LIVORNO, 1680-1845

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1. Coverage
This questionnaire discusses Livorno (Leghorn in 18th century English spelling), the main port-city of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

The first registries of entries in the port of Livorno date back to 1680 – while Braudel and Romano 1951 reconstructed reliable data for 12 years in the second half of the 16th century (1573-74, 1577-85, and 1590-93). According to Filippini (vol. I, p. 23), the post-1737 (that is, the transfer of Tuscany to the Lorraine family after the Medici dynasty was extinct) registries went lost, “maybe due to negligence or lack of interest on the part of the new administration”. However, Filippini was able to retrieve two tables summarizing the information for the years 1737-1750. He then used “general tables of the merchant ships entering the port of Livorno” for the years 1751-1843, which he crossed-checked with Repetti 1833-1846, as well as with other data series related to freights and insurance of ships entering the port of Livorno (mainly “portate di mercanzie” e “portate di sanità”).

There are no data for exports.

2. Documents
1680-1737: 49 registers of “Avvisi di mare e portate dalla bocca del porto”, kept in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze (Mediceo del Principato, 1542-1561, 1612-1626, 1627-1632, 2301-2309). The period from April 1720 through December 1722 is missing.

1737-1750: 2 tables kept in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze (Reggenza, 800).


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Synthetic tables were produced on a yearly basis for the years 1700-1737.

3. Institutional setting

For the period 1680-1737, the Capitano della Bocca del Porto and the Provveditore della Dogana in Livorno, and the Segretario di Stato alla Guerra in Florence were responsible for the registers. Their relative responsibilities are still to be clarified. The Capitano del porto presided over the Ufficio della Bocca del porto, and exercised government and police functions in the port. The Provveditore della Dogana was in charge of all matters related to the custom system of the port, and was considered one of the city’s first-rank officials. The function of Provveditore della Dogana disappeared in 1740, following the subcontracting of the states revenue: the contractors took over the Provveditore’s administrative duties, and the Auditore his judiciary ones. As the subcontracting system came to an end in 1768, Livorno’s custom was placed under the supervision of the General Administrators (Amministratori generali) in Florence.

4. Motivations

During the Medici period, registers were sent to the Segretario di Stato alla Guerra in Florence, who headed the department in charge (among other things) of Livorno’s administration – which in turn testifies for the mostly military interest the city had in the eye of the Grand Duchy’s ruling family. Under the Lorraine dynasty, relationships between Livorno and Florence became somewhat more articulate, with administrative registers being sent to specific magistratures instead of being centralized by the Segretaria di Guerra.

5. Methods

For the period 1680-1737, the data was collected by the Capitano della Bocca del Porto in Livorno, on the basis of estimates from the stagliatore, an official in charge of assessing the type of ships and the value of goods entering the port. By the end of the 18th century, the Dogana printed daily avvisi reporting on port arrivals and exchange rates. And every year, the Provveditore della Dogana sent to the Grand Duchy’s Segretario di Stato alla Guerra in Florence reports and tables synthesizing the data, as well as other information related to Livorno’s custom system.
Historians working on this material (Filippini 1998, Addobbati 2007) have established its fairly good reliability to calculate the volume of trade entering Livorno during the period under consideration. There are some discrepancies between the original material from the late 18th century and the figures produced by Repetti for the period 1766-1837 (vol. II, p. 768, “Nota sommaria dei bastimenti a vela quadra e latina entrati nel Porto di Livorno”). However, most of Filippini’s series are convergent with the numbers produced in the 18th century by Pietro Bernardo Prato in his 63-volumes manuscript Giornale della Città e del porto di Livorno (Biblioteca Labronica, Livorno), in which the author kept track of the entries of ships in the port of Livorno on a daily basis between 1764 and 1813 (in turn relying on the Dogana’s printed avvisi).

Eventually, Andrea Addobbati’s analysis of data related to the maritime insurance market (mostly drawn from the Archivio di Stato di Livorno’s Sicurtà series) constitute a major breakthrough in the city’s maritime business history (Addobbati 1996 and 2007). Most prominently, Addobbati produced a complete, year-by-year series of insurance prices for the period 1693-1815, which allows for a unique perspective over Livorno’s maritime business during the 18th century.

6. Information

The registers include information on the number, type, port of departure, flag and freight of the ships entering the port of Livorno. Depending on the period, we have information on the values and quantities of traded goods, but most of the data are related to ships.

Values were assessed by the stagliatore (see above); according to one source, the stagliatore based his estimates on his measurement of the ship’s dimensions in cubic feet². However, further research is required about how this work was carried out, and what kind of expertise was required in case one or more party disagreed with the estimate. There are no convenient price source that could be used to check his assessments.

Many different currencies and units were used. Filippini (1998, vol. I, p. 25-26) suggested to convert them all into one unit, so as to be able to compare the different values; yet his system remains rather empirical.

The names of the goods were given in Italian. Some categories varied from one period to the next, while some remained rather stable (grano/wheat, cotone bianco/white cotton, cotone greggio/raw cotton, etc.). Several dozens of different goods are mentioned. It is not clear who decided on the designation. Presumably the stagliatore, but merchant-captains might have played a role too.

Dozens of different geographical entities are mentioned in the data: see an example in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The source for Livorno in 1795

7. Availability

The data were first collected by Jean-Pierre Filippini, who published several figures synthesizing the original data (Filippini 1998, vol. I, p. 21-73, and vol. II, p. 149-153). Addobbatti 2007 and Tazzara 2011 also contain useful figures to balance Filippini’s estimates.

8. Research questions

Filippini’s main interest was to calculate the volume of maritime trade entering the port of Livorno in the 18th century. He therefore primarily used the data in a “quantitativist” perspective, paying scant attention to individual figures.
It would be extremely useful to cross-check the data with the few surviving archives of the Livorno customs, that kept track of commercial transactions in the port-city (for instance to calculate the fiscal benefits of maritime trade). Unfortunately, the rich Dogana series from the Archivio di Stato di Livorno were lost in the 19th century, probably on the occasion of a partial reorganization of the city archives in 1877. However, we can use the statistical series elaborated by Andrea Addobbati and Lucia Frattarelli Fischer on the basis of the archives of the Soppressindaci e Sindaci poi Ufficio delle revisioni e sindacati (kept in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze), a magistrature in charge of controlling the activities and accounts of the Dogana. In particular, the series of the stallaggio duty were published by historian Andrea Addobbati (2007, especially the tables p. 88, 92 and 99), and recently used by Corey Tazzara (2011).

9. Bibliography

9.1. Primary sources


Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Reggenza, n. 648 (1745-1763) and 800 (1737-1750).

Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Appalto generale delle regie rendite (1740-1768).

Archivio di Stato di Livorno, Dogana, “Rescritti e ordini”, 26 files for the period 1633-1799, with gap 1654-1701.

Archivio di Stato di Livorno, Sanità, “Miscellanee di Sanità”, f. 333, ins. 620, “Prospetto generale dei bastimenti mercantili giunti nel porto di Livorno dal 1751 a tutto il 1843”.

Archivio di Stato di Livorno, Ufficio di Sicurtà, n. 1-148 (Scritti di Sicurtà, 1763-1861; very thorough information on insurance prices for the years 1763-1861), and n. 149-159 (Riscontro delle Sicurtà e delle Polizze, rather incomplete data for the years 1729-1762).

3. LoRomer 1987, p. 20-21: “A series of peacemeal customs’ reforms which began in 1451 culminated in a decree by Cosimo III (11 March 1675) abolishing the gabelles on most goods entering Livorno by sea and instituting in their place a small, fixed duty called the stallaggio. Having paid this charge, a merchant could introduce his goods into the city and sell, store, or refine them, then reexport them by sea without undergoing any further fiscal obligation. This provision provided the juridical basis for Livorno’s existence as a free port.”
Biblioteca Labronica (Livorno), *Giornale della Città e del porto di Livorno* by Pietro Bernardo Prato (63 volumes, 1764-1813).


9.2. Secondary works publishing and commenting the data


9.3. Secondary works using the data


10. Complementary sources

Notarial records might of course be of great help in assessing the value of goods that entered Livorno by ship, although it is unlikely they can ever help to reconstitute the whole volume of trade that transited through the city-port. A list of some of the most prominent notaries active in 18th century Livorno is available in Filippini 1998, vol. I, p. 256.