

Franco Franceschi

University of Siena

ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE IN THE STATUTE OF THE COMMUNE OF CORTONA (1325)

Abstract

An ancient Etruscan settlement located in the Valdichiana, along the border between Tuscany and Umbria, Cortona has attracted renewed interest over the last two decades among historians of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Falling into this line of research is the publication of the communal statute from 1325, when the government handed the reins of power to the seignorial regime revolving around Ranieri Casali. In the same year, Cortona became an episcopal seat and thus also gained the status of a city proper. Through a careful analysis of this extraordinarily rich source, the article outlines the salient aspects of the city's economy and society, with a focus on its environmental resources and urban activities, the distribution of wealth and its poor relief, the condition of women, and the topography of social relations. The picture that emerges from this analysis is that of a lively and dynamic city, arguably at the peak of its development, at a time when many urban centres in Italy and across Europe were already experiencing a downturn after the economic expansion of the Middle Ages.

Keywords: Cortona, Casali city lordship, city statute, crafts, guilds, wealth distribution, the condition of women, sociability

I INTRODUCTION

In the landscape of late medieval Tuscan towns, Cortona, an ancient Etruscan city located in the south-eastern part of the region along the border with Umbria, presented some rather peculiar features. Indeed, at the peak of its demographic development, around 1300, its population is likely to have exceeded 10,000 inhabitants: at the time, this was comparable to Pistoia or Volterra, which in medieval Italy can be considered midsize cities.¹ At least since the beginning

¹ On this estimate, see Maria Ginatempo and Lucia Sandri, *L'Italia delle città: Il popolamento urbano tra Medioevo e Rinascimento (secoli XIII-XVI)* (Firenze, 1990),

of the thirteenth century Cortona was led by a communal government, and over the course of the century it expanded its jurisdiction across the surrounding territory, reaching a point where – in the Valdichiana, which it overlooks – it controlled an area of about 350 square kilometres.² Protected by a sturdy walls circle, its material structure was manifold and complex, while its social stratification was typically urban. It was home to numerous religious congregations, prominent among which were mendicant orders, and in worship the townspeople identified strongly with Saint Margaret (1247–97), who was born in the village of Laviano, a stone’s throw away from Lake Trasimeno, but still her name became inseparably associated with Cortona.³

These attributes of the urban condition, however, did not include the one that most typically distinguished an Italian city, namely, the presence of a bishop. Although the claim has been made that an episcopal seat existed here in the early Christian age,⁴ throughout most of the Middle Ages Cortona and its territory fell within the diocese of Arezzo, and only in 1325 did Pope John XXII, over the strong objections of Bishop Guido Tarlati of Arezzo, make Cortona an episcopal

107; Giuliano Pinto, ‘Produzioni e reti mercantili nelle campagne toscane dei secoli XIII et XIV’, in Monique Bourin, François Menant, and Lluís To Figueras (eds.), *Dynamiques du monde rural dans la conjoncture de 1300: Échanges, prélèvements et consommation en Méditerranée occidentale* (Rome, 2014), 125–45, here 128.

² See Bruno Gialluca, ‘La formazione del Comune Medioevale a Cortona’, in *id.*, *Cortona Struttura e Storia: Materiali per una conoscenza operante della città e del territorio* (Cortona, 1987), 237–73; André Vauchez, ‘Cortona al tempo di Margherita: Aspetti politici e religiosi’, now in *id.*, *Francesco d’Assisi e gli Ordini mendicanti* (Assisi, 2005), 205–18; Lorenzo Tanzini, ‘Istituzioni e politica a Cortona al tempo di frate Elia’, in Antonio di Marcantonio (ed.), *Frata Elia e Cortona: Società e religione nel XIII secolo* (Spoleto, 2018), 1–19.

³ Céline Perol, *Cortona: Pouvoirs et sociétés aux confins de la Toscane (XV–XVI siècle)* (Rome, 2004), 99–102, 110–111; *eadem*, ‘Cortona, città o centro minore?’, in Giuliano Pinto and Paolo Pirillo (eds.), *I centri minori della Toscana nel Medioevo* (Firenze, 2013), 127–35.

⁴ Angelo Tafi, ‘Fu Cortona sede vescovile paleocristiana? (Nuovo esame di una vessata questione)’, *Annuario dell’Accademia Etrusca di Cortona*, xviii (1979), 489–521. *Contra* cf. Pierluigi Licciardello, *Agiografia aretina altomedievale: Testi agiografici e contesti socio-culturali ad Arezzo fra VI e XVI secolo* (Firenze, 2005), 540; *id.*, ‘Il culto dei santi e la vita religiosa’, in Simone Allegría and Valeria Capelli (eds.), *Statuto del Comune di Cortona (1325–1380)*, with introductory essays by Andrea Barlucchi, Pierluigi Licciardello, and Lorenzo Tanzini (Firenze, 2014), 49–81, here 51–3.

seat.⁵ This contested identity explains why Cortona has variously been classified under a range labels in historiography: as a ‘minor town’, a ‘quasi-city’, a ‘non-episcopal urban centre’, and even as a city *tout court*.⁶

Certainly, the 1325 turning point ushered in a new era, not only because it freed the city from the encumbering tutelage that Arezzo, in spite of many twists and turns, had exercised since the twelve hundreds, but also because it coincided with the rise to power of Ranieri Casali: born into an influential family that had played an important role in the city’s life for over a century, he was now appointed lord (*signore*) for life.⁷ What the communal government had been unable to do in full was accomplished by the new dynasty, which for almost a century managed to guarantee the city’s autonomy by skilfully neutralizing the expansionist ambitions of neighbouring cities like Arezzo and Perugia.

But 1325 also coincided with another event that was consequential in shaping the city’s urban identity: at the request of the Casali household a new city statute was drawn up that can be understood as part of an effort to reshape the city commune’s legal tradition by introducing normative elements aimed at reinforcing the lord’s control over the city’s institutions.⁸

⁵ Girolamo Mancini, *Cortona nel Medio Evo* (Firenze, 1897), 97–9; Giuseppe Mirri, *I vescovi di Cortona dalla istituzione della diocesi (1325–1971)* (Cortona, 1972).

⁶ See, respectively, Perol, ‘Cortona, città o centro minore?’, 131–5; Maria Elena Cortese, ‘L’incastellamento nel territorio di Arezzo’, in Riccardo Francovich and Maria Ginatempo (eds.), *Castelli: Storia e archeologia del potere nella Toscana meridionale* (Firenze, 2000), i, 67–109, here 97; and Maria Ginatempo, ‘La popolazione dei centri minori dell’Italia centro-settentrionale nei secoli XIII–XV: Uno sguardo d’insieme’, in Federico Lattanzio and Gian Maria Varanini (eds.), *I centri minori italiani nel tardo Medioevo: Cambiamento sociale, crescita economica, processi di ristrutturazione (secoli XIII–XVI)* (Firenze, 2018), 31–79, here 39.

⁷ On this seigneurial experience, see Mancini, *Cortona nel Medioevo*, 91–102; Franco Cardini, ‘Una signoria cittadina “minore” in Toscana: I Casali di Cortona’, *Archivio storico italiano*, cxxxi (1973), 241–55; Lorenzo Tanzini, ‘Esercizio del potere e relazioni politiche in una signoria trecentesca: I Casali a Cortona’, *Rivista storica italiana*, cxxiv, 1 (2012), 442–78; Gian Paolo Scharf, ‘Tra Valdichiana e Valtiberina: Esperienze signorili e di potere personale in tre centri minori fra Toscana e Umbria (XIV–XV secolo)’, in Andrea Zorzi (ed.), *Le signorie cittadine in Toscana: Esperienze di potere e forme di governo personale (secoli XIII–XV)* (Roma, 2013), 195–208.

⁸ Lorenzo Tanzini, ‘Lo statuto: Aspetti politici e istituzionali’, in Allegría and Capelli (eds.), *Statuto del Comune di Cortona*, 3–21.

This very collection – the first of Cortona’s communal statutes that is preserved almost in its entirety – has recently been made available to scholars thanks to an excellent edition that also includes a series of subsequent integrative provisions (dating from 1325 to 1380) and is prefaced by a few introductory essays.⁹ Here I will use the wealth of material in this source to shed light on some aspects of the city’s economic and social life – this, importantly, at a time when the city was probably at the peak of its medieval development.

II

THE LAND AND THE WORKSHOPS

“Sitting on a big knoll, with vineyards and almond-gardens all around it” – as the city is described in a novella by Giovanni Sercambi¹⁰ – Cortona lived in symbiosis with the moist and fertile environment of the Valdichiana. The agrarian economy was based on the breeding of sheep, goats, and pigs; on the cultivation of dyeing plants that were highly valued in the textile industry (the madder and woad plants, for example, were cultivated for their red and blue dyes, respectively); and the production of “good and prized white and red wines”:¹¹ these are the articles that fed the commercial networks which branched out from the city.¹²

In recent studies, however, Cortona’s rural physiognomy has perhaps been overstated, as has the limited expansion of its mercantile activity. In fact, at least in the early fourteenth century, this image contrasts with the wide circulation of the currency minted in the city – the *cortonese*¹³ –

⁹ Allegria and Capelli (eds.), *Statuto del Comune di Cortona*.

¹⁰ Giovanni Sercambi, *Il Novelliere*, ed. Luciano Rossi (Roma, 1974), i, nov. xvi, 126.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Giovanni Cherubini, ‘Le campagne aretine alla fine del Medioevo’, now in *id.*, *Scritti Toscani: L’urbanesimo medievale e la mezzadria* (Firenze, 1991), 209–17; Dario Martini, ‘Produzioni agricole per le manifatture medievali: La robbia e il lino di Cortona all’inizio del Quattrocento’, *Rivista di Storia dell’Agricoltura*, xxxiv, 1 (1994), 49–73; Giuliano Pinto, ‘Produzioni e traffici nell’aretino nei secoli XIII e XIV: Aspetti e problemi’, *Atti e Memorie dell’Accademia Petrarca*, nuova serie, lxi (1999), 223–36; Perol, *Cortona: Pouvoirs et sociétés*, 272–5; Andrea Barlucchi, ‘L’economia cortonese alla luce dello statuto’, in Allegria and Capelli (eds.), *Statuto del Comune di Cortona*, 23–48, here 24–32.

¹³ That the *cortonese* was minted in Cortona does not, according to some scholars, mean that it was a currency of the city itself: it may have been a currency of Arezzo

and with the liveliness of the trade that stretched across its territory,¹⁴ as is abundantly evidenced by the fact that the tolls levied on goods were among the largest sources of revenue for the city's public finances.¹⁵ Indeed, Cortona lay at the centre of a vast trading basin whose main hubs were Perugia and Lake Trasimeno to the east, Città di Castello and the Valtiberina to the northeast, Chiusi and Montepulciano to the southwest, and Arezzo to the north. Cortona thus drew in a variety of people in trade who would come both from Tuscany and Umbria: these tradesmen were also encouraged by the economic policy enacted by the communal government and then the seigniorial one, which generally kept customs duties low and favoured the inflow of foreign merchants through a variety of benefits, including tax breaks,¹⁶ while granting them an equal status with citizens in civil suits involving debtors and creditors.¹⁷

In addition, the soil was a source of raw materials that were essential to the craft activities making up the urban economy, such as the working of leather and the production of wool cloths – and it produced the foodstuffs that would go into the merchandise sold by the city's shopkeepers. That Cortona had a vibrant economy can also be appreciated by looking at the notarial documentation of the

minted in Cortona in virtue of the ancient rights which the bishop of Arezzo exercised over the local church. See Alan M. Stahl, 'A Hoard of Medieval Pennies from Arezzo', *Rivista italiana di numismatica*, xc (1988), 483–93; Angelo Finetti, *La zecca e le monete di Perugia nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento* (Perugia, 1997), 57–62, and Lucia Travaini, *Moneta, mercanti e matematica: Le monete medievali nei trattati di aritmetica e nei libri di mercatura* (Roma, 2003), 21–2.

¹⁴ Cf. Pinto, 'Produzioni e traffici nell'aretino', 233; Andrea Barlucchi, 'L'economia aretina fra Due e Trecento', in Giovanni Cherubini, Franco Franceschi, Andrea Barlucchi, and Giulio Firpo (eds.), *Arezzo nel Medioevo* (Roma, 2012), 145–55, here 148, 151.

¹⁵ Cf. Tanzini, 'Lo statuto: Aspetti politici e istituzionali', 16.

¹⁶ *Statuto del Comune di Cortona* (hereinafter: SCC), Appendice ii, doc. 2, 483 (1342): "Item quod quilibet forensis qui venerit ad habitandum in civitate Cortone et comitatu ipsius et continue familiariter habitaverit, non teneatur ad aliqua onera, factiones vel expensas comunis solvendas vel faciendas, reales vel personales, usque ad quinque annos proxime futuros".

¹⁷ SCC, Appendice ii, doc. 4, 486 (1342) "... quod omnes et singuli forenses mercatores et artifices, undecumque sint in mercando, emendo et vendendo eorum mercantias et pro eorum mercantiis et pretiis et denariis quos deberent, vel in futurum debebunt recipere, tractentur et habentur in curia civili comunis civitatis Cortone in civilibus causis tantum, ut veri et orriginarii cives Cortonenses".

early fourteenth century, where we can easily observe a remarkable number of contracts drawn up to finance small and medium-sized businesses and craft enterprises – a phenomenon that in turn brought not only professional money changers and lenders to the city, but also made for a wide circulation of currency and helped to spread credit relationships among all social classes.¹⁸

This picture is also borne out by the existence of a manifold system of guilds, in line with what could be observed in the major cities. The section of the statute regulating holidays in honour of the city's main patron saint, Margaret of Cortona, lists twelve *arti* duty-bound to make candle offerings. They are ordered according to the place they would occupy in the procession that from the communal piazza proceeded to the sanctuary devoted to the saint, and they were as follows: judges and notaries; shoemakers; apothecaries, doctors, and barbers; stonemasons; ironsmiths; carpenters; wool-manufacturers (*lanaioli*) and mercers; tavern-keepers, innkeepers, cotton-employers (*bambacai*), and furriers; butchers, fishmongers, and sellers of plucks (*lardaioli*); livestock merchants; millers and bakers; and cloth merchants, money changers, and tailors.¹⁹ It is also worth noting that this list did not account for the full array of guilds present in Cortona, considering that there also existed other crafts (*alie artes*) for which ritual offerings were voluntary.²⁰

As we can see, some guilds were made up of several *membra*, that is, different crafts that were distinct but were grouped under a single trade sector. Others were instead formed through an alliance, sometimes without much rhyme or reason, that might be struck between two or more trade groups – nor would these necessarily be lasting alliances, as is attested by different documents that in subsequent years show how a category of guildsmen would move from one grouping to another (as in the case of the *lanaioli* and mercers) or would altogether disappear (cotton-employers and furriers).²¹

¹⁸ Barlucchi, 'L'economia cortonese', 42–3.

¹⁹ SCC, b. iv, rub. lxxv, 433.

²⁰ Such was city's economic vibrancy, however, that it is difficult to say what these other associations might have been: just in the indexes of personal names and notable things compiled by the charter's drafters there appear some fifty different trades, see SCC, 529–36 and 543–61.

²¹ Barlucchi, 'L'economia cortonese', 33.

Even in Cortona, as in many other cities in Tuscany and elsewhere, the economic importance of guilds spilled over into the political sphere. For in order to gain citizenship into the city, it was necessary to exercise a trade with continuity and be registered with a guild association. Furthermore, the heads of guilds played a role in the political system as regular members of the city council.²² However, in devoting specific attention to the corporative world and the manufacturing classes, the statute also clearly limited the powers granted to guilds and their aldermen, while reiterating both the central authority's power to revise guild bylaws according to established practice and procedure and the guilds' correlative obligation to respect such revised bylaws.²³

III CRAFTSMEN AND GUILDS

The first thing that jumps out, as we look through the guilds' activities, is the high incidence of food trades, which answered the demand for prime necessities and were thus placed under the control of the central power,²⁴ interested in maintaining an uninterrupted and abundant supply of food of good quality at affordable prices, so as to ward off any show of popular discontent, and hence potential threats to public order and peace. Thus, for example, millers – distinguished according as they operated treadmills, powered by draught animals, or watermills – were bound by the price controls placed on the milling of grains,²⁵

²² SCC, b. iv, rub. cxi, 462: "... quod quicumque forensis habitaverit familiariter in civitate Cortone et scriptus fuerit in brevi alicuius artis, quam artem publice exercuerit, quod ille talis forensis habeatur pro cive civitatis Cortone ..." And, further, *ibid.*, b. iv, rub. lxi, 421: "Item quod quelibet ars habeat suum rectorem qui sit de consilio ...".

²³ SCC, b. iv, rub. lxxvii, 437: "Item quod quelibet dictarum artium possit, teneatur et debeat habere suum breve continens capitula pertinentia tantum ad artem suam et non se ad aliud extendentia, et quod rector qui pro tempore fuerit sue artis teneatur et debeat breve sue artis ostendere legendum, videndum et corrigendum vicario sive rectori terre Cortone qui pro tempore fuerit, et breve quod fuerit approbatum per eos sit firmum in quolibet parte sui, et homines dicte artis teneantur tale breve inviolabiliter observare et aliter factum non valeat nec teneatur".

²⁴ SCC, b. i, rub. xvii, 138.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

and a comparable restriction applied to bakers.²⁶ Although the latter were grouped in the same guild with the city's millers, they could not have an alderman of their own, which was tantamount to depriving them of any corporative autonomy.²⁷

There were also, in this area of activity, numerous regulations aimed at protecting the environment and the citizens' health. Cereals had to be delivered to the mill in sacks previously weighed on the city's weigh-beam.²⁸ Bakeries had to have a chimney so as to prevent the smoke from giving nuisance to neighbours,²⁹ and they could not be used to dry the roots of the madder plant.³⁰ Butchers could not sell meats unless the animals had been slaughtered within the city walls, nor could they lay on the same counter the meats of steer, bullocks, lambs, muttons, and goats,³¹ and there was also a curious fair-competition rule prohibiting butchers from entertaining customers at the shop by disparaging fellow-butchers.³² On the other hand, they were free to wander about after the curfew, the beginning of which was signalled by the third evening toll of the communal bell, but this rule was good only on Saturdays and on the eve of festivities (when there was likely to have been a greater demand for meat): in these cases butchers were allowed to return to their homes with the knives they used to cut the meat,³³ and this was an exception to the prohibition on bearing arms outside the home during the curfew.

Also central to the urban economy was the textile sector, with the production of articles such as cotton, linen, and wool. The cotton industry was typical of the entire Arezzo area and of numerous

²⁶ *Ibid.*, rub. xvi, 136–7.

²⁷ This was quite a radical provision, and its drafters had to have been well aware of that fact if they thought to add the following proviso to it: “Item quod nullus advocatus, liciteratus vel non liciteratus, nec aliqua alia persona possit vel debeat pro predictis fornariis vel aliquo eorum in aliqua curia comunis Cortone contra dictum capitulum advocare nec aliquod patrucinium alicui eorum prestare”, SCC, b. i, rub. xvi, 137.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, rub. xvii, 138–9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

³⁰ Or at least this seems to be the reason behind the rule that forbade bakers to “tenere in domo in qua sit furnus robbiam”, SCC, Appendice ii, doc. 15, 498 (1325–1351).

³¹ SCC, b. i, rub. liii, 228–9.

³² *Ibid.*, 227.

³³ *Ibid.*, rub. lxxv, 243–4.

Umbrian cities, where the raw material came in from different parts of the Mediterranean, mainly through the Adriatic ports.³⁴ There is evidence that in Cortona this production dates back to the 1270s.³⁵ The linen industry did not leave much of a documentary trail, but in the statute its importance can be surmised from provisions like the one that obligated tenants to water-ret all the flax growing on the lands they worked,³⁶ or the prohibition on storing the fibre within the city walls,³⁷ certainly because the working of flax, especially in the retting stage, was a polluting process giving rise to offensive miasmas.

The statute also attests to the importance of wool production, not from provisions describing the production process or listing the numerous kinds of workers engaged in this activity, but mainly from provisions prohibiting the importation of foreign cloths, especially those of shoddy or ordinary quality, for they could come into competition with the woollen fabrics produced within the city.³⁸ Another significant clue is that Cortona was home to two trade groups with a stake in this sector. They were organized under two different wool guilds: wool-manufacturers, who would materially organize production, and merchant-drapers, who “in virtue of their frequent contacts with foreign businessmen, were regarded as the crown jewel of the city’s economy”.³⁹

Closely connected with textile manufacture and with commerce in textiles (whether locally produced or imported) was the activity of tailors, but what we can know about them needs to be gathered almost exclusively from sumptuary laws, designed to limit the consumption of luxury goods, at least formally. Under these provisions, tailors, as well as goldsmiths, were barred from making up clothes using overfine fabrics (such as silk) or fabrics decorated with designs representing

³⁴ Maureen Fennel Mazzaoui, *The Italian Cotton Industry in the Later Middle Ages, 1100–1600* (Cambridge, 1981), 62; Bruno Dini, ‘L’industria tessile italiana nel tardo Medioevo’, now in *id.*, *Saggi su una economia-mondo: Firenze e l’Italia fra Mediterraneo ed Europa (secc. XIII–XVI)* (Pisa, 1995), 13–49, here 28.

³⁵ Robert Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze*, 8 vols. (Firenze, 1956–1968), vi, 161.

³⁶ SCC, b. ii, rub. cvii, 270: “Item quod laboratores terrarum quas habent ad laborerium teneantur et debeant totum linum quod fuerit in ipsis terris totum facere macerari in aquis expensis ipsius laboratoris”.

³⁷ SCC, b. ii, rub. lxxi, 237: “Nulla persona debeat neque possit aliquod refudium straminis vel lini fecere vel tenere intra muros terre Cortone a tribus salmis supra ...”.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, rub. xxxvii, 169–70.

³⁹ Barlucchi, ‘L’economia cortonese’, 37.

birds or other animals or roses or other flowers. In essence, they could not make up clothes in the fashion of the day, as can be ascertained by looking at contemporary lists of precious garments available in Florence;⁴⁰ and if they had widows as clients, the restrictions would also apply to colours, particularly red, yellow, and green. In sewing clothes for males, on the other hand, they had to take into account not the colours themselves but their number: no more than two, while avoiding the use of gold, pearls, and enamels.⁴¹ It is worth pointing out that complying with these prescriptions required a considerable degree of mastery in the craft.

Like everywhere else, at a time when people would do a lot of walking and would use a whole range of leather goods, Cortona could not do without shoemakers (*calzolai*), a term that in reality more broadly designated all leatherworkers and leather merchants, whose shops would open close to the town-hall building.⁴² What private documents sometimes suggest is that these craftsmen and merchants were overall well off economically,⁴³ and there may also have been a sense of corporative cohesion among them, as can be conjectured from the fact that they had a hospital of their own.⁴⁴

A group that cannot be neglected is that of craftsmen in the building trades, who in 1325 turn out to have been organized into two distinct guilds, namely, stonemasons and carpenters, bespeaking a numerous group, and perhaps also a certain factiousness preventing them from merging into a single guild. Prominent among carpenters were sawyers, who prepared semifinished pieces such as boards, rungs for ladders, and “*pedes scrineorum vel campsarum*”, and shipwrights, who appear to have specialized mainly in the production of containers to be used across the whole gamut of economic activities.⁴⁵ In 1323, in a petition lodged with the town hall, the Dominican Friars asked that a pardon be granted to a master wood-carver (*magister lignaminum*) and another craftsman who had been convicted of certain crimes and who for

⁴⁰ Cf. Laurence Gérard-Marchant (ed.), *Draghi rossi e querce azzurre: Elenchi descrittivi di abiti di lusso (Firenze 1343–1345)* (Firenze, 2013).

⁴¹ SCC, b. i, rub. xxxiii, 166–7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, b. iv, rub. iv, 359.

⁴³ Barlucchi, ‘L’economia cortonese’, 39.

⁴⁴ There is mention of an ‘*hospitale cerdonum*’ in SCC, b. iv, rub. v, 362. But see also Mancini, *Cortona nel Medio Evo*, 103 and 105.

⁴⁵ SCC, b. iv, rub. xliiii, 397.

this reason were soon to leave Cortona: the plea was entered on the ground that these men were good artificers (*boni artifices*), and their skill could therefore stand the city in good stead;⁴⁶ and let us not forget that Cortona was abundantly supplied with wooded areas, however much these may already have been overlogged.⁴⁷

In metalworking, practitioners were all grouped under the single corporative label of ‘ironsmiths’, a group that also included goldsmiths – of whom there always had to be at least one available in the city, and who for this reason was offered an incentive⁴⁸ – and especially farriers, who in addition to shoeing animals almost any day of the year would top up their income by renting out horses and mules.⁴⁹ Other documents, nearly contemporary with the statute, reveal that the city had locksmiths, needlemakers (*acorai*), swordmakers, and cutlers.⁵⁰ It was probably to the latter that the legislation addressed the prohibition on whetting blades by the city’s wellsprings.⁵¹

Also considerably numerous in Cortona were apothecaries,⁵² who were dealers in sundry grocery items and drugs, often rare and precious, as well as resins, pigments and dyes, waxes and candles, and paper and ink, and who would sometimes couple this activity with a mercantile activity proper. Apothecaries had a distinctive mark through which they could be readily recognized;⁵³ they ordinarily worked alongside doctors but could not replace them when making medical visits.⁵⁴ They were permitted to move about freely even after nightfall, however, if candles or some medication was needed that they had to prepare and deliver in short order, and they were also allowed to keep their shops open on holidays.⁵⁵

Doctors, for their part, enjoyed other privileges, first among which was that if they lived in Cortona or came to the city to care for someone who had fallen ill, they would, throughout that time, be deemed

⁴⁶ Tanzini, ‘Lo statuto: Aspetti politici e istituzionali’, 13.

⁴⁷ Barlucchi, ‘L’economia cortonese’, 38.

⁴⁸ SCC, b. iv, rub. cx, 462.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, rubs. xxxiv, 391; and xli, 393–4.

⁵⁰ Barlucchi, ‘L’economia cortonese’, 34.

⁵¹ SCC, b. iv, rub. iii, 358.

⁵² *Ibid.*, rub. xxxvi, 391.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, rub. lxxxvi, 452.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, b. ii, rub. lxxxii, 251.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, rub. lxxv, 243.

citizens proper.⁵⁶ Of course, this privilege was also accorded to the “bonus medicus pro comuni Cortone sufficiens et expertus, qui debeat stare et habitare continuo in Cortona”⁵⁷ – in essence a local doctor engaged by the city. A similar contract, by provision of the statute, was formed with the master of grammar, who would receive a monthly stipend and be assigned a place to live.⁵⁸ And one could guess that it is with this role in mind that, in the provision previously introduced for physicians, the drafters of the statute also included “omnes et singuli docentes in Cortona vel burgis publice in quacumque scientia et etiam eorum scholares”.⁵⁹

While on the subject of the professions, we cannot fail to mention the notaries, who played a key role in virtue of both their private services and the public services they provided for the various divisions of the communal government. From their *breve* of 1321 – the only statutory code drafted by a guild that has come down to us from the early fourteenth century⁶⁰ – it can be inferred that this trade group comprised some forty-five members.⁶¹ An interesting aspect of the text is that it includes a rubric added by the city’s revisers, reaffirming the city legislation’s supremacy over the guild’s statutes and Ranieri Casali’s power to make changes to the latter.⁶²

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, rub. xiv, 191: “Item quod omnes et singuli medici donec familiariter habitarent in Cortona vel burgis publice operando artem suam et omnes medici qui venirent ad medicandum aliquem de Cortona vel suo districtu dum venirent, starent et recederent, tractentur pro Cortonensibus”.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, b. iv, rub. lxxxii, 447–8.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, b. i, rub. xxvii, 151.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, b. ii, rub. xiv, 191.

⁶⁰ Archivio Comunale di Cortona (Cortona City Archive, hereinafter ACC), Serie G’, *Ordinamenti e statuti*, 2 bis. I owe a debt of gratitude to Simone Allegria and Alarico Barbagli for making the first draft of the transcription available to me while the document was in the process of publication. On the *breve* see Alarico Barbagli, *Il notariato in Toscana alle origini dello Stato moderno* (Milano, 2013), 36–8.

⁶¹ See ACC, Serie G’, *Ordinamenti e statuti*, 2 bis, 12r–v, making mention of ‘triginta notarii per duas partes ipsorum notariorum’.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 2 bis, 14v (1326): “Item additum fuit huic brevi per certos bonos homines positos pro comuni ad corrigendum brevia artium quod si esset aliquod capitulum in hoc brevi quod esset contrarium alicui ordinamento statuti comunis vel populi civitatis Cortone quod illud capitulum sit cassum et inritum et quod semper ubi breve esset contrarium statuto sive alicui ordinamento alicuius statuti comunis vel populi supradicti quod debeat observari statutum et non breve, salva

IV
THE WEALTHY, THE POOR, AND INSTITUTIONAL RELIEF

If we take a big city like Florence as our benchmark, we will find that Cortona was decidedly less wealthy by comparison.⁶³ This clearly emerges starting from the time we begin to have statistical data at hand, such as the *catasto* (cadastral survey) of 1427–9, revealing that the average value of family's taxable assets in Cortona was about 150 florins, as against 800 in Florence. In Cortona, however, the distribution of wealth was not marked by the disparities present in Florence or even in Pisa or Prato. Indeed, the proportion of unpropertied taxpayers did not even reach 6 per cent of the population (this was the lowest percentage in any Tuscan city), while the more affluent families – forty-two, with taxable assets worth 600 florins or more – accounted for slightly less than 5 per cent. It is true that these families alone held almost 57 per cent of the wealth, but this number paled in comparison with the situation in Florence, where just 1 per cent of the families held one-fourth of all wealth. The remaining 90 per cent of the population in Cortona fell between the two extremes just mentioned, testifying to the size of the middle classes in their different tiers.⁶⁴

The snapshot we get from the data captured in 1429, at least as concerns the top echelons of society, was in large part the upshot of processes that had been underway throughout the previous century. More to the point, under the rule of the Casali the ancient aristocratic families became increasingly less influential, while clout gradually shifted to a new elite made up of wool manufacturers, apothecaries, doctors, and notaries, who in addition to practicing their regular trades also accrued wealth as landowners and cereal producers, livestock breeders, textile entrepreneurs, and merchants of wool, madder, cloths,

semper potestate et arbitrio domini nobilis et potentis militis domini Ranerii generalis domini civitatis Cortone cui liceat addere et diminuere huic brevi prout sibi placebit”.

⁶³ This is also the sense we get from Giovanni Sercambi, who in the novella mentioned at the opening of this section describes the protagonist as having been “born not into great wealth, but comfortably situated for a place like Cortona”, Sercambi, *Il Novelliere*, i, nov. xvi, 126.

⁶⁴ Perol, *Cortona: Pouvoirs et sociétés*, 267–8; David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles: Une étude du catasto florentin de 1427* (Paris, 1978), 254.

and a motley range of goods.⁶⁵ For this reason, it is difficult to gauge the extent to which this picture can be generalized across the first decades of the fourteenth century. There is no doubt, at any rate, that even in Cortona, next to the *divites et potentes*,⁶⁶ there could also be found people in financial distress. Evidence of this condition comes up in the statute through its use of concepts such as *paupertas*, *inopia*, and *egestas*,⁶⁷ as well as of adjectives such as *pauper*, *impotens* (or *minus potens*), *debilis*, and *miserabilis*.⁶⁸ Their human faces were those of people locked up in debtor's prison,⁶⁹ peasants made prostrate by war,⁷⁰ widows,⁷¹ people who couldn't pay their taxes,⁷² and above all the 'shamefaced poor',⁷³ meaning those who fell into a state of poverty perceived as a demotion to a lower rank, and who felt uneasy and reluctant to reveal themselves to be needy.

But Cortona seems also to have been a place where such pauperism was effectively dealt with through a dense network of poor-relief institutions. The most important of these, which the Casali placed directly under the protection of the communal government, was the *Fraternita di Santa Maria della Misericordia*, established in 1285 by Saint Margaret along with the relative alms-house.⁷⁴ The six rectors who ran it assumed the task of drawing up a monthly list of indigents in each of the city's three districts (*terzieri*) and collecting the money necessary to fulfil the relief mission to which the confraternity was committed.⁷⁵ Also active in the city, next to the *Misericordia*, were the confraternities

⁶⁵ Perol, *Cortona: Pouvoirs et sociétés*, 267–93.

⁶⁶ SCC, b. iv, rub. lx, 421.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, b. i, rub. xxvi, 149; b. iv, rub. lx, 421; Appendice ii, doc. 18, 505 (1362).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, b. i, rub. xxxiii, 167; b. ii, rub. lxxxi, 151; b. iii, rub. xxxiii, 340; b. iv, rubs. xxii, 380, xxx, 390, xxxiii, 390, xxxviii, 392, xlvii, 404, lviii, 418, lx, 421, lxxiii–lxxi, 425–30, lxxiii, 431, lxxvi, 435–36, cii, 456, cvi, 461, cxiii, 466.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, b. i, rub. xxvi, 149.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Appendice ii, doc. 18, 506 (1362).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, b. i, rub. xxxiii, 167.

⁷² *Ibid.*, b. iv, rub. lx, 421.

⁷³ On the different faces of poverty, in a body of scholarship that has now grown large, see Giuliana Albini, *Poveri e povertà nel Medioevo* (Roma, 2016), esp. chap. VI.

⁷⁴ Pierluigi Licciardello, 'Il culto dei santi e la vita religiosa', in SCC, 49–81, here 79; André Vauchez, 'Vita e culto di Santa Margherita', now in *id.*, *Francesco d'Assisi e gli Ordini mendicanti*, 219–50, here 221.

⁷⁵ SCC, b. iv, rubs. lxxiii–lxxi, 425–31.

of the Disciplinati della Santa Croce and the Laudesi di Santa Maria, though the statute makes no reference to either,⁷⁶ as well as the previously mentioned shoemakers' hospital (n. 44), along with other hospitals placed under public control, with the city overseeing their endowment, ensuring their function, and appointing their wardens. These establishments were the urban *domus* at the city gates of Santa Maria, Peccioverandi, San Vincenzo, and San Basilio and, outside the city, the *domus* of Cignano, Ossaia, San Lazzaro a Camucia, Boverco, and Bacialla.⁷⁷ The last two of these were reserved for lepers (men at Boverco and women at Bacialla) and were the only places where people with this dreaded disease could find refuge – provided, however, that they were from Cortona and not strangers.⁷⁸

V

VIGNETTES FROM THE LIVES OF WOMEN

Next to the city of men, there also existed a city of women, probably less concealed from view and guarded than we might expect. Certainly, what we can learn about the lives of women in Cortona is what the local sources tell us in connection with specific aspects of life: marriage, with its uses and rituals, including, of course, the wedding procession and banquet;⁷⁹ the intricate matter of hereditary succession and dowries;⁸⁰ adulterous relationships and concubinage with clergymen, addressed in the statute under the heading of “*libidinem effrenatam mulierum*”;⁸¹ the restrictions placed on luxury in clothing and on ‘superfluous’ spending;⁸² the regulation of prostitution;⁸³ and violence in the particularly hateful form of rape.⁸⁴ Definitely more unusual is the notice that the city would build a *pagliaçça*, a women’s prison

⁷⁶ Licciardello, ‘Il culto dei santi e la vita religiosa’, 80–1.

⁷⁷ SCC, b. iv, rubs. lxxvi, 435–7, cxiii, 465–6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, rub. xviii, 375–7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, b. ii, rubs. lxxviii, 247–8, cxviii, 277–8.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, rubs. liiii, 230, cxxvi, 282–83, cxxxviii, 288; *ibid.*, b. iii, rubs. x, 309–15, xviii, 322–6, xx, 327, xxviii–xxviii, 331–6, xxxvii, 345.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, b. ii, rub. cxvi, 276–7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, b. i, rubs. xxxiii–xxxiii, 163–7.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, b. ii, rubs. xxiii, 198–99, xxxviii, 224; *ibid.*, b. iv, rubs. xv, 371, lxxxiii, 441–2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, b. ii, rub. lv, 230.

that no man could even attempt to get into,⁸⁵ but where no pregnant women or women convicted for delinquent debts could be detained.⁸⁶

But other aspects, in the tranquillity of daily life, can be garnered from sources such as notices documenting the presence of women in the world of work. I am thinking in the first place of bakeresses, who like their male counterparts were allowed to run their own shop, so long as they pledged to closely follow all rules, meaning that they had to bake bread for a set price, strictly comply with all health and environmental regulations, and be willing to work at night, and they could not refuse to practice their trade.⁸⁷ Next to them we find itinerant bread-pedlaresses (*panicocole*), not unlikely to have been widows needing to make a living off this activity, which required that the bread be carried in a covered basket and be handled only with a special stick, nor could they hawk their merchandise by street cries or solicit passersby for clothes.⁸⁸

The rules prohibited spinners from working outside the front door to their homes during a curfew,⁸⁹ and if they were selling bread or fruit in the town-hall piazza, they could not use their idle time handling their distaff or spindle,⁹⁰ this probably for hygienic reasons, considering that in hand-spinning the fingers need to be regularly moistened with saliva.⁹¹ There were also rules in place regulating the activity of shopless mercers, who for this reason sold their wares in front of Sant' Andrea's church.⁹² Wet-nurses could not stop suckling the child before he or she had been weaned, nor could servants leave their employers before the contract was due to expire.⁹³ Also mentioned are

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, b. i, rub. xxvi, 150: "Item quod fiat per se una pagliaçça seu carcer feminarum. Qui carcer sive pagliaçça sit seperatus, sive seperata, per se in quo, sive qua, captivi homines non morentur et ex parte balchionis palatii existentis supra dictam pagliaççam sive carcerem fiat quedam fertilitia sive sbarratum cum ferramentis firmatum tali modo et forma quod rumpendo balchionem superiorem non possit haberi additum ad partem inferiorem ubi starent dicte mulieres".

⁸⁶ See, respectively, *ibid.*, b. iii, rub. xi, 316 and b. iv, rub. lxxx, 440.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, b. i, rub. xvi, 136–7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, b. iv, rub. xlvi, 400.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, b. ii, rub. lxxv, 244.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, b. iv, rub. iv, 360.

⁹¹ This is noted in Dante Cecchi, 'Aspetti di vita cittadina attraverso gli statuti dei comuni della Valle del Fiastra', *Studi maceratesi*, xxiii (1990), 475–504, here 483.

⁹² SCC, b. iv, rub. iv, 359.

⁹³ SCC, Appendice ii, doc. 20, 510 (1362).

several other kinds of female workers, such as millers, apple-mongers (*pomaiole*), tavern-keepers, and costermongers (*treccole*).⁹⁴

Under other rubrics we catch glimpses of women helping men put out fires by bringing earthenware jugs and vases filled with water,⁹⁵ or women gathering burnt wood in the Selvapiana woodland (but only as heavy a load as they could carry on the head),⁹⁶ or devout women who, the night before Saint Margaret's Day, would converge on Cortona from the countryside and the surrounding villages and find overnight hospitality in the churches.⁹⁷

VI SPACES OF SOCIABILITY

One passage in the statute also mentions women attending mass on days of festivity, and it points to the existence of other places where they would habitually gather in small groups.⁹⁸ Prominent among these were churches and their adjacent buildings, as well as establishments where confraternities would meet. But there were also other places where social relations would be cemented: these undoubtedly included shops, in constant symbiosis with the streets or piazzas they faced,⁹⁹ and they effectively served as the primary settings in which a whole panoply of people from the city's various social strata would spend different moments of the day. In a world in which productive and commercial outfits were still operating on a small scale, and where working hours were still irregular, working and socializing could easily overlap.¹⁰⁰ Consider barbershops, for example, which until a very recent

⁹⁴ SCC, b. i, rub. xvi, 139; *ibid.*, b. ii, rubs. v, 179, xxxii, 212, lxxiii, 239, lxxvi, 244; *ibid.*, b. iv, rub. iv, 359–61; Appendice ii, doc. 20, 510 (1362).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Appendice ii, 15, 498 (1325–1351).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, b. iv, rub. xlvi, 404.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, rub. lxxv, 359 and 434.

⁹⁸ SCC, b. i, rub. xxxiii, 165: "diebus dominicis et solennibus festivis et aliis ... ad ecclesias et festivitates et loca alia quecumque ubi essent venie sive ubi tenerentur curie dominarum vel congregatio fieret mulierum".

⁹⁹ This can be clearly appreciated from the provisions designed to limit the extent to which working activities could physically expand beyond the workplace itself – SCC, b. iv, rub. v, 361–4.

¹⁰⁰ In this regard see Franco Franceschi, *La bottega come spazio di sociabilità*, in Franco Franceschi and Gloria Fossi (eds.), *Arti fiorentine: La grande storia dell'Artigianato*, vol. ii, *Il Quattrocento* (Firenze, 1999), 64–83.

past have been meeting places distinctly for men, or the bakeries of yore, serving an overwhelmingly female clientele that would go there not so much to buy baked goods as to take their own home-made preparations: doughs, sweet or otherwise, to be baked or meats to be roasted. These places would often be located on a piazza or a street corner, where patrons would sometimes patiently line up waiting for their turn, or where they would gladly stop by and chit-chat or keep warm in the winter, and – as the statute suggests – they would even take the opportunity to dry their laundry.¹⁰¹

Among the meeting-and-greeting places that most frequently come up in the statutory code are taverns, which would serve wine, but they would often also serve food and provide lodging for the night: these establishments, in essence, could be described as places of “reception and hospitality for a fee”.¹⁰² Even if the Church held “very clear and unfavourable ideas” about such milieus,¹⁰³ these were places where citizens and foreigners, laypersons and ecclesiastics, the poor and the well-to-do would mix – and in Cortona, too, they seem to have established quite a presence. Of course, taverns were more or less discreetly kept under watch by the authorities, and they were subject to various and detailed regulations: the shop signs had to bear the Casali coat of arms or the symbol representing Saint Mark, on whose feast Cortona celebrated the city’s liberation from Aretine dominion, on 25 April 1261;¹⁰⁴ business hours were regulated (taverns couldn’t open before the morning bell and had to close up shop at the third toll of the evening bell, though they had to stop serving at the second toll);¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Cf. SCC, b. i, rub. xvi, 137; Franco Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle*, ed. Antonio Lanza (Firenze, 1984), cxxiv, 251 and clvi, 417; Sercambi, *Il Novelliere*, ii, lxxxvi, 146; Alessandro Stella, *La révolte des Ciompi: Les hommes, les lieux, le travail* (Paris, 1993), 159; Anna Modigliani, ‘Mercati, botteghe e spazi di commercio nella Roma tardo-medievale’, in Rita Padovano (ed.), *Mercati, arti e fiere storiche di Roma e del Lazio* (Padova and Roma, 2011), 27–69, here 54; Francesca Pucci Donati, *Il mercato del pane: Politiche alimentari e consumi cerealicoli a Bologna fra Due e Trecento* (Bologna, 2014), 161.

¹⁰² This is the definition offered in a very recent book on this topic: Francesca Pucci Donati, *Luoghi e mestieri dell’ospitalità nel Medioevo: Alberghi, taverne e osterie a Bologna tra Due e Quattrocento* (Spoleto, 2018), vii.

¹⁰³ Giovanni Cherubini, ‘La taverna nel basso Medioevo’, now in *id.*, *Il lavoro, la taverna, la strada: Scorsi di Medioevo* (Napoli, 1997), 203.

¹⁰⁴ SCC, b. ii, rub. xxxiii, 216.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, rub. xxxii, 212.

the method of selling wine was regulated, as were the sizes of the pitchers that could be used;¹⁰⁶ and as a way of preventing brawls from breaking out, a rule was in place requiring tavern-keepers to check that their patrons did not walk into their establishments carrying weapons or other potentially dangerous objects.¹⁰⁷ One final item on which the statute intervened severely concerned the strict ban on the playing of games, covering both the *ludus taxillorum* – which was a dice game and thus primarily a game of chance – and the *ludus tabularum*, which by contrast was a board game and thus primarily a game of skill.¹⁰⁸ The provision punished tavern-keepers not only if they turned their establishments into gambling dens, but also if they barred entry to city rectors coming in for an inspection or if they simply snuffed the lights out.¹⁰⁹

Stepping outside the tavern, but keeping our gaze on the long menu of locally banned games, it is easy to see that the rule-makers' main concern was to stamp out any deeply entrenched popular practice, such as stone-throwing battles (*sassaiole*) and fist-fighting, or otherwise dangerous practices, however unusual they may be for us, such as the throwing of pumpkins, onions, cucumbers, and suchlike.¹¹⁰ In light of this background we might comment that even a snowfall, not too unlikely an occurrence in the Cortona winter, could cut both ways: if it became a merry occasion for children, it could equally raise concern in view of its potential to turn into a snow fight.¹¹¹

VII CONCLUSION

What I believe we can take away even from the brief considerations so far offered is that the communal statute of Cortona is a document of critical importance in reconstructing the economic and social life of this Tuscan community in the early fourteenth century, all the more so if we bear in mind the relative dearth of contemporaneous sources that can be

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, rub. xxxiii, 216.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, rub. lxxiii, 239.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, rubs. xxxii, 212, and lxxvi, 244.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, rub. lxxvi, 244.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, rub. xxxii, 211 and 213.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 211: "Item quod nullus masculus ludat vel proiciat contra aliquem nivem, amatossatam vel strictam".

used for investigations of this kind. Thus, for example, the traditional image of the city statute as a stereotyped, manufactured source lacking dynamism once more proves to be skewed and inaccurate. Indeed, the Cortona statute, if examined in depth, not only offers a great wealth of data and details, but, reflecting a decisive political-institutional turning point, reveals contradictions and imbalances that enable historians to better understand the trends and processes at the core of their investigations.

trans. Filippo Valente

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Franco Franceschi – medieval and Renaissance economic and social Italian history; professor in the Department of Education, Human Sciences, and Intercultural Communication, University of Siena; e-mail: franco.franceschi@unisi.it