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Title: The cultural importance of Florentine patricians. Cultural exchange, brokerage networks, and social representation in early modern Florence and Rome (1600-1660)

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Introduction

Between 1600 and 1660, the cultural life of the city of Florence has been associated almost exclusively with the ruling Medici family.¹ This PhD thesis aims to change this view by showing that educated members of the Florentine patriciate contributed substantially to the cultural success of the Medici court and that their networks were responsible for many cultural innovations in Florence society.

In the 1970s, Cochrane and Diaz presented the traditional view that patri- cians in the period under consideration withdrew from society and politics and became landowners without influence on the economic, cultural, social, or political aspects of Florentine society.² Although economic, political, and social historians began revising this idea³ in the 1980s and 1990s, many cultural historians still cling to this view.⁴ The fact that the cultural heritage of the Medici is so carefully preserved, while many patrician collections have been dispersed, has done much to fix this image. Moreover, the Medici were already manipulating the historiography centuries ago by glorifying themselves as the

1 For example in Gregori 2005; Fantoni 1999; Diaz 1976; Cochrane 1973.

2 Cochrane 1981, 1973; Diaz 1976.

3 The historians who revised the traditional image were Litchfield 2008, 1986; Boutier 2005a, 2004, 2000, 1993; Contini 1997; Goldthwaite 1993; and Stumpo 1984. Already in the 1970s Samuel Berner described the economic investments of the patricians (1972, 1971); see chapter 1 of this thesis.

4 This view is expressed for example in Gregori 2005; Bizzocchi 2003a, 1991; and Fantoni 1999, 1994.

arbiters and defenders of Florentine culture and neglecting the important contribution of the patricians.⁵ Palaces and villas of the Medici can still be visited, while those of the patricians are only shown on demand and escaped from the attention of most art historians. The consequence of all this is that cultural studies and books on the Florentine sixteenth and seventeenth centuries focus on the Medici family. In reality, however, a large group of patricians who had supported the Medici regime from the beginning continued to live in the city and manifested themselves culturally, economically, and socially.

Over the past fifteen years, an increasing number of books and articles have appeared on the cultural activities and patronage of individual patrician families.⁶ This thesis has a broader scope, as it aims to highlight the patricians' contribution as a group, and to provide insights into the mechanisms behind their cultural input.

My main issue is to demonstrate the ways in which the patricians contributed to the cultural climate in Florence and to the cultural success and social representation of the Medici court, in the period 1600-60. I answer this by looking at their art patronage and collections, their brokerage activities, their cultural academies, their relations with Medici princes, their cultural exchange and the accompanying innovations and experiments, and finally their role in the cultural and sociopolitical representation of the Medici court.

Much of the new information and findings presented here is drawn from the extremely rich and well-preserved archives of the Niccolini, Guicciardini, and Buonarroti families, covering several generations. This is the reason for a special focus on four patricians (Giovanni Niccolini and his son Filippo, Piero Guicciardini and Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger), who reappear in different chapters, one time as ambassador, the other time as patron of arts or broker.⁷ The wealth of the sources from their family archives is unparalleled for the period under discussion, and offers a touchstone for a better understanding of the cultural activities of other members of the Florentine elite. In fact,

5 Carter 1985a. More about this manipulating of facts can be read in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

6 Carter (1985a) was the first to change the traditional view by writing about the cultural and economic activities of the Corsi family. Recent publications about the cultural activities of the Florentine patricians are: Cole 2011, 2007; Van Veen 2011, 2008, 2005; Spinelli 2011a, 2009, 2005a, 2002; Pegazzano 2010; Di Dedda 2008; Guerrieri Borsoi 2004a; Callard 2007a, 2002; Benassai 2002; De Caro 2001a/b; and Romei 2001.

7 The four patricians with their dates of birth and death: Giovanni Niccolini (1544-1611), Filippo Niccolini (1586-1666), Piero Guicciardini (1569-1626) and Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger (1568-1647).

my archival research has helped me to clarify the main outline of my thesis and to integrate the results of previous publications into a larger interpretative framework.

The arrangement of the chapters of my thesis is thematic rather than chronological. Every chapter covers the period 1600-60 and investigates a specific topic in which patricians contributed to the cultural climate in Florence or to the cultural and social representation of the Medici court. The introductory first chapter analyses the current state of scholarship and focuses on the changing economic and sociopolitical position of the Florentine patricians between the end of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries. It serves as a sociopolitical framework for the following chapters. The second chapter shows how the patricians, in their roles as ambassadors and chamberlains, helped to define the cultural and social image of the Medici. In the third chapter the patronage characteristics of different patrician families are analysed, with a view to discovering what their aspirations were and the extent to which these were common or unique to individuals. The fourth chapter elaborates on the relations between patricians and Medici princes and discusses the different cultural academies, and the cultural experiments and innovations that originated from them. The fifth chapter focuses exclusively on the patricians' brokerage networks, in particular that of Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger, which serves as an example for social networks with comparable structures and mechanisms. In the sixth and last chapter, we see how the patricians as men of letters contributed largely to the image of the Medici in Europe, both politically, by writing treatises, but also culturally, by organizing the events they wrote about and inventing the iconographic programs.

On a practical and methodological level, I am indebted to two research traditions in the Netherlands. At the University of Groningen, Professor Henk van Veen as early as 2006 initiated his research on the cultural activities of Flo-

rentine patricians, with an emphasis on the sixteenth century.⁸ One outcome has been the international conference: *A forgotten world. Florentine patricians as Patrons, Collectors, Cultural Brokers under Medici rule (1530-1743)*⁹, while PhD theses on Bernardo Vecchietti (by Bouk Wierda) and the Salviati family (by Klazina Botke) are nearly completed and new researches have started.¹⁰ Among the topics that are central to Van Veen's investigations are the sometimes tense relationship between family pride and the patricians' relationship to the Medici court (between independence and dependence), and the city of Rome as a reference point for the Florentine elite.

Equally important for my own research is the Dutch tradition of the study of (cultural) networks in early Modern Europe, which is particularly well developed at Leiden University.¹¹ Indeed, such networks are the key to many answers to my central question. Florentine patricians associated with each other in several ways: at court, on the occasion of the organization of ceremonial events, within cultural academies, and in large correspondence networks. Already at an early stage, patricians formed the cores of their networks through the cultural academies in which patricians, artists, and Medici princes met each other a couple of times a week (because they were members of several academies and confraternities at the same time) and got to know each other informally, which proved very useful for the success of brokerage networks.

8 Before initiating this project, Van Veen conducted pioneering research on the Grand Duchy of Tuscany ruled by the Medici family. This resulted in 2006 in his book *Cosimo I de' Medici and his self-representation in Florentine art and culture* (Cambridge University Press). During his research on the Medici Grand Dukes, he started to question the role of the patricians in all this. Therefore, he started the project 'Florentijnse patriciërs als opdrachtgevers 1537-1670' (Florentine patricians as patrons 1530-1743), with the goal of mapping out the cultural habits of the patricians.

9 This conference was organised by Prof. Dr. Van Veen, Kazina Botke M.A., Drs. Elisa Goudriaan and Drs. Bouk Wierda, and was held at the University of Groningen, 3-5 March 2011. For a short summary of this conference, see Botke/Goudriaan/Van Veen/Wierda 2011: 473-78.

10 Drs. Bouk Wierda is working on a dissertation about Bernardo Vecchietti as patron of the arts with the title 'Het Leven van Bernardo Vecchietti (1514-1590)' (The life of Bernardo Vecchietti, 1514-1590), which is nearing completion. In 2009, she published an article on the identity of the Anonimo Magliabechiano. See Wierda 2009: 157-68.

Klazina Botke M.A. wrote her master's thesis on the patrician Ludovico Capponi (1534-1614) and her dissertation on the patronage of the Salviati family is nearing completion. In 2013, she published an article on Ludovico Capponi. See Botke 2013: 206-19.

Julia Dijkstra, Research Master student at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen is currently writing her thesis on the patronage of exiled Florentine patricians with the working title "Portraits of Tyrannicide?! Art patronage and 'fuoruscitismo' in Florence and Rome between 1530 and 1554".

11 Publications in this field are Keblusek/Noldus 2011; Egmond 2007; Pollmann 2006; Cools/Keblusek 2006; and Blockmans 1988.

An advantage of these strong networks was that as they attained more important positions and found themselves in foreign courts, the patricians continued to correspond and exchange cultural news and objects. Some patricians became bishops at little Tuscan towns such as Arezzo and Cortona, while some were sent as ambassadors to Italian or European courts such as Rome, Madrid, and Vienna. Others became secretaries or cardinals at the papal court, or knights in military orders, or worked in the Medici household as chamberlains. Still others attained the position of senator in the Medici government. Wherever they were, very often these patricians built up new patronage networks outside Florence, which could be useful for their Florentine friends. Letters were written to Florence and vice versa from the imperial cities of Vienna and Prague, from the royal capitals of Madrid and Paris, from the papal court in Rome, and from numerous episcopal cities around Europe.

Together with their letters, the patricians exchanged cultural and scientific information about innovations at the European courts. Besides that they exchanged cultural objects such as books, poems, plays, political treatises, music compositions, manuscripts, and more. This constant stream of cultural information created a community of cultured men who were perfectly informed about the political and social position of the Medici. This was one of the strong points of the patrician networks and the reason why they contributed so much to the social representation and stability of the Medici court.

This brings me back to the importance of the Buonarroti-, Guicciardini-, and Niccolini-archives. The personal correspondence that is kept in these places makes it possible to situate cultural initiatives and achievements into a well-defined historic context in which politics, social life, and cultural activities tend to merge. Furthermore, because of the broad time span covering several generations, one is able to follow closely how patricians became increasingly involved in the cultural and political affairs of the Medici court between 1600 and 1660. As such, these archival sources are unique. In the preparation phase for this PhD project, I visited many other patrician archives in Florence and its surroundings, but in these private archives for my time period I only found economic, commercial, and legal documents, and no correspondence at all.¹²

12 The private archives I visited in Florence and its surroundings are Archivio Bardi di Poppi, Archivio Casa Buonarroti, Archivio Corsini, Archivio Guicciardini and Archivio Niccolini di Camugliano. At the Soprintendenza Archivistica per la Toscana (Via de' Ginori 7, Florence), I consulted the inventories of the private family archives of the Capponi, Giraldi, Guadagni, Inghirami, Minerbetti, Nerli, Pucci Rinuccini, Ubaldini, and Torrigiani (which contains the Archivio Del Nero and a part of the Archivio Guadagni and is situated in Montecastello, Pontedera). The family archives whose inventories I consulted in the

My research and findings in the above-mentioned archives could be fruitfully combined with the analysis of sources from the Florentine State archives, the National Central Library of Florence and archives in Rome, in particular the Vatican archive and library, Roman family archives (Sacchetti and Fondazione Camillo Gaetani), the Archivio Capitolino, and the Roman State Archive.¹³ Moreover, one of the strong points of the Florentine sources compared to the Roman ones is that the Florentines often made copies of their original letters or kept their drafts.¹⁴ As a result, it is generally possible to read both the incoming and outgoing correspondences in one place, even when original sent letters have not been preserved. Therefore, the information is rich and lively enough to bring to life a world from four centuries ago. It is on this basis, and by integrating my findings with the results of previous studies on the cultural activities of Florentine patricians, that I hope to convince the reader of the remarkable skills and creativity of the seventeenth-century Florentine patricians as a group.

Florentine State archive are those of the Bardi/Serzelli, Bardi di Vernio, Capponi, Della Gherardesca, Grifoni, Gondi, Guicciardini/Corsi/Salviati, Manelli/Galilei/Riccardi, Riccardi, Serristori, Strozzi (Carte strozziane), and Venturi. I decided not to focus my research on the Salviati family, as my colleague Klazina Botke is writing her PhD thesis about this family.

13 The Fondazione Camillo Gaetani contains the fondo Giustiniani-Bandini, with many letters of members from the Corsi, Salviati, Medici, and Bandini families. In the Archivio Capitolino is housed the Archivio Orsini, a family with many ties to Florentine patrician families. The Vatican Archive contains the archive of the papal family Borghese (Archivio Borghese). The Roman Archivio di Stato contains a fondo Giustiniani. The Archivio Sacchetti contains letters of members from the Corsini, Niccolini and Riccardi families.

14 Wieland 2004b: 133.