

**Architecture, Festival and Order:  
The history and persistence of the Florentine Feast of San Giovanni and its  
significance to the city's civic identity.**

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**Volume 1 of 5**

**TEXT**

Volume 1: Text  
Volume 2: Illustrations  
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Se mai continga che 'l poema sacro  
al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,  
sì che m'ha fatto per molti anni macro,  
vinca la crudeltà che fuor mi serra  
del bello ovile ov' io dormi' agnello,  
nimico ai lupi che li danno guerra;  
con altra voce omai, con altro vello  
ritornerò poeta, e in sul fonte  
del mio battesimo prenderò 'l cappello;  
però che ne la fede, che fa conte  
l'anime a Dio, quivi intra' io, e poi  
Pietro per lei sì mi girò la fronte.

Dante (Divina Commedia; Paradiso, XXV1-12)

## Introduction

The Feast Day of San Giovanni is still a significant day for Florence. Since its revival in the 1930s—but also throughout much of the city’s history—every year church processions and civic parades have been augmented by a series of other events that together combine to represent the city to itself and to others. This re-presentation is not a mask that conceals Florence’s ‘true’ identity, or one that invents something that is not present, but, even in today’s information driven world, an authentic manifestation of the city where everyday relationships and actions—both historic and contemporary—are elevated to become the focus of different representations. This thesis examines these ritual and ceremonial settings—from an urban to an architectural scale—particularly in relation to the evolution of the Feast of S Giovanni—first documented in the thirteenth century by Villani (1276-1348)<sup>1</sup>—with the intention of discovering how this order helped to structure the transformation of civic identity from its Roman and feudal origins into late medieval humanism, and how this then established the basis future manifestations of civic order, such as that of the Medici Dukes from the sixteenth century onwards, and the fascists of the twentieth century. The main body of the text, which acts as a fulcrum for the argument, examines the development of the Festival of San Giovanni during the shift from a feudal to a communal order in the Middle Ages but is given significant context through studies on the Roman and Renaissance periods. Thus, whilst the feast maintains a presence in all chapters, there are particular studies in the course of the historical transformation that help illuminate the ritual or ceremonial depth of urban/civic life. All of these studies have the quality of typicality, but move across the spectrum from custom, through ceremony [which would include dramatic performances], to ritual.

It will be argued that the more the events occupy the latter end of this spectrum, the more they have the quality of conscious or deliberate re-enactment, and, as such, they disclose important content to which the city continually returns in order to maintain ‘orientation’ in changing historical circumstances. These fluctuations might

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<sup>1</sup> *Cronica*; Book VII Giovanni Villani, *Villani’s Chronicle*, ed. Philip Wicksteed H., trans. Rose Selfe E. (Westminster: The Project Gutenberg eBook, 1896).

best be characterised as rhythms that carry different levels of intensity or profundity. So, for example, in the church the Catholic Mass is celebrated weekly as well as on special occasions, such as weddings or funerals; then, the year, with its seasons and associated works and days, are tracked according to the life of Christ and the saints.

The Feast of S Giovanni was (and is) celebrated once within this cycle, aligning the city with its patron saint and therefore with God. However, more specifically, while the processions and masses that occur in this cycle can be seen to be linked to symbolic ideas of re-founding, other political parades and meetings that have occurred in the Piazza della Signoria (and elsewhere the city) have their own cycle which, although more explicitly civic in origin, are also never totally outside the potential for grace. Consequently, within this spectrum of incidence, it is the understanding of aspects of architecture and festival that sit between custom and ritual that play an important role in the unfolding discourse in this thesis.

Within this horizon of activity, the principal social group was, and is, the family who combined to form larger associations within the different areas of the city. But there were also a host of other institutions, ranging from guilds, to armies, monasteries, and nascent academies, which all had their protocols of membership and ceremony, binding the individual (and hence the family) to the town. The thickness or depth of this ceremonial and ritual life was also embodied in the languages used to describe and celebrate these events, which shifted from vernacular dialects through rhetorical Italian to scholarly and liturgical Latin.

It is in the depth of this ceremonial and ritual life that Florence was able to move from necessity to profound insight and maintain its identity within the vicissitudes of history. Indeed, it could be argued that one does not get Dante, or Michelangelo, or Savonarola, without Florence (understood in both its institutional and architectural 'bodies'),<sup>2</sup> which provided the depth of cultural context embodied in its

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term 'bodies' here in relation to Kantorowicz's description of the king in medieval culture as having 'two bodies' in one: an 'institutional' one and a 'personal' one. Florence can be described in



rituals and ceremonies—both historically and ontologically. It is for this reason that so much space is given over in this thesis to restoring the architectural and urban settings for this, and other, festivals, even though currently such ceremonies appear to be more ‘show’ than ritual, partly obscured, as they are, by contemporary aspects of historicism.

Broadly speaking, when examining the development of the festival in Florence, it appears to fit into four key phases; the first corresponds to the rites of Roman foundation where the ordering of the city was oriented towards ‘nature’ and the ‘Cosmos’; the second phase is primarily feudal and Christian (one could argue sacramental) in character where festivals linked the identity and fate of the city to Christian teleology; the third phase, which relates to the period of the Communal government of Florence from around 1250 until 1530, broadened the iconography integral to the Christian festival by incorporating some aspects of the city’s developing civic institutions (such as the judicial arrangements, governmental offices, and guilds etc.); and finally, the fourth phase, that began following the elevation of the Medici to the Duke of Florence after 1532, where all of this historical and cultural landscape was open to perspectival or instrumental representation even if it was not always manifested as such. The first three of these four key phases correspond to chapters two to four.

Following on from this exploration into the history of the festival, its architectural setting, and its significance to Florence, aspects of the philosophy and anthropology of festival will be investigated in more detail to establish the possible implications of the research findings in relation to the idea, representation and praxis of festival in the fourth phase outlined above. In this discourse architecture—particularly those buildings that have responded to these conditions—are shown to be more engaged in the life of the city than much contemporary analysis would suggest. As a consequence of this point, chapter six explores the opportunities these findings in relation to more contemporary issues.

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the same way. Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton University Press, 1997).

The structure of this thesis follows the opening out model described by Patrick Dunleavy in his book *Authoring a PhD*.<sup>3</sup> Thus the thesis begins with this introductory chapter briefly contextualising the research and describing the research methods and tools utilised before launching into the core chapters two, three, and four which develop chronologically, concentrating on three key moments from the Roman foundation of the city up to the elevation of the first Dukes of Florence in the sixteenth century. Each of these chapters begins with a pragmatic description of the city and its architecture at the time (as depicted in contemporary texts or through archaeological evidence as well as simple observation) before moving on to descriptions of the period's most significant festival(s). Having described this background, the final part of each of these chapters develops the topic within a broader cultural background, situating the particular festive praxis within an ontological horizon more relevant to the period, and developing a set of themes relevant to the aims of the thesis as a whole. As these chapters progress the understanding of these various layers of meaning will necessarily evolve but also build upon the previous interpretations making connections and links between the representative aspects of festal order through broadly hermeneutic evaluations. Thus, these three different periods are subtitled:

1. Roman: Order and Cosmos
2. Feudal: Transcendent, or Sacramental Order
3. Communal: Civic, or Mundane Order

Therefore, the layers of order articulated in each period are not limited by the time frame of the particular political/social order but continue to contribute to the understanding of the mediatory possibilities of the symbolisation embodied in experience of festival—even in periods of radical political and social change. Thus it can be seen that the constancy of 'Florence' manifests itself through various transformations or re-interpretations, all the while maintaining or renewing themes, creating a continuity in history.

Chapter five then develops this philosophical analysis further bringing phenomenological themes to the fore in order to discuss more clearly their impact

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<sup>3</sup> Patrick Dunleavy, *Authoring a PhD: How to Plan, Draft, Write and Finish a Doctoral Thesis Or Dissertation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 59.

on the understanding of festival ontologically both historically and in the present. This then leads on to the conclusions presented in the final chapter discussing the wider implications of the research. What will become clear is that at the end of the Communal period the representation of the civic order of the city became Ducal, underpinned by a perspectival, or instrumental order that is more prevalent in contemporary discourses on power and governance. Consequently, much of the discussion of this phase in the development of the festival will be absorbed into chapter five which looks at the nature of the understanding of civic order in Florence over time.

The primary aim of this thesis is to present a case for the understanding of architecture and festival activities as linked, both in relation to the original development of the civic festival as a mode of civic representation but also in its persistence up to the present day. i.e. Rather than seeing the planned and staged activities of the contemporary Feast of San Giovanni as a historicist reconstruction presented for the delight of visitors, this thesis suggests that its continued re-enactment within the historic centre of Florence still has the capacity to articulate the civic order of the city to and for its contemporary citizens.

Within the thesis this overarching search for continuity is discussed in relation to a series of smaller studies of buildings which, while designed to support the main argument, have insights of their own. So, for example, the section on the Baptistery of San Giovanni suggests that the use of reflections in the font were important to the iconography of the medieval baptismal ceremony in Florence. Also, that the mosaics in the gallery of the baptistery offer the first pictorial representation of the civic governing body who, in this critical setting, were given equal status as the cathedral. Both these factors are interesting in themselves but they also contribute to the larger argument relating to the role the baptistery played in the transition from a feudal/Sacramental order to a communal/civic one. In relation to the development of other civic buildings in the city—such as the Bargello and the Palazzo Vecchio—the study suggests that the evolution of the staircases and thresholds within these buildings occurred as a part of the increasing court ceremonial of the Commune and the Duchy, and that these developments indicate a strong medieval influence on the

emerging form of the Renaissance palazzo as well as on the continuing significance of festival to civic order.

In the end, the aim of the thesis is to argue that the current festival of San Giovanni, including the architecture that continues to accommodate it, has real value to the contemporary city beyond its purely historical significance.

## Chapter 1 –Research Questions and Methodology

### Introduction

Close to mid-summer every year on the 24<sup>th</sup> June in Florence locals gather in the historic centre of the city together with visiting dignitaries and tourists to celebrate the Feast of San Giovanni Battista, the city's patron saint.<sup>1</sup> Beginning at eight in the morning and ending well into the night these public and private festivities incorporate liturgical masses, processions, parades, elaborate costumes, historic weapons, drummers, flags and banners (*palia*), tributes, games, banquets and fireworks, all within a setting framed by the architecture and the city. These celebrations, like much of the architectural setting, are not new and it is likely that a feast would have occurred in the city on this day since its late Roman Republican foundation. By the thirteenth century chronicles described the festival in relation to the emerging civic identity of the city and, therefore, the festival as a whole— tied to the evolving history of the region and the developing form of the city— creates an opportunity for re-evaluating aspects of the identity of the city in relation to its architecture. (See Feast of San Giovanni 2016 Booklets)

Although throughout the eight-hundred year history of the festival the exact nature and scale of the celebrations has changed in response to different political and social conditions, the scope of its embodiment has remained the same: it is an opportunity for the city to remind itself of its historical and its contemporary identity; to represent itself to itself, as well as to others; to celebrate its successes over the year; and, perhaps most importantly, to reveal, acknowledge and challenge its civic structure and the business of governance. Thus, the festival is never an event with only one narrative governed by one social group but a singular event with multiple narratives and many layers of meaning that together combine to make something that has value to (and for) the city as a whole. It is this process of representation—albeit with multiple narratives—particularly in relation to architecture and the spaces of city, that forms the main topic of this investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> San Giovanni Battista will be used in preference to the English name St John the Baptist throughout this thesis

Whilst recognition of the multivalency of a festival makes describing it challenging, it also creates demands on the parameters of the research itself in that no methodology that focusses too heavily on any particular political, sociological or historical bias (and at the expense of other issues) will succeed in identifying the possible extents—or horizon—of the festival as a whole and its relationship to the city. Even if it can be argued that using such methodologies—best suited for evaluating power and difference in society—could lead to a more complete understanding of the particular forces (political, sociological, religious, etc.) driving civic behaviour in the preparation and enactment of the festival, such research would always leave obscure the commonality of the event itself, and, more importantly, the ontological nature of the festive experience.

These particular characteristics of the festival—the part that binds the reveller to fellow revellers and, in this case, to the city itself—cannot be found in any narrative of difference and are even difficult to determine in research which tries to take account of difference in a meta-narrative of ‘competing discourses’.<sup>2</sup> In the end, understanding of this ‘communal’ aspect of the festival can only be approached through research which accepts the ontological nature of the situation itself. In such a discourse participation in a festival, on whatever level, is seen to incorporate forms of belonging and togetherness that are distinct from the mundane realities of behaviour and everyday social hierarchies (class, race, and religion etc). This is the case even if the planning for the event ignores such a distinction. For example, even a festival that appears to be a purely historicist reconstruction (like a pageant in period costume) can also manifest—often unintentionally—the ontological components that accompany all festival experience. Equally, events appropriated for partisan purposes (such as a political rally) and used to imply unanimous support, often bring with them challenges to such monocultures that are revealed by the festive experience itself.

What both of these examples suggest is that at the heart of a festival culture lies something that has a special relationship to the temporal experience of the

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<sup>2</sup> For such a meta-narrative see, for example, John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (University of Illinois, 2000), 5.

everyday world; and as a result, the festival creates an opportunity to reflect upon both. Recognition of this aspect of festival also demands that the method used to gather and evaluate material for the research must be sensitive to such realities. Broadly speaking this thesis uses mixed methods underpinned by modern hermeneutics as a means to uncover these elusive aspects of the festival, its form and its setting and will begin by introducing some themes specific to this approach. Following on from this, a brief description of each of the tools used to gather the research information is given.

### **1.1 Phenomenological Hermeneutics versus Method**

Many methods are used within the social sciences in order to focus attention on different aspects of history and continuity. However, built into many of these methods is a prejudice that leans towards the objective nature of experience. As Hans Georg Gadamer suggests, hermeneutics challenges this prejudice:

The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically not a problem of method at all. It is not concerned with a method of understanding, by means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigation like all other objects of experience. It is not concerned primarily with the amassing of ratified knowledge which satisfies the methodological ideal of science—yet is concerned, here too, with knowledge and truth. In understanding tradition not only are texts understood, but insights gained and truths acknowledged.<sup>3</sup>

In a study of festival, where experience, situation, and architecture are keenly intertwined, it could be argued that hermeneutics is an essential component of any enquiry intent on discovering insights and revealing some truths. Consequently, this investigation begins with a section on the nature of the hermeneutics of festival.

- **The Hermeneutics of Festival**

The anthropologist Victor Turner suggests that the shared aspect of festival can be explained by a hierarchy of three layers of engagement that relate to three degrees of detachment from normal social situations which he identifies as ‘separation’, ‘transition’ and ‘incorporation’. Firstly, everyone who witnesses the event is

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<sup>3</sup> Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. William Glen-Doepel (Sheed and Ward, 1979), xi.

'separated' into one community 'out of time';<sup>4</sup> and at the other end are the smallest subgroup of the hierarchy, the festival participants, who, in participating, deny their own identity and as a result are deemed to be 'incorporated'. In between these two states rest the remainder of the population who experience 'transition' — 'a sort of limbo which has few [...] of the attributes of either the preceding or subsequent profane social statuses or cultural states'.<sup>5</sup> Such a description, for Turner, was also applicable to the detachment experienced by a pilgrim where, in the act of the pilgrimage, a new community he labelled *communitas* emerged.<sup>6</sup> For Turner, this *communitas* was formed, revealed, and shaped by the event itself and was related to a state of being he called 'liminality' that emerged in a 'time out of time' characterised by Gadamer as a form of festival time:

It is in the nature, at least of periodic festivals, to be repeated. We call that the return of the festival. But the returning festival is neither another, nor the mere remembrance of the one that was originally celebrated. The originally sacral character of all festivals obviously excludes the kind of distinction that we know in the time-experience of the present; memory and expectation. The time experience of the festival is rather its celebration, a present time *sui generis*.<sup>7</sup>

In this scenario, the variety of experiences people encounter during the more ritualistic aspects of a festival are accounted for on an ontological level and tend to resist the identification of any individual with their normal social conditions:

... for Turner, so far from reflecting or reinforcing secular social structure, [such an event] is a liminal phenomenon which betokens the partial, if not complete, abrogation of that structure ... [and tends] towards *communitas*, a state of unmediated egalitarian association between individuals who are temporarily freed of the hierarchical secular roles and statuses which they bear in everyday life.<sup>8</sup>

In such an interpretation of Turner's theory, the ritual aspect is seen to become completely disassociated from the political or social conditions that may have contributed to the festival's creation in the first place. As a result of this particular

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<sup>4</sup> i.e. out of profane time which measures secular processes and routines.

<sup>5</sup> Victor Witter Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 24.

<sup>6</sup> For Turner, pilgrimage and festival had similar attributes in this regard.

<sup>7</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 110.

<sup>8</sup> John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (University of Illinois, 2000), 4.



interpretation of Turner, Eade and Sallnow dismiss Turner's theory as a discourse that relates more to a particular discourse *about* ritual rather than as an description of it.<sup>9</sup> In its place they offer another solution to this layered experience at the heart of festival suggesting that '... it is necessary to develop a view of pilgrimage not merely as a field of social relations but also as a *realm of competing discourses*.'<sup>10</sup> The problem with this theory is that it reduces (or completely ignores) the significance of the ontological aspect of festival, and in doing so reduces any interpretation that refers to such an ontological aspect as just one of many equal discourses when in principle it is completely different.

In the end, the apparent conflict between these two interpretations serves only to confuse the situation. It is clear that there is an ontological component to the experience of the festival, but one that is rooted in the conditions of the mundane experience, not separated from it. So, while viewed purely psychologically it could be argued that Turner's 'incorporation' (and the associated states of detachment) suggests a separation from the world out of which the actual conditions for the festival originally emerged, it would be a mistake to consider this detachment to be total or solipsistic. Both Turner's insistence on detachment, and Eade and Sallnow's response of perpetual engagement, cloud any real ontological description of the situation. After all, it is the very specific locations of events—from pilgrimage, through ritual to festival—that link the ontological conditions to the world from which any 'detachment' occurs. Hence, it is the spaces of the city that do much to maintain the continuity of the tradition—the ultimate or foundational reference for the time-out-of-time—even if the activities associated to it, or the political conditions that drive it, are subject to radical change. Consequently, in terms of the above ideas, it can be argued that it is the spatial component to both arguments that is under-developed and leads to this apparently unresolvable dichotomy.

In actuality, meaning within a festival is borne in the form of the event, its participants, its location, as well as the different aspects of temporality evident in

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<sup>9</sup> Eade and Sallnow, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Eade and Sallnow, 5.

the experience itself. Consequently, disclosing and interpreting the festival in its context can only be achieved through a method which can account for information which, though shared and defined, is not a fact, or a thing described by fact, but is, nevertheless, present in the experience of festival. Equally, any attempt at the analysis of a festival and its setting in the present is determined by the very experience we are trying to evaluate—linguistically, historically and spatially. Therefore, if the aim is to further understand the event through history then there are also issues of tradition and continuity that have to be addressed. As Gadamer says:

We are always within the situation, and to throw light on it is a task never entirely completed. This is also true of the ... situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition we are trying to understand.<sup>11</sup>

Purely empirical studies, therefore, can be problematic not only because the subtlety of much mediation utilised by pre-modern society is lost through the use of methods devised to measure and analyse a rational world, but also because such studies often tend to change the purpose and meaning of the event itself. As Voegelin states in relation to the state of much current thinking:

When the balance of openness and separateness is destroyed through the telescoping of myth and science ... the symbols of the myth become perverted into intra-mundane, illusionary objects, “given,” as if they were empirical data, to the cognitive and active functions of man; at the same time the separate, individual existence suffers an illusionary inflation because it absorbs into its form the more-than-human dimension. Man becomes anthropomorphic ... and revolution can abolish such evils as still exist.<sup>12</sup>

In the context of this study these comments have a twofold impact. First, along with the innate prejudices towards particular forms of data suggested by Voegelin above comes the belief that progress is synonymous with advances in reason and technology, and that, therefore, it is possible to chart the progress of society (or in this case a festival) towards a form of perfection.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, in the discipline of history such ‘telescoping’ results in the discrediting of any evidence offered by

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<sup>11</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269.

<sup>12</sup> Eric Voegelin, *Order and History 3: Plato and Aristotle* (London: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 187.

<sup>13</sup> Eric Voegelin, *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, ed. John H. Hallowell (Duke University Press, 1975), 84.

what Voegelin characterises as ‘myth’—i.e. any form of evidence not open to rational evaluation. Methods operating within such limited parameters not only believe they can successfully understand the world—much of which lies outside the frame they have constructed—but also that the cultural operations of the past that are valued in the study were subject to the same, or similar, aims as in the present. For example, such an approach has often resulted in the confusion of *perspectiva naturalis*—which was linked to the developments in medieval philosophy related to light and optics—with *perspectiva artificialis* or pictorial perspective.<sup>14</sup> As Vesely points out, these two were different, and the latter was initially only accessible as an ‘ideal’, later becoming the visual analogue of the much deeper idea related to perspectivity as a way of thinking that dominated ideas of space.<sup>15</sup> Trachtenberg’s work on Early Renaissance Florence, for example, falls into this trap.<sup>16</sup>

In reality the spaces of any city—but particularly late medieval Florence—tend to be much more multivalent, tied to fragments of culture creating what Vesely labels ‘communicative space’ rather than any one singular vision; ‘... like conventional perspectival space, communicative space generated by positive fragments has the capacity to hold together a plausible solution and a series of possible ones.<sup>17</sup> In other words urban space can accommodate a festival, a mundane activity, or one more associated to ritual, either at the same time (or interchangeably) and it continually carries the possibility of the presence of all three. Thus, any attempt at evaluating the continuity of festival meaning brings with it the need to recognise the relationship between this multivalency of intention, experience, and interpretation that exists within a shared tradition in a shared territory.

One of the first people to begin to question this aspect of historical social analysis was Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) who, in his work on the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*), suggested that if man is understood as a part of nature

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<sup>14</sup> Also known as *costruzione legittima*

<sup>15</sup> Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: The MIT Press, 2006), 112.

<sup>16</sup> Marvin Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye: Urbanism, Art, and Power in Early Modern Florence* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, 349.

(rather than outside of it as the scientific method would imply) he is also ‘... determined by nature, which embraces the sparse, sporadic mental processes’ and thus places him closer to the ‘great text of the physical world’.<sup>18</sup> Such a view allowed Dilthey to argue for a singular interpretation of experience in a shared natural world. However, the problem with such a proposition was that unlike other contemporary methods that developed multiple viewpoints as a way of understanding, this process argued for a single explanation; ‘it expresses a unity of significance that is expressed in all parts’<sup>19</sup> when in fact no such continuity is experienced (even though it may be possible to articulate something like it after the event). This aporia emerged from Dilthey’s work because, following Schleiermacher,<sup>20</sup> his main focus was on rediscovering original meaning in history through a recognition of the significance of the life-world. Such a process went some way to create conditions favourable to the evaluation of festival in the context of the ‘pre-modern’ culture but because it was too focused on recovering the original meaning such research tended not to evaluate the experience in a way that could then be used to compare with the present; past and present forms of the festival would, therefore, in such a study, remain at least partially irreconcilable. Only in phenomenological hermeneutics, where the ontological nature of the festival is recognised as fundamental to the experience, can these problems be properly addressed and discussions of continuity considered. Thus, this thesis is not a ‘history’ in the traditional sense; it uses history, as well as other disciplines, but the aim is not to create a new history of the city, rather to understand the present historically. This is characterised as *Geschichtlichkeit* by Gadamer and Dilthey, translated as either ‘historicity’ or ‘historicality’.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey, *Dilthey Selected Writings*, ed. H. Rickman (Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 172.

<sup>19</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 197. Gadamer argues that because Dilthey used Kant’s categories as a foundation for his particular hermeneutics he remained tied to the idea of a universal understanding per se—hence the accusation of his romanticism.

<sup>20</sup> Gadamer, 168.

<sup>21</sup> Historicity in Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. or ‘historicality’ Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Northwestern University Press, 1969), 114. I will use historicity.

- **Phenomenological Hermeneutics in the context of festival**

Although much of the philosophical writing on phenomenological hermeneutics relates to the use of language it is clear that the main issues also apply to spatial relationships and more particularly to the idea of the ‘poetic’ nature of the creative act itself. There are numerous contemporary philosophers who have written on this (most notably Heidegger,<sup>22</sup> Gadamer,<sup>23</sup> Bachelard,<sup>24</sup> and Merleau-Ponty<sup>25</sup> to name but a few), but the discourse itself can be traced back to Plato who, in the *Symposium*, links creativity in language with all other forms of making when he suggests that ‘every kind of artistic creation is poetry’.<sup>26</sup> Aristotle proposes something similar in his *Poetics* when he defines the work of art as ‘mimesis of praxis’—as a representation of people doing or experiencing something.<sup>27</sup> The significance of both these statements is that for Aristotle and for Plato the creative act exists as a form of re-enactment and, seen in this way, the results of such an act can never be fully comprehended if they are considered only as a material ‘object’; i.e. things should always be understood as something that continues to be re-created through a situation. In the repetitive and creative—recreative—experience inherent to festival such conditions are impossible to ignore, but the point raised by Plato and Aristotle is that such creativity is inherent to most experience. That is not to say that a thing only exists if engaged in this process; a direct experience of an object can happen in purely mundane terms without recourse to any symbolic or situated values. However, the separation of the object from the situation does not just artificially limit the investigation, it creates something completely different, and in such a mundane process the cultural meaning over time will not necessarily be revealed at all. Consequently, Heidegger argues that meaning is only revealed through creative engagement with the world and that acknowledgment of this more creative aspect of the world is not a matter of choice but of necessity:

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<sup>22</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 1978). Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Harper & Row, 1975).

<sup>23</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method. Truth and Method*; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>24</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, New edition edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

<sup>25</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*, trans. Hugh J. Silverman, 1 edition (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1979). Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1 edition (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, 204b

<sup>27</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450b3-4

Making is, in Greek *poiesis* ... [however] ... this does not mean, though, that the poetic is merely an ornament and bonus added to dwelling. Nor does the poetic character of dwelling mean merely that the poetic turns up in some way or another in all dwelling. Rather, the phrase “poetically man dwells” says: poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the phenomenological ‘creative’ understanding of the festival in its various historical guises becomes the significant factor in allowing for any aspect of continuity to emerge; the themes present in the event seen as a re-presentation of another event (mimesis of praxis) are the grounds for the event itself—they underpin the form of the event, not the other way around (i.e. the form is not created and meaning then appended, the meaning comes first). Within such an interpretation there are still many different possible accounts of the event but the point of the evaluation is to discover the shared, deep latent qualities rather than concentrate on the surface differences. Such is the aim of the core chapters 2, 3 and 4 which describe the various settings for the festival in relation to three key moments in the history of the city (Roman, Feudal, and Communal).

However, even given care in rendering accounts of festival locations and events it is possible that the application of such a process could become an exercise in the interpretation of historical (or historiographical) knowledge resulting in simple historicist descriptions or representations. In such cases knowledge is presented as the precondition for authentic engagement—the more you know, the more affiliation you appear to have with the events. But this is only partially the case. In the same way that meaning offered by the contemporary festival is mediated through experience in the present (through issues of place, praxis, and history) and described through contemporary language, so the festival of the past can be understood through a similar process. Therefore, within a phenomenological investigation, historical meaning (or value) has some currency in the present even though it is clear that it is not exactly the same as the knowledge of it inherited from history. That is to say that in such a research context the feast cannot be seen purely as a historicist reproduction of an event that is only relevant in its ‘form’, but, that the event relates to an understanding of history in terms what Gadamer

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<sup>28</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 215.

calls 'effective historical consciousness'.<sup>29</sup> In such an evaluation the festival in the past and the festival in the present combine to create a broader horizon of understanding. The process of revealing and utilising this aspect of 'consciousness' is, for Gadamer, necessary in order that the symbolic horizons open to festive experience can be truly evaluated:

A person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. Contrariwise, to have an horizon means not to be limited to what is nearest, but to be able to see beyond it. A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within his horizon, as near or far, great or small.<sup>30</sup>

Gadamer, argues that a 'horizon' has a temporal as well as a spatial component but, although it is potentially open to each individual equally in relation to their 'Being', it is limited by cultural prejudices that often contribute to the framing of any particular activity in any one society.<sup>31</sup> So although the horizon of human understanding is ultimately limited only by the limits of being, it is the prejudices of tradition and culture that create the most tangible 'limits' to most attempts at understanding. This aspect of the discourse will become more evident as the argument develops but it too is not without difficulties. On this basis, meaning always involves continuity, or difference within continuity.

This problem of tradition is also raised by Arendt, in that where a culture operates within a tradition that is itself being questioned through multicultural valencies, the understanding of tradition as a singular viewpoint becomes difficult. For Arendt:

Tradition transforms truth into wisdom, and wisdom is the consistence of transferable truth. In other words, even if truth should appear in our world, it could not lead to wisdom, because it would no longer have the characteristics which it could acquire only through universal recognition of its authority.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, it is the multivalency of the festival—the fact that in its enactment it has the capacity to operate on many different levels to various (sometimes conflicting) constituencies—that offers opportunities to challenge such singular

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<sup>29</sup> *Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein* (Gadamer 1979: 267 ff.).

<sup>30</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269.

<sup>31</sup> Gadamer, 238ff.

<sup>32</sup> Hannah Arendt, Introduction to *Illuminations*, Walter Benjamin, p 45

representations of political authority dressed up as tradition; in fact, moments in the history of the feast indicate that attempts at appropriating festivals can only ever be partial and the festivals themselves appear to offer resistance to such coercion. Even the most specific historical enactment sits within a culture that has a defined set of conditions for representation and allows for other accompanying narratives, irrespective of how insignificant they may appear to the major protagonists. No matter how politically, socially, spatially and temporally distinct these narratives are they are always built off the particular traditions of the city and, as a consequence, reveal the primary conditions of festivity which reflect, to some degree, the conditions of order in the governance of the city. This thesis argues that architecture can be seen to play a significant part in this process.

- **Civic Governance: Natural State and Agon**

In order to describe aspects of the continuity of the festival of San Giovanni and its consequences to the contemporary city it is also necessary to indicate what was the context for the 'natural' conditions of freedom present in north Italian state at the time. The term 'natural' here refers to North, Wallis and Weingast's definitions of 'natural states' and 'open access states':

[In a natural state] ... personal relationships, who one is and who one knows, form the basis for social organization and constitute the arena for individual action ... Natural states limit the ability of individuals to form organizations ... [in] *open access orders* ... personal relationships still matter, but impersonal categories of individuals, often called citizens, interact over wide areas of social behaviour with no need to be cognizant of the individual identity of their partners.<sup>33</sup>

Florence, at the time of the development of the Feast of San Giovanni was a 'natural state', within which, the principal social group was the family. These families then combined (with shifting alliances and feuds) to form the emerging institutions of the commune supported by ceremonies and rituals designed to reveal the broader horizon of each enterprise. From 1343-1480 during the period Trexler calls the '*classical period of Florentine feste*',<sup>34</sup> it is clear that each of the ruling regimes

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<sup>33</sup> Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2.

<sup>34</sup> Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Cornell University Press, 1991), 216.



(communal, oligarchic and autocratic) formed out of these family allegiances used the iconography of the various feasts of Florence to build a strong representational power base but also to curry favour within the populace through spectacle, performance, and ritual. Each different regime adapted aspects of the feasts to best represent their power, prosperity, and success. However, within this broad festal activity were embedded tensions, conflicts, and resolutions that mirrored aspects of the day-to-day reality of city life. Trade, business, finance, marriages, allegiances, arguments and games, all contain an element of conflict, resolution and compromise which is also inherent to events incorporated within the structure of the festival. Therefore, it can be argued that the full spectrum of events offered by the feast discussed here created a frame in which the populace could re-enact mimetically and metaphorically the everyday 'agon' of the city.

The term *agon* derives from the classical Greek word meaning 'struggle' or 'contest' often used particularly in relation to sport or debate. However, it also has themes related to the foundation and order of the Greek Polis and is underpinned by ideas of representation and contest acted out in the theatre, the gymnasium and, politically, in the agora:

Agonism implies a deep respect and concern for the other; indeed, the Greek *agon* refers most directly to an athletic contest oriented not merely toward victory or defeat, but emphasizing the importance of the struggle itself—a struggle that cannot exist without the opponent. Victory through forfeit or default, or over an unworthy opponent, comes up short compared to a defeat at the hands of a worthy opponent—a defeat that still brings honor. An agonistic discourse will therefore be one marked not merely by conflict but just as importantly, by mutual admiration...<sup>35</sup>

The *agon*, therefore, is an intrinsic part of a 'natural state' in which 'one fights only an opponent who is worthy of it'.<sup>36</sup> In more recent political theory the term *agon* is used to describe the tension, conflict and negotiation at the centre of all political order that seeks to maintain its legitimacy through conflict and constant action. For example, Habermas suggests that:

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<sup>35</sup> Samuel Chambers, 'Language and Politics Agonistic Discourse in The West Wing', *CTheory.Net*, no. a098a (12 November 2001), <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=317>.

<sup>36</sup> Krzysztof Ulanowski, *The Religious Aspects of War in the Ancient Near East, Greece, and Rome: Ancient Warfare Series* (BRILL, 2016), 68.

Hannah Arendt's principle philosophical work *The Human Condition* serves to systematically renew the Aristotelian concept of 'praxis' in so far as she contends that power is built off the agon of words and deeds which together, with the support of the populace, contribute to the legitimisation of rule.<sup>37</sup>

So, for example, by the time the Medici were elevated to the Dukedom in the mid sixteenth century in Florence, many of the city's festivals were more designed to placate the city and reinforce the aristocratic order rather than display the reconciliation of conflict embedded in the structure and make-up of the civic governance. Arendt might have characterised this shift as a partial loss of power for the people of the city:

Power is actualised only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities. Power is what keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearance between acting and speaking men, in existence.<sup>38</sup>

The association implied here by Arendt that any reduction to the ethical aspects of the representational field in the public realm is actually a loss of power seems peculiar when viewed in the light of the spectacles of power created by the totalitarian governments of the twentieth century. But Arendt distinguishes power—which is only evident in the relationships between people and hence volatile—from strength which can be the manifestation of an individual. It is the former that is both the most dangerous and the most important factor of the creation and wellbeing of the city. The implied loss of such a condition at the heart of her statement has an equivalence in relation to the reduction of representational potential within a feast from a creative 'space of appearance' into something less interactive and ontologically undifferentiated (something more historicist and pictorial) and can be, to a certain extent, linked with the growth of use of perspective in the evolution of Renaissance art and architecture mentioned earlier.

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<sup>37</sup> Jürgen Habermas, 'Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power', trans. Thomas McCarthy, *Social Research* 44, no. 1 (1977): 7. For other uses of Agon see Chantal Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?', *Social Research* 66, no. 3 (1999): 745–58.

<sup>38</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition: Second Edition* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 200.

In truth both media were subject to the same loss of meaning, particularly after the Enlightenment. However, it would be a mistake to apportion blame on the growing primacy of visual culture and perspectivism on the decline in understanding of the breadth and possibilities of festal practice. Or to suggest that the substitution was total. As has already been mentioned, the ontological nature of festive experience resists such takeovers. In the end the growth of a limited form of perspectivism can certainly be equated with the gradual decline in some positive aspects of festive representation but in this process, it will be argued, a loss of the idea of perspectivity also occurs; a loss which also has affected the way architecture is seen more in relation to its form than in relation to its deep meaning that is evident in, and through, time.

This loss of meaning—or at least the misplacement of a deeper relationship between architecture and festival—has occurred, in part, through the silence of many of the chroniclers and historians on the matter. Continuity of the form of the festival and its participants can be fairly taken from most of the accounts, but the architectural component is often absent even though much of the continuity of ‘place’ can be still be ascertained from the persistence of some aspects of the urban fabric. Thus, if the priorities of the narrative form are taken at face value—such as in the historic reports of the event from Villani (c.1276-1348) onwards—it would suggest that the activities of the feast were more significant than their setting and, like many theatrical performances, transferable to a neutral ‘stage’ sited anywhere. In contrast to this, however, often when reportage is offered in relation to particular political rallies or religious processions, the architecture is seen as anything but neutral and is often tainted with the abuses of power,<sup>39</sup> or loss of it in Arendt’s sense, or acts of generosity or heroism, or other significance to civic history, perpetrated by the rulers or families who have built, and inhabit, the city. In reality, the status of architecture lies somewhere in between these two extremes; it is neither totally neutral nor totally defining. For example, even

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<sup>39</sup> For example on Nazi architecture see Karl Arndt, ‘Paul Ludwig Troost als Leitfigur der Nationalsozialistischen Repräsentationsarchitektur’, in *Bürokratie und Kult: Das Parteizentrum der NSDAP am Königsplatz in München. Geschichte Und Rezeption*, ed. Iris Lauterbach (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1995), 147. And for Italy see Dennis P. Doordan, *Building Modern Italy: Italian Architecture, 1914-1936* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), 129ff.

though one might recognise some echoes from the past, one does not act like or become a Nazi by walking through the Maifeld in Berlin; or become a Fascist by sitting in an office in the Casa del Fascio in Como. Equally, on the other hand, a festival in Rome signalling aspects of its heritage would be different if it took place by the Roman Forum or in the Piazza John F. Kennedy outside the Palazzo dei Congressi in Esposizione Universale Roma (EUR).

The enactment of a festival, therefore, is a symbolic representation of the political and social relationships that are played out within the everyday agon of civic life. In order to begin to describe this transformation of the understanding of representation within the culture of festival each of the core chapters will also describe different modes of order in relation to festival that articulate this continuing shift in symbolisation. According to Voegelin this moves from representation that operates more as an analogue of cosmos and order, most often articulated through myth, to one that is an analogy of human existence more attuned to being, in Christianity represented as the *logos*.<sup>40</sup> It is this shift, that took place over centuries, that allows for the engagement of history in the process of ontological understanding outlined already:

Only when man advances from the truth of cosmic-divine order to the differentiated experience of transcendent-divine order, does the order of human existence in society acquire the luminosity of conscious historical form.<sup>41</sup>

However, these two states are not totally distinct, they are both present throughout history—it is their proportions that change—and, with the re-emergence of Greek texts and the subsequent scholarship built off this work in the twelfth and thirteenth century, many of the ideas from both traditions began to re-engage. Therefore, in the same way that the layering of the core chapters offer a temporal progression of order, these themes associate the development in relation to man's consciousness of 'his humanity in participatory tension toward the divine

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<sup>40</sup> This shift began with Revelation in the Ancient Near East and the emergence of philosophy in the Greek Polis. Eric Voegelin, *Order and History 1: Israel and Revelation* (Louisiana State University Press, 1956), 5. '

<sup>41</sup> Eric Voegelin, *Order and History 2: The World of the Polis* (Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 3.

ground'.<sup>42</sup> As the narrative of these themes progresses it will be argued that the more complex the understanding of this tension within culture became, the tendency increased for symbolisation to abolish the previous understanding of the cosmos within which the experience occurred—resulting, for example in the de-divinising of nature (and also, over time, the *studia humanitatis*) which was then left open to be explored by science in such a way that important aspects of continuity were ignored. This will be argued on the basis that this increasing complexity of the ' ... differentiation of existential truth does not abolish the cosmos in which the event occurs ...'<sup>43</sup> or continues to occur.

## 1.2. Research tools

- **Observations, Maps,<sup>44</sup> and Plans**

General observations undertaken in the city and on the feast day itself are critical for the research as it is through the narrative that appeared in these observations that the critical questions pertaining to the topic emerged. Often contemporary social and political interpretations of such events suggest they are superficial spectacles offered for tourists, or, because of the presence of the mayor and the cardinal, are of more civic value. In both cases the picture painted by the investigator prioritises the particular aspects of the feast that support their initial prejudice and, as a consequence, such evaluations tend to neutralise much of the contested territory of the city in relation to the protagonists of the first order who are seen to supply all meaning. Then, equally inevitably, meaning itself becomes cast as 'knowledge of the event' (through custom, identity, history, or politics) with the implication that greater knowledge leads to greater authenticity of experience. Whereas in reality, the wearing of historical costume during participation in the events does not necessarily reduce the authenticity of the experience (ask a participant in the Calcio Storico), nor does it increase or decrease the wearer's knowledge. Now, like in the past, the event is always a combination of these and other factors continually acting in harmony and opposition within the unfolding of the event in the urban realm.

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<sup>42</sup> Eric Voegelin, *Order and History 4: The Ecumenic Age* (Louisiana State University Press, 1956), 8.

<sup>43</sup> Voegelin, 8.

<sup>44</sup> For a full list of the books used in the development of the Adobe Illustrator file please see the separate bibliography.

Therefore, the observations of the festival are supported by photos which demonstrate the various relationships that develop over the day. This rapportage is supplemented by maps that clarify some of the relationships observed (for example in relation to thresholds or juxtapositions of rooms to other rooms or piazza). These observations are the basis upon which the research began and to which the research returns at the end. In between these chapters it is the aim of the thesis to reveal the various layers of historicity that are still active within the contemporary setting, whether consciously or not, and how these factors contribute to the continuing life of the city for everyone.

For the maps in the thesis, the base used is from Fanelli's 1973 *Firenze architettura e città*<sup>45</sup> which comprises the contemporary block plan as a base but only articulates those which can be traced back to the fourteenth century. As such, although Brunelleschi's Duomo is present, along with the Piazza Signoria and the Palazzo Vecchio (both completed in the fourteenth century) the Piazza Repubblica is only half its current size as it was expanded in the nineteenth century. From this base map various stages have been developed including the structure of the city prior to the building of Santa Maria della Fiore and the Palazzo Vecchio and the Piazza Signoria. Also, this base has been used to map the remnants of the Roman city blocks and roads that were identifiable from reconstructions.<sup>46</sup> Thus the map shown of the Roman city is not a hypothetical reconstruction of the city, but a record of the traces of the particular city blocks that have survived—each block of the Roman city slightly distorted but recognisable (Map 2.1). Additionally, when the hypothetical regulating lines of the setting out geometry of the Roman colony suggested by Watts are shown, (Map 2.2)<sup>47</sup> the correlation between supposed geometrical order and the real significance identified by preservation of the particular lines, can be assessed.

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<sup>45</sup> Giovanni Fanelli, *Firenze, architettura e città* (Mandragora, 2002).

<sup>46</sup> For example C Hardie, 'The Origin and Plan of Roman Florence', *Journal of Roman Studies* 55, 1965., 1965.

<sup>47</sup> Carol Martin Watts, 'The Geometry of the Master Plan of Roman Florence and Its Surroundings', in *Architecture and Mathematics from Antiquity to the Future*, ed. Michael J. Ostwald and Kim Williams (ebook: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 177–88.

For the later developments the various parts of the city were then traced in relation to the various city walls from different periods. Although the location of parts of some of these defences are not absolutely clear, on the whole a picture emerges of a city that remained defined by the Roman boundaries until the first set of Commune walls were constructed in the twelfth century. These walls, as well as those of the second Commune, have been used to define the boundaries of the city at any given time even though it is clear that there would have been some extra-mural settlements that would have formed the basis for later expansion. This is clear from the fact that some of these roads between the first and second set of commune walls follow the lines of the Roman centuriation which structured the plots on the land outside the earlier Roman boundary. The argument for ignoring these blocks until they are enclosed by a wall is that it is only within the walls of the city that the laws, customs and taxes of the city would have been implemented. These walls also defined the political boundaries at specific stages of the political growth of the city, and so these too are mapped (see maps 1.1-1.4). The initial *Sesti* of the first commune as well as the *Quartieri* of the second commune—further divided into the three *Gonfalons*—are important to the ceremonial form of the city as each of these groups represented a particular community responsible for providing troops to defend the Commune in times of threat.

Maps of the city showing the walls and the districts of the city begin to indicate the growth and organisation of the city at particular times and are supplemented with more detail regarding buildings of the city. On top of the Roman archaeological remains that form a part of the early maps, other buildings are shown with indications of their first documentary reference.

Davidsohn was the first scholar to provide such a map, which included churches, hospitals, and some significant family dwellings.<sup>48</sup> This map has been reproduced here (Map 2.3). However, much work has been undertaken since this initial attempt and so further documentary and archaeological evidence has been used to correct and expand these early findings. This has allowed further refinement to his

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<sup>48</sup> Robert Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze: le origini* (Firenze: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2009).

initial categories but also supported the addition of civic buildings (including the locations of all the guild houses) as a further category. This information has been entered into the overall document and then placed into revised groupings that phase the growth of the city approximately every one hundred years. As such, the growth in number and location of the city churches (both inside and outside the city walls), as well as the hospitals and civic structures, can be traced in relation to the expansion of the city.

The houses of the most important families of the city have also been traced. Davidsohn began this task but it has been further added to here by more contemporary authors using up to date information. The locations of these family dwellings enable the migration of one family across (or out of) the city to be traced, but it also allows for particular churches to be linked spatially to dwellings based on the allocation of family chapels throughout the city.

These maps, extracted from the file that has over 1,100 layers, also include the paths of the various processions for marriages and feasts, as well as the urban interventions made in the thirteenth century and the general locations of the various occupations within the city. This work has resulted in a tool used throughout the thesis to indicate aspects of the growth, hierarchy, and form of the city through the centuries (including critical locative relationships) that reveal spatial continuities and discontinuities.

- **Primary Literature**<sup>49</sup>

Because of the extensive publication of Florentine chronicles and diaries of from the thirteenth century onwards, for this thesis the need for extensive archival work was less essential. Nevertheless, the State Archives of Florence (Archivio di Stato) were used to check and investigate documents cited elsewhere which allowed for the corroboration of dates and events from original sources.

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<sup>49</sup> The dates of these figures are included in Table 1 alongside critical events in history and in the construction and development of Florence.



A selection of the primary chroniclers and literary figures used, are listed below:

- **Bruno Latini** (1220-1294)
- **Ricordiano Malespini** (c.1220-1290) Chronicle to 1281, then continued to 1286 by his grandson.
- **Salimbene di Adam** (1221-1290) wrote his *Chronica* from 1282-1290
- **Dino Compagni** (1255-1324) (political diarist) *Chronica* 1280-1312
- **Dante Alighieri** (1265-1321) wrote the *Divine Comedy* 1308-21
- **Giovanni Villani** (1276-1348) *Nuova Chronica* written 1300-48
- **Boccaccio** (1313-1375) wrote the *Decameron* 1353
- **Buonaccorso Pitti** (diarist) (1354-1432)
- **Gregorio (Goro) Dati** (diarist) (1362-1445)
- **Leonardo Bruni** (1370-1444) *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis* 1401
- **Luca Landucci** (diarist) (1436-1516) wrote his diary from 1450 onwards until his death

The works of all of these writers have value in themselves but, if the chronicle was believed to be true account of the history of the city, then it is also significant document in relation to the historiography of the city. What is important is that any history that can be seen to interact with the day-to-day representation of the city to itself—whether myth, legend, fabrication or exaggeration—is acknowledged.

The chronicle with the most impact upon the developing identity of the city appears to be Giovanni Villani's *Cronica* which he began to write in 1300,<sup>50</sup> issuing it in its final form around 1333-41.<sup>51</sup> Current scholarship suggests that the main sources for this were; the *Gesta Florentinorum*,<sup>52</sup> the *Chronica de origine civitatis* (also known as the *Libro Fiesolano*),<sup>53</sup> and Bruno Latini's *Li Livres di Trésor*<sup>54</sup> for

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<sup>50</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk.8. Ch. 36. In this section he refers to works 'written by Virgil, and by Sallust, and by Lucan, and Titus Livius, and Valerius, and Paulus Orosius, and other masters of history.'

<sup>51</sup> Louis Green, *Chronicle into History: An Essay on the Interpretation of History in Florentine Fourteenth-Century Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 166.

<sup>52</sup> Reconstructed by Otto Hartwig from various secondary sources in Otto Hartwig, *Quellen und Forschungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Stadt Florenz* (Marburg: Elwert, 1875). Green, 155.

<sup>53</sup> Written sometime before 1231, it existed in Villani's time in Latin and vernacular forms and was used by him for much history directly relating to Florence. See Pietro Santini, *Quesiti e ricerche di storiografia fiorentina* (Florence: B. Seeber, 1903).

some other local issues,<sup>55</sup> until he begins to write accounts of events occurring in his own time.<sup>56</sup>

Accounts of particular significant moments in the history of Florence in Villani's Chronicle from the fourteenth century on are likely to have come from men still alive who remembered the events but, as a chronicler and not a historian, Villani was not overly concerned with supplying a list of his sources. Certainly, for the earlier periods Villani's work appears to have become the foundation upon which many later chronicles were based, but it must also be considered possible that they were similar because they plundered similar sources to Villani. For example, similarities in the Chronicle to Dante's *Divine Comedy* have led some to suggest that Villani used Dante's great poem as source for some aspects of the history, whereas it is more likely that they both relied upon the same sources.<sup>57</sup> As a consequence of the significance of these two early documents, myths and legends from the foundation of Florence described by Villani became the common view of the city's history throughout much of the Renaissance.

Nevertheless, even before this re-evaluation of the city's Roman heritage many of the Roman texts available to the scholars of the city—such as Virgil's *Aeneid*—were used to develop ways to articulate the relationship between pragmatic and paradigmatic history; for example, Dante's use of Virgil as his guide to the underworld in the *Divine Comedy*. Consequently, even though the authenticity of the thirteenth-century Malespini Chronicle<sup>58</sup> has been brought into question,<sup>59</sup> the

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<sup>54</sup> Brunetto Latini, *Li livres dou tresor* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1863). Latini was a Guelph supporter and wrote this early encyclopaedia while in exile in France 1261-68 following the battle of Montaperti in 1260.

<sup>55</sup> An early chronicle, once attributed to Bruno Latini but now considered anonymous is where Villani appears to have found information on the origins of the Guelph Ghibelline feud. Green, *Chronicle into History*, 158.

<sup>56</sup> In Villani's Chronicle, the sections relating to Florence's history from its foundation to the eleventh century are from the *Chronica de origine civitatis*, and the period from around 1080 to 1278 from the *Gesta Florentinorum*.

<sup>57</sup> Dante's father died around 1281-83 (when Dante was 16-18 years old) and Bruno Latini became his guardian. As such, Latini would certainly have had opportunities to influence Dante's version of Florentine history.

<sup>58</sup> Ricordano Malespini, *Storia fiorentina: dall' edificazione di Firenze fino al 1282* (Livorno: G. Masi, 1830). It is now thought to have been written sometime in the fourteenth century.

<sup>59</sup> Charles T. Davis, 'The Malespini Question', in *Studi Medievali*, vol. 10, 3 (Spoleto, 1969), 215-54.

fact that it has influenced Florentine attitudes to their own history makes it a credible source for this study.

Dante and Boccaccio are included in the list for two main reasons. First because they both wrote in the vernacular tongue and so their work contributed significantly to developing ideas of Florentine identity—both at the time and for many generations to come—and secondly because their work offers insights into the values and actions of the society of the time; Dante for his fictionalisation of significant contemporary events; and Boccaccio for his fictionalised representation of the morality (or lack of it) of fourteenth-century Florence. Both writers recognised the changes taking place within the social organisation of cities—particularly in relation to sin, virtue, appearance, status and influence—but for both men change also appeared secondary in the face of death.<sup>60</sup> Consequently both works are less historical but not without history.

Dino Compagni,<sup>61</sup> Buonaccorso Pitti, Giorgio Dati,<sup>62</sup> and Luca Landucci,<sup>63</sup> all recount events that occurred in their own lifetime and do not attempt a broader history of the city. Nevertheless, there are differences in these works. Landucci (an apothecary), Pitti (a general trader) and Dati (a silk merchant), give accounts of their daily business at home and abroad whereas Compagni offers a more political discourse assessing the split between the black and the white factions of the Guelph party in the early fourteenth century that led to Dante's exile in 1302. Although this type of diary was not uncommon in Florence (over one hundred survive) '... these Tuscan memoirs constitute one of the largest collections of private diaries in Europe before the French began to develop the form in the

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<sup>60</sup> The Decameron is set in the country while plague raged in the city and Dante's journey is into the underworld following death.

<sup>61</sup> Dino Compagni, *The Chronicle of Dino Compagni / Translated by Else C. M. Benecke and A.G. Ferrers Howell*, ed. A. G. Ferrers Howell, trans. Else C. M. Benecke (London: Dent, 1906).

<sup>62</sup> Gene Brucker, ed., *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*, trans. Julia Martines (Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Pr Inc, 1991).

<sup>63</sup> Luca Landucci, *Diario fiorentino dal 1450 al 1516*, ed. Jodoco Del Badia (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, 1883).

sixteenth century.<sup>64</sup> It appears that one of the reasons for this was that the form of the account books of the Florentine merchants lent itself to the diary format, but also that education within the Commune emphasised group action over the individual. Whatever the cause, these accounts make it clear that the honour of the commune and of Florence was built on sentiments related to the family, and consequently the politics and fortune of the city were not immune to personal vendettas.

Luca Landucci is particularly useful as a record because of his account of the period of rule of Savonarola.<sup>65</sup> Landucci's description of the crowd's reaction in 1498, and his explanation of their expectations reveals that, even though there was already a substantial increase in the sophistication of representation built upon late medieval foundations,<sup>66</sup> popular attitudes to Christianity were still relatively superstitious—even if the fifteen year old Martin Luther was only two decades away from initiating the Reformation with his 95 theses. (see Table 1)

The four-year Republic under Savonarola was also a critical period in the education of Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527). His progress in the institutions of Florence during this period was sufficient that in 1498, at the age of twenty-nine, he became Secretary to the Second Chancery in Florence, a position he held until his own exile in 1512 following the return of the Medici.<sup>67</sup> His role during this fourteen year period extended well beyond the offices within Florence itself to time spent as Florentine ambassador to the brutal court of the Duke of Valentinois, Cesare Borgia (1475/6-1507) and his father Pope Alexander VI—as well as time at

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<sup>64</sup> Brucker, *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence*, 9. See also P. J. Jones, 'Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 24 (1956): 183–205.

<sup>65</sup> Stefano Ugo Baldassarri and Arielle Saiber, *Images of Quattrocento Florence: Selected Writings in Literature, History and Art* (Yale University Press, 2000), 281.

<sup>66</sup> For example; the Damilas Press began in Florence in 1471; Brunelleschi had been dead for around fifty years, and Alberti dead for around 30; Ghirlandaio (1449-1494) had only recently died; Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and Michelangelo (1475-1564) were both active; Marsillio Ficino (1433-1499) published the complete works of Plato in Latin in 1491.

<sup>67</sup> The Medici had been exiled from the city by Savonarola in 1494 when he established a new Republic. Even though he was deposed in 1498, the city, under the protection of the French Monarchy, continued to operate as a republic until the French too retreated in 1512. Following the return of the Medici, Machiavelli, along with other officials who had administered the republic were, in turn, exiled.

the equally cruel French and Spanish courts—and influenced his major work, *the Prince*,<sup>68</sup> written in the first year of his exile. For example, his suggestion that there is no point discussing ‘the proper form of government unless and until a state could adequately defend itself’ emerges from his experience of courts built on conflict rather than concord,<sup>69</sup> and led him, in 1506, to advise the Gonfaloniere of Justice, Piero Soderini (1440-1522), to replace mercenaries as the main protectors of the city with a ‘National Militia’ recreated through a return to the ‘Republican Draft’.<sup>70</sup> Other fifteenth-century scholars were employed by patrons to undertake research and stock the newly built libraries of the city as a way of bolstering the city’s importance within the region, and consequently their works have a different relationship to the city.<sup>71</sup>

Leon Battista Alberti’s *I Libri Della Famiglia*<sup>72</sup> is very useful for the relationship between the public and private thresholds within the fifteenth century house.<sup>73</sup> Of the four books in this treatise the first three were written sometime before 1434 and the last around 1437. The early books recount a courtly dialogue on family life, morality, marriage, and virtue discussed by close acquaintances around the death bed of Alberti’s father, with occasional interruptions by the doctor. In Book IV these issues related to the family are extended to include broader themes related to governance outside the family and how to avoid enemies and exile. It opens with an old family servant (who was also a Jester) entering the dying man’s chamber.<sup>74</sup> References to classical texts and classical characters—all of whom featured in the

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<sup>68</sup> *The Prince* ‘*De Principatibus*’ was first published in 1513.

<sup>69</sup> Miles J. Unger, *Machiavelli: A Biography* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 79.

<sup>70</sup> Ferdinand Schevill, *History of Florence: From the Founding of the City through the Renaissance* (New York, N.Y: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1936), 465.

<sup>71</sup> As well as the Medici, Francesco Sassetti, amongst others, was interested in building a collection: ‘In his youth and Early manhood Sassetti can be shown to have made a collection of a rather miscellaneous nature. In the 1470s, apparently with the help and advice of [Bartolomeo] Fonzio, the collection was built up with a special care for the works of Cicero, for the Latin poets and historians, and for Greek Historians in Latin translation.’ Albinia de La Mare, ‘The Library of Francesco Sassetti’, in *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance: Essays in Honour of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. Cecil H. Clough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), 160.

<sup>72</sup> Translated in to English as *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. Watkins, Renee Neu (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1969).

<sup>73</sup> Alberti is more known for his other, mostly later written works: *Della Pittura* written in the vernacular in 1435, and later with more technical information for scholars in Latin as *De Pictura* (1439-41); *De re Aedificatoria* (On Architecture) of 1452; and *de Statua* of 1462.

<sup>74</sup> Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, 246.

story of the foundation of the city—litter the text, offering moral grounds and wise guidance for the fifteenth-century trader, but also advice on issues related to the growing bourgeois politics of Florence:

...I think, Piero, that riches indeed help make a man more popular with other men, especially with princes. Whether by nature or custom, they almost all seem to appreciate only those who can at some time further their own wishes or needs. Princes, moreover ... rarely experience desires that are not self-indulgent and shameful. Often they need to make use of their citizens' wealth and of that of every propertied and rich person whom they count as a friend. Further, the signs of riches are more easily discerned at first than those of virtue, especially by princes who find it harder to recognize virtue than fortune since it is in much shorter supply around them.<sup>75</sup>

Again here, like in the later *Discourses* of Machiavelli, there is a recognition of some forms of rulership and their value—or not—to civic society.

- **Secondary Literature**

Understandably, over the years, there have been many works on Florence, particularly from the nineteenth century on, that have gathered and translated key documents pertaining to the history and development of the city and Commune; most notably by Hartwig (1875),<sup>76</sup> Guasti (1884),<sup>77</sup> Davidsohn (1896),<sup>78</sup> and Santini (1903).<sup>79</sup> These histories have since been added to by works from the twentieth century that have augmented the history of the region and also added more insights into the political and social aspects of the city; notably by Gene Brucker (1967);<sup>80</sup> Lauro Martines (1963, 1988, 2008),<sup>81</sup> John Hale (1983);<sup>82</sup> and more recently John Najemy (2008).<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Alberti, 248.

<sup>76</sup> Otto Hartwig, *Quellen und Forschungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Stadt Florenz* (Marburg: Elwert, 1875).

<sup>77</sup> Cesare Guasti, *Le Feste Di S. Giovanni Batista in Firenze: Descritte in Prosa e in Rima Da Contemporanei* (Firenze: Giovanni Cirri, 1884).

<sup>78</sup> Robert Davidsohn, *Geschichte von Florenz*, vol. 1, 7 vols. (Berlin: Mittler, 1896).

<sup>79</sup> Santini, *Quesiti e ricerche di storiografia fiorentina*.

<sup>80</sup> Gene Adam Brucker, *Florentine Politics and Society: 1348-1378* (Princeton University Press, 1967).

<sup>81</sup> Lauro Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963). Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988). Lauro Martines, *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities, 1200-1500* (ACLS History E-Book Project, 2008).

<sup>82</sup> John Rigby Hale, *Florence and the Medici: The Pattern of Control* (Thames and Hudson, 1983).

<sup>83</sup> John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575* (John Wiley & Sons, 2008).

Other significant general histories used that cover the political conditions of the Commune include Hans Baron's *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny*;<sup>84</sup> Quentin Skinner's *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Volume 1, The Renaissance*;<sup>85</sup> Philip Jones's *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria*;<sup>86</sup> and Chris Wickham's *Sleepwalking into a New World: The Emergence of Italian City Communes in the Twelfth Century*.<sup>87</sup> Even Edward Gibbon's *History Of The Decline and Fall Of The Roman Empire* of 1836 covers the decline of the Empire up until the mid-fifteenth century and therefore includes relevant information on the challenges out of which the Commune in Florence emerged.<sup>88</sup>

As has already been mentioned, many works were used in relation to the urban history of the region as well as constructing the maps. These noted in a separate bibliography, but it should be acknowledged that both Braunfels (1953)<sup>89</sup> and Fanelli (1970)<sup>90</sup> were also useful in linking the political histories presented in the other works to aspects of the urban form of the city; as were works by Krautheimer (1942 & 1980).<sup>91</sup> Other works, such as Rubinstein (1995) on the Palazzo Vecchio,<sup>92</sup> Saalman (1966)<sup>93</sup> and Borsook (1981)<sup>94</sup> on Santa Trinita, have been used for the same reason in relation to particular buildings.

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<sup>84</sup> Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton University Press, 1966).

<sup>85</sup> Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Volume 1, The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

<sup>86</sup> Philip Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria*, 1 edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>87</sup> Chris Wickham, *Sleepwalking into a New World: The Emergence of Italian City Communes in the Twelfth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015).

<sup>88</sup> Edward Gibbon, *History of The Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire*, 1996 Project Gutenberg e-book (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836).

<sup>89</sup> Wolfgang Braunfels, *Mittelalterliche Stadtbaukunst in der Toskana* (Gebr. Mann, 1953).

<sup>90</sup> Fanelli, *Firenze, architettura e città*.

<sup>91</sup> Richard Krautheimer, 'Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 1–33. Richard Krautheimer, *Rome, Profile of a City, 312-1308* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

<sup>92</sup> Nicolai Rubinstein, 'The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence. A Study in Mediaeval Historiography', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 198–227. N. Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*, Oxford-Warburg Studies (Clarendon Press, 1995).

<sup>93</sup> Howard Saalman, *The Church of Santa Trinita in Florence* (College Art Association of America, 1966).

General histories of the medieval period used for background context include Friedrich Heer's *The Medieval World: Europe 1100-1350*;<sup>95</sup> also Huizinga (1924),<sup>96</sup> and Southern (1953);<sup>97</sup> and several works from Jacques Le Goff, from his general *Medieval Civilization 400 – 1500*, to his works more focussed upon medieval mentalities, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages* and *The Medieval Imagination*.<sup>98</sup> The social aspects of the medieval period, discussed by Le Goff are also evident in works by Georges Duby such as *A History of Private Life: Revelations of the Medieval World* and *Art and Society in the Middle Ages*.<sup>99</sup> These works are used to broaden the description of the cultural background of the early period of the Feast of San Giovanni and develop themes that can be seen to persist throughout its life until the present day. For a brief overview of the period see also my essay 'Gothic Art and Architecture' in *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art and Architecture*.<sup>100</sup>

Nevertheless, even given the discoveries and arguments of much of this new material, the *History of Florence: From the Founding of the City through the Renaissance* by Ferdinand Schevill,<sup>101</sup> published in 1936, is still one of the best books on the subject. His history is broad and culturally rich, composed in a literary style that brings to life the complex landscape Florence up to end of the Republic in the sixteenth century using a variety of sources not always used by the professional historian. For example, he argues that the historiography of Florence, beginning with the *Chronica de origine civitatis*, has always been more interested in shaping the city's future than accurately establishing its past:

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<sup>94</sup> Eve Borsook and Johannes Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence: History and Legend in a Renaissance Chapel* (Davaco Publ., 1981).

<sup>95</sup> Friedrich Heer, *The Medieval World: Europe 1100-1350*, trans. Janet Sondheimer, New Edition (London: Phoenix Books, 1998).

<sup>96</sup> Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (S.l.: Stellar Classics, 2017).

<sup>97</sup> R. W. Southern, *The Making of The Middle Ages*, New Ed edition (London: Pimlico, 1993).

<sup>98</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages* (University of Chicago Press, 1982). Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination* (University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>99</sup> Georges Duby, *A History of Private Life: Revelations of the Medieval World* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988). Georges Duby, *Art and Society in the Middle Ages*, First Edition (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2000).

<sup>100</sup> Tom Devonshire Jones, Linda Murray, and Peter Murray, *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art and Architecture* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 236.

<sup>101</sup> Schevill studied under Herman Von Holst at the University of Freiburg which led to a lifelong interest in the history of ideas common in the German tradition of historiography



In short, the position of the later, more enlightened generations, is that legend is fiction, history truth, and whereas men were once content to receive the story of their past from their dreamers and poets, they now take it from their scholars and historians in command of a method of investigation calculated to yield a full and satisfying knowledge.

Although such is the view advanced societies usually entertain regarding the distinction between legend and history, it errs by drawing too absolute a line between them.<sup>102</sup>

This is also the position of this thesis in relation to festival. Even though there is much space given over to the past, by the end it will be seen that the hermeneutical nature of the investigation results in an equal interest in the present.

The early studies of the festivals of Florence by G.A. (1877),<sup>103</sup> and Guasti (1884),<sup>104</sup> brought together many of the historical accounts available in the chronicles and were linked to some aspects of popular history by Gori (1926),<sup>105</sup> as a homage to the newly elected Mussolini. However, all of these accounts, and the most significant recent study of Florentine festival, Richard Trexler's *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*,<sup>106</sup> are relatively silent on the relationship between the architecture of the city and its evolving festive structures.

Trexler's overall argument uses psychology as a way to understand the festive life of Florence, suggesting that much behaviour emerged as some sort of compensation for particular childhood experiences—or a lack of structure within some critical aspects of Florentine family life:

The absence of a stable behavioural language in Florentine childhood may have been a cause of that society's perception of individual and collective identity as embodied in highly formal public activity.<sup>107</sup>

The problem with using aspects of behavioural psychology for the analysis of festive engagement is that it implies that understanding of the subject in question

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<sup>102</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, xi.

<sup>103</sup> G. A., *Le feste di S. Giovanni in Firenze antiche e moderne: cenni storici* (Firenze: Tipografia dell'Arte della Stampa, 1877).

<sup>104</sup> Guasti, *Le Feste Di S. Giovanni Batista in Firenze*.

<sup>105</sup> Pietro Gori, *Le feste fiorentine attraverso i secoli: Le feste per San Giovanni* (Firenze: Bemporad & Figlio, 1926).

<sup>106</sup> Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*. Trexler also suggests that Schevill's *History of Florence* offers the best overview of the city's history. Trexler, xix..

<sup>107</sup> Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 90.

is possible even before the association of its meaning. i.e. the festival can be understood in its totality, through a series of frames, prior to its psychological diagnosis.<sup>108</sup>

The implication of such thinking is that the key to understanding the festive life of Florence is firstly to understand the physical or material event, and only then can meaning be attributed or attached. This type of evaluation can be questioned in relation to the period covered by Trexler where meaning was believed to be already there and hence understanding was predicated more on the peeling away of layers than the overlaying he implies. Trexler's frames do have layers, but they are applied rather than revealed.

More recently, Heidi Chrétien<sup>109</sup> and Paola Ventrone<sup>110</sup> have both discussed the Feast of San Giovanni specifically, but again, without much reference to the spatial and architectural aspects of the feast. Consequently the questions established earlier in the chapter regarding the continuity of representation have not been addressed. Answers can be given to questions relating to the authenticity of representation in the past, but not in the present in relation to the past. That would still be articulated as as more of a facimile or a historicist reconstruction—as Medina Lassansky suggests is the case for the Fascist reinventions of the 1930s that will be discussed in chapter six.<sup>111</sup>

Each of the above titles has added something new to the understanding of the emerging politics and structure of the city of Florence but they do not cover in detail the issues being investigated here. In most of the histories listed architecture is addressed obliquely if at all, and there is no discussion of festival that relates to the present state of the institutions and spaces of the city.

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<sup>108</sup> Trexler, 92.

<sup>109</sup> Heidi L. Chrétien, *The Festival of San Giovanni: Imagery and Political Power in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 1994).

<sup>110</sup> Titus Livy, *The History of Rome: The Only Complete and Unabridged Edition in One Volume*, ed. Jake E. Stief, trans. D. Spillan, Cyrus Edmonds, and William A. M'Devitte (Stief Books, 2018), Bk. XXXIX, Ch. 2.

<sup>111</sup> D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy* (Penn State Press, 2004).

## Conclusion

It is the contention of this thesis that while the commercial and cultural aspects of society can often share what Trexler calls a 'frame' there needs to be a clear distinction between the two because it is not possible to describe commerce in the same language as culture, they are linked but separate. You cannot buy sacrament, neither could you make a coat of arms holy. Because Trexler does not distinguish clearly enough between these two factors he suggests that Florentines had a similar choice in whether to have faith as to trade, whereas in reality they had no such choice. All clerical directions were about the precise nature of the ordering, not the premise of the order itself. Hence, as will be shown, in the emerging commune the ceremonial order mimicked that of the earlier feudal court to give it credibility. It was the role rather than the individual that was honoured (like the kings two bodies).<sup>112</sup> In the end, although Trexler's authority on the subject is unquestioned and his research of the highest level, his conclusions are at odds with the argument here. He clearly understood that festive rituals were a significant part of the civic life of the city but that, in the end, they sat outside of society; their meaning was based upon knowledge rather than praxis. If this is the case then it suggests, or certainly implies, that only 'knowledge' of the ideas underpinning the structure of the city can deliver authentic experiences; the remainder of the population (including tourists), like spectators in a contemporary theatre, are tricked, charmed and entertained and experience the anxiety that animates Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*,<sup>113</sup> not to mention Baudrillard's assault on various forms of simulacrum,<sup>114</sup> but do not partake in any 'real' experience at all.

Ultimately, the phenomenon of 'continuity' raised by the Feast of San Giovanni in Florence suggests that it offers orientation in history, grounded in spatial orientation or structuring, and that the resulting symbolic Florence, in order to be credible, resonates within a depth acted out in the practical lives of the inhabitants. Most of the actions performed during the festivals described—walking, greeting,

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<sup>112</sup> Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*.

<sup>113</sup> Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit, Mich: Black & Red, 1984).

<sup>114</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

gift-giving, etc.—are heightened versions of actions the citizens would perform anyway, but, in the festival, are performed for their own sake, accompanied by music, chanting and the shared meal/sacrifice of the Mass etc.(whose attunement to rhythm ought to have attracted attention in Lefebvre’s *Rhythmanalysis*).<sup>115</sup> It is possible to see here the reciprocity of action and reflection in the Aristotelian conception of mimesis of praxis mentioned earlier on which Gadamer draws to illuminate understanding generally. With this in mind, the next three chapters begin to describe the historical development of festival in the city at three critical moments beginning with the city’s Roman roots.

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<sup>115</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

## Chapter 2 – Roman Florence: Order and Cosmos

### Introduction

This chapter aims to reveal aspects of continuity that exists between the development of the Feast of San Giovanni in the Middle Ages with Florence's Roman foundation that occurred over a millennium earlier. This continuity has two strands, the first stand articulates the direct history associated with the original Roman settlement and the ways in which such foundations reconciled history with cosmic origins through forms of ceremony and rites that date back to the Ancient Near East; and secondly through the chronicle, literal and allegorical origins of the city. Given the length of time between the Roman foundation and the critical emergence of the medieval festival much of this continuity is implicit and indirect, built in to the traditions of the city, but remained relevant to the Christian city due to the fact that Rome harboured the birth of Christ and much of the iconography of Christian Imperial rule that had been instigated by Constantine had been revived by Charlemagne in the ninth century—for example in the Palatine Chapel at Aachen.

The narrative developed here is that the idea of the city articulated in Republican and Imperial Rome can be described through festivals, rites and ceremonies related to architecture and that such descriptions, linked to the time-out-of-time re-enactment of the ontological origins inherent to festival, offer a compelling argument for some 'indirect' continuity that was critical to the identity of Florence during the early medieval period.

There are no documents dating from the Roman period that explicitly refer to the foundation of Florence (in terms of time and place). However, the traditions and rites which formed the rituals of town foundation generally during the Republic and the Empire are well documented and so it is possible to account for the likely rituals that accompanied the foundation of the city. This chapter discusses these rituals in relation to the form of the city and the developing political situation at the time of the foundation. It will also introduce key themes—both tangible and intangible— that form the critical legacy of the period on the future identity of the

city. The content of the Roman texts indicates an attitude to ritual and foundation (as well as community, commerce and allegiance) that formed the basis of many of the urban traditions in the region that continue to this day. What becomes clear is that although these Roman narratives described events relating to festive activities, they are not simply accounts; they were written more as testaments placing the particular actions within a broader, universal, or sacred and cosmic framework.<sup>1</sup> It is this tradition in relation to the history of the foundation of Florence that forms the content of this chapter

## 2.1 The Origins of Roman Florence

### • Roman History of the Foundation of Florence<sup>2</sup>

The ground upon which Florence was built was not immediately hospitable. Accounts by Polybius (200-118BC)<sup>3</sup> and Livy (64/59BC – 12/17AD),<sup>4</sup> of Hannibal's journey through Italy around 217-218BC, portray the valley of the *Arnus* as a marshy, inhospitable part of the country almost impassable and swarming with mosquitos. It thus appears that sometime between these accounts of the area as it was in the third century BC, and the first references to the city in the late first century BC on the *Via Cassia*,<sup>5</sup> the whole centuriation of the valley was undertaken (Fig. 2.1& 2.2). Lopes Pegna<sup>6</sup> suggests that the critical setting out point between the centuriation landscape and the more cardinal orientation of the city is related to the orientation of the valley itself, allowing a better partitioning up of the land beyond the city walls (Map 2.1).<sup>7</sup> Hardie, writing in 1965, can see no reason to separate these two aspects of land demarcation:

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Virgil's *Aeneas* where the actions of the Trojan hero were linked to the foundation of Rome and ultimately the genealogy of Augustus Caesar, later used by Dante as a means to identify the heritage and iconography of Florence as Roman, rather than Gothic—its *romanitas*. See Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 52.

<sup>2</sup> For a summary of the available sources and possible scenarios see Appendix 1 of Rubinstein, 'The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence. A Study in Mediaeval Historiography'.

<sup>3</sup> Polybius, *Histories*, Bk. 1, Ch. 79ff

<sup>4</sup> Titus Livy, *The History of Rome: The Only Complete and Unabridged Edition in One Volume*, ed. Jake E. Stief, trans. D. Spillan, Cyrus Edmonds, and William A. M'Devitte (Stief Books, 2018), Bk. XXII, Ch. 2.

<sup>5</sup> For accounts of the foundation see below. The main Roman road between Arretium (Arezzo) and Luca (Lucca)

<sup>6</sup> *Firenze dalle origini al Medioevo. Pref. di Giulio Giannelli* (Del Re, 1962), 54ff.

<sup>7</sup> Watts uses this stating point theorem when she attempts to reconstruct the original geometrical setting out of the town. 'The Geometry of the Master Plan of Roman Florence and Its Surroundings'. See Map 2.2.

It seems impossible, however, to suppose that the plain was drained without also at the same time being centuriated and distributed to *coloni* with a political centre, whether old (Fiesole) or new (Florence). The road across the plain, the centuriation and the foundation of Florence must surely hang together.<sup>8</sup>

In Hardie's narrative it is possible that initially at least, colonisation of the area might have involved fortified villas and a centre at Fiesole rather than a new town foundation on the recently cultivated marshland.<sup>9</sup> However, Hardie also suggests it is likely that, if it were not there already, the draining of land to the south of the river would have resulted in the foundation of the new town, including the provision of a new bridge that would have created a more favourable situation for these new farmers.

The actual date of the foundation of the Roman colony *Florentia* (Florence) is still disputed.<sup>10</sup> A *terminus post quem* is offered by the complete absence of any reference to the town in the well-documented end of the Catiline<sup>11</sup> conspiracy that took place around the Etruscan/Roman *Faesulae* (Fiesole) in 62BC.<sup>12</sup> Although Catiline's final death occurred in battle near Pistoia, around 30km north west of Florence (following his earlier expulsion from Rome) he had spent some time in Fiesole, which is mentioned often in Sallust's (86-35BC) history of the conspiracy, *Bellum Catilinae* (44-40BC).<sup>13</sup> As well as an opportunity to date its foundation, the conspiracy was used by early chroniclers to associate Florence with Roman Republican virtues displayed by Cicero in opposition to the evils of proto-imperial Fiesolean politics represented by Catiline.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Hardie, 'The Origin and Plan of Roman Florence', 130.

<sup>9</sup> Fiesole can be seen in Fig. 2.1 slightly to the north of 'Firenze'

<sup>10</sup> Guglielmo Maetzke, *Florentia, Firenze, etc. [With plans.]*, [Italia romana: municipi e colonie. ser. 1. vol. 5.] (Firenze: Spoleto, 1941).

<sup>11</sup> Lucius Sergius Catilina (108-62BC) was a Roman Consul who attempted to take control of the Republic.

<sup>12</sup> In the remainder of this text, Fiesole will be used instead of *Faesulae*, and Florence for *Florentia*. The Etruscans developed a civilisation in Italy between c.800 and c.300BC around Tuscany through contact with Greek traders or following the settlement of Hittites or Mycenaean.

<sup>13</sup> Sallust, *The War with Catiline: The War with Jugurtha*, trans. J.C. Rolfe (Harvard University Press, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Patricia J. Osmond, 'Catiline in Fiesole and Florence: The After-Life of a Roman Conspirator', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 7, no. 1 (September 2000): 14.

The archaeological excavations of Fiesole support the contemporary Roman texts that confirm the Etruscan foundation of the town but are silent on Florence until after the conspiracy when it begins to be mentioned in some texts—notably by Livy<sup>15</sup> and Pliny (23-79AD)<sup>16</sup>—who both describe it as a ‘Roman Colony’. The later *Liber Colonialium*, written in the fourth century AD, states that it was founded by the ‘*triumviri*’ following the death of Julius Caesar. This would date the foundation between the assassination of Caesar in 44BC and the collapse of the second Triumvirate when Augustus and his general Agrippa defeated Antony at the battle of Actium in 31BC. Claims that the foundation was by the second *triumviri* of Antony, Augustus, and Lepidus in 43BC, not the earlier 59BC association of Caesar, Crassus and Pompey were, and are, political.<sup>17</sup> Sulla<sup>18</sup> and Caesar, who had both been credited with the foundation of the city at different times during the medieval period, were dictators who also had their roots in Republican Rome—Sulla handing back power to the Consuls after only one year of dictatorship,<sup>19</sup> and Caesar, who was assassinated whilst in the role of dictator. As there is no clear document that describes one or other as the truth, speculations on a Republican or Imperial foundation tend to be more based on the prejudices of the speculator rather than any reasoning based in the past.

From Sallust’s account of the Catiline conspiracy it appears that many of the farmers from around Fiesole had been stripped of their land during Sulla’s dictatorship twenty years earlier when he had given parts of the land to his veterans as reward for their loyal service.<sup>20</sup> In a region already disaffected by this historic land seizure the more recent mismanagement of commerce undertaken by distant ‘benefactors’ would clearly have further alienated the locals (which now included the veterans) from the Republican rulers of Rome. Catiline, focussing

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<sup>15</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome*, Bk. XXXIX, Ch.2.

<sup>16</sup> Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, III. 26. ‘... florentini prae-fluenti arno adposti,’

<sup>17</sup> Fanelli *Firenze, architettura e città*. originally writing in 1972 argues for a Caesarian foundation, preferring the idea of a Republican heritage.

<sup>18</sup> Based on Cicero *Catilinarian Orationis* II, 9, 20; III, 6, 14

<sup>19</sup> Leonardo Bruni and James Hankins, *History of the Florentine People* (Harvard University Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>20</sup> Sallust, *The War with Catiline*, 28. If this farmland was on the plains then it would discount Hardie’s suggestion that the centuriation and Florence were coeval as Florence is not mentioned in the text while the farmers are.



much of his recruitment initiatives in this area of Etruria, used this regional discontentment to his advantage.<sup>21</sup> However, while Catiline was trying to raise support for his cause in the area, Cicero, who was Consul in Rome at the time, was trying to diffuse this support. Sallust's description of those who supported Catiline's call for change is oddly timeless and echoes aspects of dissatisfaction among large groups of people that also played a significant part in the emergence of the later medieval city where manufactured disorder often flew in the face of self-preservation:

In this very particular they seemed to act as the populace usually does; for in every community those who have no means envy the good, exalt the base, hate what is old and established, long for something new, and from disgust with their own lot desire a general upheaval. Amid turmoil and rebellion they maintain themselves without difficulty, since poverty is easily provided for and can suffer no loss. But [Rome's] populace in particular acted with desperation for many reasons. To begin with, all who were especially conspicuous for their shamelessness and impudence, those too who had squandered their patrimony in riotous living, finally all whom disgrace or crime had forced to leave home, had all flowed into Rome as into a cesspool. Many, too, who recalled Sulla's victory, when they saw common soldiers risen to the rank of senator, and others become so rich that they feasted and lived like kings, hoped each for himself for like fruits of victory, if he took the field. Besides this, the young men who had maintained a wretched existence by manual labour in the country, tempted by public and private doles had come to prefer idleness in the city to their hateful toil; these, like all the others, batted on the public ills. Therefore it is not surprising that men who were beggars and without character, with illimitable hopes, should respect their country as little as they did themselves. Moreover, those to whom Sulla's victory had meant the proscription of their parents, loss of property, and curtailment of their rights, looked forward in a similar spirit to the issue of a war. Finally, all who belonged to another party than that of the senate preferred to see the government overthrown rather than be out of power themselves. Such, then, was the evil which after many years had returned upon the state.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, in this part of Etruria at the time of Sallust's account, and for much of the future of the empire, the manifestation of urban decadence linked to the dictatorial ambitions of Catiline, was thought to exist in Fiesole. Florence, as a later

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<sup>21</sup> Catiline used a local ally, Manlius, who had been a distinguished soldier in Sulla's army who, on retirement, had been put in command of the veterans' settlement around Fiesole.

<sup>22</sup> Sallust, *The War with Catiline*, 37. It is interesting to note that the various activities that are incorporated within the contemporary Feast, which can be traced through much of its active history, have the ability to address these different protagonists listed above (from disaffected *Popoli* to enraged aristocrats) and bring them into the representative 'play' of agonistic endeavour.

foundation—or at least not mentioned in this regard—appeared untouched by these events and therefore escaped this particular form of critical judgement.

Eventually Catiline and his army were defeated to the north of Fiesole, near modern Pistoia.<sup>23</sup> Catiline himself was killed while on foot, having prepared for battle by sending away all horses to make the remaining combatants equal in the face of overwhelming odds. That he was defeated, along with his army, is not the significant part of Roman history relevant to the consolidated foundation of Florence. The significant factor is that Catiline's was the second attempt to establish a dictatorship out of the Roman Republic in the first century BC.<sup>24</sup> Sulla's brief control of Rome as Praetor and sole dictator in 82/81BC had shown that, given the right conditions, in the sophisticated political landscape of Rome at the time, it was possible to subvert the political will of the Republic and Senate and seize control. Even though Sulla after a year of corruption, purges, and killing did hand back control to the Senate, in the process he had inspired the twenty-seven-year-old Catiline to attempt a similar coup with the promise of similar power. Unfortunately for Catiline, nineteen years later, he miss-read the signs and, confronted by the powerful rhetoric of Cicero, failed in his attempt to emulate his predecessor. But even if he had won the day and created a 'second dictatorship' of the first century BC it is not clear that he could have maintained control for a year let alone any longer. For Sallust, even a victory in the first battle would have resulted in a civil war:

If Catiline had been victor in the first battle, or had merely held his own, beyond a doubt great bloodshed and disaster would have fallen upon the state; nor would the victors have been allowed for long to enjoy their success, but when they had been worn out and exhausted, a more powerful adversary would have wrested from them the supreme power and with it their freedom.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Also mentioned in Sallust, 59. as was Pisa

<sup>24</sup> There were many dictatorships in the Roman Republic (around 90 in total) where a single ruler took command of the Republic for a brief period before returning rule to the Senate. However, Sulla's dictatorship from 82-81BC was the first for over 120 years and so carries more significance than the earlier examples.

<sup>25</sup> Sallust, *The War with Catiline*, 39.

In the end it was Julius Caesar who achieved the 'second dictatorship', which later transformed into the imperial rule of Caesar Augustus.<sup>26</sup> Sallust, writing at the time of Julius Caesar was, therefore, not without prejudice and did much to distinguish his patron(s) from Catiline but also from other aspects of Republican decadence that would have justified a dictatorship in the first place.<sup>27</sup> Sallust's condemnation of the aristocracy of Rome for its conspiring and greed was designed to separate Caesar from Catiline (seen as an opportunist and corrupt senator rather than as a successful dictator) but also from the other hedonistic senators and consuls of Rome. In addition, Sallust offered an account of a lengthy oration in the Senate by Caesar against Catiline and his conspiracy suggesting that, even given his relatively young age of 37, he was capable of great acts of statesmanship on top of his already established military prowess. Consequently, in his account, Sallust sets out the attributes for a princely ruler/dictator necessary for the restoration of order within a decadent republic. These themes, preserved in the histories and in the rhetoric of the Roman Empire—and hence accessible to the Latin scholars of medieval Italy—re-emerged intact within the urban centres of Italy where the Roman legacy was reinforced by the already established urban aristocracy.

- **Chronicle accounts of the Roman Legacy**

Villani describes the aftermath of the Catiline conspiracy and the sieges to Fiesole that followed, offering an account of the various generals and lords pitching their camps at various places surrounding the besieged city following their deployment by Rome to end the rebellion. Villani states that the siege of Fiesole lasted six years and, as mentioned above, during this period a building in which councils could be held was built by Caesar's troops (on a site now known to have been the stadium). He then goes on to recount that Caesar 'fixed the boundary of the city' before constructing the main buildings including; the aqueduct; the walls with several round towers; the capitol (forum and temples) including a great cistern and duct

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<sup>26</sup> Caesar and Augustus were both representatives of Imperial rule but Augustus signals the end of the period of transition from Consular rule to a Dictatorship. However, it is not really until the rule of the second emperor, Tiberius, that the transition to the Empire is fully complete.

<sup>27</sup> Julius Caesar was a patron to Sallust. It is likely that Sallust wrote *Bellum Catalinae* immediately following Caesar's death in 44BC suggesting that Augustus continued this patronage Ronald Mellor, *The Roman Historians* (Psychology Press, 1999), 32.

which was emptied at every festival.<sup>28</sup> Later he recounts the ‘eight sided’ Temple of Mars built in honour of the god of Rome partly constructed from elements spoliated from Fiesole.<sup>29</sup>

As has already been mentioned in the last section, Poliziano’s discovery of the fourth century text, the *Liber Coloniarum*,<sup>30</sup> shifted the time of the foundation to the second triumvirate (including Augustus). However, although this became the accepted history from the sixteenth century on it is still not universally accepted. As recently as 1972 Fanelli<sup>31</sup> quotes Lopes Pegna<sup>32</sup> supporting a foundation in 59BC by Julius Caesar around the time of the *ludi florae* (28-29<sup>th</sup> April)<sup>33</sup>—and around the same time as Christian Rogation and the commemorative date of the foundation of Rome. Nevertheless, these disputes over the time and mode of the foundation do not appear to have been affected by arguments relating to explicit Republican versus Imperial iconography. The Roman histories, the chronicle accounts, and the archaeological evidence allow for a Roman ‘classical’ origin and the iconographies associated to different forms of rule seem to have been less significant.

However, although no-one disputed an original Roman foundation, there were differences of opinion relating to whether it had been ‘re-founded’ at a later date following its destruction at the time of Totila’s siege in 552 (Fig. 2.5):<sup>34</sup>

Was Florence destroyed by Atilla or Totila, and re-founded by Charlemagne and the Romans as Florentine medieval tradition had it? Or had the city, as Leonardo Bruni and other humanists after him had argued never suffered

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<sup>28</sup> Villani, *Villani’s Chronicle*, I. 38.

<sup>29</sup> Villani, I. 42. See also Leonardo Bruni and James Hankins, *History of the Florentine People* (Harvard University Press, 2007), 13, Vol 1.

<sup>30</sup> Angelo Ambrogani (1454-94), known as Poliziano, based his claim for an Augustinian foundation (using the *triumviri* of Antony, Augustus, and Lepidus) on his discovery of the *Liber Coloniarum* which Vincenzo Borghini (1515-80) used with Vasari to build the iconography of the painting of the foundation of Florence in the *Salone del Cinquecento* 1563-65. Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, 71. See Fig. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Fanelli, *Firenze, architettura e città*, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Pegna, *Firenze dalle origini al Medioevo. Pref. di Giulio Giannelli*.

<sup>33</sup> A theory based on readings of the medieval texts Hardie, ‘The Origin and Plan of Roman Florence’, 132.

<sup>34</sup> Villani, *Villani’s Chronicle*, I. 36.

total destruction, so that its restoration under Charlemagne was much less complete than had been believed.<sup>35</sup>

Like the difference between an Augustan or Julian foundation can be articulated relating to themes of republicanism and empire, so can these. Bruni writing on the early fifteenth century would have been keen to establish that the original foundation was instigated by the Roman Republic rather than a later German Imperial foundation because the ‘republicanism’ at the heart of Florence’s Communal government required this symbolic connection—even if the shift did gradually move from Caesar to Augustus.

- **Archaeological Evidence of Roman Florence**

The archaeological evidence for the Roman city of Florence has recently been brought up to date by Scampoli in his *Firenze, archaeologia di una città* (2010).<sup>36</sup> Building off previous descriptions of the archaeological evidence of Roman Florence, particularly the work of Davidsohn (Map 2.3),<sup>37</sup> and later, Maetzke,<sup>38</sup> a picture of the remains of the Roman settlement that were visible within the medieval period can be described (Map 2.1). More evidence has since been unearthed but, as knowledge of this is relatively new, it has had little impact upon the shaping of the city, its festivals, and its historiography.

In the late nineteenth century Davidsohn gave special attention to the baths, forum, temples, stadium, theatre, and the aqueduct, separating them from the other buildings already suggesting a hierarchy to the remains.<sup>39</sup> He described the temple in the Forum, dedicated to Juno and Minerva,<sup>40</sup> along with a smaller temple of Isis outside the walls, as well as the surviving remnants of the city gates. Maetzke, writing in 1941, covers mostly the same buildings but his map results in a better-described Roman Theatre in terms of location and size, and also a

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<sup>35</sup> Nicolai Rubinstein, ‘Vasari’s Painting of The Foundation of Florence in the Palazzo Vecchio’, in *Essays in the History of Architecture: Presented to Rudolf Wittkower*, ed. Rudolf Wittkower et al. (Phaidon, 1967), 65.

<sup>36</sup> Emiliano Scampoli, *Firenze, archeologia di una città* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Davidsohn, *Geschichte von Florenz*.

<sup>38</sup> Maetzke, *Florentia, Firenze, etc. [With plans.]*.

<sup>39</sup> Davidsohn, *Geschichte von Florenz*, 1:16.

<sup>40</sup> Davidsohn, 1:18.

conjectural location for the older Roman Bridge, slightly upstream from the current location of the Ponte Vecchio (Facing Map 2.1).<sup>41</sup> While Davidsohn does not attempt to apply a strict grid over the layout of the current street plan, Maetzke, partly through his drawings depicting the material of the Roman streets, does suggest a more rigid structure that also extends to his straightening of the proposed city walls, and a notion that the Roman amphitheatre may have been outside the original *pomoerium*.<sup>42</sup> While neither proposal offers any clarification as to the possible Roman settlements on the left banks of the Arno, they both suggest an area occupied by buildings outside the original city walls where the territory was identified as belonging to the town, but not seen as a part of its sacred area.

Scampoli, using the most up to date archaeological evidence corrects some of these details but confirms a picture very similar to that of these earlier scholars. In detail, Scampoli retains the stadium in its estimated location but places the theatre inside an enlarged southern wall and on a slightly different orientation, corrected to the latest information from the excavations under the Palazzo Vecchio. However, although this significant palazzo, built to accommodate the Communal government of Florence in 1299, was built on the remains of the theatre, this does not seem to have been considered a significant symbolic move at the time. Of more significance was the fact that its foundations were located on a site previously occupied by a small urban square and houses belonging to one of the most powerful Florentine families of the thirteenth century. Therefore, unlike the Roman stadium whose form was still recognisable in the street pattern, the form and function of the amphitheatre was lost beneath the foundations of the medieval city. The fact that the stadium was reputed to have been built by Caesar's soldiers for parley while laying siege to Fiesole seems to have carried little weight in the development of the city.<sup>43</sup> This relative insignificance of the theatre building to the continuity of the city does suggest some break in the culture of the city but it may also may be due

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<sup>41</sup> Davidsohn had implied a similar location for both.

<sup>42</sup> The original sacred boundary of the town. The *pomoerium* of Rome was marked by marble stones, or *cippi* with inscriptions on, and corresponds to the supposed line of the ritual foundation by Romulus. It was illegal to cross this boundary carrying weapons (except for an elected dictator) and burial inside this boundary was forbidden except for the ashes of Vestal Virgins.

<sup>43</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, BK1. Ch.36.

to the fact that it was possibly situated outside the limits of the original Roman *pomoerium*—the boundary set by the original foundation ritual.

## 2.2 Florence and Roman Festival

- **Foundation and Festival: The Foundation of Rome: 21<sup>st</sup> April**

Roman texts described in detail foundation rituals associated with the Etruscans that had been transformed into a Roman Rite through the iconography of the initial the foundation of Rome. That all Roman military forts and camps (*castrum*) as well as larger towns were set out in this rigorous and orthogonal manner has often led to the suggestion Roman towns were just enlarged camps. However, as Rykwert suggests;

...[this] convention inverts the truth. The Roman town was not a formalized and enlarged camp. On the contrary, the Roman military camp [and, therefore, the town] was a diagrammatic evocation of the city of Rome, an *anamnesis of imperium* ... The first act was to plant the general's *vexillum* at a chosen spot ...<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, the critical point to make here is that this tradition of festivals is actually the representation of the rite of foundation and, in the Roman case, the foundation rite of any Roman camp was mimetically a re-founding of Rome.

There are no surviving texts that describe the date or form of the Roman foundation rite of Florence. However, at least since Vasari's painting of the foundation of Florence completed in 1563-65 (Fig. 2.3) the rites of foundation of Rome were understood and would have been a part of the festive life of the city handed down through tradition.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, the rich festive landscape of Florence which re-enacted the event suggests it was known much earlier—in the thirteenth century

In the rites the founder moves anticlockwise around the boundary whilst ploughing the first furrow locating the sacred boundary or *pomoerium* (Fig 2.4).

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<sup>44</sup> Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World* (Faber & Faber, 2010), 68. The planting of the *vexillum* is depicted in Vasari's image of the foundation (Fig. 3)

<sup>45</sup> For example, instructions on how to set out a Roman Camp can be found in Polybius, *Histories*, Bk. VI, Ch. 27.

The plough, pulled by a cow (inside) and an ox (outside) is carefully guided by the founder, head covered, ensuring the ploughed earth falls on the inside, lifting the plough at every gate (*porta*), defining the limits of the city as *templum*.<sup>46</sup> Thus the rite is not only related to the foundation of the particular city but also mimetically related to the original foundation of Rome, and even when the shift was made from Republican to Imperial rule, the iconography of this was not lost as the event focussed on the idea of origins related to the Etruscan foundation.<sup>47</sup>

Although the initial foundation of Rome was Etruscan, based around the myth of Romulus and Remus, the tradition continued under Republican rule in Rome and then gathered renewed momentum with Caesar Augustus's commission for Virgil's *Aeneas* linking the story of Rome to that of Troy and the time of the gods.

Depictions of the founding of the early city relate to the *Roma Quadrata*<sup>48</sup> (Figs. 2.6-2.8) (already obscure by the late Republic)<sup>49</sup> with the setting up of the boundary as the critical act. Hyginus Gromaticus writing in the 1-2C. AD states that:

The origin [of the setting up of boundaries] is heavenly, and its practice invariable ... Boundaries are never drawn without reference to the order of the universe for the *decumani* are set in line with the course of the sun, while the *cardines* follow the axis of the sky.<sup>50</sup>

In interpreting such texts it would be easy to drift into the language of 'ideal' cities, but it is not clear that such language would have been recognised at the time. For example when a regular plan is visible, such as in Timgad (Fig. 2.9) or other 'grid' like Roman foundations, it is easy to argue that these were the 'proper' manifestations of Roman order—extending the implied perfection of the cross (or the right-angle) onto the remaining streets and squares of the city—with only the geographical anomalies of mountains and rivers etc. distorting cities that would otherwise have been rectilinear with a more rigorous four quartered form. But this

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<sup>46</sup> See Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, 65. Also Rykwert quoting Ennius (p. 45) '*Templum* is used in three ways: with reference to nature, in the sky; to divination, on the ground; and to resemblance, underground.'

<sup>47</sup> Rykwert, 91. Also linked by the proposed date of 28/29<sup>th</sup> April listed above

<sup>48</sup> 'Romulus accordingly built Roma Quadrata (which means *square*), and wished to have the city on that site.' Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*, trans. J. Dryden (Cambridge, Mass: Loeb, 1914), 115.

<sup>49</sup> Which possibly included only a small number of the seven hills

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, 90.



leap of faith forgets that the primary act of foundation was ritualistic; cities were founded through rites organised to sacralise the ground and create boundaries. As Rykwert argues:

... as ancient authors suggested, orthogonal planning was the product of grafting a law of land tenure on to some form of quasi-astronomical surveying, which gave landed property divine, and in particular celestial sanction ... The [orthogonal foundation] rite was of course completely independent of anything as conscious, as explicit, as a planning theory. The origin of this kind of rite cannot ever be found in speculation, whether 'rational' or 'mythical'. Its origin will always be in a *dromenon*, in an action, and such origins are always lost. The search for the 'pure' and original form of the rite would be entirely fruitless.<sup>51</sup>

This passage develops two points. Firstly, that orthogonality was not necessarily the primary aim of Roman planning; and secondly, that the origins of a city founded by rite are lost unless they are commemorated and continually re-enacted, and that in their re-enactment they adapt and change in line with the times. The first point is confirmed by the plan of Rome itself where the relationship of the various imperial fora to the Republican forum and to each other and is not structured with an overarching geometry (Fig. 2.10). Instead, and like other imperial examples such as Hadrian's Villa (Fig 2.11) at Tivoli and the Piazza Armerina in Sicily (Fig. 2.12), the plan reveals a clear formal structure between groups of rooms with more informal relationships between these groups.<sup>52</sup> The second point is confirmed by the continuing tradition of foundation rites within the Christian tradition.

Since the Republican period, the foundation of Rome has been celebrated on the 21<sup>st</sup> April in a feast—*parilia*—born out of rural fertility rites aimed at the purification of shepherds and their sheep.<sup>53</sup> The feast had both a rural and an urban component; Ovid describes the significant aspects of the urban element of the feast in his *Fasti*:<sup>54</sup>

Or is this nearer the truth, that when Rome was founded

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<sup>51</sup> Rykwert, 88.

<sup>52</sup> See Christian Frost, *Continuity and Transformation in Symbolic Mediation: The Architecture of Early Christianity* (University of Cambridge: Unpublished MPhil Dissertation, 1993).

<sup>53</sup> W. W. Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic: An Introduction to the Study of the Religion of the Romans* (Gorgias Press LLC, 2004), 79.

<sup>54</sup> 43 BCE-18? Ovid, *Fasti*, 2005, Bk. IV 800, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8738>.

They were commanded to move the Lares to their new homes,  
And changing homes the farmers set fire to the houses,  
And to the cottages, they were about to abandon,  
They and their cattle leaping through the flames,  
As happens even now on Rome's birthday.<sup>55</sup>

This feast, situated in the Roman Calendar in a group of feasts (Table 2 & 3)—including Robigo on the 25<sup>th</sup> April that transferred into the Christian Calendar as St Marks or Rogation Day<sup>56</sup>—were related to agricultural, seasonal rites of fertility and renewal as well as the 'beating of the bounds' mentioned earlier.<sup>57</sup> Even though this heritage was agrarian in nature, its transition to the iconography of the city was easily made. The period in late April which culminated in the blessing of the city by the priest and augur was followed by the month of May, in nature designated as the month of 'growing or increasing',<sup>58</sup> an apposite month to follow on from the foundation of the city.

These 'growing' festivities began on the next significant day in the Roman Calendar, the first of May, which, although not a feast, was, nevertheless, a significant date. No major Roman feasts bar one take place in the Calends (the early part) of any month<sup>59</sup> so the celebration that did occur was likely to have been relatively muted even though it took place in the middle of the *Ludi Florae*.<sup>60</sup> The fact that the month as a whole was seen as the 'month of growing' perhaps made the political and social elites more cautious lest they upset the gods<sup>61</sup>—hence the Romans were more prone to celebrate purifications (like Robigo in April) than

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<sup>55</sup> Ovid, *Fasti*, Book IV 800. Trans. A.S. Kline (<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/OvidFastiBkFour.htm>).

Hoc tamen est vero propius, quum condita Roma est,  
Transferri jussos in nova tecta Lares,  
Mutantesque domum tectis agrestibus ignem  
Et cessaturae supposuisse casae;  
Per flammam saluisse pecus, saluisse colonos.

Quod fit natali nunc quoque, Roma, tuo

<sup>56</sup> Terence Bailey, *The Processions of Sarum and the Western Church* (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1971), 94.

<sup>57</sup> The annual processional circumnavigation of parish boundaries to re-establish the legal jurisdiction and bless the whole area for the coming year

<sup>58</sup> Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic*, 98.

<sup>59</sup> NP POPLIFUGIA Ferae Iovi on 5<sup>th</sup> July. See Fowler, 174.

<sup>60</sup> Public games.

<sup>61</sup> Howard Hayes Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic* (Cornell University Press, 1981), 117.

major public and private functions<sup>62</sup>—but it was apparently less of a problem for the lower castes (*plebes*) whose work in the setting up the crops was complete and they now awaited the harvest later in the summer.

It appears from Ovid's description of the feast on the 21<sup>st</sup> April—as well as that of the *ludi floriae* and the other feasts—that the events related to commemorating the foundation of Rome were focussed more on purification than on the sacred boundary. While this would conform to the characteristics of the period in the calendar already described in relation to purification, it does also suggest that there was no mimetic re-enactment circumnavigation of the city designed to secure increased fertility or productivity.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to consider the absence of this aspect in accounts of the re-enactment as an indication that the sacred boundary of Rome (or Florence) was considered of lesser importance to late republican or imperial rulers. The fact that the specific movement of the *pomoerium* of Rome by senators and emperors at particular moments in history was recorded and marked,<sup>64</sup> suggests that the significance of the *pomoerium* as a sacred boundary within the expanded Rome was maintained throughout the time of the Republic and then the Empire.<sup>65</sup> Equally, and perhaps more significantly this boundary, marked by stones inside the city walls, may have had an important role in the festive life of the city. It is not surprising that outside Rome such processions around the original boundary would be seen as more significant because it is in the act of foundation that any Roman town came closest to symbolically representing Rome as an '*anamnesis of imperium*'. Therefore, re-enacting such a moment reinforced not only the purification and increased fertility of land or the productivity of a city, but also its links to Rome—the centre of the empire.

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<sup>62</sup> For example, May and the first half of June were not considered auspicious times for marriage ceremonies.

<sup>63</sup> Or if there was a circumnavigation, it was of lesser importance.

<sup>64</sup> Particularly by Sulla, Claudius and Vespasian

<sup>65</sup> For a comprehensive list of the documented extensions of the *pomoerium* see Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, 222.

- **Other Relevant Roman Feasts**

Three different feasts are mentioned in the Roman Calendar near the feast of *parilia* that occur on the first day of the May;

1. *Maia*
2. *Bona Dea ad saxum*
3. *Laribus (praestitibus)*.

The first two are less important for the purposes here but will be briefly described:

**Maia: 1<sup>st</sup> May**

Maia (who may be responsible for the name of the month) was offered a sacrifice of a pregnant sow to the earth goddess Terra. She may not have been a well-known deity and so it is possible that the month as a whole was named after the root *maior* or *maiestas* relating to the ‘growing’ or ‘increasing’ mentioned earlier.<sup>66</sup> However, even the Romans were not sure and the name of the month is likely to have been a later development instigated by the priests naming a deity after the month rather than the other way around. The actual deity is likely to have been *Bona Dea*.

**Bona Dea ad saxum:<sup>67</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> May**

This feast was for women only and took place on the Aventine outside Rome’s Etruscan *pomoerium*, originally under a sacred rock. The ritual included wine but was called milk in the ceremony—a much more appropriate offering for the earth mother. The significance of the feast at this particular time and in a location outside the *pomoerium* seems to reinforce its agricultural origins but also raises issues of feminine fertility. Descriptions of the feast indicate that there may have been some relationship to beating or flagellation linking it to other purification festivals and rites such as *Robigalia*, which, as has already been mentioned, transferred into the Christian calendar as Rogation feasts.<sup>68</sup> There are also some

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<sup>66</sup> Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic*, 99.

<sup>67</sup> See Ovid, *Fasti*, Book V 147-158.

<sup>68</sup> It also suggests initiation rites similar to those depicted in the Villa of the Mysteries outside the *pomoerium* of Pompeii, although those are associated to the cult of Dionysius.

links to herbal cures for both sexes as well as the sacrifice of a pregnant sow (*porca*) indicating another link to earth gods such as Demeter.<sup>69</sup>

### **Laribus Praestitibus:<sup>70</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> May**

This appears to have been the most significant celebration on the day, particularly in respect of the civic life of Rome. The *Lares Praestite* were so called because they were represented 'standing in front' (*praestite*), guarding the city. They were the civic equivalent of the *Lares* (and the *Lares Compitales* who protect crossroads) shifting the focus of well-being and worship associated with the household as community to the city as community. These gods were inherited from antiquity and the feast day itself related to the commemoration of the erection of their altar. There were two Lares with a dog at their feet. The Lares were clothed in dog skins suggesting they were chthonic deities appeased by the sacrifice of dogs, similar to Hecate in Greece who also appears in the hymn to Demeter. Plutarch discussed the significance of these deities in his *Questiones Romanae*.<sup>71</sup>

### **Ludi Florae: 28<sup>th</sup> April-4<sup>th</sup> May**

The group of feasts listed above occur within a period of the Roman Calendar designated for the games called *ludi florae* in honour of the god Flora which ran in Rome for five days from 28<sup>th</sup> April to the 3<sup>rd</sup> May. The festivities were based around the temple dedicated to Flora (c. 240BC) built on the *Clivus Publicus* (the current Clivio dei Publici) just south of the Circus Maximus (See Fig. 2.8) in a location outside Rome's ancient sacred *pomoerium* but inside the templum demarcated by the Republican Servian walls that had been re-built in the fourth century BC.<sup>72</sup> Thus the feast occurred outside the inner *pomoerium* that was

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<sup>69</sup> Demeter originally formed a triad with Hecate as Crone and Persephone (Core, Demeter's daughter) as the maiden in the story related to the fertility of the land and death. See also of the second labour of Hercules. The monster of the story, the Hydra, had a dog-shaped body with many heads). Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Penguin UK, 1990), 124.4.

<sup>70</sup> See Ovid, *Fasti*, Book V 132-158.

<sup>71</sup> Plutarch, *Quaestiones Romanae*, 51.1.

<sup>72</sup> Filippo Coarelli, *Rome and Environs: An Archaeological Guide* (University of California Press, 2007), 325. The boundary of Rome defined by the Servian walls reflected an enlarged area including the Aventine hill, but the boundary of the original foundation would still have held significance as the path of the original ritual. The walls were begun under the rule of Tarquinius Priscus (616-579BC) but built by his successor Servius Tullius (king from 575-535BC) then later

divided into four administrative regions, named after the four city districts—*Palatina, Collina, Esquilina, and Suburana*—for the registration of property,<sup>73</sup> in a part of the city inside the walls designated simply as ‘property of Rome’ (Fig 2.7).<sup>74</sup>

The games grew out of an informal event related to the punishment of land-grabbing senior officials,<sup>75</sup> and as a result, they were coarse and more associated with plebes—who were more willing to ‘feast’ at this auspicious time—than consuls. Along with the inevitable commercial activity that accompanies gatherings of large numbers of people, prostitutes were allowed to participate in the festivities, as were various animals that were seen to most clearly reflect fertility. The whole event was funded by the fines collected over the year for the property offenses that had spawned the event in the first place.<sup>76</sup> However, although many of the festal activities were condemned by the elites who were more focused on the ‘auspicious’ period of the year—as well as later by St Augustine who used the activities of this particular feast as an argument against the classical city<sup>77</sup>—it would be a mistake to consider them as without significance and symbolic merit to the city as a whole. As Wiseman states:

To moralists like Cato and religious purists like Varro, it was all very disgraceful. But to the Roman people, and the ambitious *aediles* whose job it was to entertain them at the games, it was surely a proper way to honour the goddess at her holiday time. For all their raunchy style, Flora’s games were like the other dramatic festivals in providing an opportunity for the

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rebuilt on the same foundations in the fourth century. See also H. L. Havell, *Republican Rome*, 1st edition (Royston, England: Oracle, 1996), 13.

<sup>73</sup> The pomerium also included the sacred area of the Capitoline but this was outside these four administrative areas.

<sup>74</sup> Havell, *Republican Rome*, 16. It is possible that property in the country outside the pomerium was joined with these districts like the Sienese Contrada. It is also interesting to observe that when, in Florence the second set of Commune walls were built (1283-1333) the Commune redefined the city administrative districts from six (in operation since the building of the first set of Commune walls in 1173-75) to four even though these new areas were inevitable larger than their predecessors. They were, however, further subdivided into three Gonfalons each.

<sup>75</sup> ‘In or about the year 240BCE two plebeian aediles [Roman Magistrates] with the appropriate name of Publicius punished rich land owners who were illegally occupying public land; they brought the culprits to trial before the people, fined them heavily, and with the proceeds built the Clivus Publicius up from the Circus Maximus to the Aventine.’ T.P. Wiseman, ‘The Games of Flora’, in *The Art of Ancient Spectacle*, ed. B.A Bergmann and C. Kondoleon (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1999), 196.

<sup>76</sup> Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic*, 110.

<sup>77</sup> St Augustine, *The City of God*, bk. ii. Ch. 27. quotes Cicero 2 Verr. 5,14,36 and in Catiline, 3,8.

creation and re-creation of the Romans' concepts of their gods, their city and their past.<sup>78</sup>

The fact that the location of the temple, and most of the festivities associated with the *ludi floriae*, was outside the *pomoerium* but inside the *templum* is perhaps significant in this regard. In the urban context of Rome, and even more broadly in early Christianity, although it is important to appreciate that these feasts celebrated issues of fertility rather than 'personalised sexuality'<sup>79</sup> they were still often too vulgar to be accepted as part of a recognisable civic sensibility. Even if they did have value in their ability to highlight the reciprocity between cyclical ritual time associated to reproductive nature (*natura naturans*) and other aspects of ritual time linked to history (including paradigmatic history and creation—*natura naturata*) the representational form of their enactment was often unpalatable for the urban elite. As Wiseman suggests, this type of ritual activity, built into civic feasts, was central to the way the citizens were able to articulate their engagement with the sacred world (both in the countryside and the city) and represent how just order is revealed and mediated.<sup>80</sup> Both the financing of the event (managed by fines collected for the transgression of the law) and its enactment (represented by the controversial behaviour of many 'unsavoury' outsiders) reveal, if not a complete order built off disorder, at least an order that challenges the correct way to negotiate civic life. In this regard, the liminal nature of the ritual itself was supported by the ambiguous boundary condition that surrounded the events in relation to the *pomoerium* and *templum* of the city.

### **Fortis Fortunae: 24<sup>th</sup> June**

The Roman feast of *Fortis Fortunae* occurred on the same date as the Christian Feast of San Giovanni and so warrants some mention here to see if, following the development of the feast from the medieval period on, there appears to be any

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<sup>78</sup> Wiseman, 'The Games of Flora', 200.

<sup>79</sup> Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, 134.

<sup>80</sup> During the period in which the feasts of Florence were developing the Bible's paradigmatic Christian history was beginning to be linked to the classical world through the discovery and translation of texts of history and oratory, and also by the persistence of the structure of classical education (the Quadrivium and Trivium). These factors become the critical means through which the city begins to understand itself and organize its institutions.

obvious syncretism. Again, there is no particular record of the specific festival events in Florence and so the events in Rome will be described.

As mentioned already, the beginning of June, certainly up until the Eides,<sup>81</sup> was, like May, not considered an auspicious time for marriage or other celebrations. Nonetheless, following the early part of the month this attitude shifted, partly due to the location of midsummer's day in the latter part of the month. On the 24<sup>th</sup> *Forti Fortunae* was celebrated along the banks of the Tiber near the temples dedicated to *Fortuna*, at least one of which was laid out by Servius Tullius in honour of the victories over the Etruscans and the Samnites:

Quirites, come celebrate the goddess Fors, with joy:  
She has her royal show on Tiber's banks.  
Hurry on foot, and others in swift boats:  
It's no shame to return home drunk.  
Garlanded barges, carry your bands of youths,  
Let them drink deep of the wine, mid-stream.  
The people worship her, because they say the founder  
Of her shrine was one of them, and rose from humble rank,  
To the throne, and her worship suits slaves, because Servius  
Was slave-born, who built the nearby shrines of the fatal goddess.<sup>82</sup>

More than one temple was mentioned, all of which were outside the city proper, and the festival described by Ovid suggests that the feast celebrations travelled south,<sup>83</sup> further down the river, to an original foundation of a temple by Servius on the right bank by the first milepost on the via Portuensis.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> June

<sup>82</sup> Ovid, *Fasti*, Bk. 6, 775.

Ite, deam laeti Fortem celebrate, Quirites!  
In Tiberis ripa munera regis habet.  
Pars pede, pars etiam celeri decurrite cymba,  
Nec pudeat potos inde redire domum.  
Ferte coronatae iuvenum convivium lintres:  
Multaque per medias vina bibantur aquas.  
Plebs colit hanc, quia, qui posuit, de plebe fuisse  
Fertur, et ex humili sceptrum tulisse loco.  
Convenit et servis; serva quia Tullius ortus  
Constituit dubiae templa propinqua deae

<sup>83</sup> Fowler mentions three in his account which he thinks are all on the far (right) bank of the Tiber. Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic*, 161.

<sup>84</sup> 'Ovid must allude to two temples at least, and as two five miles apart can hardly be called *propinqua*, we must suppose that he has in mind that at the first milestone, the old foundation of Servius, and that built by Carvilius near it, which the poet erroneously regards as Servian. In this case also we must assume three temples in Ovid's time, that at the sixth milestone, of which nothing remains at present; one at the first, presumably that generally regarded as



Also, the poem reveals that the feast, like the *Ludi Florae*, was popular with the lower classes because although the temple foundation was in 293BC, at the time it was believed to be by King Servius Tullius (reign 575-535BC) who was allegedly the son of a slave woman.<sup>85</sup> The feast seems to involve recently harvested fruit, vegetables and flowers as well as trips up and down the Tiber on boats for the more affluent members of society. The presence of the other temple dedicated to Fortuna in the area next to the church of Sant' Omobono at the foot of the Capitoline on Rione Ripa, situated on the edge of the Forum Holitorium,<sup>86</sup> does not appear to figure in the festival.<sup>87</sup> Again, even though the temple may have been just outside the *pomoerium* the plebian nature of the feast may have been too bawdy to take place in the shadow of the sacred temples on the Capitoline Hill near the significant Temple dedicated to Hercules.

The feast was large and the activities extended over several days. The two days immediately after the feast were given over to the *Ludi Taurei quinquennales* dedicated to the gods of the underworld and involved the sacrificing of bulls. They were the only circus games to be held in the circus Flaminius (220BC)<sup>88</sup> near the Tiber and included horse racing around the turning post (*circum metam*). The games were followed by a further feast in honour of the *Lares*, which may have been held in similar locations to the feast on May 1<sup>st</sup> even if the *Lares* were of a different order.

The connection with the military is confirmed by the fact that triumphal processions assembled at the circus before progressing to the Roman Forum and

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Servian, to which Varro and Dionysius refer, and Plutarch ...; and that erected by Carvilius.' Samuel Ball Platner and Thomas Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 212. See also Coarelli, *Rome and Environs*, 439.

<sup>85</sup> Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic*, 155. The new wall of Rome built after the Gallic sack of Rome in 390 were also named after Servius Tullius even though he lived nearly two centuries earlier.

<sup>86</sup> A part of the old port of Rome

<sup>87</sup> Amanda Claridge, *Rome* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 284. This appears to have been destroyed near the end of the sixth century BC at the time of the expulsion of the kings and the beginning of the Republic. They were then rebuilt after 396BC, and again in 212BC. Coarelli, *Rome and Environs*, 313.

<sup>88</sup> The circus Flaminius was associated with the plebes and was later demolished, replaced by the Theatre of Marcellus (17BC)

as a result the area is full of sanctuaries founded by Roman generals—the Roman General Aemilius Paullus<sup>89</sup> vowed a temple to Fortuna here.<sup>90</sup> It is also significant that the feast of *Fortis Fortunae* occurs mid-summer because it identifies themes of cosmic order associated with earlier agrarian rituals as well as with aspects of the later Christian calendar which built upon this earlier exemplar.

### 2.3 Roman feasts as a representation of Cosmic Order

The Roman foundation ritual, as has already been suggested, was a development of Etruscan rituals,<sup>91</sup> themselves already a development of earlier rites from across Europe and have deep roots in the European tradition:

... the structure of the rite: divination, limitation, relic-burial, orientation and quartering, are more primitive than the written history of any Italian people.<sup>92</sup>

The ‘quartering’ of a city or piece of land was evident in the rites of many civilisations of the Ancient Near East, and even though no direct trace between these two areas can be made, there are clear similarities that suggest continuity.<sup>93</sup> In the Ancient Near East this ‘quartering’ was not only a means of ordering the palace of the king and the city it incorporated but also a way of centring the order of the ‘known’ world upon the agon of the king.<sup>94</sup> At the centre of these palaces rectangular, four quartered throne rooms were articulated spatially and iconographically to support the rule of the king religiously, politically, militarily,

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<sup>89</sup> Aemilius Paullus (229-10BC) was a Roman Consul and famed Republican General who defeated Macedon. Therefore, in the early Renaissance he could be viewed as a Republican with Imperial ‘patriotic virtues’. Ventrone, ‘La Festa Di San Giovanni : Costruzione Di Un’identità Civica Fra Rituale e Spettacolo (Secoli XIV-XVI)’, 64. For a Roman account of his life see Plutarch, *Roman Lives A Selection of Eight Lives*, ed. Philip A. Stadter, trans. Robin Waterfield, Reissue edition (Oxford ; New York: OUP Oxford, 2008), 36.

<sup>90</sup> Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic*, 165.

<sup>91</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome*, Bk. V, Ch. 1. ‘The Etruscans as a nation were distinguished above all others by their devotion to religious observances, because they excelled in the knowledge and conduct of them ...’

<sup>92</sup> Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, 72. See Chapter 3, ‘Square and Cross’ for a possible history.

<sup>93</sup> See Frost, *Continuity and Transformation in Symbolic Mediation: The Architecture of Early Christianity*.

<sup>94</sup> Ancient Near Eastern city-states had walls identifying the physical boundaries of the palace and the city but there was also a notional boundary or limit of the land outside as far as the point where tribunes were paid to the king. Beyond these boundaries lay ‘chaos’, brought into order (creation) periodically by the army sent out from the centre to conquer new lands. In this sense we can see echoes of the classical tradition of *rus* vs *urb* and the medieval ‘culture’ vs ‘nature’ mentioned earlier.

administratively and economically.<sup>95</sup> Consequently, as in the Roman world, this order was most explicitly revealed through the rituals, manifested in the Ancient Near East as court ceremony. The throne room, as a place for the king to greet tribunes, send out war parties, settle arguments and hold court, was a universal setting that also represented particular events depicted in the throne room in the same cardinal orientation as in the world outside.<sup>96</sup> As a result, the boundaries revealed two modes of temporality that were both rooted in the primary experience of the mediative possibilities of ritual; firstly as a mimetic representation of the time of origins linked to creation itself, where aspects of temporality were fundamentally linked to the repetition of the original cosmogonic act (the origin of time itself) and the possibilities for representing this act as a return or renewal in a sacred context; and secondly, in kingship, the possibility that this could occur within human praxis. To make such mediative possibilities evident, particular forms of speech or actions were often used to define more clearly the primordial aspects of archaic participation in relation to the reciprocity between the pragmatic and paradigmatic modes of time.<sup>97</sup> Although in the ancient Near East, as well as in the early history of Rome, this process was manifested most clearly through the person of the king, the rituals themselves, with their implicit temporal reciprocity, were also a critical reference point. Initially this meant that although the king was the main medium to the gods, it was the role of the king as well as his body that was sacred. Hence the king was always replaceable.

Although by the time of the Catiline conspiracy the Etruscans had similar institutions to Rome—including magistrates and other elected officials running their cities—their civilisation began, like Rome, as a kingship and so carried much of the same iconography as in the Ancient Near East. In this tradition the act of foundation did not arise from choosing a place but from its discovery—through

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<sup>95</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought* (Cornell University Press, 1984), 24.

<sup>96</sup> See for example the Throne room of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud

<sup>97</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History*, trans. W. R. Trask (London: Penguin, 1989), 112ff.

*anamnesis*<sup>98</sup>—articulated in a rite centred on the king, assuring the ritual then became a part of the site’s significance—historically, spatially, and temporally. The rite was the means through which mortals could engage anagogically with the divine, and the Roman foundation ritual manifested this particularly in the act of orientation through the bounding and quartering of the *templum*.

This central ‘cross’ formed the basis of the *Roma Quadrata*, a term not necessarily used to represent a square perimeter boundary but rather a cross which divided places into four—a point often lost in attempts to reconstruct the possible geometrical ordering of the Roman city such as in Watts (Map 2.2).<sup>99</sup> In Rome this act was later reinforced by the division of the city into four tribes in four areas (Suburban, Esquiline, Colline and Palatine) by Servius Tullius in the sixth century BC, Rome’s sixth Etruscan king.<sup>100</sup>

As the Etruscan order evolved the ritual maintained its relevance even with the decline in significance of the king in their republic; mediation became seen as something embodied in the place and the praxis of the rite rather than in the person of the king. Nevertheless, even though this inevitably resulted in stratification broader than the single room or palace (focussed on one individual), the ‘centre’, as well as the boundary, was still significant; after all, the cross of the *Roma Quadrata* does have a centre and a boundary. The boundaries of the town or city were still significant in relation to purification and the mimetic re-founding of order, but the centre became more focussed on the temples of the *Capitol* (a word derived from the Capitoline Hill, site of the main temples of Rome) rather than the Palace (derived from the Palatine Hill, site of the palace). This Capital—or *Campidoglio*—was situated on a species of acropolis, the *Arx*, addressing the main Roman Forum representing the economic and symbolic heart of the town, surrounded by political spaces, temples, baths and markets.

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<sup>98</sup> In Plato’s sense suggested in the *Meno*, that it is a re-discovery of something that was already there.

<sup>99</sup> Watts, ‘The Geometry of the Master Plan of Roman Florence and Its Surroundings’. That is not to say that many towns were square and gridded, only that this was not necessarily the main purpose of the geometry.

<sup>100</sup> Marcus Terentius Varro, *On the Latin Language*, trans. Roland Grubb Kent (London : W. Heinemann, 1938), 41: V. viii, 45.

The heritage of this type of order from the Ancient Near East was articulated most clearly through rituals originating from an undifferentiated 'compact' order that relied on cosmic cycles rather than transcendental hierarchies, as Voegelin states:

Compact blocks of the knowable will be differentiated into their component parts and the knowable will gradually come to be distinguished from the essentially unknowable. Thus, the history of symbolisation is a progression from compact to differentiated experiences and symbols ... At any rate, the civilisations of the ancient Near East ... symbolised politically organised society as a cosmic analogue, as a cosmion, by letting vegetative rhythms and celestial revolutions function as models for the structural and procedural order of society.<sup>101</sup>

Although by the Roman period this type of order had undergone transformation through the 'philosophy' that had emerged in the Greek Polis, it still maintained many of these archaic ideas. Mircea Eliade is often cited to describe this type of compact ritualised engagement with the world, but confuses the extents and limits to the experience inherent to ritual and ontological order. For example, in his work *The Sacred and the Profane* he suggests that:

Every world is the work of the gods, for it was either created directly by the gods or was consecrated, hence cosmicised, by men ritually re-actualising the paradigmatic act of Creation. This is as much to say that religious man can only live in a sacred world, because it is only in such a world that he participates in being, that he has a *real existence* ... The unknown space that extends beyond his world ... represents absolute non-being.<sup>102</sup>

The issue with this definition is that, while it maintains the importance of the analogical aspects of ritual it problematizes the dialectic between the two modes of temporality described above. If one understands Eliade's statement as a description of the difference between bounded and unbounded space or temporality, inside or outside the boundaries of the kingdom (in terms of the Ancient Near East) it has some credence, as all space within the kingdom was sacred, hence ordered and open to being. If, however, the statement is placed within the idea of the Roman world it is less meaningful. The dialectic of in/out was replaced by one of pragmatic/paradigmatic; the same space had multi-valency within the Republic depending on the particular time of the year and consequently

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<sup>101</sup> Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, 5.

<sup>102</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. W.R. Task (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1959), 64.

Eliade's suggestion that mundane experience is a form of non-being loses this tension. This can be best illustrated by the shift from the temple-palace to the polis in ancient Greece, a shift which is rehearsed in Italy several centuries later, from the Etruscan palace-culture to the Republic:

After the collapse of the Mycenaean kingship, when the palace centred system and the figure of the [king] had disappeared, nothing remained of the old royal rituals but vestiges whose meaning had been lost. The memory of the king who periodically recreated the order of the world had been obliterated; the bond that had once existed between mythical deeds attributed to the sovereign and the functioning of natural phenomena was no longer so clearly visible. The ... limitation of royal power thus contributed to the separation of myth from ritual in which it had originally been rooted. Released from the religious observance on which it had first been the oral commentary, the tale could become more autonomous and disinterested. In certain respects, it prepared for and prefigured the work of philosophy.<sup>103</sup>

It is critical to note here that although Vernant is right to suggest that the order of the world represented most clearly by the palace/city structures of the Ancient Near East had been 'obliterated', much of the content that underpinned the articulation of ritual survived in myth as well as the buildings which housed court and religious ceremony. Alongside this, the transition from 'compact' to 'differentiated' occurred through the amalgamation of a number of other factors. Firstly the growth of the Eastern empires strained the centre of the ecumene where one city had to be seen as the centre of many diverse but contiguous city-states (such as under Darius III in 331 BC) but also because new revelations of a transcendent god in the region had begun to change the horizons of architecture and its meaning in the first place, questioning such 'compact' ideas of centre (for example at Akhnaton's El-Amarna).<sup>104</sup> So, in the Greco-Roman city order began to be articulated through its people—ultimately as a democratisation of symbolic order, and this symbolic order can be traced in some aspects of the architecture as well as in rituals.

Nevertheless, care must be taken in suggesting that this is a moment of continuity as often it is in the nature of any evolving tradition to create new forms in response

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<sup>103</sup> Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, 116.

<sup>104</sup> Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, 101.

to changing conditions. For example, the *Roma Quadrata* has often been cited by some historians of the Christian world as evidence of the cross used in urban planning because in maps and plans it is often possible to find traces of the cross (in non-Christian as well as Christian cultures). In reality, the right angle has symbolic meaning in many cultures. Therefore, the question of the use of the cross in any culture must address aspects of understanding as well as interpretation.

### **Conclusion**

The festival, at once both ritual and mundane act, was utilised within Roman culture as a way of re-enacting and revealing the principal ordering of the town. The particular 'time out of time' inherent to such events, offers the twofold aspect of temporality mentioned with respect to the Ancient Near East (i.e. the original cosmogonic act and the beginnings of time itself; and the representation of this act as a return or renewal in a sacred context) but was also able to accommodate more sophisticated ideas inherent to a more 'differentiated' culture. Gadamer suggests that within this more complex paradigm, the individual and history also begin to play their part:

For the structure of the historical world is not based on facts taken from experience which then acquire a value relation, but rather on the inner historicity which belongs to experience itself. It is a living historical process and its paradigm is not the discovery of facts, but that strange fusion of memory and expectation into a whole that we name experience and that we acquire through experiences.<sup>105</sup>

It was to try to address this issue that Victor Turner, after Van Gennep, suggested that festivals offer three phases of engagement mentioned in the last chapter.<sup>106</sup> For Turner, the 'liminal' nature of such an experience, offered access to the divine through a ritual act within the urban landscape and, therefore, although it is possible to trace some aspects of a festival, or develop descriptive narratives for the settings (i.e. the architecture and the city) it is the act itself which carries the meaning alongside the setting—one cannot exist without the other. As Rykwert

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<sup>105</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 195.

<sup>106</sup> Section on the Hermeneutics of Festival

stated in the earlier quotation this sort of rite cannot be described in a purely rational or mythical way, it has to be understood as an enactment, 'an action'.<sup>107</sup>

Thus the festival is perhaps, in the end, the surest mode to reveal or evaluate the city's origins. However, because in contemporary theory rituals are mostly associated with specific pieces of architecture rather than the places in-between, the urban contribution to the mediation is often overlooked and in overlooking this 'in between' it is easier to evaluate architecture through its form rather than through the actions and activities it accommodates (and has accommodated). Evaluating this layering is the first step in revealing the depth of meaning present in the contemporary feast which are—at least partly—inherited. If this is the case then at least some aspects of the iconography described in this chapter would have remained apparent in the Christian Milieu (and beyond), where, the idea of origins became associated to the idea of creation itself.

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<sup>107</sup> Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, 88.



## Chapter 3 – Feudal Florence and the Emergence of the Commune<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire in Europe, even though the locus of power, influence and economic activity shifted away from towns and cities into the courts of the landed nobility and the vast monasteries of the countryside, the presence of many significant Roman buildings played a key part in the development of Early Christian Architecture. Even though these building types were often transformed to accommodate new Christian Rituals—such as can be seen in the early Christian basilica and the round church—their basic taxonomy was still evident and therefore contributed to shaping the rituals they housed.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, in addition to the ‘conversion’ of these architectural examples of a ‘material’ tradition, continuity was also supported through aspects of ‘intangible’ culture in the enactment of rituals (including processions) that were transformed into fragments of Christian liturgy.

With the exception of Northern Italy—where some towns founded by the Romans maintained an active civic identity—the drift away from the cities had a significant impact on the praxis of the Roman city that was outlined in the last chapter. Duby suggests that later this desire to re-settle and remain on the land contributed to the deterioration of civic culture as a whole:

This [deterioration] was not a consequence of Germanic influences overwhelming Roman, of barbarism driving out civilisation; change had already begun to take place before the destruction of classical culture of the ancient world. It was connected to ruralisation: the city, which had been conceived as a stage for the exhibition of public power, was slowly invaded by the countryside, while the power of the magistrate was increasingly scattered among the rustic households. Imperceptibly the “court” supplanted the city as the primary model of social life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lauro Martines defines a Commune as ‘... a sworn association of free men collectively holding some public authority. Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 18.

<sup>2</sup> For discussion on the transformation of the Roman Basilica see Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Yale University Press, 1992). Krautheimer, *Rome, Profile of a City, 312-1308*. and For the development of the round church see Krautheimer, ‘Introduction to an “Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture”’. and C.W. Frost *Continuity and Transformation in Symbolic Mediation: The Architecture of Early Christianity*, unpublished M.Phil. Thesis, The University of Cambridge. 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Duby, *A History of Private Life*, 14.

Jones explains this shift as one of ‘social custom ... from “city” to “tribe”, *civilitas* to *incivilitas* ...’<sup>4</sup> and although it can be argued that this change led to a shift in the economic focus of medieval communities to outside the city the change was not universal.

Initially, much of this tradition (both in terms of architectural form and the rituals housed) was articulated in and around churches (rural or urban), but in the early medieval period continuity was most evident in the monastic settlements of Europe where the idea of the classical city, embodied in the structure of the monasteries themselves, was most clearly preserved—perhaps most notably in the plan of St Gall drawn circa 820 (Fig. 3.1).

The Plan of St Gall is a work of the Middle Ages, not of late antiquity. It was shaped by the special role conferred on the monasteries by the Frankish kingdom. They saw themselves compelled to evolve new sets of buildings facilitating the fulfilment of their novel civilising mission. Monasteries became centres of agriculture, links in the chain of defence, hosts to the progress of the peripatetic court; they became schools, chanceries, centres of research and missionary bases. In many monasteries the abbacy was a political office, sometimes more high ranking than that of bishop or count. The entire monastery emerged as a political institution.<sup>5</sup>

But at the same time as being significant institutions for the administration of the feudal landscape, they were also built to accommodate all aspects of the life of the monk. Prayer, sleeping, learning, eating, growing etc had all developed particular forms of accommodation. However, since early monasticism, the task of the Middle Ages, with the help of some aspects of the classical tradition gleaned from texts and the urban traditions that had survived, was to find the ‘best’ ordering of such institutions as cities.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, such continuity still manifested clear differences from its forbears:

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<sup>4</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Wolfgang Braunfels, *Monasteries of Western Europe: The Architecture of the Orders* (New York, N.Y: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1980), 28.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Braunfels, *Urban Design in Western Europe: Regime and Architecture, 900-1900* (University of Chicago Press, 1990), 13. For example when Alcuin was given control of the national shrine in Tours, it included an overall population of around 20,000. Braunfels, *Monasteries of Western Europe*, 31. In this work he has a chapter entitled ‘St Gall Utopia’. The idea of ‘Utopia’ or ‘Ideal’ are still too early. In fact Braunfels argues in his text that the ‘utopian’ plan was only made for contemplation. This places it in the tradition of the Neo Platonists and is closer to the original intention. See fragment of the letter from Gozbert in Braunfels, 46.

In the Middle Ages the great contrast was not, as it had been in antiquity, between the city and the country (*urbs* and *rus*, as the Romans put it) but between nature and culture, expressed in terms of the opposition between what was built, cultivated, and inhabited (city, castle, village) and what was essentially wild (the ocean and forest, the western equivalents of the eastern desert), that is, between men who lived in groups and those who lived in solitude.<sup>7</sup>

Monasteries, as large institutions designed for such ‘communal living’, emerged all over Europe from the fourth century on, and although in the main were situated outside larger towns or cities, they remained significant representations of culture, seen, in part, as a counterbalance to the sinful life persisting within towns still rife with decadent urban culture that had survived the decline of the later empire. But as the towns developed and became more prosperous, the ritual tradition preserved in monastic life was utilised by the church—particularly in parts of northern Italy—to lay the foundations for the ritual/ceremonial organisation and structure of their developing city-states. This chapter covers this period of migration back to the city and the impact it had upon the architecture and civic culture of Florence

### **3.1. The Origins of the Florentine Commune**

- **Political and Governmental Developments to Around 1200**

Following the decline of the Roman Empire the area around Florence fell under the authority of various different regimes. Although one of the first of these invaders, Radagisius had been defeated outside Florence in 405, throughout the fifth century the Goths held power over much of Italy, with the Arian Goth, Theodoric the Great (454-526), in control of the region until his death in 526. Theodoric brought with him the iconography of Arian dualism (evident in the mosaics and churches of his regional capital Ravenna) but did not enforce his beliefs or laws on all his subjects; land was divided between the existing land-owning nobility and his own conquering nobles thus creating a mixed landed aristocracy; and civilised Roman citizens were allowed to continue living in the towns and cities under Roman law meted out by Roman Judges run in parallel with his own legal

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<sup>7</sup> Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, 58.

administration.<sup>8</sup> Thus many of the urban traditions of the Roman Empire managed to survive relatively intact under the rule of the Goths.

Following this period of subjugation to Arian Goth invaders from 535-40 the peninsula was briefly brought back into the Byzantine Empire by the Emperor Justinian (482-565) but was soon reconquered by the Goths under General Totila. Initially Totila attempted to take all parts of the peninsula but following the sack of Florence by his forces in 542 he left most of the fortified coastal Byzantine towns alone and only took control of the inland areas. Totila's policy with respect to the vanquished people was as generous as it had been under Theodoric, and so, although it was not presented so positively in the city's chronicles (Fig. 2.5),<sup>9</sup> like the other Goth invaders before him in the region, the effect of his rule upon the indigenous Romanised culture was minimal.<sup>10</sup>

Following a brief period of Byzantine rule under Justinian and his son (Map 3.1), around 578 the area was attacked by Lombards.<sup>11</sup> Like Totila, the Lombards aimed to conquer the whole peninsula but in the end were unable to hold many coastal areas; or the southern part of the region governed by the Duchy of Rome (later transformed into the Papal States); or the Greek dominated southern portion (which was later overseen by a succession of different rulers).

Although the Lombards and their new subjects were from different traditions they were both divided into three estates; those who pray (*oratores*); those who fight (*bellatores*); and those who work (*laboratores*). Under the Goths the culture of all of these estates had remained relatively intact, however, these new conquerors mistrusted the defeated Roman and Byzantine heritage and as a consequence, unlike the Goths, created a single administration under a single legal system and ousted most of the incumbent landed gentry replacing them with Lombards. All these changes made little difference to the *laboratores* of the 'third estate' who saw

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<sup>8</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Hartwig, *Quellen und Forschungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Stadt Florenz*, 56.

<sup>10</sup> Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (University of California Press, 1990), 353ff.

<sup>11</sup> Also known as the Langobards.

only different masters,<sup>12</sup> but for the civilised population of the two governing 'estates' the modifications were more radical. Schevill goes as far as to say that these combined factors were catastrophic to the local remnants of classical culture:

The Lombard state signified the forceful imposition on Italy of a harsh, cruel, and primitive politico-social system under which the peninsula made its final plunge into barbarism ... the last dim tapers of classical culture guttered and went out.<sup>13</sup>

This 'collapse' of classical culture was certainly an important factor in the early years of the occupation resulting in a gradual decline in population throughout region, particularly in the towns where by the mid-seventh century around one hundred urban episcopal seats had been lost.<sup>14</sup> But even in the face of this depopulation the local classical traditions persisted and these 'last dim tapers' of civic culture were far from extinguished. Hence Martines is more circumspect than Schevill, suggesting that although the aggressive tactics of the Lombard invaders had been initially successful—particularly in the countryside—it had not penetrated all aspects of the richer and more established classical culture evident in many Etruscan/Roman towns and cities prior to their arrival:

In central and upper Italy this meant about forty different sites. The peninsula's urban-civic traditions had survived even in the north despite the devastating invasions of the sixth and eighth centuries—which is not to deny breaks in those traditions. The organization of trades largely collapsed; ...<sup>15</sup>

Thus, even though the period saw a significant drop in economic activity, culturally it still maintained strong links with its Roman past. So much so that after many years in the region many of the resident Lombards had succumbed to the more sophisticated culture of the indigenous 'Romans' and with increasing assimilation many classical traditions began to recover. As early as 677, a peace treaty signed between the Lombards and Byzantium made no distinction between tribal origins and confirmed the ownership of land to whoever held it at that time. The combined result of these factors was that by the time Lombard King Liutprand (712-744)

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<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, for the average labourer the city did offer more opportunities than the countryside. For example, serfs escaping the feudal agrarian landscape in Germany could claim freedom from their lord if they had remained unchallenged in a town or city for a year and a day—hence the medieval German saying '*Stadtluft macht frei nach Jahr und Tag*'

<sup>13</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 18.

<sup>14</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 58.

<sup>15</sup> Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 11. Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 73.

was ruling the region, most of the Lombard families were completely integrated; they wore the same clothes; ate the same food; spoke the same language; and following their gradual conversion to Catholicism, worshipped in the same churches. The resurgence of Catholicism resulting from this assimilation also brought with it the return of Roman law—which had remained the law used by the church throughout the period of Lombard rule but now extended to society as a whole. Thus the religious and legal revival steeped in the rhetoric and dialectic of the classical world brought with it a resurgence in the idea and spirit of Rome (*romanitas*).<sup>16</sup>

In Florence during much of the period of Lombard rule the urban aristocracy, along with other landowners in the region, had created lower ranking knights (mostly from the more affluent and higher ranking locals) to run their landholdings.<sup>17</sup> This consideration—combined with the fact that by the time the pope, with the help of the Franks, removed the Lombards from the area in 774—meant that Florence, with its new-found trading prowess, was already in a position to argue for increased regional significance. Consequently, the various classes in a position to rule the city began to seek a form of governance that would be satisfactory to all.<sup>18</sup> In this potentially seditious environment the established aristocracy of the city (and surrounding landscape) tended to identify with the Emperors and became known as Ghibellines; and those from lesser families who had begun to find success within the trading opportunities of the region sided with the pope and became known as Guelfs.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Administering Roman law required skills that were prevalent in the clergy but also in the class of secular legal officials who formed a significant part of the clerical court Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 87.

<sup>17</sup> Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 11. Offers a description of the challenges between these different strands of nobility who tended, over time to drift towards the cities. On the other hand, Jones suggests that the '... aggressive policy of town toward country ... [and possibly] the communal movement itself, one powerful influence was a rooted class difference, unappeased in 1037, between the lesser (or urban) and greater (or rural) aristocracy.' Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 147.

<sup>18</sup> The new affluent *cives* (money lenders, merchants, notaries, freeholders and some tradesmen—sometimes also known as the 'Fourth Estate') who demanded a position higher than the unskilled workers of the city (the *popolino*), plus the additional layer of rural aristocracy who held property within the city.

<sup>19</sup> It is important to note here that this division allegiances later became the foundation for the main political parties of Florence; the *Ghibellines* who supported the German Emperor's claims to the

As a result of all of these conditions, over time, the administration of commercial centres such as Florence began to support a ‘... a trading class with corporate identity, the first bourgeoisie’,<sup>20</sup> who were not governed from the rural castles and strongholds of the landed nobility but from *grandees* living in houses in the towns. In addition to these changes, and coupled with the momentum created by new economic successes, even as early as 854 Florence and its *contado*,<sup>21</sup> run by this urban nobility, was the largest in Tuscany and included what had been the independent area originally controlled by Fiesole.<sup>22</sup> For Jones this change was an economically driven revolution:

When the towns recovered and multiplied ... they assumed, almost by default, ... a form and function not merely different (in the tradition of pre-Roman towns), but fundamentally new. They were not primarily political or social centres, but essentially economic; not integrated with a territory but increasingly distinct, socially, legally and administratively.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, the new institutions were not wholly run by the new city elites and continued to be subject to the corrupting influence and simony of the old feudal order. Culturally, the nobility was used to being in control and so in the beginning changes to the system resulted only in the ‘promotion’ of low-born men through employment as *scabini*<sup>24</sup>—peripatetic judges who assisted the local count in the administration of justice. However, such promotions always had a price and certainly by the time that the Lombards were replaced by the Franks in the ninth century, many such men were acting purely on behalf of the local aristocracy rather than for the good of justice or the advancement of trade.<sup>25</sup> Equally, *Podestàs*<sup>26</sup> appointed to cities in the region by the distant rulers to oversee justice

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region; and the *Guelphs*, a reforming party who supported the claims of the Pope in the area, albeit on the condition that his influence in the city would remain marginal.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 33.

<sup>21</sup> The lands around the city that were controlled by the city government.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz*. (Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn, 1896), Vol. I, 27.

<sup>23</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 29.

<sup>24</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 31.

<sup>25</sup> Francis N. Estey, ‘The Scabini and the Local Courts’, *Speculum* 26, no. 1 (1951): 119.

<sup>26</sup> The role of the *podestà* was central to the government of the early communes. They were generally nobles from different cities skilled in organisation but without allegiances within the city they helped govern. Their appointment was for a fixed term and ultimately they had to account for their period of rule before they were allowed to leave the city upon completion of their term of government. By 1193, when the term is first used in connection with Florence, the relation to the

and order—later also a significant appointment of the communal governments—were also originally directed from above, retained by the emperor to administrate specific areas or cities for his own benefit.<sup>27</sup>

What eventually developed was a new form of order that was able to accommodate this new ‘mercantile and bourgeois’ class alongside the older ‘civic and patriarchal’ classes that had ruled the city, creating new checks and balances; the whole structure built off the tradition inherent to Roman law and an idea of the ‘good city’ that re-emerged through the study of rhetoric. However, this course of action was not universally supported and so by the latter part of the tenth century, following the example of Venice, many of the cities of northern Italy that had already established independent institutions had to rebel against their erstwhile rulers and corrupt administrators, often by acquiring particular royal charters linked to the town independent of the local aristocracy—beginning with Genoa in 958, and Florence following around the turn of the century.<sup>28</sup> These newly independent cities began to hold courts in buildings separate from the church or the palaces and castles of the local ruling nobles and clerics, initially in houses before building their own, purpose built courtrooms.<sup>29</sup> Up until this point council meetings were held in churches and some private houses such as the Palazzo Boscoli which housed the Capitano.

As well as the internal feuding between families, artisans and traders the emerging communes of the region were now in direct competition for the productive lands and trade routes of Tuscany and so from 1173-75 the city built a new set of walls (Map 3.5).<sup>30</sup> The new walls, therefore, constituted a defence for the expanding city from all of the various forces that threatened their growing economic influence the region and so it is of consequence that the construction of the first set of walls occurred soon after the creation of the First Lombard League of 1167 (signed by

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emperor is already less important. Equally, this early use of the role was unsuccessful and in Florence power returned to a group of men mostly from noble families appointed as consuls. See chapter 5 for a discussion of the Podestà of Florence in relation to the commune.

<sup>27</sup> The term is first used by Emperor Frederick I (1122-90). Schevill, *History of Florence*, 91.

<sup>28</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 131.

<sup>29</sup> For Florence this was the building of the Bargello in 1255

<sup>30</sup> Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 22.



Venice and 15 other cities). These cities together were determined to reduce Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa's influence in the region to the North of Tuscany. The League eventually won the decisive battle of Legano in 1176 against Frederick and subsequently signed the treaty of Constance; that sanctioned the election of consuls within their Lombard communes; gave them their right to govern their own regions (their *contado*); and to make their own laws. As Martines suggests:

The commune was an association of men bound together by an oath and common interests. They swore to aid and defend one another; they pooled their prestige and minute jurisdictions, if they had any; and they invested their consuls, the official heads of their association, with executive and judicial powers.<sup>31</sup>

At this time the Emperor Frederick believed that the Tuscan communes were 'less volatile' and consequently less dangerous to his rule in the region and so the treaty only related to the communes of Lombardy.<sup>32</sup> However, the Tuscan cities used the treaty as grounds to begin to structure their own similar institutions (and walls) and by the time of the death of Frederick's heir, Henry IV, in 1197 the Tuscan cities had formed a league of their own. This new League, backed by the papacy, was formed to ensure the same rights as their northern colleagues, guaranteeing the same legal and economic freedom in Tuscan cities and their surrounding landscape.

So although Martines suggests that the term '*commune*' can be used in relation to Florence as early as 1138 (about 50 years after Pisa),<sup>33</sup> in fact the institutional order that accompanies such a form of government was not really active until nearer the turn of the century. Nevertheless, the changes were significant, as Jones states;

At all levels of Italian society, in effect if not intention, a revolution appeared to be in progress: a general transformation after centuries from hierarchy to community, 'signoria' to 'commune', or in the imagery of Roman law, from monarchy back to republic, *principatus* to *populous*.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Martines, 27.

<sup>32</sup> Martines, 26.

<sup>33</sup> Martines, 18. Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 134.

<sup>34</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 136.

Therefore, although there appears to be a consensus in historical thought that, during the period of Lombard occupation the economic foundations of these Italian towns collapsed, there is some difference in opinion as to the nature of their revival; Jones considers the institutions of the emerging communes as ‘new’ whereas Martines is content to argue for some aspects of continuity. It is clear that changes to the civic presentation of the towns and cities of the region were acute and differed immensely from earlier forms of classical and feudal governance. However, it would be wrong to assume that the ‘green shoots’ of recovery—even if they were manifested as new economic institutions—were not affected in any way by tradition. Consequently, even though Schevill and Jones imply the renewed economic activity that followed Lombard rule was the key factor in the emergence of the city-state of north Italy, it would appear that the ground for this revival may actually be equally associated with the survival of aspects of classical civic culture such as the festive/ritual activities of the city and the places that accommodated them (the architecture and streets and piazzas places of the city), albeit transformed to support new forms of civic governance. Why this particular development should occur in this part of Europe is partly due to the continuity of inhabitation of the towns and cities of the region in contrast to other parts of Europe, where, as has already been stated, much of the aristocracy had moved their courts to their country seat, but it is also linked to the history of disorder and corruption within the church in Florence.

- **Developments in Church Administration**

Although corruption in the church was common throughout Europe the issue became particularly acute in northern Italy where the clergy held much power within the towns and cities. Consequently, there developed a movement for church reform both locally and nationally. In Florence the call for reform was led, in 1035-37, by the monk Giovanni Gualberto (985/995-1073), who preached against corruption in the churches of Florence—including a condemnation of the then bishop and his wife.<sup>35</sup> As a result of this act Gualberto (canonized 1193) a native of the city became a significant figure in the city’s history, founding the Vallombrosan

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<sup>35</sup> Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz.*, Vol. 1, 56.

Order<sup>36</sup> which, although located some distance from the city, maintained a strong influence there through significant property holdings—including the church of Santa Trinita—and contributed to the drive for overall political reform, advancing ‘civic consciousness’ and ‘group collaboration’ within the city as a whole.<sup>37</sup>

It is perhaps not surprising then that the most notable reformer of the period, Hildebrandt of Sovana (b. 1015), later Pope Gregory VII (1073-85), was nurtured within the environment of a Tuscan town halfway between Florence and Rome. Seeing the possibility of increased threats to the church if corruption continued, Hildebrandt, the most influential administrator at the papal court, helped draft a document presented by the then pope, the German Victor II (1055-57), to the Emperor Henry III (Holy Roman Emperor 1046-1056) at a council in 1055 held at the cathedral of Santa Reparata in Florence. The document is remembered mostly for its condemnation of clerical marriage and simony as well as corruption within the church as a whole;<sup>38</sup> but Hildebrandt’s main concern throughout this period was related to how the two ruling estates engaged in the election of the pope. Although during much of the Middle Ages such elections were supposed to have been the result of an action of the clergy and the people of Rome, they were mostly controlled by the rulers of Europe; a condition that had been made explicit by Henry III who, during his reign, chose five popes, all but one German.<sup>39</sup> Following the death of Henry III in 1059, Hildebrandt convinced Pope Nicholas II to change the system by decree with the result that forthwith, popes were to be elected by a conclave of cardinals, thus removing the most obvious secular abuses from church politics.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> A Benedictine congregation founded in 1138, whose motherhouse, the Abbey of Vallombrosa is around 30km from Florence.

<sup>37</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 147.

<sup>38</sup> Simony—where the nobility paid dues to secure the appointment of a particular person to a position in the church was a problem for the church all through the middle ages and beyond. Dante reserved one whole section of the *Inferno* (XIX, 47, 48) where the Simonists are drowned upside down in small holes or wells. This particular circle of Hell is thought to have been based upon the font in the Baptistery of San Giovanni.

<sup>39</sup> Clement II, Benedict IX (Italian), Damascus II, Leo IX, Victor II.

<sup>40</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 51. The act had the result of cementing the antagonistic relationship between these two estates for the next few centuries.

Following his own election as pope Gregory VII some years later, Hildebrandt developed this theme of church reform further, proclaiming the end of all lay investitures of bishops and abbots. Albeit this was a natural progression from the previous changes in election procedure championed prior to his election, this proposition was much more contentious to the aristocracy and particularly the young Emperor Henry IV because the church owned large landholdings and, therefore, the loss of the fealty of bishops and abbots etc. led to an implicit loss of power over much of the lands of the empire. Nevertheless, the changes were made and thus laid the ground for much of the conflict that existed between church and crown over the next few centuries, and it was in the cities that the politics of this conflict were most visible.

- **Legacy of the changes**

As Florence gained status its population began to grow, causing some conflict with the feudal families who owned most of the landscape surrounding the city. At one point during the middle of the twelfth century this conflict resulted in a papal interdict, removed only when property seized by the city was returned to the aristocrats. This event is one of many over the next century which saw the city form allegiances for and against the emperor and the pope, occurring while the city continued to develop its internal governmental order and how it managed its self-representation. However, even though bloody feuds between Florentine families—common and noble—were frequent, it was this influence of the emperor on the government, particularly through the local nobility, which was most resented.

Like all the rising communes of Italy, the Florentines recognized that the prime obstacles to their power were the great feudal families and that they and their castles would have to be cleared from the path if the city was to enjoy the unhampered growth to which it aspired.<sup>41</sup>

In 1202 this led Florentine troops to attack and finally destroy Otto the Fourth's stronghold of Semifonte, much reducing local imperial power and enabling Florence's influence to spread well beyond the limits of the city walls. It is perhaps not surprising then that this resulted in the second great phase of building the

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<sup>41</sup> Schevill, 60.

baptistery (the building in the city most associated with its civic independence) which continued throughout the century.

- **Chronicle accounts of the period**

As suggested in chapter two, Villani, began to write his chronicle around 1300—using some earlier documents that had commented on the general history and foundation of Florence. The significance of this process of historiography to the chronicles of the early part of the fourteenth century will be discussed further in the next chapter. However, in the period in question here, aligned with the development of the early commune, there were three key sources that began to establish the mythical status of the foundation of the city:

In recording the early growth of the city, [Villani] ... drew directly or indirectly upon previous historical writings, such as the *Chronica de origine civitatis*, Sanzanome's *Gesta Florentinorum*, the so-called chronicle of Brunetto Latini, and the other work described by Hartwig as the *Gesta Florentinorum*, which is not to be confused with Sanzanome's chronicle of the same name.<sup>42</sup>

Apart from Bruno Latini's *Livres dou Trésor*,<sup>43</sup> which Villani used as a source for the later histories of Frederick II and the coming of Charles of Anjou into Italy and so will be more significant in the next chapter, the other three documents form the basis of the history of Florence that, although partially mythological, carried much of the identity of the city and its people. Like many histories of the period these works were both a local and a universal history linking the hierarchy of angelic heavenly order with the mundane tripartite structure of society.<sup>44</sup> However, in reality, the factual knowledge that these chroniclers had was limited:

Following its overthrow when “not a stone was left upon another,” Florence—still according to Villani—lay in undisturbed ruin throughout the Lombard period and was not rebuilt till the time of the Franks, when none other than Charlemagne himself took the good work in hand ... Villani took over the story from his immediate predecessors, the fanciful mythmakers,

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<sup>42</sup> Green, *Chronicle into History*, 14.

<sup>43</sup> This was written in French by Latini at the same period as he wrote his *Tesoretto* in Italian while he was in exile in France 1260-66

<sup>44</sup> See for example *The Two Cities: A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 A.D.* (Columbia university press, 1928). by Otto von Freising (1114-58) written 1143-45 comparing Jerusalem to Babel, but also offering insights into the history of the time, building of the tradition of St Augustine in *The City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge University Press, 1998). See Rubinstein, 'The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence. A Study in Mediaeval Historiography', 200.

and they were stirred to free invention due to the circumstance that no information whatever regarding Florence during the dark period of the Germanic invasion had come down to them.<sup>45</sup>

The *Chronica de origine civitatis*<sup>46</sup> was a compilation of ‘popular legends, mythological traditions and historical facts’<sup>47</sup> derived from earlier classical and medieval writers and was written sometime between the end of the twelfth century and 1231. Sanzanome’s *Gesta Florentinorum*<sup>48</sup> borrows heavily from the *Chronica* but can be dated to after 1231 and is focused on more recent events. The other *Gesta Florentinorum*, reconstructed by Hartwig,<sup>49</sup> has many similarities in content with Sanzanome’s *Gesta* but overall is much broader in scope.<sup>50</sup>

In terms of content, all three texts begin to reveal a local identity associated to the foundation and growth of the city of Florence. That the strength and identity of the northern Italian cities was already well known throughout Europe is confirmed by Otto of Freising in his *Deeds of Emperor Frederick (Gesta Friderici imperatoris, c.1152)* where he indicates that Italians of the Northern plains, particularly Milan, were already independently minded in that they ‘... very frequently receive[d] in hostile fashion him whom they ought to accept as their own gentle prince ...’ and further suggests that they called the lands around the city, rightly owned by nobles, their ‘contado’ (*comitatus*) and used men of inferior rank (‘workers of the vile mechanical arts’) as knights to defend their cities; as a consequence ‘... it has resulted that they far surpass all other states of the world in riches and in power.’<sup>51</sup> Consequently, when Frederick did go to the area to ‘pacify’ the region he was faced with alliances of cities often overseen by the church and linked to the Papal states—not the German church hierarchy championed by Bishop Otto von Freising. But although from the outside the organisation and presence of Florence was apparent to invaders and distant rulers, internally the organisation of the

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<sup>45</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 29.

<sup>46</sup> Hartwig, *Quellen und Forschungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Stadt Florenz*, 35–65.

<sup>47</sup> Rubinstein, ‘The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence. A Study in Mediaeval Historiography’, 199.

<sup>48</sup> Hartwig, *Quellen und Forschungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Stadt Florenz*, 1–34.

<sup>49</sup> Hartwig, 271–96.

<sup>50</sup> Green, *Chronicle into History*, 157.

<sup>51</sup> Otto I (Bishop of Freising) and Rahewin, *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa*, trans. Charles Christo Mierow (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), Bk II, Ch. 13.

governmental hierarchy was in its infancy and consequently, both in its structure and its representation, it leaned heavily on church tradition which, as already has been pointed out, was steeped in the culture of Roman Law. Consequently, the chronicles, using highly articulated rhetoric that was built off surviving examples of Roman writers like Cicero as well as the tradition of the Liberal Arts in education that had survived throughout the medieval period, were designed to describe history in terms related to ideas of a free and 'good' city. Together, these trends began to develop an identity related to 'Republican Liberty'.<sup>52</sup>

This particular aspect of these early chronicles is clearly indicated by the identification of Fiesole as the dialectical counter to the good city of Florence.<sup>53</sup> Although they would have known the Roman sources that reported the Catiline incident outlined in the last chapter, the authors of these chronicles also embellished the story, highlighting the relationship of the foundation of Florence to the life and death of Catiline as well as the brutal murder of the Roman General Florinus and his family by the Fiesoleans.<sup>54</sup> Equally, the significant Roman buildings built during this earlier period (that were visible in the thirteenth century as listed in the last chapter) were described as copied from Roman exemplars and so although the city was soon named after the martyred general, it had also been known as *parva Roma*<sup>55</sup>—Little Rome—a theme linked to the idea of *romanitas* associated with the Catholic church mentioned in the last section. This attempt to strengthen the links with Rome is further evidenced by the fact that they described the occupants as 'Romans' rather than Florentines, thus reinforcing their link with the founding fathers (Sulla or Caesar), the Papal States and the pope (the supreme priest of Rome *pontifex maximus*), as well as a city in direct opposition to Fiesole. In fact, as Rubinstein states, the *Chronica de origine civitatis* is almost symmetrical in composition, with two sections each beginning with the rise of Fiesole at the expense of Florence and ending with its destruction. The most

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<sup>52</sup> Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 28ff.

<sup>53</sup> Rubinstein, 'The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence. A Study in Mediaeval Historiography', 212. It also survives under the name *Libro Fiesolano*. Green, *Chronicle into History*, 156.

<sup>54</sup> Hartwig, *Quellen und Forschungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Stadt Florenz*, 56.

<sup>55</sup> Hartwig, 56. and Rubinstein, 'The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence. A Study in Mediaeval Historiography', 201.

recent sack and destruction of the city of Fiesole in 1125 was, therefore, viewed as a final flourish of Fiesole which was definitively destroyed following a third attempt and then left in ruins,<sup>56</sup> thereafter becoming a part of Florence's *contado*.

These early chronicles then, through links to Caesar and other figures that represented Roman civic virtue, reinforced the connection to a Roman Republican foundation (contra Fiesole and Catiline), presenting Florence as the 'second Rome', arguably worthier than Rome itself of being considered Republican Rome's true heir. And in addition to this noble ancestry taken from the histories of Rome, the chroniclers linked these themes to the mythological foundation of Rome itself. Thus, in a similar way to the later Republican writer Dante used Virgil as a guide through the various layers of the afterlife structured as a continuity with the hierarchies and spaces of medieval society, the early chronicles began their narrative of the history of the city of Florence with links to Troy, in effect continuing the narrative of Virgil's *Aeneid* that was itself composed as a way of sacralising the foundation of Rome for Augustus. The primary difference is that unlike the *Aeneid* where Augustus's direct heritage is linked to the bloodline of the gods and mortals of the Trojan wars, in these chronicles it is the city of Florence that is the power for good set up in opposition to Fiesole and the corrosive civic relationships evident in the late Roman Republic and the Empire.

Although Villani, using the *Chronica de origine civitatis* as his main source for the Roman history of Florence,<sup>57</sup> mentions the later building of the Baptistery of San Giovanni on the site of a Temple of Mars—built to commemorate the victory of Caesar over Catiline,<sup>58</sup> the earlier chronicle only mentions the other Roman buildings evident in the city at the time.<sup>59</sup> This embellishment of the earlier text is thought to be an incorporation of a local legend designed to add weight to the significance of the Baptistery and the site upon which it stands to the identity of

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<sup>56</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 79.

<sup>57</sup> Green, *Chronicle into History*, 155ff.

<sup>58</sup> Giovanni Villani, *Cronica*, ed. Giovanni Porta, Edizione di riferimento Nuova Cronica (Palma: Ugo Guanda Editore, 1991), Bk. 1, chap. 42.

<sup>59</sup> Hartwig, *Quellen und Forschungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Stadt Florenz*, 55.



the city as a whole—particularly in relation to its republican credentials.<sup>60</sup> To understand this in more detail and relate this aspect of the historiography of Florence to the architecture and processional order of the city, the history of this building, and others within the ‘Early Commune’ need to be described.

### 3.2. The Medieval City as Seen

Even though during the ‘dark ages’ much of the Roman fabric of Europe was plundered and left to ruin,<sup>61</sup> it remained a significant factor in the evolving political climate of the region and, in some cases, helped to form continuities—even amidst dramatic cultural change. For example, the Christian Basilica emerged as a result of a transformation of its original legal function—the local governor/judge (and vicarious representative of the emperor) became, for Christians, the Bishop representing Christ as *logos* and eschatological judgement. Temples, on the other hand, tainted as they were by pagan sacrifice, were more contentious and so the conversion of temples into churches in Italy was a slow process with the first instances occurring as late as the sixth century.<sup>62</sup>

In Florence and its surrounding *contado*, from the spoliation of building elements for use in castles and parish churches, to the adaption of complete Roman buildings and spaces such as the gates, forum and stadium—like the vestiges of Roman law—the legacy of Rome remained visible even if it was subject to further transformations or additions required by new layers of governance.<sup>63</sup> It could be argued that the use of various basilicas for meeting of the senior representatives of the early commune is one such aspect of syncretism, even if by 1335 city statutes no longer allowed such civic meetings to take place ‘in a church, in a cloister or in a cemetery’.<sup>64</sup> Beyond this continuation (and the survival of the gates, walls and

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<sup>60</sup> Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes, 1125-1325* (Penn State Press, 2010), 9.

<sup>61</sup> Bryan Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy, AD 300-850* (Oxford: OUP, 1984), 14.

<sup>62</sup> Although temples were converted into churches in other parts of the empire from the fourth century, in Italy it was later and in Rome it was as late as 609 (over two centuries after the legal closure of all Roman temples) that the first temple (the Pantheon) was converted into a church (S. Maria Rotunda). Krautheimer, *Rome, Profile of a City, 312-1308*, 72.

<sup>63</sup> Krautheimer, 124.

<sup>64</sup> Fanelli, *Firenze, architettura e città*, 26.

Forum) the Roman fabric was merely assimilated into the background order of the city.

- **First set of Commune Walls (1173-75)**

It is clear that during the periods of Byzantine rule the population of the city reduced, with Malispini (allegedly writing in the thirteenth century) suggesting a new inner wall was constructed to protect this smaller area (Map 3.3a).<sup>65</sup>

However, more recent archaeological work by Scampoli et al (2007) suggests that there is a possibility to interpret this 'reduction' still in terms of the original Roman walls; a theory presented earlier by Davidsohn as well as by Schevill who both argue that although chronicles suggest that, following the sack of Florence by Totila in 542 the Roman walls were razed, they were still evident well into the twelfth century:

The Roman walls, far from being levelled with the ground, as would have been the case if the reported destruction by [...] Totila had occurred, stood whole and unimpaired until as late as the twelfth century. Having by that time lost their usefulness, they were ordered removed because the town, now embarked on a career of rapid expansion, had burst its bounds and required for the protection of its citizens and their houses and property a second and ampler circle of walls.<sup>66</sup>

For Davidsohn, on the eve of the construction of the first set of new walls that were built to create a defensive boundary for the expanded commune as it neared the end of the twelfth century, the Roman walls were visible, if a little lower than when they were originally constructed.<sup>67</sup> During the period between the construction of the two sets of walls there were additions, deviations and patches to the original Roman walls but these alterations do not feature in the chronicles of the city—although it is possible that Byzantine re-foundation of the city, and then the Carolingian re-foundation may have been accompanied by some rebuilding of the city's defences.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Emiliano Scampoli, *Firenze, archeologia di una città, secoli I a.C.-XIII* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2010), 129.

<sup>66</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 30. Others continue to argue for the existence of these Byzantine inner walls. Silvano Fei, *Firenze: Profilo di storia urbana = Florence: an outline of urban history* (Firenze: Alinea, 1995), 13.

<sup>67</sup> Davidsohn, *Geschichte von Florenz*, 1:735.

<sup>68</sup> Scampoli, *Firenze, archeologia di una città, secoli I a.C.-XIII*, 175.

On a simple level the building of the first set of Commune walls in 1173-75 around the enlarged area suggests a singular identity for the city as well as a move designed to protect a unified populace. This area was then further split into six districts or *Sestieri*, which were, in turn, further subdivided into three or four Gonfaloni (Map 1.2).<sup>69</sup> These subdivisions—designed to ensure each area of the city was represented within the Commune, and to help structure any draft or revenues required for the protection of the city—became very strong associations and, as a consequence, were often considered much more important with respect to betrothals than links through the parishes, which sometimes straddled boundaries of the Gonfaloni.<sup>70</sup> As such it would be a mistake to assume the expansion of the city and the introduction of the *Sestieri* was a simple undertaking because the new divisions had to recognise some existing conditions as well as try to structure new associations that would build a more prosperous future. The tradesmen associated with each district (Map 3.6), plus the local nobility, as well as the manual workers, were all necessary for the prosperity of each district and the city as a whole, but equally, they all had different visions of how this change should be brought about.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, coupled with competition between districts there was also disagreement between the different estates, as well as clashes within the parties of the emerging ruling oligarchies. This was particularly clear within the older families of the city that were divided between allegiances to the emperor (such as the Ghibelline Uberti family who had also declared for the Cathars (Map 3.7) and other consular families (such as the Giandonati) who were papist and consequently sympathetic to the Guelph cause. Both these families were powerful and had strong presence within the city, particularly by the Arno ports and the Ponte Vecchio (Map 3.5).<sup>72</sup> Such rivalry, within the curtilage of the new commune

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<sup>69</sup> These six districts survived until the city replaced this structure with the four Quartieri in 1343. The six districts were; San Pier Scherragio; Oltrarno; Borgo; San Pancrazio; Porta del Duomo; Porta San Pietro.

<sup>70</sup> In 1343, when these *Sestieri* were replaced by Quartieri, some Gonfaloni retained their name and their boundaries. But because some churches had been replaced—including the cathedral—others demolished and the city itself grown, some parishes also switched allegiance, or were assigned to Gonfaloni with a new name.

<sup>71</sup> 'Urban policy became trade policy ...'. Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 32.

<sup>72</sup> The Giandonati family owned property on the river by the Ponte Vecchio. The Uberti family owned the large Carolingian fort on the river—the *Castrum Altrafrontis*—shown in a document of 1180, although it is unknown when it came into their ownership. Scampoli, *Firenze, archeologia di una città, secoli I a.C.-XIII*, 236.

walls, was often as destructive to the city (now with a population of about 50,000) as actions from the outside to the extent that, in 1177,<sup>73</sup> this particular feud could have been responsible for two major fires that ravaged the city.<sup>74</sup>

The new walls, although designed to protect a greater area, most of the important families at the time were still located within the area of the old Roman *pomoerium*. It was not until later in the thirteenth century that more of these significant families moved into the new expanded area. However, the wall did extend to envelope two significant churches in the northern part of the city: San Lorenzo and San Pier Maggiore.

- **The Houses of the City**

Within this unstable environment of warring inter and intra city factions, dwellings also had to be part fortress. Thus houses of the city grew to resemble castle keeps, with entrance ladders that could be drawn up at the slightest threat (Fig 3.3). On the narrow urban plots of the old Roman city, this requirement resulted in the development of tall towers on small footprints that could only be expanded by linking to adjoining properties (Fig. 3.2). As a consequence, neighbouring houses often grouped together to make larger strongholds for extended families or associations of different citizens.<sup>75</sup> Like urban castles, these towers sprang up all over the city, their height, strength and stability a symbol of the status of the family or the association that owned them (Fig. 3.4).

Although over the years many of these towers have fallen into decay and been replaced, many were also destroyed because they were seen as symbols of the conflict raging through the commune in the first half of the thirteenth century.<sup>76</sup> This 'cleansing' of property was undertaken by both sides of the conflict throughout the early part of the century, beginning with the Buondelmonte

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<sup>73</sup> The same year as the defeat of Frederick Barbarossa at the battle of Ascanio.

<sup>74</sup> The fact these fires were soon followed by a flood that destroyed the main bridge was just unlucky. Scampoli, *Firenze, archeologia di una città, secoli I a.C.-XIII*, 239.

<sup>75</sup> James Wood Brown, *The Builders of Florence* (New York: E.P Dutton & Co., 1907), 81.

<sup>76</sup> For a list of the surviving towers see Fortunato Grimaldi, *Le 'case-torri' di Firenze: itinerari storici e turistici* (Tassinari, 2005).

murder in 1216,<sup>77</sup> but came to a head in the middle of the century by the Ghibellines who, following their later victory at the battle of Montaperti in 1260, demolished over 85 towers, 103 palaces, and 580 houses belonging to the defeated Guelphs (Map 3.8).<sup>78</sup> As a result of this brutal destruction, six years later, following the victory of the Guelph forces at the battle of Benevento, Ghibelline property was also razed and plundered. Amidst this violent exchange, in 1258, all houses that had belonged to the Uberti were destroyed and the beginning of the Piazza della Signoria laid out on top of the foundations to ensure they could never be reconstructed (Fig. 3.5). The Florentines never repeated this wholesale destruction of domestic property on the same scale even though there were many different internal struggles that resulted in exile and the looting of defeated city factions. It seems that once the institutions of the Commune began to become the primary symbols of city governance, it was (for the most part) enough to change the personnel that ran the city rather than destroy the places and buildings of the city within which they dwelt. Nevertheless, it should be noted that prior to this period of brutal destruction, in the early twelfth century the silhouette of Florence would have had some similarity to the towering skyline of San Gimignano.

- **The Cathedral of Santa Reparata** (Fig. 3.6-3.9)

The earliest historical document that refers to the church of Santa Reparata dates from 987, however, the chronicles suggest a foundation as early as 406 in an account related to Radagaisus' attack on the city on the feast day of Santa Reparata,<sup>79</sup> the building constructed on the site of the earlier church of San Salvatore (395-423).<sup>80</sup> However, Toker, building his argument on the major excavations that occurred in the mid-seventies, argues that it was probably under the relatively stable rulership of Theodoric (sovereign of Italy 493-526), when all communities were allowed to worship alongside the Arian Goths, that the Christian community would have developed the larger church within the bounds of the old

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<sup>77</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 103ff.

<sup>78</sup> Braunfels, *Urban Design in Western Europe*, 47.

<sup>79</sup> Franklin Toker, 'Excavations Below the Cathedral of Florence, 1965-1974', *Gesta* 14, no. 2 (1975): 17, 26.

<sup>80</sup> Marica S. Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence: The Service Books of Santa Maria Del Fiore* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.

city walls. He argues this partly on the similarity of the internal mosaic decoration of the church which appears to be strongly influenced by Theodoric's Arian churches of Ravenna.<sup>81</sup>

Although by the time of the building of the new Commune walls Santa Reparata was the cathedral of the city, this status had earlier been granted to San Lorenzo (Map 3.1). This originally suburban church, which was sited beyond the northern extent of the Roman defences, was not ideally located to support associations between the Roman and Christian identities of the city but because of the significance of its Ambrosian foundation, and its collection of relics (including those of S. Zenobius), its importance to the identity of the city during its pre-communal period was guaranteed. Nevertheless, when, in the late ninth century, Bishop Andrea of Ireland (869-93) ordered the transferral of St Zenobius's remains, along with the bishop's throne, to Santa Reparata, and then began building a new bishop's palace next to the baptistery, it was clear that the city's cathedral would move to this new religious focus for the city (Fig. 3.6).<sup>82</sup>

Although the church of Santa Reparata was of a similar scale to San Lorenzo at this time, the growing significance St Zenobius as a local saint meant that the small church of Santa Reparata had to be extended to accommodate the increase in pilgrims. Equally, the overall combination of new cathedral with the Bishop's Palace and Baptistery—a grouping recognisable from the tradition of the Carolingian *ecclesia*<sup>83</sup>—created a significant new religious focus for the city which included these new buildings but also the spaces in between (originally also used as a city cemetery).<sup>84</sup>

However, following the shift of focus to Santa Reparata the cathedral was now established in an appropriate location within the city inside, and adjacent to, the old Roman *pomoerium*, but at the same time both the saint and the building were

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<sup>81</sup> The Arian Baptistery (c.500); The Archiepiscopal Chapel (c.500); The early mosaics of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, originally dedicated to Christ the Redeemer in 504.

<sup>82</sup> Toker, 'Excavations Below the Cathedral of Florence, 1965-1974', 31.

<sup>83</sup> Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, *The Cathedral: The Social and Architectural Dynamics of Construction*, trans. Martin Thom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 41ff.

<sup>84</sup> Carla Tomasini Pietramellara, *Battistero Di San Giovanni a Firenze* (Rilievo e studio critico, 1973).

in the process of becoming outgrown by the aspirations of the city. At the time S. Zenobius (who had fought against the Arians) and S. Reparata (where Florentines had been protected in times of siege) were joint patron saints of the city but were perceived to be too partisan in relation to the active political dispute between local supporters of the emperor or the pope. The elevation of the politically 'neutral' San Giovanni neatly avoided such issues.<sup>85</sup> By 1055 when Hildebrandt of Sovana, the future Pope Gregory VII, championed church reform in the synod held in the cathedral, a new larger baptistery building that replaced the smaller existing structure and dwarfed St Reparata was already under construction (Fig. 3.9).<sup>86</sup>

In the mid 11<sup>th</sup> Century, possibly under bishop Gerhard (1046-61)—later elected Pope Nicholas II (1058-61)—S. Reparata was rebuilt to a Cluniac plan and was later further remodelled to accommodate new relics of St Philip under Bishop Giovanni da Velletri (1205-30).<sup>87</sup> Although Toker suggests that the growing obsolescence of the church of S. Reparata was in part due to this stylistic association with Cluniac precedents (Fig. 3.7),<sup>88</sup> it is perhaps also significant that the desire for a new building arose from the early communal government who felt the need for a more 'noteworthy' saint to partner a larger cathedral commensurate with the new baptistery which was now out of scale with the smaller S. Reparata (Fig. 3.8). Even though the decision to 'redo' the building (*reffici debet*) was made in 1294 with the foundation stone laid on the feast of the Virgin in 1296 (the new cathedral dedicated to Santa Maria Del Fiore),<sup>89</sup> the structure of S. Reparata, its chapels and its saints, had an impact upon the development of the Commune to the extent that even as late as 1293 the commune was considering renovation over

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<sup>85</sup> Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 1. However, some documents show that San Giovanni was already being cultivated as the patron of the bishops of Florence from as early as the tenth century. Maureen C. Miller, 'The Saint Zenobius Dossal by the Master of the Bigallo and the Cathedral Chapter of Florence', in *The Haskins Society Journal 19: 2007. Studies in Medieval History* (Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2008), 68.

<sup>86</sup> Franklin Toker, 'A Baptistery below the Baptistery of Florence', *The Art Bulletin* 58, no. 2 (June 1976): 157-67. Miller, 'The Saint Zenobius Dossal by the Master of the Bigallo and the Cathedral Chapter of Florence', 68.

<sup>87</sup> Sally J. Cornelison, 'Art Imitates Architecture: The Saint Philip Reliquary in Renaissance Florence', *The Art Bulletin* 86, no. 4 (December 2004): 642.

<sup>88</sup> Toker, 'Excavations Below the Cathedral of Florence, 1965-1974', 34.

<sup>89</sup> 'St Mary of the Flower'. Franklin K. B. Toker, 'Early Medieval Florence: Between History and Archaeology', in *Medieval Archaeology: Papers of the Seventeenth Annual Conference of the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Charles L. Redman, vol. 60, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies (Binghamton: State University of New York, 1989), 261-83.

replacement.<sup>90</sup> This is reinforced by the fact that even after its demolition and replacement, the use of the name S. Reparata for the new building by some members of the community appears to have continued until the early part of the fifteenth century when a renewed dedication to Santa Maria was undertaken. Bergstein argues that this occasion was also used to reinforce the power of Guelph politics in the city,<sup>91</sup> re-establishing the power of the patriarchate and drawing a line under the period of joint rule with the *Ciampi* that occurred prior to its consecration in 1436.<sup>92</sup>

- **The Baptistery of San Giovanni**

During the two centuries covered by the three maps used to discuss the growth of the feudal city (Map 3.3, 3.4 & 3.5) the only building to be consistently worked upon was the baptistery. From its initial construction as a small building paired with S. Reparata, through its extension in the eleventh century, to the development of its extensive decorative programme and iconography related to the republican roots of the city that are finally completed at the beginning of the fourteenth century, this building—and the rituals associated with it—were closely linked to the identity and increasing independence of the city itself.

Although freestanding baptisteries were not common in most of Europe Florence was not the only city in Northern Italy to have one.<sup>93</sup> During this period the baptistery was perceived both pragmatically and paradigmatically as a triumphal entry point into the religion and the City of God; the Neophyte became a citizen of the Holy Roman Empire represented by both the church and the civic rule of the town or city. As Brunetto Latini in his *Tesoretto II* of 1260-66 declares, ‘every man

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<sup>90</sup> The city began to build a new façade that can be seen in the Misericordia image (Fig. 3.9) and has now been rebuilt as a part of the Opera del Duomo Museum.

<sup>91</sup> The Lily, or ‘fiore’ was used by the Guelph party as one of their key symbols. Tacconi calls it ‘an act of cold civic self-reference’. Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 3.

<sup>92</sup> Mary Bergstein, ‘Marian Politics in Quattrocento Florence: The Renewed Dedication of Santa Maria Del Fiore in 1412’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1991): 679.

<sup>93</sup> Thompson, *Cities of God*, 4. Baptisteries extended in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were: Ascoli Piceno, Asti, Bari, Cremona, Florence, Padua, Parma, Pisa, Treviso, Ventimiglia, Verona, with Siena and Volterra. Thompson, 29. Davidsohn suggests that in Florence the baptistery was initially constructed under the Lombards, Robert Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz. : Von Robert Davidsohn* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn, 1896), Vol.1, p. 24.



who comes into the world is first born to his father and relatives, then to his commune'.<sup>94</sup> On a practical level, the size and grandeur of the new baptisteries often led to an inevitable rebuilding of the associated cathedral within an enlarged urban setting, the pair becoming both house of the bishop and the parish church of the *citade*.<sup>95</sup> Within the politically charged atmosphere in Florence at the time with Ghibelline pitched against Guelph, the buildings became even more significant.

There has been much written on the Baptistery of San Giovanni its origins, building programs, and iconographic developments.<sup>96</sup> Its significance for the identity of the city led Villani, writing in the early part of the fourteenth century, to suggest that the building originated in the Roman period as a Temple to Mars.<sup>97</sup> However, in 1976, Franklin Toker argued convincingly that archaeological evidence pointed to the existence of an earlier bath building covered initially by a smaller baptistery on the site that was only later replaced by the current building (Fig. 3.10). This hypothesis included the idea that the central octagon visible in the existing pavement was not, as had been interpreted, remnants of a large full immersion font, but actually marked the extent of the original building, probably constructed around 500 (although the *terminus ante quem* can only be given as 897) as a site for the mass conversion of Langobard Arians into the Catholic faith.<sup>98</sup> Toker goes on to suggest that this initial building remained until it was replaced by the existing building at the beginning of the twelfth century—complete enough by 1128 to receive a new font.

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<sup>94</sup> (Latini, 1824, II, 54)  
*Ogn'uom, ch'al mondo viene:  
Che nasce primamente  
Al padre, et al parente,  
E poi al suo Comune.*

<sup>95</sup> And the baptistery paired with the cathedral

<sup>96</sup> Franklin Toker, *On Holy Ground: Liturgy, Architecture and Urbanism in the Cathedral and the Streets of Medieval Florence* (London: Turnhout: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2009); Domenico Cardini, *Il Bel San Giovanni E Santa Maria Del Fiore: Il Centro Religioso Di Firenze Dal Tardo Antico Al Rinascimento* (Firenze: Ed. Le Lettere, 1996); Antonio Paolucci and Carlo R. Chiarlo, eds., *Baptistery of San Giovanni, Florence* (Modena: F. C. Panini, 1994); Alberto Busignani and Raffaello Bencini, *Le chiese di Firenze: Il battistero di San Giovanni* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1988); Werner Jacobsen, 'Zur Datierung Des Florentiner Baptisteriums S. Giovanni', *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 43, no. 3 (1980): 225–43; Pietramellara, *Battistero Di San Giovanni a Firenze*.

<sup>97</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, 40.

<sup>98</sup> Toker, 'A Baptistery below the Baptistery of Florence', 165.

A report of the building sequencing based upon current research work is available elsewhere.<sup>99</sup> In sum, the archaeological and documentary evidence confirm that the current baptistery was erected sometime during the period 1039 to 1059 (including the internal marble encrustation Fig. 3.12), when it was consecrated in 1059<sup>100</sup> by the old Bishop Gerard of Florence (1045-61)—by then Pope Nicholas II (1058-61)—making it ‘the first and most important example of Florentine marble ‘Romanesque’<sup>101</sup> revetment, and an ‘early monument to the agenda of eleventh-century church reform in Italy’.<sup>102</sup> The ground floor external revetment was completed between 1059-1090 (Fig. 3.13).<sup>103</sup> Morolli then describes a second stage of construction from around 1100-1150—comprising the upper level encrustation—as more ‘abstract’ and completed with the support of the ‘Vallombrosan order, the city and the consuls’.<sup>104</sup> He then describes a final stage, from around 1200, which was funded by the Calimala Guild,<sup>105</sup> as more ‘profoundly’ gothic<sup>106</sup> commenting that the geometrical decoration of the internal lower order reflects the ‘constructional methods which guided the structural growth of the building’ creating a ‘geometrical surface with a different character to that of a screen of columns’.<sup>107</sup> The decoration clearly differs from the early-Christian or Byzantine work seen in the Lateran baptistery or at Ravenna—hence its later dating.

The remaining mosaics—and some of the marbling—are from a later date along with the alternating saints and openings which form the base of the dome; most

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<sup>99</sup> Christian Frost, ‘Reclaiming Architectural History: The Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence’, *Art History Supplement* 3, no. 5 (September 2013), <http://arthist.net/archive/5782>.

<sup>100</sup> Busignani and Bencini, *Le chiese di Firenze*, 26.

<sup>101</sup> le Morolli, ‘The Architecture of the Baptistery and the “Good Antique Style”’, in *Baptistery of San Giovanni, Florence*, ed. Antonio Paolucci (Modena: F. C. Panini, 1994), 43.

<sup>102</sup> Jacobsen, ‘Zur Datierung Des Florentiner Baptisteriums S. Giovanni’, 243. Translated by the author.

<sup>103</sup> With the exception of the corners. Morolli, ‘The Architecture of the Baptistery and the “Good Antique Style”’, 42. Arnolfo di Cambio was entrusted with the task of replacing some of the sandstone on the corners with marble in 1293. Vasari states that de Cambio encrusted all eight outer sides but in fact was mis-quoting Villani who wrote that he only replaced the corner pilasters.

<sup>104</sup> Morolli, 93.

<sup>105</sup> This date was reported by Villani. The members of the Calimala Guild (Arte di Calimala) were finishers of foreign cloth and the guild was one of the greater guilds of Florence.

<sup>106</sup> Morelli’s timeline is confirmed by Villani who states that in 1150 the lantern, was placed atop the dome which itself had been completed around 1130.

<sup>107</sup> Morolli, ‘The Architecture of the Baptistery and the “Good Antique Style”’, 63 and 85.

likely sometime in the thirteenth century (Figs. 3.17 & 3.19). The square Scarsella chancel is recorded, again by Villani, to have replaced the earlier semi-circular one in around 1202 (Fig. 3.18).<sup>108</sup> This new addition to the building was accompanied by the laying of a new cosmatesque marble pavement (Fig. 3.16)<sup>109</sup> and the placement of a new font.

- **The Other Significant Churches of the City**

The four early Christian churches of the city (Map 3.1)<sup>110</sup> formed a spine that ran north south through the city located approximately on the Roman Cardo (oriented to the cosmos) but over the next few hundred years as the number of inhabitants grew so did the number of churches (Map 3.2a & 3.5). Because accurate information regarding the location of particular family houses within the city is limited until the latter parts of the thirteenth century, it is the location of these churches that is the best indicator of the main inhabited areas of the city.

San Lorenzo which formed one of the corners of the first set of commune walls was an important Paleo-Christian foundation consecrated by St Ambrose in 393.<sup>111</sup> It had been rebuilt with an atrium and cloister in 1060, with a further garden added in 1174 coeval with the construction of the new walls.<sup>112</sup> The other church that stands at a corner of the new walls was San Pier Maggiore reputedly consecrated around the same time by S. Zenobius (337-417), the first bishop of Florence, and as such it became a significant church in the entry celebrations of any new bishop which will be described later.

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<sup>108</sup> The 1202 date is from Strozzi's copy of the Calimala books Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz*, 146.

<sup>109</sup> Pietramellara, *Battistero Di San Giovanni a Firenze*, 30. This date is also confirmed by its similarity to the pavement at S. Miniato al Monte which is inscribed 1207

<sup>110</sup> From the north to the south: San Lorenzo, S. Reparata, S. Cecilia, S. Felicità,

<sup>111</sup> Although most of the churches in Florence are first mentioned in documents around the turn of the millennium, current archaeological evidence suggests that the other early Christian foundations were Santa Reparata, S. Cecilia and S. Felicità. S. Lorenzo and S. Felicità were both originally constructed outside the Roman walls of the city. Scampori, *Firenze, archeologia di una città, secoli I a.C.-XIII*, 48. Also, it is known that St Ambrose was in Florence on an extended visit from 393 and 394, hence San Lorenzo was also known as "Ecclesia Ambrosiana". Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 61.

<sup>112</sup> See Davidsohn and Fanelli, *Firenze, architettura e città*, 9.

These two churches then, marked the corners of the new commune with the orientation of the walls guided by the Roman centuriation that established much of the layout of urban plots outside the original Roman walls (1 and 13; Map 3.3b). On Oltrano, S. Felicita, with its early Christian and Roman Cemetery, was also brought within the boundary of the commune (4; Map 3.3b), with the far southern wall marked by S. Felice, a Benedictine Monastery that remained outside of the new walls until the later 1258 extension (17: Map 3.4).

Elsewhere in the city, apart from Santa Maria Novella in the west (11; Map 3.3b) (up until it was rebuilt in 1094 it was Santa Maria della Vigne), and S. Ambrogio in the East (9; Map 3.3b), all of the other new churches were located within the boundaries of the area defined by the commune walls of 1175. Of these seventeen churches, twelve are situated within the boundaries of the Roman city, and seven sit on the boundary.

If Malispini's description of the Byzantine walls is correct then only three churches were protected by the city walls during this early period (S. Cecilia, S. Michele in Orto, and S. Andrea All'Arco) (Map 3.3a), the others lying in the land that was between the two sets of walls. Nevertheless, San Lorenzo was still the cathedral during this period even if it was only partially protected. The location of six of the churches around the south-eastern corner of the city suggest a more developed urban population was active in this area during this period. Therefore, given the history of the period, this could indicate that this area was more aristocratic than other parts of the city—and consequently developed into the Ghibelline stronghold prior to their exile in 1266.

Trades, often associated with particular churches, were located throughout the city with some areas having a concentration of a particular trade (Map 3.6), which later determined the location of many of the guild houses of the thirteenth and fourteenth century. However, throughout the medieval period, trade was a significant factor across the city:

Medieval Florence had specialized spaces for commerce, markets, but production and commerce developed in every part of the city in open

spaces and enclosed spaces, public spaces and private spaces: the whole city was factory and market.<sup>113</sup>

In the eleventh century a further twenty-three churches were either extended or newly consecrated. Within the old Roman boundary most of these were in the western half of the city, with those in the east extending outward from the south-eastern corner (Map 3.4). Three further churches were built in Oltrarno suggesting increased residence on the southern banks of the Arno, and seven new hospitals are recorded as being built in the city as a whole, predominantly on, or very close to, the main Roman roads heading north/south and east/west.

In the twelfth century a similar pattern emerges, with more churches being built around the south-western quadrant and in Oltrarno around the Ponte Vecchio bridgehead, but also three new churches around the market square (Map 3.5). It is also during this century that the locations of some family dwellings are recorded. The same map showing the families with known Cathar (and hence Ghibelline) sympathies from the thirteenth century indicate that they were predominantly located within the south-western quarter of the city in the area most populated from earlier centuries (Map 3.7).<sup>114</sup> Other dwellings from the period show some scattered dwellings but two clear concentrations; one around the northern bridgehead of the Ponte Vecchio; and the other around the marketplace (Map 3.5). Both of these sites would have been significant locations for merchants who could both oversee market activity and the arrival of merchandise from across the river. Thus it is likely that these areas attracted the more prosperous of the new mercantile class (The trade map would suggest silk traders, goldsmiths and tailors) who later became the important members of the Guelph party.

### **3.3. The Commune and Christian Festival**

- **The Service Books of Santa Reparata**

Although there were many religious centres in Europe that were in a position to determine the form of the rites undertaken in different churches, in reality most

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<sup>113</sup> Fanelli, 26.

<sup>114</sup> 'In 1244 Peter of Verona (St Peter Martyr) was sent to Florence by Pope Innocent IV (1243-54) to combat [this] deeply ingrained heretical movement'. Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 74.

church practice was built off slight variations of a small number of *Uses*.<sup>115</sup> These rites were further structured by the fixed calendar of feasts (with local saints gaining further recognition) and the moveable feasts linked to Easter. In relation to the developing processional rituals of the church, even the development of a new building did not necessarily result in the need for a new set of service books.<sup>116</sup> This widespread practice of continuing to use old documents was due, in part, to the fact the *Consuetudinaries* were manuscripts and so churches (including many significant foundations) often lacked multiple copies. Re-use was, therefore, common even in radically restructured, or new, buildings. Equally, these manuscripts were drafted for general usage in more than one specific location or church and consequently the instructions for processions were often generic, stipulating a particular direction or an ‘eastern’ or ‘western’ portal rather than named gates and streets.

The standard set of service books comprised the following:

**Service Books**<sup>117</sup>

Mass	(missals, evangeliaries, graduals)
Divine Office	(breviaries, lectionaries, psalters, antiphonaries)
Para-liturgical	(bibles, homiliaries, legendaries, passionaries) <sup>118</sup>

Florence itself was caught between two *Uses*; The Milanese Ambrosian rite and the rites from Rome. The Ambrosian rite was probably brought to the city by St Ambrose (330-397)<sup>119</sup>—himself founder of San Lorenzo in 393—and further

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<sup>115</sup> *Uses* were associated to particular cathedrals and gave the structure of the daily offices and the mass. The daily cycle of offices emerged from monastic practice but became a key part of the secular cathedrals that emerged all over Europe during the middle ages. They began with Matins before dawn, followed immediately by Lauds then Prime just after 6 a.m. Tierce, the next office, was then said followed by the main mass of the day: High Mass. At midday, Sext was said followed by None and then Vespers (evensong) at dusk. Compline was the last office of the day, celebrated before the clergy retired for the night. On feast days, the cycle usually started with first Vespers on the night before and ended with second Vespers on the evening of the day itself.

<sup>116</sup> This practice of transferring practice from old to new buildings also occurred when new sites were chosen. See Christian Frost, *Time, Space and Order: The Making of Medieval Salisbury* (Oxford ; New York: Peter Lang AG, 2009). The practice enabled continuity in festive praxis even when radical new places were constructed.

<sup>117</sup> Manuscripts of service books are held in the: Archivio della Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore; Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana; Archivio Arcivescovile; Biblioteca Riccardiana.

<sup>118</sup> These books were more for study and reference than for the service.

<sup>119</sup> St Ambrose Feast Day 7<sup>th</sup> December.

reinforced by St Zenobius (337-417),<sup>120</sup> the first recorded bishop of Florence. The rite was particularly useful in his fight against the Arian religion of the invading Goths and Visigoths of the time.<sup>121</sup> The Roman rites, which were supported by the papacy, were originally brought to the city by the reformer Gérard de Bourgogne, later Pope Nicholas II (1059-61), who, in an attempt to unify the Catholic rites, managed to subordinate Milan to Rome, increasing power of the papacy in the area with this change coeval with the consecration of the Baptistery. There are two Roman Use manuscripts that survive from the period prior to the building of S. Maria della Fiore; the *Ritus in ecclesia servandi* (written between 1173 and 1205) and the *Mores et consuetudines canonice florentine* (ca.1231).<sup>122</sup>

The *Ritus*, originally composed after the transition to the Roman rite sometime in the late twelfth century,<sup>123</sup> is clearly associated with the Cathedral of S. Reparata and the Baptistery of San Giovanni, and has a similar form to the Gelasian Sacramentary XLII describing the Roman rite that dates back to the eighth century.<sup>124</sup> It is likely that there would have been earlier service books than the *Ritus*, but the instructions for the processions in these documents do not describe the church with enough accuracy to have demanded any rewriting in relation earlier extensions to the building. It appears that the need for new books came when the rites began to establish greater significance for the landscape of the city as a whole, and this happened with the emergence of the commune and the establishment of the first set of commune walls. However, even though the civic additions to the rites during this period adapted and sometimes replaced the original church processions, their paths did not end up accurately transcribed into the religious documents. The basic description of the rite prior to these adaptations was all that ever remained within the church documents. All other knowledge of

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<sup>120</sup> St Zenobius Feast Day 25<sup>th</sup> May.

<sup>121</sup> The early association with the Ambrosian rite also had political benefits—with its ‘tradition of immunity from imperial visitation.’ Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 135.

<sup>122</sup> S. Reparata had ten altars at the time of the writing of the *Ritus* and *Mores*: St. Reparata; St. Zenobius (below main altar in crypt); St. Luke; St. Matthew; St. Mark; St. John Evangelist; Virgin Mary; St. Thomas Becket; St. Stephen; St. Sylvester. The last two altars were removed with the architectural work of c.1230, possibly removed from the main apse following addition of the new staircases. Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 122.

<sup>123</sup> Toker, *On Holy Ground*, 30.

<sup>124</sup> E.C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, (London: SPCK, 2003), 229.

the processions emerged from the diaries and chronicles compiled by merchants and aristocrats of the time. Consequently, even though the second surviving church document, the *Mores et consuetudines canonice florentine* (ca.1231) corresponds to the arrival of the relic of St Philip and the adjustments to Santa Reparata which corresponded to the increased status and pilgrimage activity this esteemed relic brought to the city, there is little extra information on adapted processional forms.<sup>125</sup> Both works were used throughout the thirteenth century but in 1330s a new set of books were written because of a ‘... radical transformation of the liturgy of the cathedral in 1310 coupled with the establishment of a new financial system in 1331’.<sup>126</sup> A further phase of book production was entered from 1438 to 1526 related to the new cathedral, but even in these works the basic processional ordering of the rites were not affected. As a consequence, it can be argued that the production of such documents was more related to the increasing scale of the events, and the prestige of the new cathedral (and city) rather than their spatial sequencing related to architectural change.<sup>127</sup>

- **The Feast of San Giovanni and the Rite of Baptism at the beginning of the Thirteenth Century in Florence: 24<sup>th</sup> June**

In the *Mores* there is only a small reference to the feast day of San Giovanni Battista:<sup>128</sup>

**On the Nativity of San Giovanni Battista**

On the feast celebrating the birth of San Giovanni Battista, the ringing of the bells, the sermon, and the procession for Vespers, the Vigil, and for Matins is done as it is designated for the feast of St Philip and St James.<sup>129</sup> The call is sent through the immediate enactment of two masses (in S. Reparata), one after the other. At the first service is said the *Justus ut Palma*,<sup>130</sup> and at the second, *De Ventre*.<sup>131</sup>

After these masses another mass is said at the altar of St Matthew (in S. Reparata) where his relics are kept. Subsequently we move on to the sermons. Then we proceed from S. Reparata to the church of San Giovanni

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<sup>125</sup> Cornelison, ‘Art Imitates Architecture’.

<sup>126</sup> The completion of the Romanisation of the liturgy was made in 1310 by Bishop Antonio degli Orsi. Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 15.

<sup>127</sup> Tacconi, 23.

<sup>128</sup> *Mores*, 397-406, in Toker, *On Holy Ground*, 278.

<sup>129</sup> The Bells are rung four times for office of Vespers, for the Vigil and for Matins. Preaching happens in Santa Reparata and the procession is between Santa Reparata and the Baptistery of San Giovanni.

<sup>130</sup> Psalm 92.12 ‘The Righteous will flourish like a palm tree’

<sup>131</sup> Isaiah 49. 1-2 ‘From the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name’



for High Mass prepared by the bishop and his ministers. After the octave of the feast, daily two peals, during the feast three peals, namely in the Vespers before the octave and in Matins of the octave.

As can be seen, even as late as 1230 there is no reference to any city-wide processions in the church documents (which do give some guidance for other city processions such as St Agatha. See below). Therefore, up until Villani's description of the feast day celebrations of San Giovanni Battista in 1283, there are no descriptions of the processions or the ordering of the feast day that spreads beyond the area of the baptistery and the cathedral, but it appears that the events may have been similar to those that occurred on the days of baptism.<sup>132</sup>

During the medieval period baptisms were held on significant feast days relating to the life of Christ. The main day was Easter Saturday, and when total immersion was practiced, catechumens were immersed three times representing the Trinity, but more significantly, the three days Jesus spent in the tomb. When baptismal practice developed into partial immersion or *affusion*, this threefold action was continued within the rite even if the catechumen was no longer fully submerged or 'entombed' by water within the rite.<sup>133</sup>

On Holy Saturday the service began in the cathedral with boys assembled in the south aisle and the girls in the north aisle. Following various prayers, chants and gestures, the catechumens left the church and entered the baptistery where more lessons were said before the whole congregation formed a procession to 'the font' behind the cross and blessed candle, which, from a single flame lights all the

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<sup>132</sup> The number of infants baptised in Florence on Holy Saturday would have been relatively large as, according to Sicardus of Cremona, only Holy Saturday and the Pentecost Vigil (50 days later) were appropriate days for the rite (unless the child was in danger of dying) because 'on the two great feasts of redemption, the true baptizer of Christians was Christ himself, in whose death and Resurrection the redeemed shared'. Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes 1125-1325*, (Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 2005), 312. This means that on average there would have been around six times as many children baptized on Easter Saturday as on the Pentecost Vigil.

<sup>133</sup> For a thorough description of all surviving baptismal rites see E. C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy: Third Edition*, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson, New edition (London: SPCK Publishing, 2003).

candles used in the ceremony.<sup>134</sup> Following the procession the bishop would then bless and consecrate the font before baptizing those catechumens present.

It is difficult to ascertain whether baptism involved the full or partial immersion of the children or whether, by the time the new baptistery was constructed, affusion had become the preferred method. However, in either case the consecrated water was administered on the catechumen three times with a question related to the Trinity at each stage. Following the baptisms, the procession returned to the cathedral for mass signalled by a peal of the church bells that echoed throughout the city.

- **Other Significant Processional Feasts**

**The Entry of a New Bishop**

Once Confirmed in Rome, a new Bishop of Florence would travel to the city and enter from the south (Map 3.9a). He would then cross the river, continue along the Roman *Cardo* and then the *Decumanus* eastwards until he arrived at S. Pier Maggiore where he would stay in the Benedictine Convent for the first night. The next day the bishop would then go to the site in Borgo degli Albizi (a continuation of the *Decumanus*) where Zenobius' had miraculously resurrected a child that had been run over by a processional cart (Map 3.9b). From a blessing at this site the bishop travelled on to the palace opposite Santa Reparata. Thus the new bishop began his term serving the city by mapping the cross of the *Roma Quadrata* as an act (or *dromenon*). Subsequently, on the following day, by emulating the saint in his performance of a miracle engaged with the time of history as well as eschatological time. Therefore, over both days he re-enacted and memorialised the Roman and Christian traditions of the city.

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<sup>134</sup> For a more in depth description of this see Frost, 'Reclaiming Architectural History: The Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence'. This processional link between the two churches was not limited to baptismal rites. Processions also took place on the Sunday after Easter, the Feast of St Philip and James as well as Ash Wednesday and during Holy Week. On Palm Sunday, for instance, the procession would gather in the '*atrium*' between the cathedral and the baptistery—perhaps referring to the cemetery which surrounded San Giovanni until further burial was prohibited in 1293-95—before continuing to the baptistery. Toker, *On Holy Ground*, 50.

### **St Agatha (5<sup>th</sup> February)<sup>135</sup> and St Philip (1<sup>st</sup> May)**

Map 3.10a shows the path of the procession for the feast of St Agatha as suggested by Tacconi based on the description of the procession in the *Mores et consuetudines* of c.1230 (f. 7r-v).<sup>136</sup> Each of the four points represents a quarter of the city where a part of each of the Four Gospels was sung by a clergy from a specified church. Only these eight places are mentioned in the *Mores*. Tacconi and Toker both suggest a strange path that would have included the doubling back of the procession if it was to take in the four churches mentioned. A far easier, and more likely path, is suggested here, which argues for a complete circumnavigation of the city walls as they were at the time (Map 3.10b). This is perhaps supported by the idea, suggested by Tacconi, that the lengthy description of this feast implied it may have been a relatively new festival (perhaps coeval with the new walls) and as such required more description.<sup>137</sup> This sequence of Gospel reading is also noted as the *Processione de' quartieri* and Davidsohn suggests it also took place on the four days before the Feast of Sand Giovanni Battista.<sup>138</sup>

On the feast of St Philip (1<sup>st</sup> May) his relic, brought to the city around 1204 after the sack of Constantinople, is carried between the Baptistery and the cathedral (at this time S. Reparata) and shown to the gathered people in the piazza between the two buildings after each blessing and mass.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> St Agatha was the defender of the city against fires Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze*, 1071.

Additionally, the cathedral owned her veil. Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 111.

<sup>136</sup> Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 110.

<sup>137</sup> Tacconi, 109. This aspect of city circumnavigation in urban religious festivals of the thirteenth century is discussed in Frost, *Time, Space and Order*.

<sup>138</sup> 'It is believed that the *Processione de' quartieri* was also performed on the four days before the Feast of St John the Baptist. Davidsohn makes note of this custom pointing to evangeliary (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Cod. Barb. Lat. 525) as the source of his evidence. Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze*, 1070. Indeed, the first part of the Vatican manuscript, in a thirteenth, or fourteenth century hand (ff. Ir-8r), includes four Gospel readings to be said "ad portam S. Petri," "ad pontem veterum," "ad portam S. Pancratii," and "ad portam S. Iohannis Baptiste." There are no rubrics, however, specifying exactly the feast for which these Gospels were to be read. Neither the *Ritus in ecclesia servandi* or the *Mores et consuetudines canonice florentine* prescribe such a procession on the days preceding the feast of St. John the Baptist." Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 108.

<sup>139</sup> Toker, *On Holy Ground*, 48. and Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 106. Quotes the *Mores et consuetudines canonice florentine* of c.1230.

- **Palm Sunday**

On Palm Sunday the *Ritus* describes a procession from Santa Reparata to San Lorenzo at Terce where the palm fronds were blessed. Then, after some further activity (including the *Gloria laus et honor*) a procession back to S. Reparata (Map 3.11). Thus, until the building of the first set of Commune walls, the procession from San Lorenzo back to S. Reparata replicated Christ's entrance into Jerusalem—in this case through the Bishop's Gate.<sup>140</sup> Once the new walls were built and both churches were within the city boundary, there was no need of this journey, hence, by the time of the *Mores* in 1230 the celebration had shifted back to the land between the cathedral and the baptistery (like St Philip), thus elevating the cathedral itself to the representation of Heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>141</sup>

- **Rogation Processions**<sup>142</sup>

These three significant processions were described clearly in the *Ritus in ecclesia servandi* (c.1205) (f.52r-v) but get no mention in the *Mores* suggesting that the texts may have been used together. The processions undertaken on the three days prior to the Feast of the Ascension follow approximately the lines of the Decumanus and the Cardo visiting named churches within the city and beyond Map (3.12). Again, both Tacconi and Toker provide an explanation for this, suggesting that the processions form a cross on the plan of the city. It should be becoming clearer now that the iconography of medieval processions would not have supported such an assumption that the cross on the ground is linked to that of the crucifixion. Lines on the ground, both in their legacy from Roman exemplars, and from the rites that occurred within the church, did not operate on this level. If there was a trace on the ground it would have been mimetic, following the boundary of the Roman city (after the Roman foundation rites) or, as on Palm Sunday, Christ's entry into Jerusalem. If this is the case then the similarity of the

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<sup>140</sup> Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 114. This entry to a 'city as Jerusalem' on Palm Sunday was not unfamiliar in Europe and can be seen in the Palm Sunday Rites of Rouen But equally during the thirteenth century a shift in the processional rites to the 'church as Jerusalem' was also evident, particularly in relation to the iconography of city rule. Frost, *Time, Space and Order*, 43.

<sup>141</sup> Toker, *On Holy Ground*, 49.

<sup>142</sup> Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 111ff. and Toker, *On Holy Ground*, 121.

traces of the Rogation processions to the Bishop's entry would suggest a similar mapping, more significant in its relation to the *Roma Quadrata* (a four quartered structure) than a 'cross'. As mentioned already, this 'quartering' related to the orientation of the city to the heavens (Cardo) and the rising and setting of the sun (Decumanus and Jesus's second coming). Nevertheless, the clear use of the primary Roman streets for the Rogation Processions would have continued at least until the shift of the major North/South axis occurred through the work on Via Calzaiuoli in 1389 (Map 4.1b). It is true that there could have been an association of this overlaying of the Christian cross—linked to redemption—on top the Roman quadrata, but it is more likely that such an act was linked to the cosmological foundations associated to orientation rather than any reference to the cross as sign or pathway.

### **3.4. Christian Feasts as a Representation of Sacramental Order**

Tacconi suggests that courtly life in the medieval period—and thus by implication many aspects of the festive life of the city—was theatrical, orchestrated by heralds and clerks steeped in customs of the time but somehow aware of its representational limitations:

...the origin of the herald's ceremonial duties lay in these two areas: as accompaniment for the prince, and as director of the theatre of chivalry.<sup>143</sup>

However, this suggestion that courtly life was in some sense related to 'theatre' as it is understood today is problematic. As Le Goff suggests, '... reality was not that the heavenly world was as real as the earthly world, it was that they formed one world, in an inextricable mixture which caught men in the toils of a living supernatural'.<sup>144</sup> Thus although it can be argued that the later evolution of the role of the herald in courtly life developed in relation to an idea of manners (particularly *sprezzatura*) distinct from symbolic meaning, in the medieval period meaning was understood both implicitly and explicitly as components of a spiritual reality; word, deed and spirit were one. As such, even the world of courtly manners had symbolic meaning. The sentiment to which Tacconi is referring is more related to the conscious articulation manners (*manneri*) and itself heralds the origins of

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<sup>143</sup> Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 19.

<sup>144</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization 400 - 1500* (Wiley, 1991), 165.

the possibility to consider the form of things as partly autonomous. However, within this late medieval phase (and throughout much of the Renaissance) the ordering of the world was seen as much more immanent and *mannieri*, no matter how articulated, still embodied the codes, hierarchies and values of tradition and culture.

Consequently, it would be a mistake to assume that the 'feudal' organisation described above and its architectural and festive manifestation was understood at the time as a purely political or economic order or as simple autonomous spatial hierarchies; it was also imbued with immense symbolism to such an extent that any challenges to the political characteristics of feudalism—particularly the stability of the 'three estates'—were also considered heretical. As such, it is worth giving a brief description of the Christian understanding of the three estates and their association to faith and the Christian hierarchy.

The first clear description of the hierarchical tripartite division of society has been attributed to Gerard of Florennes (c.975-1051), bishop of Cambrai and Arras, in a sermon of 1025 designed to attack a local contemporary heresy that had questioned the authority of the church and the Holy Sacraments.<sup>145</sup> Gerard's defence of the church led him to describe society in relation to the Catholic understanding of Christ as both flesh and an intrinsic part of the Trinity; for Gerard, Christ's church was a part of heaven as well as earth '... governed, and instituted, by an order embodied in a two-level edifice' of an 'ecclesiastical' and an 'angelic' hierarchy.<sup>146</sup> Although it is unclear whether he had direct access to Pseudo Dionysus' works on the Ecclesiastical and Angelic hierarchies, which had been translated into Latin in the ninth century by John Scotus Eriugena, Gerard does mention Dionysius by name in the sermon along with Gregory the Great (540-604)—who had established the principle of Papal supremacy.

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<sup>145</sup> For example, the heretics declared that 'Baptism ... was unnecessary for anyone who ... fled the world, stifled carnal desire, lived by manual labour, forgave one another, and loved all members of the sect ... ; [and] for anyone who did not observe it, baptism was not enough.' Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (University of Chicago Press, 1982), 30.

<sup>146</sup> Duby, 32. See also Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, Chapter VIII; Man Centred Kingship: Dante.

In the main body of the sermon Gerard described the roles of the two governing estates (the clergy and the nobility) in relation to Christ's role in heaven; priests, he argued, were responsible for Christ's sacerdotal function, and kings were destined to administer the law and distinguish what is just in the world as Christ did in Heaven. Thus, the role Christ played on earth as priest and 'king of kings' was split into two equal institutions destined to rule over the *laboratores* on earth as God rules over the celestial hierarchy in heaven. In this way, both the church and the nobility of the Middle Ages continued to argue for their God-given right to rule. Even though there were times in which the church and the king disagreed on their relative powers—particularly in relation to the investiture of bishops and popes—they never doubted their right to rule the remaining 'workers' in the mundane world:

Moreover, the heavenly society of the angels was only the image of heavenly society, or rather, as men of the middle ages believed the latter was only the image of the former, as asserted by Gerard, bishop of Cambrai and Arras, in 1025: 'the king of kings organises celestial and spiritual society into distinct orders just as much as the earthly and temporal society. He allots the functions of angels and men according to a marvellous order. It is God who has established sacred orders in heaven and on earth.'<sup>147</sup>

As a direct result of this hierarchy the rule of society, and the administration of the law by priests and kings in the Middle Ages, was seen as a divine right made visible through the performance of particular rituals or 'sacraments'.<sup>148</sup> In addition, the sacred nature of this order was thought to extend in a contiguous hierarchy stretching from the three estates of the mundane kingdom up to and including the spheres heaven.<sup>149</sup> In such a context Gerard had little option but to censure the heresy of Arras (in the same way that the church condemned the later heresies practiced by the Cathars and Waldensians in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries) because they challenged aspects of the hierarchies understood to be present in both spheres. However, it was not only these 'heresies' that fell foul of the church and the governing elites. Because of the perceived continuity of celestial and

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<sup>147</sup> Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization 400 - 1500*, 164.

<sup>148</sup> The seven Sacraments are: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist (Holy Communion), Reconciliation (Confession), Anointing the Sick, Marriage, Holy Orders. The anointing of a king was not a separate Sacrament but seen as a form of Holy Orders, reinforcing the divine right to rule.

<sup>149</sup> As illustrated in Danté's journey in the *Divine Comedy* which also reveals an unbroken continuity.

earthly order, even movements that did not overtly challenge an ‘angelic hierarchy’—for example those restricted purely to mundane activities such as town governance—were also often condemned by the church (especially if there was no profit in it for them).

If this understanding of hierarchies argues for a continuity or hierarchy that crossed political boundaries and was revealed (and sometimes challenged) in ritual processions and feasts, then it also begins to ask broader questions relating to Christian hierarchies of matter and time. The Roman foundation has already been described as an act that could be recovered through ritual, linking seasonal cosmic time to the time of origins when the world of matter was ‘ordered’ by the gods. But with Christian values the origin of matter, as well as its ‘ordering’, was further complicated by the idea of God as ‘Creator’. Therefore, while the Romans and the Greeks had not addressed the problem of how matter could be formed from non-matter, for Christians this underpinned their complete hierarchy from spirit, through light, to matter. In the world of Christian faith and ritual these relationships were revealed most clearly within the Sacraments that, in their enactment, questioned the nature of these boundaries themselves. As a result, during the thirteenth century, following the twelfth-century renaissance in theology, these issues formed a significant part of the discourse related to symbolic language and representation.<sup>150</sup> In Florence this is perhaps best portrayed through the rite of baptism and the role of the Baptistery within the city as a whole.

As a part of this research the arrangement of the square twelfth century font placed in an octagonal presbytery was reconstructed and a sequence of images produced following the movement of a catechumen as they were baptised (Fig. 3.22 & 3.23).<sup>151</sup> It can be seen that the approach would have offered different images of parts of the building reflected in the water. It is difficult to establish exactly what these reflections would have been for the various participants but it

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<sup>150</sup> For example, the word ‘transubstantiation’ was first used to describe what happens to the bread and wine during the consecration of the host in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.

<sup>151</sup> Giuseppe Castellucci reconstructed this font and presbytery within the baptistery in 1921. This research was published in Frost, ‘Reclaiming Architectural History: The Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence’.



appears that as the font was approached much of the internal revetment, up to and including gallery level, would have been reflected in the surface prior to a segment of the vault mosaic and finally the reflection of light itself from the lantern. These reflections in the font, just like the iconography of the building, would have varied from matter to heavenly light, via material, geometry, proportion, numerology and image, but would have all been present in the same place—the font where the mystery of the Sacrament of baptism was also seen to occur.

This magical transformation of the various reflected images (particularly if approached from the East like Jesus into Jerusalem)—changing from stone (tomb),<sup>152</sup> through the image of Christ, to light itself—offer a compelling narrative for the initiation of the catechumen into the death of the old (Adam) and resurrection of the new (Christ), and suggest, that the baptistery should be understood more through its use than its form. The embodiment of praxis indicated by this ritual brings to the level of a building what the Roman foundation ritual brought to the city, but here, the building is also a city—Heavenly Jerusalem. The architecture and the ritual together bring the universal to the particular—during the ritual Heavenly Jerusalem was thus seen to emerge from the political realities of duecento Florence. That the reflection was an important part of the ceremony is confirmed by the fact that during the ritual, specified particularly on Holy Saturday, the priest breathes on the water,<sup>153</sup> thus momentarily destroying the reflected images, only for them to reform and change intensity when the Chrism oil is poured onto the surface of the font.

The increasing politicization of the baptistery (as a symbol of belonging to the city and the Florentine Republic) could account for some of the changes in the rite of baptism itself in relation to its setting within the building. The timing of the shift from immersion to affusion may have been due to increased numbers of catechumens, but it may also indicate a broadening of the iconographic potential of the event within the city. By reducing the scale of the ritual within the baptismal

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<sup>152</sup> The Milan rites for Baptism refer to the font as the tomb. See Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 180.

<sup>153</sup> Whitaker, 189.

room there were more possibilities to shift the locus of the overall initiation into the city as a whole—re-prioritising the event as more of a civic initiation. The mosaics in the gallery would go some way to support this contention. Although it has been suggested that these were unfinished because they were only complete above the eastern doors (facing the cathedral)—the cathedral mosaic representing the most significant relics (Fig. 3.20), and the southern doors (facing the city), represented by images of the significant city grandees (Fig. 3.21). These were the two most significant gates of the Baptistery and would also, in the development of the festive life of the city represent, within the baptistery, the significant entrances and exits from the building during liturgical masses and festivals.

Therefore, in the landscape of the early thirteenth-century commune it may have been more important, even within the enactment of baptism, for the burgher to declare allegiance to a particular faction or family within the city rather than to the city and the church as a whole. As a result, it would seem that the celebrations in the streets, houses, and Quartieri, began to gain more significance than those centred purely inside a building to such an extent that by 1577, when the central font was finally removed from the baptistery by Bernardo Buontalenti to make way for new decorations for the baptism of Prince Filippo, first born to Grand Duke Francesco, the importance of the rite would have already altered significantly and it is likely that the font had not been used for some time.

If, then, there is a question of what is matter and where did it come from, there must also be a similar question related to time. The iconography of the Christian ritual presented above suggests that it was understood as a further layer of meaning overlaid upon Roman foundations. The catechumen was baptised into the church and the commune at the same time within a building that was Heavenly (and earthly) Jerusalem;<sup>154</sup> and into a city that was thought to be the New (*parva*, little) Rome. Equally, the ritual transformation of material from stone to light within the rite was a way of revealing ‘presence’ within a ritual temporal setting, an event in the present which has significant meaning also in relation to the past

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<sup>154</sup> As Brunetto Latini suggests in his *Tesoretto II* of 1260–1266.

(the Passion) and the future (the Second Coming), all three built off Augustine's notion of time.<sup>155</sup>

Broadly speaking the Creation and the subsequent incarnation of Christ brought several themes related to temporality into question. Augustine argued that the heavens and the earth were created by the Word of God<sup>156</sup> and consequently the difference between the eternal word, the *Logos*, which could not be subject to worldly time, and the words of the Bible in real time, were analogous to the difference between eternal and experienced time.<sup>157</sup> Equally, as eternity enfolded earthly time it was through ritual that the connections between things-in-the-world and eternal principles could be revealed. These differences in temporality, in which the limits of experience determined by the position of the perceiving being within the hierarchy, were central to the beliefs of the classical Neo-Platonist as well as to Augustine because it maintained that being was embraced by a greater consciousness; but also that the lesser being could not diminish the greater by its decay or loss. Hence, the time of mortals—lived time—was a mere shadow of eternity and could not affect the completeness of the eternal sphere, even though they were thought to be intertwined. As Le Goff articulates, eternity was the past the present and the future:

... the middle ages not only confused heaven and earth – or, rather, treated them as a spatial continuity – but they treated time as merely a moment of eternity. There was thus temporal continuity analogous to that of space [and matter]. Time belonged only to God and could only be lived out.<sup>158</sup>

St Augustine argued that time is experienced as a movement from a state of non-being (future), through a state of being (present) to another state of non-being (past) and consequently there was a real question regarding its ontological location; 'we cannot say rightly that time is except by reason of its impending state of not being'.<sup>159</sup> Whereas earlier Aristotle in his *Physics* had managed to avoid this

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<sup>155</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Augustine's ideas of time and their relationship to procession and festival see Frost, *Time, Space and Order*, 193ff & 237ff. Section on 'The Cloister' and 'Augustine's Threefold Temporality'

<sup>156</sup> Following the Gospel of John

<sup>157</sup> St Augustine, *Confessiones*, ed. J.J. O'Donnell, vol. 1 (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 11,6:8.

<sup>158</sup> Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization 400 - 1500*, 165.

<sup>159</sup> St Augustine, *Confessiones*, 1:11.14:17.

difficulty by describing time as ‘number’, Augustine’s Christian beliefs demanded resolution and so, in the end, he argued for time to be located in the mind (*in animo* or ‘in the soul’) in the present, thus revising past, present and future to ‘... the present of past things [*memoria*], the present of present things [*contuitus*] and the present of future things’ [*expectatio*].<sup>160</sup>

In relation to the festive experience this threefold temporality is significant insofar as each mimetic re-enactment is both a recreation of the original event and a unique transformation of it:

The mimetic is and remains a primordial phenomenon in which it is not so much an imitation that occurs as a transformation ... Mimesis does not imply a reference to an original as something other than itself, but means that something meaningful is there as itself.<sup>161</sup>

It shifts from something about to happen [*intentio*] into something happening [*distentio*] which, in the process of becoming, reveals its distance from the eternal and forms an image in the mind [*affectio*]. Consequently, the festival, like time, is experienced only in the present, and in its enactment it also articulates the spaces that accommodate it. Within a religious site this phenomenon is perhaps easier to grasp, but in the places the festival occupies within a city it reveals a different mode of being, not only for the people but the places. Each procession was a journey from *intentio* to *affectio*, leaving an impression on the mind of the participant and also on the city.

## **Conclusion**

The transition from a baptismal rite that occurred between the cathedral and the baptistery to one that according to Villani, on the feast day of the saint, later circumnavigated the city, is likely to have occurred between 1150-1250. The fact that the liturgical documents state that the feast of San Giovanni is carried out in the ‘same way as the feast of St Philip and St James’ suggests that, for the church at least, at this time the feast of San Giovanni was not the most significant feast in

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<sup>160</sup> St Augustine, 1:11.20:26. ‘Quod autem nunc liquet et claret, nec future sunt nec praeterita, nec proprie dicitur, “tempora sunt tria, praeteritum, praesens, et futurum,” sed fortasse proprie diceretur, “tempora sunt tria, praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris”’.

<sup>161</sup> Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, 121.

their calendar—the precious relic of St Philip, acquired around the time of the writing of the *Mores* seems to have held much more significance. Equally, unlike the Feast of St Agatha (apparently structured like a traditional Rogation rite tracing the boundary of the city)<sup>162</sup> the path of the feast of San Giovanni is not prescribed. The agreed path of the procession in the city appear only to have been reported after the event to establish and reinforce a new representation of civic order linked to the Roman rite of foundation and the Christian order of processions outlined in the service books from the cathedral. Consequently, it was not designed to follow or emulate the Christian path but establish a civic one. This is significant insofar as it did not subvert or challenge the pre-existing church procession but encouraged the civic aspects of the festival to develop as a layer on top of the Christian liturgical structure. For example, the description of the rite of St Philip and St James involved the display of the relics and according to the *Mores*<sup>163</sup> the relic is on display to the public between Vespers and Tierce (from around midnight to nine in the morning). This could have been just in the piazza around the cathedral but could also have processed around the town in the same time frame.

But this was not the only aspect of the festal calendar which was significant to Florence. The Feast of San Giovanni, as has been shown, was apparently not the most significant festival in the city during this ‘feudal’ period; it was mainly confined to the baptistery and the cathedral and therefore did not extend its influence far into the city. However, as the significance of the Saint to the city increased and the aspirations of the city as *parva Roma* developed the midsummer feast began to grow in stature, in part because of the feasts significant pairing with midwinter Christmas; both feasts celebrating creation, and both tied to the cosmic cycles of the year.<sup>164</sup> In John 3. 23-30. John the Baptist describes his role in relation to Christ stating ‘He must increase, but I *must* decrease.’ This section of the Bible

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<sup>162</sup> See Frost, *Time, Space and Order*.

<sup>163</sup> Toker, *On Holy Ground*, 277. English translation in Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 106.

<sup>164</sup> The only other feast day in the Calendar associated with birth is the Birth of Mary (8<sup>th</sup> September). Apart from these three feast days, all other saints’ days are linked to their death, as is the other feast associated to St Giovanni Battista on 29<sup>th</sup> August (the date of his beheading).

was used by St Augustine in his *Sermon for the feast of the Nativity* in developing his themes on the nature of Christ and the Baptist:

God Sent John to earth as his human Precursor so that he was born when the days were becoming shorter while the Lord Himself was born when the days were growing longer, that in this minute detail the subsequent words of this same John might be prefigured: 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'<sup>165</sup>

Thus, this particular feast has strong links to the seasonal calendar linked to Christ as well as the ontological aspects revealed in the mimetic enactment of the festival itself.

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<sup>165</sup> St Augustine, Sermon 194, *For the Feast of the Nativity*.

## Chapter 4- The Commune: Florence from 1250

### Introduction

By the middle of the thirteenth century the ruling elite of Florence recognised that in order to establish a peaceful city in which their businesses could flourish, new institutions were needed that were independent from the local nobility (who were supported by the Emperor in Germany) and separate from the jurisdiction of the Papacy.<sup>1</sup> These new institutions, run by individuals from various strata of society and from various political factions, took some time to settle into a form that could best articulate their new brand of civil society; there had to be some sort of hierarchy, but one that did not defer any validation to the nobility or the church. However, in order to have any credibility within the fractious and conflict-ridden urban landscape of Florence at the time, these 'new' institutions had to be recognisable *as* authority and consequently 'borrowed' many aspects of the iconography of rule that they had inherited from the nobility and the church through its architecture, local history, and its urban traditions.

The courtly life of the feudal period, alongside the legacy of the Roman colony, had already shaped parts of the city, with some aspects of the rural castle grafted onto small city plots resulting in the proliferation of groups of urban towers. But the impact of this layering on the basic form of the city was limited. Even during periods of rule by *podestà* appointed by the emperor, these 'judges' had been billeted somewhere within the general housing stock of the city; the houses may have been large but they were not palatial. In addition, although there were many churches run by influential religious orders and (some) powerful clerics, beyond the few churches that had small parvises, and the processional entry to various churches in the course of the festive calendar, there appears to have been little focus on the identity of churches in relation to the city as a whole—with, perhaps, the exception of the Baptistery which, as has been noted, began to be associated with its republican identity. Even the large space between the Baptistery and the

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<sup>1</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 11.

Cathedral of S. Reparata was a cemetery, full of monuments more attuned to the past than the present or the future.

Over the course of the next hundred years the city changed dramatically to accommodate the growing pressures from within framed, most obviously, through the conflict between the Guelfs and Ghibellines, but also by the increasing power of the *popolo* and their demands for justice and protection. While this journey has had much commentary in relation to the emerging political dimension, the study here is primarily interested in the effect these changes had on the city and its festive landscape—particularly on the Feast of San Giovanni in relation to the development of the civic palace in Florence and its importance to the later development of the Renaissance Palazzo.

#### **4.1. The Development of the Commune in Florence**

- **Political and Governmental developments from around 1200**

As the social and civic nature of the city became more complex different roles and institutions were created, tested and adapted. In the past, times of prosperity had often occurred under the yoke of a strong local leader (even if they were themselves representing distant authority) and so initially this singular form of leadership appeared to be the best solution—manifested in the figure of the podestà. To begin with, these men came from the noble families of the city—the earliest recorded, in 1193, was from the elite Carponsacchi family. However, it soon became apparent that the allegiances and feuds of the local families made impartiality in the judicial systems of the city impossible. As a consequence, the role soon became one offered only to foreigners (from different communes rather than different countries) who brought with them their own staff to counter any possible partiality in the administration as a whole.<sup>2</sup> They also brought with them best practice from more established city communes and often managed great improvements to the cities they ruled—even if it was for a relatively short tenure. For example, during the eighteen-month period the Milanese Rubaconte da Mandello was podestà (from 1237 onwards) he oversaw the erection of a new

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<sup>2</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 64. Also Gene A. Brucker, *Florence: The Golden Age, 1138-1737* (New York: Abbeville Pr, 1983), 245.



bridge across the Arno and paved many of the streets of the city (Map 4.1b).<sup>3</sup> However, as a noble appointee he, like most of the other podestàs of this period, was a Ghibelline and therefore not favoured in all quarters of the city. This was problematic because in the developing city, much of the wealth required for financing improvements and administration came from merchants and bankers, many of whom were not from the nobility but from the Guelf-papist axis and, as a result, were looked down upon by their erstwhile overlords. Schevill describes this development thus:

... the first half of the thirteenth century witnessed a significant social revolution exhibiting two distinct but subtly interrelated phenomena. The first of these was the intensification of faction among the ... *milites* ...; the second was the slow rise and gradual emancipation of the common people till with a sudden rush they were able to take over government.<sup>4</sup>

But this 'gradual' development was not universally appreciated and many of the older families, while acknowledging the newfound power of the rising numbers of wealthy merchants that wanted a stake in the governance of the city, resented their raised status:

By 1300 cities were generally dominated by a burgess 'nobility' or 'patriciate', variously composed of old ministerial families, immigrant gentry, but mainly of ennobled burghers ... derided and resented as arrogant upstarts ...<sup>5</sup>

In Florence this conflict of 'old' and 'new' money and status was most obviously apparent in the developing support for the two most powerful parties—the Guelfs and Ghibellines (Map 3.8). These factions had preceded the thirteenth century and, up until the early part of the century, conflicts between them that could not be dealt with through the family networks were handled relatively successfully by the legal system in operation at the time (run by the podestà). But this system was unable to cope with the growing complexity of urban affairs and it only took one event to send the city into a bloody civil conflict that was destined to last for much

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<sup>3</sup> Originally the Ponte a Rubaconte, now the Ponte delle Grazie. Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, VI. 26. By this time he had already been podestà of Novara, Verona, Bergamo, Arezzo, and Faenza.

<sup>4</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 104.

<sup>5</sup> Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 39.

of the century. This event was the murder, in 1216, of Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonte.<sup>6</sup>

At the heart of the dispute was a struggle for power between the elite families of the city, notably the Buondelmonte, who at the time were the leading family in the Guelf party, and the Amidei and their allies (Arrighi, Fifanti, Uberti, Alberti and Lamberti) whose allegiance was with the Ghibellines.<sup>7</sup> It began with a fight between Oddo Arrighi and Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonte over dinner that ended in some minor injuries. Although there had been no fatalities, insults were thrown and blood was drawn and so some 'satisfaction' was required. As a way of halting any possible escalation a marriage union was proposed between Buondelmonte and Arrighi's niece, a member of the Amidei family. Everything was agreed until a woman of the Donati family talked the young Buondelmonte out of the union—a decision he made himself without consulting other members of his family. As this was a dishonourable action (for both families), and Buondelmonte's own family would have also been looking to discredit his individualistic actions, the Arrighi felt that his murder would not exact severe reprisals. However, Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonte's swiftly arranged marriage to a member of the Donati family meant that other parties were already involved. Six weeks later on Easter morning (also the date of the wedding) Buondelmonte was murdered by Schiatta degli Uberti.<sup>8</sup>

The situation quickly escalated into one of regional—if not national—significance when the relatives of the victim appealed to the podestà for justice, at the same time voicing their concerns with the papacy. The assassins, on the other hand, bypassed the local jurisdiction of the podestà and appealed to imperial law and Frederick II.<sup>9</sup> Najemy sums up the events thus:

If the account is in part parody and exaggeration, it parodies and exaggerates attitudes and institutions central to the life of these families:

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<sup>6</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. V; Ch. 38. Schevill, *History of Florence*, 103ff.

<sup>7</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 13–16.

<sup>8</sup> This was the first recorded event involving the powerful Uberti family.

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, as added fuel to this dispute, Frederick II was denounced by both the Franciscans and the Dominicans as a heretic follower of the Arab philosopher Averroës. Schevill, *History of Florence*, 112.

the expectation of family solidarity and the leadership of the elders; the networks of “friends and relatives” mobilised in times of crisis; the marginal position of women between their natal and marital families; the control of neighbourhoods and churches by families or clusters of families; the coalitions of family groups in political factions with their “councils”; the role of marriage in consolidating factions; knighthood and the emulation of the courts; and the easy and frequent recourse to violence and vendetta.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear from the account of the Buondelmonte murder that a female member of the aristocratic Donati Family escalated the feud that then led to the partial destruction of the city. Thus, the following civil war was seen by the popolo as a folly of women and the rule of the aristocracy who resolved their feuds and vendettas (created, in many accounts, by the uncontrollable urges of women and young men) through marriages and alliances that, more often than not, led to further bloodshed. As a consequence of this attitude towards the part-feudal/part-communal landscape of governance, over the course of the thirteenth century the city’s leaders began to adapt and develop the institutions in order to create conditions where power was seen to be shared, at the same time as limiting the possibility of vendettas destabilising the city and disrupting trade. It is also the case, perhaps as a direct result of such chronicle accounts of these conflicts, that the city began to create institutions in which it was harder for women to access any form of governance; shifting power away from the magnate as family man, to magnate as civic representative—as will be seen in the development of the Bargello and the Palazzo Vecchio in the next chapter. This particular shift had a profound affect upon the form of the architecture of the city developed over the period.

Florence was not the only city in the region undergoing political and social change, neighbouring communes—that also had similar Ghibelline and Guelf factions—were also in the process of developing new models for civic governance; vying for local supply monopolies as well as regional trade control. As a result of this regional growth there inevitably arose conflicts between Florence and other communes. Florence’s nearest adversaries were Siena and Pisa, both of which developed a long-standing allegiance with the Ghibelline party and were

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<sup>10</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 16.

constantly competing with Florence for the same regional trade concessions. Although Florence won a victory against Pisa in 1220-22,<sup>11</sup> the city continued to struggle throughout the early part of the century finally winning a significant victory against Siena in 1235.<sup>12</sup> However, even though Florence had been victorious in many of these campaigns there were still internecine conflicts within the city where power—mostly through the person of the podestà—was still dominated by the Ghibelline faction backed by Frederick II (at the time excommunicated) who defeated a Guelf army (supported by Pope Gregory IX) in the region in 1239.

Florence continued to develop and trade under the domination of the Ghibelline party, but draconian taxation and abuses of the law turned most non-Ghibelline families into Guelf supporters. In 1247 the conflict came to a climax when the Ghibelline patriarchy, at the request of the emperor, appointed Frederick's bastard son, Frederick of Antioch,<sup>13</sup> as the new podestà. He arrived in the city with over 1500 mounted German mercenaries and proceeded to further persecute Guelf families with the result that later the same year, the city finally revolted. The ensuing insurrection was unsuccessful leading to the expulsion of many of the most powerful Guelf families and, as Villani records, it was following this victory that the destruction of property associated to the different parties began. The Ghibellines, supported the German troops, routed parts of the city, destroyed thirty-six Guelf houses and palazzi (some 'with marble columns') and exiled their owners.<sup>14</sup> For the remaining inhabitants of the city there were compensations, with Frederick allowing the commune to mint its own currency. However, a situation where Ghibelline authority was propped up by mainly foreign mercenaries was never going to last.

The victorious Ghibellines tracked many of the Guelf leaders, killing and maiming those they could capture, destroying the places that had given them refuge. But

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<sup>11</sup> Villani, *Cronica*, 222. Bk. VII; Ch.2.

<sup>12</sup> Villani, 229. Bk. VII; Ch.13.

<sup>13</sup> and king of Apulia

<sup>14</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. VI; Ch. 33. Villani, *Cronica*, 254: Bk. VII; Ch.33. The Umiliati also arrived in the city at this time improving the skills within the city in weaving and dying which was to contribute much to the future prosperity of the city.

there was a growing resentment in the region and, as much of the land was administered by fortified castles and towns that were held by Guelf supporters, the ruling Ghibellines remained vulnerable to any large-scale popular uprising:

When the [... Ghibellines who had ransacked the land around the city...] came back to Florence there was great contention amongst the citizens, inasmuch as the Ghibellines, who ruled the land, crushed the people with insupportable burdens, taxes, and imposts; and with little to show for it, for the Guelfs were already established up and down in the territory of Florence, holding many fortresses and making war upon the city. And besides all this, they of the house of the Uberti and all the other Ghibelline nobles tyrannized over the people with ruthless extortion and violence and outrage.<sup>15</sup>

It was not long before the Guelfs rose again and, following a victory at *Fegghine*<sup>16</sup> in 1250, many families of all classes in the city joined the insurrection; exiled many Ghibelline oppressors; unseated the podestà; and fashioned a new form of government—the *primo popolo*—which distributed power throughout the city. As well as appointing a new sympathetic podestà they introduced the *capitano del popolo* and a council of twelve elders (*anziani*)—two from each district (*sesto*) of the city—who were appointed to advise the *capitano* who would defend the people against any injustices brought about by the podestà.<sup>17</sup> This council was ordered to meet in the gatehouse of the Badia and only return home to eat and sleep (Map 4.2a).<sup>18</sup> The people of the city were then divided into twenty gonfalon (each identified by a different banner) entreated to supply a militia ready to defend the city at the tolling of a new bell installed in one of the city towers (Map 1.2).

Although this rule only lasted a short time it had a profound effect on the city, not least in the fact that saw the first minting of the gold Florin in 1252;<sup>19</sup> the construction of the fourth bridge, the Ponte di Santa Trinita, also in 1252; and the building of the first civic building—the Palazzo del Popolo (now the Bargello)

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<sup>15</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. 6; Ch. 39.

<sup>16</sup> Currently Figline Valdarno

<sup>17</sup> *Mostra documentaria e iconografica del Palazzo del Podestà (Bargello)* (Tipografia Giuntina, 1963), 17. All of the references from this source are related to specific documents in the archive in Florence which were displayed at an exhibition in 1963. I have seen the original documents in the archive to confirm the references.

<sup>18</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. VI; Ch. 39.

<sup>19</sup> For a brief description of the significance of this event see Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 70.

begun in 1255 to house the Capitano del Popolo. But perhaps most importantly it gave the popolo a taste of what well managed communal government could offer. Although the exact detail of the constitution of this first communal government has not survived,<sup>20</sup> it appears that the key move was to exclude magnates of all parties from taking up places on the new council. In the beginning this seems to have worked, as nobility from both sides benefited from the new opportunities offered by the commune even if they were denied influence in its governance. But the nobility's service to the new commune was eventually, and predictably, undermined by their continued party allegiances when, in 1258 as a result of a failed coup by members of the Ghibelline Uberti family, executions, expulsions, confiscations, and demolitions were ordered to halt further sedition and make sure the Ghibellines could never again inhabit the centre of the city.<sup>21</sup>

This response, along with other countermeasures against conspirators in the clergy, began to isolate the government of the popolo and although they could muster support from other cities that were sympathetic to the Guelf cause (including Lucca, Pisa, Pistoia and Volterra), Florentine Guelf forces were defeated by Ghibelline Siena, supported by Frederick's son, Manfred of Apulia, King of Sicily, at the battle of Montaperti in 1260. Following this victory, the Ghibelline exiles returned triumphantly, ripped up the constitution of the popolo, and restored the previous order of government appointing a new podestà—now to be housed in the vacated Palazzo del Popolo—filling the remaining governmental posts with members of their own party. Somewhat inevitably, they also demolished much Guelf owned property. As Najemy states:

The Ghibellines, recalling the punishments inflicted upon them in 1258, destroyed, according to the *Book of Damages*, 103 palaces, 580 smaller houses, 85 towers, and a large number of shops and warehouses.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The constitution of this time has not survived but has been reconstructed from other documents in Robert Davidsohn, *Geschichte von Florenz ..*, vol. II Part 1 (Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn, 1896), 367–73. Also in relation to the constitution of Volterra, which built its own institution based on the influence of Florence.

<sup>21</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. VI; Ch. 65. See also Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 71. Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. VI; Ch. 79.

With the period of the *Primo Popolo* now at an end the Ghibelline government continued much as it had done before, learning no lessons in diplomacy or moderation. The exiled Guelf families eventually found refuge with the French king, Charles of Anjou and with his support, in 1266 fought back, defeating the Ghibelline Florentine forces at the battle of Benevento.<sup>23</sup>

It took over a year for the victorious Guelf forces to return to Florence and in the meantime the old regime of the popolo regained control of the city and attempted to re-establish a revised form of the *primo popolo* in which neither the Guelf or the Ghibelline parties could dominate government. As a result, for over a year the city was ruled by thirty-six men, both '*popolani* and *grandi*', led by two podestàs (one from each party) who met regularly in the guild hall of the Calimala, who were also, as has already been stated, custodians of the Baptistery.<sup>24</sup> Within this system, each of the newly recognised seven major guilds<sup>25</sup> was given a coat of arms and the Prior of each guild, supported by the five middle ranking guilds (who were also given banners),<sup>26</sup> was given a place on the 'Priorate of the Guilds'.<sup>27</sup> In order to defend this new system each guild was also charged with the appointment of a military captain who would lead the guild's troops against any further attempts to take over the government.<sup>28</sup>

Even though this structure was not skewed towards one or other party it was still not accepted by many magnates of both sides and consequently was challenged, first by the Ghibellines, and then, more successfully by the victorious Guelf exiles on their return in 1267.<sup>29</sup> During their short tenure the Priorate had managed to halt any reprisals by either side for previous grievances, but once the Guelfs had disbanded them, along with the other newly founded institutions (except for the

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<sup>23</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 74. Villani wrongly dates this as 1265. Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. VII; Ch. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. VII; Ch. 13.

<sup>25</sup> These were, in rank order: Judges and Notaries; Cloth Refiners (Calimala); Money Changers; Woollen Cloth Manufacturers; Doctors and Druggists; Silk and Haberdashers; Furriers.

<sup>26</sup> The Baldrigari—second hand clothing and linen; Butchers; Cobblers; Masons and Woodworkers and the Blacksmiths.

<sup>27</sup> 'priori dell'arti' Villani, *Cronica*, 351; Bk. VIII; Ch. 39.

<sup>28</sup> For locations of the guild houses at this time in relation to government meeting places and the location of trades within the city see Map 4.2a & b.

<sup>29</sup> With the support of the pope, Charles of Anjou, and the bankers who had financed the war.

guilds), they preceded to reclaim property and exiled those Ghibellines that had remained within the city. This final act was decisive and, as Najemy states: 'With the exile and economic dismemberment of the Ghibelline lineages, the thirty-year war between the elite parties finally ended.'<sup>30</sup>

It was this particular period that the changes alluded to in the quotation by Schevill earlier in this section began to take shape. Over the next fifteen years the city became more prosperous but the elite families from both sides still felt there were scores to settle and so continued to search beyond the borders of the commune for support. This left the way open for the rich merchants and bankers to secure senior positions within city through a process of 'financial' evolution, and also allowed the popolo to rise through membership of the ruling party and the guilds. These combined processes paved the way for development of a new priorate that defined the city for the next two hundred and fifty years.

The first key change occurred in 1280 when, in another attempt to try to reconcile the two warring factions, the roles of the *podestà* and consuls were supplemented by the introduction of guilds (as they had been in the *primo popolo*) into the mechanisms of city governance. Initially, led by Cardinal Latini, the city settled on electing representatives from eight of the major and middle ranking guilds (but none from the lower guilds),<sup>31</sup> who were together willing to engage in government while seceding final decisions to the cardinal himself. Although this was not what the city wanted it established the guilds as a part of the process of government and by 1282 all twelve of the senior guilds were regularly consulted by the 'fourteen magistrates'<sup>32</sup> on issues relating to city governance to such a degree that the 'Fourteen' were soon considered irrelevant and replaced by the 'Priorate of the Guilds' or 'Signoria' (Map 4.3).

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<sup>30</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 75.

<sup>31</sup> This group included five from the major guilds (Judges and Notaries; Woollen Cloth Manufacturers; Doctors and Druggists; Silk and Haberdashers; Furriers) and three from the middle guilds (Butchers; Cobblers; Blacksmiths). The lower guilds included; Vintners; Saddlers; Innkeepers; Bakers; Oil Merchants; Locksmiths; Armourers and Sword Makers; Leather Workers; and the Second-Hand Dealers.

<sup>32</sup> Of the 'Fourteen', eight were Guelph and six Ghibelline.



Initially comprising only three members the Signoria soon grew and, depending on the situation at the time, incorporated up to one from each of the twelve 'political' guilds, with each prior elected to serve a two-month term in office.<sup>33</sup> Tasked with the protection of the interests of merchants and guildsmen against the old elites, it is not surprising that the majority of these priors did not come from the magnate class but from emerging banking and merchant families who were increasingly important to the prosperity of the city. Nevertheless, even though they were not from this privileged class, they were not immune from outside influence and so, as Dino Compagni suggests, they too succumbed to the pitfalls of sectarian politics. Had they better safe-guarded the property of the commonwealth and prevented the helpless from being oppressed it would have worked, but instead they;

... sought not to observe the laws but to corrupt them. If a friend or kinsman of theirs incurred a penalty, they connived with the magistrates and officials to hide his guilt, so that he might go unpunished. Nor did they protect the property of the Commonwealth but sought means how best they could rob it ... Therefore, the good citizens among the *popolani* were disconcerted and blamed the priors' office because the Guelf nobles controlled the government.<sup>34</sup>

Although this type of abuse was ubiquitous, it was more prevalent in the guilds that favoured the elites and consequently became a significant issue when any aspect of reform was discussed.<sup>35</sup> Equally, during this period in which the predominantly Guelf government ruled the city the same elites took the city to war against the Ghibelline Pisa and Arezzo, eventually trouncing them in the battle of Campaldino in 1289. Somewhat inevitably, on their return, the noble *milites* were looking for more recognition and increased influence in the city. In the end a key Signoria of 1293—comprising six priors from different guilds together with three jurists—composed the Ordinances of Justice (based on a similar document from Bologna)<sup>36</sup> that would form the basis of the Communal government until its

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<sup>33</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. VII; 79. This entry in the Chronicle states that at some times, even prior from the minor guilds formed a part of the priorate. However, there is no record of this in the archives of the city.

<sup>34</sup> Compagni, *The Chronicle of Dino Compagni / Translated by Else C. M. Benecke and A.G. Ferrers Howell*, 13.

<sup>35</sup> These guilds were; Judges and Notaries; Cloth Refiners (Calimala); Money Changers; Woollen Cloth Manufacturers)

<sup>36</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 82.

abolition by the dukes of Florence in the mid sixteenth century. The Ordinances comprised several key innovations:

1. It created a federation of twelve guilds that formed the executive branch of the Florentine Government and were charged with electing six of their priors to serve for two months (one for each Sesto of the city) to form the basis of the Signoria. As there were no civic buildings specifically built for the Sesto the guild houses or the key churches became the key places for each Sesto.
2. To this group was added a further position, the Gonfaloniere of Justice, whose role was to lead the 1000 militia of the city to destroy properties of magnates who killed or seriously injured non-magnates.<sup>37</sup>
3. 140 named elite families were given increased obligations towards non-elite families.
4. Seventy-two named families were barred from becoming priors altogether. It is also no coincidence that, like the *primo popolino* before them, the new government wished to construct a purpose-built palazzo—the Palazzo della Signoria (now the Palazzo Vecchio)—designed to house the new priorate during their two-month tenure.

As well as the new Palazzo della Signoria, this period saw a great increase in building activity within the city as a whole; in 1293 the cemetery around the baptistery was removed and the area paved, allowing the occupation of ever greater and more elaborate festivals and pageants; and in 1296 the new Duomo was begun, all three projects under the direction of Arnolfo di Cambio (Map 4.1b). These developments along with the extension of the mendicant churches and the grain market all testified to a prosperous, confident and progressive city, sure of its own value and its place within the peninsula (Map 3.12).

However, the civic landscape of the city was a theatre for more than one political issue and once the older, mostly noble families of the Ghibelline party had been expelled, divisions began to emerge within the Guelf faction that were fuelled by the rising power of the *popolo*. Thus, a dispute emerged between the Black and the

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<sup>37</sup> This number of troops quickly increased to 2000. Najemy, 85.

White Guelphs; the 'progressive' Whites in favour of increased independence from any outside authority; and the 'conservative' Blacks in favour of closer links with the papacy (Map 4.4). Even though many magnates were happy in the knowledge that they could influence the 'Signori' through other connections, at one point the Blacks managed to get a concession to the ordinances that a guild member need not be 'active' in the profession to be elected prior, reopening the possibility for richer magnates to take up the position.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless violence did break out and internecine conflict in the city continued, albeit this time for different reasons, with Dante himself (a White and a member of the Medici e Speziali guild) being exiled in 1302. Florence remained in turmoil for some time and in 1304 a fire set by one of the warring parties destroyed nearly the whole of the centre of the city.<sup>39</sup>

As such, it appears that even though the Ghibelline faction had been ostensibly exiled from the city, conflict within the city was still present in a different guise. Consequently, over the thirteenth century and into the fourteenth century the city developed an increasingly complex set of institutions and civic ceremony (often dressed up as ritual) capable of directing this landscape of conflicting aims, bonds, and alliances even if the city was not 'purely' democratic. Initially at least, during the early part of the century several families dominated the priorate:

... from the inauguration of the priorate in 1282 there was in Florence so persistent a drift toward an oligarchy of a plutocratic type that we are obliged to conclude it constituted a reasonably correct expression of the city's social structure.<sup>40</sup>

However, over the next two centuries the constitution of the city underwent several shifts, with brief periods of rule by single authorities, most notably the Duke of Athens in 1342, and the Dominican Monk Savonarola from 1494-98. Throughout this period, although there were occasions when property in the city was attacked and burnt,<sup>41</sup> for most of the time the city and its buildings, the urban topography, the festivals, and the basic social hierarchies underpinning the urban

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<sup>38</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 163.

<sup>39</sup> Villani suggests that Over 1700 houses and palaces of both sides were destroyed. Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. VIII; Ch. 79.

<sup>40</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 210.

<sup>41</sup> For example, the Black Guelphs burnt several houses on June 10<sup>th</sup> 1302 following the expulsion of several key White Guelphs from the city (including Dante). Urbano Cipriani, *There Romena Lies: Dante and the Casentino, 1289, 1302-1313* (Arti grafiche Cianferoni, 2012), 43.

order, allowed various adaptations to the rule ushered in by the Ordinances of Justice to build upon each other without large scale demolition. What is clear is that the changes that occurred during the century ushered in by the continued rise of the *popolo*, affected more than just the governmental structures of the city:

The *popolo* ... by its sustained assaults on authority, altered the political and social organisation of the old urban space and changed the disposition and thrust of values. This, in turn, had a pervasive effect upon imaginative literature, political thought, and historical writing.<sup>42</sup>

In the remaining sections of this chapter, these changes will be viewed in more detail in relation to the city and its festivals.

- **The Chronicle Accounts of the Commune**

In terms of the government of the city the shift from medieval civic order to the communal rule of the thirteenth and early fourteenth century can be articulated as institutional and economic. The various new layers of government that emerged during this period were designed to deal with the conflict between the established nobility—the elites of both Guelf and Ghibelline parties—and the wealthy merchants and bankers that were rising from the *popolo*. However, having made that distinction, it would be a mistake to believe that this shift towards discourse and negotiation over vendetta and feud was considered purely pragmatic. It should be remembered that the chronicle accounts that have already been cited were predominantly penned during the period just covered—Malispini (1220-1290); Bruno Latini (1220-1294) writing his *Tesoretto* just after the fall of the *Primo Popolo* in 1260; Salimbene di Adam (1221-1290) writing his *Cronica* from 1282-1290 during the early years of the Priorate; Dino Compagni (1255-1324) also beginning at the time of the Priorate; Giovanni Villani (1276-1348) beginning in 1300; and although not strictly a Chronicle, Dante wrote his *Divina Commedia* in exile from 1308-21.

Thus, it should be noted that although these chroniclers were writing relatively pragmatic histories of the city they were also, within the formalised structure of a written history, pursuing their own personal prejudices; all within a framework

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<sup>42</sup> Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 59.

that continued to give equal weight to history, myth, theology, and legend. It is because of this that the historiography of Florence, beginning with the *Chronica de Origine Civitatis* should be understood as a set of documents more concerned with shaping the city's future than establishing its past. Equally, the various forms of writing used within this collection should be recognised as a significant part of the document itself. For example, as in the classical world, the chronicles used myth and legend to articulate ideas of justice and, as a consequence, were designed to contribute to the shaping of the future by explaining the past. Equally, the highly articulated rhetoric of much of the prose was written in accordance with the classical tradition where such writing embodied the ethical grounding of culture alongside the ability to persuade.<sup>43</sup> Although many of the chroniclers were not men with a university education or well versed in the liberal arts, they were still embedded within a medieval conception of the world:<sup>44</sup>

One senses in the chronicles of this period something more than the usual medieval predilection for the accumulation of factual information ... there is evident in them an effort to use their interpretation of the detail of historical occurrence to draw the world of their own experience within the sanctioned scheme of the medieval universe.<sup>45</sup>

But, in addition, this 'medieval universe' was deeply rooted in the Classical world. That the chroniclers were aware of the classical tradition is confirmed by Brunetto Latini describing three types of government '... the first of kings, the second of autocracies, and the third of peoples ...'<sup>46</sup> which has echoes of both Cicero, but also Plato's Republic—although this was not available until the fourteenth century in a translation by Coluccio Solutati (1331-1406) and his pupil Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444).<sup>47</sup> However, although these men were pivotal in the translation and reintroduction of many of Plato's works into Florence,<sup>48</sup> much of the sentiment was already in circulation through its impact upon Roman writers such as Cicero, who Villani specifically cites as an influence in his efforts to write a chronicle of the

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<sup>43</sup> Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 32.

<sup>44</sup> The first university in Florence, the *Studium Generale*, was set up in Florence in 1321.

<sup>45</sup> Green, *Chronicle into History*, 4.

<sup>46</sup> Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 41.

<sup>47</sup> Manuel Chrysoloras (d.1415), translated the Republic into Latin (ca.1402) and inspired the first generation of Italian humanists, especially Guarino da Verona(1374-1460) and Leonardo Bruni.

<sup>48</sup> James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance. 1 (1990)* (Leiden: BRILL, 1990), 29ff.

city in 1300,<sup>49</sup> and Augustine, who transformed many aspects of Plato's thought into a Neo-Platonism more pertinent to the Christian city. Nevertheless, this gradual increase in the number of Plato's works available was also fuelling a reaction against the Thomism of the scholastics whose ideas were based predominantly upon Aristotelian ideas.<sup>50</sup>

This is not the time to challenge the idea promulgated in much writing since this period that there was a fundamental dichotomy between Aristotle and Plato (at the time also described as the difference between a pagan philosopher and a proto Christian). Indeed, it is a part of this thesis that any suggestion of a 'break' in any tradition should be looked at very carefully.<sup>51</sup> Any living tradition is not a dogma but a continual re-interpretation according to historical circumstances. Suffice it to say that for Villani, the chronicle was operating within both traditions; it was a story through which the struggle for justice was voiced; but also a history through which the will of God revealed itself. For him, the two were inseparable.

In reading the chronicles as a whole it could also be argued that they offer an insight only into the mentality of the educated burgher of the time rather than the *popolo* who would not necessarily have been literate, or have had access to the ideas voiced in the text.<sup>52</sup> But this idea can also be challenged. The elision of education and rationality is a dangerous one in history because any 'honest' account is always potentially coloured by the way the writer wishes to be seen. So although Schevill can suggest that the sophisticated merchant class '... gradually developed an intrepid scepticism which became an important factor in shaping the new and modern European mentality' and that the more conservative masses '... even far into the Renaissance, clung to familiar attitudes and conventions of the

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<sup>49</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. VIII; Ch. 39. Boccaccio was also an admirer of Plato and defended his apparent expulsion of poets from his 'best polis'. Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance. 1 (1990)*, 39.

<sup>50</sup> The complete works of Plato were completed by Marsilio Ficino and printed in Florence in 1491 (See table 1).

<sup>51</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that the dichotomies at the core of arguments referring to the differences between Plato and Aristotle were partly spawned from many of the conflicts in this period—Guelf and Ghibelline; Pope and Emperor.

<sup>52</sup> Around 1300, Italian cities were the most literate in Europe. Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 64.

middle ages'<sup>53</sup> he is, in doing so implying a form of 'progress' that found its apotheosis in the rationality of the Enlightenment rather than any trend recognisable at the time. This is made very clear by Luca Landucci's contemporary account of the burning of Savonarola in 1498 which describes a more varied and less divided populace than that suggested by Schevill:

On May 23, 1498, a Wednesday morning, the execution of these three friars took place ... The friars were divested of all their paraments while the various formulae proper to the ceremony were pronounced. ... it was claimed by people that Fra Girolamo was being condemned to the stake because he was a heretic and a schismatic. The demotion completed, ... immediately ordered that they be hanged and burned. They were thus taken to the cross at the end of the platform. ... The third was the friar who had been called a heretic, who did not speak in a loud voice, but softly, and that is how he was hanged. None of them addressed the crowd, and this was regarded as a very surprising thing, especially since everyone expected to see signs from God and thought that on such an occasion the friar would somehow reveal the truth. This is what was expected, especially by the righteous people, who were eagerly awaiting God's glory, the beginning of a virtuous life, the renovation of the Church, and the conversion of the infidels. They were disappointed, therefore, that neither Savonarola nor the other two made any sort of speech. As a consequence, many lost their faith.<sup>54</sup>

It should be remembered that Savonarola was elected by popular mandate and that, even after his death, he could count the educated Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510) amongst his supporters.<sup>55</sup>

#### **4.2. The Commune as Seen**

- **Three Bridges and the Second Set of Commune Walls**

The first set of Commune walls completed in 1175 were further extended in the Oltrarno district of the city in 1258 (Map 4.5a & b).<sup>56</sup> But this was not enough to accommodate the burgeoning population of the city which, during the thirteenth

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<sup>53</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 231.

<sup>54</sup> This translation from Baldassarri and Saiber, *Images of Quattrocento Florence*, 281. Italian in Landucci, *Diario fiorentino dal 1450 al 1516*, 176.

<sup>55</sup> 'Botticelli was a follower of Savonarola's, and this was why he gave up painting and fell into considerable distress as he had no other source of income. Nonetheless, he remained an obstinate member of the sect, becoming one of the *piagnoni*, the snivellers, as they were called then ...' Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella, Reissue edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 227; Vol. I.

<sup>56</sup> Fanelli, *Firenze, architettura e città*, 50 (text).

century, more than tripled in number.<sup>57</sup> This increase in population led to the occupation of land outside the protective boundary of the walls and, to the construction of three new bridges; Ponte alla Carraia, 1218-20; Ponte Rubaconte, 1237; and Ponte S. Trinita, 1252.<sup>58</sup> In 1284, soon after the setting up of the Priorate, instructions were given to begin building the second set of Commune walls and its associated moat enclosing almost eight times the previous area. Unlike the first set of Commune walls, although some of the streets now incorporated into the city followed the orientation of the Roman Centuriation, the new walls were aligned differently—albeit approximately centred on the location of the old Roman Forum (Map 4.6a). These were not finally completed until 1334, a year after a major flood had devastated the city (Map 4.3).

Guidoni, writing in 1970, goes so far to suggest that the second set of walls are primarily linked via critical vistas to three towers in the city (The Campanile of the Duomo; the tower of the Bargello; and the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio) with a ‘centre of gravity’ for the city resting on the east side of the old Roman Forum (the Piazza Mercato Vecchio) (Map 4.6a & b).<sup>59</sup> Such planning—where the articulation of space is made through the imposition of vistas on plan—is, however, from a later period. There is no evidence at all that such plans would have been implemented using such theoretical ideas. Not only would the mapping of such a task at the time have been almost impossible given the accuracy of surveying techniques of the period, but also, images—such as the *Madonna della Misericordia* from the middle of the fourteenth century (Fig 3.9)—suggest non-perspectival understanding of urban territories. In this image of the city, visible in the bottom section of the *Madonna della Misericordia* (school of Bernardo Daddi roughly contemporary with Giotto), Florence is represented as a collection of significant buildings whose location with respect to each other is, apparently, less important, surrounded by a wall and a river. Perhaps, given the significance of festive order to the culture of the city, this non-perspectival painting may be the

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<sup>57</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 97.

<sup>58</sup> Although a further bridge was planned in the early part of the fourteenth century, apart from reconstructions, no further crossing was implemented until 1837.

<sup>59</sup> Originally published in 1970, his plan was reproduced in Enrico Guidoni, *Atlante storico delle città italiane. Toscana vol. 10 - Firenze nei secoli XIII e XIV* (Firenze : Roma: Bonsignori, 2002), 15.



best evidence there is supporting the argument that the iconography of the city of Florence in the medieval period was more linked to hierarchies invested in processional rituals than by any form of perspectivity. Also, as the processional activity appears to be mostly bounded by the first set of commune walls, the second set were freer to follow their own logic—perhaps determined more by the limits presented by the topography and construction and land-holdings than by the layout of the city within.

Due to the extent of the walls, their construction was undertaken in stages, with most building work undertaken when the city was under threat—because during periods of relative stability the dangers were as much from the inside as from assaults from foreigners.<sup>60</sup> However, they were a necessary development for the city and when Henry laid siege to the city in 1312, according to Villani, it was the walls and their associated moats that assured victory for the fledgling republic.<sup>61</sup> Villani himself was in control of the on-going construction of the walls from 1324,<sup>62</sup> nevertheless, progress was sporadic until the last period of intense productivity from 1332-34 led to their completion.<sup>63</sup>

Once the walls were complete the districts of the city needed to be redefined as the Sesti, demarcating the administrative areas of the city, only extended to the areas inside the first set of Communal walls (Map 1.2). The conditions to allow this to happen occurred following the brief rule, in 1343, of Walter of Brienne, Duke of Athens.<sup>64</sup> Having deposed and banished this ‘despot’ the governors, recognising the poor financial state of the city, abolished the Ordinances of Justice and returned power to the Fourteen (including magnates from families proscribed under the previous regime) who proceeded to draw up a new set of city districts (the Quartieri) inside the new commune walls (Map 1.3).<sup>65</sup> However, this new government did not last long and soon they too were ousted and replaced by one

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<sup>60</sup> After four new gates were constructed on Oltrarno, construction halted, only beginning again in earnest in 1299, fifteen years later. Schevill, *History of Florence*, 256.

<sup>61</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. IX; Ch. 10.

<sup>62</sup> Villani, *Cronica*, 879. Bk. X; Ch. 256.

<sup>63</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 104.

<sup>64</sup> Villani, *Cronica*, Bk. XIII; Ch. 17.

<sup>65</sup> Santo Spirito, San Giovanni, Santa Croce, and Santa Maria Novella. Villani, Bk. XIII; Ch. 18.

similar to that stipulated by the Ordinance of Justice, adjusted to take into account the new city subdivisions. Two priors were elected from each Quartiere supported by the Gonfalone of Justice and as a concession to the *popoli*, whose frustration had played a significant part in the election of the Duke of Athens, three of these priors were to be from the minor guilds, the other five from the upper and middle guilds.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, beginning with the drafting of the Ordinances of Justice in 1293 when guilds were first given significant power, and continuing into the period of redrafting following the fall of the Duke of Athens in 1343, the guilds' influence over the governance and order of the city gradually increased and, as a consequence, their role in festivals, and the status of their guild houses within the city became more significant.

- **Houses and Palazzi**

At this time increased wealth, new requirements for the etiquette of national and international trade, and the advancing complexity and representation of civic ceremony meant that the old tower-houses of feudal Florence were no longer fit for purpose. The legal structures of the commune began to institutionalise the conflict at the heart of the city's civic order and thus the violence of feuding factions that had previously been manifested in the tit-for-tat destruction of property belonging to the exiled, victory now mostly resulted in the forfeiting of property rather than its destruction.

Along with this shift to a more pragmatic form of triumph came a new type of political and social expediency that embedded itself within the civic institutions of the city and, therefore, became ritualised in civic ceremony. Houses became less about defence and more about the presentation of the family to the city. Consequently, the first palazzi were constructed in the area delineated by the location of the first set of commune walls, which was already relatively densely populated. Many of these new palazzi were also directly located with respect to the major roads and streets, thus allowing the occupants to participate in the growing ceremonial life of the city. Instead of defensive walls their facades became

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<sup>66</sup> Villani, Bk. XIII; Ch. 22.

backdrops and viewing platforms for the newly augmented and expanded civic rites of the commune. Now, as well as shutters which could be closed to secure the property, the facades often had rails from which tapestries and banners could be hung on feast days (Figs 4.1 & 4.2).<sup>67</sup>

However, there were also other factors that may have affected the distribution of domestic property within the city, in the first instance relating to the Guelf and Ghibelline factions. In describing the early allegiances related to this internecine conflict within Florence Villani names the significant families of each side as they were in 1216 following the Buondelmonte murder (Map 3.8). Although this account, along with others of the period, is tainted by prejudice related to the newly developing Communal order of the city that was inherently critical of the old aristocratic (magnate) order, it offers the opportunity to evaluate the locations of these families within the broader relationships outlined above.

There is not much to add about the locations of these different factions as the city's civil conflict grew out of a culture of aristocratic family allegiances, feuds, and vendettas which were constantly in a state of flux depending on marriages, and short-term business deals underpinned by ideas of feudal honour. There was little time to form areas of the city run by one party or the other and so families from both sides were spread all over the city. Equally, once most of the significant Ghibelline families were finally banished around 1266 reasons for future segregation based upon this conflict became less significant.<sup>68</sup> By the time that the victorious Guelf party itself split into the Blacks and the Whites a further layer of potential segregation rested on the fabric of the city (Map 4.4). In Najemy's list of families associated to these different parties there are a similar number of 'Magnate' families (older families with some noble connections) in each party. However, there were a greater number of 'new money' families associated to the

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<sup>67</sup> These are still visible on the Palazzo Davanzati (built in the mid fourteenth century)

<sup>68</sup> One of the most powerful Ghibelline families, the Uberti, had had most of their properties destroyed by the Guelf government of 1258 to ensure that if they returned to the city (as they did following the Ghibelline victory at the battle of Montaperti in 1260) that they could not re-inhabit the centre of the city. The site of their properties later formed the foundations of the Palazzo Vecchio. Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*, 8.

more conservative Blacks, intent on keeping strong links with the papacy, perhaps as a form of insurance against the possible return of the Ghibellines.

These different factions of the Guelf party do appear to have developed properties in particular areas of the city (Map 4.7). By the early fourteenth century when the city already has four civic buildings in place—the Bargello (A, Map 4.7. From 1255); the first stage of the Palazzo Vecchio (E: 1299-1342); the Piazza de Signoria (F: 1299-1386); the Stinche prison (G: 1297-1304); and the Headquarters of the Parte Guelf (B: from 1320)—although there is a general distribution of most of these families in both factions—the Whites do appear to have properties mostly near the trading centres of the city and on strategic bridgehead locations in Oltrarno able to keep tabs on traffic entering and leaving the city (Map 4.4). The Blacks seem to be mostly located outside the old Roman city, within the boundary demarcated by the first Commune walls (with a concentration on the Eastern side approach to the city over the Ponte Rubaconte but, more significantly, in two concentrated areas: one around the church of San Pier Maggiore sited just outside Maetzke's proposal for the extent of the second century Roman Town (Map 2.1),<sup>69</sup> near the Porta S. Petri on the line of the old Roman Decumanus; and the second on the current Borgo Santi Apostoli, near the relocated headquarters of the Parte Guelf, itself situated in Via delle Terme. This latter collection of properties is, therefore, strategically located amongst many of the guild-houses of the city and within easy reach of party headquarters and the developing centre of government.<sup>70</sup> Both these strategic locations were an equal mixture of Magnate and non-Magnate families who participated in the governing of Florence, with many of the elders already veterans of the new governmental structures of the city. In terms of the relationship to Quartieri and Gonfalons of the city there is no clear argument to be made. Although there are some Gonfalons which seem to be host to either all White (Carro and Bue in Quartiere di Santa Croce, Scala in Quartiere di Santo Spirito, and Drago in Quartiere di San Giovanni) or all Black (Chiavi in Quartiere di San Giovanni, Leon Nero in Quartiere di Santa Croce, Vipera and Unicornio both in Quartiere di Santa Maria Novella) no real pattern emerges.

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<sup>69</sup> Maetzke, *Florentia, Firenze, etc. [With plans.]*.

<sup>70</sup> This grouping includes the Acciaiuoli, Altoviti, Ardinghelli, Buondelmonte and Spini.

- **Guilds**<sup>71</sup>

The guilds of Florence did not all appear at the same time or benefit from equal status within the city (Map 4.3 and 4.8a & b). Although membership of a guild was necessary for anyone wishing to progress into the government of the commune, there was a hierarchy of guilds that affected the likelihood of any member becoming a senior official. The first seven guilds to emerge became categorised as the *Arti Maggiori* and were already active within the city by the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>72</sup> Over the next century the number of guilds increased, incorporating trades demanding lesser skills; those perceived to be of lesser worth; or simply those covered by issues of taboo. These later additions were often placed in different orders or hierarchies but by the end of the thirteenth century, barring one or two exceptions, they became fixed into a particular system that established two further layers; the five *Arte Mediane*,<sup>73</sup> established by 1283; and the nine *Arte Minori*,<sup>74</sup> all established by 1288. Together, these twenty-one guilds formed a significant part of the organisation of the government of the city.

With respect to some of the artisans now famous for the development of the artistic reputation of the city, they did not always become members of the guild most obviously associated with their trade. For example, in 1339 many artists (particularly painters) in the city formed the *Compagnia e Fraternita di San Luca* located at the Spidale S.M. Nuova which became associated to the *Arte dei Medici e Speziali*, a major guild, rather than setting up an independent guild which would inevitably have been of lesser status and thus limited the opportunities of the

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<sup>71</sup> For a concise history of the Guilds see Edgcumbe Staley, *The Guilds of Florence: Illustrated After Miniatures in Illuminated Manuscripts and Florentine Woodcuts* (Benjamin Blom, 1967).

<sup>72</sup> The seven *Arti Maggiori* comprised (in order of importance); *Arte dei Giudici e Notai* (judges and notaries); *Arte dei Mercatanti or Calimala* (cloth merchants); *Arte della Lana* (wool guild); *Arte del Cambio* (bankers and money changers); *Arte della Seta* (silk merchants and Porta Santa Maria merchants); *Arte dei Medici e Speziali* (physicians and pharmacists); *Arte dei Vaiai* (furriers).

<sup>73</sup> *Arte Mediane*: *Arte dei Beccai* (Butchers and Graziers); *Arte dei Fabbri* (Blacksmiths); *Arte dei Calzolari* (Shoemakers); *Arte dei Maestri di Pietra e Legname* (Stonemasons); *Arte dei Linaioli e Rigattieri* (Linen and Tailors)

<sup>74</sup> *Arte Minori*: *Arti dei Vinattieri* (Vintners); *Arti degli Albergatori* (Hoteliers); *Arti dei Cuoiai e Galigai* (Curriers and Tanners); *Arti dei Oliandoli e Pizzicagnoli* (Olive Oil and Provisions); *Arti dei Correggiai* (Sadlers and Harness Makers); *Arti dei Chiavaioli e Calderai* (Locksmiths and toolmakers); *Arti dei Corazzai e Spadai* (Armourers and Swordsmiths); *Arti dei Legnaiuoli* (Carpenters); *Arti dei Fornai* (Bakers and Millers).

artists to socialise or work within the upper echelons of society. Equally, prominent thinkers, writers and architects were also often members of this guild as apothecaries were one of the primary locations where books were sold or exchanged. Leon Battista Alberti, Marsilio Ficino were among the matriculated members of the guild, with other significant figures such as Boccaccio and Petrarch sympathetic to their cause.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, some 'architects' were also inducted into one of the *Arti Maggiori* in preference to lesser but more obvious associations. For example, in 1418 Filippo Brunelleschi, who had been matriculated into the 'major' *Arte della Seta* in 1398, secured the commission for the construction of the cathedral dome over at least six master builders from the 'middle' ranking *Arte dei Maestri di Pietra e Legname* who had also submitted expressions of interest for the contract.<sup>76</sup> Thus it can be seen that membership of a guild in Florence was not simply a case of your particular trade, but also your status (or that of your family) within the city.<sup>77</sup> Equally, being successful in business was an important factor in the status of any individual in the early oligarchy of Florence, but if one desired access to the institutions of the Florentine oligarchy it was important to join the highest status guild possible. The two were clearly intertwined.

A brief overview of the major guilds shows that they represented the citizens most responsible for bringing the city out of its feudal bondage. The general merchants of the *Calimala*, along with the bankers (*Cambio*), plus the wool and fur traders (*Lana* and *Vaiiai*), had together created the financial power of the city with the doctors and pharmacists (*Medici e Speciali*) and the Judges and Notaries (*Giudici e Notai*) supplying the necessary knowledge base and administrative skills for the new order. The middle guilds offered the next level of crafts necessary for the establishment of a 'good' city; supplying the city with the meat,<sup>78</sup> shoes, metalwork (horseshoes etc),<sup>79</sup> clothes, and buildings. The third layer offered a last tier of

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<sup>75</sup> Staley, *The Guilds of Florence*, 266.

<sup>76</sup> Staley, 334. This guild later added the trade of 'Goldsmiths' to its association of members.

<sup>77</sup> Notwithstanding this fact, often members of the same family were members of different guilds

<sup>78</sup> The guild of butchers and graziers was originally split into two, with the butchers of lesser standing through blood taboo. They combined around 1320.

<sup>79</sup> Among the curiosities of the Blacksmiths Craft were the iron tongs used for the stamping of the Festival cakes of the Guilds, consumed upon St John the Baptist's Day and upon the anniversaries of the Guilds. Staley, *The Guilds of Florence*, 313.

crafts, some placed at this level because of their unhealthy, taboo ridden processes (such as the tanners), and others who, unlike the goldsmiths, were unable to form satisfactory affiliations with other more prominent guilds and so were placed at, or near, the bottom of the order.

The earliest documentation of guild meetings offers a picture of the developing significance in the urban landscape. Initially they held their meetings in properties belonging to prominent members, or in churches that had associations with the guild such as a commissioned chapel or one with a dedication to the guild's patron saint. Or even, in the case of the *Arte della Lana*, a monastic order already established in the trades practicing within the city (the *Umiliati* at Ognissanti). This particular association lasted during the thirteenth century when the *Umiliati* were allowed some autonomy in their processing of wool. However, once the guild was properly established this multi-centred guild (with the *Umiliati* section established near Ognissanti amidst the workshops of the guild members) was unified and a hall built closer to the centre of trading activity. The remaining 'trading' guilds had their houses in or around the market squares within easy reach of the old Roman *Cardo* that linked the main southern entry with the old and new markets, and also the main entry for any merchandise entering the city.

Of the non-trading 'major guilds' the *Arte dei Medici e Speziali* also maintained a presence in this active part of the city with only the judicial guild (*Arte dei Giudici e Notai*), the most powerful guild, locating its activities in and around the *Badia* on the old Roman boundary. Even though this location, just south of the Roman *decumanus*, was close to the Roman Theatre and Stadium as well as the most significant extramural Roman temple (Isis), the relationship with the Roman legacy appears to have been less significant. Nearly all of the guilds were also placed within the southern half of the city, of which the eastern half has already been suggested was one of the more established residential quarters.

Once these major guilds became more established and built new accommodation they remained in these areas of the city and were followed by the other guilds, keen to establish their own authority within the same area of the city. It was not

until the formation of associations of artisans that were linked with particular projects (such as the *Opera del Duomo*) that buildings catering for such groups were placed in other areas. It also appears that this concentration of the guilds influenced the relocation of the expanded headquarters of the *Parte Guelfa* that shifted from its site on the southern bridgehead of the *Ponte Vecchio* to its new location next to the *Arte della Seta* just outside the old Roman *pomoerium*, which maintained its significance within the festive life of the city.

- **The Bargello**<sup>80</sup>

Noted as being among the first civic buildings of the medieval city, construction began on a palace for the newly invested *Capitano del Popolo* on via Proconsolo and Piazza San Firenze next to the existing Volognana tower to from 1255 to 1261 over forty years before the Palazzo della Signoria (Fig. 4.3).<sup>81</sup> Although this was the first civic building in Florence this type of municipal building was not in itself a new phenomenon, northern Italian city-republics had been building palaces for their *Podestàs* since around 1200.<sup>82</sup> Initially, the newly appointed *capitano* resided in a house previously owned by the Boscoli family, separate from the *podestà*, who Davidsohn places in the region of St Romolo in the northern section of the present Piazza della Signoria (14, Map 3.4).<sup>83</sup> As Schevill remarks, it is perhaps paradoxical that the first civic building commissioned by this new communal government 'took rather incongruously the form of a feudal castle',<sup>84</sup> a form reflecting the rule of feudal governance the Commune was trying to replace. But in reality what other 'forms' were there to take? The castle was an established architectural type designed to accommodate the feudal lord and his court with all its manners, rituals and hierarchies; it underpinned the authority of feudal power and therefore was the perfect model upon which to begin to build a new hierarchy that included the *popoli* within the city walls.

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<sup>80</sup> For information on the history of key buildings of Florence see Repertorio delle Architettura civili di Firenz/ricerche nel Ripertorio <http://www.palazzospinelli.org/architetture/progetto.asp>

<sup>81</sup> *Mostra documentaria; Palazzo del Podestà*, 9. Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, VII, 40. Bologna had a *Capitano del Popolo* in 1228

<sup>82</sup> Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*, 7. John White, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1250-1400*, 3rd Revised edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 59ff., 225ff.

<sup>83</sup> Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz.*, Vol. I: p. 143-44.

<sup>84</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 126. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 87.



The first meeting was held between the *capitano* and the *anziani* in a room of the palace in late 1259 when the courtyard is also mentioned (Fig. 4.4).<sup>85</sup> But following the defeat at the hands of Pisa at the battle of Montaperti in 1260, the building was taken over by the *podestà*, and became the centre of civic administration more familiar to the city prior to the control of the *primo popolo*. Although this predominantly Ghibelline government was itself overthrown in 1266, the structure of government remained substantially the same until the introduction of the Ordinances of Justice in 1293.

Over the next hundred years the building developed alongside the evolution of the civic governance of the city itself, changing its form in response to different conditions that emerged. The building was extended from 1260-80 and by 1283 was able to accommodate meetings of the full city council—comprising three hundred members—all summoned by a bell located in the tower of the building. The courtyard is recorded as being completed around 1295.<sup>86</sup> Over the life of the building it was often attacked and damaged by rioting townsfolk who identified the building with city governance leading to, in 1296, the addition of further fortifications. Interestingly, during the initial phase of the building the main access was via a stair on the outside which, like the access to traditional Florentine tower houses, could be retracted in times of siege.<sup>87</sup> However, there was also an internal staircase in the courtyard of the palace as early as 1267—confirmed by an account of defeated Ghibelline supporters swearing an oath to the Guelph victors at the base of the staircase in the court of the Bargello.<sup>88</sup> The building was again attacked and looted by the *popolo* during the overthrow of the Duke of Athens in 1343.<sup>89</sup>

The distinctive staircase that currently dominates the courtyard was initially constructed out of timber by Neri da Fioravanti around the same time as he added

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<sup>85</sup> *Mostra documentaria; Palazzo del Podestà*, 9.

<sup>86</sup> in the fifteenth century the courtyard was covered by a roof which was later demolished during the nineteenth-century restoration.

<sup>87</sup> *Mostra documentaria; Palazzo del Podestà*, 9.

<sup>88</sup> *Mostra documentaria; Palazzo del Podestà*, 17.

<sup>89</sup> Villani, *Cronica*, BkXIII; Ch.XVII.

a further storey to the building (1340-45)<sup>90</sup> and the audience hall, accessed through the courtyard staircase and loggia (Fig. 4.6) (designed by Benci di Cione). The internal timber stair was later, in 1367, replaced by a stone version.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, it was only in the middle of the fourteenth century, around the time that Boccaccio was writing the *Decameron* and by which time more power had shifted to the Palazzo Vecchio, that the palazzo became recognisable as what we see today.<sup>92</sup>

- **The Palazzo Vecchio**<sup>93</sup>

Although the priors of the guilds were involved in civic governance from at least 1282, it was not until the drafting of the Ordinances of Justice in 1293 that the city began to consider a further building to accommodate the priori and compliment the Bargello (Map 4.9). When the idea for the new palazzo was debated in 1294 it was suggested that the site for the palazzo should touch at least three of the Sesti (the Bargello touched two).<sup>94</sup> However, in the end the site chosen was within the Sesto di San Pier Scheraggio which, according to Dati, was ‘nearly in the middle of the city’,<sup>95</sup> and for Villani was significant because it covered the ruins of the Uberti houses demolished in 1258 during the *primo popolo*. Brunni remarks that it was placed ‘between the church of San Piero Scheraggio and the old theatre’<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> This work is evidenced by different masonry construction that includes scaffolding holes and stone brackets, also suggesting originally the outside face of the building also had several overhanging wooden balconies.

<sup>91</sup> *Mostra documentaria; Palazzo del Podestà*, 13. In 1840, frescoes in the small chapel were discovered, including images of Dante, which led to the restoration of the whole building, removing sections that had been added over the period it had been used as a prison.

<sup>92</sup> Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi, *Museo Nazionale del Bargello. La guida ufficiale* (Giunti Editore, 2014), 6.

<sup>93</sup> For general histories of the building and descriptions of its origins see Alfredo Lensi, *Palazzo Vecchio* (Milano: Bestetti e Tumminelli, 1929). Jürgen Paul, *Der Palazzo Vecchio in Florenz: Ursprung und Bedeutung seiner Form* (L.S. Olschki, 1969). Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*.

<sup>94</sup> When the Quartiere were introduced in 1342, the slightly strange boundary lines of the Gonfalons in the Quartiere di Santa Croce appear to be organised in such a way that allows for all four to touch the Palazzo Vecchio.

<sup>95</sup> Goro Dati, *Istoria Di Firenze Di Goro Dati Dall'Anno 1380 All'Anno 1405. Con Annotazioni* (Firenze: Giuseppe Manni, 1735), 108.

<sup>96</sup> Brunni and Hankins, *History of the Florentine People*, 2004, 389; Vol.1.

suggesting the location of the building in relation to the Roman history was also understood at the time (Fig 3.5).<sup>97</sup>

Permission was granted to begin construction of the Palazzo Vecchio, originally the Palazzo del Priori, in 1298 after the 'Priors which ruled the city and all the republic, did not feel themselves secure in their former inhabitation, which was the house of the white Cerchi behind the church of San Procolo'.<sup>98</sup> The job was given to Arnolfo di Cambio and his work described thus, by Vasari, the architect later given charge of its conversion to a ducal palazzo:

[Arnolfo] made a beginning for the Palace of the Signori, designing it in resemblance to that which his father Lapo had built in the Casentino for the Counts of Poppi. [Fig. 4.7 & 4.8] ... Arnolfo could not bring it about ... that it should be granted to him to put the Palace on a square base, because the governors had refused that the Palace should have its foundations in any way whatsoever on the ground of the rebel Uberti. And they brought it about that the northern aisle of S. Pietro Scheraggio should be thrown to the ground, rather than let him work in the middle of the square with his own measurements; and [it had to incorporate] the Tower of the Foraboschi, called the "Torre della Vacca," in height fifty braccia, for the use of the great bell ...<sup>99</sup>

The initial section completed by Arnolfo included the three public halls; the Camera dell'Arme on the Ground floor; the council hall on the first; and the still undivided hall on the second floor (Fig. 4.9 & 4.10). At this point it is likely that the entrance to the building was directly into the Camera Dell'Arme (A; Fig. 4.11) from the north façade facing onto the older town square.<sup>100</sup> This would have been the main piazza next to the site prior to the beginning of the larger square to the west (Map 4.9).<sup>101</sup> In 1313, two years prior to the completion of the first phase, the supreme council of the commune moved in. The commune soon began to clear more areas of the city to the west of the palazzo and pave areas of the developing

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<sup>97</sup> This is particularly significant in that the theatre was the site where the Roman Troops had met to discuss the ruling of the city during the Catiline conspiracy.

<sup>98</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, VIII, 26. San Procolo was just behind the current location of the Bargello

<sup>99</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects [Volume 1 of 10]: Cimabue to Agnolo Gaddi*, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan & co, 1912), 25. The great bell was moved in 1304 from the house of the Cerchi where they had been meeting prior to this move.

<sup>100</sup> Paul, *Der Palazzo Vecchio in Florenz*, 54.

<sup>101</sup> Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*, 9.

*Piazza della Signoria*. By the time of the rule of the Duke of Athens the next phase of the building was complete and requests were made to demolish two churches which were obstructing the enlargement of the growing piazza which was extended to its present size by 1386.

Over the following decades the building was expanded and further audience halls added: for example, the new *Sala dell'Udienza* (13; Fig. 4.14) and *Sala dei Gigli* (or *Sala dell'Oriolo*) (C; Fig. 4.14) were formed out of the pre-existing Sala Grande in 1472; and the *Salone dei Cinquecento* (54; Fig. 4.12) developed during the brief rule of Savonarola from 1494-98. Nevertheless, the relatively short periods of rule undertaken by the *Signori*<sup>102</sup> and the need for them to be separated from possible outside influence during their tenure meant that often the inner halls and rooms of the palace were only inhabited by the same person for a relatively short period.

The development of the Palazzo Vecchio and the Bargello into their current form took several centuries but their roots in relation to civic order were defined during the thirteenth and fourteenth century when the Commune was being shaped. In the end, together these buildings helped transform the landscape of Florentine civic constitutional praxis at a time when Aristotelian and Ciceronian civic Humanism was beginning to claim attention in the idea of what constitutes 'the good city', both physically and ethically. The significance of the palazzo was further inscribed upon the city through the shifting of the main north south axis to link Piazza della Signoria directly with the Piazza del Duomo in 1389 (41, Map 4.1b). A road that remains the key route for the morning procession of the Feast of San Giovanni.

- **Santa Maria del Fiore and the Mendicant Churches**

On September 8<sup>th</sup> 1296, the Feast day of the Nativity of the Virgin, the papal legate of Boniface VIII—along with several other bishops, the Podesta and the priors—blessed the re-building of the city's cathedral (formerly Santa Reparata) under the

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<sup>102</sup> Signori held the role for two months.

new name 'Santa Maria del Fiore' (1; Map 4.7).<sup>103</sup> At the same time as the foundation the *Opera del Duomo* (22: Map 4.8b)—'a secular institution in charge of the construction, maintenance, and the overall administration of the cathedral'—was formed, and by 1331 aligned to the *Arte della Lana*.<sup>104</sup>

Although Santa Maria Del Fiore was built in the fourteenth century, many Florentines continued to refer to it as Santa Reparata until its re-dedication in 1412.<sup>105</sup> For example, Brunni still refers to it as Santa Reparata when describing the foundation of Giotto's campanile,<sup>106</sup> and its existence during the period of the rule of the Duke of Athens.<sup>107</sup> Bergstein suggests that the naming of the cathedral was a bold civic gesture:

Naming the cathedral "Santa Maria del Fiore" in honor of the state (called "Florentia" or "Fiorenza"), which had as its emblem the Florentine lily (*giglio fiorentino*), was a gesture of unusually bold civic self-reference. The conceived and subsequently vanished plan for a statue that would have manifested the idea of Santa Maria del Fiore actually consisted of a synthesis in monumental form of various associable strands of thought (legends, names, images, and emblems) that had been in gestation throughout the history of the republican commune. Originally set forth in 1296, the theme was recapitulated with strength of purpose in the deliberations of 1412.<sup>108</sup>

The white lily on a red background had been the civic emblem of the commune since the mid thirteenth century but had been reversed to a red lily on a white background during the brief reign of the *primo popolo*. Nevertheless, throughout the various changes in regime the 'flower' had remained a symbol of civic governance rather than religious order, and so its association with the new name of the cathedral was provocative.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Villani, *Cronica*, 536; Bk.9; Ch. 9.

<sup>104</sup> Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 25.

<sup>105</sup> Bergstein, 'Marian Politics in Quattrocento Florence', 675.

<sup>106</sup> Brunni and Hankins, *History of the Florentine People*, 2007, 199; Vol. II.

<sup>107</sup> Brunni and Hankins, 279; Vo. II.

<sup>108</sup> Bergstein, 'Marian Politics in Quattrocento Florence', 679.

<sup>109</sup> Equally, its use as an emblem (described by Dati) during the processions of the Feast of San Giovanni is significant to the representation of civic order utilised by the city. Dati, *Istoria Di Firenze Di Goro Dati Dall'Anno 1380 All'Anno 1405. Con Annotazioni*, 84ff.

The building of the cathedral took many decades and was finally dedicated by Pope Eugenius in 1436.<sup>110</sup> The history of the building of the cathedral is well documented elsewhere—particularly Brunelleschi’s dome—and so will not be covered here.<sup>111</sup> Of more interest is the development of the land around the Duomo, such as the removal of the graveyard and the levelling of the area between the cathedral and baptistery; and the new ‘monumental’ axis down to the newly developed Piazza della Signoria which effectively shifted the Roman *Cardo* one street to the east (12, 15, 30, 41; Map 4.1b). All of these developments in the city plan, and the key churches, have strong links to both the symbolic identity of the city (i.e. the Roman and feudal legacies) but particularly the processional routes used on the various feast days of the city inherited from this tradition and planned for the future. As Braunfels suggests:

In addition there were new buildings or remodelling’s undertaken by the Cistercians when they took over San Frediano, by the Umiliati for all Saints, the Vallombrosians for Santissima Trinita and Santa Maria Maggiore, and the Sivistrians for San Marco. All of these churches faced onto squares of a size hitherto unknown in Florence. These squares served as settings for the delivery of sermons, often as markets, and later on for popular festivals.<sup>112</sup>

Of these new churches the most significant were the three mendicant churches: The Dominican Santa Maria Novella (1246-1360) (11; Map 4.3); the Franciscan Santa Croce (1294-1442) (7; Map 4.3); and the Augustinian Santo Spirito (1428-1481) (17; Map 4.3). These three churches grew dramatically in size during the fourteenth and fifteenth century such that by the time the new administrative districts of the city were introduced to replace the *Sesti* in 1343, the new *Quartieri* were named after these churches (the fourth *Quartiere* being San Giovanni).

Later legend would have it that both St Francis and St Dominic visited Florence in the thirteenth century; indeed, some even indicate that they met there.<sup>113</sup> Villani

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<sup>110</sup> Bruni and Hankins, *History of the Florentine People*, 2007, 381; *Memoirs* Vol III.

<sup>111</sup> For example Heinrich Klotz, *Filippo Brunelleschi* (London: Academy Additions, 1990).

<sup>112</sup> Braunfels, *Urban Design in Western Europe*, 51. See all these churches on Map 3.5: San Frediano 8. This can also be seen on Map 4.3: Ognissanti 9; S. Trinita 14, Santa Maria Maggiore 1; San Marco 31.

<sup>113</sup> Brucker suggests that St Francis was in Florence in 1211, and that he met St Dominic in the hospice of San Paolo in 1221. Brucker, *Florence*, 245. Paul Sabatier, *The Life of St Francis of Assisi*, trans. Louise Houghton (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919), 114. Suggests that documentary

mentions the foundation of both these churches but nothing of the presence of the two founding saints in Florence and other chronicle accounts are silent on the matter, suggesting that even if they did meet somewhere in the city it was not seen as a significant civic event.<sup>114</sup> It is more likely that both ‘legends’ sprang up in order to aggrandise the foundation of both mendicant motherhouses in the city.

Again, the development of these churches has been well documented and so will not be covered here, but it appears that the paving of their associated piazzas—Piazza Santa Croce (built as a part of the new ring road from 1259)(10; Map 4.1b); Piazza Santa Maria Novella (c.1300)(18; Map 4.1b); Piazza Santo Spirito (1294-1301)(17; Map 4.1b)—may be more linked to the development of the ceremonial activities of the city (Map 4.1a).

### 4.3. The Commune and Civic Festival

- **The Feast of San Giovanni**

The first description of events occurring on the feast day of San Giovanni are given in an account by Villani related to the time of Constantine when, he reports, the Roman Temple of Mars was converted into the church of St Giovanni and activities took place in the city on the date of the saint’s nativity:

...they consecrated their said temple in honour of God and of the blessed S. John the Baptist, and called it the Duomo of S. Giovanni; and they decreed that the feast on the day of his nativity should be celebrated with solemn sacrifices, and that a race should be run for a samite cloak, and this custom has been always observed by the Florentines on that day.<sup>115</sup>

In his account Villani also describes some activity related to older rites where a hearth fire is lit in each house from the same holy source ‘as in Jerusalem’. This tradition may have had a Christian precedent but it was also a practice common from antiquity described at length by Fraser in *The Golden Bough*.<sup>116</sup>

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sources can confirm that it was in fact 1217 that St Francis arrived in the city. Villani, *Villani’s Chronicle*, Bk. V; Ch. 24 & 25.

<sup>114</sup> For example, as Salimbene de Adam, the Franciscan chronicler, did not mention any such event it is unlikely that it actually occurred.

<sup>115</sup> Villani, *Villani’s Chronicle*, Bk. 1; Ch. 60. Also referred to in Dante Par. xvi. 25, 47. Par. xvi. 42.

<sup>116</sup> Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Abridged Edition (London: Macmillan & co, 1987), 609ff. See also Fustel De Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), 25 ff.

Building on this early reference to the festival, Villani describes the feast day activities for 1283 in more detail:

**How the city of Florence became a noble court and festival, with all dressed in white robes.**

In the year 1283, in the month of June, on the feast of St. John, the city of Florence being restful—quiet and peaceful—and prosperous for the merchants and artisans (especially for Guelphs who lorded over the land) there was in the district of Santa Felicita in Oltrarno, ... a company and brigades of a thousand men or more, all dressed in white robes, with a lord called 'dell'Amore'. The brigade did nothing other than occupy itself with games, and amusements, and dances of women and knights and other popolani, going through the area with trumpets and diverse instruments with joy and gladness, gathering together for meals, dinners and suppers. The court lasted two months and was the most noble that there ever was in the city of Florence or Tuscany; many gentlemen and buffoons filled the court from areas all over the country and all were received honourably and with hospitality ... No foreigner of any name or standing passed Florence whom the said brigade did not compete to invite and accompany on horse through the city and outside as needed.<sup>117</sup>

This account of the feast shows that in 1283, at least, the feast was well populated if not highly structured. To accommodate such crowds it must have been organized, the order of the feast apparently centred on a form of civic identity which grew out of the family unit.<sup>118</sup> Cesare Guasti writing in 1884 brought together several other accounts of the feast over the centuries up until the eighteenth century, and suggests the next account is by Gregorio Dati who describes the feast around 1410, here quoted almost in full:

When springtime comes which delights the whole world, every Florentine begins thinking about celebrating a beautiful feast of San Giovanni, which is in midsummer. And right at the beginning each person provides for suitable clothes and adornments and jewels. Anyone having to offer wedding banquets or another festa waits until that time, so as to honour the feast. Two months beforehand they begin to make the palio and the clothes of servants and pennants and trumpets and the cloth palii that lands commended to the commune give as cens (tributes), and ceri and other things they have to offer, and to invite people, and to gather things for the banquets, and to have the horses come from everywhere to run the Palio. You see the whole city involved in preparing for the feast and the high spirits of the youth and women involved in such preparations. They do not

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<sup>117</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, BKVII. Ch. 89.

<sup>118</sup> Ventrone, 'La Festa Di San Giovanni : Costruzione Di Un'identità Civica Fra Rituale e Spettacolo (Secoli XIV-XVI)', 54.



omit, however, to do all those things that show happiness and spirits full of joy on the festive days preceding the feast, such as S. Zenobius, and for Ascension and Pentecost and Trinity Sunday and for the Feast of Corpus Christi, [such as] dancing, singing, banqueting and jousts and other graceful games. For it appears that they have nothing else to do in those times lasting up to the Vigil of San Giovanni.<sup>119</sup>

Finally, on the vigil of San Giovanni, early in the morning all the guildsmen made mostra (exhibitions) outside their shops, joyfully displaying all their rich offerings, ornaments. Enough reams of golden cloth silk for ten kingdoms are displayed; gold and jewels of silver, caps, painted panels, exquisite carvings, and things that belong to armouries. It would take too long to describe in full.

Close by, elsewhere in the city, at three o'clock there is a solemn procession of all the clergy, priests, monks and friars (from a large number of orders): with so many relics of saints that it appears infinite and a great devotion. In addition to these clerics from many Abbeys of the world—with their marvellous and opulent adornments, rich vestments embroidered with figures of gold and silk—there are many Compagni of secular men walking in front of the Order where they are gathered, dressed like angels, playing marvellous instrumental music and songs and displaying beautiful images and statues of the saints and of those relics in whose honour they march. Departing from Santa Maria del Fiore, the whole procession travels around the city (la Terra) before returning to the cathedral.

Then after midday, a little past the heat of the day, about the time of Vespers [dusk], all citizens gather in their Gonfalone (of which there are sixteen), and in order, one after another, each Gonfalone, comprising richly dressed citizens led by the oldest and most worthy, then journeymen etc., march two by two to the church of San Giovanni to offer a gift of candles ... [the greater part of the Gonfalone will take part in games, amusements, and other representations] ... The walls of the streets they pass through are adorned ... and everywhere is full of young women and young girls dressed in silk and adorned with jewels, precious stones and pearls ... all of it so wonderful that the heat of the sun can be ignored and people wish to return the following day.

On the morning of the feast of San Giovanni, whoever goes to the Piazza della Signoria sees a triumphant and magnificent thing ... Around the great Piazza are a hundred towers, which look like gold; brought in as carts (which are called Ceri) made of wood, paper and wax, with colours and gold ... There are men on horseback .... and pedestrians with spears ... and some with dancers ... [also] on them are carved animals, and birds, and different trees, with apples and all things that, in seeing, give delight to the heart.

Nearby, around the ringhiera of the Palazzo Vecchio, set in iron rings hang a hundred banners (palios) or more; the first are those of the major cities giving tribute to the city, such as Pisa, Arezzo, Pistoia, Volterra, Cortona, and of Lucignano and of Castiglione Aretino, and of some Lords of Poppi and

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<sup>119</sup> Guasti, *Le Feste Di S. Giovanni Batista in Firenze*. Dati, *Istoria Di Firenze Di Goro Dati Dall'Anno 1380 All'Anno 1405. Con Annotazioni*, 84. Partial translation in Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 215.

Piombino, (which are recommended by the Municipality). They are made of double velvet and grey squirrel fur, or of silk; or made of other silk draped taffeta, which is marvellous thing to see.

The first offering, done in the morning, is from the Captains of the Guelph Party with the Knights, accompanied by other gentlemen, ambassadors and foreign knights—a great number of the most honourable citizens of the earth—with the Gonfalone showing the sign of the Guelph Party, brought by one of their ladies draped in an overcoat on a large palfrey covered to the ground with a white cloth also with the sign of the Guelph Party.

Then follow the other palii, brought one by one, each by a man on horseback called by name (each horse covered with silk etc.): and ... thus make an offering to the church of San Giovanni. These palii are given by tribute from the lands purchased by the City of Florence ...

The decorated Ceri, which seem like gold towers, are the record of the antique city of the Florentines: and so, in order of worthiness go, one after another, to make an offering (of the Palii) to San Giovanni. And they are hung around the inside of the church [San Giovanni] where they remain all year until the next feast. The old Palii are taken out ... and some are sold ...

After this ... come other offerings ... [brought by farmers of villas] ... Then, on a richly adorned carriage pulled by a pair of oxen covered with the sign and arms of the Mint, the Lords of the Mint come with a gift of a magnificent candle—escorted by about four hundred venerable men (all matriculated in the Arte di Calimala ..., and the Arte de 'Cambiatori; and each one with beautiful candle in his hands).

Then offerings come from the Signori—the Priors and their Colleges—together with their Rectors in companies (i.e. the Podestà, Capitano and Assecutor). All with so much ornament, and so many servants, and with so much trumpet and pipe, that it seems that the whole world resonates with it.

And when the Signori return all the runners who have come to run the Palio horserace [Map 4.10b]; and after them, all the ... weavers of woollen cloths in Florence. And after these, twelve prisoners are presented ...

At the end of all these offerings men and women return home to dine. And, as I said, the whole city is made that day of wedding celebrations and great banquets, with many pipes, sounds, songs, and dances—feasts of joy and ornament that make the earth seem like paradise.

Then, after dinner, past the middle of the day when the people are somewhat rested, and each one is happy; all the women and girls go where they have to see those runners of the Palio who follow a straight path through the middle of the city from one end to the other, past many beautiful houses of rich and good citizens, (of whom there are more than in any other part of the city). And, this straight path is full of flowers ... and all of the joys and rich adornments of the city; suitable to go with a big feast. And there are always many foreign gentlemen and knights, who, every year, come from the surrounding lands to see the beauty and magnificence of such a feast. And for this course there are so many people, who seem incredible—foreigners and citizens—that whoever did not see it could neither believe it nor imagine it.

Then, at the sound of the three peals of the large bell of the [Palazzo Vecchio], the prepared runners begin moving; and from the Tower they are seen by the signs of the boys who are there ... and the first to arrive at the finish wins the Palio which is brought in a triumphal cart with four wheels adorned with four life-like carved lions ... pulled by two horses covered with a sign of their commune ... This is a very large and rich Palio, of fine crimson velvet held in two poles, with a fine gold frieze lined with grey squirrel fur and hemmed with ermine, fringed with silk and fine gold; altogether costing about three hundred florins: although in times past it was made of high and low brocade of beautiful gold and worth six hundred or more florins.

All of the great square of San Giovanni, and part of the street around is covered with blue curtains with yellow lilies making the church [San Giovanni] a marvellous figure; and thus it would require more time to speak of it as a great ornament of the City. It seems to me that today we have already said much, and that it is good to end this glorious feast here and follow on another occasion.

The account of the feast dwells upon the Palio and candles, the meals, banquets and *mostra* more than the church processions that occurred on the vigil, but this race was not only run during this feast; another took place on the feast day of S. Reparata (8<sup>th</sup> October).<sup>120</sup> Later others were added such as one on the Feast day of St Barnabas (11<sup>th</sup> June)—commemorating the victory of the Battle of Campaldino (1289)—another to commemorate the defeat of the Pisans at the battle of San Vittorio in 1364 (July 28<sup>th</sup>); and another, on the Feast day of S. Anna, associated with the expulsion of the Duke of Athens in 1343.<sup>121</sup> At all of these events the clergy, the judiciary and the citizens took equal part, however, the race did not have the same relationship to the areas of the city as it does in present day Siena. As suggested by Dati's description, any wealthy owner could run their horse with a professional jockey—as was the case in various cities.<sup>122</sup>

It is also the case that over the several days running up to the feast there were often more than one procession and as the civic identity of these events increased in significance with the chariots, the candles, and the *palii*, it was not the case that the sacred functions were negated; in the days preceding the feast of San

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<sup>120</sup> Romolo Caggese, ed., *Statuti Della Repubblica Fiorentina. Editi a Cura Del Comune Di Firenze. Vol. 2: Statuto Del Podesta Dell' Anno 1325*, vol. 2 (Firenze: E. Ariani, n.d.), 436, accessed 15 August 2016. This race was run on foot.

<sup>121</sup> Ventrone, 'La Festa Di San Giovanni : Costruzione Di Un'identità Civica Fra Rituale e Spettacolo (Secoli XIV-XVI)', 55.

<sup>122</sup> Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 262.

Giovanni—beginning on the 20<sup>th</sup> June—processions left the cathedral and went to the church of S. Spirito, the next day to the Church of S. Croce, and in the third to that of S. Maria Novella all displaying the usual apparatus of the clergy, monks and friars. Trexler suggests that these processions were a later addition to the celebrations (early sixteenth century), and were probably undertaken in the specific Quartiere.<sup>123</sup> The exact itineraries for these processions is difficult to ascertain, however, for procession on the Vigil (Map 4.11) it is believed that they moved from S. Maria del Fiore, then going along Via Calzaiuoli, Piazza dei Signori, Via dei Gondi; and then from Badia, passed the Opera del Duomo, and return to S. Giovanni and S. Maria del Fiore.<sup>124</sup> It seems, according to an account by Giambattista Bertini (1509-1550) that this path was partly changed when the Medici moved from their palace (near San Lorenzo) to the Royal Palace built by Luca Pitti (1540), running the procession past the palace itself.<sup>125</sup>

The offering mentioned at the beginning of the account is set out in the Statutes where candles from all over the municipalities gathered in the Piazza of Santa Felicita before processing across the Arno.<sup>126</sup> This candle procession was altered both in the form of the gifts that became too garish for later 'Romanisation' of public taste.<sup>127</sup> It also changed in 1343 under the rule of the Duke of Athens where the gathering of offerings was made in the Piazza Santa Croce before moving past the Palazzo Vecchio and then on to San Giovanni.<sup>128</sup> Up until this point, although the candle and wax offerings were a part of the civic ceremony, the homage to the duke before the final journey to San Giovanni would not have had the same form under the Commune.<sup>129</sup> But still this aspect of the feast is evident today, with a smaller, symbolic gift of candles from the city to the church rather than large gifts or tributes from the cities subjugated in the lands surrounding Florence. It is also

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<sup>123</sup> Trexler, 249.

<sup>124</sup> A., *Le feste di S. Giovanni in Firenze antiche e moderne*, 15.

<sup>125</sup> Gori, *Le feste fiorentine attraverso i secoli*, 24.

<sup>126</sup> Caggese, *Statuti Della Repubblica Fiorentina. Editi a Cura Del Comune Di Firenze. Vol. 2*, 2:303. This is still the case today. (See accompanying booklet)

<sup>127</sup> See Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 258. and Guasti, *Le Feste Di S. Giovanni Batista in Firenze*, 49.

<sup>128</sup> Villani, *Cronica*, 1142, Bk.13, Ch. 8.

<sup>129</sup> Ventrone, 'La Festa Di San Giovanni : Costruzione Di Un'identità Civica Fra Rituale e Spettacolo (Secoli XIV-XVI)', 56.

telling that in 1306, the government ‘... abolished the organisation of the procession according to guilds...’<sup>130</sup> and began to organise them in relation to the military companies of the city.

It is interesting to note that in Dati’s relatively comprehensive description of the day, he does not describe the actual path of the main procession on the feast day itself—only that it travelled ‘around the city’ (*e vanno per la Terra*) returning to the cathedral from where it began. Trexler suggests that the procession followed the ‘standard’ path of the old Roman walls (although some did vary to visit Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella when the Mendicant orders became more significant for the city),<sup>131</sup> only diverting away at the south-western corner in order to cross Ponte Trinita into Oltrarno before returning over Ponte Vecchio and picking up the path again near the Mercato Nuovo (thus allowing the procession crosses all four Quartieri)(Map 4.12b).<sup>132</sup> Trexler’s description of this path extends that described by later chroniclers who use the via Calzaiuoli, but has been accepted by recent scholars as the path for the procession.<sup>133</sup> This procession, therefore, passed the Palazzo Vecchio, the Bargello and the hall of the most powerful guild in the city—*Arte dei Giudici e Notai*—allowing the Law and judiciary, as well as the new civic institutional buildings, to have a physical presence at the festival. As it circumnavigates the town the procession also crossed all four Quartiere—as it had done with the Sesti (Map 4.12a)—uniting the city in celebration.

- **Entries and the Feast of the Magi**

The path taken specific entries to the city (excepting the bishops entry described in the last chapter) seems to have been influenced by this circumnavigation developed in relation to the celebrations for the feast of San Giovanni. In 1418, for example, Pope Martin V arrived through the northern city gate (Porta S. Gallo), travelled south along the old Roman Road and Cardo until it reached the historic location of the *Pomoerium* (Map 4.13b). From here, at the location of the baptistery

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<sup>130</sup> Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze*, 463, Vol. IV.

<sup>131</sup> Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 251.

<sup>132</sup> Trexler, 250.

<sup>133</sup> Chrétien, *The Festival of San Giovanni*; Ventrone, ‘La Festa Di San Giovanni : Costruzione Di Un’identità Civica Fra Rituale e Spettacolo (Secoli XIV-XVI)’, 58. ‘The path followed by the various processions was that of the [Roman] first circle of city walls ...’

and cathedral, the procession turned left in order to circumnavigate the city clockwise along much of the Roman city boundary, continuing west along the Borgo Santi Apostoli before heading north and onward to Santa Maria Novella where the pope was eventually to be lodged. All subsequent recorded ceremonial arrivals also follow the path of this wall at some point during their journey thus cementing the iconography of the Commune—and its perceived Roman (Republican and/or Imperial) precedent—into the iconography of the city.<sup>134</sup> These events were often accompanied by ephemera (including Triumphal Arches, Elements at Junctions, Isolated Elements and Ornamental Facades) which further heightened the symbolic representation of the city and, during certain key episodes, renewed the association of Florence with a 'New Rome'.

The original Feast of the Magi involved a small procession between the Duomo and the Baptistery,<sup>135</sup> but its significance to the city was secured because it was on this feast day that San Giovanni had baptised Jesus in the Jordan. By 1390 it was recorded that the '... Magi went through the whole city ...' and performed a play at the site of the baptistery re-enacting the 'Massacre of the Innocents'.<sup>136</sup> The significance of this procession to the Medici began under Cosimo di Medici (1389-1464) who became frustrated by his lack of success in taking control of the 'stubbornly communal' Feast of San Giovanni and found that influencing this less significant—but linked—festival was less of an issue for the communal government and the *popolo*. Thus, his new extended path of the feast went from the Cathedral and Baptistery, past the new Medici palace up to the Dominican foundation of San Marco. From there it returned to the cathedral via SS. Annunziata (Map 4.14).

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<sup>134</sup> For example; the 1515 Entry of Leo X; 1518 Maddalena de la Tour d'Auvergne; 1539 Marriage: Cosimo I and Eleonora; 1565 Marriage Giovanna d'Austria; 1569 Carlo d'Austria - Entry; 1574 Cosimo I Funeral; 1589 Marriage Cristina di Lorena; and 1608 Marriage Maria Maddalena d'Austria

<sup>135</sup> See the *Mores* in Toker, *On Holy Ground*.

<sup>136</sup> Rab Hatfield, 'The Compagnia De' Magi', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970): 108.

#### 4.4. Commune Festivals as a Representation of Civic Order

That the iconography of the festivals of Florence were linked to the historical order of the city is recalled constantly in relation to the chronicles and reflected in some of the architecture of the city. Villani, it will be recalled, mentioned in his account of the festival the lighting of hearth fires 'as in Jerusalem.<sup>137</sup> In classical Rome, this was a significant gesture. The rites surrounding the sacred fire almost always involved the annual extinction and re-kindling of the fire.<sup>138</sup> Most families' house cult was specific to them as it related to their own ancestors, and as such the hearth flame symbolised continuity because if the flame was extinguished it was considered to be the end of the family. The son of the family would inherit the family cult and assume the role of the priest when the father died but the daughter would adopt the cult of the family into which she married.<sup>139</sup> In the Roman world the fire was ritually renewed on the first of March following strict rules regarding the processes of lighting the fire in order to preserve its purity (Table 2). Each family may have had different criteria but generally there was a restriction on the type of woods that were allowed to kindle the flame, or which flame could be the source for its reignition,<sup>140</sup> or it was lighted by rays from the sun.<sup>141</sup> Thus, Villani's reference to the event in relation to one of the most articulated festivals in the Christian calendar of the city suggests a very conscious understanding of the legacy of the Roman foundation of the city discussed in chapter two.

Equally, references to the Feast of San Giovanni in Dati's description acknowledge of the iconography of its Roman predecessors. The associated trade, games and markets that accompany the religious aspects of the day are further augmented by the tributes (in the form of *palii*), as well as the use of oxen to pull the cart of the Mint are definitely familiar, as is the more general iconography of triumph linked

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<sup>137</sup> Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. 1; Ch. 60. Also referred to in Dante Par. xvi. 25, 47. Par. xvi. 42.

<sup>138</sup> Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*, 67–69.

<sup>139</sup> This ritual expulsion and admission was the subject of Sophocles' *Antigone and Creon* which viewed the background for the relationship between house cults and state religion and the conflict between them.

<sup>140</sup> In Rome it was rekindled from the Temple of Vesta.

<sup>141</sup> "The sacred fire, which was so intimately associated with the worship of the dead, belonged in its essential character, properly to each family. It represented the ancestors; it was the providence of a family, and had nothing in common with the fire of a neighbouring family." Coulanges, *The Ancient City*, 37.

to the military prowess of the various Gonfalone. But the whole *feste* is primarily the Christian feast day of San Giovanni translated by the Commune, as has been suggested in the previous chapter, through baptism and its link to the Baptistery (also understood to have a Roman heritage), into an initiation into the Commune itself. The *palii* given as tributes to San Giovanni (taken from the Palazzo Vecchio) and left in the Baptistery for the year as testament to political and economic allegiance indicates significant links between church, city, and the families of the city and contado. A fact later confirmed when, during the time when Lorenzo the Magnificent unofficially ruled the city, all republican relics were removed from the Baptistery, and he began to significantly interfere with the iconography of the hitherto republican Christian festivals.

As has already been mentioned, the Medici also interfered with the path of the procession for the Feast of the Magi, in the process appropriating much of the iconography for its own benefit. This can be seen firstly in the Gozzoli fresco (1458-61) representing the arrival of the Magi that dominates the small chapel in the Medici Palace (begun 1444) (Fig. 4.16b). Here, the Medici—represented as the Magi on their way to greet Christ—were portrayed as wealthy, powerful, of international repute, and ‘princely’.<sup>142</sup> Their association with the Magi as ambassadors and envoys of Florence is clear and thus the painting suggests an elaborate procession similar to one in the festal cycle of Florence as well as a historical representation of a biblical event which will be discussed further in the next chapter. The painting, combined with the fact that the newly extended procession passed by the front façade of their new palazzo (Map 4.14), anchored their identity—and that of the palazzo—to both the city and the church simultaneously. Even before their elevation to the Dukedom, the Medici were civic ‘royalty’, billeting most of the dignitaries who visited the city.<sup>143</sup> Thus their palazzo, like the Palazzo Vecchio and the Bargello before, developed the iconography of a private dwelling as well as a civic institution. The family, the processional activities

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<sup>142</sup> The iconography of the painting itself is thought to have been influenced by the relatively recent arrival of the John VIII Palaiologos (1392-1448) Byzantine Emperor (1425-48) with a magnificent retinue and various scholars who added to the rapidly developing humanist environment of the city (such as Gemistus Pletho (c.1355-c.1452) to attend the Council of Florence in 1439, while Cosimo was holding the role of Gonfaloniere of Justice. (All of these men appear in the painting).

<sup>143</sup> Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 425.



of the feast and the architecture all contributed to this iconographic order to such a degree that the religious importance of the event was matched by its civic significance (and the status of the Medici).

The importance of this event to the Medici is confirmed by its later proscription. In the first instance, following the Pazzi conspiracy in 1478, the Medici themselves were able to affect the event banning the use of wagons (*edifizi*) for the feast, influencing the feast to such an extent that even when it resumed in 1488 it was less spectacular than before.<sup>144</sup> However, more significantly, by the time that Savonarola was in control of the city in 1494 all lavish celebrations held on the streets of Florence that were not seen as a critical part of the religious iconography of the city—such as the Medici controlled feast of Magi—were banned.

From the events that influenced the growth and eventual decline of the Feast of the Magi it can be inferred that in order for a feast to survive political change in Florence during this period its representative praxis—in this particular context in relation to Roman republican and Christian virtue—needed to maintain a balance between pragmatic and paradigmatic order. The predominantly sacramental aspects of the Christian feasts of the feudal era had to be adapted for the consumption of the *popolino* of the thirteenth century and beyond. But equally, this episode suggests that if a feast became too obviously representative of a particular government or family then it was also likely to be banned, unsupported, or abandoned once the government changed or the family became less significant.

The Feast of San Giovanni seems to have managed to negotiate this territory and maintain its popularity by developing a civic iconography linked to the original Roman foundation, and in doing so allowed the Commune, the *Podestà*, the *Gonfaloniere*, (and later the princes, dukes, and Fascists) to adapt some of the iconography of the feast to suit their own requirements as well as those of the city and the *popoli* (even if they were unaware of the layers of tradition and the order it established). For example, in 1491 Lorenzo di Medici did not suppress the San

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<sup>144</sup> Hatfield, 'The Compagnia De' Magi', 119.

Giovanni procession but added fifteen floats re-enacting the triumphs of Aemilius Paullus,<sup>145</sup> an allegory to Lorenzo's own virtues as a leader.

This continual reassessment and adaptation of the iconography of the festival to suit the ruling hegemony is revealed in particular events such as the way that, after 1532 when Cosimo I became the Duke of Florence, the Medici contrived to maintain links to the idea and significance of a Roman foundation of the city by transforming the established iconography of Republican Rome into one of Roman civic virtue that was more easily portable to another location—an idea made explicit in the fresco by Ghirlandaio in the *Sala dei Gigli* (Figs. 4.17 & 4.18).<sup>146</sup>

More generally, in relation to the buildings of the city, the obvious point to make is that the main civic buildings and the baptistery and the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore and the Baptistery, were all located on the boundary of the old Roman *pomoerium*. Although there are no documents that establish particular relationships between other buildings of the city and the various festive processions that continually inhabited the streets of the city, it can be inferred that they were at least a factor that contributed to the significance of the streets. For example, the grouping of Black Guelf palazzi belonging to the Albizi, Altoviti, Donati and Pazzi families located on the eastern section of the old Roman *Decumanus* were located perfectly for the entry processions for new bishops (the Blacks were the more conservative papist side of the Guelf party) (Map 4.15). Not only did the bishop travel past these palazzi and onward to San Pier Maggiore on the day of his arrival, but on the second day the first public act undertaken by the bishop in honour of Florence's first bishop took place amidst the houses along the Borgo degli Albizi (now named after one of these significant families)

What becomes clear is that from early in the fourteenth century the church was beginning to no longer be the primary institution of the city charged with defining the routes for the more civic oriented processions. Their basic instructions, set out

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<sup>145</sup> Chrétien, *The Festival of San Giovanni*, 11. See Chapter two note 90

<sup>146</sup> Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*.

in the consuetudinaries, were not compromised but augmented by additions designed to allow greater representation of the governmental order of the city. This is made clearer by the various memoirs and diaries of the period that recounted aspects of wealth, splendour and pomp rather than the more mundane things such as the exact paths of the processions. These fashionable, wealthy shows, which began with the '*mostra*' on the first days of the feast, were supplemented by personal displays of wealth and power within the later processional rites. This is confirmed by the sheer number of men (and sometimes women) with brand new livery listed as being part of various family brigades participating the festival processions.<sup>147</sup> However, that is not to say that when the time for planning the event emerged aspects of path, structure and hierarchy were left to the whims of the most powerful families. Special institutions (*festaioli*)<sup>148</sup> were charged with the job of organising the events, and the parameters within which they had to operate were somewhat limited by the Statutes of the city itself. Even during the turbulent years of change under the watchful eye of Lorenzo de Medici the basic format of the events was relatively consistent.<sup>149</sup> The drastic events of the Pazzi conspiracy resulted in a delay of some events and a cancellation of the parade of *edifizi* but they soon resumed.<sup>150</sup>

As such we can see over this period a shift in control of the processional order from the church to the city—even though they were both significant (as indicated by the mosaics within the baptistery mentioned in the last chapter) (Figs. 3.20 & 3.21)—with continued freedom of expression (like in the Roman Festival's favoured by the plebiscite) allowed for the citizens and visitors to Florence. It is no surprise then that the iconography of Roman Republican and early Imperial rule was often used as a means of articulating hierarchies of symbolic and ritual order alongside the more prosaic world of tax revenue and general civic administration which were clearly the main tasks of the *Signori*. Their own elevation to a quasi-priesthood with the accoutrements of state mirroring the vestments and relics of

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<sup>147</sup> Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 227ff.

<sup>148</sup> Trexler, 247.

<sup>149</sup> Ventrone, 'La Festa Di San Giovanni : Costruzione Di Un'identità Civica Fra Rituale e Spettacolo (Secoli XIV-XVI)', 62.

<sup>150</sup> Ventrone, 63. The parade of *edifice* was stopped for ten years but resumed with the triumphal entry of the son of Innocent VIII on the occasion of his betrothal to one of Lorenzo's daughters.

the church, was designed to elevate the oath of fealty from feudal origins to governance based on trade and money rather than birth and privilege. As Trexler argues, the ‘... city hall had to be partly a church’ with the Ringhiera (added to the building on the 1320s) acting as a virtual altar:

When the steps of the palace became a regular stopping place on the standard processional route – the priors were joined to the procession much as the relics fetched from churches – the building had definitely become one of the centres of ritual activity within the city.<sup>151</sup>

Once the first set of commune walls were built in the twelfth century and the old Roman/early-medieval walls were demolished, a new road around the old city was constructed and this, combined with gaps in city fabric that had resulted from the destructive legacy of the early stages of the Guelph/Ghibelline conflict, allowed for the construction of some new urban spaces linked to the new ‘order’ of the city. At the time the only existing urban open spaces were the two medieval market squares; the Mercato Nuovo—situated beside the old south gate of the Roman city (11, Map 4.1b); and the Mercato Vecchio—a remnant of the old Roman Forum (29, Map 4.1b). These spaces, although important for business and a focus for the successful development of the trading prowess upon which Florence based much of its newfound power, do not appear to have been central to the festive order of the city. As the century progressed some of the new guild-houses were located on or near these piazzas (Map 4.8b), but they do not seem to have been significant enough to shape the new urban order; they were not used as a focus for the location of new civic buildings for governmental institutions; and equally, around 1389,<sup>152</sup> the main north south axis of the city was shifted one street to the west, away from the old Roman *Cardo* (the *via Roma* / *Via Calimala*) to the *via Calzaiuoli* which linked two new urban piazzas—the *Piazza San Giovanni* to the *Piazza Signoria*—no longer passing through the markets. Thus emerged a further layer to the ordering of the city—a civic layer—which was most evident during the annual festive processions that took place within the city, sponsored, funded and

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<sup>151</sup> Richard C. Trexler, ‘Ritual Behaviour in Renaissance Florence: The Setting’, in *Medieval and Renaissance Spirituality*, ed. Paul Maurice Clogan, *Medievalia et Humanistica: Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture*, NS 4 (North Texas State University, 1973), 127. This is also confirmed by the fact that the closer to the relics the more power it signified

<sup>152</sup> Fanelli, *Firenze, architettura e città*, 23.

embellished by the ever-increasing number of (competing) merchants and city grandees.

While Trachtenberg's the *Dominion of the Eye* develops a theory related to the arrangement of these new streets and piazzas best described as a form of 'proto' Renaissance planning, in the context of this thesis it appears that the city was not contemplated as a visual 'tableau' where perspective was utilised to structure an idea of 'space' but that the traditions of procession were considered much more important.<sup>153</sup> The city built its new institutions at the same time as it developed the ritual landscape of the city into something more fitting for the political and social hierarchy of the fledgling commune. As a consequence, the festive setting of the city established by the Sacramental Order in a variety of Christian feasts—itsself grafted onto an urban setting (oriented to the cosmos) forged by the Romans—formed the ground for a further layer of articulation aligned to the new representational requirements of the Commune. The new guild houses, civic palazzi (and other new institutions), urban mendicant churches and monasteries, lined the streets of the expanding city and affirm the gradual administrative organisation of the newly designated districts. However, although this administrative order expanded out in to recently inhabited areas inside the new city limits, the ritual ordering of the city seems to have remained primarily within the curtilage of the first set of communal walls, centred on the Roman *pomoerium*. Thus the tension between the original city boundaries and their significance to Florentine identity were linked to these new areas, beyond the historical boundaries, through new rites. In essence, the original rituals linked to boundary transformed into ones related more towards Heidegger's sense of 'boundedness',<sup>154</sup> no longer just a commemoration of the *dromenon* at a particular place and time but symbolic act linked to an identity which extended the everyday

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<sup>153</sup> Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye*. This particular theme will be developed further in the next chapter but is also visible in Guidoni's hypothetical construction of the planning of the second set of commune walls (Map 4.6b).

<sup>154</sup> 'A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognised, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*'. 'Building Dwelling Thinking' in Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 154. '[Heidegger's] is a form of boundedness tied to the idea of that from which something begins in its unfolding as what it is, rather than that at which it comes to a stop; a concept of boundary as *origin* rather than as *terminus*.' Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (MIT Press, 2008), 29.

function of transgression and order into a ritual act or ceremonial performance, one open to different temporalities without having to be directly linked to Christian or Roman ideas of divinity.

If the city adapted in order to accommodate these new layers of order—linked to both the past and the future—then the same can be said of the architecture commissioned by the city to house the newly appointed civic dignitaries. Their palazzi with stacked *salone* above a more practical, fortified and sparse ground floor with apartments spread over the upper floors—including chambers (*camere*); a chapel; and a kitchen<sup>155</sup>—were similar to the castles that had accommodated the court life of the nobility during the feudal period. In the castle;

Not all guests were admitted very far into the privacy of the home ... the upstairs living room was used for business discussions, suppers and conversations with acquaintances and associates. The bedroom was more private, though not totally inaccessible. Jesters were allowed in, as were farmers sometimes, and of course those who attended the ill: barbers, physicians, midwives, and priests with all their retinue. In the ... rural castles of the feudal nobility the bedroom often enjoyed the same prestige as in a royal palace; here nobles stored the documents on which their power was founded and in the presence of notaries and witnesses registered important contracts.<sup>156</sup>

This domestic form, including rooms for entertaining guests and more private apartments, was then transformed into rooms for the new republican palaces where traditional court ceremony needed to adapt to facilitate new social strata crowned by the *priori*, the *podestà* and the *capitano*.<sup>157</sup>

Similarly, the Bargello and the Palazzo Vecchio were originally built in the form of a medieval castle with concealed internal staircases designed for siege protection. They had a fortified entrance and the domestic rooms (where the priors were housed) were in the least exposed parts of the palace—on the upper floors and to the rear of the building. The ceremonial functions accommodated within these

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<sup>155</sup> Often on the top floor so that fire damage to the property as a whole could be limited to one floor if tackled swiftly.

<sup>156</sup> Duby, *A History of Private Life*, 283. These spatial hierarchies are also evident in Alberti's *Della Famiglia* Translated in to English as *The Family in Renaissance Florence*. The first three books were written sometime before 1434.

<sup>157</sup> Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 65.

buildings seem to have been limited to the rooms themselves and not the circulation—stairs at this time were seen more as a functional necessity than a symbolic possibility. Nevertheless, the building was a symbol of the civic rule of the Signoria and so when the city became the centre of a dukedom, the palace was also converted for their use—both practically and symbolically.

The Medici had purchased the Pitti Palace in 1549 and, once the Vasari corridor linking the palaces together was completed in 1564 (Map 4.16b)—one year before the transformation of the Palazzo Vecchio into the Ducal palace was completed—the Medici could live in either building while still making clear that their rule had replaced that of the commune. Even if they spent much of their time in the Pitti Palace, for the purposes of civic representation they now permanently occupied the rooms formerly taken by the *Signori* and the *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia*.

Today, even though primary issues of justice and national policy are handled in Rome or in the outskirts of Florence in large new monumental structures,<sup>158</sup> the city council centred on the mayor<sup>159</sup> still meets in the Palazzo Vecchio in the *Sala di Dugento* (B, Fig. 4.12), the room where the first meeting of the *Signori* was held in 1302.<sup>160</sup> Not often open to the public, this room continues to create a setting for the council linking the rich and varied history of governance with the identity of the city—both past and present—even though tourists overrun other parts of the palace (See Booklets of the current festival). The palazzo continues to be both representative of the institution as well as the history of the city, and these functions are brought together on specific feast days when the partitioned building engages very differently. On feast days the internal boundaries which are normally used to separate users, become borders where different groups interact and the dignitaries normally accommodated out of view of the public emerge and lead

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<sup>158</sup> For example, the *Palazzo di Giustizia* (Firenze), Rifredi Quartiere, 1999-2012 by Leonardo Ricci and Giovanni Michelucci.

<sup>159</sup> A role created in Florence in 1781.

<sup>160</sup> Niccolò Rodolico, Giulia Camerani Marri, and Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Mostra documentaria e iconografica di Palazzo Vecchio: giugno-luglio, 1957*. (Firenze: Tipografia Giuntina, 1957), 12.

some of the processions that still contribute the civic identity of the city (as described in chapter one and volume four and five of this thesis (Fig. 4.19)).<sup>161</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Inevitably this chapter has covered a long-time frame incorporating some key themes related to the era Trexler describes as the 'Classical Period of Florentine Feste – 1343-1480' (See table 1).<sup>162</sup> The unfolding story of this time suggests that the changing rulers (then as now) still utilised the idea, form, and meaning of the *feste* as mechanisms of rule but also of continuity. In this regard the festivities are not just appendages to the civic life of the city but manifestations of the city itself. For the fourteenth-century Florentine, festive life and civic life were the same. Over history, the internecine struggles between various guilds and other civic institutions were inevitably played out in the festivals and their associated activities. Thus, the city festivals were primary situations where the agon of the city was preserved, articulated and manifested.

It is, therefore, this period that sees the beginning of civic festival and offers an opportunity to reveal aspects of the transition from a sacramental to a civic order that, in the end, opens the way for both spectacular new forms of festival as well as heretofore unthinkable abuses. The significance of this moment is that this transition of meaning—from purely sacred through to sacro-civic—opened the way for a clearer understanding of the ontological nature of ritual and, in the process led to the greater opportunities for mundane manipulation. Once the use of Sacramental order—underpinned by faith, blood, and entitlement—was extended into the meritocracy of the urban intelligentsia, and the actions of man within this previously exclusive representational field were accepted, the field itself became accessible to man—exposed and manipulatable. This tension will become the critical topic of the next chapter.

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<sup>161</sup> See Richard Sennett 'The Open City' for a discussion on the difference between borders and boundaries. <https://lsecities.net/media/objects/articles/the-open-city/en-gb/> accessed 15.02.16.

<sup>162</sup> Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*.



## **Chapter 5 - Dialectical Readings of Festival and Architecture**

### **Introduction**

The development of the festive landscape of Florence from antiquity to the later Middle Ages in terms of politics, social structures, urban context, and architecture suggests an evolving complexity of representation that, in the end, resulted in a multivalency of civic order accessible to every inhabitant of the city (to varying degrees) both in their everyday life and in the heightened reality of the festival. In order to accommodate such changes in representation and fulfil the demands of the growing city the communes of the region were forced to create new institutions—and house them—as well as to adapt existing traditions, grafting new aspects of iconography onto already established civic places and events. In this process theology, church processions and the parvises of the city were used alongside aspects of classical tradition re-crafted—both physically and culturally—from the historiography and the intangible culture linked to the perceived Roman foundation of the city.

Albeit this transformation, as described in the previous three chapters, has an extensive historical time frame, the changes that occurred during the latter part of this period—evident in the representational qualities of culture such as literature, architecture, art and sculpture etc.—also embody a universal shift in the articulation of order which, since this time, has been able to accommodate other particular changes in civic identity. This chapter, therefore, aims to explain how these developments, during the critical years of the late Middle Ages, created the necessary conditions, not only for the innovations evident in the representations of humanism and Renaissance culture, but for many other future changes as well. It will argue that the basic representational elements required of a city on the cusp of early modern Europe were established at this time insofar as the resultant order of the city was able—with relatively minor adjustments—to accommodate, represent, and frame the civic culture (including festivals) that continues to be such a significant part of the identity of the Florence today—both to its own citizens as well as to visitors from near or far.

In order to explore this underlying multivalency and its ability to accommodate various later manifestations of civic order within Florence this chapter is divided into two sections. First it will re-evaluate the development of the Commune in terms of its literature—particularly Dante and Boccaccio—suggesting that in this transition (well documented in philology) we can see a set of themes that also relate to the developments in architecture of the period; all responding to the developing representational needs of the Commune. But also, in many histories of the late medieval period the development of architecture, as well as other manifestations of culture, has been wrongly attributed to the emergence of the rational tradition which is in fact only one facet of the epoch’s increasing interest in what came to be called humanism. Within this section it will be argued that the narrative frames presented in much literary criticism are not directly applicable to architecture but that if traditions linked to Plato’s conception of dialectic are understood (as opposed to the more modern Hegelian idea of dialectic), the various modes of representation of the period appear subject to less division. As a result, in an analysis of festival culture and philology, there is less need for ideas such as Bakhtin’s dialogism to describe the multivalences of popular culture evident in the emerging civic life of Europe as suggested in his work on Rabelais.<sup>1</sup>

The second section then looks into the development of architecture as a field of study throughout this period and suggests that much contemporary analysis of the subject applies artificial rules—particularly to the idea of form—which is only one aspect of the visible world (according to Plato) and that a more open interpretation of architecture within this alternative tradition offers opportunities to evaluate architecture from the past, and indeed, for the future.

These two prolegomena lead to the concluding chapter which argues that, although architecture creates a background for festival, in the end—in terms of representation—it shares many of the same characteristics.

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<sup>1</sup> Mikhail Mikhaïlovich Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1984).

## 5.1 From Philology to Architecture

Much of Plato's oeuvre was not directly accessible in the Middle Ages. Up until the fifteenth century the only texts available in the Latin west were Calcidius' partial translation and commentary on the *Timaeus* (17a-53b) and the *Meno* and *Phaedo*.<sup>2</sup> However, many of the ideas had been filtered in theology through the writings of the Christian Fathers—especially Augustine who had managed to adapt aspects of Platonic philosophy to incorporate the idea of creation *ex nihilo*—and through many of the Latin writers (including Cicero and Boethius amongst others). Augustine's familiarity with Plato is clear in *The City of God* where he refers to passages from *The Republic*,<sup>3</sup> which he would have read in Latin (he did not read Greek), and also to dialectic, which he suggests is a worthy tool if limited by the Greeks' pantheism:

[The suggestions of philosophers] ... belong not to Rome, but to Greece; [and ...] the teachings of the philosophers are not the commandments of the gods, but the discoveries of men, who, at the prompting of their own speculative ability, made efforts to discover the hidden laws of nature, and the right and wrong in ethics, and in dialectic what was consequent according to the rules of logic, and what was inconsequent and erroneous.<sup>4</sup>

Augustine's dialectic, although transferred into a Neo-Platonic context of early Christian theology, still would have been closer to Plato's understanding of the term than the way it is often used today. Consequently, in the context of a discourse on festival, and in the context of the Middle Ages, the idea of dialectic as a tool to uncover 'what is inconsequent and erroneous' needs further explanation. Although such a task to a large degree bypasses Aristotle, who was central to the Scholasticism prevalent in the cathedral schools by the end of the thirteenth-century, the culture surrounding festival was less engaged in these theological advances and altogether less systematic and more superstitious and ambiguous—as evidenced by Landucci's account of the death of Savonarola in 1498 quoted earlier. These themes can be discussed through references to the literature of the time.

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<sup>2</sup> Dermot Moran, 'Platonism, Medieval', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780415249126-B095-1>.

<sup>3</sup> St Augustine, *Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Bk.II, Ch. 14.

<sup>4</sup> St Augustine, Bk.II, Ch.7.

For example, in Plato's *Symposium* Socrates recounts a discussion he had on the nature of love with Diotima, a Mantinean woman, who suggested that one difficulty in the understanding of any 'true' idea is that the words used to explain them are often limited in scope. She uses poetry as an example:

... what we've been doing is to give the name of Love to what is only one single aspect of it; we make just the same mistake, you know, with a lot of other names ... For instance, poetry. You'll agree that there is more than one kind of poetry in the true sense of the word—that is to say, calling something into existence that was not there before, so that every kind of artistic creation is poetry, and every artist is a poet.<sup>5</sup>

In chapter one a brief discussion on this comment was used to identify the idea of creativity (and hence poetry) in all fields of endeavour related to an act—mimesis of praxis<sup>6</sup>—and that consequently the festival was an appropriate subject, or lens, through which aspects of architecture could perhaps be re-evaluated. Here it serves to offer a ground for the linking of philological interpretations of the literature of the period with that of architecture and the other arts. Richard Palmer in his book on hermeneutics suggests that:

Understanding a literary work is not a scientific kind of knowing which flies away from existence into a world of concepts; it is an historical encounter which calls forth personal experience of being here in the world.<sup>7</sup>

The same is also true of architecture. Interpreting Palmer's statement in the light of Plato's comments on poetry and creativity suggests that neither architecture nor literature nor festival can be clarified through a purely scientific form of knowing and that it is in the realms of interpretation and understanding, developed through hermeneutics that an appropriate knowledge can be acquired.

Although the term 'hermeneutics' was only first used in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century referring to a tradition of biblical interpretation (or exegesis), the sentiment used in interpreting *logos* is, in essence, similar to that which evolved from the classical tradition and so mirrors many of concerns set out in the Platonic dialogues—filtered through medieval Neo-Platonism—that played a significant role in the

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<sup>5</sup> Plato, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, trans. Lane Cooper, New Impression edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), *Symposium* 205b. 557.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450b3-4

<sup>7</sup> Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 10.

emergent traditions of Humanism. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the two most critical works that were produced within Florentine culture in the great period of transition described in the previous two chapters—*The Divine Comedy* and *The Decameron*—both use classical literary forms to relay their themes: the dialogue and the symposium. Therefore, it seems prudent, in an investigation into the development of new horizons of representation, to begin with an exploration of some critical literature of the period and what it reveals about the other spatial and festive aspects of the culture of the time. While the various chronicles and diaries of the period offer great mettle to the historian, in a study of cultural representation aspects of creative imagination are more appropriate sources of information when one seeks to understand how the arts are being used for orientation in history. At this point it is worth noting that the hermeneutical method which underpins this thesis will not develop an argument suggesting the close association of philosophy, poetry and architecture—similar to Panofsky's *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*—as there is no guarantee that patterns of thought will cross the various disciplines allowing similar structures. Nevertheless, it will be in the proper evaluation of the dialectical processes inherent to Plato's dialogues that will allow some agreement in understanding between these different disciplines.

That Plato's dialectic was an issue for the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance is confirmed by Rabelais' (1483-1553) prologue to *Gargantua* (1534) where he compares his work to that of Plato's *Symposium* (215a) and suggests that:

Now what do you think is the purpose of this preamble ...? Is it that you ... in reading the pleasant titles of certain books of our invention ... may not too easily conclude that they treat of nothing but mockery and fooling and pleasant fictions ... It is wrong, however, to set such small store by the works of men. For, as you yourselves say, the habit does not make the monk ... That is the reason why you must open this book, and carefully weigh up its contents. You will discover that the drug within is far more valuable than the box promised; that is to say, that the subjects here treated are not so foolish as the title on the cover suggested.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Francois Rabelais, *The Histories Of Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. J. Cohen (London; New York: Penguin Classics, 1979), 37.

His argument is that just as the wise and distinguished Socrates was at the same time a cumbersome and ugly man with poor manners and unfit for any public office, so there is more to his apparently scatological and obscene book if one takes the time to look. At the heart of this sentiment is the belief that for the most part, one cannot have one without the other. The greatness of both—and by implication events such as festivals—is built off an irreconcilable duality that cannot, and indeed should not, be synthesised or resolved but left as contradictions because in this creative dialectic lies the richness of all social and civic humanity. Too much emphasis on the shift to the more visceral aspects of Rabelais' work misses the point that the body represents both the thing in question (nature) and the means by which we understand it. It is this conflict which, in Florence at least, was being articulated at the level of the city in the late medieval period.

Plato's own development of the unresolved nature of dialectic as '... the skill of developing the consequences of opposed assumptions even while one is ignorant of the ... "what" of what one is talking about ...'<sup>9</sup> was spawned from the realisation that the traditional idea of ethics of the polis—most clearly articulated in the moral significance of poetry provided by traditional education of classical Greece—had been destroyed by sophistry where too much focus was placed upon form. The difference between such an instrumental understanding and a more 'communicative' representation can be explained in the distinction the Greeks made between 'form' (what you apprehend through the senses that only 'resemble the true') and 'nature' (a greater reality).

In the *Republic*, Plato used the term *episteme* (translated into Latin as *scientia* by Roman and medieval scholars) specifically in relation to the correct rule of a city within a dialogue that also mused upon the nature of reality as a whole. In Book VII (514a-520a), the allegory of the cave, he describes reality as moving shadows of things, men, and animals (some who talk) cast on the wall of a cave in front of humanity by light from a fire behind. Thus, for Plato, any opinions based on

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<sup>9</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato* (London: Yale University Press, 1983), 93.

analysis of the 'shadows' (*doxa* or form) without reference to the broader setting (nature) must be considered extremely limited in scope.

For Plato there were four means of communicating a natural thing:<sup>10</sup>

1. name or word (e.g. circle) - *onoma*
2. explanation or conceptual determination (a line of points all equidistant from a single point) - *logos*
3. appearance, image, what it looks like (drawn circle) - *eidolon*
4. the knowledge or insight itself

These four means were not in themselves capable of revealing the thing itself but contributed to the orientation towards knowledge of it, albeit through the limited medium of direct experience between an individual occurrence (the One) and its relation to the world as a whole (the Many).<sup>11</sup> Plato used the irresolution of his dialectic to continually draw attention to the dilemma that there was a limit to the possible understanding of the world, but that consciousness of this limit was in itself a form of insight:

It is this very dialectic of the One and the Many which establishes the finite limits of human discourse and insight – and our fruitful situation halfway between single and multiple meaning, clarity and ambiguity.<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, in the *Republic* Book V Plato introduces several pairs of terms—justice and injustice; philosophy and philodoxy; truth and falsehood—as a way of describing the difference between a good and a corrupt society, suggesting that it is only out of the constant struggle between these pairs that order can be maintained and wisdom secured. Eric Voegelin, in evaluating this process, is thus led to the conclusion that for Plato ‘... philosophy is not the doctrine of right order, but the light of wisdom that falls on the struggle’;<sup>13</sup> and that the use of dialectical terms is an important part of the way Plato articulated the right order of the city itself:

[Plato’s] philosopher does not exist in a social vacuum, but in opposition to the sophist. Justice is not defined in the abstract but in opposition to the concrete forms which injustice assumes. The right order of the polis is not

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<sup>10</sup> Gadamer, 100. These four means of communication bear a striking resemblance to the ideas that underpinned interpretation in Biblical exegesis (literal, allegorical, tropological, anagogical).

<sup>11</sup> The thing itself, for Plato a fifth layer, was un-comprehensible as indicated in *the Republic*.

<sup>12</sup> Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, 120.

<sup>13</sup> Voegelin, *Plato and Aristotle*, 62ff.

presented as an “ideal state,” but the elements of right order are developed in concrete opposition to the elements of disorder surrounding society.<sup>14</sup>

So the ‘right order for the polis’ was seen to emerge from contemplation of these pairs (good and bad) and this dialectic resulted in wisdom situated within the city where such tensions are articulated.

... dialectic is unending and infinite. Underlying this theory would be the fact that the logos always requires that one idea be “there” together with another. Insight into one idea does not yet constitute knowledge. Only when the idea is “alluded” to in respect to another does it itself display itself as something.<sup>15</sup>

For Plato, the Sophist was the person who wanted to undermine this dialectic of justice by leading the discourse away from content towards ‘form’, i.e. the person whose aim was to win an argument regardless of the ethical or moral consequences. For the Sophist, the art of argument is seen to be more important than content. Again, it is critical to recognise that in this process there is a connection between ‘form’ and ‘meaning’ but that form is not the limit of meaning; it points to it but it is not, in and of itself, meaningful even though it plays a critical part in the processes of communication, interpretation, and understanding.

In terms of understanding the problems relating to festival, architecture and the city, it is the second pair of Plato’s terms—philosophy/philodoxy—that are the most significant. In the dialogue Socrates describes true philosophers as:

Those for whom the truth is the spectacle of which they are enamoured (475e); ... [those] who would be able to approach beauty itself and contemplate it in and by itself (476b) ... [not] mistaking resemblance for identity ... the man whose thought recognises a beauty in itself, and is able to distinguish that self-beautiful and the things that participate in it, and neither supposes the participants to be it nor it the participants ... (476c-d).

At a mundane level, although most modern empirical categorisations of elements, things, or behaviours etc. are predicated on the fact that they do not mistake ‘resemblance’ for ‘identity’, in reality it is more that they do not perceive any difference. For example, although Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849)—writing

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<sup>14</sup> Voegelin, 63. Quentin Skinner reinforces this ‘difference’ when he suggests that it was not until the late sixteenth century that the word ‘state’ was used in its modern sense. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, X.

<sup>15</sup> Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, 152.



his *Encyclopédie Méthodique* around the turn of the nineteenth century—sought to identify what is typical in order to identify ideal types and their possible variations, and in doing so may have identified with the Neo-Platonic idea of pure forms; today, an architect evaluating cities on the basis of typology is more likely to argue from a much more mundane level. Their conclusions are defined often purely through empirical observation and analysis of real things where meaning is independent of form but can be assigned to form after the fact. However, for Plato such an evaluation shifts more towards the world of *doxophilists* who:

...view many beautiful things but do not see the beautiful itself and are unable to follow another's guidance to it, and many just things, but not to justice itself, and so on in all cases—we shall say that such men have opinions about all things, but know nothing of the things they opine. (479e)

Such statements suggest that, for Plato at least, a philosopher should recognise that 'physical' characteristics are built from an ontological core. Voegelin articulates this aspect of Plato's thinking thus:

Only the knowledge of being "in itself" can truly lay claim to the title of knowledge (*episteme*); the knowledge of being in the manifold of things is opinion (*doxa*).<sup>16</sup>

In the world of architecture and the city even a perfect empirical categorisation of an object is still limited by the situation within which it can be analysed. No matter how sophisticated the analysis, its relation to ontology remains elusive unless its relation to being forms a part of the investigation. In the classical world, in the medieval world, and in the re-emerging classicism of quattrocento Europe, this was understood and, even if not explicitly stated, it was utilised in both the making of architecture and the city, and in explaining and interpreting the past as tradition.

Therefore, the idea that the re-emergence of classical architecture and the city was purely a revival of certain 'forms' is based on a misunderstanding of the ontological foundation of the western European tradition and, therefore, it should also be acknowledged that this misinterpretation of classical world has led to the gradual erosion of the idea that the 'good' city, like Plato's dialectical wisdom, emerges

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<sup>16</sup> Voegelin, Plato and Aristotle, 66.

from an agonistic struggle rather than from any one particular ideal (or utopia).<sup>17</sup> Wisdom and the good city, for Plato as well as for many thinkers of the Middle Ages, could only emerge from continual negotiation between terms or hierarchies, not from absolutes. The histories, accounts and descriptions that formed a part of the previous three chapters have tried to articulate how, during the periods in question, this multi-layered aspect was a fundamental part of the city's festivals. It can also be seen in the literature of the period and its relation to architecture.

## **5.2 From Classical to Modern: Architectural readings of Dante and Boccaccio**

Both Dante and Boccaccio were poets of their age who, in choosing to write in vernacular Italian, opened the way to a wider readership of the richly layered legacy of Latin literature. But in doing so they also brought much of the colourful language and content of popular folklore to the more articulated circles of the monastery and salone. In reality, the festivals of the city already articulated such multi-layered conditions, nevertheless, what Dante and Boccaccio (and Later Rabelais) did was reveal such behaviour within a literary genre, making what was already explicit within the oral culture of the city, present in the drawing rooms of the elite. While they were not solely responsible for this development an investigation of some of their oeuvre in relation changes in the architecture of the time offer insights into themes relevant to this thesis.

- **Dante and the threshold to the Salon at Poppi Castle**

Although much of Dante's life in service of the Commune of Florence would have involved the writing and interpretation of Latin,<sup>18</sup> his most significant poetic works—beginning with *la Vita Nuova* in 1292—were written in Italian. Of these he wrote both the *Convivio* (written from 1304 to 1307) and the *Divine Comedy* (from 1308-21) while in exile from Florence,<sup>19</sup> and although these and his other Italian works were much praised his Latin 'philological criticism' was thought mediocre—

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<sup>17</sup> i.e. instead of a continual negotiation of the dialectical order of the city within the city, one vision predominates resulting in a utopian vision for some that is dystopian for others.

<sup>18</sup> He became a member of the Medici e Speciali Guild in 1295 and served as a prior for two months in 1300.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 4. Dante's name was added to the *libro di chiodo* (the Book of the Nail) meaning his return to Florence or its contado would end in his execution.

even if as a poet he prefigured many aspects of the Renaissance.<sup>20</sup> Boccaccio, writing in his *Vita di Dante* (c. 1360) heaped heavy praise upon Dante's achievements in the language of the commons. He suggested that;

... by his teachings [Dante] trained many scholars in poetry, and especially in the vulgar tongue, which, according to my judgement, he was the first to exalt and make esteemed among us Italians, precisely as Homer had made his tongue esteemed among the Greeks and Virgil his among the Latins ... He showed by his results that any high material could be treated in it, and made our vulgar tongue glorious above all others.<sup>21</sup>

As has already been mentioned, the dialectical structures inherited from the classical world remained a significant part of the literature and theology of the period,<sup>22</sup> with writers conforming to many of the refinements of rhetoric established earlier in the Greek and Roman tradition. The *Convivio* for example, comprises both prose and poetry and although written in vernacular Italian its form and structure are based upon the Latin traditions of the period—most notably the scholastic tradition of the *quaestio*.<sup>23</sup> The aim of the work was to be an encyclopaedia of knowledge of the time written in Italian so that the maximum number of people could begin to develop a love of such things.<sup>24</sup> However, in striving for this the work did not take a form that would be familiar to us today:

...the *Convivio* aims for an *integration* of knowledge that is difficult to imagine from the post-Enlightenment perspective, for which knowledge generally is partitioned into areas of specialisation with little epistemological common ground.<sup>25</sup>

In his structure Dante was not rebelling against a trend for rationality but conforming to the norms of medieval representation. For example, cataloguing books or ideas in the Middle Ages was subject to a different form of ordering, more based on hierarchies than rationality:

... catalogues [were] almost never alphabetical, for the Middle Ages did not care much for alphabetical order, at least beyond the initial letter ... but

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<sup>20</sup> Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, 234.

<sup>21</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *A Translation of Giovanni Boccaccio's Life of Dante*, trans. George Rice Carpenter (New York, The Grolier club, 1900), 69.

<sup>22</sup> For example, the key text of Scholasticism, Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* (1265-84) was heavily indebted to the works of Aristotle.

<sup>23</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Dante: Convivio: A Dual-Language Critical Edition*, trans. Andrew Frisardi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), xxviii.

<sup>24</sup> Alighieri, Bk 1.v.i.

<sup>25</sup> Alighieri, xviii. [Translators introduction].

there [was] likely to be a loose arrangement by subjects, beginning with the Bible, service books, and the Fathers.<sup>26</sup>

Such attitudes to 'order' also extended to plans of buildings, evidenced by the fact that no medieval plans utilising anything close to Euclidian precision survive. Drawings of west facades (e.g. Strasbourg), vaulting patterns, pinnacle plans and elevations, moulding profiles, or sketches of fragments of a screen or window survive in some manuscripts or sketchbooks,<sup>27</sup> but for larger representations of geometries used in the designs of buildings masons often traced their construction lines in plaster floors rarely producing any facsimiles of the overall designs.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the closest to this is the ninth-century Abbey plan from St Gall (discussed in chapter three, Fig. 3.1a & b) that shows what seems to be the plan of an exemplar abbey with the preferred location for each element of the institution. But this in a rare exception and, as suggested earlier, the reasons for its creation are unclear.

In line with this general absence of formal plans, maps that survive were often without topographical accuracy. Such is the case with the thirteenth-century Map of Britain from Matthew Parris's *Chronicle* (Fig. 5.2), which appears to have some similarities to the fourth-century (latest) Roman *Tabula Peutingeriana* (Fig. 5.1), both apparently listing stages on a journey rather than accurate distances. This apparent disdain for 'similarity' in a modern sense would not have been a problem in the Middle Ages and as such it would be a mistake to suggest these, and other maps, were not representational, they clearly were, it was just that their 'value' was of a different order to current thinking; in their description of the landscape (and of architecture) concerns regarding value were not necessarily related to formal spatial accuracy. Richard Krautheimer describes this condition in his landmark essay 'Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture"' (1942) when he discusses the way medieval buildings made as copies of the Holy

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<sup>26</sup> Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1927), 78.

<sup>27</sup> Most notably those of the thirteenth-century mason Villard de Honnecourt. By the mid-fourteenth century 'traceries' or 'tracing houses' were common around large buildings for the production of construction drawings. John H. Harvey, *Henry Yevele The Life Of An English Architect* (London: Batsford, 1946), 23.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the Masons room over the porch at York Minster.

Sepulchre of Jerusalem varied in shape from octagons to circles, ‘... it could almost be said that to mediaeval eyes anything which had more than four sides was approximately a circle.’<sup>29</sup> Dante’s ‘integration of knowledge’ in the *Convivio* would have been subject to a similar hierarchical ordering.

Such understanding—as displayed by Dante—is Christian in terms of its insistence on hierarchy, but also classical in its relation to literature. For example, even though the form of the *Convivio* is not a dialogue, its title, meaning ‘banquet,’ implies a meeting and discussion of ideas similar to that which had occurred in the ancient academies—as in Plato’s *Symposium*. Such meetings, of course, have a spatial component; in the early medieval period discourse and dispute occurred in specific locations in the monastery (the chapterhouse, the frater, the scriptorium, the library or the cloister) depending on the nature of the subject and the parties involved; and in secular situations, they occurred in the court salons of the nobility that were later mimicked in the new urban dwellings of the aspirational merchant classes. Such developments are reinforced by the fact that as early as 1300 the cortile of the Palazzo Vecchio was often referred to as *claustrum* (cloister).<sup>30</sup>

Although exact details of where Dante lived following his expulsion from Florence are scant, in the early years at least, he appears to have spent some time in Tuscany in Lunigiana and Lucca before moving further afield to Verona and finally Ravenna where he died in 1321.<sup>31</sup> Built off reports in Boccaccio’s *Vita* and other sources, various theories have been suggested as to his movements, but it is likely that he spent time in Campaldino accepting the hospitality of the noble Guidi family who had castles in Romena, Poppi, and Pratovecchio<sup>32</sup>—a fact supported by

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<sup>29</sup> Krautheimer, ‘Introduction to an “Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture”’, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz*, IV, 499. Trachtenberg refers to this fact as a ‘deconsecration’ of the term when it is in fact better understood in its continuity. The cloister represented the life of the monk, a symbol of retreat from the world and of the vows made in the sight of God. For the brief tenure of a Signor in the Palazzo it represented much the same set of values.

<sup>31</sup> For a concise chronology of his life see Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy* (London: Everyman, 1995), 40ff. Although over the next twenty years attempts at reconciliation were made by both sides, a return with honour was never proffered by the city and his exile was only finally revoked in 2008.

<sup>32</sup> The Guidi family had strong links with republican Florence: Guido Novello was elected as podestà of Florence after the battle of Montaperti in 1260; Guido da Batifolle was vicar of Lorence in 1316 when he suggested further works to the Bargello; Conte Simone held the Duke of Athens captive

the recent discovery of letters written by Dante found in the archives at Poppi castle.<sup>33</sup> Speculation as to the influence of Campaldino on the Divine Comedy—such as in relation of the landscapes of parts of Purgatory and the Inferno—are not particularly relevant here.<sup>34</sup> There are a number of moments where real settings and real people are presented in the work—such as the font of the Baptistery of San Giovanni in *Inferno XIX*;<sup>35</sup> or the waterfall and setting of Romena in *Inferno XXX*<sup>36</sup>—but the real innovation is in the language of the popoli elevated to the salon, and a further discussion on the architecture and art of the castle at Poppi—particularly the frescoes of the chapel, the salon and the staircase—serve to illustrate this argument.

The construction of castles in the Casentino can be grouped into three phases with the original castle at Poppi—built c. 1169—forming a part of the final stage from 1150-1200 designed to strengthen the authority of the nobility throughout the region.<sup>37</sup> The castle as it stands today was begun in 1264 by the architect Lapo di Cambio and fully completed by his son Arnolfo di Cambio thirty years later after the tower was destroyed in an attack by the Florentines in 1290.<sup>38</sup> In around 1300 Conte Guido di Battifolle issued instructions for the tower to be completed and began the construction of the chapel in the castle which was later decorated with a

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after 1343. Marvin Trachtenberg, 'Archaeology, Merriment, and Murder: The First Cortile of the Palazzo Vecchio and Its Transformations in the Late Florentine Republic', *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 4 (1989): 581.

<sup>33</sup> Cipriani, *There Romena Lies*, 54.

<sup>34</sup> Ella Noyes, *The Casentino and Its Story*; (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1905), 89.

<sup>35</sup> Discussed at length in Mirko Tavoni, 'On Dante's Baptismal Font', in *Baptistry of San Giovanni, Florence*, ed. Antonio Paolucci (Modena: F. C. Panini, 1994), 205–28.

<sup>36</sup> Cipriani, *There Romena Lies*, 58.

<sup>37</sup> Phase 1, 1000-1050 castles were centres of power of the Guidi or the church; Phase 2, 1050-1150 castles consolidated power and were for other knights; and phase 3, 1150-1200 linked to towns and infrastructure, strengthening local power of the Guidi. See unpublished Masters Dissertation by Chiara Gelati, 'Verifica sismica di edifici storici in muratura: il castello dei conti Guidi di Poppi' (Universita degli Studi Firenze, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Ingrid Krüger, *Arnolfo di Cambio als Architekt und die Stadtbaukunst von Florenz um 1300* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 2007), 205, n 41. See also Valentino Bacci, *Considerazioni sulle origini di Poppi in Casentino* (Tipografia R.G.R., 1976), 68ff. According to Vasari, Arnolfo later used the building as a model for his initial designs for the Palazzo Vecchio. Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects [Volume 1 of 10]*, 1:24.

fresco cycle by Taddeo Gaddi who was working in the area from 1330-40 (1, Fig. 5.6).<sup>39</sup>

The frescoes in the chapel are some of the most important frescoes of the period in Arezzo and painted within twenty years of Dante's presence at the castle.<sup>40</sup> On the north wall are presented two episodes in the life of St John the Baptist; on the left, the encounter of St John and Jesus in the desert (possibly next to some kneeling characters of the house of Guidi. Fig. 5.3); and on the right *The Feast of Herod* (dressed in red) with Salome and a musician dressed in contemporary costume next to a soldier presenting the head of the Baptist to the king (Fig. 5.5). Such a representation of the death of the patron saint of Florence amidst family members and contemporary fashionable costumes within a festive setting suggests that members of the Guidi family were in close contact with Florence and its popular culture. This observation, combined with the fact that Dante spent time in the area, means that the family would have also been a part of the evolving trends in poetry and literature—including the elevation of popular language to the salon. Even though the content of Dante's literature was appropriate to the traditions of salon culture, bringing the language of popular culture to these spaces was not without consequences. As Smith says in his introduction to Gadamer's *Dialogue and Dialectic*, for Gadamer language is not a simple tool that we can command and use but something that precedes us and whose 'play' we submit to.<sup>41</sup> So when Bakhtin suggests that in the sixteenth century the work of Rabelais brought aspects of the marketplace into the salons of France through its bawdy content and use of the vulgar French language by saying that '... the marketplace was the centre of all that is unofficial; it enjoyed a certain extraterritoriality in a world of official order and official ideology. It always remained "with the people" ...',<sup>42</sup> he was describing a condition that began some two hundred years earlier in Florence with the works of Dante. If such sentiments suggest that the street and the marketplace did begin to have a place in the dwellings of the rich and the wealthy (albeit yet only implicitly

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<sup>39</sup> For a history of the castle and a full description of its parts see Bacci above and F. Pagnini, *Il Castello Medievale Dei Conti Guidi, Oggi Palazzo Pretorio Di Poppi, La Sua Storia, Il Suo Stato Antico e Presente, La Prima Parte Del Suo Restauro* (Arezzo: Estab. tip. cooperativo operaio, 1896).

<sup>40</sup> Dante Composes Inferno canto XXXIII depicting the fate of Traitors here.

<sup>41</sup> Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, x.

<sup>42</sup> Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 153.

in the form of the language) then it is very likely that the thresholds which defined and separated these spaces from the multi-layered festive potential of the street were reconsidered.

At the time, like most noble dwellings of the period, the main salon of Poppi castle was elevated to the second floor adjacent to the main domestic accommodation that was slightly higher within the other wing of the castle (2, Fig. 5.6 & 5.7). These upper rooms were accessed in two stages. Initially via a single stone stair (remodelled by Conte Simon II around 1360) that either terminated at first floor level below the main salon (possibly continuing up in timber to the first floor in the other wing) or continued to this level in stone (Figs. 5.9 to 5.12). All of the higher rooms were accessed via a further staircase at the rear of the building that began on the first floor and continued to the apartments, and, it appears, the salon above (Fig. 5.13). Such an arrangement was easily defensible and not uncommon in the castles of the region but offered little suggestion of the communal themes now beginning to be heard in the street as well as the salon. Thus, as the requirements for discourse, ceremony and inclusivity began to supplant the previous need for authority, power, and defence these staircases became redundant representations of feudal supremacy. Visiting dignitaries from other areas or cities would no longer have been interested in how the castle manifested the strength of the Conti Guidi; as members of the elite governing families of the Commune, their power would be more judged by their ability to debate and skills in diplomacy, and their prestige by the journey up the staircase from cortile to salon.

The development of the staircase to its current form is difficult to ascertain in part because by 1440 the castle was seceded by the Conti Guidi to the Republic of Florence and it became the dwelling of the *Vicario della Repubblica Fiorentina*. However, it is clear that in order to accommodate the state (and ceremonial) functions required for such an official a new stone stair linking the two staircases running the length of the cortile was added around 1470 by Jacopo di Baldassare Turriani (Fig. 5.9). This transition from castle to state dwelling illustrated by the development of the staircase mirrors similar changes that occurred earlier at the Bargello where the large stone staircase in the courtyard up to the arcade and



audience hall of the Podesta 1345-67 was commissioned by the strengthened Communal government soon after the expulsion of the Duke of Athens ( Fig. 4.4).<sup>43</sup> The somewhat similar developments of the meeting rooms, audience halls, and staircase at the Palazzo Vecchio offer further illustration of this trend but can be viewed more clearly in relation to the works of Boccaccio and the next stage in the development of salon culture.

- **Boccaccio and the Language of the Salon in Florence**

Dante's *Divine Comedy* was followed around half a century later by the *Decameron*,<sup>44</sup> Boccaccio's 'human comedy'.<sup>45</sup> Much of the content of the *Decameron*—like Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* of 1532-34—is bawdy; recounting tales of, and from, the marketplace in the vulgar tongue. But although the content of the work creates the tone of an oral rather than a literary culture, like Dante before him (and Rabelais after) the framing of the book as a whole and the narrative structure of the individual tales (including their careful grouping) betrays Boccaccio's schooling, displaying 'antique models and the precepts of medieval rhetoric'.<sup>46</sup> Thus the whole book reveals a depth of culture similar to that revealed in the multivalent world of the festival where knight's jostled, businessmen traded, the wealthy banqueted, and the remaining burghers of the third estate celebrated and engaged in all sorts of revelry.

Again, as with Dante, the use of the vulgate language of the street presented Boccaccio with a more limited vocabulary than would have been the case if he had written in the well-developed Latin of the classroom, but in contrast to Dante his choice of subject was indeed revolutionary. The focus on realistic (rustic) behaviour in actual rural, city, and domestic settings, was a far cry from the morality ridden tales normally recounted and discussed in the salons of the time

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<sup>43</sup> On the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1345, Neri da Fioravanti paid money for timber to build the staircase in the courtyard (ASF. Balie, 3, c. 15 r.).

<sup>44</sup> The *Decameron* appeared in Florence first in manuscript form, from around 1370, and then in print almost a century later in 1470 (The Neapolitan *Deo Gratias* edition). It comprises one hundred stories of daily life in and around Florence, told by seven women and three men, during a two-week sojourn out of the plague-ravaged city ca. 1347-49.

<sup>45</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. McWilliam, G.H. (Penguin, 1995), xlii.

<sup>46</sup> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), 206.

and had the effect of elevating discourse on such base behaviour and its inevitable consequences (which had previously only been acceptable in the street and the tavern) into the houses of the wealthy; not just the language (as in Dante) but the content of the marketplace was presented in all its sordid detail in the salon.<sup>47</sup>

In terms of the houses within Florence during this period Gian Luigi Maffei identified two basic housing types, developed from the basic tower house grouping illustrated by Wood Brown in 1907 (Fig. 3.2), which accommodated much of the city's lower-class population.<sup>48</sup> These were the 'merchant courtyard house' (Fig. 5.14) and the 'terraced house' (Fig. 5.15). The latter was the main building form of the city, able to accommodate single or multi-family occupation as well as connected or disconnected workshops and shops on the ground floor.<sup>49</sup> These dwellings are less linked to the process discussed here. The former, however, has echoes in the development of the larger palaces:

From the surviving finds, the *merchant court-house* ... has an external loggia, on the ground floor with two arches ... Inside there is the court, around which an external staircase develops. Beyond the court there is, generally, a further compartment, ... likely to serve as a warehouse. On the upper floors it is the domestic space in the proper sense, larger in size than on the ground floor as they were increased by cantilever structures, both on the street and on the court, as well as on any side alleys. The overhang is a vivid memory of the later modifications of the first floor with respect to the ground floor, and also of the change of material; below the *muriaro-pesante* type; above the *ligneo-leggero* type typical of many areas.<sup>50</sup>

In respect of the larger palatial dwellings, Lisci suggest that the early palazzi had two main features:

... the exterior walls built of rusticated ashlar, and the large ground floor entrances on the main facades which led into vast rooms called 'fondecchi' where the owners could store or sell their wares.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, even though the *Decameron* is the epic of the merchant class, its form was modelled on the *Hexameron*. Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, lvi.

<sup>48</sup> Gian Luigi Maffei and Gianfranco Caniggia, *Casa fiorentina* (Marsilio, 1990). Brown, *The Builders of Florence*.

<sup>49</sup> In this type the front loggia is closed creating the possibility of two cells, one facing the street, the other on the internal space. The stair is removed from the court, placed at the side in order to have access from the road. Maffei and Caniggia, *Casa fiorentina*, 181.

<sup>50</sup> Author's translation. Maffei and Caniggia, 89.

<sup>51</sup> Leonardo Ginori Lisci, *The Palazzi of Florence: Their History and Art*, trans. Jennifer Grillo (Giunti Barbèra, 1985), I, 19.

This type is perhaps best shown by the Palazzo Davanzati (Figs. 4.1 & 4.2), built sometime in the fifteenth century. Although over the next century some of the irregularities of the early examples disappeared, the plans remained pretty much unchanged and formed the basis for the various later works undertaken on the public palazzi built for the civic institutions of the city.

It would be wrong to jump to the conclusion that the collapse in the distinction between the street and salon in literature was the key reason for the evolution of these new building types, but it would certainly be appropriate to argue that they are perhaps linked to the same issues. For example, the *Decameron* begins with the various narrators of the tales meeting somewhat inappropriately in a chapel in the church of S. Maria Novella (11, Map 4.3) (itself a pun on the term 'novella' meaning 'novel' and not 'new') and sets a tone of irreverence in the face of the possibility of God's wrath to the overall book.<sup>52</sup>

Although the ten narrators leave the plague ravaged city for an unknown destination, agreeing to tell the popular tales to pass the time, the book, like the significant festivals and architecture of the time, belongs to the city. This was in no small part due to the rise of the wealthy and educated merchant classes who resided within towns and cities where there was a market for their wares. They developed the forms of dwelling that mimicked aspects of the castles and town houses of the nobility but required, in their dwelling, rooms also to entertain and do new forms of business. Thus, in writing the *Decameron*, Boccaccio was attempting to write a work which recast the ethics of courtly love but '... turned several degrees lower in the scale of style, and concerned exclusively with the sensual and the real.'<sup>53</sup> For Eric Auerbach, writing in 1942-43 the tales are too sentimental to be tragic, too outrageous to be real, too rhetorical and free of magic to be fairy tales.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, the book signalled a radical shift:

For the first time since antiquity, his *Decameron* fixes a specific level of style, on which the actual occurrences in contemporary life can become

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<sup>52</sup> Such stories were also a part of the Roman Tradition, exemplified by such works as *The Satyricon* by Petronius.

<sup>53</sup> Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 226.

<sup>54</sup> Auerbach, 231.

polite entertainment; narrative no longer serves as a moral exemplum, no longer caters to the common people's simple desire to laugh; it serves as a pleasant diversion for a circle of well-bred young people of the upper classes, of ladies and gentlemen who delight in the sensual play of life and who possess sensitivity, taste, and judgement.<sup>55</sup>

Unlike the *Divine Comedy*, therefore, the work does not extol Christian virtues and ethics but is more like Plato's *Symposium* (where the themes of the dialogue are 'love' and 'nature') but here presented in a new narrative form more fitting for the age. Paradoxically, the shift downwards in the apparent formality of literature is contrasted almost completely by increasing levels of formality of the architecture—particularly the salon and their associated staircases—which begin to demonstrate a much greater concern for threshold and propriety of behaviour associated with the manners of bourgeois merchants. Thus, we should be careful when ascribing the emergence of Renaissance architecture to an increasing interest in formal sophistication. In fact, it may more likely be the result of an emerging realisation of the critical and formal relationship between the street and the salon articulated through courtly ritual and festival behaviour.

Notwithstanding that many of Boccaccio's stereotypes—such as sexually predatory woman or the 'randy' monk—appear formulaic and predictable to our modern sensibilities; and most of the tales offer little or no description of the spaces inhabited; the stories do offer insights into some aspects of the city and its architecture. As can be seen in relation to the seventh story of the sixth day<sup>56</sup> when Filostrato tells of a woman from Prato, Madonna Filippa, who is discovered *in flagrante delicto* with her lover by her husband (Fig. 5.16). The main issue of this story is that in Prato at the time was a statute requiring every woman taken in adultery be burnt alive and, in this case, the cuckolded husband was determined to see the sentence carried out. Against tradition and code Madonna Filippa decided to stand up before the podestà and defend herself. In a packed room, after being told that she can only be condemned to death if she confesses, she answers:

'Sir, it is true that Rinaldo is my husband, and that he found me last night in Lazzarino's arms, [...] However, as I am sure you will know, every man and

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<sup>55</sup> Auerbach, 216.

<sup>56</sup> A day where the stories are underpinned by the theme of 'Hope'

woman should be equal before the law, and laws must have the consent of those who are affected by them. These conditions are not fulfilled in the present instance, because this law only applies to us poor women [...] Moreover, when this law was made, no woman gave her consent to it, nor was any woman even so much as consulted. It can therefore justly be described as a very bad law.

[...] 'But before you proceed to pass any judgement [...] ask my husband whether or not I have refused to concede my entire body to him, whenever and as often as he pleased.'

(Her Husband concedes this is true)

'Well then, if he has always taken as much of me as he needed and as much as he chose to take [...] what am I to do with the surplus? Throw it to the dogs?<sup>57</sup> Is it not far better that I should present it to a gentleman who loves me more dearly than himself, rather than let it turn bad or go to waste.'<sup>58</sup>

According to the tale, following this impassioned and reasoned plea, the charge was dropped and the law changed. This narrative reveals Boccaccio's interest in ideas of emancipation and the interplay between natural passions (the tension between love and nature) and the framing of a society based upon the mercantile ethic of the emerging city-states of northern Italy. Additionally, by using these particular characters, he suggests there is a role for women to play in this new society of wit and intelligence destined, as it was, to overthrow the feudal system built upon piety and loyalty. However, as has already been pointed out, the story does not reveal much relating to the particular spatial characteristics associated with this emerging tradition. Boccaccio states that the adulterous tryst took place in the wife's bedchamber—a room protected by several thresholds and supposedly accessible only to a few trusted and honourable parties—but on the court case he is silent. The tale of these two rooms and the opportunities they afforded women offers insights into the emergence of some spatial characteristics of the developing dwelling of the period.

As has been described in chapter three and four, the developing city-states of Italy appointed podestà from beyond the influence of the city to administer justice

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<sup>57</sup> Matt. VII.6. 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.'

<sup>58</sup> Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, 461.

within the communes for a set period. Although these figures were not envisioned as aristocrats, the qualifications for the role were, initially at least, most prevalent within the educated members of the landed gentry:

... [podestà] came almost exclusively from the knightly elite, families that based their identities on the military profession and a courtly, chivalric culture.<sup>59</sup>

These *podestà* and their large retinue of judges, notaries, soldiers, policemen and household staff,<sup>60</sup> were often lodged together, mirroring a domestic feudal hierarchy, where only certain people had access to particular rooms depending on their status.<sup>61</sup> While in some cities these offices of state were hosted in rented palaces, in others they were accommodated in purpose built palaces designed to house the *podestà et al* as well as create a suitable setting for ceremonial and administrative functions.

Around the time that Boccaccio is writing the *Decameron* in Florence the *podestà* was housed in the Bargello—with a new stone staircase leading up from the court to the audience hall (Fig. 4.4). The overall ‘castle like’ form of building was significant because although the *podestà* was always from another city, they were vulnerable to lobbying, blackmail and financial pressures and, therefore, were urged to separate themselves and their retinue from the community they served (while living right in the centre) for the duration of their tenure:

Political theorists and didactic treatises of the period urged *podestà* to live like monks while in office: no women, banquets, or festivals, and no mingling with local elites. They were to renounce all reunions with family and allies and avoid chivalric games. Chronicle evidence shows that they very often did not comply with this stringent ideal, taking part in local festivities and even organising them. [...] Ironically [...] when *podestà* practiced the rites and habits of knighthood in violation of local statutes or normative treatises, it probably reinforced rather than damaged their prestige.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Carol Lansing, *Passion and Order: Restraint of Grief in the Medieval Italian Communes* (Cornell University Press, 2008), 26. The Republic tried to limit access to roles within the city for certain aristocratic families in the ‘Ordinances of Justice’ of 1293. See Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 82.

<sup>60</sup> In Florence from 1286-1325 the staff rose from 7 to 11 judges; 18-30 notaries; 3 law officers. Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 417.

<sup>61</sup> See Section 4.4 in Chapter 4.

<sup>62</sup> Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 26.

By the late thirteenth century, although the podestà did not make the laws, he was responsible for their enforcement within the city—albeit in collaboration with the Signoria.

Equally, although the podestà and the Signoria were striving to deliver justice and the humanist ideal of ‘good government’ to its inhabitants it can be seen from the tale of Madonna Filippa that basic prejudices at the heart of thirteenth and fourteenth-century society meant that many laws did not favour or defend women.<sup>63</sup> For example, in the late thirteenth century the chronicle of Salimbene de Adam reported that the papal legate, Cardinal Latino Malabranca, banned long trains on dresses and required women to wear veils on their faces when they went out in Florence.<sup>64</sup> In addition, women were also often excluded from key public rooms. In 1325 Florence enacted a ban of women from the civic palace, or approaching any officials of the courts, or attending any courts of the city (unless they were to be tortured). Even female witnesses were interviewed outside these institutions:<sup>65</sup>

... during the decades around the turn of the thirteenth century, lawmakers ... wrote and endlessly revised laws that in various ways described the need to restrain passions [lust for power and wealth, ambition and greed as well as sexual passions]. And passion was often coded as feminine; an orderly community meant moderating or eliminating feminine influence.<sup>66</sup>

In Boccaccio’s tale of Madonna Filippa (set over one hundred years later) it is unclear whether this ban was in existence, or whether women were allowed in the courtroom; in the special circumstance described in the story, the trial could have been relocated. Nevertheless, in the narrative, Boccaccio clearly questions this type of exclusion, and the rules concerning who should enter the private chamber, suggesting that sexuality as a force of nature is something to be embraced, and that the fulfilment of ‘natural’ desires is not automatically in opposition to reason or any particular reserved notion of respectability; nor does ‘passion’ necessarily contradict the requirements of a civilised society. In the tale, it is the law that is

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<sup>63</sup> Villani, *Cronica*, XI, XI. Compare this with Villani’s description of the ‘sober society’ of pre 1260 Florence Villani, VI. 69.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph L. Baird, B. Guisepe, and J. R. Kane, trans., *Chronicle of Salimbene De Adam* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance texts and Studies, 1986), 160–61.

<sup>65</sup> Caggese, *Statuti Della Repubblica Fiorentina. Editi a Cura Del Comune Di Firenze. Vol. 2*, 2:358.

<sup>66</sup> Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 47.

uncivilised, not the act of adultery; women are not restricted entry to courts; and they have control of who enters their domain. In the tale at least, the proper rights due to women were stated very clearly.

Although any podestà from Florence (or in this tale, Prato) need not necessarily follow diktats set out by the cities they represented, they appear not to have gone so far as to flout the rules and move their families into the civic palazzo with them. Indeed, given the turbulent history of the city and the occasional breaching of the palazzo's defences by a rioting popolo it would have been a strange decision to do so.<sup>67</sup> So for the most part, if they wanted to be near to their families, their relatively large salaries allowed them to bring their family to the city and set them up in alternative accommodation, even though this was also in breach of the rules. It is likely that this did indeed occur as the tenure of many podestà was for a year or more—too long to remain isolated from their family.<sup>68</sup> Boccaccio would certainly have had more tales of 'adulterous podestà' should the family have been entirely absent for the duration of the tenure.

However, with the rising power of the Medici within the city hierarchy, and the gradual shift in the relationship between the public and private worlds (in part reflected in the literature of the time as well as the changing thresholds of the street and the salon) began to affect the form of the architecture of the city.

In terms of the Palazzo Vecchio, Trachtenberg argues that the transformation of the palazzo cortile by Michelozzo (after 1454) is based on the Palazzo Medici, the 'first of the Renaissance palaces,'<sup>69</sup> which was begun by Cosimo the Elder in 1445 (Fig. 5.17 & 5.19)).<sup>70</sup> But it is now clear that this form was already in place certainly by the time of the construction of the Palazzo Busini-Bardi by

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<sup>67</sup> For example in 1294. See Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk.VIII, Ch. 7.

<sup>68</sup> Florence was for a year, Siena was only for 6 months, some other cities had podestà for up to two years.

<sup>69</sup> Trachtenberg, 'Archaeology, Merriment, and Murder', 606.

<sup>70</sup> Emanuela Ferretti, 'The Medici Palace, Cosimo the Elder, and Michelozzo: A Historiographical Survey', in *A Renaissance Architecture of Power: Princely Palace in the Italian Quattrocento*, ed. Silvia Beltramo, Flavia Cantatore, and Marco Folin (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 264.



Brunelleschi in 1427,<sup>71</sup> and perhaps even earlier in the Palazzo Capponi delle Rovinate early in the fifteenth century (Fig 5.18).<sup>72</sup> These palaces of the early quattrocento were the first to have a central courtyard with porticos on each side and a covered staircase. Such palazzi (along with the ‘reduced’ merchant courtyard house) suggest that the change in culture was indeed already well established by the beginning of the quattrocento and that Michelozzo’s transformation of the main cortile of the Palazzo Vecchio from something like that at Poppi, into something already familiar to society as signifying urban domestic affluence is telling (Figs. 5.20 & 5.21).

This form, with the priors distributed around the upper floors of the building above the main ceremonial and functional rooms of the building lasted until the middle of the next century with the return of noble rule in the form of the Medici Dukes of the sixteenth century—most clearly illustrated in the development of the staircases and key rooms transformed for court ceremony (50, Fig. 4.12). The main *Sala dei Cinquecento*<sup>73</sup> had been constructed to house the increasing number of citizens participating in the administration of power during the four-year republic of the charismatic Dominican monk Savonarola (54, Fig. 4.12). However, following his demise in 1498 and the return from exile of the rich and influential Medici in 1532,<sup>74</sup> the roles of the Signori and the Gonfaloniere of Justice were immediately abolished and Savonarola’s vast, redundant republican meeting hall emptied.<sup>75</sup>

In the end, it was not until well after the marriage of Eleanor of Toledo to the second Duke, Cosimo I,<sup>76</sup> in 1539 that the decision was made to utilise the palazzo as the main ducal residence. Over a ten-year period from 1561-71 Vasari radically transformed the palace,<sup>77</sup> building the current stair ascending from the covered

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<sup>71</sup> Klotz, *Filippo Brunelleschi*, 59. For a description of the palazzo see Lisci, *The Palazzi of Florence*, II, 609.

<sup>72</sup> Formerly the Palazzo Da Uzzano. Lisci, *The Palazzi of Florence*, II, 665.

<sup>73</sup> The Sala del Cinquecento was built 1495-6.

<sup>74</sup> Alessandro de Medici was the first to hold the title, confirmed by Emperor Charles V in 1532. Schevill, *History of Florence*, 514.

<sup>75</sup> The hall was transformed into the duke’s audience hall from 1563-81.

<sup>76</sup> Duke from 1537-69

<sup>77</sup> Vasari succeeded Giovanni Battista del Tasso as the architect of the court following the latter’s death on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1555 Ugo Muccini and Alessandro Cecchi, *Palazzo Vecchio* (Sandak, 1992), 20.

courtyard up to the *Sala dei Cinquecento*;<sup>78</sup> the private apartments; the audience halls; and the government offices making the palace fit for a sixteenth-century ducal court. The ceremonial route up to the main Salone, framed in part by Vasari's new staircase, was also later supplemented by a grand decorative programme commissioned for the entry of Cosimo's son, Francesco de Medici, and his new wife Giovanna of Austria, in 1565. This included ornamentation to the main door and additional stucco and frescoes to Michelozzo's cortile.<sup>79</sup>

Judging by the various paths of the aristocratic entries to the city following the transformation of the commune into a princely domain,<sup>80</sup> the decision to move the principal residence to the Palazzo Vecchio was as much symbolic as practical—linked, as it was to the Pitti palace (Map 4.16b). By the time of Cosimo I and his wife Eleanor of Toledo (who was his consort and also acted as regent in his many absences from the city), foreign ambassadors and other political allies were often entertained at the family dining table in the Palazzo Vecchio or the Palazzo Pitti, accompanied by the duke's whole family, elevating the family meal to a political event; reimagining the 'Symposium' for the sixteenth century.<sup>81</sup>

But it is the thresholds of the palazzo that indicate the more sophisticated approach to civic architecture. The argument here is not that each individual element can be described in its form as an evolution of festive culture within the architecture of Florence, more that the whole *concetto* of court, stair, and salon can be understood as festive in origin; the combination of these elements together comprises the threshold from street to salon in a way which challenges idea that

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<sup>78</sup> This stair replaced an earlier staircase by Cronaca built in 1549-50 Ettore Allegri and Alessandro Cecchi, *Palazzo Vecchio e i Medici: guida storica* (S.P.E.S., 1980), XII. in the current location of the *Studiolo* from where it then ascended further on the external wall of the great salon up to what it currently the Map Room.

<sup>79</sup> Michelozzo's courtyard was built following a commission by the *Operei dell'Opera di Palazzo* under the guidance of Cosimo de Medici (1389-64). For a detailed description of the works completed for this occasion see Randolph Starn and Loren W. Partridge, *Arts of Power: Three Halls of State in Italy, 1300-1600* (University of California Press, 1992), 149ff.

<sup>80</sup> Reception of Pope Leo X 1515 (Map 5.1b); Entrance of Giovanna d'Austria in 1565 (Map 5.2a); Entry of Carlo d'Austria 1569 (Map 5.2b); Funeral of Cosimo I in 1574 (Map 4.16b); Marriage of Cristina di Lorena 1589 (Map 5.3a); Marriage of Maddalena d'Austria 1608 (Map 5.3b).

<sup>81</sup> This condition, of course, depended on the good will and desires of the lord, and was not continued by Cosimo's heir, Francesco I who did not get on well with his own wife Joanna of Austria and hence offered her little access to power.

they constitute a journey from public to private. The whole journey, like the enactment of a festival, can be viewed as either all private or all public and the thresholds are only really present when activated in particular circumstances. As has been seen in the festive activity of the city historically, the world of the festival is both about repetition—in that the act of festival allows for the remaking of the boundaries and thresholds that underpin the history and identity of the city—but also in transgression—in that boundaries set up (both socially and physically) are often broken during the festive process. For example, areas of churches normally closed are often opened, and social barriers of class and vendetta briefly forgotten or lost. This temporary shift of register is both a recognition of the established order and simultaneously a denial, and is still visible in the enactment of the contemporary receptions held at the palazzo. Unlike a modern foyer which has a controlled threshold, the cortile functions as an open threshold. The mixing of all levels of festival participant and observer is never denied amidst an architecture that offers a setting suggestive of civic decorum. Thus, the cortile—which hosts traders as well as distinguished visitors—and the piazza—full of performers and tourists—have an equivalence which is layered but, on the Feast Day of San Giovanni, manifested differently. Within such situations the theatricality of the event was, and is, anchored by the architecture which grew out of a medieval culture centred upon linked celestial and earthly hierarchies. Such layering of customs and space where, from the cortile, strata of the city are presented to the gathering procession prior to departure, forms a perspectival structure that was utilised within the representation of the later Renaissance artists, such as Ghirlandaio, to illustrate this simultaneity (Fig. 4.19).

### **5.3. Festive Representation the Sassetti Chapel**

- **The Sassetti Chapel (1478-85)**

The Church of Santa Trìnita was re-founded in 1092 by the Vallombrosian Order on the site of an earlier triconch Carolingian Oratory just outside the city walls (14, Map 4.3).<sup>82</sup> In 1250, about four years after the onset of the construction of the Dominican Church of Santa Maria Novella, and around the time of the construction

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<sup>82</sup> No evidence survives of this church but it is probably a small pilgrimage chapel dating from ca.775-850. Saalman, *The Church of Santa Trìnita in Florence*, 9.

of Ponte Santa Trìnita, Niccolò Pisano was given the task of rebuilding and expanding the church (Fig. 5.22),<sup>83</sup> but by the late thirteenth century Santa Trìnita had lost its status as a key church in the governmental districts of Florence although it remained on the processional routes for the Feasts of San Giovanni and Corpus Christi as well as all significant entries into the city (Maps 5.1a & 4.16a).

Franco Sassetti acquired his chapel in Santa Trìnita to the right of the main altar from the Fastelli-Petriboni family in 1478-9 after his plans to decorate the main altar at the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella with a cycle of frescos depicting the life of St Francis faltered.<sup>84</sup> This was a step down in prestige but nevertheless resulted in a significant commission (Map 5.4a & b) and once he had transferred his efforts to the chapel at Santa Trìnita, work progressed relatively quickly with the whole commission completed by 1485 (Fig. 5.23ff). During the years it took to complete the commission Sassetti's own life, as well as that of the city underwent many challenges. In 1478 his eldest son, Teodoro, died and his patron, Lorenzo di Medici, narrowly avoided death at the hands of the Pazzi conspirators.

Sassetti's choice of a theme of St Francis (his name saint) was not unusual in fact documents dating from 1417 suggest that, as well as this personal connection, St Francis was already venerated in Santa Trìnita.<sup>85</sup> However, the version painted by Ghirlandaio deviates from the authoritative version set out at Assisi, particularly in its relationship to the representation of cities which is relevant to the study here.

Cadogan suggests that;

Themes and decorative motifs from pagan antiquity and classical art leaven the traditional Franciscan imagery. There are moreover references to rebirth and resurrection in the chapel program that reflect the secondary dedication of the chapel to the Nativity and which had particular relevance to the family history of the patron.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects [Volume 1 of 10]*.

<sup>84</sup> Borsook and Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence*. The Patronage of the chapel had been granted to the Petriboni family in 1394. Jeanne K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan* (Yale University Press, 2000), 233.

<sup>85</sup> Borsook and Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence*, Doc. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 233.

For Cadogan the revelatory themes begin with the mural on the external arch depicting the Tiburtine Sybil prophesising the birth of Christ to Augustus on the Capitoline Hill in Rome<sup>87</sup>—an event given more credence at the time as Poliziano had recently found texts suggesting that it was Augustus who had founded Florence (Fig 5.23-5.26).<sup>88</sup> This image—including an obvious depiction of Rome (Fig. 5.27)—is next to a painted figure of David (as prophet) who also serves as a civic symbol and therefore another reference to the birth of Rome as well as Florentine Republicanism (Fig. 5.24).<sup>89</sup> Further sibyls are represented in the vaults of the chapel (Figs. 5.28 & 5.29), but it is the narrative of St Francis and their urban settings which is striking. The main chapel comprises six major frescoes covering aspects of the life of St Francis (Figs. 5.30 & 5.31), and an altarpiece depicting the Adoration of the Shepherds (Fig 5.56). The frescos listed in order of occurrence of the event depicted are:

1. St Francis Renouncing his worldly goods (Fig. 5.34)
2. The Confirmation of the Rule of St Francis by Pope Honorius III (Fig. 5.41)
3. St Francis before the Sultan (Fig. 5.45)
4. The Stigmatisation of St Francis (Fig. 5.47)
5. The Funeral of St Francis (Fig. 5.48)
6. Posthumous resurrection of the Notary's son (Fig. 5.52)

The frescos on the left depict various cities in larger landscapes (as does the altarpiece); the two central frescos depict urban spaces of Florence (Piazza della Signoria and Piazza Santa Trinita); and the frescoes on the right depict internal scenes thus giving an overall movement from left to right of landscape to interior. In addition to this, the top three depict scenes from the life of St Francis whereas the lower three depict scenes relating to his death (stigmatisation and funeral) and posthumous acts (resurrection of the boy) before the chapel shifts to the birth of Jesus in the altarpiece flanked by images of the donor and his wife and their respective sarcophagi at ground level.

- **Representations of Cities in the Frescoes**

Within the frescos almost all of the events depicted appear to be located in different places than they actually occurred. This is most obvious in the two events

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<sup>87</sup> Cadogan, 234ff.

<sup>88</sup> See chapter 2

<sup>89</sup> Borsook and Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence*, 32–33.

illustrated in Florence (The Confirmation of the Rule and the Resurrection of the Boy, both actually occurred in Rome) but also continues in the other landscape images and has led to much speculation as to the why these substitutions were made:

The persistent change of venue from Rome to Florence has been interpreted by Borsook and Offerhaus as a conscious reference to Florence as the New Rome, seat of republican values. This idea had informed the imagery of the Sala dei Gigli in the Palazzo Vecchio and was invoked here as part of the theme of rebirth.<sup>90</sup>

While many of the interpretations of the overall themes offered by Borsook and Offerhaus (1981) and Cadogan (2000) may have some credence, their suggestions as to which cities were represented have some limitations. There are some obvious candidates beyond the two clear representations of the public spaces of Florence, but also some that are less clear. The city in the fresco with Augustus is clearly Rome, indicated by depictions of the Pantheon and Trajan's Column (Fig. 5.27). However, the supposed second depiction of Rome in the altarpiece is less convincing (Fig. 5.57). Borsook and Offerhaus argue that the image includes both the *Torre de Milizie* (Fig. 5.62) and Hadrian's Mausoleum as portrayed in Pietro del Massaio's (1420-ca.73/80) view of Rome ca.1450 (Figs. 5.55, 5.59 & 5.60),<sup>91</sup> but do not explain why, if Ghirlandaio was using this image, all of the town gates have round towers and, in addition to this, what is the reason behind showing a major building with turrets on each corner which does not appear in Massaio's image at all,<sup>92</sup> and has real similarities with the recently completed Lyon Cathedral (1480) (Fig. 5.61). It is of course important not to be too literal with late medieval representation but there must be consistency. The representation of the Dome of the Rock in the other city in the distance is more convincing but even here, whether there are one or two cities represented is unclear (Fig. 5.58).

Elsewhere, in the image depicting St Francis Renouncing his worldly goods (Figs. 5.34 & 5.35), Borsook and Offerhaus suggest that the city represented is Geneva and cite another portrait of Sassetti by Ghirlandaio as support for this assumption

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<sup>90</sup> Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 235.

<sup>91</sup> Torre de Milizie in centre of the right border of Fig. 5.57, compared to tower one third along from the left at the bottom of Fig 5.59; Hadrian's Mausoleum near the centre of Fig. 5.59 (C. sci Angeli).

<sup>92</sup> Borsook and Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence*, 34.

(Figs. 5.38 & 5.39). Rosenberg (1993) discussing the same portrait also suggests the city is Geneva arguing that the church behind Sassetti's right shoulder in the portrait is the oratory of Our Lady built by Sassetti whilst running the Medici bank there from 1447 onwards.<sup>93</sup> Again there are problems with this specific identification (Fig. 5.40). No similar image exists of Geneva at the time and one of the most significant elements of the image in the chapel is the large hill on the left which seems to form a part of the city (Figs. 5.36 & 5.37); a landscape closer to the topography of Lyon rather than Geneva. Borsook and Offerhaus make a case that the portrait was painted around the same time as the chapel but for some reason included a younger image of Sassetti alongside one of his sons.<sup>94</sup> The ambiguity of this portrait (it is unclear which son is depicted) and a possible link with the fresco depicting the resurrection of the boy offers the possibility that the second Teodoro was seen by his father in equally miraculous terms. As it is likely that his elder son may have died in Lyon at roughly the same time as his younger son was born, probably also in Lyon, the depiction of Lyon rather than Geneva would offer a clearer argument in support of Borsook and Offerhaus' claim for links between the portrait and the chapel image of the resurrected boy. It also presents a possibility that the image of St Francis Renouncing his worldly goods has a setting commensurate with Sassetti's own impoverishment, albeit related to circumstance rather than choice.

The Stigmatisation of St Francis contains relatively clear representations of the Chapel of La Verna, where St Francis actually did receive the stigmata (Fig. 5.47), and of Pisa with its campanile, baptistery and Duomo (Fig 5.46). This could be seen as a narrative of the Arno which, soon after its origins north of Stia in the Apennines, flows south about ten kilometres west of la Verna, and eventually joins the Mediterranean at Pisa. It is unclear whether the other two towns visible in the fresco represent generic towns on this river route or relate to some aspect in the life of St Francis or Sassetti. At the time of painting the fresco Pisa would have been controlled by Florence—it was not until 1494 that it gained independence

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<sup>93</sup> Charles M. Rosenberg, 'Virtue, Piety and Affection: Some Portraits by Domenico Ghirlandaio', in *Il Ritratto e La Memoria: Materiali 2*, ed. A Gentili, P Morel, and C Cieri (Rome: Bulzoni, 1993), 190.

<sup>94</sup> Sassetti's elder son Teodoro probably died in Lyon in 1478/9 shortly before the birth of another son, born in May 1479, who he also named Teodoro. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 234.

following the invasion of Charles VIII of France—so it is possible that the fresco could be a representation of Tuscany, the rich hinterland of Florence and source of much of its trading wealth.

- **Representation of Time and Movement in the Frescoes**

As mentioned above, it appears that Francesco Sassetti and many of his family are depicted in the frescoes. This practice was not uncommon and the appearance of Lorenzo the Magnificent and his sons alongside Sassetti's own family would have been a significant gesture so soon after the attempt on Lorenzo Medici's life (Fig. 5.32). However, it appears that the frescoes are designed to look forward as much as back and as a result offer interesting themes relating to the image of Florence as well as the significant figures and families depicted. Ghirlandaio himself appears in the fresco of the Resurrection of the Notary's Son alongside his brother Davide (Figs. 5.52 & 5.53),<sup>95</sup> and there is at least one other artist depicted as the old shepherd carrying the lamb in the altarpiece (Figs. 5.556 & 5.63).<sup>96</sup> But it is the appearance of the humanists Poliziano, Luigi Pulci (1432-84) and Matteo Franco (1447-94) that is perhaps the most telling (Figs. 5.41 & 5.42). Not only do these portraits confirm Sassetti's own humanist credentials (Bartolomeo Fonzio, his librarian, went on to become a governing officer of both the *Studios* of Pisa and Florence)<sup>97</sup> but also allude to the wider understanding of Florence at the time, its civic status and its relationship to Rome.

What is clear is that within the fresco cycle there are different levels of representation of the city which relate to Plato's means of communicating a natural thing and the exegetical tradition (literal, allegorical/ethical,

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<sup>95</sup> Cadogan, 236.

<sup>96</sup> The manuscript illuminator Gherardo di Monte di Giovanni di Miniato. Borsook and Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence*, 42.

<sup>97</sup> de La Mare, 'The Library of Francesco Sassetti', 165. 'The Aristotle [*Ethics, Politics and Physics*], and Sassetti's copy of Bruni's *History of Florence* ... two volumes of Cicero's letters ... must have been ones by which Sassetti set special store'. de La Mare, 168. Sassetti's library had copies of 'the *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Pliny's *Natural History*, Martial and Macrobius. Borsook and Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence*, 11.



tropological/symbolic, anagogical/mystical).<sup>98</sup> Critically, nearly all of the scenes represent moments of time in transition not, as is often the case in Renaissance art a moment of pause or a gestural movement,<sup>99</sup> but in motion as in a festival. If this is seen as the priority of the piece then perspective is only a tool used to facilitate this aim; and the receding landscape has become an opportunity to represent different moments in the procession of time.

For example, the altar piece depicts the moment that the shepherds are to be replaced by the Magi in the adoration, the whole event presented as a sort of procession with the Holy family at the head (as in the Feast of Corpus Christi). The *Death of St Francis* (Figs. 5.48-5.51), although apparently situated in a chapel depicts the acolytes bearing the necessary elements for a funeral procession. The *Renunciation of the Worldly Goods* appears with a group of civic representatives who together have gathered to witness the scene—the last couple in the centre just arriving in time. In both these scenes the city is represented in its form (urbs) and as a body of people (civitas). In the *Resurrection of the Boy*, the gathered community, apparently listening to a funeral oration in the street outside S. Trinita, create a foreground vision of solemnity measured against the background which depicts both the moment of death of the boy counterpointed by a procession emerging from the church, all framed in a classical portico broken by the gaze of the painter standing at the extreme right (Fig. 5.52). But it is in the *Confirmation of the Rule of St Francis* that this aspect of the cycle has its most clear realisation. The composition has at least four layers with the act of the confirmation itself depicted in the second layer where St Francis pays homage to Pope Honorius III apparently in front of large set of vaults (perhaps depicting the Basilica of Maxentius Fig. 5.50). In front of this occurs a domestic scene of Poliziano leading two other scholars (Luigi Pulci and Matteo Franco) with the three Medici children up to greet their father and Sassetti (as if in the salone)—mirroring St Francis and the Pope behind. Such a composition suggests the association of newly discovered classical

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<sup>98</sup> See also St Augustine's *De Genesi at Litteram* he suggests: 'In all the sacred books, we should consider eternal truths that are taught, the facts that are narrated, the future events that are predicted, and the precepts or councils that are given'.

<sup>99</sup> Bernard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (New York; London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), 50ff.

knowledge (in the form of Poliziano) paying homage to but changing the existing order of the city (represented by Lorenzo the Magnificent and the Sassetti) with St Francis and Honorius III who contributed to changes within the church. Behind these layers the Piazza della Signoria is shown (the Palazzo Vecchio on the left), with the central arch of the Loggia dei Lanzi as the final threshold. Although the pope's eyeline is the highest in the front scenes, it coincides with that of the floor of the Loggia in Florence, below that of the balustrade of the Ringhiera and the entry to the palazzo. Whether this is significant is difficult to prove with any certainty, however, what can be seen in this image is something similar to the setting experienced in the contemporary feast of San Giovanni where the waiting civic dignitaries of the city gather in the Michelozzo court before processing into the city beyond. The thresholds depicted in the painting are spatial, political and temporal, framing the city in relation to orders that are revealed explicitly within any civic festival activity. Thus the architecture is placed within an iconography of order that is underpinned by movement most often witnessed in civic festivals and here represented by the opportunities offered by the use of perspective. This transformation of space—using architecture—by Ghirlandaio is supported by the clear development of the composition from an original sketch now held in Berlin (Fig. 5.43). It appears that the original composition was more clearly in a room (Fig. 5.50) which also plays a role in the Funeral scene (Figs. 5.48 & 5.51) that was then transformed to become also recognisable as the city Florence—*parva Roma*.

In short, perspective is not utilised as a replacement for the depth of representation in festival that had evolved since the foundation of the commune, but as another tool in its realisation. Such use of perspective and procession can also be seen in relation to the Gozzoli painting of the *Journey of the Magi* (1458-61) (Fig. 4.16) linked explicitly to the history of the procession of the feast itself which was altered by the Medici to pass by their palazzo on the way to the Dominican house at San Marco (Map 4.14); and also in Vasari's painting of the *Foundation of Florence* (1563-65) (Fig. 2.3) in the Palazzo Vecchio which draws on the Roman past to articulate the new Ducal Rule—where the city is shown in the act of being

founded.<sup>100</sup> Although the exact orientation of the city in the painting (particularly in respect of the northern gates) is open to question, each of these buildings is recognisable in broadly the correct arrangement with the Arno in the middle of the panel and Fiesole placed in the hills beyond.

All of these representations contrast with the first known image of the city visible in the bottom section of the *Madonna della Misericordia* (Fig. 3.4)—from the school of Bernardo Daddi, painted sometime in the middle of the fourteenth century and currently located in the Bigallo (the current location for the blessing of the candles during the Festival of San Giovanni)—where Florence is represented as a collection of significant buildings whose location with respect to each other appears to be less important, all surrounded by a wall and a river. It would seem that the Vasari painting is primarily interested in the Roman legacy—particularly the original *pomoerium*—whereas this painting is more interested in the identity of the medieval city through a depiction of the second set of Commune walls.

In Vasari's relatively accurate rendering of the city's orientation and layout the left foreground is dominated by the founding *triumviri*, identified by their respective helmets<sup>101</sup> gifting a Roman *vexillum* in the form of a medieval banner to the people of Florence. In the distance Fiesole can be seen, pictured beneath a ram—the astrological sign under which Florence was founded as well as a symbol of Christ and the *Arte della Lana* (the wool guild)—one of the seven major guilds of the city. While Fiesole appears developed but deserted, Florence is full of activity related to the origin, laying out, and constructing of the new city, with the founder in the middle of the painting, ploughing the first furrow moving anticlockwise around the boundary. Thus, the painting not only identifies the surviving remnants of the Roman city but alludes to knowledge of the likely form of its ritual foundation—a moment bridging the Republican and Imperial traditions and suggesting the origin of Florence was equivalent to the rites undertaken in the foundation of Rome. In

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<sup>100</sup> The city is represented by the key buildings which, in the sixteenth century, were thought to be significant examples of the surviving fabric from the Roman city: The twin round turreted northern gates, the aqueduct and the reservoir it fed, the amphitheatre, and finally the temple of Mars (thought to have stood on the site of the baptistery. See Rubinstein, 'Vasari's Painting of The Foundation of Florence in the Palazzo Vecchio'.

<sup>101</sup> Augustus (Capricorn), Antony (Hercules) and Lepidus (equestrian)

these two paintings we see a shift in representational priority from present to past themes but also between two different ideas of city order. The earlier *Madonna della Misericordia* offers a view of the city where, in line with contemporary iconography of geometry and orientation order is not established by mimicking real spatial relationships but by, amongst other things, ‘gathering’ the principal monuments active within civic life into the centre of the image (the decorated tower to the left of the Baptistery is the demolished campanile of San Piero Maggiore, the first church visited by any new bishop of the city following their inauguration). Vasari’s later image replaces these other possible hierarchies by explicitly linking the city with its classical—not medieval—origins and subordinating all other possible hierarchies to a more accurate spatial representation in line with humanistic perspectivity. Nevertheless this perspectival image with the processional and ritual themes is linked to the foundation (of Florence and Rome); the image of the founder in Vasari’s painting indicates that the idea of ritual foundation in Florence was significant and likely to have influenced part of the annual rituals of renewal—an hypothesis supported by the anticlockwise journey of the medieval procession on the feast of San Giovanni (Map 5.1a), where the path followed the line of the old Roman *pomoerium* inside the walls that bounded the contemporary limits of the city. The locus is the same in both paintings, and although they manifest different pictorial sensibilities, they both establish aspects of the landscape for festival praxis that is still accessible today, albeit transformed for contemporary practice.

Although such interpretations of the art, architecture and literature as set out above can be argued for in the context of modern hermeneutics there is still some question as to whether such knowledge can be shown to be prevalent at the time. This thesis argues that much of the current work on the spatiality of Florence during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance offers a limited understanding of the perspectivity utilised in the late medieval period—more linked to instrumental ideas of order than as a creative tool. The next section of this chapter seeks to clarify this.

#### 5.4. Architects, Architecture and the City: Some themes on the continuity of classical ideas relating to the Latin Middle Ages

- **Divided Representation**

In his 2004 book *Architecture in the age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Age of Production* Dalibor Vesely argued that the study of optics—and the associated philosophies of light that emerged during the ‘twelfth-century renaissance’ in theology and philosophy<sup>102</sup>—generated the primary conditions for the European ‘Renaissance’ in classical culture.<sup>103</sup> However, the emergence of these new ideas, he argued, also laid the foundations for the more explicit form of ‘divided representation’ that makes understanding this transition now, within our own culture, extremely challenging. His argument was not that the classical and modern worlds were completely distinct but that over time the focus shifted in such a way that understanding the transition brought about by this early study of optics was now hampered by a post Enlightenment focus on form, rationality, and the scientific method.<sup>104</sup> As such, any suggestion that the re-emergence of classical architecture—and the classical ideal of the city—was primarily a revival of certain ‘forms’ is misguided and built on a misunderstanding of the ontological foundation of the western European tradition.

It is important to state that Vesely’s critique does not undermine all contemporary investigations conducted within this ‘modern’ system. Many contemporary accounts of the past from different disciplines (using different methodologies) have successfully traced themes defined within particular parameters and, as a result, presented useful insights. Nevertheless, such histories in relation to the history of representation are problematic. In relation to architecture the difference lies in the fact that because it is a participatory art, architecture is a part of a broader continuity, both in relation to the culture of the time in which it was

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<sup>102</sup> For the best summary of this period of medieval ‘enlightenment’ see M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, ed. Lester K. Little, trans. Jerome Taylor (University of Toronto Press, 1997).

<sup>103</sup> Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, 110.

<sup>104</sup> The shift characterised by Vesely as one from a more unified classical culture towards a divided modern condition, occurred over several centuries with many aspects of ‘undivided’ classical culture, he argues, still accessible to society as a whole as late as the Baroque period.

created, and in relation to the duration of its own existence. Within the period in question, for example, architecture must be understood in relation to the ‘communicative’ or ‘poetic’ aspects of representation that were an essential part of the culture of antiquity and the Middle Ages. Without this, the architecture can only be understood as form; its meaning derived from a set of signs. In reality, festivals, rituals, agonistic rites and everyday experiences—as well as the material of the architecture itself—all contribute to the communicative aspect of the art, whether they are recognised by the analysis or not:

The distance separating the instrumental and the communicative understanding of architecture represents a wide gap in our contemporary culture ... What we normally refer to as reality, believing it is something fixed and absolute, is always the result of our ability to experience, visualize, and articulate—in other words, to represent so as to participate in the world.<sup>105</sup>

Using Vesely’s idea that representation—particularly in relation to architecture—is best understood as a participatory act, this section aims to re-contextualise the continuity of ‘communicative’ or ‘poetic’ thought in relation to architectural discourse from antiquity to the renaissance of classical culture in the quattrocento by tracing themes that were also evident in the medieval world. It will suggest that although the relationship of Vitruvius to Leon Battista Alberti, who, with “... Nicholas of Cusa and the formation of Renaissance perspective, [presents] the first plausible anticipation of modernity”,<sup>106</sup> this transition was underpinned by themes already articulated in the medieval world.

- **The legacy of Vitruvius’s *De Architectura***

The spread of the classical tradition of architecture in the West was promulgated by the re-presentation of Vitruvius’s *De Architectura*<sup>107</sup> in key treatises of the early fifteenth century.<sup>108</sup> Additionally, these texts—notably by Alberti (1404-72), Serlio (1475-1554) and Palladio (1508-80)—were also influential in developing the role of the architect and the discipline of architecture into forms that are still familiar to

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<sup>105</sup> Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, 4.

<sup>106</sup> Vesely, 6.

<sup>107</sup> Written between 30-15 BC

<sup>108</sup> The propagation of this work appears to derive from an original manuscript held and copied in Charlemagne’s scriptorium circa the eighth century.

us now. However, although these treatises updated many of the themes and ideas presented in *De Architectura*, in order to make them relevant for their contemporary audiences, in the process they also perpetuated some prejudices that contributed to the division of culture discussed above. For example, it would appear that Vitruvius's description of the understanding required of the architect should be in the form of comprehensive 'knowledge':

The architect should be equipped with knowledge (*scientia*) of many branches of study (*disciplinis*) and varied kinds of learning, for it is by his judgement that all work done by the other arts is put to the test. His endeavour is the child of practice (*fabrica*) and theory (*ratiocination*).<sup>109</sup>

But his account of the city, and the actions of the 'architect' in relation to the city, are presented in a very technical (one could argue instrumental) manner. At no point does he address the symbolic aspects of architecture and the city that were clearly significant at the time.<sup>110</sup> Even Vitruvius's description of the skills the architect should possess in order to practice are presented in rather a mundane fashion, concentrating on a list of activities rather than the way they should be utilised (ethically for example):

He should be a man of letters, skilful with a pencil, instructed in geometry, know much history, have listened diligently to the philosophers, be acquainted with music, not ignorant of medicine, learned in the responses of the jurists, and be acquainted with the rational order of astronomy and the heavens.<sup>111</sup>

Equally, when he describes 'of what things architecture consists', he does so without relating these 'things' to any symbolic ideas,<sup>112</sup> or to the people who will inhabit the architecture. Even though he did not state categorically that symbolic ordering of the city was irrelevant or of lesser status than knowledge leading to its technical realisation, nevertheless, his selective coverage of the topic resulted in the possibility that architecture and the city could be seen as divided between technical and symbolic acts. But was this his intention? Did he actively seek this

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<sup>109</sup> Vitruvius Pollo, *The Loeb Classical Library. No. 251, : On Architecture. Vitruvius*, trans. Frank Granger (Harvard University Press, 1931), 6.

<sup>110</sup> For a discussion of symbolic understanding of the form of the Roman city and its foundation see Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*.

<sup>111</sup> He talks of the 'tools' but not whether there is a right or wrong way to apply them. Vitruvius Pollo, *The Loeb Classical Library. No. 251*, 8.

<sup>112</sup> Vitruvius Pollo, Bk. I, CH. II, 25.

division? To address these questions his use of terminology needs to be investigated further.

Aside from the obvious significance in the broad scope of skills required by the architect (with the implication that the final building will, in some way, reflect these skills), Vitruvius used various terms to describe different forms of knowledge.<sup>113</sup> For example, in Book I Chapter I, he uses *scientia*<sup>114</sup> to describe knowledge in relation to the practical arts—or at least a selection of arts that includes a practical art—where dexterity and skill also form a part of the knowledge, such as in drawing or music.<sup>115</sup> *Scientia* may not be the exact skill itself—i.e. the architect may not be a mason or carpenter, sculptor or musician or even a doctor or astronomer—but he must have knowledge of all of these ‘practical’ fields in order to build buildings, towns and cities suitable for late Republican or early Imperial Roman society.

Similarly, Vitruvius’s use of the term *rationes* for ‘practical knowledge’ means that although he is apparently advocating something similar to Aristotle’s *phronesis*,<sup>116</sup> again, for Vitruvius, actual engagement in an activity does not appear to be necessary. The result of such a differentiation—even though that may not have been his intention—is that ‘types’ of knowledge form into a hierarchy, with (in this case) ‘praxis’ below ‘knowledge of praxis’.

It is clear that Vitruvius is making a distinction between forms of knowledge because elsewhere in the text he goes as far as to say that practitioners who rely on theories and scholarship alone (*ratiocinationibus et litteris*) without having

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<sup>113</sup> *noscere, cognitus, rationes, scientia.*

<sup>114</sup> Latin *scientia* meaning ‘knowledge’ equivalent to the Greek term *episteme*.

<sup>115</sup> This particular use is not universal, Cicero does not appear to differentiate its use in this way in *De Officiis*.

<sup>116</sup> For Aristotle *phronesis* is “... the exact opposite of intuitive intelligence. Intelligence apprehends the truth of definitions which cannot be proved by argument, while prudence (*phronesis*) involves knowledge of the ultimate particular thing, which cannot be attained by science but only by ‘perception’. Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, First Edition (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1984), *Nichomachian Ethics*, Book VI. Ch. 8.182.



‘practical knowledge’ were only “follow[ing] the shadow and not reality”.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, In order to begin to explore these differences—i.e. the interconnectedness but distinction between these forms of knowledge—Vitruvius’ use of the term *geometria* in his Chapter One will be examined.<sup>118</sup>

For Vitruvius *geometria* (always translated as ‘geometry’) is a form of science (*doctrinus*) associated with the Greek *logos opticos* comprising two distinct components: firstly the skill to reveal internal relationships of lines, curves, and angles (more akin the contemporary Euclidian use of the term geometry); and secondly as a reference to the ‘harmony’ of the stars and musical ‘concord’ such as fourths and fifths thus reflecting the ‘laws/discourse’ of music and vision in the perception of nature that comes from the Pythagorean tradition.<sup>119</sup> Even though this double meaning is not often explicitly stated, for Vitruvius it is always present.<sup>120</sup> Elsewhere in his treatise, although similar dialectical structures of meaning are implied in other activities—such as in his discourse on the ‘actual undertaking ... by hand’— he clearly indicates that for him the practical skills, of which the architect must also have ‘a fairly good knowledge’, are more significant. Certainly, if Vitruvius’s priorities in ascertaining architectural values were measured by the number of words used, then one would be left in no doubt that it was the practicalities of construction he was interested in. The question is, how does this knowledge associated to the construction of something link to the ideas that guarantee its meaning?

Apart from the early parts of Book I he has very little to say on the possible symbolic relationships inherent to the classical tradition which he is describing. Even in Book III where he talks of the proportions of the human body (*proportio* in

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<sup>117</sup> Vitruvius Pollo, *The Loeb Classical Library. No. 251*, 7.

<sup>118</sup> Vitruvius Pollo, 20.

<sup>119</sup> Plato refers to this idea of ‘movements of harmony’ in relation to the Pythagorean tradition in *Republic* 530d. It is this dual aspect of geometry in relation to optics in the thirteenth century that Vesely suggests makes explicit the division of representation and thus allows for the limited horizons of modernity. It is also worth comparing these definitions with the discussion earlier in the chapter on Plato’s means of communicating a natural thing.

<sup>120</sup> In the remainder of this chapter I will use the word *geometria* in italics in opposition to ‘geometry’ to denote uses of this deeper understanding of the term.

Latin, *analogia* in Greek)<sup>121</sup> moving towards an application in the proportion of Temples using the ‘perfect number’ (*perfectum numerum* in Latin, *teleon* in Greek)<sup>122</sup> he does so in rather mundane terms. It appears that he, like many architects and architectural historians since, have assumed that if a connection exists between geometry and cosmology, or mathematics, or proportion, or nature, implications of such connections can be applied to something *post facto* once the geometrical, environmental and constructional practicalities have been implemented. So even though he implies a permanent and significant connection between geometry and *geometria* he also indicates that a practical application of geometry is enough and the rest will follow, thus disconnecting any ‘embodied’ ontological understanding of meaning from the thing itself.

However, it would be a mistake to assume that because Vitruvius does not stress this aspect of meaning in architecture he does not value it at all; or that the protagonists of early humanist tradition of Quattrocento Italy who borrowed his ideas were also ignorant of this link. The ability to separate the ‘communicative’ and the ‘instrumental’ was certainly a possibility in these texts, but for all these men, they were still clearly linked. For Vitruvius, his variation of terms for ‘knowledge’ suggest he could be very precise in referring to the deeper structures of *scientia et geometria* and as such indicates he did have a concern for ‘meaning’ even if he valued it less than building practicalities.

On balance, even though it can be said Vitruvius’s text has ambiguities that have sanctioned its use to support limited evaluations of architectural form in the periods that followed, it also appears that the text can sustain a more embodied interpretation with greater links to Greek thought in relation to dialectic discussed at the beginning of this chapter. For example, in the context of the tension in Vitruvius’s work discussed above, even though many writers have interpreted his understanding of architecture through form, there is still the possibility to see in *De Architectura* the dialectic alluded to by Plato. As a consequence, it is possible to

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<sup>121</sup> For a description of the relationship between analogy and proportion see Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, 136.

<sup>122</sup> See Plato *Republic* 546. The exact value of this number is still disputed. The favourite ‘guess’ is  $3^3 + 4^3 + 5^3 = 6^3 = 216$

view Vitruvius's description of existing relationships ontologically, even if his analysis of the causation is more instrumental. It is the scholars analysing Vitruvius that have elided these two aspects of his work. Vitruvius may not have agreed with this limited description of geometry but, nevertheless, he facilitated its propagation and, as a consequence, aspects of being lying outside a broader understanding of reason began to be questioned or, as in the case of Plato's term *philodoxy*, forgotten altogether.

- **Creation and the Liberal Arts in thirteenth-century Europe**

As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, in the theology of the Middle Ages the dialectics articulated by Plato formed the basis of Neo-Platonism that could accommodate Christian ideas such as the nature of God, the Creation, and the manipulation of matter and, in the process, contributed to the transformation of the classical order into a hierarchy (a term invented by Pseudo Dionysius in the late 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD). By the thirteenth century the earlier Neo-Platonic writings of the Church fathers, reinforced by the re-emergence and translation of Aristotelian and Platonic texts, had created an intellectual horizon where developments in knowledge (*scientia*) gathered pace, but also needed to be reconciled with the doctrines of the church. Studies on light and optics in relation to geometry and perspective played a significant part in this transition.

The importance given to the phenomenon of light in medieval cosmologies reflects a tendency to grasp the mystery of creation in a more tangible way and move beyond the poetic and rhetorical language of Neo-Platonism towards a more precise syllogistic reasoning, leading eventually to a geometrical understanding of light. In this process light ceased to be a mere metaphor or analogy of intelligibility and became a real natural power—understood as a part of the creative act itself.<sup>123</sup> One of the main mechanisms that facilitated this transition was the education system based upon the seven 'liberal arts'. This system had originally been conceived in Greece in the fourth century BC to offer a basic education that

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<sup>123</sup> Dalibor Vesely, 'Robert Grosseteste and the Foundations of a New Cosmology', in *Bishop Robert Grosseteste and Lincoln Cathedral: Tracing Relationships between Medieval Concepts of Order and Built Form*, ed. Nicholas Temple, John Hendrix, and Christian Frost (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2014), 135.

prepared students for future discourse in philosophy but was later developed by the Romans who placed the arts of ideas—the *trivium*<sup>124</sup>—above the arts related to things—*quadrivium*.<sup>125</sup> However, when this sevenfold structure was later adopted by the Christian culture of the Middle Ages, it was transformed again. All Christians (even schismatics) believed that God created the world from nothing, but, at the Council of Nicea, orthodox belief identified Christ as a part of the Trinity, each part of which shared the same essence (*ousia*), thus, Christ as man was both body and spirit, and His sacrifice redeemed both the body and spirit of man. Hence the world of created matter, which itself was seen as an analogue of God, was re-sacralised.<sup>126</sup> Whereas the Romans and Greeks had bypassed this problem of the origins of matter by assigning the role of the gods as ‘shapers’ rather than ‘creators’ of matter (hence the primacy of ideas over things in the liberal arts),<sup>127</sup> Christians were required to believe that all creation was God’s work and thus, worthy of study. This adaption of the original terms altered the original hierarchy of the liberal arts, putting the *quadrivium*—dealing with aspects of nature (Creation)—at least on the same level as the *trivium*—dealing with ideas.<sup>128</sup>

Some early Christian writers such as John Scotus Eriugena (c.815-c.877) believed all scripture (through which the Christian’s relationship to Creation was revealed) was based on the skills of the liberal arts; thus suggesting more of a Roman hierarchy of arts with words above things.<sup>129</sup> However, having made this distinction he then struggled to describe the nature of reality itself suggesting that God had only brought his creative power into the ‘corruptible’ world of matter

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<sup>124</sup> Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric.

<sup>125</sup> Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask, Updated edition with a New Epilogue edition (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 36ff.

<sup>126</sup> Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 95.

<sup>127</sup> This builds on Plato’s *Timaeus* where the Demiurge does not create matter but orders it. Eriugena tries to engage in this sequence but opens up the way for heresy—such as occurred in various forms of Dualism where (for example the Arian Christians) believed that Christ’s incorruptible soul was separate but contained within Christ’s corruptible body. In the middle ages this type of apostasy was anathema because it implied that the world of matter was not touched or saved by the Incarnation.

<sup>128</sup> This is the case with respect to ideas, but the significance of the Scriptures to Christian thought meant that, in the end, even within a ‘redeemed’ physical world, the *trivium* in relation to Biblical exegesis maintained a level of superiority.

<sup>129</sup> Ralph Hexter and David Townsend, *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Latin Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 315.

following the Fall, and that as a consequence God had projected sin onto a cosmos of matter separate from spirit.<sup>130</sup> Christ's incarnation and sacrifice had saved the world of matter, but it was still corruptible because it was not a part of God's chosen domain. This interpretation of Pseudo-Dionysius meant that, for Eriugena, the internal division of the liberal arts was correct but also that any other activities, such as the 'mechanical arts'<sup>131</sup> which were made with manual labour, were of lesser import and implicitly 'tainted' by sin. However, with the rise in scholarship and Platonism in the twelfth century this idea shifted:

As against the projection of sin onto the cosmos, the masters of the twelfth century, resting their case on the interpretation given the *Timaeus* and the pseudo-Dionysian hierarchy at Chartres, proclaimed that the possibility of participating in the divine reality belonged expressly to matter as well as to everything above it; that the immense unity of all things was knotted up together in man who stands at the paradoxical borderline of matter and spirit.<sup>132</sup>

This new interpretation facilitated a reappraisal of the whole hierarchy, including the possible recalibration of the 'arts' (embracing architecture) because, although the liberal arts were still the only 'noble' subjects, working with materials and things was also acceptable because it engaged with God's creation. It is no coincidence that this discourse on the separation of matter and spirit (idea) has echoes of the geometry/*geometria* issues raised in the discussion of Vitruvius's *De Architectura* and can be traced into other aspects of education and the arts in the early medieval period.

The most significant text that set out a framework for the hierarchies of the *artes* for the Middle Ages was *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (The Marriage of Philology and Mercury), written between 410 and 439AD by Martianus Capella

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<sup>130</sup> Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, 25.

<sup>131</sup> The *artes mechanicae* for the Greeks and Romans were more defined by not being *artes liberales*, by Johannes Scotus Eriugena and Remigius in their commentaries on *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* in the ninth century. See Hexter and Townsend, *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Latin Literature*, 318. However they were described in Hugh of Saint-Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, ed. Jerome Taylor (Columbia University Press, 1991), BkII. Chap. 20. as; *lanificium* (fabric making), *armaturam* (armament), *navigationem* (commerce), *agriculturam* (agriculture), *venationem* (hunting), *medicinam* (medicine), *theatricam* (theatrics).

<sup>132</sup> Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, 25.

(active in the early part of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD).<sup>133</sup> The work was known at this time through the proliferation of a significant commentary by Eriugena, and because it was discussed by Hugh of St Victor (1096-1141) in his *Didascalicon* in the late 1120s.<sup>134</sup>

In Martianus's original work, Apollo proposes that Mercury (representing profitable pursuit) weds Philologia (learning) daughter of Phronesis (akin to practical wisdom or, in many Christian translations, *prudentia* or Prudence) who, '... being well versed in the law of Parnassus [the home of poetry, literature, and learning] but also in the secrets of the starry heavens and the underworld, embraces all knowledge.'<sup>135</sup> On her arrival at Jupiter's palace she is greeted by the four Cardinal Virtues (Prudence – *prudentia*; Justice – *iustitia*; Temperance – *temperantia*; Courage - *fortitudo*)<sup>136</sup> and the three Graces, or Theological Virtues (Faith - *fides*; Hope - *spes*; Charity/Love - *caritas*),<sup>137</sup> together comprising the seven Christian theological virtues.<sup>138</sup> Following an initiation, she is taken up to the Roman Mount Olympus (which, unlike the Greek Olympus, includes mortals as well as gods) and given the seven liberal arts as gifts:

...Grammar appears as a grey-haired woman of advanced age, who boasts that she descends from the Egyptian king Osiris [...] she appears in Roman dress. She carries an ebony casket, containing a knife and a file with which to operate surgically on children's grammatical errors. Rhetoric is a magnificently tall and beautiful woman, wearing a dress decorated with all the figures of speech and carrying weapons with which she wounds her adversaries...<sup>139</sup>

This iconography, taken from the text, can also be seen on the tympanum of the door of the Virgin on the west front of Chartres Cathedral<sup>140</sup> built 1145-55 in a programme where the Virgin Mary takes over the role of Philology (or perhaps

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<sup>133</sup> This work is known more recently for the reference made by Frances Yates in *The Art of Memory* (Random House, 1992), 64. to the incident when Simondes recounts the positions of several unrecognizable corpses in a collapsed building through his use of 'situated' memory skills.

<sup>134</sup> Hugh of Saint-Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor*, Book II, Ch. 20.

<sup>135</sup> Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 38.

<sup>136</sup> Plato, Republic IV, 426-435.

<sup>137</sup> I Corinthians; XIII.

<sup>138</sup> This hierarchy form the basis of the structure of Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

<sup>139</sup> Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 39..

<sup>140</sup> The Virgin is depicted in the right-hand door. The lower register on all three portals represent Old Testament figures, with the New Testament 'fulfilment' depicted above.

*Phronesis*) as the 'human soul in all perfection' surrounded by, among other elements, the seven liberal arts, alongside sculptures in support of the new twelfth-century hierarchy mentioned above, where God is depicted as the creator of the Cosmos (Fig. 5.64).<sup>141</sup>

By the time of the construction of this west façade of Chartres, in the mid-twelfth century, Hugh of St Victor in his *Didascalicon* had already described the mechanical arts as a part of a hierarchy with philosophy at the top,<sup>142</sup> but added that the hierarchy is also temporal. This meant that, for Hugh, true philosophy is 'divine wisdom' (a 'living mind') which '... in a single and simultaneous vision beholds (*intuetur*) all things past, present, and future' and that its aim is to 'restore within us the divine likeness which to us is a form (*forma*) but to God is his nature'. With this analysis, that touches on the subjects of the *quadrivium*, time is considered a part of the same spectrum, as inseparable from experience as matter. The creation of matter had a beginning, and it will have an end, therefore, all creation (including that the works of man) within the world mirrors the creative act itself temporally, physically, and ontologically. Such an understanding of a creative act is relatively easy to account for in relation to the ephemerality of a festival, but more challenging to conceive in terms of architecture. Nevertheless, the implication is that they should, in some regards, be seen and understood as possessing an equivalence in terms of temporality as well as meaning.

He also makes a distinction between different arts and disciplines and the knowledge (*scientia*) associated with them saying something can be called an art 'when it comprises the rules and precepts of an art' or 'when it treats of matters that only resemble the true and are objects of opinion', but can be called a discipline 'when it is said to be "full" as it is in the "instructional" science' or 'when, by means of true arguments, it deals with matters unable to be other than they

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<sup>141</sup> For a thorough description of the iconography of this portal see Titus Burckhardt, *Chartres and the Birth of the Cathedral* (Bloomington, Ind: World Wisdom Books, 2010), 60.

<sup>142</sup> For Hugh, philosophy has three parts, physics, ethics and logic. Hugh of Saint-Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor*, Bk II, Chap.16. after St Augustine's natural, ethical and logical. St Augustine, *Augustine*, Book VIII, Ch. 4.

are'. Therefore, according to Hugh, architecture is an art (its form only resembles the true); logic, a discipline.<sup>143</sup>

Over the next few chapters Hugh lays out the differences between theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, mechanical knowledge and logical knowledge, setting out the seven mechanical arts in Book II, Chapter XX. Architecture, although not explicitly mentioned here, is later defined as part of armaments (constructional armaments such as wall building. Ch. XXII) and is indirectly referred to as a part of the construction of spaces for amusement and leisure (theatres, gymnasia, temples etc. Ch. XXVII). Thus, Hugh implies that the skills required to be an architect are the same as those mentioned by Vitruvius in *De Architectura*; the architect must have knowledge of the *quadrivium* as well as these more 'practical' skills because architecture embodies all of the arts—it is neither purely practical nor purely theoretical. By making architecture a subset of 'armaments'; taking ritual out of 'theatrics';<sup>144</sup> and ignoring the capacity for ontological mediation present in both arts; Hugh could easily be accused, like Vitruvius, of a certain degree of instrumental thinking. However, the fact that for Hugh all the arts ascend towards the interpretation of scripture as the highest goal bound the activity into the hierarchy of biblical exegesis which was itself already stratified into four levels: literally as a history; allegorically, allowing links to be made between the Old and New Testament themes; tropologically, as a guide for how to act in the present; and anagogically in relation to the future. Such a system had earlier allowed John Cassian (360-435) to clarify the problem of literal and analogical aspects of biblical hermeneutics in terms of Jerusalem, the paradigmatic city of this world, of the universal Ecclesia, and of the soul of heaven:

Jerusalem can be taken in four senses: historically [literally], as the city of the Jews, allegorically as the Church of Christ [in the sense of the institution rather than the building], anagogically as the Heavenly City of God '*which is mother of us all*', (Gal.4:26) tropologically, as the soul of man, which is frequently subject to praise or blame from the Lord often under this title.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Hugh of Saint-Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor*, Bk.II, Ch.1.

<sup>144</sup> Theatrics are described in relation to well-being of the body and mind rather than any spiritual function.

<sup>145</sup> Iohannis Cassiani, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum Vol. XIII : Conlationes XXIII*, ed. Michael Petschenig (Vienna: Geroldi, 1886), 405. Translation in Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-*



That this way of thinking was clearly still germane in the twelfth century because it appears again in Hugh of St Victor's *De arca Noe Morali* where he described four different ways of talking about the ark:

... We set out to talk about one ark, and one thing has so led to another that it seems now we have to speak not of one only, but of four. Of these, the two that are visible were built visibly and outwardly, but the two that are invisible come into being inwardly and invisibly, by an unseen process of construction. The first is that which Noah made, with hatchets and axes, using wood and pitch as his materials. The second is that which Christ made through His preachers, by gathering the nations into a single confession of faith. The third is that which wisdom builds daily in our hearts through continual meditation on the law of God. The fourth is that which mother grace effects in us by joining together many virtues in a single charity. The first is realized in visible reality, the second in faith, the third in knowledge, and the fourth in power. Let us call the first Noah's ark, the second the ark of the Church, the third the ark of wisdom, and the fourth the ark of mother grace.<sup>146</sup>

- **Conclusion**

Reflecting on the various particular moments of architectural and representational innovation that occurred in relation to the civic and representational culture of the late Middle Ages discussed at the beginning of this chapter, in the light of the ideas in the last section, it can be seen that there was a form of continuity that can be traced back to antiquity. Although this continuity is explicit within the festive structures of the city where the temporal and repetitive nature of the events draws attention to this aspect of their ontological nature, in architecture it is less clear. This lack of clarity, combined with the ambiguity of the nature of how ontological order is itself manifested within architecture, has allowed this aspect of architectural representation—an aspect critical for antiquity and the Middle Ages—to be questioned and, in some cases, lost altogether. That such continuities can be still be seen within the art of the Renaissance—as in Ghirlandaio's frescoes at the Sassetti Chapel—and apparent as vestiges of civic order in the current

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*Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume XI Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian* (Cosimo, Inc., 2007), 438.

<sup>146</sup>Hugonis de S. Victoire, 'De Arca Noe Morali', in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Vol. CLXXVI*, ed. J.-P Migne (Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1882), Bk. 1, Ch. 2, Col 626. A translation is available in, Hugh of Saint-Victor, *Hugh of Saint-Victor: Selected Spiritual Writings* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 59.

festival is significant and forms a critical part of the conclusion of this thesis as a whole.

The hierarchies used by the theologians of the Middle Ages to advise their artificers were a part of the contemplative horizon of all activities and continued to be understood and used well into the Renaissance. In the same way that Vitruvius stated various forms of ‘knowledge’ were essential for the work of architects and thus implied they should at least play some part in the evaluation of the final building, so Hugh suggests a similar ground for Christian creativity. He recognised a difference between ‘speculative knowledge’ (*intelligentiam*) that comes from a divine action, and ‘practical knowledge’ (*scientia*) deriving ‘practical council’ from below, but for him they necessarily combine together to facilitate Wisdom.<sup>147</sup> This is made explicit in Appendix A of the *Didascalicon* where he discusses the order in which knowledge and understanding should be learned—moving from logic to ethics to theoretical arts and only then the mechanical arts. Thus, in learning mode the mechanical arts are placed last, once all of the other knowledge has been assimilated because;

... eloquence ought to be attained first; then, as Socrates says in the *Ethics*, the eye of the heart must be cleansed by the study of virtue, so that it may thereafter see clearly for the investigation of truth in the theoretical arts. Last of all, the mechanical arts follow, which, by themselves, are altogether ineffective unless supported by knowledge of the foregoing.<sup>148</sup>

It is difficult to suggest, after such an explicit recognition that the knowledge (*scientia*) of making in the mechanical arts (including architecture) is built upon understanding (*intelligentiam*) of the theoretical arts, that these layers of thinking would not be present in some form within the artefact. This is confirmed by the minuted argument between Italian and French experts on the development of Milan Cathedral in the early fifteenth century.<sup>149</sup> Jean Mignot, the French

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<sup>147</sup> Hugh of Saint-Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor*, Bk. 1, Ch.8.

<sup>148</sup> Hugh of Saint-Victor, Appendix A. is labelled Chapter XIV in some volumes.

<sup>149</sup> Otto Georg Von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, Expanded edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 19.

representative resolved a dispute with the incontestable truth that art is nothing without 'knowledge' (*ars sine scientia nihil est*).<sup>150</sup>

The result of such a recognition relating to architecture means that its setting and use should be subject to a similar level of scrutiny as its form. But this is not always the case. When such links between these different criteria are made any continuity has often been misinterpreted as a shift in form from the 'real' towards some sort of 'abstraction'. The nomenclature that accompanies this interpretation usually includes 'ideal' as the purest form of abstraction and is underpinned by a very different form of dialectical understanding, more Hegelian than Platonic. This is a mistake for although it could be said that there is an implied 'distancing' from the physical world in the type of hierarchical understanding proffered by Hugh, the results of his enquiry do not advocate differing levels of embodiment. As Vesely states:

[even as late as the fifteenth century] space is still part of a phenomenal reality in which it cannot be treated in isolation from the conditions of its embodiment. After all, artificial perspective was never supposed to be a purely mathematical or absolute discipline but a pictorial one, representing not a concept of space or abstract structure but a concrete world in its visibility.<sup>151</sup>

This is an important distinction to make as it affects the way commentators from today, and from the past, often attempt to explain paradigmatic aspects of ontology through explicitly pragmatic phenomena. It was in the medieval world, where the individual was clearly related to the Cosmos within a more embodied hierarchy, that the re-emergence of classical culture gathered momentum in the arts and developed into what is now called the Renaissance. However, instead of it being a theoretical shift, or a break with the past, it is best seen as analogous to a natural progression guided by the theological and artistic trends that were already emerging from the twelfth-century renaissance evident in European theological schools.

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<sup>150</sup> I have changed Von Simson's translation of *scientia*. But in both translations the knowledge refers to the skills and knowledge inherent to *geometria* and the other *ars*.

<sup>151</sup> Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, 139.

As such, it appears that many of the themes explored and manifested in art and architecture of the following centuries were more of a progression than a revolution. In architecture and art 'perspective' and 'form', although allowing for separate limited interpretations, continued to carry a depth of meaning more nuanced than many modern-day interpretations would allow. As a result, the continuing legacy of Latin classical culture is more likely to be present in some refined examples of contemporary architecture than necessarily in buildings that display the liberal use of classical columns.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> See, for example the relationship of contemporary buildings to themes of light and geometry discussed in Nicholas Temple, *Disclosing Horizons: Architecture, Perspective and Redemptive Space* (Routledge, 2006).

## Chapter 6. Conclusions: Architecture, Festival and the City

### Introduction

This thesis has used aspects of the development and representation manifested in the Florentine Feast of San Giovanni as a means to discuss broader issues of representation in relation to architecture. It has argued the developments that occurred in the identity and governance of Florence during the late medieval period laid the foundation for a spectrum of representation that was then subsumed by perspectival themes depicting civic space and activity explored in the Renaissance. Perspective, in this period, was tied to a deep understanding of order that reached back to classical ideas of the agon, dialogue, and dialectic that was revealed most clearly in ritual, and represented within the city in the form of the festival.<sup>1</sup> Also, as in the enactment of the festival where there is no possibility or desire to achieve synthesis, the form and understanding of dialectics as a whole in this period was ‘undivided’ in terms of representation; it was not in search of resolution but of understanding; there was no requirement for the synthesis of late medieval terms. In fact, in the festival, the opposite was true; the conflict during carnival and other feast days between different factions of the city, different classes, the church, and the civic government etc. was often so intense that parties who felt excluded attacked the participants.<sup>2</sup> Such behaviour had always been incorporated into the feasts in the form of games (jousts, swordfights etc.) and in the middle of the sixteenth century the newly enthroned Medici Dukes added the *Calcio* football match—renamed the *Calcio Storico* when it was revived in the twentieth century—played between residents of the four city Quartieri.<sup>3</sup>

Within this continually changing festive landscape the architecture of the city also adapted. Beyond pragmatic aspects of change related to form (height, volume, location etc) it adjusted to accommodate the requirements for representation both during festivals and in everyday use. For example, the emergence of large *palazzi* within the city—such as the Pitti Palace with its large piazza (H, Map 5.3b)—did

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<sup>1</sup> It was only later that perspective became viewed purely as an instrumental form of pictorial representation

<sup>2</sup> Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 218.

<sup>3</sup> The revival of this as a part of the current festival, and the consequential implications on perceptions of architecture and festival in contemporary Florence, will be discussed later in this chapter.

not challenge the Palazzo Vecchio in terms of height but its large volume did begin to suggest the possible re-emergence of the rule by an individual within the humanist iconography of the quattrocento. Both iconography of this, and other palaces, and the structure of the court ceremonial was attached to the civic ceremonial that had taken the city through its republican period.

However, it appears that, like in the transition witnessed in Rome from Republic to Empire, the festive structure of the city, centred on its architecture and the places of the city, were able to accommodate some changes almost imperceptibly; the feast celebrations could continue with only minor changes even though the city underwent some major alterations. At the same time, through the development of perspective—understood both spatially and temporally—art and architecture offered opportunities for the new aristocracy to represent itself in relation to this festive tradition. Consequently, the Medici were able to add themed floats to the feast of San Giovanni; or extend the processional route of the feast of the Magi (Map 4.14); and then represent these changes in their own histories, archives and paintings (such as the Gozzoli painting in the Chapel in their palazzo) (Fig.4.16). However, during this process, for the burgher of Florence, there was little change in the nature of their festival. Their experience, like ours today, was still framed by the order of festival rather than by any form of political reality crafted by the new elites.<sup>4</sup> And such experiences go back further than the late Middle Ages, at least into the world of the Greek polis and its legacy in the Roman ecumene. It may well be that any argument suggesting continuity of the idea of the ‘good city’ through history appears to some as a romantic fallacy,<sup>5</sup> but that is in fact exactly what remains at the heart of the city when understood in relation to festive representation. The historicity of the civic world is presented in its nearness through the festival and it is experienced as such by the participants. As Rykwert states, such actions are always understood:

What is true of myth is even more true of the rite. As long as it survives, marking even late medieval and Renaissance ceremonial, it retains its hold over the imaginations and the ways of thinking of the people who witness

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<sup>4</sup> i.e. as suggested by Victor Turner’s threefold layering of festive experience mentioned in chapter one (as separation, transition, and incorporation) outside normal political and social relationships.

<sup>5</sup> Habermas, ‘Hannah Arendt’s Communications Concept of Power’, 14.

or practice it. In this context, therefore, a ‘misunderstanding’ of the rite is impossible, or at any rate, the statement has no real meaning. The rite is ‘truly’ understood as long as it is practiced. And it was practiced as long as it was needed.<sup>6</sup>

The late medieval developments to the festival discussed in chapter four suggest that the traditional festival was augmented at this time by a further level of articulation—both representationally and temporally. To the two-fold temporality inherited from tradition—the temporality of the Cosmos of antiquity and of the Christian time of origins and the end of time—was added a third layer of historical temporality within which the events of the festival occurred. And this historical temporality—the historicity—is as much a part of the identity and being of the architecture as it is of the festival. Just like the memory of the event plays within the mind of the participants, allowing them to recount and re-experience aspects of the day, the architecture that plays a part in the event also engages with the temporality in a meaningful way. Thus we arrive at the first possible conclusion of the thesis that architecture of the late medieval and Renaissance period should be seen as embodying all of the dimensions that are discernible in the enactment of festival, from separation, through transition, to incorporation. Such a realisation is not limited to the period in question but has implications on the continuity of the festival beyond the parameters already established by the thesis. This can be illustrated in respect of more recent events and attitudes towards representation beginning with an analysis of the persistence of meaning in the *Calcio Storico* football game played every year on the Feast of San Giovanni since its revival in 1930.

### **6.1 The *Calcio* in Florence: Agonistic Ritual and the Space of Civic Order**

Although over time the rituals, parades, markets and games associated with the festival of San Giovanni have adapted to reflect the representational requirements necessary for each particular period, many aspects of the festival have remained constant, even until the present day. Consequently, the fact that an event such as the *Calcio Storico* still retains much of its original iconography is an important reference point for understanding both the idea of festival in Florence as well as,

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<sup>6</sup> Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, 88.

more broadly, the relationships that can exist between festival, architecture and civic order.

Although there are some commentators who suggest the *Calcio Storico* is derived from the Roman game *Harpastum*,<sup>7</sup> described by Athenaeus (2<sup>nd</sup> C. AD) in his book *Deipnosophitae* there is no proof that this game, apparently borrowed from earlier Greek origins, has any direct relationship with the game in Florence.<sup>8</sup> One of the first clear references to a football '*palla*'—a game fought for honour and a small silk banner—was by the diarist Luca Landucci (1436-1516) who reported that one was played on the frozen Arno in January 1490.<sup>9</sup> It also appears that early games were played by the nobility in the Prato district of the city and used for the training of militia and mercenaries (2, Map 6.1),<sup>10</sup> but by the early sixteenth century the contest had become a regular feature of the carnival on Shrove Tuesday. It was one such match, staged during the siege of Florence in 1530 just before the city capitulated to the Emperor Charles V, which later became the most significant occurrence and underpins much of the contemporary iconography of the game. This match, held in the Piazza di Santa Croce within shouting distance of the Emperor's troops (1, Map 6.1), was the last cry of the old Communal government before the appointment of the first Medici Duke in 1532.<sup>11</sup>

The Florentine army at this time, although incorporating many mercenaries, was also made up of a core of 'National Militia' formed into four battalions—one from each of the four *Quartiere*—created through the 'Republican Draft'.<sup>12</sup> This conscription, brought back in 1506 by Machiavelli while he was adviser to the Gonfaloniere of Justice Piero Soderini (1440-1522), came from Machiavelli's conviction that there is no point discussing 'the proper form of government unless and until a state could adequately defend itself'.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in the form of the *Quartieri*

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<sup>7</sup> Luciano Artusi, *Calcio fiorentino. Storia, arte e memorie dell'antico gioco dalle origini ad oggi* (Firenze: Scribo, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> (Bk. 1, 14F) Athenaeus, *Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists, Volume I, Books 1-3.106e*, trans. Charles Burton Gulick, Revised edition (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1969).

<sup>9</sup> Landucci, *Diario fiorentino dal 1450 al 1516*, Ch. 50.

<sup>10</sup> Luciano Artusi, *Early Florence and the Historic Game of Calcio* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1972), 28.

<sup>11</sup> Artusi, 31ff.

<sup>12</sup> Schevill, *History of Florence*, 465.

<sup>13</sup> Unger, *Machiavelli*, 79.



teams made up of mercenaries and Florentines the game represented the divided administrative order of the city, but as an event it represented the city's unity as a singular body.

Charles' siege had begun months earlier in October 1529 but the Militia, apparently unwilling to ignore the city's civic traditions even in this time of strife, elected to hold the annual *Calcio*, including much loud musical accompaniment well within earshot of the enemy. So, on February 17<sup>th</sup> 1530, even though the Florentine army were about to fight a battle for the survival of their political identity, they played their traditional carnival match which became as furious and violent as it always had been. This decision to play the game in the midst of the siege resulted in its place in the folklore of the city; an emblem of courage and respect for the *Quartieri* and the city as a whole. In the end the siege continued for a further four months, the conflict spreading throughout the region, eventually coming to an end with the defeat of the Florentine forces and the death of their commander Francesco Ferrucci (1489-1530) at Gavinana in early August (6 & 7, Map 6.1).<sup>14</sup>

Like other games, races and jousts etc., over the following centuries, as well as the carnival game special *Calcios* were often staged as a part of major celebrations such as the Ducal marriages of 1558, 1584, 1585, 1616 and 1650, as well as on other significant dates in the Christian Calendar. But even though the game eventually did fall into decline, when it was played the form of the event was always linked to the historic Communal *Quartieri* through the four teams competing. Thus, when the Duchy of Florence was created in 1532 and the region further ennobled in 1569 when Cosimo I became the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the *Calcio* remained a tangible representation of the historic civic structure of the city, linking ducal themes of governance with the city's humanist traditions rooted in ideas of its Roman foundation in the classical world.

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<sup>14</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, 460.

This ‘ambition’ to embed the game in a deeper civic culture is evident in the first treatise on the *Calcio* by Giovanni de’ Bardi (1534-1612),<sup>15</sup> written later in the century, when he suggests that ‘one might believe that the game was introduced to the city at the same time as it was founded,’<sup>16</sup> thus linking the game with the re-enactment of the foundation rite itself already established in the ritual life of the city in the processions and parades of the annual San Giovanni Battista feast day celebrations.<sup>17</sup>

Although much of Bardi’s treatise describes the rules of the game and other practicalities, it does make continual connections to the Roman exemplar, suggesting how the set-up of the teams mirrors the battle formation of Roman troops but, more importantly, argues that the ‘utility’ of the game is to ‘convert laziness into manly virtue, and into praise.’<sup>18</sup> In order to reveal such aspects of the *Calcio*, at a time following the rise of the Medici to the dukedom, Bardi goes on to suggest that these ‘manly pursuits’ must also be practised by the nobility, not the *popoli*.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, over the years the *popoli* have played the game and, like in other festivals where the normal hierarchies of rule are ‘reversed’ or at least questioned for the duration of the event,<sup>20</sup> the game has continued to elevate the most aggressive and violent of the citizens—*popoli* or *milites*—to a position of honour for the day. Interestingly, Bardi, like most commentators of the game are silent on the choice of location but seem to take for granted that it should occur in a civic space within the city not in a field on the outskirts.

Even though the *Calcio* continued to be played at different times of the year throughout the next centuries, because the representational requirements for the Duchy rested less on vestiges of Communal order of Florence, *Calcios* became less

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<sup>15</sup> Bardi was Count of Vernio and a member of the Florentine Accademia degli Alterati. An analysis of this short treatise is offered by Theodore E. Mommsen, ‘Football in Renaissance Florence’, *The Yale University Library Gazette* 16, no. 1 (July 1941): 14–19.

<sup>16</sup> Giovanni Bardi, *Discorso sopra il giuoco del calcio fiorentino. Del Puro Accademico Alterato. Al sereniss. gran duca di Toscana suo signore* (nella Stamperia de’ Giunti, 1580), 4.

<sup>17</sup> Christian Frost, ‘Festivals and Tradition in Contemporary Florence’, *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (June 2016): 239–54.

<sup>18</sup> Giovanni Bardi, *Discorso sopra il giuoco*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> ...il fiore della Nobilità. Giovanni Bardi, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Such feasts as Carnival in Venice, or the Boy Bishops and Feast of Asses from the medieval period.

significant for the city and, as a result, less frequent.<sup>21</sup> That is not to say that the implicit civic order within the game was no longer recognised or celebrated, just that their regular performance was less essential to the order of the city. However, in the latter parts of the nineteenth century, following the *Risorgimento*,<sup>22</sup> there was renewed interest in the history of Italy—including its festivals—and in Florence the historian Pietro Gori began to reconstruct them (based upon some historical accounts) for significant political and national events such as; the 1897 finishing of the new façade to Santa Maria Della Fiore; the 1898 celebrations for the centenary of Paolo Toscanelli (1397-1482) and Amerigo Vespucci (1454-1512);<sup>23</sup> and the 1902 festival designed as an imitation of Duke Cosimo I's *palio de'cocchi* (procession of chariots) of 1563 (Fig 6.2).<sup>24</sup> Thus, by the time the Fascists reintroduced the *Calcio* in 1930 as a part of a wider initiative that included festivals throughout the country, a skeleton structure more grounded in pre-First World War patriotism than nationalistic fervour was already in operation.

As Medina Lasansky suggests, this Fascist revival of historic feasts and festivals was about reclaiming Italian history for Italians. But although many of the resurrected events had originated in the late medieval period, the iconography of these 'new' events leaned heavily on the literature, art, and historiography created from the quattrocento on.<sup>25</sup> As a result, on May 4th 1930, they recreated a *Calcio* on the significant four hundredth anniversary of the match played in the city during Emperor Charles V siege of Florence mentioned earlier, and associated this with the death of the Florentine Communal General and hero Francesco Ferrucci at the hands of the French that had occurred later that same year. Additionally, just in case this historical connection might have been lost on the casual observer, the

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<sup>21</sup> For a comprehensive list of recorded matches see Artusi, *Calcio fiorentino. Storia, arte e memorie dell'antico gioco dalle origini ad oggi*, 53ff.

<sup>22</sup> The official unification of Italy occurred in 1871 but the process began at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 when the leaders of Europe convened to try to establish some international stability within Europe following the Napoleonic wars.

<sup>23</sup> Around 1502 Vespucci discovered that South America was not Asia but a separate landmass. Although Toscanelli died well before this discovery he is credited with being Vespucci's partner in his investigations. Pietro Gori, *I centenari del 1898: Toscanelli, Vespucci, Savonarola : Firenze nel secolo XV : feste, giuochi, spettacoli* (Tipografia Galletti & Cocci, 1898).

<sup>24</sup> Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, 71.

<sup>25</sup> Lasansky, 64.

match became a historic fashion show as well, and included on the VIP guest list some of the families who had attended the original 1530 event.

Unlike the game today (and the one in 1530) which is held in the Piazza di Santa Croce, this first *Calcio* of the new age took place in the Piazza Signoria (5, Map 6.1), the main civic square of the city, further linking the game's revival to the heart of civic governance, a point made in the film that documented the event (Fig. 6.1).<sup>26</sup> The path of the parade from Santa Maria Novella to the temporary pitch constructed in the Piazza della Signoria passed many of the significant Renaissance Palazzi (also emblematic of this critical time in the history of Florentine communal government), that were especially decorated as a part of the celebrations (Map 6.2a & b). Consequently, in the same way that Vasari's painting of the *Foundation of Florence* (1563-65) (Fig. 2.3), or Gozzoli's painting of the *Procession of the Youngest King* at the Medici chapel, had been designed for the needs of the new Medici Dukes,<sup>27</sup> this whole reconstruction of the feast, including the *Calcio Storico*, was primarily designed for the Fascists' own representational needs—as was the case in other reconstructions such as; the *Palio* of Siena (1928),<sup>28</sup> the Jousting in Arezzo (1931), and the Battle of the Bridge in Pisa (1935).<sup>29</sup> The *Calcio* could have been played on one of the sports fields of the city, but instead, like earlier, earth was brought in to cover the paved piazza and the game took place in the civic heart of the city.<sup>30</sup>

However, care must be taken not to see the ideas behind this '*renovatio*' in the light of later developments to fascism in Italy and abroad. The 1930 *Calcio* in Florence occurred two years before Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944) and Benito Mussolini

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkDnvHXJg4k>.

<sup>27</sup> See Frost, 'Festivals and Tradition in Contemporary Florence'.

<sup>28</sup> The most famous surviving horse race is the *Palio* of Siena where the districts of the city, or *contrade*, sponsor a horse and jockey (not necessarily from the district) to run the race twice around the Piazza del Campo. The name, *Palio*, derives from the banner which is given to the winner of the race and they were a feature of feast days throughout Italy with some *Palios* running riderless horses. The *Palio* of Florence ran across the city from west to east through the narrow streets of the city and so would be almost impossible to run today. For an anthropological account of this event see Alan Dundes and Alessandro Falassi, *La Terra in Piazza: An Interpretation of the Palio of Siena* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>29</sup> Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, 65.

<sup>30</sup> The Fiorentina Stadium, for example, was finally completed in 1931 and named after Giovanni Berta, a local fascist martyr. It was only renamed after a more suitable candidate in the 1990s.

published their *Doctrine of Fascism*,<sup>31</sup> and a full eight years before the anti-Semitic legislation of 1938 was introduced—designed to appease the more ‘racial’ Nazism of their new Axis allies,<sup>32</sup> but also partly a reaction to the recent conquest of Ethiopia in 1936.<sup>33</sup> Italian fascism was clearly dismissive of the failed liberal culture that had opened the way to its electoral success in 1922, and was often violent towards any opposition—evidenced by the fact that in as early 1924 the philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) had left the Fascist party in protest over its brutal politicking.<sup>34</sup> But Italy was not Germany. It is true that Salvemini Gaetano, Florence’s primary anti-fascist leader was already in exile and his *Circolo di Cultura* disbanded,<sup>35</sup> but dissidents including the poet Eugenio Montale were still regularly holding court in the literary *Caffè Giubbe Rosse* in the Piazza de Repubblica.<sup>36</sup> Even at this critical time in Europe the use of historical iconography in Italy had a very different purpose than similar pageants of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia:

Ultimately [totalitarianism in Italy] dealt not with exclusion but with forging the capacity to act collectively in the new ‘total’ ways that had come to seem necessary and possible. At issue was who could be part of a community capable of acting as one, exercising collective human responsibility. Whereas the Soviets and the Nazis started with an a-priori exclusionary principle, Gentile started with openness to all, based on human freedom and ethical potential.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, initially at least, and similar to earlier manifestations during the Risorgimento, the Fascist re-invention of historic festivals in Italy formed a part of the government’s plan to forge a new ‘spiritual and cultural’ identity for the whole ‘Italian’ population and differed significantly from the ‘materialistic’ identity inherent to Communism, or the ‘naturalistic’ identity of Nazism.<sup>38</sup> In 1930, at least, it appears that Gentile believed that *l’uomo del fascismo* could emerge from any of

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<sup>31</sup> *La dottrina del fascismo* (1932)

<sup>32</sup> Italy signed a treaty of alliance with Nazi Germany in 1936.

<sup>33</sup> Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, 178.

<sup>34</sup> He left the party following the assassination of the socialist politician Giacomo Matteotti in 1924 and was put under surveillance for the remainder of their time in government.

<sup>35</sup> By 1930 he had already started the *Giustizia e Libertà* group while in exile. *American National Biography: Supplement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 491.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Montale Biography’, accessed 24 August 2018, <http://www.storiaxisecolo.it/antifascismo/biografie%20antifascisti37.html>.

<sup>37</sup> David D. Roberts, *Historicism and Fascism in Modern Italy* (University of Toronto Press, 2007), 49.

<sup>38</sup> Roberts, 26.

Italy's many constituent cities, races, and beliefs, and this new 'Italian' would inevitably be supportive of the aims of fascism in Italy as a whole.

Lasansky's work in the revival of Italian festivals under the Fascists, like many other discussions of the period, tends to elide aspects of fascist ideology with aspect of festival behaviour—particularly in respect of violence and the contest inherent to its agonistic form. Such condemnation of social conduct and its hasty assignment to political will implies that the festival can be dictated to and, that by resurrecting the festival, the fascists somehow 'owned' them. Clearly, fascist activity was always centred upon a real world—'...praxis is the idol of fascism'<sup>39</sup>—but you cannot 'tell' any festival what it means. The being of the festival—in relation to mimesis of praxis—has a life of its own. Consequently, even though in many of the arts, and in society as a whole, there was much support for fascism there was also dissent,<sup>40</sup> which would also have formed a part of the event—whether documented or not. Any discourse that ignores this aspect of 'conflict' that is inherent to festival and suggests that it can be moulded and formed at will by anyone for their own political or social agenda, must be limited.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, it can be said with some confidence that in 1930, along with the Fascist's relatively narrow instrumental ideas of nationalism, other more seditious themes from the humanist commune (and its institutionalised agon) were bound to resurface; such as power reversal, local independence, and subversive anti-state behaviour. Themes as much to do with local civic unity (opposed to centralised state power) as being an Italian. This more destabilising aspect of the festivals (at least for the Fascists) closely linked the participants and observers in the city to their implicit communality rather than their difference from other nations and was very much in line with Croce's idea, articulated in the early part of the century, that liberty is not a natural right but arises out of a continuous struggle (or agon).<sup>42</sup> Commentators

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<sup>39</sup> Jared M. Becker, "'What We Are Not': Montale's Anti-Fascism Revisited', *Italica* 60, no. 4 (1983): 336.

<sup>40</sup> While there was some support for the regime by the Futurists (Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, 172.), the Novocento movement in architecture tried to develop a different use for tradition. Doordan, *Building Modern Italy*, 29ff.

<sup>41</sup> As has been stated, even the Medici realised that the iconography of festivals cannot easily be co-opted.

<sup>42</sup> An openness shared with the ideas discussed earlier in relation to Plato's dialectic.

on this aspect of Croce's philosophy have argued that his 'continuous struggle' laid the foundations of the Fascist State in that it was representative of '... a dangerous new philosophy that stressed relativism in values, subjective activism for the individual, violence as a mode of social action, and success as the supreme value in public affairs.'<sup>43</sup> But this also describes the operational aims of the Communal government of the quattrocento out of which much of the festal iconography arose and, more specifically in relation to the north Italian city-states, the way that the 'natural' conditions present in the city were understood as the context for freedom.<sup>44</sup> It is this more general aspect of the festival linked to human behaviour and civic justice that has allowed these festivals to continue following the final fall of the Fascist government in 1945. Such a recognition goes some way to explain why many aspects of representative agonistic contest in contemporary culture are seen as dangerous to civic order, whereas within the historical context of the city of Florence, this *modus operandi* had always been the way that politics was handled.

Festivals were, and continue to be, a ceremonial and symbolic representation of this 'natural state', of what was characterised by Destler as 'violent relativism'. The difference between the historical event (including Croce's relativism) and the Fascists' idea, was that Gentile's Idealism—a 'spiritual' conception that was grounded in ideas of human freedom, creativity and ethics—required a more singular viewpoint. In Fascism there was less space for negotiation of what 'freedom' might mean. The Fascists aimed use such events to help build their form of 'open access state', but the resurrection of the festival revealed a more complex set of themes, not all of which were sympathetic to their aims. Both the form of the festival and its setting within the historic centre of Florence resisted such co-option and thus, even the brutal aspects of the festivals should not be seen as a form of fascist bullying, but more as a representation of the violence that is concealed beneath much normal contemporary political activity.

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<sup>43</sup> Roberts, *Historicism and Fascism in Modern Italy*, 7. Roberts is summarising Chester McArthur Destler's opinion written in 1950 that Croce paved the way for the excesses of Fascism to follow.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter one reference to North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders*, 2.

Of the events, violent or otherwise, that continue to be celebrated annually, the majority have found a place in the festal calendar of the Catholic Church but, like their precursors in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, the festivals have a representational field which steps outside the purely Sacramental order of the church. So even when the Lateran Treaty of 1929 made Catholicism the primary state religion of Italy, the festivals still offered various forms of engagement related to broader ideas of freedom and constituency than stipulated by the religious and political monocultures of the time. Festivals have always facilitated the representation of all citizens—including mercenaries, Jews and Muslims—and one could argue that it is in the *Calcio Storico* in Florence that such diversity remains. The layered iconography of the event, originally extended to incorporate the humanist civic ideals of the commune championed by the wealthy merchants, bankers and skilled craftsmen of the city, is now continued through reference to the current city's various inhabitants, societies, institutions and visitors. But this iconography is underpinned by its location—throughout its history—within one of the significant spaces of the city that were built and fixed during the Communal period. The same game moved to a football stadium appears only as entertainment, the civic resistance implicit in its (re-)enactment is lost (Compare Fig. 6.5 with Fig. 6.6).<sup>45</sup>

While the form of most of the revitalised events that surround the *Calcio* appear to be historicist—with period costumes, traditional banners and ancient weaponry forming a significant part of the festival—designed to interest the tourist and visitor to the city, in truth festivals have always included such factors as trade, fashion, and politics. However, as the Fascists found out, such trappings do not define the event and it is in this aspect of the tradition—including the very real violence evident on the field of play—that maintains the much of the historicity of the occasion. It is the inevitability and the immediacy of these aspects of the events that give it meaning and make it a part of a real tradition, not just something made to look like tradition. Even if this aspect of the revival was outside the remit of the Fascists, they could not stop the re-emergence of this civic patriotism (still is in

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<sup>45</sup> The same is true of contemporary flash-mobs. In civic spaces they appear to have some meaning, but in shopping malls they can never appear as more than a simple form of entertainment.



evidence today) that ran deeper—and now longer—than their own shallow brand of nationalism. Additionally, while it is clear that the game, and the form of much of the rest of the festival, was used as a way of promoting fascism, the game and the festival is not itself fascist or necessarily historicist. In fact, it could be argued that the setting created by the city as fabric and as a body of people (*civitas* and *urbs*) present a deeper level of meaning that cannot easily be hijacked by political ideas. Quoting Lando Ferretti from 1932, Lasansky suggests that:

... festivals “helped codify a new civility in Mussolini’s Fascist Italy.” The festival was a social leveller—conveniently providing a common ground on which individuals, with varying degrees of support for the regime, could be united by a single civic project.<sup>46</sup>

It is then perhaps in this moment that the most important distinctions become visible and offer a way of thinking about this violence that is perhaps more therapeutic than divisive. Fighting for love is very different than fighting for hate, even if they appear to be exactly the same. To fight to belong is not the same as to fight to exclude. All civic agonistic transactions have a tendency towards violence of some sort. Even in ancient Athens where the transformation of the agon into civil debate first occurred—followed by more or less willing consensus with laws deemed common to all, some of which were sacred—the city also maintained its festive culture. The Florentine Commune followed in this tradition and its continuing occurrence in the city suggests that it continues to address these issues. The aim of the *Calcio* (along with the other resurrected games and festivals), as well as to entertain, is to make more visible this violence at the heart of all civic culture which inevitably has some winners and some losers. Dramatic enactments of battles of skill and daring, violence, and submission are merely another more visible recognition of the violence of the social structures of the city. That such attitudes to the *Calcio* are still evident is confirmed in an excerpt from an interview with one participant from the 2017 *Calcio*:

Q: What makes this game so special for the city?

A: “It’s about pride, you know, it’s about glory. You play for your city first of all, every time you step into the arena it’s for the pride and the glory of your city. There is no money involved, so it’s just for honour and pride. Everyone

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<sup>46</sup> Ferretti, preface to Salvestrini’s book on *Il Gioco del Ponte di Pisa*. Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, 73. and n.82, 291.

recognises that, so that's why this kind of game is so special for the Florentine people."<sup>47</sup>

Along with the general misconception of events such as the *Calcio* that mistakes violent demonstrations of civic belonging for fascist power and intolerance comes the claim that such events are also 'artificial' because they were partially reinvented as 'spectacle' for the tourist trade. But cities have always taken advantage of any gathering of people to make money and attract more business (or visitors)<sup>48</sup>—in the early fifteenth century the Feast of San Giovanni celebrations (including market days) would last up to ten days.<sup>49</sup> It is in the nature of festivals that there are different layers of participation, from commercial, through political to symbolic. But even within such a differentiation each participant, although in search of different things, shares something of—and contributes something to—the festival.

The same is true of the architecture of the city that was conceived within this idea of historicity; the participation of architecture in an event does not—or should not—be the defining element of its 'character'. It too, when associated to the conditions of historicity, festival and city, should be seen as a multi-layered phenomenon that has different possibilities of experience. Firstly, at a mundane level, architecture has the ability to make streets and places capable of accommodating the day to day life of the city; and at the other extreme, create a suitable setting for ritual (political, civic, religious). Neither of these two states are contentious and would fit a description of even the most rational forms of modernity. However, it is perhaps the third state, something like Turner's 'transition', which is most under-valued, suggesting there is another layer of architecture that creates opportunities for the operation of both forms of action simultaneously and is present, with or without a festival.

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<sup>47</sup> 'An Exclusive Interview with the Calciantes of Calcio Storico: Gladiators of Florence', The Gentleman Ultra, accessed 2 November 2017, <http://www.thegentlemanultra.com/2/post/2017/06/an-exclusive-interview-with-the-calciantes-gladiators-of-calcio-storico.html>.

<sup>48</sup> As discussed in chapter two, the five day *Ludi Romani in Circo* was always followed by four days of markets see Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic*.

<sup>49</sup> Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 240ff.

Perhaps it can be argued then that architecture plays a greater role in the process of tradition than currently accepted. Rather than just being an 'aesthetic analogue of culture',<sup>50</sup> architecture should be understood as something more primary, not in its ability to create new cultures—like that argued for by the fascists—but in its ability to communicate traditional ideas (a communal ethos) embedded within culture itself. The issue with the contemporary debate in architecture is that such possibilities are rarely discussed due to the problem created through the primacy of form in modern culture, the seeds of which were discussed in the last chapter. It is perhaps worth revisiting this debate briefly in a more contemporary context to illustrate the dilemma.

## **6.2. Historicism and Historicity in Modern Architectural Criticism**

As has already been described developments of iconography were not isolated to the festivals, the city and the architecture also adapted—and continue to adapt—and so the methods used to recover this process must also have a sense of historicity where there is a reciprocity of past and present, i.e. in order to understand the present to its full potential, it has to be seen within the historical context that has been transformed and adapted over centuries. However, most mapping used in tracing histories of urban form show each stage of the city as a single layer, as it is thought to have formed. For example, reconstructions of Roman plans of cities still used show the grid of the Roman city overlaid upon the current streetscape (Illustration facing Map 2.1). Equally, when it comes to possible theories about this type of structured street-plan, attempts are often made to reconstruct the geometry that may have been used in the original plan by linking it to an idealised impression of a possible idea rather than concentrating on the surviving traces embedded in the contemporary landscape (Map 4.6a & b). In the end, such idealised visions, it must be noted, are often at odds with the intentions of the original act.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Karsten Harries uses the distinction between Ornament and Decoration to illustrate such a division. Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (MIT Press, 1998), 48.

<sup>51</sup> See for example Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye*.

Reconstructing historical plans of cities which do offer insights into the original ideas is notoriously difficult. Without supporting documentation which describes particular intent, arguments for ideas in relation to the 'shape' of the city can appear purely speculative. For example, with the exception of a few consular or imperial founders, there are very few accounts of who founded Roman cities and when it comes to medieval planning there are further issues. Although some European planted new towns do reveal the use of geometry the strategies used for planning towns during this period are often not as clear as Roman examples.<sup>52</sup> By the time of the Renaissance, strategies for town planning were more apparent and there is often clear responsibility for the design as well as recognition of a theoretical strategy based upon treatises and written records that establish intent and reason behind the inscribed street patterns. This theory-plan-implementation axis has continued to be seen as the most sophisticated way to plan cities up to, and including, the present day. As a result of this continued association of theory and strategy to realisation—based upon the analysis of treatises, archival research and the study of realised plans—it is only planning that demonstrate such intent that are now considered at all sophisticated. However, although arguments can be made that explain some congruence, the ideas behind them were not the same. For example, grids can be found in Greek Miletus or any Roman frontier town, as well as in some medieval new towns of the thirteenth century. But to argue that all of these occurrences of geometry are a part of the same desire for rational order is clearly misleading.<sup>53</sup>

The problem occurs when this limited understanding of axiomatic 'intent' drifts back into periods where the process of design and conception was less clearly defined, or where the values used are more difficult to identify. For example, in response to this narrowness of interpretation, in the late nineteenth century Camillo Sitte, in his book *The Art of Building Cities* of 1889,<sup>54</sup> attempted to argue for

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<sup>52</sup> See for example David Friedman, *Florentine New Towns: Urban Design in the Late Middle Ages* (Architectural History Foundation, 1988).

<sup>53</sup> Frost, *Time, Space and Order*, 82–100.

<sup>54</sup> 'Perhaps this study will permit us to find the means of satisfying the three principal requirements of practical city building: to rid the modern systems of blocks and regularly aligned houses; to save as much as possible of that which remains from ancient cities; and in our creation to approach more closely the ideal of the ancient models.' Camillo Sitte, *The Art of Building Cities: City Building*

a type of urban planning more like the medieval street scenes or ancient cities, with asymmetries, closed corners and height variations, rather than the modern idiom of grids and thoroughfares, however, it was mostly presented in terms of views.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, in this work Sitte still argued for this less 'geometrical' ordering in formal terms thus also presenting a theoretical position behind architecture and urban planning based upon the idea of form. An engagement with the civic use of the spaces—particularly in relation to festival—would perhaps have helped in this regard.

The mapping used in this thesis has, by revealing the history of the city through the surviving traces of the planning, attempted to create maps and plans of Florence that can be utilised as documents capable of supporting an argument for a festive order of the city. Their interchangeability allows for the viewing of different combinations and reveals something beyond the simple formal arrangement of the architecture and links to ideas of historicity and continuity embodied in the festival that have been lost in the rational limits applied to understanding the world in the Enlightenment. Such limits have also been applied to much contemporary debate on the nature of architecture that appears to be searching for ideas of synthesis rather than any open, transforming, agonistic dialectic. Consequently, approaches such as the one suggested in this thesis are often misinterpreted as a complete argument for an alternative synthesis rather than for what it is; an argument for the interpretation of architecture within its proper historical, temporal and cultural context. This can be illustrated in reference to a statement by Adam Caruso:

Strategies of cybernetics, phylogenies, parametrics, mapping - each strive to generate completely original forms, unusual shapes in plan, in section, sometimes both [...] Lacking the complexities and ambiguities that are held within the tradition of architectural form, these shapes quickly lose their shiny novelty and achieve a condition of not new, but also not old or ordinary enough to become a part of the urban background.<sup>56</sup>

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*According to Its Artistic Fundamentals*, trans. Charles T. Stewart (Mansfield Centre, Conn.: Martino Fine Books, 2013), 2.

<sup>55</sup> A form of planning taken further in the twentieth century by Gordon Cullen who builds a theory of town planning from a picturesque base. Gordon Cullen, *Concise Townscape*, New Ed edition (Oxford ; Boston: Routledge, 1961).

<sup>56</sup> Adam Caruso, *Traditions*.

Caruso's use of the term 'form' in this passage is relatively neutral. He is clearly suggesting that architects less interested in 'striv[ing] for original form' and more focussed on a proper analysis and understanding of 'traditional architectural form' would make better buildings, but he does not indicate that the understanding of architecture 'as form' might be an issue in itself. The problem he is concerned with is ignorance of the development of the 'tradition of architectural form' not the 'development of the idea of form in architectural tradition'.

In a critical evaluation of this statement Caruso's 'tradition of form' can only really relate to a time when the understanding of architecture 'as form' became commonplace in architectural tradition. Accordingly, this thesis suggests, no such understanding was dominant in the Renaissance. So, in fact, the statement can only apply to architecture and architectural historiography post Fischer von Erlach's *A Plan of Civil and Historical Architecture* (1721), one of the first European works on the architecture of Europe that focused more on the form than broader cultural settings.<sup>57</sup> Analysis by Caruso of the 'form' of architecture prior to this period must be, by definition, limited by this viewpoint because it has the effect of reducing any architecture conceived in any cultural context to a purely 'formal' level.<sup>58</sup> His firm, Caruso St John, may make good architecture out of this quasi-historicist approach, but his interpretation of 'history' is as problematic as all of the other methodologies he criticises in the quotation above.

The late medieval world of Florence was not subject to these values but, unfortunately, has not escaped such analysis. In his book *Dominion of the Eye* (2008), Marvin Trachtenberg offers a formal analysis of the developing streets and squares of late medieval Florence in order to suggest that the shaping of the city through perspective and 'visual subjectivity' was the primary aim of Florentine architects as early as the trecento.<sup>59</sup> Even though Trachtenberg manages to

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<sup>57</sup> It could be argued that for Fischer von Erlach the cultural conditions were implicit to the form of the architecture. The problem occurs when this understanding is not a part of the interpretation, as was the case for many architects who drew inspiration from this source.

<sup>58</sup> See for example S. Giedion, *The Eternal Present: The Beginnings of Art*. (Oxford University Press, 1962).

<sup>59</sup> Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye*.

tabulate several conditions that indicate formal equivalence,<sup>60</sup> he does not describe medieval culture with enough clarity to offer a convincing argument as to why they would have wished to shape the city in this manner in the first place. He seems to be implying that any formal urban intervention can be viewed purely on geometrical or perspectival terms, and, in addition, that this underlying geometrical order is always the obvious (and progressive) way to plan a city. As a result of these presumptions he implies that by suggesting such an early date for this type of formal ordering, he is rescuing the reputation of trecento artificers from association with some sort of medieval ‘disorder’ or ‘naivety’ inherent to previous generations. In this act he is guilty of, first of all, anachronism and, secondly, a process, described by Voegelin in relation to many historians of the Greek Polis, as ‘transforming the consciousness of an unfolding mystery into the gnosis of a progress in time’.<sup>61</sup>

As this thesis suggests, in reality, it is more likely that medieval Florence was not a set of random relationships but structured intentionally using different hierarchies outside Trachtenberg’s own, very limited, frame of reference—more linked to civic praxis in the form of festivals and court ceremonial. The extension of this discourse could have shifted into one relating to the particular of ‘style’ of architecture that such relationships developed. But this would have been equally limiting. It would suggest that different styles could relate specifically to different ‘festive’ cultures, but at the same time imply that such styles were fixed at a specific point within a constantly evolving social landscape. In such an analysis, any correlation between appearance and meaning would become at best tenuous, and at worst, an illusion. Like Vitruvius’s allowance for division described in relation to geometry in the last chapter, it would deny an ontological relationship between form and meaning (contra Plato) and suggest that meaning can be attributed to anything after the fact.

The problem is that such stylistic and formal interpretations of architecture separate the object (the building, street, or square) from civic praxis in order to

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<sup>60</sup> Trachtenberg, 37.

<sup>61</sup> Voegelin, *The World of the Polis*, 5.

gain particular knowledge of the object, and then presuppose this knowledge can be recombined, without losing any aspect of the topic in the process, once each element has been investigated empirically. But within this process of 'knowledge' gathering, aspects of meaning, current validity, or continuity are often lost amidst the cataloguing tendencies of an applied methodology. Furthermore, in terms of much architectural history, building back into the past from contemporary iconography has revealed the continuity of some ideas but has not helped clarify the continuities of the historical situation itself—the idea of continuity remains questionable.

Nevertheless, a journey down a street of Florence today amidst a feast day procession of San Giovanni Battista (see accompanying booklets) suggests that a strong argument can be made for at least some measure of historical continuity, but a continuity which goes deeper than any formal stylistic measure to the nature of the history of representation itself. Even today, the architecture, as foreground and background, is critical to both the citizens who participate in the events and the spectators who watch them—many of whom know nothing of the history of the way the events were conceived, constructed, used, adapted and renewed; or anything about the broader issues of European culture that underpin them. The feasts clearly have meaning that is accessible in varying degrees, and, like the form of the events themselves, this meaning has a history.

Today, even though primary issues of justice and national policy are handled elsewhere,<sup>62</sup> the city council centred on the mayor<sup>63</sup> still meets in the Palazzo Vecchio in the *Sala di Dugento*, the room where the first meeting of the *Signori* was held in 1302 (B, Fig. 4.12).<sup>64</sup> Not often open to the public, this room creates a setting for the council linking the rich and varied history of governance with the identity of the contemporary city, even though tourists overrun other parts of the palace. The palazzo continues to be both a representative of the institution as well

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<sup>62</sup> For example the *Palazzo di Giustizia* (Firenze), Rifredi Quartiere, 1999-2012 by Leonardo Ricci and Giovanni Michelucci.

<sup>63</sup> A role created in Florence in 1781.

<sup>64</sup> Rodolico, Camerani Marri, and Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Mostra documentaria e iconografica di Palazzo Vecchio*, 12.



as the history of the city and these functions are brought together on specific feast days when the partitioned building engages very differently; on feast days the internal boundaries which are normally used to separate users, become borders where different groups interact (Fig. 4.19).<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusion

It is a modern conceit to suggest that only full knowledge of the meaning of a festival results in meaningful participation. Gadamer argues that festivals have similar characteristics as theatre and that;

[...] the theatrical presentation calls up something that is at work in all of us even if we are unaware of it [...] [and] makes visible the ethical harmony of life that can no longer be seen in life itself.<sup>66</sup>

The historical sketches presented in this thesis are not intended to be comprehensive but to offer glimpses into the festive order of Florentine civic life from its documented emergence in the medieval period. These origins, built off Roman traditions (later reinterpreted by communal, ducal, princely, Risorgimento and Fascist governments) were articulated to create mechanisms through which rulers could be held accountable to the city. From the introduction of the *Calcio* football match on the feast day celebrations by the Medici in 1530s to its demise and later reinstatement as an annual event in historical costume by the Fascists in 1930, the restoration of medieval iconography and Renaissance perspectivity have always been significant factors in how Florence sees and presents itself. The ability of the city to sustain a symbolic urban topography—even amidst its increasing secularity—is indicated by the continued use of the civic spaces shaped by the Commune as places for markets and political protest even though many of the institutions they are questioning have long since retreated to Rome or to Florence's outer suburbs;<sup>67</sup> and is also revealed by the persistence of feast day reveries mixing civic, political, Christian and Roman iconography. The symbolic topography persists even now the Baptistery of San Giovanni, Santa Maria del

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<sup>65</sup> See Richard Sennett 'The Open City' for a discussion on the difference between borders and boundaries. <https://lsecities.net/media/objects/articles/the-open-city/en-gb/> accessed 15.02.16.

<sup>66</sup> Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, 61–62.

<sup>67</sup> Florence was only briefly the capital of a United Kingdom of Italy from 1865-71 before the national institutions were finally settled in Rome.

Fiore and the Palazzo Vecchio to the city have become less important, allowing tourists and Florentines alike to appeal to the vestiges of history and tradition for civic orientation.

As Gadamer suggests, much of the stratification of this symbolic landscape, emerges from a world in which a designation of signs over the search for symbol has led to misguided prioritisations. Even if, in some of the costumes, banners, and music, it appears that Florence's festivals utilise aspects of historicism as a tool in their presentation, there is still enough historicity, carried on the back of extant traditions, to maintain their value to the city. As a result, it can be said that Florence's festive activity plays a significant role in the city's continued engagement with civic values—past and present—and offers clues as to how, in the face of pressures brought by activities such as mass tourism, cities can secure their longevity in ways that cultivate cultural value over the narrow understanding offered by 'consumerism'. Participation in festive praxis is not limited to those who have knowledge of the history, values or the mimetic function the event seeks to represent. Like the history of the event itself, a festival is open to everyone in different measure because it presents a 'uniformly objective present' where tradition can be seen as both a gift from the past and a setting for the future within a temporality of a 'present time *sui generis*'.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 110.

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