

THE DRAPERS OF LUCCA AND THE MARKETING OF CLOTH IN THE MID-THIRTEENTH CENTURY

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Despite the importance of the development of the woolen industry to the economy of the High Middle Ages, the processes by which cloth was marketed locally to the consumer remain largely obscure. We are, to be sure, relatively well informed about the merchandising of cloth in distant markets—the penetration of northern cloth in Mediterranean markets, for example¹—yet the distributive channels through which woolens travelled after leaving the hands of importer or local manufacturer are still unknown.² That such a lacuna should exist is due primarily to the fact that traffic in cloth at the consumer level was based upon over-the-counter cash sales and has subsequently left few traces in contemporary records.

The State Archives of Lucca, however, preserve an extensive run of notarial acts of the year 1246 which help to fill this gap.³ The evidence is fragmentary, for we are dealing with the partial production of one notary, Filippus Notti, spanning only a seven month period; yet these contracts serve to reveal one further step in the process of placing cloth in the hands of the consumer and also underscore the economic interdependence between a growing urban center, Lucca, and her neighboring countryside in the thirteenth century.

The notarial contracts deal with a part of the business carried on by a group of cloth merchants, referred to as *pannarii* in the Lucchese sources,⁴ a segment of whose trade derived from credit sales developed among a group of buyers hailing from the countryside. Most of the latter in their turn dealt directly in the retail distribution of cloth in the Lucchese *contado*.⁵ The cartulary of the notary Filippus Notti contains among its seventy-five folio pages 117 contracts for the purchase-sale of woolen cloths reflecting the credit business of fifteen partnerships of Lucchese drapers in the period from January 3 to July 30, 1246.⁶ In the main these sales were small, averaging

on a total volume of 1,108 *bracchiae* Lucchese a bit less than 10 *brac.* in quantity and 1 pound 14 sol. 5 den. in value for each transaction.⁷ The smallest sale involved 4½ *brac.* of peach colored (*persi*) Florentine cloth while the largest in terms of quantity consisted of 12 pieces of both dyed and undyed cloth (*barracani albi et tinti*) and 6 *brac.* Florentine woolens sold to two inhabitants of the rural commune of Montecalvoli.⁸ The majority of the recorded sales were, however, nearer in quantity to the above averages. All transactions were based upon short term credit; payment due usually within a month and seldom exceeding two months.

The 141 individuals appearing as buyers in the contracts were all residents of the *Lucchesia*, the Lucchese *contado*. They came from all corners of the surrounding countryside to the shops, *apothecae*, maintained by the various drapers and their partners in Lucca.⁹ From the Valdarno and Valdinievole to the southwest, the upper Valley of the Serchio, Garfagnana and the Valle della Lima to the northeast, and from the lower Serchio and Camiore to the northwest, as well as from the western *contado* bordering upon Pisan territory, men of the country sought woolen cloth in the city.¹⁰ They usually made their purchases jointly, in temporary partnerships of two or three individuals from the same rural locale, and a draper's shop on most working days must have had a decided rustic flavor as buyers and witnesses crowded about the draper negotiating sales and settling old debts.

In general it would seem that the contracts reflect a wholesale rather than a retail trade; that is, it would appear that most of the cloth purchased in the city was intended ultimately for resale in the country. Although there are a number of obvious exceptions, such as the sales of tailored articles of clothing which were clearly destined for consumption by the buyer,¹¹ the credit nature of the transactions and the rural clientele involved lead to the conclusion that the majority of buyers appearing in the contracts were in fact rural peddlers. A credit transaction, of course, presumes the intent to repay, and in the case of these rural customers this meant a second journey from the country to Lucca. Had the draper's credit customers been buying solely to satisfy their own needs they undoubtedly would not have obligated themselves to undertake such a journey. Rather, they would have paid cash for their purchases, thus avoiding the inconvenience of an arduous trip. Nor, on the other hand, would a draper, were he selling retail, have been likely to advance short

term credit, with all the risks involved, to individuals dwelling in some cases miles away from Lucca.

Furthermore, although none of the individuals appearing as buyers of woolen cloth was mentioned in more than one of the surviving contracts, it is nevertheless evident from the language of the documents that these men were regular visitors to the urban cloth shops. Thus, on April 5, when one Belluomo from Villorbanò promised to pay the draper Ranuccio Ughieri 14 sol. 6 den. on or before the end of May as the price of $5\frac{1}{4}$ *brac.* of cloth, he also stipulated that he would also pay those monies owed from earlier transactions with Ranuccio (“... alios denarios quos se in alia parte dare debere confitetur”).¹² The record of this earlier business, preserved no doubt in another cartulary, has been lost to us, yet reference to such business conclusively establishes that our rural buyers were not infrequent visitors to Lucca and the urban drapers.

In all probability such rural merchants shopped about, buying small lots of woolens from a number of drapers with whom they maintained regular credit accounts. They also may have visited the shops of other merchants and artisans in the city, acquiring their pack of merchandise in much the same way that *mercanti ambulanti* today replenish their stock at the weekly market held in Lucca. For their part, urban drapers regularly extended credit to these merchants of the country who marketed their cloth in the rural communes, parishes, *castelli*, *rocche*, and farms of the *contado* before returning to the city to settle their accounts and to acquire new merchandise.

The shop of the Lucchese draper was the focal point of distribution for cloth of both foreign and local origin. Among the foreign stuffs, Florence provided the most popular of those cloths distributed in the *contado*. Florentine woolens of various qualities figured in 28 contracts reflecting the sale of 146.2 *brac.* traded at an average price of 6 sol. 5 den. per *brac.*¹³ Cloth of Verona also weighed heavily in the rural Lucchese market. Veronese woolens, the most popular type was known as *santellore*, were on the average somewhat cheaper than those of Florence; 121.5 *brac.* were sold through 26 transactions and brought a median per *brac.* price of 4 sol. 8 den.¹⁴ Nearer to Lucca, cloth of Bolognese manufacture, figuring in only one sale, traded at a price of 2 sol. 8 den. per *brac.*¹⁵

The documents unfortunately throw no light upon the means by which Lucchese drapers acquired their supplies of foreign cloth. To judge from the almost continuous mention of individual drapers in

the contracts, it would seem that they were a sedentary lot. One contract tells us that the partners Bonagiunta Bonansegne and Rainerio Bonacase kept a mule for use in their business.¹⁶ However, the beast was probably employed in conveying the partners about the immediate *contado* rather than in long distance commerce. On the other hand, the existence of facilities for foreigners doing business in Lucca suggests that at least a part of the drapers' foreign goods were purchased locally from visiting merchants.¹⁷ It is also probable that a portion of their stock was secured directly in the city of manufacture but more likely that Lucchese merchants imported Lombard cloth wholesale from Genoa, a major distribution point of Lombard production.¹⁸ French woolens, which had only a minor significance in the rural Lucchese market, were in all likelihood purchased in Lucca from Lucchese importers operating in Genoa or at the fairs of Champagne.¹⁹

The rural market was most favorable to the cheaper cloths of local manufacture. Northern stuffs, for example, selling at a price half again that of Florentine woolens figure in only six of our contracts.²⁰ On the other hand, the woolen most frequently purchased by rural buyers was an inexpensive cloth known as *baracanus*.²¹ In all, the sources show the sale of 356 *brac.* of both finished and unfinished baracans traded at the modest price of 1 sol. 4 den. for each *brac.*²² Although the place of origin of these goods was not specified, it may be assumed from this very omission that they were the products of local looms and the Lucchese finishing industry.

Of the organization of the Lucchese woolen industry in 1246 little is known. There is sufficient but scattered evidence to postulate the working of wool in Lucca at least from the beginning of the thirteenth century.²³ However, the relatively late date at which the weavers of Lucca formed a guild (the earliest certain reference to a guild of weavers is dated 1320) implies that the weaving industry was correspondingly slow in locating in the city.²⁴ Of the various crafts associated with the processes of converting raw wool into finished cloth, only the dyers had a formal guild organization in the thirteenth century.²⁵ In 1246 most of the local production apparently derived from looms situated in rural households.

The relationship of the drapers to the manufacture of woolen cloth remains unclear. Although some drapers, as Bonagiunta and Rainerio,²⁶ may well have travelled about the *contado* in order to organize the production of cloth, it would seem that woolens were brought to the city from the country by a group of middlemen

cloth salesmen. These merchants, performing much the same economic function as the *lanarii*, *pannarii*, and *merciadrii* of contemporary Pisa, found a regular outlet for their cloth in the urban shops of the drapers.²⁷

Involved in four of the six contracts reflecting wholesale purchases of woolen cloth by drapers was one Bonaccorso Adiuti who lived in Parlascio, a rural area in the Valdarno noted for the early production of woolen cloth.²⁸ Also furnishing cloth wholesale were a resident of the suburb, *Caput burgi*, and a Florentine merchant.²⁹ The cloth in each instance was dyed, a fact which in part explains why these entrepreneurial middlemen did not directly exploit the rural market for woolens. It was necessary to bring the cloth to the urban dyers for finishing, and once in the city the cloth salesmen found the urban drapers affording them a regular outlet for their goods. They no doubt preferred this steady market to the uncertainties of merchandising their cloth retail in the *contado*. Similarly, the drapers would seem to have preferred to acquire their cloth of local manufacture from middlemen rather than deal directly with the numerous household weavers of the country. However, there may well have been another factor. Each of these transactions was based upon credit, and thus the drapers were able to balance their own credit sales against those sums owed their suppliers.

The above sketch, based as it is upon fragmentary evidence, can present only a partial picture of the local distribution of cloth in Lucca. Yet the documents reveal the specialization characteristic of this commerce—drapers, middlemen suppliers, wholesale importers, weavers, dyers, and rural merchants all operating in a particular area of the local cloth trade. Our material also suggests something of the complexity of local business and the sophistication of the techniques employed in its conduct. The extensive use of credit, for example, implies an advanced method of keeping books. A business run on credit of necessity involves planning, that is to say a business rationale existed even at this modest level of medieval enterprise. In addition, the importance of the developing Italian woolen industries clearly emerges from a study of the contracts, showing Florence, Verona, and Bologna the seats of a cloth industry organized for export to distant markets. Finally, the documents reveal a clear picture of the city as the focal point of distribution to a significant consumer market in the surrounding country. If the *contado* was a source of foodstuffs and raw materials, it was also a market for the expanding industrial and financial resources of the city.

NOTES

1. For the distribution of northern cloth in the Mediterranean, see especially R. L. Reynolds, "The Market for Northern Textiles in Genoa, 1179-1200," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, VIII (1929), pp. 831-851; "Merchants of Arras and the Overland Trade with Genoa in the Twelfth Century," *idem*, IX (1930), pp. 495-533; "Genoese Trade in the Late Twelfth Century, Particularly in Cloth from the Fairs of Champagne," *Journal of Economic and Business History*, III (1931), pp. 362-381; H. Laurent, *Un grand commerce d'exportation au moyen-âge: la draperie des Pays-Bas en France et dans les pays méditerranéens, XIIe-XVe siècle* (Paris, 1935); R. Doehaerd, *Les relations commerciales entre Gênes, la Belgique et l'Outremont d'après les archives notariales aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (3 vols., Brussels-Rome, 1941); and A. Schaube, *Storia del commercio dei popoli latini del mediterraneo sino alla fine delle Crociate*, tr. P. Bonfante (Turin, 1915).

2. A. Saponi, *Le marchand italien au moyen-âge* (Paris, 1952), pp. 24-26 contains a brief bibliography of the major works dealing with the woolen industry. More recently, see the discussion of the wool industry in thirteenth-century Pisa in D. Herlihy, *Pisa in the Early Renaissance: A Study of Urban Growth* (New Haven, 1958), pp. 150-159 and Maureen Fennell Mazzaoui, "The Organization of the Fine Wool Industry at Bologna in the Thirteenth Century," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, 1966.

3. On the notarial archives of Lucca, see R. S. Lopez, "The Unexplored Wealth of the Notarial Archives of Pisa and Lucca," *Mélanges d'histoire du moyen-âge dédiés à la mémoire de Louis Halphen* (Paris, 1951), pp. 417-443, and E. Lazzareschi, "L'Archivio dei Notari della Repubblica lucchese," *Gli Archivi Italiani*, II (1915), pp. 175-210.

4. F. Edler, *Glossary of Medieval Terms of Business: Italian Series, 1200-1600* (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), p. 202 defines the *pannaro* as a retail merchant of imported cloth. This definition based upon the fourteenth-century statute of the court of Lucchese merchants is somewhat misleading for the earlier period. Although it is undoubtedly true that the greater part of the business of a Lucchese *pannarius* of the thirteenth century was retail, he nevertheless generated a considerable trade among the peddlers trafficking in the country.

5. The term *contado* is herein used as a geographical rather than a juridical expression to include all territories beyond the city (*civitas*) and immediate environs (*burgus*) considered by the Lucchese to be in their sphere of influence. For the territorial organization of the Lucchese state, see G. Tommasi, *Sommario della storia di Lucca*, in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, X (1847), pp. 140-142, and S. Bongi, ed., *Inventario del Archivio di Stato in Lucca*, (Lucca, 1876), II, pp. 342 ff.

6. Archivio di Stato in Lucca; Archivio dei Notari, Filippo Notti (1246), reg. 1, no. 1. The Lucchese drapers, and the location of their shops when known, were: (1) Bencipse quondam Rainolfi and Riccardus Raimundini (*in domo que fuit quondam Archiepiscopi de Benevento*); (2) Matheus Orlanducci; (3) Jacobinus Villiani Civithi (*in domo filiorum Arrigi Frangelaste*); (4) Rainerius Benencase and Bonaiuncte Bonasegne (*in domo fili-*

orum *Aimerigi Mosche*); (5) Marchianus quondam Bonaccursi, Ubaldu quondam Bonaiuncte Ferandi, Cecius quondam Rodolfi and Albichus Rodolfi (*in domo que fuit quondam Archiepiscopi de Benevento*); (6) Jacobus filius Bartholomei, Gottefredus quondam Arrigi Balduinocti and ite quondam Vecchii; (7) Bandius Ferolfi and Nicolaus quondam Uberti; (8) Ranuccius quondam Guidi Ugherii; (9) Ubertus Columbani, Marronghinus quondam Rainaldi and Bugianese quondam Uberti (*in domo que fuit Archiepiscopi de Benevento*); (10) Deodatus quondam Guillielmi Rambecci *et gemini*; (11) Jacobus Lunardi; (12) Caccialumbardus quondam Guidi Caccialumbardi and Johannes quondam Bonaventure (*in domofiliorum et heredum quondam Mori Mordecastelli*); (13) Bandinus quondam Aldibrandini *Aimelline*; (14) Bonaverus quondam Meliorati; (15) Jacobus Notti.

7. *Bracchia* was a linear cloth measure equivalent to an arm's length, but varying slightly from one Italian city to another; see F. Edler, *Glossary*, p. 15. In Lucca four *bracchie* made one *canna*.

8. Fil. Notti, fols. 6, 24v.

9. The drapers would seem to have rented rather than owned their shops within the city. The only contract for the rental of an *apotheca* is Fil. Notti, f. 20v. Ranuccius quondam Guidi rented a shop "*in angulo turris*" belonging to Aldibrandinus quondam Mariani, his brothers Orlanduccius and Rubeus Rubei, and his sons, for the comparatively high annual rent of 8 pounds. The drapers would also seem to have located in the same general area, as for example the three shops "*in domo que fuit Archiepiscopi de Benevento*."

10. The below listed localities appear in the contracts. In parentheses are the number of contracts in which each is mentioned. I have retained the original case and spelling of the documents. Batone (2), Bonanno Montis S. Julie (1), Bozano (!), Camaiore—loco Tramestari, plebano de loco Peralles (5), Cantignano (1), Capella S. Giorgii (1), Capella S. Laurentii ad Vacchole (1), Capella S. Martini in Colle (1), Capella S. Michaelis de Villorbanus (5), Capite burgi (2), Carraia (1), Cassano (1), Castagnone (1), Castro Vetrii, Castro novo plebani Computi (3), Ceraliano Rocche Gouvertelli (1), Cercilliano (1), Computo de Loco Colli (1), Controne (3), Decimo de Loco Roncato (4), Ecclesia S. Blasii de Aldepascio (1), Ecclesia S. Marie de Pellagio Vallis Lime (1), Francca (1), Hospitale S. Alluccii (1), Lamari (1), Lopellia (1), Limano Vallis Lome (1), Massa Pisana (1), Matraia (1), Montecalvoli (4), Monte Chiatri (1) Montefalcone (6) Moriana de Loco Factorii (1), Mocanno (1), Nave (1), Pescalia (1), Porcari (1), Porta S. Donati (1), Porta S. Petri (1), Pedona (1), Prato S. Columbani (1), Putholo (3), S. Casciano de Vico Rube (1), S. Gennuario (1), S. Johanne de Scheto (1), S. Giorgio (1), S. Martino in Fredano (1), S. Maria ad Colle (1), S. Maria de Paganico (1), S. Michele de Scheto (2) S. Petro Salaii (1), S. Prospero de Marlia (1), Seano (5), Scelinario Plebis Mostesi Gradi (2), Vallarni (1), Valle Nebule (1), Viritano (1), Vurno (3).

11. See Fil. Notti, f. 32v for the sale of a woolen shirt to one Moricone de Carraia, intended for his son Gualfredus, for the sum of 25 sol. In this case the buyer stipulated that he had received the shirt and indeed Gualfredus was wearing it ("*. . . et gonella vergata qua indorsa habebat superscriptus Gualfredus*"). For other sales of clothing out of the drapers' shops, see Fil. Notti, fols. 33v, 43, 64v.

12. Fil. Notti, f. 41.

13. For sales of Florentine cloth, see Fil. Notti, fols. 1v, 18v, 24v, 25v, 17v, 29v, 30, 30v, 31v, 32, 35, 35v, 36, 37, 45v, 46v, 47, 59, 50v, 59v, 64v, 65, 65v, 68v, 73v.

14. For cloth of Verona, see Fil. Notti, fols. 2v, 3, 5v, 6v, 23v, 32v, 35, 37, 37v, 38, 38v, 39v, 40, 40v, 41, 47v, 48, 49v, 56, 60, 62, 62v, 64v, 73v. Pegolotti mentions a cloth known as *santelarezine* called *santelaxerio* in the Venetian sources. This was a specialty of the Veronese cloth industry: see A. Evans, ed., *Pegolotti, La Pratica della Mercatura* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), p. 429; for the specifications of the manufacture of *santelari*, see L. Simioni, ed., *Gli antichi statuti delle arti veronesi secondo la revisione scaligera del 1319*, in *Monumenti storici pubblicati dalla R. Deputazione Veneta di Storia*, 2nd ser., *Statuti*. (Venice, 1914), IV, pp. 7, 11, 15–18.

15. Fil. Notti, f. 18v.

16. Fil. Notti, f. 51 (April 26, 1246): Salamone quondam Sacchi de plebe S. Macharei (located three kilometers from Lucca on the lower Serchio) stipulated that he had in partnership with the two drapers for a period of five months one mule valued at 13 pounds. The drapers conferred into the partnership the sum of 34 sol. which entitled one or the other of them to use the animal two days of each month. For use of the mule beyond two days in any given month, the partners agreed to pay a per diem fee of 12 den. The terms of this arrangement imply that the partners did not envision employing the animal on extended journeys.

17. The importance of Lucca as a center of foreign commerce may be deduced from the number of brokers and money-changers operating in the city in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. See T. Bini, "Sui Lucchesi a Venezia; memorie dei secoli XIII e XIV," *Atti della R. Accademia lucchese di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti*, XV (1854), pp. 82, 86ff., and F. Edler, "The Silk Trade of Lucca during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth centuries," unpublished dissertation submitted to the Dept. of History, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1930, pp. 99–104 for the activities of Lucchese brokers and money-changers. I am currently collecting material relating to the money-changers of Lucca which I hope will result in a more detailed analysis of their activities.

18. R. S. Lopez, "L'attività economica di Genova nel Marzo 1253 secondo gli atti notarili del tempo," *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, LXIV (1935), p. 195, has indicated the increasing importance of Lombard cloth in the Genoese market during the course of the thirteenth century.

19. For the close political and economic ties existing between Lucca and Genoa, see A. Schaube, *Storia del commercio dei popoli latini*, pp. 798–800, 805–806 and F. Edler, "The Silk Trade of Lucca," pp. 113–123. See also my unpublished Master's essay, "Lucchese Commercial Activities in Genoa, 1186–1226," submitted to the Dept. of History, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1960. For the Lucchese at the fairs of Champagne, F. Bourquelot, *Études sur les foires de Champagne, sur la nature, l'étendue et les règles du commerce qui s'y faisait au XIIe, XIIIe et XIVe siècles*, (Paris, 1865), I, pp. 166–175; Schaube, pp. 420–423, and Edler, pp. 93–96.

20. See Fil. Notti, fols. 45, 45v, 57v, 58v, 59, for sales of *gliscelli*, *verdelli*, and *crentoni* of Arras and fols. 9, 45v for *sanguinei* and *rosei* of Ypre.

21. The term *baracanus* was apparently of Arabic origin referring to a camlet of mohair. However, a Florentine tariff of the fourteenth century lists *baraccani* among the wares of the *lanaiuoli*: see A. Evans, ed., *Pegolotti, La Pratica della Mercatura*, p. 414.

22. For sales of *baracani*, see Fil. Notti, fols. 5v, 7, 23, 28, 28v, 29v, 31, 32, 33, 33v, 34, 34v, 38v, 39v, 41, 46v, 56, 69, 70v, 71v, 74.

23. T. Bini, "Sui Lucchesi a Venezia," pp. 15–24 has argued that the thirteenth-century Lucchese woolen industry was more advanced than that of Florence. Bini's thesis has been refuted by S. Bongi, "Della mercatura dei Lucchesi nei secoli XIII e XIV," *Atti della R. Accademia lucchese di Scienza, Lettere ed Arti*, XXIII (1884), pp. 445–456. However, only a cursory glance through the notarial documents in the LL series of the Cathedral Archives of Lucca is sufficient to indicate the importance of wool to the economy of Lucca in the first half of the thirteenth century. One hopes that this material will soon form the basis for a full scale study of the Lucchese industry. By 1265 woolens from Lucca were mentioned in a Venetian tariff indicating that by that date the industry was organized for export commerce as well as for local needs: see H. Laurent, *Un grand commerce d'exportation*, pp. 76–77.

24. See T. Bini, "Sui Lucchesi a Venezia," p. 62 ff. for Lucchese weavers and the formation of a weavers' guild.

25. The statute of the Lucchese dyers guild of 1225 has been edited by P. Guerra, *Statuto dell'Arte dei Tintori di Lucca del 1255*, (Lucca, 1864). A more recent edition may be found as an appendix to Edler, "The Silk Industry of Lucca." This statute was a revision of an earlier document and hence we may date the dyers guild from before 1255. For the Lucchese guilds of the Middle Ages, see E. Lazzareschi, "Fonti di archivio per lo studio delle corporazioni artigiane di Lucca," *Bollettino Storico Lucchese*, IX (1937), 65–81, 141–158.

26. See above, note 16.

27. For these early cloth salesmen in Pisa, see Herlihy, *Pisa in the Early Renaissance*, pp. 157–158.

28. Professor Herlihy, *ibid*; pp. 156–157 has stressed the importance of the Valdarno, especially Calci, as the birthplace of the Pisan woolen industry. For Bonaccursus, see Fil. Notti, fols. 24, 26v, 27. On March 19 he sold 11 *cannae*, 3½ *brac. celestri facti de Luce* for 14 pounds 16 sol. and 12 *cannae* of the same blue cloth for 15 pounds. Two days later Bonaccursus also vended one piece Lucchese vermilion for 10 pounds and a piece of blue cloth at a price of 17 pounds.

29. For the sale of one piece *panni bladecti facti Luce* by Armannus quondam Lamberti de Capite burgi, see Fil. Notti, f. 27, and for the sale of four pieces *panni facti Luce ad III liccias* by Meliore quondam Beliocci, florentinus, f. 40v. Noteworthy for its absence from the Lucchese sources is cloth from the Garfagnana, the *carfagnini* noted by Professor Herlihy, *Pisa in the Early Renaissance*, p. 158, note 91. If cloth was carried to Lucca from the Garfagnana it probably lost its identity in the city and became subsumed under the general *panni facti Luce*.