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AND TENANTS'
DECLARATIONS FROM
THE CATASTO OF 1427

Loans and Livestock: Comparing Landlords' and Tenants' Declarations from the Catasto of 1427

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The historical literature provides a mixed judgment on late medieval/early modern Tuscan sharecropping. Some work suggests that sharecropping was beneficial for tenants because landlords provided capital inputs for impoverished rural inhabitants. Other work notes that tenants were exploited, and that some landlords did not, in fact, provide sufficient capital. One of Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's findings from their examination of the Catasto of 1427 is particularly intriguing in light of this debate. They found that sharecroppers were the least likely of all the rural Tuscan residents to mention livestock on their *Catasto* declarations, but were unable to provide a complete explanation of this finding (1985:118-119). Were landlords negligent in providing livestock for these farms? If so, sharecropping may have held few benefits for tenants. They also noted, however, that the *Catasto* provided an incomplete record of loans and livestock, because these were neither taxable assets nor allowable tax deductions.

To reconsider the provisioning of share-tenancies, I examine the *Catasto* declarations of two Mugellan parishes, San Piero a Sieve and Santa Maria a Spugnole, where I matched landlords' to tenants' declarations, providing two estimates of loans and livestock on each holding. These results show that in a majority of cases, the loans declared by landlords and tenants matched. On the other hand, the declarations diverged widely with respect to the livestock. The landlords' declarations indicated that livestock was also provided on a majority of the farms, even though the tenants' declarations rarely indicated this. These results suggest that share-tenants may have had more access to livestock than Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's results indicate, because they used only the tenants' declarations. Below, I review some of the historical

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EXTRACT

literature on sharecropping in late medieval and early modern Tuscany. Then, I explain how the declarations of landlords and tenants can be matched and present the results from these matched declarations.

The Rise of Sharecropping in Tuscany

In Tuscany, sharecropping began to spread well before 1350 and continued throughout the fifteenth century (Jones 1968). Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's data suggest that in 1427, 56.6 percent of rural families were smallholders (they may have leased a few, additional plots), 18.9 percent were sharecroppers, and 4.3 percent were fixed-term lessees (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:115-7). Their evidence shows that sharecropping spread between 1427 and 1469 in the four rural quarters of the Florentine contado (1985:117-118). In Santo Spirito, the percentage of sharecropping families was 33.7 in 1427 and 39.3 in 1469; in Santa Croce, it was 25.7 in 1427 and 29.3 in 1469; in Santa Maria Novella, it was 22.4 in 1427 and 32.4 in 1469; and in San Giovanni, it was 19.1 in 1427 and 18.5 in 1469.

For some rural inhabitants, sharecropping was an improvement over smallholding. The sharecroppers' half of the produce from large, partially consolidated farms, may have provided more income than the entire yield from smallholders' modest, scattered plots (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:240; Klapisch and Demonet 1975:425). However, sharecropping was a mixed blessing. Share leases rarely lasted more than five years and the threat of eviction was omnipresent. After the depopulations of the 1350s, the situation of the rural inhabitants may have improved, as tenants were scarce, land was more plentiful, and rural mobility was high. Some evidence suggests that lessees' attempts to improve the terms of their contracts were unsuccessful (Jones 1956:195, 1968:224). Tenant's obligations may have even increased (Mirri 1959:555). Perhaps as a result, rural residents, often the wealthier ones, left the countryside for economic opportunities in Florence (Herlihy 1968:266-8; Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:112-115).

Sharecropping leases had detailed prescriptions specifying the terms of the tenancy. The tenants had to reside on the land and were responsible for "working it well" (*bene lavorare*). "Working it well" was elaborated in statutes and leases and included specific rotations, ploughings, dates of sowing and harvest, intensive cultivation by digging and manuring, digging ditches, pruning, and cultivating vines and olives (Jones 1956:194-5). Some of these leases included labour services and some tenants were responsible for the expenses associated with working and maintaining the farm or because they specified tenant's labour services or additional crops, "first fruits", reserved for the landlord (Kotel'nikova 1974:20-21; see also Piccinni 1985:152; Pinto 1980:300-306). Tenants were not allowed to cut vines or trees, remove hay, straw, or manure, to assume another lease, or to take a job in Florence (Jones 1968:223). At least some landlords provided capital investments for their farms or tenants, such as oxen, cash advances, or

physical improvements (buildings, walls, ditches) to increase productivity (Emigh 1993).

The spread of sharecropping was influenced by the expansion of Florentine capital, and in particular, Florentines' investment in agriculture (Cherubini 1967; Pinto 1982:207-223). Agricultural holdings diversified Florentines' investment portfolios: profits were lower in agriculture, but more secure (Goldthwaite 1980:49-50). Giovanni Rucellai, a wealthy Florentine of the early-fifteenth century, claimed that land was an investment that should balance, not dominate a portfolio (Perosa 1960; cited in Goldthwaite 1980:49). Florentines purchased land in the rural regions and consolidated individual plots into larger farms, providing capital inputs, such as loans and livestock. Consolidation could require extensive amounts of investment, especially when it required building dwellings for tenants newly relocated from nucleated villages (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:117).

In the historical literature, Florentine investment is discussed in the "return to the land" debate: whether landlords were merely interested in exploiting their tenants, providing few capital inputs and being content with whatever half of the produce was left for them or whether landlords were actively involved in their properties. Cipolla, for example, suggested that urban residents were purchasing property, but not making capital investments (1949:182). However, other work suggested that many landlords made investments to improve productivity on their farms. There also is little evidence that Florentines withdrew from business ventures. Herlihy (1981) found no shift from urban manufacturing to agricultural investments. In 1427, the upper two to three percent of the city's wealthiest families had no more invested in real estate than in business (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1978:254, cited in Goldthwaite 1980:49). Florentines apparently followed Rucellai's advice that agricultural investments diversified portfolios, increasing along with investments in other business ventures.

Loans and Livestock

Loans, livestock, and other capital inputs were a central feature of Tuscan sharecropping, resulting from this expansion of Florentine capital. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Tuscan landlords, often Florentines, customarily made loans to share-tenants when they took possession of the farm (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:119). These loans, made by both small and large landowners, were virtually an inseparable condition of share-tenancy (Jones 1968:225; Pinto 1980:307). Loans included cash, cattle, seed, grain, farm implements, clothes, shoes, and food (Jones 1954:177, 1968:225; Kotel'nikova 1974:20,22; Mazzi and Raveggi 1983:28, 291-299; Piccinni 1982:56-59). Tenants borrowed money from new landlords to pay the old ones, or had outstanding loans to both (Jones 1968:225; Kotel'nikova 1974:22; Piccinni 1982:56-59).

The use of loans in conjunction with share-leasing is beyond doubt, but other aspects of rural credit are unclear. Some suggest that tenants were

deeply indebted (Cherubini 1984:131-138; Piccinni 1982:204-212), that the terms of the loans were onerous (Luzzatto 1948:82), and that the size of loans grew each year (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:119-120). Some landlords advanced credit with the intent of attracting tenants and binding them tightly to the land (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:119-120). Others reduced the value of the debts in exchange for more control over their tenants (Pinto 1980:312). Some sharecroppers worked as wage labourers to reduce their debts to the landlords (Pinto 1980:307).

Others argue that some, perhaps even most, tenants repayed their debts by the end of their tenancies, including one who had borrowed for food (Jones 1956:196). Furthermore, while some of the loans were undoubtedly seasonal and discharged quickly, some tenants never repayed their loans and abandoned their tenancies in response to the combined burden of rent and debt (Piumi 1958:494, 1961:130-1; Giorgetti 1974:37; Herlihy 1965:243, 1968:272; Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:106-107, 119; Imberciadori 1957; Jones 1954:176, 1956:195, 1968:225; Mazzi and Raveggi 1983:28, 291-299; Niccolini di Camugliano 1925:16; Pinto 1982:252-329, 423-24). The incentives for flight were especially great when rural inhabitants did not own land. Landlords frequently complained about non-repayment (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:106-107, 119-120) and sometimes initiated legal proceedings (Jones 1968:225). One landlord seized the oxen of his former tenant, pending repayment of a loan (Jones 1956:196). Other landlords simply let tenants, and their debts, go (Jones 1968:225). Although tenants undoubtedly welcomed cash advances and livestock, which may have provided a dynamism to agricultural production not found in other regions, they also created ties of dependence (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:118-120; Jones 1956:195; Jones 1968:234-241; Kotelnikova 1974).

The terms of the provisioning of livestock were even more variable than those surrounding loans and their repayment. The arrangements, for both small and large landlords, included advancing oxen or money to the tenants and debiting them to hold the oxen at their own risk, and sharing the oxen at halves for surrender, repayment or division of price, profit and loss when the lease expired (Imberciadori 1958; Jones 1956:195, 1968:224; Kotelnikova 1974:20, 23, 25; Niccolini di Camugliano 1925:12; Pinto 1980:300-306). Leases (*a soccio*) were common ways to provide livestock on share-tenancies (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:118; Jones 1954:177, 1956:195, 1968:22; Miri 1959:555). Other animals and supplies for the farm were also sometimes shared or debited to the tenant (Jones 1956:195, 1968:224-225; Pinto 1980:300-306).

After the depopulations of the mid-fourteenth century, rural inhabitants may have had some advantages, because landlords' control over tenants was diminished by high rural mobility and the scarcity of tenants. Changes in tenancy were frequent (Jones 1956:196; Niccolini di Camugliano 1925:16-17). Some land went uncultivated for lack of tenants (Herlihy 1968:272; Jones

1956:196; Niccolini di Camugliano 1925:16). This was also true for the Mugellan parishes I examine in more detail below. These Catasto declarations also have references to tenants who left the farm without repaying the debt, suggesting that repayment could be avoided.² Furthermore, Matteo di ser Giovanni, the manager (*fattore*) of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici's farms in the Mugello, wrote in one of his letters to them that good tenants were scarce.³ The depopulations after the mid-fourteenth century also assured that tenants had, at least with respect to loans and tenancy, some bargaining power. The provisioning of loans and livestock was of central importance to sharecroppers' overall well-being, since they had few assets of their own.

The Catasto of 1427

In the analyses that follow, I present findings based on the examination of the *Catasto* of 1427, a set of tax declarations, taken between 1427 and 1430. I examined *Catasto* declarations in two small rural parishes in the Mugello, San Piero a Sieve and Santa Maria a Spugnoles, north of Florence, in relatively close proximity to the city. These parishes provide examples of sharecropping communities where the landlords were wealthy Florentines who leased land to local residents. The region was relatively prosperous, and the soil fertile (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:51). These communities had been transformed by the penetration of the Florentine market economy and sharecroppers predominated, though some smallholders worked their own property, and some smallholders leased additional holdings. The parish of San Piero a Sieve is characterized by the flat flood plain of the Sieve river, with steep hills rising above this plain. Santa Maria a Spugnoles sits above San Piero a Sieve and is characterized by rolling hills. Wheat, other grains, and wine were more commonly listed in the *Catasto* declarations of these Mugellan parishes than olives. The topography of the Sieve plain made cereal cultivation relatively easy, since flat land was easier to till.⁴

For sharecroppers in these parishes, I matched the landlords' and tenants'

² See for example, the Portata of Cante di Rustico Cavalcanti (Archivio del Catasto, vol. 53, fol. 632r) and the Portata of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici (Archivio del Catasto, vol. 49, fol. 1146v).

³ For example, Matteo di ser Giovanni suggested renting a farm because it was not possible to find a better tenant at that time (MAP, Filza XIII, c. 3). Matteo also complained about the difficulty of finding honest tenants. In 1440, he wrote to Cosimo, and Lorenzo explaining that he tried not to be deceived by the tenants, but he could not be everywhere at once. The best solution, he assured them, was to have dealings with good people (MAP, Filza XIII, c. 42).

⁴ Ease of cultivation, of course, was not the only consideration in the Middle Ages. Well into the thirteenth century, settlements on the plains were obstructed by swamps and flooding. Poor drainage delayed the full agricultural exploitation of the fertile lowlands. Low lying areas were also unhealthy (Herlihy 1965:237; Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:34).

Catasto declarations. I used both the *Portate* and the *Campioni* versions of the *Catasto*.⁵ Individuals submitted the *Portate* to the tax officials, who recopied the information onto the *Campioni* and added the appropriate tax calculations. The *Portate* and *Campioni* are similar, but not identical. In some cases, the *Portate* contained some information about loans or livestock that the tax officials did not recopy to the *Campione*, probably because it contained no relevant tax information. I capitalized on Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's previous research on the *Catasto* of 1427, by using their machine readable data (1981), which I reformatted into an index, with names, page and volume numbers, making it possible to search for individuals' declarations and to match landlords' and the tenants' declarations. With this computerized index, I could search quickly for landlords' names and locate the declarations of potential landlords with relative ease. When I identified a landlord, I looked through his or her *Portata* and *Campione* for the piece of property worked by the local resident. In some cases, this was relatively straightforward because the landlord's declaration gave the name of the worker. In other cases, the name was not identical, but could be reconciled to someone in the household. In other cases, the worker's name was not given, but the property was in the appropriate parish and the match seemed unambiguous. When I located a possible landlord, I also read through his or her entire declaration for other pieces of land in these parishes. When property was identified, I also looked through the names given in the *confini*, the borders of the property, to try to identify other landlords in the same region. Thus, I was able to match many of the local residents with the pieces of property they worked. Although there is little doubt that additional farms remained unidentified, matching provided a reasonable way to identify many of the landlords.

Using these matched declarations, I coded information for loans and livestock for both the tenants' and the landlords' declarations. In theory, most loans should have appeared both in the creditor's and debtor's *Catasto* declarations. Creditors were subject to tax on the amount of the loan because it was an asset, while debtors were allowed to subtract their total debts from their taxable assets. However, the tax officials did not consider loans contracted between landlords and share-tenants to be true commercial debts or assets. Consequently, tenants were not allowed to deduct the value of these loans from their total taxable assets and the tax officials often did not assess landlords for the value of these loans (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:16-17,119).

The regulations for livestock were even more complicated. The *Catasto* regulations state that livestock and loans on all farms were supposed to be

⁵ The archival sources are Archivio del Catasto, vol. 177 (Campione), vol. 142 (Portata) (Santa Maria a Spugnole); vol. 321 (Campione), vol. 144 (Portata) (San Piero a Sieve); vol. 330bis (Aggiunte) (Santa Maria a Spugnole and San Piero a Sieve).

declared, although it is not entirely clear whether both the landlords and the tenants were supposed to declare the values (see Karmin 1906:21-22). Landlords were taxed on the livestock on their farms, but were allowed to subtract one florin from the value of the rents for each pair of oxen given to the tenants to work the property (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:14). Livestock held by rural inhabitants was taxable, but the pair of oxen used for cultivation was tax exempt (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:119). These regulations, however, were applied unevenly (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:14). Still, however, many landlords and tenants declared the values of loans and livestock, although the *Catasto* declarations are partial records of these assets (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:118-119; Jones 1968:224).

Comparing Landlords' and Tenants' Declarations

In this section, I compare the monetary values of the loans and livestock declared by the tenants to the value declared by the landlord in the parishes of San Piero a Sieve and Santa Maria a Spugnole. In these two parishes, I was able to match, with reasonable certainty, forty-six landlords' holdings to local tenants.⁶ For these holdings, the landlords declared the mean value of these loans to be 19.27 florins, while the tenants declared the mean value to be 12.73 florins. In a large number of cases, however, the amount declared by the landlord and tenant was virtually identical. The mean difference was composed primarily of a few cases where the landlord declared a loan not mentioned by the tenant or where the debt declared by the landlord was much larger than the value declared by the tenant. In twelve of these forty-six cases, a non-zero amount was declared by both landlord and tenant and matched exactly. In another eleven cases, neither landlord nor tenant declared any loans. In another ten cases, landlords and tenants declared an amount that diverged by no more than five florins. Thus, in thirty-three of the forty-six cases, the landlords' and tenants' declarations of loans were similar or identical. In two cases, the value of the loan that the landlord declared could not be determined from the declaration. Overall, then, the landlords and tenants agreed about transactions involving loans.

In the remaining eleven cases of the forty-six (excluding the two where the value could not be determined), there was a large discrepancy between the landlords' and tenants' listing of the loans. It is useful to distinguish between two types of discrepancies, first, between non-matching amounts where one of them is zero, and second, between non-matching, non-zero values. A value of zero indicates that the declaration made no mention of a loan — either because no loan was made or because it was not declared. In these cases, it is unclear whether landlords and tenants disagreed about their transactions, or

⁶ These holdings are not necessarily single, consolidated pieces of land. In some cases, for example, these holdings were declared as separate plots on the *Portata*, but summarized in the *Campione* as a single holding.

whether one of the parties simply did not declare the value. In cases where non-zero amounts do not match, it is somewhat clearer that there may have been a dispute about the transaction. In seven of these eleven non-matching cases, one of the two parties declared no debt (in six cases, the tenant declared no debt, in one case, the owner declared no debt). For example, Agnozzo di Lotto and his brothers, residents of Santa Maria a Spugnole,⁷ worked farms of Gostanza d'Uberto Cavalcanti⁸ and Gostanza di Rosso Cavalcanti.⁹ Although Agnozzo declared a fifty-florin debt to Gostanza d'Uberto, which matched her declaration, Agnozzo's declaration made no mention of a forty-florin loan that was listed on the declaration of Gostanza di Rosso. In general, it is impossible to tell whether there was a dispute about how much money was owed or whether one of the parties simply did not declare the loan.¹⁰ Some tenants and landlords may not have declared these loans since the amount was irrelevant to the tax collectors. In most of these cases, however, the documents simply do not match and there is no way to resolve the discrepancy between them.

In a relatively small number of cases, however, only four of the forty-six cases, a non-zero amount declared by landlord and tenant greatly diverged. One of these cases is the declaration of Iacopo di Tura, a resident of Santa Maria a Spugnole,¹¹ a tenant of Averardo di Francesco de' Medici. Averardo provided a *prestanza* of forty-five florins, twenty-two *stata* of grain, and four *stata* of *biada*.¹² In contrast, Iacopo listed a debt to Giovanni d'Averardo de' Medici of ten florins, thirteen *lire*, and thirteen *soldi*. Iacopo also declared a debt to Nanni di Domenico, the manager (*fattore*) of Giovanni d'Averardo for four *lire*.

In one case, the discrepancy between non-zero amounts declared by the landlord and tenant can be partially resolved, because different explanations of the amounts were given on the declarations. Cecco di Nencio, a resident of Santa Maria a Spugnole, declared that he owed Cosimo and Lorenzo di Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici thirty-four florins.¹³ Giovanni's declaration, however, stated that Cecco had a *prestanza* of fifteen florins, oxen valued at twenty-five florins, and other livestock (bestie

minute) for fifteen florins.¹⁴ In addition, these declarations may not match because they were registered at different points in time. Cecco's declaration is from the volume of *Aggiunte* recorded in 1429, while Giovanni's is dated 1427.¹⁵ This may account for the discrepancies between the values given by landlords and tenants in five other cases where the rural inhabitants' declarations were also given in the *Aggiunte*.¹⁶ Two of these five cases involved a non-zero amount that did not match. If the tenant's declarations from the *Aggiunte* do not match their landlords' because of the different dates of registration, then the number of cases with discrepancies between non-zero amounts declared by landlords and tenants is very small.

In sharp contrast to the listing of the loans, landlords' and tenants' listings of livestock diverged widely. The mean value of livestock declared by the landlords was 18.34 florins, as compared to 2.49 florins by the tenants. The difference is composed primarily of cases in which the landlord, but not the tenant, declared a value for livestock. In only one case, the landlord and tenant declared amounts that matched exactly. Piero di Bartolo was a resident of Santa Maria a Spugnole,¹⁷ and a tenant of Niccola and Cambio di Messer Vieri de' Medici.¹⁸ Both Piero and Niccola declared that Piero held oxen valued at twenty florins and no additional information was provided about the terms.

In another three cases, the landlord and tenant declared an amount that differed by five florins or less. In another thirteen cases, neither the landlord nor the tenant declared any animals. In contrast to the listing of the loans, then, where the declarations were similar in thirty-three of the forty-six cases, the listing of the livestock was similar only in seventeen of the forty-six cases. In the majority of the cases, twenty-five of the forty-six holdings, the landlords, but not the tenants, declared a value for livestock. In another four cases, the landlords declared that livestock was held on the farm, but

¹⁴ Monte Comune o delle Graticole, Copie del Catasto, vol. 75, fol. 671r (Campione) and Archivio del Catasto, vol. 49, fol. 1146r (Portata).

¹⁵ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 49, fol. 1159v, 1161r (Portata).

¹⁶ In the data set of Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber (1981), eight families are listed as living in the parish of Santa Maria a Spugnole, whose Campioni are found in the volume of *Aggiunte*, vol. 330bis. The names of the heads of the households are: Agostino di Antonio, Francesco di Iacopo Delromagne, Pierozzo di Neri, Iacopo di Romagnetto, Nino di Giovanni, Salvi di Bartolo, Cecco di Nencio, and Berto di Bartolo. Berto di Bartolo, however, probably lived in San Michele a Montecuccoli and I did not include him in my data for Santa Maria a Spugnole. In addition, there were two other *Aggiunte* declarations that probably corresponded to families residing in the parish of Santa Maria a Spugnole, even though Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber coded them elsewhere: Benedetto di Grazino and Nanni di Piero.

¹⁷ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 177, fol. 509r-v (Campione) and vol. 142, fol. 570r (Portata).

¹⁸ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 78, fol. 482r (Campione).

⁷ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 177, fol. 517v-518r (Campione) and vol. 142, fol. 605r-606r (Portata).

⁸ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 79, fol. 459v (Campione) and vol. 53, fol. 1131r-v (Portata).

⁹ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 74, fol. 154v (Campione) and vol. 38, fol. 342v (Portata).

¹⁰ Did tenants purposefully reduce the amount declared on the Catasto, a public record, to try to lower their overall debt? Or did landlords increase the amount for analogous reasons?

¹¹ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 177, fol. 510r (Campione), vol. 142, fol. 572 (Portata).

¹² Archivio del Catasto, vol. 81, fol. 453r (Campione), vol. 60, fol. 85r (Portata). To calculate the monetary value of this *prestanza*, I used the values of the crops given on the declarations for capitalizing the yields.

¹³ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 330bis, fol. 177v (Aggiunte).

did not report the value (or the value cannot be determined). Again, it is impossible to tell whether there was a dispute about how much was owed, whether the tenants chose not to declare the value, or whether the landlords simply provided the livestock under unspecified terms. Unlike the listing of the loans, however, the declarations of livestock of landlords and tenants rarely matched.

In some cases, the declarations give the terms by which the livestock was provided — most commonly, division in halves. For example, Luca di Cola, a resident of Santa Maria a Spugnoles,¹⁹ sharecropped a farm of Mona Gostanza di Rosso Cavalcanti,²⁰ who provided a *prestanza* of twenty-one florins and a pair of oxen valued at 18.5 florins. In addition, sheep, lambs, goats, and pigs were held in halves between landlord and tenant. Gostanza gave the value of the sheep as forty-one florins, ten *soldi*; the lambs as at forty-three florins and ten *soldi*, the goats as thirteen florins, ten *soldi*, and the pigs as thirty florins and ten *soldi*. On Gostanza's Portata, the livestock were declared to be held "a mezzo"; on her *Campione*, the terms were specified as "pro e danno". Luca declared nearly the same values on his *Catasto*: a loan for twenty-one florins, oxen at eighteen florins and additional livestock held in halves, sheep at forty-one florins; lambs at forty-three florins and ten *soldi*; goats at thirteen florins, ten *soldi*; and pigs at thirty florins, ten *soldi*. Similarly, Giovanni di Lagio was a resident of San Piero a Sieve²¹ and a tenant of Tommaso di Francesco de' Medici.²² On his *Portata*, Tommaso declared that the family had a *prestanza* of twenty-three and one half florins, a pair of oxen valued at twenty florins, and three pigs held in halves.²³ Tommaso's share of the pigs was seven and one half lire. There is no mention of the *prestanza*, the oxen, or the pigs on Giovanni's declaration.

In some cases, the declaration stated that the loan was given for the purpose of providing livestock. Antonio di Nanni Comandi was a resident of Santa Maria a Spugnoles,²⁴ and a tenant of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici.²⁵ Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici declared on his *Portata* that Antonio had a *prestanza* for oxen of fifteen florins and other animals (*bestie minute*) for ten florins. Antonio declared that he owed ten florins to Giovanni de' Medici.

These results also show that the usual practice in these parishes was for landlords to provide either loans or livestock, or both. In thirty-eight of the forty-six tenancies, either the tenants' or the landlords' declarations indicated

¹⁹ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 177, fol. 510v-511r (Campione), vol. 142, fol. 573r-v (Portata).

²⁰ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 74, fol. 154v (Campione), vol. 38, fol. 342r (Portata).

²¹ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 321, fol. 530r (Campione), vol. 144, fol. 516r (Portata).

²² Archivio del Catasto, vol. 79, fol. 565v (Campione), vol. 55, fol. 887v (Portata).

²³ "e 3 porcielli che sono mezi loro costo la mia parte lire 7 1/2"

²⁴ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 177, fol. 505r (Campione) and vol. 142, fol. 554r (Portata).

²⁵ Monte Comune o delle Graticole, Copie del Catasto, vol. 75, fol. 671r (Campione) and Archivio del Catasto, vol. 49, fol. 1146r (Portata).

that a loan or livestock had been provided. In three cases, no loans were declared, but the landlords' declarations (in one case the tenant's as well) indicate that livestock was provided. In six of the cases where neither a loan nor livestock were provided, the holding was a small piece of rental property where loans may not have been customary. In one case, the holding was described as twenty-one separate pieces of land. In the remaining one case, an entire *podere* was rented, without any indication of either loans or livestock being provided. Thus, the usual practice of landlords renting large farms in these parishes was to provide loans in cash and/or livestock.

In typical cases, the landlord provided a loan and livestock, both of which were declared on his or her declaration, while the tenant declared the loan, but not the livestock. For example, on the declaration of Lapino d'Azzino, a resident of Santa Maria a Spugnoles,²⁶ a loan from Giovanni de' Medici was declared for thirty florins.²⁷ On Giovanni de' Medici's declaration, the same debt for thirty florins was listed, in addition to a pair of oxen, valued at twenty florins on the *Campione*, other livestock (*bestie minute*) valued at twelve florins. Similarly, Stefano di Lotto, a resident of Santa Maria a Spugnoles listed a debt to Giovanni de' Medici for fifty florins on his *Catasto*.²⁸ Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici's *Catasto* listed the loan for fifty florins, in addition to a pair of oxen valued at twenty-two florins and sheep valued at twelve florins.²⁹ These are particularly interesting examples, because Giovanni di Bicci's manager (*fattore*), Matteo di ser Giovanni, apparently wrote these *Portata* declarations, so it seems unlikely that the disagreement in the postings could have arisen from an oversight. The *Portata* declarations do not explicitly state that Matteo wrote them, but the handwriting seems to be the same as the signed letters from Matteo to the Medici family.³⁰ Matteo may have seen no purpose in listing the oxen on the tenants' declarations. However, even when Matteo wrote the declarations, minor inconsistencies could occur. Matteo also apparently wrote the declaration of Antonio di Nanni Comandi, a resident of Santa Maria a Spugnoles,³¹ and a tenant of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici.³² As

²⁶ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 177, fol. 508r (Campione) and vol. 142, fol. 569r (Portata).

²⁷ Monte Comune o delle Graticole, Copie del Catasto, vol. 75, fol. 671r (Campione) and Archivio del Catasto, vol. 49, fol. 1145v (Portata).

²⁸ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 177, fol. 508r (Campione); vol. 142, fol. 568r (Portata).

²⁹ Monte Comune o delle Graticole, Copie del Catasto, vol. 75, fol. 670v (Campione) and Archivio del Catasto, vol. 49, fol. 1145r (Portata).

³⁰ See, for example, the letters cited above: MAP, Filza XIII, c. 3; MAP, Filza XIII, c. 42. Although Matteo wrote some portions of Giovanni's *Portata*, the listings for the Mugellan farms do not appear to be in his handwriting.

³¹ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 177, fol. 505r (Campione) and vol. 142, fol. 554r (Portata).

³² Monte Comune o delle Graticole, Copie del Catasto, vol. 75, fol. 671r (Campione) and Archivio del Catasto, vol. 49, fol. 1146r (Portata).

discussed above, Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici declared on his Portata that Antonio had a *prestanza* for oxen of fifteen florins and other livestock for ten florins, while Antonio declared that he owed ten florins to Giovanni. Small inconsistencies, such as this one, however, could have easily arisen from slightly different registration dates.

Other landlords in the region followed the same practice of providing loans and livestock, and the listings on the declarations followed the same pattern: the amount of the cash advance matched, but the value of the livestock was declared on the landlords', not the tenants' declaration. For example, Puccino di Sandro was a resident of Santa Maria a Spugnole³³ and a tenant of Simone di Giovanni, the wealthiest local resident of San Piero a Sieve.³⁴ Both Simone and Puccino declared a *prestanza* for fifty florins and Simone also declared oxen of the value of eighteen florins and fifteen goats and sheep valued at three florins and fifteen gold *soldi*.

Discussion

The examination of these *Catasto* declarations in the parishes of San Piero a Sieve and Santa Maria a Spugnole suggest that almost all the landlords provided some form of loan to their tenants, either in cash, in animals, or both. It also suggests that animals were provided more often than Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's evidence, based on the tenants' *Catasto* declarations alone, would suggest (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:118-119). While landlords often provided livestock, and recorded their presence on their *Catasto* declarations, tenants rarely declared them. Thus, sharecroppers may have had more access to livestock than may be indicated solely on the basis of their own *Catasto* declarations.

In a majority of cases, landlords and tenants agreed about the loans. Several factors may have contributed to this correspondence. Some tenants kept their own accounts, either in the context of the *Catasto* or in separate records (Jones 1954:177, 1968:225). Tenants may have recorded the loans in hopes of tax relief. In addition, the *Catasto* was a public record, and could be used to enforce contracts, so recording these transactions may have served both landlords' and tenants' purposes in recording their rights to a particular asset. Similarly, recording debts may have limited liability. Although individuals certainly misrepresented amounts on their declarations, it was unwise to omit completely certain information, because ownership could be questioned by such omissions. In other cases, the landlord's manager wrote the tenant's declarations. However, these factors alone cannot explain why the tenants recorded the loans, but not the livestock.

³³ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 177, fol. 505r-v (Campione) and vol. 142, fol. 553r (Portata).

³⁴ Archivio del Catasto, vol. 321, fol. 540v-543r (Campione) and vol. 144, fol. 565r-569v (Portata).

Neither can the tax incentives, either the assessments or the regulations, explain the pattern of listings of loans and livestock in these declarations. From the standpoint of the tax assessments, loans were neither commercial assets nor debts, and were, consequently, generally irrelevant to both the landlords' and the tenants' tax assessments. Yet, the declarations are in the most agreement about the loans. Landlords were supposed to be taxed on the oxen and other animals, and this could explain the landlords' practice of recording the livestock, but this basis for tax assessment cannot explain why the loans were posted. Again, from the point of view of the assessments, there was no reason to list any of this information on the tenants' declarations. Even if the tenants listed the loan in hopes of getting tax relief, in most cases it was completely irrelevant. Most tenants had no assets, so subtracting the debts, even if allowable, would not have changed the final tax assessment.³⁵ Neither can the tax regulations explain this pattern. The regulations stated that all livestock and loans on farms had to be declared (see Karmin 1906:21-22). Again, however, this regulation cannot explain why tenants listed their loans, but not the livestock.

Furthermore, this pattern of postings cannot be explained by examining the tax calculations on the declarations for these parishes, though these calculations on the *Campione* with respect to the loans and livestock are somewhat ambiguous. It is often difficult to determine how the taxes were calculated on the loans and livestock, because these assets were sometimes recopied from the location on the document where the farm was listed to the location where the credits were listed. When the workers' names were not given for the farms, the loans and livestock from any particular farm cannot be easily matched to names given in the lists of credits. In other cases, it was difficult to determine exactly what had been taxed because lists of credits were summarized in the *Campione*, and so the workers' names were not recopied.³⁶ However, it appears that most landlords were not assessed taxes on the value of the loan or the oxen, but were assessed taxes on any other livestock on the farm.³⁷ In other cases, landlords were assessed taxes on some, but not all of the loans, and all the livestock except

³⁵ In these parishes, the tax officials sometimes transferred the amount of the loan made by the landlord to the tenant to the portion of the document where the tax calculations were made. However, this was apparently formulaic, because even if allowable, when the household had no assets, deductions were irrelevant to the calculations. In the cases I examined, the tenants were always charged the head tax, even when they had large debts.

³⁶ For example, see the declaration of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, Monte Comune o delle Graticole, Copie del Catasto, vol. 75, fol. 668r-680r (Campione).

³⁷ For example, see the declarations of Mona Gostanza di Rosso Cavalcanti, Archivio del Catasto, vol. 74, fol. 154v-156r (Campione); and of Bernardo di Leonardo de' Medici, Archivio del Catasto, vol. 79, fol. 55r-56v (Campione).

for the oxen.³⁸ Some landlords, however, were assessed taxes on the value of the loans and oxen.³⁹ In these parishes, however, the value of the oxen and loans were usually irrelevant to the tax officials, so tax incentives cannot entirely account for the tenants' marked omission of the livestock. Thus, neither the actual tax calculations from these parishes, nor the overall structure of the tax assessments or regulations of the *Catasto*, can entirely explain the pattern of the declarations of loans and livestock.

Although tax regulations were not the primary motives, it is possible to speculate about other explanations of these postings, even though an exact interpretation is impossible. The interpretation most consistent with these documents is that the landlords were declaring the animals as their own assets, while the tenants had no obligations for them. Given that tenants carefully declared their loans, it is possible that tenants did not record the livestock because they had few obligations or responsibilities for it. If the livestock was provided and repayment was expected, then the tenants might have declared it as a debt, as they did with the *prestanze*, and as was the case when Antonio di Nanni Comandi declared that the *prestanza* had been given for oxen. Similarly, when the animals were assets, the tenants' share appeared on their declarations. When the livestock was not recorded at all, it may indicate that tenants were not obligated for the livestock as they were for the loans. Perhaps the livestock were considered to be similar to other fixed capital assets on the farm (the house, the outbuildings) that were listed on the landlords' declarations for the tenants' use. While the tenants had to care for these assets, they may not have been financially responsible for them as they were for the loans. This explanation is consistent with the interpretation of the *Catasto* as a public document, in which individuals were careful to record major assets and debts to preserve their interest or limit their liability. Finally, it is possible to speculate that if, indeed, tenants were not financially responsible for the livestock, and this practice was widespread, sharecropping may have been more advantageous to the tenants than previously recognized. Of course, these interpretations are speculative. Further research, for example, with notarial documents specifying more precisely the terms by which the livestock were provided, would be necessary to establish these points.

³⁸ For example, see the declarations of Antonio di Talento de' Medici, Archivio del *Catasto*, vol. 79, fol. 33r-v, (Campione); Federigo di Francesco, Archivio del *Catasto*, vol. 75, fol. 281v- 282r (Campione); and Niccola and Cambio di messer Vieri de' Medici, Archivio del *Catasto*, vol. 78, fol. 481r-488v (Campione).

³⁹ For example, see Simone di Giovanni, Archivio del *Catasto*, vol. 321, fol. 540v-544r (Campione) and Domenico d'Andrea, Archivio del *Catasto*, vol. 177, fol. 498r-v (Campione). Interestingly, both Domenico and Simone were rural landlords, Simone, a local resident of San Piero a Sieve and Domenico, from a rural parish in the Mugello. As Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber note, rural landlords were sometimes not given the same deductions that urban landlords were given (1985:14). Here, this may be also the case, since urban landlords were sometimes not taxed on the oxen or loans.

Conclusions

This evidence helps to explain Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's result. They found that sharecroppers were least likely of all rural inhabitants to declare oxen on their *Catasto* declarations. The evidence presented here shows that tenants' tax declarations under-estimate the extent of livestock on sharecropped tenancies, because landlords often provided livestock, but the tenants did not record this information on their declarations, possibly because they were not obligated for these animals. While the evidence presented here comprises only two rural parishes, it is certainly plausible that some tenants and landlords in other regions had similar practices. Indeed, the historical evidence presented earlier suggests that the range of experience in these parishes was not unusual. If so, Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's evidence underestimates the prevalence of livestock on share-tenancies.

This evidence addresses the larger historical debate about whether sharecropping was beneficial for tenants. One central issue was the provisioning of these farms. If the landlords were not providing loans and livestock, then tenants obtained few advantages from sharecropping. On the other hand, this evidence suggests that landlords' inputs, loans and livestock, may have been relatively widespread, suggesting at least some benefits for tenants. The countryside remained relatively depopulated until 1460 (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber 1985:73) and tenants remained scarce. If landlords competed to provide tenants with favourable leases, practices beneficial to tenants may have spread. Furthermore, this evidence suggests that landlords' provisioning of livestock in particular was more widespread than suggested by previous research. If landlords in other regions also provided livestock that was not recorded on the tenants' declarations, then the provisioning of livestock may have been more widespread than previously thought. In addition, if tenants had few financial obligations for this livestock, their situation may have been even more advantageous. Thus, overall, the evidence points to some advantages of share-tenancy. Further research in a wider range of rural parishes with the *Catasto* of 1427, other *Catasti*, and notarial documents could establish the prevalence of the provisioning of loans and livestock and support this interpretation of the pattern of listings of loans and livestock.

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