

Appendixes to the article: G. Alfani and F. Ammannati, “Long-term trends in economic inequality: the case of the Florentine state, c. 1300–1800”, *The Economic History Review*, 2017

APPENDIX S1: Additional information about sources and data collection in the *Contado* and in the *Distretto* of Florence

The tax records providing the data for the 11 communities of the *Contado*¹ (not including Prato) are organized according to the same basic set-up, based on the *estimo* until the end of the fourteenth century, the *catasto* for the fifteenth century, and the *decima* until the end of the eighteenth century. The homogeneity of the tools used to distribute the tax burden did not necessarily lead to a universal tax levy. In particular, it can be excluded that Florence intended to apply for all the communities of the *Contado* uniform tax rates, at least before the first half of the fifteenth century.²

Sampling strategy used in selecting the communities of the Contado

We selected the rural communities of the *Contado* to include in this study from among more than a thousand. The choice was made according to four main criteria.

1) We considered the demographic size, excluding those villages that during the entire period did not meet a minimum population set at approximately 80-100 hearths (300-500 inhabitants). We also decided to use as the observation unit the individual *popolo* and not the *piviere*, the superior administrative level that included a variable number of small communities.³ The *Contado*, the territory beyond the walls,⁴ was in fact split into the four districts of the city (*quartieri*), each of which was divided into *pivieri*, and the latter into *popoli* (this followed quite closely the old ecclesiastical organization of the land, divided into *pievi* and *parrocchie*). The *catasto* of 1435 introduced a major innovation: a progressive number was given to each *popolo* of the *Contado*, district by district, univocally identifying it until the gradual transition from the old *catasto* to the modern land registry of the nineteenth century. This is also related to the second sampling criterion

¹ Antella, Borgo San Lorenzo, Castel San Giovanni, Castelfiorentino, Cerreto Guidi, Gambassi, Monterappoli, Poggibonsi, San Godenzo, San Martino alla Palma, Santa Maria Impruneta.

² Cohn, ‘Inventing’; idem, *Creating*.

³ With the sole exception of Monterappoli, whose data belong to the *popoli* of the whole *piviere* of S. Giovanni a Monterappoli, consisting of S. Andrea and S. Giovanni a Monterappoli, S. Lorenzo a Monterappoli, San Jacopo a [Fi]Stigliano, S. Bartolomeo a Brusiana and the commune of Borgo S. Fiora.

⁴ The people of the suburbs were part of the *piviere* of San Giovanni which, however, was divided into the four *quartieri* of the city of Florence: there was then a *piviere* of San Giovanni in the district of Santo Spirito, one of Santa Croce and also of Santa Maria Novella and San Giovanni.

we applied (see below).

2) we selected the cases to study favouring communities that maintained a territorial unity over the centuries. In fact, from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century, Florence on several occasions changed the administrative framework of its territory by organizing the communities into *leghe*, *vicariati*, and *podesterie*, the extent of which could change over time due to splits or mergers. The *popoli*, thanks to the progressive numbering that was left unchanged over more than three centuries, were always univocally identified, thus allowing us to follow their evolution.

3) Given the nature of the sources used, our archival series are all complete from the second half of the fourteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century. However, pre-Black Death *estimi* are rare, and consequently we gave preference to those communities for which such data existed in order to assess the impact of the plague on the distribution of wealth. The selection of Antella (from 1319), Santa Maria Impruneta (from 1307) and Poggibonsi (from 1338) is due to this.

For some communities, it was also possible to stretch the series until the end of the eighteenth century, as since 1776 the grand-ducal administration had begun a restructuring of the old *popoli* and *pivieri* by creating the broader *comunità*, but some of the new administrative aggregates retraced old districts. This was the case of Poggibonsi, Castelfiorentino and San Godenzo, for which we have data for 1779.

4) Finally, we took into account geographic coverage. As can be seen in Figure 1, the 11 communities analyzed (plus Prato) are distributed homogeneously throughout the territory of the *Contado*. Some, such as Antella, San Martino alla Palma and Santa Maria Impruneta, which are particularly close to the capital, were among the first areas subjected to Florentine expansion, and consequently their territory was the more marked, from the late Middle Ages, by the penetration of urban property (see Appendix S2). The communities of the Val d'Elsa, with their fertile and varied lands, from the plains of the valley areas to the low hills, became part of the *Contado* during the first 20 years of the fourteenth century (first those situated on the right bank of the river, Castelfiorentino, Poggibonsi and Monterappoli, then Gambassi) and constituted for a long time the border with the State of Siena. Particularly significant is the presence of Castel San Giovanni, in the upper Valdarno, one of the communities newly founded by Florence around the end of the thirteenth century to impose its rule in areas without large settlements, as well as to prevent the military incursions of Arezzo and Siena and to limit or eradicate the power of the local lords. Finally, to the north of Florence, we included the communities of Borgo San Lorenzo in the heart of the Mugello region, along the Sieve river, and that of San Godenzo (sold by the Counts Guidi to Florence in 1344), whose mainly mountainous territory stretched along the slopes of the Apennines towards

Forlì.

The original plan of Florence was to apply the general *catasto* of 1427 to all areas of the State and therefore also to the communities of the *Distretto*. The discontent of the subject cities was palpable, and in some cases – as in Volterra – led to a dramatic rebellion. For this reason, in the *Distretto* from the sixteenth century it was preferable to distribute the tax burden needed for the local and general expenditures on the basis of *estimi* drawn up by each community and conducted with criteria that, although evaluated and authorized by the capital city, granted them a large margin of autonomy. Different tax systems produced different kinds of sources, not only from a formal point of view but also in terms of content, mirroring the different sources of taxable wealth or income taken into account.

Arezzo

The documentation available for Arezzo is particularly rich and quite uniform over time, even if the tax system experienced some changes over the four centuries considered. The sources of the years between 1387 and 1428 always use the term “*libra*” to indicate the operations leading to direct taxation. In this period, however, the word corresponded to a constantly changing reality. Starting from an empirical and arbitrary assessment of the ability to pay, typical of the years between 1384 and 1411, in 1412 a system was introduced whereby the “*lira d'estimo*” was calculated by estimating and verifying the data contained in statements submitted by each taxpayer indicating their movable and immovable property, of which the *lira* was a percentage.⁵ Starting from 1418-19, the *lira* of each citizen was finally calculated only after having checked, recorded and estimated in the registers of the *catasto* the data contained in the taxpayers' statements.⁶ This process was completed in 1428 with the subjection of Arezzo to the general *catasto* imposed by Florence on all its territory; tax records were renewed in 1443, 1493, 1535, 1557-58, and 1672, but the estimation of landed property and wealth became increasingly rough, and by the mid-sixteenth century involved the valuation of real estate only.⁷

We used in particular the series of the “*Libri della lira di città*”⁸ containing data for 1390, 1443, 1501, 1602, 1650, 1710, 1751, and 1792. For the mid-sixteenth century we used the data of the

⁵ Until the sixteenth century the ratio between *lira* and estimated wealth was 40 *denari* for every 100 florins (Benigni, Carbone, Saviotti, *Fonti*, p. 86).

⁶ Benigni, ‘*Fonti*’.

⁷ Benigni, ‘*Oligarchia*’; Benigni, Carbone, Saviotti, *Fonti*.

⁸ They didn't include the countryside of Arezzo. It consisted of an area of 5 miles around the city walls called “*Cortine*”, for which specific tax records exist (Carbone, *Economia*).

catasto of 1558 (published by Carbone and Saviotti).⁹

San Gimignano and Prato

San Gimignano was a large village of the Val d'Elsa, of which we have mention since the tenth century. The settlement was built around a castle of the Bishop of Volterra, to which it was subjected. It became a commune by the middle of the twelfth century, and its development was largely due to the route of the Via Francigena, which crossed San Gimignano along the stretch between Lucca and Siena. The population decrease of the city and its countryside in the aftermath of the Black Death, combined with internal political instability, led in 1353 to submission to Florence and annexation to its *Distretto*.

Our fiscal data were obtained from Fiumi's detailed study of the evolution of the community from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern period.¹⁰ They consist of three distinct series taken from three different kinds of sources:

- 1) For the years 1277-90 and for 1332, the *libra* of the city and the countryside are available¹¹, resulting from the distribution among the taxpayers of a sum of about 140,000 *lire* and 71,000 *lire* respectively. Like the Florentine *estimo*, the *libra* did not represent the value of assets or income in their real dimensions, but established the ability to pay of each household with respect to the others;
- 2) For the period 1314-1674, data are derived from the “*gabella delle possessioni o estimo*”, that is a tax on land property. Fiumi used the tax records of 1314-38, 1375, 1419, 1475, 1549, and 1674. The taxable base of this tribute was identified with the presumed annual income, expressed in *moggia* and *staia* (these were units of capacity) of wheat¹².
- 3) In 1428, San Gimignano was subjected, like the entire State of Florence, to the *Catasto* following the rules previously described.

As was common for studies of the distribution of wealth of his times,¹³ Fiumi distributed all the surveyed taxpayers in classes (according to their *libra*, or “*sovrrabbondante*” – in the case of the *catasto* of 1428 –, or income from land property). For each class he provided the number of cases and the total value.

To include these data in our database, which requires a precise identification of individual

⁹ The estimation process began in 1546, but the *catasto* went into effect, with the permission of Florence, only in 1558 (Carbone and Saviotti, *Con il computer*).

¹⁰ Fiumi, *Storia economica*.

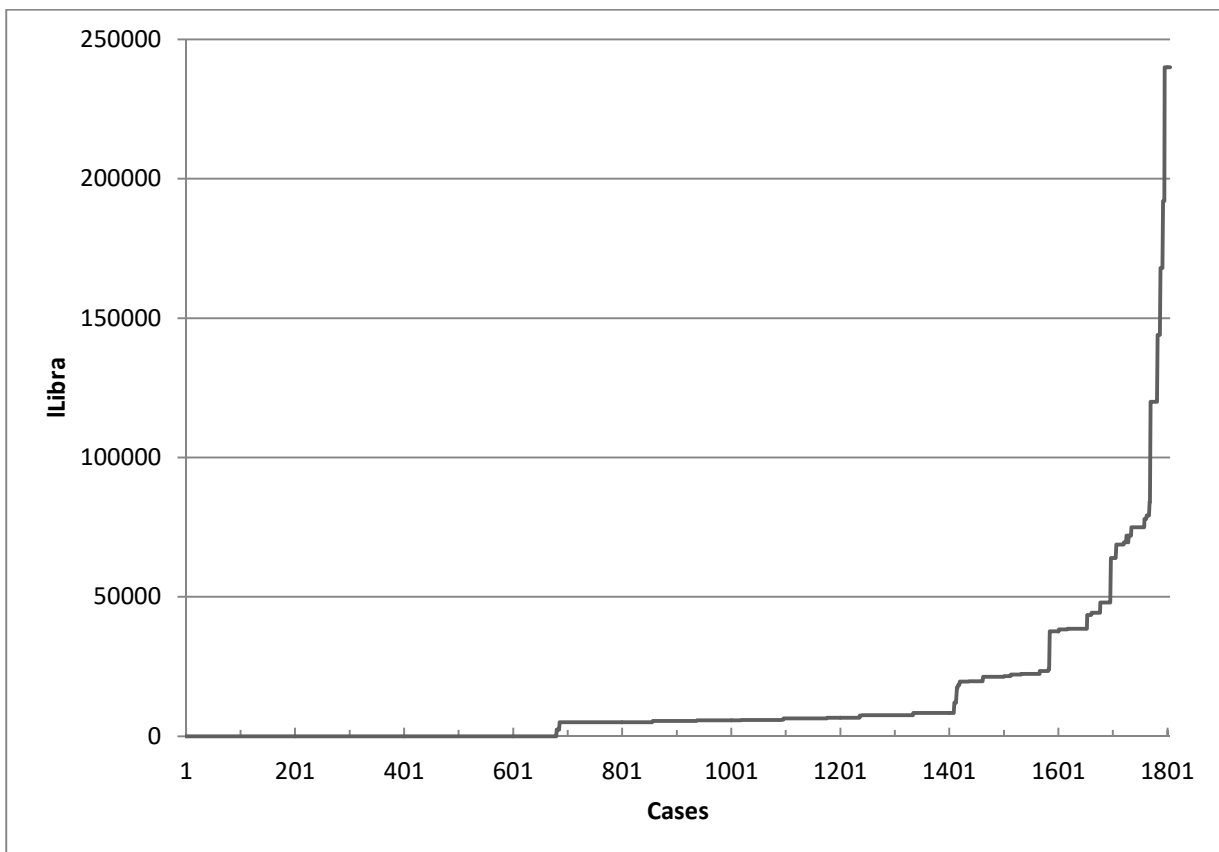
¹¹ *Libra* of the city for the year 1277, of the countryside for the year 1290, *libra* of the city and countryside for the year 1332 (Ibid., pp. 116, 124).

¹² The estimate process was refined over the centuries with the establishment of a more detailed survey, which classified the farms by the type of cultivation, assessed the income at current currency values and compared it to wheat, according to the official market price of the year of the survey (Ibid., p. 192).

¹³ Conti, *La formazione*.

taxpayers, we assumed a uniform distribution within each class, then assigned to each taxpayer an amount equal to the average calculated for the class to which he belongs. The major taxpayers, however (those above a certain threshold), have been identified individually. This fact is of particular importance, since wide empirical evidence demonstrates how, in fact, the variations at the top of the distribution tend to determine changes in the general trend.¹⁴

Graph 1A. Classes of wealth in Prato (1372)



The same procedure was adopted for the data of Prato, published in another work by Fiumi¹⁵ and in a study of the *catasto* by Pampaloni.¹⁶ The data sets used in their analysis, organized in classes (of *libra* and *sovraabbonante*) come from the “*libre di città*” of 1325 and 1372,¹⁷ which are similar to the *estimi* of the Florentine *Contado*, and the *catasti* of 1428 and 1487.¹⁸ For the following period we used newly-collected information from the books of the *decima* for the years 1546, 1621, 1671,

¹⁴ Alfani, *Economic inequality*; Atkinson, Picketty, and Saez, ‘Top Incomes’; Alvaredo, Atkinson, Picketty, and Saez, ‘The Top 1 Percent’.

¹⁵ Fiumi, *Demografia*.

¹⁶ Pampaloni, ‘Prato’.

¹⁷ Fiumi, *Demografia*, Tab. II, p. 92, Tab. I, p. 56.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 113, Pampaloni, ‘Prato’, pp. 181–5.

and 1723¹⁹.

APPENDIX S2: The spread of Florentine property

In the period we considered there was an almost continuous increase in the extent of Florentine property, especially in the *Contado*. The phenomenon has been only briefly discussed in earlier research,²⁰ requiring a full examination of the *catasto* of the capital to get a complete picture of the land placed in the *Contado* but owned by Florentine citizens. These partial inquiries clearly indicate a deep penetration of Florentine property into the area. While there are considerable differences across distinct areas, the landscape of the *Contado*, at least from the middle of the thirteenth century, was characterized by a strong presence of Florentine landowners, increasingly expanding to the detriment of small independent farmers.²¹ In the *Distretto* the problem was present, but less acute,²² partly due to the morphology of much of the territory (mountain areas covered by forests were of limited interest to Florentine citizens) but also due to the presence of large commons.²³

In the *Contado*, the long-term mechanisms that allowed the radicalization of this phenomenon from the late Middle Ages and throughout the Early Modern period are well known: the presence of big landowners of ancient origin but long time residents in Florence; the relocation to the city of small or medium landowners; and the purchase of land by Florentine citizens.²⁴ Merchants, but also craftsmen or professionals, saw in the purchase of land a way to give a stable base and a greater assurance to their business, the natural completion of their main activity, the opportunity to live off the fruits of their own land and avoiding the fluctuations of the market.²⁵ There were essentially two ways in which the Florentines accumulated small plots of land, eventually consolidated into larger properties: the lending of money to small owners of land (often bordering theirs), so it could be annexed if they were not able to pay back their debt, and speculation on agricultural products (such as the purchase of future harvests or the granting of short-term loans on wheat), which weakened the position of the farmers.²⁶

The principal form of organization of land ownership in the areas considered in this paper is sharecropping: this was a contract - in theory an annual agreement although in practice it lasted much longer - between a landowner and a cultivator, the latter becoming a *mezzadro* (sharecropper).

¹⁹ Florence State Archive (hereafter FSA), Decima granducale, 5361, 5364, 5365, 5366.

²⁰ Conti, *La formazione*; Fiumi, *Demografia*, pp. 126–8; Curtis, ‘Florence’.

²¹ Pinto, *La Toscana*; Cherubini, ‘La mezzadria’.

²² Petralia, ‘Imposizione’; Martelli, ‘La “consegna”’; Menzione, ‘La proprietà’; Cohn, *Creating*.

²³ Curtis, ‘Florence’, pp. 12–4.

²⁴ Pinto, *Toscana medievale*; Cherubini, *Signori*.

²⁵ Pinto, *La Toscana*.

²⁶ Pinto, *Toscana medievale*.

Under this agreement, the landowner provided the *mezzadro* with a plot of land, the *podere* (farm), and a house to live in, along with various agricultural outbuildings. In return the *mezzadro* agreed to cultivate the land, guaranteeing the use of the labour force of his entire family and sharing the expenses involved in running the *podere* and the final product.²⁷

From the early years of the fourteenth century, in various areas of Tuscany urban property spread considerably, preferring at first the areas closer to the city and the most productive lands. It is not by chance that in the poorest areas and on the mountain slopes land property tended to remain deeply fragmented and in the hands of small farmers.²⁸ In the countryside close to the city of Siena rates around 70-80% of urban property were recorded, while in the Florentine *Contado* in 1427 it reached about two thirds of the value of the land, against 18% of the peasant property. Peasants retained land ownership rates above 50% only in areas of high hills or low mountains.²⁹ Not everywhere did the city exert its attraction on the landowners of the countryside. It was little felt, for example, in the mountain areas north and east of Florence,³⁰ like the Casentino valley.³¹ Of the cases we studied, that of San Gimignano is striking, as the appeal of the city seemed almost to cease from the fifteenth century. The demographic crisis had led to a concentration of large families over the best land. Whereas average and big properties were few in the tax records of the countryside in the fourteenth century, the situation changed in the subsequent *estimi*. Maybe it was the “passion for the land” but it is a fact that from the fifteenth century some big capitalists began to live in the countryside.³²

The massive presence of Florentine property in the *Contado* and the widespread adoption of sharecropping poses at least two issues. The first is a systematic underestimation of the conditions of the *mezzadri*, who often appear in the *catasti* as propertyless. The possession of a very small, maybe unproductive piece of land did not necessarily ensure a standard of living higher than that guaranteed by farming on an estate owned by a Florentine citizen. After all, sharecropping encountered so much favour not only for the convenience of the owner, who appreciated this type of contract because it allowed self-sufficiency in food and the exploitation of peasant labour for the intense cultivation of plants with high added value (vines, olives, fruit trees). On the other side, the *mezzadro* was guaranteed a certain supply of food (albeit in small quantities), as in the case of a

²⁷ Jones, ‘From manor’; Giorgetti, *Contadini*; Pinto, *La Toscana*; Cherubini, *Signori*. Sharecropping did not spread evenly throughout Tuscany, instead it involved mostly the low hills and dry plains of the central region. The economic significance of this form of land organization was still more important than its territorial extent: in 1947, less than a half of the region was still involved in sharecropping (Cherubini, ‘La mezzadria’, p. 193).

²⁸ Cherubini, ‘Le campagne’, p. 215.

²⁹ Conti, *La formazione*; Pinto, *La Toscana*; Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans*.

³⁰ Cohn, *Creating*.

³¹ Curtis, ‘Florence’.

³² Fiumi, *Storia economica*.

poor harvest he would benefit from advances and loans from the owner.³³ In the rural hierarchy, the *mezzadri* were the luckier ones. Subordinate to them and much more vulnerable economically were the agricultural labourers (*braccianti*) without land of their own.

The second problem is that, since the establishment of the *decima* (which considered only the income coming from the real estate owned), the *mezzadri* were not registered at all. The immediate consequence is the thinning of the fiscal records of the communities of the *Contado*, especially those closest to Florence.

³³ Cherubini, 'La mezzadria'.

APPENDIX S3: Archival sources

Arezzo State Archive

Libri della lira di città:

- 2 (1390, Arezzo)
- 10 (1443, Arezzo)
- 17 (1501, Arezzo)
- 33 (1602, Arezzo)
- 43 (1650, Arezzo)
- 52 (1710, Arezzo)
- 55 (1751, Arezzo)
- 60 (1792, Arezzo)

Siena State Archive

Comune di Poggibonsi, 172 (1338, Poggibonsi)

National Central Library of Florence

- Magliabechi, II.I.120 (1551)
- Magliabechi, II.I.240 (1622)
- EB, 15.2 (1632)

Florence State Archive

Miscellanea medicea:

- 224 (1562)

Carte strozziane. Prima serie:

- 24 (1642)

Segreteria di Gabinetto:

- 119 (1784)
- 319 (1792)

Notarile antecosimiano:

- 448 (1319, Antella)
- 2354 (1307, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 2359 (1330, Santa Maria Impruneta)

- 7415 (1319, Santa Maria Impruneta)

Estimo:

- 258 (1402, Castelfiorentino, Gambassi, Monterappoli, Poggibonsi, San Martino alla Palma, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 259 (1414, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 264 (1357, Gambassi, Monterappoli, Poggibonsi, San Martino alla Palma)
- 266 (1373, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 267 (1365, Castelfiorentino, Poggibonsi, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 269 (1384, Poggibonsi, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 270 (1394, Poggibonsi, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 272 (1357, Antella, Castel San Giovanni)
- 277 (1394, Antella)
- 278 (1402, Castel San Giovanni)
- 282 (1357, Cerreto Guidi)
- 287 (1402, Cerreto Guidi)
- 294 (1357, Borgo San Lorenzo, San Godenzo)
- 299 (1402, Borgo San Lorenzo, San Godenzo)

Catasto:

- 307 (1427, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 842 (1458, Gambassi)
- 846 (1458, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 847 (1458, San Martino alla Palma)
- 852 (1458, Castelfiorentino, Monterappoli)
- 856 (1458, Poggibonsi)
- 859 (1458, Antella)
- 871 (1458, Cerreto Guidi)
- 883 (1458, Borgo San Lorenzo)
- 886 (1458, San Godenzo)
- 947 (1469, Castel San Giovanni)

Decima repubblicana:

- 272 (1504, Castelfiorentino)
- 274 (1504, Gambassi)
- 277 (1504, Poggibonsi)
- 281 (1504, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 283 (1504, San Martino alla Palma)
- 289 (1504, Monterappoli)
- 299 (1504, Castel San Giovanni)
- 307 (1504, Antella)
- 325 (1504, Cerreto Guidi)
- 373 (1504, Borgo San Lorenzo)
- 377 (1504, San Godenzo)

Decima granducale:

- 5165 (1536, Santa Maria Impruneta)

- 5166 (1570, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 5167 (1621, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 5168 (1715, Santa Maria Impruneta)
- 5169 (1536, San Martino alla Palma)
- 5170 (1570, San Martino alla Palma)
- 5171 (1621, San Martino alla Palma)
- 5172 (1715, San Martino alla Palma)
- 5181 (1536, Castelfiorentino, Monterappoli)
- 5182 (1570, Castelfiorentino, Monterappoli)
- 5183 (1621, Castelfiorentino, Monterappoli)
- 5184 (1715, Castelfiorentino, Monterappoli)
- 5185 (1536, Gambassi)
- 5186 (1570, Gambassi)
- 5187 (1621, Gambassi)
- 5188 (1715, Gambassi)
- 5194 (1570, Poggibonsi)
- 5195 (1622, Poggibonsi)
- 5196 (1715, Poggibonsi)
- 5197 (1536, Antella)
- 5198 (1570, Antella)
- 5199 (1621, Antella)
- 5200 (1715, Antella)
- 5209 (1536, Castel San Giovanni)
- 5210 (1570, Castel San Giovanni)
- 5211 (1621, Castel San Giovanni)
- 5212 (1715, Castel San Giovanni)
- 5253 (1536, Cerreto Guidi)
- 5254 (1570, Cerreto Guidi)
- 5255 (1621, Cerreto Guidi)
- 5256 (1715, Cerreto Guidi)
- 5289 (1536, Borgo San Lorenzo)
- 5290 (1570, Borgo San Lorenzo)
- 5291 (1621, Borgo San Lorenzo)
- 5292 (1715, Borgo San Lorenzo)
- 5309 (1536, San Godenzo)
- 5310 (1570, San Godenzo)
- 5311 (1621, San Godenzo)
- 5312 (1715, San Godenzo)
- 5361 (1546, Prato)
- 5364 (1621, Prato)
- 5365 (1671, Prato)
- 5366 (1763, Prato)
- 5641 (1536, Poggibonsi)
- 5741 (1779, Castelfiorentino)
- 5742 (1779, Castelfiorentino)
- 5772 (1779, San Godenzo)
- 5773 (1779, San Godenzo)
- 5796 (1779, Poggibonsi)
- 5797 (1779, Poggibonsi)

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