

The intermediary role played by local officials and barons in the Papal States: The Case of the administration of Spoleto at the End of the Fifteenth Century

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Abstract

In this study, I aim to examine the role played by local officials and barons of the Papal States at the end of the fifteenth century. In particular, I wish to investigate the intermediary role played by local officials and barons, who acted between the Pope and regional cities. These officials and barons built significant political relationships that extended beyond their cities, but the study of their role has been neglected so far. For example, in the 1490s the city of Spoleto was asked by neighbouring cities to intervene in factional conflicts that had been intensifying. In this situation, the channels of communication and alliances that extended beyond cities played a substantial role not only in local government, but also in directing and advancing various entities' political interests. Therefore, we could reconsider the Renaissance Papal States by examining the local dynamism and governance practice of Spoleto, in which local conflicts and problems between city states were intertwined. In this project, my focus will be threefold: 1) The role of the governors of Spoleto in the Papal States at the end of the fifteenth century; 2) the negotiation process in the local conflicts in Umbria; and 3) the relationship between the Orsini family and Spoleto.

Project aims and their relevance in the context of the state of the art

Project aims

This research will consider the local administrative structure of the Papal States, by looking at the role of intermediaries between the Pope and provincial cities, for example local officials and barons. It will examine the case of one provincial city in particular—Spoleto, in Umbria—at the end of the fifteenth century. Spoleto was asked by neighbouring cities to intervene in factional conflicts that had been intensifying. Concerning Umbria, Shaw (2007) considered the mutual military and administrative relationship between the Orsini and Guelph families in Umbria during the second half of the fifteenth century and argued that there existed partisan networks that extended beyond cities. However, according to Carocci, it is not easy to describe the barons due to their fluid positions. Even after the fifteenth century, when the control of the Pope over each region had been strengthened, interlocal networks involving barons and papal officials still existed and often influenced the Pope's policy. We will be able to present a perspective of a local society in the Early Modern Italy under the control of foreign powers by examining not only the institution but also the social bound and political culture. Therefore, it is useful to focus in detail on the activity of officials sent by the popes and of the barons when discussing the relationship between the Roman Curia and provincial cities in the political history of Italy.

Spoleto was strongly influenced by the popes and the governors appointed by them, while it, in turn, maintained its own influence in Umbria by organising relationships with other cities and the Orsini family. Nevertheless, researchers have tended to be interested only in major cities and there have been few exhaustive studies focusing on Spoleto. Besides, according to Shaw (2007), little is known about the political role of barons from the end of the fifteenth century to the early sixteenth century. Although she dealt with the politics of all branch families of Orsini based on a wide range of examples, it is necessary to further focus on regional characteristics in the Papal States by considering each Orsini branch's regional policy.

In order to unravel the situation in which local conflicts, between city states and war between nations were all intertwined, we should analyze their activities and the mechanisms of local government.

It is expected that, by analysing Spoleto in the 1490s, we will gain a greater understanding of the complex character of the Renaissance Papal States. There are two reasons for this expectation: First, by studying situations surrounding Spoleto, it will become possible to comprehend the dynamism of the Renaissance Papal States, which established relationships within each region based on mutual interests and interlocal activities. Second, the analysis of regional powers will reveal not only the lack of unity of the Papal States, but also the nature of the Early Modern state, which consisted of conglomerate elements that contributed to both the consolidation and the division of territories. I cannot generalise from the case of Spoleto to the Renaissance Papal States as a whole, but the analysis of the involvement of barons and officials in the administration of the Papal States will contribute to reconsider the multi-level political control by the Popes over provincial cities and the nature of one of the Renaissance sovereigns.

As a result of the territorialisation of the Papal States, by the middle of the sixteenth century the word '*stato*' came to be used officially by the popes themselves. However, we don't have to connect the Medieval and early Modern Papal States to the image of the Modern State. Besides, because the local organizations of the Papal State so diversified, it is difficult for us to recognize each characteristic. In order to comprehend these local conditions, as Carocci (2010) asserts, it is necessary to reexamine dualism, the central power and the periphery and to focus on the political action of intermediary subjects between the Roman Curia and provincial cities. This perspective will become the key to solve the characteristic of the Papal State which has been considered unstable and vulnerable in comparison with other hereditary states. Also, insights into Italian society at the local level during this turbulent era will contribute to the understanding of the conglomerate form of government in the Renaissance and Early Modern periods.

Although Spoleto has been considered to have a close relationship with the Pope, this relationship was constantly changing depending on its relationship with other regions. Besides, it is necessary to discuss the possibility of choice and actions organized by local entities, that were not always affected by Popes, the Orsini families and factions. These analyses will lead to understanding of a political practice in Early Modern Europe, which was conditioned on the relationship between the sovereign and local people.

Relevance in the context of the state of the art

There is a substantial body of studies on the Papal States and the provincial cities within them, although little that focuses on Spoleto. After the Risorgimento, the Roman Curia came to be seen as being in contrast to the municipalities of the Middle Ages. Researchers tended to be interested in the communes of the Middle Ages and see in them a symbol of political freedom. Therefore, at that time, few researchers paid attention to the study of the Papal States. In their series published at the end of the 1970s, *Storia d'Italia*, Caravale and Caracciolo examined the Papal States from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. Although they described the politics of the popes and the alliances and disputes between local barons throughout the period, they gave scant attention to the structure of governance in provincial cities, and little work has been done on the subject.

After the end of the 1970s, Prodi advanced the study of the Papal States in the early modern age. He considered that the taxes, barratry, diplomatic organisation and standing armies promoted by the popes

represented a precondition of the European modern state. At the same time, he pointed out the need for further analysis of the politics and institutions of the Papal States. Prodi contributed to the understanding of the Papal States from the perspective of institutions and military affairs. However, Caracciolo (1983) and Carocci (1996) criticised Prodi's conception because they felt that he overemphasised the view of the Papal States as a type of centralised state. In recent years, researchers have tended to partially approve of Prodi's views and have tried to examine them from various perspectives. Since the 1980s, research on provincial cities and the Roman court has developed under the influence of social history.

In the context of the Italian medieval and early modern studies, in the 1970s, Chittolini evaluated the political order in Italian cities after the fourteenth century. As a consequence, research on the 'regional state' developed. In the regional state, in which a structure was made up of various political entities, the sovereign ruler, such as the duke, authorised local authorities to act with autonomy. This arrangement was derived from the governing structures of the municipal cooperation in the Middle age. At the same time, the sovereign rulers would try to control the relationships between local authorities. After 2000, researchers turned their attention to the various political factions in Italy that did not always hold a place in the official structure and analysed a variety of regional cases. In the end of the fifteenth century, some sovereign rulers, such as the Medici Family in Florence, lost much of their political strength and controlling power. In considering this change, the following questions arise: How did the relationship between the popes and the local authorities change? How did local actors exercise their roles in the local administration?

A study of the Umbria region was undertaken by Volpi (1983) and several researchers have written on Perugia, the regional capital. Black (1970, 1972), for example, focused on the diarchy between officials sent by the popes and the provincial council at Perugia. With their work, Regni (1981) and Chiacchella (1974) advanced understanding of the administration and finances of Perugia in the late Middle and Early Modern ages and drawing attention to the intervention of papal officials in these domains. As a fruit of this work, a conference was held in 1997 at Perugia on politics and peripheral administration in the medieval and early modern Papal States. At this conference, Chiacchella addressed two points concerning cities under the protection of the pope: the autonomy of the municipal city and the power of the local lords who maintained relations with the Roman barons and held power until the early modern age.

In response to the points raised by Chiacchella, Carocci (2003) studied the local barons and Kudo (2001, 2002) examined the governors who were dispatched by popes to Perugia in the sixteenth century. Besides, according to Irace (1995, 2014), the popes of the Renaissance period were unable to maintain a stable and unified government. Instead, the Papal States resembled a mosaic in which the barons and factions of each city competed for supremacy and tried to maintain their positions of power by contracts with mercenary armies and factional identities.

When we come to the case of Spoleto, it is difficult to find any study giving a broad overview of the history, except for that of Sansi (1879-86). Concerning Todi, a neighbouring city, Archivist F. Orsini (2009, 2018) examined the relationship between local factions, the Alviano family and the Pope. His study is appreciated as being the first detailed study about Todi at the end of the fifteenth century, but there is room for further examination of the relationship between the local factions and other cities in Umbria.

Project description

My study will have a threefold focus: the role of the governors of Spoleto in the Papal States at the end of the fifteenth century; the negotiation process in local conflicts in Umbria; and the relationship between the Orsini family and Spoleto.

First, in considering the role of governors in the Papal States, I will investigate the governors of Spoleto at the end of the fifteenth century. During this period, Pope Alexander VI appointed three people from the same family—Giovanni Borgia (1494–95), Lucrezia Borgia (1499–1500) and Lodovico Borgia (1500–1502)—as the governors of Spoleto. When a governor was not able to be present in Spoleto, his or her duties were carried out by a representative. I will examine the process for appointing governors and representatives and the way in which they were evaluated by the local government. The 'Codices Borgiani latini 882', which is preserved in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gives us a useful list of governors of the period. In addition, I plan to analyse the 'Riformanze' of the Priori di Spoleto and the 'Lettere al Priori', which are both preserved in the Archivio di Stato di Spoleto. In particular, 'Riformanze' contains not only the minutes of the local council but also copies of letters, which the government of Spoleto received from popes and cardinals. I completed photographing 'Riformanze' from 1492 to 1503. It has a huge number of pages, but it will be helpful to examine the relationship between Pope Alexander VI, the governors and the local council and the role of representatives in the governors' absence.

Second, I will analyse the negotiation process in local conflicts and the effect that these conflicts had on the Papal States by studying the intervention of Spoleto in conflicts at Todi, a nearby town. In Todi, the Atti family (Guelph; Catalaneschi) and the Canale family (Ghibelline; Chialavallese) fought. These factions were related to the Orsini and the Colonna, respectively. In this period, by taking advantage of disorder by the outbreak of the Italian War of 1494–1503, some cities in Umbria, for example Terni, attempted to invade others' territories and also the Pope couldn't disregard these local conflicts. Documents useful to this aspect of the study that I intend to analyse are the 'Riformanze' of the Priori di Todi, as well as the 'Memoriali dei Priori' (1497–1720) and the 'Lettere al Priori di Todi', conserved in the Archivio Storico del Comune di Todi and the Biblioteca Comunale Lorenzo Leonini. An analysis of unpublished documents will allow us to understand the communication between the various political factions and powers involved in the disputes. Besides, I will refer to published chronicles; *Le Cronache di Todi, secoli XIII-XVI*, a cura di G. Italiani, *Nuova Italia*, (1979); F. Matarazzo, *Cronache della città di Perugia (1492-1503)*, a cura di A. Fabbretti, in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, tomo XVI, parte II, (1851). Could governors intervene in and control the factional conflicts? Otherwise, who influenced activities of factions? By consulting these questions, it is expected to analyse the dynamic situation in Spoleto, which can fluctuate not only in relation to the Pope, but also in relation to other regions.

Third, I plan to focus on the relationship between the Orsini family and Spoleto in the 1490s and the influence of the family on the local government of the Papal States. The Orsini family exercised their influence on Rome and on the Roman Curia for a substantial period and had a significant influence on local administration in the region at the end of the fifteenth century. To shed light on the subject, 'Lettere al Priori' in the Archivio di Stato di Spoleto is instructive because it contains several letters from Cardinal Giovanni Battista Orsini (c. 1450-1503) and Niccolò Orsini, Conte di Pitigliano (1442-1510). In addition, I will refer to letters of the Orsini family in the series of 'Orsini Archive', Archivio Capitolino Storico in Rome. Although Shaw already argued that it is important to analyse the relationship between the lords of Umbria and the Orsini family, the Orsini family was divided into these branches. In particular, the Orsini di Pitigliano was a branch of the Orsini family involved in the situation in Umbria and it is required to focus on a person who had close relationship with Spoleto. The case of Spoleto might show that each member of the Orsini family did not necessarily follow a single strategy, but rather acted individually in relation to local communities. It will also be necessary to

study the 'Dieci di Balìa, Carteggi: Responsive' conserved at the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, which gives information about the Orsini family engaged in Umbria. It is true that these documents are not categorized systematically and in chronological order, but it is supposed to reconstruct the communication between the Roman baron, Orsini, and regional city. How did the communication between the Orsini family and Spoleto affect the policy of the Pope Alexander VI?

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 - 77 (1501 settembre-1502 marzo)
 - 78 (1502 marzo-1503)
- ✓ Lettere ai Priori
 - b. 4 (1439-1498)
 - b. 9 (1490-1492/ 1495-1496)
 - b. 10 (1497)
 - b. 11 (1483-1498)

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