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Abstract
This paper looks at the Medici family's rise to power and control over Florence. The main focus of the paper is on Cosimo de' Medici, who is the man responsible for bringing his family to power. The first chapter looks at his business and familial connections and the ways that these relationships helped him gain power. The second chapter examines Cosimo's role as patron of the arts and learning and the ways in which this helped to extend his influence. The third chapter looks at Cosimo's grandson Lorenzo de' Medici and the ways in which he continued the dominance of the Medici family in Florence, specifically focusing on his role as patron and how he took after his grandfather.

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MEDICI POWER AND PATRONAGE UNDER COSIMO THE ELDER AND LORENZO THE MAGNIFICENT

By

Kelly Ann Gilbert

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ABSTRACT

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Introduction

The Medici family controlled Florence for over three centuries. The man responsible for putting the family in power was Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464), who was also known as Cosimo the Elder. He was able to gain influence over the city and its government, the *signori*, because of the wealth that was available to him through the Medici bank. Without these funds, he would not have had the opportunities that were available to him and thus, to his family. Along with this wealth, Cosimo also relied on the business connections that the Medici bank provided him with in order to extend the influence he held. This expansion of power by the Medici led to Cosimo's exile in 1433 at the hands of the Albizzi family. Medici money once again came through and he was recalled one year later. Upon his return, Cosimo repaid the favor to the Albizzi clan by exiling its members from Florence.

The wealth that the Medici bank provided for Cosimo de' Medici also allowed him to participate more fully in various aspects of society. He was able to become a significant patron of both the arts and learning. By sponsoring artists and humanists, Cosimo once again extended his influence over Florentine society to cover a greater area. The projects that Cosimo sponsored included a wide variety of styles by many different artists. Through his patronage Cosimo influenced painting, sculpture, and architecture. He also influenced learning though his support of both humanistic education and the creation of the first public library at the monastery of San Marco in Florence. Cosimo made a significant impact on Florentine society in a number of areas, and this was made possible by the wealth he held.

Cosimo was only the first of many generations of Medici to rule over both the family and the city of Florence.[*] While each Medici ruler had his own way of governing over the city, the

[*] see Appendix, family tree

family's control began with Cosimo's ascent to power. Some of his descendants, such as his grandson Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492), followed closely in Cosimo's footsteps. Lorenzo the Magnificent, as he was know, practiced patronage of both the arts and learning in ways similar to his grandfather. He became more involved in the Florentine Renaissance through the creation of his own poetry.

Cosimo's power came from a combination of many different sources. The status he held as the leader of the Medici family and party combined with the wealth available to him through the Medici bank and his role as a patron of art and learning led to the creation of physical manifestations of the power he held. Using his immense wealth, Cosimo was able to use his support of art and learning to create sources of propaganda with which he created a positive image of himself to control how the Florentines saw him. Both Cosimo and his grandson Lorenzo after him consciously worked to create a certain representation of themselves and the Medici family in order to legitimate their rule over the city. In addition to using his patronage to influence his image, Cosimo also relied upon his piety to create this image. These various acts of patronage combined to exemplify him as a wise, pious, and benevolent leader who was fit to rule over the city.

Cosimo de' Medici was the first in a long line of Medici rulers in Florence. While he controlled the city indirectly, he was still the acting head of the government even if he did not hold such a title. The wealth that was available to him through the Medici bank allowed him to expand upon his power and control in the city of Florence. The following chapters will examine Cosimo de' Medici's rise to power, the ways in which he used his role as patron to consciously create a positive image of himself and his family in order to justify the influence he held over the

city of Florence, and how his grandson, Lorenzo de' Medici followed in his footsteps in the roles of patron and leader of the Medici faction in Florence.

Cosimo de' Medici as Businessman and Political Leader

The Medici family is known for the power and influence it exerted over Florence from 1434-1743. However, the family had not always held this high a place in Florentine society. Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464) was the first man to consolidate his family and lead it into power. As Padgett and Ansell have argued, "He founded a dynasty that dominated Florence for three centuries. He consolidated a Europe-wide banking network that helped induce both international trade and state making elsewhere. And he oversaw and sponsored the Florentine intellectual and artistic efflorescence that we now call 'the Renaissance."[1] Through his guidance and leadership the Medici family came to hold the power for which it is now known and remembered. This chapter will explore how Cosimo de' Medici used his extensive familial and business connections, along with his immense wealth, to gain and maintain the exclusive power his family held over Florence.

Cosimo de' Medici garnered a significant amount of power from his extensive family and the connections that this gave him. As Professor Dale Kent has noted, "Cosimo became the family's leading representative in the ruling group, its symbolic head, and the chief architect of family and party policy."[2] Under Cosimo's leadership the Medici family further united to form a more cohesive unit, which worked to extend the patriarchal role that he held. He extended his familial influence to include not only distant relatives but also his friends and supporters until the family that he headed included no less than twenty-seven households. This gave Cosimo influence over a greater range of people upon whom he could rely to work for the benefit of the family. As Dale Kent argued,

> Cosimo succeeded in identifying the honor of the Medici family with that of the commune more completely than any citizen before him. He did this by making his friends and political supporters honorary extensions of this group, to be seen as dear as fathers, brothers, and sons in affection and obligation.[3]

This extended family became not only a support system, but also a social and political entity. By incorporating his political supporters into his family, Cosimo extended his reach and influence in Florentine society. This occurred because Cosimo could now use the connections of his "honorary" family members for his own political and economic ends.

Because of the power and status Cosimo gained from his connection with others, he kept a close eye and tight reign on the activity of his family members. He understood the impact that another's behavior could have not only on him personally, but also on the entire family. An example of this can be found in an undated letter Cosimo wrote to his son Piero, who was in Venice, which stated, "Be careful to conduct thyself well at home and abroad, so as not to put either me or thyself to shame. Consort with our friends according to usage; make thyself acquainted with what is doing in the company, and learn what is going on."[4]

In this same letter Cosimo also reminded Piero of the reason he was in Venice and made it clear what his son was supposed to be doing. This served as a warning that Piero's actions were being paid attention to and that Cosimo was displeased with the way Piero was acting. As the head of both the Medici family and business, Cosimo was controlling of the way his family members and employees acted. Yet another example of Cosimo keeping a close eye on family members comes in a letter to his son Giovanni, who was in Milan. The letter stated, "As I told thee, and as I have written to thee, I do not at all desire that thou shouldest go further in order to accompany the Duke of Calabria. We should lose more here than we should there by this."[5] Cosimo was shrewdly telling Giovanni that he did not approve of his actions and that he needed to return to Florence. As head of the family and the business, Cosimo was a dominating and calculating man who kept an eye on what his family and supporters were up to in order to ensure that their actions reflected well on the Medici family. Here, Cosimo was advising Giovanni what

actions he should take, and as the head of the entire family and the Medici bank, Cosimo's orders were followed.

Cosimo was a skillful leader in both business and politics, and these traits would eventually help him increase the power that his family held over the Florentine government and society. As Dale Kent explained, "Cosimo de' Medici achieved power in his lifetime and fame beyond it because his outstanding skills in business and politics – civic, Italian, and international – made him a major force in the public life of Renaissance Florence."[6] These skills allowed Cosimo to extend his sphere of influence until it reached not only throughout Italy, but across Europe as well. But, it was through his family's banking business that he was able to gain this far-reaching recognition as a man of power and influence. Cosimo remained very involved with the family's banking business even after he gained political power in Florence. In her study of Medici family correspondence historian Janet Ross stated, "For even when most deeply engaged in political matters, Cosimo always found time to attend to his business, and himself conducted the correspondence with the heads of the banks which were known throughout Europe and in Asia."[7] Maintaining a strong, controlling presence in his business allowed him to nurture the connections he had through the bank, which he could then use to his political advantage. This also helped to increase his family's financial independence and wealth, which would come in helpful in later years when Cosimo and other members of his family were exiled from Florence.

Despite the skills he possessed in both business and politics, Cosimo wished to remain out of the public eye, as his father had warned him to do.[8] This is not to say that Cosimo did not influence the government. On the contrary, Cosimo came to hold a significant amount of power over Florentine politics. He did, however, tend to hold this power indirectly. As Gene Brucker noted, "He demonstrated a particular talent for working behind the scenes, achieving his goals by

manipulating others. His instruments were the bonds of obligation by which he tied his supporters to himself."[9] Cosimo did not have to be at the center of the Florentine government for his presence and authority to be noted.[10] Rather, his supporters held the positions of political power in the Florentine government and he manipulated them as he wished. So, while Cosimo was the man behind the government, he was not the face in front of it.

The power that Cosimo came to hold and exert over Florentine politics and society was also a function of his relationship with others. As Nicolai Rubinstein has observed, "Cosimo's vast and complex network of patronage was essential for the working of his political ascendancy, and while that ascendancy in its turn helped to extend it, his patronage was an indispensable instrument in making his will prevail."[11] It was through the connections that he had with people that he gained control and influence over the political organization of Florence. According to Kent, Cosimo's political power was "a function of his relationships with others. It was a strategy embracing all of life, an attribute of his identity shaped by all those partisan, patriotic, dynastic, intellectual, and devotional preoccupations expressed in his words and deeds."[12] While Cosimo had many connections among his peers in the upper classes of Florentine society, he was also a man of the people who was popular among the lower classes. Thus, as Curt Gutkind argued in his study of Cosimo, "He was a man whose wisdom and quick understanding became evident in anything he said or did, a man who liked to give help when some one needed it and asked him for it, who liked to mix with people, especially the peasants."[13] The popularity held by Cosimo among the *popolani*, or lower class, was a significant source of the power he held in Florence.

While Cosimo's personality appealed to many and earned him numerous followers and supporters, it created conflict with others. These enemies of Cosimo, in particular the Albizzi family led by Rinaldo degli Albizzi, disliked the economic, social and political power that the

Medici were coming to hold in Florence. This antipathy would lead first to the exile of prominent members of the Medici family in 1433 in the hopes that their political and economic dominance would end, and eventually, upon their return in 1434, to the exile of their political opponents. As Brucker observed, "The triumph of the Medici faction over its opponents was partly the result of Cosimo's superior financial resources. Controlling the largest banking enterprise in Europe, the Medici were able to buy support in the city and also abroad."[14] They were able to maintain their economic independence even when the government of Florence attempted to keep them from accessing their own wealth. As Cosimo stated in his diary, "They thought to ruin us by preventing me from making use of what was mine. But in this they failed, for we lost no credit, and many foreign merchants and gentlemen offered us, and even sent to Venice, large sums of money."[15] The large network of connections that Cosimo enjoyed through his extended family and his business worked to his advantage during his time of exile because it allowed him access to money when he was not able to get to his own wealth. Thus, the Medici bank was an essential component of Cosimo's power and his ability to be recalled from exile back to Florence.

Furthermore, maintaining his economic independence allowed Cosimo to still exhibit some political power while in exile. Rather than being shut out of society, Cosimo was welcomed into Padua and Venice as an ambassador would have been greeted. The governments of these areas opened themselves up to him in order to make his time in exile more comfortable. The citizens of these two cities were happy to welcome such a powerful man into their society. Thus, rather than being financially and politically burdened by his exile, Cosimo experienced quite the opposite. Though not in Florence, he was still able to lead a comfortable and somewhat influential life.

The Florentines quickly realized their need for and dependence upon Cosimo and his leadership. In the end, the citizens of Florence thought that Cosimo would be a better representative for the republic and for their needs. Thus, the Medici were recalled to Florence within one year of their exile in 1434, even though they had been ordered away from the city for ten years. As Kent observed, "Exile could have ended a crudely partisan career; Cosimo's sense of himself and his destiny turned it into a triumph. He survived and prospered because by contrast with other Florentine exiles, Cosimo refused to separate his private interest from the public."[16]

Even while in exile in Padua, Cosimo and the Medici had loyal followers in Florence fighting for their return. This allowed him to stay in the minds of the Florentines, which helped the Medici supporters, who were trying to achieve the return of Cosimo and his family. The Medici family was able to gain the backing of Florentine citizens as people came to realize that Cosimo was a necessary part of Florentine politics and society. As Kent argued, "A concern for legality and the maintenance of the city's republican traditions undoubtedly inclined many of the citizens of Florence to the support of Cosimo, who had scrupulously respected the letter of Florentine law at every point since his banishment."[17] The citizens of Florence realized that Cosimo de' Medici was the ruler who had the most concern with their needs and because of this, they pushed for his recall from exile.

The amount of power Cosimo and the Medici still held in Florence was apparent in the way they re-entered the city upon their return from exile. As Cosimo explained in his diary, "The Signori did not wish us to enter by daylight lest we should be the cause of an uproar in the city."[18] Because of this, Cosimo re-entered the city by night in order to attract less attention. Nevertheless, he attracted enough notice on his return to Florence so that many people came out

and met him on the road leading to the city. Instead of being ruined by the political exile forced upon him by the Florentine government, Cosimo came to hold an increased amount of power upon his return to the city.

When he returned to Florence in 1434, Cosimo was pushed into various roles of political power and influence. As Gutkind observed, "Cosimo, whether he wished it or not, had now to take over the political leadership of the state: the people forced him to do it."[19] The same men who had fought for his return from exile pushed him into a politically powerful role. Now that he was once again in power, Cosimo had to reconsolidate the power of his family and friends. Doing this protected his family, friends, and wealth from those who had exiled him originally. As Gutkind stated, "Cosimo had to make his house, his enterprises, and his affairs safe from the revengeful plots of the 'defeated'. But he could only do that if he consolidated his own power and that of his friends in the State."[20] Cosimo accomplished this by once again surrounding himself with his political allies. This time he was able to fully encircle himself with his own friends. By placing his family and friends into political offices, Cosimo was guaranteed control over the government as a whole. Gertrude Richards wrote that

> He endeavored to prevent the ascendancy of any one faction; he aimed to exclude from the Florentine domain whosoever should prove dangerous opponents to the Medici or to their government; and he controlled all offices and councils by seeing to it that the list of those eligible for office should contain only the names of his friends; and by shifting the burden of taxation so as to bring pressure on the refractory groups, he managed to prevent disloyalty ripening into conspiracies.[21]

Cosimo extended his family's influence by allowing only those men with whom he was closely associated to be nominated for public office in Florence. This furnished him with protection from anyone opposed to his government because he would not be able to gain any political power. After his return from exile the government of Florence was completely manipulated by Cosimo and filled with people whom he selected to hold office.

Not only did Cosimo have influence over the Florentine government itself, he also had a significant amount of power over its dealings and interactions with foreign powers as well. Cosimo was acknowledged as the authority over Florence's foreign policy as well as its domestic issues. Though official government business went through the *Signoria* "no important decision was ever reached without reference to the Medici Palace. Foreign ambassadors were frequently to be seen passing through the gateway; Florentine ambassadors invariably called upon Cosimo before taking up their appointments."[22] Through this unofficial role, Cosimo gained influence outside of Florence as well. He typically kept in contact with all of the ambassadors that left Florence for various seats of power around Italy. This gave him more power than that of the Florentine government, because all decisions were sent for his approval. Thus, even if the *Signori* made a decision, it still went to Cosimo for his acceptance. So, while he had no official role in Florence's dealings with other governments, he had a great deal of "informal" influence. This is another example of how Cosimo held most of the political power in Florence yet managed to stay out of the public eye.

The influence that Cosimo wielded also extended to the papacy. Through most of his reign over Florence he was in some way connected with the various popes. George Holmes has observed that "During his period of power in Florence, the thirty years from 1434 to 1464, Cosimo had to deal with four Popes. Only for three of these years, the short-lived pontificate of the Catalan Borgia Calixtus III, was the papacy not in the hands of a man with whom Cosimo at some time had close connections and natural reasons for sympathetic relations."[23] Being on good terms with the papacy solidified Cosimo's power even though he was in Florence. The Catholic Church held a great deal of political and territorial control throughout Italy, and having a close relationship with the papacy increased the power that Florentines and other Italians

associated with Cosimo. The papacy also felt the importance and power of Cosimo de' Medici. As stated in a letter from Pope Pius II to Cosimo de' Medici on the death of Cosimo's son Giovanni (1463), "Mourning accords not with your age; it is contrary to your health, and we ourselves, your native city, and all Italy, require that your life should be as far as possible prolonged."[24] In this letter the pope acknowledged the power of Cosimo de' Medici and the extent of his influence throughout Italy.

The Medici banking business was also a great source of power and influence for the Medici over Florentine society. Dale Kent, who has studied the Medici bank in some detail, has argued that the bank was, in fact, the basis of all Medici power. The wealth that the Medici earned from their bank allowed them to gain followers because it gave them economic and financial power, but most importantly, "banking was essentially the foundation of Medici power for the far more fundamental reason that it made them a major financial force, not only in Florence, but throughout Italy."[25] The Medici bank gave Cosimo financial independence in and even dominance over Florence. Since Cosimo gained much of his power from the connections he had with family and friends, the bank worked to expand these interactions and to create new relationships with others as well.

The wealth that came from the banking business also gave Cosimo further opportunities and presented him with the ability to extend his power through acts of patronage as well. As Mark Jurdjevic argued, "The immense wealth of the Medici bank made possible all the acts of largesse for which Cosimo came to be known, it brought Cosimo into favorable contact with princes and popes, and most importantly, it made possible political and artistic patronage on a grand scale."[26] Without the wealth that the bank provided, Cosimo would not have had the ability to use his acts of patronage as a significant source of his power, because he would not

have controlled the resources to accomplish many of the great works for which he was responsible. The funds provided Cosimo by the Medici bank allowed him to become a significant patron of the arts and learning which created a positive image of both Cosimo and the Medici family. The wealth that Cosimo controlled through the Medici bank was the source of a significant amount of the power he held over Florence.

Cosimo was also able to use his immense wealth to gain power politically. As the head of the Medici family he was also the head of its banking business. The Medici loaned out money to many different people, including the Commune of Florence. Cosimo reminded the *Signori* of this in his oration to the government after his exile was announced. As he stated, "With no small pride I affirm that none can say my ill-behaviour ever caused a city to rebel or to be taken from you; on the contrary, our money bought several: ask your soldiers how many times they were paid by me for the Commune with my own money, to be returned when convenient to the Commune."[27] He never pressured the government for repayment, but when he was forced to leave Florence he held these loans over its head. Cosimo reminded the *Signori* of all the ways in which he had helped the city previously. Yet, despite the fact that the government was exiling him, he still offered his services and wealth to the Florentines whenever they felt they might need him. In his speech to the *Signori*, Cosimo stated, "Never have I been found wanting when the Commune could be enlarged, and although I am exiled, I shall ever be ready at the call of this people."[28] He even here was showing his political acumen – always the servant, humble – angling for his return.

Wealth was no longer something to be ashamed of, rather it was an acceptable thing to have and spend, as long as the Florentines were wise about it. Cosimo was never a man who spent lavishly on himself. He reserved his wealth for large acts of patronage both for the city

and for his family. Professor Janet Ross has noted that, "While spending money in a princely manner on works of art, public libraries and buildings, Cosimo lived as simply as any other citizen. Though for twenty-five years he was practically the ruler of Florence, he remained the merchant, the plain burgher, the agriculturist."[29] This was one of the ways in which Cosimo appealed to the larger society. Rather than flaunting his wealth and spending the majority of it on himself and his family, Cosimo tended to use it for larger projects that would have a greater impact on society in general. In doing so, Cosimo attempted to create an image of himself as a benefactor of Florence, and he used his many roles as patron to support the image he created.[30]

Cosimo's popularity among people of all classes in Florence helped him to return from exile in 1434. Neither he nor his family worked in opposition to those in the lower classes, which garnered them a significant amount of support. Following his father's example, Cosimo never ignored the needs and interests of the lower classes of society. By spending his wealth modestly rather than ostentatiously as the Albizzi and Strozzi families did, Cosimo was able to remain in power and control in Florence.[31] Cosimo was never intentionally inconsiderate of the needs and well-being of those who were beneath him in society. As Janet Ross stated, "Of consummate prudence, staid yet agreeable presence, Cosimo was liberal and humane. He never worked against his party nor against the State, was prompt in giving aid to all, and his liberality gained him many partisans among the citizens."[32]

In all actuality, many of Cosimo's supporters came from the lower classes of Florence. Dale Kent has noted "Cosimo's party flourished 'because the masses had chosen him as their champion and looked on him as a god.' Cosimo drew his chief support then from 'the lower classes', or at best from the 'minor guilds.'"[33] Thus, Cosimo and the Medici gained much power and influence from the support of the *popolani* or lower classes. This was in opposition to how

the enemies of the Medici organized themselves politically. The anti-Medicians garnered all of their support from the most wealthy sectors and families of society. By purposely ignoring the lower classes the anti-Medicians caused these people to push for the return of the Medici. The Florentines realized rather quickly the necessity of Cosimo's wisdom and so, though they at times opposed his practices, his power and control over the government were restored.[34] Thus, by incorporating the needs of the lower classes into his political and social decisions, Cosimo paved the way for his own return from exile.

Cosimo de' Medici, through his familial, economic, and business relationships, came to rule Florence exclusively by 1434. He also used his wealth to increase his power and control through his extensive patronage of sacred buildings and works of art. His ascent to power was halted along the way by his enemies, who feared the amount of control and influence he was coming to hold. Thus, in 1433, he was exiled from Florence. Yet Cosimo's popularity among the people would cause the Florentine government to recall him within a year of his exile. Once back in power, he monopolized control of the government by filling all of its offices with his own followers and supporters. In this way, Cosimo was able to influence all aspects of the government without always being directly involved. Though he rarely held public office, he was still the most influential man in Florentine politics for thirty years. Beginning with Cosimo's leadership the Medici came to hold exclusive power over Florence for over 300 years. He was responsible for bringing his extensive family to power and, following the example he set, the Medici remained as such for the many of the following generations. Cosimo was the man who made the name Medici known to those throughout Italy and who started the Medici on their way to holding exclusive control and power over Florence politically, socially, and economically.

Cosimo de' Medici as Patron

Art, architecture and learning flourished during the Florentine Renaissance because of the support of wealthy patrons such as Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464). His support of these areas led to physical manifestations of the power and control he held over the city of Florence. As mentioned in chapter one, Cosimo was able to become an artistic and intellectual patron because of the immense wealth that he had available to him from the Medici bank. This affluence gave him the opportunity to spend money on art, building projects, and education. These acts of patronage served as a manifestation of Medici power, and the support of art, learning, and humanism provided by Cosimo worked as a type of propaganda that created a positive image of the Medici in the eyes of the Florentines. This chapter will demonstrate that Cosimo de' Medici used his role as patron of the arts and learning and his support of humanism to create a positive image of both himself and his family, one that worked to solidify his control over Florence by portraying him as a benevolent benefactor of the city and of learning.

As a patron, Cosimo supported artists and helped art to flourish during the Florentine Renaissance. His role as patron also gave him the image of being a "dispenser of favour".[1] Acting as a patron allowed Cosimo to be seen as a generous leader by those people that he supported, and his role as patron also allowed him to create images of propaganda that served to create a positive image of the Medici across Florence. The artwork that he sponsored could also be seen by various members of society depending on what the piece was commissioned for and where it was on display. Some of this artwork was most easily seen by members of the upper levels of society who would have been invited to the Medici palace and who would have viewed the pieces that were commissioned to decorate the inside of the palazzo. Examples of such works would have included Donatello's bronze statues of *David* (c.1440) and *Judith and*

Holofernes (c.1456-57) and paintings of the *Labours of Hercules* created by Antonio del Pollaiuolo.[2] These pieces of artwork would have been an exhibit of the wealth that Cosimo possessed as well as the patronage that he performed. This practice of patronage also showed Cosimo as a charitable leader who was beautifying his city as a good citizen and ruler should. Sponsoring these artists and the artwork they created served as both a reminder of the power Cosimo held in Florence and as a source of propaganda that showed him as possessing qualities of a good leader.

Both the subject and the artist were selected by Cosimo depending on the type of artistic endeavor he wished to sponsor, and these can be related to his patronage. Two of the artists who at one time or another enjoyed the patronage of Cosimo de' Medici were Donatello (1386-1466) and Michelozzo (1369-1472).[3] After Cosimo took control of Florence and its government, the artists that he commissioned came under the services of the Florentine government. This occurred because "the atmosphere became civic-centered with the coming of the Medici, and the artists were gradually drawn into the service of the new *signori*, who went in for patronage on a large scale."[4] Prior to this, patronage had been practiced by the guilds and commune and this sponsorship had reached its height between 1375 and 1425.[5] By incorporating the artists into the power of the government, Cosimo extended his influence in Florence because these artists could be put to work creating a positive image of the Medici in the eyes of the Florentines.

Cosimo's role as a patron did not only extend over the city of Florence. As Connell and Zorzi stated, "In view of his role as leader of the Florentine regime after 1434, it was inevitable that Cosimo de' Medici should have emerged as a significant patron in Arezzo."[6] Thus, his role as a patron allowed Cosimo to extend his power beyond of the city of Florence as well. The influence that Cosimo exhibited outside the city of Florence was strengthened by the far-

reaching impact of the Medici bank. Not only did Cosimo's role as a patron let him increase the control and influence he held both inside and outside of Florence, but it also influenced members of his family who followed in his footsteps. It is noted that "both Lorenzo and Giuliano followed their grandfather in his liberal promotion of talented artists and in his loyal friendships with some of them."[7]

Much of the art that Cosimo sponsored gave visualization to the significance and greatness of both Cosimo and the Medici family. The "Adoration of the Magi" was a work commonly found among the buildings and palaces of the Medici. Cosimo had a fresco of the scene in his cell in the monastery of San Marco and the work was also used to decorate the chapel of the Medici in their palazzo. Benozzo Gozzoli (1420-1497) was responsible for creating both of these images. As Rubin and Wright pointed out when discussing the Medici image of the "Adoration of the Magi" in *Renaissance Florence: the Art of the 1470's*, "The importance of the imagery is most famously registered in the decoration of the Medici palace chapel where portraits of the family and their allies are placed in the retinue of the philosopher kings."[8] These images placed Cosimo and other members of his family, as well as his supporters, on a level equal to that of Biblical figures. This imagery would have had an impact on those who saw it, as the artwork was meant to show the greatness and importance of Cosimo de' Medici, his family, and his allies.

These images, particularly those shown in the "Adoration of the Magi," also worked to show Cosimo as a pious man. While Cosimo was a patron of the monastery of San Marco, he also had his own cell where he frequently went to pray and reflect. As A. Richard Turner pointed out in his study of Renaissance Florence, "A cell dedicated to a particular layman was rare, as was a chapel in a private palace, which required papal dispensation. But the Medici were

no ordinary citizens."[9] Both the private cell that Cosimo held at San Marco and the private chapel he had built in the new Medici palace were meant to show his piety. Since religion held a high place in Florentine society during the Renaissance images of Cosimo as a pious man created an even more positive image of him for the Florentines.

In addition to being a patron of art, Cosimo de' Medici was also known for his magnificent building projects both inside and outside the city of Florence. Many of these projects worked to beautify Florence,[10] and these projects certainly showed Cosimo in a positive light to the Florentines. According to Gene Brucker, a leading scholar of the Florentine Renaissance, "Order, harmony, and spaciousness had been the articulated goals of Florentine planners for more than a century."[11] Many of the projects that Cosimo sponsored worked to accomplish these goals and were seen as improving the city. His contemporary, Giovanni Rucellai, regarded all of the building that Cosimo undertook as "worthy of a crowned king."[12] Thus, Cosimo's desire to make a favorable impression on the citizens of Florence through his patronage worked since his contemporaries commented on the various tasks he undertook. Cosimo's patronage of these building projects stemmed from the Renaissance humanist idea that "a great man expresses the magnificence of his status and quality through architecture."[13] Cosimo enhanced his individual and familial power and control over the city by sponsoring these projects, and the building projects that Cosimo undertook both inside and outside Florence not only made him a powerful man, they helped extend his influence and reputation as well.

While most of Cosimo's well-known architectural projects aimed at improving the city of Florence, others were of a more personal nature. Beginning in 1445 through his patronage of Michelozzo di Bartolommeo (1396-1472), Cosimo built "a palace fit for a king" in Florence.[14] In fifteenth century Florence, "the palace was first of all an embodiment of family propaganda,

the tradition and continuity of lineage."[15] While the Medici palace held this role, it also served as a larger form of propaganda in terms of the status of the Medici family in Florence. This palazzo was a significant sign and image of Cosimo's growing power in the city. Flavio Biondi, a papal secretary under Pope Eugenius IV, observed, "In all of Rome, no remains can be found, either of a large private building or of some prince's palace, which display greater magnificence than Cosimo's residence."[16] This speaks to the grandeur of the palazzo, which would have sent a message to the citizenry of Florence about the authority and influence that Cosimo held.

Ironically, the greatness of the Medici palazzo was actually less than what it could have been as the original plan, drawn by Brunelleschi, was for a much larger and grander design. As Richard Goldthwaite pointed out, "In rejecting Brunelleschi's plan for his palace, Cosimo presumably recognized that there was an upper limit to what society would allow a private person to have."[17] So, while the palace that Cosimo built still set the Medici apart from the other citizens of Florence, he realized that the building could not be too grandiose or the Florentines would not accept it. Though it was for personal use, the act of hiring Michelozzo to build his new palazzo was still an act of patronage for Cosimo. His palazzo served dual purposes as it showed him in a positive light as a patron, while it also created a physical manifestation of the power and control he held over the city of Florence.

In addition to his palace, Cosimo was also responsible for the building of several religious structures in Florence. One of these endeavors, the church of San Lorenzo, was begun by Cosimo's father Giovanni, but it was not until 1442 when Cosimo became the financial backer for the project, that it was completed.[18] In his study of Renaissance Florence, Gene Brucker pointed out that "Cosimo's reluctance to finish this work earlier was apparently due to his unwillingness to appear too bold and ambitious as a patron."[19] This aversion on Cosimo's

part to be too overt in his patronage, follows his idea that he wanted to be seen as just a regular citizen. When discussing the politics of Renaissance Florence, Brucker observed that "such expenditures advertised his wealth and power, which balanced neatly with…his posture of disinterest, or rather his pretense that he had no more influence in the republic than any other citizen."[20] Regardless of how Cosimo hoped to be viewed though, projects such as San Lorenzo added to the influence he held in Florence. The city's citizens could not walk in Florence without seeing some physical manifestation of Cosimo's power evident in such buildings as San Lorenzo.

In addition to San Lorenzo, Cosimo de' Medici was also the financier of the monastery San Marco. In fact, according to B.L. Ullman and Philip Stadter, from 1445 until his death in 1464, "Cosimo paid for almost everything connected with San Marco: the buildings, furniture and sacred vessels; the clothes, food and daily necessities of the friars; books for the library, sacristy and choir."[21] Thus, Cosimo appears to have been the financier of San Marco in its entirety as well as the benefactor for the expansion of the library's collection of books and manuscripts. He is said to have spent in excess of forty thousand florins on San Marco alone.[22] This is a significant amount of money and it shows the role that the Medici bank played in Cosimo's patronage. Without the funds from his bank, Cosimo would not have been able to spend such a significant fund on one of his many projects.

By funding various churches and religious sites along with works of art, Cosimo created visible signs of the Medici's power, wealth and influence. Historian Dale Kent, in her studies of the Medici family in Florence, stated, "The Medici building programme in the parish of San Lorenzo from the late twenties on may be seen as a tangible expression of their growing power and influence, and its relationship to the party."[23] Not only did patronage give Cosimo social

power, it also worked to increase his political power as well. Everything that he did aimed at increasing both his and his family's power, influence, and visibility. Commissioning these various sacred buildings and works of art provided the Florentines with a constant reminder of both Cosimo's name and that of his family and showed he was a good citizen, benefactor of the city, and also reflected his pious nature.

Besides sponsoring works of art and architecture that left a lasting impression on the citizenry of Florence, Cosimo also paid for other events to remind the Florentines of his presence. According to Lucas-Dubreton, Cosimo "lost no opportunity of pleasing the Florentines. He offered them fine shows, assemblies of notables, flattering ceremonies."[24] All of these expenditures were meant to show Cosimo as a benevolent man engaged in the life of the city. These activities are another example of his wealth and patronage being used to influence the citizens to solidify the support of the Florentines behind this generous patron.

In addition to his patronage of art and architecture, Cosimo supported humanism as a source of propaganda to promote a positive image of himself in the eyes of the Florentines. He attracted humanist scholars to his palace with his wealth, and he made his house a "haven of refuge for men of genius."[25] Cosimo encouraged humanist scholars to visit and converse with him at home. He hoped that by drawing the humanists to his palazzo that he could bind them to the political fortunes of the Medici. According to Arthur Field, "Patronage was an extra force gluing humanist intellectuals, regardless of political ideas, to the Medici party."[26] Because of the support that Cosimo gave these humanist scholars, they were inevitably tied to the Medici party and their literary and intellectual support of Cosimo helped create the image of him as a learned and wise man who was fit to rule over Florence. Cosimo obviously had an impact on the humanists as many of them, including Leonardo Bruni, dedicated their works and translations to

him.[27] This practice of dedicating works to Cosimo reflected his genuine interest in learning and also reinforced the idea that he was wise and noble and thus suitable to govern the city.

While Cosimo used humanist teachings and ideals as a way to create a certain representation of himself, he also wanted the scholars to teach his sons and enhance his court.[28] Perhaps this was because he had been given some humanist education, and he wanted his sons to have the same opportunity. According to Jean-Lucas Dubreton, Cosimo was "fairly cultured, knew more Latin 'than was fitting in a businessman', even a little Greek, and was a constant reader of the Scriptures."[29] Cosimo was certainly learned enough to be able to converse with humanist scholars on philosophical and intellectual issues. But, the characteristic that earned him the greatest admiration was "his love of study, especially of the works of historians."[30] Cosimo enjoyed discussing learned topics with the scholars, and as Alison Brown noted, "his relationship with them was probably that of a friend who shared common literary interests rather than that of a patron."[31] Cosimo felt a connection with the humanists because this allowed him to expand upon his own knowledge.

Cosimo not only supported education and learning for his own sons but also for the city in general. One significant project that helped him to showcase this support was the building of San Marco and in particular, the library inside. This was the first public library of its kind anywhere in Europe, and it became the model for all of the libraries that followed. Cosimo wanted the library to "be made freely available to all those who wished to deepen their knowledge."[32] This building project bore witness to Cosimo's support of humanism and learning. He wanted the resources that were found in the library at San Marco to be available to anyone who wished to use them to extend their knowledge and education. Not only was Cosimo responsible for building the library at San Marco, but he also helped to fill it with the resources it

held. As James Hankins observed, "Cosimo did have a genuine interest in making books available to learned men and in sponsoring translations of 'good literature', especially philosophical literature, from the Greek."[33] Because of this Cosimo helped to fill the library with priceless Greek and Latin manuscripts.

In order to expand the resources found in the library at San Marco, Cosimo de' Medici sent agents such as the humanists Giuliano Lapaccini and Vespasiano da Bisticci to buy works for the collection. He gave an unlimited amount of funding from the Medici bank to Bisticci to procure works and because of this, "in less than two years, with the help of forty-five scribes, Bisticci collected two hundred volumes, including the Holy Scriptures, various Fathers of the Church, and the works of Aristotle and Aquinas."[34] Through the work of men such as Bisticci, Cosimo greatly increased the size of the library at San Marco for the use of the humanists and scholars of Florence. This patronage was also seen as a positive influence for the city as it enhanced Florence's reputation as a flourishing center of intellectual and academic pursuits.

The support and expansion of the library at San Marco that Cosimo engaged in was not continued to the same extent after his death, which meant a loss for the collection. Ullman and Stadter pointed out that upon Cosimo's passing the library "lost the most generous benefactor it was ever to know. Cosimo had been the library's almost unique support for more than thirty years, and no later donor came close to the liberality of the merchant prince in this regard."[35] Cosimo played a significant role during his lifetime in the creation and expansion of the library at San Marco. This project, which gave many intellectuals and scholars a wealth of manuscripts to study, left a lasting impression on the city even without the continued support of the Medici after Cosimo's death in 1464.

The use of wealth by Cosimo in the public forums of art, architecture, and learning supported the ideas of civic humanism that began to emerge at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries. While humanists of the fourteenth century had been opposed to wealth, this changed with the turn of the century as humanists began to view the issue of wealth in the framework of civic life. As Richard Goldthwaite pointed out, "These so-called civic humanists attempted to promote a sense of public morality by exalting the active life."[36] The ideals of humanism supported a civic expenditure of wealth, which was also embraced by the citizens of Florence as it typically led to improvements in their city. The discussion of this change in ideas was also reflected in the writings of the humanists such as Leonardo Bruni (c.1370-1444), whose texts changed in emphasis from "private family virtues to public political virtues."[37] Alison Brown hypothesized that this change may have reflected "Cosimo's increasing authority in the city."[38] Cosimo's outflow of cash toward civic projects expanded his influence and control of Florence as both humanists and citizens supported his projects for the betterment of the city.

Through his patronage of humanism, Cosimo promoted education and the study of classical works, which were both important to the humanist ideal. In his study of Cosimo's relationship to humanism, Mark Jurdjevic concluded,

> Many ideas in civic humanism complemented Cosimo's prominent position in Florence and could thereby be used to defend his authority and unrivaled social prestige. Humanist discussions about the ideal of the scholar-statesman, wealth, and the characteristics and effects of ideal government informed Florentine political thought. Because Cosimo's popular image represented these humanist principles, civic humanism provided justification for Cosimo's authority in Florence.[39]

Clearly the ideas and principles being studied by the educated elite of Florentine society worked to support Cosimo and the Medici's exclusive control over the government. Humanism helped

to provide justification for the power the Medici came to exert in Florence and the way they used that power.

Not only did Cosimo de' Medici support the humanists philosophically and ideologically, he supported them financially as well. In her study of the humanist view of Cosimo Alison Brown noted,

> The help Cosimo was able to give these humanists was that of laying open to them the facilities of his bank with its supplies of ready money, its courier-system between Florence and Rome, and its agents scattered throughout Europe who could help to recover newly discovered manuscripts.[40]

The Medici bank gave Cosimo the ability to support the humanists and their endeavors to a greater extent than could other citizens of Florence. Cosimo supported the humanists and in return for Cosimo's backing, the humanists supported and honored him. It was the humanists who first thought of giving Cosimo the title of *Pater Patriae*, or father of the country, upon his death. Humanists praised Cosimo after his death for the many roles he had held in Florence during his lifetime and for the extent to which he had influenced the city. Donato Acciaiuoli, in the preface of his translation of Plutarch's *Life of Hannibal* (1467), "paid tribute to Cosimo's wisdom and learning, praising the study of letters and calling him the father of learned men, their patron and constant friend and helper."[41] Many other humanists and scholars praised Cosimo as an intellectual and scholar as well. These men include Johannes Argyropoulos who was the first scholar that "idealized Cosimo as the divinely inspired philosopher-ruler of Florence and praised Cosimo rather as a philosopher than as a politician."[42] Cosimo's education and support of humanism caused him to become more regarded as a scholar than a political leader, and it was this role that was recognized and honored by the humanist scholars even after his death in 1464.

In addition to supporting the studies of the humanists, Cosimo de' Medici was responsible for the creation of the Platonic Academy in Florence. He was the first to provide for

the creation of the Academy and because of this was seen as having a significant role in the philosophical Renaissance. Part of his motivation for creating the Platonic Academy stemmed from the fact that "Cosimo, too, like many merchant-humanists such as Alberti, Manetti, and Palmieri, seems to have been genuinely interested in bringing teachings reserved for professionals into the public forum."[43] This sentiment followed that which had led Cosimo to create the public library at San Marco. He wanted to bring education and learning to the citizenry of Florence.

Through his patronage of Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), whom he engaged to translate the works of Plato from Greek into Latin, Cosimo began the Academy. This assignment was an honor for Ficino because as Hankins stated, "complete codices of Plato were extremely rare and precious items in the fifteenth century so Cosimo's gift to a relatively unknown scholar was an act of munificence well worthy of gratitude on Ficino's part."[44] After being given the text of Plato in Greek, Ficino began using his translations, letters, commentaries, and treatises to explain Plato to the Florentine citizenry. The Academy was, as Field put it, "a circle of acquaintances interested in these studies."[45] The Platonic Academy was "open to all men of culture and helped to give the Florentines intellectual ease and freedom."[46] The forum of the Platonic Academy gave Florentine men a place to discuss philosophy and other intellectual topics that they may not have felt they could discuss elsewhere.

Thus, the Platonic Academy came into existence because of Cosimo's request for the text of Plato to be translated into Latin. This translation and the process surrounding it attracted followers who met to discuss Plato's thought. Cosimo's founding of the Platonic Academy also stemmed from the inspiration he found in the speeches of Gemistus Pletho (c.1355-1452), who was "a respected and renowned Platonist."[47] As pointed out by Arthur Field in his examination

of Florentine humanism, "it was probably a combination of historical vision as to Florence's role in Western culture and pride with regard to his role as *primus inter pares* that led Cosimo to support the revival of the Platonic Academy."[48] Many factors contributed to Cosimo's decision to found a Platonic Academy in Florence.

The extent of Cosimo de Medici's patronage helped to distinguish him from other political leaders of the time. Cosimo has been described as having exceeded all other great men due to the fact that he "managed to dispel envy."[49] Part of this emerged from the wealth with which the Medici bank provided him, because there were few people who could hope to give out as much monetary funding as Cosimo did and remain in the upper levels of society. Because of his wealth Cosimo was able to surpass all of his economic equals in terms of the generosity he showed in his patronage of humanism and the Florentine Platonic Academy. In addition, Field pointed out that "Cosimo saw to it that entire groups of artists, philosophers, and humanists would remain more or less loyal to the Medici family."[50] Because Cosimo was supporting these humanists, they were also under his control politically and were used to help create a specific representation of the Medici in Florence. Their support of him served as a type of propaganda meant to showcase Cosimo as a benevolent and wise man who was fit to rule over the city. While Cosimo did have a genuine interest in learning, he undoubtedly used his support of humanism and learning as a means of promoting the view the citizens of Florence held of both himself and his family.

Lorenzo de' Medici

Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492), known as il Magnifico, followed in his grandfather's footsteps as the leader of the Medici clan in Florence. Though Lorenzo did not immediately succeed his grandfather Cosimo as the head of the Medici family, he did take closely after Cosimo in many respects. Lorenzo practiced patronage of the arts and learning as had Cosimo, and he used the wealth from the Medici bank for this purpose. Unlike Cosimo, however, Lorenzo was raised with the expectation that he would rule over Florence, and the education he received reflected this belief as opposed to Cosimo's education, which had focused on business and commerce. The humanist education that Lorenzo received influenced him as a patron of education and learning because he was knowledgeable in the topics about which people were writing. In addition to being a patron of the arts, Lorenzo was also a poet which meant that he was directly involved in the literary movement of the Renaissance. This chapter will argue that Lorenzo de' Medici followed in his grandfather's path when it came to his patronage of the arts, but that Lorenzo accomplished this in ways that differed from those of Cosimo, including taking an active role in the composition of his own pieces of writing.

Lorenzo de' Medici was raised with an appreciation of art and learning, while Cosimo was raised as a banker and then a scholar. Lorenzo was given an education that focused more on the humanities rather than business or commerce. In her study of Lorenzo de' Medici, Sara Sturm observed, "It is an indication of the importance his father and grandfather attached to the course of letters and learning that despite the early foundation of family power in the Medici bank, Lorenzo learned little of banking and commerce. His education was solid, classical, and essentially literary."[1] This education based on literature and the humanities led to an appreciation of learning, which caused Lorenzo to support art and learning later in life when he

came to head the Medici faction in Florence. In addition, he could appreciate the scholarly works that he was sponsoring because he had a background in the subjects that they covered. Since his education was strong in the sciences, letters, and arts, "Lorenzo was conversant with the venerable tradition of ancient literature as well as with modern writers."[2] This gave him the ability to converse with the writers whom he sponsored on the topics about which they wrote.

Lorenzo's literary education was supplemented by his interaction with scholars and artists that came to the Medici palace while he was growing up. Living in the palace while first Cosimo and then Piero acted as significant patrons of the arts, "it was inevitable that Lorenzo would also come in contact with the many other scholars who were clients or friends of the Medici."[3] The very family of which Lorenzo was a part and the interaction that this allowed him with artists and intellectuals helped to increase and supplement the formal education that he received. This contact with scholars also allowed Lorenzo to be involved in dialogue with educated and knowledgeable men, and it also gave him an opportunity to learn from the men with whom he conversed. While discussing Lorenzo's early life, Judith Hook stated, "Certainly dialogue was a means of learning which Lorenzo used throughout his life, beginning with these early days in the Medici palace."[4] Thus, life in the Medici palace helped to expand upon the formal education that he received from his tutors and teachers.

The lack of an education in business and commerce did leave Lorenzo less financially knowledgeable and adept than his grandfather Cosimo. Because Lorenzo lacked the financial prowess of his grandfather, he covered his overspending with money from public accounts.[5] Since he was the *de facto* ruler of Florence no one challenged these actions, but this was a situation in which Cosimo de' Medici had never found himself because of his background in banking and finance. Fortunately for Lorenzo, his status in the city allowed him to siphon off

money from the public purse without being punished. Because of his political influence, Lorenzo "was able to win special financial favours for himself by manipulating communal institutions, [and] exploiting his ambiguous position in the state to his own advantage."[6] Since he was the head of the ruling faction in Florence, Lorenzo was able to control the finances of the city and to use them for his own ends.

In addition to his education in the liberal arts, Lorenzo was also raised with the expectation that he would eventually be the political head of Florence. This was the opposite of Cosimo's experience, who had not been born to power but rather worked his way into a position of political authority in Florence. Lorenzo, on the other hand, "had been prepared from childhood to assume the task of wielding political power, and he wielded it with zest and consummate skill."[7] The fact that the Medici family was already in control when Lorenzo was growing up gave him first hand experience and knowledge about ruling over the city. Lorenzo was able to see both his grandfather and father in power and the ways in which each man wielded his political control over Florence. These observations allowed Lorenzo to form his own ideas about how he would rule over the city when his turn came. In her study of Lorenzo, Professor Sturm described him in the following manner, "A natural politician, he was to possess this ability to a remarkable degree to the end of his life, maintaining not only Florence's position of eminence but also his own through a period when the affairs of all the Italian states were frequently precarious."[8] Being raised with the expectation that he would become the ruler of Florence thus helped Lorenzo to become an effective ruler who was able to keep both himself and his city in a position of power in a period during which other states struggled for stability. Under his leadership the Florentines "lived in great prosperity until 1492, when Lorenzo de' Medici died; for he having put a stop to the internal wars of Italy, and by his wisdom and

authority established peace, turned his thoughts to the advancement of his own and the city's interest."[9] Through his political and social influence Lorenzo de' Medici made a positive impact on the lives of the citizens of Florence, while also looking out for both his personal interests and those of the Medici family as a whole.

By observing both his father and grandfather in their roles at the head of the Medici faction, Lorenzo learned from an early age the importance of family and lengths to which he should go to perpetuate his family's control over Florence. For the Medici, family was of the utmost importance and all decisions had to be weighed in terms of the impact they would have on the familial unit as a whole. As Judith Hook put it, "the family still remained the central political, social and economic fact of life for every Florentine patrician,"[10] and this was certainly no different for the Medici clan. Thus, Lorenzo learned that the family came before his own personal wants and needs. This belief can be seen in the fact that his marriage and the careers and marriages he chose for his children were all done with the betterment of the Medici family in mind.

When discussing the influence that family had on Lorenzo de Medici's life, Professor Hook observed, "Family came to dominate his life to such an extent that everything he did was determined by the need to preserve its status and reputation, its business and political interests and, above all, its property."[11] No decision could be made without first considering the implications that it would have on the family as a whole. This meant that Medici leaders like Cosimo and Lorenzo would sometimes be forced to make a decision that was less positive for them individually because it was the better option for the Medici clan in general. Because of these views regarding the importance of family, Lorenzo

> would sacrifice his feelings, his time, his peace of mind, would immerse himself in uncongenial tasks and squander effort in ways that brought little personal reward; would increase his political power and thus earn himself the name of tyrant, and endeavor, by any every possible means, to protect the Medici into the foreseeable future.[12]

Lorenzo, like his grandfather before him, used patronage as a means of expanding and extending his influence over the city of Florence. The Medici (Cosimo and Lorenzo to a greater extent than Lorenzo's father, Piero) "represented all that was most living in Florentine culture."[13] Through their patronage and appreciation for scholarship, literature, and art, "they made Florence the centre of Renaissance culture for Italy and all Europe" in the Quattrocentro.[14] It was the influence of the Medici family, specifically that of Cosimo and Lorenzo, which helped the Renaissance flourish in Florence as it did. Lorenzo learned the importance of patronage from observing both his grandfather's and father's uses of it. Lorenzo's patronage "alone would earn him a place of honor in the history of Italian art and letters. He freely contributed both his wealth and his influence, and the list of those who received his patronage includes the masters of the Renaissance in Florence."[15] Some of the artists that Lorenzo sponsored included the painters Botticelli and Ghirlandaio, the architect Giuliano di San Gallo, and the poet and humanist Pico della Mirandola.[16] Through his patronage of these artists and writers, Lorenzo helped the period of cultural rebirth known as the Renaissance to flourish in both Florence and Italy. By sponsoring these artists and scholars Lorenzo encouraged them to expand their knowledge and to create works of art which helped to both beautify the city of Florence and showcase Lorenzo as a benevolent ruler and patron of Florence.

Of all the arts of which he was a patron, Lorenzo was very interested in architecture and the projects of this type that he sponsored. Instead of being a hands-off patron who just paid for buildings and allowed others to do all the work, Lorenzo became more involved. In her study of Lorenzo's activities as an architect, art historian Beverly Brown has argued that, "Lorenzo's role

as an architectural patron was not merely one of loosing the purse strings but [rather] he took an active and vital part in the design of his buildings."[17] Lorenzo's grandfather, Cosimo, was also involved in the creation of some of the buildings he sponsored. For instance, Cosimo had changed the design for the Medici Palace when he thought it was too extravagant. Thus, Lorenzo was not the first of the Medici to become deeply involved in some of the projects for which he was the patron.

Lorenzo's involvement in these building projects led him to be seen as "an arbiter of taste by his contemporaries, who often turned to him for advice and recommendations."[18] King Ferdinand of Naples was one such contemporary who asked for Lorenzo's opinion and assistance about the construction of a proposed royal palace.[19] This shows that Lorenzo's influence extended not only over the city of Florence but in other parts of Italy as well. In addition to influencing well known and influential persons, Lorenzo's involvement in architecture also had an effect on lesser known people. In his tribute to Lorenzo de' Medici, Filippo Redditi, a contemporary of Lorenzo's, remarked, "How greatly he excels in architecture. In both private and public buildings we all make use of his inventions and his harmonies. For he has adorned and perfected the theory of architecture with the highest rules of geometry."[20] Lorenzo's knowledge of architecture and the influence this had on the projects he sponsored were noticeable to men at various levels of Florentine and Italian society.

Along with his patronage of the arts, Lorenzo de' Medici also sponsored projects that helped to make Florence a more striking and magnificent city. Machiavelli praised Lorenzo's "successful efforts to make his own city more beautiful through the construction of new streets and buildings."[21] Obviously, Lorenzo's contemporaries were cognizant of the changes that he was bringing about in the city and the positive impact that these changes had upon Florence. In

addition to these projects, "Lorenzo himself originated plans for several outstanding architectural projects."[22] Rather than leaving the designing of the projects to others, Lorenzo became involved in the process himself. This patronage to create a more beautiful Florence was another way in which Lorenzo took after his grandfather. By helping to beautify the city, Lorenzo continued to create a positive name and image for the Medici family. These acts of patronage that helped beautify Florence improved the reputation of the city across Italy as word spread about the benevolent acts that were being performed by the Medici. The architectural projects also helped to enhance Florence's status in Italy by improving the image of the city in the eyes of anyone who visited. Wherever people went in the city of Florence they saw examples of Medici patronage and the ways in which the Medici family had bettered the city for its citizens.

Lorenzo also followed in his grandfather's footsteps by collecting literary works for the Medici library. Lorenzo commissioned the humanist Jean Lascaris (d.1535), a Byzantine scholar, to "procure for him all the manuscripts he could find."[23] In his searches Lascaris found 200 manuscripts to add to the Medici library at San Lorenzo. Eighty of these were unknown at the time that he discovered them, which added enormously to the prestige of the Medici library because it gave the Medici family the only known copies of certain works.[24] These additions helped to expand the Medici library created by Cosimo de' Medici, and they showed the importance that Lorenzo placed on literature and learning as well.

Lorenzo also encouraged learning and education by supporting the Platonic Academy of Florence, initially created under the patronage of Cosimo. Through his support of Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), whom Cosimo had also sponsored, Lorenzo promoted the continuance of the academy and the study and discourse of classical works. According to scholar Selwyn Brinton, under Lorenzo's attention, "the Platonic Academy of Florence became a very real

influence upon contemporary thought."[25] By encouraging the continuance of the academy, Lorenzo also brought about an increase in the effect the Platonic Academy had upon the literary and intellectual culture that existed in Florence during the Renaissance.

In addition to the expansion of the Platonic Academy, Lorenzo also encouraged education by inviting scholars and literary figures to visit and engage in conversations with him. Like his grandfather Cosimo, "Lorenzo had gathered around him… scholars and thinkers, no less than the artists, both as a friend as well as a generous and all-powerful patron."[26] The fact that Lorenzo sponsored learning and scholarship to the same degree that he sponsored artistic projects showed the value that he placed on education and study.

One way in which Lorenzo forged his own path was through his poetry. Here he greatly influenced Renaissance literature by encouraging the use of vernacular in writing, which he did by composing all of his pieces in the Florentine dialect. Lorenzo himself defended his use of the vernacular in his *Comento de' Miei Sonetti* when he said, "Some things are not less worthy because they are more common, rather one proves every good to be greatly better because it is communicable and universal…And therefore it does not seem that being common to all Italy takes dignity away from our mother tongue."[27] His defense of the vernacular as a literary language was one of Lorenzo's most important contributions to the literary tradition of the Italian Renaissance. By defending the use of the vernacular Lorenzo placed such writers as Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch, on the same level as the writers of the classics.[28] In his justification for the use of the Italian language, Lorenzo also stated "If we wish to prove the dignity of our language, we need only insist on the principal condition that our language can easily express any concept of our minds; and for this one can introduce no better argument than that from experience."[29] In terms of experience Lorenzo was referring to the writers who had written in

the vernacular before him like Dante and Boccaccio. As Sturm remarked, "The fact that he composed all of his own literary works in the vernacular marks a highly significant departure from the literary emphasis of his period."[30] Lorenzo influenced the Renaissance not only through his patronage of other artists and writers but also through the creation of his own writing.

Furthermore, through his poetry Lorenzo helped to revive the writing and study of Italian poetry. His poetry demonstrated that both classical and popular literary forms could be adapted to incorporate the content and attitudes of the time in which he was writing and by doing this, Lorenzo "contributed, perhaps more than any other poet of his time, to the renewal of Italian poetry."[31] Thus, Lorenzo had significant influence on the literature of the Italian Renaissance through his own writing. The style and language that he chose to use in his poetry led to changes and a revival in the study of poetry in Florence and Italy in general. This influence was different from anything Cosimo had achieved because while Cosimo was a great patron of the arts he never created any literary or artistic work of his own.

Lorenzo's role as both patron and poet caused him to have greater influence on the period known as the Renaissance than members of his family who were only patrons. While he shaped the events and artistic creations of the day through his roles as politician and patron, he also influenced the vernacular literary movement in the Renaissance through his own compositions. In reference to the Renaissance that occurred in Florence, Sara Sturm observed, "Lorenzo was both a leader in its principal events and a singularly faithful mirror of its major intellectual movements. His figure imposes so clearly on any study of the Renaissance that he has been called 'the protagonist of the new age.'"[32]

Lorenzo de' Medici took after his grandfather Cosimo in many respects starting with the fact that he also became the head of the Medici family, though not directly after Cosimo. Lorenzo was also a significant patron of the arts as his grandfather had been, though Lorenzo's education and childhood encouraged this since he observed both his father and grandfather in their support of art and learning. The literary education that Lorenzo received prepared him both for a life at the head of the Medici faction and for the role he held as a patron of the arts. Lorenzo expanded upon his role in the Renaissance by composing his own poetry which influenced the literary movement in Florence. As a poet, Lorenzo was more directed involved in the literary developments that occurred during the Renaissance than his grandfather would have been. Thus, Lorenzo learned the basics about using patronage to strengthen his influence from his grandfather, but he also took his own steps to create his own image as a patron of the arts and learning.

Conclusion

By 1434, Cosimo de' Medici brought himself and the Medici family to a position of power in Florence. He achieved this through the use of his wealth and the familial and business connections that the Medici bank opened up for him. Cosimo's rise to power in Florence was cut short in 1433 when he and other members of his family were sent into exile by his political enemies, namely the Albizzi family. The wealth of the Medici family and the influence that Cosimo already held over the city, led to the family's recall from exile after only one year. Upon his return to Florence, Cosimo promptly exiled those prominent citizens that opposed him and filled the positions of power with his supporters. This allowed Cosimo to influence the government without doing so directly. Under his leadership the Medici family came to hold control over Florence for over three centuries.

In addition to using his wealth to gain power, Cosimo de' Medici also used the funds provided him by the Medici bank to extend his influence over the city. Because of the immense fortune of Cosimo, he was able to become an influential patron of the arts and learning. Through his patronage, Cosimo sponsored art and building projects around Florence to showcase his power and influence to all the citizens. Thus, while his patronage made him seem a benevolent leader, it also created visible signs of the control he held over the city. Cosimo also used his wealth to extend learning in the city through his support of humanists, the construction of the library at San Marco, and the creation of a Platonic Academy in Florence. The money available to Cosimo because of the Medici bank allowed him to support artists and humanists throughout his control of Florence and these acts helped to extend the influence he held.

These acts of patronage represented a conscious effort of the part of Cosimo to create a positive public image of him to be seen by the citizens of Florence. He used his support of art

and humanism to create visual propaganda that showcased his generosity and benevolence. Cosimo was able to accomplish this because he was the financial backer of the artists and humanists who created these public images of both him and the Medici family and he could thus influence the ways in which he was portrayed. While Cosimo did have a genuine interest in learning, he also supported scholarly and intellectual pursuits because they helped show him as a learned and wise man to Florentine citizens. Lorenzo followed in his grandfather's path when it came to using his acts of patronage to consciously create positive images of him and his family to be seen throughout the city.

The Medici remained in control of Florence for many generations after Cosimo brought them the family to power. His descendants followed in his footsteps as the leader of the Medici faction as well as in their roles as patron of the arts and learning. One such relative was Cosimo's grandson Lorenzo de' Medici. Lorenzo was also a significant patron of both the arts and learning and his grandfather influenced him in this respect. In addition to following Cosimo's lead as a patron, Lorenzo also became more directly involved in the Florentine Renaissance through the creation of his own poetry. Thus, Lorenzo respected his grandfather by making similar decisions but he also expanded his influence in his own way as well.

Cosimo de' Medici played a significant role in the rise of the Medici family in Florence. He was the first of the clan to become the leader of the city, even if he chose to do so indirectly. Through his influence and expansion the Medici family came to rule over the city for over 300 years. Once Cosimo came to power, he used the wealth of the Medici bank and his role as a patron of the arts and learning to expand the influence he held. Following his lead, his descendants also used their role as patron to increase and maintain the control they had in Florence.

Endnotes

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[12] Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici,* 19.

[13] Curt S. Gutkind, *Cosimo de' Medici, pater patriae, 1389-1464* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), 65.

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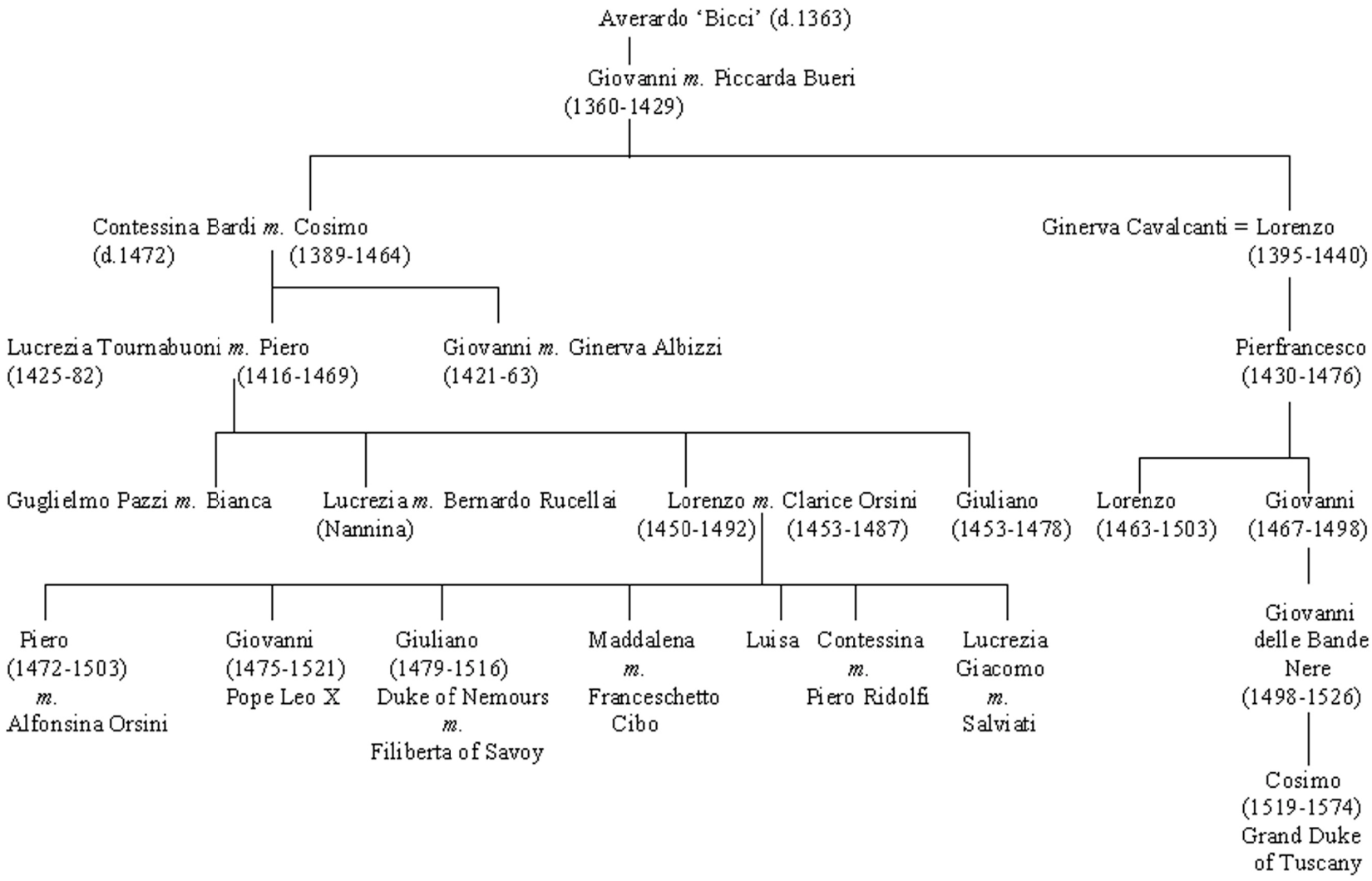
Appendix A – Medici Family Tree