

I Florentine Networks in Europe

‘A Florentine who is not a merchant,
Who has not traveled through the world,
Seeing foreign nations and peoples and
Then returned to Florence with some wealth,
Is a man who enjoys no esteem whatsoever.’¹

Florence During the Albizzi Regime (1382-1434)

Robert Sabatino Lopez described twelfth-century Italian communes as ‘Governments of the merchants, by the merchants, for the merchants’, which accurately reflects the most important characteristic of the Florentine state and society in the studied period: the predominance of merchant culture and its manifestations in the overlaps between various private and public spheres.²

According to John Najemy, the period of the Albizzi regime, marked by political consolidation after the unskilled wool workers’ revolt (1378) and Cosimo de’Medici’s return to the city (1434), witnessed important changes in social structure, economy, politics, and culture.³ In politics, the most remarkable novelties occurred in the electoral system, when the number of elected city officers, who belonged to the major and the minor guilds, was established. Political participation and office holding were based on guild membership, and therefore guilds were part of the political system. Members of the five major guilds possessed an absolute dominance within city magistrates, even though, in theory, the reforms following the *Ciompi* revolt meant to weaken their positions by giving more seats to members of the minor guilds. The five major guilds: Merchants’ (*Calimala*), Por Santa Maria (later, Silk), Wool (*Lana*), Moneychangers’ (*Cambio*), and Doctors’ (*Medici e Speciali*), were headed by their elected consuls and were the guilds into which merchants of various ranks traditionally enrolled. Furthermore, the six consuls of the Merchant Court (*Mercanzia*), the supreme court for merchants residing inside and outside the city, were elected among members of the five major guilds. The elections for the most important city offices,

1 For the translation of Goro Dati’s words see: Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, p. 102.

2 Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages*, p. 70.

3 Najemy, *A History of Florence*, Chapters 7-9.

the governing *Signoria*, were organized instead according to the four city quarters and sixteen gonfalons. A gonfalon was, in the sense of domestic politics and settlement, the most important organizing structure in the city, having the function of a neighbourhood.⁴ The eligibility for city offices started at age 21, and two priors of the government were elected from each of the quarters. The Standardbearer of justice (*gonfaloniere di giustizia*), that is, the ninth member of the *Signoria*, was of foreign origins. While guild consuls covered their offices for four months, members of the *Signoria*, rotated in every two months to avoid the possibility of one member of the government gaining a leading position. Because of these rapid changes in the composition of the government, the priors were accompanied by members of the Colleges (*collegi*), which included the Twelve good men (*dodici buonomini*) and the sixteen Standardbearers of the urban militia (*gonfalonieri di compagnia*), who were elected, in a similar way, from the sixteen gonfalons.

The priors had the decisive role in domestic as well as in international politics; meanwhile, the Colleges, together with a restricted group of citizens who were the core of the politically active elite, could express their opinion in two distinct political platforms. The legislative councils, the Council of the Popolo and the Council of the Commune, were registered in the *Fabarum volumes* and during the Albizzi period comprised about 360 active members who spoke at the meetings.⁵ However, the number of voting participants varied; the Council of the Popolo included around 240-260 voting members at a time and the Council of the Commune considerably less, maybe around 117-170 voting members.⁶ Discussions at these two councils were limited to domestic politics; its registers give us an idea of the nature of the proposals and the voting that took place before their enactment into the city provisions.⁷ In 1349, the earlier role of the great councils in foreign policy-making had been taken over by another political

4 See Kent's definition of the gonfalon. Kent, *Neighbors and Neighborhood in Renaissance Florence*, pp. 1-23.

5 This is an approximate number based on the names of the speakers registered in the corresponding volumes. ASF, LF vols. 40-48. (1375-1406).

6 These numbers were calculated on the basis of the votes recorded at the meetings. For the Council of the Popolo see: 265 members. ASF, LF 40. fol. 283r. (29/01/1378) 264 member. LF 40. fol. 350r. (01/02/1380) 243 members. LF 65. fol. 95r. (29/04/1433) For the Council of the Comune see: 118 members. LF 40. fol. 284r. (30/01/1378) 177 members. LF 40. fol. 285r. (23/02/1378) 147 members. LF 65. fol. 90r. (08/04/1433) 167 members. LF 65. fol. 92r. (22/04/1433).

7 For its fourteenth-century history see: Klein, 'Introduzione', pp. XXIII-XXXVII. Fubini, 'Prefazione'. For the fifteenth century see: Guidi, *Il governo della città-repubblica di Firenze*, pp. 133-149.

platform, the secret councils, called *consulta* and *pratica*.⁸ The *consulta allargata* included, besides the Colleges, the various city officers, like the captains of the Guelph Party, the deputies of the four city quarters, the six consuls of the Merchant Court, and so forth.⁹ The *consulta ristretta*, instead, was composed exclusively of the Colleges, sometimes aided by the captains of the Guelph Party or the Eight of Balie, these later ones appointed typically in times of war. The third type of meeting recorded in the registers was the *pratica*, a special commission put together by the *Signoria* with a specific mandate. Its activity was very often related to ambassadorial visits. Given the electoral system, which favoured the members of the five major guilds, that is, the international merchants and domestic entrepreneurs, political decisions of the Florentine government were very often shaped by trade interests.¹⁰ The records of the discussions that took place at the secret councils provide testimonials to the fact that a high percentage of international merchants participated actively as speakers in the debates. Some of them were even sent out to foreign courts as ambassadors of the city, negotiating on behalf of the government and therefore representing Florentine merchants' interests. With their speeches, merchants were, in fact, able to effectively influence the decision-making of members of the government who were often inexperienced in foreign policy-making.

During these more than fifty years, the city magistrates were dominated by the supporters of the Albizzi faction, headed by messer Maso di Luca degli Albizzi (1343-1417) and Niccolò di Giovanni da Uzzano (1359-1431), and, following Maso's death, by his eldest son, Rinaldo. The faction included several magnate families, the members of which possessed an ancient noble heritage but were ineligible to hold any city offices. At the same time, the opponent faction, led by Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici, constituted several of those new *popolani* families who acquired wealth and a name for themselves in the course of the fourteenth century, thanks to their involvement in long-distance trade.¹¹ However, in both factions, the presence of international merchants and domestic manufacturers was very high. Despite that, the Medicis' economic primacy was unquestionable.¹² Their

8 On the types of secret councils see: Conti, *Le 'Consulte' e 'Pratiche'*, pp. IX-XIX.

9 Among them were: the Ten of Liberty (Dieci di Libertà), the Eight of Balie (Otto di balia) and several other officers responsible for the surveillance of various taxes, and immobile properties of the city, like the Ufficiali della condotta, gli Ufficiali dell'abbondanza, gli Ufficiali della gabella del vino, gli Ufficiali della gabella delle porte e gli Ufficiali della gabella dei contratti.

10 Prajda, 'Trade and Diplomacy in pre-Medici Florence'.

11 One of the best documented cases is of the Serristori family. Tognetti, *Da Figline a Firenze*.

12 Padgett and Ansell, 'Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici'.

company branches in Florence and Venice continued to serve through the period as an important business partner and financial intermediary for Florentine merchants abroad.

In the 1370s, immediately preceding the Albizzi regime, magnates still suffered property confiscations by the Guelph Party, which exercised control over the properties of the Ghibellines as well.¹³ At that time, exile to the Florentine countryside was also part of the punishment. Due to the loss of their political influence and properties in the city, these families were very often left without any economic potential. But by the first decade of the fifteenth century, this phenomenon was already in the past. Even though magnates were still not allowed to hold any major public offices, they could have applied for *popolani* status to restore their eligibility. The conditions for having their status restored included changing the name and coat of arms of the family. According to the studies of John F. Padgett, because of the lost economic potential, already in the second part of the fourteenth century these old families started to make marriage alliances with new men who had acquired some wealth and political influence by their participation in long-distance trade.¹⁴

The data drawn from the two most complete tax surveys, which were installed at the beginning and end of the Albizzi regime, mirror remarkable social changes that manifested in the evolution of these new lineages. The 1378 *Estimo* and the 1433 *Catasto* were two entirely different forms of taxation; yet, they are both a testament to the transformation of society that brought significant changes to the sensitive issue of taxation. Taxation, as political participation, was organized according to gonfalons, and the subject of taxes was most commonly discussed in the framework of the meetings of the secret councils. The tax reform, installed with the first *Catasto* in 1427, might be thought of as an indicator of the changed attitude the politically active mercantile elite exhibited, which pushed the reforms.

The *Estimo* was an old form of direct taxation, used since the thirteenth century, which was based on the assessment of the worth of each citizen's property.¹⁵ In July 1378, the year of the unskilled wool workers' revolt, the officers of the *Estimo* registered about 12,759 households in the entire city.¹⁶

13 For the history of magnates, see: Klapisch-Zuber, C., *Retour à la cité*. Diacciati, *Popolani e magnati*. Lansing, *The Florentine Magnates*.

14 Padgett, 'Open Elite?'

15 For the various forms of taxes, see: Conti, *L'imposta diretta a Firenze nel Quattrocento*. On the 1378 *Estimo* see: Najemy, *A History of Florence*, p. 168.

16 A household in this case equals to a *capo famiglia*. ASF, *Prestanze*, vols. 367-369 (Santa Maria Novella, San Giovanni, Santa Croce.); ASF, *Estimo* 268 (Santo Spirito).

Among them, about 1982 households, a bit more than fifteen per cent, were recorded with family names or with some indicator of the provenience of the family.¹⁷

The 1433 *Catasto* includes only about 7970 households.¹⁸ Among them, more than 41 per cent, that is, about 3280 heads of household, regarded it an important matter to establish a name or provenience for their families in the tax records. Despite the distinct nature of the two systems, these differences in the number of households indicate certain changes in the demography of the city. The population drop during the studied period has also been suggested by Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, who, based on the 1427 *Catasto*, stipulated the Florentine population to be around 37,000 inhabitants. Meanwhile, at the beginning of our period of study, this number was about 54,000-60,000.¹⁹ According to the studies of Ann G. Carmichael, at least three plagues occurred during the Albizzi regime. The first one in 1400 is considered a major epidemic, which was followed by two minor ones in 1424-1425 and in 1429-1430.²⁰ Epidemics in between the two dates, as well as migration and internal economic depression, might have been at the core of these population changes. The incoming migration from territories outside Tuscany, and especially outside the Italian Peninsula, was insignificant at the time. Lorenz Böniger's studies have revealed that Germans, the most sizable foreign community, had little to do with international commerce or large-scale entrepreneurial activity.²¹ Merchants of the city, unlike in many other Italian states, were typically born and raised in Florence or in its hinterland. It was mainly lower craftsmen and artisans who chose Florence for their new home.

The *Estimo*, though, considered both movable and immovable properties as the *Catasto* did, yet, the new men who might have invested primarily in their businesses rather than with the purchase of immovable property did not contribute to tax according to their wealth. The debates, which took place at the meetings of the secret councils prior to the installment of

17 Like Da Empoli, Da Peretola, Da Milano, da Signa, Da San Miniato, etc. In this number, those heads of households are also included who had three names registered in the document.

18 The number has been calculated on the basis of the *campioni*, prepared by the tax officials from the original declarations. Except the gonfalon of Vipera, Quarter of Santa Maria Novella, which does not have surviving *campioni*. In that case, I have used the *portate* as well as the *Sommari*, written by the *catasto* officials. For the *campioni* see: ASF, *Catasto* vols. 487-500. For the quarter of Vipera see: *Catasto* vols. 454, 455. For the *Sommari* see: *Catasto* vol. 503.

19 Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leur familles*, pp. 173-188.

20 Carmichael, *Plague and the Poor in Renaissance Florence*, Graphs 3-2, 3-2a (1400); 3-4 (1424-1425); 3-5 (1429-1430).

21 Böniger, *Die deutsche Einwanderung nach Florenz*.

the second *Catasto*, reflect these concerns. Several well-off international merchants, who were also active participants of the meetings, stressed that business activity should be measured by the *Catasto* officials.²² However, in 1433, the percentage of frauds was very high and the countless number of companies operated by Florentine citizens inside and outside the city presented only 112 complete balances.²³ The senior partners most commonly submitted the balance of the company, extracting them from their various levels of account books.

An accurate study of the second *Catasto*, compared to the analysis of David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber on the first *Catasto*, gives us, however, an image that the two *Catasti* do not differ much from each other in terms of reliability.²⁴ In fact, the second *Catasto* seemingly includes a higher number and more detailed company balances than the first one, probably because of the pressure of several politicians. Among them, Florentine firms in Tuscany were registered in Pisa and Siena, and we find them in the major trade centres of the Peninsula: Aquila, Bologna, Genoa, Naples, Perugia, Rimini, Rome, and Venice. Meanwhile, outside Italy, they were mentioned in Avignon, Barcelona, Bruges, Buda, London, Paris, and Valencia.²⁵ The emergence of the credit market and the widespread use of

22 'E cc'è ancora una parte sotto la quale pensiamo vi sia mancamento assai al catasto. Et questo è che ci è molti mercatanti che mai in verità nel presente catasto dettono il bilancio del debito e credito del traffico, benché alcuni lo promettessono e mai lo dettono onde la sospitione ci è da pigliare non piccolo però che ci è tale che dà per creditore in migliaia e migliaia di fiorini forestieri e altri che non acatastano, che si dubita sia in tutto vero, però ci pare si debba per riformatione provvedere che ciascuno mercatante o trafficante sottoposto al catasto sia tenuto et debba dare il bilancio del traffico a decti ufficiali [...]’ ASF, CP 50. fol. 131v. (21/03/1432).

23 In this case, I consider only those headlines that refer to the document as *bilancio*. For the complete number of balances see: ASF, *Catasto* 484. fol. 601r; 483. fols. 106r, 156r, 201r, 274r, 333r, 346r, 429r-v, 510r; 482. fols. 330r, 333r, 381r, 382r, 420r, 469r, 534r, 598r, 611r, 623r; 479. fols. 2r, 173r, 394rr-v, 395r; 479. fols. 2r, 173r, 394r-v, 395r; 478. fols. 19r, 294r, 628r, 994r; 477. fols. 138r-v, 225r, 261r, 483r, 514r; 475. fols. 19r, 41r, 42v, 181r, 209r, 323v, 324v; 474. fols. 122r, 128r, 143r, 335r, 450r, 453r, 555r, 700r, 772r; 473. fols. 80r, 383v, 473r, 637r; 471. fols. 91r, 458r, 580r; 470. fols. 16v, 31r, 325r, 326r, 332v, 346r, 500r; 469. fols. 590r, 745v; 467. fols. 216r, 336r; 466. fol. 189r; 463. fols. 74r, 343v; 460. fols. 246r, 465r, 557r; 457. fol. 238r; 456. fol. 454r; 455. fol. 461r; 453. fols. 320r, 403r; 451. fols. 66r, 103r, 291r; 450. fols. 85r, 197r, 221r, 278r, 384v, 387r, 389r; 447. fols. 175r, 409r, 584r; 446. fols. 233r, 528r; 443. fols. 269r, 271r, 515r; 441. fols. 418r, 525r; 438. fol. 166v; 437. fols. 251r, 485r, 735r; 436. fols. 426r, 472v; 430. fols. 45r, 46r, 119r; 429. fols. 123r, 150v, 157r.

24 About the 1433 *Catasto* see: Conti, *L'imposta diretta a Firenze nel Quattrocento*, pp. 165-179.

25 For the various Florentine business enterprises abroad, *compagnia, ragione, bottega, accomandita, traffico* considered, see: Pisa: ASF, *Catasto* 429. fol. 416r; 453. fols. 423v, 834r; 445. fol. 122r (no more active companies); 482. fol. 177v; 478. fol. 19v; 475. fol. 31r; 429. fols. 157r, 262r; 470. fol. 325r; 457. fols. 449r, 495v; 460. fol. 210r; 466. fols. 556r-v; 430. fols. 52v, 230r, 310r; 433. fol. 98v; 438. fols. 166v, 522r; 445. fol. 630r; 463. fol. 338v; 443. fol. 367v; 436. fol. 124r. Siena: 446. fol.

bills of exchange instead of the precarious bullion, made considerable trade transactions possible.²⁶ Since 1408, the *accomandita*, that is, the limited liability partnership, gave rise to the holding companies created by the agglomeration of small firms.

Gene Brucker earlier claimed that international merchants' activity was not the main factor in the city's economic growth, although the upper anchor of Florentine society, which obtained political influence, was engaged in trade at various levels, and long-distance trade merchants put the elite inside this already elitist economic group.²⁷ As Richard A. Goldthwaite has put it: 'Its industry was completely dependent on the importation of raw materials and the exportation of finished cloth; and it was the city's merchants, not foreigners, who made this trade abroad possible.'²⁸ The two most important industries, wool and silk, which produced cloth for both domestic consumption and the international market, developed in different modalities.

By obtaining the finest English raw wool and extending its mercantile network further, in the fourteenth century wool became the leading industry of the city. Starting from 1406 with the capture of Pisa, Florence had direct access to the sea. Following that, in the 1420s, the city had started the construction of a fleet and sent galleys to Flanders, England, and the Levant. This important step guaranteed a regular supply of raw wool for the cloth industry and direct access to important foreign markets. The wool industry undoubtedly contributed to the greatest extent to the wealth of Florentine merchants by producing highly luxurious fabrics made from English wool, called San Martino, and lower quality Garbo cloth, made from raw material imported from the western Mediterranean.²⁹ In 1427, 127 functioning wool

415v. Aquila: 437. fol. 751v. Bologna: 473. fol. 473r; 470. fol. 326r; 457. fol. 91r; 445. fol. 91r. Genoa: 467. fol. 455v. Naples: 483. fol. 436r; 455. fol. 225v; 447. fol. 70r; 445. fols. 378v, 379v, 795r. Perugia: 474. fol. 741v. Rimini: 433. fol. 134v. (no more active) Rome: 471. fol. 369r; 429. fol. 129v (no more active companies); 479. fol. 499v; 478. fol. 19v; 450. fol. 148v; 460. fol. 528r; 453. fols. 276r, 288r, 379r; 467. fols. 60v, 62r; 466. fol. 628r, 450. fol. 387r; 436. fols. 197r, 447v. Venice: 474. fol. 5v; 471. fol. 124r; 450. fols. 148v, 520r; 453. fol. 825r; 467. fol. 455v; 466. fol. 438v; 437. fol. 745r; 436. fols. 227r, 260r. Avignon: 478. fol. 20r; 471. fol. 409v; 433. fol. 103v; 463. fol. 387r. Barcelona: 450. fol. 176v; 453. fol. 46v. (no more active companies) Bruges: 450. fols. 148r, 207r, 392v, 613r. Buda: 445. fol. 98r; 474. fols. 15r, 881r; 475. fol. 578r (no more active companies); 474. fol. 881r; 453. fol. 824r. London: 430. fol. 466v (no more active); 450. fols. 148r, 207r; 450, 613r; 451. fol. 3v; 460. fol. 532r; 436. fol. 472v. Paris: 478. fol. 20v. Valencia: 467. fol. 5v (no more active); 446. fol. 132v; 453. fols. 664r-v; 466. fol. 224v; 437. fols. 218r, 617r.

26 Padgett and McLean, 'Economic Credit and Elite Transformation in Renaissance'.

27 Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, p. 54.

28 Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, p. XVI.

29 Ibidem, p. 273.

workshops were registered in the Florentine city census.³⁰ Six years later, in 1433, at least 20 were running in the Convent of San Martino, located between the cathedral and the Palazzo Vecchio.³¹ However, politicians at that time were aware of the fact that these numbers should be handled with caution, since many owners declared their workshops vacant, abandoned, or not in proper conditions; meanwhile, the city's economic growth suggests a slightly different picture.³²

Not far from the wool workshops, several silk workshops were situated between the Palazzo Vecchio and the Mercato Nuovo, mostly in Via Vaccareccia and Via Por Santa Maria. The beginnings of the domestic silk industry in the first decades of the fourteenth century can be linked to the immigration of Lucchese silk manufacturers (*setaiuoli*) who brought their know-how from the centre of the sector.³³ The earliest silk manufacturers who acquired a name for themselves by participating in this rising sector established a cooperation with a few Florentine businessmen who had already accumulated some financial capital to invest. In 1378, 44 silk manufacturers' households were recorded in the census, including both manufacturers (*setaiuoli grossi*) and retail cloth merchants (*setaiuoli a minuto*).³⁴ By 1433, there were 25 citizens who indicated in their declaration that they worked as silk manufacturers.³⁵ In 1420, according to the statutes of the Por Santa Maria Guild, four entrepreneurs started to invest in the production of silk textiles of the highest quality, decorating them with threads made of precious metals. At this early stage, these threads were probably produced in the neighbouring goldsmiths' workshops, which also became centres of entrepreneurial activity.³⁶ Florentine silk cloth rapidly

30 Grossi, 'Le botteghe fiorentine nel catasto del 1427', p. 8.

31 For the wool firms in the Convent of San Martino see: ASF, Catasto 456. fol. 293r; 466. fol. 83r; 441. fol. 524r; 443. fols. 269r, 470. fol. 37v. (no more active firms); 482. fol. 611r; 478. fols. 19r-v, 969v; 471. fol. 280v; 447. fol. 510r; 453. fol. 47r, 58r, 90r, 173r, 320r, 462r; 467. fols. 140v, 336r; 466. fol. 584r, 441. fols. 523v, 525r; 436. fol. 329r.

32 The debates at the Consulte also concern this question: 'Un altro inconveniente ci troviamo, che molte botteghe e case che si dettono nel secondo catasto si trovano al presente murate, spigionate e disfatte solo per non darle a catasto.' ASF, CP 50. fol. 132r.

33 Tognetti, 'The Development of the Florentine Silk Industry'. Ibid., 'La diaspora dei lucchesi'.

34 ASF, *Estimo* 268. fols. 3r, 34v, 35v, 77r, 82r, 84v, 87r-v, 88r. *Prestanze* 367. fol. 5r. *Prestanze* 368. fols. 11r, 19r, 24v, 46v, 47r-v, 70v, 73v, 74r, 77r. *Prestanze* 369. fols. 2r, 3v, 4r, 8r-v, 14v, 17r-v, 18v, 19r, 22v, 24r, 34v, 38r-v, 40v, 59v, 68v, 73r, 83r, 86r, 128v.

35 This number includes most probably only *setaiuoli grossi*. ASF, *Catasto* 499. fols. 235v, 482v, 730v. *Catasto* 500. fol. 344r. *Catasto* 488. fols. 243v, 331v. *Catasto* 489. fol. 219v. *Catasto* 491bis. fols. 7r, 174v, 225r, 277v, 292v. *Catasto* 493. fol. 282v. *Catasto* 494. fol. 127v. *Catasto* 497. fol. 8r. *Catasto* 498. fols. 152v, 425v, 29r, 57v, 265v. *Catasto* 497. fols. 638v, 281r. *Catasto* 496. fol. 378v.

36 Prajda, 'Goldsmiths, Goldbeaters'.

gained popularity in foreign royal and princely courts. Already in the 1380s, there is information on silk being transported by Florentine merchants abroad, though the export of which might not have been significant until around the 1390s.³⁷

Some international merchants, members of this socially endogamous elite, accumulated enough wealth to invest in voluminous building projects and to spend a considerable amount on self-representation. The wave of urban palace-building started sometime after 1400.³⁸ City palaces were often organized around square-shaped inner courtyards (*cortile*). The first floor of the typically two-or-three-story buildings was usually occupied by shops and workshops, while the second floor provided a home for the family and maybe also for other tenants. Rooms might have been decorated with various wooden objects brought by the wife with the marriage, such as marriage chests (*cassonne*) and table paintings. Palaces might have housed private chapels, but elite families were also eager to found their own family chapel in the nearest parish church, which might then become their burial site.

Well-off Florentine citizens also felt a moral obligation to make financial contribution towards the construction of the city's major building project, the Santa Maria del Fiore cathedral, run under the supervision of the five major guilds. The leading architect of the period, Filippo di ser Brunellesco Lippi, succeeded in developing an original method to construct a dome over the cathedral, the most grandiose of its kind. In the decorative arts, the names of Donato di Niccolò de'Bardi's (Donatello) public statues in base metals, Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Gate of Paradise* of the Baptistery, and Tommaso di ser Giovanni di Mone Cassai (Masaccio) and Maso di Cristofano's (Masolino) works on the private chapel of Felice di Michele Brancacci in the Santa Maria del Carmine Church, were retained as landmark objects of the new Florentine taste.

Some Florentine merchants, in addition to algebra and bookkeeping, even possessed good knowledge of Latin. This led, for example, Palla di Nofri Strozzi and Cosimo de'Medici to cultivate friendship ties with influential learned men of their time. In Florence, early humanism is traditionally linked to the name of Coluccio di Piero Salutati, a statesman who served as head of the Florentine chancellery for more than thirty years (1375-1406). The chancellery, the chief organ of state bureaucracy, which was responsible

37 In 1386, the count palatine of Hungary had purchased silk textiles of considerable value from a Florentine company. However, its provenience was not specified in the document. ASF, Mercanzia 11310. fol. 34r. I wish to thank Cédric Quertier for calling my attention to the volume. I am indebted to Carlo Taviani for sharing some of the results of his research on Florentine silk export.

38 Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence*, p. 14.

for the verbalization of the city councils's meeting as well as diplomatic correspondence, became the headquarters of these early humanists.³⁹ Beyond the chancellery, convents like the Benedictine monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli were developed into centres of humanist studies, where important miniators also worked. The cultural inventions that occurred in the city rapidly gained fame abroad, thanks to Florentine trade networks established through Europe.

Florentines in Europe

By the beginning of the fifteenth century, Florentine merchants had already installed themselves in the most important trading hubs of the continent. As Richard A. Goldthwaite has pointed out, 'the strength of Florence in international commerce was in its network abroad.'⁴⁰ The firms were independent entities, but they worked through one another. Their most important businesses in foreign lands included the trade in bullion, textiles, and exotic goods, as well as banking, but they operated within the local administration as well.

In Europe, many precious metal deposits had already been exhausted; only silver was found in considerable quantity, mainly in Bohemia, the Kingdom of Hungary, the Balkans, and the Iberian Peninsula. Gold and copper were extracted overwhelmingly in the Kingdom of Hungary.⁴¹ In search for new resources as well as for market possibilities, Florentines, already by the 1420s, established business interests in remote places like the Eastern Empire, Constantinople, Alessandria (Egypt), and the Kingdom of Tunis. Though, at this point, they did not settle there in large numbers.

According to the studies of Cédric Quertier, by the mid-fourteenth century Florentines had set up only a few independent *nazioni*, or consulates, mainly in the Italian Peninsula, in Bologna, Genoa, Naples and Salerno (all in the thirteenth century), in Pisa (1345), and Venice (1329? 1346?), but also in Bruges (1367?) and Avignon (1345), for instance. By the end of the Albizzi regime, their number had increased, and a few others were founded in the major trading hubs of the Peninsula and Europe, such as Rome (1391) and London.⁴² Consulates were administrative-jurisdictional organizations of Florentine

39 Maxson, *The Humanist World of Renaissance Florence*.

40 Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, p. 38.

41 Batizi, *A középkori bányászat*.

42 Astorri, *La Mercanzia a Firenze nella prima metà del Trecento*, p. 165. For an overview of the history of Florentine consulates see: Quertier, 'Guerres et richesses des nations'.

merchants abroad and their primary focus was representing their interests in the host city. A consulate was typically headed by a consul who often acted as judge or legal representative of Florentine merchants, mediating between the merchants and the local society. Besides the independent Florentine consulates, joint ones operated in Valencia and Aragon, comprising not only Florentine but Genoese, Lucchese, Sienese, and Venetian merchants as well.⁴³

The Kingdoms of Aragon, Catalonia, and Castile served for Florentine merchants as major sources of precious metals as well as raw wool. Maria Elisa Soldani's research has brought to light the modalities of Florentine merchants' social and political integration into the feudal structure of Barcelona. She has also shown, through the case of the Tecchini family, that Florentine merchants, through their service to European rulers, were even able to make a significant social step and to improve their social status from ordinary tradesmen to noblemen of the crown of Aragon.⁴⁴

Similarly, in the course of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, a number of Florentines succeeded in entering into royal service in the Kingdom of England.⁴⁵ Some of them ventured there with the view of finding favorable economic conditions for their trade, while others arrived in the kingdom as refugees.⁴⁶ By the mid-fourteenth century, the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Durham employed a few among them as mint-masters.⁴⁷ For several years, the London mint was also headed by a member

43 In Valencia, Florentine, Genoese, Lucchese, and Sienese merchants belonged to the joint consulate; in Aragon only Florentines, Genoese, and Venetians did. Soldani, *Uomini d'affari i mercanti toscani nella Barcellona del Quattrocento*, pp. 61-62.

44 Soldani, 'A Firenze mercanti, cavalieri nella signoria dei re d'Aragona'.

45 Prestwich, 'Italian Merchants'. For extensive literature on the subject, see: Tognetti, 'Nuovi documenti sul fallimento della compagnia Frescobaldi'.

46 Initially, they had been arrested, because Pope Gregory XI placed Florence under interdict. But later, on 30 January 1377, they were released and received permission to trade as the King's serfs. 'In the same year (1376) some Florentines were excommunicated by the pope on account of their rebellion against the Roman church and unheard-of acts of disobedience. Among their other crimes and awful deeds of cruelty they had tortured with red-hot iron hooks a monk, sent to them by the pope with papal commands, while he was still alive, and had buried him in the ground before he was actually dead. Some of the Florentines later came to England. They asked for the king's peace and stayed in England, until the pope in his bulls revealed the enormity of the crimes in which they had been involved. When that happened, they actually became servants of the king, just as though they were English, with all their goods and chattels. This was because of the decision contained in a letter from the pope and his curia. The Florentines therefore chose what seemed to them to be the lesser of the two evils, namely to serve the king of England like his countrymen rather than to submit themselves to the judgement of the Romans.' *The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham*, p. 28.

47 Allen, 'Italians in English Mints', p. 59.

of the Florentine Bardi family, who later, in 1380, was appointed master of the London exchange, combining the two offices for the first time in history.

Florentines were interested not only in the domestic market. For instance, English wool became one of the most important trade items for those residing in Flanders. Francesco Guidi Bruscoli has pointed out the density of Florentine commerce between England, Flanders, and the Italian Peninsula, which likely reached its peak around the middle of the fifteenth century. In the beginning, Bruges was considered as the centre of Florentines' settlement, which later was replaced by Antwerp.⁴⁸ In Bruges, the *nazione* dates only from 1427; they installed a lodge there, the grandest Florentines ever built abroad.⁴⁹

Sporadic information also appears regarding Florentine merchants' business in the Kingdom of France. In the last decades of the thirteenth century, they still considered Avignon as an important exchange and bullion market.⁵⁰ Already in the 1330s-1340s, the most important Florentine companies traded in Paris, a major banking centre at that point.⁵¹ Among them we find the firms of the Albizzi, the Alberti, the Bardi, the Peruzzi, and the Acciaiuoli.⁵² Around the turn of the century, Francesco di Marco Datini, an important merchant from Prato, also kept agents there.⁵³ Later, in the 1410s-1430s, the correspondence between Averardo di Francesco de' Medici, Andrea di Lipaccio Bardi, and Andrea di Guglielmino Pazzi shows that Florentine merchants were still present at the local market.⁵⁴

During the same period, references to Florentine merchants in German lands are very scarce; before the end of the fifteenth century, no German city had a sizeable Florentine community. However, a few Florentines ended up

48 Bruscoli and Bolton, 'When did Antwerp replace Bruges'. Bruscoli, 'I rapporti con il Nord-Europa'. See also: Watson, *The Structure of the Florentine Galley Trade with Flanders and England*.

49 In the fourteenth century, the Bardi, Peruzzi, Acciaiuoli, and Alberti families had agents in the city. In the fifteenth century, the Mannini, Medici, and the Pazzi companies traded there. Dini, *Manufattura e commercio*, p. 116.

50 Stouff, 'Une famille Florentine'. See also: Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, pp. 162-163.

51 It lost its positions because of the civil conflicts and the English occupation, which marked the last years of the reign of Charles VI (1380-1422). De Roover, *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank*, p. 124. For Florentines in Paris see also: Farmer, *The Silk Industries of Medieval Paris*.

52 Hoshino, *L'Arte della Lana in Firenze*, p. 143. n. 78. Dini, *Banca e commercio*, pp. 108, 114. Saponi, *I Libri di Commercio dei Peruzzi*.

53 Arnoux and Bourlet and Hayez, 'Lettres parisiennes du Carteggio Datini'. See also: Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, p. 129.

54 Andrea Bardi's correspondence: ASF, MAP 2. fols. 385r, 386r, 405r, 411r. Andrea Pazzi's correspondence: MAP 2. fol. 31r. 1. fol. 43r. On the relation to the Medici firm, see also: De Roover, *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank*, p. 38.

in the administration of mines and mints.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, others, according to Kurt Weissen, were engaged there in banking activity.⁵⁶ Similarly, in the Kingdom of Poland there is only very fragmented information at our disposal on Florentine merchants' presence at this early period. Some of them worked in royal administration, like an agent of the Medici firm residing in Krakow, who was employed as customs officer.⁵⁷ But their most important income might have derived from ecclesiastical revenues.⁵⁸ The Florentine *Signoria* had established some contacts to the Polish royal court by letters of recommendation, but following this period they were interrupted.⁵⁹ The marginality of Poland within the Florentines' settlement is also shown by the absence of any Florentine companies that might have been set up there.

Florentines typically traveled towards the central-eastern part of the continent by sea through Venice. The city and its hinterland were home to probably the most sizeable Florentine business community abroad. Not only the Rialto area and San Marco Square, most commonly associated with mercantile and banking activity, but also some of the subject towns, like Treviso, grew into centres of Florentine settlement. Reinhold C. Mueller has argued that banking services in Venice were in the hands of Florentine businessmen who brought their advanced record-keeping practices and company structures to the city.⁶⁰ Besides banking, much of their commercial interest was related to trade with Florentine as well as Venetian

55 Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, pp. 194-195.

56 Weissen, *Florentines Bankiers und Deutschland*.

57 In 1419, the Medici decided to send to the Kingdom one member of the family, Albizzo of Talento, as an agent. He settled in Krakow, where he died in 1439. In the 1420s, he worked as a customs officer. *Ibid.*, p. 133. Another member of the Medici family, named Matteo, in 1428, lived also in the Kingdom of Poland. *Ibid.*, p. 34. The Florentine Simone Talenti also worked as mint master there around the turn of the century. See also Bettarini, 'The New Frontier'. In 1430, there is also record of Antonio di Giovanni de' Ricci living in Krakow at that time. '[...] Antonius Iohannis de Riziis habitatorem ad presens in Chrachovia, Regni Polane [...]'. ASV, Giudizi di petizion, *Estraordinario nodai* 10. fol. 7v.

58 Since 1393, several Florentine businessmen with their companies participated in the collection of ecclesiastical revenues there. Among them were Dozzo Spini, Giovanni de' Medici, Bartolomeo, Benedetto and Ilarione Bardi, and Carlo Tornaquinci. Saporì, *Studi di storia economica*, III, pp. 149-176.

59 On contacts with the Polish court up to the 1430s, see: Bettarini, 'The new frontier'. I have systematically researched the correspondence of the Florentine chancellery, which to my best knowledge, do not include references to either Florentine embassies sent to Poland or to official contacts between the two states. ASF, Missive, I Cancelleria, vols. 36-49; Signori, Legazioni e Commissarie vols. 10-21; Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, vols. 4-10; Otto di Pratica, Responsive, vols. 1-5; Signori, Minutari, vols. 7-13.

60 Mueller, 'Mercanti e imprenditori fiorentini a Venezia'.

wool and silk textiles. The registers of the court of the *Giudici di Petizion* show their commercial enterprises.⁶¹ Families like the Del Bene, Gaddi, and Velluti turned into significant actors of local and thus international trade. It is not surprising, therefore, that during our period more than 130 Florentines received citizenship in Venice.⁶² Given the geographic proximity and the city's role as a major trading hub, Venice also featured as the major commercial-cultural mediator between the Italian Peninsula and the Kingdom of Hungary. Indigenous as well as foreign merchants took continuous advantage of Venetian resources through exchanging goods with merchants residing in Buda.⁶³

Its nearest subject lands, Dalmatia, belonged formally to the Hungarian crown until 1409 when Ladislaus of Durazzo sold it to the *Serenissima*. Along the coastline, *Ragusa* (Dubrovnik, HR) also occupied a prominent place in Florentines' trade and settlement in the region. Francesco Bettarini has demonstrated that besides Florentines, several businessmen of the subject town of Prato arrived in the city for commercial purposes.⁶⁴ Their network, though, seems to have lived a life separate from the Hungarian hinterlands, which had direct access to the sea by the port of Segna (Senj, HR).⁶⁵

Florentines in the Kingdom of Hungary

Florentine merchants, indeed, might have arrived in the Kingdom of Hungary either by land, from the direction of Vienna, or by sea, fleeing from Venice to *Segna*. Despite the considerable distance between the two cities, Florence and Buda were well-connected to each other by commercial routes. The most important documents in this regard are the accounts of the brothers Rinaldo and Luca di messer Maso degli Albizzi, who travelled to the Kingdom of Hungary in 1426 and 1427.⁶⁶ The two distinct collections speak better than

61 ASV, Giudici di Petizion, Sentenze a giustizia, vols. 1-110.

62 The data is obtained by researching the provenience of those individuals registered in the database of the *Cives Veneciarum*. *Civesveneciarum*.

63 See the case of Michael Nadler, German citizen of Buda. ASV, Giudici di Petizion, Sentenze a giustizia, 22. fol. 77r. Prajda, 'Florentines' Trade in the Kingdom of Hungary'. See also the case of luchese Pietro Guerrucci, who, in 1390, sent a load of silk textiles to his correspondent in Buda, Marco Paruta. Molà, *La comunità dei lucchesi a Venezia*, p. 248.

64 Bettarini, *La comunità pratese di Ragusa*. For Florentines in fourteenth-century Dalmatia, see Raukar, 'I fiorentini in Dalmazia'.

65 Teke, 'Il porto di Segna'.

66 For the documents produced by Rinaldo during his trip, see: *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi*, III. For the complete edition of Luca's diary written during his trip to Hungary, see:

any other source about the itineraries and difficulties that occurred along the most frequently used land and sea routes that Florentine merchants took for business purposes. Even though the Albizzi brothers were heading to Buda as members of diplomatic contingents, they mention itinerant Florentine merchants in their travel accounts that prove that businessmen, indeed, used the very same routes.⁶⁷

Both embassies followed the commercial route leading north from Florence to Bologna through the Apennines. In Rinaldo's case, the first segment of the trip included Ferrara and Padova as stops after Bologna; meanwhile, Luca went through Corticella, Torre della Fossa, Francolino, Crespino, Loreo, and Chioggia.⁶⁸ Generally, transport from Florence to Bologna was by pack animals over the Apennines, then over land or by canal and river after that from Bologna to the region of Ferrara and finally from Ferrara to Venice by river and sea. According to Luca's diary, he was travelling by land until reaching Corticella, located north of Bologna, and from there he continued his trip by river to Ferrara. From Ferrara, he traveled again on horseback to the nearby Francolino, a port on the Po river, where he took a boat. Turning to the north at Loreo, he left behind the Po and arrived in Chioggia, probably by river, and finally took another boat to Venice. Including the several stops during his trip, made both for relaxation and networking purposes, travelling from Florence to Venice took approximately one week.

Venice, as main hub for the redistribution of commercial goods, played a crucial role in the transportation of Florentines' merchandise. They typically stopped there for several days to purchase goods, socialize with their fellow citizens, as well as to arrange shipping. Arriving in Venice, Rinaldo continued his travel by land to the north, through Villach and Vienna, reaching Buda after 40 days of travel and diplomatic visits. At the same time, Luca took a ship in Venice and followed the coastline through Livenza (Caorle), Daira (Dajla), Parenzo (Poreč), Fagiana (Fažana), Vegli (Veli Brijuni), Pola (Pula), Medulino (Medulin), and Ossero (Osor), arriving at the port of *Segna* (Senj) after eight days.⁶⁹ Maritime navigation depended much upon weather conditions, which could shorten or lengthen the trip. Because of an illness, probably provoked by the harsh weather on the sea, Luca was forced, after

Prajda, 'Egy firenzei követjárás útinaplója'.

67 Also, Luca degli Albizzi's diary mentions three Florentine merchants who were traveling at that time from Venice, through *Segna* (Senj, HR), to the Kingdom of Hungary; two of them lived permanently in Buda. These merchants were: Tommaso di Piero Melanesi, Filippo di Giovanni del Bene, and Tommaso di Jacopo Schiattesi.

68 *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi*, III. pp. 607-608.

69 Prajda, 'Egy firenzei követjárás útinaplója', p. 10.

a long permanence in *Segna*, to return to Florence without ever reaching the royal court in Hungary. On the way back, Luca used the same sea route with small modifications. Rinaldo, instead arriving in Hungary from the northwest, left the Kingdom from the southwest and followed a different land route through to the Mura River, reaching Venice by following the road down from Vienna.⁷⁰

Florence was not a major transit centre for commercial goods; it was the Florentine merchants who, by operating in the most important trade hubs, built up an international transport system for their goods.⁷¹ Therefore, the cooperation between Florentine businessmen living in the cities situated on the commercial routes had a crucial role, given all the travel of Florentine ambassadors as well as merchants with their commercial goods. Florentines offered each other hospitality in their foreign home, like shelter and supplies for their horses and sometimes even accompanying servants. Their reliable and experienced servants carried messages, goods, and occasionally provided traveling Florentines with safeguard as well. The social network used by itinerant Florentine merchants was a business network of those fellow citizens who operated far from their homeland. Members of this network very often maintained not only business but social ties with each other, ensuring in this way the circulation of goods, messages, and people. Weather conditions, health issues that arose during a trip, as well as the security of their goods and of people were the major concern of travellers. So, it might have been common that merchants traveled together in order to guarantee their own safety and to share the otherwise elevated costs of toll and travel.⁷² For the safety of their goods, they might have even signed an insurance contract with one of the Florentine banks operating either in Florence or in Venice.⁷³ Safe conduct, obtained from the Florentine or Venetian government or from King Sigismund himself, might have also offered traveling Florentine merchants a major sense of security.⁷⁴ Letters of recommendations were

70 *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi*, III. pp. 590-591.

71 Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, p. 119.

72 See the travel of Gianozzo Cavalcanti, Filippo Frescobaldi, and Matteo Scolari to Hungary: 'Tomaso Borghini mandò in Ungheria drappi in sino di marzo 1425 e mandò chon essi Gianozzo Chavalchanti e Filippo Freschobaldi e mandogli insieme e in compagnia chon messer Matteo Scholari che allora andò inbasadore in Ungheria. E questo fu perché andassono più salvi anche per non paghare ghabelle e passaggi.' ASF, Corp. Rel. Sopp. 78. 321. fol. 98r.

73 For example, the company of Niccolò Baldovini and Giovanni di Antonio di Santi of Buda appears in the insurance book of Piero di Gabriello Panciatichi's company. See the copy of the document in the tax declaration of the Panciatichi, in 1433: ASF, *Catasto* 477. fol. 471r.

74 See the safe conduct of the Florentine Signoria for Giambonino di Rinieri Scolari. ASF, Corp. Rel. Sopp. 78. 326. fol. 318r. Antonio di Giovanni Panicatichi wished to obtain safe conduct from

also common means for Florentine merchants to secure their activity in the region and to seek the favor of foreign dignitaries.⁷⁵ The Florentine chancery continually received requests of this sort from its citizens.⁷⁶ In 1386, upon the coronation of Ladislaus of Durazzo as the King of Hungary, a Florentine politician suggested at the secret councils that ambassadors be sent to the King to recommend Florentine merchants who were trading in Hungary.⁷⁷ Several merchants, simply seeking political support or struggling with their credit claims in the Kingdom, were introduced in oral or written form to the royal court.⁷⁸ Ambassadors' mandates regularly included the names of those merchants whom they were supposed to mention at a specific royal audience.⁷⁹ During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, all these practices and factors contributed to the success of Florentine merchants, who constituted seemingly the most populous group of local merchants of Italian origins.⁸⁰

Italians' penetration, though, into the Hungarian hinterland was not a new phenomenon. As early as the first part of the thirteenth century, for example, the remote town of *Varadinum* (Oradea, RO), subject of bishopric control, already had districts named after its Venetian and Latin immigrants.⁸¹ The

King Sigismund. See Antonio's declaration in 1433: '[...] E itò dietro al'onperadore più tempo fa per avere salvo chondoto per potermi stare e tornare [...]'. ASF, *Catasto* 474. fol. 881r.

75 Paul D. McLean has analysed such letters of recommendation in connection with Florentine domestic politics. McLean, *The Art of the Network*. For a detailed analysis of letters of recommendations sent to the Kingdom of Hungary, see: Prajda, 'Trade and Diplomacy in pre-Medici Florence'. For letters of recommendation sent to the Kingdom of Poland, see: Francesco Bettarini, 'The New Frontier'.

76 Witt, *Coluccio Salutati*, p. 9.

77 ASF, CP 25. fols. 48r-v.

78 For cases see: Prajda, 'Justice in the Florentine Trading Community'.

79 'Ancora raccomandere al detto re i nostri cittadini e mercatanti che usano e trafficano nel suo regno. E in singolarità affectuosamente e strettamente raccomandere alla sua maestà Antonio Macigni e Domenico di Francesco Federighi nostri cittadini nelle loro faccende. Ancora raccomandere Arrigo Sassolini, il quale fa certe faccende di là di Inghilese d'Inghilese nostri cittadini [...] Et simile gli raccomandere pienamente Guido di meser Tommaso e Giovanni Tosinghi nostri cittadini carissimi.' ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie 2. fol. 17v. '[...] Et rispouose l'averli raccomandati tutti e i nostri cittadini che sono nel suo reame e spetialmente quegli che sono nominati nella detta commissione.' ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Relazioni di Ambasciatori 1. fol. 20v. In 1427, Bernardo di Sandro Talani, Filippo del Palagio, and Tommaso Corsi were among the merchants to be recommended by the ambassadors to the royal court. ASF, Signori, Legazioni e Commissarie 7. fol. 80v.

80 This hypothesis might be partly biased by the lack of sources of commercial nature in Venice and the absence of research in the Genoese archives.

81 Villa latinorum, Vicus Venetia, Vicus Bolonia, Vicus Padua. Balogh, *Az erdélyi renaissance*, pp. 20, 31.

literature on Italians' presence in the Arpads' Age also indicates that the migration of Italians from the various parts of the Peninsula was continual.⁸² Charles Robert of Anjou (1308-1342), for example, gave offices to goldsmiths of Sienese origins.⁸³

It is probably safe to say, though, that not many Florentines settled in the Kingdom prior to the reign of Louis I of Anjou (1342-1382). The earliest information on a Florentine merchant so far is dated to 1370 when a court case refers to a certain Taddeo Bettucci who was residing in the Kingdom for business purposes.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, the Florentine community during the reign of Louis I (1342-1382) and even until around the turn of the century, was characterized by the strong presence of a small business group of Vieri di Cambio de' Medici and the Panciatichi family. But by the first years of the fifteenth century, the business network of the Scolari family was dominant in the Hungarian-Florentine long-distance trade. In the years immediately following the Scolari brothers' deaths, in 1426, there were multiple power plays between the Scolari nephews and the Bardi brothers, old *familiars* of the Scolari. Following these conflicts, the leading position of the Bardi brothers, as well as other internal social dynamics in Hungary, likely led to the reorganization of key positions in the royal administration and within long-distance trade.

However, it should be acknowledged that besides Florence, Venice, and Rome, no other Italian cities have been studied in detail from the point of view of long distance trade with Hungary.⁸⁵ Because of the lack of written sources of an economic nature both in Rome and Venice, the picture of economic exchanges hardly could be altered or completed. In Venice, the picture drawn by Zsuzsa Teke, which made use of the best published sources, remains as a point of reference.⁸⁶ Similarly in Rome, besides the collectorial

82 Auner, 'Latinus'. Kristó, *Nem magyar népek a középkori Magyarországon*, pp. 167-177. Székely, 'A székesfehérvári latinok', pp. 45-72. Zolnay, 'Az esztergomi latinusokról', pp. 155-167.

83 Goldsmiths Niccolò and Pietro di Simone Sienese are mentioned in the specialist literature as *Petrus* and *Nicolaus Gallicus*. Marosi, 'A 14. századi királyi pecsétek művészettörténeti jelentőségéhez', p. 143. For a detailed analysis of their lives see: Zsoldos, 'Sienai ötvösből szepesi alispán'.

84 'Constitutes in iudicio dinanzi al decto ufficiali et alla sua corte, Taddeo Bettucci di Firenze il quale habita in Ungheria [...]' ASF, Mercanzia 185 s. f. (13/09/1370)

85 Since 2011 the author has also been conducting systematic researches in the corresponding archives of Rome and Venice. She has also visited the National Archives of Mantua, Modena, and Naples, where, because of the availability of sources, she did not find any significant new sources which might contribute to the already existing literature on long-distance trade with Hungary.

86 Teke, *Velencei-magyar kereskedelmi kapcsolatok*, Ibid., 'Zsigmond és a Dalmát városok'.

activities of the Apostolic see in Hungary, no other significant sources of an economic nature have come to light.

The economic exchanges between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Italian Peninsula were retained as rather diverse and intense into the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. Starting from its origins, the Florentine trading community in the Kingdom of Hungary was built upon the export of wool textiles from Florence and the import of precious metal coins and bullions to the Italian Peninsula. In general, the various goods which typically circulated between the Peninsula and Hungary are scarcely documented.⁸⁷ There is some fragmented information at our disposal concerning the Hungarian leather trade to Italy.⁸⁸ Trade in livestock, recently examined by Andrea Fara, might have been one of the sectors in which Florentines seemingly did not actively participate.⁸⁹ On the other hand, copper, as Martin Štefánik has pointed out, was one of the metals that generated interest in Florence and Venice.⁹⁰ In some cases, besides written evidence, archeological findings, such as cloth seals, provide evidence for their commerce from Italy to Hungary.⁹¹ Besides these goods, Florentines were occasionally involved in the administration and probably also in the marketing of salt, which was extracted in various parts of Hungary.⁹² Few of the resident companies in Buda provided banking services, so the considerable part of money exchange and safe keeping, as well as selling trade insurances, might have gone through those Florentine companies that operated in Florence and Venice. In all that, the Medici of Venice might have played a key role. Since, to the best of our knowledge, account books of Florentine companies based in Buda did not survive, we have only fragmented information at our disposal regarding the quantity and the quality of these commercial goods mentioned above, as well as the transportation and marketing of them.⁹³ Because of the considerable distance between Florence and Buda, we can only suspect that profit-oriented Florentine businessmen sold mainly high-quality San Martino cloth in Hungary. This hypothesis is also supported by the business

87 For an overview of the historiography see: Nagy, 'The Study of Medieval Foreign Trade of Hungary'.

88 Teke, 'Firenzei kereskedőtársaságok', pp. 195-214.

89 Fara, 'Il commercio di bestiame ungherese'.

90 On the copper trade with Italy, see: Štefánik, 'Kupfer aus dem ungarischen Königreich'.

91 Mordovin, *Textilvégek védjegyei*, pp. 211-222.

92 Draskóczy, 'Italiener in Siebenbürgen im 15. Jahrhundert'. For the salt monopoly of the Hungarian kings, see: Ibid., 'Das königliche Salzhandelmonopol in Ungarn'.

93 There are about 2500 volumes of private account books, from the early fourteenth century up to 1500 which have survived. Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, XII. I wish to thank Richard A. Goldthwaite for sharing with me his unpublished list of account books.

profiles of some merchant-entrepreneurs who had an interest in selling their goods in Hungary.

Besides wool textiles, which had a vast circle of customers, silk textiles became the other important item of Florentines' trade. By the end of the fourteenth century, when some investors started to produce high-quality silk fabrics in the city for the international market, Florentine merchants had already initiated its export to Hungary. Silk, in the beginning, might have arrived in the Hungarian court as diplomatic gifts with the purpose of increasing the interest for Florentine domestic products.⁹⁴ Italian silk textiles preserved in various Hungarian collections complete the picture of their circulation in Hungary.⁹⁵ Besides textiles, luxury items like spices and exotic animals occasionally appear in the sources. Already in 1386, István Lackfi brought spices from the Panciatichi firm.⁹⁶ Bonaccorso di Neri Pitti, in his chronicle, details that as an apprentice he and his master Matteo di Scelto Tinghi took a load of saffron to Buda.⁹⁷ In 1422, Matteo Scolari, in his letters, mentions spices as well as exotic animals like Arabian horses, falcons, ostriches, and monkeys his agent imported from Tunis, probably with the intent to carry them to Hungary, to the royal court, and to his brother, Pippo Scolari.⁹⁸

The significance of the Florentine community can also be measured by the fact that at least twelve Florentine trading companies were established in Buda during the first three decades of the fifteenth century. As far as we can tell, they were medium-size companies, mainly set up for the export of Florentine textiles to Hungary, in exchange for precious metals originating from the local mines. The senior partners of these companies were important to the business of Florentine long-distance trade and played a

94 In 1376, the politician and wool manufacturer Giovanni di Amerigo del Bene suggested to the government that the Florentine ambassadors heading to Hungary would carry as gifts three pieces of velvet and three pieces of silk, decorated with gold. Though, Giovanni did not specify if the silk textiles should have been made of domestic products, we can believe that such gifts might have meant to represent the city and therefore the domestic industry. However, we have no information on whether or not these diplomatic gifts reached the royal court. 'Iohannes Amerigi pro Gonfaloneriis dixit quod nota ambaxiatores Hungarie videatur per duos per Collegium et de Octo [...] Et quod portent ad filius regis tres petias velluti et tres drappi ad auri.' ASF, CP 14. fol. 38r.

95 See as examples: Wetter and Sipos, 'Kasel aus Kaschau', pp. 630-632. Ibid., 'Kasel aus Zipser Kapitel', pp. 632-633. Ibid., 'Kasel aus Bartfeld', pp. 633-634.

96 ASF, Mercanzia 11310. fol. 34r.

97 Pitti, 'Ricordi', pp. 366-367.

98 '[...] Magiori miei qui vi dirò apunto quello mi à rubato due chavalli barbereschi, 18 sparveri, 2 sori, 216 mudati, 2 bertuocchie, 2 struzoli [...] uno anno ch'io tenuto un fante per mandare queste frasche, salvo le sparveri alla reina, a messer Filippo [...]'. ASF, MAP 1. fol. 44r.

significant role in the Florentine textile industry. Some of them were also leading investors in the Florentine silk industry, both in terms of domestic production and in selling abroad. Besides the resident Florentine companies and autonomous partnerships, other merchants relied on their business networks or on independent agents in the marketing of their textiles in Hungary. The *accomanda* system, that is, limited liability contracts, was also used between Buda-based companies and silk companies or between silk firms and local agents.⁹⁹

Florentines' commerce in Hungary was subject to amicable diplomatic relations between the two states, which was also the primary focus of Florentine diplomacy. The Florentine *Signoria's* attitude toward the Hungarian Kings had always been fundamentally conditioned by the contemporary political events in the Italian Peninsula and by Hungary's as well as Florence's relations to the major Italian powers. Since the reign of the Anjou dynasty, started in 1301, Hungary had been in the forefront of political and general interest in Italy. Enikő Csukovits claims that in the fourteenth century Hungarian domestic politics and the diplomatic contacts kept with various Italian states were an important subject for political discussions in contemporary Italy.¹⁰⁰

By the first decades of the century, the Kingdom of Hungary grew into one of the most important powers in Europe, with its over 320,000 km² of territory, which covered the entire Carpathian Basin. By the 1330s, Charles I, as the first Anjou King of Hungary, was among the most influential monarchs of his time. Already in 1333, Charles I's younger son, Andrew, and Johanna, granddaughter of Robert of Anjou, king of Naples and uncle of Louis I, became engaged. After Robert of Anjou's death, the two of them would be the successors to the throne of Naples. In 1342, with Charles's death, the Hungarian crown was passed on to his son, Louis I, without any major opposition. In 1345, however, prince Andrew was killed in Naples, and using this event as a good excuse, in 1348 Louis I conducted a military campaign and conquered Naples, assuming therefore the title of King of Naples, Jerusalem, and Sicily. He did not manage to consolidate his power, though, and after a second military campaign, he signed a peace agreement with Queen Johanna I in 1352.

According to another agreement which resulted in a personal union between the Kingdoms of Hungary and Poland, in 1370, Louis I was also

99 For the history of Florentine companies during Sigismund's reign see: Prajda, 'Florentine Merchant Companies'.

100 Csukovits, 'Introduzione'.

crowned King of Poland. In 1356-1357, he re-conquered territorial control over Croatia and Dalmatia against Venice, which his father had previously lost. Two peace treaties signed with Venice reinforced his military successes in the area; in 1358, the *Zara* (Zadar, HR) treaty gave the Hungarian King control over the Dalmatian coastline from Rijeka to *Ragusa* (Dubrovnik, HR). Further, with the second treaty, concluded in 1381 in Turin, the Hungarian monarch was entitled to receive annually 7000 golden florins from the *Serenissima*.

Since Louis I did not have male heirs to succeed, his Hungarian crown was therefore passed on to his elder daughter, Mary, in 1382; meanwhile, the Polish throne was passed on to his younger daughter, Jadwiga. Because he had no male heirs, Louis also invited his distant cousin, Charles of Durazzo, to Hungary. He arranged Charles's marriage with his cousin and Queen Johanna's niece, Margaret of Durazzo, in 1370, making Charles Duke of Slavonia, Croatia, and Dalmatia. In 1382, Charles managed to occupy the throne of Naples over Johanna II, and three years later, in 1385, he entered also into Hungary and claimed Mary's throne as the eldest male Anjou alive. However, in 1386, supporters of the Queen arranged his assassination. And then Mary, who died prematurely in 1395, through her marriage gave access to the Hungarian throne to Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387-1437).

With this picture of Italian diplomacy, Florence stands as a small fish, always trying to navigate between the more powerful states. Records of political discussions, even in times of war, were filled with words of negotiation, ambassadorships, and the public good. The political elite might have viewed these bellicose situations as interruptions of fruitful trade relations and so remained in favor of peaceful solutions. In 1379, a Florentine politician observed at the secret councils that: 'Peace has always been the objective of the city of Florence and its merchants.'¹⁰¹ Peace guaranteed undisturbed trade for Florentines and therefore offered prosperity and financial stability for the state as well as its institutions and trading communities abroad.¹⁰² As Gene Brucker has demonstrated, the city provisions, which made possible the use of the *Signoria's* authority and public funds in order to protect Florentine

101 'Zenobius Marignolli pro Gonfaloneriis dixit quod pax semper fuit directio civitatis Florentie [...]. ASF, CP 14. fol. 6v. 'Alexander Benedicti dixit super litteris oratorum Ungarie eligatur oratores quot Dominorum placuerunt ad procurandum pacem Venetorum et utilitatem ac securitatem civium et mercatorum nostrum quod sunt Venetiis.' CP 18. fol. 9v.

102 'Quod pax procuretur, et pro mercatoribus procuretur quod possint facere per mundum suas mercantias et exigere debita sibi.' ASF, CP 15. fol. 90v. Brucker, *Florentine Politics and Society*, p. 338.

mercantile interests abroad, received much support in the councils in the 1350s-1370s.¹⁰³

Official contacts with the Hungarian royal court, had already been established by the first years of the 1350s.¹⁰⁴ The main aim was to form an alliance with Louis I in support of Florentine diplomacy in the peninsula. In 1359, the notary of the secret councils recorded for the first time a speech that addressed the issue of dispatching an ambassador (*oratore*) to the King of Hungary.¹⁰⁵ Following that, in the 1360s and 1370s, diplomatic contacts with the Hungarian King occupied an important place among the subjects of the meetings of the secret councils.¹⁰⁶ The earliest report on the arrival of a diplomatic contingent to the royal court in Hungary dates back to 1376, an important moment of the War of the Eight Saints (1375-1378), a conflict that arose between Florence and the Papacy.¹⁰⁷ Florence, during this period, considered the Hungarian King as a possible diplomatic ally, and so at the secret councils a large number of speakers addressed the issue.¹⁰⁸ The close and fruitful relations between the two states might have been the main reason that, in spite of Pope Gregory XI's interdict, published on 31 March 1376, Florentines never suffered expulsion from the Kingdom.¹⁰⁹ This was the very same reason the *Serenissima* refused to publish the interdict on Venetian territory, claiming that they wanted to preserve good relations with the Florentine merchants therein. The Venetian ambassadors to the pope explained that the city of San Marco would suffer great losses if Florentines were expelled.¹¹⁰

Coluccio Piero Salutati entered into the Florentine chancellery in April 1375, exactly at the beginnings of the conflicts with the Papacy. It might not be accidental that during his office, the number of state letters sent to the Hungarian royal court increased visibly. State letters were collected and copied into registers, kept very often by the chancellor himself. In our

103 In 1372, Filippo Giamori, one of the sixteen Standardbearers consulted that 'Favorentur mercatores circa recuperationem suarum mercaturarum.' ASF, CP 12. fol. 147r. Brucker, *Florentine Politics and Society*, p. 91.

104 ASF, Signori, Missive, I. Cancelleria 10. fol. 47r.

105 Though the earliest meetings date back to 1349, the record-keeping in the first ten years of the secret councils was not complete. ASF, CP 12. fol. 35r.

106 ASF, CP 4. fol. 113r; CP 5. fols. 66r, 79r; CP 10. fol. 31r. See also: Prajda, 'Trade and Diplomacy in pre-Medici Florence'.

107 The embassy was led by Simone di Rinieri Peruzzi and Bene di Jacopo del Bene. Prajda, 'Representations of the Florentine Signoria'.

108 ASF, CP 13. fols. 55v, 57r; CP 14. (c. 50 cases); CP 15 (c. 33 cases)

109 Trexler, *The Spiritual Power*, p. 80.

110 Mueller, 'I fiorentini', p. 8.

period, most of them were produced during the chancellery of Salutati (twelve registers), while the chancelleries of Benedetto Fortini (one register), Piero di ser Mino (one register), Paolo Fortini (three registers), and Leonardo Bruni (four registers) have considerably smaller correspondences left in the records.¹¹¹ Ronald G. Witt's hypothesis that the Florentine government would have relied significantly on state letters in diplomatic communication during Coluccio's time is also supported by the quantity and quality of *missive* sent to the King of Hungary.¹¹² According to the registers, before Coluccio entered into office, Niccolò Monachi, in the capacity of Florentine chancellor, addressed altogether three letters to Louis I.¹¹³ At the same time, Coluccio's dispatches to Louis I, between 1375 and 1382, number 23, almost eight times as many as in the previous period.¹¹⁴ Following Louis I's death, his daughter, Queen Mary, received six letters from the chancery.¹¹⁵ Besides her, Elisabeth and Charles of Durazzo (in his capacity as Hungarian King) were among the correspondents.¹¹⁶ During Salutati's term, the chancery addressed ten letters to Sigismund of Luxembourg.¹¹⁷ After Coluccio's time, the accuracy of record keeping and the frequency of dispatching diplomatic correspondence, as well as its quality, decline. In the following eighteen years, there are no traces of correspondence with the Hungarian royal court, and the remaining eight letters were written in a relatively short period of time, between 1424 and

111 For the registers see: Monachi: ASF, Signori, Missive, Cancelleria I, vols. 9-14. Salutati: Signori, Missive, Cancelleria I, vols. 15-24, 26. Benedetto Fortini: Signori, Missive, Cancelleria I, vol. 27. Piero di ser Mino: Signori, Missive, Cancelleria I, vol. 28. Paolo Fortini: Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, vols. 29, 30, 31. Vols. 25 and 29 are mixed ones. Bruni: Signori, Missive, Cancelleria I, vols. 32-5. On Salutati's registers see: Langkabel, 'Due Staatsbriefe Coluccio Salutati's', pp. 8-9.

112 Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients*, p. 315.

113 ASF, Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 10. fol. 47r, 12. fol. 92r, 13. fol. 36v.

114 For the comprehensive list of missives sent by the Florentine chancery during Coluccio's office see: *Coluccio Salutati cancelliere della repubblica fiorentina*. For the missives sent to the Hungarian royal court see: ASF, Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 16. fol. 69r. (02/05/1376); 17. fol. 11v. (04/02/1376); 15. fol. 58r. (04/26/1376); 17. fol. 21r. (04/29/1376); 17. fol. 23r. (05/03/1376); 17. fol. 30v. (05/27/1376); 17. fol. 52v. (08/04/1376); 17. fol. 67v. (09/28/1376); 17. fol. 99r. (03/21/1377); 17. fol. 99r. (03/23/1377); 17. fol. 123r. (07/18/1377); 18. fol. 74v. (10/17/1379); 18. fol. 81v. (11/09/1379); 18. fol. 95r. (12/30/1379); 18. fol. 135v. (04/05/1380); 18. fol. 143v. (04/16/1380); 19. fol. 42v. (09/13/1380); 19. fol. 69r. (10/29/1380); 19. fol. 80r. (12/04/1380); 19. fol. 149v. (07/10/1381); 19. fol. 175v. (09/23/1381); 18. fol. 141r. (s.d.); 18. fol. 141r (s.d.) Besides these letters, Armando Nuzzo cites others as well of which there are no copies in the registers of the chancery. Nuzzo, 'Coluccio Salutati e l'Ungheria'.

115 ASF, Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 20.fol.82v. (03/15/1386); 20.fol.12v. (02/10/1388); 21.fol.27v. (05/16/1388); 21.fol.41r. (07/31/1388); 21.fol.85v. (03/06/1389); 24.fol.110r. (02/09/1395).

116 For a letter sent to the queen mother see: ASF, Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 17.21r (04/29/1376).

117 ASF, Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 21.fol.13r. (02/10/1388); 21.fol.39v. (07/25/1388); 21.fol.45r. (08/17/1388); 21.fol.131v. (09/28/1389); 24. fol.109v. (02/09/1395); 24.fol.121r. (03/28/1395); 24.fol.154r. (09/12/1395); 26. fol.28v. (02/06/1404); 26.fol.51v. (07/11/1404); 26. fol.136r. (12/05/1405).

1432.¹¹⁸ Since the registers of the Florentine chancery seem to be consistent in this regard, we shall presume that besides the general decrease in the number of *missives*, record-keeping of the Florentine bureaucracy took a very inefficient and unsystematic form. Not only the quantity but also the quality of the dispatches was improved with Coluccio's entrance into the Florentine bureaucracy.

Ronald G. Witt has emphasized that the novelty of Coluccio Salutati's political writings lay in the fact that he developed a historical discourse, which made use of classical examples.¹¹⁹ The salutations of Coluccio's state letters, addressed to greater powers, became elaborate, to the extent that sometimes they even reached exaggerated proportions.¹²⁰ The dispatches sent to the Hungarian ruler were seemingly no exception. Monachi's correspondence with the court contained short, straight-to-the point *missives*, and their *salutatio* was kept to the minimum, calling the Hungarian ruler 'illustrious King and single lord' and 'the most glorious and illustrious King.'¹²¹ Coluccio's letters, instead, were characterized by the extensive use of superlatives, in a similar way to other *missives* addressed to his correspondents of the same rank. The rhetoric Coluccio applied to his correspondence with the Hungarian monarch followed a pattern similar to that found in his letters to other monarchs, for example, the French King.¹²² Salutati's state letters had a tremendous effect at the French royal court, so we might expect the same reception in the *aula* in Hungary, which might also explain why Sigismund invited to Buda one of Salutati's followers, Pier Paolo Vergerio.¹²³ In Salutati's letters, both the Hungarian and the French sovereign were addressed as 'our most serene Father and Lord,' 'Prince, our Father and Lord',

118 ASF, Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 32 fols.65r-v (7/4/1429); 32. fols.178v-179r (07/02/1430); 33. fols.76r-78v (21/06/1432); 33. fols.78v-80r (03/07/1432); 30. fol.85v (30/10/1424); 30. fol.104r (1426); 30.fol.104v (1426); 30. fols.114v-115r (24/05/1427).

119 Witt, 'Florentine Politics and the Ruling Class', pp. 243-267.

120 On his style see: Daniela de Rosa, 'Coluccio Salutati notaio e cancelliere'. For an example of the *salutatio* in one of the letters addressed to the French king: 'Serenissime atque gloriosissime principium metuendissime domine nostrum ac populi Florentini columen et refugium singular.' Witt, *Coluccio Salutati and his Public Letters*, pp. 27-28.

121 'Regum illustris et domine'. ASF, Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 10. fol. 47r; 'Illustris rex et domine singularis'. Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 12. fol. 92r; 'Gloriosissimo et illutris rex'. Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 13. fol. 36v.

122 For correspondence with the French King see: 'Serenissime atque invictissime princeps.' in *Coluccio Salutati, Political Writings*, pp. 16, 46. For other dispatches to the French King see: ASF, Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 20. fol. 30v; 19. fol. 97v; 21. fol. 44; 24. fol. 132v; 24. fol. 93r.

123 On the reception of Salutati's letters at the French court see: Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads*, pp.125-126. For the letters in which Vergerio refers to Salutati as his master see: *Epistolario di Pier Paolo Vergerio*, pp. 55, 33, 66.

and foremost 'singular benefactor' of the Republic.¹²⁴ In a similar way, Witt has also noted that while Niccolò Monachi made no distinction in his state letters between kings and queens, addressing them both as *Rex*, Coluccio was sensitive to the issue.¹²⁵ In fact, when corresponding with queens, such as Mary of Hungary and Margaret of Naples, the female versions of these *salutatio* were used, such as 'the most serene and glorious Queen' and 'our most singular Mother and Dame'.¹²⁶

Besides the extensive use of father-son, lord-servant paradigms, Coluccio also frequently recalled the past relations between the Hungarian monarchs and the Florentine government. In Mary's case, he mentioned the amicable contacts the Signoria maintained with her father; while the rhetorical setting of Sigismund's letters followed the same logic: the good contacts with Emperor Charles IV, father of Sigismund, would have provided, in his understanding, the basis for fruitful diplomatic contacts.¹²⁷ Coluccio's letters, in spite of their innovative nature, were standardized in their formalities, making no distinction between correspondents of the same rank, and were composed with little to no intention for personalization in their rhetoric. Rigorous record-keeping, eloquence in composing letters, and the emphasis on *missive* over embassies as means of diplomatic communication all indicate that during Coluccio's time, state letters stood as the most important tools for setting Florence in the context of international diplomacy. As part of this view, the amicable contacts with the Hungarian ruler remained an important factor in shaping the foreign affairs of the Republic. The remaining eight letters, written during the chancery of Paolo Fortini and Leonardo Bruni, show little novelty on the rhetorical level and testify to certain changes in the functioning of the chancery.

Following Coluccio's time, state letters seem to have lost their importance in diplomatic communication, resulting in the fact that both Paolo Fortini and Leonardo Bruni put less emphasis on their improvement. State letters were consequently replaced by personal embassies assigned to foreign powers

124 For the letters addressed to Louis I see: 'Serenissime et gloriosissime princeps et benignissime pater et domine noster'. ASF, Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 17. fol. 99r; 22. fol. 81v.

125 Witt, *Coluccio Salutati and his Public Letters*, ch.3.

126 For a letter to Margaret see: ASF, Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 21. fol. 40r. 'Serenissima et gloriosissima regina, singularissima mater et domina nostra.' For a letter to Mary see: 'Serenissima et gloriosissima regina'. ASF, Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 21. fol. 26v.

127 ASF, Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria, 21. fol. 12r; 21. fol. 12v. Earlier, one of his letters addressed to Louis I recalled the memory of the King's great-grandfather, while praising the Angevins. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients*, p. 313.

with a specific mandate.¹²⁸ One of the explanations might be, as Ronald Witt has pointed out, that this was a general tendency throughout Italy, which also led to the transformation of diplomatic practices. Ambassadors such as Rinaldo degli Albizzi proved to be more effective representatives of the Signoria's interests abroad than state letters composed by Paolo Fortini.¹²⁹ If we consider the records of the diplomatic contingents assigned to the court of the Hungarian king, we might find inequalities in the quality and the quantity of sources housed by some of the north Italian archives. The earliest information about a diplomatic contingent dispatched by the Florentine government to the King of Hungary dates back to 1347, and was recorded in the Chronicle of Giovanni Villani.¹³⁰ This date almost coincides with the earliest report about a Venetian envoy sent to the Kingdom of Hungary in 1348.¹³¹ It was not until 1376, just a year after Coluccio Salutati was nominated to the head of the chancery, that we receive a detailed account of a Florentine diplomatic contingent in Hungary.¹³² Since most of the documentation produced by the Florentine chancery that deals with ambassadorships starts with his appointment, the number of Florentine diplomatic missions that precede this period is unclear. Ambassadorships, like state letters, were discussed at the meetings of the secret councils as early as the 1350s. They address the issue of an envoy to Hungary. But there is no evidence that the priors had actually approved the proposals. In spite of the fact that the corresponding registers of the Florentine chancellery starting from 1393 seem to be consistent, the total number of embassies to Sigismund's court remains low compared to the number of contingents which the *Signoria* sent to the neighbouring Italian powers.¹³³ One very plausible explanation might be the considerable distance and difficulties of the journey between Florence and Buda, which also made the missions extremely expensive. During Coluccio's time two embassies were recorded. The chancery led by Paolo Fortini registered four diplomatic missions and

128 De Rosa, in accordance with Ronald Witt, also emphasizes the inferiority of the style of Leonardo Bruni's state letters compared to Coluccio's. De Rosa, *Coluccio Salutati*, pp. X-XI.

129 Witt, *Coluccio Salutati and his Public Letters*, pp. 21-22.

130 In this particular case, the embassy reached the King in Verona. *Cronaca di Giovanni Villani*, III.12.108, pp. 161-162.

131 For a later copy of a register containing ambassadorships see: Venice, Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter: ASV), Senato, Sindacati, Registri I.

132 For references regarding this particular ambassadorship see: Prajda, 'Egy firenzei sírköve a középkori Budán', pp. 29-35. Prajda, 'Trade and Diplomacy in pre-Medici Florence'.

133 ASF, Signori, Legazioni e Commissarie, Missive e Responsive, vols. 1-10.

consequently during Leonardo Bruni's chancery, three more. Among these, only six were heading directly to the Kingdom of Hungary.

In the first case, in 1376, the *Signoria* was seeking alliance with Louis I against Pope Gregory XI. In 1396, the Florentine government dispatched another embassy in order to forge a marriage alliance between Sigismund and the house of Naples.¹³⁴ This happened the year after the Count of Mantua assigned his ambassadors to the royal court in Buda.¹³⁵ Nine years had passed since Sigismund's accession to the throne, without news about the sending of a diplomatic contingent from Florence. This is no wonder, since several sources underline that the Florentine political elite, during the struggle for the throne between Charles and Sigismund, was in favor of the former. In fact, in 1386, following the news of Charles of Durazzo's coronation as King of Hungary, Coluccio Salutati himself read aloud the letter of the newly made ruler and the Florentine government ordered public celebrations.¹³⁶ Instead, the Venetian *Serenissima* in 1387 decided to assign the Venetian nobleman Pantaleone Barbo to the court, accompanied by the notary Lorenzo Monaci, demonstrating their support for Sigismund.¹³⁷ By the Treaty of Turin (1381), once a year, a diplomatic contingent was dispatched from Venice to the royal court in order to hand over the 7,000 ducats the *Serenissima* was supposed to pay for the use of the Dalmatian ports.¹³⁸ Florentine contingents were surely less frequent than that, at least in the decades preceding the 1420s, which is considered the most active period of Florentine diplomacy in relation to the Hungarian ruler, with four embassies following each other

134 For the instructions to the ambassadors see: ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie 2, fols. 17r bis-18r. In response to this, the ambassadors, messer Grazia Castellani and messer Andrea Da Montebuoni prepared a written report about what they accomplished during their stay at the royal court. In the document, they give a detailed account to the *Signoria* of how they performed their task and represented the Florentine government at the royal court. ASF, Dieci di Balia, Relazioni di Ambasciatori 1, fols. 20v-21r.

135 ASMA, Archivio Gonzaga, busta 533, n. 3, busta 531, n. 1. Thallóczy, 'Mantovai követjárás Budán 1395'.

136 Following the coronation, the news reached Florence by 20 January, when the Standardbearer, Dinozzo Stefani, suggested holding public celebrations in the city. ASF, Consulte e Pratiche 25,30r. For the diplomatic correspondence see: ASF, Signori Missive I, Cancelleria 19. For the detailed description of the celebrations see: *Alle bocche della piazza*, p. 61.

137 The ambassador met Sigismund on 7 April 1387 at the palace in Buda. E. Kovács, 'Mária királyné kiszabadítása', pp. 926-931. Sigismund proposed to Venice by the ambassador to forge an alliance for the release of Queens Mary and Elisabeth.

138 Until 1400, they were sometimes the ambassadors who brought money to Buda or brokers of a local bank; Vieri de' Medici, for example, took money to Hungary. For the payment in 1388 see: *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. I, docs. 762, 882.

in the years 1424, 1426, 1427, and 1428.¹³⁹ As for the 1430s, there are no cases known to us when Sigismund might have welcomed incoming Florentine ambassadors on Hungarian territory.

The richness of the Florentine National Archives regarding the diplomatic contacts between the Florentine Republic and the Kingdom of Hungary was discovered in the nineteenth century by the Hungarian Ernő Simonyi (1821-1882).¹⁴⁰ His work consists of complete transcriptions of documents, drawn from the collections of the Signori, the Dieci di Balìa, and the Carte Stroziane.¹⁴¹ It has remained until now a manuscript, kept by the Manuscript Collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and provides fertile ground for research to scholars with limited access to the Florentine National Archives.

In the interwar period, Jolán Balogh (1900-1988), also Hungarian, started to publish a series of studies concerning the artistic connections between Florence and Hungary, but the period of Sigismund of Luxembourg's reign remained marginal to her studies.¹⁴² One of her articles, dealing with Andrea Scolari's service as Bishop of *Varadinum*, describes in detail the fragmented family archives of the Scolari family, earlier mentioned by Cesare Guasti, which are located among the documents of the Florentine Benedictine Abbey (*Badia Fiorentina*).¹⁴³ Balogh's groundbreaking narrative, which put Hungarian art into the context of the development and spread of the Florentine Renaissance, won many followers, and consequent generations have been using her works as points of reference when studying Florentine-Hungarian relations.¹⁴⁴

However, it was not until the 1980s that Zsuzsa Teke at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences initiated research on Florentines' trade in Hungary during Sigismund of Luxembourg's reign, benefiting mainly from the

139 For these diplomatic contingents see: Prajda, 'A Magyar Királyság és a Firenzei Köztársaság'. In 1428, the Venetian ambassador, Marco Dandolo visited the royal court. For a copy of a letter addressed to him see: ASMA, busta 2185.

140 The first part of the work was prepared in 1863, which was completed by further archival researches in 1864 and in 1866-1867. The timespan of the transcriptions ranges between 1380 and 1492. Lukinich, *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Történettudományi Bizottsága másolat- és kéziratgyűjteményének ismertetése*, pp. 15-16.

141 Simonyi, *Flórenczi Okmánytár*. MTA Kézirattára Mb 4994 I-II.

142 Balogh, *A művészet Mátyás király udvarában*. Its revised version: Ibid., *Mátyás király és a művészet*. Ibid., 'Néhány adat Firenze és Magyarország kulturális kapcsolatainak történetéhez'. For Jolán Balogh's activity see: Török, 'Jolán Balogh'.

143 Balogh, 'Andrea Scolari'. The Scolari family archives were earlier mentioned by Cesare Guasti. *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi*, III. p. 588.

144 For an exhaustive literature of the subject, see: Prajda, 'Florentine Merchant Companies'.

documents of the Simonyi collection and the first *Catasto*. The novelties of Teke's theoretical and empirical findings were summarized in two Hungarian-language publications, which have since been published in Italian.¹⁴⁵ Even though Teke had restricted access to Florentine sources, her chronology of Florentine merchants' settlement in the region, which considers as a turning point the consolidation of Sigismund's power in 1404, is underlined by more in-depth studies as well.¹⁴⁶ Following in her footsteps, Krisztina Arany has recently prepared an index of Florentine merchants who traded in Hungary and published a few articles on Florentine businessmen in Hungary.¹⁴⁷ Meanwhile, though the conceptual framework of her research mirrors Teke's hypotheses, the documentary evidence consists mostly of the 1427 *Catasto*, the *Zsigmond kori oklevéltár*, and Simonyi's manuscript.

As Teke has pointed out, it might be partially due to the increased number of sources, which have been preserved in the Florentine National Archives, that up to the turn of the sixteenth century Sigismund's reign seemingly witnessed the largest influx of Florentine merchants into the Kingdom of Hungary. Thanks to their business profile, Florentine merchants' migration was typically an urban phenomenon. Their settlement fell into two categories: they either installed themselves nearby mining towns or in royal towns, which were connected to the network of long-distance trade. In Transylvania, we find them, for example, in Dej (RO), *Hermannstadt* (Sibiu, RO), and *Varadinum* (Oradea, RO), locations that have salt mines and salt chambers. Among them, the Mannini, studied by István Draskóczy, operated in the region as Pippo Scolari's officers and their sons continued to work in the royal administration of salt until the mid-fifteenth century.¹⁴⁸ Florentines also received employment in royal minting; the case of Francesco di Bernardo da Carmignano (earlier noted as Francesco Bernardi) shows that the Hungarian florin, introduced by Louis I, was minted during Sigismund under the supervision of Florentine mint-masters.¹⁴⁹

145 Her first work on the subject was published in 1984. Teke, 'Az 1427.évi catasto'.

146 Teke, 'Firenzei üzletemberek Magyarországon'. Ibidem, 'Firenzei kereskedőtársaságok, kereskedők Magyarországon'. Ibid., 'Operatori economici in Ungheria'.

147 Arany, 'Firenzei kereskedők, bankárok és hivatalviselők'.

148 Draskóczy, 'Olaszok a 15. századi Erdélyben'. Ibidem, 'Italiener in Siebenbürgen im 15. Jahrhundert'.

149 Gyöngyössy, 'Zsigmond király aranypézt- verésének első korszaka'. Ibidem, 'Florenus Hungaricalis'. Draskóczy, 'Der ungarische Goldgulden'. Mályusz, 'Az izmaelita pénzverőjegyek kérdéséhez'.

Among the free royal towns, Buda, *Gradec* (Zagreb, HR), Košice (SK), and *Pressburg* (Bratislava, SK) surely had Florentine inhabitants.¹⁵⁰ So far, *Gradec* is the only known place where Florentines were elected to be members of the town council.¹⁵¹ The town was bordered by the bishopric town of Zagreb and was on the main road that connected *Segna* (Senj, HR) to Buda and the Hungarian hinterland. The Kingdom of Croatia, a subject of the Hungarian crown since the eleventh century, surely had a good number of Florentines residing temporarily on her territory. Besides that, Buda, as a major trade centre and the seat of Sigismund of Luxembourg's court, can be considered as the centre of Florentines' settlement in the region. Back then, the town, which was constituted roughly of what is today the castle district and some nearby lands, was hardly comparable in size to contemporary Florence with a population about 15-20 per cent of the Tuscan city.¹⁵² The local Florentine community was part of a more extended group of merchants of Italian origins, comprising also Genoese and Venetian citizens. The former had already been granted trade privileges by Louis I of Anjou, which were renewed by King Sigismund.¹⁵³ Besides members of the Sorba family, there is very little evidence of their presence in Hungary.¹⁵⁴ Only the Milanese ambassador, visiting the court in 1426, happened to be

150 In the 1390s, Jacopo di Francesco Ventura, an active member of the meetings of the secret councils lived in *Pressburg*. *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár* I. doc. 2655. (25/10/1392), doc. 2880 (26/03/1391), doc. 3971 (08/05/1395). Probably his brother was Giovanni Ventura, who in 1375, submitted a proposal to the Council of the Popolo regarding the textiles sent by a certain Giovanni Gianni and others to the Hungarian King. ASF, LB, 40. fol. 179. Majorossy, 'A Krisztus Teste Konfraternitás'. *Ibid.*, 'Late Medieval Confraternities in Pressburg'. For his participation in the meetings of the secret councils, between 19 December 1391 and 6 May 1401 see: ASF, CP 29. fols. 9v, 155v, 156v, 158r, 160r, 168r, 169v; 30. fols. 2r, 5v, 6r. 31. 27v, 33v, 34v, 40v; 33. fols. 95v, 146r; 34. fols. 17v, 23v, 24r, 25r, 44v, 48v, 174v, 179r. He, as the research of Judit Majorossy has also underlined, became a respected member of the local community as well as remained actively involved in Florentine politics. In Košice, the Talenti brothers, Giovanni and Simone, received citizenship. Already in the 1380s, they appeared in the Kingdom where they covered several royal offices, such as count of the salt chambers, the royal chamber, and the *lucrum camerae*. *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*. I. doc. 5645; II/1. doc. 4749. See also: Teke, 'Firenzei üzletemberek'.

151 Budak, 'I fiorentini nella Slavonia e nella Croazia'. See also: Škrebliin, 'Ethnic Groups in Zagreb's Gradec'.

152 András Kubinyi and József Laszlovszky estimated the population of late medieval Buda at about 6000-8000 inhabitants. Kubinyi and Laszlovszky, *Népességtörténeti kérdések a késő középkori Magyarországon*, pp. 37-40. Kubinyi and Laszlovszky, *Völker und Kulturen im mittelalterlichen Ungarn*.

153 Pach, 'A Levante-kereskedelem erdélyi útvonala'.

154 ASF, Signori, Missive, Cancelleria I. 13. fol. 36v.

mentioned as having Genoese origins.¹⁵⁵ Since there has been no systematic research in the Genoese archives, we must presume that their number, in comparison to Florentines, was limited. Similarly, the Venetian community might have been more sizeable in Dalmatia, but not in other parts of the state. Sporadic information about *cittadini originari* from Venice living in one of the free royal towns, such as Buda, *Pressburg*, or *Gradec*, during the reign of Sigismund does appear in sources.¹⁵⁶ One example from the 1390s shows that, like Florentines, they also cooperated with local citizens and sold their goods in Buda.¹⁵⁷

Some of these Italian merchants kept their houses and shops in the street of *Platea Italicorum* (mentioned in Florentine sources as *Via dei Latini*), identified today as *Országház utca*.¹⁵⁸ Among them was Pippo Scolari himself.¹⁵⁹ In addition to Scolari, in 1390, Nofri di Francesco de'Bardi also owned a house in Buda.¹⁶⁰ Two decades later, around 1410, Francesco di Bernardo da Carmignano was registered in the already mentioned *Platea*.¹⁶¹ In 1427, Simone di Piero Melanesi also rented a house there from the heirs of a Venetian citizen.¹⁶² Furthermore, the four Florentine tombs found

155 Rinaldo degli Albizzi mentions Bartolomeo Mosca da Genova. *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi*, III. p. 580. Published in short: *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*. XIII. doc. 386.

156 A tax declaration of the Melanesi mentions the house possessed previously by the Venetian Daniello Cini in Buda. ASF, Catasto 46. fol. 655v. In 1426, Rinaldo degli Albizzi refers to the factors of the Venetian Niccolò Sorger in Vienna. *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi*, III. pp. 579-580. On the basis of this, it is possible that Hans de Sorger, cited in a document issued by the city council of *Pressburg*, was also of Venetian origins. *Zsigmond-kori oklevéltár*. VII. doc.1294. Similarly, two other Venetians, Luca di Giovanni Bomolo and Zacaria de Gangioni, are mentioned in the town of Zagreb. E. Kovács, *Mária királyné kiszabadítása*, p. 934.

157 An example of Venetian textile trade to Hungary also suggests that Venetians might have used the same local brokers and retail cloth merchants in Buda as Florentines did. Michael Nadler, a German merchant and citizen of Buda, appears in Venetian sources in connection with textile trade: ASV, Giudici di Petizion 22. fol.77r. At the same time, he is also listed as debtor of the Melanesi company in Buda: ASF, Catasto 46. fol. 654v.

158 Among them were Pippo Scolari, Nofri Bardi, Tommaso Melanesi, Francesco di Bernardo da Carmignano, and Niccolò Sorger. For Sorger, see: *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi*, III. pp. 579-581. For Nofri Bardi: *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, I. doc. 1379. For Francesco Bernardo, see: *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, II/2. docs. 7379, 7562. See also: Végh, *Buda. The Multi-Ethnic Capital of Medieval Hungary*.

159 Végh, *Buda város középkori helyrajza*. Ibid., *The Multi-Ethnic Capital of Medieval Hungary*.

160 The document also mentions a certain Bartolomeo da Padua who earlier lived there. *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, I. doc. 1379. (27/02/1390)

161 '[...] In civitate nostra Budensi in platea Galicali [...]. *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, II. doc. 7379. (23/02/1410), doc. 7562 (06/05/1410)

162 'Una casa a pigione posta in Buda nella Via de latini, dall'erede di Daniello Cini da Vinegia [...]. ASF Catasto 46. fol. 655v.

during the excavations of the nearby Dominican Church suggest that in the fifteenth century this might have served as the Florentines' parish.¹⁶³

It has been generally accepted, so far, that only Germans and Hungarians had legal representatives in the city during Sigismund's reign. However, lately several new pieces of evidence have supported that, at least as early as the 1390s, Italians maintained a joint consulate in the city.¹⁶⁴ Though the Hungarian National Archives lack documents of a commercial nature, the so-called Buda law book, a record of the laws and customs of the city, does not refer to the Italian consul either. However, the law book – probably written between 1405 and 1421, and in German, for personal use – would not necessarily record the existence of an independent organization of Italians.¹⁶⁵ Despite the fact that the city statutes strictly regulated the activity of non-indigenous merchants who did not possess citizenship in Buda, their business conduct was not the focus of the Buda law book. Since the book is mainly concerned with German merchants' privileges in the city, and if there was very little overlap between the two groups on organizational and jurisdictional levels, then there would have been no reason at all to mention the Italian consul. The four corresponding sources, surviving in four different archival units in the Florentine National Archives, point out that roughly between 1392 and 1431, the joint Latin consulate operated as the permanent jurisdictional and organizational system of Florentine merchants in the city. The dates are negotiable, since the earliest document refers to the ex-Latin consul and the last refers to the election of a new Latin vice judge.

The existence of this organization system cannot be thought of without the Florentines obtaining collective privileges. In 1375, the Florentine Signoria had already delivered a request to Louis I, an indicator that negotiations on that front might have started before Sigismund's time.¹⁶⁶ The Latin consulate in Buda was probably one of the earliest of such organizations that included Florentine merchants outside Italy, and its operation might have embraced the entire period of Sigismund of Luxembourg's reign.

The first consul known by name, Giovanni Saracino, was of Paduan origins, and was an important member of the royal administration, studied

163 For the description of the tombs, see: Lővei, 'Mittelalterliche Grabdenkmäler in Buda', pp. 353-354. For the study of the ambassador, Bene di Jacopo del Bene's tomb see: Prajda, 'Egy firenzei sírköve'.

164 Prajda, 'Justice in the Florentine Trading Community'.

165 For the German edition of the Law Book see: Mollay, *Das Ofner Stadtrecht*. For the Buda Law Book about selling Italian wine in the city: Blazovich and Schmidt, *Buda város jogkönyve*, p. 423, article 209. On commercial goods coming from Italy: ID., p. 525, article 405.

166 ASF, Signori, Missive, I. Cancelleria 17. fol. 52v.

by Boglárka Weisz.¹⁶⁷ Giovanni's brother, Jacobo, appears in Hungarian sources as early as the 1350s, governing the chambers in Szerém (Srijem, HR) and Pécs. Before that, he had been working as a shopkeeper (*apothecarius*) in Buda.¹⁶⁸ Giovanni was first mentioned in 1371 as a *castellanus* in Nyitra County (Nitra, SK).¹⁶⁹ The Saracino brothers occupied various offices in Hungary, including the administration of salt, taxes, and mints. In 1382, Giovanni had already managed the thirties tax (*tricesima*) with a Florentine merchant named Francesco di Bernardo da Carmignano.¹⁷⁰ Between 1382 and 1387, the sources mention another officer of the thirties, the very same Nanni (Giovanni) Boscoli, whose case was brought before Giovanni as Latin consul.¹⁷¹ In 1389, Giovanni and Francesco were still at their positions, at approximately the same time when Giovanni might have been elected to the consul's office. He was also promoted to noble rank by King Sigismund and died sometime before 13 June 1402.¹⁷² Later, in the early 1430s, two Florentine brothers, Giovanni and Leonardo di Nofri de'Bardi, similarly royal officers, occupied the position. In their absence, which might have lasted only a relatively short period, a Siense was elected for Latin vice judge.¹⁷³ This vice judge, Sano degli Ugurgeri, was also mentioned in 1435 in the letter sent by Pope Eugene IV, urging the restitution of Antonio Popoleschi's goods by King Sigismund.¹⁷⁴ Antonio worked as a representative of the firm of Filippo di Simone Capponi and

167 A document issued by the chancellery of Ladislaus of Durazzo informs us that the brothers were of Paduan origins. Weisz, 'A szerémi és pécsi kamarák', p. 40. Giovanni Saracino worked also with another administrator of Paduan origins. *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, I. doc. 4661.

168 He was also mentioned as *magistro Saracheno*. Weisz, 'A szerémi és pécsi kamarák', pp. 39-40.

169 Weisz, 'A szerémi és pécsi kamarák', p. 42.

170 Weisz, 'A szerémi és pécsi kamarák', p. 45. He was mentioned in 1387, together with Francesco as *Johannes Sarachenus*. *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, I. doc. 8. In the 1370s, Francesco was also responsible for the transfer of ecclesiastical revenues from Hungary to the Apostolic Chamber. Renouard, 'Relations', p. 310.

171 Pach, 'A harmincadvám az Anjou-korban', 265-266. Weisz, 'A szerémi és pécsi kamarák', p. 46.

172 For Johannes' settlement in Buda, see: *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, II. doc. 2043. Already in 1389, he used the names of Mesztegynyői or Százdi. *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, I. docs. 87, 4659. He also became proprietary of noble estates in Hungary. *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, I. doc. 4762. For his death see: *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, II/1. doc. 1727.

173 '[...] Dinanzi a voi Sano degli Ugorgieri da Siena vice giudice de latini in luogo di messer Lionardo di messer Giovanni di Nofri da Boymoy [...]. ASF, Mercanzia 4379. fol. 98v. The document talks about the brothers, Leonardo and Giovanni di Nofri de'Bardi. Giovanni de'Bardi is mentioned as Latin judge: Mercanzia 7120. fol. 254v.

174 Sano was mentioned in the document as a Siense citizen, without any reference to his office. Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Registri Vaticani 359. fol. 236v. For a short summary of the case see: *XV. századi pápák oklevelei*. II. doc. 393.

Zanobi di Giovanni Panciatichi in Hungary. He was among those detained in royal prison, and the mediation of the vice judge might have been necessary between local and Italian authorities.

Despite the existence of a Latin consulate, the administration of justice had a very complex path in the local Florentine community. In case of business misconduct, there might have been several competent judges and institutions that intervened. Consuls of the Florentine *nazioni* typically acted as judges for the merchants, a practice which might have been followed also in Buda.¹⁷⁵ Besides the Latin consul, other domestic Florentine courts had the right to settle disputes between the interested parties, including the corresponding guilds and the *Mercanzia* as supreme court. Several entries in the registers of the Wool Guild suggest that Florentines, with pending affairs in Hungary, often turned to its consuls for protection of their business interests against their fellow citizens. For instance, in two cases occurring in the late 1380s, wool entrepreneurs like Gabriello di messer Bartolomeo Panciatichi and Zanobi di Neri Macigni sued their dealers because they had refused to pay them interest.¹⁷⁶ In the absence of similar court cases of the other major guilds, we can only assume that they similarly handled several appeals at the request of Florentines trading in Hungary. Even though guilds had the right to administer justice internally, businessmen frequently brought their claims also before the Merchant Court.¹⁷⁷ The story of the Boscoli-Portinari firm in Buda eloquently illustrates how the *Mercanzia* might have fulfilled its duties in such cases.¹⁷⁸

175 Quertier has noted that in Pisa the notary (notaio-sindaco) acted as judge for Florentines. Quertier, 'Guerres et richesses des nations'.

176 In the first case, likely occurring on 13 May 1388, the wool entrepreneur Zanobi di Neri Macigni submitted a petition to the guild consuls because of 2400 Florentine florins that Nofri di Francesco dello Stanghetta owed him for wool cloth he had transported to Hungary. ASF, Arte della Lana 542. fol. 13r. Probably in the same year, on 12 February, Gabriello di messer Bartolomeo Panciatichi also brought a case before the guild consuls. He accused Giovanni and Michele di Benedetto da Carmignano of failing to pay for the wool textiles that Gabriello had sent to Hungary, which were consequently sold by Maruccio di Pagolo Marucci in Zagreb. Arte della Lana 542. fol. 28v.

177 Recently, Cédric Quertier has published insights into the tribunal process the *Mercanzia* used to handle bankruptcy and tensions between Florentine and foreign merchants outside the walls of the city-state. Quertier, 'La stigmatization des migrants à l'épreuve des faits'.

178 Other cases involving Florentine merchants in Hungary were also brought before the merchant court. For example, Matteo Scolari, Fronte di Piero di Fronte, and Antonio di Santi established a company in 1406 in Buda. The liquidation of the firm was started on Fronte's initiative, while the Merchant Court mediated between the parties, since the debtors acknowledged the genuineness of the claims. ASF *Mercanzia* 11312. fols. 5r-v.

Initially, the Florentine merchant court set up a commission in order to settle a dispute between several parties, including Ardingo de Ricci, Gualtieri Portinari, and their firm on one side and Giovanni di Bandino Boscoli's heirs on the other side.¹⁷⁹ Giovanni, by his account book, left many debtors in Buda, among them the voivode of Transylvania, István Laczkfi, the Archbishop of Esztergom, Miklós priest of Kapus (Căpușu Mic and Căpușu Mare, RO), the Bishop of Eger, and Pál, the brother of the Bishop of Pécs.¹⁸⁰ Recuperating debts from dignitaries in Hungary was beyond the capacity of a Florentine firm; in cases in which they did not wish to pay, merchants had no other option than to complain to different authorities and continuously beg the debtors for payment. The *Mercanzia* also lacked authority and power against these Hungarian dignitaries, having no other tools at their disposal than to continuously send letters to them. Approximately three years after the commission had been formed, Gualtieri Portinari, in cooperation with the *Mercanzia*, dispatched an agent named Agostino di Pagolo Marucci to Buda to check Giovanni Boscoli's account books. His trip was also designed in such a way that he would recuperate the credits of the firm. On this occasion, the merchant court contacted the ex-Latin consul in an attempt to facilitate the agent's access to the account books and then wrote a letter to one of the major debtors, the Archbishop of Esztergom, asking him to settle his debt with the agent. Besides debtors in Hungary, the *Mercanzia* would have also dealt with the firm's other financial claims against some Italian business partners engaged in trade in Hungary. The heirs, along with the mother company, could fulfill the requests only by the complete liquidation of the branch in Buda and by selling Giovanni Boscoli's mobile and immovable properties in the city. Even under the supervision of the Merchant Court, the affairs were not settled for years.¹⁸¹ The Court even used means of diplomacy in facilitating cases of this sort. On those occasions, the Florentine chancellery contacted the authorities in Hungary and took a stand, though a very humble one, against business misconduct. In some cases, diplomatic correspondence reached the highest level between the *Signoria* and King Sigismund himself.

179 ASF Mercanzia 11310. fols. 2r, 32v.

180 The priest was addressed as bishop in the letter. ASF Mercanzia 11310. fols. 75v, 43r-v, 45r.

181 The former agent Agostino Marucci's attempt to close Boscoli's business affairs in Hungary was not entirely successful when, in 1390, another agent, Giovanni Tosinghi, arrived in Buda. He was sent to Hungary, probably by the Merchant Court, in accordance with the two remaining partners for recuperating the company's credits and for making the account books available for inspection. ASF, Mercanzia 11310. fols. 35r, 44r-v.

Some Florentine merchants acquired citizenship in Buda, and therefore their jurisdictional cases might have fallen under the authority of the town court judges.¹⁸² Furthermore, King Sigismund's order, introduced sometime before 1428, allowed the town court judges of Buda to act in cases of foreign merchants who were trading on her territory.¹⁸³ This might have considerably weakened the role the Latin consul played in the resolution of business conflicts. Maybe because of this new order, the Florentine Merchant Court also sent a letter to the town court judges of Buda, asking for their support in the Boscoli case.¹⁸⁴

Becoming inhabitants of the feudally structured Kingdom of Hungary might have represented not insignificant challenges for Florentine merchants. Not only the jurisdictional circumstances were completely different from those in Florence, but also the centralized market might have limited international merchants' possibilities. For them, the royal and baronial courts were the most important markets in which to merchandize their luxury goods. Therefore, without any support in the royal court, they might have found themselves only on the margins of long-distance trade.

Some of these Florentines probably became involved in diplomacy in order to obtain favorable market possibilities. As we have already seen, the Florentine political elite kept a close eye on the domestic politics in Hungary and tried to maintain favorable diplomatic relations with its ruler. Following Louis I's death, the Florentine political elite had clearly expressed their wish to support Charles of Durazzo (1345-1386), King of Naples, in obtaining the Hungarian crown. In return for their support, Florentine politicians might have expected that Charles would provide them with a strong diplomatic alliance. Thanks to the opposing barons, headed by the Horváti brothers who did not wish to have Sigismund as their king, Charles was crowned King of Hungary in December 1385. Following the news of the coronation, Coluccio Salutati himself read aloud the letter of the newly made ruler and the Florentine government ordered public celebrations and decided to

182 Foreign merchants were not allowed to engage in any commercial activity without the consent of the town court judges and the local merchant community, and once arriving in Buda, they were required to sell their goods there. *Buda város jogkönyve*, pp. 348-355, articles 74-78. The city regulations also prevented domestic merchants from forming partnerships with foreign merchants. *Buda város jogkönyve*, p. 360.

183 Skorka, 'Levél a városháza tornyából'.

184 For the letter addressed to 'Judicibus juratis in Regno Hungarie'. see: ASF, Mercanzia 11310. fol. 75v.

assign ambassadors to Hungary.¹⁸⁵ Charles did not enjoy his reign for long, though, as he was killed two months later on the orders of the queen mother, Louis's widow, Elizabeth. It was only after the deliberation of her daughter, Queen Mary, from the prison of the Horváti, that the marriage between the Queen and Sigismund took place. The devotion of Horváti, János (d. 1394), and Pál (d. 1394), without any doubt, was at the core of Charles's success in obtaining the Hungarian crown. Following Charles's murder, the Horváti organized a rebellion against Sigismund and the queen, capturing and killing several participants, among them Miklós Garai, who was the count palatine, the queen mother, and two other barons. As a Florentine chronicle commemorates, the heads of the three barons who were responsible for Charles's murder had been exposed in Florence for two days before they were taken to Naples to Charles's widow.¹⁸⁶

All these events emphasize that Florentine merchants, and with them Florentine diplomacy, might have played a significant intermediary role between the Horváti and the court of Naples. In fact, unlike the Venetians, who sent a diplomatic contingent to congratulate Sigismund on his accession to the throne, there is no information about a Florentine embassy to Hungary for nine years following the event. The Horváti's contacts with the Florentine diplomacy dated back at least to the 1380s, preceding Charles's arrival to the Kingdom.¹⁸⁷ At that time, Pál Horváti sojourned several times to the court of Naples. In 1388, in the Signoria's letter, dispatched to Joanna II of Naples, he was mentioned together with Luca di Giovanni del Pecchia, a Florentine merchant, who was simultaneously trading in the court of Naples and in Buda.¹⁸⁸

Luca's family was completely new on the Florentine social and political scene. Their name originated probably from his father Giovanni's

185 Following Charles's coronation, the news reached Florence by 20 January, when the Standardbearer of Justice, Dinozzo Stefani, suggested holding public celebrations in the city. ASF, CP 25, fol. 30r. For the diplomatic correspondence, see: ASF, Signori, Missive, I. Cancelleria 19. For the detailed description of the celebrations, see: *Alle bocche della piazza*, p. 61.

186 'E a dì XXV d'aghosto (the *vendetta* took place on 25 July, a month before) furono rechate in Firenze tre teste di tre baroni che furono chaporali a ucidere il re Charllo, quella del gran conte (Miklós Garai) e di due altri baroni, e stettono in palagio de' Signori tutto uno dì e due dì nello albergho de Leone e videle chiuunque volle. A dì XXVIII si partirono di Firenze e furono portate a Napoli alla reina Margherita, donna che fu de re Charllo.' *Alle bocche della piazza*, p. 64. On Charles's death see: Stefani, *Cronaca Fiorentina*, pp. 440-442.

187 ASF, Missive, I Cancelleria 21, fol. 130r. The correspondence between the Signoria János Horváthi, in the first years of 1380: Signori, Missive, I Cancelleria 19, fols. 62v, 151r.

188 ASF, Signori, Missive, I. Cancelleria 21, fol. 26v.

appellative.¹⁸⁹ Luca, a retail cloth merchant himself, and his two brothers were members of the Por Santa Maria Guild.¹⁹⁰ The earliest reference to him in Florentine politics appears in the minutes of the secret councils from 1380, when Bernardo di Sandro Talani, a merchant with a business profile in Hungary, advised the councils to send ambassadors to Charles of Durazzo, among them Luca del Pecchia.¹⁹¹ However, it was not until 1383 that his first speech was recorded.¹⁹² Following that, he spoke all together nineteen times at the secret councils.¹⁹³ On 21 March 1387, for example, he urged the Priors to dispatch ambassadors to Queen Margaret to convince her to go to Hungary.¹⁹⁴ Though the exact details of his service for the house of Durazzo remain unclear, in 1400 he was honored by Charles' son with the donation of six islands located on the Dalmatian Coastline.¹⁹⁵ Luca, as a respected international merchant and politician of his time, surely played some intermediary role between the Durazzo and the barons opposing King Sigismund in Hungary. However, Emir O. Filipović claims that Luca might have been employed by the Bosnian King as well in order to further his own ambitious plan in Dalmatia. Given the political climate in Hungary, Tvrtko Kotromanić attempted to turn the situation to his advantage and possibly expand the borders of the Bosnian Kingdom by gaining access to the revenues of the Dalmatian trade. In fact, ten years earlier, in 1390, a letter of the Florentine Signoria informs us that Kotromanić named Luca count of the islands of Korčula, Hvar, and Brač.¹⁹⁶ We hear about him for the last time in 1403, when Ladislaus of Durazzo, upon his arrival to Hungary, was

189 There is no trace of the family in the 1378 Estimo.

190 Jacopo del Pecchia and partners silk manufacturers (setaiuoli): AOI, Estranei 188. fol. 157v, ASF, Arte di Por Santa Maria, 7. fol. 146r, ASF, Arte dei Medici e Speziali 46. fol. 24v. His brother, Jacopo, was a retail cloth merchant. Arte dei Medici e Speziali 7. fol. 92v. In December 1386, Luca was elected to the guild consul. Arte dei Medici e Speziali 46. fol. 24v.

191 'Bernardus Sandri pro Duodecim dixit quod in consilio proponatur idem sicut Gonfalonerii [...] Lucas Pecchie remittantur ad campum ut explorentur et detur sibi negotia provisio.' ASF, CP 19. fol. 45r. 'Bernardus Sandri pro Duodecim dixit [...] Ambaxiata mittantur ad dominum Carolum ita quod fiat concordia et mittantur Lucas Pecchie cum eis.' CP 19. fol. 54r (09/10/1380).

192 ASF, CP 22. fol. 7v.

193 ASF, CP 26. fol. 163r; 31. fols. 49v, 57v, 86v, 95r, 105v, 127r; 33. fols. 49r; 35. fols. 102v, 120v, 129v, 151r, 159r, 162; 36. fols. 17v, 41r, 49v, 57v, 62r.

194 'Lucas Iohannis dixit quod mittantur duo oratores ad reginam [...]. ASF, CP 26. fols. 11r. On 15 January 1388, he raised the same issue. CP 26. fol. 163r.

195 *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, II/1. doc. 671.

196 For a detailed analysis of the letter see: Filipović, 'Pismo firentinske vlade kralju Tvrtku Kotromaniću'.

crowned King.¹⁹⁷ While Luca, following Ladislaus's unsuccessful attempt to obtain control over the Kingdom, disappears from the sources, his former apprentice, Pippo di Stefano Scolari, was raised to baronial rank by King Sigismund.

¹⁹⁷ 'Luca Iohannis del Pecchia dixit idem quod dominus Donatus et mictantur oratorum in Franciam et recomendatur ei fili regis Karoli.' ASF, CP 31. fol. 49r. He delivered his last speech on 3 January 1403. CP 36. fol. 17v. He might have spoken even in 1404; however, there are no verbalized meetings that survived from that year.

Figure 1 Pippo Scolari by Andrea del Castagno, Uffizi Gallery, Florence



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