

Black Africans in Renaissance Europe

edited by

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The trade in black African slaves in fifteenth-century Florence

SERGIO TOGNETTI

This chapter will elucidate some aspects of the trade in black African slaves in fifteenth-century Florence. Slavery in the late Middle Ages, at least in its main features, is a well-known phenomenon as a consequence of Charles Verlinden's major work on Mediterranean Europe.¹ Among the important Italian cities involved in the slave trade, Genoa and Venice have received the greatest attention from scholars, and therefore have generated the most historiography. They were among the most populous urban centres on the continent, with port structures and economic ambitions focused principally on international trade. The two cities could also count on strong and powerful merchant colonies in the basins of the Aegean and Black Seas. Merchants from Genoa and Venice had been trading in slaves in Khios, Laiazzo, Pera, Caffa, Tana and Famagusta since the second half of the thirteenth century, although the growth of the slave trade received a significant boost in the decades after the Black Death.² Genoese and Venetian merchants, being so deeply rooted in these emporia in the Levant, had far greater possibilities than other Europeans or Italians of forging contacts with non-Christian peoples. The indispensable condition permitting men or women to be reduced to slavery, and in a similar fashion to any other goods that were an object of regular market transactions, was precisely that the individuals in question were not

¹ C. Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, 1: *Péninsule Iberique – France* (Bruges, 1955); II: *Italie, colonies italiennes du Levant, Levant latin, Empire byzantin* (Ghent, 1977).

² Beyond the works included in the previous footnote, see for example C. Verlinden, 'Le recrutement des esclaves à Venise aux XIVe et XVe siècles', *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, 39 (1968), pp. 83–202; D. Gioffré, *Il mercato degli schiavi a Genova nel secolo XV* (Genoa, 1971); J. Heers, *Esclaves et domestiques au Moyen Age dans le monde méditerranéen* (Paris, 1981); G. Pistarino, 'Tratta di schiavi da Genova in Toscana nel secolo XV', in *Studi di storia economica toscana nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento in memoria di Federigo Melis* (Pisa, 1987), pp. 285–304; M. Balard, 'Esclavage en Crimée et sources fiscales génoises au XVe siècle', in H. Bress, ed., *Figures de l'esclave au Moyen-Age et dans le monde moderne* (Paris and Montreal, 1996), pp. 77–87. A wide and updated bibliography on this subject is included in F. Panero, *Schiavi, servi e villani nell'Italia medievale* (Turin, 2000), pp. 341–57, 361–9 and in the monographic issue of *Quaderni storici*, 107: 2 (2001) ('La schiavitù nel Mediterraneo').

Christian.³ However, the prohibitions sanctioned by canon law, and by its civil counterpart receptive to religious norms, still did not manage to stop some Christians from being reduced to slavery. The numerous studies on the slave trade have in fact clarified that the great mass of people brought to Italian cities from emporia in the Levant were Tartars, Circassians, Russians and other unbaptised Slavs or Saracens, although a small number were Greeks, Christian Orthodox Slavs and Rumanians, Albanians and Armenians.

The privileged position occupied by the Genoese and Venetians in the trade in human beings is also documented by a few statistical data relating to the density of slaves in some Italian cities, which is deducible from reliable fiscal sources. In the Florentine *catasto* of 1427, there are only 360 female slaves (the vast majority of the total number were female), or less than 1 per cent of the whole Florentine population, estimated at about 37,000 inhabitants.⁴ In the Pisan *catasto* of 1428–9, out of a population of 7,400 inhabitants, slaves (55 women and 3 men) once again constituted less than 1 per cent.⁵ In Genoa, on the other hand, data taken from indirect taxes on possession of slaves in the first decades of the fifteenth century indicates at a conservative estimate more than 2,000 slaves, or 4 to 5 per cent of the inhabitants.⁶ In the 1380s and 1390s, the presence of slaves in Genoa had reached the exceptionally high figure of 4,000 or even 5,000 people.⁷

As far as the slave trade in Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is concerned, certain fundamental aspects are clear; some relate to its persistence over time, while others can be linked to modifications connected to the variation in economic trends in Mediterranean trade. In the towns of North and Central Italy, that is in the communes, slaves were exclusively female: the urban elites bought adolescent girls and female children chiefly but not solely for domestic duties. It is very rare to find slaves employed in manual labour connected to the work of artisans or in farming, although more frequently they were used as nurses or wet-nurses. The highest prices were paid for young women aged between fifteen and twenty-five years old: long life expectancy and increased attraction played a determining role for male buyers. Most of the slaves bought during the fourteenth century for the main cities in North

³ In Florence a fundamental law about this was enacted in 1364: see I. Origo, 'The domestic enemy: the eastern slaves in Tuscany in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', *Speculum*, 30 (1955), pp. 321–66 at 324–5.

⁴ C. Klapisch-Zuber, 'Women servants in Florence (fourteenth and fifteenth centuries)', in B. Hanawalt, ed., *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* (Bloomington, 1986), pp. 56–80 at 69.

⁵ B. Casini, *Aspetti della vita economica e sociale di Pisa dal catasto del 1428–1429* (Pisa, 1965), pp. 18–19.

⁶ Gioffré, *Il mercato degli schiavi*, pp. 68–9. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

and Central Italy were Tartars and Circassians, whereas in the fifteenth century Russians formed the majority, at least until the fall of Constantinople and the dismantlement of the Genoese trading colonies on the Black Sea. In the second half of the fifteenth century, with the drastic and unexpected rupture of the previous sources of supply, a much reduced flow of slaves was concerned in particular with Moors, Berbers and black Africans. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the slave trade in Italy, in terms of its organisation and the structures within which it had operated since the thirteenth century, was in a phase of critical and general decline.

This brief outline also applies in part to the south of Italy, with some important differences.⁸ Geographical proximity to the coast of Africa and thus to caliphates and emirates inhabited by non-Christian peoples, towards whom there existed an attitude of more or less permanent hostility, led to a higher quota of Saracen slaves than elsewhere on the peninsula. Obviously too this quota of Moor and Saracen slaves allowed for a considerable number of males captured during acts of open war or piracy. Second, above all in the predominantly rural regions in Southern Italy, the presence of male slaves employed to carry out agricultural duties became more accentuated in the passage from the fourteenth to the fifteenth centuries, when the demographic vacuum caused by repeated epidemics of plague reached its negative apex. In a sort of anticipation of the colonial slavery of modern times, the majority of slaves present in Southern Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century were males working on the land, with by then a net preponderance of black Africans. Charles Verlinden himself stated that 'slavery in Sicily at the end of the fifteenth century was, above all, black slavery'.⁹

The slave trade in black Africans consequently spread during the fifteenth century, replacing the oriental slave trade, which declined after the military conquests of the Ottomans in the basins of the Black and Aegean Seas, and in the Balkans. At the same time, the commercial routes of this trade changed. Until the 1440s, black slaves were sold to Italians and other Europeans by Arab merchants operating in the cities on the Mediterranean coast of Africa. After the voyages combining exploration, trade and plunder by the Portuguese (and also Italian) sailors, under the patronage and financial sponsorship of Prince

⁸ See C. Verlinden, 'L'esclavage en Sicile au bas moyen âge', *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, 35 (1963), pp. 13–113; C. Verlinden, 'L'esclavage dans le royaume de Naples à la fin du moyen âge et la participation des marchands espagnols à la traite', *Anuario de historia económica y social*, 1 (1968), pp. 345–401; H. Bresc, *Un Monde méditerranéen: économie et société en Sicile, 1300–1450* (Rome and Palermo, 1986), pp. 439–75.

⁹ Verlinden, *L'esclavage en Sicile*, p. 91.

Henry of Portugal, known as 'the Navigator', black Africans reduced to slavery from the coastal areas of Senegal and Guinea started to flow into the ports of the Algarve and into Lisbon itself.¹⁰ Florentine sources from the 1460s and 1470s describe these new slaves as 'teste nere venute da Lisbona' ('black heads from Lisbon'). The great Florentine merchant-bankers were also drawn to participate in this potential source of profit. Here the account books of the Cambini bank, an important Florentine mercantile and banking firm, provide some interesting points of departure in the attempt to define the slave trade in black Africans between Portugal and Tuscany at the end of the Middle Ages more clearly.¹¹

The Cambini bank, active between 1420 and 1482 (the year of its bankruptcy), has left 79 extant account books, preserved in the Estranei *fondo* of the Archive of the Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence. Among these, the most useful for this chapter are the ledgers ('libri mastri') and the record books (*ricordanze*). The business strategy and economic geography around which the activity of the bank gravitated for decades foresaw its regular presence in some commercial centres considered of strategic importance, regardless of variations in circumstances and profit margins. One of the fixed points of the commercial and financial interests of the Cambini had always been Lisbon. In the Portuguese capital, some Florentine merchants of high status operated on behalf of the bank, both as agents and as partners (*accomandatari*). They are documented many times in Portuguese archives: Bartolomeo di Iacopo di ser Vanni, Giovanni di Bernardo Guidetti and Bartolomeo di Domenico Marchionni are the most famous. It is through these Florentine businessmen who were resident in Lisbon that the Cambini bank began to take an interest in the slave trade in black Africans and to promote their import into Tuscany at the beginning of the 1460s. In fact, at this date the coasts of West Africa were being scoured by numerous naval expeditions supported by Prince Henry 'the Navigator'. In the course of the 1450s, the merchant navigators Alvise Ca' da Mosto (Venetian) and Antoniotto Usodimare (Genoese) had taken part in the voyages of exploration, culminating in the 'discovery' of the Cape Verde Islands, while many Portuguese voyagers had searched the landing places of

¹⁰ C. Verlinden, 'Les débuts de la traite portugaise en Afrique (1433-1448)', in *Miscellanea medievaleia in memoriam Jan Frederik Niermeyer* (Groningen, 1967), pp. 365-77; B. W. Diffie and G. D. Winius, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire, 1415-1580* (Minneapolis, 1977), pp. 74-95.

¹¹ For the history of the business and of the family, see S. Tognetti, *Il banco Cambini. Affari e mercati di una compagnia mercantile-bancaria nella Firenze del XV secolo* (Florence, 1999).

Senegal and Guinea.¹² The slave trade in black Africans constituted one of the most macroscopic consequences of European raids on sub-Saharan Africa.

The first documented example in the Cambini account books of the dispatch of black African slaves from Lisbon to Tuscany dates from 1461. In July of that year, a Portuguese ship called the *Santa Maria di Nazarette* docked in Livorno with a cargo of multiple and heterogeneous merchandise, including amongst much else untreated leather from Ireland and Portugal, silk from Iberia, cochineal from Sintra and three black female slaves. They had been embarked in Lisbon by a trusted partner and business agent of the Cambini, Giovanni Guidetti, who also sent to Florence a meticulous statement of accounts.¹³ The poor slaves had been acquired in Lisbon between the end of May and the beginning of June and their clothing must have been absolutely minimal, as Guidetti wrote that because they were naked, he had been compelled to spend 300 reals on each for clothes, as well as 600 reals for food. The names of the young women (Isabell, Barbera and Marta) are a clear testimony to the fact that they had been baptized, and the same account book reports straightforwardly that 'non sono cristiane . . . ma l'abbiamo batezate a parole' ('They are not Christians . . . but we have informally baptised them with words'). The purchase price paid in Lisbon in Portuguese reals shows a palpable hierarchy of values corresponding to variation in one physical norm: Isabell, though black, was defined as 'più bianca' ('whiter') and she was worth 8,500 reals; Barbera had cost 7,500 reals; and Marta, described as 'ben nera' ('quite black'), only 6,500 reals. Therefore a darker skin brought about an effective depreciation in value, a fact that correlates exactly with the price structure of the contemporary market for slaves in Genoa.¹⁴ These slaves were destined for domestic chores: Isabell had been bought directly to satisfy the household requirements of the Cambini; Barbera had been purchased on behalf of Giovanni degli Albizzi, a member of an important Florentine patrician family; and Marta had been acquired on behalf of Ridolfo di ser Gabriello, a Florentine merchant resident in Pisa, who was an agent of the Cambini for their business affairs in Pisa and Livorno. Adding together all the costs and expenses sustained between the acquisition in Lisbon and the arrival of the ship at Livorno, the slave of the Cambini family cost 9,351 reals, the equivalent of 46.15 *florini di suggello*, a sum that would exceed 50 florins

¹² Diffie and Winius, *Alle origini*, pp. 123–41.

¹³ Florence, Archivio dell'Ospedale degli Innocenti (hereafter AOIF), Estranei, 250, fol. 79; 233, fol. 33r.

¹⁴ Gioffré, *Il mercato degli schiavi*, pp. 127, 140–1.

with the addition of the expenses for the journey from Livorno to Florence.¹⁵ The value of the slave therefore was considerable, comparable to the annual salary of a qualified craftsman such as a master-mason,¹⁶ or to the production cost of a standard piece of the finest quality woollen cloth manufactured in the Florentine district of S. Martino and made with precious English wool.¹⁷ At any rate, in the income-tax return presented by the Cambini brothers for the catasto of 1469, Isabell had been replaced by another black African slave, aged twenty-four, called Giovanna, whose value was estimated at 31 *fiorini di suggello*.¹⁸

At the end of 1464 Giovanni Guidetti sent three more black African slaves through the Cambini bank's account. The caravel called the *Santo Spirito* that docked in Livorno in January 1465, chartered by the Portuguese João Afonso, brought three women all destined for Florentine buyers. Unfortunately, in only one instance does the account book record the name of the buyer and the sum paid for the purchase: the Florentines Piero and Giuliano di Francesco Salviati paid 36.18 *fiorini di suggello* 'per una testa nera ebbono da noi . . . per loro in chasa' ('For a black head they received from us . . . for their own domestic use').¹⁹ In September of the same year, another black female slave acquired and sent by Giovanni Guidetti arrived in Livorno on the whaling-ship *Dispensiero*, chartered by a Portuguese business man whose name has been Tuscanised into 'Luigi Stefani' by the Florentine book-keeper. This time the consignee of the slave is known: Stefano Mucini, a member of a Florentine family with strong interests in the trade between Tuscany and Portugal.²⁰

In 1467 three more black African female slaves arrived in Livorno on a sailing-ship from Lisbon. Giovanni Guidetti dispatched them through his own account; he wanted to sell the slaves in Pisa and Florence, using the Cambini bank as broker. The whale-boat the *Santa Maria Nunziata*, chartered once again by a Portuguese merchant and ship-fitter, Lopo Iannis, docked at Livorno in August. One slave called Barbera was sold to the Florentine Benedetto di ser Francesco Guardi for 51.14 *fiorini di suggello*; the other two, a woman and a baby girl, were sold in Pisa to the Florentine merchant Niccolò

¹⁵ AOIF, Estranei, 223, fol. 35v.

¹⁶ R. A. Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore, MD, 1980), pp. 437–8.

¹⁷ S. Tognetti, 'Uno scambio diseguale. Aspetti dei rapporti commerciali tra Firenze e Napoli nella seconda metà del Quattrocento', *Archivio storico italiano*, 158 (2000), pp. 461–90 at 482. The measure of a Florentine cloth or *panno* was 13 *canne* = m. 30.42.

¹⁸ Florence, Archivio di Stato (hereafter ASF), Catasto, 923, fols. 634r–636v. The partners of the bank until April 1462 were the brothers Francesco and Carlo di Niccolò Cambini; from that date until 1481, the brothers Francesco and Bernardo di Niccolò were partners instead.

¹⁹ AOIF, Estranei, 251, fol. 68; 227, fol. 105r.

²⁰ AOIF, Estranei, 227, fol. 130r.

di Paradiso Mazzinghi for the combined price of 42.10 *forini di suggello*.²¹ In June 1470 the whaling-ship belonging to one Portuguese, João Sodr , and fitted by another called 'Andrea Pieris', docked in Livorno with a black African slave. The woman had been bought in Lisbon for 8,500 reals by Piero Ghinetti, a new partner and agent of the bank, and she was reserved for the Cambini family.²²

The examples specified until now clearly refer to an entirely occasional trade, limited to the satisfaction of a moderate request for slaves destined for domestic service in the houses of rich Florentine merchant-bankers. The paltry volume of transactions shows the marginal character of the slave trade in the business strategy of the Cambini bank. A partial exception to this is constituted by the large-scale operation organised by Giovanni Guidetti who, in 1474, made two more substantial shipments of female slaves from Lisbon to Tuscany.²³ In January 1474, the Portuguese ship the *Santa Maria Nunziata*, chartered by Bartolomeu Afonso, arrived in Livorno with 26 slaves (25 women and 1 man); and in April, the ship *Santa Maria di Grazia*, also equipped by a Portuguese called 'Piero Ferrandi', disembarked 9 female slaves in Livorno. Some of the women who were the objects of the trade were defined as having white skin, others as having black skin; for the remainder of the women, and for the man, the Cambini account books give no further details. A doubt remains over which ethnic group can be linked to adjectives such as '*bianca*' or '*alba*' ('white'), given that the slaves were coming from Lisbon; maybe these terms indicate Saracens or Berbers, or whoever could be differentiated by skin colour from the women captured in sub-Saharan Africa.

At least in terms of the Florentine slave trade in the second half of the fifteenth century, this was a transaction of a certain financial substance. Between the hiring of the ship, the port operations, the costs of land transport, the taxes, the expenses of clothing some of the almost naked slaves and the price of commercial and financial brokerage, Giovanni Guidetti's current account at the Cambini bank was debited 140 large florins. The sales were delayed until 1476, making the wait for the proceeds a long one. The bank in Florence and its agents in Pisa and Naples sold 25 black and white slaves on behalf of Guidetti, crediting him with net proceeds of 1,071 large florins; the male slave and the other women were consigned to Lena Vettori, Guidetti's wife, who lived in Florence. For two of these slaves, the final result of the trade, but not the sum of the yield, is known; the bank could not be involved in financial

²¹ AOIF, Estranei, 252, fol. 179; 229, fols. 122–5. ²² AOIF, Estranei, 254, fol. 112.

²³ AOIF, Estranei, 259, fol. 99; 260, fol. 31; 235, fols. 31v–32r.

transactions that were not its responsibility. Summaries of the transactions documented in the bank's account books are shown in the Appendix to this chapter.²⁴

The sample is sufficiently detailed to hazard some general observations. First, it underlines the overwhelming preponderance of females, a phenomenon that confirms what was said at the beginning about slavery in the large towns in North and Central Italy. When the colour of the skin is specified, it is quite clear that slaves with white skin were much more desirable than those with black skin. The difference in price is very marked, to the point where some white women reached the price of 60 large florins (the equivalent of 72 *Fiorini di suggello*), a rather prohibitive sum in relation to the economic use of owning such expensive slaves. Just to give again an idea of the real value of these slaves, Antonio di Zanobi di ser Martino and Co., who were silk merchants and manufacturers, purchased a white slave by exchanging her for a piece of black velvet 30 *braccia* long and two widths of pile high ('a due altezze di pelo').²⁵ It is probable that the acquisition of a slave by a rich merchant was a response to pressures of prestige or in some cases to straightforward sexual interest rather than being fuelled by calculations of savings relating to domestic personnel. Nor should it be forgotten that in the fifteenth century some Florentine institutions dealing with foundlings, such as the Ospedale di San Gallo or the Ospedale degli Innocenti, brought up a significant number of children born to slaves (between 14 per cent and 30 per cent of registered foundlings) whose fathers can be more or less openly identified with members of the rich Florentine merchant class.²⁶

The majority of commercial transactions concerned precisely members of the mercantile and entrepreneurial circles of the city, as can be deduced from the surnames of the buyers. These included people of a certain importance, like Bernardo, the son of the humanist Giannozzo Manetti, and Francesco Sassetti, the general manager of the Medici bank. Two transactions concerned Lucca

²⁴ For a better understanding of the data, remember that the large florin became a money of account in 1471, replacing the old *Fiorino di suggello*, compared to which it enjoyed a fixed premium of 20 per cent. Any comparison with the amounts cited previously must therefore take into account that after 1471 100 large florins were the equivalent of 120 *Fiorini di suggello*. See on this R. A. Goldthwaite and G. Mandich, *Studi sulla moneta fiorentina (secoli XIII–XVI)* (Florence, 1994), pp. 29–73.

²⁵ AOIF, Estranei, 235, fol. 217r. A Florentine *braccio* corresponds to 58.5 cm.

²⁶ Origo, 'The domestic enemy', pp. 346–7; Klapisch-Zuber, 'Women servants', pp. 70–1; R. C. Trexler, 'The foundlings of Florence, 1395–1455', in R. C. Trexler, *The Children of Renaissance Florence* (reprinted Asheville, NC, 1998), pp. 7–34 at 22–4, 27 (originally printed in *History of Childhood Quarterly*, 1: 2 (1973), pp. 259–89).

and two more concerned Pisa. In Lucca the buyers came from the most elevated level of society.²⁷ In the case of Pisa, the purchases were made by a leather merchant and tanner (*cuoiaio*) and a shoemaker (*calzolaio*), or an entrepreneur and an artisan from the most important industry of the city (leather tanning and manufacture).²⁸ Finally, two transactions concerned Naples, through the brokerage of important merchant-banking firms like those belonging respectively to Filippo and Lorenzo Strozzi, and to Tommaso Ginori.²⁹ The buyers were the Count of Fondi and a certain Girolamo Liperotto Falconi who, according to the Cambini account books, seems to have been an official of the Neapolitan mint.

Considering the size of the turnover and the number of slaves as objects of sale, this operation is the only commercial one that can be considered a real trade, aiming to fulfil a not altogether occasional request for slaves. Other more limited cases can, however, be found in the Cambini account books in the second half of 1470s. The Portuguese ship the *Santa Maria Nunziata*, docking in Livorno on 23 September 1478, brought two black African female slaves belonging to Bartolomeo Marchionni, a Florentine merchant-banker resident in Lisbon. One of the slaves was described as 'di nazione nera d'età d'anni XVI in circha chiamata Luza' ('of black race, about sixteen years old, called Luza').³⁰ The girl was sold in Florence to two brothers, Chiaro and Pellegrino di Francesco da Casavecchia;³¹ at that time, Pellegrino was one of the clerks of the Cambini bank and his not so negligible annual salary

²⁷ Giovanni Guidiccioni was at the time one of the most important merchant and silk manufacturers in Lucca, whereas messer Iacopo da Ghivizzano was a member of the inner circle of the Lucchese ruling class. On them, see S. Polica, 'Le famiglie del ceto dirigente lucchese dalla caduta di Paolo Guinigi alla fine del Quattrocento', in *I ceti dirigenti nella Toscana del Quattrocento* (Florence, 10–11.XII.1982 and 2–3.XII.1983) (Florence, 1987), pp. 353–84; M. E. Bratchel, *Lucca, 1430–1494: The Reconstruction of an Italian City-Republic* (Oxford, 1995), *ad indicem*.

²⁸ S. Tognetti, 'Attività industriali e commercio di manufatti nelle città toscane del tardo Medioevo (1250 c.–1530 c.)', *Archivio storico italiano*, 159 (2001), pp. 423–79 at 454–6; and see the articles by L. Galoppini, M. Tangheroni and S. Tognetti in S. Gensini, ed., *Il cuoio e le pelli in Toscana: produzione e mercato nel tardo medioevo e nell'età moderna* (San Miniato, 21–22.II.1998) (Pisa, 1999).

²⁹ On Filippo Strozzi the elder's business affairs there is a vast bibliography; see at least R. A. Goldthwaite, *Private Wealth in Renaissance Florence. A Study of Four Families* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 52–73; *Il giornale del banco Strozzi di Napoli (1473)*, ed. A. Leone (Naples, 1981); M. Del Treppo, 'Aspetti dell'attività bancaria a Napoli nel '400', in *Aspetti della vita economica medievale* (Florence, Prato and Pistoia, 10–14.III.1984) (Florence, 1985), pp. 557–601; M. Del Treppo, 'Il re e il banchiere. Strumenti e processi di razionalizzazione dello stato aragonese di Napoli', in G. Rossetti, ed., *Spazio, società, potere nell'Italia dei comuni* (Naples, 1986), pp. 229–304. On Tommaso Ginori's business affairs, see M. Cassandro, 'Affari e uomini d'affari fiorentini a Napoli sotto Ferrante I d'Aragona (1472–1495)', in *Studi di storia economica toscana nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento in memoria di Federico Melis* (Pisa, 1987), pp. 103–23.

³⁰ AOIF, Estranei, 237, fol. 152. ³¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 187.

amounted to 50 large florins.³² Since the slave cost 40 large florins, once again it is permissible to doubt the strictly economic benefit of owning this type of servant. The second slave, called Margherita, was not sold in Florence. She was initially kept for a month in the house of Leonardo di Francesco Ringhiadori, another clerk of the Cambini bank.³³ Then, after having a bubo treated by a barber, Margherita was sent back to Pisa where she was exchanged for some cloth unloaded in Livorno from Venetian galleys on their regular return from Aigues-Mortes.³⁴

The owner of the two slaves, Bartolomeo Marchionni, was at the time partner and agent of the Cambini in the Portuguese capital. Belonging to a family of Florentine apothecaries who had a shop overlooking Brunelleschi's basilica of San Lorenzo, he had become an apprentice at the Cambini bank when he was about fifteen. Sent to Lisbon at the beginning of 1470s, he would become, in the space of a few years, one of the most important businessmen in Portugal, taking an interest in an impressive variety of commercial and financial transactions. Becoming a naturalised Portuguese in 1482, at the beginning of the sixteenth century he also participated in the financing of the voyages of 'discovery' and trade led by captains of the Portuguese navy of the calibre of Pedro Álvares Cabral and Afonso de Albuquerque, realising fabulous profits.³⁵ Among the manifold occupations in which he was involved, the slave trade in black Africans was not a matter of second rank – rather the contrary. Almost thirty years ago, Virginia Rau described Marchionni as one of the first slave-traders in Renaissance Europe. In the three years from 1493 to 1495, the registers of Casa dos Escravos in Lisbon record 1,648 slaves belonging to Marchionni, and between 1489 and 1503 he would send 1,866 black African slaves from Lisbon to the kingdom of Valencia.³⁶ These data are illuminating on two counts. In the first place, it is evident that the new geographical 'discoveries' had opened up new prospects of gain for the great international merchants: unfortunately, among them was also the racialised slave trade in sub-Saharan Africans. Nevertheless, at the same time, it is easy to see that this trade in human beings did not find very propitious terrain in the urban society of Renaissance Italy. Marchionni, who traded in hundreds of slaves each year, made only sporadic and very limited shipments to his native country,

³² Tognetti, *Il banco Cambini*, p. 353. ³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ AOIF, *Estranei*, 240, fol. 169v; 237, fol. 171; 236, fol. 66v.

³⁵ Tognetti, *Il banco Cambini*, pp. 287, 294–8.

³⁶ V. Rau, 'Notes sur la traite portugaise à la fin du XVe siècle et le Florentin Bartolomeo di Domenico Marchionni', *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, 44 (1974), pp. 535–43; see also Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe*, 1, pp. 625–8.

preferring to concentrate on markets where there were, in embryonic form, what were to become colonial types of cultivation (first and foremost, the cultivation of sugar cane). The possession of black African slaves in Florence was due in large part to mainly non-economic motives, such as notions of social prestige and the fascination of the exotic.

Genuine revitalisation of slavery in the Grand-Duchy of Tuscany, as in other states of modern Italy, would only take place between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, when hard labour and galley-slaves were introduced into the Mediterranean navies.³⁷

Appendix

Female slaves sold through the Cambini bank in Florence on behalf of Giovanni Guidetti in Lisbon (1474–1476)

Buyers	Place of delivery	Other middlemen	Physical description	Returns in large f.
Paolo di Giovanni di Zanobi	Florence	Giovanni Portinari & Co. (goldbeaters)	Black	35
Francesco di ser Antonio Parigi	Florence	Zanobi Girolami & Co.	White	60
Messer Iacopo da Ghivizzano	Lucca	Giuliano Cambini in Pisa and Giovanni Guidiccioni (Lucchese merchant)	White	60
Giovanni Guidiccioni Lucchese (merchant)	Lucca	Giuliano Cambini in Pisa	White	58
Bernardo di Giannozzo Manetti	Florence	—	Black	45
Tommaso di Francesco Ginori	Florence	—	White	63
Francesco di Tommaso Sassetti	Florence	—	Not specified	50
Giovanni di Corrado Berardi	Florence	Berardo di Corrado Berardi	Not specified	56
Giorgio di Niccolò Ugolini	Florence	Niccolò Ugolini & Co. (woollen merchants and manufacturers)	Not specified	54
Giovanni di Rineri Grisi (leather merchant and tanner)	Pisa	Giuliano Cambini in Pisa	Not specified	42

(cont.)

³⁷ F. Angiolini, 'Slaves and slavery in early modern Tuscany (1500–1700)', *Italian History and Culture*, 3 (1997), pp. 67–86.

(cont.)

Buyers	Place of delivery	Other middlemen	Physical description	Returns in large f.
Guido di ser Giovanni Guiducci	Florence	—	Not specified	40
Iacopo di Francesco Lottieri	Florence	—	Not specified	40
Bartolomeo di Giuliano Zati	Florence	Giuliano Cambini in Pisa	Not specified	60
Giovan Gualberto del Giocondo	Florence	—	Not specified	55
Iacopo di Alessio Lapaccini	Florence	—	Black	43
Felice di Deo del Beccuto	Florence	—	Not specified	53
Roba di Mino Squarcialupi	Florence	—	Not specified	40
Bartolomeo di Andrea Cambini	Florence	—	White	50
Girolamo Liperotto Falconi	Naples	Strozzi and Ginori companies of Naples	Black, 10 years old	32 ^a
Count of Fondi	Naples	Strozzi and Ginori companies of Naples	White, 10 years old	40 ^b
Morello (shoemaker)	Pisa	Gabriello di Ridolfo in Pisa	Black	40
Gino di Francesco Ginori	Florence	Giuliano Cambini in Pisa	White	50
Lena (wife of Giovanni degli Albizzi)	Florence	—	Black	25
Paolo Mini (silk merchant and manufacturer)	Florence	—	Not specified	60
Antonio di Zanobi di ser Martino & Co. (silk merchants and manufacturers)	Florence	—	White	60
Torrigiano Torrigiani	Florence	Lena Guidetti	Not specified	?
Niccolò di Ugolino Martelli	Florence	Lena Guidetti	White	?

^a This is net of the expenses for transport, the indirect taxes and the cost of mediation in Naples.

^b See the preceding footnote.