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***The beginnings of Florence Cathedral. A political interpretation***

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THE BEGINNINGS  
OF FLORENCE CATHEDRAL  
A POLITICAL INTERPRETATION



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An inquiry into the politics behind the decision to build a new Cathedral in Florence at the end of the thirteenth century might seem misdirected, for it could be objected that, as the chief architectural expression of Florence's religious identity, the great church must have been above politics. Was it not, after all, a focal point of both civic pride and religious devotion for all Florentines? On the other hand, it has long been recognized that the massive project was approved and financed largely by Florence's communal government and that major decisions about the Cathedral were formulated in the councils and committees of city government. From this angle, the new church was obviously enmeshed in politics. Yet, most investigations of the politics behind the building of the Cathedral, while underscoring its civic status and the role of the communal government, have not asked *who* wanted a new Cathedral and why, and whose interests were served, and whose damaged, by the replacement of the old church of Santa Reparata with a vastly larger one that changed the character of an entire section of the medieval city. When such questions are posed, the issues become more complex and the answers less clear.

What follows is a hypothesis about the intersection of communal politics and the beginnings of Florence's new Cathedral at the end of the thirteenth and through the first third of the fourteenth century. True as it certainly is that the Cathedral was largely funded by the commune and built by a works committee (Opera) that was ultimately placed under the supervision of the Wool guild (the Arte della Lana), it is particularly important to recognize that the proposal for a new Cathedral emerged during the

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I could not have written this paper without the generous help and indispensable advice of Amy Bloch and David Peterson, who know far more than I do about Florence's Cathedral and church. My warm thanks also go to Margaret Haines and Saundra Weddle for their valuable comments on the penultimate draft. All errors are of course mine.

popular government of the 1290s when the commune was in the hands of the guild community – the guildsmen, merchants, shopkeepers, and notaries who did not come from elite families and who constituted the class the Florentines called the *popolo*. Having first established control of communal government during the so-called *Primo Popolo* of 1250-60, the *popolo* resurfaced in 1266-67 to organize seven guilds into a political federation, and again in 1282 with an expanded alliance of twelve guilds to institute the priorate of the guilds as the commune's chief executive magistracy. Elite families dominated the priorate for the next decade, but a still larger federation of twenty-one guilds retook power in 1293 and promulgated the Ordinances of Justice, which put government in the hands of mostly non-elite representatives of this wider guild community. This "second *popolo*" (as the chronicler Giovanni Villani called it) relegated more than seventy elite families of the city (and seventy more in the countryside) to magnate status, imposed heavy penalties on their members for violent crimes against non-magnates, and deprived them of office-holding rights in the guilds and the priorate. Even after the exile in early 1295 of the *popolo*'s influential leader, Giano della Bella, the guild community remained in control and defeated an armed revolt by magnates in July 1295. For the next six years, as the elite families were dividing into the warring factions of Black and White Guelfs that would soon engulf the city, the *popolo* maintained a significant share of power until, in November 1301, a *coup d'état* supported by Pope Boniface VIII and led by the French prince Charles of Valois ended popular influence in government and placed the commune under the Black Guelf elite, which included many magnate families. For the next generation, an elite consisting of both magnate and non-magnate families controlled the city and kept the *popolo* and the guilds politically weak.<sup>1</sup>

It was during the years of the *popolo*'s greatest influence in government, between 1293 and 1295, that proposals for refurbishing Santa Reparata, and then for replacing it with the new Cathedral that was to be called Santa Maria del Fiore, were first aired in the communal councils.

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<sup>1</sup> On the politics of these years, see R. DAVIDSOHN, *Geschichte von Florenz*, 4 vols., Berlin, 1896-1927; repr. Osnabrück, 1969, Italian translation (cited below): *Storia di Firenze*, 8 vols., Florence, 1972-73, vols. 2 and 3; G. SALVEMINI, *Magnati e popolani in Firenze dal 1280 al 1295*, Florence, 1899; repr. Milan, 1966; N. OTTOKAR, *Il comune di Firenze alla fine del Duecento*, Florence, 1926; repr. Turin, 1962; S. RAVEGGI - M. TARASSI - D. MEDICI - P. PARENTI, *Ghibellini, guelfi e popolo grasso: i detentori del potere politico a Firenze nella seconda metà del Duecento*, Florence, 1978; and my *Corporatism and Consensus in Florentine Electoral Politics, 1280-1400*, Chapel Hill, 1982, chapters 1-3.

An earlier suggestion, made by the notary Ubertino Cervellini, for annual funding to renovate the old church was never implemented,<sup>2</sup> and sustained discussion began only after the popolo re-established control of government in the 1290s. In June 1293 the General Council of the Comune approved the expenditure of 300 lire for the repair of Santa Reparata, and in July of either 1292 or 1293 another notary, Nino Cantori, advised the commune to take action “concerning the opera of Santa Reparata.”<sup>3</sup> In December 1293 the legislative councils approved a proposal from the priors for the disbursement of 400 lire every three months to officials entrusted with overseeing the repair of the old church. A subsequent payment refers to this now lost law, but the precise date is illegible, which leaves it unclear whether this first plan for regular funding came from the priorate that left office in mid-December 1293 or the one that replaced it. But both priorates were dominated by non-elite guildsmen, most of whom were making their only appearance in the priorate or were among the few members of their families ever elected to the office.<sup>4</sup> Re-

<sup>2</sup> L. RICCETTI, “Il vescovo Francesco Monaldeschi e l’avvio del cantiere di Santa Maria del Fiore (1295-1301)”, in T. VERDON - A. INNOCENTI (eds.), *Atti del VII centenario del Duomo di Firenze. La Cattedrale e la città*, 3 vols., Florence, 2001, vol. 1, pp. 195-226 (210).

<sup>3</sup> C. GUASTI, *Santa Maria del Fiore: la costruzione della chiesa e del Campanile*, Florence, 1887; repr. 1974, p. 1, assigns the second of these documents to July 1293. In his edition of the *Libri Fabarum, Le Consulte della Repubblica fiorentina dall’anno MCCLXXX al MCCXCVIII*, 2 vols., Florence, 1896-98, vol. 2, p. 311, Alessandro Gherardi dated it July 1292, before the beginning of the popular government, and this dating has been accepted by A. GROTE, in *Das Dombauamt in Florenz, 1285-1370: Studien zur Geschichte der Opera di Santa Reparata*, Munich, 1959, p. 124, n. 64, and also by RICCETTI, *loc. cit.* (see note 2), p. 210. Whichever date is correct, the important fact is that the proposal was made by a notary.

<sup>4</sup> The priors of October-December 1293 were Giovanni (or Giova) di Aglione Billicozzi (a member of the Arte del Cambio who was making his and his family’s only appearance in the office); Carlettino di Aldobrandino (the absence of his given name among the many Aldobrandini who served on the priorate makes it unlikely that he belonged to this elite family); Guccio Salvini (his only time as prior and his family’s only appearance before 1378); Cambio di Giovanni (about whom Raveggi et al. were able to discover nothing more); Lapo Bencivenni (a woodworker who served four times as prior, but whose guild affiliation suggests he may not have been a member of the upper class Bencivenni who later accumulated 34 appearances); Maso del Cresta (a member of the Lana who was making his only appearance in the priorate and was one of only two members of his family to reach the office); and the Standardbearer of Justice Goso di Guidalotto Mancini, who was one of 66 family members elected to the priorate over the next two centuries (although this was Goso’s only appearance). Only Mancini qualifies as a member of the elite. On the popular character and guild affiliations of this priorate, see RAVEGGI *et al.*, *op. cit.* (see note 1), p. 254.

The next term’s priors were Stefano Benintendi (who, despite his family’s 54 appearances in the priorate, was making his sole appearance in the office); Lapo di Talento Bucelli (seven times a prior and one of 42 Bucelli priors, but also a member of the committee of fourteen appointed to revise the statutes at the end of 1294 – but not among those who conspired against Giano della Bella according to Patrizia Parenti in RAVEGGI *et al.*, *cit.*, p. 272); Giovanni di Donato Ulivieri (who sat on the priorate four times between 1283 and 1301 but was one of only three members of his family to reach the

ceiving these sums in March 1294 were four officials appointed by the priors and Standardbearer of Justice to oversee what was already called the “opera of the church of Santa Reparata” and to spend the funds as they saw fit: Girolamo di Salvi di Chiaro Girolami, who came from a prominent family that consistently sided with the popular government in these years, and who was, with Dino Compagni, a member of the last popular priorate of October 1301; Falcone Falconieri, who had served on the priorate in 1282; Passa Finiguerra [Diodati?], who served on five priorates between 1284 and 1295; and Tedice Manovelli, who, although he later went over to the Black Guelfs earning Dino Compagni’s scornful rebuke (*Cronica* 2.19), sat on ten priorates between 1283 and 1318, including that of October-December 1294 when a committee led by Giano della Bella was revising the communal statutes. These four all came from families of some status, but only Falconieri came from a genuinely elite family and there were no magnates among them.<sup>5</sup> At the end of 1294 Girolami and Manovelli, the latter having been elected to the priorate, were replaced as officials of the “opera” by Ricco del Maestro and Mandato de’ Pilastrri, whose names imply that they may have been members of the guild of master builders and masons; in any event, the paucity of evidence concerning them or their families suggests that they belonged to the artisan ranks of the popolo. Plans for the repair and renovation of the old Cathedral were promoted and administered in these years by citizens overwhelmingly from non-elite families and often with ties to the popular government.<sup>6</sup>

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to clarify a sentence from Giovanni Villani’s chronicle that could be interpreted as evidence against

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high office); Jacopo Giambullari (who here made his only appearance on the priorate and was one of just two from his family to do so); Giacomino Buonaccorsi (a notary – and thus almost certainly not a member of the elite Buonaccorsi – who here served his only term on the priorate); Fantino Silimanni (who held the office just this one time and was one of three priors from his family); and the Standardbearer of Justice, Lapo di Pace Angioleri (who served twice on the priorate – his second term came in October 1301 with Dino Compagni on the priorate of the “ultimo rimedio” before the Black Guelf coup d’état – and was one of only two priors from his family). In this group only the Benintendi and Bucelli qualify as even second-rank elite families. Prior lists are taken from the “Online Tratte of Office Holders 1282-1532”: <http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/tratte/search/>.

<sup>5</sup> Contrary to RICCETTI’s assertion in *loc. cit.* (see note 2), p. 212.

<sup>6</sup> Only in February 1296 did the city’s recently appointed bishop, Francesco Monaldeschi, appoint his own “operai” (or overseers of the “opera”). They are presumably those named in a petition of December 1296 submitted by the building committee to the communal government: the Cathedral canon Gualtieri da Pontormo and the Cathedral chaplain, presbyter Chiaro; GUASTI, *op. cit.* (see note 3), pp. 8, 11-15.

the thesis that the project for a new Cathedral came from the popolo. Villani writes (*Cronica* 9.9) that “in the year 1294 [1295], while the city was in a most peaceful condition, *essendo passate le fortune del popolo per le novità di Giano della Bella*, the citizens agreed to rebuild Florence’s Cathedral,” because the old one was too small and inelegant for “so great a city [...]. And [the new church] was founded on the feast of Saint Mary in September [the Nativity of the Virgin].”<sup>7</sup> Some read the phrase here left untranslated to mean that the decision to build a new church occurred after the *good* fortunes of the popolo under Giano della Bella ended with his expulsion. But such a reading is, first of all, based on the faulty assumption that Giano’s exile spelled the end of the popolo’s power. Moreover, it is incompatible with Villani’s assertions three chapters later (9.12) that the magnate uprising of July 1295 against the popular government failed, that “the popolo remained *in suo stato e signoria*,” that the priors in office at the time of the armed revolt, who had given support to the magnates and offered them certain concessions, were stoned when they left office in mid-August, and that through these events “a new government [*stato*] of the popolo came to power.” The leaders of this “new government of the popolo” included members of elite families, but no magnates. It would have made no sense for Villani to write that the decision to build a new Cathedral occurred after the “good fortunes of the popolo had passed” and then to say about events just a few months later that the popolo remained in power and control of government. In fact, a closer look at the way Villani uses the plural *fortune* elsewhere in the *Cronica* in a clearly

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<sup>7</sup> G. VILLANI, *Nuova cronica*, 3 vols. ed. G. PORTA, Parma, 1990-91, vol. 2, book 9, chapter 9, p. 26. The order of events in the surrounding chapters leaves no doubt that Villani meant 1294 in the Florentine style and thus 1295 in the modern style. Chapter 8 describes the fall of Giano della Bella, which occurred early in 1295, and chapter 12 narrates the July 1295 conspiracy and insurrection of the magnates. Although it is clear that Villani believed that a foundation ceremony took place in September 1295, just after the failed revolt of the magnates, the reliability of his recollection of the correct year is complicated by the fact that an oddly ambiguous commemorative stone, placed decades later on the Cathedral, has been variously interpreted to mean that a formal foundation ceremony took place in either 1296 or 1298; on this disputed issue see, most recently, G. BRESCHI - T. DE ROBERTIS, “L’epigrafe di fondazione della Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore: filologia e dilemmi”, in E. NERI LUSANNA (ed.), *Arnolfo alle origini del Rinascimento fiorentino*, exh. cat. (Florence, Dec. 21, 2005 - Apr. 21, 2006), Florence, 2005, pp. 293-311; and RICCETTI, *loc. cit.* (see note 2), pp. 219-226. Villani may have remembered the year incorrectly and/or there may have been more than one ‘foundation’ ceremony. But the fact that the commemorative stone was placed on the Cathedral much later and mysteriously lends itself to two opposing interpretations should if anything enhance the plausibility that Villani got it right. Still, in view of the uncertainty surrounding the issue, the best one can say is that the foundation occurred on 8 September of some year between 1295 and 1298. Exactly which year it was does not affect the argument that the project was launched during the time of popular influence in government.

negative sense suggests that he meant, not that the good fortunes of the popolo were a thing of the past, but that the popolo had overcome a time of *misfortune*.<sup>8</sup> It thus seems that he meant to refer, not to the end of the popular government, but to the conclusion of the crisis it underwent with the fall and disgrace of Giano, and to say that it was in the successful recovery from this crisis that the popolo pushed for the new Cathedral. Indeed, it is particularly significant that Villani situates the government's ceremonial commitment to the project in the immediate aftermath of the unsuccessful attempt to unseat the popolo led by three magnates – Forese Adimari, Vanni Mozzi, and Geri Spini – two of whose families were deeply enmeshed in ecclesiastical politics and patronage and, as we shall see, may also have opposed the new Cathedral out of a desire to preserve their power over the local church.

That the Cathedral project emerged in the context of the complex struggle between elite and popolo in 1293-95 already suggests its heavily politicized origins. Further evidence of its controversial nature lies in the resistance to the funding plan presented to the priors in December 1296 by the bishop's *operai* (named above in note 6) and the "lay officials" Girolamo di Salvi Girolami and Tedice Manovelli, who were again serving as the commune's *operai*. Urging the "rapid expansion" of the project and implementation of the recently adopted proposal for a new church, their petition requested the "acquisition of houses and land to be incorporated" into the proposed structure, which, even in the original design, let alone the expansion of the 1360s, dwarfed old Santa Reparata and necessitated the purchase of a large number of buildings and plots of land in the densely settled neighborhood of what is now the immense Cathedral and its surrounding spaces.<sup>9</sup> To raise the funds needed for buying up these properties, the *operai* proposed that everyone writing a will be required to make a bequest to the Cathedral project, the amount in each case left to the generosity and conscience of the testator, and that all households in both the city and the *contado* (the surrounding territory extending be-

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<sup>8</sup> For example, in 9.73, in the phrase "essendo la città di Firenze in tante aversitadi e fortune", "fortune" is obviously synonymous with "aversitadi"; in 10.179, when Villani writes that a terrible storm was among the "maggiori fortune di vento a greco e tramontana con neve che si ricordasse per niuno", "fortune" again carries the meaning of misfortunes or troubles; VILLANI, *op. cit.* (see note 7), pp. 30-31 (9.12), 140 (9.73), and 370 (10.179).

<sup>9</sup> M. HAINES, "Attorno a Santa Maria del Fiore: la conquista dello spazio per una cattedrale", in L. RICCETTI (ed.), *La Piazza del Duomo nella città medievale (nord e media Italia, secoli XII-XVI)* (*Bollettino dell'Istituto Storico Artistico Orvietano*, 46-47, 1990-1991), Rome, 1997, pp. 301-332.



tween ten and twenty miles in different directions from the city and over which Florence had established direct rule) be required to contribute according to their assessments in the tax rolls.<sup>10</sup> Collection was to be administered by joint committees of priests and laymen appointed by the bishop in each parish. This was the first proposal for funding the Cathedral that went beyond periodic subsidies from the communal treasury. It aimed at reaching every household subject to tax in the city and contado, which meant that, if it had been implemented, tens of thousands of approximately 100,000 households in a total population of 400,000 would have been called upon to contribute.<sup>11</sup>

A first hint of potential controversy is that the priors, in presenting the operai's funding plan to the legislative councils, left open the question of how often these taxes would be imposed and for how long. In the Council of One Hundred, which had primary responsibility for fiscal legislation, Nitti Cacciafuori advised rejecting the proposal outright – “it is not useful at the present time to convene the councils on this matter, and everything presented [in the petition] should be shelved for the present (*quod utile non est ad presens super predictis [...] teneri et fieri aliqua consilia, sed predicta omnia et singula suspendantur ad presens*)” – although it is not clear whether he objected to the purposes for which the funds were to be collected, the system of assessing and collecting them, or to the timing. A second speaker, the jurist Lapo Rinucci (from a family that had its first prior in April-June 1295), took the opposite view that the proposals were indeed “*utilia*” for the commune and should be implemented “just as outlined in full above.” Another jurist, Goccia da Castelfiorentino, recommended that the tax be adopted for five years, but with the stipulation that it be collected only once a year. And a fourth speaker, Andrea Ricci, from a rising family, whose first prior, however, came only in 1298, proposed a two-year implementation, again with a single collection each year.

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<sup>10</sup> GUASTI, *op. cit.* (see note 3), pp. 11-13. In the city, heads of households assessed at more than 25 *lire* were to pay 2 *soldi* for themselves and an additional 2 *soldi* for their families; for those assessed less than 25 *lire*, the tax was 12 *denari* (one *soldo*) for household heads and the same for the rest of their families. In the *contado*, household heads assessed above 5 *lire* were to pay 12 *denari* and another 12 for family members; male household heads assessed less than 5 *lire* were to pay 6 *denari* and 6 more for their families, and for women heads of households the tax was 3 *denari* for themselves and 3 for their families.

<sup>11</sup> D. HERLIHY - C. KLAPISCH-ZUBER, *Tuscans and Their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427*, New Haven, 1985, pp. 65, 68-69, estimate the population of the *contado* in 1338 at “between 280,000 and 320,000” and that of the city at 120,000. Precise data on household size before the middle of the fourteenth century are lacking, but the available indications suggest that households averaged about four members.

When the priors asked for a vote in the Hundred on their original proposal, without the time restrictions advised by the third and fourth speakers, it received only 43 affirmative votes of 71 cast and thus did not reach the two-thirds majority required for approval. They then gave the council the opportunity to vote simultaneously on the two- and five-year modifications of the plan: 49 councilors – just one over two-thirds – opted for the former, and only 22 preferred the latter. Subsequently, a joint meeting of the Special Council of the Capitano del popolo and of the consuls of the twelve major guilds also gave its assent, by a vote of 44-15.<sup>12</sup> That the guild consuls were overwhelmingly in favor points to solid support from the popolo. For whatever reason, however, the plan was apparently not implemented, for just a few months later, in March 1297, the councils approved a one-year subsidy of 2,400 lire to support construction of the Cathedral.<sup>13</sup> Although the two funding methods were by no means mutually exclusive, the absence of any further mention of the tax on households suggests that it was discarded. In October of that year, the councils expanded the subsidies to 8,000 lire for the two-year period from February 1298 to February 1300, subsequently renewed for another two years (February 1300-February 1302), and again at the end of 1301 for still two more years (February 1302-February 1304).<sup>14</sup> Thereafter, at least according to the documents published by Guasti, communal funding either ceased or became sporadic and left no traces in the surviving archival sources. And, in fact, after significant construction activity in the late 1290s, including much of the facade attributed to Arnolfo di Cambio, work apparently came to a halt in the early years of the new century.<sup>15</sup> Only in the 1330s did construction resume, when the commune recommenced funding and entrusted supervision to the Wool guild. It seems difficult to explain the approximately thirty-year hiatus in building activity (and possibly longer if, as some believe, attention turned first to the Campanile in the early 1330s<sup>16</sup>) exclusively on the basis of funding difficulties and without reference to political factors and interests.

<sup>12</sup> GUASTI, *op. cit.* (see note 3), pp. 13-15.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17, 18-19, 21-22.

<sup>15</sup> On the dating of the facade, see E. NERI LUSANNA, "Arnolfo e Firenze", in *op. cit.* (see note 7), pp. 27-53.

<sup>16</sup> For a summary of views on whether resumption of the project in the 1330s may have included some work on the nave of the Cathedral as well as on the Campanile, see D. FINIELLO ZERVAS, "Un nuovo documento per la storia del Duomo e del Campanile di Firenze, 1333-1359", *Rivista d'arte*, 39, 1987, pp. 3-53.

If it is clear from the foregoing that the project for a new Cathedral was promoted and supported by the popolo during the years in which it had at first (1293-95) overwhelming and then (1295-1301) still significant influence in government, the more difficult question is why these popular governments, certainly more than those that preceded and followed, wanted a new Cathedral. Motivations were no doubt many and complex, some possibly shared by the popolo, the bishop, certain leading families and parts of the local clerical establishment. But the driving purpose behind the popolo's interest in the project may have been its determination to reduce the control of magnate families over ecclesiastical institutions and wealth by breaking their patronage links to the local church and bringing these institutions under communal jurisdiction. From this angle, rebuilding the Cathedral was part and parcel of the same policy toward the magnates announced in the Ordinances of Justice of 1293. Magnate families had long used their traditional patronage rights to exploit the wealth of churches and convents, and they often fought amongst themselves for control of the Florentine bishopric and the Cathedral chapter in the effort to dominate ecclesiastical wealth and landed property. In addition to increasing the severity of punishments applied to magnates for assault, injury, and murder committed against non-magnates, the Ordinances also expressed the popular government's intention to do something about the persistent and frequently violent quarrels among magnates over ecclesiastical institutions and property. Rubric 19 (in the 1293 edition, and 22 in that of 1295) decreed that "because many scandals occur, and have occurred in the past, over churches and the land and wealth belonging to them, from which conflicts can arise, especially on account of the magnates (*cum occasione ecclesiarum et possessionum ad ecclesias pertinentium multa scandala oriantur et in preteritum orta fuerint, ex quibus maxime ratione magnatum posset dissensionis nasci materia?*)," the Capitano del popolo – the judicial official instituted by the Primo Popolo of 1250-60 – would henceforth be empowered to take action against persons, "especially among the magnates," who "have illegally or unjustly occupied or seized lands or wealth belonging to monasteries, churches, and hospitals (*si aliquis et maxime ex magnatibus aliquas possessiones vel bona vel etiam res pertinentes ad aliqua monasteria, ecclesias vel hospitalia occupaverit seu detinuerit indebite et iniuste*)" and compel them to restore such property under threat of heavy penalties.<sup>17</sup> It was with this perception

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<sup>17</sup> The 1293 text is published by F. BONAINI in *Archivio storico italiano*, new series, 1, 1855,

of the stranglehold of the magnates over the local church that the popular government – in the same years in which the Ordinances were promulgated and Giano della Bella was at the height of his power – first gave prominence to the Cathedral within a wider building program that included, over the next few years, the new palace of the priors, now known as Palazzo Vecchio, which likewise rose over neighborhoods once dominated by magnate families, and strategically selected street projects that penetrated elite enclaves and allowed the government to move troops quickly into neighborhoods still dominated by magnate families.<sup>18</sup>

Chief among the magnate families whose influence over the local church included the ‘occupation’ or control of significant amounts of ecclesiastical property were three whose roles have recently been illuminated by Carol Lansing and George Dameron: the Visdomini, their *consorti* the Tosinghi, and the Adimari.<sup>19</sup> The Visdomini and Tosinghi were linked to the bishopric by ancient ties of service and fealty that had gradually evolved into a position of dominance. When Bishop Giovanni Mangiadori was installed in 1251, seventeen members of the Visdomini clan and twenty Tosinghi swore oaths to him to defend the bishopric.<sup>20</sup> One aspect of this ‘defense’ was the traditional right of the Visdomini to administer and profit from the vast landed holdings of the bishopric during episcopal vacancies. Another was the conspicuous place of honor enjoyed by the Visdomini in the elaborate rituals that marked each new bishop’s entry into the city, which likewise underscored their almost proprietary power over the bishopric and the episcopal palace. The canons of the Cathedral chapter, who presided over the ‘Cathedral church’ of Santa Reparata, were a powerful group, generally numbering between ten and twenty, who traditionally elected the bishops (although popes were gradually undermining their right to do so) and during episcopal vacancies selected one of their own as “*vicario capitolare*” through whom they held the reins of the bishop’s spiritual and temporal jurisdiction. Like the bishopric, the

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pp. 37-71 (67-68); the 1295 redaction by SALVEMINI, *op. cit.* (see note 1), pp. 384-432 (411-412); both reprinted in *Ordinamenti di Giustizia, 1293-1993*, Florence, 1993, with the original pagination.

<sup>18</sup> For an overview of the popolo’s building program, see my “Florentine Politics and Urban Spaces”, in R. J. CRUM - J. T. PAOLETTI (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, Cambridge, 2006, pp. 19-54 and 483-491 (20-37).

<sup>19</sup> C. LANSING, *The Florentine Magnates: Lineage and Faction in a Medieval Commune*, Princeton, 1991, pp. 64-83; G. DAMERON, *Episcopal Power and Florentine Society, 1000-1320*, Cambridge, Mass., 1991, esp. pp. 141-185.

<sup>20</sup> B. QUILICI, “La chiesa di Firenze dal governo del ‘Primo Popolo’ alla restaurazione guelfa”, *Archivio storico italiano*, 127, 1969, pp. 272-273.

chapter had accumulated extensive properties throughout the *contado* and diocese.<sup>21</sup> In the early thirteenth century these estates were divided into prebends and assigned to individual canons, many from powerful families. By thus parceling out this landed wealth the chapter relinquished centralized administration of its holdings, turning prebends in effect into quasi-independent mini-lordships.<sup>22</sup> Some canons used the wealth they gained from this system to pursue interests, pleasures, and power far from Florence, and their absence over long periods became a problem that some bishops attempted to curtail. In 1253 only four canons were present in Florence; in 1297 Florentine canons were living in Rome, Parma, Faenza, and Padua, and two more were priors of other Florentine churches.<sup>23</sup> Most powerful among the families in the Cathedral chapter were the Adimari, who are found among the canons from at least the early eleventh century and who had no fewer than six in the thirteenth century, including Pagano di messer Gherardo Adimari, the *proposto*, or provost, of the chapter from 1250 until his death in 1265.<sup>24</sup>

These families sometimes cooperated and sometimes fought over the exploitation of ecclesiastical wealth and property. After Bishop Mangiadori died in 1274, they quarreled over the selection of a new bishop through their relatives and allies in the Cathedral chapter, with the Visdomini and Tosinghi supporting the candidacy of Lottieri della Tosa (Tosinghi), a Cathedral canon who, although unsuccessful on this occasion, became bishop of Florence a generation later, and the Adimari promoting Schiatta degli Ubaldini, from a great rural family traditionally allied with them. Such was the power of these families that neither church nor commune could resolve the conflict, and the result was an eleven-year vacancy from 1275 to 1286 during which the Visdomini-Tosinghi administered the revenues from episcopal property. Two of them even lived in the episcopal palace and built a family tower adjacent to it.<sup>25</sup> According to Carol Lansing, they “habitually and casually borrowed episcopal money for their own business dealings,”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> G. DAMERON, “Patrimony and Clientage in the Florentine Countryside: The Formation of the Estate of the Cathedral Chapter, 950-1200”, in S. K. COHN, JR., - S. A. EPSTEIN (eds.), *Portraits of Medieval and Renaissance Living: Essays in Memory of David Herlihy*, Ann Arbor, 1996, pp. 259-281.

<sup>22</sup> E. ROTELLI, *Il capitolo della cattedrale di Firenze dalle origini al XV secolo*, Florence, 2005, pp. 15-24.

<sup>23</sup> DAVIDSOHN, *Storia di Firenze*, *op. cit.* (see note 1), vol. 7, pp. 7-8.

<sup>24</sup> S. SALVINI, *Catalogo cronologico de' canonici della chiesa metropolitana fiorentina compilato l'anno 1751*, Florence, 1782, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> DAVIDSOHN, *Storia di Firenze*, *op. cit.* (see note 1), vol. 7, p. 514.

<sup>26</sup> LANSING, *op. cit.* (see note 19), pp. 78-79.

and, as George Dameron discovered, all three lineages somehow agreed to share the profits. But this did not prevent a feud from erupting between the Tosinghi and the Adimari that lasted at least fifteen years and produced a major episode of violence at the beginning of the popular government in 1293 or 1294.<sup>27</sup> In 1286 Pope Honorius IV finally ended the vacancy by appointing as bishop a non-Florentine Dominican. But the new bishop died shortly after being installed, and once again there was disagreement inside the Cathedral chapter over the choice of a successor.

After another eight-month vacancy, the canons elected Andrea de' Mozzi, from a powerful elite family of bankers who were also declared magnates by the popular government. Mozzi alienated and angered many Florentines with his high-handed ways in forcing the creation of the post of treasurer of the Cathedral chapter and having his nephew Aldobrandino Cavalcanti appointed in 1292 as both canon (in excess of the prescribed number) and treasurer. Mozzi also awarded his nephew the income from the property of the hospital of San Giovanni Evangelista, which stood at the northern end of the narrow piazza between San Giovanni (the *domus episcopi*, or bishop's church, which we know as the Baptistery) and the Cathedral church of Santa Reparata. When the hospital's director balked at handing over to Cavalcanti sources of income that traditionally supported the hospital's aid to the ill and poor, Mozzi threatened to imprison him. Once Cavalcanti was in secure control of the hospital's landed holdings, however, he repudiated his clerical status, married, and lived the life of a secular landed lord. Whether it was because of this blatant act of nepotism at the expense of San Giovanni Evangelista or Mozzi's unsuccessful attempt to dispossess the friars of the Order of the Sack of their convent at San Gilio with a sale whose proceeds would have gone to the Mozzi bank, by 1295 the bishop had made himself thoroughly disliked by large numbers of Florentines,<sup>28</sup> and Pope Boniface, elected at the end of 1294, quickly transferred Mozzi from the Florentine see to Vicenza. Dissatisfaction in Florence with the grasping bishop who subordinated the interests of his diocese to those of his relatives must have been a factor in the pope's decision. Aldobrandino Cavalcanti was also removed as treasurer of the Cathedral chapter in 1296.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> DAMERON, *op. cit.* (see note 19), pp. 147-150, 248, n. 37; LANSING, *op. cit.* (see note 19), p. 189.

<sup>28</sup> DAVIDSOHN, *Storia di Firenze, op. cit.* (see note 1), vol. 3, pp. 600-606.

<sup>29</sup> SALVINI, *op. cit.* (see note 24), p. 14.

As Dameron incisively puts it, “the history of church property was an important and hitherto neglected factor which contributed greatly to the violence-ridden culture of the Florentine magnates [...]. In other words, what may have distinguished the magnates from other members of the ruling class was the *source* of their political power and the *object* of their political ambitions: ecclesiastical property, honors, and offices.”<sup>30</sup> In the *Divine Comedy* (*Paradiso* 16.112-18) Dante gave expression to the widespread unhappiness among non-elite Florentines with the magnates’ exploitation of church wealth by including in his ancestor Cacciaguida’s denunciation of the corruption and oppressive ambition of the great Florentine families, albeit without their names, both the Visdomini-Tosinghi (“those who, whenever your church is vacant, fatten themselves by staying in consistory”) and the Adimari (“the insolent breed that plays the dragon behind him that flees, and to whoever shows his teeth – or else his purse – becomes mild as a lamb”).<sup>31</sup> Dante’s harsh critique of the Florentine elite throughout the *Comedy* reflects the popolo’s anger at this class, and the magnates among them in particular.<sup>32</sup> In the case of the Visdomini and Adimari, he put Cacciaguida’s finger squarely on their greed and exploitation of the local church. As for Bishop Mozzi, Dante unambiguously consigned him to Hell (*Inferno* 15.112-14), although for what sin is still a matter of debate.

Seeing how the entrenched interests of a few powerful and contentious families were able to keep the city without a bishop for so long, how they profited from vacancies by controlling episcopal properties, and how they generated turmoil and factional divisions in their struggles for advantage and power within the ecclesiastical establishment, the popolo resolved to wrest control of the local church from these overmighty families. While this sometimes has the appearance of antagonism from the commune toward the church, for the popolo the problem was less the church itself than the extent of elite and magnate control over ecclesiastical institutions and wealth. Popular policies took aim at the families that routinely established proprietary and patronage rights over large chunks of the local church. For this reason the commune decreed – exactly when is not known, since the law survives only in the form in which it was incorpo-

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<sup>30</sup> DAMERON, *op. cit.* (see note 19), p. 151 (the emphases are Dameron’s). Lansing makes a similar argument in *op. cit.* (see note 19), pp. 64-83.

<sup>31</sup> DANTE ALIGHIERI, *The Divine Comedy*, tr. C. S. SINGLETON, Princeton, 1982, *Paradiso*, p. 183.

<sup>32</sup> For an overview of this critique, see my “Dante and Florence”, in R. JACOFF, *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge, 2007, pp. 236-256.

rated into the communal statutes of the 1320s – that Florentine citizens were ineligible for election to the bishoprics of Florence or Fiesole: “Because scandals, dissensions, and conflicts among citizens and inhabitants of the contado and district of Florence have arisen in the distant and recent past concerning the bishoprics of Florence and Fiesole, which have been and are held by Florentines and by magnates from the surrounding areas, in order to remove such scandals and prevent them from occurring again,” the commune prescribed, “by this law, valid in perpetuity,” that no one from the city of Florence or from the rural noble families of the Counts Guidi, the Counts Alberti, the Pazzi of the Valdarno, the Ubertini, or the Ubaldini could ever again be elected bishop of either Florence or Fiesole, under threat of permanent banishment for all family members and descendants of anyone violating the prohibition. In future vacancies, the communal priors would be obligated to send ambassadors to the pope to beseech him, “for the sake and love of the *popolo* of the aforesaid commune,” not to confirm or elect any Florentine or anyone from the named families to the episcopal office in either Florence or Fiesole.<sup>33</sup>

Opinions vary as to whether the prohibition against the election of Florentines to the two episcopal sees originated during the popular government of the 1290s, when it might have been prompted by the reaction against Bishop Mozzi, or during the vacancy following the death of Bishop Antonio degli Orsi in 1321, when rival magnate families again fought within the Cathedral chapter over the election of a successor.<sup>34</sup> But the fact that the prohibition was disregarded as soon as the elite regained control of communal government underscores its popular origin. Moreover, several other rubrics of the 1322-25 statutes similarly reflect the *popolo*’s efforts to keep the great magnate lineages at bay in the local church. Laws that made their family members punishable for the crimes of clerics, subjected clerics holding communal offices to the jurisdiction of communal courts, and prevented the abuse of clerical status by so-called “fictitious

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<sup>33</sup> *Statuti della Repubblica fiorentina*, ed. R. CAGGESE, vol. I, *Statuto del Capitano del Popolo*, Florence, 1910, book 5, rubric 78, pp. 273-274; new ed., ed. G. PINTO - F. SALVESTRINI - A. ZORZI, Florence, 1999, pp. 245-246.

<sup>34</sup> R. Bizzocchi links the prohibition to the “lotta di fine Duecento contro le grandi consorzierie”; *Chiesa e potere nella Toscana del Quattrocento*, Bologna, 1987, p. 203. E. ROTELLI similarly places it “nel più vasto quadro delle norme emesse contro il ceto magnatizio”; “I vescovi nella società fiorentina del Trecento”, in *Eretici e ribelli del XIII e XIV sec.*, Pistoia, 1974, p. 193. Davidsohn connected it to the struggle of the early 1320s (*Storia di Firenze* [*op. cit.* (see note 1)], vol. 4, pp. 848-849), as does G. DAMERON, in *Florence and Its Church in the Age of Dante*, Philadelphia, 2005, p. 103.



clerics” were not aimed exclusively at elite families.<sup>35</sup> But holding relatives accountable for the misdeeds of an individual mirrored the similar strategy of the anti-magnate laws in the Ordinances of Justice, and the most infamous of the “fictitious clerics” were those magnates, like Aldobrandino Cavalcanti, whose clerical status appears to have been merely a ruse to feed their greed.<sup>36</sup> The popolo’s hand is especially evident in the law that excluded from guild membership persons attempting to use clerical status or privilege to evade communal taxes or jurisdiction, for it entrusted to the guild consuls the responsibility of removing such “clerics” from the guild rolls and reporting them to the commune’s judicial officials.<sup>37</sup> Threats of severe fines against anyone who provoked a riot in the bishop’s palace or offended the bishop with injurious or intimidating words point an accusing finger at those magnates who occasionally occupied the episcopal residence in their presumption to control both the office and its landed wealth.<sup>38</sup> In at least one case it is possible to establish a precise link between the 1322-25 statutes against clerics and a specific legislative enactment of the popular government of the 1290s. A law passed by the councils on 22 October 1293 giving the priors authority to refuse the protection of communal law to all persons, including clerics, who “declined” the commune’s jurisdiction is surely the origin of the rubric concerning the same matter found in the statutes thirty years later.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> “Quod laici teneantur pro clericis et religiosis personis offendentibus”; *Statuto del Capitano*, *op. cit.* (see note 33), book 5, rubric 68, pp. 264-265; new ed., p. 238. “Quod Potestas et Capitaneus habeant arbitrium contra clericos recipientes officia Communis Florentie”; *Statuti della Repubblica fiorentina*, ed. CAGGESE, *Statuto del Podestà*, Florence, 1921, book 3, rubric 109, p. 261; new ed., p. 236. “Quod hoc constitutum et infrascripta serventur contra clericos fictitios”; *ibid.*, book 3, rubric 110, pp. 261-262; new ed., pp. 236-237.

<sup>36</sup> For the dispute over fictitious clerics and the circumstances in which the Cathedral chapter finally yielded to communal pressure, see DAVIDSOHN, *Storia di Firenze*, *op. cit.* (see note 1), vol. 3, pp. 393-398; cf. DAMERON, *op. cit.* (see note 34), pp. 219-224.

<sup>37</sup> “De hiis qui privilegiis clericatus vel oblationis se defendere conantur”; *Statuto del Podestà*, *op. cit.* (see note 35), book 5, rubric 61, p. 401; new ed., p. 363.

<sup>38</sup> “De puniendo qui rixam fecerit in palatio episcopatus”; *ibid.*, book 3, rubric 6, pp. 184-185; new ed., p. 170.

<sup>39</sup> Archivio di Stato di Firenze [hereafter ASF], Provisionsi Registri, 3, f. 143r: “Item super facto clericorum et illorum qui [...] dicerentur esse in sacris ordinibus constituti qui declinant iurisdictionem Communis Florentie et non respondent sub iurisdictione et in foro regiminum et officialium dicti Communis.” Cf. *Statuto del Capitano*, *op. cit.* (see note 33), book 5, rubric 128, pp. 320-323; new ed., pp. 286-288 (“De non declinando iurisdictionem communis Florentie”). Many thanks to David Peterson for providing me with the citation and text of the 1293 law and pointing out the similarity to 5.128 of the Capitano’s statutes. On the extensive communal legislation of the 1280s and 1290s that limited clerical claims of privilege and exemption, see G. SALVEMINI, “Le lotte fra Stato e Chiesa nei Comuni italiani durante il secolo XIII”, in *ID.*, *La dignità cavalleresca nel Comune di Firenze e altri scritti*, ed. E. SESTAN, Milan, 1972, pp. 298-330 (315-323).

It is within this framework of the popular government's attempt to rein in the power of the "ecclesiastical" magnates that we may approach its building program. Particularly intriguing in this regard is the rubric of the Capitano's statutes that speaks of his duty to "defend churches, religious places, and hospitals" from "private persons who, through their influence [*eorum auctoritate*], seek to seize and usurp such places."<sup>40</sup> This is followed by a statute ordering "laypersons" or "patrons who take possession" of the lands, homes, buildings, spaces, or goods of churches, and "who live in them together with the clerics," to "surrender and relinquish" these properties within a month and never to return.<sup>41</sup> Legislation imposing communal control over hospitals and other ecclesiastical entities can be traced back to the first popular government of 1250-60,<sup>42</sup> and these rubrics of the 1322-25 statutes obviously reflect a long struggle to wrest control of ecclesiastical property and offices from the same elite families whose influence in government the popolo sought to diminish by banning magnates from the priorate and the guild consulates. However, several examples suggest that the controversies involving magnate control of ecclesiastical property became especially acute during the mid- and late-1290s. In 1294 the popular government freed the hospital and leprosarium of Sant'Eusebio from occupation and exploitation by members of two magnate clans, the Tornaquinci and Tosinghi, who had at some point seized control of the hospital and the income from its landed wealth accumulated through donations and legacies. Sant'Eusebio was returned to the supervision formerly exercised by the Calimala guild.<sup>43</sup> A second instance of government action to liberate ecclesiastical institutions from magnate exploitation – and in this case it also involved clearing space for the new Cathedral – was the decision to remove the hospital of San Giovanni Evangelista from the area between the church of San Giovanni and Santa Reparata in the very year in which Aldobrandino Cavalcanti was expelled as treasurer of the Cathedral chapter and the Mozzi-Cavalcanti "occupa-

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<sup>40</sup> "Teneatur dominus Capitaneus defendere ecclesias et loca religiosa et hospitalia a specialibus hominibus et personis qui eorum auctoritate vellent ipsa loca invadere vel occupare"; *Statuto del Capitano*, *op. cit.* (see note 33), book 2, rubric 9, p. 98; new ed., p. 89.

<sup>41</sup> "Quod layci et patroni domos et bona ecclesiastica per eos occupata libere dimictant"; *ibid.*, book 2, rubric 10, pp. 98-99; new ed., p. 89.

<sup>42</sup> QUILICI, *loc. cit.* (see note 20), pp. 323-324, 333; DAVIDSOHN, *Storia di Firenze*, *op. cit.* (see note 1), vol. 2, pp. 624-635.

<sup>43</sup> DAVIDSOHN, *Storia di Firenze*, *op. cit.* (see note 1), vol. 3, pp. 674-675; LANSING, *op. cit.* (see note 19), p. 76.

tion” of the hospital presumably came to an end. In June 1296, the consuls of the Calimala, who supervised the Opera of San Giovanni, and the *operai* of Santa Reparata jointly petitioned the communal priors to have the hospital torn down and rebuilt a block or so to the north, between via Martelli and via Ricasoli, on land owned by the commune that was exchanged for the land vacated by the old hospital. The petition declared that the action had the approval of the bishop, but it also emphasized that it was approved by the “whole commune,” to which “the protection of the hospital pertains and belongs.” Two years later the councils authorized the construction of the new hospital with communal funds. In the 1296 petition the consuls and *operai* also requested that the tomb monuments (“*sepulcra seu avelli*”) surrounding San Giovanni and containing the remains of prominent members of elite and magnate families be removed.<sup>44</sup> Their displacement was no doubt necessary for the enlargement and leveling of the piazza in front of the new Cathedral, but it also symbolically displaced the great families that had traditionally dominated the two churches and their adjacent neighborhoods. According to Villani, the popular government had already begun clearing away these “*monumenti e sepolture e archie*” in 1293, but the fact that many of them were still there in 1296 (and indeed much later) implies considerable resistance from the elite families to their removal.<sup>45</sup>

Another case of communal intrusion in the 1290s into magnate occupation of ecclesiastical property concerns the “family church” of San Michele Visdomini, which stood where the choir (or possibly the north tribune) of Santa Maria del Fiore was later built. Carol Lansing has brought to light a document of 1299 that records the testimony of six witnesses who, at the behest of the Visdomini, confirmed the ancient patronage rights of the family over the church: the right to be received in the church at all times, to be given food and drink by the rector, to use anything in the church, to keep documents in a chest in the sacristy, to name the rectors, to pay for festivals and invite whomever they wanted – in sum,

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<sup>44</sup> Petition of 6 June 1296 in GUASTI, *op. cit.* (see note 3), pp. 9-10; also in G. PAMPALONI, *Firenze al tempo di Dante. Documenti sull'urbanistica fiorentina* (Rome, 1973), pp. 56-58. Communal funding and the location of the new San Giovanni Evangelista were mandated in a law of 1 October 1298; PAMPALONI, *cit.*, pp. 58-60; the exact spot is pinpointed by F. SZNURA, *L'espansione urbana di Firenze nel Duecento*, Florence, 1975, pp. 62-63. See also HAINES, *loc. cit.* (see note 9), pp. 305-306.

<sup>45</sup> VILLANI, *op. cit.* (see note 7), vol. 2, 9.3, p. 14. On these tomb monuments and the difficulty the commune encountered in removing them, see J. T. PAOLETTI, “Medici Funerary Monuments in the Duomo of Florence during the Fourteenth Century: A Prologue to ‘The Early Medici’”, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 59, 2006, pp. 1117-1163 (1119-1127).

to use the church as their own property. Lansing plausibly speculates that this effort to prove the family's long-standing rights at the church was related to the plans for the new Cathedral.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, it was likely a response to a challenge by the commune, possibly through one of the two Opere, to the legality of the family's proprietary claims over San Michele Visdomini, an inquiry no doubt motivated by the need to clear space for construction. In fact, a partial destruction of San Michele Visdomini did occur in 1300, even though it was obvious that it would be years and perhaps decades before the building of the new Cathedral reached its eastern end where the old Visdomini church was located. But the demolition was halted (not to be completed until the 1360s), which, as with the tomb monuments, also suggests resistance to the government policy of confiscation and destruction of structures and properties that the magnates considered theirs by ownership or patronage.<sup>47</sup>

These episodes support the hypothesis that the plan for a new Cathedral and the reshaping of the urban fabric it entailed emerged from – or merged with – the popolo's intention to break the hold of the magnates over the local church. Supervision of these projects and their finances by communal and guild committees affirmed in principle public control over the two main churches of Florence's central ecclesiastical complex. Not least among the aims of the Opera of San Giovanni and the Opera of Santa Reparata was to dislodge magnate families from the positions of power, privilege, and patronage that had allowed them to control the bishopric and the Cathedral chapter and, through them, the bishop's church of San Giovanni and the Cathedral church of Santa Reparata,

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<sup>46</sup> LANSING, *op. cit.* (see note 19), pp. 71-72.

<sup>47</sup> GUASTI, *op. cit.* (see note 3), pp. 185-186. The partial demolition of 1300 is mentioned in a 1367 enactment of the Cathedral *operai* in which they decided to augment the compensation to the bishopric and the Visdomini for the value of the destroyed church and its land because of the diminished value of the *lira* over 67 years. The portion of the deliberation referring to the partial demolition of 1300 is as follows: "Operarii [...], considerantes quod dudum in MoCCCo facta fuit quedam provisio per opportuna Consilia populi et comunis in favorem ecclesie Sancti Michaelis Vicedominorum, videlicet partis dicte ecclesie Sancti Michaelis que destructa fuit pro hedificando ecclesiam Sancte Reparate de Florentia; in qua continetur quod operarii operis Sancte Reparate predicte teneantur et debeant dare et solvere ecclesie Sancti Michaelis predicti, pro extimatione et pretio et re-compensatione terrenorum et hedifitii predicti destructi, libras duomilia pro rehedificando dictam ecclesiam in alium locum. Et considerantes etiam quod pro rehedificatione predicta operarii dicti operis olim dederunt et solverunt in pluribus partitis ser Ridolfo rettori dicte ecclesie procuratori vicarii domini episcopi Florentini et patronorum dicte ecclesie libras duomilia f. p. videlicet monete nunc ad presens currentis" [they accept the advice of a jurist to increase compensation to 2,829 *lire*]. The payments went to the procurator of the bishopric and the Visdomini, the latter here referred to as the church's 'patrons' ("procuratori [...] patronorum dicte ecclesie").

and the landed wealth of ecclesiastical institutions in Florence and throughout the two dioceses. The Opere were the instruments through which the popular commune weakened the magnates' hold on the local church.

Especially illuminating in this regard is the long struggle between the Calimala guild and the Cathedral chapter for control of the Opera of San Giovanni. In 1253, during the Primo Popolo, the provost of the Cathedral chapter, Pagano degli Adimari, revived an old claim on behalf of the chapter and appealed to Pope Innocent IV to have the administration of the Opera transferred from the guild to the chapter.<sup>48</sup> This dispute over the Opera of San Giovanni between the Calimala and the Cathedral chapter, which was of course linked to the Cathedral church of Santa Reparata, implies not only that the chapter claimed rights over the church of San Giovanni and its Opera (and possibly over the bishop himself), but also that the Opera (and the Calimala behind it) had extended its administrative reach to the Cathedral church of Santa Reparata as well. If so, the Cathedral chapter may have been defending ancient rights in its 'own' church that it felt were being encroached upon by the Opera. The pope sided with the chapter and thus with the powerful Adimari, but the Calimala remained in control, presumably with the support of the Primo Popolo. Conflicts between the chapter and the Calimala-controlled Opera subsequently erupted in 1266 and 1271,<sup>49</sup> and again in 1296 when the quarrel probably involved the hospital of San Giovanni Evangelista. In its 1301 statutes, the Calimala, no doubt recalling Pagano degli Adimari's appeal to Innocent IV a half-century earlier, sought to obstruct further challenges to its control of the Opera by blocking such petitions to the papacy. The guild's consuls were instructed to seek the commune's cooperation in declaring null and void the "letters solicited not long ago from the Apostolic See by the Florentine provost [of the Cathedral chapter] to the detriment of the Opera and the aforementioned consuls [of the Calimala] (*littere dudum impetrate ab apostolica Sede per propositum florentinum in preiudicium dicte opere et consulum predictorum*)." Whether the "letters solicited not long ago" were those sought by Pagano degli Adimari in 1253 (in

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<sup>48</sup> One wonders if, in doing so, the chapter advanced an argument similar to the one made in 1187 by the canons of Bergamo who asserted that the Cathedral church and the baptistery of that city constituted a single entity; see A. THOMPSON, O.P. *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes, 1125-1325*, University Park, Pa., 2005, p. 26.

<sup>49</sup> G. FILIPPI, *L'Arte dei Mercatanti di Calimala in Firenze ed il suo più antico statuto*, Turin, 1889, p. 56, n. 163; p. 57, n. 171; QUILICI, *loc. cit.* (see note 20), p. 280, n. 32.

which case the rubric may have originated long before 1301) or were a more recent instance of the Cathedral chapter's efforts to snatch control of the Opera from the Calimala is not clear. Either way, the fact that the issue merited inclusion in the guild's 1301 statutes implies that the struggle between the chapter and the Calimala over the Opera was still alive in the 1290s. The Calimala consuls were to "resist all persons seeking to acquire any rights (*aliquod ius acquirere*) in the Opera." These "rights" may have included income from the Opera's property, use of the liturgical objects and books, and perhaps a voice in the building and decorative programs. Whatever the precise content of such rights, it was the responsibility of the consuls to "do everything they considered necessary for the well-being of the Opera, so that the Opera and its offices may remain free and in peace under the auspices and protection of the consuls and guild of Calimala." To protect the Opera's "rights," the guild appointed an official to oversee expenditures at San Giovanni and also at the Opera of the church of San Miniato and that of the hospital of Sant'Eusebio, both administered by the Calimala. The inclusion of Sant'Eusebio in this arrangement evokes the controversies of the 1290s between the popular government and the magnates over the 'occupation' of ecclesiastical property and hospitals. The guild was to maintain a permanent representative (*a procurator*) at the papal court to oppose anyone soliciting papal letters against the Opera of the two churches or the hospital.<sup>50</sup>

The early history of the Opera of Santa Reparata remains obscure. Even at what point a separate Opera for the Cathedral church was instituted, whether in the 1290s or earlier, is not clear. As suggested above, it is possible that the Opera of San Giovanni initially had responsibility for building, repairs, decoration, and maintenance at both churches until – perhaps in the 1290s? – an autonomous Opera of Santa Reparata was created. The system of assigning responsibility for the Cathedral Opera each year to one of the major commercial guilds (Calimala, Cambio, Lana, Por Santa Maria, and Medici e Speziali) is known chiefly from a rubric of the communal statutes of 1322-25.<sup>51</sup> In June 1303 Por Santa Maria took charge for one year,<sup>52</sup> and if, as it seems, this was a routine or regular turn,

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>51</sup> "Quod artes superesse debeant operi Sancte Reparate et de rationibus revidendis et pretiis presentibus recircandis"; *Statuto del Capitano*, *op. cit.* (see note 33), book 1, rubric 58, pp. 65-66, new ed. pp. 58-59. The statute is also published in *GUASTI*, *op. cit.* (see note 3), pp. 26-28.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22. See A. DOREN, *Le arti fiorentine*, 2 vols., tr. G. B. KLEIN, Florence, 1940, vol. 2, p. 239, n. 1.

guild supervision of the Cathedral Opera probably originated with the popular government a few years earlier. But it may have had a relatively short life. Already in 1307 there is no mention of the guilds in a document in which the canons of the Cathedral chapter appointed one of their chaplains as *operaio*, receiver of funds, and “*gubernator*” of the Opera, empowering him to exact all sums owed to the Opera by any and all persons, localities, or institutions. Absent from this arrangement, in addition to the guilds, is the commune itself. In 1318 (after a hiatus of eleven years for which Guasti found no documents pertaining to the Cathedral Opera), the commune acknowledged that construction had “proceeded slowly and was indeed almost abandoned because of a lack of funds,” and that a renewal of communal subsidies was needed in order to resume work. Receipts from the tax of four *denari per lira* (1.67%) on disbursements by the communal treasury were assigned to the Cathedral Opera and paid to a committee of three – one appointed by the bishop, one by the Cathedral chapter, and one by the commune – again with no role for the guilds. A similar measure in 1319 that gave the Opera the commune’s third of revenues from heresy convictions by the Inquisition originated from a petition “on behalf of the officials who preside over the Opera of the Blessed Reparata” – still with no mention of the guilds.<sup>53</sup> Although the 1322-25 statutes still refer to a rotation of responsibility among the guilds in overseeing the Opera, there is no evidence it was still in use at that time.

If, as these documents suggest, after 1303 responsibility for the Cathedral – or, more accurately, for the virtual cessation of construction in the first third of the fourteenth century – rested more with the bishops and the Cathedral canons than with the Calimala or other guilds, we need to ask, in the light of the hypothesis formulated thus far, whether this was so because the magnates, after seeing their power over the local church threatened in the 1290s by the popular government’s determination to reshape the city’s ecclesiastical center, succeeded, in the space of a few short years at the beginning of the new century, in re-establishing control over the bishopric, the Cathedral chapter, and to an extent even over the commune. With the victory of the Black Guelfs in the winter of 1301-02, the faction of elite families, both magnate and non-magnate, led by the arch-magnate Corso Donati and supported by Boniface VIII took power and removed the guilds from the electoral and constitutional responsibilities they had acquired since 1282 and 1293. Among the lead-

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<sup>53</sup> GUASTI, *op. cit.* (see note 3), pp. 22-26.

ing Black Guelf families were the Visdomini and the branch of the Tosin-ghi that included Lottieri della Tosa, who finally achieved what had eluded him in the 1270s: with the support of his ally Corso Donati, Della Tosa was appointed by Pope Boniface to the Florentine see in December 1301 and took office early in the next year. Thus the bishopric itself was now in the hands of one of the most powerful magnate clans. At the Cathedral chapter, after six years (1293-1298) of popular government in which no new canons came from magnate families, suddenly in the two years 1299-1300 new canons came from the magnate Giandonati, Mozzi, Bardi, and Buondelmonti, in 1307 from the Visdomini and Cavalcanti, and in 1312 from the Buondelmonti and Frescobaldi.<sup>54</sup> Civil war among the factions, lack of funds, and the death, possibly in 1301, of Arnolfo di Cambio, who had been appointed some years earlier as “capudmagister laborerii et operis ecclesie Beate Reparate maioris ecclesie Florentine,”<sup>55</sup> were no doubt among the reasons why work on the Cathedral came to a halt sometime after 1300. But construction remained stalled for a generation – “lungo tempo vacua e senza nulla operazione,” says Villani<sup>56</sup> – and it is difficult to avoid the impression that this happened in great part because the elite families that controlled both commune and church in these decades, including many magnates now restored to the centers of ecclesiastical power and wealth, had no interest in reviving work on the new Cathedral.

Despite the revival of their influence over the Florentine church after 1300, however, the magnates were unable to translate this success into a broader political restoration. They failed (until 1343, and then succeeded for only six weeks) in reversing their exclusion from the priorate. In the first quarter of the fourteenth century, magnates joined several unsuccessful conspiracies aimed at overturning popular institutions and the Ordinances of Justice.<sup>57</sup> These episodes weakened the magnates and caused some of their own number and most of the non-magnate elite families to make their peace with the guild-based priorate and work within the political framework created by the *popolo* at the end of the thirteenth century. As factional divisions debilitated their ranks, bankruptcies (most notably that of the Scali company in 1326) lessened their economic clout.

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<sup>54</sup> SALVINI, *op. cit.* (see note 24), pp. 14-16.

<sup>55</sup> GUASTI, *op. cit.* (see note 3), pp. 20-21.

<sup>56</sup> VILLANI, *op. cit.* (see note 7), vol. 2, 11.193, p. 756.

<sup>57</sup> E.g., *ibid.*, vol. 2, 10.219, pp. 404-405.



Military and fiscal crises generated by the war against Castruccio Castracani of Lucca led the elite, including many magnates, to accept the lordship of the Angevin Charles of Calabria in 1326. After both Castruccio and Charles died at the end of 1328, an oligarchy of bankers and merchants took control, which, although by no means antagonistic to the magnates, was organized in and represented by the association of international merchants, the Mercanzia, that had been created by the five major commercial guilds. Magnate clans not enmeshed in these trading and banking networks gradually saw their influence dissipate, and even the economic powerhouses among the magnates – chiefly the Bardi and Frescobaldi – were still barred from the priorate. After 1328, magnate dreams of destroying the structures of government instituted in 1282 and 1293 became ever less realistic. A conspiracy led by the Bardi, Frescobaldi, and Rossi in 1340 led to a swift reaction in defense of communal institutions by both the popolo and much of the non-magnate elite. And the violent reaction against the brief readmission of magnates to the priorate after the expulsion of Walter of Brienne in 1343 resulted in the institution of a new and more radically popular government in September of that year. Not least among the many assaults on elite power and wealth carried out by the popolo in the mid-1340s were the ruinous bankruptcies forced on the magnate Bardi and several non-magnate elite companies.<sup>58</sup>

By the 1330s, and certainly after 1343, the great magnate ‘ecclesiastical’ families – Visdomini, Tosinghi, Adimari, Buondelmonti, and Mozzi – were shadows of their former selves and no longer wielded the kind of power they once had within and over the bishopric and Cathedral chapter. Having once owned much of the area around San Giovanni and Santa Reparata, they were gradually forced to sell a great deal of their property. In the late 1330s the Calimala, through the Opera of San Giovanni, bought properties in this neighborhood from the Tosinghi and Adimari. In one case from 1338, the Opera acquired two houses from the Adimari in their ancestral enclave near the north end of the modern via Calzaiuoli and exchanged them for land belonging to the Cathedral chapter in order to

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<sup>58</sup> On the decline of the magnates: M. BECKER, “A Study in Political Failure: The Florentine Magnates, 1280-1343”, *Mediaeval Studies*, 27, 1965, pp. 246-308; C. KLAPISCH-ZUBER, “Ruptures de parenté et changements d’identité chez les magnats florentins du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 1988, pp. 1205-1240. On their subsequent evolution: C. KLAPISCH-ZUBER, *Retour à la cité: Les magnats de Florence 1340-1440*, Paris, 2006. On the Buondelmonti: R. BIZZOCCHI, “La dissoluzione di un clan familiare: i Buondelmonti di Firenze nei secoli XV e XVI”, *Archivio storico italiano*, 140, 1982, pp. 3-45.

widen the piazza around San Giovanni.<sup>59</sup> In the 1350s and 1360s the Cathedral Opera completed the destruction of old San Michele Visdomini and built a new church of the same name north of the Cathedral.<sup>60</sup> As Anna Benvenuti has eloquently written, the demolition of the original Visdomini church “symbolically encapsulates the dissolution of the system of social ties that had bound the city’s aristocracy, in a dense network of reciprocities, to the bishopric and the administration of its wealth.”<sup>61</sup>

By the 1330s the old struggles for control of the Opera of San Giovanni and that of Santa Reparata were largely resolved. The Calimala secured unquestioned authority over the building program, finances, and wealth of the Opera of San Giovanni, and henceforth the Wool guild was similarly in control of the Opera of Santa Reparata/Santa Maria del Fiore. When the commune entrusted the Wool guild with supervision over the Cathedral works in 1331 and resumed regular funding from the communal treasury, it reasserted civic and public control of at least the material aspects of Florence’s ecclesiastical establishment. Initially, the consuls and other officials of the Wool guild who received and spent communal subsidies were required to account for their use of these funds to communal auditors. But within a matter of weeks the commune reversed itself and made the Cathedral operai, elected by and from the membership of the Wool guild, accountable only to the guild and its consuls, thus confirming the guild’s autonomy in managing the huge enterprise.<sup>62</sup> Because by this time the magnate families and the ecclesiastical institutions they once dominated no longer challenged guild and civic control of the Cathedral project, and perhaps also because the Wool guild had been less involved in the earlier conflicts over such questions, it did not need to write into its statutes ringing declarations or rhetorical defenses of this autonomy.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, by the early fifteenth century the Lana’s dominance at the Cathedral was so complete that it even gained authority from the commune to endow new prebends in the Cathedral chapter with income from the Opera.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> ASF, Carte strozziane, series 2, 51, vol. 1, ff. 105v-106r, and vol. 2, f. 120v and f. 122v. I thank Amy Bloch for these references, and for those below in notes 69 and 71.

<sup>60</sup> HAINES, *loc. cit.* (see note 9), pp. 311-313.

<sup>61</sup> A. BENVENUTI PAPI, “Da San Salvatore a Santa Maria del Fiore: itinerario di una cattedrale”, in F. GURRIERI (ed.), *La cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore a Firenze*, 2 vols., Florence, 1994-95, vol. 1, p. 286.

<sup>62</sup> GUASTI, *op. cit.* (see note 3), pp. 30-32.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-41 (book I, rubric 65 of the Wool guild’s unpublished statutes of 1333).

<sup>64</sup> D. S. PETERSON, “The Cathedral, the Florentine Church, and Ecclesiastical Government in

Unlike the Lana, however, the Calimala had been in the thick of these struggles since at least the mid-thirteenth century. One indication of its determination to stamp the seal of its authority on the new Cathedral in the early years of construction is the appearance of the Calimala eagle over the side doors in the drawing by Poccetti that is our chief evidence for Arnolfo's original facade.<sup>65</sup> And in the guild's 1334 statutes there remain loud echoes of what had once been at stake. One rubric required the Calimala to appoint two officials each year to keep an accurate register of all properties, shops, farms, and other possessions of the Opera of San Giovanni, San Miniato, and Sant'Eusebio, and to administer the rental of these properties in public offerings to the highest bidders. The Calimala's 1301 statutes had also required the appointment of an official to collect income from properties rented by the Opera of San Giovanni,<sup>66</sup> but the 1334 statutes treat the matter in considerably greater detail and also refer to large quantities of rental property "outside the city of Florence." Some of this land came directly to the Opera of San Giovanni from the bequests of testators, but much of it had no doubt belonged to the vast landed patrimony of the bishopric that had long been controlled and exploited by the Visdomini, Tosinghi, and other magnate families and had since come under the guild's control through its domination of the Opera.<sup>67</sup> Calimala officials were forbidden to make lifetime grants of lands or possessions of the Opera to any person in order "that they not be usurped [*A ciò non si possano usurpare*]" – an allusion perhaps to the old system by which magnates had occupied ecclesiastical properties and to the division of the Cathedral chapter's patrimony into prebends assigned to canons with lifetime tenure.<sup>68</sup>

The Calimala likewise fought to protect the Opera of San Giovanni from clerical taxation. Sometime around 1300 Calimala officials had been excommunicated for the guild's resistance to the imposition of the papal tenth, or *decima*, on the Opera of San Giovanni and Sant'Eusebio.<sup>69</sup> In

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the Early Quattrocento", in T. VERDON - A. INNOCENTI (eds.), *op. cit.* (see note 2), part 1, p. 75. On the Opera in the fifteenth century, see L. FABBRI, "L'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore nel quindicesimo secolo: tra Repubblica fiorentina e Arte della Lana", *ibid.*, pp. 319-339.

<sup>65</sup> F. K. B. TOKER, "Florence Cathedral: The Design Stage", *Art Bulletin*, 60, 1978, p. 215, n. 8.

<sup>66</sup> FILIPPI, *op. cit.* (see note 49), part 1, rubrics 22 and 25, pp. 82-84.

<sup>67</sup> *Statuto dell'Arte di Calimala*, in *Storia politica dei municipj italiani*, ed. P. EMILIANI-GIUDICI, Florence, 1851, appendice, book 3, rubric 11, pp. 157-158.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, book 3, rubric 14, p. 161.

<sup>69</sup> ASF, Carte strozziane, series 2, 51, vol. 2, f. 104r-v.

1306 the canonist Johannes Andreae supported the Calimala's claim for the Opera's exemption,<sup>70</sup> and that same year the guild consuls and operai protested before Bishop Lottieri della Tosa's vicar general that the Opera should not be subject to papal taxes on ecclesiastical entities because of its lay status and because its possessions were distinct from those of the church itself.<sup>71</sup> By 1334 the claim of immunity from clerical taxation extended to the church as well as the Opera and was expanded into an assertion of independence from any ecclesiastical interference. In its statutes of that year, the Calimala required its consuls to summon the heads of the most powerful Florentine merchant-banking companies with operations at the papal curia – specifically mentioned are the Bardi, Peruzzi, Acciaiuoli, Buonaccorsi, and Biliotti – and to instruct the companies to have their partners and representatives at the papal court make every effort “with their friends” to ensure that “the church and the Opera of the building works of the church of San Giovanni” be exempt and free of all taxes and obligations levied on the clerics (“chiericato”) of Florence. An extraordinary sentence follows: “Neither the lord bishop of Florence nor the clerics of the Cathedral [*maggiore chiesa*] of Florence, nor anyone on their behalf or acting in their name, may or will be allowed in any way to meddle in or interfere in anything pertaining to the church and the Opera [of San Giovanni], except when expressly requested by the consuls of the Merchants of Calimala and the other men of the guild, under whose guardianship and protection this church and Opera are ruled, maintained, and governed in pure faith.” Each year the consuls were to appoint four members of the guild and give them full power and authority to negotiate and enter into agreements with any and all persons and institutions in order to identify the ways in which “the Opera and Oratory of San Giovanni may best be preserved in honor, beauty, liberty, and exemption [from taxation].”<sup>72</sup> The consuls were obligated to safeguard the rights of the guild and its Opere against any civil action, court decision, excommunication or interdict and to call upon the Podestà, the Capitano del Popolo, the Executor of the Ordinances of Justice, the communal priors, Standard-bearer of Justice, and the consuls of the other guilds to assist them in defending the guild and its Opere. Should the communal priors be negligent in this duty, the Calimala consuls were required to convene the guild's

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<sup>70</sup> DAVIDSOHN, *Storia di Firenze*, *op. cit.* (see note 1), vol. 7, p. 321.

<sup>71</sup> ASF, Diplomatico, Mercatanti, 6 June 1306. See also DAMERON, *op. cit.* (see note 34), p. 153.

<sup>72</sup> *Statuto dell'Arte di Calimala*, *op. cit.* (see note 67), book 3, rubric 24, pp. 170-172.

members and the consuls of the other guilds, make a formal complaint against the priors, and appeal to the advisory colleges of the (then nineteen, later sixteen) Standardbearers of the neighborhood companies and the Twelve Good Men for help in defense of the guild and the Opere, and to punish any member of the guild who failed in the same duty while holding communal office or who did anything “against the liberty of the guild and the Opere.”<sup>73</sup>

Behind the early history of Florence’s new Cathedral lay a political effort not only to transform the city’s ecclesiastical center, but also to establish communal and guild control over the local and territorial church, to remove the suffocating patronage of the magnates, and to circumscribe the authority of bishops and Cathedral canons who, in the eyes of the popolo that promoted this program, had always been too close to the city’s elite families. The old magnate families lost the levers of ecclesiastical power. During the rest of the fourteenth century, the Cathedral was built by the Opera of Santa Maria del Fiore under the control of the Wool guild, and the three monumental bronze doors of the Baptistery were executed (the first by Andrea Pisano in the 1330s and the second and third by Lorenzo Ghiberti in the first half of the fifteenth century) under the authority of the Calimala’s Opera of San Giovanni. Thus, even in the construction and decoration of their own churches, the bishop and Cathedral chapter were relatively minor players.<sup>74</sup> Whereas the ground in and around old Santa Reparata had once been filled with the tombs of elite and especially magnate families, in the new Cathedral burials of laypersons were generally limited to the republic’s military and literary heroes and in any case to persons (including, as John Paoletti has recently revealed, several members of the Medici family) approved for such an honor by the consuls of the Wool guild and the Cathedral operai.<sup>75</sup> For about a century, Florence’s ecclesiastical establishment and its many building programs were administered by communal and guild authority, until, in the fifteenth

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, book 3, rubric 28, pp. 176-177.

<sup>74</sup> This was so even in the sacristy of Santa Maria del Fiore: see M. HAINES, *The “Sacrestia delle Messe” of the Florentine Cathedral*, Florence, 1983, pp. 36-42.

<sup>75</sup> On burials in the Cathedral: G. POGGI, *Il Duomo di Firenze. Documenti sulla decorazione della chiesa e del Campanile tratti dall’archivio dell’Opera*, 2 vols., revised ed. M. HAINES, Florence, 1988, vol. 2, p. 132 (document 2084); E. BORSOOK, “The Power of Illusion: Fictive Tombs in Santa Maria del Fiore”, in M. HAINES (ed.), *Santa Maria del Fiore: The Cathedral and Its Sculpture*, Fiesole, 2001, pp. 59-78; L. GATTI, “Ubi fui episcopus: Pietro Corsini e la Cattedrale”, in VERDON - INNOCENTI (eds.), *op. cit.* (see note 2), part 1, pp. 79-103; and, most recently, PAOLETTI, *loc. cit.* (see note 45).

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century, the Medici resurrected a more concentrated form of the patronage and exploitation of ecclesiastical institutions once practiced by the magnates and contested by the late-thirteenth-century popolo. But the emblem of the *popolo* – the shield depicting a red cross in a white field – remained and still remains symbolically front and center on the keystone of the entrance arch of the east tribune.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Noted by PAOLETTI, *ibid.*, p. 1119.