9-1-2014

Managing Free Trade in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Information, and the Free Port of Livorno

Corey Tazzara
Scripps College

Recommended Citation

"Managing Free Trade in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Information, and the Free Port of Livorno." *The Journal of Modern History*, 86(3): 493-529 (September, 2014).

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Scripps Faculty Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scripps Faculty Publications and Research by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

Managing Free Trade in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Information, and the Free Port of Livorno*

Corey Tazzara

Scripps College

In November 1644, the ship captain Sebastiano Ferro arrived at the Tuscan port of Livorno with a cargo of wine. Even before requesting the *pratica* of the port—entry for the purpose of trade—he asked to receive the exemptions of Livorno, “to be sure that in coming onto land he not be molested either in his person or in his goods for civil debts contracted in foreign states.”¹ Technically, these exemptions were restricted to inhabitants of the city. Nonetheless, the Customs Office routinely granted them even to temporary visitors of what was Europe’s premier free port, and in this case Customs Director Pandolfo Attavanti was happy to oblige Ferro. What happened next was therefore quite unexpected. While the regular governor was out roving the Mediterranean with the grand duke’s ships, several creditors of Ferro persuaded the acting governor to clap the captain into prison, disable his vessel, and seize his cargo. Attavanti was furious. He declared that this violation of the port’s liberties gave merchants a lot to worry about regarding their safety in Livorno. Captains ought to be protected from such outrages by the “public faith and the freedom of the port.” Even in more restrictive places such as Genoa and Civitavecchia, ship captains were given a “golden bridge” in the general interests of commerce. The customs director feared that the attack on Ferro was symptomatic of a new approach by the *auditore* of Livorno, the governor’s chief legal counselor. In the preceding months an Armenian and a Venetian who also ought to have been protected by the port’s generous freedoms had also fallen victim to the *auditore*’s zeal. “I don’t know whether I have said too much,” Attavanti apologized at the end of a rambling letter to the secretary of

* I would like to thank Clifford Ando, Philippe Buc, Catherine Chou, Paula Findlen, Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, Noah Millstone, Jeffrey Miner, James Shaw, Francesca Trivellato, the participants of the Stanford Medieval and Early Modern workshop, and three anonymous reviewers for their invaluable assistance in developing this article. Any remaining errors are my own.

¹ Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Mediceo del Principato (MP), 2160, f. 102, 01/31/1644. The author of this letter was almost certainly Pandolfo Attavanti, although the cover sheet to his letter is missing. In the footnotes I have retained the Florentine manner of dating the new year to March 25.

war in Florence. "I am not angry with anyone but am only obeying Your Excellency's orders."²

What did free trade mean, and what was a free port in early modern Europe? With centralizing states still unable to establish strong control over their peripheries, how did governments manage the increasing velocity and quantity of trade? Livorno's officials had as much difficulty as modern historians in answering these questions. The detention of Ferro's ship spawned a good deal of paperwork and bureaucratic infighting, which officials attributed first to the disorganization of the relevant legislation but ultimately to the informal customs of the port. The creditors asserted that Ferro's brother, a corsair, had absconded with prizes on a venture they had invested in, but the details of the case did not interest officials.³ At stake was the fundamental nature of the port. When the regular governor returned to his office, he disavowed his substitute's actions. The governor did not prosecute ship captains for debt even when they did not explicitly enjoy the exemptions of Livorno.⁴ In any case, he preferred to address what he believed to be the underlying problem: the haphazard organization of the laws and decrees on the subject. Over the next few weeks, legal officials, the governor, and the customs director scoured their archives for documents to shed light on the issue.⁵ Customs Director Attavanti asserted on the basis of decrees that the grand dukes had always permitted free comings and goings: "all ships can put in here and pay the anchorage fee and ask for whatever exemptions and safe-conducts they need before stepping onto the land. This is a very usual practice."⁶ He granted the exemptions to whoever showed up: "Regarding their examination, the whole affair is settled thus: when they are foreigners I ask them whether they have debts with Tuscan subjects or inhabitants; they respond that they have debts with aliens and foreigners; and I cannot deny them [the privileges]."⁷ Attavanti explained that this had always been the behavior of his predecessors at the Customs Office, even though no law authorized his office to grant the city's exemptions.⁸

When the secretary of war pressed him further on the issue, Attavanti made a blanket appeal to the traditions of the free port. Although the customs director

² Ibid.

³ Archivio di Stato di Livorno (ASL), Capitano poi Governatore poi Auditore vicario (CGA), 2603, vol. 1, ff. 801, 818.

⁴ ASF, MP, 2160, ff. 124–25, 02/06/1644.

⁵ Ibid., ff. 163, 194, 206, 223, 564, 565, and an unfoliated letter from Alessandro Vettori dated 02/23/1644. These letters were all written in February 1645 by our dating system.

⁶ Ibid., f. 157, 02/13/1644.

⁷ Ibid., f. 132, 02/16/1644.

⁸ Attavanti did produce a record that showed the customs director was responsible for enrolling people into the port's privileges as early as 1603. Ibid; see also ASL, CGA, 2602, vol. 2, f. 317 (1627).

admitted that his own chancellery did not contain "all of the old documents," he emphasized that the most important charter, known as the Livornina of 1591/1593, "does not embrace the full extent of the free port." He suggested that the full panoply of decrees was stored with the Privy Council in Florence but that it hardly mattered in any case: practice was more important than documentary precedent in creating a hospitable trade regime. Everybody knew that the custom was that "even our enemies the Turks have enjoyed and continue to enjoy the freedom of this port."⁹ They were granted trade exemptions in Livorno by virtue of its character as a free port. Attavanti won his point, and his office continued to manage exemptions as in the past. But the significance of the episode lay in his willingness to ground specific policies on a general conception of the free port. On its surface, the Sebastiano Ferro episode was a conflict between Attavanti and Livorno's chief legal official over the limits of exemptions in the city. But the debate was responsible for elevating various ducal decrees and bureaucratic practices into canons of local policy. In turn, this helped transform a fluid notion of Livorno's liberties into a practical sense of the free port.

Livorno played a privileged role in early modern discussions about free ports, and its experiences came to epitomize both the policy's advantages and its limitations.¹⁰ The city was famous for its regime of toleration, its flourishing foreign communities, the simplicity of its customs procedures (after 1676), and its pervasive atmosphere of liberty.¹¹ Contemporary pamphleteers regularly cited Livorno in their arguments about free ports. The Whig commercial publicist Sir Francis Brewster, who leveled one of the earliest critiques of the institution in his 1695 treatise, found it necessary to begin by analyzing the success of Livorno, "because I take that in all its Circumstances to be the first Complete Precedent

⁹ ASF, MP, 2160, f. 187, 02/19/1644.

¹⁰ Ports resembling free ports in terms of openness to foreigners and low customs duties were widespread in antiquity. Nevertheless, there is little continuity between ancient discussions of port policy (found most explicitly in Xenophon's *Poroi*, which advocated welcoming foreigners for fiscal purposes) and political economy in the seventeenth century. See Robert B. Revere, "'No Man's Coast': Ports of Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean," in *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory*, ed. Karl Polanyi et al. (New York, 1957), 38–63; Karl Polanyi, "Ports of Trade in Early Societies," *Journal of Economic History* 23, no. 1 (1963): 30–45; Alain Bresson and Pierre Rouillard, eds., *L'emporion* (Paris, 1993); Nicholas Purcell, "The Ancient Mediterranean: The View from the Customs House," in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. by William V. Harris (Oxford, 2005), 200–232.

¹¹ For example Michel Guyot de Merville, *Voyage historique d'Italie* (La Haye, 1729), 549–57; Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Voyages du P. Labat de l'ordre des FF. Precheurs en Espagne et en Italie* (Amsterdam, 1731), 2:79–106; Thomas Nugent, *The Grand Tour* (London, 1778 [1749]), 3:374–77.

in Europe.”¹² Livorno’s example deeply influenced the spread of the institution.¹³ It is useful to identify four phases in the geographic expansion of free ports. The first was a Tyrrhenian period, roughly from 1591 to 1650. Goaded by the success of Livorno, Genoa and the Savoyard ports of Villefranche and Nice adapted free port policies to their needs. There followed an expansionary phase, roughly 1650 to 1740, when free ports appeared throughout western Europe and especially around the Italian peninsula. The most well known of these included Trieste, Ancona, Naples, Messina, Marseilles, Tangier, Dunkirk, and Althona. By the mid-eighteenth century colonial powers were creating a number of such ports in the Caribbean Sea, including in Martinique, Guadeloupe, Tobago, Jamaica, and Saint-Domingue (Haiti). Later they spread to East Asia and North America. Thus free ports were first an Italian, then a western European, later an Atlantic, and ultimately a global phenomenon (table 1).

Historians often place free ports in the context of centralizing states and relentless international competition. In his classic work, Louis Dermigny stated baldly that “the free port is a modern reality, created by and imprinted with centralizing states and the mercantilist orientation of their policies.”¹⁴ More recently, Thomas Allison Kirk has argued that the Genoese free port aimed to help the small Ligurian state stay politically independent and commercially prosperous in a Mediterranean dominated by large nation-states.¹⁵ Scholarship on Livorno likewise portrays the free port as the creature of three grand dukes in three discrete instances: Cosimo I (the Customs Reform of 1566), Ferdinando I (the Livornina of 1591/1593), and Cosimo III (the Customs Reform of 1676). Save for a reform

¹² Francis Brewster, *Essays on Trade and Navigation in Five Parts* (London, 1695), 29. Geographical dictionaries usually remarked on Livorno’s status as a free port, too, even when they withheld that moniker from other ports that claimed the title, such as Genoa. For example, Lucas de Linda, *Le relationi et descrittioni universali et particolari del mondo*, trans. Maiolino Bisaccioni (Venice, 1664), 40.

¹³ Alberto Caracciolo, “Il dibattito sui ‘porti franchi’ nel Settecento: Genesi della franchigia di Ancona,” *Rivista storica italiana* 75, no. 3 (1963): 538–58; Louis Dermigny, “Escale, échelles et ports francs au moyen âge et aux temps modernes,” in *Les grandes escales* (Brussels, 1974), 521–626; Josef W. Konvitz, *Cities and the Sea: Port City Planning in Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, 1978); Jesper Meijling, “La lenta diffusione di un modello: Il porto franco da Livorno a Marstrand nel settecento,” *Nuovi studi livornesi* 17 (2010): 95–120. The free port is the forebear of the modern free trade zone (FTZ) and export-processing zone (EPZ). See Richard S. Thoman, *Free Ports and Foreign-Trade Zones* (Centreville, MD, 1956); Robert J. McCalla, “The Geographical Spread of Free Zones Associated with Ports,” *Geoforum* 21, no. 1 (1990): 121–34; Jean-Pierre Singa Boyenge, “ILO Database on Export Processing Zones (Revised),” April 2007, p. 1, http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/2007/107B09_80_engl.pdf.

¹⁴ Dermigny, “Escale, échelles et ports francs,” 522.

¹⁵ Thomas Allison Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea: Policy and Power in an Early Modern Maritime Republic, 1559–1684* (Baltimore, 2005), 151–85.

TABLE I
FIRST-TIME FREE PORT DECLARATIONS, EUROPE AND THE AMERICAS, 1591–1790

City	Year	City	Year
Livorno	1591	Montego Bay (Jamaica)	1766
Genoa	1595	Nassau (Bahamas)	1766
Nice	1613	Prince Rupert Bay (Dominica)	1766
Villefranche	1613	Roseau (Dominica)	1766
Civitavecchia	1630	Saint George (Granada)	1766
La Spezia	1643	Santa Lucca (Jamaica)	1766
Tangier	1662	Savanna la Mar (Jamaica)	1766
Venice	1662	Môle Saint-Nicolas (Haiti)	1767
Althona	1664	Marstrand	1775
Dunkirk	1665	Ostend	1781
Marseilles	1669	Saint John (Virgin Islands)	1781
Curaçao	1675	Saint Thomas (Virgin Islands)	1781
Gibraltar	1706	Cap Français (Haiti)	1784
Trieste	1719	Cayes (Haiti)	1784
Fiume	1719	Lorient	1784
Ancona	1731	Pointe à Pitre (Guadeloupe)	1784
Naples	1739	Port au Prince (Haiti)	1784
Monte Cristi (Haiti)	1760	Saint-Pierre (Martinique)	1784
Sainte-Luce (Martinique)	1765	Scarborough (Tobago)	1784
Kingston (Jamaica)	1766	Sebastopol	1786
Kingstown (Saint-Vincent)	1766	Port Louis (Mauritius)	1787

SOURCES.—Coded from Louis Dermigny, “Escalaes, échelles et ports francs au moyen âge et aux temps modernes,” in *Les grandes escales* (Brussels, 1974). Dermigny does not include a discussion of Venice or of Tangier, which was made a free port by Charles II. See *By the King, a proclamation declaring His Majesties pleasure to settle and establish a free port at his city of Tanger in Africa* (London, 1662); Massimo Costantini, “La regolazione dei dazi marittimi e l’esperienza del ‘porto franco’ a Venezia tra il 1662 e il 1664,” in *La finanza pubblica in età di crisi*, ed. Antonio Di Vittorio (Bari, 1993), 77–88.

NOTE.—Since the term did not always appear in legislation, contextualized readings determine what counted as a free port. Some ports had their privileges revoked after more or less time; others saw their privileges fall into desuetude or vitiated by later legislation; still others experienced an expansion of privileges.

of 1643 that temporarily restricted privileges, the free port appears to have expanded progressively at these three moments.¹⁶ This view descends from the eighteenth-century jurists of Livorno who first discussed the free port in historical terms. At least some jurists were aware that the story was more complicated

¹⁶ Mario Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo porto: Origini, caratteristiche e vicende dei traffici livornesi* (Livorno, 1932); Fernand Braudel and Ruggiero Romano, *Navires et marchandises à l’entrée du port de Livourne (1547–1611)* (Paris, 1951); Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, “Livorno città nuova: 1574–1609,” *Società e storia* 11 (1989): 873–93; Frattarelli Fischer, “Livorno 1676: La città e il porto franco,” in *La Toscana nell’età di Cosimo III*, ed. by Franco Angiolini et al. (Florence, 1993); Frattarelli Fischer, *Vivere fuori dal ghetto: Ebrei a Pisa e Livorno (secoli XVI–XVIII)* (Turin, 2008); Jean Pierre Filippini, *Il porto di*

than it seemed. One remarked on the “infinite amplifications and declarations” that constituted the free port and noted the distinction between “written law,” on the one hand, and “particular orders, practice, and custom,” on the other.¹⁷ But like the historians who have followed them, jurists preferred to base their narratives on the grand legislation. There are serious problems with this approach. While it is easy to see purposive state action in the decision to construct port infrastructure and invite foreigners to settle in Livorno, the term “free port” was not even mentioned, let alone defined, in the chief legislation. It remained vague in both its sphere—did it pertain primarily to merchants or to their goods?—and in its detailed provisions.

Uncertainties about Livorno’s fundamental laws caused periodic confusion, and bureaucratic procedures both formal and informal proved as decisive as legislation in shaping the free port. The Medici had no regular institutional channels with which to craft strategic policy or analyze the workings of their customs regimes. Instead, they delegated control over policy development to poorly supervised local officials. This “choice” was made without careful consideration but it fully partook of the larger institutional logic of the grand duchy.¹⁸ Policy making by the periphery nonetheless provided an excellent mechanism for

Livorno e la Toscana (1676–1814) (Naples, 1998); Samuel Fetta, “Livourne: Cité du prince, cité marchande (XVIe–XIXe siècles),” in *Florence et la Toscane: Les dynamiques d’un État italien, XIVe–XIX siècles*, ed. Jean Boutier et al. (Rennes, 2004), 179–95; Andrea Addobbati, *Commercio, rischio, guerra: Il mercato delle assicurazioni marittime di Livorno (1694–1795)* (Rome, 2007); Renato Ghezzi, *Livorno e il mondo islamico nel XVII secolo: Naviglio e commercio di importazione* (Bari, 2007), 197–219; Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, CT, 2009). For precedents, see Paolo Castignoli, “Immunità, esenzioni e privilegi concessi ai nuovi abitanti di Livorno dal 1286 alla nascita della città medicea,” in *Livorno: Dagli archivi alla città*, ed. Lucia Frattarelli Fischer and Maria Lia Papi (Livorno, 2001), 33–37; Stephan R. Epstein, “Market Structures,” in *Florentine Tuscany: Structures and Practices of Power*, ed. William J. Connell and Andrea Zorzi (Cambridge, 2000), 90–121. On the early customs regime, see Brunello Mannini, “La riforma della Dogana di Livorno del 1566,” *Studi livornesi* 7 (1992): 65–107.

¹⁷ ASL, Governo civile e militare di Livorno (Governo), 1025. Modern historians have likewise noted the gradual development of the free port by means of decrees or generous interpretations of the law, but they have nonetheless emphasized ducal initiative throughout the period from 1566 to 1676. The goal in this article is to explain why, as Baruchello put it, a “spirit of unlimited favor towards commerce” animated officials in Livorno despite changing conditions in the Mediterranean and the grand duchy (see Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo porto*, 125, 267, 292, 367–71).

¹⁸ I treat policy as a web of decisions, taken over a long period of time and by a variety of actors. It need not be centrally directed. See Michael Hill, *The Policy Process in the Modern State* (New York, 1997); Michael Moran et al., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy* (Oxford, 2006); Michael Hill and Peter Hupe, *Implementing Public Policy*, 2nd ed. (London, 2009).

managing Livorno's unpredictable expansion in the seventeenth century. Local officials, bound to merchants by ties of collaboration, were responsive to the desires of the business community in ways that increased port traffic, promoted foreign settlement, and furthered freedom in the marketplace.¹⁹

At the same time that historians have seen free ports as "entirely a modern act,"²⁰ they also have celebrated them as centers of cosmopolitan toleration in a Europe wracked by religious divisions and monopoly restrictions. Accordingly, historians have tended to accept the ideal definition of the term provided by the brothers Savary in their *Dictionary of Commerce* (1723). For them and their later readers, free ports were places where merchants of any ethnicity or religion were free to trade on equal terms and where storage and transit duties were nominal.²¹ This definition obscures the question of the development of the free port as a set of practices and a discursive tool. The Medici grand dukes who crafted Livorno's legislation and the merchants who settled there did not have the Savary definition in mind when they used the term "free port." A specific notion developed gradually in the first half of the seventeenth century. The practices examined in this article created a free marketplace open to virtually all comers, but a marketplace constituted by a thicket of bureaucratic intricacies. The complexities of free trade in Livorno helped spur radical legislation in 1676 whereby the grand duke eliminated import/export duties and imposed a uniform tariff for commercial services. Livorno helped invent free trade for all nations, but its path was winding and unpredictable.

This article has four sections. The first examines the evolution of the trading framework in Livorno from the customs law of 1566 to the celebrated Reform

¹⁹ By contrast, the Genoese favored a legislative path in their Republic's elusive goal of competing with Livorno. Guided by the expertise of the Casa di San Giorgio, which administered the customs and the public debt, the Genoese government crafted a new free port law every five or ten years to adjust the shortcomings of previous laws. The Genoese free port did not exert an important influence over the discursive or practical spread of free ports, however. Giulio Giaccherio, *Storia economica del Settecento genovese* (Genoa, 1951), pt. 1; see also his *Origini e sviluppo del porto franco genovese* (Genoa, 1972); Thomas Allison Kirk, "Genoa and Livorno: Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Commercial Rivalry as a Stimulus to Policy Development," *Journal of the Historical Association* 86, no. 281 (2001): 3–17, and also Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea*, 151–85.

²⁰ Caracciolo, "Il dibattito," 539.

²¹ "C'est un port où il est libre à tous marchands, de quelque nation qu'ils soient, de décharger leurs marchandises, & de les en retirer lorsqu'ils ne les ont pu vendre sans payer aucun droit d'entrée ni de sortie. . . . Se dit aussi de la franchise totale & de l'exemption qu'ont les marchands, de tous droits, soit pour les marchandises qu'ils apportent dans les ports de quelque État, soit pour celles du crû du Pays qu'ils en veulent remporter." Jacques Savary des Brûlons and Philemon-Louis Savary, *Dictionnaire universel de commerce*, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1748 [1723]), 3:962. Compare the distinction between an "entrepôt" (a free port for merchandise) and an "emporium" (a free port for merchants) in Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea*, 155.

of 1676. Section II analyzes the political institutions that made the free port possible, especially the practice of supplication whereby individuals lobbied local officials for ducal favors. It shows that the informational problems inherent in administering the free port had important consequences for policy outcomes. Section III argues that the policy process in Livorno illuminates larger problems in European political economy during the seventeenth century. Institutions played a critical though varying role in shaping economic discourse throughout Europe. A brief conclusion then highlights the implications of this study for our understanding of free ports in early modern Europe.

I. THE FREE PORT AS A WORK IN PROGRESS

Establishing direct ties with Spain for purchasing raw wool and with the Levant for selling finished textiles were long-standing ambitions of the Tuscan elite.²² Since the old medieval harbor of Pisa had silted up by the early sixteenth century, the Medici grand dukes needed to construct a new port to achieve these goals. They offered extensive privileges and made large investments in Livorno, then a backwater port ignored by the currents of international commerce. In 1566, Cosimo I reformed the town's customs administration. Although the reform was more a consolidation of prior arrangements than a novel tax regime, it enshrined the low storage and transit duties that would make Livorno an attractive place to do business. A decade later Francesco I commissioned the grand duchy's finest architect, Bernardo Buontalenti, to design a city capable of accommodating some ten thousand people. In the meantime, the grand dukes also built basic port facilities: a channel for connecting Livorno to the Arno River and a pier, fortified walls, and warehouses for storing grain or other goods. Francesco, following in his father's footsteps, also took measures to establish silk cultivation in Tuscany itself and to attract a range of foreign artisans to his realm. Francesco's industrial policy enjoyed substantial success, especially in luxury crafts.²³ The grand duke's difficulty in luring private real estate investors to his new port slowed construction in Livorno, however, and his failure to secure a reciprocal trading agreement with the Ottoman Empire frustrated the regime's commercial goals.

²² Michael E. Mallet, *The Florentine Galleys in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1967).

²³ Judith C. Brown, "Concepts of Political Economy: Cosimo I de' Medici in a Comparative European Context," in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del '500: Strumenti e veicoli della cultura. Relazioni politiche ed economiche* (Florence, 1983), 279–93; Rita Mazzei, *Pisa Medicea: L'economia cittadina da Ferdinando I a Cosimo III* (Florence, 1991); Giuseppe Vittorio Parigino, *Il tesoro del principe: Funzione pubblica e privata del patrimonio della famiglia Medici nel cinquecento* (Florence, 1999), 166–76; Luca Molà, "Artigiani e brevetti nella Firenze del cinquecento," in *La grande storia dell'artigianato*, ed. Franco and Gloria Fossi Franceschi (Florence, 2000), 3:57–79.

Ferdinando I abandoned the capitulatory approach pursued by his predecessor. Settlement in Livorno would not be based on bilateral agreements between sovereigns, but rather upon a set of privileges granted unilaterally by the regime. Livorno's big opportunity came when famine struck Italy in 1590. At once anxious to secure adequate grain and attentive to the wider commercial prospects of his state, the grand duke invited foreign merchants to settle in the port of Livorno. He issued a broad call for settlement known as the *Livornina* (1591/1593) addressed to "all you merchants of whatever nation—Easterners, Westerners, Spanish, Portuguese, Greeks, Germans, Italians, Jews, Turks, Moors, Armenians, Persians, and [those] of other states."²⁴ The *Livornina* offered merchants immunity from prosecution for debts contracted outside of the state, freedom from criminal prosecution, tax exemptions, and a host of privileges specifically for Jews. These measures were distinctive not because of any single provision but because, unlike other monarchs of the period, the Medici actually stuck by and even augmented them.²⁵ Officials adopted a pragmatic policy that quickly grew to encompass a large measure of toleration for all foreigners in the city.²⁶

Growth in Livorno was slow but steady amidst the prevailing stagnation of the Italian economy. In 1590, Livorno was a malaria-ridden village of five hundred inhabitants. By 1642 it had about 12,000 people, including a large population of Jews and various small but dynamic communities of foreign merchants.²⁷ For several decades, grain and wool were its most important imports, the former to feed the Tuscan population, the latter to supply the Florentine textile industry. Over the course of the seventeenth century, however, Livorno came to serve functions quite unanticipated by the grand dukes. Relatively low duties and storage incentives, designed to attract capital and raw materials to the Tuscan economy, also made Livorno an ideal entrepôt for redistributing goods throughout Italy

²⁴ Giuseppe Gino Guarnieri, *Livorno medicea nel quadro delle sue attrezzature portuali e della funzione economica-marittima* (Livorno, 1970), doc. 5.

²⁵ Benjamin Ravid, "A Tale of Three Cities and Their *Raison d'État*: Ancona, Venice, Livorno, and the Competition for Jewish Merchants in the Sixteenth Century," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991): 138–62.

²⁶ Muslims did not come in large numbers, as it turned out. Protestants posed a more sustained challenge. Dissimulation among the Dutch and the English was high in the early decades of the seventeenth century as officials deliberately turned a blind eye to the spiritual affiliations of the city's inhabitants. Only when a religious matter threatened public order or relations with Rome did the regime intervene. Stefano Villani, "'Cum scandalo catholicorum . . .': La presenza a Livorno di predicatori protestanti inglesi tra il 1644 e il 1670," *Nuovi studi livornesi* 7 (1999): 9–58.

²⁷ Elena Fasano Guarini, "Esenzioni e immigrazioni in città tra sedicesimo e diciassettesimo secolo," in *Livorno e il Mediterraneo nell'età medicea* (Livorno, 1978), 56–76, and Fasano Guarini, "La popolazione," in *Livorno e Pisa: Due città e un territorio nella politica dei Medici* (Pisa, 1980), 199–215.

and the Tyrrhenian region. Over time, it grew into a central node for trans-Mediterranean commerce as well. Livorno's transformation from a minor Tuscan port into "one of the most famous places for trade in all Christendom," as the pioneering mercantilist writer Thomas Mun put it in the late 1620s, ultimately owed to global economic developments.²⁸ The crisis in Italian shipping, the production of cheaper textiles, and the growth of the Atlantic sphere created an opportunity for the major seafaring nations. Livorno was a perfect place for northerners to distribute their products as their markets in the Mediterranean expanded.²⁹

Ferdinando I took a vigorous interest in supervising the minutiae of the port's affairs. But after his death in 1609, the regime gradually scaled back its maritime ambitions and finally sold off most of the Tuscan galleys in 1647. In the meantime, privy secretaries more often enjoyed a free rein in managing administrative matters in Livorno, especially after Cosimo II's premature demise in 1620 ushered in fifteen years of government by regency. These developments strengthened the role of bureaucratic decision making—not because privy secretaries could not exert central authority in any particular instance, but because ordinary administrative procedures made it costly for the central government to maintain constant vigilance as commerce expanded. In addition, the Medici regime lacked the theoretical and practical knowledge to direct their port project. Late Renaissance economic thought opened up a vast new sphere for intervention in commercial and industrial life, but it did not provide rulers with realistic assessments of how to adjust means to ends.³⁰ To move beyond a perspective focused on effective state action, then, it is necessary to pursue another trajectory to explain the elaboration of the free port: bottom-up bureaucratic processes.

The framework set up in the late sixteenth century could scarcely accommodate the crush of new immigrants, merchandise, and industries. The Customs

²⁸ Thomas Mun, *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade* (Basingstoke, 1895), 24–25. Mun himself had spent the early years of his career in Livorno and had received a business loan from the grand duke. See Raymond De Roover, "Thomas Mun in Italy," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 30, no. 81 (1957): 80–85.

²⁹ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (Berkeley, 1995); Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century* (Berkeley, 1992); R. T. Rapp, "The Unmaking of the Mediterranean Trade Hegemony: International Trade Rivalry and the Commercial Revolution," *Journal of Economic History* 35 (1975): 499–525; Molly Greene, "Beyond the Northern Invasion: The Mediterranean in the Seventeenth Century," *Past and Present* 174, no. 1 (2002): 42–71. For a summary of the Italian literature, see Domenico Sella, *Italy in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1997), 19–49; and Paolo Malanima, *La fine del primato: Crisi e riconversione nell'Italia del Seicento* (Milan, 1998). For Tuscany, see also Malanima, *La decadenza di un'economia cittadina: L'industria di Firenze nei secoli XVI–XVIII* (Bologna, 1982); Richard A. Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore, 2009).

³⁰ See n. 88 below.

Reform of 1566 and the Livornina granted individuals general immunity from debts contracted outside the state (and before they settled in Livorno). Merchants also enjoyed the right to store goods in the port and to re-export them duty-free, so long as the goods did not change owners; and if goods were exchanged in Livorno, merchants paid reduced taxes depending on the commodity in question and its origin. Most business disputes that arose from these arrangements were adjudicated on the basis of a combination of Roman law, local statutes and regulations, and customary norms. In this respect, Livorno was much like other commercial centers.³¹ Economic life in the free port also rested on a body of decrees, precedents, and practices that were bureaucratic in nature. Especially in the early decades of Livorno's growth, the local bureaucracy had yet to settle into its standard procedures, and the extent of the city's liberties remained unknown. The requests of merchants generated piecemeal innovations that, taken together, contributed to the city's landscape of policies. Crucial steps toward consolidating a free-trade regime in Livorno included the decision to extend privileges to virtually all comers, not merely those who intended to settle in the port; to protect from seizure pirated goods purchased elsewhere and sold on the market in Livorno; to permit the free trade of both wholesale and retail goods despite the interests of local industry; and to extend warehousing rights indefinitely.

After unearthing a number of supplication decrees that were not precisely to the point, Customs Director Attavanti ultimately grounded his defense of Sebastiano Ferro on the traditions of the free port. If officials with archives of laws and rescripts at their disposal made broad appeals to the free port, it should be no surprise that individual merchants did the same in their supplications. A good example occurred when two Ragusan ship captains contracted to carry raw wool from Spain to Livorno despite owing money to some Tuscan subjects. They undertook to transport it "seeing that the liberties of the Port of Livorno have been observed for other people notwithstanding the interests of Tuscan subjects."³² As the ship drew close to Livorno, however, the Ragusans learned that their creditors intended to detain the ship to satisfy their debts. They requested

³¹ In Livorno, the Governor's Court heard most cases initially, although ones involving more than two hundred lire were easily appealed. Two other mercantile courts heard cases originating in Livorno, the Sea Consuls in Pisa (Consoli del Mare), and the Merchant's Tribunal in Florence (Mercanzia). These cases might end up at still another appeals court in Florence, the Ruota Civile. Andrea Addobbati, "La giurisdizione marittima e commerciale dei Consoli del Mare in età medicea," in *Pisa e il Mediterraneo: Uomini, merci idee dagli Etruschi ai Medici*, ed. M. Tangheroni (Milan, 2003); Trivellato, *Familiarity of Strangers*, ch. 10; Guillaume Calafat, "Expertises et tribunaux de commerce: Procédures et réputation à Livourne au xvii^e siècle," *Hypothèses*, no. 1 (2010): 141–54; and in general: Francesco Galgano, *Storia del diritto commerciale* (Bologna, 1976), 29–53; Charles Donahue, "The Search for a Medieval Lex Mercatoria," in *From Lex Mercatoria to Commercial Law*, ed. Vito Piergiovanni (Berlin, 2005).

³² ASL, CGA, 2602, vol. 2, f. 12, 10/06/1616.

a safe-conduct for trade to protect the privileges of the port from corrosion (as they put it) and to unload their cargo of wool. Even though the Ragusans' request went against the letter of the city's privileges, which only protected people from their debts with alien subjects, the two were granted the exemptions of Livorno. The dictates of law did not prompt the regime to grant such favors; on the contrary, they explicitly overrode the letter of the law. They were approved in order to increase the city's commerce and were known as *agevolazioni* or *facilitazioni*—little concessions that promoted commerce.

Merchants or ship captains cited the free port precisely because it was difficult to track down every privilege, exemption, or license, much less the spirit behind the letter of these texts. Their concerns were usually grounded in concrete business problems. For example, a basic question concerned the relationship between piracy and legitimate commerce. Two Corsicans, both citizens of Livorno, were involved in buying pirated merchandise in Algiers and selling it in Livorno.³³ In October 1610 they supplicated to recover goods sequestered at the request of the original owner, who claimed that his property had been seized by enemy corsairs at sea and brought to Algiers for sale. The Corsicans were granted the assurance that "vessels and merchants from that part of Barbary may not be harassed" on the grounds that "Livorno is free and open for all businessmen."³⁴ Though framed as a supplication for personal safe-conducts, this decision set a precedent that was incorporated into the customs of the free port. By this act the regime indicated that it would not discriminate against goods purchased in corsair warrens like Tunis or Algiers. The grand duke might have remanded this case to the lower courts, which would have disputed the matter according to the concept of postliminy.³⁵ He did this when Christians claimed that his galleys had illegally seized their goods, as the direct sale of booty in Livorno was regulated according to strict legal principles.³⁶ But instead he decreed that the liberties of the free port would protect merchants and the goods

³³ The two were Carlo Lorenzi and Rocco Manfredini. See Elisabetta Piccioni Lami, "I Corsi a Livorno nel '600: Primo contributo," *Studi livornesi* 5 (1990): 71–79.

³⁴ ASF, Riformagioni, 28, f. 349, 06/19/1611.

³⁵ Postliminy (*postliminium*) concerns the right by which property seized during war or piracy is restored to the original owners. Postliminy was under debate in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, particularly over goods captured by Barbary "pirates," traded legally in Barbary territory, and sold to a European merchant. The tendency was for thinkers to legitimize such trade on pragmatic grounds. In Livorno it was legitimated on grounds of the free port. See Alfred P. Rubin, *The Law of Piracy* (Newport, RI, 1988), 19–32; and Molly Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants: A Maritime History of the Mediterranean* (Princeton, NJ, 2010).

³⁶ ASL, CGA, 2602, vol. 1, ff. 456, 691–96; vol. 2, ff. 383–84, 483, 515–17. The claimants were usually Greek and their cases were sent to the Governor's Court rather than resolved by supplication.

they purchased elsewhere, even in Barbary.³⁷ As late as 1645 the Corsicans' case was still cited along with thirty-four other memoranda important enough for the Customs Office to register in a specific book—a book which, however, officials seem not to have consulted very often.³⁸

The Reform of 1566 had granted merchants the right to store wares duty-free in Livorno for up to a year: the "liberal gift." As the city's commerce expanded, so too did the appetite for warehousing exemptions. During the reign of Ferdinando I, merchants won the right to keep their *merci sottili* (low-volume, high-value goods) in their own warehouses rather than under lock and key in the customs house, as stipulated by law.³⁹ In 1627, several Livorno merchants supplicated to extend the "liberal gift" to two years, subject to an annual customs inspection. Just a couple of years later they supplicated again to make the gift perpetual in exchange for an increase in stallage fees; the measure preserved customs revenues while simplifying procedures. Merchants could now store their goods in Livorno indefinitely without paying duties on their import or export, so long as the goods did not change ownership. The movement from "liberal" to "perpetual" gift is an important marker of recognition of the city's role in the deposit and transit trade. It made warehousing exemptions central to the city's identity as a free port. The "perpetual gift" lasted only until the Reform of 1643 reduced the warehousing exemption to two years, although the merchant nations soon won the right to request its biennial extension (so that they enjoyed the same privilege, albeit with more paperwork and bureaucratic oversight).⁴⁰

The supplications of merchant coalitions also shaped the relationship between industry and commerce in Livorno. In 1648, Carlo Antonio Pezzini supplicated for a privilege for the production and distribution of silk stockings. Forty-five merchants and shopkeepers sent a collective supplication begging the grand duke to deny Pezzini's privilege. Aside from the fact that the silk stocking industry would never amount to anything given the competition of established centers in Naples and Messina, they thought it would destroy the wholesale market for stockings in Livorno itself. The customs director concurred with the merchants, remarking: "Given that this is a free port for all merchants alike, [conceding this privilege] would accomplish nothing but obscuring that title for something that

³⁷ Nor was this the only case of its kind. See *ibid.*, vol. 1, 03/12/1608; ASF, Miscellanea Medicea (MM), 30, ins. 7, ff. 1–15.

³⁸ ASL, CGA, 2603, 02/19/1644. Customs directors such as Attavanti or his long-serving predecessor Ottavio Cappelli were notorious for governing the affairs of the port according to their whims. See, for instance, ASF, MP, 2150, ins. 3, 05/26/1640; and below, n. 80.

³⁹ Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo porto*, 278.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 277–84, 291. A number of these supplications survive: e.g., ASL, Dogana, 3, ff. 20, 24, 77, 78, 91 (all from 1648–49). See ASF, MP, 2155, 08/21/1643.

could not result in any profit for the customs here."⁴¹ The customs director argued that any privilege that hindered commerce in Livorno threatened its identity as a free port. In the end, Pezzini received only a privilege for the production of silk stockings. There were no prohibitions on sale or distribution. Yet again we see how Livorno's businessmen played a crucial role in defining the boundaries of the free port.

Officials were well aware that the liberties of the free port were ill-defined. In 1645, the *auditore* of Livorno complained that there was no single repository of texts that defined procedures in the port. "But I have nothing else to say about the exemptions," he commented, "than to observe, that limitations have always been a seminary of disgust."⁴² This particular legal official was unhappy with generous interpretations of legislation. By contrast, the governor and customs director were generally committed to a broad and evolving notion of a free port. They settled most matters on a case-by-case basis. Attavanti had based his arguments in defense of Sebastiano Ferro on decrees lifted directly from supplications.⁴³ These were identical in form to the requests of men like the Corsican traders, the Ragusan ship captains, and Carlo Antonio Pezzini. In the last analysis, Attavanti's case rested less on decrees and more on what his predecessors in office had done. But many of their practices had originated in supplications, even if the decrees themselves seem to have been forgotten after the immediate decision.

Supplications—and the ducal decrees that answered them—were crucial for defining, even creating, the free port. Precedents were confusing and not readily available. As a result, the free port remained a flexible concept that officials and merchants alike deployed strategically in their supplications. Over time this practice created a way of doing things in Livorno that constituted what contemporaries meant by a free port, namely, the protection of merchants, ship captains, and their wares from arbitrary government action and the right of traders of any nation or ethnicity to do business on equal terms. The Ferro episode and others in the mid-seventeenth century invented a tradition based on these practices. It helped create a body of authoritative texts of the free port whose centerpiece was the Livornina.

The preference for reactive, ad hoc policy making bequeathed a mass of practices that made free trade in Livorno an administrative labyrinth. The Medici regime became aware of this problem as it shifted its interest in Livorno from commercial and industrial goals to meeting the fiscal needs of the state. The outbreak of the War of Castro in 1641 and the ongoing demands for Tuscan subsidies during the Thirty Years' War impelled Grand Duke Ferdinando II to trim

⁴¹ ASF, MP, 2324, ff. 201–2 and 640.

⁴² ASF, MP, 2160, f. 564, 02/11/1644.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, f. 141, 02/10/1644. He forwarded f. 142, a supplication from 1610; f. 143, a supplication from 1614; and f. 144, an undated safe-conduct.

the liberties of Livorno in his search for cash. His Reform of 1643 increased transit duties on most goods and shortened the warehousing exemption.⁴⁴ This new law did not set out to foster bureaucratic simplicity, and Livorno's merchants continued to enjoy a favorable trade environment thanks to intimate ties with local officials (see below). Nevertheless, it shifted the focus of policy discussions from particular provisions or tax rates to the general administrative framework for trade. Rather than simply urging tax reductions, which would have been unwelcome to the fiscally oriented grand duke, the foreign merchant communities began to object to the entire regime of particularistic liberties. They sought to extend the free port by simplifying administrative procedures on a systematic basis. It is no surprise that when a new reform finally arrived in 1676, it took the form of a fictive supplication whereby foreign consuls proposed a new tax regime. In fact, the "supplication" was the product of intense negotiations between the merchant communities and top advisors to the young Grand Duke Cosimo III.⁴⁵

The Reform of 1676 eliminated ordinary taxes on imports while imposing an elevated but uniform stallage tax, the fee paid to house goods in Livorno. Merchants paid the stallage fees only once. Thereafter, they could store, trade, or export goods without further payments or bureaucratic oversight. Contemporaries were duly impressed. The French traveler Jean-Baptiste Labat marveled in the early eighteenth century:

Each parcel pays two piasters to enter, whether it contains silk or paper, whether it weighs one hundred pounds or fifteen hundred: it always pays the same duty. It is therefore a place of enormous parcels. Merchants take care to go aboard [ships] and to make one pack out of two, three, or four. They count them when passing through the Customs House without weighing them, without estimating how much they are worth, and without any of those annoying visits that one so often finds in other places. You know exactly what you have to pay, you pay it, and you're done.⁴⁶

For the Medici regime, the reform preserved the fiscal advantages of Livorno while regularizing the relationship between merchants and local officials: the

⁴⁴ ASF, Pratica Segreta (PS), 29, f. 705. In 1646 the government also imposed the Tenth (*Decima*) on rental property, eliminating a long-cherished exemption that benefited the Livornesi as well as foreign merchants. On the strategic situation faced by Ferdinando II, see Niccolò Capponi, "Le Palle di Marte: Military Strategy and Diplomacy in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany under Ferdinand II de' Medici (1621–1670)," *Journal of Military History* 68, no. 4 (2004): 1105–41.

⁴⁵ Ferdinando II promised the foreign merchants of Livorno that his regime would consider simplifying tax procedures as early as 1660 (Giacchero, *Storia economica*, 30). The eventual "supplication" may be found in ASF, MP, 2272, 03/10/1676. See Frattarelli Fischer, "Livorno 1676."

⁴⁶ Labat, *Voyages*, 2:87.

grand duke did not like the capricious way officials appeared to reign over the institutional jungle of the free port. For merchants it amounted to a substantial reduction in transaction costs. The Reform of 1676 crystallized the notion that a true free port could charge only for commercial services such as warehousing or harbor use, not import duties. But it was motivated largely by an appreciation of the practical benefits of administrative simplicity in a city where free trade had developed with little central planning, poor theoretical guidance, and collusive relations between merchants and local officials.

II. SUPPLICATIONS AND THE COMMERCIAL CLASSES

Like monarchical power elsewhere in Europe, Medici rule rested on a process of bargaining between centers and peripheries. The grand duke respected the traditional privileges of his territory's governing bodies while overlaying them with supervisors that enabled him to intervene in the judicial process, balance local interests, and control finances throughout the state. In many ways, these policies were a continuation of those that developed under the Republic. What changed was the introduction of a Medici court apparatus and the bureaucratization of governance in the form of a larger administration staffed by permanent officers.⁴⁷ Supplications are a case in point. In the fifteenth century, rural communities presented their petitions to the Florentine government in person via *oratores*. In the mid-sixteenth century, Cosimo I began personally handling written supplications to provide equity to his subjects. After a few decades of princely intervention, the growing Tuscan bureaucracy replaced the direct attention of the

⁴⁷ Elena Fasano Guarini, *Lo stato mediceo di Cosimo I* (Florence, 1973); Fasano Guarini, "Center and Periphery," in *The Origins of the State in Italy, 1300–1600*, ed. Julius Kirshner (Chicago, 1996), 74–96; Fasano Guarini, *L'Italia moderna e la Toscana dei principi* (Milan, 2008); Giorgio Spini, ed., *Architettura e politica da Cosimo I a Ferdinando I* (Florence, 1976); R. Burr Litchfield, *Emergence of a Bureaucracy: The Florentine Patricians, 1530–1790* (Princeton, NJ, 1986); Luca Mannori, *Il sovrano tutore: Pluralismo istituzionale e accentramento amministrativo nel principato dei Medici (secc. XVI–XVIII)* (Milan, 1994); Jean-Claude Waquet, *Le grand-duché de Toscane sous les derniers Médicis: Essai sur le système de finances et la stabilité des institutions dans les anciens états italiens* (Rome, 1990); William J. Connell and Andrea Zorzi, eds., *Florentine Tuscany: Structures and Practices of Power* (Cambridge, 2000). For other Italian states, see esp. Giorgio Chittolini, *La formazione dello stato regionale e le istituzioni del contado* (Turin, 1979), and Chittolini, "The 'Private,' the 'Public,' the State," in *The Origins of the State in Italy*, 34–61. For France, see William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (Cambridge, 1985), and Beik, "The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration," *Past and Present* 188, no. 1 (2005): 195–224; for England, Michael Braddick, *The Nerves of State: Taxation and the Financing of the English State, 1558–1714* (Manchester, 1996), and Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1700* (Cambridge, 2000); and in general, J. H. Elliott, "A Europe of Composite Monarchies," *Past and Present* 137 (1992): 48–71.

monarch with a system of rules, precedents, and more or less formalized practices.⁴⁸ Local officials often controlled the pace and, in practice, the outcome of the supplication process. And while many of the dispensations the regime granted lay squarely in the criminal, political, and military spheres, others had commercial, fiscal, or industrial implications. The supplication was an important conduit for introducing novel procedures or clarifying older regulations. In Livorno, this form of state intervention tended to extend rather than limit freedom of trade.

The supplication process was a key dynamic that ordered relations between center and periphery in Tuscan political life. Historians have focused on the mediation of local officials as they bargained or negotiated interests between the localities, which were intent on preserving their autonomies, and the grand duke, who was concerned with securing obedience and with fiscal matters. By contrast, scholars inspired by neoinstitutional economics have concentrated on political bargaining at the center when they investigate early modern politics.⁴⁹ They have largely ignored administration in their examination of relations between monarchs and elites.⁵⁰ Studying the working conditions of local institutions helps historians incorporate information flows and bottlenecks into our understanding of systems of territorial power in the ancien régime. Although officials did indeed “mediate” and “negotiate,” their capacity to do so was determined not by their position relative to the center or periphery but by their ability to manage and overcome the informational difficulties inherent in administering Livorno. Even when documentary precedents existed, neither ducal secretaries nor local officials found it easy to retrieve information from their archives (or from reality, for that matter). When making decisions, officials often had no sensible choice but to rely on individuals who had a stake in the outcome. The passive nature of the system,

⁴⁸ Samuel Cohn Jr., *Creating the Florentine State: Peasants and Rebellion, 1348–1434* (Cambridge, 1999); James Shaw, “Writing to the Prince: Supplications, Equity, and Absolutism in Sixteenth-Century Tuscany,” *Past and Present* 215, no. 1 (2012): 51–83.

⁴⁹ For example, Douglass North and Barry Weingast, “Constitutions and Commitment: Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Journal of Economic History* 49 (1989): 803–32; Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, “The Political Economy of Absolutism Reconsidered,” in *Analytic Narratives*, ed. Robert H. Bates et al. (Princeton, NJ, 1998), 64–108; Regina Grafe and Oscar Gelderblom, “The Rise and Fall of Merchant Guilds: Re-thinking the Comparative Study of Commercial Institutions in Premodern Europe,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 4 (2010): 477–511. For neo-institutional economic theory as applied to historical research, see Avner Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy: Lessons from Medieval Trade* (Cambridge, 2006).

⁵⁰ Exceptions are Edgar Kiser, “Markets and Hierarchies in Early Modern Tax Systems: A Principal-Agent Analysis,” *Politics and Society* 22, no. 3 (1994): 284–315 (and the criticism by Matthew Vester, “The Political Autonomy of a Tax Farm: The Nice-Piedmont Gabelle of the Dukes of Savoy, 1535–1580,” *Journal of Modern History* 76 [2004]: 745–92); and Regina Grafe, *Distant Tyranny: Markets, Power, and Backwardness in Spain, 1650–1800* (Princeton, NJ, 2012).

in which suppliants took the initiative in framing requests, further diminished the government's role in directing ordinary business. These factors stacked the cards in favor of Livorno's merchants, artisans, and ship captains.

Princely regimes in sixteenth-century Italy found supplications a potent vehicle for affirming their status as absolute rulers and exercising munificence. An integral element of European political theology, the practice of supplications originated in a judicial context and was used to overturn decisions.⁵¹ Whereas appeals were founded on strict procedural justice and *ius commune*, the supplication was founded solely on grace. In the sixteenth century the practice evolved to allow intervention in other realms as supplications were used to request patronage, propose commercial or industrial monopolies, and raise complaints. A burgeoning contemporary literature urged princes to be generous in bestowing their favors on subordinates. Baldassare Castiglione praised princes who were "liberal" in dispensing graces on their subjects.⁵² For once, the virtuous counsel of humanists served the interests of princes. Supplications enabled rulers to superimpose their power over courts and communal governments while satisfying the demands of their subjects, especially the poor and weak.

Supplications were sometimes heard *in voce*, but the practice as a whole was a written substitution for holding an audience.⁵³ Virtually every bureaucracy in Tuscany had a collection of supplications, which run into the thousands of volumes. Other regimes also established regular channels to cope with the sheer

⁵¹ Although the supplication has deep roots in the ancient world, the practice only (re)assumed bureaucratic dimensions in the papal chancery of the fourteenth century. It then spread to other Italian courts where it enabled upstart dynasties such as the Scaliger of Verona or the Pepoli in Bologna to gain authority over communal institutions. Franco Bartolini, "Suppliche pontificie nei secoli XIII e XIV," *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo* 67 (1955); Paola Repetti, "Scrivere ai potenti: Suppliche e memoriali a Parma (secoli XVI–XVIII). Lo stato, la giustizia, la supplica," *Scrittura e civiltà* 24 (2000): 295–358; Cecilia Nubola and Andreas Würigler, eds., *Suppliche e "gravamina": Politica, amministrazione, giustizia in Europa (secoli XIV–XVIII)* (Bologna, 2002); Nubola and Würigler, eds., *Forme della comunicazione politica in Europa nei secoli XV–XVIII: Suppliche, gravamina, lettere* (Bologna, 2004); and Nubola and Würigler, eds., *Operare la resistenza: Suppliche, gravamina e rivolte in Europa (secoli XV–XVIII)* (Bologna, 2006); Massimo Vallerani, "La supplica al signore e il potere della misericordia: Bologna 1337–1347," *Quaderni storici* 44 (2009). For the supplication in antiquity, see Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC–AD 337)* (London, 1977), 537–49; Benjamin Kelly, *Petitions, Litigation, and Social Control in Roman Egypt* (Oxford, 2011).

⁵² Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (New York, 2003), 296, 308, 310.

⁵³ ASL, CGA, 2602, vol. 1, 04/20/1609; *ibid.*, vol. 2, f. 21, 06/03/1597. See Gian Maria Varanini, "'Al magnifico e possente signore': Suppliche ai signori trecenteschi italiani fra cancelleria e corte. L'esempio scaligero," in *Suppliche e "gravamina,"* 65–106, 87.

number of requests.⁵⁴ The supplications exploited in this study were composed in the third person and generally did not bear a signature, date, or place of composition. They were probably drafted by a notary or scrivener who copied from a formulary. From there, the supplicant found an official or ally who transmitted his request to the ducal chancellery. The documents usually contain the name of the supplicant, his town of origin or residence, the nature of his request, and a brief summary of the facts.⁵⁵ Thanks to their abundance and formal characteristics, supplications are ripe for quantitative analysis. Unfortunately, these same generic conventions make it difficult to get at the realities they purport to represent. Formulaic language is used both in the relation of facts and in the request for grace. In addition, even detailed supplications contain the fictive elements common to legal cases.⁵⁶ Accordingly, most scholars have shied away from a quantitative study and focused instead on supplications as a rhetorical form of communication between subjects and sovereigns. They were vehicles for conveying grievances and demanding redress.⁵⁷ In Livorno, however, the official investigation (*informazione*) also exists alongside supplications and offers a further means for contextualizing requests. When read in light of other evidence, a quantitative study provides insight into decision making in Livorno as well as a window upon social and political realities.

⁵⁴ For instance, the Archivio Segreto Vaticano lists 7,365 volumes in its *Registra supplicationum*. The French collection known as the Trésor des Chartes in the Archives Nationales contains some 9,500 letters of remission for the years 1523–68. Philip II answered no fewer than thirty to forty supplications per day. Cecilia Nubola, “La ‘via supplicationis’ negli stati italiani della prima età moderna (secoli XV–XVIII),” in *Suppliche e “gravamina,”* 35; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Seventeenth-Century France* (Stanford, CA, 1987), 145; Geoffrey Parker, *The Great Strategy of Philip II* (New Haven, CT, 1998), 28. Not all supplications were routed through the bureaucracies, however, as many found their way into the letters of prominent officials and courtiers. Irene Fosi, “Rituali della parola: Supplicare, raccomandare e raccomandarsi a Roma nel Seicento,” in *Forme della comunicazione politica*, 329–49; Simon Teuscher, “Chains of Favor: Approaching the City Council in Late Medieval Bern,” in *ibid.*, 311–28; Katia Pischedda, “Supplicare, intercedere, raccomandare: Forme e significati del chiedere nella corrispondenza di Cristoforo Madruzzo (1539–1567),” in *ibid.*, 351–82.

⁵⁵ Amedeo Quondam, “Dal ‘formulario’ al ‘formulario’: Cento anni di ‘libri di lettere,’” in *Le “carte messaggere”: Retorica e modelli di comunicazione epistolare. Per un indice dei libri di lettere del Cinquecento*, ed. Amedeo Quondam (Rome, 1981), 130; Gianni Orlandi, “Suppliche al Comune di Ancona (sec. XVI): Inventario,” *Quaderni della rassegna degli archivi di stato* 97 (2001): 16–22; Repetti, “Scrivere ai potenti,” 301–13; Cristina Belloni, *Suppliche al pontefice: Diocesi di Trento 1566–1605* (Bologna, 2007).

⁵⁶ Davis argues that requests for pardon can be analyzed as a genre of storytelling. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*.

⁵⁷ Paola Repetti does perform a quantitative analysis, although she lacks the rescripts and the *informazioni* on which I draw. Repetti, “Scrivere ai potenti,” 295–96, 312.

For this study I examined 772 surviving supplications from the two chief bureaucracies in Livorno: the Customs Office ($n = 173$) and the Governor's Office ($n = 599$). Their officials reported directly and almost daily to a privy secretary on a variety of requests pertaining to economic life. My source selections were conditioned by the surviving material and, where material was abundant, the beginning and end of reigns; the figure for the Customs Office is so low because many of the documents in its archive were destroyed in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁸ I coded every supplication into one of twelve exclusive categories: privilege, exemption, license, safe-conduct against specific debtors, general safe-conduct to trade in the port, contract enforcement, fine or assessment revision, grant (requests for jobs, pay raises, etc.), abuse report, judicial, administrative, and miscellaneous. I use the term "economic graces" to describe the first seven categories because they directly shaped commercial and industrial life in the port.⁵⁹ Of course, other graces might have had economic consequences (such as the court cases of merchants), but they were disposed of according to a judicial or political logic.

⁵⁸ The documents come from: ASL, CGA, 2602: 1592–1629 ($n = 408$); ASL, CGA, 2603: 1640–48 ($n = 148$); ASL, CGA, 2608; 1680–82 ($n = 43$); ASL, Dogana, 3: 1648–53 ($n = 173$). While we have no reason to believe that the run of documents is complete, particularly for the earliest periods, supplications were conserved because of their importance to the chancery in establishing precedents. If we cannot be sure of having access to all of the supplications of a given period, at least we can be confident about the relative importance of those that do survive. I read only three years of the Governor's Office records from the 1680s because it was evident that supplications dealt almost entirely with housing and judicial matters. Note that the customs records between 1648 and 1653 seem relatively complete.

⁵⁹ Privileges were requests to be the exclusive producer, distributor, or tax farmer of a good. Exemptions were requests to avoid paying a tax, to receive a lower tax rate, or to get permission to engage in some form of economic activity without paying a tax. Licenses included permission to engage in economic activity while nonetheless paying the usual taxes (e.g., privateering patents). Specific safe-conducts protected individuals from prosecution by a specific list of creditors. Bankrupt merchants usually requested such safe-conducts to ensure orderly repayments to creditors or to protect themselves from malicious creditors. The general safe-conduct protected individuals from any civil debts contracted outside Tuscany or with non-Tuscan subjects. They were the equivalent of "taking the exemptions" of Livorno and were sometimes requested by potential immigrants, often redundantly. Contract enforcement supplications were requests for the government to enforce a contract, compel payment, or settle a debt. These were often efforts to circumvent the ordinary course of justice, as normally the governor or the Sea Consuls in Pisa would have heard such cases. (I also placed requests for enforcement of judicial decisions in the judicial category.) Assessment revisions were requests to have an assessment or fine reduced or an extension on payment. The majority of these requests were supplications to the Customs Office asking for an extension on tax dues or (for smugglers) a penalty reduction.

Supplications in Livorno largely served the commercial classes. Individuals making requests came mostly from the mercantile (47 percent) and artisanal (17 percent) sectors (table 2). Only 10 percent came from occupations associated with maritime life—ship captains or owners, petty boat operators, mariners, and the like. Few of the city's teeming poor supplicated. The presence of laborers and small-time mariners is modest compared to the richer, much less numerous mercantile sector. Perhaps the supplications of the poor were less likely to survive or less likely to record their occupations than those of higher status.⁶⁰ At any rate, it is clear that the commercial classes found it possible to adapt the system of supplications to their needs. About 45 percent of the cases handled by the Governor's Office, and nearly 80 percent of the cases handled by the Customs Office, dealt with the economy (table 3). Remaining business largely pertained to judicial or housing matters.⁶¹ Although both offices dealt with requests for privileges, exemptions, licenses, and safe-conducts, the policing of economic life lay in the hands of the governor. It was his office that enforced contracts, handled requests for safe-conducts, and managed court cases. Only in cases of penalty revisions did the two offices share the burdens of policing, since both bodies could levy fines under certain conditions.⁶² A practice originally instituted for facilitating justice and empowering the poor became, in Livorno, a tool for manipulating economic life.

The regime had a marked preference for granting supplications. Out of 639 supplications with known resolutions, the regime granted 67 percent (table 4).⁶³ At a basic level, the desire among European rulers to exercise their generosity explains this finding: Natalie Zemon Davis found that over 93 percent of pardon-seekers at the Paris Conciergerie between 1564 and 1580 won the king's grace

⁶⁰ A word of caution is in order. The monikers *mercante*, *negotiante*, and so forth found in the supplications were not direct expressions of social reality. No doubt many who did business in Livorno arrogated the title of *mercante* without recognition by their "peers." Nor do the words distinguish between the big wholesale merchants and smaller-scale operators. But thanks to the process of investigation described in the text, supplicants had to make their designations plausible or risk being exposed as frauds.

⁶¹ By contrast, I have found little evidence that supplications were a primary vehicle for managing the port's religious life. There are a few examples, e.g., ASL, CGA, 2602, vol. 2, f. 249. But in general, urgent religious issues could scarcely be decided by means of supplications because of the potential involvement of the Holy Office. See the Saint-hill episode in Villani, "Cum scandalo catholicorum," 9–13.

⁶² See Marcella Aglietti, *I governatori di Livorno dai Medici all'Unità d'Italia: Gli uomini, le istituzioni, la città* (Pisa, 2009).

⁶³ The figures break down to an acceptance rate of 85 percent for the Customs Office and 61 percent for the Governor's Office. The lower proportion for the Governor's Office is accounted for by instances in which the grand duke remanded a supplication to the governor's own court. At that point they become ordinary judicial cases.

TABLE 2
SUPPLICANTS BY OCCUPATIONAL STATUS, 1592–1682

Occupational Status	Customs Office (1648–53)	Governor's Office (1592–1682)	Total	Percentage
Noble	2	16	18	2
Businessman	58	299	357	47
Professional	4	15	19	2
Shipowner/captain	3	33	36	5
Official	28	18	46	6
Petty shipowner/mariner	6	29	35	5
Artisan/shopkeeper	19	109	128	17
Laborer	1	14	15	2
Military	7	20	27	4
Clergy	10	39	49	6
City of Livorno	0	28	28	4
Jewish community	1	3	4	1
Miscellaneous community	0	2	2	0
Total	139	625	764	100

SOURCE.—See n. 58.

NOTE.—Businessmen include *mercanti*, *negotianti*, and *sensali/mezzani*. Shipowners or captains include those who described their vessels as *navi*. Those who used terms for small craft such as *leuti* were classified as petty shipowners or mariners. Artisans or shopkeepers were those who described themselves as practicing a craft, maintaining a *bottega*, or engaged in the retail trade. Professionals were typically doctors or lawyers.

for homicide.⁶⁴ But other processes also account for the high acceptance rate. First, supplications were drafted in a stereotypical manner that reflected the conventions of the genre and the known preferences of the regime. The merchants of Livorno were well aware of the grand duke's standards for granting safe-conducts from debt, for instance. Second, there is abundant evidence for "pre-selection" whereby individuals lobbied with local officials before submitting their requests. The high approval rate marks the success of officials in mediating affairs in the port by vetting requests, lobbying for measures they liked, and blocking proposals they disliked. It does not represent the efforts of merchants and artisans in Livorno to overstep the authority of local officials by appealing to the central government. In most cases the grand duke and his secretaries had no knowledge of a matter until a supplication brought it to their attention. It was then delegated back to Livorno for investigation. Although supplications were a princely institution, they reinforced rather than undermined the power of the local bureaucracies.

⁶⁴ Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, 52. Davis focused on supplications for capital crimes, which had distinct procedures that differed substantially from practices in Livorno. Most important, the French courts conducted their ratification process according to judicial norms (if not procedures), whereas the investigations I studied in Livorno were conducted by bureaucrats according to the norms of their offices. *Ibid.*, 8–11.

TABLE 3
SUPPLICATIONS BY TYPE

	Governor's Office (1592-1682)	Customs Office (1648-53)	Total	Percentage
Privilege	27	9	36	5
Exemption	22	44	66	9
License	42	30	72	9
Specific safe-conduct	54	7	61	8
General safe-conduct	18	0	18	2
Contract enforcement	57	1	58	8
Assessment revision	43	41	84	11
Grant	56	30	86	11
Abuse report	12	3	15	2
Judicial	156	1	157	20
Administrative	62	4	66	9
Miscellaneous	46	3	49	6
Total	595	173	768	100

SOURCE.—See n. 58.

Gentlemen, merchants, and artisans were effective at arranging their graces and privileges before the formal submission of a supplication. This “preselection” helps explain the high rate of approval I have observed. When the English refugee Sir Robert Dudley wanted a privilege for his new method of dyeing silk, he wrote to the governor of Livorno to settle his supplication ahead of time.⁶⁵ Another official discussed the safe-conduct of a gentleman from Padua with a privy secretary before drafting the supplication.⁶⁶ The preselection process was part and parcel with the traffic in personal recommendations, and it was common for officials to use a form of the word “recommend” when forwarding a supplication.⁶⁷ As a result, they were reluctant even to accept supplications of which they disapproved, or which they did not find convenient for the grand duke. The assistant director of customs wrote to one secretary, “I’ve done my best not to trouble Your Lordship about the Netherlander who is owed money by those old butchers, but he has been so insistent that I could not escape forwarding his memorial.”⁶⁸ Failed supplications did not generate a large body of rejections because many died in transit or got lost in the bureaucratic shuffle.

Supplications in Livorno often became public knowledge. There was no pretense of secrecy, partly because supplicants handed their requests directly to

⁶⁵ ASF, MP, 1305, f. 51, 07/03/1610 and 07/10/1610.

⁶⁶ ASF, MP, 2140, f. 27, 01/26/1606. For other examples see *ibid.*, ff. 286, 830, 853.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. 133, 142; f. 847 (in which the official denies his “recommendation”); ASF, MP, 2139, ff. 346, 353, 463. See Fosi, “Rituali della parola.”

⁶⁸ ASF, MP, 2139, f. 470, 12/17/1605.

TABLE 4
ACCEPTANCE RATES, 1592-1682

	Governor's Office		Customs Office		Total Acceptance Rates (%)
	Accepted	Total	Accepted	Total	
Privilege	10	23	3	7	43
Exemption	12	19	33	42	74
License	30	37	27	28	88
Specific safe-conduct	38	48	7	7	82
General safe-conduct	15	17	0	0	88
Contract enforcement	11	46	1	1	26
Assessment revision	28	36	34	40	82
Grant	24	40	26	29	72
Abuse report	4	11	1	3	36
Judicial	53	108	1	1	50
Administrative	43	52	4	4	84
Miscellaneous	20	37	3	3	58
Total	288	474	140	165	67

SOURCE.—See n. 58.

the governor, the customs director, or one of their underlings to transmit back to Florence.⁶⁹ These men read and discussed supplications before sending them along. But the practice of information gathering after submission of a supplication was public in a more direct sense. If the grand duke asked the governor to evaluate a supplication, the governor sent one of his lackeys through the marketplace looking for the interested parties. For instance, when the commissary of Livorno needed to compile a report on the alabaster industry, he sent a man to talk with the privilege-holder Innocentio Nerucci. Nerucci's shop was always shut up tight, and eventually the commissary himself decided to pay the artisan a visit: "Passing by I asked a mason who was working there where the master of the workshop was, and he told me that he had gone to the fairs. Apparently Innocentio is the type of man who works only when he has to."⁷⁰ Livorno was small. Most business took place in the Piazza Grande, in the government offices that flanked the piazza, or in the nearby dockyards. In addition, officials were not the only people flitting to and fro asking questions. The city's scores of brokers who negotiated sales between wholesale merchants were also conduits of news. In Livorno, there were few barriers to the rapid circulation of information about supplications or commerce more generally.

⁶⁹ ASF, MP, 2140, ff. 147, 152-53, 211, 407, 647.

⁷⁰ ASL, CGA, 2602, vol. 1, f. 328.

The information-gathering process and the publicity it generated minimized the tendency for supplicants to make patently false claims in their requests. A few did not resist the temptation to lie, however. The debtor Michele Tilche asserted that most of his creditors supported his supplication for safe conduct, but his request was denied after officials discovered during investigation that Tilche had larded his petition with the names of noncreditors.⁷¹ This example is significant because safe-conducts were routine business in Livorno, and it shows that even simple supplications received a measure of direct examination. Requests for privileges, licenses, and exemptions triggered more thorough investigations. I have found few instances in which officials reported outright lying in supplications. Of course, successful liars would be impossible to detect. But the practices of information gathering made lying difficult.

Although it is impossible to estimate how many supplications were stage-managed, it appears that prescreening in Livorno was less effective in conflict-prone situations. Requests for privileges, contract enforcement, and judicial interventions were denied more often than other kinds of supplications—acceptance rates were only 43 percent, 26 percent, and 50 percent, respectively.⁷² In these cases, conflicts of interest were likely to prove problematic because they involved other parties. Exemptions and licenses could be granted to one individual without affecting others (except indirectly). By contrast, exclusive privileges antagonized people who were already producing or dealing in a good. For instance, Giulio Romano's proposal to create a privilege for weighing the grains used by the Cathedral Workshop (*Opera del Duomo*) was denied on the grounds that the Customs Office's corporate stevedores already enjoyed that right by custom. In cases of contract enforcement, the regime strongly preferred the judicial process over direct intervention. Even when a baker asked for a mutual friend to adjudicate over payment from a merchant who was supposed to invest in his shop, the grand duke preferred to follow the ordinary course of justice.⁷³ These norms of equity were a function of the judicial legacy of the supplicatory process. According to one French jurist, established interests were *ipso facto* legitimate and could not be infringed upon in adjudicating supplications. This principle lay behind the process of investigation and consultation conducted by public officials.⁷⁴

⁷¹ ASL, CGA, 2603, vol. 2, ff. 950–51.

⁷² See table 2. Abuse reports also had a low acceptance rate (36 percent), but the small number of cases (only 14) makes it difficult to draw conclusions. The low acceptance rate of judicial supplications found in the Governor's Office (49 percent) is partly compensated by the 24 percent of cases remanded to the governor's own court by the grand duke.

⁷³ ASL, CGA, 2602, vol. 1, f. 345.

⁷⁴ Petrus Rebuffus, "*Tractatus de supplicationibus, seu errorum propositionibus*," in *Commentaria in constitutiones* (Lugduni, 1599), 301; Christian Zendri, "Il 'Tractatus de

Taken as a whole, the supplications suggest that a creative period in Livorno's political economy came to an end by the 1640s. Sufficient sources for comparison exist only for the Governor's Office (table 5). In earlier decades, the governor dealt with a great variety of supplications. The uncertainties posed by immigration, new commerce and industries, and rampant piracy all required his attention.⁷⁵ The practices associated with the free port also became increasingly regular thanks to the institution of supplications. Informal traditions based on older decisions obviated the need for innovative economic supplications. As a result, more of the governor's business was occupied with judicial matters or safe-conducts against creditors. Supplications were more often remanded to his court rather than decided by the grand duke. The simpler profile of requests by the 1640s reflects the changed needs of Livorno as the free port became an institutional reality. In its early days, the system of supplications revolved less around judicial affairs than around economic matters. But the Customs Office and the Governor's Office gradually amassed a body of practical knowledge, documented precedents, and assumptions about the port that facilitated free trade in Livorno. By the 1640s—the period when Attavanti declared that “the custom is that even our enemies the Turks have enjoyed and continue to enjoy the freedom of this port”—the system of supplications was routine rather than innovative.

The supplication system allowed the grand duke to intervene when he wished while allowing for the general reign of customs and consensus. My study of supplications indicates, however, that in virtually every instance the regime followed the recommendation of local officials. This was true for both complicated business and mundane matters, for which the grand duke or his secretary simply wrote *non altro* (“not otherwise”) or *così si fa* (“do it this way”) at the end of the official commentary.⁷⁶ It goes without saying that these local officials were not disinterested analysts of commerce, committed ideologically to norms of free trade. Except for the *auditore* of Livorno, à virtually all of the port's top

supplicationibus, seu errorum propositionibus' di Pierre Rebuffi (1487–1557),” in *Forme della comunicazione politica*, 35–51. The juridical nature of what today we would call an administrative body was typical of ancien régime approaches to governance. See Luca Mannori and Bernardo Sordi, *Storia del diritto amministrativo* (Rome-Bari, 2001).

⁷⁵ The arc of legislation confirms this chronology. Ferdinando I and Cosimo II issued a welter of laws and decrees for regulating the minutiae of economic life in Livorno. This legislation was often a response to uncertainties in the current framework rather than a novel policy departure. Lorenzo Cantini, *Legislazione Toscana raccolta ed illustrata*, 32 vols. (Florence, 1800–1808), esp. vols. 12–15; and Giuseppe Vivoli, *Annali di Livorno: Dalla sua origine sino all'anno di Gesù Cristo 1840*, 4 vols. (Livorno, 1974 [1840]), esp. vols. 2 and 3.

⁷⁶ Sometimes a dissatisfied privy secretary asked for further information (e.g., ASL, CGA, 2602, vol. 2, 06/14/1619), but such cases were infrequent.

TABLE 5
SUPPLICATIONS TO THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE BY TYPE

Category	1592-1608 (%)	1609-20 (%)	1621-30 (%)	1640-48 (%)	1680-82 (%)
Privilege	4	8	5	3	2
Exemption	7	4	2	3	2
License	13	9	5	2	7
Specific safe-conduct	8	7	10	11	9
General safe-conduct	4	5	3	1	0
Contract enforcement	6	12	6	13	14
Assessment revision	14	7	2	7	0
Grant	12	11	10	7	0
Abuse report	1	3	3	2	0
Judicial	8	15	26	44	60
Administrative	11	16	13	4	5
Miscellaneous	13	2	16	3	0
Total	142	134	127	149	43

SOURCE.—See n. 58.

officials hailed from the Tuscan and especially the Florentine patriciate.⁷⁷ In their memoranda they sought to affirm their loyalty to their superiors and to safeguard their own political or financial interests. Their decisions nonetheless created a freer marketplace. In part, that outcome depended on supplication procedures and on poor monitoring from Florence. At a deeper level it was owing to a fundamental solidarity between merchants and officials in Livorno.

Officials relied on merchants for information when investigating a supplication, as we have seen, but they also secured merchant cooperation in judicial cases and in managing tax collection. Customs duties in particular posed problems, as the policies associated with the free port complicated rather than simplified procedures until the Reform of 1676. Merchants paid duties not upon entry of their goods but only upon their eventual sale or re-export. Officials therefore had to monitor wares in storage as well as all marketplace transactions. The bookkeeping demands were formidable. As Attavanti put it, speaking of why it was unreasonable to settle all outstanding accounts in December, "that order was issued when the port of Livorno was still at a tender age, when com-

⁷⁷ Among governors, the outliers were Giovanni Canaviglia (from Naples) and Giovanni Manoli Volterra (a Greek Uniate). Among customs directors, Paolo Poltri and Francesco Terriesi were of relatively modest origins. Many subordinate customs officers were also from important families. For the list of officeholders I have consulted ASF, MM, 414, Niccolò Arrighi's *Teatro di Grazia e di Giustizia*, ff. 99-102, and Aglietti, *I governatori*. I relied on Litchfield's list of the Florentine patriciate (*Emergence of a Bureaucracy*, 364-82) to determine the status of an officeholder.

merce was just getting started, and it was easy for the customs officer to fulfill the regulation punctually. Since then business has always increased—to the benefit of Your Highness—and as a result it has become difficult even for previous customs officers to observe the full rigor of this law.”⁷⁸ Opportunities for defrauding the customs were rife in Livorno, and officials went out of their way to cultivate good relations with merchants—in part to ensure the orderly payment of dues.

Official collaboration with merchants readily slipped into collusion. Merchants had three general incentives for skirting the law: they wanted to minimize the time their wares or ships spent in quarantine; they wished to pay fewer taxes on goods they imported or sold in Livorno; and they sought to smuggle their goods beyond the customs cordon that separated the port city from the Tuscan hinterland. Officials were willing to oblige them on all three counts. Quarantine patents were a salable commodity in Livorno despite ongoing efforts to reform the Health Board that regulated access to the port.⁷⁹ Moreover, officials frequently turned a blind eye to merchants who skimmed on paying their duties, often by underreporting the amount of goods they imported into Livorno, and they rarely took a hard line against people who tried to smuggle things into Tuscany. Bribery of customs officers was pervasive.⁸⁰ Liberty and licentiousness went hand in hand in Livorno.

Constant (and sometimes illicit) cooperation nourished the habits of consensus that reigned in Livorno. In its early days, merchants negotiated directly with local officials over a host of matters by means of supplications. That changed as the number of merchants in the city and, in the eyes of officialdom, the complexity of its affairs grew. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, there were perhaps twenty-three merchants in the city, including brokers. That figure grew to almost 300 businessmen by 1642.⁸¹ Increasingly, officials found it easier to negotiate with consuls or other representatives than with the entire ensemble of merchants in the city. For example, when Livorno faced a scarcity of Spanish reales in the winter of 1644–45, the grand duke saw an opportunity to establish Florentine coin as the only tender in Livorno. Commodities would be exchanged in Tuscan coinage pegged to a specific exchange rate. The gover-

⁷⁸ ASF, MP, 2163, f. 644, 03/08/1646.

⁷⁹ Carlo M. Cipolla, *Il burocrate e il marinaio: La “Sanità” toscana e le tribolazioni degli inglesi a Livorno nel XVII secolo* (Bologna, 1992), 52 and 57.

⁸⁰ Jean-Claude Waquet, *Corruption: Ethics and Power in Florence, 1600–1770* (Cambridge, 1991); Waquet, “Aux marges de l’impôt: Fraudeurs et contrebandiers dans la Toscane du XVIII^e siècle,” in *La fiscalité et ses implications sociales en Italie et en France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Rome, 1980), 75–94; and Waquet, *Le grand-duché de Toscane sous les derniers Médicis*.

⁸¹ The 1601 and 1642 figures come from Fasano Guarini, “La Popolazione,” 203 and 212.

nor and the customs director began to canvass merchant opinion, which initially seemed unfavorable to the change. The governor therefore convoked the merchant community to discuss monetary reform and urged them to think carefully about a compromise position. The chaotic meeting broke up without resolution. The governor's account portrays the challenge of managing consensus in Livorno when every merchant had a voice:

The English and Dutch wanted to be able to negotiate in every kind of currency, including local pieces of eight or doubloons; the Florentines were soon of two minds, and likewise the French fell into the same division. Faced with this great confusion (for there were many [merchants] present) and without hope of a genuine resolution, I begged these gentlemen to be satisfied if each nation selected two people to gather the opinion of their nation and convey to me in writing their view of the matter.⁸²

In this case, the opinion of the English and Dutch communities as conveyed by their deputies prevailed. The free circulation of all currencies according to market prices remained the custom of the port. When historians speak of negotiations in the port, they should imagine local officials spending hours in the governor's palace or the customs house trying to get the city's premier merchants to agree with one another on matters ranging from technocratic best practices to fiscal policy. They listened carefully to merchants while trying to steer discussions in directions that would be amenable to their superiors in Florence. This process of negotiation was ultimately backed by the threat, rarely voiced, that merchants could take their business elsewhere. But in daily practice, norms of consensus were fostered more by the bonds of collaboration and collusion than by geopolitics.

III. INSTITUTIONS AND COMMERCIAL THOUGHT

Livorno provides an example of how organizational dynamics shaped an important concept of early modern political economy. When the Medici decided to transform Livorno's infrastructure and legislative framework, the term "free port" signified merely a "port with privileges." It referred to the ability of foreigners to settle in Livorno regardless of ethnicity. The phrase acquired a "general notion of unrestrained liberty" as well as a precise rubric of policies through memoranda produced according to local institutional logics.⁸³ The state was implicated in these institutions and indeed had created them, but it was not necessarily either their driving force or capable of directing their development. Historians of political economy, focused on concerns about imperial rivalry or "taming the passions" of subjects, should direct their attention to institutions as

⁸² ASF, MP, 2160, f. 34, 01/13/1645.

⁸³ Compare ASL, Governo, 1025, ins. 13.

well.⁸⁴ While those themes were crucial for introducing cultural and intellectual elites to the problem of economic growth, much writing on commercial matters during the seventeenth century took place with more practical aims in view. Historians have often linked free ports to the purposive intervention of the state in the economy and the aggressive commercial competition of the mercantilist era. It is more accurate to view the evolution of free ports as part of the haphazard development of institutions for regulating economic life, of bodies instituted to serve the state's new commercial goals but readily slipping beyond their grasp: in the case of Livorno, the Customs Office and the Governor's Office.

The system of supplications was deeply embedded in the larger structure of the Medici's organization and use of commercial information. Contrary to some historiography that has glorified the efficiency of early modern information management, neither the central government nor the local bureaucracies in Livorno had the capacity to utilize their archives effectively for most commercial matters.⁸⁵ Supplications were an important vehicle for discussion about political economy precisely because the state lacked a body for handling similar material. The state machinery for processing supplications was not adept at calibrating Tuscan commercial strategy; the system was erected to make judicial decisions rather than to revise ongoing projects. The central government rarely issued follow-ups or excavated information from its archives. There were no routine inquiries into commerce and no forums for debating industrial goals. Instead, when merchants or artisans crafted a supplication over a particular ques-

⁸⁴ Eli F. Heckscher, *Mercantilism* (London, 1955); D. C. Coleman, ed., *Revisions in Mercantilism* (London, 1969); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY, 1976); Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism Before Its Triumph* (Princeton, NJ, 1977); Lars Magnusson, *Mercantilism: The Shaping of an Economic Language* (London, 1994); John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680–1760* (Cambridge, 2005); Sophus A. Reinert, *Translating Empire: Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy* (Cambridge, MA, 2011); see also Joseph Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (Oxford, 1994 [1954]).

⁸⁵ Paolo Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia* (Milan, 1994); Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron, eds., *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2001); Elena Fasano Guarini and Mario Rosa, eds., *L'informazione politica in Italia (secoli XVI–XVIII)* (Pisa, 2001); Randolph Head, "Knowing Like a State: The Transformation of Political Knowledge in Swiss Archives," *Journal of Modern History* 75, no. 4 (2003): 745–82; Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford, 2007); Markus Friedrich, "Government and Information-Management in Early Modern Europe: The Case of the Society of Jesus," *Journal of Early Modern History* 12 (2008): 539–63; Jacob Soll, *The Information Master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert's Secret State Intelligence System* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2009). A few writers have emphasized systemic informational failures. For instance, De Vivo has explored the unintentional consequences of the Venetian government's efforts to manipulate public opinion during the Interdiction Crisis (238–48). My study pursues the trajectory explored by Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (ch. 1), in his discussion of the Spanish bureaucracy's inability to adjust imperial strategy proactively in light of experience.

tion, the Customs Office and the Governor's Office were responsible for discovering precedents in the records of their chancellery, grilling supplicants on the details of their requests, and offering whatever thoughts occurred to them on the case at hand. To facilitate their tasks, offices kept books of rescripts that preserved the grand dukes' decisions in previous matters and indexed important business by subject. The meticulousness of their record keeping should not be exaggerated, however, and information gathering relied more on face-to-face discussion than on archival research.

The supplication process generated thousands of memoranda (*memoriali*). It is important to distinguish this genre from other forms of writing about political economy, such as published pamphlets or legal treatises. The memorandum investigated questions of fact and only rarely offered theoretical discussions. As a result, their writers usually progressed from the particular to the general, from the merits of the case at hand to a general approach to the issue. Moreover, before offering his opinion, the writer usually presented a list of precedents that bore on the decision. Of course, due to the disorganization of the archives, the list of precedents was often incomplete and sometimes done by memory. Most importantly, memoranda were set in a policy process. They were composed in response to a privy secretary's request for more information and were supposed to form the grounds for a decision. Because the genre was so coherent, an ambitious writer could also use his brief strategically, as a platform for showcasing his ideas or to urge a new departure in policy.

The signal importance of the memorandum for political economy in Livorno may be established by comparing it to the larger universe of economic writing. Ducal secretaries regularly received information in the form of news, digests, and the letters of agents who had standing orders to report on commercial developments. Take, for instance, Jan Van der Neesen, a seventeenth-century Flemish man investigating the possibility of establishing direct commercial ties between Livorno and the Indies. Van der Neesen delved into the organization of the Dutch East India Company, transmitted news about trade, and forwarded books on navigation to his contacts in Florence.⁸⁶ Officials in Livorno itself also collected economic information. The captain of the port sent almost daily briefs to Florence detailing the provenance and cargos of ships that arrived in Livorno. His reports served an essentially military and political purpose, to monitor the armaments passing through the port. The Health Board transmitted similar information for ships arriving with suspect health patents to prevent the spread of plague to the port. In addition, every year the Customs Office prepared a summary balance sheet in order to track government revenues. All of these

⁸⁶ ASF, MP, 4750, f. 665, 05/06/1605; f. 675, 08/09/1605; f. 676, 08/16/1605; ff. 722–24, 05/31/1606; f. 756, undated but from late 1606; f. 781, 06/19/1607; and ASF, MP, 4259, ins. 1, 12/06/1605. Compare Brendan Dooley, "Art and Information Brokerage in the Career of Don Giovanni de' Medici," in *Your Humble Servant: Agents in Early Mod-*

records have been exploited by modern historians to trace the development of Livorno's trade, although they served other purposes in the seventeenth century. Only the customs balance was occasionally used in contemporary discussions of the free port.

Officials had difficulty exploiting the torrent of information that came their way. Often it was buried in the personal archives of the recipient. Busy secretaries rarely dug through their records to build a picture of trading opportunities in Holland (for example) or to compile trends for the price of grain in Livorno. They did not use their archives to assess ties between Livorno and its increasingly estranged Tuscan hinterland; to analyze the contradictory relationship between policies that favored the port of deposit versus those that favored maritime expansion; or to track the policies of rival ports, apart from taking note of major legislation issued by competitors. Instead, secretaries almost always asked their usual correspondents to pen responses to specific questions even when they could have excavated such information from their own troves of letters, memos, and news reports. Most everyday business consisted of just such questions and answers, since it would have been impossible to index all of the proper names mentioned in letters, let alone all of the subject matters. This procedure meant that many memoranda merely rehashed data or perspectives that had been presented piecemeal over previous correspondence. Like the most advanced of their contemporaries in Venice or Spain, Tuscan secretaries organized their files according to strategic objectives and drew upon them when producing general statements of policy.⁸⁷ Most commercial information escaped their principles of organization, however. Crucial matters pertaining to the free port were delegated to local officials working through memoranda.

Another reason the memorandum reigned supreme was the absence of published treatises on political economy in seventeenth-century Tuscany. The late Renaissance had witnessed a florescence of writing on commercial matters. The

ern Europe, ed. Hans Cools, Marika Koblusek, and Badeloch Noldus (Hilversum, 2006), 81–95; Brendan Dooley, “Making It Present,” in *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Dooley (Farnham, 2010), 95–114; Francisco Javier Zamora Rodríguez, “War, Trade, Products and Consumption Patterns: The Ginori and Their Information Networks,” in *War, Trade and Neutrality: Europe and the Mediterranean in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Antonella Alimento (Milan, 2011), 55–67. These works emphasize the quality of the Medici information network. I agree, but I would observe that its translation into policy outcomes was efficient only for “hot” political or commercial affairs.

⁸⁷ Giuseppe Pansini, “Le segreterie del principato mediceo,” in *Carteggio universale di Cosimo I de' Medici, I (1539–41)*, ed. Anna Bellinazzi and Claudio Lamioni (Florence, 1982), ix–l; Giuseppe Fusai, *Belisario Vinta ministro e consigliere di Stato dei Granduchi Ferdinando I e Cosimo II (1542–1613)* (Florence, 1975 [1905]); Marcello Fantoni, “Dalla provincia alla capitale: Gli Usimbardi di Colle alla corte medicea,” in *Colle di Val d'Elsa: Diocesi e città tra '500 e '600*, ed. Pietro Nencini (Castelfiorentino, 1994), 117–37.

most original writer was undoubtedly Antonio Serra, whose 1613 treatise analyzed the difference between industrial economies and agricultural economies. Serra showed that industry enjoyed increasing returns to scale, whereas cultivation suffered from diminishing returns to scale, and his work, virtually unknown in the seventeenth century, had a profound impact on Enlightenment thinkers. But Serra was just one of several Italian thinkers who applied historical or analytic reason to the sources of state wealth. The Tuscan Bernardo Davanzati wrote treatises on money and agriculture, and his compatriot Filippo Sassetti wrote a discourse on commerce and port cities. The most influential author of the late Renaissance, however, was Giovanni Botero. As a secretary to the prominent Borromeo family of Milan, Botero had first-hand knowledge of the political machinations that drove European politics. He incorporated his insights into *The Reason of State*, which was published in 1589 and saw many subsequent editions.⁸⁸

The problem was that commercial writings dealt with matters that were patently too political for Tuscan subjects to publish. Caroline Callard has shown that by the early seventeenth century, virtually all publication touching upon political life in Tuscany came to a halt as the Medici grand dukes squelched public discussion of the *arcana imperii*.⁸⁹ Perhaps because Botero had succeeded so well in marrying it to reason of state, commercial discussion could not be framed in a politically neutral way. In addition, the fecklessness of representative institutions meant that there was little incentive to court popular opinion by publishing on political economy. The major representative bodies in Tuscany were the forty-eight-person Senate and the Council of 200. The members of both were handpicked by the grand duke, but these were honors that

⁸⁸ Maria Luisa Pesante, "Il commercio nella repubblica," *Quaderni storici* 35 (2000): 655–95, and Pesante, "Un pensiero economico laico?" in *Commercio e cultura mercantile*, ed. Franco Franceschi et al. (Treviso, 2007); Mark Jurdjevic, "Virtue, Commerce, and the Enduring Republican Moment: Reintegrating Italy into the Atlantic Republican Debate," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62, no. 4 (2001): 721–43. On Serra: Sophus Reinert's introduction to Antonio Serra, *A "Short Treatise" on the Wealth and Poverty of Nations (1613)* (New York, 2011); on Davanzati: Leandro Perini, "Un patrizio fiorentino e il suo mondo: Bernardo Davanzati," *Studi Storici* 17, no. 2 (1976): 161–70; on Sassetti: Marica Milani, *Filippo Sassetti* (Florence, 1973); on Botero: Peter Burke, "Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700*, ed. J. H. Burns with Mark Goldie (Cambridge, 1991), 479–98; Artemio Enzo Baldini, ed., *Botero e la "Ragion di Stato"* (Florence, 1992); Romain Descendre, *L'état du monde: Giovanni Botero entre raison d'état et géopolitique* (Geneva, 2009), 133–212.

⁸⁹ This sensitivity to public politics, exceptional even by the paranoid standards of the day, owed to Florence's republican heritage. Caroline Callard, *Le prince et la république: Histoire, pouvoir et société dans la Florence des Médicis au XVII^e siècle* (Paris, 2007); Mark Jurdjevic, *Guardians of Republicanism: The Valori Family in the Florentine Renaissance* (Oxford, 2008).

carried no real power. The supremacy of the Medici and the narrow political class discouraged publication of commercial reflection. Supplications therefore provided the context for many discussions about political economy. The long sunset of the Medici dynasty began in the early eighteenth century when it became clear that the last prince of the house, Gian Gastone (r. 1723–37), would be unable to produce an heir. Tuscans began publishing texts asserting the independence of their republic in a failed effort to forestall a foreign succession.⁹⁰ They also started publishing economic texts again, first with Sallustio Bandini's *Discourse on the Maremma* (1739). The grand duchy went on to have one of the most vibrant explorations of political economy in Enlightenment Europe.⁹¹

Different institutional arrangements may well have changed the nature of political economy in Medici Tuscany. Other countries had more regular feedback mechanisms for linking policy and commercial strategy. For example, in Venice the Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia (Trade Board) played an active role in vetting petitions on economic matters and occasionally proposed new measures.⁹² Under the system of *intendants* supervised by Colbert, France had a cadre of agents well trained in the mercantile arts, in gathering information, and in superintending state-backed projects.⁹³ The presence of representative bodies mattered, too. The *Collegi* in Genoa were the major venues in which the “navalist” faction sought to implement their policy of commercial expansion. They unleashed a flurry of publications in the mid-seventeenth century glorifying the mercantile and seafaring identity of their city in order to win public support.⁹⁴ The English ruling class was larger and more permeable than Genoa's, and in a state of rapid evolution owing to economic expansion and political controversy. Commercial writers employed back-room dealing as well as extensive pamphleteering to influence Crown and Parliament.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Marcello Verga, *Da “cittadini” a “nobili”: Lotta politica e riforma delle istituzioni nella Toscana di Francesco Stefano* (Milan, 1990).

⁹¹ Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, 7 vols. (Turin, 1969–90).

⁹² Maria Borgherini-Scarabellin, *Il magistrato dei Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia dalla istituzione alla caduta della Repubblica* (Venice, 1925); Maartje van Gelder, “How to Influence Venetian Economic Policy: Collective Petitions of the Netherlandish Merchant Community in the Early Seventeenth Century,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24, no. 1 (2009): 29–47.

⁹³ Soll, *The Information Master*, ch. 5.

⁹⁴ The *Collegi* comprised the senate, privy council, and doge in joint session. See Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea*, ch. 5.

⁹⁵ Joyce Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth Century England* (Princeton, NJ, 1978); John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (London, 1989); Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550–1653* (Princeton, NJ, 1993); Magnusson, *Mercantilism*; William J. Ashworth, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production and Consumption in England 1640–1845* (Oxford, 2003).

Throughout Europe, however, many discussions about the economy occurred in political or mercantile bodies erected for other purposes: the guilds, customs houses, monopoly companies, and so forth that had their own mechanisms for supervising or manipulating some dimension of the economy. The early history of political economy has a bureaucratic flavor to it because these institutions were often the primary ones charged with evaluating economic ideas.⁹⁶ Historians of seventeenth-century political economy have focused on printed sources and powerful states. They have dwelt on Holland, France, and England and marginalized Italy after the publication of Serra's treatise in 1613, perhaps because inhabitants of the peninsula did not publish widely on the subject until the Enlightenment.⁹⁷ The example of the free port indicates that print was not the only vital medium in the development of early modern commercial thought, and historians' focus on printed sources obscures debates that occurred largely in manuscript.⁹⁸ Manuscript discussions often unfolded in the context of the messy institutions described here, with their poorly supervised officials, disorganized archives, peculiar procedures, and insistent interest groups. To the extent that the free port is an illustrative example, historians of economic thought must pay closer attention to the organizational contexts that were the venues for manuscript production. National traditions of political economy were embedded in local intellectual life as well as local institutions. Some of these institutions may have been insulated from the larger world. Those of Livorno, so responsive to an international cadre of merchants and artisans, were not.

IV. CONCLUSION: FREE PORTS IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

The institutional perspective helps explain the perplexing variety of policies that fell under the aegis of the free port. The free port of Marseilles, for example, sharply discriminated against non-native shipping. Other ports constituted a

⁹⁶ See Philippe Minard, *La fortune du colbertisme: État et industrie dans la France des Lumières* (Paris, 1998), 151–253; David Kammerling Smith, "Structuring Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Innovations of the French Council of Commerce," *Journal of Modern History* 74, no. 3 (2002): 490–537; William J. Ashworth, "Quality and the Roots of Manufacturing 'Expertise' in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Osi-ris* 25, no. 1 (2010): 231–54.

⁹⁷ An indication of print production may be gauged by a search on *The Making of the Modern World*, an online collection of texts pertaining to political economy. Between 1600 and 1699, the collection contains items sorted by language as follows: Spanish (104), Italian (142), German (189), Dutch (286), French (680), and English (4,086). These results are impressionistic, of course. The collection is biased toward English sources and features, in addition to works on political economy, legislation, political or legal treatises, and the like.

⁹⁸ The chief exception to the neglect of manuscript sources are the memoranda of Colbert, which have received a great deal of attention due to the fame of their author.

special zone within a city that otherwise remained untouched by free trade, as in Genoa. The port of Tangier was free only for certain trade routes since the English mandated that goods shipped from there to other English territories be carried aboard English vessels. The ports in the Caribbean exempted only those goods that did not compete with a mother country's domestic industries. Scholars have attributed the diversity of free ports largely to the geopolitical situation of each. This explanation carries some weight in accounting for differences between cities such as Marseilles and Livorno, or between European and Caribbean ports. It has less traction with regard to the variety of free ports among Italian states. Italian free ports shared a general geopolitical outlook: most of them belonged to rich but small, second-rate powers at the crossroads of Mediterranean trade. But none experienced the success of Livorno.

The policy process deeply affected the articulation of free ports. Despite similar legislative intent, new policies were implemented in contexts very different from that of the Tuscan port. Most observers attributed Livorno's success to the Livornina. Ferdinando's legislation was recalled in laws issued for Nice (1648), Modena (1652), Genoa (1654), Messina (1719), and Naples (1739).⁹⁹ It also had an important impact on legislation in Marseilles and Ancona. The military engineer Sir Henry Sheeres complained that Tangier, declared a free port by Charles II in 1662, lacked a defined "constitution" laying out its actual privileges like the one Livorno had.¹⁰⁰ As we have seen, however, ascribing Livorno's success to its formal legislation is a gross oversimplification. Livorno's free port was a complex of formal and informal practices embedded in a larger institutional matrix. It was nourished not only by Ferdinando's legislation but above all by the lack of effective central oversight and the collaborative ties that bonded merchants and officials in Livorno. The ensemble of administrative practices, precedents, and assumptions that constituted the free port of Livorno could not be copied simply by lowering customs duties or by welcoming foreign settlers.

Contemporary observers often failed to appreciate the institutional complexity of free ports, with important consequences for policy as well as for how Enlightenment thinkers handled them during the formative period of European political economy. In 1743 the Neapolitan economist Carlo Antonio Broggia accused Italians of having "prostituted" their commerce to foreigners through their establishment of free ports.¹⁰¹ The more illustrious Antonio Genovesi, who held the first chair of political economy in Italy, likewise criticized free ports as

⁹⁹ Frattarelli Fischer, *Vivere fuori dal ghetto*, 55.

¹⁰⁰ Henry Sheeres, *A Discourse Touching Tanger in a Letter to a Person of Quality* (London, 1680), 46–47.

¹⁰¹ Carlo Antonio Broggia, *Trattato de' tributi, delle monete, e del tributo politico della sanità* (Naples, 1743), 97–121.

"the idol of many economists."¹⁰² Free ports promoted a passive commerce that benefited only foreigners, imperiled the liberty of Italian states, and, for Broggia, even corrupted civic life. Italian thinkers turned against free ports at the same time that observers farther afield began to see them as models of free trade in action. Matthew Decker made an eloquent appeal to free ports in his case against trade restrictions.¹⁰³ Adam Smith, too, opined in his university lectures that "Britain should by all means be made a free port," by which he meant that customs duties should be abolished, navigation laws eliminated, and foreign merchants admitted into British ports.¹⁰⁴ The experience of Livorno provided ammunition for supporters and for critics of free ports: on the one hand, the city was a flourishing zone of religious tolerance and rational customs regulations; on the other, its trade was managed by foreign merchants and fostered by complicit ties between officials and businessmen. Free ports such as a Livorno sat uneasily between Enlightenment programs of commercial rivalry and principles of laissez-faire.

¹⁰² Antonio Genovesi, *Lezioni di commercio o sia di economia civile* (Bassano, 1769), 288.

¹⁰³ Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade* (London, 1744), 30, 65, 91.

¹⁰⁴ Adam Smith, "Report Dated 1766," in *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, ed. R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael, and P. G. Stein (Oxford, 1978), 514. The lectures were probably delivered in 1763–64 (editors' introduction, 5).