market had turned into a shortage within a couple of days merely by his intervention. In a follow-up letter he stressed how this intervention had damaged the merchants and the Low Countries in general. 573 The recurrence of the subject in Guicciardini’s letters is but an implicit acknowledgement of the importance of this group of merchants and English royal agents for the Tuscans in Antwerp, and explicit complaints of the kind that recur in the business letters of Florentine firms are absent. The importance of the Antwerp financial market for European rulers, and for his home ruler in particular, was more explicitly stressed.

570 ASF, MdP 483, fol 219, January 23 1559 (Florentine calendar), Baroncelli in Antwerp to Cosimo in Florence.
572 Battistini, Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini, 117.
573 Battistini, 125; About the actions of the English crown on the Antwerp market in this period, see George Daniel Ramsay, The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor, The End of the Antwerp Mart, G. D. Ramsay ; Pt. 1 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 118.
In his writings, Guicciardini wrote about commerce when he could functionally link it to politics. He was not the only one of the duke’s correspondents to do that. The Antwerp-based Tommaso Marchi also wrote to the duke about the troubled commercial relation between England and the Low Countries. Marchi’s case has many puzzling aspects and we largely remain in the dark about his biography. However, because of their bluntness, his writings lay bare what remained implicit in the writings of others. When he provided news, he linked it more explicitly to the duke’s interest than others did. In his letter to Cosimo, he advocated that given the troublesome situation, it would be interesting to attract English merchants to the Tuscan ports.\textsuperscript{574} In the Low Countries and elsewhere on the continent, the prohibitions against the English had doubled, and the port of Emden in the North of Germany, an early centre of Protestantism with a silting port, did not provide them with a structural alternative. Therefore, he thought it a relatively easy enterprise to attract them with their ships and goods to Tuscany. According to Marchi, a flow of goods worth one million golden scudi per year that was reaching Italy over land would be consolidated. About a year later, in June 1565, he repeated his suggestion in a longer and more explicitly advisory letter.\textsuperscript{575} Whereas Marchi’s previous letter with advice was still concisely framed in news about contemporary events in Antwerp and Northern Europe, his 1565 one was a longer one without any references to Antwerp. Starting with a reference about the collaboration between Marchi’s father and ‘il gran Giovanni de Medici’, probably Cosimo’s father Giovanni della Bande Nere, he developed a blurry argument about the tenth tax, the so-called decima, in Tuscany. After that, Marchi repeated his proposal that it would be wise to keep taxes on imports and exports low, so that the Tuscany ports would become attractive. Throughout the letter, he also flattered the duke by alluding to the fact that Florence would make a suitable imperial chamber, as well as by making a comparison with how Julius Caesar took advice.

Unlike Guicciardini, Marchi was thus straightforwardly offering reflections and advice about the consequences of the commercial situation in Antwerp in relation to the economy of Tuscany, and his behaviour in that sense resembles that of a so-called arbitrista in early modern Spain.\textsuperscript{576} Whereas Guicciardini’s news, information and advice were adapted to the interests of

\textsuperscript{574} ASF, MdP 507, fol 221, July 8 1564, Tommaso Marchi in Antwerp to Cosimo.

\textsuperscript{575} ASF, MdP 516, fol 134, 141 & 313, identical copies of the same text, respectively dated at November 2, June 2, and June 15 1565

the duke, and thus part of a long-standing relationship of patronage seeking and provision, Marchi’s letters were attempts to establish such a relation. Unfortunately, besides what can be deduced from his letters to his home ruler, we remain largely ignorant about Marchi’s background and the reasons for his stay in Antwerp.\(^{577}\) As early as 1560 he had written his first letter from Antwerp to a secretary of Cosimo I.\(^{578}\) In that first letter, he mentioned that he had been traveling the world for 25 years, an experience he invoked to give credibility to his advice.\(^{579}\) He wrote that he had not been in Florence throughout that period, and indicated that he did not have any intention of ever returning to Florence. However, that did not stop him from advising and suggesting improvements on a variety of topics, such as how taxation in Tuscany should be organized after Florence won the war with Siena.\(^{580}\) In his last letter, sent in May 1566, he notified Francesco about rumours which indicated that the Spanish king was about to retake the rule of Malta, which had been given in concession to the Knights of Saint John.\(^{581}\) Marchi considered it an opportunity to invite the knights to the ports of Tuscany and to combine their forces with the duke’s galleys. Given the bluntness with which he gave such diverse forms of advice, he is by far the most exceptional Florentine that wrote from Antwerp to the duke. However, that did not mean that he was an isolated figure. Tommaso Baroncelli, another Antwerp-based Florentine with ideas about reforms for mercantile organizations and institutions, regularly referred to Marchi and his various proposals when writing to the duke.\(^{582}\)

Whether Marchi was in Antwerp primarily for commercial reasons remains unclear, but there are no indications to the contrary. If he was a merchant, he clearly did not see a future for commerce in Antwerp. His position as a Florentine abroad could potentially have enabled him to gain profits as an intermediary in the trade from England to Italy, but he saw more benefits in attracting foreign merchants to Tuscany.

Marchi’s suggestion to attract English merchants to Tuscany can be considered as a precursor of later ideas and advice, such as that of Filippo Sassetti on the trade between Florence and the Levant, and on developing Livorno into a free port. Apart from recommending the

\(^{577}\) The Antwerp certificates do not contain references to Marchi. The inventories of the duke’s correspondence only list letters by Marchi sent from Antwerp. In the index of the inventory, he is described as a merchant. An entry in the account books of the Salviati firm in Antwerp registers his involvement in the trade of ‘sensiere’: CASNS, AS 987, fol 138 r, November 13 1542.

\(^{578}\) ASF, MdP 486, fol 674, September 16 1560

\(^{579}\) “(...) in dirvi ne quale ho imparato in vedere tanti paesi tanti ghuberni, che io ho experimentato in molti anni che ho andato per il mondo”, ASF, MdP 486, fol 674 r & v

\(^{580}\) Marchi elaborated on that subject in his first two letters: ASF, MdP 487, fol 1292 (copy in c 1295), February 28 1560, Marchi to Cosimo I; MdP 486, fol 674, September 16 1560, Marchi to Cosimo.

\(^{581}\) ASF, MdP 524, fol 78, May 6 1566, Marchi to Cosimo

\(^{582}\) ASF, MdP 486, fol 653, September 14 1560, Baroncelli in Antwerp to Cosimo in Florence
foundation of Florentine communities in the Near East, Sassetti primarily stressed the importance of attracting foreign merchants to Tuscany and in doing that he used Antwerp as an example of a commercial centre that attracted foreign merchants by providing an excellent infrastructure.\footnote{An elaborate analysis of Sassetti’s ideas and their relation with the creation of the free port of Livorno is offered in Corey S. Tazzara, ‘The Masterpiece of the Medici: Commerce, Politics, and the Making of the Free Port of Livorno, 1574–1790’ (Ph.D., Stanford University, 2011), 51 and following. Sassetti’s references to Antwerp are discussed on p 54, http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.eui.eu/pqdthss/docview/907106132/abstract/8129E446F1E44CA0PQ/4.}

Marchi was not as explicit, elaborate, or clear in his argumentation as Sassetti in his suggestions, but his letters are nevertheless indicative about the relation between Florentines abroad and their ruler. In that relation, both news and ideas about the development of the political economy of Ducal Tuscany were offered to the duke with an explicitly selfless explanation. In his letters, Marchi occasionally refers to the general benefit of the duchy as the cause driving him to provide his advice.\footnote{He claimed his motives for writing were “La utilità et beneficie del nostro Principe et del ben essere et utile de tutti ui populi”, ASF, MdP 486, fol 674.} That may seem like a noble and inclusive cause, but Marchi’s conception of the common good was a particular one. By stressing the influx of goods, his advice was primarily tailored to the duke, buyers of goods in Tuscany, and others who might benefit from the presence of foreign merchants in Tuscany. Florentines abroad who made a living by organizing the supply had no explicit place in his conception of the general interest of Tuscany.\footnote{It should be noted that Sassetti in his later advice would try to seek a balance between the interests of Florentine merchants outside of Tuscany - particularly in Ancona - and the potential for developing Livorno. Tazzara, ‘The Masterpiece of the Medici’, 54.}

Given what we know from his letters about his background and experiences, Marchi’s motives for providing news and expertise to the duke remain difficult to grasp. A reference to his brother in Florence, his ill health, especially the loss of his eyesight, and a request for money suggests that his motivations were to secure financial compensation and attention for his relatives in Florence.\footnote{ASF, MdP 505, fol 833 r, May 20 1564.} It is also plausible that he aimed at becoming a trusted advisor and reformer for the duke in the same way that his acquaintance Baroncelli had become. Yet given his repeated complaints about not receiving any answers, he was not successful.

Regardless of the more explicit tone of advice in his letters and of his background and own interests, Marchi’s letters nevertheless have an important element in common with those of Giovan Battista Guicciardini, namely that they both related commercial events to the interests of the duke and of Tuscany, rather than pursuing the interests of the merchant community in Antwerp. Although Guicciardini received confirmations and encouragements to keep writing, as a rule, the merchants in Antwerp themselves initiated and drove the flow of information, and
only occasionally did they have to reply to explicit requests. That attitude also resonates in the reporting on and following up of the Joyous Entry of 1549, where it was the consul who signalled that the image and interest of Florence needed the attention of the duke and his government. Occasionally, requests for favours were brought up in Guicciardini’s and others’ letters, but as a rule, such requests were but a small part of a longer letter. Only one undated supplication in Guicciardini’s hand kept separate from his other letters contains a more elaborate demand for the duke’s favour and intervention, in order to prevent him from being subjected to a sindacato. The document contains references to debtors that have claims upon him, but given the lack of concrete indications about the case, it remains difficult to grasp whether this supplication was written before or during his time as a news writer.587

Overall, when we try to the balance what Cosimo’s Florentine correspondents in Antwerp provided in terms of news and information and what they requested in return for their service, it is clear that they wrote with the intention of being perceived as generous and loyal servants of the duke. Guicciardini and the majority of the other correspondents were essentially providing news without any evidence to suggest that they were receiving an explicit or paid commission to do so. Demands for favours in return for their news provision were not completely absent in their letters but remained rather rare and often implicit. That uneven balance demonstrates that their writings were driven by their interest in establishing and maintaining a patronage relationship. By writing about news that was framed to be of interest to their home ruler, they constructed and maintained a hierarchical relationship where the interests of the duke set the tone of their writings. Moreover, the explicit hierarchical qualities of the relationship suggests that patronage in Florentine society under the duchy evolved away from practices that had existed under the republic, where expectations were more mutual.588

The Style and Rhetoric of Letters

News about political events and commerce was an important part of what was exchanged and supplied via the letters that the Florentines in Antwerp sent to Cosimo, together with both regular and less evident forms of service. Yet the Florentines in Antwerp did not merely construct and maintain their relationship with the duke through services and requests. The substance of their requests and offers was entangled in a dense texture of rhetorical

587 “Memoriale di Giovan Battista Guicciardini per una supplica”, ASF, Misc Med 27, III, fol 937 (undated)
588 This observation concurs with that of Baker on the letters of Florentine patricians to Cosimo: Baker, The Fruit of Liberty, 219.
commonplaces that were a crucial part of the process to develop, maintain and cultivate a beneficial relationship with the duke. Before going into the main distinctive characteristics of that rhetoric in the letters, two principal sources of influence which shaped that style and rhetoric should be discussed. The first source is the commercial letters that long-distance merchants were accustomed to writing, the second one is the Florentines’ practice of sending patronage letters during the informal Medici rule of the fifteenth century. Apart from patronage letters and commercial correspondence, other forms of regular letter writing, such as diplomatic correspondence or newsletters – so called avvisi - also came into existence in the period under scrutiny here, but it seems that these types did not affect the style and structure of the letters that the Florentines in Antwerp sent to their ruler. On the contrary, it is more plausible that the letters sent from Antwerp to Florence which contained news were purposefully differentiated from the style of avvisi and instead were complementary to them.589

Before going into the stylistic and rhetorical differences between commercial correspondence and the letters that they sent to the duke, it should be stressed that writing letters to partners, commission agents, suppliers and clients in their commercial network at home and beyond was the standard way for merchants to communicate. It is plausible that the majority of such letters were drafted by the merchants’ junior collaborators, and that they held the pen themselves much less often once they had a senior position in a business, but most of them had gone through the apprenticeship of working as a giovane themselves. Therefore, in that capacity they were familiar with regularly writing letters. This familiarity with correspondence and the frequency of writing to business correspondents stands at odds with the irregularity and exceptionality of the letters that they sent to their home ruler.

Besides this quantitative difference, the aim of writing either type of these letters was also different. The purpose of business correspondence was primarily to inform a correspondent about how commercial dealings were progressing and how one fulfilled the requests and expectations of the correspondent or vice versa to express one’s expectations to a correspondent and to check upon the progress of a commercial transaction. Although the world of long-distance trade was not an egalitarian one and the hierarchy between correspondents did matter, a correspondent who was in a lower position could still provide his opinion about a commercial situation in a relatively frank manner and explain why the expectations of his correspondent

might not be realistic. Such directness was at least partially enabled by the geographical distance and the uneven access to information between long distance merchants. Fluctuating market circumstances, like a lack of demand or a saturated level of supply, or political turbulence could be invoked as arguments to tone down expectations. Although a formal and respectful form of language was standard in commercial correspondence, the tone of such letters was relatively straightforward, and when necessary they could write in a more blunt form.

A second main source, the patronage letters that Florentines wrote during the republican age and, in particular, during the informal Medici rule of the republic, differed substantially from Florentine business correspondence, in purpose, but also in style. An important difference was that patronage letters were often sent by a correspondent within Florence or its surroundings. Patrons and clients were more likely to have kinship ties, to live in the same neighbourhood and to have common acquaintances and friends. The information gap that affected long-distance correspondence thus had much less impact on patronage letters. However, that did not mean that writers of patronage letters took less care when describing their situations.590

Although patronage letters have been an important body of sources in both the political and social historiography of Renaissance Florence in an attempt move beyond an institutional approach, the rhetoric of these letters has only relatively recently become the subject of substantial research.591 Building on the scientific literature from various disciplines about representation, framing, and presentation as well as on state formation, Paul McLean has been the first to analyse a sample of Florentine patronage letters from these various perspectives.592 Through that analysis, he has distilled a standard model of Florentine patronage letters. Those letters generally consisted of seven parts: a salutation, a recapitulation as preamble, stock phrases to curry favour, a brief narration of the problem, justifications for assistance, a petition for assistance, and a conclusion.593 Clients took great care in presenting their patrons as beneficent fathers to whom they felt obliged.594 Framing them as such allowed the clients to adopt expectations that sons held towards their fathers in terms of financial aid in times of difficulty and of intervening to deal with various Florentine institutions on their behalf. Especially in fiscal matters, such aid was often requested and the approach and expectations of

590 See chapter 2 ‘Rhetoric and Design’ in McLean, The Art of the Network, 35–58.
592 McLean, The Art of the Network.
593 McLean, 58.
594 McLean, 55.
Florentine clients towards their patrons also changed over time. What differentiated these patronage letters from merchant correspondence is thus partially the degree of familiarity between the correspondents and the more elaborate and layered language used in patronage letters. However, these two types of letters also have an important characteristic in common, namely that they were filled with expectations and a language of obligation.

The rhetoric and the style of the 189 letters from Antwerp in Cosimo’s carteggio under scrutiny here were influenced by the occupation of their senders and by their history of inserting themselves into patronage webs, but that does not mean that they had a uniform outlook. Although most of the letters were sent by those who had a lower position in the patronage hierarchy than the recipient of the letter, it did matter whether or not the duke was addressed as the recipient. Unsurprisingly, letters directly addressed to Duke Cosimo were the ones that had the most careful and legible handwriting. Also rhetorically such letters contained the most explicit phrasings of subjection, and often began with the salutation which addressed the duke as ‘my most illustrious and excellent lord’. After such a salutation, references to previous exchanges often preceded the main subject of the letter. These previous exchanges commonly occurred through correspondence, but occasionally conversations in Antwerp could be invoked as the main reason for the letter.

A letter by Bernardo Cavalcanti from March 1549 is an example of how strong such a rhetoric of subjection and service could be. Already in the phrasing of his salutation, Cavalcanti explicitly developed a patronage relation with the duke by addressing him as “ill[ustrissi]mo et ex[cellentissi]mo s[igno]re e padrone mio osser[ventissi]mo”, an exceptionally long and unusually explicit acknowledgment of Cosimo’s role as a patron. Throughout the rest of the letter Cavalcanti repeatedly expressed his gratitude for ‘a dignity’ that the duke had given with his letter. Interwoven with these expressions of gratitude was a stress on his role as a servant of the duke. He went as far as stating that he wanted to serve the duke with his own blood. At the end of this letter, which was full of such similar expressions

595 McLean, 170–92.
596 It should be stressed, however, that in commercial correspondence familiarity was part of the rhetoric, sometimes up to a surprising level, see Trivellato, ‘Merchants’ Letters Across Geographical and Social Boundaries’.
597 ASF, MdP 396, fol 194
598 “Io non so di havere fatto cosa p[er] la ecc[ellenzi]a che meriasse pur di esserne in considerazione e che mi facessi degnio di cose de sue lett[er]e”, ASF, MdP 396, fol 194. Neither in the registers of outgoing correspondence of the ducal secretaries nor in the minutes of Cosimo’s letters could a letter sent to Cavalcanti around that period be retrieved.
but void of any concrete information, offers or requests, he signed as the “humble servant of your illustrious and excellent sir”, a formal phrasing that was a common ending of letters to the duke. Cavalcanti’s letter is the most hyperbolic example of a rhetoric of servitude and acknowledgement of patronage, but expressions like it are recurrent in many of the letters that Florentine merchants sent from abroad to the duke. Cavalcanti was based in Antwerp for a long time – the sources indicate his presence from 1540 until 1561, and as one of the few Florentine merchants in Antwerp, Cavalcanti had already obtained Antwerp citizenship in 1540. Due to that long stay, it was possible that his relationship with Florence was watered down throughout the years and that such a formal rhetoric served as a way of compensating for that.

The rhetorical formality of the letter may be explained by the fact that it was the only letter that he addressed directly to Cosimo. It is striking indeed that in some letters, especially those of the more frequent correspondents, the inflated language that Cavalcanti used was far less evident or almost absent. Niccolò Giunta, a Florentine who was involved in the arrangement of credit for the duke on the Antwerp market between 1549 and 1551, regularly wrote letters to the duke, which were at times dense with technical information about opportunities and problems related to the loans. He used a standard opener of his letters that followed his salutation to the duke, but then he quickly turned to the information that he needed to convey. Throughout the letter he occasionally inserted expressions of diligence and reassurances that he would follow the duke’s wishes. Unlike in Cavalcanti’s letter, such expressions were not the main body of Giunta’s letters but rather the necessary language that was occasionally inserted to maintain his relationship with Cosimo.

Apart from the dense language of service and the necessary expressions of reassurance, references to family members were another element that recurrently appeared in the letters that Florentines sent from Antwerp. We already saw that Tommaso Marchi tried to establish a relationship with Cosimo by referring to a connection between Cosimo’s father and his. Overall, such passages remained rather scarce in the letters that Florentines sent from Antwerp. Whereas Francesco Nasi (see above) had first written to a family member in Florence to implicitly request a tax deduction from the duke, Galeotto Magalotti was more direct in writing about his

600 ACA, poortersboeken, February 5 1540, registration of ‘Bernaart Cavelcanti’ from Florence, with merchant as registered profession.
601 After saluting the duke as ‘my illustrious and excellent sir’, Giunta’s standard opener of his letters was “chon la debita umilita e reverensia suplicho al Illustrissima excellentissima”, e.g. ASF, MdP 394, fol 289, August 28 1549, Giunta to Cosimo
602 E.g. “e stia s[ignor] ill[ustrissi]ma eccellentissima asichurata che il t[u]tto sara fatto con la debita diligenzia sollecitudine e fede chonforme a li ordinii sua”, ASF, MdP 398, fol 499 r, August 17 1550, Giunta to Cosimo
family and his difficulties to meet his tax requirements. He wrote to the duke that he could not feed his aged mother anymore and therefore requested a relief of the balzello and accatto taxes. Magalotti’s letter was the last traceable one that he sent from Antwerp, and it seems that he needed the tax relief as a return for the services that he had been providing to Cosimo over the previous years. Magalotti had started writing from Antwerp in 1552, mainly about credit provision but also about grain supplies and the provision of a ship to transport the grain. In these nine previous letters, he had refrained from commenting on his familial and financial situation, but in his final letter he seems to have sought a compensation for the service that he had provided.

Tommaso Baroncelli, the Florentine in Antwerp who, especially after his return to Florence, had the closest ties to the duke’s inner circle, wrote more frequently about his familial situation than the other merchants in Antwerp. His first letter from Antwerp to Cosimo in January 1556 contains an elaborate section in which he discusses how his itinerary has brought him to Antwerp and how he had ‘taken’ a woman, namely the daughter of Giovan Battista Gualterotti. He continued by providing a description of her character and beauty, and about his desires to share his life with her. In a letter he sent nearly three years later, Baroncelli wrote to the duke about the birth of his child and how his wife Chiara also partook in honouring Cosimo. About a year after that letter, he included news about the return of his son Bernardo to Florence, and in a covered phrasing he sought patronage for him from the duke.

The cases of Baroncelli, Magalotti, and Cavalcanti presented in this section have shown that a language of service and obligation, as well as a tone that shifted between reverent distance and glimpses of familiarity, together with occasional references to actual family members were important and distinctive components of the correspondence between Florentines abroad and their ruler. Yet as the previous section on information and news provision has already shown, expressions of service were not the main substance of a large majority of the letters. The dense

603 ASF, MdP 446, fol 206, March 10 1555, Galeotto Magalotto to Cosimo I
604 Correspondence about the acquisition of grain and a ship started in October 1554, see: MdP 437, fol 76, 108 and 160, respectively October 27, November 3 and November 10 1554, all Magalotti to Cosimo
605 “(...), soj agiar donna una figla di m[onsignor] gio[van]battista ghondi gualterotti homo onorate”, ASF, MdP 457, fol 535, January 30 1556 (Florentine calendar), Tommaso Baroncelli to Cosimo I
606 “la quale e de bellezza, onesta, me contento tanto che io spero d' avere una ottima vita co[n] lei”, ASF, MdP 457, fol 535
rhetoric of service provision was accompanied by actual practices of providing shipments of goods, money and expertise from Antwerp to Florence. Unlike in commercial exchanges, the remuneration for such services was not always part of a transaction, and when it was they were discussed more politely and in veiled terms. Services were primarily inserted into a discourse of obedience, which clearly indicate that in return they expected help in the future and benevolence from their home ruler.

Providing Horses, Hounds and Hydraulic Expertise

The services that Florentines in Antwerp offered to their home ruler did not merely consist in providing him political and economic news and advice, which has been demonstrated earlier in this chapter. They also corresponded with Cosimo about the acquisition of various types of grain and its shipment on the duke’s galleys, commanded by Italian captains. Opportunities to buy jewellery and gemstones in Antwerp were signalled in their letters. Moreover, Antwerp, an important financial market at the time, was also a place where they engaged as intermediaries in credit provision for their ruler. However, their letters show that they also acted as providers of a variety of services and ‘commodities’ that we rarely associate with the activities of long distance merchants. One of the more recurring types of provisions to which they referred when writing to the duke or prince in Florence is the supply of animals. Moreover, as Antonio di Giovanni di Merciante’s letter at the beginning of the chapter has made clear, Florentines in Antwerp also occasionally notified their home ruler about the presence of technical experts in Antwerp.

Both topics seemingly do not have much in common, but focusing on them provides additional insights into how Florentines in Antwerp thought about service provision to their home ruler. As there are little or no indications in their private business correspondence or in the Antwerp certificates that they were involved in the animal trade there or in working with

609 Apart from the involvement of Magalotti in grain shipments that I have already mentioned, Nicollo Giunta was also following up on grain shipments: ASF, Mdp 398, fol 498; Mdp 399, fol 301 & Mdp 400, fol 331, respectively August 17, September 13 & November 25 1550, all Giunta to Cosimo. Also the captain of the duke's ship Francesco Rustichi wrote from Antwerp about grain transport. This shipment was followed up by Magalotti: ASF, Mdp 439, fol 474, January 23 1554 (Florentine calendar)

610 Baroncelli for example signalled the availability of a diamond: ASF, Mdp 491, fol 670, March 22 1561, Baroncelli to Cosimo. And one of the few letters of Lodovico Guicciardini signals the availability of tapestries and jewellery: ASF, Mdp 516, fol 741, July 14 1565, Guicciardini to Cosimo

611 Also Giovan Battista Guicciardini at times was asked to organize a credit for the duke. For example, in the summer of 1562, he wrote that he was not able to find money on the Antwerp market. Battistini, Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini, 183.
engineers and other experts, we must assume that such trades and forms of knowledge brokerage were further from, if not completely outside of their core business activities. These traces of the shipment of animals in their letters to Cosimo, therefore, leave an exotic and curious impression. Whereas the provision of political and commercial news and advice by merchants was a logical by-product of their commercial undertakings in Antwerp and therefore must have required less extra effort to gather, that was not the case for the provision of information on both engineers and animals. Moreover, especially in the case of horse provision, Florentine merchants mainly followed up on requests for providing these animals or information about them, rather than pro-actively including information or proposals about them. However, merchants nevertheless followed up on such requests, which demonstrates that the Florentines in Antwerp were willing to move beyond their core fields of commercial expertise to serve their home ruler. Therefore, I focus on the provision of animals and then turn my attention to references in their letters about various forms of technological expertise. I seek to demonstrate that these exchanges were also part of a patronage relationship, and moreover, they can be quite indicative about the quality of that relationship.

In the letters of the Antwerp-based Florentines to Cosimo, two types of animals regularly appear, dogs and horses. In June 1548, Tommaso Corbinelli and the unspecified heirs of Pandolfo Biliotti wrote from Antwerp that one of the duke’s galleys, which primarily carried copper and an important bill of exchange, had also been loaded with six dogs: three English mastiffs “of great beauty and quality”, two greyhounds of somewhat more doubtful quality and one small dog. Based on the minutes of Cosimo’s correspondence and of the outgoing letters of the secretaries, it seems that Corbinelli had received instructions about copper provision and the financial transaction that he had to arrange with the ship’s captain, but any requests or instructions about the provision of dogs are lacking, suggesting that Corbinelli and the heirs of Biliotti acted on their own initiative. However, the detailed attention that Corbinelli paid to describe the qualities of the dogs gives the impression that he had received a detailed request or at least had become knowledgeable about the exact preferences of the duke via another channel, and in his turn he went to great lengths to acquire them. Ten years later, in January 1559, Tommaso Baroncelli sent English dogs to Cosimo I and stressed the excellent qualities

---

612 “Carichiamo sopra el detto ghaleone 6 cani di tre mastini d’ Inghilterra molto buoni e belli et dua leverieri da porci che noi [n] sappiamo come riusciremo che meglio noi [n] habbiamo trovato, et un canotto piccolo seghuso buono”. ASF, MdP 387, fol 750, June 30 1548, heirs of Pandolfo Biliotti and Tommaso Corbinelli to Cosimo I
613 ASF, MdP 188, fol 61, May 26 1548, Secretary to Corbinelli and heirs of Biliotti; MdP 188, fol 88 r, August 18 1548, Secretary to Corbinelli
of the animals. Also, Baroncelli seems to have provided the dogs on his own initiative and gave an impression in his letter of being knowledgeable about selecting the best breeds. Two years later, he again included an offer to send dogs to Florence in one of his letters.

The appearance of dogs as being animals that were shipped recurrently calls for a contextualization of the larger flows of the animal trade in early modern Europe. The trade of dogs has remained largely opaque. European ports on the Atlantic coast and in the North Sea area, such as Antwerp, Lisbon and later Amsterdam, were considered to be places where ‘exotic’ goods, objects and animals from the lands around the Indian Ocean, Africa, and the America’s arrived to then be further transported to the courts of European rulers. For Antwerp, we know that for example the Fugger firm there traded in ivory and various non-European animals. For later periods, the interest in such exotic goods by members of the Medici court in Florence has also been brought to light, but it seems that throughout Cosimo’s rule that was not the case yet. Cosimo was very keen on hunting, so the large mastiffs that Corbinelli sent him, might have been intended to provide him company during his trips. Overall, within the larger scale of the correspondence, the two shipments of dogs were rather exceptional. Nevertheless, it remains revealing that Florentines like Corbinelli, who as the former governor of the Salviati bank in Antwerp spent most of his time arranging financial transactions, shifted his efforts to acquire animals for the duke.

Cosimo I was known as a practical and down to earth man, and he was also regularly sent other animals from the Low Countries that had both practically useful and culturally significant characteristics. Indeed, more than dogs, horses were the primary species that was shipped from the Low Countries to Italy for the duke. One of the best-documented cases of horse provision by Florentines via Antwerp is the one that was arranged via Giovan Battista Guicciardini. In July 1562, when he had been regularly writing to the duke for about three

614 “Io le manderò un paro di cani d’inghilterra ch[e] saranno de meglo si possa trovare”, ASF, MdP 475, fol 459, January 25 1559 (Florentine calendar), Baroncelli to Cosimo
615 ASF, MdP 489, fol 311, June 28 1561, Baroncelli to Cosimo
616 The historiography on dogs in early modern society is scarce, and primarily focuses on cultural meaning and representation. See Laura Deborah Gelfand, ed., Our Dogs, Our Selves: Dogs in Medieval and Early Modern Art, Literature, and Society, Art and Material Culture in Medieval and Renaissance Europe, Volume 6 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2016).
617 Via Antwerp the Fuggers imported monkeys, parrots, peacocks, wildcats and various other animals, apart from non living exotica. See: Mark A. Meadow, ‘Merchants and Marvels. Hans Jacob Fugger and the Origins of the Wunderkammer’, in Merchants and Marvels, ed. Pamela H. Smith and Paula Findlen (Routledge, 2002), 183.
619 The horse provision by Guicciardini has already been signalled in Jacqmain, ‘Een Minder Bekende “Vlaamse” Guicciardini: Giovan Battista, de Correspondent van de Medici’s’, 383.
years, he acknowledged the reception of a letter from the duke on this subject.\textsuperscript{620} This order was certainly eye-catching because of the request for fifty horses, but it was not the first time that the duke had expressed an interest in acquiring horses from the Low Countries. Earlier, in 1548, he had already written to Gaspar Ducci to ask to procure and send twelve horses, “for the augmentation and preservation of our race”.\textsuperscript{621} Together with Tommaso Corbinelli, Ducci followed up on that order and provided the duke with mares.\textsuperscript{622} Apart from Corbinelli Ducci was also primarily involved and therefore also specialized in various forms of financial transactions, but that did not stop them from putting effort into successfully meeting the needs of their home ruler. They contacted people with expertise in Holland and made arrangements to conduct those horses, a task that according to Corbinelli would be performed primarily by Ducci. As it would be better to wait until after January to conduct them to Italy, they would stay with their flock until then. Corbinelli and Ducci were only dealing with the provision of twelve female horses and that order did not create complications, but fourteen years later Guicciardini had a more complicated task in acquiring and sending fifty Frisians to Florence.\textsuperscript{623}

Throughout the early modern period and up to the first decades of the twentieth century, horses were of crucial importance for the European economy. All substantial transports of goods over the continent needed horsepower, and also the pace of information exchange correlated with the speed of travel by horse. Together with this utilitarian value, they also carried an important cultural significance. Horses provided their owners with an opportunity to distinguish themselves, and they held a crucial place in the image of chivalric culture and in military enterprises. Monarchs and princes, therefore, went to great lengths to acquire the best-bred horses. Such costly and rare animals served monarchs as a means to over shadow other rulers and they were used as valuable gifts and objects of exchange between the courts.\textsuperscript{624}

On the Italian Peninsula, the court of the Gonzaga in Mantua was an important, if not the primary centre of horse breeding in that period.\textsuperscript{625} The dynasty there went to great lengths to acquire horses, mainly from the Eastern Mediterranean area, and developed networks

\begin{itemize}
\item Battistini, \textit{Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini}, 177 Cosimo had written about his intention to acquire the fifty Frisian horses. See MdP 216, fol 86, June 12 1562.
\item ASF, MdP 190, fol 17 r, September 1 1548, Secretary to Ducci
\item ASF, MdP 392, fol 84 r, March 16 1548, Tommaso Corbinelli in Antwerp to Cosimo I in Florence.
\item Corbinelli referred specifically to the transport of ‘giumente’, mares, in one of his letters: ASF, MdP 392, fol 84, March 16 1548, Corbinelli to Cosimo
\end{itemize}
specifically for that purpose. In that light, Cosimo’s order can be considered as part of an effort to partake in a widely shared interest for horses among Italian princes and their courts. However, it is striking that Cosimo repeatedly placed orders for horses from the Low Countries. Nowadays, the Frisian horses that Cosimo requested have an almost legendary reputation in the circles of horse breeders, and they have a long history of being in demand throughout Europe and beyond.626 However, in the period when Cosimo ordered them from the Florentine merchants in Antwerp, they did not have the same standing as the lighter Italian and ‘Turkish’ bred horses. Nevertheless, this type of horse was requested with the argument that it could serve ‘to improve our race’, and moreover the request was sent to Florentines in Antwerp who were all but specialists in this trade. This raises the question what was the importance of knowledge in such requests and the discussions about them. Since Daniel Roche recently published his trilogy on the central place of horses in early modern society, the relation between knowledge and the centrality of horses in early modern society has been brought to attention.627 Therefore cases about horse provisioning in the letters from the Florentines in Antwerp may serve as an indicator to understand the importance of knowledge exchange and provision in patronage relations.

The acquisition and transport of the Frisians, and in particular the gathering of information, was for months a recurring topic in Guicciardini’s letters. Guicciardini also expressed eagerness to serve his ruler in this request, but in the first letter following Cosimo’s request, Guicciardini immediately made it clear that he knew nothing about horses but that he would gain more information and keep the duke informed about his progress.628 Later that month, Guicciardini wrote that he had gained more intelligence about the subject: the best Frisian horses could be acquired in the North of Holland, in the areas close to the province of Friesland. According to the information that he had gathered, Frisian horses were born in Friesland but bred in Holland or Flanders, because of the excellent meadows there.629

629 ‘(...) io ritraggo che quelle che sono bonissime per raza si comprano in Holanda in luoghi vicinissimi alla Frigia, dove più parte sono nate et poi là condotte, par causa delle buone pasture come anche se ne conduce in Fiandra, et chi ne vole haver maxime quantità dove fra 5 e 6 settimane si fa una fiera dove ne sarà gran numero’ Battistini, 181.
Guicciardini referred explicitly to the Pisan merchant Jacopo Lanfranchi, as being a source of information on horses, and added that Lanfranchi was planning to leave Antwerp and had therefore bought four or five horses for 35 scudi each to pull his carts. After he provided this information, the duke’s answer took longer than Guicciardini thought suitable. In his subsequent letters, he stressed that the fairs were being organized soon and those were the best occasions to acquire horses quickly, but neither a definitive order nor the necessary payments which Guicciardini could not advance, were sent from Florence. Moreover, he would also need a letter of recommendation from the duke for the governess of the Low Countries, in order to facilitate the acquisition and sending of the horses. As horses were of military relevance, their trade was regulated and special passports were often needed.

Guicciardini continued to become more knowledgeable about the horse trade, and he learnt that the inclement weather of autumn and winter would make transporting horses from the north of the Low Countries to Antwerp and then all the way to Italy an infeasible endeavour. As most of the horses would die, he strongly suggested postponing the order until the following spring. From Carnival onwards, the weather would be better, and the state of the roads would improve. Moreover, the most interesting fairs from which to buy horses would also be held in that period. This approach was approved and indeed between November and February, it ceased to be a topic in Guicciardini’s letters. In early February, shortly before an important fair, he brought up the subject again and notified the duke that in order to buy horses he would need a financial provision. After reminders throughout March, credit letters reached Guicciardini at the end of that month. Unfortunately, the most interesting fairs had already taken place at that point, but he would nevertheless put endeavour to fulfil his commission and would travel to Holland to see what he could get. After following some leads through hearsay, halfway through April he bought a first dozen horses in Holland and left one of his aides there to arrange the acquisition of more. In May, Guicciardini himself travelled north to finish the

---

630 Battistini, 181.
631 Battistini, 183 & 185.
632 According to Guicciardini, the acquisition of a license to export horses would not create difficulties on the condition that Cosimo would write about it to Margaret of Parma, the governess of the Low Countries. See Battistini, 181 & 183.
635 Battistini, 198.
636 Battistini, 199 & 200.
637 Battistini, 201.
638 Battistini, 202.
transactions. This was not the end of his updates on the subject, however, as arranging passports to export them took until the summer. When that was arranged, they could finally be conducted to Italy, which also took more time, effort, and money than he had hoped. The weather conditions during summer were not as expected and the drivers could only take the horses in short stages. That delay required more money than was foreseen, which forced Guicciardini to set up a transaction with a bill of exchange to make sure that the conductors did not remain stuck near Basel.

All in all the whole process of providing the horses from Guicciardini receiving the request to the point when the animals reached Tuscany took more than a year. During that period, Guicciardini spent a substantial portion of his attention and effort to learn more about horse breeding in the Low Countries, the modalities to transport them and to obtain permission to export them. The channels that he used to increase his knowledge about the trade were rarely mentioned explicitly and often relied on hearsay. When a decade earlier the duke had asked Gaspar Ducci to provide horses, he too had to start from a position of ignorance. Ducci turned to the Dutch nobleman Brederode, who via his village in Holland could help him to contact horse breeders. The paradoxical aspect of organizing the acquisition and transport Frisian horses to the duke is thus that these supplies were requested with the explicit purpose of improving the quality of horse breeding in Tuscany, but that it was up to the Florentine correspondents of the duke in Antwerp, who were unaccustomed to this kind of work, to find suitable horses. The case of Guicciardini’s involvement in the supply of horses, therefore, provides us with important insights into the kind of patronage relations that existed between the Florentines in Antwerp and the duke, and the significance of knowledge in that. In this case, it was not their experience in a trade or their deep knowledge of horse breeding that mattered, but rather their ability to gain information about it, to work themselves into a trade and to use their local contacts. That they were not only able but also willing to do so must be interpreted as an indication of their strong attachment to maintaining their relationship with the duke. This case establishes that it was not merely via their fields of expertise that they were eager to provide services and to make a profit.

639 Battistini, 205.
640 Battistini, 205–7.
641 Battistini, 207–10.
642 The last reference to the transport in one of his letters was on October 10 1563 when he had heard that they were near Milan. Battistini, 217.
643 ASF, MdP 390, fol 589, October 20 1548, Ducci to Cosimo.
That attitude also explains the occasional notifications that they sent about engineers or similar technical experts who were active in Antwerp or the Low Countries. Cases about foreign engineers being attracted to Tuscany for various undertakings, such as the management of streams and rivers, have been noted in previous scholarship. We know for example the case of Lodewijk De Raet, an engineer from the Low Countries who spent time working in Wolfenbuttel in Germany before he was recruited by the city of Lucca through an Antwerp-based Lucchese merchant. Simultaneously, the Duchy of Florence recruited De Raet in a failed attempt to improve the flow of the Arno.

De Raet is the only established case of an engineer from the Low Countries who was actually recruited by the government in Florence, but prior to that Florentines in Antwerp notified the duke about other experts who might be of interest. I already briefly referred to the description of such an expert in one of Antonio de Giovanni Merciante’s letters. He elaborately discussed the appearance of an ‘artificie’ who had knowledge of cleaning water, and of mines, wells, fountains, and swamps. The man was also capable of conducting water in a palace to any height without any effort from men or animals. He then further described the man’s long history of activities in England and the interest that his skills had aroused from the King of France. By sending and forwarding this letter, Merciante and his patron in Florence, Pietro Berti both seem to have been well informed about Cosimo’s interest in water management in the duchy. Later, both Giovan Battista Guicciardini and Tommaso Marchi would also inform Cosimo about opportunities to recruit technical experts in Antwerp. Throughout 1562, Guicciardini notified the duke that a Lucchese named Bartolomeo Banelli had talked to him about an invention, and that he would send more information to Cosimo if he was interested. Guicciardini was brief in his notification, and it was Banelli himself who around the same time sent a letter to the duke in which he referred to his contact with Guicciardini. Here, Guicciardini clearly acted as an intermediary who used his privileged relationship with the court

645 ASF, Misc Med 28, VII, “Convenzione fra il granduca di Toscana Francesco I e l’ ingegnere Guglielmo Raet per un progetto per rendere navigabile l’ Arno.”, August 31 1577
646 “(...) significandoli essere qui in Anversa comparso uno excellente artefici, il quale ha intelligentia di levare l’ acqua di qual si voglia fondo, et luoghi, come di miniere, di pozzi, di fontana, et palude, et in oltre condurre acqua in un pallazzo anche altezzo uno desidera, facilissimamente et senza fatica alcuna d’ huomini o bestie (...)”ASF, MdP 368, fol 350, May 12 1544, Merciante to Cosimo via Berti
649 ASF, MdP 495, fol 295 r, Banelli in Brussels to Cosimo
in Florence to give Banelli a better opportunity to approach the duke. By referring to him in his letters and letting Banelli use his name in his own letter to the duke, he both increased his value to the Lucchese and at the same time showed himself to be a pro-active servant of the duke by notifying his patron about subjects that might interest him. Two years later, Tommaso Marchi dedicated the larger part of one of his –again rather puzzling– letters to the duke to report on the situation of mining and the expertise about it in the region of Augsburg and Hungary.\footnote{ASF, MdP 505, fol 83, Marchi to Cosimo, May 20 1565}

Unlike their involvement in horse provision, the notifications about engineers and technical experts that Florentines provided from the Low Countries were driven by the pro-active attitude that they also deployed when they gathered news on commercial and political developments in the region. Most likely they were as knowledgeable about the details of mining and water management as they initially were about horse breeding, but the two cases show that through their contact with the duke and their service to him, they were able and willing to move beyond their fields of expertise. It should be noted, however, that in the cases of merchants who wrote about technical experts, the three Florentines in question had moved away from actual engagement in commerce (Guicciardini) or at least there is little to no evidence to suggest that they had actually ever engaged in it in Antwerp (Marchi and Merciante). For them, writing to the duke might have been a matter of necessity rather than an attitude of service, as we saw in the letters by Florentines such as Corbinelli or Baroncelli.

**Correspondence and Patronage: Conclusive Analysis**

Throughout the first decades of the sixteenth century, the political order in Florence had changed substantially while remaining largely the same. Numerous scholars have written about this transition, but they have only partially noted that such changes may have also had an impact on the choices and actions of Florentine merchants abroad. By analysing the letters that Florentines sent from Antwerp to their home ruler, I have been able to demonstrate that a substantial proportion of the Florentines in Antwerp explicitly wanted to gain or maintain a place in the various forms of patronage that Cosimo I provided. It should be noted that numerous Florentines who were active as merchants in Antwerp such as the Salviati or Dietisalvi Rinieri rarely or ever wrote to the duke during their stay in the Low Countries, and many of the most eye-catching correspondents, like Tommaso Marchi or Giovan Battista Guicciardini were seemingly not involved in commerce anymore. However, between these two ends of the
spectrum, we find various cases of Florentines like Tommaso Baroncelli and Galeotto Magalotti who simultaneously corresponded with and provided services to the duke but also were active in regular commercial activities in Antwerp. Cases like these provide important new insights into the relations between merchants and their home regions. Both for active and retired merchants in the Low Countries, the duke, his court, and the administration in Florence remained an important point of reference, and it was clear that they wanted to retain their contacts. Sometimes we can see short-term opportunism and a need for help in their letters, but for many of them, their letters and offers of service can be considered as a long-term investment. We read little about financial remuneration or direct offers to provide paid service in their letters. The remuneration must have been primarily the perception of being a good servant of the duke, an image that might benefit them, their family and their associates at a later point. In the case of Guicciardini, his regular newsletters were often explicitly acknowledged and encouraged, so his remuneration lied partially in having a prosperous relationship with the court in Florence. At times that prosperous relationship could lead to actual commissions like that of the horse provision, for which he was remunerated.

Based on a case of Antonio Guidotto, a Florentine merchant active in England throughout the middle of the sixteenth century, Laura Hunt has demonstrated that a merchant could also gain an informal diplomatic role. The available sources for that case also indicate that the driving force was the merchant rather than the duke.651 Although the relation between the Habsburg Empire, of which the Low Countries in this period were part, and the Duchy of Florence was of crucial importance to Cosimo I, there is little to suggest that Florentines in Antwerp acted as informal diplomats similar to the way Guidotto acted. More comparative research is needed to begin to understand fully how Cosimo I and his successor used, reacted and related to the Florentine network of merchants throughout Europe and how this related to their efforts to set up a system of diplomatic representation.652 Based on the cases scrutinized here, it seems that the duke had a variety of Florentines at his disposal which approached him more than he called upon them. When they sent him suggestions, advice or offers, he could ignore, decline or pick them up. Occasionally, when he needed an agent in Antwerp for a commercial transaction, like the provision of horses, he had a group of potential agents at his disposal.

652 Contini’s overview article on Medici diplomacy in this period barely touches upon the relation between diplomacy and the commercial network Contini, ‘Aspects of Medicean Diplomacy in the Sixteenth Century’, 54–55.
By focusing mainly on forms of service provision and patronage-seeking that lay outside of the more common activities performed by merchants, it has been possible to demonstrate that these merchants were willing and able to go beyond their core activities in order to gain and retain the duke’s benevolence. That shows that their activities in Antwerp should not merely be analysed from a rational profit-seeking perspective in a narrow sense. By providing the first substantial analysis of the relations between Florentine merchants abroad and their home ruler, I have been able to demonstrate that a political culture of patronage-seeking also extended into the commercial sphere. The institution of the Florentine merchant nation in Antwerp was part of that sphere, but throughout this chapter, we have been able to observe how that political culture also mattered to individual merchants. When they moved from Florence to Antwerp to seek a fortune there, many of them did not leave their habit of building and maintaining ties with their home ruler behind them. On the contrary, they invested their time, attention and knowledge into a relationship that has rarely received attention from scholars of long-distance trade.
Chapter 5. Gaspar Ducci: the boundaries of Florentine identity.

In an Antwerp certification drafted in December 1556, Gaspare Ducci registered that he was the procurator of a certain Laurens de Pontadera de Pijl. As we have seen earlier, such a proxy was used frequently by merchants in Antwerp, and in itself, the use of proxies was thus not exceptional. However, what makes this registration noteworthy is the way in which Ducci is described in the introduction of the document. Initially, the Antwerp city clerk who drafted the text identified Ducci as a ‘merchant florentin’, but then scratched out that formulation. Instead, it was replaced with a sign of reference to a section at the end of the document, in which Ducci was described as a knight and an advisor to the king. This revision of his identification in the document, probably at the instigation of Ducci himself, is a fine example of the confusion, ambiguity, and difference in preference and perception that came with the identification of merchants. In this chapter, the ambiguity and confusion that came with being a Florentine abroad is at the centre.

Illustration 5.1. Source: ACA, Cert 11, fol 427 r

Throughout the previous chapters of this thesis, I have unpacked and analysed the extent to which Florentine merchants in Antwerp were embedded in institutions and political, social

---

653 ACA, Cert 11, fol 427 r, December 31 1556
and economic networks that on various levels and degrees related and connected them to their hometown. Looking at Florentine merchants as being members of an institution and a community, as being connected through commercial and social ties on a local and a long-distance level, and as seeking patronage from the government and the ruler of their home region, has enabled me to show that their hometown background mattered to them. The main aim of each of these chapters has been to grasp what was the general and ‘normal’ operating mode of Florentines abroad in these various settings and contexts. In the course of searching for their habits, strategies, and tactics, the focus thus far has been primarily analytical, using the various formal and informal institutions and bodies of records that they produced as the respective starting points. This approach has allowed me to understand the relevance and use of the Florentine nation, of their commercial ties in Antwerp and on a long-distance, as well as the relationship with their home ruler, but so far it has only provided a somewhat scattered impression of the multiple and sometimes paradoxical paths that the individual merchants in Antwerp followed.

Shifting the focus from institutions and networks to actors as a vantage point allows us to gain a better understanding of the choices that merchants made throughout their careers. The correction in Ducci’s identification shows that for merchants their background and self-presentation was by no means constant in every setting and that it evolved throughout time. Cases like Ducci’s, therefore, call for more sensitivity to the ambiguity that came with a ‘Florentine’ background. Florence was both a city with a closed urban elite and a polity that up until the middle of the sixteenth century bought or conquered cities and territories in its surroundings. Although merchants with a background in that second category appeared less often as Florentine merchants abroad, they did exist and occasionally rose to prominence. Moreover, some functions in the Florentine republic and more so in the duchy were reserved for men with a background outside of the Florentine office holding class. Thus characterizing one’s self as a Florentine did not mean that a person belonged to a fixed and stable category. Florentines were of course not the only group of merchants that preferred or stressed different aspects of their identification in different settings. For some groups of merchants, like the Portuguese New Christians, being identified in a particular category could be a matter of life or death.654

The boundaries of being a Florentine may not have affected merchants in Antwerp to that degree. However, in this chapter I demonstrate that in the relations between the Florentines abroad and their home government their background did matter. In order to bring the construction and the limits of being Florentine to light, this chapter deviates from the approach of the previous four chapters in two ways. First, whereas in the previous chapters merchants from Florentine office holding class families appeared as the most prominent group, here the case of ‘Florentine’ merchants with a non-office holding background and an origin outside of the city of Florence is at the centre. Office Holding Class families were indeed the most conspicuous and recurrently appearing subgroup within the larger group of Florentines in Antwerp, but as the case of Tommaso Marchi shows, Florentine merchants with a non-office holding class background also appeared regularly in Antwerp, and at times drew attention. The predominance of Office Holding Class merchants thus should not prevent us from asking the question, if and how Florentines with a different background lived and traded in the Low Countries. On the contrary, it is only by paying explicit attention to ‘Florentines’ with a background outside of the city of Florence or outside of the Office Holding Class that the effects of these backgrounds can better be understood. A second change in approach in comparison to the previous chapters is that my analysis will initially be based on the case of a single merchant, namely Gaspare Ducci, instead of analysing the group of non-office holding Florentines as a collective. As Ducci was one of the most eye-catching merchants in Antwerp and without a doubt the most notorious non-office holding class Florentine there, I have chosen him as my guide in this chapter. By giving a central place to this particular case, I intend to counterbalance the analytical vantage point of institutions and networks of the previous chapters and to explore what additional insights a biographical approach can raise and how such a focus can provide us with a better understanding of the importance of Florence for Florentines abroad.

This chapter is organized into four sections. First, I will elaborate on my argument for choosing to focus on a single merchant and why Ducci is a suited case. After that methodological and historiographical section I will turn to the biographical background of Ducci in Pescia and his first years as a merchant in Antwerp, paying particular attention to the political-economic offices that he held there. The third section focuses on the extent to which Ducci was embedded in Antwerp as well as how he perceived himself and was perceived by others. In these two sections, my research will be primarily based on the work of other historians and on edited sources, combined with my own additional archival findings. The fourth and final section focuses on Ducci’s relations with other Florentines in Antwerp and in particular with the ducal court in Florence. For this section, I rely primarily on my own findings in the
Florentine archives, a body of sources that unlike the Antwerp archives has rarely been used to investigate Ducci. Moreover, in the final section, I also compare Ducci with other ‘Florentine’ merchants that like Ducci had a background outside of the office holding class.

_Ducci and The Limits and Advantages of Merchant Biographies_

In the past decade, scholars of pre-modern long-distance commerce have started to point out that kinship, state, and urban institutions, at home as well as in their host environment and their ethnic or religious based networks were by no means mutually exclusively used as a solutions for the so-called fundamental problems of exchange. Rather, all were parts in a toolbox out of which a concrete solution to a particular commercial problem or concern could be constructed, in accordance with the concrete preferences and circumstances. In light of these observations, following the steps of an individual merchant throughout his career in Antwerp can allow for a more in-depth understanding of how and when such instruments and institutions were used. In this chapter I do not intend to offer an exhaustive reconstruction of Ducci’s uses of such various tools, instead, I will juxtapose his relations and engagements in the Low Countries with the traces of his use of Florentine tools in order to shed light on the relative importance of hometown institutions and actors.

It is not my pursuit or claim to write comprehensively about the case of Gaspare Ducci here. That would require more in-depth research into numerous archives, which would lead us to a variety of additional themes and debates that fall beyond the scope of this dissertation and would deserve a monographic study of its own. However, by engaging with the particular and the ‘abnormal’ case that Ducci offers, it is possible to put the choices and actions of Florentine merchants in Antwerp with an office holding class background into a comparative perspective. As I will demonstrate below, Ducci’s choices and action were in many respects different from those of most other Florentine merchants in Antwerp, but to some extent his actions and his aspirations were similar.

I also decided to use Ducci in this case because numerous historians have touched upon him, and their writings, in turn, have had a significant impact on the general image of Italian

---

merchants, and of Florentines in particular, in sixteenth-century Antwerp. Several scholars have referred to him as a prominent Florentine in Antwerp and as an embodiment of the recklessness of Florentine capitalism in their respective works on early modern trade, Italians in the Low Countries, Florentine commerce and other topics.656 Often, such references consist of a brief discussion of one of his undertakings and stress the exceptionality of his case and his audacious, if not ferocious attitude. The overall image of Ducci provided in these studies is that of a merchant who left his home region forever and became irrevocably entangled in various political and economic relations in the Low Countries. His various economic activities that had a strong political aspect, like tax farming and holding a monopoly have been investigated and discussed extensively.657 Also, his conspicuous way of life and his various residences in and around Antwerp have been the subject of detailed research.658 However, much of the evidence in the sources and literature about Ducci raise up more questions.

That Ducci recurrently appears in a variety of sources and that scholars can build further on a diverse historiography based on that source base, does not mean that he provides an easy case to investigate. The absence of his own private commercial records makes it difficult to grasp the patterns or even the directions in his activities and his affinities. Probably because of this scattered archival situation and as a consequence of that the scattered references to him in the historiography, attempts to synthesize and digest all fragmented pieces have remained limited. Moreover, somewhat one-sidedly, his case has consistently received more attention from scholars that specialize in commerce, urban history, and other aspects of the history of Antwerp and Low Countries in the sixteenth century. In the scholarship on Italian commerce, 

---

656 Denucé’s short book on Italians in Antwerp contains a chapter on Ducci: Denucé, Italiaansche koopmansgeslachten te Antwerpen in de XVIe-XVIIIe eeuwen., 27–43; More than a monograph, De Cock’s work should be considered as a brochure in which the sprawled findings about Ducci in the archives and secondary literature are brought together, but are barely analyzed. Moreover, concrete archival references are often lacking which detracts from the main relevance of the booklet as it signals in which direction one might search: Siegfried De Cock, Gaspar Ducci, bankier van keizer Karel, heer van Schoonsel en Kruibeke (Borgerhout; De Cock, 1979); Ducci is elaborately discussed in Richard Ehrenberg, Das Zeitalter der Fugger: Geldkapital und Creditverkehr im 16. Jahrhundert (Jena: G. Fischer, 1896), 311–16; Alberto Tenenti, ‘The Merchant and the Banker’, in Renaissance Characters, ed. Eugenio Garin (University of Chicago Press, 1997), 173; Goris refers to his ‘role nefaste’ on the Antwerp market Goris, Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567, 79; Goldthwaite, The Economy of Renaissance Florence, 47, 257–58.

657 For references to that literature, see notes in the sections on that subject lower in this chapter.

on secondary literature, and little substantial research has been conducted based on the primary sources kept in Italy.  

By turning to the sources about Ducci that are mainly kept in the Florentine archives, I aim primarily to understand his relationship with his home region. That way, I not only go beyond the traditional focus on Ducci’s activities and his role in the Low Countries, but I also use his case to engage with the last set of questions about the ties between merchants abroad and their region of origin. Even the Florentine merchant who by many standards was the most embedded in Antwerp, still made an effort to develop and maintain such relations. In this light, it is important to understand where Ducci came from. Yet rather than focusing on Ducci’s actual life in Tuscany, a phase that covered only a brief first part of his adult life, I focus on some overlooked aspects of his time in Antwerp, namely his correspondence with the court in Florence and more particularly the loans that he organized for Cosimo. However, before turning to Ducci’s relationship with Florence, I first need to reconstruct his activities in Antwerp.

**Early Life, Move to Antwerp and Gaining a Reputation**

Gaspar Ducci was born in the small Tuscan city of Pescia on November 18, 1495. Based on the primary sources generated and kept in the Low Countries, Ducci’s background is unclear, and in older historiography he is often presented erroneously as originating from the middle sized Tuscan city of Pistoia. As the earlier example made clear, in the Antwerp sources he was generally referred to as a Florentine or a knight and local lord in the Low Countries, rather than as a Pescian. Some of the other Florentines in Antwerp and elsewhere were more conscious of Ducci’s background and referred to him as a ‘Pesciatino’. Pescia was a very different place

---

659 The best assessment of Ducci in the Italian sources is provided in the lemma on him in the Italian national biographical dictionary. There the main sources on Ducci that are preserved in Florence are referred to but not substantially analyzed: Enrico Stumpo, ‘Ducci (Docci, Dozzi, Douchy, Douche), Gaspare’, *Dizionario Biografico Degli Italiani*, accessed 8 January 2013, http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gaspare-ducci_(Dizionario-Biografico)/.

660 Ducci’s early life and his family history is documented well in the lemma of the Italian National Biographical Dictionary dedicated to him, and I rely on Stumpo’s findings about the Ducci family for my description of his early life. Stumpo also corrected Ducci’s place of birth to Pescia, by relying on a convincing sourcebase: Stumpo.

661 It seems that the misunderstanding that Ducci came from Pistoia goes back to Ehrenberg, who gave his section on Ducci the subtitle ‘Gaspar Ducci aus Pistoja’ Ehrenberg, *Das Zeitalter der Fugger*, 311; Goris and Denœc also refer to him as a native of Pistoia: Goris, *Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567*, 375; Denœc, *Italiaansche koopmansgeslachten te Antwerpen in de XVIe-XVIIIe eeuwen*, 27.

662 Ducci’s Pescian background is mentioned regularly in various descriptions of him in letters authored by Florentines: ASF, MdP 9, c 10, Cosimo I in Florence to Nicola de Nicolai in Brussels, September 12 1547 contains a description of him as Gaspare Ducci di Pescia; in MdP 12, fol 13-14, Cosimo I in Florence to Ducci, place not
to grow up than Florence, but by the time Ducci was born it had already been under Florentine rule for more than a century and a half. The city was situated in the border region between the territory of Florence and that of the Republic of Lucca. Its economy was largely based on breeding silk worms and on growing mulberries, an indispensable food for the caterpillars. We do not know whether Ducci’s ancestors were engaged in silk production and trade, but his father and uncle held offices in the local communal government and in ecclesiastical bodies, which indicates that he must have grown up in relatively prosperous circumstances. Apart from the registration of his baptism and traces of his ancestors, the first two decades of Ducci’s life in Pescia remain largely unclear. However, the political and economic context of his native city—under Florentine rule but in the periphery, and a centre of raw materials for textile production for international markets—may have had an impact, and as we will see strikingly resonated in the course of Ducci’s life.

When exactly Ducci left his native city and whether he spent time in other major commercial centres has not been documented, but he must have arrived in the Low Countries when he was in his early twenties, as according to the sources he first appeared in Antwerp in 1517. His move north was undertaken in the service of the company owned by the Lucchese Arnolfini family. The geographical proximity between Pescia and Lucca, which had brought the city under its rule before Florence took it over, and the fact that Lucca was a centre of production and trade in silk cloth, an important Italian export product in which Lucchese merchants were strongly involved, made it a logical step for a young man such as Ducci to enter into long-distance commerce via that city and its merchant elite. Although political relations between Lucca and Florence were at times very tense and also the most prominent and successful merchant families of both polities did not collaborate structurally in mixed Florentine-Lucchese partnerships, contacts and interactions occurred more frequently in an ad hoc manner and when practically useful. That Tuscans from villages and smaller towns in

mentioned, October 10 1548 Ducci is referred to as Gaspare di Pescia; Tommaso Corbinelli referred to Ducci as ‘il Pesciatino’ in a letter to Cosimo: MdP 392, fol 84, March 16 1548

663 An overview of Pescia’s history is provided in Amleto Spicciani, Pescia: città di confini in terra di Toscana (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana, 2006).

664 On mulberry growing and silk worm breeding in Pescia, see Spicciani, 102.

665 Stumpo, ‘DUCCI (Docci, Dozzi, Douchy, Douche), Gaspare’.

666 Sabbatini, Cercar esca, 26 See note 7 there, based on the Burlamacchi ‘diary’, a narrative ego document on the Lucchese presence and activities in the Low Countries; Goris, Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567, 703.

667 Florentine and Lucchese merchants for instance regularly shared shipments from Antwerp to the Italian peninsula. E.g a shared transport by Vincenzo Arnolfin, a Lucchese who worked as a factor both for the Lucchese firm of Gheronimo Arnolfini and the Pisan Lorenzo Cini, and by the Florentine Bernardo Cavalcanti is documented in ACA, Cert 6, fol 39 r, August 19 1544.
the contado and the territories which were acquired by the larger polities of the region still engaged in long-distance commerce in the sixteenth century should not come as a surprise. In the medieval period, both smaller cities like Arezzo and larger ones like Pisa and Siena had their own merchant class that engaged in long-distance trade with Northern Europe. The two larger cities, Siena and Pisa had been staunch competitors of Florence for some time, but by the end of the sixteenth century almost all of these cities had fallen under Florentine rule. At that point, only the small republic of Lucca remained an autonomous polity in the territory of contemporary Tuscany.

Ducci’s first traceable steps in international commerce were thus set in the service of merchants from another polity, but what his exact function was in the commercial activities of the Arnolfini in Antwerp is not clear. In November 1526, he was referred to as a Florentine merchant in an Antwerp notary’s act which dealt with a bill of exchange involving South German bankers and Lucchese merchants. As any references to an employer are lacking, it is unlikely that he was still working for the Arnolfini at that point. Four years later Ducci had become the governor of the Florentine Marucelli brothers’ company. Around that time, in collaboration with a certain Henri van Rees, he was registered as ‘Jaspar Ducci et C’ and took a substantial share in a sea insurance, which was organized by Hanseatic merchants. As this sequence of his recorded activities shows, our knowledge of Ducci’s activities in Antwerp in prior to the 1540s remains scattered.

Ducci’s activities from the 1540s onwards are better documented. By that time they seem to have consisted more predominantly of financial speculation, and in relation to that, of holding offices in the political economic sphere. Although we have evidence that he did not give up trading in goods completely, it seems that such activities became of lesser importance.

668 On the activities of Tuscan merchants from Arezzo and other smaller communities in the Low Countries in the Middle Ages, see Galoppini, Mercanti Toscani e Bruges Nel Tardo Medioevo chapters 6, 7 and 8 focus respectively on merchants from Pisa, Sienna and Arezzo.

669 Notularium J. de Platea, 1, f 228, November 26 1526, edited in: Jacob Strieder, Aus Antwerpener Notariatsarchiven Quellen zur deutschen Wirtschaftsgeschichte des 16. Jahrhunderts (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1962), 52–54, http://books.google.com/books?id=MOGRAAAIAAJ; Goris has mentioned Ducci as being part of a group of merchants who bought spices in 1523, but that observation is based on an errant reading of the name of a merchant (Lasarus Doucher, described as a ‘citizen and merchant of this city’). Goris, Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567, 120 Compare with ACA, Pk 1071: Natie van Portugal, II, fol 56 v -f 57 r.

670 ASF, Merc 10381, fol 216 r, November 9 1530

671 Goris, Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567, 181.
Both Ducci’s speculations, his loans to rulers, and the way in which he performed his public offices were contested and at times considered as transgressive behaviour by his contemporaries in the Antwerp market. Three cases demonstrate how he acted and was contested, respectively as a speculator, tax collector, and monopoly holder. The case of Ducci the fraudulent speculator has been investigated the least by other scholars. In 1540 it was said that he was sentenced by the Antwerp magistrate to a three-year ban from the Exchange because he had created an artificial shortage of currency there. Although vaguely documented, the condemnation shows that at that point, Ducci must have had formidable financial power in the Antwerp market and had a substantial local network that allowed him to have such an impact. Artificially shorting the currency probably made him unpopular in most merchant based circles in Antwerp at that time. Moreover, his ban by the Antwerp magistrate is also the first example of his turbulent relationship with that local body of governance.

The stormy and tense relationship that Ducci had with the Antwerp magistrates and the merchant community did not by any means discredit him in the court circles in Brussels. The second case we touch upon here, his appointment to the important political economic office of collector of the One Hundredth Penny tax in the first half of the 1540s, is proof of Ducci’s prosperous ties with the higher echelons of government in the Low Countries. Apart from good contacts, the position had also been farmed out to him because he was able to offer the highest sum upfront and of course, Ducci must have expected that his investment would provide a substantial profit, but that was not the case and he was not even able to collect what he had spent on acquiring the tax farm. In regards to Ducci’s involvement in the actual practice of

672 Ducci himself is listed as one of the smaller exporters in the records of the One Hundredth Penny, the tax he collected himself. Brulez, ‘L’Exportation Des Pays-Bas Vers l’Italie Par Voie de Terre, Au Milieu Du XVie Siècle’, 490.

673 The story of the shortage that Ducci created in 1540 often appears in the historiography about the Antwerp money market, but it is difficult to retrace on which primary source it is based. Ehrenberg was the first to touch upon it, and he relies on the edited sources about the murder attempt of Van Schoonbeke in which Ducci was involved. Goris referred to a quotation from Guicciardini’s descrittione. If these are the only two sources, it should be noted that the story goes back to allegations of the two entrepreneurs with which Ducci had a long standing quarrel. See: Goris, Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567, 375; Denucé, Italiaanse koopmansgeslachten te Antwerpen in de XVIe-XVIIe eeuwen., 28; Ehrenberg, Das Zeitalter der Fugger, 312; Raymond De Roover, Gresham on Foreign Exchange: An Essay on Early English Mercantilism with the Text of Sir Thomas Gresham’s Memorandum for the Understanding of the Exchange (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), 159–60; P. Génard, ‘Un Procès Célèbre Au XVIe Siècle: Gilbert van Schoonbeke Contre Gaspar Dozzi’, Bulletin de La Commission Royale d’Histoire de Belgique, 4, 15, no. 4 (1888): 316–17.


675 Ducci bought the concession for collecting the tax for 200 000 gulden, see James D. Tracy, Emperor Charles V, Impresario of War: Campaign Strategy, International Finance, and Domestic Politics (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 267.
collecting the tax, we only have some limited indications. The final accounts of the tax were signed by Ducci, but given the logistical complexity and scale of the task, he must have had a team of employees or collaborators that did the major part of the actual tax collecting. Documents that refer to the collection of tax consistently contain references to Ducci's substitutes, and do not indicate his own involvement in the process of collecting the tax.\textsuperscript{676}

Apart from farming the One Hundredth Penny, Ducci also held other offices, such as the collector of the toll of Iersekeroord in the Zeeland province, and a tax collector on exports to France, similar to the One Hundredth Penny.\textsuperscript{677} All of these offices were as prestigious as they were contested, but Ducci's most eye-catching and contested office was the monopoly on the alum staple of the Low Countries, which he held between 1544 and 1549.\textsuperscript{678} Ducci's most important political-economic position is also his best documented one, and therefore I elaborate more on this third example to show Ducci as an office holder. Several qualities of alum as a product made it a relatively easy and attractive staple in a particular place and to grant a monopoly of it. Those same qualities also made it a recurrent subject of political-economic debates and social and economic tensions.\textsuperscript{679} Alum, a special type of salt, was an extremely important yet relatively scarce natural resource that was a crucial element in the process of dying various kinds of textiles. Without alum, the colour added to the thread or tissue in various cloths could not be fasted durably. Given the importance of both the textile industry and of the trade of various fabrics in the pre-modern economy, the employment and livelihood of a large group of Europeans depended on the availability of this product.\textsuperscript{680} However, that availability was by no means a given: throughout the Middle Ages, it could only be retrieved in the mines of Anatolia. Even when it was discovered in the second half of the fifteenth century in Tolfa, in the papal states, and in a couple of mines in Castile, alum remained a product in high demand that was at times a subject of political-economic tensions.\textsuperscript{681} Those who controlled the

\textsuperscript{676} A certain Jacques Steegmans, probably a relative of Ducci's wife Elisabeth Steegmans, is mentioned as a 'substitute' for Ducci in the collection of the tax. ACA, Cert 5, fol 28 r, December 18 1542. In another document, Giovanni Battista Gondi refers to a transaction that happened in the house of Ducci's substitute as a collector: ACA, Cert 6, fol 26 v, June 13 1544.

\textsuperscript{677} Willem Sybrand Unger, ed., \textit{De tol van Iersekeroord documenten en rekeningen, 1321-1572} (s'-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1939), 162, http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/iersekeroord.


\textsuperscript{680} Soly, 'De aluinhandel in de Nederlanden in de 16e eeuw', 800–803.

\textsuperscript{681} Also Florentine Tuscany had alum mines in the area near Volterra, but those mines were quickly exhausted in the late fifteenth century, see: Delumeau, \textit{L'Alun de Rome, XIVe-XIXe siècle.}, 13:29–30.
exploitation rights of the few alum mines thus had a formidable power over an important sector of the European economy of that time. The combination of a scarce supply, alum’s crucial place in the production process and the constant demand related to that, made regulating the import of alum a vital issue for authorities in regions and cities where textile production and dying was a crucial part of the economy. Moreover, just like the farming out of tax collecting, selling the monopolies on the import of goods into a polity offered governments a stable form of income.  

At the end of the fifteenth century, Antwerp, was not an important centre of textile production but as a rising commercial meeting ground, it acquired the staple right of alum for the Low Countries, meaning that all alum trade in the Low Countries would have to go through Antwerp. The city held that privilege throughout the sixteenth century. It is important to keep in mind that a staple right meant that a particular site functioned as a nexus in the supply chain, but it was not in itself a monopoly of a single merchant or a company in the trade of that product. Such temporary monopolies on the import and distribution of alum were given in times of shortage, but for most of the first decades of the sixteenth century, the import was not limited to one trader or company. However, when in 1544, Ducci acquired a monopoly on alum distribution in the Low Countries, it had more to do with his financial acumen and his position as a creditor to the central government than with the dynamics in the supply and demand of the product. He mainly acquired the position because he was able to provide necessary and urgent government loans at a time when all other financiers on the Antwerp market refused to do so. The monopoly right on alum served as a part of Ducci’s compensation for providing those credits. His control over the trade was immediately contested by various other important traders, both in Antwerp and elsewhere, and by the Antwerp magistrate. Even the pope, who was the owner of the mines at Tolfa, became involved in disputing Ducci’s right to hold the alum monopoly in Antwerp.

Despite these various and powerful forms of opposition, the central government of the Low Countries initially maintained its decision and kept supporting Ducci, with the argument

682 Soly, ‘De aluinhandel in de Nederlanden in de 16e eeuw’, 801.
683 Goris, Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567, 206.
684 Giovan Battista Guicciardini wrote elaborately to Prince Francesco about how the alum monopoly worked in Antwerp (at that point managed by Genoese): ASF, MdP 521 bis, c 855, June 2 1566, edited in: Battistini, Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini, 262–64.
686 Gheronimo Frescobaldi held a monopoly on the import of alum from Anatolia for some time, which was given to him in reaction to the shortage created by the concession holders of the Tolfa mines. See Soly, ‘De aluinhandel in de Nederlanden in de 16e eeuw’, 805.
687 Soly, 811–18.
that the monopoly was beneficial for the common good. However, around 1549 that argument began to be used against Ducci. The combination of a conflict with his suppliers, the Genoese Grimaldi who controlled the export of Tolfa, and the accusation that he only sold alum in Antwerp in large quantities to four big buyers so that they and Ducci gained an excessive profit, led Emperor Charles V to revoke Ducci's monopoly. Moreover, shortly after the loss of his monopoly, in 1550 a new allegation levied suggesting that he had created artificial financial shortages in Antwerp through Lyon and in collaboration with two German partners and the Florentine Simone Pecori. Initially, the prosecutor in that case demanded the death penalty for Ducci, but interference from the governess of the Low Countries substantially reduced the penalty to a relatively modest financial fine. These coinciding blows to Ducci's fortune and trustworthiness are often considered as his 'fall' as a financier and an important player on the Antwerp market. It is true indeed that after these events we do not have many traces of Ducci's involvement in large financial operations or in political economic roles.

The acquisition of the alum monopoly and the tax farm of the One Hundredth Penny demonstrates Ducci's strong relations with the higher echelons of the government of the Low Countries, and the fact that he was spared from harsh punishment points to the value and continuity of such relations even when his reputation had strongly declined. In itself, the two positions that Ducci held were not that exceptional. Throughout the Late Middle Ages, Italians in Northern Europe took up various functions such as the ones that Ducci held. Their advanced knowledge of financial techniques and their ability to provide volumes of credit that few others could offer made them suitable for managing tax collection and holding monopolies. Italian creditors with ties to the highest nobility remained conspicuously present at various early modern European courts and places where royal credits were provided. Apart from the Gondi in France which I discussed earlier, Italian creditors on the Iberian peninsula, Genoese in particular, were also key in the provision of loans. More distinctively about Ducci in comparison to most of these cases of Italian financiers is that he did not approach the government of the Low Countries relying from an affluent financial basis in Italy, but that he had arrived in

---

688 Denucé, Italiaansche koopmansgeslachten te Antwerpen in de XVIe-XVIIIe eeuwen., 37.
689 Denucé, 38; Soly, ‘De aluinhandel in de Nederlanden in de 16e eeuw’, 818; Goris, Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567, 380.
690 Denucé notes that in 1552 he still became the official factor of the government of the Low Countries in Antwerp: Denucé, Italiaansche koopmansgeslachten te Antwerpen in de XVIe-XVIIIe eeuwen., 37.
691 The case of the brothers Albizzi and Giovanni Paolo de’ Franzesi in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, who served the Duke of Brabant and the French king Philip IV somewhat resembles that of Ducci: Goldthwaite, The Economy of Renaissance Florence, 239.
692 A well investigated case in the Low Countries is that of the Rapondi, see Lambert, The City, the Duke, and Their Banker.
Antwerp as a small merchant with little capital behind him. His commercial and financial successes in Antwerp had been the main source of his financial weight, which in turn had allowed him to become an important creditor of the Habsburg monarchy in the Low Countries.

To a large extent, Ducci’s path to becoming a dominant creditor and political economic office holder resembles that of the Schetz family. The founding members of that family dynasty who had moved to Antwerp came from a modest financial background that lay in the Liege and Westphalia regions. Just like Ducci, they had largely acquired their reputation as merchants, creditors, and financiers on the Antwerp market. However, despite these similar career paths, there seems to be more consensus about the Schetz family’s local entanglement, and they are more univocally considered as ‘local’ Antwerp merchants. A first important reason for this difference in judgement lies in the fact that the first generation of Schetz merchants that migrated to Antwerp were able to found a commercial dynasty that remained an important presence on the Antwerp market. Ducci, in contrast, was the sole member of his family that gained commercial success and a reputation in Antwerp. The early death of his only son Laurens in May 1559 must have prevented the Ducci’s from following a similar course as that of the Schetz family and probably has shaped our understanding of Ducci as a ‘foreign’ rather than a local merchant. However, the lack of a second generation was not the only reason why Ducci was and is perceived more ambiguously. Apart from his ties with the Florentine nation in Antwerp and his other attachments to his home region, which I will present in the last part of the chapter, Ducci’s turbulent relationship with the Antwerp merchant community and the local government also contributed to this ambiguous perception. The two cases of Ducci’s involvement with political economic offices that I have presented, in particular his alum monopoly, and the condemnation of 1540 demonstrate his tense position in the circles of Antwerp merchants and his untrustworthy reputation among the commercial community there.

---

693 Goris describes Ducci’s background as ‘Comme la plupart des Italiens peu fortunés à leur arrivée à Anvers (...)’. However, even if the financial background of Florentines in Antwerp is difficult to trace, let alone to reconstruct, Goris underestimated the differences in the background of the Florentine community in Antwerp. Goris, Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales portugais, espagnols, italiens à Anvers de 1488 à 1567, 375.


695 Denucé, Italiaansche koopmansgeslachten te Antwerpen in de XVle-XVIIIe eeuwen., 35.
Ducci’s self-perception and reputation within the local community in Antwerp can be traced through two cases that shed light on his local ties in Antwerp. First I turn to a case that concerns his relationship with the Antwerp family of his wife. Particularly Ducci’s relationship with his nephew, Gilbert Van Schoonbeke the younger, who was one of the most notorious entrepreneurs in Antwerp at the time, was particularly turbulent and therefore well documented and investigated. Whereas Ducci was mainly involved in financial transactions, Van Schoonbeke increased his wealth mainly through real estate and urbanization projects. He was responsible for the construction of the new ring of Antwerp city walls in the late 1540’s and related to that for the development of a new neighbourhood in the north of the city. There, he also innovated the local brewery industry, but his innovations were hotly contested up to the extent that they roused a popular uprising. Just like his uncle, Van Schoonbeke was also a contested businessman.

It is unclear when Ducci’s contacts with the Van Schoonbeke family had begun, as is the exact date of his marriage to Elisabeth Steegmans, but we know that their first child must have been born around 1538. The first documented case of commercial interactions between the two families was Ducci’s acquisition of a house from the guardians of Gilbert the younger in 1540. Through his marriage with Steegmans, the sister-in-law (wife’s sister) of Gilbert the younger’s father, Ducci had become Van Schoonbeke’s uncle. Peaceful commercial interactions seem to have been limited, as tensions between the two of them started building and came to a spectacular outburst in 1544. On the early evening of February 22 of that year, a group of men made an attempt to stab Van Schoonbeke near the Antwerp Exchange. Saved by one of his own servants, Van Schoonbeke had to run for his life. The main suspect of plotting the attack was his uncle Gaspare Ducci.

---

696 The enterprise of van Schoonbeke is comprehensively studied in Hugo Soly, *Urbanisme en kapitalisme te Antwerpen in de 16de eeuw: de stedebouwkundige en industriële ondernemingen van Gilbert van Schoonbeke* (Gemeentekrediet van Belgie, 1977).
697 Denucé states that Ducci’s son died in 1559 at age 21. Denucé, *Italiaansche koopmansgeslachten te Antwerpen in de XVIIe eeuwen*.
698 ACA, SR 197, f 486v-487 v, quoted in: Soly, *Urbanisme en kapitalisme te Antwerpen in de 16de eeuw*, 139.
699 Gilbert the younger was the child of Gilbert van Schoonbeke the elder and an unknown women. Génard, *Un Procès Célèbre Au XVIe Siècle: Gilbert van Schoonbeke Contre Gaspar Dozzi*, 308.
700 Génard, 309.
Due to the complaint that Van Schoonbeke submitted to the Antwerp aldermen the next day, the case is well documented. Following up on the incident, the authorities called on Ducci, his cousin Anthony ‘Roussy’, his servant ‘Rosse’, a Dutch name for a red-haired person, and any others involved to appear before the bench of the Antwerp Magistrate, but none of them did. A long undated request from van Schoonbeke to the Antwerp alderman provides a valuable yet anything but impartial narrative of his relationship with Ducci. The first part of the request is framed as a character sketch in which the virtues of van Schoonbeke were contrasted with the vices of Ducci. Schoonbeke claimed to be of impeccable reputation, whereas Ducci was said to be constantly quarrelsome and not capable of engaging in peaceful interactions with anyone. As part of his self-presentation as a man of high reputation, Van Schoonbeke stressed his official position as the master of weights in Antwerp. He must have stressed that role because, as we will see, it was via that position that his animosity with Ducci had begun. Schoonbeke also reminded the magistrate about various crimes, fraudulent schemes, and threats organized or performed by his adversary. In order to assist him in such vicious practices, Ducci had gathered a group of about 20 Italian men. According to Schoonbeke, they had no other occupation in Antwerp than to serve Ducci as his gang of mobsters. Van Schoonbeke’s description of Ducci’s gang was painted in colourful negative phrasings and images. He depicted Ducci as running a small lordship within Antwerp, ordering his vassals to intimidate, stab, or kill. The unpunished continuation of such acts by Ducci was said to have led to popular outrage among the common people of Antwerp. However, according to Van Schoonbeke given Ducci’s ties with the highest circles of the Low Countries’ political bodies, all attempts at putting an end to it had thus been in vain.

As we only have Gilbert Van Schoonbeke’s opinion and narration about the causes of his conflict with Ducci, our perception of Ducci’s motives is biased. Van Schoonbeke pointed to two incidents between them that had caused Ducci’s hatred and led to the subsequent attack. First, Ducci had had a quarrel with Van Schoonbeke in his function as master of weighing in Antwerp. It had been alleged that Ducci had manipulated a volume of alum, which as a result had to be weighed officially, but Ducci would not accept critiques or accusations from his nephew. During that quarrel, Ducci had criticized Van Schoonbeke because he continued to

---

701 The sources documenting this case have been edited in: Génard, ‘Un Procès Célèbre Au XVIe Siècle: Gilbert van Schoonbeke Contre Gaspar Dozzi’.
702 Génard, 314.
703 Van Schoonbeke’s request consist of 70 sections in which he discusses various aspects of his relationship with Ducci, see Génard, 315–39.
trade while performing that neutral office.\textsuperscript{704} According to Van Schoonbeke, the second cause of their conflict was a dispute about a load of pastel that Ducci had imported. The exact nature of that conflict remains unclear, but at one point Van Schoonbeke and a couple of other merchants involved in the transaction considered Ducci’s behaviour as fraudulent.\textsuperscript{705}

Following up on Van Schoonbeke’s elaborately narrated complaint about Ducci, the latter was summoned to appear in front of the Vierschaer, the Antwerp criminal court. Ducci did not react to these repeated calls to appear.\textsuperscript{706} Shortly after the calls were issued, the Antwerp aldermen received an edict from Charles V about the case.\textsuperscript{707} In that document, the emperor urged the Antwerp city magistrate and Van Schoonbeke to immediately cease all proceedings against Ducci. According to Charles, the Antwerp magnate himself had been the instigator of the incident. As a consequence, the members of the Antwerp magistrate, in turn, drafted a reply in which they addressed the points brought up in the Imperial edict.\textsuperscript{708} They refuted allegations—which were based on rumours and not stated in the Imperial edict—that the Antwerp city government, one of its majors in particular, had been biased against Ducci throughout the whole procedure. Moreover, the city government argued that, as the incident had happened in the crowded environment of the Antwerp Exchange, numerous members of the merchant community, not just Van Schoonbeke, had filed complaints against Ducci. Despite their request to be allowed to continue their procedure, there are no traces of further actions against Ducci.

Apart from adding to Ducci’s image as a merchant who operated beyond the standards of the Antwerp marketplace, the case primarily demonstrates the paradoxical embeddedness of Ducci in Antwerp and the quality of his ties there. On the one hand, he had various types of connections that only a few Florentine merchants and others on the Antwerp market had. None of the other Florentines in Antwerp had such direct and effective connections with the governor of the Low Countries or the emperor, or later with the king. Also among the Lucchese and Genoese, who at that time began to ascend to the role of primary lenders of the Habsburg monarchy, no merchant-banker had developed such ties with the court. On a social level, a marriage into a well to do Antwerp family was uncommon for foreign merchants in Antwerp and for Italians in particular.\textsuperscript{709} On the other hand, the excessive nature of his actions alienated him from most of the Antwerp merchant community, the urban government, his wife’s family

\textsuperscript{704} Génard, 332–33.
\textsuperscript{705} Génard, 334.
\textsuperscript{706} Génard, 339–40.
\textsuperscript{707} Génard, 341–43.
\textsuperscript{708} Génard, 343–45.
\textsuperscript{709} Subacchi, ‘Italians in Antwerp in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century’.
and at a later point, from the higher authorities of the Low Countries.\textsuperscript{710} The incident with Van Schoonbeke was not the end of Ducci’s role on the Antwerp market, but it would contribute to his declining reputation. After the conflict which resulted from the assassination attempt, the sale of a house in Antwerp from Gilbert van Schoonbeke the younger to Ducci was nevertheless registered in 1547.\textsuperscript{711}

Ducci’s embeddedness in Antwerp did not consist solely from his ties and quarrels with the Van Schoonbeke’s, but also from of a patrimony of residences there.\textsuperscript{712} Apart from a residence in Kruibeke, where he held a lordship, and the castle of Schoonsel, both situated in the region south of Antwerp, Ducci obtained and sold numerous residences. In particular, his residence in the Huidenvettersstraat in Antwerp has caught attention from scholars and has been referred to as ‘Palazzo Ducci’.\textsuperscript{713} Ducci had bought the townhouse in 1547 and had it completely redesigned with the aim of expressing his self-image to the various notable guests that he would host there. That image contained reference to both his Italian background and to his ties to the Low Countries. The house was redesigned in what scholars of architecture have called an Italianized style, which at that time was rather rare in Antwerp.\textsuperscript{714} Apart from the general style, concrete elements, like the depiction of Saint Laurence have also been interpreted as a reference to Ducci’s Florentine background.\textsuperscript{715} However, the building also contained references to the castles that were typical of the Low Countries nobility, and probably also to Mary of Hungary, the regent of the Low Countries to whom he had provided services, and who had resided in his house.\textsuperscript{716} Moreover, the largest hall of the townhouse contained painted \textit{tondi} that together formed a sequence honouring Charles V, which has been interpreted as an attempt to demonstrate that he was a loyal servant of the emperor.\textsuperscript{717} The ambiguity and the layered character of Ducci’s embeddedness in both Florence and Antwerp was thus well expressed in his residence, but thus far it is mainly the latter that has received attention in the scholarship. Therefore, the following section will focus an aspect of Ducci’s activities in Antwerp that have

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{710} On Ducci’s ambiguous reputation as a lender to Charles V, see Tracy, ‘Charles V, His Bankers and Their Demands’, 124, 130 n 31.
\textsuperscript{711} ACA, SR 225, f 221, quoted in Soly, \textit{Urbanisme en kapitalisme te Antwerpen in de 16de eeuw}, 155.
\textsuperscript{712} Antwerp sources contain various traces of Ducci’s property ownership, and various scholars –Denucé and De Cock in particular– have touched upon the subject, but a consistent overview is lacking for now.
\textsuperscript{713} Maclot and Grieten, ‘Het renaissance-interieur van Palazzo Ducci: flirt van een Italiaans bankier met Keizer Karel’, 62.
\textsuperscript{714} Maclot and Grieten, 63.
\textsuperscript{715} Maclot and Grieten, 68.
\textsuperscript{716} Maclot and Grieten, 64, 67.
\textsuperscript{717} Maclot and Grieten, 75–77; See also an earlier analysis of the iconography in Vanaise, ‘Een XVle-Eeuwse Beschilderde Paneelzoldering Uit Het Voormalige Huis Ducci Te Antwerpen’.
\end{flushright}
received little attention, namely his place in the Florentine community and in particular his relation with the court and administration in Florence.

Ducci, Florence, and Florentines

In a letter in 1550, Duke Cosimo I commented on the ‘downfall’ of Gaspare Ducci to Bernardo Antonio de Medici, the Florentine ambassador at the imperial court. The duke noted that what had recently happened to Ducci had been anticipated for a long time, was caused by his greed and that he now ‘has what he wanted’. The tone of Cosimo’s comment is clearly anything but sympathetic, and it is also one of the last traces of Ducci in the duke’s records, which indicates that his ties with the government in Florence were never re-established afterwards. In the preceding years, Ducci had maintained a relatively frequent contact with the duke, and he was the second most frequent letter writer from Antwerp. He also served Cosimo’s interests at the court of the regent of the Low Countries by performing a couple of semi-diplomatic chores. Thus far, Ducci’s ties with his home ruler and with members of the Florentine merchant community have largely been overshadowed by his undertakings as tax collector and financial agent for the higher government of the Low Countries and of the emperor. However, letters and other sources kept in Florence document Ducci’s entanglement with the Florentine commercial and political world, and they provide important insights into his strategies and self-perception. These sources show a different side than the one usually discussed in the historiography that covers his case. The contacts between Ducci and other Florentines in Antwerp, Florence, and beyond therefore stand central in this section. By focusing on them, we gain both a better understanding of the extent to which Ducci, as a Florentine with a substantially different career path than most of his compatriots in and beyond Antwerp, was part of Florentine networks and used Florentine institutional resources, and how he was perceived by other Florentines in various places and at different levels.

The excerpt of Cosimo’s comment provides us insights into Ducci’s relationship with Florence and Florentines through the duke’s and his entourage’s correspondence, but his

718 ASF, MdP 13, f 452, Cosimo I in Florence to Bernardo Antonio de Medici in Brussels, March 11 1550. The full quote on Ducci “A Guasparri Ducci non è accaduto cosa che non sia stata prevista molto tempo fa, et pronosticata da noi, per la troppa cupidità et ingordigia sua. "Duolci della sua rovina", ma poiché così egli ha voluto, così habbi.” (borrowed from the transcription provided in the BIA database of the Medici archive project)

719 In 1547, Ducci acted as an intermediary in the payment of Cosimo’s share in the ceremonies organized by the Order of the Golden Fleece after the death of the French king Francis I. ASF, MdP 9, c 10, Cosimo I to Nicholas de Nicolai, September 12 1547 & MdP 1173, ins 7, c 329, secretary Pagni to Riccio, September 13 1547.
contacts with Florentines were far from limited to his ties with the ducal court. Already in 1530, he was part of an accomandita partnership registered at the merchant court in Florence. The investing partners in that partnerships were the brothers Carlo and Francesco Marucelli. These brothers were Florentines from an office holding class family who were based in Lyon at the time of the registration of the partnership.\textsuperscript{720} The partnership provides the first indication of Ducci’s collaboration with Florentine merchants, and when it was registered he was described as a Florentine merchant.\textsuperscript{721} Given Pescia’s position in the Florentine territory that may seem self-evident, but as the case of the Schetz family makes clear, one’s place of origin did not necessarily define a merchant’s affiliation throughout the rest his life. Since he came to Antwerp as a collaborator of a Lucchese firm, Ducci could have tried to fashion himself as a Lucchese merchant rather than a Florentine. However, identifying himself as a Florentine or being perceived as such in Antwerp may have offered him some benefits that a Lucchese identity did not. Unlike the Florentine nation, the Lucchese merchant nation with its recognized privileges was never formally transferred from Bruges to Antwerp. Although there are occasional references to a Lucchese nation in Antwerp, it always remained an informal community without any recognition by the Antwerp city government, the emperor, or the government of the Republic of Lucca.\textsuperscript{722} Although the data on it are scarce, the number of Lucchese in Antwerp was probably higher than that of Florentines, but whether the network of Lucchese merchants throughout Europe at that time was as sprawled as the Florentine one remains unclear.\textsuperscript{723} In any case, from the 1520’s, we have no references to Ducci as a Lucchese but rather as a Pescian, a noble man of the Low Countries, or a Florentine.

Traces of Ducci’s activities during his time as the Marucelli’s partner are very limited, but we know that by 1534 he was still the governor of the enterprise of the two Florentine

\textsuperscript{720} ASF, Merc 10831, c 216 r, November 9 1530. I am grateful to Francesca Trivellato for sharing here data on this contract.

\textsuperscript{721} As mentioned earlier, already in 1526, Ducci had been described as a ‘mercator florentinus’ in a notary act that registered a bill of exchange: Notularium J. de Platea, 1, f 228, November 26 1526, quoted in: Strieder, \textit{Aus Antwerpener Notariatsarchiven Quellen zur deutschen Wirtschaftsgeschichte des 16. Jahrhunderts}, 54.

\textsuperscript{722} The Antwerp city archives hold a small miscellaneous collection of papers under the subheading ‘Nation of Lucca’, see: ACA, Pk 1076

\textsuperscript{723} Doehaerd counts fewer Lucchese than Florentines in the early sixteenth century. Subacchi’s count for the second half of the century is that there was a higher number of Lucchese than Florentines. Both estimates remain tentative however. Doehaerd, \textit{Études anversoises}, 1963, I:102–3; Subacchi, ‘Italians in Antwerp in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century’, 77; A proposal to draft statutes for the Lucchese nation in Antwerp was submitted in 1560 to the Lucchese government, but was not approved. See Eugenio Lazzarechi, ‘Gli Statuti Dei Lucchesi a Bruges e Ad Anversa’, in \textit{Ad Alessandro Luzio Gli Archivi Di Stato Italiani. Miscellanea Di Studi Storici}, vol. 2, 2 vols (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1933); On Lucchese trade networks, see Rita Mazzei and Tommaso Fanfani, eds., \textit{Lucca e l’Europa degli affari (secoli XV-XVII). Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi} (Lucca, 1-2 dicembre 1989) (M. Pacini Fazzi, 1990).
brothers in Antwerp. However, it seems that the partnership ended in a conflict, as some of his later letters contain a reference to a court case between him and Marucelli. I have indicated that his most important activity in the 1540s was his work with South German merchant bankers and his political-economic offices. Yet we should keep in mind that during that period he also retained commercial interactions with Florentines in Antwerp. In October 1544, for example, Ducci acted as a broker for a commercial deal between Giovan Battista Guicciardini and a certain Jan de Oldrino, a merchant about whom we know nothing. Around that period, Ducci also worked together regularly with the Guicciardini brothers in Antwerp and used the Salviati’s banking services to facilitate his dealings. Also, during his time as the collector of the tax on imports from France in 1543, Ducci had helped Tommaso Corbinelli, the governor of the Salviati branch in Antwerp, to circumvent the monopoly on French wines that at that time was held by the Guicciardini brothers. By not maintaining their monopoly, he thus favoured the dealings of one Florentine commercial enterprise in Antwerp at the cost of another one. We do not know whether the Guicciardini ever found out about this, but as noted earlier, the collaboration between Ducci and the Guicciardini did not end well and Ducci and Giovan Battista Guicciardini would end up in an endless legal battle over an outstanding debt. The tension between the Guicciardini and Ducci went so far that when an attempt to assassinate Ducci was undertaken in Antwerp in 1555, Lodovico Guicciardini was one of the main suspects.

These traces of Ducci’s interactions with members of the Florentine merchant community in Antwerp nuance the standard image of him as a foreign merchant who became deeply, and seemingly solely embedded in the region that hosted him. However, the main value of shedding light on Ducci’s ties with other Florentines becomes clear when comparing them with earlier observations on the standard practices of making partnerships and seeking

---

724 Sabbatini, Cercar esca, 5.
727 ASNS, AS 982, c 133 r, undated accounting entry. As no references to goods are made here, this was a financial transaction between him and the Guicciardini; idem, c 181 v, The transfer of a sum that the Antinori owed to Ducci forwarded to the Guicciardini. The books of the Salviati contain numerous other transactions in which Ducci was involved. See AS 982, c 36v–38r, c 58, c 104, c 158, c 182–183, c 199–200, c 238, c 292–293, c 324–25, c 399
728 Corbinelli wrote that due to their friendship with Ducci, at that time the official receiver of the tax on imports from France, they wouldn’t have to fear confiscation. ASNS, AS 995, f 44 v, quoted in Matringe, ‘L’entreprise Florentine et La Place de Lyon’, 118 note 340.
729 Prims, ‘De Vlucht van Guicciardini’.
collaboration with Florentines in Antwerp. The three-tiered structure that I proposed earlier, (1) partnership relations almost exclusively between Florentines, (2) employment as well as other forms of collaboration as a rule between Florentines, but with others when they offered distinctive expertise or knowledge, and (3) a diverse group of clients, does not readily apply to Ducci. For Ducci, Florentines were a group with which he collaborated, but in no domain did he incline towards exclusive ties with other Florentines, as many of them tended to do.

The most striking element of his engagements with other Florentines is that he was one of the few Tuscan from a non-office holding class background who became the active partner in an accomandita with office holding class investors. Clearly Ducci was able to convince investors from a group that were generally not keen on engaging in such partnerships with outsiders. However, it is revealing for his relationship with Florentines in Antwerp and for his attitude as a businessman and investor that unlike many others in Antwerp he himself never invested as a passive partner in such a partnership. Moreover, unlike other Florentines in Antwerp, Ducci left traces clear of conflicts with his compatriots there and beyond, suggesting that he had a an ambiguous role in the community. Yet overall he was certainly not a complete outsider of the Florentine community. In 1549, when he had already been in contact with the highest circles of the Low Countries government and held offices in the region for quite some time he was also a counsellor of the Florentine nation in Antwerp. Unfortunately, evidence about his role in the nation and the community remains scarce, as well as his engagement with the Magistrate of the Consulates in the late 1560s, a time in which he seems to have retreated from commerce.

Apart from his interactions with Florentines on the Antwerp market and beyond, Ducci’s most revealing interactions with his home region were certainly his letters to the duke and his entourage. Ducci had been the first Florentine merchant in Antwerp who regularly wrote to Cosimo I, but unlike Giovan Battista Guicciardini’s later letters, Ducci only sent letters frequently for a couple of years. His regular correspondence with the duke and his entourage lasted for about a year and a half, and in the year after that he only wrote very occasionally, before refraining from writing completely after 1550. After that Ducci remained in Antwerp for 25 years, but during that time he did not contact the court in Florence again. He also never engaged in any substantial form of newswriting to the duke, but similar to those of other

---

730 Goris, *Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567*, 375.
731 ASF, MdP 394, c 15, August 3 1549. Together with Rondinelli and Rinieri, Ducci signed a letter about the conflict concerning rank in the Joyous Entry.
Florentines, his letters do also contain occasional reports about events in the Low Countries.\footnote{ASF, MdP 383, f 277 r, Ducci to Pagni, September 17 1547. This letter contains an elaborate section on the tension between France and England and their financial implications.} Moreover, like Guicciardini and many other Florentines in Antwerp, he was keen to provide his service to the duke. The main forms of service that he offered to the duke were not the smaller chores or notifications that occasional writers from Antwerp provided or ideas for elaborate projects like Tommaso Marchi. In line with his service to the government of the Low Countries Ducci offered to provide financial brokerage. Ducci’s first letters on that topic were sent in the summer of 1547, but given the content of the first letter, it seems that he had already indirectly been involved in some form of financial brokerage to the duke before the correspondence that is kept in Cosimo’s carteggio was initiated.\footnote{ASF, MdP 384, c 84, August 13 1547; MdP 383, c 277 September 17 1547, both Ducci to secretary Pagni}

As financial brokerage was the most recurring subject in Ducci’s correspondence with Cosimo and his entourage, I will primarily focus on his involvement in such transactions. Rather than reconstructing the technical aspects of these transactions in detail, I remain focused on the social and relational component of organizing them. The “loan of 100 000 scudi” that Ducci organized was a predominant topic in his correspondence with the duke and his secretaries. Therefore, the case offers an excellent window from which to gain a better understanding of Ducci’s relations, not only with the court in Florence but also with the Florentine merchant community in Antwerp and beyond. Unfortunately, the historiography on government finances and debts of Florence under the ducal governments in the sixteenth century is limited, which makes it difficult to interpret Ducci’s actions in a larger perspective.\footnote{The only substantial contribution on this subject is Anna Teicher, ‘Politics and Finance in the Age of Cosimo I: The Public and Private Face of Credit.’, in Firenze e La Toscana Dei Medici Nell’Europa Del ’500, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini, vol. 1, 3 vols (Olschki, 1983), 343–62.} However, on a more general level, it is important to keep two contextual elements in mind in order to understand Ducci’s actions.

First of all, by the sixteenth century, Florentine merchant bankers had already been involved for centuries in the provision of credit to foreign rulers. The French and English Crowns had at times relied on the credit provision of Florentines, and so did the papacy. Throughout the previous centuries, both well-established Florentine families and members of unknown families had often risen to much contested and at times dangerous positions. By the middle decades of the sixteenth century, Florentine bankers in France like Tommaso Guadagni
and Albizzo di Piero Del Bene were important creditors to the crown. Florentines thus had a long history and experience in credit provision to sovereigns.

Second, it should be noted that within a European context, Florence, during its Republican period was at the cutting edge in developing techniques and schedules with which to acquire capital to fund state activities, both in the form of taxes and through credit provision. Loans were a part of that, but such sources of credit were traditionally sought from Florentine citizens, not from outsiders. The shift from a Republican to a ducal government and the ascent of Cosimo marked the end of solely relying on internal taxes and loans, and opened the door for loans from foreign creditors. Cosimo’s modest private capital, the turbulent political and military situation in Tuscany, his aspiration to remain independent yet in good standing with the Habsburg monarchy and his initially uncertain base of support within the Florentine elite are likely explanations for his need to rely on loans from foreign bankers for the first time. It has also been suggested that the choice to acquire capital outside of his polity was a conscious strategy to remain independent from the financial influence of Florentine families. Such a preference is in line with Cosimo’s approach in other fields of governance, where he deliberately relied on men with a background outside of the city of Florence. Exhaustive data on the duchy’s foreign creditors in its first decades are lacking, but based on the limited findings that we have it seems that Genoese bankers were an important group of foreign creditors. South Germans, among which the famous Fuggers, were the second group. The Florentine duke thus seems to have turned to groups of creditors that were on the rise in that period to obtain his short and midterm credits.

In the historiography on Cosimo’s foreign loans, the involvement of intermediaries like Ducci and others that helped to organize the acquisition of such credit by introducing the lenders to Cosimo and his administration as borrowers has largely remained unnoticed. However, as Cosimo turned to foreign creditors to obtain the necessary capital for his various enterprises, intermediaries must have been crucial in setting up and maintaining contacts between the court,

741 A list with foreign creditors to Cosimo is provided in the appendix of Teicher, ‘Politics and Finance in the Age of Cosimo I: The Public and Private Face of Credit.’, 359–62.
the administration in Florence and the providers of credit in various marketplaces.\footnote{About the rising and evolving role of financial intermediaries, see Stanley L. Engerman et al., ‘Introduction’, in \textit{Finance, Intermediaries, and Economic Development}, ed. Stanley L. Engerman et al. (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1–7.} By examining Ducci’s role in the organization of a loan, I will thus not only provide a better understanding of his particular motives for engaging with Cosimo I, but also how he as a native of a Tuscan provincial town was of use to his home government and fulfilled a function about which we know little at this point.

How exactly Ducci had come into contact with the duke and the court is not clear, as the correspondence we have at our disposal starts at the point when the communication between Ducci and the court already seems to have been established. The ducal secretary to whom he wrote was a member of the Pagni family and just like Ducci, a native of Pescia, so they may have been acquainted through their shared place of birth.\footnote{Spicciani, \textit{Pescia}, 102; The biographical background of Pagni is provided in Domenichini, ‘Alle origini del principato cosimiano’, 111–15.} Ducci’s oldest surviving letter to the ducal secretary refers to a loan of 100,000 scudi that the Fuggers had provided to Cosimo via Venice.\footnote{ASF, MdP 384, c 84. In the documents that record that loan in Florence, no references to Ducci are made: ASF, Guardaroba Medicea 10, c 135, 152, 154, 179, 184 & Guardaroba Medicea 10, f 81; quoted in and retrieved through Teicher, ‘Politics and Finance in the Age of Cosimo I: The Public and Private Face of Credit.’ However, in one of his later letters, Ducci refers to the ‘partita’ that he had arranged between the duke and the Fuggers about a year earlier: ASF, MdP 390, c 274 r, Ducci in Antwerp to Cosimo I in Florence, September 18 1548.} His reference to that previous loan served as an introduction to notify secretary Pagni that a similar line of credit had been offered in Antwerp by two potential lenders, Sebastian Neidhart and Carlo de Affaitadi.\footnote{“(…) se ne puo servire a sua piacere il signor Sebastiano Neyhart ed anche lui risposte che servira a sua excellentia di scudi 100/m per uno anno o dua (...) Il signor Giancarlo afetati anche m’ a oferto un simile partito (...)” ASF, MdP 384, c 84} As Ducci included an explanatory section in the letter about how credit provision to monarchs in Antwerp had functioned over the past year, it is likely that this was the first time that he offered to acquire capital in Antwerp for the duke. How that offer was received up by the duke and his administration in Florence, unfortunately, remains unclear.\footnote{ASF, MdP 186, f 3 v–4 r (date unreadable) contains the copy of a letter from a ducal secretary to Ducci, but large parts of that folium are so worn out and have lost sections that I was not capable of interpreting the letter.}

A year later, in September 1548, Ducci again brought up the subject of organizing a loan in Antwerp in his correspondence with the court, but that letter makes it clear that the organization of that credit provision had already been initiated earlier.\footnote{ASF, MdP 390, c 274, September 18 1548} There are no traces of a concrete offer from Ducci, nor was he directly contacted by the duke or his secretaries to initiate a new provision of credit. The only direct request Ducci received from the ducal
secretary around that time was to provide twelve horses, and another letter sent the same day contains a statement that instructions about the arranging of a new loan had been sent via Tommaso Baroncelli, who at that time was not in the Low Countries, to Niccolo Giunta in Antwerp.\textsuperscript{748} We do not know what Giunta’s exact instructions were and whether it was explicitly requested that he and not Ducci arrange the loan and report to the court.\textsuperscript{749} Despite the fragmentary information that we have at our disposal, it is possible to understand what kind of relationship Ducci had with the duke and the administration in Florence at that point. The direct instructions about the provision of horses but the indirect contact about the loan via Baroncelli and Giunta indicate that the duke and his administration preferred to work with those two and explicitly not directly with Ducci. However, further correspondence shows that in practice Ducci took the lion share of the organization of the loan. Giunta’s involvement was limited to only one letter that he wrote, together with Ducci, about the loan to the Florentine ambassador at the Imperial court.\textsuperscript{750}

Arranging the credit was a long and seemingly frustrating process. In the correspondence between Ducci, the court in Florence and Bernardo Antonio de’ Medici, several issues were brought up. A first important problem was that in order to arrange the loan, it was necessary to assure that the credits were safeguarded against a potential default by the duke.\textsuperscript{751} Neidhart, the provider of the credit in Antwerp, must have requested measures to prevent that and found them in sureties provided by wealthy Florentines who would guarantee the repayment of the credit. These sureties would cover the loan, and a ducal secretary stressed that the promise of the duke to arrange them served as a guarantee that they would be provided.\textsuperscript{752} In early October 1548, notary acts were drafted in Florence to provide these guarantees for the

\textsuperscript{748} ASF, MdP 190, f 190 r & v contains two letters from the ducal secretaries, both dated September 1 1548. The first letter contains the instructions about horse trading, the second one refers to a message sent to Giunta via Baroncelli about the arrangements of a new ‘partita’. A letter from the court in Florence to Baroncelli about this topic could not be traced.

\textsuperscript{749} ASF, MdP 188, c 18 v contains a letter sent by a ducal secretary to Tommaso Baroncelli on April 18 1548 (where Baroncelli was at that moment is not indicated). In that letter the conditions of a loan “che l’ amico Vostro tratta in Fiandra” are discussed. It seems that at that point the organization of the loan had already been going on for some time, and the amount discussed—200 000 scudi—also differentiates from that of the loan that was initiated in the autumn of 1548. The series of minutes of the dukes outgoing correspondence contains one letter sent to Giunta during the handling of the loan. That letter is dated at a moment when Ducci had already been involved in it, so it seems that Baroncelli was the main intermediary through which communication ran. ASF, MdP 12, c 14 r, Cosimo I to Nicola di Giunta, October 10 1548.

\textsuperscript{750} ASF, MdP 389, c 237 r, December 10 1548, Ducci & Giunta to Bernardo Antonio de’ Medici.

\textsuperscript{751} The securities were initially brought up in the first letter about the new loan from the ducal secretary to Ducci. ASF, MdP 190, c 17 v. In a long but partially damaged letter from Ducci on the subject, Ducci seems to have received news from Baroncelli about the securities, ASF, MdP 390, c 274

\textsuperscript{752} “e cosa degna d’ un principe mantenere qualche promete et noi maximamente lo osserviamo” ASF, MdP 190, c 17 v, September 1 1548, Secretary in Florence to Ducci in Antwerp
In a letter about the loan sent from Florence to Giunta on October 10, arrangements about how the credit should be provided were discussed, together with Ducci’s one per cent fee for his involvement. However, it would take substantially more time before the money could be provided. Initially, the ducal secretary continued to work via Giunta and Baroncelli, to provide Neidhart with these sureties. However, communicating via Baroncelli, in particular, caused delays, and was not until to December 1548 that the documents confirming the guarantee of the loans were sent from Florence to Antwerp via Bernardo Antonio de’ Medici.

Apart from the sureties, a second related issue was that the instructions arrived late, and therefore the credit could not be assumed on the scheduled date – November 20 1548 - but the interest started running from that moment onwards. In order to compensate for that loss, Ducci speculated with part of the money in Lyon and at the Castilian fairs. Unfortunately, that speculation did not end well and Ducci lost 3000 scudi on it. The loan was eventually delivered in cash to Bernardo Antonio de’ Medici in February 1548. Earlier, the duke had

753 ASF, NAC 9331 (papers of notary Giovanni Battista Giordani 1547-48) contains eleven individual records of the guarantees provided by Florentines (referred to in Latinized names), drafted between September 30 and October 7 1548: 1. Bernardo Ricasoli and company (de Florentia) 5000 scudi, c 248r-249r (30 september 1548) 2. Averardo Alamani Salvati (civis mercator Florentinus) 35000 scudi, c 251r-252v (1 october 1548) 3. Hieronymus Fra Sumaria (Civis et mercator Florentinus) 15000 scudi, c 253r-254v (2 october 1548) 4. Philappus Johannes Oricollarius (civis et mercator Florentinus) 8000 scudi, c 255r-256r (2 october 1548) 5. Johannes Baptista Petrus de Narli (civis et mercator Florentinus) 3000 scudi, c 257r-258r (3 october 1548) 6. Federicus q Roberti de Riccis (civis et mercator Florentinus) 5000 scudi, c 259r-260v (4 october 1548) 7. Bindus altovitis (civis et mercator Florentinus) 7000 scudi, c 261r-262r (4 october 1548) 8. Nicolaus Johnis Manallis (civis Florentinus) 5000 scudi, c 263r-264r (4 october 1548) 9. Bartolomeo Alterius de Piacaticus (civis et mercator Florentinus) 6000 scudi, c 265r-266r (6 october 1548) 10. Sebastianus Montacutus (civis et mercator Florentinus) 6000 scudi, c 267r-270r (7 october 1548) 11. Lucas et Andreas fratres Torrigiani (civis et mercatores Florentines,) 5000 scudi, c 271r-272r (7 october 1548).

A final record lists all the creditors, acknowledges Ducci, Giunta, and Corbinelli for the Salviati, as intermediaries, and Neidhart as creditor (c 282 r- c 283 v). All these documents were retrieved thanks to references in Teicher’s work (cfr supra).

754 ASF, MdP 12, c 14 r, October 10 1548 Cosimo in Florence to Giunta in Antwerp. The first lines of a letter from the ducal secretary to Ducci make it clear that the communication was preferably organized via Baroncelli and Giunta: “La resulutione che habiamo fatta circa il partito de cento milia (sic) scudi, trattato con voi per Nicolo di Giunta l’ havete Intesa per lettere di Thomaso Baroncelli al medesimo Nicolo”. ASF, MdP 189, c 22 v, September 13 1548. Secretary to Ducci. Reading through the letters sent by and to Ducci, it seems that he was primarily ‘handled’ by Giunta and Baroncelli.

755 The guarantees were promised to be sent in late December: ASF, MdP 12, c 141, Cosimo I in Florence to Ducci in Antwerp, December 22 1548.

756 Initially Ducci had agreed with Neidhart to receive the credit on November 15 that year: “(…) per riceverli qui all’ xv del mese di novembre prossimo”, ASF, MdP 390, c 274

757 Ducci wrote that while waiting for the orders he thought of investing 15 000 scudi in Lyon and 30 000 in Spain, with the intention that the gains would compensate for the lost interest, ASF, MdP 389, c 5 r, December 22 1548. Ducci to Cosimo I. The same day that Ducci wrote about that, the duke sent a letter to Ducci with instructions to make profit from the money if the interest was already running on it. ASF, MdP 12, c 141, December 22 1548 Cosimi I to Ducci.

758 ASF, MdP 391A, c 293 r, Ducci to Cosimo I, February 2 1548 (Florentine calendar)
expressed a preference to secure the money in Italy, but according to Ducci, it was easier to provide the credit in the Low Countries via the Florentine ambassador.\textsuperscript{760}

A third issue that already appeared earlier in the process of arranging the loan was that the maximum interest rate on the Antwerp market was capped at 12 per cent, but that the loan via a complex construction of additional commission would, in fact, carry a very high interest of 13 per cent.\textsuperscript{761} Before the loan was eventually delivered, Ducci had already started to offer new schemes of credit provision, some of which included the acquisition of jewellery.\textsuperscript{762} In earlier letters, he already had included propositions about the grain trade and ammunition, but letters with such propositions did not receive a reply from the court in Florence.\textsuperscript{763} About a year later, Ducci heard about a plan to prolong the loan, again via Giunta.\textsuperscript{764} Once again, he was allowed to be the intermediary with Neidhart, but a proposal to arrange another new loan was declined.\textsuperscript{765} Ducci’s involvement in credit provision was thus a one-time stint that did not gain him a position as the financial agent of Duke Cosimo on the Antwerp market. Giunta, Galeotto Magalotti and occasionally Giovan Battista Guicciardini would fulfil the role of intermediary throughout the 1550s and 1560s.

Ducci’s fall from grace and the choice to use additional intermediaries rather than work directly with him raises the question why the duke had involved him in the organisation of the loan in the first place. His main quality was his insider knowledge about credit provision in Antwerp and his history of working with South German bankers and as the organizer of loans for the Habsburg monarchy. The exact dimensions of his network remain unclear, but based on what we have observed Ducci arguably functioned as an intermediary between two worlds that remained largely separated, namely that of the Florentine court on the one side and that of the potential creditors on the Antwerp market on the other side. The indirect approach of only letting him arrange the loan in collaboration with more trustworthy and familial Florentines like Baroncelli and Bernardo Antonio de Medici stood in contrast with the direct contact about horse

\textsuperscript{760} ASF, MdP 390, c 274, September 18 1548. Ducci to Cosimo I.

\textsuperscript{761} ASF, MdP 390, c 274, September 18 1548. Ducci to Cosimo I. For average interests on short term loans to the government in the Low Countries, see Van der Wee, The Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy Vol 1, Appendix 45/1.

\textsuperscript{762} Ducci offered a new loan already in March 1548/49. In that letter he also offered jewellery: ASF, MdP 392, c 113, March 17 1548 (Florentine calendar). Ducci to Pagni. Earlier Ducci had suggested a similar deal: ASF, MdP 383, c 277, September 17 1547.

\textsuperscript{763} An offer to provide grain was declined by a ducal secretary. ASF, MdP 189, c 22 v, September 13 1548. About a month later, Ducci made a suggestion about grain and artillery provision. ASF, MdP 390, c 589, October 20 1548.

\textsuperscript{764} Ducci wrote a letter in the autumn of 1549 after he had learnt from Giunta that Cosimo intended to prolong the loan for another year. ASF, MdP 394, c 853, October 2 1549, Ducci to Cosimo I.

\textsuperscript{765} ASF, MdP 192, c 27 r, secretary to Ducci, October 17 1549.
provision, a trade of which he was much more ignorant. Clearly, Ducci was too much of an outsider and was not considered to be reliable enough to function as a direct intermediary.

From the court in Florence’s perspective, Ducci was thus a necessary outsider who relatively quickly fell from grace. When we shift the perspective to Ducci’s own motives for engaging in credit provision, it seems that they were strikingly similar to those of other Florentines who offered their services to Cosimo. In the letters, where he was not updating the duke about the loans, he regularly asked for Cosimo’s intercession to solve his problems and those of his relatives in Tuscany. His last letters to Cosimo contain requests for help with his problems with the alum monopoly in the Low Countries, but any trace of Cosimo’s replies or reactions to such requests are lacking. Organizing the loan and providing the horses was a way for Ducci to gain the kind of favours and preferential treatment that many other Florentines in Antwerp also hoped to receive. Despite his exceptional embeddedness in Antwerp, Ducci thus also went to great lengths to develop and maintain ties with his region of origin. He had property in Tuscany that he left to his brother and nephews, and was one of the few Antwerp-based Florentines whose testament was registered in Florence. Although we have no indication that he ever returned, Ducci never left Tuscany completely or lost his connection to the region and was eager to retain his contacts there.

Ducci was not the only merchant in Antwerp that came from a place in the Florentine Duchy outside of its capital. Although merchants from smaller cities in Florentine Tuscany remained exceptions in the Florentine nation, some did trade in Antwerp. Two Pisan families, in particular, the Lanfranchi and the Cini, were active in Antwerp, and their activities are relatively well documented. Jacopo Lanfranchi must have arrived in Antwerp sometime in the 1550s. Carlo Lanfranchi followed him soon afterwards, as he appears in the Antwerp sources

766 In his correspondence about horse provision, Ducci just like Guicciardini about a decade later had to build up intelligence before he could provide what Cosim asked for. He referred to his contact with the Dutch nobleman Bredero and about how licences for the export of the animals would have to be acquired via the governess of the Low Countries. See ASF, MdP 390, c 589 October 20 1548

767 Ducci wrote two letters with hints for the duke to pay attention to a problem that his relatives in Pescia had. ASF, MdP 384, c 199, January 7 1547 (Florentine calendar) & MdP 388, c 199, June 3 1548. He also asked for help to recuperate credits from Colonel Amerigho Antinori and in his dispute with his former partner Carlo Marucelli. ASF, MdP 387, c 182, April 7 1548

768 See ASF, Notarile Moderno, Testamente Forestiere 3, c 145. Ducci’s testament was made in 1560 by the Antwerp notary Van Lare and in 1593 it was registered as a ‘foreign’ testament in Florence. About the practice and obligation to register testaments from Florentines abroad, see Pierre-Frédéric Brau, ‘Le comportement religieux de marchands florentins expatriés à la fin du XVIe siècle.’, in Commerce, voyage et expérience religieuse, 16ème-18ème siècles, ed. Albrecht Burkardt, Gilles Bertrand, and Yves Krumenacker (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 333–40.

769 The historiography on the One Hundreth Penny and processed data of the tax does not contain any references to either of the two families, suggesting that they were not yet active in Antwerp around that time. A first trace of Jacopo Lanfranchi is provided in an Antwerp certificate of May 20 1559: ACA, Cert 15, f 147 v.
from 1560 onwards. Several sources point to entanglements between these two Pisan merchant families in Antwerp. When Jacopo Cini arrived in Antwerp in June 1560, his background was certified by Carlo Lanfranchi and Julio Pannuci, another Pisan in Antwerp. In 1563, they registered an *accomandita* in which both the investors and the recipients of the funding to trade in Antwerp were members of the two families. However, apart from that one partnership, in the rest of the *accomandita* that the Cini and Lanfranchi registered in order to finance business in Antwerp, only members of their own families were involved. The merchants from the Lanfranchi and the Cini family in Antwerp were in a similar position to Ducci as they were members of the Florentine nation who had a background outside of the city of Florence, but otherwise their profile is substantially different. They were active in financial transactions but never rose to notoriety as Ducci did. Based on what we know they did not function as bridging figures between the Florentine community in Antwerp and other groups, as Ducci did with the South Germans and the government of the Low Countries. However, just like Ducci, their interactions were of a different type than those of the office holding class Florentines in the Low Countries.

**Ducci and Florentine Identity: A Conclusion**

Gaspare Ducci left a provincial town in Florentine Tuscany, once in Antwerp he switched from a Lucchese to a Florentine firm, collaborated with South German financers, held numerous offices in Antwerp and elsewhere in the Low Countries, became a creditor and advisor to the governess of the region and to Charles V. He became hated by many on the Antwerp market and was feared as a merciless mobster. He was keen on being recognized as a local noble, but for some of the Florentines with whom he interacted, he remained a little Pescian. He was an intermediary for Cosimo I who failed to retain that role. When historians began to pay attention to the economic success of sixteenth-century Antwerp, he quickly became an embodiment of a
new form of cutthroat capitalism, a role that he is still casted in nowadays. Based on previous scholarship and my own new findings, I have reconstructed his various activities in Antwerp. The image that comes out of that reconstruction is not a fundamental alteration to how he has been perceived by previous scholars, but it has provided a detailed account of the Florentine side of his activities, a part of him that has remained largely overshadowed thus far.

Ducci can easily be situated in a group of early modern actors whose transitions and adaptations to new contexts were eye-catching enough to become noted by contemporaries and historians. It would not suffice, however, to merely argue for his place in the group of marginal and transgressing figures. As Sanjay Subrahmanyam has elegantly demonstrated in his *Three ways to be Alien*, the concrete background, the intentions and interests of these actors and the environments in which they acted affected them and deserve our attention. Therefore, in an approach that echoes the endeavours of microhistorians, Subrahmanyam has investigated his cases not only to grasp their intentions, interests and how they were received and perceived but also to better understand that respective background and the environments in which they appeared. Following the exhortations of that approach, I have turned to Ducci not just to grasp his intentions and interest—which are often only subliminally traceable, and tempting to reduce to a greedy profit-seeking and difficult character. Rather, whereas previous scholars have turned to him as part of their endeavour to better understand Antwerp and the changes in its commercial organization at that time, I have primarily presented his case to shed light on what it meant to be Florentine in Antwerp and how that affected their relationship with Florence, Tuscany and its ruler.

Although Florentines from a non-office holding class background occasionally appeared in Antwerp, Ducci was one of the very few merchants, if not the only one, with such a background who recurrently engaged in activities that diverged from the paths that most Florentines took. Florentine merchants in Antwerp, as a rule, had an office holding class background and formed most of their structural ties with other Florentines in Antwerp and

---


778 Simone Pecori might be considered as Florentine with a non-office holding class background who at times was active in Antwerp in undertakings similar to Ducci. As noted above, Pecori collaborated with Ducci and also with South Germans. However, traces of Pecori in the Antwerp sources are very scarce and he never wrote Cosimo. See ACA, Cert 5, f 204 r & 206 r; Cert 8, f 39 v. See also Ehrenberg, *Das Zeitalter der Fugger*, 222.
beyond. In the early 1540s, merchants like Niccolò Rondinelli, Alessandro Antinori and Bernardo Cavalcanti were among the larger exporters in Antwerp, whereas Ducci was the collector of the taxes on their exports. He was one of the few Tuscan creditors to Charles V, at a time when the Genoese became the leading creditors of the Habsburg monarchy, and Florentines either concentrated their activities in that field in France or retreated from it. Moreover, and most importantly, whereas other Florentines with an office holding class background, such as Giovan Battista Guicciardini, Tommaso Baroncelli or Galeotto Magalotti at times became trusted agents for Cosimo I, building and maintaining flourishing relationships with the duke, Ducci did not succeed in obtaining such a position. Paradoxically he was mainly useful because he was considered as an outsider who could provide services that other Florentines initially could not, but he himself clearly aspired to be considered as a Florentine in the same way as the duke's other agents.

Ducci's liminal case not only contrasts with the common behaviour, practices and background of Florentines in Antwerp but also raises the question whether there was anything like a distinctive Florentine identity. Identity has been and continues to be commonly used as an analytical concept when historians write about belonging to groups, self-understanding and presentation in the early modern world. However, already at the turn of the twenty-first century the historian Frederic Cooper and sociologist Rogers Brubaker issued an important warning against the careless use of the concept and its limited analytical value. Following upon their warning and suggestion to look rather on processes of identification, I have focused throughout this chapter on the case of Gaspare Ducci to concretely trace what being Florentine meant for Ducci in contrast to those with an office holding class background. When he had his identification as a Florentine in an Antwerp certificate replaced to be recognized as a nobleman, it showed that being Florentine did not mean much to him. The manner in which he decorated his house, was also ambiguous. When he wrote to Cosimo about his problems, he acted like a Florentine abroad and aspired to the same kind of recognition and reward as other office holding class Florentines. Ducci's case demonstrates that identity could be crafted, but


that such crafting was confronted with limits. The locals in Antwerp considered him a transgressive Italian in spite of his fashioned noble identity, and for the Florentines in Antwerp, he continued to be a Pescian who could not become a member of the society where the Guicciardini’s, Gondi’s and other office holding class merchants came from.
Conclusion

When the city of Antwerp surrendered to the Habsburg army in the summer of 1585 after a siege of more than a year, it had become the antithesis of a friendly environment for its merchants. The Dutch Revolt had turned the Low Countries into an unwelcoming region for commerce, and the sack of Antwerp in November 1576 was one of the most devastating events of the Revolt. Following upon the sack and the general political turmoil, Protestants took over the city government of Antwerp and forbade the practice of Catholicism in 1581.\(^\text{781}\) Four years later, as part of the agreement that formalized their surrender to Alexander Farnese’s armies in 1585, Protestants in their turn were forced to either convert or leave the city in a couple of years. At this point, the number of Florentines in the city had already decreased. After this decrease and following upon the so-called diaspora of Antwerp merchants throughout Europe, which contributed to the rise of Amsterdam, Antwerp went through what Roland Baetens called an ‘Indian summer’, the last revival of its commercial relevance, in the first decades of the seventeenth century. During this Indian summer, some of the previously mentioned Florentines families continued to trade there.\(^\text{782}\) By the time Antwerp fell to Farnese, Tuscany had already been under the rule of Grand Duke Francesco I for more than a decade. Francesco was a ruler who showed little interest in politics and commerce and was more preoccupied with scientific experiments. After his sudden death, he was succeeded in 1587 by his brother Ferdinando, who opened the port of Livorno to Sephardic and other foreign merchants, thus for the first time actively attracting foreign merchants to Tuscany.\(^\text{783}\)

Both the fall of Antwerp followed by the rise of Amsterdam and the development of Livorno had important consequences for the organization of commerce, not just in the Low Countries and in Tuscany, but in Europe as a whole. The rise of Amsterdam as a city where open access institutions left no room for foreign merchant nations, and the development of Livorno as an important free port in the Mediterranean where Northern European merchants

---


\(^\text{782}\) Roland Baetens, De nazomer van Antwerpens welvaart : de diaspora en het handelshuis De Groote tijdens de eerste helft der 17de eeuw (Brussel: Gemeentekrediet van Belgie, 1976), 222; On the activities in Antwerp of the Portuguese Ximenez family, which also had strong ties with the Florentine court and had a Florentine senator in the family, see Sven Duprê, ‘Trading Luxury Glass, Picturing Collections and Consuming Objects of Knowledge in Early Seventeenth-Century Antwerp’, Intellectual History Review 20, no. 1 (2010): 53–78, https://doi.org/10.1080/17496971003638258.

dealt with Italians, Greeks, Armenians, and many others have been considered as two important new approaches, which facilitated long-distance trade in commercial centres. As important as these developments were, such change at the end of the sixteenth century has cast a shadow on our perception of the previous century, making it tempting to conceive it as a precursor to these developments.

Throughout this dissertation, I have sought to avoid this perspective and on the contrary have looked at the activities of Florentine merchants from a new angle, more specifically at how they dealt with and were affected by the social and political changes in their hometown during the first decades of the sixteenth century. I have introduced the activities of long-distance Florentine merchants explicitly into the rich historiography on one of the most substantial social and political changes in Early Modern Florence. But above all, I have aspired to transcend the concrete debates on Antwerp and Florence in the sixteenth century, and have introduced a more profound awareness for the place where merchants came from, and in particular, the social and political dimension of that place of origin, into the historiographical debates on long-distance commerce.

Throughout the five chapters of this dissertation, my focus on the relationship between merchants and their hometown has allowed me to assess and revise the case of Florentine merchants abroad as well as to contribute to various debates. In the first chapter, I have focused on the Florentine nation in Antwerp, and demonstrated that a particular hometown background affected the membership of this institution. As an institution that was set up and adapted to the commercial environment of fifteenth-century Bruges, it was of little relevance to its members in Antwerp a century later. However, the Florentine government’s attempts to reform the nation in Antwerp together with other Florentine nations elsewhere was met with indifference and at times plain resistance. The Florentine nation was more eager to defend the interests of its home ruler in the ceremonial sphere. In the second chapter, I demonstrated that Florentines in Antwerp mainly engaged in structural social and commercial contacts with other Florentines. Their accomandita partnerships were exclusively funded by Florentines. Their structural collaborators and employees were composed of other Florentines, and collaboration with non-Florentines only occurred infrequently. A common Florentine background thus was of great importance to them. In the third chapter, I demonstrated that this was also the case at a long-distance level. The Florentines in Antwerp preferred to ship their goods via Italian companies, and most of their international business contacts consisted of other Florentines. Many of these correspondents were based on the Italian peninsula, with their hometown of Florence, as well as Venice and Ancona in the Adriatic region, being major nodes in their network. In the fourth
chapter, I demonstrated that the relationship that the Florentines in Antwerp had with their hometown was not merely a familial and business one, but that many of them also aspired to establish a patronage relationship with their home ruler. To establish and maintain that relationship, they were willing to move beyond their core field of commercial expertise. In the last chapter, the case of Gaspar Ducci allowed me to demonstrate that although a Florentine background was not a fixed identity, it had boundaries and some merchants with a background in Florentine Tuscany were excluded from it.

The empirical observations and the debates into which I have inserted them throughout the chapters have allowed me to make three main claims that contribute to a better understanding of the activities of early modern long distance merchants. A first claim is about the role of politics and institutions in the activities of long-distance merchants. In the debates on long-distance trade, politics is frequently touched upon in the image of the ‘predatory ruler’, and this has formed part of the explanatory models for understanding how merchants used institutions and networks. However, recently Philip Hoffman has warned against an all too strong pre-occupation with the extractive capacities of rulers and has argued that in order to understand economic changes, it is important to take into account the policies and, in particular, the political processes that drove these changes.784 In that call, we can read an invitation to take the work of historians of early modern politics into account more profoundly. Since the last decades of the twentieth century, they have taught us that politics was not just a matter of developing bureaucracy, fiscal expansion, and warfare, but also of bargaining with various social groups, and about creating and breaking networks and factions. Inspired by the cultural turn, they have demonstrated that politics was also about a particular rhetoric, ethos, and imagery to which various political actors at times complied but which they also created and manipulated. Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated that such an approach allows us to better understand how merchants made decisions about their investments, not just in terms of capital but also of their time and attention, and in relation to their use of institutions and networks. As the case of the Joyous Entry of 1549 shows, the nation was also inserted into the political culture of their hometown, and the conflicts that came with the ritual aspects of that political culture.

784 Philip T. Hoffman, ‘What Do States Do? Politics and Economic History’, The Journal of Economic History 75, no. 02 (June 2015): 303–32, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050715000637; It should also be kept in mind that the ‘predatory ruler’ was by no means necessarily an absolutists monarch, but could very well be the oligarchy of an urban republic. Epstein has made a strong case for seeing Italian commercial republics like Florence through that lens: Epstein, Freedom and Growth.
Moreover, a focus on the relationship of the Florentine nation in Antwerp as an institution, of the community, and of the individual merchants with their home ruler as well as with Florentine institutions also problematizes the binary opposition between so-called extractive institutions that allegedly serve an oligarchy and inclusive ones that are said to benefit to all. This binary has been developed and popularized mainly by economists and social scientists but has received necessary criticism from historians.\textsuperscript{785} As the Florentine nation in Antwerp forced its members to contribute financially, it theoretically could be considered as an extractive institution. However, as I have demonstrated, that contribution was not efficiently organized, and serious attempts to reform the institution and make it more efficient were initiated by Florentines with a background in the Antwerp nation, but those attempts were not welcomed by the majority of the community. The reforms and improvements that men such as Baroncelli, Marchi, and the author of the anonymous memorandum on the nation proposed were a mix of strategies that can be labelled as being both inclusive and extractive, but which were all framed in the rhetoric of improving the Tuscan economy and increasing the duke’s returns. Their focus was on the future of their home region, and concerns about openness were secondary to that. This lack of concern for the open or extractive character of Florentine institutions also becomes clear by studying the relationship that Florentine merchants sought to develop with their home ruler. The initiative for such a relationship came more from the Florentine merchants in Antwerp than from the duke and the court in Florence, which makes it clear that the term ‘extractive institution’ is a poor category to analyse the actual behaviour of early modern merchants. Although the world of early modern commerce had institutions that can be categorized as open access, such institutions are rare, and the category does not offer a good yardstick from which to assess institutions more broadly. The first main claim of this thesis is that by taking into account how early modern politics functioned more precisely, we can better understand the choices and decisions of long distance merchants.

My second claim is that by paying attention to the relationship the merchants had with their home region we can gain a better understanding of the entanglement between formal

institutions and informal networks. Over the past decade, some of the most interesting work in economic history in general and on long distance trade, in particular, has been preoccupied with countering the binary opposition between these two explanatory schemes. Various scholars have correctly demonstrated that contrasting informal networks with formal institutions is of little help in analysing the ways in which long-distance merchants protected themselves against the perils that came with commerce. Throughout this dissertation, I have shown that in the configuration of networks and the choice of institutions the merchants’ hometown was a primary point of reference to them, and therefore offers an excellent lens from which to grasp the entanglements between formal institutions and informal networks. Paying attention to the position of a home region in informal networks and formal institutions shows that both were, if not embedded in, than at least related to the political process, the social web and the culture of particular places.

When Florentines engaged in limited liability partnerships, they did so primarily with their kin and with co-Florentines that they knew from Antwerp, and they used *accomandite* contracts which they registered at the Florentine merchant court. In doing so, they formalized a relationship, which had begun informally, through a formal institution in their hometown that was relatively open to whoever needed its services. The commercial contacts that Antwerp-based Florentines had at times were embedded in formal Antwerp institutions, such as notary records, certifications, the Antwerp exchange and courts, but most of their contacts took place outside of formal institutions and were marked by a preference for collaboration with other Florentines and to a lesser extent other Italians. Based on the registers of correspondence, it is clear that their ties with their city of origin mattered more to them than has been previously assumed. Using a formal institution such as the One Hundredth Penny tax to trace merchants’ activities gives a one-sided view of their commercial network. Despite the formal openness of the Florentine nation in Antwerp to anyone with a background in Florentine Tuscany, it remained mainly populated by the offspring of the Florentine political and commercial elite, and thus was marked by the informal but important social dynamics in their city of origin. It was already clear to its contemporaries that the nation did not function well enough to face to all the new challenges of its time and its new commercial environment. Ideas and initiatives to reform the nation and other institutions that facilitated trade were developed both by merchants from the office holding class such as Baroncelli as well as by enigmatic solitary figures like Marchi and by an anonymous advisor. Behind the attempts to reform formal institutions or to create new ones thus stood an informal network. The most tangible evidence of the blurriness between formal institutions and informal networks is found in the various letters that merchants
wrote to Cosimo I. The duke held the highest formal office in Florence, but the merchants that wrote to him primarily tried to establish or maintain an informal patronage relationship that benefitted themselves as well as their families and dependents in Florence. When the duke wanted to collect a loan on the Antwerp market, Ducci and his informal network there were crucial. My second claim about the entanglement of formal institutions and informal networks is thus complementary to my first claim about the importance of understanding early modern politics and the problematic character of distinguishing extractive institutions from inclusive ones.

My third main claim relates to the importance of taking a hometown background into account when assessing whom long distance merchants associated themselves with in their various forms of commercial activities. Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated that the hometown background was crucial for explaining how a group of merchants drew its boundaries. By investigating the case of a group of merchants that originated from a continental European city and were active in a commercial metropolis in the north of the continent, this dissertation, at first sight is quite far removed from the debates on diaspora merchants such as Armenians and Sephardic Jews. I have demonstrated that their trade was intra-European, as were their buyers and suppliers. In fact, in the case of the Rinieri and the Salviati firm in Antwerp, their activities were strongly orientated towards the Italian peninsula, and their networks were predominantly Florentine. Throughout the thesis, I have demonstrated that Florentine merchants, who were neither a religious nor an ethnic minority subjected to discrimination, can nevertheless be compared with groups who belonged to these categories. The findings presented in this dissertation thus demonstrate that even within Europe, boundaries between groups of merchants could remain strong in spite of the absence of religious or ethnic differences.

In so doing, this dissertation has thus contributed to problematizing the concepts of cross-cultural trade and ‘diaspora’ merchants. In the footsteps of Markovitz and Aslanian, who worked on cases of merchants that originated from outside of Europe, it seems more fruitful to think of Florence as a circulation society. Young men left their hometown to engage in commerce abroad but remained closely tied to their city of origin, not only via commercial contacts but also through institutions and contacts with their home ruler. In spite the substantial differences between the cases of the Armenians from New Julfa, the Genoese in the south of Italy, the Sephardim in the Mediterranean and the members of the ‘Antwerp diaspora’ of the late sixteenth and the seventeenth century, I demonstrate that it is valuable to think comparatively about those cases to gain a better eye for both the normal and exceptional aspects
of each case. My third claim is thus that we need to move beyond diaspora and discrimination as the main explanations for why groups of merchants developed separated networks. Often, a common place of origin was the criterion that guided merchants in choosing their partners, collaborators, and long-distance correspondents.

In the last part of these conclusions, I would like to discuss two lines of inquiry in the historiography that I have observed in recent years and how this dissertation relates to these tendencies. Following upon those observations, I will propose a suggestion for new paths to follow. First of all, we should keep in mind that apart from actual goods, news and information, financial transactions from all over Europe also circulated between Antwerp and Florence. In previous years, the subject of finance and the related evolutions to the legal framework have received increased attention. As Florentines had been prominent bankers since the Middle Ages, the financial aspect of their dealings, in particular, has received substantial attention from scholars, and history of financial techniques has moved to new fields in recent years. Such new work provides us with valuable insights, especially when the findings are related to political, social and cultural conditions that affected these financial developments and in their turn were affected by these new techniques. Second, together with an increasing interest in financial techniques and its legal dimension, research about inequality in wealth and capital has also risen to prominence in the historiographical agenda. In this dissertation, I have touched upon these subjects mainly from a social point of view, paying primary attention to the background to those who were involved in partnerships, and to establish the extent to which the Florentine nation in Antwerp and the Florentine merchant network allowed for social mobility. Understanding more profoundly the importance and impact of capital inequality and social mobility within long-distance merchants’ communities is certainly a topic worth exploring.

786 On Florence see for example Matringe, ‘L’entreprise Florentine et La Place de Lyon’.
more fully, but it requires the kind of data that is very labour intensive and time-consuming to acquire, and not every commercial centre or city of origin provides historians with sources to do so. Given the archival riches of Florence, the city certainly offers one of the more promising cases.

Together with a rising focus on financial techniques, less evident forms of investment such as lotteries and other forms of gambling have also drawn the attention of economic and cultural historians of Antwerp and Florence in the previous years.790 Related to that, these scholars have recently embarked on projects that focus on the attitudes and ideas that commercial actors developed in their understanding and conception of the future. Such a turn to the future is certainly promising, but as this dissertation shows, it was at least as often the past of institutions, networks and actors that mattered to merchants and at times was an explicit preoccupation. The case of the Florentine nation is the best example of the impact of the past on merchants’ activities. When that institution was transferred to Antwerp sometime in the second decade of the sixteenth century, it came with a mode of organization that was the product of Florentine politics and above all the commercial landscape of Bruges in the early fifteenth century. The organization of the institution had not changed for decades when in the 1560’s ideas were proposed and initiatives were taken to reform the nation and to monitor it better. Yet in the concrete implementation of these reform plans, acquiring a better understanding of the nation’s past was a primary concern. Merchants were requested to retrieve their old ledgers and correspondence, the historical regulations of the nation had to be provided to the Magistrate of the Consulates, together with a list of the consuls of the nation and historical consular rights. When the nation had a conflict about its position in the Joyous Entry of 1549, it relied on historical arguments for precedence, which were drawn from historical cases from various places within the Florentine commercial network. Marchi’s reference to the relationship between his father and Cosimo’s, as well as other invocations of historical ties shows that history not only mattered on the institutional level of nation but also in individual relations with the duke. The choice of business partners and the habit of certifying the background of Italian newcomers in Antwerp via a reference to a common past acquaintance point to the importance of history in commerce as well.

The observation that history matters in commercial organizations and in the choices of commercial actors are commonplace. Models such as path dependency and a game theory approach have long given a prominent role to the history of institutions and interactions. Yet as political economist Paul David has noted, in the work of prominent New Institutional Economists like North, which have become important points of reference in our understanding of early modern commerce, the role of institutional history is at its best only ambiguously taken into account. The focus on institutional changes and the genesis of ‘open-access’ institutions are largely a product of the agenda of New Institutional Economics, but this focus should not make us forget that many institutions, both formal and informal, were not easily susceptible to change. This does not mean that we should turn a blind eye to the rent-seeking, oligarchic or conservative attitudes that may have contributed to a lack of change, and not many historians will argue that whatever institutional setup existed, was therefore right. But rather than continuously focusing on the aspects of historical institutions that from our modern perspective and occasionally that of contemporaries appears to be unfair or inefficient, we would benefit more from paying attention to how alleged inertia in institutions and networks took shape, and how processes of fragmentary adaptation in times without exogenous shocks took place.

The revaluation of the importance of history in mercantile institutions and networks that I propose also takes notice of the suggestions and claims in two bodies of historiography that have grown since the turn of the century, namely the revisionist approach to the role of guilds in the early modern European economy, and the so-called archival turn that has paid attention to practises of record keeping and management in the pre-modern world. In order to explain the persistence of crafts and guilds in spite of their allegedly exploitive and rent-seeking attitude throughout the pre-modern period, scholars in the footsteps of Stephen R. Epstein have convincingly argued that they offered a setting in which technological innovation could develop. Elaborating upon that work, it has been suggested that corporative bodies served as

---

793 My stress on the importance of exogenous shocks to fundamentally change institutional arrangements and commercial networks is primarily indebted to Lesger’s case for the importance of the devastating effect of the Dutch Revolt on the economic order of the Low Countries. Lesger, Handel in Amsterdam Ten Tijde van de Opstand; In the steps of Cipolla, Alfani has made a convincing case for the effect of such shocks on the economy of Italy in the sixteenth century. Guido Alfani, Calamities and the Economy in Renaissance Italy: The Grand Tour of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse, trans. Christine Calvert, Early Modern History: Society and Culture (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
repositories that prevented the loss of tacit knowledge. It is important to keep in mind the significant differences between craft guilds and the corporations of long-distance merchants, but based on the findings in this dissertation, the role of institutional memory may deserve more attention from scholars that work on long-distance trade. Moreover, as the binary opposition of institutions to networks has become untenable, it is worth looking more closely at commercial networks as repositories of a various body of knowledge. The eagerness with which some correspondents of the Florentine duke offered information and knowledge to their home ruler, as well as the case of crafting the argument for the priority of Florentines in the Joyous Entry of 1549, are a testimony to the function of the network and the institution of the Florentine nation. Historians of science have already pointed to the attitudes and networks of merchants in the development of new attitudes towards knowledge. How commercial knowledge affected the adaptation and reform of commercial institutions, as well as the development of new ones, is a subject that requires further exploration.

Although a large part of the knowledge that was kept and transferred through corporative organizations and within firms was tacit and thus not written down, it is also worth looking into the practices of record keeping in mercantile networks and institutions. Those practices have become an important subject of attention for historians in recent years. This archival turn has primarily been focused on the developments in record keeping by developing polities and their institutions, but the practices of record keeping of religious exile communities have also been investigated. Strikingly, the archival practices of commercial institutions, both private and state-related, have received much less attention in this historiography. Yet as


Cook, Matters of Exchange.

It should be noted that the rich Florentine practice of keeping commercial archives has been discussed repeatedly by Richard Goldthwaite. See his latest contribution on that topic: Richard A. Goldthwaite, ‘The Practice and Culture of Accounting in Renaissance Florence’, Enterprise & Society 16, no. 3 (September 2015): 611–47, https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2015.17.


the case of the Magistrate of the Consulate and of the Joyous Entry of 1549 make clear, such an approach at the intersection of institutional history, the study of institutional memory and record keeping provides us with a better understanding of the continuing existence and relevance of both mercantile institutions and networks which are often considered to be obsolete.
Table 2.1: Accomandita Partnerships Involving Antwerp Based Florentines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archival reference</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Investor(s)</th>
<th>Recipients</th>
<th>Investment</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10831, fol 176 r</td>
<td>24-10-1519</td>
<td>Jacopo Guicciardini</td>
<td>Piero Guicciardini (brother of Jacopo)</td>
<td>Fiorino 4500 in oro d'oro</td>
<td>To trade in merchandise in Flanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10831, fol 216 r</td>
<td>9-11-1530</td>
<td>Francesco e Carlo Marucelli e compagni di Lione</td>
<td>Gaspare Ducci</td>
<td>900 lire di grossi di Fiandra</td>
<td>To trade in Flanders and Brabant and in the cities of Antwerpen and Bergen where fairs are held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10831, fol 216 r</td>
<td>15-11-1530</td>
<td>Leonardo di Leonardo da Filicaia come tutore di Simone e Niccolò di Marco del Nero</td>
<td>Pierozzo di Rosso del Rosso</td>
<td>4200 lire di grossi di Fiandra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10831, fol 216 v</td>
<td>17-11-1530</td>
<td>Pietro e Giovanfrancesco di Giovanni Bini “civis et merchatoris florentini” abitante a Lione</td>
<td>Simone Pecori</td>
<td>5500 scudi di marchi di grossi di Fiandra</td>
<td>To trade in Flanders and Brabant and in the cities of Antwerpen and Bergen where fairs are held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10832, fol 8 r</td>
<td>19-1-1533</td>
<td>Jacopo Guicciardini Giralomo Guicciardini Francesco Guicciardini Domenico Vernacci</td>
<td>Simone Pecori / Gugliemo Natoli</td>
<td>7500 ducati d’oro a lire 7 per ducato in lire 2250 di grossi moneta di Fiandra</td>
<td>To trade in Antwerp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10832, fol 6 r</td>
<td>12-8-1533</td>
<td>Philippo Strozi</td>
<td>Simone Pecori (proxy given to Luigi Capponi as his representative in Florence)</td>
<td>5500 scudi</td>
<td>To trade in Antwerp and elsewhere in Flanders in drapes, exchange and other trades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10832, fol 8 v</td>
<td>21-4-1534</td>
<td>Thomaso Guadagni Simome &amp; Nicolo del Nero (represented by their 'tutore' Leonardo da Filcaia)</td>
<td>Camillo Diaceto (represented by Philipo Guadagni)</td>
<td>22000 ducati d'oro</td>
<td>to exercise trade and exchange in Antwerp, Brabant, Flanders and elsewhere in the surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10832, fol 9 v</td>
<td>16-9-1534</td>
<td>Giovan Battista Nerli Lorenzo Rondinelli</td>
<td>Nicolo Rondinelli</td>
<td>2500 Fiorini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page: Merc 10832, fol 17 r</td>
<td>Dates: 6-9-1537</td>
<td>Parties: Thomaso Guadagni (in Lyon, proxy to Philipo Guadagni in Firenze)</td>
<td>Transactions: Francesco Nasi (absent, proxy to GB Nasi in Firenze)</td>
<td>Notes: 4710 lira di grossi di fiandra To exercise in trade and exchange in Flanders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page: Merc 10832, fol 18 v</td>
<td>Dates: 21-11-1537</td>
<td>Parties: Widow and curators of the testament of Lorenzo Rondinelli</td>
<td>Transactions: Niccolo Rondinelli</td>
<td>Notes: Continuation of the partnership of 1534 after Lorenzo's death</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page: Merc 10832, fol 31 v</td>
<td>Dates: 23-12-1540</td>
<td>Parties: Heirs of Lorenzo Rondinelli</td>
<td>Transactions: Niccolo Rondinelli</td>
<td>Notes: prolongation of c 18 v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page: Merc 10832, fol 35 r</td>
<td>Dates: 15-9-1541</td>
<td>Parties: Giovan Battista Giovanni</td>
<td>Transactions: Giovannì Giraldi (with a proxy to Raphaelo Nasi in Firenze)</td>
<td>Notes: scudi 2500 d'oro in oro to buy and sell 'drappi' at the Imperial court in Brussels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page: Merc 10832, fol 55 v</td>
<td>Dates: 9-9-1545</td>
<td>Parties: Cristofano Rinieri</td>
<td>Transactions: Dietisalvi Rinieri</td>
<td>Notes: 4000 ducati d'oro to trade in Antwerp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page: Merc 10832, fol 67 v</td>
<td>Dates: 28-5-1547</td>
<td>Parties: Andrea Rinieri (in Lyon, proxy given to Christofano Rinieri)</td>
<td>Transactions: Dietisalvi Rinieri (proxy given to his brother Bernardo)</td>
<td>Notes: 2000 scudi d'oro to engage in various forms of trade and exchange in Antwerp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page: Merc 10832, fol 90 r</td>
<td>Dates: 16-4-1551</td>
<td>Parties: Giovan Battista Nerli, Niccolo Rondinelli (in Antwerpen)</td>
<td>Transactions: Piero Lutiano</td>
<td>Notes: 4350 fiorini carlini to engage in various forms of trade and exchange in Middelburg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page: Merc 10832, fol 91 v</td>
<td>Dates: 16-6-1551</td>
<td>Parties: Dietisalvi Rinieri, Niccolo Rondinelli</td>
<td>Transactions: Luigi Sostegni Cosimo Martelli</td>
<td>Notes: for a company in Spain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page: Merc 10832, fol 103 r</td>
<td>Dates: 5-7-1554</td>
<td>Parties: Galeotto Magalotti (in Antwerp, proxy given)</td>
<td>Transactions: Giovan Battista Frescobaldi (in Antwerp, proxy given)</td>
<td>Notes: 1500 scudi d'oro in oro to transport goods to Italy and elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10832, fol 113 v</td>
<td>2-12-1556</td>
<td>Agistino Biliotti (based in Ancona)</td>
<td>Pandolfo e Matteo Biliotti e compagni d’anversa (proxy given to Agostino Biliotti)</td>
<td>Antonio di Berto (Berti). His brothers are also involved as procurators. Antonio di Giovanni, a Lyonese merchant, is also involved.</td>
<td>2500 scudi d’oro in oro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10832, fol 144 v</td>
<td>29-8-1561</td>
<td>Carlo Rinuncinni Galeotto Magalotti (both in Antwerp, proxy given to Antonio Magalotti and Francesco Rinunciinni in Florence)</td>
<td>Luca Rinieri Antonio degli Albizzi (both in Antwerp, represented by a proxy in Florence)</td>
<td>Lira 3000 di grossi di Fiandra</td>
<td>To engage in Antwerp and elsewhere in commerce, exchanges and assurances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10832, fol 156 r</td>
<td>5-4-1563</td>
<td>Jacomo Lanfranchi</td>
<td>Carlo Lanfranchi Jacopo Cini</td>
<td>Scudi 20000 d’oro larghi d’oro</td>
<td>To engage in commerce, exchanges and assurances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10832, fol 179 r</td>
<td>13-11-1565</td>
<td>Bernardo Bonsi and Rede di Giovan Battista Bonsi</td>
<td>Piero Spinelli</td>
<td>Ducati 5000</td>
<td>To engage in Antwerp and elsewhere in commerce, exchanges and assurances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10832, fol 186 v</td>
<td>7-6-1566</td>
<td>Pandolfo Attavanti Carlo Lanfranchi</td>
<td>Marco Attavanti (absent, proxy given to Gabriello Strozzi)</td>
<td>Suci 5000 a grossi 80 moneta di Fiandra</td>
<td>To engage in Antwerp in commerce, exchanges and assurances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10832, fol 208 v</td>
<td>16-7-1569</td>
<td>Giovanni Cini and other members of the Cini family</td>
<td>Jacopo Cini Cosimo Cini (in Antwerp, proxy given to Gerardi in Florence)</td>
<td>Scudi 18000 d’oro in oro</td>
<td>To engage in Antwerp in commerce, exchanges and assurances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document</td>
<td>Date Range</td>
<td>Parties Involved</td>
<td>Location/Currency</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10833, fol 4 r</td>
<td>16-7-1572</td>
<td>Curzio, Giovannifilippo et Pompilio Lanfranchi</td>
<td>Carlo Lanfranchi (in Antwerpen, Marucelli in Firenze is procurator)</td>
<td>Lire 4533 di grossi di Fiandra</td>
<td>To engage in Antwerp in Flanders in commerce, exchanges and assurances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10833, fol 43 v</td>
<td>11-8-1576</td>
<td>Giovannifilippo, Curzio Lanfranchi</td>
<td>Carlo Lanfranchi</td>
<td>Scudi 10118,5 a grossi80 moneta di Fiandra</td>
<td>To engage in Antwerp and elsewhere in commerce, exchanges and assurances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10834, fol 2 v</td>
<td>26-6-1577</td>
<td>Giovannifilippo, Curzio Lanfranchi</td>
<td>Francesco Lotti Francesco Cambi</td>
<td>Lira 6000 di grossimoneta di Fiandra</td>
<td>To engage in Antwerp in Brabant in commerce, exchanges and assurances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10833, fol 120 r (also registered on Merc 10834, fol 76 r)</td>
<td>3-3-1581</td>
<td>Giovannifilippo and Carlo Lanfranchi</td>
<td>Maurizio Lanfranchi Fabio Agostini (Pisan) (both staying in Antwerp)</td>
<td>Scudi 15500 a grossi80 moneta di Fiandra</td>
<td>To engage in Antwerp in commerce, exchanges and assurances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10833, fol 139 (also registered on Merc 10834, fol 100 v)</td>
<td>28-6-1583</td>
<td>Giovanni, Curzio, Giovannifilippo and Carlo Lanfranchi</td>
<td>Francesco Cambi (in Cologne) Antonio Velluti (in Antwerp)</td>
<td>Lire 10800 di grossimoneta di fiandra</td>
<td>To engage in commerce, exchanges and assurances in Antwerp, Cologne, the fairs of Frankfurt and elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10833, fol 146 r (also registered on Merc 10834, fol 110 v)</td>
<td>13-4-1584</td>
<td>Giovannifilippo, Curzio Lanfranchi (in Antwerp, proxy given)</td>
<td>Camillo Bartoli Bando Santa Croce (both Florentines in Venice)</td>
<td>Ducati 12000 correnti a moneta di Venezia</td>
<td>To engage in commerce in Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merc 10833, fol 164 r (also registered on Merc 10834, fol 136 v)</td>
<td>20-2-1585</td>
<td>Giovannifilippo, Curzio Lanfranchi (staying in Antwerp or Cologne, represented by Amerigo Capponi in Florence)</td>
<td>Francesco Cambi</td>
<td>Scudi 16000 di grossimoneta di Fiandra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Edited Primary Sources

To provide the reader an impression of the source base of the dissertation, an average of about two sources per chapter has been edited. I have selected sources that are either striking because of their content or that offer a good impression of what an average document in that particular series conveys in terms of information and how it is structured.

Misscelaneea Medicea 27 III c 970-972

This document is an anonymous memorandum that offers a reflection about the benefits of installing a Florentine factor in Antwerp and provides critical reflections about the functioning of the Florentine nation in Antwerp.

c 970r

Declarazionne delle com[m]odita et benefitij che seguirebbeno stando in Anversa il fattore di loro ecc[ellen]itiss[i]me ill[ustrattisks]i me

danari che bisognerebbe per haverne sententia
Secondariamente ne conseguirrebbe che ottenendosi libero il [detto]
Privilegio, quelli mercanti fior[entini] che per esentarsi di pagare
detto consolato si servono qui di natione forestiere, ritornia [margin broken of]
a com[m]ettere le loro faccende’ alli istesse fior[entini] ,o, al fat[ttore] [margin broken of]
se questo fusse buon piacere di’ loro e[ccellenza] Ill[trissi]me et cio fare[bbe] [margin broken of]
tanto piu volentieri per che nelli disperer[ri] mercanti che
accaggiono infiniti alla giornata ciascuno ha[vrebbe] ricorso
alla mercantanti di firenze dove tale differenze sono

c 970v

Intese et considerate meglio che in altro loco del mondo
terminate con brevita et poca spesa, dove che havendo
differenza con altre natione che non si poss[onno] astringere
di andare a firenze, sono li detti fior[entini]. constretti a litigare
il loro, qui, o, altrove’ con dan[n]o loro graviss[im]mo di spesa intollerabile
Di piu se il detto fattore per hordine di loro ecc[ellenze] ill[ustrissi]me si
intervenissi in compagnia del Mag[nifico] Consolo a tenere la
natione unita in se stessa, et con la Pisana ancora, ella
ne sarebbe piu honorata, et con il favore non solo li istessi
fior[entini] di fuora, ma altre natione concorrerebbero a servirsi
di essa, o, del detto fattore, si come, e statato solito et vistosi
per il tempo passato sendo questo loco il piu com[m]odo et
propitio che ness[un]o altro, la quale Unione non solo servirebbe
per le faccende’ mercantile’ ma divertirebbe ancora
infinitj processi poco honorati che’ si gener[n]o spesso fra
essi fior[enti]ni per che si observerebbe li hordini che ponessino
le loro ecc[ellenzie] Ill[ustrissi]me si come di tali hordini ne e fatto
expressa mentione nel detto Privilegio Cesareo
Item le pa[n]nine’ che neggiamo oggi di per Tutto il Mondo
car[issi]me et in reputatione di modo che li Inghilesi e fiam[m]inghi
che’ han[n]o le lane nel paese vendono le loro p[er] danari contanti
sulli proprii lochì, e' il medesimo si fa in francia et qualche
parte d'Italia, qui la n[ost]ra che ci viene' di firenze' con
tanta spesa, risico e lunghezza di Tempo la vedia[mo] [margin broken of]
vendersi per tempi lunghi di 10 o 12 mesi con profitto
leggierj et qualche' volta senza, questo inconveniente'

c 971r

Procede per che venendo le rascie in più parte in mano di
lombardi, genovesi, lucchesi, et altre natione, che non han[n]o
quel pietoso riguardo al bene publico della n[ost]ra citta
in mantenere dette rascie in reputatione e credito com[e] [margin broken of]
si converrebbe, tengono solamente ochio al venderle
quamprima per l' utile delle provisione che ne piglono
et spoglati d' ogni altra considerazione', ne fan[n]o li tempi
cosi longi et pregi così bassi con dan[n]o de nostri merchant[i] [margin broken of]
che le mandano, Dove che se dette Rascie venissino [margin broken of]
mano de fior[enti]ni, o, del fattore, in breve' tempo seguiri [margin broken of]
tutto l' opposito, si come per esperienza veggiamo [margin broken of]
natione genovese et Cremonese che questi vendan[no] [margin broken of]
loro fustani p[er] contanti et a breve tempo quelli [margin broken of]
hordini publici confermati ogni a[n]no con giuramento no[n]
possono vendere li loro velluti a tempo piu longo di
6 mesi, et questo nascie per che dette mercantie
vengano in mano delli proprii mercanti di quelle cit[ta] [margin broken of]
come' il medesimo interviene alli Luchesi de loro drappi
et altanto si potria tenere per certo in breve tempo fuss[era]
per seguire delle n[ost]re Rascie et agumentarle ancor[a]
di pregio, et de drappi ancora, et tanto piu quanto chi [margin broken of]
la pa[n]ina, è, cosa piu necessaria della seta, o, fustani
[part unreadable because of too thin ink] al beneficio et com[m]odo particolare [margin broken of]
Fior[enti]ni gia dichiarato, si aggiungne che per mezzo del
detto fattore' ne potria seguire ancora com[m]odo e benefitia
a tutti li stati di loro ecc[elle]tia Ill[ustrissi]me provvedendoli annu[almente]

c 971v


La quale dignita di fattoria non solo no[n] porteria dan[n]o o pregiuditio in conto alcuno aquella del Consolo ma per co[n]tro li darebbe [margin broken of] quella al presente molto declinata et quasi ridotta a niente’/ne’ Impoco potria il console operare et eseguire le cose disopra narrate, Per che’ cambiandosi ogni
c 972v

An[n]o il console si verrebbe a cambiare ancora insieme tutte
quella reputatione et credito che da loro ecc[ellenze] ill[ustrissi]me pervenirebbe’ nel detto fattore’, anche ne seguirebbe’ che quelle nelli loro affari non sarebbono poi così ben[e] servite massimo no[n] si trovando sempre in tante mutazione di console persone idonee et capace a tali maneggi oltra che tenendo li console loro negoti particolari il primo loro risguardo sarebba la conservatione di essi dov [margin broken of] che se hoccorressi stare fuori’ danversa per qualche negotio di detti ill[ustrissi]m s[igno]ro ne’ seguirebbe’ presto infiniti disordini, il che al detto fattore non adverrebbe per che staria tutto intento al servitio delle loro ecc[ellenz]ie ill[ustrissi]me come’ loro ministro et servitore accio destinato anche ne seguirebbe satisfactione a essi ill[ustrissi]mi signori e utile ancora et al detto fattore similmente conforme alle buone operatione sua, e tutto a honor[e] de dio sempre ben[e]
The letter from the consul and advisors of the Florentine nation in Antwerp in which they inform Cosimo I about the conflict that has arisen between them and the Genoese nation about their position in the parade of the Joyous Entry of Philip II in Antwerp in 1549.

Consolo et altri de sua natione
In Anversa di[e] 3 di Agosto 1549


che la natione Genovese pretende dover[e] preceder[e] alla n[ost]ra, et con ogn[i] industria et diligenza si sforza di rimostrar[e] tale precedentia ad essa appartenersi, allegando (secondo che s' intende) in favor loro certa dichia
la instanza prima fatta a s[ua] M[a]jes[t]a ces[area] per supplica, dalla n[ost]ra na
tione, che ne fusse conservato la precedenza gia in altri luoghi acqui
stata, ha scritto qui alli prefati del governo della villa che i[n]tendino
le ragione delle parti, et a lei riferiscano per deliberarn[e] seconda
trovera per consiglia, Però essendo l'una et l'altra natione stata
chiamata davanti alli detti s[ignori], la nation[e] di Genova ha solo verbal
mente allegato le cose sopradette in favor suo, ne ha per ancora prodotto
per iscritto alcune delle predette ragioni allegate, ne meno per che si [margin broken of]
d'intention[e] di volerle produrr[e], Noi d' alcanto n[ostro] non abbiamo ma[ncato] [margin broken of]
davanti alli medesimi sig[nori], per maniera di discorso et amicabilmente

decialmente in mostrare[e] che la n[ost]ra nation[e] non è stata solita di n[ego]
tiare in Granata, dove che l' habbia havuto ad oppersi à q[ual] ch[e] [margin broken of]
dicono li Genovesi havervi ottenuto: et che Papa Julio era di lor[o]
natione, et che in Bologna nel tempo della coronatione di cesare
non n' era Ambasciador[e] p[er] la citta di Fiorenza: et p[er] cio ogni [margin broken of]
Sopra di cio seguito si puo dir[e] essere stato fatto in absentia de [margin broken of]
parte. Ma che possiamo ben noi mostrar', che nella corte Pon[ificale] [margin broken of]

nel portare[e] il Baldacchino del corpus D[omi]ni alla processione Papale
dove intervengono per grado et per dignità tutte le Natione che vi si
trovano, la n[ost]ra Nation[e] doppo la Milanese ha preceduto allo Geno
vese et la Genovese haver[e] preso il Baldacchino doppo la n[ost]ra, come
tianissimo nella entrata di Lione, ove l'una et l'altra nation' era p[res]ente
essere stato dichiarato che la n[ost]ra dovesse precederre[e] alla loro P[er]
che abbiamo ultimamente fatto instanza alli predetti s[igno]ri della villa che
di nuovo richieggiano li Genovesi à produrr[e] in scritto q[uel]le chiarezze
con le quala intendono valersi et ricusandolo che ce ne diano un Atto
et così han[no] detto di fare. Et perche noi non abbiamo da poter hora
mostrar[e] altro che il dichiarato in Francia et certa esamine fatta
in Roma sopra del portare[e] il Baldacchino, che di amendue le cose
sia con questa copia deli strumenti sopra di ciò fatti come alli se ne
è dato copia al Rever[entisimo] Mons[ign]or di Furli suo oratore, et avvertitolo,
quain[to giornalme]nte sopra ciò è seguito, come s[ua] s[ignoria] R[everendissima] la può
avvertire[e]
per la che le scrive, che sia inclusa in q[uest]a et come anco in avvenir[e]
si avvertirà il prefato suo oratore[e], accio che sotto l' ombra di v[ostra] ecc[ellen]za
possa procurare[e] tutti li mezzi possibili à beneficio di questo negocio
Perciò ne è parso intanto non dover mancar[e] di avvertir[e] v[ostra] ece[llen]za di tutto il seguito fin qui, con q[uell]a n[ost]ra la quale se le manda in dili
genza et di supplicarla, che trovandosi o potendosi dicostà pro
cacciar[e] altre migliori ragioni delle allegate di sopra in favor[e] n[ost]ro
ella si degne qua[n]to prima farnele mandar[e], per potersene valere
davanti alla decisione della causa, quale pensiamo si tarderà
sino allo estremo, et q[ue]ll[e] accompagner[a] con tutti q[ue]lli favori che a le parera[n]o più opportuni per conservation[e] del honor[e] et grado di q[uesta]
n[ost]ra n[azione et similme[n]te si degnera fare il[n]tendere al prefato suo
orator[e] che voglia cahlde[n]te abbracciar[e] q[uesta] Causa come fino a qui
se ne è mostro ardentissimo che dal canto n[ost]ra non manchereno p[er] lo
c 16 r

con tutte le diligentie possibile, et in oltre di honorar[e] il ser[ennissi]mo Principe
in questa sua entrata (come di gia è dato ordi[n]e al tutto) di maniera
che v[ostra] ecc[ellen]za ne possa restar satisfatta, come è n[ost]ro principale i[n]t[ione]
Et perché noi siamo stati avvertiti che li Sanesi hanno instrumento
publico della precedenza con li Genovesi, et perché detti Sanesi
soglion cedere a’ Fiorentini, potendosene col favor di V[ostro] ece[llen]za haver[e]
copia in forma autentica, con dichiaratione ancora che essi Sanesi
cedono come è detto, saria certo grande aiuto alle n[ost]re ragioni
et similme[n]te l’ haver fede del tempo che si trattò di far[e] il concilio
a Pisa contro a Papa Julio, donde ne nacque che esso diventò nemico
della città, perché se la fede, che dichino haver[e] li Genovesi dal M[agistr]o delle
Ceremonie’ fusse stata fatta in q[ue]ll tempo, o, che anco il M[agistr]o delle
Ceremonie Genovese, et che il pontefis mostrar[e] bisognando,
non è dubio che l’ una cosa et l’ altra farebbe à proposito per render[e]
sospetta la detta fede, Pero suplichiamo v[ostra] ece[llen]za che si de[ve] [margin broken of]
d’aiutar[o]i in tutti q[uell]i modi che ella può, et noi dalli com [margin broken of]
di q[uell]la non partiremo già mai . Il m[agistr]o delle poste che [margin broken of]
obbligato à metter costi le p[rese]nte lettere dentro a xii giorni che dal [margin broken of]
data loro, et così far’ il simile della risposta dal giorno che di
V[ostra] ece[elle]za sara dispensato in dietro, alla quale reverente baciando le mani pregando nostro signore guardi et prosperi sua nobilissima e illustre persona. D’anversa il di ii d’agosto 1549

D[i] V[ostra] ece[lle]za

humilissimi servitori
Niccolò Rondinelli, Console
Guaspar Ducci, Consigliere
Diotisalvi Rienieri, Consigliere
A random Antwerp certification that provides an impression of how these documents were structured and what kind of information is provided in them.

A la requeste de Simon Pecori comme Gouverneur de la compagnie intitulée Alexa[n]dre Antinori et c[om]pagnons D’anvers

Thomas de berto conducteur de Florence Juravit
Et affirmavit Que le xxie Jour d’octobre
derrenier passé il a receu en la ville de florence
De Laurentio [et] Alexandre Antinori et compagnions de Florence
deux casses de draps d’or nombrez 1 . 2 . marques
de la marque mise a la marge de cestes pesans
ensemble quatre cens cinquante livres pois de Florence pour ammener et conduire en toute
Diligence a luy possible et a despons et couste
Extraordinaires en ceste ville d’anvers et consigner ausd[îtes] produrens,

Affirma en oultre led[ît] deponent p[ar] sond[ît] [jure]ment qu’il a fait son extreme povoir et diligence de am[m]enés lesd[îtes] casses de draps d’or en ceste ville comme dict est De sorte q[ue] en la space d’environ xxxix jour il a fait amené icelles casses dud[îte] florence jusques en la ville de Fontenoy en Lorraine (section scratched out)
la ou depuis les mesmes casses ont demouré p[our]
l’espace d’environ six mois a cause de la p[rese]nte guerre y laquelle les chemins estoient tellement empeches et rompus qu’il ont guer il ne les a peu faire ammener p[ar] dela non
obstant toutes ses diligentes p[ar] luy
faictes, hor environ le huytiesme jour de
juing dernier passe auquel temps le chemin
sembloit estre ung peu plus ouverte et moins
dangereux que lui deposant (a l’adventure)
a faict mettre les casses sur le chemin de
sorte q[ue] le xxv jour d’icelle mois de Juing
Icelles sont arrivees en ceste ville
D’ anvers, passe die xiiij augusti a[nn]o xv c [et] xliij
Firenze a Cristofano Rinieri adi 8 di guignio 1549 tt
a[d]veni inteso chome sera detto fine alla teletta gialla piana
e dipoi non e seguito altro salvo che siamo in p[r]aticha e tengiamo
e delli altri saremo ap[r]esso p[er] vedere di farne fine che sara
possibile benche po[ch]a speranza si tiene causa chelle feste
anno avuto si puo dire fine inpero non si manchera della solita
diligenzia e chapitando qualche ventura la p[r]enderemo e ne sare
te avisi In chopia e detto che p[er] voi buon co[n]to valere
alli n[ost]ri Rinieri in pasqua si rimesse [scudi] 60 di m[arco] attendesi
n’ abbiate aconcio la scrittu[r]a al suo dovere
di poi scritto abbiamo venduta la teletta [ver]de a [un]o filo che di la
si dice e como inp[r]aticha essi finita a f[jorini] 17 d[oro] [ad] e p[er] altra vi si
dira il p[ar]ticulare
A random limited liability contract, funding the enterprise of Galeotto Magalotti, to clarify what kind of information is included in such a contract.

5 luglio 1554

guigno pross[imo] passato o alt[ro] piu vero tempo et vollen[do]
ciascuno de predetti ch[e] p[er] me Z. Cancell[iere] di detta corte
sene facessi nota nel p[rese]nte lib[ro], et cosi m’i[m]posono
fatte furo[no] le predette cose nella cancell[eria] di detta corte nell’ a[n]no
del S[ignore] MDLIII indice e a di 5 del mese di luglio
p[resente nostri di Lionardo di Stefano nemi citt[adi]no fiorentino et
detta corte testimoni chiamati etc
ASF, MdP 216, c 41

Brief respons of a ducal secretary to Giovan Battista Guicciardini

A Gio[van]bat[tist]a Guicciardini
a di detto [August 26 1561]

An example of a letter from Antwerp in which a merchant, Tommaso Baroncelli suggests services to the duke and solicits for favours.

Ill[ustrissimo] e ex[cellentissi]mo s[ignor] mio oss[ervandissi] mo


d[i] v[ostra] e[xcellenza] Ill[ustrissima]
e umilissi e fedelissi[me] s[ervitore]

Tommaso Baroncelli
Example of a letter of Tommaso Marchi in which he includes various propositions to the duke.

Ill[ustrissimo] et Ecc[ellentissi]mo Principe et mio S[ignore]

Nicolò di Giunta sara datore della presente a V[ostra] Ecc[ellen]za
Al quale come bene Informato delle cose d’ Inghilterra ho
Replicato quello che a V[ostra] E[cce]l[enza] ho proposto cio è che si faccia
Amicitia per via di Milort Robert con La ser[enissima] Elizabet
Regina d’ Inghilterra offrendoli tutti li porti di mare
et di terra del suo stato senza fare bandi o legge
Publiche ma p[er] Un Gentilhuomo ch[e] risplenda di nobilta
Et alta qualita Virtuose che vadi In Inghilt[erra] si facei
ben segretam[ente] l’ amicitia, e l’ offera ne sia p[er]sone che
habio atteso a merca[n]tia ch[e] parebbe Una Inve[n]ttina di mercant[i]
Le Prohibitioni co[n]tra gli Inglesi di q[ue]sti et d’ altri paesi
Raddoppiano et il porto di Emde Unico Rifugio di loro
esperanza ch[e] hanno provato nesce Incommmodo, et Inutile
et sara facil cosa che invitati faccino capitale dell’ offera
Voltando p[er] mare con numero di navi q[ue]lle tante merca[n]tie
che di qui per terra andavano In Italia p[er] Valore di Uno
milion d[or]o l’an[n]o, et Io daro modi E vie da Convenire
con choloro et da potere dar qualche scala da continuame[n]te
durare, et sino che de questo non ho aviso no[n] so che scrivere
altro ne Intrare In nuove materie p[er] sino che di questa no[n] ho
qualche risposta et per haverne detto assai per hora no[n]
ne dire piu, d’ Anversa alli viii di Luglio 1564

Thommaso Marchy
Example of a letter by Gaspare Ducci in which he discusses his progress in arranging a loan for the duke.

InIlluissi.mo et exc.ellentissi.mo sig[n]or mio o[bserventissi]mo

Io o ricevuto la di sua exc[ellentia] de xxii decemb[re] con li ricepiti p[er] l’ intero compimento del [scudi] 100/m e tutto p[er]
bono ordine e a contento e perch[e] si dara fine a questo negotio con il rever[entissi]mo vescovo di furlli Sa[a]
inclusi[re] ne non ne faro altro discorso salvo ch[e] e per quanto sua exc[ellentia] mi scrive non intendere lontano
sino anch[e] si sborsino io ne paghi li cambi sopr[a]ch[e] prenando umilmente sua exc[ellentia] pigli in bene
la mia risposta li dico ch[e] come quella puo vedere p[er] la mia lettere ne li scripsi tanto tempo inanzi
all xx in qual di li denari sariano estesi e ch[e] li piacesse mandare le ricapiti a suficencia a quali soli[di]
or con questa sua de xxii di dicembre sua exc[ellentia] mi manda e io non dimanco desideroso s[er]virilla
sempre ne dissì al rever[entissi]mo inbra[sciato] re e ne scissi a sua exc[ellentia] ch[e] pendente li ordini venisseno se sua ex[cellentia]
comettava ch[e] il rever[entissi]mo inbra[sciato] a disponesi dei denari da tutte ne li arei pagato e preso sopra di me
p[er] escluso ch’ io desiderassi ordini e ch[e] in il avenime[n]to ch[e] avesse connessio si fusse disposto de danari
m’ oferivo come sua s[er]vir[e] p[er] sua ex[ellentia] de bene fare e nonch[e] de danari de la p[er]opia persona
in questo detardam[en]to il mercante consi feci il partito non si mancato annulla e non si li puo
diminuire il suo interesse non che a sua ex[cellentia] ch[e] io pensando di guadagnare qualcosa rimessi
spetando li ordini venissero circa di [scudi] 15/m a lione e 30/m in ispania ab intensione ch[e] e li ordini
fusino venuti davanti ch[e] li ritorni de canbi avesseno potuto s[er]vir bripilagli ac[a]bio co[n] in
tereso p[er] satisfire ch[e] il pagame[n]to a sua ex[cellentia] non si fusse ritardato li ritorni depesi [scudi] 15/m e 30/m ni
sono venuti tali ch[e] e ne perdo circa [scudi] 3/m e il tempo quelch[e] non dico p[er] assegnarlo a sua ex[cellentia] ma si bene
perch[e] ne sapia ch[e] il domandare canbi li dare di perdita e non di utile e come si sia perch[e] desideravo
usare de denari offersi al corbinelli ch[e] lu tenesse li 35/m de salviqialch[e] non volese fare scispensine
al rever[entissi]mo suo inbra[sciato] re piu volte inn’ antimo mi mandi un suo agente perch[e] s’ inpieghiasino essi denari
p[er]sino a pagamenti di questa fiera per farssi qualche profitto a utile di sua ex[cellentia] sempre volese
li denari facendolo sapere 15 giorni avanti si li dovesseno paghere e finalmente ce ne acordanno
ch[e] con tale condizione li o ritenessi e ne paghassi si no a xx di questo mese uno p[er]cento ch[e] sono [scudi] mille
su[o] s[ervitore] mi tengha in sua ben[evolente] gratia

[not signed, written by Gaspar Ducci]
Bibliography

Archival sources

Antwerp City Archive (ACA)
- Certification books (Cert): 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 45
- Priviligekamer (Pk): Nation of Portugal 1071, Nation of Lucca 1076

State Archives Florence (ASF)
- Guardaroba Medicea: 10
- Mediceo del Principato (MdP)
  - Registers of outgoing letters by secretaries (1547-52 & 1561-64): 186-191, 193, 195, 197-199, 216-217, 219
- Mercanzia (Merc): Registers with Accomandita contracts: 10831-10834
- Miscellanea Medicea (Misc Med): 27 III; 28 VII
- Libri di Commercio e di Famiglia (LCF)
  - Account book and register of outgoing letters of the Rinieri in Antwerp (1547-’51): 4416& 4417
- Notarile Antecosmiano (NAC): 9331
- Notarile Moderno:
  - Testamenti Forestiere (TF): 3

Centro Archivistico Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa (CASNS)
- Archivio Salviati (AS), papers of the Antwerp company: 980, 981, 982, 94, 986, 987, 988, 990, 991, 994, 995, 996
Printed Sources

Juan Cristóbal Calvete de Estrella, *El Felicissimo Viaje d’el... Principe Don Philippe, Hijo d’el Emperador Don Carlos Quinto Maximo, Desde España à... Alemaña, Con La Descripcion de... Brabant y Flandes* (En Anvers: en casa de Martín Nucio, 1552).


Edited Sources


Secondary literature


Calvete de Estrella, Juan Cristóbal. El Felicissimo Viaje d’el... Principe Don Philippe, Hijo d’el Emperador Don Carlos Quinto Maximo, Desde España à... Alemania, Con La Descripcion de... Brabante y Flandres. En Anvers: en casa de Martin Nucio, 1552.


De Smedt, Oskar. *De Engelse natie te Antwerpen in de 16e eeuw: (1496-1582)*. De Sikkel, 1950.


Goris, Jan-Albert. Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales (portugais, espagnols, italiens) à Anvers de 1488 à 1567: contribution à l’histoire des débuts du capitalisme moderne. Leuven: Librairie universitaire, 1925.


Kunčević, Lovro. ‘The Maritime Trading Network of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century.’ In *The Routledge Handbook of Maritime Trade around


Maclot, Petra, and Stefaan Grieten. ‘Het renaissance-interieur van Palazzo Ducci: flirt van een Italiaans bankier met Keizer Karel’. In Vreemd gebouwd westerse en niet-westerse

Malanima, Paolo. ‘An Example of Industrial Reconversion: Tuscany in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.’ In The Rise and Decline of Urban Industries in Italy and in the Low Countries: Late Middle Ages-Early Modern Times, edited by Herman van der Wee, 63–74. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988.


Wee, Herman van der, ed. The Rise and Decline of Urban Industries in Italy and in the Low Countries: Late Middle Ages-Early Modern Times. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988.

