

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

Hot Spots:[™]

Renaissance Florence[™]



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INTRODUCTION

Late in the Middle Ages, Europe began to recover from a series of catastrophes ranging from the collapse of the Roman Empire to the Black Death. This political and economic revival, accompanied by a renewed interest in Classical literature, became the Renaissance. Scholars in different fields use different dates and definitions for the Renaissance, but undeniably the height of the period was what the Italians call the *quattrocento*, the 1400s. Just as undeniably, the center of the Renaissance was Italy, and one of the most important players in that revival was the City of the Flower, Florence, or, to the Italians, Firenze.

This book deals with the city of Florence during the height of the Italian Renaissance and its immediate aftermath, from about 1400 to the 1550s. During this period, Florence produced a political dynasty that ruled for nearly a century without holding formal office, a man whose name is synonymous with practical politics, and many of the most important figures in the history of Western art. All of this happened against a backdrop of warfare, intrigues, international trade, civil unrest, and the invention of modern diplomacy. Finding adventure in Florence isn't a problem, but getting away from it might be.

FLORENCE, EUROPE, AND THE RENAISSANCE

Much that happened in Florence won't make a lot of sense without knowing what's going on with the rest of Italy, the rest of Europe, and the Renaissance as a whole. Although Italy had been touched by feudalism, a system built around scattered rural military strongmen, it never completely took root there. Italy retained urban centers better than the rest of Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire. Many of those cities, almost all of which were independent city-states, established republican or broadly oligarchic forms of government instead of setting up military autocracies like the north (with some exceptions – southern Italy, long dominated by Normans, acquired a more feudal character).

While northwestern Europe was getting into the High Middle Ages, full of Crusades, courtly love, and Gothic cathedrals, Italy was reviving trade across the Mediterranean, creating links with the Byzantine empire and the Muslim world. Expanding trade led to an increasingly educated urban middle class. Merchants, after all, needed mathematical skills to keep track of ever larger and more complex transactions. They also benefited from an

education in rhetoric and law, the better to persuade potential customers and write contracts. It further helped them participate in communal government.

For their better education, and to indulge in a new taste for the arts and philosophy, the Italians pursued once-lost Classical texts. They sought works in the Iberian peninsula, which was undergoing the *Reconquista* (an expansion of Christian kingdoms at the expense of the crumbling Muslim emirates, which had separately preserved the works of Classical authors). They also found writings in Byzantine territories, which was collapsing under the advance of the Turks. The Classical texts provided the rising merchants with ideas created by a society more like their own than the rest of medieval society, more urban than rural and, particularly when it came to Greek philosophy, more republican than authoritarian. It also presented them with a sophisticated set of philosophies

entirely free of Christian concerns. This created a new school of thought, humanism. Renaissance humanism in no way rejected religion, but it *did* accept nonreligious topics as worthy of consideration and did not necessarily leap to theology for all of its arguments.



Glossary

This book uses a few Italian terms, mostly place names, but there are a few technical terms well worth knowing.

condottiero: Literally, a contractor, but in general use, a mercenary, particularly a mercenary officer.

Firenze: Florence.

Milano: Milan.

Napoli: Naples.

palazzo: Literally, palace, but in use, more like a large urban house (as opposed to a villa in the countryside).

piazza: Plaza or public square.

Quattrocento: Literally, 400, meaning the 15th century, or the 1400s; preceded by the Trecento (1300s) and followed by the Cinquecento (1500s).

Roma: Rome.

Sicilia: Sicily.

Toscana: Tuscany.

Venezia: Venice.

And thus it is seen in all human affairs . . . that you cannot avoid one inconvenience without incurring another.

– Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, VI

This, then, was the beginning of the Renaissance: wealthy, educated city dwellers participating in a growing revival of Classical learning, and supporting new philosophy and art dealing more directly with their own world. It saw its earliest flowering in the 14th century (Florence was a leader here as well, with the painter Giotto and writers such as Boccaccio, Dante, and Petrarch). Its finest hour, however, came a bit later, in the mid-15th century. Two events in the early 1450s made this possible. First, in 1453, Constantinople fell to the Turks, finally bringing the Byzantine empire to an end. A last wave of Greek refugees filtered into Italy, the nearest unthreatened Christian land. They brought copies of Classical texts long lost to the West. Second, the Treaty of Lodi led to improved diplomatic relations between Italy's major players. The treaty was initially just a nonaggression pact between two cities signed in 1454. Subsidiary agreements allowed others to join, and join they did. Within the next few years, the major Italian powers and many of the smaller ones had become part of the "Most Holy League," which the treaty had established. Italian wars did not stop completely, but for the next 50 years, they were much smaller and shorter. The need for constant communication between governments to head off or limit fighting led to the world's first permanent, resident ambassadors.

Prior to this period, ambassadors visited foreign governments to perform specific missions (the negotiation of a peace treaty, petitioning for trade privileges, etc.) and then returned home. The establishment of permanent embassies kept governments much better informed about their neighbors' intentions and sped negotiations. For five decades, the relative peace allowed Italy to get on with other matters.

Then there was the rest of Europe. Whatever the achievements of the Italian Renaissance might have been, one thing the Italians would never have even dreamed of doing was creating a large nation-state. Despite some consolidation in their own territories, the Italian cities were mostly concerned with maintaining a balance of power. Meanwhile, nations like France and Spain were building themselves into large, centrally governed kingdoms. Compared to those two nations and the Holy Roman Empire (essentially Germany), even the most powerful Italian city-states were minor players. Their minor status became sorely felt later in the Renaissance as the larger countries worked out their own concerns on Italian soil, using lessons in diplomacy they had learned from the Italians.

The balance of major powers meant that France might be allied with the Papacy against Spain and Germany one year, and Spain and the Papacy against France and Germany the next, all the while fighting wars in their Italian possessions and client states. The Italian powers, used to cutting deals to keep one another in check, were unable to unite against them. The best artists, merchants, and scholars could do little to stop the massive armies descending on them from outside, taking the ideas of the Renaissance with them but leaving considerable destruction where those ideas had first sprung up.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Riggsby is trained in anthropology and archaeology and, like the rest of his generation, has a job in computers. He works for an international medical technology company and lives with his lovely and talented wife, above-average child, and a pack of dogs. He is unique among game writers in that he owns no cats.

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Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

CHAPTER ONE

GEOGRAPHY

To my lord the Bishop of Oxbridge, greetings, on the fourth day of May, in the year of our Lord fourteen hundred and eighty-one.

. . . Tuscany is a pleasant land, less miasmal than Rome, from whence I have just arrived, and both warmer and drier than our own land at this season. The hills here are fairly

covered with vines and olives such as those which grace the Roman urns which are in your cabinet of curiosities. The city itself presents a most pleasing aspect as well. The walls and rooftops have a hue resembling old pottery, save for the remarkable white of the cathedral . . .

ITALY AND TOSCANA

Italy long resisted being a unified country. The Romans managed it, but after the empire collapsed, Italy wasn't even remotely unified again until the late 19th century. Through the Renaissance, Italy was a collection of dozens of small city-states.

One of the contributing factors was its geography. The Apennine Mountains split most of Italy into eastern and western halves. The northern part of the peninsula up to the Po valley is particularly montane, with extensive areas of forest and hilly land more suitable for grazing and vineyards than large-scale agriculture. The most sizable areas for farming are the broad, fertile Po valley in the north and portions of southeastern Italy. For most of its area, though, hills and small rivers divide the peninsula into small territories backed by mountains and looking either east to the Adriatic or west to the Ligurian and Tyrrhenian. The sea and the Swiss Alps provide some protection from causal invaders, though not enough to stop determined outsiders.

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, Italy's chaotic political scene began to settle down into five major centers of power. From north to south, these centers were the following.

Venezia, an island at the northwestern corner of the Adriatic Sea that controlled the eastern half of the Po valley.

Genoa or Milano: Until the end of the 14th century, Genoa, near the northernmost point of Italy's western coast, was a long-time rival with Venezia for control of the north; after the beginning of the 15th century, Milano overtook and absorbed Genoa.

Firenze, in Toscana in central Italy.

Roma and its client territories, the *Papal States*, which stretched across the peninsula from east to west.

Napoli, which dominated the southern third of Italy. It identified itself as the kingdom of Sicilia, after the island it laid claim to, but since Sicilia was actually controlled by the Spanish, historians refer to it by its capital.

The territories governed by these powers were fluid. For example, in addition to Milano's conquest of Genoa, the line between Venetian and Milanese spheres of influence in northern

Italy shifted back and forth several times. Firenze intermittently exercised authority over Pisa and took over Sienna in 1555. Napoli briefly regained control of Sicilia in the 1440s and 1450s. Several second-rank powers such as Friuli and Bologna were incorporated into the Papal States in the early 1500s.

Firenze is located in Toscana, a roughly triangular, environmentally diverse region in northwestern Italy. The region sits between the Po valley and the northern arm of the Apennines to its north, and Lazio (the region dominated by

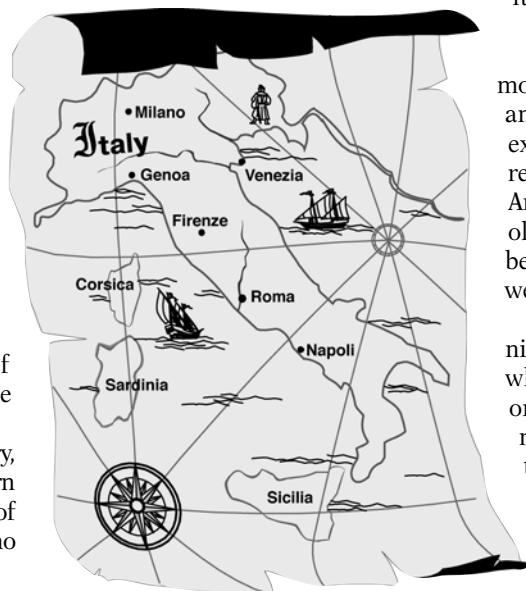
Roma) to its south. Firenze itself is on land best suited for small-scale farming, but the nearby mountains provide grazing and lumber, while an extensive wine-growing region is just down the Arno, with good land for olives and grain just beyond to the south and west.

Despite having few significant metal deposits – whatever metal ores it once possessed were mined out by the time of the Renaissance – Italy had considerable mineral wealth available at the time.

Good limestone for building could be

found in many places throughout the country, and Toscana had a number of important marble quarries,

including those at Carrara. (The Carrara quarries provided material for some of the finest architecture and sculpture of the age.) Ironically, though, the mineral deposit with the greatest influence on Firenze's fortunes was nowhere near Firenze. Rather, the great alum mines that enabled Firenze's massive textile industry were near the town of Tolfa, a few miles northwest of Roma.



THE CITY AND ITS ENVIRONS

Firenze lies in northeastern Toscana, about halfway between Roma and the “fan” at the top of the “boot” of Italy, in a west-turning bend of the Apennine mountains. It sits astride the river Arno, about fifty miles upstream from the nearest port, Pisa. It is a similar distance south of Bologna and north of Sienna, Italy’s previous banking powerhouse but by the Renaissance something of a backwater. The Apennines lie close to the north and east, and the land rolls into gentle hills to the south and west.



Firenze sits at the southeast end of an oval plain five to six miles across for most of its length and extending 30 miles to the northwest. The surrounding hills, steeper to the north than to the south, are picturesque, but much too far away to be a staging platform for artillery for use against the city. The river makes a broad curve to the west a few miles past the city, flowing through the hills to the southwest toward Pisa and the sea. During the Renaissance, the Arno was bridged in four places as it flowed through Firenze. The riverbanks were equipped with many boat ramps. The river also provided some opportunity for fishing and powered waterwheels. In times of war, a ditch immediately before the walls was flooded with river water to serve as a moat.

The area protected by the city walls was about a mile and a quarter across at its widest extent. Then (as now), most of the city lay on the north side of the river; about a quarter, a neighborhood called the Ortrarno, was on the south. The city walls were about 30 feet high, with 60 square towers and rectangular gatehouses about twice that height set at even intervals. In addition to surrounding the city, the walls also followed the course of the river for a few hundred yards as it passed through the city, so enemies couldn’t bypass the city’s defenses just by sailing up or down the Arno. By the late Renaissance, tall towers and medieval walls were ineffective for defense against growing numbers of cannon, so many were pulled down and their material recycled for housing. To replace them, the early Medici dukes built star-shaped fortifications such as the Fortezza da Basso.

The area inside the walls was lightly populated during most of the Renaissance, so the walls encompassed a significant amount of open ground. This green space was mostly around the edges of the city near the walls. The open land was used for gardens and small-scale agriculture, though some sections likely served as public parks as well.

The inner city was packed with buildings, and it became more so as the population grew. Structures lined the entire length of the roads leading through the city gates. As in many medieval and Renaissance cities, some of the bridges were as heavily built up as the streets, lined with houses, shops, and even churches and a small monastery.

The cobble-paved streets were narrow by modern standards. Most were wide enough for two horses or a wagon to

pass comfortably, perhaps 10 to 12 feet, but usually little more. Major thoroughfares were wider, and a commentator of the 1500s noted that Firenze’s streets were relatively generous. Traffic flow was made difficult, however, by the practice of treating the street in front of one’s house like a porch. People worked, socialized, and watched life go by from their front doors. Narrow sidewalks, uncommon in many cities, were in use along a number of streets in Florence, and many had gutters that carried away rainwater.

An area of suburbs surrounding the city walls quickly gave way to fields and scattered villages. Firenze’s suburbs extended farthest along the courses of the roads leading into the city; the roadsides immediately outside the walls were nearly as built-up as areas within the city proper. In addition to fields, woods, monasteries, and tiny villages, the countryside was dotted with the villas of Firenze’s aristocrats. The typical villa was a combination farm and country retreat, where wealthy urban merchants could go to relax and play at being rural noblemen.

At the beginning of the period, just after the end of the Black Death, Firenze’s population was 40,000 to 50,000. However, within a few generations, the city’s population rose to as high as 100,000, leaving only a few patches of open land, essentially public parks and gardens, within the walls.

For more specifics about homes, shops, and important buildings, see pp. 28-29.

Adventure Seed: Losing Your Marbles

A great but temperamental sculptor has received a huge commission to carve a monumental marble statue for a wealthy Florentine patron, and the PCs must bring him a particularly fine block of marble from Carrara. The trip is about 100 miles down the coast to Livorno, then up the Arno to Firenze. Unfortunately, Pisa and Firenze are at war again, and the PCs have to drag a barge with a 30-ton block of gleaming white marble across battle lines and through territory with more than its usual share of bandits taking advantage of the temporary chaos.

CLIMATE

Because it sits in a walled-off river valley, Firenze can be humid. In the hot summers (average high temperatures approach 90° F), the climate can be oppressive; this gave the upper classes another reason to run off to villas in the hills. Winters can be very wet, but temperatures rarely dip below freezing, so snow and ice are rare. Like the rest of the Mediterranean, earthquakes are an occasional threat, though not so much of a hazard as in southern Italy and Sicilia. Unlike two of Firenze’s rivals, Venezia and Roma, Firenze was far enough from swampy ground that malaria was never a serious problem, and healthy air was one of the city’s selling points.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY

... Friar Benedicto tells me that antiquities are not found here in great numbers, and there is little to interest you, my lord, from before the time of Christ, but the people of Firenze make many memorials to their own age. Only this past day, as

Benedicto directed me around the city to view the public palace, he showed me paintings on its wall depicting the torture of priests who had rebelled against Ser Lorenz, even an archbishop!

EARLY HISTORY

The first definite signs of occupation of the site of Firenze come from the Roman period. The rectangular outline of the original Roman settlement is still visible at the center of the city's modern street plan. When the empire collapsed, central authority over the Italian peninsula went with it, but the idea of the city as the basic unit of society remained.

Firenze was inhabited continuously through the Middle Ages. In the ninth century, Firenze, along with the rest of northern Italy, fell under the theoretical authority of Charlemagne and what was to become the Holy Roman Empire. Although officially under the rule of a count of Toscana, the Florentines displayed an independent streak. Many civic conflicts in the later Middle Ages involved strife between the Ghibellines, a political faction that was aristocratic, pro-German, anti-French, and more or less anti-papal (in that they opposed closer ties with the Papal States), and

the Guelfs, who were largely the opposite. Firenze had a communal government running the city's internal operations by the 12th century. In the early 13th century, the triumphant Guelfs dealt with the emperor's habit of appointing Germans to rule Toscana with a series of revolts driving them out. By the 1260s, Firenze had become a completely independent city. The Guelfs themselves fractured repeatedly, and the very terms Guelf and Ghibelline soon ceased to have meaning. By the time the names were forgotten, the Guelf cause had won out.

Despite the occasional revolt or political domination by this or that prominent family, Firenze prospered in the 13th and 14th centuries. It became a significant banking center, a major textile producer, a center of the arts, and a wealthy trading hub. It is in this environment that a family arose whose course is worth following into the 16th century: the Medici.

GOLDEN AGE OF THE MEDICI

The story of Renaissance Firenze is inextricably intertwined with the story of the Medici, the family that ruled the city with a few brief interruptions from the mid-15th century until 1737, when Firenze passed to the Habsburgs. The Medici were a prominent family, but just one of many at the beginning of the 15th century. The first important character in this history is Cosimo de Medici, born in 1389. When he was eight, his father Giovanni de Bicci de Medici established the Medici bank in Firenze, having moved to the city of his birth from managing a branch of a relative's bank in Roma. Giovanni's early investments paid off exceptionally well, in part because of Cosimo's efforts as a negotiator and traveling agent for the bank. When Giovanni died in 1429, leaving the bank to Cosimo and his brother Lorenzo, the Medici bank was the wealthiest in Firenze, if not Italy as a whole, with branches as far away as the shores of the North Sea. Cosimo had excellent relationships with foreign rulers, and acts of charity and an easygoing manner made him popular among the lower classes in Firenze itself.

Cosimo's rising power threatened Firenze's political strongman at that time, Rinaldo degli Albizzi. The Albizzi had been

Firenze's leading political family for a few decades, but Rinaldo was in trouble for a series of military defeats against the Milanese, and Cosimo threatened to replace him. Rinaldo manufactured charges of treason against Cosimo, but between demonstrations by commoners with whom Cosimo had cultivated good relations, appeals by foreign dignitaries with whom Cosimo did successful business, and bribes from Cosimo to the right officials, the worst sentence Rinaldo could arrange against Cosimo was exile.

Cosimo had prepared for this eventuality. He had already moved most of his money out of the city, and he went to lie low in Venezia. After an election that the Albizzi failed to fix, friends of Cosimo's came to power in the fall of 1434. Cosimo was recalled, and many of his enemies, already in disarray, were exiled. As wealthy as ever and, for the moment, free of enemies, Cosimo took control of the city.

Nevertheless, the power of the Medici was unofficial. Instead of keeping high offices for themselves or declaring themselves rulers, the Medici worked within Firenze's republican structure, or at least made a pretense of doing so.

Despite Cosimo's popularity and influence, the Florentines would not have voluntarily given up a government in which their interests were at least theoretically represented. Instead, Cosimo preferred to operate behind the scenes. He actively avoided political office, but he used his wealth and popularity to intimidate his enemies and to have his allies appointed to high offices.

Under Cosimo's rule, Firenze strengthened its ties with France in their diplomatic struggle against Spain and entered into the Peace of Lodi in 1454. Cosimo also ensured that Firenze had close ties with Milano, which was ruled by his close friend Francesco Sforza.

Despite periodic challenges, Cosimo ruled the city until his death in 1464, followed briefly by his son Piero, "the Gouty." Piero proved nearly as able as his father, holding off an attempt by the Pitti family, one of Cosimo's old allies, to take power themselves when the Medici's old ally Francesco Sforza died. However, his effectiveness was doubtless curtailed by his poor health. Piero was regularly afflicted with gout and other joint problems and was often confined to bed. He had sufficient force of will to respond well to crises even when bedridden, but he passed away only a few years after his father.

When Piero died in 1469, Cosimo's grandson Lorenzo, called *il Magnifico* (the Magnificent), followed him. At the time, he was a mere 20 years old. Lorenzo may not have had quite as much of Cosimo's head for business, but he was every bit as good a diplomat and politician. Lorenzo also followed Cosimo's example of ruling from the shadows, but he indulged in expensive tastes and used his influence more openly.

Medici rule did not go unchallenged. It was increasingly clear that the Medici were the city's true rulers, with the question being whether one was on their side. In 1478, the Pazzi

family was under attack by a government loyal to the Medici. The Pazzi bank had loaned the pope money to purchase the strategically placed town of Imola, which Lorenzo wanted to bring under Florentine rule. (Lorenzo had previously turned down the pope's request.) The Pazzi assembled a conspiracy to assassinate Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano and establish themselves as new leaders with the support of mercenaries waiting just outside Toscana before Medici allies could rally their own support. For this, they enlisted a mercenary company, several priests, and the archbishop of Pisa, and obtained the tacit, if underinformed, consent of the pope. They sprang their trap during Easter Mass, but it went wrong in detail. They killed Giuliano but only lightly wounded Lorenzo, who sensed the attack at the last moment, and conspirators who were to take the city's official leaders hostage ended up imprisoned in the Palazzo de Signoria.

The Medici response was swift and decisive. With public sympathy behind him, Lorenzo obtained emergency powers. The Pazzi and their co-conspirators were wiped out, either executed or exiled. This brought Firenze in conflict with the pope, who used the execution of the archbishop of Pisa and the priests who had attacked Lorenzo as a pretext to put Firenze under interdict until Lorenzo paid a massive fine. The interdict led in turn to a standoff between the Papal States and Napoli on one side and an alliance of Firenze, Venezia, and Milano on the other. The standoff threatened to break the Peace of Lodi. Unrest in Genoa (supported from Napoli) distracted Milano, which exposed Firenze to direct attack, but a personal visit by Lorenzo to the Neapolitan court neutralized Napoli as an enemy. When a Turkish attack threatened the next year (which never materialized), the pope was forced to settle for a token apology from Florentine envoys.

The end result of the Pazzi conspiracy, then, was that Firenze found itself in a slightly worse diplomatic position, estranged from its usual allies Venezia and Milano, while Lorenzo was in a far superior position, with his enemies decisively defeated and himself with new powers.

During this period, the influence of Firenze and the Medici was at its height. Artistically, wealthy Florentines employed, at one time or another, most of the important artists of the era, and consequently several of the most important figures in Western art. Politically, Firenze's wealth made the city's influence felt internationally. Lorenzo, whose trade partners included Muslim sovereigns, provided material support for rulers as distant as the sultan of Egypt. In 1489, Lorenzo managed to have his son Giovanni, who was 14 at the time, made a cardinal.

Adventure Seed: Takin' It to the Streets

Political turmoil has boiled over into open rioting, and the PCs are in the middle of it. Initially, it will be impossible to tell which side is winning, and it might be difficult to determine just what the sides are. If the PCs take too long to make up their minds what to do about it, it may be too late. Will they attempt to join political allies? Establish contact with political foes and offer to join them for a price? Start their own side and force themselves into any power vacuum that might appear? Or just take advantage of the situation to loot a palazzo?

UNREST, REVOLT, AND OCCUPATION

By the last decade of the 15th century, the Medici were having problems overseeing their city. A general economic downturn was causing difficulties for Italy in general and the Medici bank in particular, which were not aided by Lorenzo's preference for politics over business. In 1492, Lorenzo died, leaving Firenze's affairs in the decidedly less capable hands of his son Piero. Piero was wealthy, good-looking, and from the best of

families, but like many later-generation descendants of dynasties, he had little or no political skill. He cultivated a few close friends, but he had no interest in keeping up on the minute details of current affairs and balancing the interests of potential enemies to keep them from becoming real enemies. Combined with the late-15th-century depression, Piero's lack of ability caused the Medici's half-century hegemony to begin to crack.

Worse yet, this came at a time when Firenze was under threat. Milano, which was embroiled in a dispute with Napoli, appealed to France for aid. King Charles VIII of France decided to exert an ancient claim to southern Italy and set out with an army of 40,000 men, huge by Italian standards, with a large quantity of artillery. Piero, a relative by marriage of the king of Napoli, Alfonso II, initially aligned himself with his cousin, but he wavered as the army approached. He handed over territory to the French in an attempt to buy them off, an act that alienated him from a city now completely in opposition to him. A week before Charles's arrival at Firenze in November of 1494, Piero fled Firenze for Bologna rather than face a fight for control of the city which he was likely to lose. He was never to return. Piero continued to seek allies who would help him return to power, but he always ended up on the wrong side, and in 1503, he drowned in a river while fleeing a losing battle.

The French arrived several days after Piero's departure and used the city as a temporary base, but they soon moved on. Their departure allowed Firenze to restore its republican institutions and recall families who had long been exiled. However, they didn't have the resources to put down a revolt in Pisa, losing them the city for years thereafter. Charles had several reasons for leaving Firenze behind, but popular opinion held that the credit belonged to a Dominican friar named Girolamo Savonarola.

Savonarola was an extremely charismatic preacher who had reportedly foreseen a number of events, from the death of Lorenzo to the arrival of the French, which made his visions of an apocalyptic future more plausible and a claim to moral



Adventure Seed: City on the Edge of a Nervous Breakdown

When Charles VIII rode into Firenze in the guise of a conqueror despite a complete lack of resistance, both the supporters of the Medici and their detractors jumped to work trying to influence him. For several weeks, the city teetered between becoming a republic under a post-Medici administration, an autocracy again under Piero (whom the French might recall), or a subject territory under the French. Piero had given in to enough of Charles's demands to make the king reasonably well-disposed toward the deposed Medici, while in the week between Piero's departure and Charles's arrival, the Florentines had restored their republic with enormous relief and not a little pride. The question of the day was how far the French king's inclination toward Piero extended. The newly liberated Florentines decorated the city with fleur-de-lis, cheered the king when he rode through the streets, and tried desperately hard to convince him that republican Firenze was an ally. The supporters of the Medici lobbied the king's advisors and tried to gain access to the king himself to convince him to recall the exiled former ruler.

In this situation, PCs could fall on any side: pro-Medicis trying to convince Charles to bring Piero back, anti-Medicis trying to keep him away, or French advisors to the king trying to make up their minds (and, of course, their ruler's mind). Adventurers could also be hired to settle the matter decisively by assassinating Piero in exile, assassinating the leading anti-Medicis to provoke the French into action, assassinating the king because they'd rather die than run the risk of living under a French yoke, or protecting any of the above from assassins.

authority. His central message was that people had fallen away from true piety into materialism. It was not just laymen who had parted ways with the spiritual mission set out for them, but clergy who were treating the Church as a job or a way of gathering power rather than as a religious calling (which, in fact, was true of a great many clergy).

He led a tremendous religious revival and became the effective ruler of the city, turning Firenze, in the words of one contemporary, into a vast monastery. The Jews were expelled, and an army of children went everywhere in the city looking for signs of sin and heresy.

Eventually, Savonarola became extreme in his criticisms of the pope, going so far as to deny the authority of the current Church leadership. The government was increasingly aware of a gathering Papal threat to the city, and a backlash was growing among the people. In 1498, a riot broke out between Dominican friars and an angry mob, resulting in several deaths. Savonarola was arrested for his part in provoking it, tried and convicted of heresy, and burned at the stake.

The years that followed were not good for Firenze. The Peace of Lodi and the balance of power it had engendered were broken. Firenze itself lacked inspired leadership. Piero Soderini, who had been elected gonfaloniere-for-life, was regarded as an honest man, but dull, and he frequently relied on the advice of one of his junior officials, Niccolò Machiavelli. Following his advice, Firenze managed to recover Pisa, but the city was no match for larger challenges.

Firenze tried to stay neutral in a number of conflicts, but it ran afoul of several papal campaigns to chastise cities that had previously resisted papal authority. In 1512, a Spanish army under papal authority approached Firenze. Accompanying it was a man with a familiar last name.

FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE MEDICI

The Spanish army brought with it Giuliano de Medici, the late Piero's younger brother. Rather than fight the overwhelming force that had already brutally pillaged several cities in its path, Firenze surrendered peacefully, Piero Soderini accepted exile, and a pro-Medici gonfaloniere was installed with resident Medici overseeing the city without taking titles.

The post-1512 generations of Medicis were more involved in international politics than in banking. While Giuliano and later relatives stayed to rule Firenze, many left in pursuit of power. In 1513, Giovanni de Medici (Lorenzo's son, the former adolescent cardinal), became Pope Leo X, followed by his brother Giulio, who became Pope Clement VII in 1523. Consequently, Firenze was increasingly a pawn of, or at least the object of special attention from, greater powers, particularly the Medici popes.

Giuliano, like many of his ancestors, was a ruler without a title, which suited the Florentines reasonably well. However, when he died in 1516, the exiled Piero de Medici's son

Lorenzo replaced him. This Lorenzo was more like his father than his namesake was: good-looking, ambitious, and an utterly inept ruler. Lorenzo passed away in 1519 from a combination of tuberculosis, syphilis, and an old gunshot wound. Giulio de Medici, a sour-tempered archbishop, replaced him. After Giulio's elevation to the papal came the young, ill-equipped, and ill-advised Ippolito and Alessandro, called *Il Moro* because of his dark features (Alessandro was illegitimate, and his mother may have been a Moorish servant in his father's household).

In 1527, a German-Spanish alliance pushed Clement VII out of Roma, leading to an anti-papal revolt in Firenze that likewise drove out Ippolito and Alessandro. For a few years, Firenze reverted to its republican government. However, once the pope and the alliance against him were reconciled, the pope sent the Spanish to force the Florentines to accept the Medici for a final time. Alessandro returned in 1531 and was soon thereafter named Duke of Firenze by the Holy Roman emperor, formally ending the Florentine republic.

The story ends as it began, with a Cosimo de Medici. This Cosimo, though, was the son of the mercenary captain Giovanni dalle Bande Nere, a member of a collateral branch of the Medici. Cosimo became Duke of Firenze in 1537 after the murder of Alessandro. Moving quickly, he crushed an attempt by an army of republican exiles to unseat him, sealing the fate of Firenze as a republic. Moreover, instead of pursuing Firenze's usual independent policy, he allied himself with the Holy Roman Empire. In 1569, he was created Grand Duke of Toscana, putting him on a near-equal social footing with other monarchs.

Despite the success of the Medici family, Firenze was past its prime. Firenze's peculiar tradition of popular rule was dead, and the city's unique identity was blurring as it became the capital of Toscana, a process that Cosimo I encouraged by removing restrictions on subject cities, originally imposed to maintain Firenze's primacy over the rest of the region. Instead of a leader in its own territory, it was a junior partner to a Spanish-German alliance against France. Though it remained a center of art and high culture, it was no longer the center of the wave of creativity and new scholarship sweeping Europe. For Firenze, the Renaissance was over.

Timeline

- 1397 – Medici bank founded.
- 1406 – Pisa conquered.
- 1422 – War with Milano starts.
- 1427 – Castato (income/property tax) instituted. Conference between Orthodox bishops and Catholic clergy.
- 1428 – War with Milano ends.
- 1429 – War with Luca starts. Cosimo takes charge of Medici bank.
- 1430 – War with Luca ends unsuccessfully. War with Milano starts.
- 1433 – War with Milano ends.
- 1434 – Cosimo briefly exiled but returns when Albizzi are driven out.
- 1436 – Brunelleschi completes dome on the Duomo.
- 1455 – Firenze joins Peace of Lodi.
- 1464 – Cosimo dies.
- 1469 – Piero dies.
- 1471 – Florentine mercenaries sack Volterra after city surrenders.
- 1478 – Pazzi fail to assassinate Lorenzo.
- 1482 – Leonardo da Vinci leaves Firenze for Milano.
- 1484 – War of Ferrara, between Venezia and the Papacy, settled in part by Florentine diplomacy.
- 1492 – Lorenzo dies.
- 1494 – Medici expelled. Medici bank collapses. Pisa regains independence.
- 1495 – Decimo (tax on real estate) replaces castato.
- 1498 – Savonarola executed.
- 1504 – Michelangelo finishes his David.
- 1509 – Pisa retaken by Florentine militia.
- 1512 – Medici return to Firenze.
- 1513 – Giovanni de Medici becomes Pope Leo X.
- 1516 – Giuliano de Medici dies.
- 1523 – Giulio de Medici becomes Pope Clement VII.
- 1527 – Popular revolt drives out Medici.
- 1531 – Alessandro de Medici returns, becomes Duke of Firenze.
- 1537 – Cosimo I becomes duke.
- 1555 – Sienna conquered.
- 1569 – Cosimo I named Grand Duke of Toscana.

CHAPTER THREE

THE APPARATUS OF POWER

... *The Florentines have great pride in their government, which is a republic, though more a republic in the mode of old Rome than that of Athens. The leading men of the city take it in turns to be great lords, carrying banners and proceeding with great pomp to a keep at the center of the town. Yet in a few weeks, they march out again to be replaced by several of their fellows. At least, this is what they say, but I have seen that no matter what man holds the banner; it is Ser Lorenzo who tells him when to wave it . . .*

... *In revealing to me the sights of the city, our good friar showed me a monument to a countryman of ours known as well*

to them as to you, Sir John Hawkwood, who held many lands and led their armies in the time of your grandfather. I did think to hear, though, a note of disapproval. They are excellent ones to work accounts and wear finery, but these burghers presume to look down on honest fighting men . . .

When important things happened, they usually happened because of powerful economic and political interests operating through the mechanism of government when they could, or through mercenary armies when they had to.

LAW AND POLITICS

Firenze's government was a complex entity. Its components were developed to preserve popular rule, but even before it was replaced by autocratic rule, it proved susceptible to control by powerful factions.

THE GOVERNMENT IN THEORY

Firenze's government wasn't a democracy as modern citizens recognize it. The people as a whole didn't participate in government decisions. It was, though, a republic. The government was composed of members of the people, who moved through positions of authority so that faction balanced faction and all views would eventually be given proper public consideration.

The Signoria

The core of Firenze's government was the *Signoria*, sometimes called the Council of Eight (with few exceptions, Firenze's governing bodies were named for the number of members they contained). The Eight, individually called priors or lords prior, were the chief legislators as well as comprising the high court and executive body. To be considered, a man had to be a member of an important guild whose fathers or grandfathers had held office, who was not closely related to current or recent office holders, and who did not owe the city any debts. The names were written on slips of paper and pulled from an urn or purse by a government clerk. Six were representatives of the city's major guilds, while the remainder were

representatives of the city's middle-ranked guilds. They were led by another randomly selected official, the *gonfaloniere della giustizia* (standard-bearer of justice), who served as a chief administrator. Election as a prior was a great honor, though anyone selected could decline the office on payment of a fine (Cosimo de Medici did this repeatedly).

Two other councils of magistrates, the Twelve and the Sixteen, advised the Eight. The Twelve were individually called *buonomini* (good men), while the Sixteen were individually known as *gonfalonieri* (standard-bearers; however, references to *the gonfaloniere* invariably mean the *gonfaloniere della giustizia*). The members of the Twelve and Sixteen were selected from lists of candidates similar to those eligible to serve as priors, but limited geographically. Firenze was divided into four quarters, each of which was subdivided into four neighborhoods called *gonfalons*, or standards. Each gonfalon had its own name and symbol, such as the Dragon, the Ladder, and the Lion. The gonfalons were so called because each neighborhood had a different standard around which people would gather in times of emergency. Each quarter provided three *buonomini*, and each neighborhood a *gonfaloniere*. Though they had little direct power, the Twelve and Sixteen had considerable influence on the Eight, and they were a primary source for people to serve on ad-hoc committees.

All of these officials were chosen for two-month terms. Government officials were not paid, but they were maintained in lavish style in the Palazzo della Signoria, and they both took and left office with an elaborate procession. Although a change in government every two months may sound inefficient, it seems to have worked well for most of the city's history.

While the highest levels of government may have consisted of constantly cycling sets of 37 men, the number of people actually eligible for government was relatively small, so there was a great deal of overlap in the composition of councils. A small pool also meant that many potential office holders already had experience at some level of government.

Because the various councils changed on a staggered schedule, the new priors would find the *buonomini* and *gonfalonieri* already well-established, new *buonomini* would come in when priors and *gonfalonieri* were firmly in place, and so on. Furthermore, other, longer term councils and officials were in place to assist the government.

Finally, most people able to participate in government were already well-acquainted with current office holders and kept abreast of current events for their own reasons.

Other Officials

Foremost among the longer-term officials were a notary (who kept official records of meetings and made official announcements) and a chancellor (who kept track of correspondence). These officials had no legislative power, but they were at the head of a small bureaucracy that kept the wheels of government turning.

Several special purpose councils existed as well. For example, maintaining lists of people eligible to hold office was an ongoing task, which depended on current tax status, relationships to current office holders, and so on. The Council of Twenty, a body of clerks who served for a year at a time, typically performed that job, though it was temporarily replaced with an appointed Council of Seventy late in the 15th century. After the Medici were driven out, a Grand Council was constituted to select all city officers and act as a legislature. This council consisted of the bulk of the male population aged 30 or more, making Firenze about as democratic one could hope for at the time.

A Council of Six oversaw the regulation of commerce, while in times of war or particularly intense diplomatic strain, the government appointed a Council of Ten to exert emergency powers in the realm of diplomacy and military decisions (imagine a modern government organizing a defense department on an ad-hoc basis). The Signoria appointed the Ten for terms of six months to a year, which might be renewed if crises persisted.

Additional positions were reserved for non-Florentines, an innovation meant to ensure that some government officials could be neutral to the city's internal rivalries. These include the Podesta (a sort of police chief and criminal magistrate) and the Executor (whose job was to thwart schemes of the aristocracy that might hurt the people).

Firenze's larger councils had elaborate rules for determining membership and what constituted a quorum. For example, the Grand Council was clearly too large to meet on a regular basis, so only a third of the members were called on at a time, serving six-month terms. When in session, two-thirds of currently serving members counted as a quorum, and they passed legislation by a simple majority vote.

Supporting the Government

A variety of means supported the government. For example, a toll was levied on the value of bulk goods such as salt and meat entering the city. Starting in 1427, the government insti-

tuted the *castato*, a sort of combined income, inventory, and property tax. Heads of household had to submit written accounts of their holdings, and a tax was levied on their value, subject to certain exemptions. The tax took into account what one could pay, but by taxing moveable goods, it discouraged trade. It was also extremely difficult to prepare and evaluate. In 1495, it was replaced with the *decimo*, a pure real-estate tax.

THE GOVERNMENT IN PRACTICE

This, at least, was the *idea* of the Florentine republic: overlapping sets of magistrates chosen from a broad range of the population to protect the people from powerful minorities seizing control of the government. In actual practice, the machinery of the state was easily subverted and used as a weapon by those in power. Sufficiently powerful family alliances could, once brought into power, stay there and keep others out until their alliance inevitably began to crack.

Adventure Seed: Election Fraud

A new group of priors is about to be selected, and the PCs are going to try to fix the results. They have a leather bag, a list of eligible candidates, and two days. They must obtain handwriting samples from all the members of the Twenty, make convincing forgeries of candidates' names (but *only* their own candidates' names), slip into the Palazzo della Signoria the night before names are drawn, and replace the names there with their own pouch.

Factions

From the Middle Ages until 1530, Firenze was, at least in form, a republic. At this time, as in much of world history, that only meant rule by a group of people rather than by just one. Distribution of power among a number of councils and offices ensured that no *one person* could completely control the city. A sufficiently clever and powerful *faction*, though, could.

A mix of ancestral privilege, membership in professional organizations, and chance determined participation in Firenze's peculiar and confusing government. The requirements for office excluded women, clergy, noblemen, peasants, the urban poor, and much of the middle class. Ultimately, about 4% of the population were theoretically eligible for office. Nevertheless, the common people had some form of power. Particularly unpopular legislation or attacks on beloved individuals led to public protests and riots. Since little effective crowd control existed, the Signoria could be intimidated by a popular uprising.

During most of the Renaissance, the primary divisions in Florentine politics were between Medicans and anti-Medicans. The original Medicans were rising "new men," becoming rich from the developing economy, while their opponents were generally the older, established aristocracy. In time, however, the class distinctions between them blurred. Those factions could be split by other issues: preferred alliances with foreign powers (other Italian cities, France, the Papacy, etc.), competition for desired offices, rising vs. established families, and so on.

After the Piero was driven out, the factional picture became very complex: conservative anti-Medicis, who were former Medici allies wanting to maintain their powerful positions; progressive anti-Medicis desired a more democratic government; puritan Savonarolans; and very quiet pro-Medicis. These factions were soon joined by the *arrabiati* (angry men), anti-Savonarolans from across other factions. The name later applied to the anti-Medici faction after the Medici were restored.

The political culture of Firenze, like the political culture of many historical republics, rarely encouraged cooperation. Therefore, when the various methods of appointment, election, and random selection worked as intended, the city's councils were composed of well-balanced groups of people who hated one another passionately. Often at odds with each other, they ultimately accomplished very little, but that did it as loudly as possible.

Abuse of Power

The natural consequence of factionalism was abuse of power. Those in positions of authority did what they could to keep themselves there, and they could use their influence to benefit their regular occupations. While in control, the various factions did what they could to direct the machinery of the state against their opponents.

The first weapon used against political enemies was election fraud. In Firenze, election fraud consisted primarily of influencing the clerks who maintained the lists of names of those eligible for office. This could be done by bribery, blackmail, or appealing to the clerks' own factional loyalties. The Council of Seventy, created by Lorenzo de Medici with the purported job of keeping track of electoral rolls, was packed with Medici loyalists. Despite creating the appearance of a broad-based popular oversight council, it served to keep Medici enemies out of power.

Tax assessments were another extremely potent political weapon. Assessing all possible taxes an opponent might be liable for (while paying few or none themselves) placed a huge and often destructive financial burden on them. In addition to that, anyone owing tax payments was not eligible for office, forcibly keeping them out of power. Repeated tax assessments were a major factor that spurred the Pazzi to their ill-fated conspiracy.

In extreme cases, powerful factions wielded the courts as a weapon. The Signoria and other assemblies acted as courts for all crimes, political and otherwise. If charges could be trumped up, political minorities could be subjected to extraordinary punishment. Exile was a frequent penalty. However, since alliances could shift and random selection of officials could cause sudden changes in the composition of the government (at least, where sitting officials didn't interfere with the lists), exiles could be recalled quickly.

Just as the government could be used to attack one's enemies, it could be influenced to aid one's friends through the same devices. Just as people in power could direct tax assessments toward their enemies, they could fail to have them taken on themselves and their allies. They also could acquire the lion's share of business with the government. For example, during wartime, the administration was allowed to compel citizens to provide loans to support the army. Authorities could arrange to be selected for those loans, offer themselves attractive rates of interest, and put themselves first in line for repayment.

Public opposition to the government was often risky, but some political agitation was anonymous. It was a long-standing custom in uncertain times to write short screeds and throw them into the streets, where others would pick them up and read them. The writer could champion dangerous causes (for example, overthrowing the Medici) but escape detection and punishment. This may not have been a directly useful technique, but it could indicate popular opinion and start to prompt bolder people, assured of some support, to action.

ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY

Like most urban economies, Firenze's system was heavily monetized. Although some, notably servants, were paid in part with room and board, most people were paid monetary wages, and barter was all but unknown.

The government issued a variety of coins. The smallest was the *denario* (penny) made of billon (a copper-silver alloy) or just copper. At the beginning of the 15th century, a denario was worth about a quarter of a **GURPS** \$. Twenty denari made a *soldi* (a silver coin), and 12 soldi made a *lira* (likewise silver). Other silver and billon coins with intermediate denominations were minted, such as *grossi* with values from 30 to 128 denari. There were also two gold coins: the florin and the large florin (worth 20% more than the florin). The value of silver coins fell slowly but steadily relative to gold through the Renaissance. In 1400, the florin was worth about 960 denari. By the end of the century, it was worth 1,680. Meanwhile, the large florin became more popular, completely replacing the regular florin in 1471. Gold coins were used for large transactions: wholesale purchases, international trade, financing wars and large buildings, and so on. Anything below that level was "small money" and settled in silver.

Firenze had two major industries: banking and textile manufacture. It was also an important center for long-distance trade in other goods, and it hosted a number of other professions.

BANKING

During the Renaissance, Firenze, Genoa, and Venezia constituted Europe's commercial hub. All participated in trade and finance, but coastal Genoa and island Venezia had significant natural advantages as shippers, so Firenze leaned more toward banking.

At this time, financial services were limited, particularly for the poor and middle classes. For most people, the only formal financial services were pawnbrokers. Firenze had a handful of small banks that dealt in low volumes of money-changing and accepted long-term deposits at interest for the middle class, but even the average Florentine had little use for banks. Bankers who could deal in serious commerce were members of the Arte del Cambio (the moneychangers' guild), though some were also members of the Arte di Por Santa Maria (a guild encompassing a number of other luxury trades).

For people who needed to move large sums of money around, which included traveling merchants, governments, and senior clergymen, bank services were vital. Instead of carrying untraceable and irreplaceable gold and gems, one could deposit money in one bank and carry a letter of credit, which identified the legitimate bearer, to the next branch. If the letter was stolen, the thief couldn't cash it, while the legitimate bearer could simply go back for another one. Among other consequences, this made international trade much easier. Merchants carried paper instruments representing some quantity of money to foreign ports, changed them into money or other paper instruments circulated locally to exchange goods, and returned home without risking the loss of a single physical coin.

Banks would also, for a small charge, exchange foreign currencies for native coinage, necessary for traveling merchants and dignitaries of all kinds just as it is for modern travelers going from one country to another. If the seller and buyer of some goods had deposits with the same bank, they could even bypass the paperwork and have the banker adjust their balances in his ledger by the appropriate amount.

Banks also provided an easy means of investment. The wealthy didn't just make deposits at banks to withdraw them at another location. They could also make deposits to receive interest, as though they were making a long-term loan to the bank. The banks paid interest out of the interest they received from other loans and from the profits of subsidiary businesses they might also own. It was not unusual, for example, for a Florentine bank to also own interests in textile factories.

Using Banking Services

As a practical matter, PCs can take advantage of banking services only if they deal in large amounts. For letters of credit and currency conversions, any transaction involving less than \$5,000 is likely to be beneath a banker's notice, and the banker will take a cut of up to 6% of the total value. Under normal conditions, bankers may loan money at annual rates of 25-35%, though rates for riskier ventures can be much higher. Returns on deposits are typically no more than half prevailing rates for loans, with similar variability based on risk.

Despite their power, banks of the Renaissance were minuscule by modern standards. A branch consisted of a room furnished with a few desks for clerks, a strongbox for cash on hand and *libri segreti* ("secret books," the bank's confidential internal records), and a *banco* (table) covered by a green cloth, on which business was done. The main office of a large bank would probably employ fewer than 10 people, and a branch office would have at most four or five.

Moreover, each bank only had a few branches. Five branches constituted a large bank, while an exceptional bank might have 10 branches. At its height, the Medici bank probably didn't directly employ more than 50 or 60 people. Most branches were in or near Italy (for example, Pisa, Venezia, Genoa, Roma, and Avignon), but at one point, it had branches as far away as Bruges and London. Most bank branches were partnerships between the large banking houses (which

offered international connections) and local bankers (who provided access to the local market). Both offered capital.

Because they dealt only in very large sums, banks of the Renaissance weren't convenient for day-to-day use for personal expenses. Funds might be withdrawn with written notes, but preprinted checks were centuries away. Furthermore, some banking centers only allowed transfer of funds on the spoken request of the depositor and prohibited the use of written instruments not created by another branch of the bank itself.

Money lending was vastly complicated by the fact that, in medieval and Renaissance Europe, it was illegal. In particular, lending money for interest was illegal, since the Church found it immoral. Moneylenders, therefore, had to find ways around the problem. Florentine pawnbrokers openly admitted to the sin of usury and were fined an annual fee by the government, which was the entirety of their punishment. Essentially, it was a license fee disguised as an indulgence, but with that came prohibitions that kept pawnbrokers from participating in government.

Bankers who worked on a larger scale, such as the Medici, found loopholes in usury prohibitions. For example, rather than charging a particular rate of interest, a bank might loan money in return for a share of the profits of the venture for which the loan was being made. Alternatively, a large fee might be added to a money-changing operation as part of a sale of goods in a foreign country. Essentially the banks hid interest as part of a sales transaction that they facilitated.

TEXTILES

In addition to banking, Firenze was the home of a profitable textile industry, producing a variety of high-quality finished cloth. The significance of clothworking can be seen in the number of guilds related to it. Four of Firenze's most important guilds encompass trades dealing with garments or textiles:

- Arte di Por Santa Maria (also known as the Arte di Sera): gold, silver, and bronze smiths, silk merchants, retail clothiers, tailors, hosiers, embroiderers
- Arte della Lana: wool merchants
- Arte di Calimala: wool workers
- Arte dei Vaiai e Pellicciai: furriers

Additionally, lesser guilds existed for flax and leather producers.

The fibers themselves came from elsewhere: wool from England and Spain, silk from the Byzantine and Muslim east, and small quantities of flax from the north. The fibers were spun, dyed, and woven into cloth in the city, or rough cloth was imported and processed to turn it into finer fabric.

Firenze's textile industry was enabled by several factors. One of the biggest was its prominent place as a trade center, which brought in a broad range of dyes. Two other related factors were its physical and political proximity to several alum mines in Italy. Firenze had a close political relationship with the Papacy, mostly through the Medici, whose bank was a major financial partner of Roman curia; the Papacy held a monopoly on most of the alum mines. Alum, a profoundly unexciting mineral on its own, is a mordant, a chemical that helps dyes hold fast to textiles. Consequently, a good supply of it is vital to any manufacturer of fine cloth. Of course, Firenze is also on a river, which provided power for a variety of water-driven cloth-processing devices, and with its wealth, the city developed a large domestic market for top-quality textiles.

TRADE AND MINOR INDUSTRIES

By the 15th century, there were seven major guilds:

- Arte della Lana
- Arte di Calimala: moneychangers
- Arte dei Giudici e Notai: judges and notaries
- Arte del Cambio
- Arte di Por Santa Maria
- Arte dei Medici e Speciali: physicians and pharmacists (painters were included in this guild, possibly because physicians and painters share St. Luke as a patron)
- Arte dei Vaiai e Pellicciai

These guilds monopolized Florentine political life, since they held the majority of seats on the Signoria. There were also five middle-rank guilds:

- Arte di Pietra e Legname: masons, sculptors, carpenters
- Arte dei Beccai: herders
- Arte dei Calzolai: cobblers
- Arte dei Fabbri: iron workers
- Arte dei Linaioli e Rigattieri: flax workers

Minor guilds included those for armorers, bakers, innkeepers, locksmiths, millers, saddle-makers, tanners, vintners, and woodsmen. Membership in one guild did not prohibit membership in another. Bankers might be members of both the banking and, for example, the wool merchants' guild.

Firenze was a major transshipment point for a number of exotic goods. While it was not a port, it saw considerable

traffic in gemstones, spices, dyes, and medicines. Firenze was a particularly large consumer of pigments, given its large textile industry and many painters. Florentine or other Italian merchants carried most of the pigments.

By this time, one-off mercantile expeditions had been replaced by a system of merchants stationing factors in foreign cities. Regularly scheduled shipping voyages merely provided transport between the factor and his home city. The trips brought carefully considered, prearranged cargoes that probably already had buyers in the destination port.



Firenze had a modest slave trade. Slavery was legal, and the wealthiest families might own a slave or two from as far away as Africa or western Asia. However, since taking and selling captives during wartime had long since passed out of fashion in most of Europe, slaves were few and far between, kept as prestigious domestic servants by the rich rather than providing mass labor. There appears to have been no particular social stigma attached to being a former slave or the child of a slave.

ARMS, ARMOR, AND THE MILITARY

During the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance, troops for Italian armies came from three sources: civic militias, feudal levies, and mercenary companies. As Firenze (and, indeed, Italy as a whole) became wealthier, the first two sources began to fade into the background. Many feudal noblemen were absorbed into the civic order, and the wealthier townsmen who formed the core of the civic militia realized that they could use some of their wealth to convince others to undertake the risky and uncomfortable task of fighting in their place. During this period of small but frequent wars, footloose adventurers could usually find employment somewhere as *condottieri*. By the end of the Renaissance, the cities of Italy had come to realize the danger of purely mercenary soldiers and were taking steps to tie officers more closely to their cities with honors and commitments. Firenze, though, was slow to catch on to the trend and remained a better source of short-term employment for outsiders than its neighbors.

CONDOTTIERI

Italy was the home of the *condottiero*. The literal translation is simply “contractor,” but what it *really* meant in the

Renaissance was “mercenary.” The quattrocento was just past the golden age of the freelance mercenary company, when nigh-unstoppable, independent armies roamed the peninsula, fighting for the highest bidder and raiding or extorting tribute from everyone else. By the beginning of the 15th century, mercenaries were tied more closely to individual states with long-term contracts and civic honors giving them special privileges so long as they stayed loyal. In most cities, long-serving mercenary officers and their units, possibly combined with native troops, formed the core of an army, supplemented as necessary by additional short-term mercenaries. Firenze, which had a lingering distrust of soldiers, lagged far behind. Rather than trying to buy the loyalty of sometimes-unreliable soldiers, the Florentines attempted to minimize their costs by hiring mercenaries only as necessary and hiring many small units rather than a few captains with higher standing and larger units. The Florentines also sporadically tried to make greater use of civic militia. Machiavelli had a particularly strong dislike for mercenaries and advocated greater reliance on citizen soldiers. However, for all of their cost and the treachery feared by many, professional mercenary soldiers were more often than not worth the money.

Strictly speaking, condottieri were officers, not necessarily the soldiers who followed them. With a few exceptions for notable veterans and specialists, cities offered contracts to officers alone. (This is much the same as someone in the modern era who hires a contractor to work on his house and lets the contractor worry about the specifics of hiring workmen, buying tools, getting the work crew to the job site, and so on.) The *condotta* (contract) spelled out the terms of employment for a captain and provided for the maintenance of a body of troops that he was responsible for assembling. The task of raising troops to fulfill the agreement fell entirely on the contracted captain. Typically, the captain already had troops, though a new contract might provide him the funds to increase their numbers.

Many condottieri were feudal lords. They were already military men by inclination and had standing relationships with groups of warriors, either members of their household or feudal dependants who were also men of a military bent. Rather than sitting around on their estates, ambitious lords in search of loot and adventure sold their services to whomever would hire them, reaching separate agreements with their followers to keep them in the field past the terms of their own feudal obligations. This led to considerable overlap between feudal lords and mercenary soldiers.

*The secret of getting
things done is to act.*
— Dante Alighieri

Condotta were very detailed legal documents. Rights and privileges set out in the contract frequently included pay rate, types and numbers of troops to be provided, length of service, bonuses for signing and exceptional performance, and exemption from local taxes and foreign lawsuits. Troops had to buy their own supplies, but to protect them from wartime inflation, fair prices for provisions were sometimes specified, though those were often available only when operating in their employer's home territory. Further abroad, armies had to live at least partly by looting or buying local provisions.

Where possible, Florentine contracts limited service to a single fighting season, three to nine months; other cities offered contracts for multiple years. Many contracts offered options for automatic renewal if the contract expired in the middle of a war. Some had retainers, giving the employing city the right to call on the condottiero if his services were required within a specified period. Where condottieri were subject to such retainers, they'd have clauses in any other contract they might sign acknowledging their prior obligation and setting out their obligations in case they had to leave a current employer for their previous one.

Even the division of loot was spelled out. Real estate (land, castles, and such) and certain important people (exiles, foreign rulers, and other persons of particular interest) were to be turned over to the employing state. Portable wealth and other people who might be ransomed were fair game for the mercenaries.

TROOP TYPES AND WEAPONS

Armies of this period had five categories of regular troops: pikemen, cavalry, crossbowmen and arbalesters, shield-bearers, and swordsmen.

Pikemen were the largest single component of most armies. They provided some offensive power against other infantry, but their main use was to channel and defend against cavalry. The great length of the pikes of the era ensured that a formation of them would still provide a dense enough concentration of sharp points to discourage cavalry charges.

Many heavy pikes were wielded by two men. Two men could move their weapon faster and hold it more firmly than one. If attacked by other infantry, one of the men could let go of the pike to fight with a sword while the other held on to it.

The second most common component of an Italian Renaissance army, and the primary offensive force, was cavalry. Italian cavalry was heavy cavalry, with long lances, plate armor for the riders, and often barding for the horses whose owners could afford it.

Crossbowmen provided the infantry with an effective offensive weapon that could be used against cavalry and infantry alike. They were usually shielded by formations of pikemen. The use of guns grew rapidly as the Renaissance progressed, displacing crossbows almost entirely by the end of the 15th century, but troops armed with arbalests filled the same functional role as crossbowmen.

Shield-bearers carried huge shields that offered coverage from head to toe. They would stand in the front ranks of both pike and crossbow formations, using their shields to protect the entire line from missiles and enemy pikes. If enemy troops came in too close, they would use swords or other personal weapons.

Simple swordsmen were rare at the beginning of the Renaissance. On an open field, pikemen were far superior on defense, crossbowmen on offense, and cavalry all around. As battlefield fortifications became more important, swordsmen multiplied quickly. Without heavy pikes to drag with them and bring back into line, the Italians found that swordsmen, supplemented by a few troops with shorter polearms, were best suited to storm prepared enemy earthworks.

There was a gray area between cavalry and some infantry units. Mounted infantry were widely used. That is, they fought on foot, but when not directly engaged in combat, they could use horses for mobility. Over half of a fighting force might have horses, but only some of the troops would actually fight on horseback.

In addition to the five basic troop types, many armies had engineers and artillerymen. The use of cannon grew rapidly during the Renaissance. Condottieri rarely provided artillery themselves. Expensive to maintain and difficult to relocate, they were not well-suited to the small, mobile units that were the rule for mercenaries. Cannon needed a wagon train for powder and shot, a party of specialists to maintain and use them, and other gear and additional personal weapons for the crew, making even a few pieces of light artillery a considerable logistical challenge. Instead, they were organized and maintained directly by civic governments. Prepared defensive positions, particularly cities and towns, got the better part of the deal as cannon became more common. Without the need for a supply train, cannon in defensive positions could be larger and better supplied with ammunition. Stationary guns could fire projectiles up to 300 pounds (though most were much smaller), but field pieces were usually in the two- to three-pound range.

Pikes and How to Use Them

The long polearms of the Renaissance require a new maneuver (planting a spear), a new weapon (the pike), and a new perk (Two-Man Pike Training).

Any spear or impaling polearm with a reach of 2 or more can be planted against a charge. The butt of the weapon is pressed against the ground to take the impact of someone running into it. Planting a weapon requires a Ready action, and the wielder must Wait until he decides to unbrace it. While planted, the weapon cannot parry and can only be used to attack someone entering the hex occupied by the tip of the weapon from one of its front hexes. When a planted spear hits, it does the *better* of damage for a normally braced weapon *or* damage similar to a couched lance (p. B397): Compute collision damage based on the moving target's HP and velocity (see p. B430), add the weapon's damage bonus, and apply it to the target as impaling damage.

A pike is an exceptionally long spear, reinforced near the point end to withstand impact. It is ill-suited for individual combat, but an array of closely set pikes is a terrifying sight to even the heaviest cavalry.

New Perk: Two-Man Pike Training

With this perk, you are trained to work with another warrior to move and fight while wielding a large spear or polearm (minimum reach 3). Once you and your companion

have both taken a Ready maneuver to grab hold of the weapon, you move and choose maneuvers as a single fighter with these stats:

- The worse Basic Speed, Move, and Spear skill of the pair.
- Effective ST equal to the strongest man's ST plus 1/5 the other man's ST, rounded down, for the purpose of damage, resisting knockback, etc.
- Effective HP equal to the larger HP score of the pair plus 1/5 the other man's HP, rounded down, for the purpose of making or resisting slams.

The front man can let go with one hand as a free action, if necessary. He can even draw a one-handed weapon and fight at his usual skill with that weapon, although the team still moves as a single fighter with the lower Basic Speed and Move, and the pike cannot be used to attack during this time. To resume pike use, the front man must take another Ready maneuver. If anyone is separated, he must take a new Ready maneuver to get back on the pike. Until then, he's fighting individually while his partner drags the giant spear.

If either fighter lacks this perk, the team cannot combine ST or HP at all, still uses the worst Basic Speed and Move, and fights at (lowest Spear skill)-2.

Pike

<i>TL</i>	<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Parry</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>ST</i>
SPEAR (DX-5, Polearm-4, or Staff-2)							
2	Pike	thr+3 imp	5, 6*	0U	\$80	15	13+

As wealthier states could afford more labor, battlefield engineering also became more important. Engineers would direct construction of ditch-and-earthen-wall battlefield fortifications, lay out siege works, and plan canals. Permanent defensive positions might have better cannon, but with enough time and effort, attacking engineers could and did flood them with diverted streams.

Many great architects spent at least some time dealing with military engineering. Brunelleschi was responsible for a number of earthworks and battlefield canals, while Michelangelo was once in charge of Firenze's fortifications (and, apparently, his work was effective, standing off the Spanish attack of 1530 for quite some time).

ORGANIZATION

Troops were frequently organized into a small unit called a "lance." The term was used to describe different small units across Europe, but during the early Italian Renaissance, it consisted of three men. Two members of the lance fought, while the third man (or, often, adolescent boy) stood to the rear holding spare horses, weapons, and other accessories. Fighting men who broke a weapon or had a horse killed from under them could quickly rearm and return to the battle. As the Renaissance wore on, the size of a lance grew, but the

additional people usually just held on to more horses or looked after more of their master's gear. (A French-style lance, occasionally seen late in the period, included a combined force of archers, infantry, and cavalry.) A late-Renaissance army could have twice as many people as an earlier one, but no more fighting strength.

By the end of the 15th century, some standardization had arisen in the organization of army units and ranks. There were three to five men per lance. Twenty to 25 lances formed a squadron commanded by a *caposquadra* or *squadriere*, though squadrons might be subdivided into smaller units of five or six lances. *Colonello* commanded formations of eight to 10 squadrons, while a marshal or captain general commanded larger armies.

Aside from the "spear-carriers" in a lance, armies were essentially composed entirely of fighting men; even the boys holding the horses had access to arms and would use them, albeit ineffectively, if attacked. Logistical support was provided by mostly unofficial camp followers: cooks, cleaners, personal servants, prostitutes, smiths, and other people looking to turn a quick profit by selling goods and services to soldiers. Being a camp follower was lucrative, but it was also dangerous. If enemy troops broke through friendly lines, they'd often rush to loot the nearest encampment and slaughter anyone who looked like they might possibly get in the way.

Since they carried out activities with profound legal and diplomatic implications, mercenary armies rarely operated without their employer's oversight. Most armies had a liaison between the mercenary general in the field and the government that employed him. Whether that political officer would have any formal authority over the chief mercenary officer would, of course, be specified in his contract. Historically, some were officious busybodies who clashed with the general's decisions, while others were valuable allies, smoothing potential points of conflict between mercenaries and their employers.

Other officials were more practically useful. Merchants to the end, the Florentines often provided officials whose job was to arrange temporary markets in camp, bringing in local farmers and merchants to sell to the army as it passed through the area.

With money on our purse we cannot lose.

– Ludovico Ariosto,
Orlando Furioso, XXVIII.46

CIVILIAN ARMS AND ARMOR

Weapons and armor weren't only carried on the battlefield. Civilians and civil authorities sometimes went about armed as well. Since city-dwellers were relatively wealthy and the cost of metal slowly dropped through the period, many people owned swords, which were the sidearm of the day rather than truly military weapons. They may not have *carried* the armaments most of the time. Those who did have blades sported them as a fashion accessory rather than with the intent to cause harm.

Nonetheless, swords certainly did come out in times of civil unrest and some people carried them as a matter of course. There was a brief period of arms control after the failure of the Pazzi conspiracy, where the government granted license to own weapons only to Medicians, but the phase had passed away by the early 1490s. Even if weapons were restricted in the city, anyone with a villa in the countryside could easily hide them beyond the city walls.

Anyone who might have to serve in the militia would have had a modicum of training with pikes, the lance, or other primary military weapons, particularly when the militia was operating under Machiavelli's guidance. However, the Renaissance also saw the rise of sophisticated fencing styles concentrating on swords and other small weapons (see the Italian School style on p. 156 of *GURPS Martial Arts*). Many styles involved the use of a weapon or cloak in the off hand. Such styles might not be ideal on the battlefield, but they were perfectly adequate to use in the streets.

On a day-to-day basis, a missile weapon would have been an unusual sight on the street. Like swords, a number of people may have owned crossbows (they were the primary hunting weapons by this time). Unlike swords, which have defensive application, the use of crossbows is purely offensive. Furthermore, polearms would have been a very unusual sight, as well as painfully awkward. The same is true of armor and shields.

Those restrictions did not apply to officials and police forces, though. Members of Firenze's city guard were armed with crossbows. Guardsmen and some civic officials wore armor, though typically more as a symbol of status and authority on formal occasions. A breastplate might be worn as a badge of office as much as actual protection. Nonetheless, anyone – even a policeman – wearing armor, is expecting serious trouble.

Using GURPS Mass Combat

Through the Renaissance, a typical lance has two or three effective fighters, so five lances usually comprise an element. Renaissance Italian armies are composed mostly of Pikemen elements, with some Heavy Cavalry and a mix of missile troop (Bowmen early in the period, Musketeers later). A thin screen of shield-bearers may be treated as a small number of Heavy Infantry (no more than one Heavy Infantry element per five Pikemen elements – and probably less). Field pieces count as Light Artillery, but cities may have with Heavy Artillery. Many forces have Miners, and the swordsmen employed to attack their fortifications are Medium Infantry. Many foot troops, particularly Pikemen, may be accompanied by Mounts. All of these troops are TL4.

Quality of troops and equipment run the gamut, though Good-quality gear is unremarkable. Troops in Italy in general and troops hired by Firenze in particular are typically Mercenaries and may be Disloyal.

Non-combatant members of a lance are essentially logistics troops integrated into the unit. Not all infantry units were formally organized into lances, but most had collections of servants and camp followers performing the

same function. The Florentine government was particularly keen to keep expenses low by limiting mercenary employment to times they could pay for themselves by plundering on other people's territory (see *Campaigning Season*, p. 14 of *GURPS Mass Combat*).

Example: A captain commands a squadron of 20 lances. Five are cavalry, 10 are pikemen, and five are crossbowmen. Half of the pike lances are mounted. The cavalry counts as one element of Heavy Cavalry (cost to raise \$200K, cost to maintain \$40K, plus \$200K to raise and \$20K to maintain logistics). The pikemen count as two elements of Pikemen plus one of Mounts (total cost to raise \$180K, total cost to maintain \$36K, plus \$180K to raise and \$18K to maintain logistics). The crossbowmen, all unmounted, count as one element of Bowmen (cost to raise \$40K, cost to maintain \$8K, plus \$40K to raise and \$4K to maintain logistics). Total cost to raise the squadron is \$840K; cost to maintain is \$126K. However, since they're probably mercenaries, there is no cost to raise them for their employer and a maintenance cost of \$189K, or \$94.5K during the fighting season.

CHAPTER FOUR

NOTABLE PEOPLE

... The next day, I called on an artisan to whom I was commended. No mere goldsmith is this man, but painter, sculptor, and much else besides. He seems to think himself a philosopher

as well, though I discern he has no education beyond his craft. Still, no matter what airs he puts on, the evidence of his handiwork is clear. I think you will be most taken with the work of this young Leonardo.



This is a selection of notable people with an impact on Firenze during the 15th and 16th centuries: local political figures (generally Medici and their relatives), prominent artists who were at least temporary residents, and foreign politicians who had a significant impact on the city.

POLITICIANS

This is a sampling of the most prominent and well-known people in politics of the time. They might make excellent Patrons, Contacts, or employers.

COSIMO DE MEDICI (1389-1464)

Friendly and plain-looking, one would never imagine that Cosimo was the effective ruler of the wealthiest city in Italy and the largest bank in world history up to that point. Cosimo's personal style was to present himself as a man of the people, a simple banker rather than a nobleman. Despite his fabulous wealth, Cosimo dressed plainly, was never seen with more than one servant, and built a far smaller and less ostentatious house for his family than he could have afforded. His style of leadership was to broker favors, arranging and managing alliances between rising new men who could use assistance and would give their loyalty in return. In addition to tremendous skills as a diplomat and banker, he had a talent for picking skilled and reliable people to whom tasks could be delegated. Nonetheless, he continued to oversee even the small details of his business through his life.

Cosimo kicked off the Medici tradition of sponsoring artists and scholars. In addition to supporting Brunelleschi and Donatello (among others), he sponsored the first complete translation of Plato into Italian and founded a school for the study of Classical authors. He was also prone to gout, an ailment that he passed on to generations of his descendants.

LORENZO DE MEDICI, IL MAGNIFICO (1449-1492)



Like the rest of the Medici, Lorenzo was not a particularly attractive man (though, by all accounts, better looking than his immediate ancestors), but he was quite charming. He was not as skilled an administrator or financier as his grandfather and didn't have his attention to detail. However, he was a remarkably able diplomat, maintaining alliances at home and abroad largely through force of personality.

Despite ruling Firenze more openly than his ancestors and surrounding himself with an endless stream of fine art, Lorenzo preferred to dress simply when he didn't have to wear official finery. In the years before his death, he was increasingly afflicted by gout and was considering retiring to study Classical philosophy full time.

In addition to his political skills, Lorenzo was surprisingly competent in the arts. He dabbled in poetry and architecture as a talented amateur. Though he produced no immortal works himself, his taste in art and artists is unquestionable. Even kings and popes asked his opinion on new palaces or artistic works. Lorenzo actually commissioned very few artworks himself, but he was in a position to recommend artists to others more inclined to pay for them. For his personal collection, Lorenzo preferred gold and gems, which are both attractive and easily resold, and he had a fondness for antiques.

Gout

Gout is an inflammatory condition of the joints caused, in most cases, by consuming too much meat, fats, alcohol, and, sometimes, lead. (Lead sugar was a common sweetener.) It most often afflicts the feet, making it difficult to walk, but it can spread through the entire body. Its symptoms vary from mildly inconvenient to completely debilitating, manifesting as the disadvantages of Lameness, Chronic Pain, or both. The elderly Cosimo and Lorenzo had Crippled Legs, while Piero the Gouty effectively had a limited version of Paraplegic (he had feeling and could move his limbs, but he couldn't use them often) and Chronic Pain, which, though probably Mild, recurred frequently.

A diet low in animal protein and alcohol can reduce the severity of gout. Historically, no effective treatments existed until the 20th century. A Renaissance doctor who discovered one (for example, sodium bicarbonate, available as a washing compound since antiquity, can be an effective short-term treatment) or a time traveler who brought modern drugs to treat it could become a wealthy man.

GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA (1452-1497)

Savonarola was born to a middle-class family, distantly connected to a princely court, in Ferrara. In 1475, he determined to take up a religious life despite the disapproval of his family. He was a voracious scholar, studying at the universities at Padua and Bologna, and a skilled debater and teacher. However, he was not a natural speaker and spent many years developing his preaching style.

Like other reformers of his time, Savonarola was disgusted with the materialism of his society and particularly unhappy with the way it had overtaken religion. Even as a young man, he distinguished between the "true Church" and the "whore in Roma." He promoted asceticism, and he "walked it like he talked it," sometimes quite literally: He walked rather than rode on his early travels, and had to be prevented from doing so when he acted as an ambassador later in life. He also dressed cheaply, ate simple food, and largely avoided women when not actively sermonizing to them. He preached against luxury, pagan Classical influences, Jews, and anything else that might distract from spiritual matters.

Ironically, given his role in kicking the Medicis out of Firenze, he originally came to the city at the express request of Lorenzo de' Medici. Indeed, Lorenzo was the driving force behind Savonarola's rise to a position of leadership within his order, and Savonarola was at Lorenzo's deathbed and delivered a blessing to him there.

Savonarola was physically unimpressive: small, with a long nose and deep eyes. Though devout, Savonarola was not simply a wild-eyed fanatic. Certainly, he was emphatic in his beliefs, but he was also extremely well-educated and had a firm handle on philosophy. Despite a strict medieval morality, he had a remarkably forward-thinking political position. Among other things, he preached that real moral improvement was impossible under an autocracy, so a Christian society had to be a democracy.

CATARINA SFORZA (1463-1509)

Despite being an illegitimate child, Catarina was acknowledged as a Sforza and managed to marry well, becoming countess of Forlì, a town near Bologna. She obtained a reputation for being a ruthless, even brutal, ruler in defending her holdings against both internal conspiracy and external attack. She was certainly merciless against failed conspirators, and she was capable of leading spirited military defenses. If not a warrior in her own right, she was a more-than-usually competent military leader. She was also nearly impossible to intimidate. One story about her claims that when she escaped captors who still held her children as hostages, she told them in vulgar terms that her former captors could do as they liked with her children since she could produce more herself. She had recurring battles with rivals to her title supported by the papacy, eventually losing Forlì to Cesare Borgia. She spent the last few years of her life in exile in Firenze.

Her particular importance to Florentine history is her brief marriage to Giovanni de' Medici. Giovanni was descended from a junior branch of the Medici that started with the original Cosimo's brother Lorenzo (after whom Lorenzo il Magnifico was named). However, family rivalry led to Giovanni's branch being exiled by Piero not long before Piero himself was driven out. (The rivalry also caused Giovanni to change his name from de' Medici to il Popolano.) Giovanni was one of the exiles recalled to Firenze in 1494 (the junior Medici disliked their senior cousins as much as anyone else, so they were not regarded as politically dangerous), and he quickly became a minor political figure and diplomat. He and Catarina became romantically involved and married in the late 1490s. Their offspring would become the new rulers of Firenze.

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI (1469-1527)

Born to a distinguished middle-class family, Machiavelli started his career as a government official the year Piero de' Medici was driven from Firenze. He undertook a number of official tasks: He acted as chief secretary to the government in 1498. He organized the Florentine militia in 1503. (This met with limited success – the militia based on Machiavelli's model retook Pisa in 1509 but was dealt a major defeat when they attempted to keep the Medici out in 1512.) He accepted a variety of ambassadorial assignments, which took him as far away as Paris and Aragon. After the return of the Medici effectively ended his political career in 1513, he retired to the countryside to write.

Machiavelli's best-known work, *The Prince*, is among the first works of purely pragmatic political philosophy. Rather than outlining a morally ideal society, as most medieval philosophers and even many Classical philosophers did, Machiavelli set out a philosophy of how power can be most effectively maintained, with more attention to what works as opposed to what is just. Most of his critics missed Machiavelli's point that small evils could prevent greater ones.

For example, brutally putting down a revolt or silencing a political rival could prevent serious challenges in the future, allowing the ruler to reign in peace and justice thereafter. Nevertheless, the book's notoriety, even at the time, overshadowed his works on how to run a republic (a subject he was far more interested in), his plays, and his critiques of Classical authors.

GIOVANNI DALLE BANDE NERE (1498-1526)

Not all of the Medici were shadowy behind-the-scenes figures. Giovanni was descended from Catarina Sforza and Giovanni il Popolano. Giovanni showed a talent for warfare early in life; he is said to have first killed a man in his early teens. He became a mercenary at the age of 18, frequently employed by his cousin, Pope Leo X. He was a successful and dashing cavalry officer, but he died at the age of 28 from an infection resulting from battle wounds. Though his death didn't mark the end of mercenary soldiers, Giovanni became famous in the years that followed as the last of the classical condottieri. By the early 16th century, increasing numbers of muskets and field artillery were rendering heavy cavalry obsolete. His nickname ("of the black bands") came from his adding black marks to his coat of arms as a sign of mourning after Leo's death.

My courage is as great as yours.
– Catherine de Medici

CATHERINE DE MEDICI (1519-1589)

Catherine was the last descendant of the first Cosimo to use the Medici name. She was, perhaps, a natural survivor. When the Medici were briefly kicked out of Firenze in 1527,

the eight-year-old girl was held as a hostage and threatened by angry mobs. Surviving that ordeal, she left Italy at 14 to marry Henry II, the king of France, bringing with her Italian cuisine and Italian fashion, which formed the basis of French high culture for centuries to come.

Catherine was as formidable a politician as her ancestors Cosimo and Lorenzo. Like her great-great-grandfather, she had a talent for ruling behind the scenes. Through her sons (the kings Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III), she was effectively the ruler of France until her death. Through a series of marriages, she was the lynchpin of a set of in-laws and cousins ruling most of Europe for decades thereafter.

GRAND DUKE COSIMO I DE MEDICI (1519-1574)

Though only a teenager when he rose to power, Cosimo displayed not only the confidence of his ancestors but also, at last, some of their ability. Despite coming from the minor branch of the family, he accomplished a lot in his lifetime. He managed to take control of the city. He disposed of his few remaining challengers (both the last descendants of the first Cosimo and a number of republican exiles). He founded a navy, and he conquered Sienna, giving Firenze hegemony over all of Toscana. His rule was sufficiently secure that he was able to go into semi-retirement in the mid-1560s, letting his son Francesco run things.

Far from presenting himself as a man of the people as his ancestors did, this Cosimo acted as a true aristocrat. Like many other rulers who didn't trust their subjects, he obtained a bodyguard of Swiss troops; with no ties connecting them to local factions and no backing by the people, they had little incentive to betray him. Supported by heavy taxes, he also built a number of new structures supporting his new government. In addition to moving the offices of the government from the Palazzo dei Signoria, the symbolic fortress of republicanism, into the newly built Uffizi, he constructed the Vasari corridor. This corridor permitted him to move without touching or seeing the common people, the exact opposite of the policy of his ancient namesake.

FOREIGN DIGNITARIES

Mercenaries, popes, and kings – these prominent people might require bodyguards, soldiers, or spies.

FRANCESCO SFORZA (1401-1466)

Francesco Sforza was one of the great mercenary success stories. Born in Toscana, he was the son of a condottiero, and he took up the family business at an early age. He was also a minor nobleman; he was granted a small territory of his own in his early teens. He was famed for feats of strength early in his career, bending bars and lifting heavy objects, but he rose rapidly in political prominence because of his skills as a battlefield leader. He fought for (and against) just about every significant power in

Italy, becoming particularly honored in the service of Milano. During that time, as was common for important condottieri, he received authority over a number of towns in the area.

In 1450, after several years of economic crisis, the government of Milano asked Francesco to step in as duke. It turned out to be a good choice – Francesco became as effective a ruler as he was a general. Not only did he quell unrest and bring Milano into a more prosperous period, he expanded the city's territory to include long-time rival Genoa.

In addition to being one of the architects of the Treaty of Lodi, Francesco was a long-time friend and ally of Cosimo de Medici. The association of the Medici and the Sforzas lasted beyond the deaths of both Cosimo and Francesco, to the point where Milanese retaliation was often a danger to anyone plotting against the Medici.

POPE ALEXANDER VI (1431-1503)

Born to a noble Spanish family, Roderic de Borja came to Roma not long after the elevation of his uncle to the papacy as Calixtus III. Roderic himself became pope in 1492 after a contentious election that involved carefully arranged political deals and bribery on all sides. (Funding was supplied by a number of governments, each with their own favorite candidate.) Roderic, now Alexander, quickly moved on to putting relatives into positions of wealth and authority. (This included his illegitimate children, who were among the first to be acknowledged by a sitting pope.) To support them, he started expanding the Papal States into southern and east-central Italy. He was only moderately successful in the face of alliances of Italian powers against him and the 1494 French invasion. However, the brutal means he used and his openly corrupt administration became a scandal across the peninsula. When he died after a brief but painful illness, he was only grudgingly accepted for burial at St. Peter's basilica, and his body was removed to Spain not long thereafter.

Though his reputation was somewhat exaggerated, Alexander was known as the most corrupt of popes, entirely ignoring spiritual matters in favor of empire-building and other worldly pursuits. His most lasting achievement, though, was his 1493 division of the New World between Portugal (which got Brazil) and Spain (which got everything else).

CHARLES VIII, KING OF FRANCE (1470-1498)

Charles became king at the age of 12. During the regency of his older sister Anne, a revolt by a number of noblemen was firmly put down, leaving Charles with a free hand and a full treasury when he came of age.

Short, unattractive, and in chronically poor health, Charles didn't present a regal image. He also had a reputation for not being very bright, though his enemies probably underestimated him. Certainly, he was canny enough not to try to conquer all of Italy as he went, tying down his forces with occupation and garrison duties.

Contacts and Patrons

Though they might be used as Allies, these historical figures are probably better used as Contacts or Patrons. Values as Patrons are indicated here, along with hints at skill levels.

As a Contact, *Cosimo* has the highest Administration, Diplomacy, Finance, and Politics skills in the campaign, as well as a high level of Current Affairs. For bribes, he prefers to deal in favors rather than money; he's one of the richest men in Europe, so he hardly needs more money. As a Patron, he has a base cost of 25 points.

Lorenzo has exceptionally high Connoisseur, Current Affairs, Diplomacy, and Politics skills; good Administration, Poetry, and Philosophy; but only moderate Finance skill despite being immensely rich. Being fond of sports and hunting, he also has better than average physical traits and combat skills. He has a base cost of 25 points as a Patron.

As a Contact, *Savonarola* has a high Public Speaking skill, though he is likely to be offended by bribery attempts. During the mid-1490s, Savonarola is head of the local Dominican order, during which time he is a Patron worth 10 points. However, by 1498, his clients may find themselves acquiring enemies.

Catarina Sforza has good Strategy and Tactics skill, and if some conjectures about her are true, tolerable fighting skills as well. Until her exile to Firenze, she has a base cost of 10 points as a Patron.

If used as a Contact, *Machiavelli* has a high Administration skill and very good Current Affairs. If it becomes applicable, he also has high Writing and Philosophy skills. During his years in government, he might qualify as a 10-point Patron.

When she becomes queen of France, *Catherine de Medici* is worth 30 points as a Patron, though she's far from Firenze when that happens.

Giovanni dalle Bande Nere has a high ST and excellent fighting and military leadership skills. However, he's only worth 10 points as a Patron.

Cosimo I has Diplomacy and Politics skills approaching those of his ancestors, as well as above-average physical traits and fighting skills. He is worth 20 points as a Patron.

Francesco Sforza has high Strategy and Politics skills, as well as excellent physical traits and fighting skills. He is worth 20 points as a Patron.

Alexander VI is worth 30 points as a Patron.

Charles VIII is worth 25 points as a Patron.

While he has his father's support, *Cesare* is worth 15 points as a Patron, but he probably has Bloodlust and possibly Bad Temper or something like Paranoia as well. Relying on him too much invites trouble. (To be fair, Cesare isn't out of touch with reality; it's Renaissance Italy, so people probably *are* plotting against him.)

Most of the artists presented here have negligible value as Patrons or Allies (while directing construction on the Duomo, *Brunelleschi* might make an appearance as a very inexpensive Patron). However, young artists may have them as employers. If used as Contacts, most have, at best, one or two moderate social skills, but all have at least one Artist specialty at 20+.

Many of the artists (most notably *Leonardo*) not only never married, they had close relationships with male pupils, leading to speculation that they may have been homosexual. If true, they may qualify for a Secret, though that would be, at worst, a -5-point disadvantage in cosmopolitan Firenze; despite a special court to investigate sodomy and tens of thousands of trials, hardly anyone was actually punished.

Nevertheless, his ambitions outstripped his abilities, and his invasion of Italy turned out to be a bad idea. One of the factors motivating his move against Napoli was a desire to establish a base from which he could kick off a Crusade and retake Jerusalem. However, even ignoring that the last Crusade had ended in failure two centuries earlier, Charles overextended his kingdom's finances by raising a large army and marching them up and down the Italian peninsula. He was planning a second invasion of Italy when he died after an accidental fall. Though it was little consolation, Charles did manage to establish ties with Firenze that lasted until the rise of the Medici dukes.

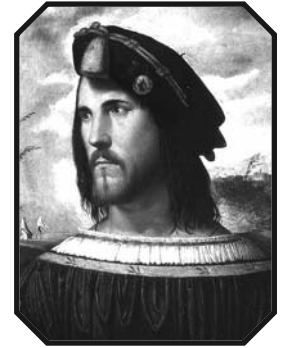
CESARE BORGIA (1476-1507)

The illegitimate son of Cardinal Roderic de Borja, Cesare was long associated with Papal territories and the ambitions of Alexander VI. Cesare was another teenage bishop and cardinal, but his career as a cleric came to an abrupt end when his older brother, who was being groomed as Alexander's standard-bearer in the field, was assassinated in 1497. In the aftermath, Cesare traded his cardinal's hat for a duchy in southern France and became the pope's military commander. He spent the next

several years enlarging Papal holdings in southern and eastern Italy, with definite designs on Toscana.

Cesare employed Leonardo da Vinci in 1502-1503, during which time he also met Machiavelli, inspiring large portions of *The Prince*. In 1503, Julius II became pope, and Cesare, who proved of little use to Julius, lost his backing. Cesare was arrested and held prisoner for several years in Roma and Spain. When he was released, he served as an officer for the king of Navarre and was killed in action.

Though graceful and handsome, Cesare shares a notorious reputation with his sister Lucrezia. He certainly broke promises under which people surrendered to him, and he used treachery as a weapon against some of the cities he attacked. He is also believed, with less certainty, to have been involved in a number of poisonings and assassinations, including that of his own older brother. Cesare was an intriguing figure when encountered, but people around him tended to have short lives.



ARTISTS

Artists rarely make good Patrons or Allies, but they might help as Contacts or employers. They also might need assistance with obtaining materials, which is especially risky during times of strife.

FILIPPO BRUNELLESCHI (1377-1446)

The son of a minor Florentine public official, Brunelleschi was more inclined to the arts than his family's legal practice. As a young man, Brunelleschi traveled to Roma in 1404 to examine surviving Roman architecture, but he spent most of his career working in Firenze, often associated with the Medici. Though he was a reasonably successful painter, he was more skilled as an architect, engineer, and mathematician. His most visible work is the dome of the Duomo, which, in addition to being an architectural marvel on its own, required the invention of a number of novel lifting devices. He was also responsible for the discovery around 1415 of perspective and the vanishing point. Tracing the outlines of buildings as they appeared on mirrors, Brunelleschi discovered that straight lines ultimately converged at a point on the horizon. Soon, the use of perspective and the realistic vistas it produced came to dominate Renaissance painting.

Brunelleschi was gifted in his trade and supremely competent in his abilities. During the competition to determine who would get the contract to build the dome on

the Duomo, Brunelleschi submitted a model lacking a few essential details. When questioned, he pointed out that if he revealed all of his plans, anyone could build it, and there would be no reason to hire him.

Brunelleschi had a sharp personality, but even his otherwise worshipful biographer admitted that he was not an attractive man.

DONATELLO (1386-1466)

Donatello was a leading sculptor, working largely in bronze, though he produced some works in marble as well. He was also a good friend of Brunelleschi and accompanied him to Roma on his 1404 trip. Donatello was closely associated with Cosimo de Medici, for whom he produced a number of important works, including a bronze David and parts of the San Lorenzo church.

Donatello was a loyal and generous friend and an excellent artist but a poor businessman. In his old age, he was unable to support himself in a suitable fashion and had no family to help take care of him (he never married), so Piero de Medici gave him a profitable farm. However, even running that was contrary to Donatello's nature, as was country living, and within a year, he wanted to return it to his patron. Piero understandingly took the farm back and granted a monetary pension instead.



ALLESANDRO BOTTICELLI (1445-1510)

Except for a brief interlude in Roma in the 1480s, Botticelli spent his life in and around Firenze, often working for the Medici (at least one of his most famous works, the “Primavera,” was a Medici commission, and his “Birth of Venus” may have been as well). Primarily a painter, he also wrote a bit, even illustrating his own commentary on Dante. His style combined Renaissance and earlier Gothic conventions, using strong contours but gentle shading.

Botticelli is another great artist of the period who never married. He was very much caught up by Savonarola’s preaching and is believed to have destroyed several of his own paintings. However, rejecting art is not a viable position for a professional painter, so he was at or near poverty for several years. He resumed his old profession after Savonarola’s fall, but between his association with the Medici and Savonarola, he had acquired a number of political enemies.

LEONARDO DA VINCI (1452-1519)

Leonardo was born in Vinci, a small town about 10 miles from Firenze just over the city’s western hills. As a boy, he

apprenticed in a studio associated with a number of important artists, including Botticelli, where he became a pioneer in the new medium of oil paint. In 1482, Lorenzo de Medici sent Leonardo with some of his artwork to present to the Duke of Milano as part of a diplomatic expedition. He spent most of the remainder of his career away from Firenze, returning intermittently between 1500 and 1508. He divided the last decade of his life between Milano, Roma, and Paris, where he worked for King Francois I.

During his career, Leonardo repeatedly crossed paths with many contemporary artists, most notably Michelangelo and Raphael. He also worked for Cesare Borgia in 1502-1503, was a friend of Machiavelli, and had a considerable reputation as an artist and engineer during his lifetime. Contemporary scholars, though, tended to disregard his more scientific and philosophical works because of his poor command of Latin.

MICHELANGELO (1475-1564)

Michelangelo was born in a town near Arezzo, the son of a minor Florentine official. Like da Vinci, he was apprenticed to a Florentine art school and began working locally once he was old enough. A client of the Medici (Piero is said to have commissioned him to construct a snowman), Michelangelo found it expedient to work briefly in Bologna and Venice as Charles VIII approached the city, but he returned by the end of the year. After a brief sojourn in Roma and the death of Savonarola, he was able to find more work in his home city. In 1504, he produced his famous statue of David. The next year brought him back to Roma, where he would soon begin work on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Michelangelo did not get along with his contemporaries, and he actively disliked both Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael. He believed, for example, that supporters of Raphael were responsible for putting him to work on the Sistine Chapel (doing painting although he was more skilled as a sculptor) in order to make Raphael look better by comparison.

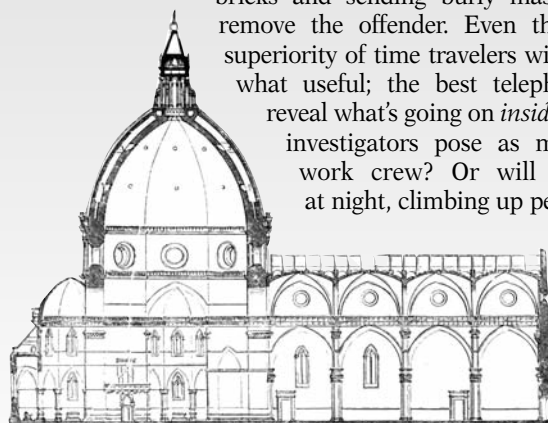
RAPHAEL SANZIO (1483-1520)

Raphael spent most of his early life in Urbino, but he lived most of the years 1504 through 1508 in and around Firenze. Primarily a painter, he was particularly influenced by Leonardo da Vinci. He duplicated much of da Vinci’s use of color and his experimental approach to anatomy. From Firenze, he moved to Roma, where he eventually died.

Unlike many other artists of his age, who tended to be flighty, ill-tempered, or both, Raphael was even-tempered, courteous, and hard working. He ran an enormous workshop of assistants with little trouble and was very close to Pope Leo X. He also had a reputation as a rake; though he never married, he accumulated a great many mistresses.

Adventure Seed: Brunelleschi’s Dome

Many of Brunelleschi’s innovations in building the dome of the Duomo have been lost to history, so learning his secrets would be a large, colorful feather in the cap of any time-traveling historian. Contemporary humanist mystics, combining knowledge of math and engineering with a near-religious devotion to Platonic forms, might also speculate that Brunelleschi’s scaffolding-free design was taking advantage of powerful sacred geometries, allowing brick and stone to defy gravity and adhere to one another even before being mortared. The biggest obstacle, of course, is Brunelleschi himself. He knows his secrets are valuable and he wants to keep them. He won’t allow casual visitors to the site, and anyone seen trying to inspect the work close up will be urged to move along, probably by Brunelleschi hurling bricks and sending burly masons to forcibly remove the offender. Even the technological superiority of time travelers will only be somewhat useful; the best telephoto lens won’t reveal what’s going on *inside* the dome. Will investigators pose as members of the work crew? Or will they sneak in at night, climbing up perilous stairways



in the dark and hoping the glow of lanterns won’t attract unwelcome attention?

CHAPTER FIVE

DAILY LIFE

. . . Of the food, perhaps I should say little, for even the thought of such things may revive your indigestion. Spices are to be had at favorable prices here in good quality, so they are much used. Likewise, wine of quality is easily had. A variety of meats and birds are plentiful in this season, though they cook them with many herbs rather than roasting them plainly. All might be well were it not for a dish of which all are exceedingly fond, a bowl of long strings like worms made from a paste of flour . . .

. . . Of the many sights this city offers, the greatest is their cathedral. Never have I seen a church so grand, not even in Rome itself. The windows are not so great as at Paris, nor does the church present such a forest of pillars and arches, but the height of the building seems greater than any other I have seen, and the vast expanses of figures of saints and respected men presents a truly heavenly prospect.

CLOTHING

Clothing was a good indicator of social class. Despite the profusion of hue around them, the poor wore plain-colored clothing, usually black or brown. A typical member of the lower classes wore a long, hooded cloak with sleeves; a shirt; a belt; hose; and leather shoes. Members of the middle classes dressed in similar outfits augmented with a tight-fitting jacket under the robe and a brimless cap, often with ribbons hanging from the back. The upper classes had similar attire, but made from finer cloth in more colors. Cloaks of the well-to-do included a hood, a flap that could be pulled over the left side of the face, and a sort of false sash on the right shoulder. Soldiers and low-class toughs wore capes rather than long cloaks or robes. The middle and upper classes also sported a variety of chains, ribbons, and colorful buttons, as their wealth allowed.

Sumptuary laws technically prohibited certain kinds of elaborate clothing such as dresses with long trains, but the laws were widely ignored. Officials charged with enforcing sumptuary laws wrote of their frustration: If the number of buttons on a garment was restricted, garments would have decorative studs that looked like buttons but weren't actually fasteners. If it was illegal to trim a hood with lace, a cloak might have a second hood made of lace under the first, giving it the same appearance. Women's outfits were particularly elaborate, with finely detailed figurative embroidery (evading laws against painted clothing), low-cut bodices, long trains, high-heeled shoes, and other embellishments. Despite constant outcry from outraged moralists that the women of Firenze dressed as harlots, even Savonarola couldn't rein in the Florentines' voracious appetite for new fashions.

FOOD

Wheat bread formed the core of the diets of the middle and upper classes. The poor consumed low-grade wheat and barley in various forms, while the rustic poor, surrounded by forests, consumed quantities of chestnuts. Meat was mostly from smaller animals: lamb, kid, and a variety of poultry (pheasant was a particularly prized bird). Fish were a staple, particularly since, in Catholic Europe, meat was prohibited on Fridays and during Lent. Wine was also consumed in quantity. It was not necessarily drunk to get intoxicated; rather, wine was safer than many water supplies. Coffee was just starting to come into use and was still rather exotic during this period.

In the upper and middle classes, dishes were often heavily flavored with spices. The availability of pepper, cinnamon, and other seasonings in large quantities was still relatively new and cooks experimented lavishly. Sugar was used much like a spice as well. Pasta had been introduced to Italy centuries earlier

(broad pasta shapes resembling lasagna are probably at least as old as the 12th century, and spaghetti followed a century later). It was popular in the upper and middle classes. However, it didn't become a staple of the Italian diet until semolina flour became relatively cheap early in the 19th century. It was associated with luxury-loving upper classes to the point where puritanical priests sermonized against eating dishes of macaroni rich with garlic and cheese.

A number of other items associated with Italian food, though, did not yet exist in the Renaissance. Tomatoes and red peppers, for example, had not yet been introduced from the New World. Likewise, polenta, based as it is on cornmeal, hadn't been invented, let alone become a staple of lower-class diets. There was, though, a mush made of wheat or barley that filled a similar dietary role. On the other hand, Parmesan cheese existed and was highly praised.

Florentines were among the first people in the West to use forks at the table. A Byzantine princess married to a Florentine aristocrat introduced this utensil. Nevertheless, it was, at first, something of a fad among the wealthy. Lower classes generally ate their simpler meals with a spoon and eating knife.

There were typically two meals, one at mid-morning and one late in the evening. The day's first meal was relatively light, often bread and fruit (often in the form of jam or a preserve), supplemented by greens and herbs. The later meal was far more substantial, with more dishes and more protein.

RELIGION

During this entire period, Italy was emphatically Catholic, even after the Protestant Reformation began in 1517. Early in the Renaissance, up to 3% of the city's population may have been clergy (twice as many as Italy's already relatively high average). That percentage grew slowly through the period. Every guild had a patron saint, and rich men demonstrated their wealth and virtue by paying for new churches and renovations of old ones.

At the same time, though, there was a strong thread of anticlericalism, or distrust of the Church's authority. Membership in the Church did not immediately imply agreement with all of its practices and policies, as demonstrated by Savonarola. This was partly due to a growing materialism on the part of worldly merchants and the educated class to which they belonged. These people became skeptical about some of the Church's more outdated or dubious ideas (reconsidered in the light of better philosophical tools gleaned from Classical sources). Italians also had a front-row seat for problems that shook the Church at the end of the Middle Ages. During the late 14th and early 15th century, the Church had dueling popes in Roma and Avignon, which could easily make one doubtful about the authority of the Papacy. Indulgences (fees for forgiveness from sins) turned the Church into a marketplace, and many upper clergy clearly enjoyed the lavish lifestyle that donations to the Church provided them. The politicization of the Papacy, in which the Medici were frequently players, made it easy to sneer at the spirituality of the Church leadership. Consequently, corrupt priests and monks were commonly the butt of jokes and occasionally targets of mob violence.

Florentine clergy showed considerable independence from Rome. While the pope placed Firenze under interdict several times during the Renaissance, Firenze's priests could often be persuaded to celebrate Mass, officiate at weddings, perform last rites, and hear confession anyway.

Members of other religions were rare. Protestants typically were imprisoned or exiled. The best the Protestants could do was establish an alliance with a schismatic Waldensian minority in the far north, still well away from Toscana.

Given Firenze's trade links with the east, Muslim visitors from the Ottoman Empire and Egypt were unusual but not unprecedented. Sicily had a vestigial Muslim population left over from a brief period of Moorish domination in the 10th century, and Venice had a small resident Muslim community. There was a scattering of Muslims elsewhere in Italy. For instance, Pope Alexander VI hosted the brother of the Ottoman sultan for several years as a diplomatic hostage.

Adventure Seed: Cardinal Sin

The lovely daughter of a noble house is found strangled to death during the visit of a cardinal from Roma, who was negotiating a delicate agreement with the Florentine government. The PCs are charged with quietly finding the murderer to avoid a scandal. It quickly becomes apparent that the murderer was someone in the cardinal's party, if not the cardinal himself. Heroes with a strong sense of duty will, of course, be unhappy when some members of the Signoria try to shut down the investigation for fear of ruining the ongoing negotiations.

In 1427, Firenze hosted a conference attempting to reconcile the Catholic and Orthodox churches, which meant visits by Orthodox Byzantines, including the Byzantine emperor himself. Likewise, some Orthodox refugees from the collapse of the Byzantine empire visited town from time to time. However, the most frequently encountered non-Catholics in Firenze were Jews. Indeed, until Savonarola had the Jews expelled, Firenze was an important center of Jewish learning and Hebraic scholarship. Often restricted from other lucrative jobs, Jews also made up the bulk of Firenze's pawnbroking industry.

LIFE OF THE MIND

The major philosophical movement of the age was humanism. Humanism grew out of an interest in pre-Christian letters, specifically in Greek and Roman authors. In contrast to medieval philosophy, which was based almost entirely on purely Christian thinkers with distant echoes of Aristotle, the humanists were heavily influenced by Plato (whose works were being rediscovered) and importantly if more subtly by the

whole range of Classical poets and other authors. In their enthusiasm for Classical antiquity, humanists also "invented" the Middle Ages. They regarded the Classical period as the high point of human civilization and their own era as an attempt to return to it. The intervening thousand years was a benighted "middle age" of ignorance.

It became possible to discuss beauty and learning as virtues desirable in themselves and ethics as a separate subject from pure Christian morality. Machiavelli's *The Prince* was the most notorious example of this idea, since it discussed how to rule effectively and not, necessarily, ruling virtuously. In dealing with new and conflicting versions of Classical texts, the humanists developed methods of textual criticism that became politically charged when they were applied to alternative versions of Scripture. None of this is to say that the humanists rejected Christianity. Indeed, many prominent humanists were priests or theologians and all accepted the primacy of Christian thought. However, the ideas and techniques of humanism were regarded as touching on some areas more immediately and effectively than medieval theology.

Like a handful of other major cities, Firenze had a university, chartered in 1321. By the 15th century, it was well-established as a leading school of theology. Like other universities of the period, it was an organization of educated men, essentially a scholars' guild, which did not own buildings or a campus. Since leading scholars and their students could provide political enemies with rhetorical ammunition, the Medici moved some of the faculty to Pisa in the 1470s and again in the early 16th century, where they'd be a less immediate problem.

Although Firenze was a center of learning and the written word, it was slow to establish printing presses. Presses were regarded as cheap and low-class compared to the fine art of hand copying. Indeed, Firenze was the birthplace of italic cursive handwriting in the early 15th century, a faster, more efficient script than the blocky "black letter" styles of handwriting popular at the time. The city didn't have its first press until near the end of the 15th century, years after the other major Italian cities had adopted theirs. Nevertheless, new books from all over quickly made their way to Firenze, and prominent men of the period owned extensive libraries.

One of the most significant authors in Firenze – Dante Alighieri – died long before this period. His most famous work, *Divine Comedy*, had few fans among intellectuals. After all, it was written in mere Italian rather than proper Latin, and the somewhat mystical, deeply Christian content didn't interest dedicated humanists. However, it was very accessible to and well-liked by the ordinary man on the street; most Florentines could recite at least a few lines of his verse.

Dante's renown extended beyond Firenze and Toscana. The popularity of the *Divine Comedy* is credited by some as an influence on the Tuscan dialect becoming a large part of standard Italian in later years.

LANGUAGES

Through most of history, Italian has been not a single language, but a collection of dialects; modern "standard" Italian is the product of 19th-century political unification and 20th-century mass communication. Toscano, the dialect of Firenze, is a major influence on modern Italian, but it didn't achieve dominance during the Renaissance. Renaissance



Italian could be divided into many dialects, and each major city had its own. Besides Toscano, there were Ligurian (Genoa), Lombardic (Milano), Veneto (Venezia), Romanesco (Roma), and Campano (Napoli). Other regional dialects include Emiliano and Romagnolo in northeastern Italy, Calabrese in the far south, Umbrian in the region between Roma and Toscana, and many others.

Separate dialects should be treated as different languages, but familiarization with one helps with the others. Someone who knows one can write or speak other dialects of the same region at one level of fluency lower. For example, someone Native with Toscano is Accented with Ligurian. However, the dialects of the north and south (for these purposes, a dividing line can be drawn just south of Roma)

were sufficiently different that knowing a dialect from one region provides fluency *two* steps lower for dialects from the other. Thus, someone Native with Toscano is Broken in Calabrese.

Because of a high level of international trade and French, German, and Spanish involvement in Italian politics, all of those nations' languages were frequently encountered. Languages from elsewhere in Christendom (for example, English or Swedish) were used occasionally, though it may be difficult to find native speakers.

Latin was the international language of the Church, the dominant language of philosophy and scholarship, and the preferred language for writers. Any even vaguely serious scholar or poet knew at least a little, and a good priest could speak it. Hebrew was known as well, though not as widely.

It was harder to find languages that weren't used in European scholarship. Greek was not well understood in western Europe at the beginning of the Renaissance. A few scholars owned books written in Greek but complained that no one could read them. By the beginning of the 15th century, though, visiting Byzantines had begun to reintroduce Greek into the West (mostly in Italy), and a handful of Western scholars studied in Constantinople. The first Italian text on Greek grammar was published in Firenze in 1484.

Given Firenze's involvement with the East, Arabic and Turkish speakers visited from time to time, but they were be the exception rather than the rule. Other than some Arabic works possessed by a few Italians, manuscripts in Arabic were not widely owned or translated. One of the few non-Europeans to reside in Italy for any length of time in this era was Leo Africanus, a Moorish scholar and diplomat born in Andalusia, educated in Morocco, and captured by European pirates. He converted to Christianity, probably a necessity for any resident of Europe, became a favorite of Pope Leo X, and wrote a well-known if somewhat questionable geography of Africa. (The errors were not his fault; early transcribers embellished on Leo's manuscript.)

HOMES AND SHOPS

Most buildings within the city walls were made of kiln-fired clay brick or, in poorer areas, sun-dried mud brick, with wooden or tile roofs. Expensive edifices, including churches and the palazzos of the wealthy, were made from stone. Building laws discouraged wooden structures and prohibited thatched roofs, both of which pose severe fire hazards.

The typical construction was three or four stories tall. High ceilings were common if the builder could afford them – a three-story palazzo might be 60 feet tall. Main living quarters were on the lower floors. Upper stories and the occasional cellar were used for storage.

Buildings were mostly unpainted or stuccoed, but they might be decorated with flowers or banners indicating political, religious, or familial affiliations. Windows were tall and narrow. Since window glass was still quite expensive, windows were typically covered with panes of oiled linen, which lets in light but keeps out weather. The linen might be glazed in wealthier homes. Doors were often ornately carved and embellished.

In contrast with their plain facades, buildings could be very elaborately decorated inside, particularly churches and the homes of the wealthy. Rooms typically featured paintings, tapestries, and statuary, as well as ceilings by painted frescoes, perhaps depicting heaven or the stars of the night sky.

A feature of architecture all over the Mediterranean is that almost every cluster of small homes or large building has at least one courtyard with rooms built around it. That was true of Firenze as well. People slept indoors, but most work and

entertaining and some cooking took place outside. The courtyard offered a cool, shaded place away from the noise and traffic of the city streets while providing more wall space for windows to light the dim interiors. In bigger structures, courtyards were often lined with sheltered walkways and, with tall buildings, a ring of balconies as well. Large buildings often had small balconies facing the streets and piazzas.

A common feature in Renaissance Italian architecture was a freestanding, roofed colonnade. In Italian, it's called a *loggia*, though similar structures can be found in any warm climate (for example, the very similar *stoa* is ubiquitous in Classical Greek architecture). The roof provides shelter from the sun and occasional rain, while the open sides allow air circulation. Narrow loggias appeared as porches attached to the sides of buildings, while wide ones, as in the Mercato Nuovo, comfortably roofed over large areas.

Shops and other places of business were often built into the ground floor of homes. Even the Medici Palazzo had a public entrance and an area where business could be transacted. However, the primary office of the Medici bank was located in the Mercato Nuovo.

In addition to homes and shops, Firenze had a great many religious institutions. Most streets had at least one church, small shrine, or monastic institution. (The city was home to over 100 small institutions.) There were several “hospitals,” which at the time meant charity homes for travelers and the poor. Florentines also made a virtue of cleanliness, and the city had four public bathhouses.

IMPORTANT BUILDINGS

Buildings in Firenze varied in height from single-story dwellings to the huge cathedral. For more information about structures within the city, see p. 6.

THE DUOMO

The skyline of Renaissance Firenze was dominated by its cathedral, the Basilica de Santa Maria de Fiore or, as it is generally known, *il Duomo* (“duomo” simply means a church that has been used as a cathedral at some point). Through most of the Renaissance, the Duomo was the biggest Catholic church in the world (500 feet long by 300 feet wide, 75 feet high for the most part but nearly 300 feet high at the top of the dome). It became second only to St. Peter's in Rome at the end of the 16th century.

Even by itself, Brunelleschi's octagonal dome is an architectural marvel. It remains the largest masonry dome in the world, and the double-shelled design was built without scaffolding, using specially designed chains to maintain proper internal tensions.

Unlike more northerly Gothic-period cathedrals, it does not have long vistas of stained-glass windows (it has *some* stained glass windows, but not to the extent of more northern architecture) or gargoyles-decorated flying buttresses protruding from

the exterior. Instead, it is encased in light-colored marble panels and has just a few small, if exquisite, windows to keep the inside dim and refreshingly cool during the day. The southwest corner of this cross-shaped building (the bottom right corner of the cross) has a square, 90-yard-tall bell tower. A large octagonal baptistery sits immediately to the west.

THE PALAZZO DELLA SIGNORIA

Also called the Palazzo dei Priori, Palazzo Vecchio (“old palace,” after Grand Duke Cosimo moved the seat of government to the Uffizi), and other names depending on how it was being used at the time, this building was the seat of Firenze's government. The four-story structure is a mix of new and old construction, with the tower and a nearby palazzo being incorporated into a single building. It incorporates two courtyards; some wide, open shafts for light; a few large galleries for ceremonies and large meetings; and a great many smaller rooms to use as individual offices and, when necessary, residences. It was also decorated by several of the better artists active during the period.

The tower was a common feature of medieval Italian architecture. Every important family had its own defensive tower where it could take refuge against attacks and survey the town. By the Renaissance, most towers had passed away and new construction was intended more for industry and comfort than warfare. However, since the Palazzo della Signoria retained some of its defensive function, that tower remained. The tower was equipped with a single-handed clock facing the piazza (the current two-handed clock was installed in the 17th century). It also contained small prison cells that held, at various times, Cosimo de Medici and Savonarola.

UFFIZI PALACE

This was the last major building undertaken during the period. The name of the building means “the offices.” It was commissioned by Grand Duke Cosimo to replace the Palazzo della Signoria as the center of Firenze’s government. The long, narrow, U-shaped structure was constructed to resemble an idealized city street. The ground floor had a long, colonnaded gallery all the way around the interior of the U, while upper floors were entirely offices and other small rooms.

OTHER NOTABLE SPOTS

Palazzo Medici: The Medici palace is notable for its outward modesty. The exterior of the three-story building is made of rusticated (not entirely smooth) stone, giving it a less grand appearance than it might otherwise have. According to contemporary accounts, though, the interior was furnished as finely as any other house of the era.

Mercato Nuovo: One of Firenze’s largest open spaces, the Mercato Nuovo was the center of Firenze’s banking industry. The Medici and many others set up their tables there. It also served as a market for a variety of luxury goods, though all food sales were prohibited there. The center of the market holds the *pietra dello scandalo*, or stone of scandal, where defaulted debtors were punished. They were stripped from the waist down and received a vicious public spanking. In the middle of the 16th century, a loggia was constructed in the center of the market, providing shelter for merchants.

Vasari Corridor: This unusual structure is one of the most visible symbols of Firenze’s transformation from a republic into an autocracy. The corridor consists of sections of elevated, sheltered walkway that connect the Palazzo della Signoria and the Uffizi palace on one side of the Arno with the Pitti palace on the other by way of the Ponte Vecchio. The corridor begins with a small section connecting the third floors of the Palazzo della Signoria and the Uffizi. The bulk of the corridor goes from the Uffizi alongside and then south across the river. It was commissioned by Grand Duke Cosimo to allow him and other officials to move between important buildings without having to expose themselves to the public.

The Basilica of San Lorenzo: This was essentially the Medici family church. It was largely another of Brunelleschi’s projects, though a number of other important artists had their hands on it at one time or another. Every important Medici from Giovanni di Bicci through Grand Duke Cosimo and beyond (all but the last Grand Duke) was entombed here, as were the sculptor Donatello and a handful of other important artists. One of the most peculiar aspects of the church is its completely undecorated brick facade. Brunelleschi died before he could come up with a proper design. Decades later, Michelangelo was commissioned to build one, but the project was abruptly canceled (though he was later commissioned to construct more monumental tombs for the Medici buried inside), so the front of the church remains undecorated into modern times.

Palazzo della Bargello: Another fortified building near the center of the city, the Bargello was the headquarters of the Podesta and Firenze’s criminal court. It also served as a barracks for the city guard and was adjacent to the Stinche, Firenze’s small and, by all accounts, very unpleasant municipal prison.

Menagerie: The Medici maintained a small zoo near their palazzo. The lion was a particularly favored animal, given their symbolism. In 1486, the sultan of Egypt sent Lorenzo a giraffe, one of the few to come to Europe since the Roman period. It survived less than a year and reportedly died when its head became stuck in the rafters of the stables where it was kept, breaking its neck. However, the giraffe attained a kind of immortality, being represented in a handful of paintings.

SPECTACLES

Florentines had a number of pastimes to amuse themselves when they weren’t busy engaging in politics or commerce.

SPORTS AND GAMES

Florentines enjoyed a number of sports. One of the most popular was horse racing. Since Firenze had no purpose-built racetracks, jockeys raced through the city streets. In a prestigious, regularly staged *palio* (a race named after its prize, an elaborately decorated banner), horses entered by both locals and visiting noblemen were raced from one end of the city to the other. The custom developed of making the horses race without jockeys. Cheering spectators kept them moving, though they would occasionally crash through the crowds.



Another, less expensive sport, *calcio* (football) was popular, although the Renaissance version was very different from any modern sport. Like soccer, the ball remained in play until a goal was scored. Like rugby or American football, it was legal to carry and throw the ball as well as kick it.

Teams were very large, with up to 27 men on a side. Pushing, kicking, and punching other players were all allowed in order to get the ball and score a goal, making the game look more like a brawl than a sport. During Carnival, young men of the city’s leading families would gather in the Piazza Santa Croce and play a game that attracted huge crowds. It was even played when the Spanish besieged the city in 1530.

Other “sporting” events were less sublimated forms of combat. Despite their republican pretensions and reluctance to actually fight, wealthy Florentines staged jousts in the piazzas, with full armor and real weapons. Combatants usually dropped out if they were wounded, but lasting injuries and even deaths were occasionally suffered. During some special festivals, hunts of exotic animals were staged in artificial sets resembling the countryside.

Adventure Seed: Vanity, Thy Name Is Firenze

Many items burned under Savonarola were enormously valuable: fine furs, silk garments, books, and so on. Treasure-hunting PCs may reason that if other people are getting rid of them, there's no reason why they shouldn't take them for themselves. The “vanities” were typically collected by Savonarola's child morality police and piled up in public squares. Fleet-footed PCs might snatch items from the growing piles or attempt to bribe their guardians. (Such attempts are known to have failed miserably; a Venetian merchant's offer of 20,000 florins for the contents of one of the first bonfires was turned down and the merchant himself was burned in effigy.) They might even try to take them by force, though no one should believe the old saying about taking candy from babies, particularly not babies at the forefront of a radical social movement.

BONFIRES OF THE VANITIES

During the period of Savonarola's sway over Firenze, games and public festivities were replaced by a more peculiar and not entirely comfortable kind of spectacle. Citizens were encouraged to collect secular books, indecent artwork, gaming equipment (such as dice and chessboards), cosmetics, fine clothing, and other goods that represented luxury and materialism, pile them up, and burn them. Many valuable artworks and books were destroyed in the bonfires. Ironically, though, it was also how Savonarola was himself executed.

OTHER AMUSEMENTS

The usual amusements of drinking, gambling, music, and good companionship were as commonplace in Firenze as they are anywhere else, and they faced no particular legal impediments beyond the ineffective sumptuary laws. Chess was popular, as were gambling games with using dice. Playing cards had not yet become cheap enough to be a well-known pastime. Despite idealized codes of behavior that maintained that women, particularly unmarried women, should stay in their homes when not in church, the sexes mingled relatively freely for that time. Matchmakers, though, frequently arranged marriages, and men typically married late in life, if at all.

Just as the Renaissance yielded vast quantities of visual art, it also produced a great deal of music. Many popular instruments would be regarded by modern audiences as more medieval than modern, such as the lute (a many-stringed guitar-like

FESTIVALS

One of the ways the rich and powerful used their wealth and influence was to make a big show of themselves. Pomp and circumstance accompanied significant public acts. For example, new members of the Signoria took office with a procession, so the people of Firenze could be assured of a grand parade with banners, relics, and officials in robes of state at least every two months.

Weddings of the rich and powerful were a big deal. Celebrations could last for days with entertainment and staggering feasts for hundreds of invited guests, as well as food and alms distributed to many of the city's other residents. Lorenzo de Medici's wedding in 1469 was accompanied by a tournament involving 18 men from the city's foremost families accompanied by crowds of retainers, all wearing armor covered by elaborately decorated surcoats. The fighting was largely formalized and symbolic. Processions, musicians, and endless ceremony accompanied everything. The feast for Lorenzo's sister Lucrezia's wedding was so immense that it required the construction of a new kitchen to feed 500 guests.

The wealthy weren't the only ones to be involved in public festivities. Many holidays saw general celebration. The feast of St. John the Baptist, Firenze's patron saint, was June 24, and it was a day of emphatic civic pride. A procession with models on wagons representing towns under Florentine control made its way around the Piazza della Signoria, processions of people dressed as saints went all over the city, and there were two horse races. The one in the morning had horses with riders, while the afternoon race involved riderless horses spurred on by spiked balls hanging from their sides.

May Day, not Valentine's Day, was the holiday for young lovers. Unmarried young men hung decorated green branches on the doors of women they were fond of. At night, they would put on elaborate finery and call to the women to come out to them, accompanied by torches and music.

instrument) and the krumhorn (a reed instrument with a buzzing tone similar to that of a bagpipe). However, keyboard instruments became increasingly popular, including bellows-powered pipe organs and a variety of instruments similar to the harpsichord. In the 16th century, Firenze became a center for styles of choral music such as the madrigal and the motet, which involve multiple voices singing complex sets of separate lines.

In addition to having no racetracks, Firenze had no purpose-built theaters. It did, however, have a growing theatrical tradition. The religious mystery plays of the Middle Ages were giving way to secular plays written by humanist playwrights, often in imitation of Greek and Roman originals. Unlike the contemporary theaters of northern Europe, actresses were allowed on stage instead of having boys and beardless young men play female parts.

CHAPTER SIX

CAMPAIGNS

With so much going on in Firenze, the city has the potential to fit neatly into any type of campaign. Whether players seek

espionage, fighting, politics, or romance, Firenze provides many opportunities for any kind of campaign.

FIRENZE AS DESTINATION

For outsiders, Firenze has a great deal to offer materially, intellectually, and politically. Just about any exotic, high-value commodity in Europe can be found in Firenze in quantities worth shipping. In addition to being a transshipment point for items from Africa and the East, it has a booming trade in luxury textiles and fine art. Anyone looking for a valuable commodity has good reason to visit. For outsiders with goods that *can't* be found in Europe, Firenze is a reasonable place to try to introduce them. Many of Firenze's wealthy inhabitants have a taste for the exotic and the money to make bringing it to them worthwhile.

Since it is a center of scholarship, Firenze is a natural location to search for obscure books or have untranslated texts examined. A world-spanning treasure-hunting campaign could easily go through Firenze several times as secret journals are discovered or maps with peculiar geometry appear.

Of course, diplomacy is an ongoing concern. Diplomats were common visitors, and Firenze hosted international conferences. Though there was no such conference historically,

a meeting between Western and Turkish or Egyptian diplomats in Firenze would at least be plausible.

As a dark counterpart to diplomacy, exiles from other cities might use Firenze as a temporary base and meeting place from which to organize an uprising in their homeland, and spies inevitably shadow regular diplomats.

All of this activity gives a reason for a broad range of character types to get involved in traveling to Firenze: sages in search of new or recovered knowledge; merchants looking to get rich or use some of their wealth for Firenze's luxury products; diplomats and political players coordinating their own rise to power; and any hangers-on they might have (such as personal physicians and bodyguards).

Firenze is also well-equipped with inns to host short-term visitors, while medium-term temporary residents may be able to obtain accommodation at a small monastery. Long-term temporary residents, though, are most likely to find a place to stay in someone's house, particularly if they are upper class.

FIRENZE AS HOME

Like any other civilized area, Firenze is subject to forces of law and order. Characters built with the expectation of doing massive violence aren't likely to find much to do in town; they'll want to go off and rampage through somebody else's countryside (see *Military Campaigns*, below). Violence at home is typically limited to recreational jousting, dueling, riots, and the occasional assassination. Firenze itself is better suited to more socially oriented campaigns, such as political intrigue or mercantile activity.

Any Florentine character, much like any other character who stays in one place, is likely to be part of an extensive

social context. This doesn't mean that a Florentine character *must* have Allies, Claim to Hospitality, Dependents, Duty or Sense of Duty, Enemies, and other social traits, but all characters of significant social standing will certainly have at least a few of those.

Though they don't usually figure as adventuring characters, artists, scholars, and merchants may be people of considerable influence. The wealthy are linked to governing factions, and given the patronage that Firenze's ruling class provided to scholars and artists, prominent ones will be close to the rich and powerful.

MILITARY CAMPAIGNS

With the predominance of small wars and small units of mercenaries in Renaissance Italian warfare, this is an excellent setting for a low-tech military campaign. Characters may

travel all over Italy and fight every kind of military action from ambushes to sieges and against everything from armored knights to musketeers to rabble armed with rakes.

Most conflicts, particularly in the quattrocento, involved small enough units that individual PCs can have a real impact on outcomes. It's quite plausible for a city to seek out and hire a small group of specialists, such as one consisting entirely of PCs. Successful mercenaries don't have to be native to the region they fight for or even to Italy. The 14th-century English mercenary Sir John Hawkwood served as Firenze's supreme military commander in the 1390s, and he was lavishly honored for his work.

The table below sets out how Renaissance military ranks correspond to the Rank advantage. Unless he has an exceptional reputation or is being hired on for a very small conflict, a condottiero (that is, a mercenary officer) will have at least Rank 4. The distinctions between junior and senior versions of a rank aren't formal, but more experienced officers commanding larger detachments take precedence in the field. A mercenary officer

may have a Reputation, Allies, or Patrons within the civic government hiring him (Allies are more likely than Patrons for Firenze). He might take a group of particularly loyal troops as Allies, too.. Conversely, common soldiers may be able to take their commander as a Patron. Feudal lords moonlighting as mercenaries have Status in place of or in addition to Rank.

<i>Position</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Soldier	0
Commander of a lance	1
Junior caposquadra	2
Senior caposquadra	3
Junior colonello	4
Senior colonello	5
Marshal	6



POLITICS AND INTRIGUE

Secret plotting approaches the status of a regular pastime for the wealthy and powerful in Firenze. Most intrigues are plots to advance the interests of a family or other small group of conspirators against another. Nonetheless, even a grandiose scheme to take over Firenze, Italy, or the world comes down to a question of keeping the interests of all the conspirators coordinated until they can actually get something done. Although a successful plot often needs a number of conspirators to look after all the details (exert broad action to damage an enemy's business interests, convince the Signoria not to aid an opponent when they otherwise might, etc.), few people can be trusted very far because of conflicting loyalties. Many of the more notable conspiracies in Florentine history involved former allies. The Pazzi, for example, were former allies of the

Medici, while the Pitti who wanted to usurp the elder Piero's position were once supporters of Cosimo. Personal morality can even be an issue. For instance, a pair of priests was designated by the Pazzi to assassinate Lorenzo because their first choice, a condottiero, felt that attacking someone in a church was blasphemous.

Many potential foes are relatives as well. Political power was held by only a few hundred families, which were consolidated into even fewer extended families and power blocs. While a cousin might seem like a potential ally, the situation becomes far more complicated if he is married to an enemy's sister.

Many historical plots involved lots of scheming and building alliances but very little action. Pitched battles are risky, expensive, and unpopular. Anyone who resorts to violence and does not win immediately and decisively is in great danger not just from his enemies, but from the state, which is usually obligated to act against anyone disturbing the peace. For example, when the Pitti declined to directly fight Piero de Medici, a peaceful accommodation was reached; when the Pazzi attempted to assassinate Lorenzo and seize the Palazzo della Signoria, the family was decimated. In a way, it's like a game of chess: Plots usually end up in a checkmate, with the leading figures rendered unable to act (except, perhaps, to flee into exile) rather than destroyed outright, but they survive to fight another day.

Though Status in Firenze mostly belongs to the members of the republican government and those able to participate in it, the most powerful person in the city usually had no office. Except for periods of exile, the highest level of Status belonged to the leader of the Medici. Only after 1531 did that Status correspond to a title. This table indicates appropriate levels of Status for characters in Firenze.

<i>Position</i>	<i>Status</i>
Reigning head of the Medici	5
Gonfaloniere	4
Sitting member of the Signoria	3
Lesser government official	2
Other member of the political class (potential office-holders and voters)	1

Adventure Seed: Lega di Giustizia

It's the mid-1470s, and a group of diplomats from across Italy have come up with a radical new idea: Instead of relying on the Treaty of Lodi to maintain an uneasy peace, create a body of supreme magistrates to rule Italy as a single nation. Though no one will speak of it publicly, the Medici and Sforzas are intrigued by the idea, and certain members of the Venetian Senate and the court of Napoli are interested as well. Pope Sixtus IV, however, would certainly oppose any plan that didn't put the pope firmly in charge of such a powerful alliance.

PCs with social and academic skills can act as diplomats, feeling out potential allies, developing vital details, and keeping an eye out for potential traitors and Papal agents. More physically oriented characters can act as their agents: smuggling secret messages, making contact with other agents in dark alleys and livery stables, spying on the opposition, and, if it comes to that, taking direct action against enemies.

Diplomats may be involved in intrigue as well. On one hand, a corps of resident and traveling diplomats was instrumental in keeping Italy peaceful for decades. On the other, diplomats quickly came to be recognized as polite spies. Despite being foreigners, diplomats could easily be drawn into local disputes. Up to the 1490s, rival factions could plausibly try to enlist the aid of other cities (as, for example, the Pazzi involved Roma and Napoli while the Medici often relied on Milano). In the 16th century, intrigues could easily be colored by how larger powers outside Italy might react to local power shifts, making diplomats active players in shady

affairs. In intrigues, diplomats operate as spymasters, gathering information from local agents and sending it home. They even may find themselves negotiating with members of local factions, promising support in revolts, safe exile if things don't go well, or no safe exile for enemies if they do. Since diplomats were drawn from the ruling class, diplomat characters should have Status, Clerical Investment, or Social Regard. They also should have Diplomatic Immunity while on diplomatic missions. That immunity is personal, though; the idea of extraterritoriality for embassies is more than a century in the future.

CROSSOVERS

Though Firenze provides a rich background for a strictly historical game, it can fit into a wide range of other campaigns with surprisingly little modification.

INFINITE WORLDS

Setting aside conventional opportunities posed by a close parallel (trade in works by alternate versions of artists, research visits, cross-time tourism, etc.), Firenze is an important nexus for alternate histories. For example, if Firenze (or any other Italian city) had developed good relations with the Ottoman Turks, that might have kept the Eastern spice routes open, greatly reducing the incentive for western European nations to explore and colonize the New World. If properly capitalized on, this could have created an Italian-Ottoman axis to dominate Europe and western Asia for a century or more, with tremendous potential impact on the colonization of the New World, the concurrent native American genocide, African slavery, and relations between the West and China.

Many groups have their own reasons for interfering in an alternate Renaissance. Centrum might want to bolster the humanist movement and promote constitutional government at the expense of Papal authority; they'd hate Savonarola on general principle. Homeline Turkish nationalists or militant Muslims might try to weaken the Italian cities, including Firenze, with the hope of leaving it open to an Ottoman Turkish invasion. Alternatively, they might try to strengthen them as part of an elaborate flanking move, setting them up as a distraction to the Holy Roman Empire to weaken imperial holdings in the Balkans and giving the Turks an open door to Europe.

ESPIONAGE

A natural consequence of the importance of diplomacy is the opportunity for espionage. Indeed, a network of people who can find things out and take subtle actions is a fitting tool for the Medici. Rather than being part of a formal espionage agency, characters would simply be friends of Cosimo or Lorenzo, doing little favors for him.

In a purely realistic game, spies are disgruntled locals, servants, or associates of more important people willing to sell out but limited to providing information on or performing operations in a very small area. Even so, there's ample room for far more cinematic espionage. In addition to traveling to

any number of romantic locations, the art of the Renaissance and the pomp and grandeur of wealthy Italian cities provides an excellent setting for a James Bond-style sophisticate 400 years before the Cold War. What better to arm him with than clockpunk or alchemical gadgets from his more technical associates?

MARTIAL ARTS

If political intrigue and foreign trade become boring, you can always stab somebody. Renaissance Firenze is a natural place for both fighting masters and fighting students from across Europe to settle, to serve as mercenaries or instructors to anyone willing to pay.

Masters face the same problems during the Renaissance as they do elsewhere, trying to teach paying students without revealing their secrets to everyone. Dueling is an accepted custom, so traditional martial-arts themes of spying on others' styles, fighting for honor against other schools of combat, and defending one's personal honor with force all work in this era. The normal attractions of festive jousts and other mock combats, as well as the potential political and legal complications of patronage, further add to the adventure possibilities.

Furthermore, books on fighting styles from everywhere in Europe make their way there, in addition to native-grown tactics. One of the earliest illustrated guides to fighting was written in Italy in the early 15th century.

Firenze also offers a varied physical environment for fighting. The countryside provides as much of a featureless fighting ground as any combatants so inclined would need (ignoring the occasional well-hidden rabbit hole, old tree root, or bit of soft ground). Meanwhile, the city proper supplies far more tactically interesting possibilities. Courtyards and loggias sport columns to duck behind. Combatants can use them for defense, or they can lie in wait for the enemy to pass by these places. Pediments and steps around important buildings provide different levels for fighting, as do the stairways that are a necessary feature in most Florentine buildings. Moreover, fighting outside in a bustling city like Firenze means fighting in public at the very least, and quite possibly fighting in the middle of a crowd. Even the simplest fencing match might be complicated by barking dogs, wagons passing through, chairs and tables set out on the streetside, the authorities closing down an unseemly brawl, and bystanders placing bets or even joining in.

FANTASY

Another obvious use for Firenze is in a fantasy campaign. Firenze hardly has to be retooled at all to fit into a conventional fantasy setting. Indeed, with deposit banks, rudimentary clockwork, and high-quality plate armor, many fantasy worlds bear as much resemblance to TL4 Italy as they do to TL3 feudal Europe.

Even in a campaign free of mythical monsters, Firenze can be an important center for mystics. Medicine was hardly distinguishable from magic, and mystical texts of every kind could easily make their way there. A number of prominent figures studied alchemy, including Grand Duke Cosimo I himself. Firenze also would be one of the most likely places in Europe to find Jewish Cabalists.

To turn Firenze into a fantasy city, all that needs be done is to make it all true. Magicians might have their own guild (St. Cyprian of Antioch is an appropriate patron). The rich and powerful would sponsor magical scholarship, and they might dabble in magic themselves. They would work to recover and import magical artifacts and materials. A magical Firenze would be a center of mystical as well as mundane commerce and learning.

CLOCKPUNK

Magic isn't the only way to make a fantastic Firenze. The city had more than its fair share of technically gifted artisans, so it may also be the center off a clockwork-powered industrial revolution.

In this alternate history, Brunelleschi would have started the clockwork revolution, inventing pendulum-powered cranes to lift materials to the top of the Duomo and spring-driven temporary supports that could walk themselves along the walls. Cosimo then saw the advantage of clockwork-powered industry, and he built waterwheels along the Arno to wind masses of automata. The technology would have spread quickly through Europe, particularly as the restless Leonardo da Vinci traveled from one high-paying court after another, but Firenze kept enough of its native sons like Michelangelo to maintain a technological edge.

This creates a TL(4+1) Firenze, where the streets are full of ticking bronze horses pulling trams, and the tower of the Palazzo delle Signoria is reached by mechanical elevator. Firenze grows even wealthier on the sales of clockwork-powered toys, household conveniences, and weapons, and the Medici bank is starting to use fast, accurate mechanical adding machines. On clockpunk Renaissance battlefields, crossbowmen and musketeers are replaced by troops armed with repeating spring-powered dart guns, and multi-barreled cannon are mounted in slow-crawling armored vehicles shaped like turtles and elephants. Meanwhile, rumor has it that Venezia is developing a gryphon-shaped ornithopter . . .

HORROR

The Renaissance wasn't all glorious art and new learning. The fears and superstitions of the past remained in full force. The most obvious threats were ghosts, witchcraft, and

demonic possession. (However, Italy appears to have been less concerned with witchcraft than northern Europe and Firenze less concerned than average for Italy.) The Bargello and the Stinche should be particularly full of angry spirits, and many prominent people of the age, notably the Medici and the Borgia family, may have left any number of unhappy ghosts in their wake. PCs could pursue a career as ghostbusters just by tracing the history of human brutality. If they do, it's worth knowing that it was illegal for laymen to attempt exorcism. Unofficial supernatural investigators face the double problem of unearthing a past that others would prefer to keep hidden and offending the Church as they go.

Since Firenze's foundation was recent relative to many other Renaissance cities and its underground not at all extensive, it's unlikely that it sits atop any long-buried horrors. Nevertheless, the Florentines can import them or invent them on their own. The collectors of Classical (and older) antiquities could easily bring in long-lost books of dreadful knowledge, cursed Greek idols, Egyptian sarcophagi containing long-slumbering vampires, or baleful pre-human artifacts. Meanwhile, new knowledge can easily become perilous: musicians may discover melodies that drive men mad, artists may use new techniques that make their paintings take on a horrible life of their own, and an alchemist may invent a universal solvent with the power to destroy the world.

SCIENCE FICTION

If it can be stripped of its technological aspects while preserving that social milieu, much about Renaissance Firenze can be transported to some *very* different settings.

For cyperpunk, by replacing the Black Death, humanism, and velvet with a biotech catastrophe, cybernetics, and span-dex, Firenze moves from the Renaissance to a dystopian future. Just as in the historical past, the Medici can be a powerful dynasty of bankers who use their wealth and influence to unofficially assume control of the government. They have subverted the respected civic cyberdemocracy that randomly selects eligible citizens for positions of authority to chose only their own candidates. Some of the people of Firenze are avid supporters of the Medici family and their unflagging philanthropy. After all, the family constructed one of the most powerful local area networks in existence, and they support a new generation of artists working in direct brain stimulation, to say nothing of the combat *calcio* league. Others distrust the Medici and the power that their control of the network and ominous new brain-stim technologies give them.

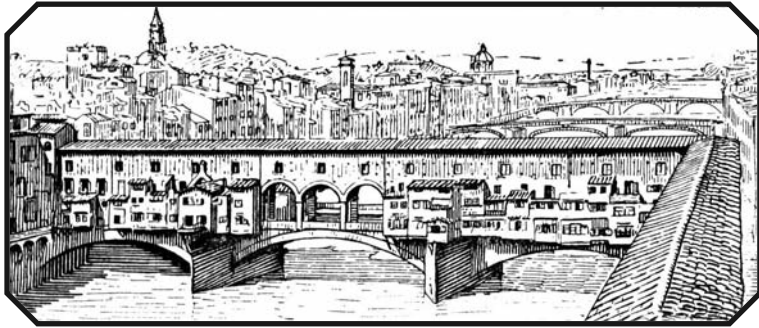
As a post-apocalyptic example, the world may have been shattered by a plague. In the aftermath, a powerful commercial interest has quietly taken over the government while an influx of new knowledge combined with bold new forms of art transform society to the great dismay of cultural conservatives.

In a space campaign, Italy can be a belt of inhabited asteroids, with each city as its own bubble habitat; Spain, France, and the Holy Roman empire are highly populated terraformed planets, while the Muslim world is a nearby system reached by slow FTL. Spheres of influence are determined not just by shifting alliances, but by shifting orbits as well.



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Martines, Lauro. *Fire in the City: Savonarola and the Struggle for the Soul of Renaissance Florence* (Oxford University Press, 2006). An outstanding biography of Savonarola, applying Martines' eye for detail and engaging style to a slightly later period than *April Blood*.

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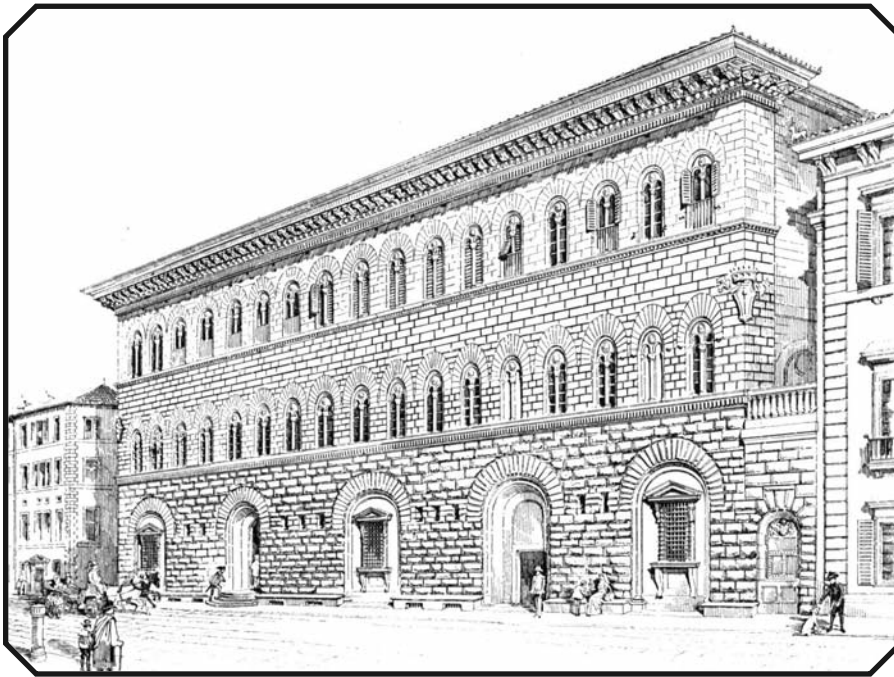
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Turnbull, Steven. *The Art of Renaissance Warfare: From the Fall of Constantinople to the Thirty Years War* (Greenhill, 2006). Less focused on Italy than *Mercenaries and Their Masters*, but more accessible both physically and in its subject matter.

*Leave behind your
beloved isle,
Leave your delicate and
beautiful kingdom,
Goddess Ciprigna, and
rest beside this stream
Which waters the fine
green grass.*

*– Lorenzo de Medici,
Sonnet iii*



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Machiavelli, Niccolò (Harvey Mansfield, translator). *The Prince* (University of Chicago Press, 1988). This bedrock work

of political philosophy is often mentioned but rarely read, and is far less wicked than its critics would claim.

Vasari, Giorgio (Julia Conway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella, translators). *Lives of the Artists*. (Oxford University Press, 2008). One of the first works to describe the lives of artists, and certainly the first of its magnitude.

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Yarbro, Chelsea Quinn. *Ariosto* (Tor, 1980). Another fantasy Florence, this one shifting between the poet Ariosto's artistic struggles and his character Orlando's adventures. Yarbro has used Florence as a setting for other books, such as the historical vampire novel *The Palace*.

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Huelgas Ensemble. *In Morte di Madonna Laura* (Sony, 1991). The selections on this recording, written through the Renaissance, are based on the works of Petrarch, a Tuscan and one of the grandfathers of the Renaissance.

O'Dette, Paul. *Dolcissima et Amorosa: Early Italian Renaissance Lute Music* (Harmonia Mundi, 1994). In addition to being very good, if rather delicate, music, O'Dette is one of the better lutenists of his generation.

If people knew how hard I had to work to gain my mastery, it wouldn't seem wonderful at all.

– Michelangelo

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