

Editors' Note

This special issue of *Business History Review* on Italy and the origins of capitalism continues the journal's long engagement with the subject, dating back to its founding. In 1927, an article titled "Original Manuscripts of the Medici" announced the coming of the Medici Collection to Harvard Business School. "On Tuesday, October 4, the Harvard Business School entertained as its guest Mr. H. Gordon Selfridge, the first man to introduce American department store methods into England," the note began. "Mr. Selfridge has just deposited with the Business School Library a part of his collection of the original account books of a branch of the Medici family, covering the period from 1377 to 1597." As part of a broader project to study and celebrate these unique documents and the historical period that produced them, Robert Fredona and Sophus A. Reinert organized an international conference on "Italy and the Origins of Capitalism" at HBS on March 1, 2019, under the auspices of the School's Business History Initiative. The present issue resulted from this meeting, and the organizers are particularly grateful to Niall Atkinson, John Brewer, Christine Desan, Richard Goldthwaite, Lauren Jacobi, Geoffrey Jones, Julius Kirshner, Elizabeth Mellyn, Reinhold C. Mueller, Dante Roscini, and Daniel Lord Smail for their help and contributions.

Guest editors Fredona and Reinert have brought together leading scholars from around the world to explore this rich subject. Their own essay returns to Mr. Selfridge's manuscripts to make the case for incorporating business history into the history of political economy. The other essays range broadly, including research into the vibrant banking and manufacturing city, Florence, in William Caferro's article on premodern capitalism and Christianity and Francesca Trivellato's study of the business history of Renaissance Florence. The articles also capture the mercantile nature of Italian capitalism. Corey Tazzara writes on the port city of Livorno and its history of cross-cultural trade and Maria Fusaro on conceptions of risk in maritime enterprises. The issue also emphasizes the role of the state in renaissance capitalism. Franco Franceschi documents state-and-business interests in the burgeoning silk enterprises of Renaissance Italy and Jeffrey Miner writes on public debt and property. The articles provide an analysis of the evolution of the fields of economics and business history, the early history of global trade, and the

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place of culture, religion, and beliefs in shaping business enterprise and economic philosophies. Most of all, they provide a strong contribution to the vibrant and growing field of the history of capitalism.

Immediately following this editors' note are two maps, one of the Mediterranean region and the other of Italy, with a detail of Tuscany, showing places mentioned in this issue. Both maps were created by Isabelle Lewis.



Map 1. The Mediterranean and beyond, showing places mentioned in the issue. (Map by Isabelle Lewis.)



Map 2. Italy with detail of Tuscany, showing places mentioned in the issue. (Map by Isabelle Lewis.)