

Giorgio Tosco – States and merchant communities in pursuit of the world's trade

In the 17^o century, besides and beyond Spain, Portugal, France, England and the Netherlands, also many smaller European states tried to carve out a slice of the trans-oceanic trade. In my thesis, I deal with the attempts that were made in two Italian states, the Republic of Genoa and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. Grand Duke Ferdinand I of Tuscany tried to purchase from Portugal some territory in Brazil and Sierra Leone, and finally sent an expedition on the Amazon and the Orinoco at the end of the 1600s. Later on in the century, in the 1670s, Grand Duke Cosimo III tried to involve some Tuscan merchants abroad, who were already active in the Atlantic trade, in the setting up a joint Portuguese-Tuscan chartered trading company. The Republic of Genoa, on the other hand, established two chartered trading companies, the *Compagnia Genovese delle Indie Orientali* (1647-1653) and the *Compagnia Marittima di San Giorgio* (1653-1665). Those companies sent some ships to the Indian Ocean and Brazil, but they were not economically successful.

So far, literature has mainly looked at these enterprises from the vantage point of the state structures involved. However, the sailors and merchants who took part in these enterprises had their own agency, which strongly influenced the outcome of these episodes. Moreover, the borders between state structures and private merchants were often blurred, as the same people could duplicate their role as civil servants and entrepreneurs.

Most of the skills and expertise which were necessary for these attempts came from people who belonged to “foreign” merchant communities: either the Dutch-speaking colonies of Genoa and Livorno or the Genoese and Tuscan ones of Lisbon and Amsterdam. How did these people interact with their home or host state? What flows of capital and information connected them?



Whose agency?

← Ferdinand I, Grand Duke of Tuscany (1587-1609)

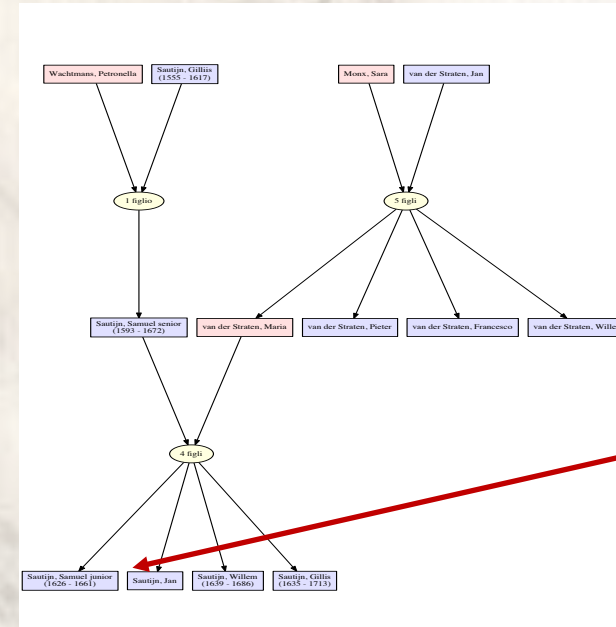
Francesco Feroni (1614-1696). A native-born Tuscan, he moved to Amsterdam and made a fortune in the Atlantic slave trade. He later became an economic advisor to Cosimo III, and advocated the establishment of a company for the slave trade.



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If we focus on the individual traders, our evaluation of these attempts is different. These enterprises were only one of the many possible options that these merchants could choose. Dutch traders could participate in the chartered companies of their own country, instead of looking for a flag of convenience elsewhere. On the other hand, while Tuscany and Genoa did not have any official presence overseas, some individual Genoese and Tuscan traders were already involved in trans-oceanic trade, in a more or less indirect way: they could send ships on their own (either legally or by smuggling) and/or participate in business ventures with foreign partners. Why, then, were these people interested in the support of the Tuscan and Genoese states? What combination of social, political and economic reasons stood behind their preference for a particular institutional framework?

In order to assess which aims these people had, and if and how they attained them, we need an assessment of their economic and social background. I am doing this through an analysis of sources coming from different archives.

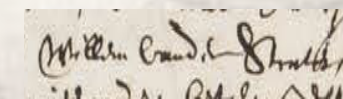


The family tree of the Sautijn and Van der Straten families. Samuel Sautijn junior, Dutch consul in Genoa and one of the directors of the *Compagnia Marittima di San Giorgio*, belonged to two families which were prominent in Dutch-Italian trade, and had a long experience in smuggling as well. In Genoa, the company owned by Sautijn and Willem van der Straten replaced Hendrik Muilman (another Dutch consul, and chief promoter of the *Compagnia Genovese delle Indie Orientali*) as the leading Dutch firm in town.

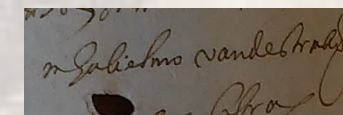
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1													
2	Approso	padre Gio Francesco											
3	Asparani	Ferrante	1	1									
4	Ayrolo	Agostino	1	1									
5	Babi	Francesco Maria	1	1									
6	Bening	Jan			1								
7	Benzi	Gio Batta			1								
8	Bio	Io Batta	1	1									
9	Boeri	Gio Francesco	1	1									
10	Borzone	Gio Antonio			1								
11	Borzone	Gio Francesco			1								
12	Bremaschi	Bremasco	1	1									
13	Brignole	Emanuele	1	1									
14	Brignole	Gio Carlo			1								
15	Brignole	Rudolfo Maria			1								
16	Broni	Bernardino	1	1									
17	Buonvicino	Scipione	1	1									
18	Carmagnola	Gerolamo			1								
19	Castiglione	Giacomo			1								
20	Castiglione	Barotomeo			1								
21	Cattaneo	Lucrezio			1								
22	Cattaneo	Gio Filippo			1								
23	Cattaneo	Gio Battista			1								
24	Cattaneo	Piniello			1								
25	Cesà	Lauro Gio			1								
26	Cesà	Grimali Nicolò			1								
27	Centurione	Gio Batta			1								
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30	Centurione	Carlo			1								
31	Centurione	Barnaba			1								
32	Cernusco	Cesare			1								
33	Chivasso	Hendrick			1								
34	D'Amico	Nicolò			1								
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Most of the literature on the Genoese chartered companies has assumed that their Genoese promoters were aloof from the world of "real" trade, and that they were only interested in making a political statement (with the aim of pursuing a more aggressive naval policy). I have made a list of all the directors and shareholders I could identify, and I am trying to assess, for each of them, their political preferences and their business activities. Only some of them were known for supporting a new naval policy, and quite a few of them had already some experience of trade with the extra-European world.

Two names for the same person!



Willem van der Straten (notarial document from Amsterdam)



Gulielmo Vandestraten (notarial document from Genoa)