

# Book Reviews

## FEATURED REVIEWS

*Guerres et richesses d'une nation. Les Florentins à Pise au XIVe siècle.* By Cédric Quertier.  
Rome, Italy: École française de Rome, 2022. Pp. xiv, 600. 35€.  
doi: 10.1017/S0022050724000160

Cédric Quertier's book is about alterity. From a methodological point of view, the historian of medieval society constantly deals with some strangeness toward his object of investigation. Acknowledging the otherness of medieval people's mentality, behaviors, and institutional environment is key to correctly writing their story. What is more is the subject of the book itself, as the author decides to write the story of the Tuscan city of Pisa in the fourteenth century through the lens of its most economically and politically powerful mercantile foreign community, the Florentines. The book investigates how expatriate Florentine merchants collectively organized themselves to ensure the oversight of their trading activities and to defend their local privileges during a century of open and latent political conflicts between their city of origin and their host city. The author ends this story with the conquest of Pisa by Florence in 1406.

This historical inquiry is driven by three main research questions. First, the author aims to provide an exhaustive overview of the changing relationship between two politically rival cities whose economic spaces are complementary. Indeed, Florence's international trade highly depends on Pisa's seaport complex. As he tries to account for the different political, diplomatic, and socio-economic factors that played a part in the shifting balance of power in favor of Florence during the second half of the fourteenth century, the author demonstrates the deep intertwining of political and economic interests and conjunctures (Chapters 1, 5, and 7). Second, Cédric Quertier explores the rise, institutionalization, and fall of the Florentine nation in Pisa during the fourteenth century (Chapters 3 and 4). He highlights the nation's political function in mediating between the Florentine merchants and the local—sometimes hostile—Pisan society, and he questions its economic efficiency in securing the collective interests of the Florentine mercantile community in Pisa (Chapter 6). Third, the author strives to contribute to scholarship on merchant conflict resolution and conflict management in the Middle Ages (Chapter 8). More precisely, he focuses on the stratified, yet overlapping, and sometimes concurrent institutions that had the jurisdictional authority to handle commercial conflicts involving expatriate Florentine merchants and Pisans. Florentine merchants living in Pisa had the ability to bring their business cases before different jurisdictional courts. They could reach out to the nation's consul and/or notary (*notaio-sindaco*), who acted as judges and legal representatives of the Florentine community in Pisa, and they could also bring their commercial disputes before the *Mercanzia*, which operated as the supreme commercial court in Florence. Notably, Cedric Quertier investigates side by side the *Mercanzia's* procedure in administering commercial justice and its increase in power as it expanded both its control over expatriate Florentine merchants' communities and its jurisdictional authority in handling their commercial conflicts.

In carrying out this research, Cedric Quertier is in dialogue with a wide range of scholarship. He discusses the political and socio-economic history of medieval Italian city-states as he reevaluates the decline of Pisa's economy after the 1284 battle of Meloria and the growth of Florence as a European industrial center and a territorial state in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. His study of the Florentine nation in Pisa speaks to both the scholarship on aliens, foreigners, and strangers in medieval Europe—in line with the construction of citizenship and national identities—and work on the institutionalization of extraterritorial jurisdictions in medieval and early modern Europe. Importantly, Cédric Quertier inserts his research into the debate over new institutional economics' inputs into history by contributing to scholarship on the commercial revolution, the rise of the market economy, and the role of merchant law and institutions in shaping the mechanisms of medieval trade. Price stability and price reduction were not the sole rationales for Florentine merchants' defense of their privileges in Pisa. Rather, economic interests were embedded in political and symbolic struggles for domination. The Florentines in Pisa in the second half of the fourteenth century became a dominant minority thanks to their

widening economic weight in Pisa's trade and their political influence as they belonged to one of the most powerful Italian city-states. Extraterritorial jurisdiction and commercial privileges, granted notably by bilateral peace treaties, for example, that of 1369, allowed the Florentine merchants to enjoy a wide range of concessions, from more favorable judiciary treatment and tax duty exemptions to rights to conduct maritime shipments, and work in the industrial sectors and brokerage. Together, these concessions enabled Florentine merchants to collectively bypass the "protectionist" regulation of Pisa's economy.

Furthermore, the book provides interesting insights into the craft of the historian as the author extensively displays the choices he made in selecting the source materials and, simultaneously, building his object of inquiry. Indeed, this research is based on primary sources, mainly the archives of the *Mercanzia*, its court procedures, and diplomatic correspondence concerning Pisa, as well as some public records of the city of Florence (Chapter 2). Throughout the book, the author critically reflects on the historical substance he recalls from his archives, as well as the large social reality they silence. In that respect, the reader might be disappointed by the description of the social composition of the Florentine nation in Pisa. Certainly, the author provides insights into the nation's commercial elites and their links with the great Florentine companies and Florence's political elites. Yet, while he argues that the Florentines established in Pisa had a more diversified socio-economic profile, he recognizes the lack of information available to provide a complete social picture of the community. Indeed, the Florentine nation in Pisa in the fourteenth century appears throughout the book as a homogenous social group, suggesting that internal institutional mechanisms that compelled Florentine merchants to bind together and ensure collective responsibility were quite effective. Overall, the book makes valuable and original contributions to the joint analysis of economic change and institutional transformations in history.

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*The Legacy of the Global Financial Crisis*. By Youssef Cassis and Jean-Jacques van Helten, eds. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. Pp. 236. \$39.89, paper.  
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Casual conversations with colleagues in other parts of my university suggest that academic historians still have what Crowcroft (2018) describes as a "widespread professional distaste for the Thucydidean vision" that lessons can be learned from the past. But unfortunately, we cannot afford not to be part of the "lesson learning" industry; civil, political, and business leaders constantly draw from history to justify their decisions. If we are not in the room when they are doing their learning, then they will inevitably, as MacMillan (2008) warns, "pick and choose what you want" to justify practically anything.

The applied history movement, which now boasts its own imaginatively named academic journal (*Journal of Applied History*), seeks to solve this problem. By employing what Tosh (2006) calls "processual and analogical reasoning," applied history practitioners aim to shed light on big questions facing policy makers today. They aim to provide the necessary analytical rigor to the historical parallels and analogues that policy makers draw on in their decision making. They do things like write popular books and accessible policy briefs, engage directly with decision makers outside of normal academic venues, and inject history into executive teaching.

The volume under review, which was edited by a retired financial historian (Youssef Cassis) and a retired banker (Jean-Jacques van Helten), is best seen through the lens of applied history. It has an ambitious objective: to look back at the financial crisis of 2008 and learn the lessons for the future. Each chapter has its own unique angle, centered around a specific policy domain, country experience, or disciplinary perspective. Contributors include academics and practitioners, policy makers and policy takers, macroeconomic historians, and macroeconomic forecasters.

This very competitively priced book is worth acquiring for the good parts. The chapters by the academic contributors are especially worth perusing, as they typically distill and translate