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The free port of Livorno and the transformation of the Mediterranean world 1574-1790

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ease and dexterity, drawing on estate records, codes of customs and laws, hagiographies, penitentials, and polyptychs, among others, to drive home her arguments. Her book may concentrate on western Europe in the post-Roman context, but she is also able to mobilize a wide range of Roman sources judiciously and effectively to make comparisons. Her instrumental approach to the problem of unfreedom argues that people regulate, coerce, and restrict the working lives of their dependents in order to serve their own purposes, and that as these purposes change over time, so does the choice of the form of dependent unfreedom. This is clearly evidenced, well argued, and compelling, although it tells us little about the development of medieval slavery per se, identified by Rio herself as 'the most heavily subjected end of the spectrum of unfreedom' (p. 13). The similarities with modern definitions of slavery, however, are striking.

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JUDITH SPICKSLEY

Corey Tazzara, *The free port of Livorno and the transformation of the Mediterranean world 1574–1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xvi+346. 33 figs. 10 tabs. ISBN 9780198791584 Hbk. £75)

When the Medici bought Livorno in 1421, its land was sparsely populated and swampy. Livorno's port was formed by only two docks, largely untouched by Mediterranean trade. Thanks to the pioneering role that Livorno played in the growth of the institution of the 'free port' (*porto franco*), however, the city rapidly became one of the most important ports in Europe. Corey Tazzara's book masterfully examines the free port of Livorno's fascinating but previously neglected story. Tazzara's broader goal is to transcend boundaries between the history of ideas and the political economy of trade, and cast new light on the birth of liberalism. Tazzara draws on a wealth of new quantitative and qualitative data from archives in Florence and elsewhere, illuminating the daily life of the port and its evolving relationship with the capital, as well as on the writings of key economic thinkers. For Tazzara the seeds of liberalism are not to be found in the ivory towers of Enlightenment thinkers, but in the dusty custom houses that gave shape to its practice in the preceding centuries.

The presentation is chronological, starting with the planning of the free port (chapter 1) and the initial implementation of the Medici's legislation (chapter 2). The Medici's project is seen by Tazzara as the product of two interacting forces. Late Renaissance economic thought made economic development a core object of state power. The decline of commercial power of the Italian city-states paved the way for the infrastructural development of Livorno's port, as well as the introduction of policies aimed at attracting foreign merchants, like the famous *Livornina* (1591), which extended trading privileges to Jewish merchants. Tazzara argues that the central issue that gave shape to Livorno's early days as a free port was how to credibly commit to upholding the interests and property rights of foreign merchants. In consequence, Livorno evolved as a node of transit within an international and multilateral trading network, while the initial intention of the officials behind its development was to foster the growth of Tuscan industry and exports.

Tazzara then moves on to examine the consolidation of the free port in the seventeenth century. Specifically, he looks at how merchants exploited legislative ambiguities and used supplications to clarify and reform legislation (chapter 3), how the Customs Office dealt with the challenges posed by the administration of the free port through the involvement of merchants in the shaping and implementation of economic policies (chapter 4), and the creation of the classic free port, culminating in the reform of 1676, which eliminated taxes on imports and exports (chapter 5).

The final part of the book deals with the economic, institutional, and intellectual consequences of the free port. Chapter 6 maps out the growth of maritime traffic. This expansion was at once spectacular and limited. The arrivals of long-distance ships grew five-fold in the decades after 1676. Yet Livorno continued mainly to link north-western Europe with the Levant, and did not become directly involved in trade with the Americas and southern/eastern Asia. Livorno's free port played a crucial role in facilitating the import of grain and raw materials, but never managed to become the vehicle of industrial development for which it was initially conceived. Chapter 7 attends to the interactions between enlightened reformers, seeking to impose uniformity, and the local elite, defending their privileges, in the eighteenth century. Tazzara's emphasis is on mutual influences. On the one hand, Livorno's previous experiments with free trade provided a model for the implementation of economic reforms at the state level. On the other hand, the local elite discourse became increasingly couched in the universalistic principles of non-interference developed by the emerging science of political economy, instead of particularistic traditions. Chapter 8 expands the gaze to look at Livorno's free port from a comparative perspective, by following the global spread of this institutional innovation and its intellectual legacies. Tazzara returns here to his main claim, stressing that it was Adam Smith who was responsible for 'the conversion of the free port into free trade' (p. 257).

The intellectual legacies of the free port are explored further in the concluding chapter, as Tazzara reflects on the ambivalent consequences for merchants of the changing nature of the economic expert between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. While Enlightenment discourse meant that merchants lost their privileged position as *the* intellectual authority on economic matters, with a consequent restriction of opportunities for rent-seeking, it also provided merchants with new weapons to fight their corner in relation to central authorities, with the language of *laissez-faire*. The story of the free port of Livorno offers valuable insights into this journey.

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DAVID CHILOSI

Wantje Fritschy, *Public finance of the Dutch Republic in comparative perspective: the viability of an early modern federal state (1570s–1795)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017. Pp. xvi+429. 41 figs. 30 tabs. ISBN 97804641272 Hbk. €135)

This is one of the most important books on early modern Europe state finance to be published in the last half-century. It is the culmination of work on the Dutch Republic by many hands for nearly 30 years and innovatively compares those findings with the Venetian Republic, Britain, and the Ottoman Empire. It covers the whole history of the federal and decentralized Dutch Republic, from the war of independence from Spain at the end of the sixteenth century through to its dissolution near the end of the eighteenth century. For most of that period the Dutch were the most heavily taxed people in Europe. The primary question addressed is how that was possible given its relatively small size, the considerably greater population and economy of Holland compared to the other six provinces, and the weakness of the Dutch federal system.

The book is divided into two parts of roughly equal length. The first sets out the Dutch case. Resting on an impressive amount of original research—often by Fritschy, sometimes by others—a careful quantitative picture is painted of how public revenues developed over this period: of the balance between taxation and borrowing, of the different types of taxes collected, and of the different contributions made by the Republic's provinces. It is shown that it depended rather less than has sometimes been thought on customs duties and rather more on urban centres, structured by setting quotas for provincial contributions in 1616