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Making of an Oligarchy: The Ruling Classes of Bologna

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At the close of the 13th century almost a quarter of the Bolognese population normally exercised political rights; at the end of the 16th century only a group of 50 principal families possessed them. This essay shows how, in the long passage from a citizen-state to full integration into the papal principate, changes in society produced a local ruling group that became ever more oligarchical and, in fact, hereditary, ending by formally constituting a civic nobility. The political effects of social transformations are analyzed: who arrived at the vertex of society and local power, how they arrived there, and how they decided to resolve the problem of access and replacement within the ruling group. The chronological framework extends from 1376, when during the general revolt against Gregory XI an autonomous commune under popular leadership was established at Bologna, to 1590, when Sixtus V imposed on the city a broadening of the civic council and definitively regulated access to its membership. At every point the political goals that motivated the various actors are considered – those of the urban corporations (guilds), who served as custodians of the ideology and practices of broad communal government; those of the greater families, who led the transition towards an oligarchical regime; and those of the princes (the dukes of Milan and above all the popes) who at various times rendered their own sovereignty effective in the city and sought the support of local and faithful interlocutors and representatives.¹

The challenges facing a work of this type are many. In the first place, the turbulent period at the turn of the 14th century (and the same holds true for much of the Cinquecento) has not yet been studied sufficiently, not even enough to establish the simple succession of events. We still lack in-depth knowledge of Bolognese economic life and especially the conditions and events that affected the principal families. The presence of strong currents of social mobility, upward and downward, often interwoven with the twists and turns of civil conflicts, makes it difficult to identify with precision the boundaries between various groups and the place of individuals and families within them. Theoretical reflections from the Bolognese Renaissance on the actions of its protagonists are few, and therefore political alignments must be derived above all from actual practice. Another major obstacle to writing a history of the upper classes of Bologna between the Trecento and Cinquecento is the significance given by contemporary narrative sources to the competition between the factions that coalesced under the greater families (the Scacchesi, Maltraversi, Raspanti, Caneschi, Bentivoleschi, Malvezziiani), as if a focus on those factions presented a complete portrayal of local political life. In reality, the factions were a destabilizing element, provoking civil conflicts and institutional breakdowns. Constituting vertical solidarities branching into the guilds, the lower classes, and the *contado*, they still did not express the totality of Bolognese politics, in which both the guilds and the families unattached to the principal alliances operated. Finally, it is difficult but

¹ For Bolognese political events and institutions, see the essays by Giorgio Tamba, Giuliano Milani, Tommaso Duranti, and Angela De Benedictis in this volume. For the issue of oligarchy in the late Duecento and early Trecento: Blanshei, *Politics and Justice*, pp. 69-133; Giansante, "Ancora magnati e popolani."

necessary to avoid dating the identification of social phenomena prematurely: the birth of a civic nobility at Bologna occurred only at the end of the Cinquecento when the popes made noble status concomitant with exclusive enjoyment of the highest communal offices. That act, however, is only the conclusion of a long formative period in which such exclusivity was affirmed only gradually in practice. Accompanied by the search for other signs of social distinction, the concept of a civic nobility entered the collective consciousness and gave rise to some theorizations and to the first and partial normative statements. Two centuries of travail were needed to pass from a changeable group of *divites populares* or “notable citizens” to the exclusive 50 *ex Nobilioribus Familijs [...]* *Cives* selected by the pope to sit in the communal council.²

In order to identify the pathways of this institutional and social change, it is necessary to review the existing historiography, integrating it with an examination of the principal chronicles and, where possible, with tracts that specifically treat the theme of the Bolognese patriciate, and finally with the normative sources directed to citizenship and the urban nobility. In this way it is possible to follow the natural process that flows from the formation of a common mentality (attested by the chroniclers), to theorization, and finally to its translation into statutory terms, sumptuary dispositions, and council deliberations that politically acknowledge and canonize the changes in society.

Between 1376 and 1443 Bologna underwent a difficult period of political restructuring. After recovery of its autonomy as a popular commune (albeit under pontifical sovereignty), local political life was threatened by the rivalry between principal factions. Cardinal legate Anglico de Grimoard described the situation in 1371 thusly:

The *bolognesi* were divided at first, one part called the party of the Geremei or Guelfs, the other the Lambertazzi or the Ghibellines; the Ghibellines then were driven out and almost exterminated, after some time some powerful men rose from the *popolo*, one part of whom, while remaining *popolani*, united with certain nobles, and was called the party of the Scacchesi, which today is also called the party of the Pepoli, which party was expelled by another party of popular notables and some nobles, which today is called the party of the Maltraversi [until 1328, when it was called back again to the city]. [...] The Ghibelline party has almost totally failed, and one can take little notice of it. The party of the Pepolesi surpasses the other party twofold in wealth, friendships, and persons.³

² For the transition between the 14th and 15th centuries: Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, and his essay in this volume; Tamba, *Il regime* (p. 12 for the first definition of the Bolognese ruling class, dated to 1376); Di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese* (p. 63 for the second definition, dated to 1400). The last definition (1590) is from *Statuta civilia et criminalia*, vol. 2, p. 387.

³ “Bononienses fuerunt primo divisi, quorum una pars appellata fuit pars Gerementium sive Guelforum, alia Lambertationum sive Gebelinorum: Expulsis autem et quasi exterminatis Gebelinis, post aliqua tempora surrexerunt quidem potentes in populo, populares tamen, quorum una pars iuncta quibusdam nobilibus appellata est pars Scachsiorum [*sic*], que et hodie dicitur pars Pepulorum, que pars fuit expulsa per aliam partem notabilium popularium et quorundam nobilium, que hodie appellatur pars Maltraversorum [...]. Pars Gebellinorum quasi totaliter defecit, et de ipsa modicum est curandum. Pars Pepolensium in duplo superat partem aliam quoad divicias, amicitias et personas.” *Codex diplomaticus domini temporalis*, vol. 2, p. 528.

He then advised his successor to conduct himself with absolute impartiality in governance of the city.⁴ The French cardinal thus clearly indicates the sociopolitical players on the Bolognese stage at the end of the Trecento. *Nobiles* and *populares* existed, but the popular *potentes* were united with nobles to form inter-class parties; at first those of the Guelfs and Ghibellines; then after the triumph of the former, those of the Scacchesi and Maltraversi, that is, respectively the powerful clientele network of the Pepoli family and those of its opponents, who expelled each other when they succeeded in controlling the commune. The important social actors are therefore the same as those of the preceding century: the nobles (who, as deduced from the narrative sources, were essentially the old and weakened feudators and *domini loci* of the mountains); the *populares*, organized into the guilds; and the greater rich families of popular extraction whose members were defined traditionally as “magnates.” At the end of the Trecento the magnates were more often called *grandi* or *potentes* and, after the signorial experience of mid-century, were no longer discriminated against in local political life and enjoyed ties with foreign princes.⁵

Institutional order was the first problem faced by the refounded republic. A few months after the recovery of civic autonomy, in the *Consiglio generale* of 30 October 1376, the notary Tommaso Galisi declared that Bolognese society was divided into “magnates, doctores et populares divites, homines medie conditionis” and “homines de parva conditione vel pauperes,” and suggested the Venetian model as a guide for the commune (an alliance between nobles and *grandi* of the *popolo*), or better yet that of the Florentines (a government of the lower classes); which was opposed by Taddeo Azzoguidi, head of the Pepolesco party, who envisioned an oligarchy of *nobiles*, *doctores*, *mercatores*, and *populares*. The contemporary Cronaca Rampona distinguishes among *nobeli del contado*, *zentilomini* (notable citizens), *populo mezano*, and *populo minuto*, connoting the *zentilomini* as more attentive to their private interests than to the public good, while the more comfortably well-off *popolari* (the *mezzani*) are distinguished by their patriotism, and the *popolo minuto* as being so hostile to any internal *signoria* as to prefer papal domination.⁶ As for the factions headed by great families, the fact of constituting systems of clientage (and therefore social structures of a vertical type) rendered them necessarily inter-class groups which functioned in the interests of the leading families; nevertheless, the Scacchese party (at the end of the Trecento led by the Gozzadini, Bentivoglio, Malvezzi, Ghisilieri, and others) appears perhaps to have been more coherently oligarchical and compact, while their adversaries the Maltraversi (a residual category, definable above all in negative terms), seem at times to have sought ties with the guilds, lower classes, and the *contado*.⁷

⁴ On Grimoard see: Gardi, “Il mutamento,” p. 390.

⁵ For nobles and feudators at the end of the 14th century: Palmieri, *La montagna*, pp. 201-29; Zagnoni, *Il Medioevo*, pp. 345-406. For *popolani* and magnates: Blanshei, *Politics and Justice*, pp. 136-312. For foreign ties: Tamba, “I Dieci.”

⁶ For the debate of 1376: Tamba, *Il regime*, pp. 11-12; Castelnovo, “Vivre dans l’ambiguïté,” pp. 95-105. “Cronaca Rampona,” especially vol. 3, pp. 309-14 and 317-19; on that work (and on the chronicle cited below), see Quaquarelli, *Memoria Urbis*, pp. 168-73.

⁷ This seems most evident for the factions of the Gozzadini at the end of the Trecento and
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The interaction among these forces, and the strategic position of Bologna at the intersection between the Florentine, Milanese, Venetian, and pontifical spheres of influence, introduced increasing instability into the life of the commune. The political leadership of the guilds was eroded, and then supplanted, by the strategies of the great families, who sought to occupy *de facto* local institutions with the support of Italian powers and with the favor of the lower middle classes. During the Papal Schism, the city obtained self-government from the Roman papacy in the form of an apostolic vicariate granted to the *anziani* (the communal executive body), and a competition was initiated that opposed the Maltraversi, tied to the guilds, to an alliance between the Scacchesi and the Zambecari family: the victory of the latter alliance opened the door to a series of party regimes (Zambecari, Gozzadini) that culminated in a formal Bentivoglio *signoria* (1401-02), but it was cut short by a brief Visconti conquest of the city and by its rapid cession to the Roman papacy. From 1408 Bologna became, however, the center of the new obedience to the pontiffs elected by the followers of the council convoked at Pisa to reconstitute the Schism. These various regimes were sustained on the whole by the great families, especially after the less important guilds and lower classes succeeded in 1411-12 in gaining leadership of the commune for the last time. When the Council of Constance deposed the Pisan pope, John XXIII, and ended the Schism, the urban oligarchy split between the factions of the Canetoli and Bentivoglio families (both formerly Scacchesi), which in alternating phases controlled local institutions; greater success fell to the Canetoli who led the city from 1420 to 1435 despite the presence of legates and governors who embodied papal sovereignty; the more exclusive Bentivoglio regained importance during the final Visconti domination (1438-43) and ended by overthrowing it.⁸

In this environment of political instability (19 regime changes in 68 years), norms followed in the wake of communal tradition. On the one hand, the statutes of 1376 and 1389 recognize only the distinction between citizens and non-citizens, even if access to communal and guild offices was limited to those who were “*veri cives civitatis Bononie, origine propria, paterna et avita*,” thereby excluding those who had become citizens recently, those infamous for committing crime (procuring, falsification, assassination, treason), rebels and *banditi*, inhabitants of the *contado*, ecclesiastics with the greater Orders (apparently considered a social group *ipso facto* privileged), and those who practiced crafts and trades that were humble or not organized into guilds: millers, bakers who worked *propriis manibus*, vegetable vendors, drovers, donkey drivers, wine-cask carriers, messengers, agricultural workers, and still others. On the other hand, there were no provisions barring nobles or magnates (who were not even mentioned), and in the text of 1389 access to the Council of 600, the legislative body of the popular commune, was open to knights (*milites*) and to doctors (*doctores cuiuslibet facultatis*), even those from a *contado* family. The statutes themselves further sanction an order of precedence, and therefore a *de facto* hierarchy, among the guilds, ranking at the vertex the

the Canetoli 50 years later. See “Cronica Rampona,” vol. 3, p. 455; Borselli, *Cronica gestorum ac factorum* p. 81. For factions in general: Gentile, “Factions and parties” (the Bolognese case fits his thesis poorly, but see p. 311 for the allusion to the Maltraversi of Cremona).

⁸ For the events of 1392-94: Tamba, *Il regime*, pp. 18-30; for the 15th century see Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, and his essay in this volume.

notaries, then the bankers, cloth merchants, butchers, down to the humble stationers, curriers and tanners, and the corporation of the *Quattro Arti* (comprising the saddlers, shield-makers, scabbard-makers, and painters).⁹ Formally, therefore, communal norms admitted only distinctions tied to work activity (that is, to the sociopolitical weight of the professional categories), with the exception of the *milites*, the only ones to whom a hereditary social eminence was recognized. The latter distinction, however, was no longer motivated by discrimination but was fully recognized in the sumptuary provisions, which did not bind *doctores* and knights. Knightly dubbing still occurred as it had in the 13th century: in 1432 the pontifical governor Fantino Dandolo, after having celebrated mass, “fe’ chavaliero” Luigi Griffoni; the *podestà* of the city girded him with the sword; two other Bolognese *milites* put on his spurs; and two citizen-prelates dressed him in the habit of the Order of Rhodes. The chronicler Fileno dalla Tuata records at least 61 men who were made knights between 1376 and 1443 by various authorities: foreign princes passing through Bologna or encountered abroad, especially the *signore* of Mantua, the duke of Milan, and the king of France; pontifical representatives; other knights; the *anziani* of the commune themselves, for example, in the case (1382) of Lambertino Canetoli, who needed to be knighted in order to hold the *podestà*-ship of Florence. These knights came principally from Scacchesi notables: five were Canetoli, four Gozzadini, Ghisilieri, and Bianchi, three Pepoli, two Bentivoglio and Galluzzi; but there were also Maltraversi – two Manzoli and two Griffoni. The equestrian dignity was a sign of social distinction which all desired and a clear indicator of the social aspirations of the greater families: as soon as Giovanni I Bentivoglio proclaimed himself *signore* of Bologna (14 March 1401), he had 20 men dubbed knights by his devoted ally Pietro Bianchi (who had been knighted in turn 20 years earlier by the king of France, in the course of an embassy); seven anti-Bentivoleschi were knighted a year later by Francesco I Gonzaga when on behalf of the Visconti he brought down Giovanni I.¹⁰

The deepening awareness in the common mentality of an increasingly oligarchical concentration of urban power is clearly revealed in the lexicon of an eyewitness, the chronicler Pietro di Mattiolo (died 1425), a priest of artisan family background. His narrative, written at the end of the 14th century, swings between the poles of the *puouolo de le arti* on the one hand and the *grassi, possenti*, and *notabili cittadini* on the other hand. These terms signified social but especially

⁹ For the first reference to the statutes, see *Gli Statuti del Comune di Bologna*, p. 401; for the second, pp. 67 and 681; for the third p. 407 (and pp. 311-15, 404-07, 681-84). For the pre-eminence of the merchants and bankers: Legnani, *La giustizia dei mercanti*, pp. 39-42. On the *Quattro Arti*: R. Pini, “La Società,” pp. 91-150. On citizenship: Angelozzi and Casanova, *Diventare cittadini*.

¹⁰ On knights: Maire Vigueur, *Cavalieri e cittadini*, especially pp. 365-80; Dean, “Knighthood in later medieval Italy”; and Blanshei, *Politics and Justice*, especially pp. 231-39 and 266-71. For sumptuary norms: *La legislazione suntuaria*, pp. 103 and 111-36 and the discussion in the essay by Antonella Campanini in this volume. For the Griffoni and Canetoli: Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, pp. 133 and 251 and for those knighted in 1401-02, pp. 167 and 175; Bosdari, “Giovanni I Bentivoglio,” pp. 203-12. For Pietro Bianchi: Dolfi, *Cronologia delle famiglie*, p. 153. Pasquali Alidosi, *Li cavalieri bolognesi*, pp. 17 and 28-29, lists 15 among the knights of Rhodes and *frati gaudenti*.

political qualifications, since the *artexani* were distinct from the *puuolo menudo* (apparently those who were not part of the guild organizations or held a subordinate role therein, given that the chronicler distinguishes between *omini lauoraduri e de bassa conditione* and *grandi artexani*); in turn the *fiore di notabili cittadini* includes *chavalieri, doturi, zudixi, procuradori, merchadanti*, and others. After 1416 the commune was led by the *pouolo e arti* (a customary hendiadys in Bolognese political language), but above all by the *buoni e notabili citadini* grouped into *chaxali*, that is, into great families with organized retinues. At the apex of society were the *doctores* and knights, the only ones who had the right to the title of *missere*, whereas already by 1410 it was attributed to any socially eminent person.¹¹ In the late Trecento Pietro di Mattiolo qualifies as *nobeli* only knights and titled persons, such as Ugolino da Panico, alleged descendant of the imperial counts of Bologna; only from 1412 on is the term *gentili homini* used to indicate eminent citizens, and only in 1420 is the banker Pietro Felicini, while still not invested with any particular title, defined as a *nobele e Riccho cittadino*.¹²

It seems, therefore, that the early decades of the Quattrocento strengthened an already significant oligarchical tendency, favored by Visconti and pontifical influences: the embassy sent in 1402 to swear obedience to the duke of Milan was composed in equal measure of knights, *doctores*, *gentilomini*, and *artexani*; in 1418 Martin V asked that the *anziani* be “de nobilibus, mercatoribus et popularibus, pro meliori statu ipsius civitatis”; in 1440 the Visconti governor Niccolò Piccinino ordered the “Officialibus Nobilibus Civibus et ceteris quibuscumque” resident in the Bolognese city and territory to obey his lieutenant. By this time it had become clear that a group of families existed who were endowed with distinctive political importance within Bolognese society.¹³ Their importance, moreover, had already found institutional expression. The popular commune, after its restoration in 1376, soon felt the necessity of creating *balie*, that is, term offices which were granted extraordinary powers in order to rapidly confront emergency situations. Initiated in 1386 with the *Otto di guerra*, the *balia* was an entity that in various modes of composition would reappear periodically throughout the Bolognese Renaissance, at least up to 1522; the most important of these in the late 14TH and early 15TH century were the *Dieci di balia* and especially the *Sedici Riformatori dello stato di libertà*.

The *Sedici*, named by the *Consiglio generale* for the first time in 1393, immediately became the catalyst of oligarchic power. Although both notables and *populares* were included (all of the latter, however, were rich and prestigious), and although they were elected to fixed terms, they set in motion a policy of subordinating the guilds to the commune and of appointing in advance the officeholders of future years. In 1398 the *Sedici* were newly instituted, but without defining their authority, and included seven bankers, three jurists, and two others experienced in politics; in

¹¹ For Pietro di Mattiolo see Cantelmi, *Bologna fra Trecento e Quattrocento*; for the terminology adopted by him, see Di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*, pp. 55-61, 74-79, 218 and for the environment to 1416, pp. 270-79.

¹² For Ugolino da Panico and Pietro Felicini, see Di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*, pp. 19 and 300; Palmieri, “La congiura” (for Panico); Salvioni, *Il valore della lira*, pp. 225 and 227-29 (for Felicini).

¹³ For 1402: Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, p. 180; for 1418: Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, p. 162; for 1440: Longhi, “Niccolò Piccinino,” p. 316.

1400 they were renamed, again with undefined authority, and became the expression of the Bentivoglio faction's control of the commune. A council of 16 members flanked Giovanni I Bentivoglio during his brief *signoria* and a similar body apparently served the legate Baldassare Cossa and his successors in leading the city; even when a coup d'état overthrew the last popular government in 1412, the "notable citizens" and *ricchissimi merchadanti* who had carried out the coup restored the *Sedici* before recalling the pontifical legate.¹⁴

During the first half of the 15TH century the most prominent families in the public eye concentrated all their local power in the *Sedici* and transformed it into a life-long cooptive office. In parallel with this development the oligarchy proceeded to the privatization (or appropriation) of public resources: in 1416 the communal grain mills were taken over by 73 buyers and their associates; in 1434 it was the turn of the fulling-mills, while at the same time a group of 21 eminent private citizens granted an interest-bearing loan to the communal treasury. Four years later, however, Raffaele Foscherari, who was very closely tied to the governor Piccinino, was named hereditary treasurer: the alarm raised by this measure among the greatest Bolognese families was such that on 4 February 1440 Foscherari was killed by Annibale, head of the Bentivoglio, and on 18 March (ten days after their restoration), the *Sedici* entrusted the treasury to a group of 40, then 51 lenders, and 14 of the additions were from the group of 1434.¹⁵

In this way a nucleus of families was decisively defined, a group that under the leadership of the Bentivoglio controlled the political and financial life of the commune through the *Sedici* and the council of 12 members elected each year from among the shareholders of the Treasury. Between 1393 and 1443, 113 families entered the ranks of the *Sedici* or analogous bodies. Of these, however, 66 entered between 1393 and 1402 and only 47 during 1403-43; 50 families were present only once, and of these 29 entered before 1402, another 21 after that year.¹⁶ The start of the foreign *signoria* in the early 15TH century therefore coincides with sclerosis in the replacement rate of the urban ruling class, which in some decades was reduced to approximately 60 great families who took possession of local institutions and managed them through factional regimes.

Between 1443 and 1506 the Bentivoglio faction controlled the government and formalized the already delineated social rigidity, but did not succeed in

¹⁴ On the *Sedici*: Guidicini, *I riformatori*; Tamba, *Il regime*, pp. 30-74, 117-20, 158-63; Idem, "I XVI Riformatori"; Bosdari, "Giovanni I Bentivoglio," pp. 212-13; Vancini, "Una rivoluzione" (and Fasoli, "Le compagnie," pp. 71-72); Di Mattiolo, *Cronaca bolognese*, p. 242 (for the quotation); Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, pp. 67-69, 243-45; Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, pp. 190-214, Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle*, and the essay by Tommaso Duranti in this volume for the development of the *Sedici*'s power.

¹⁵ For the financial dispositions: Orlandelli, "Note di storia economica," especially pp. 233-40 and 253-54; ASB, Comune-Governo, Diritti e oneri dei Comune, Convenzioni, trattati, obbligazioni. Serie cronologica sciolta, Busta 3 (now Comune-Governo, Busta 15), Fascicolo 237, part 2, nn. 11 and 22; *Codex diplomaticus dominii temporalis*, vol. 3, p. 318; Zaoli, *Libertas Bononie*, p. 28. On the fulling mills: *Raccolta di leggi*, vol. 1, pp. 31-35. On Foscherari: Tamba, "Foscarari (Foscherari) Raffaello"; Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, pp. 265-76.

¹⁶ The data are from Guidicini, *I riformatori*, vol. 1, pp. 13-34, who, although imprecise, offers nevertheless a representative picture.

stabilizing the city politically, both because it excluded from office those who were outside the dominant party and tended to transform itself into a familial *signoria*, eliminating the oligarchic and collegial factors, and also because in the end it was subject to the pressures of greater powers operating in northern Italy, in particular the papacy, Milan, and then France.¹⁷ Bentivoglio dominion was punctuated by the expulsions of rival families and even of those merely critical of their supremacy: the Canetoli and Ghisilieri in 1445; the Fantuzzi, Zambeccari, and Pepoli in 1450 (the latter later were recalled, but were excluded from the *Sedici*); and the Caccianemici in 1472. In contrast, the Bentivoglio, Malvezzi, Marescotti, and Castelli obtained privileged positions within the oligarchy. The Bentivoglio received part of the communal income; they and the Malvezzi always had two exponents among the *Sedici*; these four families were able to send substitutes to meetings of the *Sedici* when their appointed members had to be absent. The split in the urban oligarchy became apparent with the conspiracies led by formerly loyal families – the Malvezzi in 1488 and the Marescotti in 1501.¹⁸ The Bentivoglio regime early on provoked criticisms that were later sustained: the visit of Pius II on his way to Mantua in 1459 was the occasion for the jurist Bornio da Sala to publicly denounce the tyranny of the faction to the pope; the Bentivoleschi themselves lamented to Paul II that the families of the *Sedici* “enjoy all that city, whether in having its revenues spent as they please [...] and all the offices are given either to their relations or to their friends.” Gradually the regime lost the confidence of the *populares* and turned to the lower classes for support. At the same time society also became more polarized economically: at the beginning of the Cinquecento 54 per cent of landed property in the *contado* was in the hands of barely 83 families, who remained at the vertices of political and economic life. People whispered that the regime was good only “to the nobles and magnates of the land who held the government and offices [...] and not to the citizens, who did not hold office, or did so rarely.”¹⁹

The *Sedici* comprised the instrument for increasing the concentration of power as it moved in the direction of becoming a hereditary institution but with vicissitudes in its size. Named in 1443 but quickly replaced by the *Dieci di balia*, it was restored in 1445 with its members’ terms of one year’s duration (although it was rumored that the Bentivoglio wanted to reduce its membership to six) and with confirmation of all the authority of that office in 1416; above all, they were

¹⁷ For what follows, in addition to the essay by Tommaso Duranti in this volume, see Ady, *I Bentivoglio*; Basile, *Bentivolorum magnificentia*; Gardi, “Gli ‘officiali’”; Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle*.

¹⁸ For the expulsions: Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, ad annos. For the privileges: Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle*, pp. 39-43, 85-86, 128-31, 213-14; for 1470: pp. 213-14; Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, pp. 112-13 and 432-42. For the Malvezzi, also Belvederi, “I Bentivoglio e i Malvezzi.”

¹⁹ For Bornio da Sala: Bocchi, “Plagi e primizie”; for the laments and loss of consensus, Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle*, p. 17 for the first quotation “se godono tuta quela Citta, si in far spendere lintrate a lor modo [...] et tuti li officij se dano o alor parenti o aloro amici” and pp. 207-09. For the *popolo minuto*, Ady, *I Bentivoglio*, pp. 134-45, 172-75, 234-35. On property and the second quotation: Farolfi, *Strutture agrarie*, pp. 22-23 (“alli nobili e magnati della terra, che hanno avuto lo governo et officii et utilitadi [...] et non alli cittadini, che poi non ebbero officio, o rare volte”).

recognized formally in the 1447 *capitoli* of Nicholas V.²⁰ The members of the *Sedici* profited rapidly by breaking away from the other families within the faction: in 1450 they made their office one of indefinite duration. In 1459, in connection with the visit of Pius II, norms providing for succession in membership of a semi-hereditary nature were approved and the composition of the *Sedici* was broadened with the addition of seven supernumerary members. Pressure for access to the group that was defining itself as the inner circle of power was such that a few years later Paul II felt the need to intervene in order to defuse local tensions. Not being in a position to impose an authoritative solution, in 1466 he proposed that the commune select between the options of doubling the size of the *Sedici* or bringing its membership up to 21 (that is, the old *Sedici* with five remaining supernumeraries), with a permanent seat for the faction's head, Giovanni II Bentivoglio. Contrary to the pope's expectations, the second proposal was selected, which therefore sanctioned the formal existence of an oligarchy, composed of hereditary communal councillors, around a Bentivoglio *signoria de facto*. Between 1466 and 1506, 33 families alternated in office, of whom only three, however (the Cattani, Orsi, and Salaroli) had never before entered the *Sedici*.²¹ Control by the *Sedici* (the name remained despite its enlarged membership) over offices of the popular commune reduced the significance of those posts for their holders to sources of income and badges of honor. The statutes of 1454 limited officeholders, according to custom, to citizens of three grades of origin, that is, the sons and grandsons of citizens, as in 1376, but in fact the ties of clientage and faction of *Sedici* members determined their allotment. According to the contemporary chronicler Fileno dalla Tuata, from 1460 the *gonfalonieri del popolo*, *massari delle arti*, and tax contractors were selected by *imborsazione* (in which a roster of nominees was compiled, with each member of the *Sedici* supplying names according to a varying but pre-arranged number, and from which a name was drawn when a vacancy opened up), rather than by election or by *subastazione*, that is, by auction, in the case of the contractors, while the *gonfaloniere di giustizia*, who presided over meetings of the *anziani* and theoretically led the commune, was named only on the basis of friendship and family relationships; in fact, from 1463 he was selected from among the *Sedici* themselves, inaugurating a practice that was formalized within a few years. Different levels were thus formed within the oligarchy: the families who had lost their seats among the *Sedici*, those who aspired to obtain them, and the secondary families who were represented among the *massari*, the *gonfalonieri del popolo*, and

²⁰ On 1443: Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, p. 277; Borselli, *Cronica gestorum ac factorum*, p. 85. For the authority of the *Sedici*: Verardi Ventura, "L'ordinamento," pp. 301-02; for the project to reduce the membership of the *Sedici* to six: Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle*, pp. 126-27; for the *capitoli* of 1447: Duranti, *Diplomazia e autogoverno*, pp. 56-61, 223-28; Bartolotti, "Sui 'Capitoli'." Martin V did not want to sanction the institutional predominance of the *Sedici* (*capitoli* of 1429) and Eugenius IV had made it 20 councillors of the pontifical governor. ASB, Comune-Governo, Diritti e oneri del Comune, Convenzioni, trattati, obbligazioni. Serie cronologica sciolta, Busta 3, now Comune-Governo, Busta 15, Fascicolo 237.

²¹ Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle*, pp. 41-47 for 1450 and the norms of 1459; pp. 139-46, 167-97, 217-18 for the events of 1466. For access to the *Ventuno*: Guidicini, *Iriformatori*, vol. 1, pp. 45-78.

the *anziani*. The latter two magistracies were held by approximately 160 families outside of the ranks of the *Sedici* and were valued by those who claimed social importance; at the end of the century, the *anziani* seem to have been commonly viewed as nobles.²²

However, it is more difficult to define the nobility of Bologna in the second half of the Quattrocento, as each family sought to accumulate signs of social distinction and recognition of belonging to that class. While the ancient nobility of the *contado* had been reduced by norms (1475) to the status of citizens with extra-urban residence, knights continued to be created (Dalla Tuata alone records 54 of them between 1446 and 1506), especially by Frederick III and Pius II when they passed through Bologna, and continuously by Giovanni II Bentivoglio; in 1462 Frederick III further conceded to every *gonfaloniere di giustiza pro tempore* the right to name two knights. Completely new, however, was the acquisition of fiefs in the *contado* by some families of the oligarchy: in 1447 the Sanuti obtained the county of Porretta (which passed in 1482 to the Ranuzzi); the Malvezzi those of Selva and Castel Guelfo in 1455 and 1458. These, however, were exceptional cases, since they not only devolved on private citizens from communal sovereignty, but this was done particularly thanks to ties established with the popes (Nicholas V, Calixtus III, and Pius II), ties which only a very few faithful Bentivoleschi among the *Sedici* were able to maintain without rousing suspicion.²³

The fact is that Bolognese society was mobile; a pope of patrician family like Paul II lamented in 1466 that the new ruling group included the newly enriched “who a short time before were some linen merchants, some furriers, and some one thing and some another.”²⁴ He was alluding in particular to Giacomo Lini and Giacomo Grati, two men who in their ties with the Bentivoglio had found a pathway to rapid social ascent. A contemporary chronicler, Girolamo Borselli, commenting on the death of Grati, describes him as *Dominus [...] miles, vir patritius*, but says that “Here he was first, the one who made his house illustrious, for when he was young, he was a furrier” (Borselli would express analogous reflections about the *ex-causidicus* Bernardo Sassoni). Through political loyalty, public offices, and knighthood, within a generation one could thus pass from rich merchant or professional to member of the urban oligarchy, to the ranks of the *patricii*, as Borselli labels the 21 *Riformatori*, the narrow nucleus of important families.²⁵

²² For the Statutes of 1454: *Statuta civilia et criminalia*, vol. 1, pp. 540-41. On clientage: Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, p. 323; Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle*, pp. 58-63. On the popular magistracies: Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, p. 333; Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle*, pp. 49-60. On the *anziani*: Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, p. 368; Zanni Rosiello, “Le ‘Insignia’ degli Anziani.” On the *gonfalonieri*: De Benedictis, *Diritti in memoria*. On citizenship, Angelozzi and Casanova, *Diventare cittadini*; Idem, “Essere cittadini.”

²³ For the concession of 1462 and the norms of 1475: *Statuta civilia et criminalia*, vol. 2, pp. 52 and 420-21. See Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, pp. 307 and 326 on the knights created by Frederick III and Giovanni II; p. 321-22 for Pius II. For Pius II see also Pini, “Non tam studiorum’.” On fiefs: Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle*, pp. 101-03; Comelli, “Di Nicolò Sanuti.”

²⁴ As cited by Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle*, p. 65: “che da poco tempo in la erano chi mercadanti da lino, chi pellizari, et chi vna cosa et chi vn'altra.”

²⁵ For Giacomo Lini: Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle*, p. 65; for Giacomo Grati: Angiolini, “Grati, Giacomo.” See Borselli, *Cronica gestorum ac factorum*, p. 99 for the

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The status of *patricii* nevertheless does not find confirmation in normative provisions, nor in a more complete articulation of social classification in Renaissance Bologna. The latter can be seen in an edict issued 24 March 1453 by the Cardinal legate Bessarion (and incorporated the following year into the communal statutes), who for sumptuary purposes grouped the *bolognesi* into five categories (plus the *comitatini*): the three highest-ranking groups in descending order were the knights (*milites*), doctors (*doctores*), and nobles (*nobiles*), and on an equal footing with the latter were included the *patroni et magistri* of the *artes superiores* of the notaries, bankers, drapers, and silk merchants; in fourth place were the butchers (*beccai*), apothecaries and spice merchants (*speziali*), wool workers (*lanaioli*), cloth merchants (*strazzaroli*), haberdashers (*merciai*), cotton workers (*bombasari*), and goldsmiths (*orefici*). In fifth place were the “other inferior or more vile crafts and guilds and also those others not of the nobility who did not practice any craft or trade,” that is, all the urban residents who did not belong to the 11 listed guilds.²⁶ In addition to the social primacy traditionally assigned to knights and *doctores*, in this decree we find for the first time a Bolognese authority (the pontifical legate) thus introducing the term *nobiles* into the normative lexicon, giving it a precise definition: nobles were third-generation citizens who had a *doctor* or knight in the family during the past 30 years and did not pursue a manual craft or trade, and if they did, belonged only to the four highest ranking guilds without actually performing manual labor (except for the notaries). Hence the existence of a civic nobility constituted by those who lived without doing manual labor was sanctified legally; the guilds (which had been the expression of the communal ruling class since the 13th century) were regrouped, first among the *artes superiores* (a new term in Bologna), then another seven guilds which configured a rich “middle class” and together with the preceding guilds led the civic commercial tribunal, and lastly the members of 14 guilds (including the furriers) who were defined as *viles* and paired with the mass of non-organized and non-specialized workers. This fundamental text (the circumstances surrounding its composition remain unknown) revolutionized communal tradition, which had distinguished only between citizens and non-citizens: with the sanction of the prince it gave the force of law to social distinctions (even if it did not draw political consequences from them); it formalized the idea of a fixed social hierarchy, and tied the concept of nobility to the repudiation of the mechanical arts, thereby following a model that would become generalized in Cinquecento Italy. The Bessarion norms would be maintained at Bologna up to the Council of Trent, with the addition of only a few neglected categories (foreigners, soldiers, artisans of the *contado*, Jews – whether bankers or not, prostitutes).²⁷

quotation from Borselli (“Hic primus fuit, qui domum suam illustravit; nam cum esset iuvenis, pelliparius erat”); p. 98 for the appellative *patricii*; and p. 106 for Sassoni. For Sassoni see also Guidicini, *I riformatori*, vol. 1, p. 60.

²⁶ For the edict of 1453: *La legislazione suntuaria*, pp. 3-17, 148-52 and pp. 150-51 for the quotation (“aliorum inferiorum seu viliorum ministeriorum et artium ac etiam aliorum non existentium de nobilibus suprascriptis et non exercentium artem aliquam”).

²⁷ For the commercial tribunal: Legnani, *La giustizia dei mercanti*, pp. 57-58 and cfr. Fasoli, “Le compagnie,” pp. 76-77. On Bessarion at Bologna: Bacchelli, “La legazione”; on Bolognese tracts on nobility: Angelozzi, “La trattatistica,” and for the Italian context, Donati, *L’idea di nobiltà*, especially pp. 3-80, 118-36, 165-76; Nico Ottaviani, “*Res sit magni* For use by the Author only | © 2018 Koninklijke Brill NV

The sumptuary measures were limited, however, to acknowledging a mentality that also appears in the writings of the chroniclers. Borselli himself, who defines the *Ventuno* as *patricii*, when speaking of the role of his father who served alongside the Canetoli in 1445, excuses himself for putting him among nobles (“si virum gregarium inter nobiles pono”) and by *nobiles* he meant the heads of the faction. A little known Giovanni who lived at mid-century recounts in his chronicle how in 1447 two knights, two *doctores*, and two *çentilomini* (a Bentivoglio and a Malvezzi) went on an embassy to Nicholas V in a great company of notable and honorable citizens (“citadini da bene e orrevoli”) and says that the great masters of the city at that time (“Li gran maistri, che riçeano in quello tempo”) were the seven families of the Bentivoglio, Pepoli, Malvezzi, Fantuzzi, Bargellini, Vizzani, and Marescotti. Writing later, Dalla Tuata attests at the end of the century to an inflation of attributes and noble behaviors, which are interwoven with the old lexicon of communal politics: not only is his narrative punctuated with the status designations of *nobile* or *gentiluomo*, but in 1495 he records an order to the *gonfalonieri del popolo* to carry their *scuri* (hatchets), the symbols of their authority, when out in public “because there were so many gentlemen and citizens who carry the sword that the *gonfalonieri* cannot be distinguished from the others,” while in 1504 he points to the *nobilissima* composition of the *anziani* of the last bimonthly term (four *gentilomini*, consisting of one who was “rich,” a jurist, a medical doctor of Italian-wide fame, and the most important procurator and merchant of Bologna). However, he also notes that the local government was in the hands of Giovanni II Bentivoglio who dominated the other citizens called the *Sedici* (“vinte altri çitadini chiamati li Sedese”) and that Giovanni perennially surrounded himself with a swarm of 200 citizens drawn from the *populo*, *zentilomini*, and *chavalieri*.²⁸ At the end of the Bentivoglio epoch there thus existed a civic nobility recognized both in public opinion as well as in normative measures, but political rights were still tied only to the enjoyment of citizenship.

Between 1506 and 1590 the mechanism for the selection of the Bolognese oligarchy was gradually defined.²⁹ With the flight of the Bentivoglio in 1506, artisans and merchants restored popular government for a week and prepared for the peaceful entrance into the city of Julius II. The latter, in turn, resumed the traditional policy of the popes: he sought a dialogue with an oligarchy that would gather together with loyalty to the pontiff all those who enjoyed social importance, independently of belonging to a faction. Notwithstanding a fleeting restoration of the Bentivoglio (1511-12), the popes and local notables basically collaborated in a

momenti.” For a revision of these classifications in 1474 and for earlier classifications in the Duecento, see Blanshei, “Aristocratization of late medieval-early modern Bolognese government,” pp. 237-38, and for successive norms, *La legislazione suntuaria*, pp. 154-81.

²⁸ The first quotation is from Borselli, *Cronica gestorum ac factorum*, p. 86; the two successive ones are from Giovanni, *Cronaca di Bologna*, pp. 285, 287 (“perché çe erano tanti zintilomini e çitadini che se favano portare le spade che non se chonoseano li confalonieri dali altri”), pp. 95-121 on the author Giovanni; the last quotes are from Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, pp. 380, 413 (and cfr. p. 461). On the *scuri*, De Benedictis, *Diritti in memoria*, pp. 34-36.

²⁹ For the following section, see Gardi, “Lineamenti della storia”; Idem, *Lo Stato in provincia*, pp. 99-120, 347-97. For information on the councillors: Guidicini, *I riformatori*, ad voces.

stable manner; among the issues discussed and regulated were also the definition of and access to the oligarchy.

The difficulty can be expressed thusly: how to reconcile political equality among citizens with a formalized social inequality? The uncertainty that this issue raised appears clearly in the language of the chroniclers. Eliseo Mamellini refers to the ephemeral popular regime of 1506 first as “Vinti homini cittadini” elected by the *populo*, then as “Viginti nobilibus viris per populum electis,” while Dalla Tuata writes of “vinte homini da bene tutti merchadanti e artesani.” In fact there were 25 (20 plus five supernumeraries) and at least one *doctor*, two notaries, procurators, and drapers, three bankers, and three silk merchants, with the opportunistic addition of one Pepoli: in short, the highest level of the *populus*.³⁰ Upon taking over the city, Julius II immediately abolished the *Sedici* (the Bentivoglio brought them back in 1511, raising their number to 31) and transferred their powers to 40 “Consiliarios praesentis Status pro Nobis, & Sancta Romana Ecclesia, & pro Civitate nostra Bononiensi,” including 20 Bentivoleschi families, 11 anti-Bentivoleschi ones of long-standing, five who were such since 1448, and four represented in the *popolo* government of 1506). The norms regulating access to this group were the same as those for entrance to the *Sedici* in 1466. It was a regime that consisted exclusively of great agrarian landholders: the anti-Bentivolesco Carlo Grati had his relative Nicolò Rigosi included, but when the pope learned of his lowly status he was infuriated and substituted a *popolare*, Tommaso Cospi, in his place (“quando el papa sepe che l’era de infima nazione s’infuriò e lo sostituì”). Social eminence was therefore a prerequisite to being a part of the oligarchy, even if Julius II did not call these eminent citizens *gentiluomini*, but merely *cittadini*. Quite quickly Dalla Tuata denounced the exclusivity of the *Quaranta*: after the execution in 1508 of the councillor Alberto Castelli he writes that “there is no longer anyone to defend the rights of the people and the republic” (“più non c’è chi tiegnia la raxon del popolo e dela republicha”), and that his colleagues “are a sect of the *Quaranta*, who help one another [...] who would like to be the ones who designate [as councillors] whom they want and have this office as an inheritance” (“sono una seta deli 40 che teneno insieme [...], che vorebano essere loro a fare [councillor] chi paresse loro, e torse tale mazistrato per heredità”). When in 1510 it was rumored that the number of councillors would be reduced, he burst out “blessed would be this land were there none of them, or no more than eight or 12” (“beata questa tera non ne fusse niuno, overo fusseno otto o dodexe e non più”). Dalla Tuata, a citizen of notarial family, badly tolerated the control exercised by the *Quaranta* over public offices, which he considered a resource to be distributed equally; but he also absorbed the idea of noble primacy to such a degree that he defined the Bottrigari, Dolfi, Gessi, and Verardi families, who had held the anzianate office many times, as being *de vile naçion*.³¹

In 1512, after the final expulsion of the Bentivoglio, who had re-established a

³⁰ For the first two quotations, Montanari, “Cronaca e storia,” pp. 15-16. On the chronicler, see De Tata, “Mamellini (Mammellini...)”. For the last citation, Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, p. 484.

³¹ For the definition of the *Quaranta* in 1506: *Statuta civilia et criminalia*, vol. 2, p. 300 (and see Gozzadini, “Di alcuni avvenimenti,” pp. 109, 158-60, of the first part). On the observations of Dalla Tuata on Rigosi: Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, p. 492, on 1508, pp. 533, 537, on 1510 p. 574, on offices and exclusiveness pp. 604, 611.

dictatorship of faction with the support of the *popolo minuto*, Julius II punished the revolt by not restoring the *Quaranta* and leaving the *anziani* at the head of the commune: within one year at least 44 families took turns holding that office, indicating the sovereign's capacity to re-establish a broad access to office. Leo X permitted a period of institutional experimentation: in 1513 he accepted the request of the commune to reconstitute the *Magistratus et ordo nobilium* of the *Quaranta*, under terms analogous to those set by Julius II (21 anti-Bentivoleschi and 19 Bentivoleschi families flowed into that office), but he did so without defining the great families as *nobili*. In fact, he had no intention of changing the council's social extraction. When the new *Quaranta* refused to accept the *comitatino* jeweler Girolamo Pandolfi as one of their members, because "his father [...] was a *vilan* like others and paid direct taxes [like other *contadini*]," the pope "excused himself and said that he had thought he was *nobele*" and excluded him, "although he was a *zentil persona*." However, an analogous maneuver in 1514 did not succeed in the case of Annibale Paleotti, refused by the *Quaranta* as a Bentivolesco *de gente infima*, since he had been assigned to the post by the sovereign. Leo X, however, also sought to establish a new feudality next to the civic nobility, both by granting fiefs in the *contado* to approximately 15 families of the city, and by linking up important families of the mountains, such as the Pandolfi, Ramazzotti, and Tanari.³²

Leo X's projected three-part alliance among civic nobles, new feudators, and eminent *comitatini* failed in the face of resistance from Bolognese political culture: "those good *patrici* [...] destroy our republic" thundered Dalla Tuata at the granting of the new fiefs. Greater caution was necessary: Clement VII revoked the fiefs, leaving only the honorific titles; Charles V on the occasion of his coronation (1530), granted the traditional titles of knight of the golden spur and palatine count to members of the Bolognese colleges of the *doctores* of the *studium*; the 1532 statute of the *tribuni della plebe* (as the *gonfalonieri del popolo* were renamed) defines the nobility on the basis of the old edict of Bessarion; and the norms on citizenship of 1541 do not privilege the nobility over other citizens. Various families then sought to procure distinctions elsewhere: the Campeggi received from Clement VII the county of Dozza in the Romagna in 1528, the Pepoli, counts imperial of Castiglione since the 14th century, became Venetian nobles in 1575; Gregory XIII bought for his Boncompagni relatives fiefs in the Este states and in the kingdom of Naples; in 1586 the Aldrovandi obtained the county of Guiglia in Modenese territory and the Facchinetti the marquisate of Vianino in the Parmegiano. In his 1588 book on the Bolognese nobility, Francesco Amadi did not define a class but listed illustrious *bolognesi* from Gregory XIII to the ecclesiastical dignitaries, knights, and members of at least 420 families.³³

³² For the definition of the *Quaranta* in the *capitoli* of 1513, see Gardi, *Lo Stato in provincia*, p. 106. For the citation concerning Pandolfi ("suo padre [...] era vilan chome li altri e pagava le colte") see Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, p. 680; Gardi, "Lineamenti della storia," p. 40, and Caprara, "Girolamo Casio"; for the second on Paleotti, see Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, p. 685 and Prodi, *Il cardinale Gabriele Paleotti*, vol. 1, pp. 32-47. On the new fiefs, most recently, Foschi, "Il castello"; for Ramazzotti: Capasso, *Nuove notizie*, for Tanari: Cavazza and Bertondini, *Luigi Tanari*, pp. 12-15.

³³ Amadi, *Della nobiltà*. For the quotation from Dalla Tuata, *Istoria di Bologna*, p. 691 ("quelli boni patrici [...] destruzeno la nostra republica"). For the privileges of the collegial *doctores*: Brizzi, "Lo Studio di Bologna fra *orbis academicus*," p. 65. For

If the status of the nobility thus remained in flux for a long period, the families of the *Quaranta* worked constantly to enclose themselves into a separate class. After Clement VII in 1524 had evaded the explicit request of the commune that the members of the *Quaranta* be selected from noble and meritorious families of the Holy See, the question was repeated, in an attenuated form, to his successors for more than 40 years, but non-binding responses were always received. In fact, the *Quaranta* desired hereditary succession and cooption in case of the extinction of a family; the families who aspired to enter their group sought to put themselves in the limelight socially, to procure patrons for themselves and briefs of anticipated nominations for seats that might be vacated; and to propose broadening the size of the *Quaranta* (to 120 seats). In the end, the popes wanted to avoid a closure that was too rigid and would provoke destabilizing tensions in the city: they therefore recognized the nobility of individual families (not the body of the *Quaranta* as such); permitted the granting of a council seat to sons or brothers; guaranteed a certain rate of replacement in the oligarchy and sought to bind it into a clientage mode. Control of the social dynamic of the city moved therefore into the hands of the popes as political sovereigns; in order to ascend at Bologna one passed through Rome. Between 1513 and 1585, 64 families rotated through the *Quaranta*, but of these only 11 had never held that post earlier and only 23 had an uninterrupted presence in that body. The Bolognese Gregory XIII seems to have changed the policy, committing himself to guaranteeing hereditary succession to the *Quaranta* (but introducing two new families into it, the Bonfioli and Ruini, who were closely tied to him); and in 1584 the commune modified the norms on citizenship, dividing it into three levels: common, *satis ampla* (granted to “Nobilibus Viris, virtute, doctrina, & armis insignibus”), and *amplissima*, reserved to the *nobilissimis viris* and which meant its holders were qualified to hold all communal offices. The three levels were conceded by the *Quaranta*, who identified themselves with the highest level and who in fact acknowledged as their equals only well-deserving cardinals; as citizens *satis ampli* only foreign nobles, university teachers, jurists, and doctors of medicine. An official statement of 1587 underscores that members of the *anzianate* were nobles, as were part of the *tribuni della plebe* (the others were merchants or simple citizens), various secretaries, and financial employees of the commune, and raised the control exercised by the *Quaranta* over local administration. But the *Quaranta* did not control access to their own group.³⁴ In fact, the *Quaranta* were named by papal brief and the competition to obtain such a dignity became frantic during the reign of Sixtus V. The latter, in order to avoid excessive tensions, on 21 March 1590 decided to broaden by ten members the size of the civic *Consiglio* (*Senatus*): for the first time a pope said that its members were *ex Nobilioribus Familijs* and that increasing its number would serve to augment the sociopolitical stability of the commune by maintaining equality among the

Campeggi: Casanova, *Comunità e governo*, p. 286. For the Pepoli and Facchinetti: Dolfi, *Cronologia delle famiglie*, pp. 599 and 295 (for the origins of the Pepoli fief, see Calonaci, *Feudi e giurisdizioni*, p. 390). For the Boncompagni: Borromeo, “Gregorio XIII,” p. 183.

³⁴ For incentives to broaden the *Quaranta*: Fanti, “Un progetto di riforma.” For the norms of 1584: *Concessionibus, brevia, ac alia indulta*, pp. 79-81 (for the quotation pp. 79-80). For the 1587 statement: Gardi, *Lo Stato in provincia*, pp. 120-26. On citizenship: Angelozzi and Casanova, *Diventare cittadini*; Idem, “Essere cittadini.”

cives; at every future vacancy the councillors would indicate to the sovereign four *cives Nobiles* suitable to hold that office, from among whom he would choose one. It was no less than the recognition on the part of the prince of the existence of a civic nobility and the concession to the counciliar families of a closure of class under the surveillance of the pontiff. Also in the selection of the ruling class and in the control of the social dynamic the sovereign solicited the collaboration of the oligarchy, which he had agreed to formalize.³⁵

In the long period extending from the end of the 14TH century to the end of the 16TH century, an ideology persisted at Bologna that tied political rights to citizenship and to forms of collegiality and republican equality, but the institutions of popular government were progressively weakened, with the authority of the commune becoming concentrated in new bodies, formally extraordinary and restricted. Such a policy was promoted by the greatest *popolo* families who (together with some of magnate and traditional noble origin) competed to control those new magistracies, to regulate access to them and possibly thus to monopolize local institutions; for such a purpose they organized themselves into inter-class factions, allied themselves to foreign powers and sought to procure for themselves badges of honor within and outside Bologna. Since the guilds and arms societies of the *populus* had rapidly been paralyzed by their trust in factions and by the control of extraordinary commissions (the *Dieci*, *Sedici*, *Quaranta*), the political dialectic became concentrated around approximately 200 principal families, and a neo-noble mentality became diffused in popular opinion, which accepted hereditary social distinctions. While the factions aimed at organizing party regimes that excluded part of the possible ruling class from office, the dukes of Milan and the popes, when able to exercise their sovereignty over Bologna, sought to form a power group that united all notables into a common loyalty to the prince. In the 16TH century the popes succeeded in implementing such a policy, which cemented a stable oligarchy recognized by the sovereign as a civic nobility (or as citizenship with full rights), sustained by him in its leadership of local institutions and society. The collaboration between the counciliar oligarchy and the sovereign who controlled access to it was consolidated and lasted to the end of the *ancien régime*, constituting the Bolognese manifestation of a process common to all of Italy.³⁶

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³⁵ For the norms of 1590: *Statuta civilia et criminalia*, vol. 2, pp. 385-89 (for the quotations pp. 386-87). For the closure of class in the Papal State: Zenobi, *Le 'ben regolate città'*, pp. 71-72, 174, 178 (who dates closure back to 1466).

³⁶ For which see among his many works, Chittolini, *Città, comunità e feudi*; Castelnuevo, "L'identità politica"; Fasano Guarini, *L'Italia moderna*.

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