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# “People of Every Mixture”. Immigration, Tolerance and Religious Conflicts in Early Modern Livorno

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## ABSTRACT

In this chapter we present the specific case of Livorno, an Italian port city newly founded in early modern times, which drew inhabitants of many kinds: marginal people, artisans and great merchants, not exclusively Catholic. The growth of the city and the port and the presence of various “nations” made Livorno in the modern age a particularly dynamic place for international exchange, an important hub that connected the Mediterranean trade with the macro-economies of the European colonial powers. Fundamental studies conducted on sources preserved in European and Italian archives have provided a detailed picture of its importance for the trade of the northern powers in the Mediterranean and shown the constitution of “foreign” economic groups that maintained networks of relations with the commercial centres of their countries of origin. Moreover Livorno was also a centre from which intercultural relations were projected out over the Mediterranean and beyond, since merchants from “Leghorn” [Livorno] traded even with Hindu merchants in India.

The opportunities for peaceful co-existence established by the Privileges for Eastern and Western Merchants, which are known because of their success with the name of the “Livornina” or Leghorn privileges, guaranteed in fact a certain degree of ‘tolerance’ and supported the development of trade and the growth in the city of a population of immigrants from both neighbouring regions and distant countries. The history of the population of Livorno is in fact a history of growth, politically planned and assisted; just as the formation of an urban elite and the organisation of foreigners in nations was the result of the pragmatic policy of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany and their interest in developing merchant networks. The particular case of the English community of Livorno illustrates concretely how the immigration of populations of different faiths and cultures created conflicts and divisions, and allows us to discuss the controversial *topos* of cosmopolitanism and tolerance towards non-Catholic minorities, the privileges of the Jewish population, the mixing of languages and ethnic groups. The documents of the Medici Grand Duchy and the records of the tribunal of the Inquisition throw into relief how in an Italian port city in the ‘confessional age’, thanks to the protection of state mercantilism, it was possible to establish a regime of co-existence including Catholics, Protestants and Jews, which allowed individuals to establish business and sometimes friendly relations, although it was not possible, except in cases of formally leaving one’s original faith, to cross the barriers of religious denomination and enter fully into the ranks of citizens.

*Si presenta qui il caso particolare di Livorno, una città portuale italiana di nuova fondazione in cui, nella prima età moderna, confluirono marginali, artigiani e grandi mercanti non sempre di religione cattolica. La crescita della città e del porto e la presenza delle «nazioni» resero Livorno in età moder-*

*na un punto di scambio internazionale particolarmente dinamico, un importante nodo dei traffici tra l'area mediterranea e le macroeconomie delle potenze europee coloniali. Studi fondamentali condotti sulle fonti dei grandi archivi europei hanno fornito un quadro circostanziato della sua importanza per i traffici delle potenze nordiche nel Mediterraneo e segnalato la costituzione di gruppi economici 'stranieri' che mantenevano reti di relazione con le piazze commerciali dei paesi di provenienza. Senza contare che Livorno fu anche centro di irraggiamento di rapporti interculturali nel Mediterraneo e non solo, se mercanti 'livornesi' trafficavano perfino con gli indù dell'India.*

*L'opportunità di convivenza stabilita dai Privilegi ai mercanti ponentini e levantini, conosciuti per il loro successo con il nome di "Livornina" garanti infatti un certo grado di "tolleranza" e supportò lo sviluppo dei traffici e la crescita nella città di una popolazione di immigrati da regioni circonvicine e da paesi lontani. La storia della popolazione di Livorno è infatti la storia di un incremento sollecitato e aiutato così come la formazione di una élite cittadina e l'organizzazione degli stranieri in Nazioni fu il risultato di una politica pragmatica e interessata allo sviluppo delle reti mercantili. Il caso particolare della comunità inglese di Livorno illustra concretamente come l'immigrazione di popolazioni di fedi e culture differenti creasse conflitti e divisioni, e mette in discussione il controverso topos del cosmopolitismo e della tolleranza verso le minoranze acattoliche, i privilegi della popolazione ebraica, il mescolarsi di lingue ed etnie. I documenti del granducato mediceo e i processi del tribunale dell'Inquisizione mettono in risalto come in una città portuale italiana in età confessionale, grazie alla protezione di un mercantilismo di stato, fu possibile stabilire un regime di coesistenza fra cattolici, protestanti ed ebrei, che permise ai singoli di entrare in relazioni d'affari e talvolta di amicizia, non fu però possibile, salvo nei casi di abiura della fede originaria, attraversare i confini dell'appartenenza religiosa, ed entrare a pieno titolo nel novero di cittadini.*

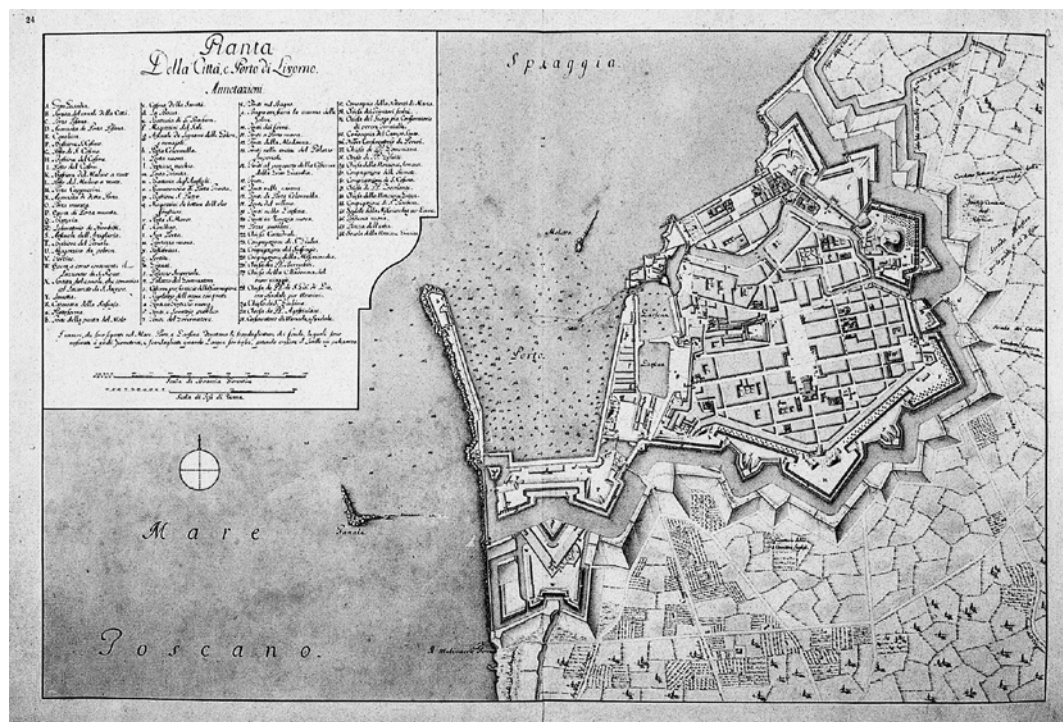
The foundation period of Livorno is roughly from 1575 (the year in which grand duke Francesco I entrusted the task of drawing up a project for it to the architect Bernardo Buontalenti) until 1606, when Livorno officially received city status. But Florence's interest for this locality went far back in time, to when it was only a small walled village near the little natural port. It was acquired from the Genoese in 1421, and subsequently dominated by a Medici fortress built between 1518 and 1533. The project for a city of 12.000 inhabitants actually began to take shape when the first stone was laid on the morning of 28 March 1577, quite a few years before the phenomenon of the foundation of port cities became widespread in Europe between the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century<sup>1</sup>. Thanks to merchant trade and to the great economic stimulus created by the requirements for construction materials necessary to build the city, the population in a few years jumped from the 500 inhabitants of 1590 to 3000 in 1606, reaching 30.000 inhabitants in the middle of the 18th century. Livorno hence is the most relevant example in Italy of the demographic growth of a non-capital city, so much so that within a century many military areas around the city were urbanised and a whole new quarter was built ("Venezia Nuova" [New Venice]) on an artificial extension of the coastline<sup>2</sup>.

Urbanisation proceeded along with the promulgation of a series of provisions to attract men and women to Livorno. Among these, we single out for both their real and symbolic importance the edicts of 30 July 1591 and 10 June 1593, which have entered history as the *costituzioni Livornine* [the Leghorn constitutions]. Guaranteeing ample social and religious freedoms to "merchants of any nation" they were issued primarily in view of attracting to Livorno and Pisa (both were included in the edicts) the Jews and 'Marranos' that because of the persecutions of the Inquisition were fleeing from the Iberian peninsula. Thus the very important Jewish settlement in Livorno was constituted: at the end of the 17th century about 10% of the population was of Jewish origin<sup>3</sup>. But along with the Jews coming from Spain and Portugal numerous other foreigners were attracted by the broad guarantees granted in the grand dukes' privileges. Even earlier, from the

1570s on, numerous Greek sailors and artisans found work on the Grand Duke's galleys. Already by the end of the 16th century the first groups of Armenian merchants, of French artisans (Marseillaise specialised in the soap industry), Corsican sailors, and English and Flemish merchants and captains had come to reside in Livorno, structuring their communities around their own statutes and organs of self-government<sup>4</sup>. The opportunity of co-existence established by the Privileges to the 'eastern and western merchants', known on account of their success as the "Livornine", in fact guaranteed a certain degree of 'tolerance' and supported the development of trade and the growth in the city of a population of immigrants from both neighbouring regions and distant countries.

Livorno hence is by definition a place of immigration, but it was also a place of emigration and circulation. Its history is characterised by movements of individuals and groups, who gave rise to complex and articulated commercial, social and family networks. The story of how these groups of different nationalities and religions interacted and entered into conflict shows in a concrete way, on the one hand, how the immigration of populations of different faiths and cultures in the early modern age created conflicts and divisions, and how, on the other, the civil and religious authorities tried to favour and govern their presence and their co-existence.

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF A CITY



Map 1

Plan of the city and the port of Livorno, about 1749.

Source: Florence State Archives, Segreteria di Gabinetto 696.

In the 17th century the growth of a city could not be taken for granted. In Ferrara, where a strategy of urban enlargement of great entity had been implemented, we can see that the architectural enterprises undertaken by the Duke Ercole I d'Este did not achieve the slightest results in terms of demographic, political or economic growth of the whole city: indeed, the expansion of the area surrounded by the city walls was followed a few years later by a contraction of the inhabited area<sup>5</sup>.

The question arises spontaneously: how was it possible to achieve the development of Livorno at a time of demographic decline in an unhealthy territory surrounded by swamps and marchland, where for centuries, although it had been enjoyed important privileges, there had only been a small fortified settlement containing a few hundred inhabitants?

Let us go back to the mid 16th century, when Livorno appeared to be a walled settlement of about 500 inhabitants, although it was important as it was the Florentine state's only access to the sea because of the silting up of the port of Pisa (*Porto Pisano*).

For the traveller coming to Livorno from Pisa in the mid 16th century, the landscape would have appeared wild, swampy or covered with forest, not easy to reach by boat. The traveller would have had to cross deep ditches and swampy pools. On horseback the trip was complicated by the winding and rough road, dangerous because of wild animals, particularly wolves. The air was unhealthy because of the swamps to the north of the little walled settlement and because of deposits of seaweed. From the sea, the coast might appear to be provided with a complex port system. But the towers that had marked the port of the seafaring republic of Pisa had partially collapsed and now stood by a sandy coast instead of a place to anchor. And "it was necessary to pass the Pisa river mouth [the mouth of the Arno] far out to sea because it is shallow", keeping as a reference point "a tall white tower called 'Marzocco' which marks the beginning of the basin of the port of Livorno". To a gentleman following the court of Cosimo I Medici and his wife Eleonor of Toledo, living in Livorno seemed like hell: "the price of food is more than double what it is in Pisa and it is not surprising, since this is a town of sailors and thieves". Notwithstanding its strategic and commercial importance, Livorno continued to be an isolated outpost with respect to the Tuscan territorial context, "a place where one does not ordinarily go", endowed with scarce agricultural resources, and where the precarious environmental situation limited the possibilities for development of a town. It was more likely that the existing population would leave rather than that new inhabitants might arrive.

The intuition that a port city furnished with the necessary structures such as *lazzaretti* [quarantine-houses], storage areas, housing and services could develop and take off with success was due to Grand Duke Francesco I, who in 1575 registered the changes that were taking place in the Mediterranean because of the arrival of English and Flemish ships. He entrusted the task of drawing up a project for a fortified city that could contain 12.000 inhabitants to his trusted architect, Bernardo Buontalenti. New stimulus for building houses and issuing populationist privileges came – from 1590 on – from Grand Duke Ferdinando I, considered the real father of the new city.

The Grand Duke's commitment led to developments on several fronts: building powerful fortifications; incrementing the arrival of ships in the port; building housing and warehouses, populating the new city. Many interrelated measures were carried out between 1590 and 1593, years in which a great famine struck Italy, allowing the Grand Duke to make Livorno take off as a port for the grain trade and attracting labourers and artisans in search of work.

The process of urbanisation inside the fortifications, favoured by huge investments from the state coffers or those of bodies controlled by the Grand Duke, was accompanied by a systematic populationist policy aimed to attract, through economic facilitations, artisans and specialised workers; and through customs concessions and guarantees, to promote the settlement of merchants of every origin. Decrees issued in rapid succession attracted new inhabitants with very varied specialisations. The first "Bando", issued in 1590, was addressed to Greeks, expert sailors and ship-builders. The second, in October 1590, was addressed to foreign craftsmen: manufacturers of ropes, ship-builders, carpenters, wood-workers, masons, ironsmiths, stoneworkers, fishermen, sailors "and every manual worker except agricultural day labourers and diggers". The third, of 10 July 1591, is the invitation directed to all eastern and Jewish merchants and to non-Catholics guaranteeing

economic privileges, customs privileges and – extremely important – the right to practice their religion, protected from the Inquisition. The Bando attracted non-Catholic merchants, ensuring in time the settlement in Livorno of Jews, Armenians and northerners of Protestant faith. At the beginning of the 17th century, the construction of the Uniate Greek church and of the synagogue lead to the constitution of meeting places for foreigners. The Greeks, and at the end of the 17th century the Armenians, bought houses in the immediate vicinity of their churches; the Jews gathered in a quarter (not a ghetto closed by walls) that developed behind the Cathedral, where the synagogue had been built<sup>6</sup>. With the construction of the “Bagno della Galere” (a large enclosed area) for slaves, Livorno became a centre of arrivals where Muslim and Christian slaves could be ransomed and where the corsairs could sell their prizes: an extremely profitable activity in which the Medici family itself participated, financing the ships and vessels of the corsairs. Braudel noted that in the first years of the 17th century Livorno was like the Algiers of Christianity, in that its economy revolved around corsair warfare and the ransom of the booty<sup>7</sup>.

The growth of the building infrastructure was sometimes ahead of the influx of population, more often it was behind. The growth of the population and of merchant trade was supported by enormous investments to expand the port structures. In 1590 a new *darsena* [port basin] was dug; between 1611 and 1621 the Cosimo pier (today the Medici pier) was built; in the mid 17th century the ‘Fernandeo’ port; *lazzaretti* where merchandise coming from areas stricken by the plague could be unwrapped, spread out, and according to the methods of the day, disinfested; storehouses and grain deposits. The building of the fortifications and the urbanisation of space laid out for the city were in the first phase the economic fly-wheel that, at a time of epidemics and famines, attracted inhabitants; the privileges and the protection from the Inquisition guaranteed to the eastern, western and northern merchants transformed the port for cereals into a great Mediterranean emporium.

The population increase of Livorno is the story, as Elena Fasano Guarini writes, of a desired, promoted and assisted growth. The facilitations and privileges brought to the new city inhabitants from the Arno Valley and from centres in the Appenines in the territory of Pistoia and the Mugello area, and attracted inhabitants from the neighbouring republic of Lucca and from the Ligurian and Provençal rivieras<sup>8</sup>. News of new Christians fleeing from the Iberian peninsula in boats and the matrimonial *processetti* [witnesses’ declarations that persons coming from abroad are free to contract marriage] give us a concrete picture of the stories of many, men and women, who arrived often in groups by land or in boats, in search of fortune or at least of a possibility of work in the new city. Construction of the fortifications<sup>9</sup> and of the houses attracted inhabitants; the growth of the population was tumultuous; sometimes new housing was built faster than new tenants arrived, but more often it was the other way around. And there were difficulties and obstacles for the newly arrived before they could put down roots. The merchants preferred to live in the more comfortable and tranquil city of Pisa, and for many long years Livorno was a frontier outpost, inhabited by a very mobile population, largely male due to the preponderance of sailors, diggers, soldiers and slaves.

It was very difficult to root a stable, hard-working and disciplined population in a precarious situation, while work was booming in an enormous construction site, in a place of transit for “many very evil seafarers whence the city is corrupted”. Decrees aimed at discouraging the frequent phenomenon of leaving the city; they show us that many people, after having obtained privileges and houses, settled their affairs and left Livorno.

The systematic study of the marriage documents available from 1611 on has shown that the immigrants, prevalently male, at least until 1650 put down roots by marrying brides who were already residents of Livorno<sup>10</sup>. The fragmentation of real estate and the possibility of transmitting it through the female line as dowry goods contributed to the rooting of the wedded couples. Be-

cause of the lively demand for lodgings, renting houses came to constitute a subsidy for the urban subsistence economy<sup>11</sup>.

The building of sanitary structures for the treatment of merchandise from places stricken by plague favoured stops in the port of Livorno, although not without creating negative attitudes towards the Grand Duchy's bureaucracy<sup>12</sup>. The ships in port, needing repair and supplies, stimulated the ship repair activities and Tuscan agricultural production. It is enough to read the list of the cargos of the galleys and ships, or the registration of the gifts in kind (vegetables, wines, fruit, cheese and live animals) offered by the Tuscan court to personages who were passing through, to get an idea of the amount of work and business possibilities that the port offered to a large part of the population of the city and its hinterland. The arrival of the ships from the north, bringing herring and dried cod, solved in part the lack of fresh fish that characterised the diet in the many meatless days imposed by the rules of the Council of Trent. Livorno became for all of central and northern Italy the port of arrival and distribution of foodstuffs – not just grain. The products of the New World converged there to be re-exported: besides herring and cod, sugar – some of which refined in Livorno itself – coffee, tobacco, cacao, both luxury products and products of wider use entered into the diet and the consumption habits of the populations of Tuscany and of Italy<sup>13</sup>. For the international merchants, Livorno was the deposit port and the logistic centre for the maritime distribution goods between the Mediterranean and northern Europe; it became the port where eastern and western products could be found. Ships could unload products from their place of origin and leave with a cargo of every sort of merchandise. The huge warehouses, the efficient *lazzaretti* and quarantine system and the international consent that guaranteed neutrality made the 'porto franco' of Livorno the centre of Mediterranean commerce. The working of Mediterranean coral also favoured the importation of precious stones from India by way of the India Company and from Portuguese Goa<sup>14</sup>.

The intermediation trade was encouraged by the geographic position of Livorno at the centre of the Mediterranean, by the customs exemptions and by the policy of religious tolerance promoted by the Medici. The Tuscan policy of equidistance on the international level with respect to the great European powers favoured the settlements of foreign merchants. In the 1570s the first English ships entered the port of Livorno and their presence increased rapidly from 1604 on when the Anglo-Spanish Peace of London was signed, making the Mediterranean routes less dangerous. Along with the arrival in the Mediterranean of English ships the settlement of English merchants in Livorno began. The grand ducal authorities from the beginning looked at the English settlement with favour and in this connection it is significant that copies of the "Livornina" privilege of 1593, with the invitation to foreigners to settle in Livorno and the promise of a certain religious 'tolerance', was also sent to Queen Elisabeth I. In 1597 the Grand Duke recognised the first English consul, the French consul and the Dutch-German consul, and soon the foreign communities began to give themselves a structure and call themselves "nations".

## THE LIVORNO OF THE NATIONS

With a solemn ceremony, when there were already more than 3000 inhabitants, on 19 March 1606 Ferdinando I granted to Livorno – "the pupil of the Grand duchy's eye" – the title of 'city'. The secular ceremony took place in the 'old' Fortress and the Duomo was consecrated lavishly by the Florentine nuncio. Other Tuscan centres, such as Prato or Colle, had first obtained their own bishop as a necessary preliminary step towards receiving the title of 'city'; on the contrary, in Livorno the Duomo was the only parish for the whole city, and it was officiated by a simple parish priest until 1628, when it was raised in status to become a *collegiata* having a prevost and canons. The government of the city was entrusted to a governor with military and civil competences.

A great deal of effort was expended to define the status of the urban élite which was forming. In 1604 Ferdinando chose the 'citizens' of the new city, whose number was fixed at 100. From these, 12 were selected to be *Gonfalonieri* and 22 to be *Anziani* [elders], and given the right to carry out the municipal functions. In the list of names of the *fedelissimi* [very faithful persons] chosen by the Grand Duke himself, the presence of foreign Catholics (or persons that declared themselves officially to be such) stands out (in 1604 Thomas Hunt, Italianised as Untò, an Englishman; Giorgio Squillizzi and Filatti Stamatti, Greeks; Giovanni Dieman, Irish; Matteo Bonatt, German), to whom in 1616 were added Giorgio Vega Pinto, Portuguese, and a new Christian<sup>15</sup>; Benjamin Sproni of Antwerp; and in 1665 the Armenian Antonio Bogos and other merchants coming from other states in Italy and in Europe. The 'foreigners' in the core of the local 'notability' consolidated the links between the Florentine court and the corporate groups, organised in "nations", of the non-Catholic foreigners who resided in or transited through Livorno.



Fig. 1  
Clara Van de Wingaert (del Vigna), wife of Benjamin Sporon.  
Source: Livorno, Biblioteca Labronica, Ms. III.

The foreigners' communities had the status of autonomous bodies with the name of "nations" (in the sense that the term had at that time: i.e. of a community of foreigners and partially independent ethnic-religious minorities), in particular the Sephardic Jews were given ample powers of government of their communities, with the right to *ballottare* [ballot] – that is to accept or refuse by vote – new arrivals, and to administer justice, civil and penal (at the lower levels) among Jews<sup>16</sup>. The Greeks were administered by a confraternity (a semi-religious association) that, among other things, had the task of keeping a register of the residents and of checking on their behaviour<sup>17</sup>. The foreign merchant communities were headed by consuls, soon recognised with letters patent from the sovereigns of the countries they represented.

The policy of facilitating the formation of an open citizenry, giving citizenship to some foreigners, ensured informal but continuing links between the city and the court for the social management of the community and the organisation of trade, and made Livorno a successful port city.

Even within the framework of the broad protection granted to the foreigners, political and practical reasons counselled the Grand

Dukes to issue decrees that increased the penalties in case of relations between Jews and Christians. Jewish physicians were forbidden to cure Christians even if they were accompanied by a Christian physician; Jewish clients of prostitutes were punished with very heavy fines; it was severely forbidden for Christians to serve in Jewish homes or even for Christians to be employed by Jews. The documents of the Roman Inquisition show that for two centuries, from the end of the 16th to the middle of the 18th century suspicions were active with respect to 'new' Christians, and scrupulous investigations were carried out to establish whether the Jews coming from countries where they were not allowed to profess their faith openly were guilty of apostasy. For their



part, the *massari* [officials of the Jewish community] and other influential members of the élite did their best to keep careful control over their nation, establishing who belonged and who did not, and punishing by excommunication any deviation from the religious or behavioural norms<sup>18</sup>. There were conflicts within the Armenian community too, so much so that in 1667 some missionaries were sent to Livorno to check on the residents: only after having submitted to the profession of the Catholic faith were they allowed to build a church of the Armenian rite.

All the foreign communities present in Livorno reproduced on a smaller scale the same divisions and religious differentiations that were present in their countries of origin. The Greek nation of Livorno was divided between the Catholic (Greek rite) members and the Orthodox. The Armenian nation was divided between a Levantine minority of Catholics and a Persian majority that professed the Monophysite faith<sup>19</sup>. A Catholic minority was present in the Dutch Protestant community and a Protestant minority was certainly present – although well-hidden under prudent Nicodemite attitudes – in the Catholic French community (and after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes quite a few Huguenots found refuge in Livorno). In the second half of the 17th century the Jewish community underwent a lacerating division between the “orthodox” and the followers of Sabbatai Sevi, the Jew from Smyrna who in 1666 was identified by his supporters as the long awaited Messiah. The English community of Livorno, from its very first years of existence, was internally divided between

Protestants and Catholics: at least until the 1620s with a preponderance of Catholics, and from then on with a Protestant majority. All these circumstances show how, in an Italian port city in the “confessional age”, thanks to the protection of state mercantilism, it was possible to establish a regime of co-existence between Catholics, Protestants and Jews, which permitted individuals to enter into business relations and sometimes even friendship; crossing the institutional boundaries was not possible however, on the administrative and juridical level.

In the city of Livorno, notwithstanding the privileges of the *porto franco* [free port] and the possibility of establishing a co-existence with foreigners, religious boundaries marked the juridical and institutional boundaries – as did the cultural and ethnic boundaries. The “nations”, like small cells – in a walled city that because of its dimensions was compared to a “snuffbox” – entered into relations without being able to upset the static equilibrium marked by the religious confession of the group they belonged to, as well as by social and cultural cohesion. In daily life instead, lifestyles, fashion, taste and the curiosity for the exotic came together and were interwoven: inventories allow us to visualise the houses well furnished with furniture from all over, decorated with seascapes and portraits, with common dishware but also with special services for new products, glasses for beer, cups for chocolate. The sumptuary laws, the lists of linen and clothing, some portraits of merchants show that men and women had fashionable wardrobes, varied and colourful, ornamented with ribbons and jewels. The number of coffeeshouses (the first one was opened by an Armenian),



Fig. 2

Benjamin Sporon (Sproni) a merchant from Antwerp who became citizen of Livorno.

Source: Livorno, Biblioteca Labronica, Ms. III.

of pastry shops and inns that offered food, bread and sweets according to the countries of origin of the owners; the diffusion of specialised places for games and physical exercises, and of theatres are indications of a lively social life projected outside the home. In the meantime, notwithstanding the fact that it was allowed to keep the business and accounting records in one's own language, the Tuscan language was widely used, written and spoken, and became the means of communication for everyone. In 1647 the Agustinian Father Nicola Magri published the first history of Livorno from its origins to his own time. Among the many pages that describe the material construction of the city he dedicated a passage to the character of "livornesi": *gente di ogni miscuglio* [people of every mixture], but "almost all of the same humour", friends of foreigners, lively, curious, active, always attentive to fashions and novelties, non conformists<sup>20</sup>.

## PRACTICES OF TOLERANCE: THE ENGLISH CASE

The English case is emblematic of how the immigration of populations of different faiths and cultures created conflicts and divisions even within a well-off minority like that of the foreign merchants who decided to stay in Livorno. Here we should remember that we are speaking of a small community, of a few dozen families, in a city of thousands of inhabitants, growing at an amazing rate. But even if the numbers were few, the presence of the English merchant community was very visible from the economic, political and religious points of view. Moreover, it was a very well structured body: merchants and merchants' agents were in fact part of the *British Factory*, a kind of mercantile corporation that grouped together all the English engaged in trade, constituted in the course of the 17th century<sup>21</sup>. It is therefore interesting to investigate the dynamics which arose from the presence of these rich and cultivated foreign non-Catholic immigrants, keeping in mind that often these merchants would stay in the city for a certain number of years, with the idea however of returning to England. Around the merchants, as we will see, there gravitated a world of artisans, sailors and prostitutes whose identities oscillated between the country of origin and the host city.

In reality – on the basis of the 1593 privileges – in Livorno, Protestant merchants were granted the possibility of professing their own religion without being molested, on the condition however that they not must not proselytise nor give 'scandal' with their behaviour. Obviously it was not difficult to cross the indefinite and abstract line that divided the behaviours considered permissible from those that the Inquisition considered 'scandalous'. The margins of real religious liberty that English Protestants could enjoy in Livorno were in reality the fruit of numerous and variable factors. On the one hand there were the Medici authorities, both local and central, who wanted to favour the wealthy community of merchants in every way, without however coming into open conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities and, in the first place, with the Inquisition. On the other hand there was the Catholic Church with its multiplicity of articulations, that often had different attitudes: it was not rare that the local ecclesiastical and inquisitorial institutions had a more 'indulgent' attitude towards the English of Livorno than did the central authorities, who were less affected by immediate political considerations. Political considerations that – we must not forget – often brought the English government to intervene in support of the requests of the English merchants in Livorno.

This multiplicity of factors sometimes gave rise to a game of hypocrisies, bluffing and trickery which is often hard to decipher. Over the years there were two fields in which conflict between the Tuscan political and religious authorities and the English nation of Livorno exploded: the request to have a Protestant minister in the city and that of guaranteeing the English dead a decorous burial in a walled cemetery. Measures were taken to expel Anglican ecclesiastics that had served as ministers for the community in 1644, 1645, 1649, 1666, 1668 and 1670: periods of tacit tolerance towards Anglican ministers and periods of bitter polemics alternated. It was only at the

end of 1707 – after the usual tug-of-war between the resident English diplomat and the Tuscan authorities – that a religious minister was allowed to reside in Livorno as chaplain of the English community. An analogous story of alternating tacit concessions and polemics characterised the request to put a fence or wall around the piece of land where ever since the end of the 16th century English Protestants had been buried. The Inquisition decidedly opposed this concession, on the one hand to emphasize even in a symbolic way the unworthiness of those who died outside the Catholic Church, and on the other for fear that a wall might hide Protestant ceremonies. Apparently it was only in 1706 that the cemetery could be enclosed by a little wall and iron fencing<sup>22</sup>.

The opposition on the part of the Catholic Church towards any concession seems to have been determined essentially by the fear that similar privileges could ingenerate a kind of plebeian Latitudinarianism. They did not fear hypothetical conversions of Livornese to Protestantism, but rather the fact that any concessions might spread the opinion that it was socially acceptable to be Christians without belonging to the Catholic Church, and that Catholic rites and the cult were not fundamental questions for saving souls. This was the scandal that the Catholic Church feared and tried to avoid.

On the part of the English, often the demands of religious freedom had an eminently symbolic meaning as a claim to identity: it was unacceptable for English merchants, some of them very rich, to undergo the humiliation of burying their relatives in an open field, where dogs could roam as they pleased, and to have to send their children to be baptised in a Catholic church: behind the requests to have a minister and to fence the cemetery it would seem that there were motivations connected more with social prestige than with religious matters. The Dutch, English and Jewish burial places were outside the walls, and although they were unfenced it was not by chance that they contained sumptuous funeral monuments, sometimes of marble and artistically sculptured.

While religion represented a characterising identitary element for the rich merchants of the British Factory, the situation was different for those foreigners that decided to leave the faith in which they had grown up. A thorough study of the abjurations by Protestants preserved in the papers of the Inquisition in the Archive of the Archdiocese of Pisa could perhaps give us a more accurate picture of the foreign men and women of Livorno who chose to convert to the Catholic Church (the Inquisition series is composed of 32 large bundles which regard the years 1574 to 1734, but unfortunately even today only about 10 of them have indexes and repertories)<sup>23</sup>. On the basis of a first survey, which however will have to be confirmed by more systematic research, we estimate that in the century and a half considered in the papers preserved from the Inquisition in Pisa about 150 abjurations of English people are recorded (but probably, considering the lacunae in the documentation, it can be estimated that the total number of English men and women who converted to Catholicism is much greater). Often those who abjured were sailors or modest tradespeople. Of some of them we only know the very few things that those who abjured were asked: their name, age, parents and birthplace. Hence it is difficult to establish the nature of the real motivations that made them chose conversion. The stereotyped formulas that we find in the Inquisitorial records in general refer on one the hand to the attractiveness of the Catholic ceremonies and rites, and on the other to the unity and concord that characterised the Catholic Church with respect to the many lacerations of the Protestant world. In many of the abjurations there are references to conversations with English Catholic priests who did not live in Pisa or Livorno. Often it appears, however, that rather than being a sign of real spiritual travail, these conversions were in effect the result of choices among opportunities and that the passage to the Catholic Church was felt to be the essential premise for becoming completely integrated in the life of the city. At the same time, obviously, this step meant symbolically cutting the bridges with one's original culture.

In the skeletal autobiographies contained in the records of the abjurations pronounced by the English of Livorno, then, we never see signs of real spiritual travail. But, whatever the motivations were,

it is certain that this step, in addition to the spiritual sphere, had great impact on the daily life of the converts. If nothing else, adhering to Catholicism implied a radical change in the converts' eating habits. In contrast to the Anglicans, Catholics in the early modern age were not allowed to eat meat, eggs, milk, butter, cheese or lard on Fridays, Saturdays, during the forty days of Lent nor on the eve of religious festivities – for a total of more than one third of the year<sup>24</sup>. It was not just the fact of believing that the pope was Christ's vicar, of venerating the saints, of following a sumptuous liturgy in Latin, of confessing one's sins to a priest that immediately distinguished a Catholic from a Protestant in early modern Livorno: it was also the diet. In the 17th and 18th century eating meat on the prohibited days was more and more interpreted by the Inquisition as a clue to an irreligious attitude. In the case of a convert from a Protestant confession, the dietary infraction might be a sign of apostasy. It is not surprising therefore that the major part of the not very many investigations that were started by the Inquisition against English people in the 17th and 18th centuries regarded cases of English Catholics accused if eating meat when it was prohibited.

So on the one hand there were the 'de luxe' immigrants: the rich merchants, with strong political and economic bonds with their mother country, who imposed with tenacity the opening of spaces of tolerance for their religious and national identity, on the other there was a sort of small community composed of English (or Italian-English) Catholic families that resided in Livorno, devoting themselves in general to small scale trade and crafts, although there were some families in which the husband was a soldier or a sailor and the wife a servant or a prostitute. This community was not completely integrated with the Italians, and it was at the margins of the English 'nation', with which however it maintained a close relationship. These English people apparently lived with a double identity as they were regarded with suspicion and scarce sympathy both by the English factors, because they were Catholic, and by the Catholics because they were ex-Protestants. In this case too we must emphasize that the numbers involved were not large. The cases of marriage of English women with Italian men or vice versa are only a few dozen in two centuries<sup>25</sup>.

Abandoning one's own culture, confronting a completely different world was not painless even within the family. At the end of the 17th century and during the entire 18th century, there were some clamorous cases of Englishwomen converting to Catholicism that often greatly agitated the relations between the English resident in Livorno and the Tuscan political and religious authorities. If, as we have said, many of the abjurations of which we find traces in the Inquisition papers were motivated by a desire to integrate rather than by religious travail, these 18th-century cases seem instead to originate in the first place from a conflict with the family of origin. Passing to Catholicism represented the refusal of the religion of one's own family. It would be necessary to carry out further research on these young women of the 18th century who wanted to embrace the Catholic faith. It would be interesting to discover whether part of their motivation derived from an attraction to a Church that in exactly those years was developing what has been called a "feminisation" of its devotional practices<sup>26</sup>. It is significant that the English envoy Davenant underlined that "the ceremonies of the Roman church, the invisible and extrinsic things, the priests' robes, the singing, and sounds, the incense, the images and very ornamented figures" were "very suitable to attract the spirit of weak and incautious children" especially when they were "accompanied" by proselytising ecclesiastics or *donnicciuole* [pious little women]<sup>27</sup>. Aside from what we may learn from further research, it is in any case very significant that at the centre of almost all the cases of religious conflict between the English merchant community and the Tuscan authorities in the 18th century there were events regarding young women, sometimes even girls, who fled from their Protestant homes and families, finding shelter with Catholics<sup>28</sup>.

The English community of Livorno from the 1620s was by far the most important English community in Italy from both the numerical and the economic point of view (Livorno – Leghorn

– was “the” English port for the Levant for at least two centuries) its history shows in an emblematic way the problems of co-existence that the settling of people of different religions and cultures created even in a decidedly favourable situation for “others”. It is evident however that the Tuscan government (both at its highest levels and at local level) implemented a precise policy and measured itself in a very pragmatic way with the limits imposed by confessional society.

“Of many peoples one” is the motto that in 1656 circulated in the Mediterranean and in Europe, impressed on the golden *tollero* of 3,48 grams bearing the portrait of Ferdinand II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, on the obverse. On the reverse the *tollero* presents a classical view of Livorno seen from the sea: in the foreground there is the lighthouse and the port full of vessels with their sails; in the background the city appears, well defended by its fortifications. The legend reads *Diversis gentibus una*. We do not know exactly how the iconography of this coin was decided. Since the gold florin was no longer current, the new coin had the aim of competing with the Spanish pieces and the German *ungheri* in the emporia of the Levant. Evidently it was thought that the image of Livorno would prove attractive on the international markets, especially in the Mediterranean area, in which the monetary flow of gold and silver guaranteed exchange between the Christian and the Muslim powers<sup>29</sup>. And it was certainly a carefully meditated choice to represent the specificity of the new city, extolling its role in Mediterranean trade in the name of tolerance in diversity, and presenting the composition of an open and cosmopolitan population as the result of a precise political and economic programme.



Fig. 3

Obverse of the golden tollero of 1655, showing the port and the city of Livorno.

From the point of view of the city, the coin, in which the urban and social characteristics were represented in synthesis, shows that the growth of a process of belonging and identity cohesion was already perceptible and not just hoped for. To conclude, let us also note that the processes and events brought to light by recent studies on the history of Livorno, a few of which we have mentioned, show how practices of tolerance were often the result of compromises and bitter conflicts and that the process of assimilation was less straightforward and easy than the Medici propaganda and the myth of Livorno as a cosmopolitan and tolerant city have claimed.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For the urban history of Livorno see G. Nudi, *Storia urbanistica di Livorno dalle origini al secolo 16*, Venice 1959; D. Matteoni, *Le città nella storia d'Italia. Livorno*, Rome - Bari 1985; L. Bortolotti, *Livorno dal 1748 al 1958. Profilo storico-urbanistico*, Florence 1970.
- <sup>2</sup> L. Frattarelli Fischer, *Lo sviluppo di una città portuale: Livorno, 1575-1720*, in M. Folin (ed.), *Sistole/Diastole. Episodi di trasformazione urbana nell'Italia delle città*, Venice 2006, pp. 271-333.
- <sup>3</sup> R. Toaff, *La nazione ebraica a Livorno e a Pisa (1591-1700)*, Florence 1990, pp. 419-435.
- <sup>4</sup> For the social history of Livorno see P. Castignoli, *Studi di storia. Livorno dagli archivi alla città*, Livorno 2001; L. Frattarelli Fischer, *L'insediamento ebraico a Livorno dalle origini all'emancipazione*, in M. Luzzati (ed.), *Le tre Sinagoghe. Edifici di culto e vita ebraica a Livorno dal Seicento al Novecento*, Livorno - Turin 1995; L. Frattarelli Fischer, *Per la storia dell'insediamento degli armeni a Livorno nel Seicento*, in *Gli armeni lungo le strade d'Italia, Atti del Convegno internazionale (Torino-Genova - Livorno, 8-11 marzo 1997)*, Pisa-Rome 1999; Id., *Alle radici di una identità composita. La «nazione» greca a Livorno*, in *Le Iconostasi di Livorno, Catalogo della mostra (Livorno 7 aprile - 24 giugno)*, Pisa 2001; Id., *Ebrei a Pisa e Livorno fra Inquisizione e garanzie granducali*, in A. Prosperi (ed.), *Le inquisizioni cristiane e gli ebrei, Atti dei Convegni Lincei*, Rome 2003, pp. 253-295; S. Villani, «Cum scandalo Catholicorum...». *La presenza a Livorno di predicatori protestanti inglesi tra il 1644 e il 1670*, in «Nuovi studi Livornesi», 1999, 7, pp. 9-58; Id., «Se è vero secondo Galileo che il mondo ha suo moto quotidiano, non è da meravigliarsi della instabilità d'ogni cosa in esso». *Charles Longland: un 'rivoluzionario' inglese nella Livorno del '600*, in C. Ossola, M. Verga, M. A. Visceglia (ed.), *Religione cultura e politica nell'Europa dell'età moderna. Studi offerti a Mario Rosa dagli amici*, Florence 2003, pp. 591-607.
- <sup>5</sup> M. Folin, *Un ampliamento urbano nella prima età moderna: L'addizione erculee di Ferrara*, in M. Folin (ed.), *Sistole/Diastole. Episodi cit.*, pp. 51-174; F. Ceccarelli, *Contrazione urbana e crisi insediamentale: Ferrara nel XVII secolo, un excursus, ibid.*, pp. 175-205.
- <sup>6</sup> Frattarelli Fischer, *L'insediamento cit.*
- <sup>7</sup> F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris 1949 (ed. it. Turin 1979), II, p. 921.
- <sup>8</sup> In general on the demographic history of the city of Livorno, see E. Fasano Guarini, *La popolazione*, in *Livorno progetto e storia di una città tra il 1500 e il 1600. Livorno e Pisa: due città e un territorio nella politica dei Medici*, Pisa 1980, pp. 199-215.
- <sup>9</sup> On the role of the port city in grand ducal policy see F. Angiolini, *Sovranità sul mare ed acque territoriali. Una contesa tra granducato di Toscana, repubblica di Lucca e monarchia spagnola*, in E. Fasano Guarini, P. Volpini (eds.), *Frontiere di terra, frontiere di mare: la Toscana moderna nello spazio mediterraneo*, Milan 2007, pp. 39-65 [forthcoming]; Id., *Spagna, Toscana e politica navale*, in M. Aglietti (ed.), *Istituzioni, politica e società. Le relazioni tra Spagna e Toscana per una storia mediterranea dell'Ordine dei cavalieri di S. Stefano*, Pisa 2007.
- <sup>10</sup> Fasano Guarini, *La popolazione*, in *Livorno progetto e storia di una città cit.*, in particular, the tables showing the placet of origin of the brides and grooms, p. 208-211.
- <sup>11</sup> L. Frattarelli Fischer, *Casa e proprietari a Livorno nel Seicento*, in «Quaderni storici», 2003, 113, pp. 364-380.
- <sup>12</sup> Carlo M. Cipolla, *Il burocrate e il marinaio. La «Sanità» toscana e le tribolazioni degli inglesi a Livorno nel XVII secolo*, Bologna 1992.
- <sup>13</sup> On the merchant networks of the Jews of Livorno, cf. L. Frattarelli Fischer, *Reti toscane e reti internazionali degli ebrei di Livorno nel Seicento*, «Zakhor», 2003, 6, pp. 93-116.
- <sup>14</sup> G. Yogev, *Diamonds and Coral. Anglo Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade*, Leicester, 1978, pp. 102-109; F. Trivellato, *Juifs de Livourne, Italiens de Lisbonne, Hindous de Goa. Réseaux marchands et échanges interculturels à l'époque moderne*, in «Annales H. S. S.», 2003, 58, pp. 581-603.
- <sup>15</sup> On the settlement of new Christians and new Jews in Tuscany and particularly in Livorno, L. Frattarelli Fischer, *Cristiani nuovi e nuovi ebrei in Toscana fra Cinque e Seicento. Legittimazioni e percorsi individuali*, in P.C. Ioly Zoratti

- tini (ed.), *L'identità dissimulata. Giudaizzanti iberici nell'Europa cristiana dell'età moderna*, Florence, 2000, pp. 99-149.
- <sup>16</sup> R. Toaff, *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa (1591-1700)*, Florence 1990, 419-435.
- <sup>17</sup> On the settlement of the Uniate Greeks and of the so-called schismatic Greeks, see G. Passatelli (ed.), *Le iconostasi di Livorno – Patrimonio iconografico post-bizantino* (with essays by D. Dell'Agata Popova, A. d'Aniello, L. Frattarelli Fischer, G. Passatelli), Pisa 2001; D. Vlami, *Commerci et Identité dans les Communautés Grecques. Livourne aux XVI-IIe Siècles*, in "Diogène", 1997, 171, pp. 75-95; id., *ΤΟΦΙΟΡΙΝΙ, ΤΟΣΙΤΑΡΙΚΑΙΗΘΛΟΣΤΟΥΚΗΠΟΥ. Έλληνες έμποροι στο Λιβόρνο. 1750-1868. Athens 2000.*
- <sup>18</sup> L. Frattarelli Fischer, *Ebrei a pisa e Livorno nel Sei e Settecento* cit., pp. 253-295.
- <sup>19</sup> G. Panessa, M. Sanacore, *Gli armeni a Livorno. L'intercultura di una diaspora*, Livorno 2006.
- <sup>20</sup> N. Magri, *Discorso cronologico delle origini di Livorno in Toscana*, Napoli 1647.
- <sup>21</sup> M. d'Angelo, *Mercanti inglesi a Livorno 1573-1737. Alle origini di una "British Factory"*, Messina 2004.
- <sup>22</sup> Cf. Stefano Villani, «Cum scandalo catholicorum...» cit., 1999, 7, pp. 9-58; Id., *Alcune note sulle recinzioni dei cimiteri acattolici livornesi*, in "Nuovi Studi Livornesi", 2004, 11, pp. 35-51.
- <sup>23</sup> The repertories have been produced in three dissertations prepared under the guidance of Prof. Luigina Carratori of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Pisa: D. Bondielli, *Inventario del fondo del Tribunale della Inquisizione pisana (anni 1574-1628)*, 1995-96; R. Pirisi, *Inventariazione del fondo del tribunale della Santa Inquisizione pisana (anni 1615-1616)*; S. C. Casella, *Inventariazione del fondo del Tribunale dell'Inquisizione pisana (anni 1642-44, 1672-74)*, 2003.
- <sup>24</sup> The Reformation in England brought a general relaxation of fasting practices, which however were confirmed by a series of edicts and statutes. It is significant, though, that the obligation not to eat meat on certain days was declared to be for economic reasons, so as not to damage the fishing industry as the statute of Edward VI of 1549 stated explicitly. In 1560 under Elisabeth II a fine was imposed on those that butchered animals during Lent; and during the 1562-1563 parliamentary session, Cecil imposed on a reluctant Parliament an order that anyone eating meat on a 'fish day' would be fined £3 or 3 months of prison (this time too, though, the measure was justified on the basis of economic considerations). Notwithstanding this, abstinence from eating meat became less and less observed and eating meat on the forbidden days become more and more a manifestation of explicit Protestantism. New edicts were made by James I in 1619 and 1625, by Charles I in 1627 and 1631, by Charles II 1661 and (understandably) by the Catholic James II in 1687. After the Glorious Revolution, however, even though they were not abrogated, these rules were generally abandoned. Cf. *The Several Statutes in force for the observation of Lent: And Fish-days, at Lent: And Fish-days, at all other time of the YEARE. With full and ready notes in the margin, Shewing the effect in brief*, London, printed by Robert White, 1661 (electronic edition < [http://justus.anglican.org/resources/pc/england/several\\_statutes.html](http://justus.anglican.org/resources/pc/england/several_statutes.html) >). In general on meatless days, see M. Montanari, *La Fame e l'abbondanza: Storia dell'alimentazione in Europa*, Rome-Bari 1993, pp. 98-103; 141-144.
- <sup>25</sup> For a study of marriages in Livorno, cf. M. P. D'Alessandro, *Immigrazione a Livorno nel Seicento attraverso le fonti ecclesiastiche: uno studio dei libri di matrimonio e dei processi matrimoniali*, laurea dissertation, under the guidance of M. Della Pina, University of Pisa 1996-1997. In her dissertation, M. P. D'Alessandro has made a systematic study of the marriage registers from 1646 to 1649 and from 1682 to 1686. In the 14 years that D'Alessandro has carefully analysed 4 marriages of English men with Livornese women are mentioned. As to marriages of women of British origin celebrated in Livorno, there are only 3. On the utilisation of these sources cf. also D. Puleo, *Una fonte per lo studio dell'immigrazione e dell'insediamento a Livorno: i processi matrimoniali dell'Archivio Arcivescovile di Pisa*, laurea dissertation under the guidance of A. Menzione, University of Pisa 1987-1988; and A. Menzione, *Immigrazione a Livorno nel secolo XVII attraverso i processi matrimoniali. Alcune note*, in «Bollettino di demografia storica», 1990, 12, pp. 97-102.
- <sup>26</sup> For the "feminisation" of religious practice, cf. M. Rosa, *Settecento religioso. Politica della Ragione e religione del cuore*, Venice 1999; A. De Spirito, *Il «sesso devoto». Religiosità femminile tra Settecento e Ottocento*, in G. De Rosa, T. Gregory, A. Vauchez (eds.), *Storia dell'Italia religiosa, II, L'età moderna*, Rome-Bari 1994, pp. 453-476; and M. Caffiero, *Dall'esplosione mistica tardo-barocca all'apostolato sociale (1650-1850)*, in L. Scaraffia, G. Zarri (eds.), *Donne e fede. Santità e vita religiosa in Italia*, Rome-Bari 1994, pp. 327-373.
- <sup>27</sup> Archivio di Stato di Firenze [State Archives, Florence], *Mediceo del principato*, 4239, c. 188.
- <sup>28</sup> S. Villani, *Donne inglesi a Livorno nella prima età moderna*, in L. Frattarelli, O. Vaccari, *Sul filo della scrittura. Fonti e temi per la storia delle donne a Livorno*, Pisa 2005, pp. 377-399.
- <sup>29</sup> S. Balbi de Caro (ed.), *Merci e monete a Livorno in età granducale* (with texts by S. Balbi de Caro, L. Frattarelli Fischer, A. Mangiarotti, E. Stumpp), Milan 1997.

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Id., *L'histoire religieuse de la communauté anglaise de Livourne (XVII<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, in Burkardt A., Bertrand G., Krumenacker Y. (eds.), *Commerce, voyage et expérience religieuse (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Rennes 2007, pp. 257-274.

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