

Note on Currencies, Weights, and Measures Found in the Documents

Currencies

The standard currency in Florence during the later Middle Ages and Renaissance was the gold *fiorino* or florin. From the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries the Florentines also employed the *fiorino di suggello*, a large ducat-sized coin that was used only in sealed bags and thus of guaranteed purity and weight.

In 1471 the Florentines introduced a system of two moneys of account, the *fiorino largo di grossi* which was expressed in silver, and the *fiorino largo d'oro in oro*, expressed in gold.

The value of all these florins corresponded, in constantly fluctuating ratios, to certain numbers of *lire* (the *lira* was a money of account). The *lira*, in turn, was divided into twenty *soldi*, the *soldo* into twelve *denari*. The *fiorino* was discontinued as a coinage around 1542, though it continued to be used as a money of account.

In 1531 Duke Alessandro de' Medici began minting a new currency which quickly supplanted the florin in importance: the *scudo*. Corresponding to this new denomination, two moneys of account became prevalent in mid-Cinquecento Tuscany. The *fiorino di lire 7* or *fiorino di moneta* was fixed at a value of 140 *soldi*, while the *scudo d'oro in oro* was fixed at 150 *soldi*.

Many states issued gold coins that were roughly comparable to the Florentine florin. The most common name for these was the *ducato* (with variations like the *ducato del sole* or the Roman *ducato di camera*).

Weights and Measures

The values of the various weights and measures varied somewhat from place to place. Florentine versions of these measures are given here and can be taken as fairly close to the values of those same units in other parts of the peninsula.

The standard unit of length was the *braccio* (plural *braccia*) measured 0.584 meters at Florence and in much of Tuscany. It was sometimes divided into two *palmi*, twelve *crazie*, twenty *soldi*, sixty *quattrini*, 240 *denari* or 2880 *punti*.

The *libbra* was the equivalent of 0.339 kilograms at Florence and in much of Tuscany. Some cities had a heavy *libbra* (*libbra grossa*) and a light *libbra* (*libbra piccola*); the Florentine *libbra* was fairly close to the *libbra piccola* of other states. In many places, as at Florence, the *libbra* was divisible into twelve *once*, the *uncia* into twenty-four *denari*, the *denaro* into twenty-four *grani*. A thousand *libbre* constituted a *migliaio* or *miliarium*.

A liquid measure, the Florentine *barile* or barrel corresponded to 0.456 hectaliters.

For bulk of liquids and solids, the Florentine *staio* or bushel corresponded to 0.244 hectaliters. Three *staia* constituted a *sacca*; eight *sacche* made a *moggio*. There was also the *soma*, which varied widely. The term was applied to wet or dry volume measures as well as land measures; it corresponded roughly to the saddle-load of a pack animal.

Derived from the *staio* was a land measure, the *staiora* or *stioro* (theoretically the amount of land one could sow with a bushel of seed). Measuring about 5.25 acres, it was divided into twelve *panori*; a *panoro* was equal to twelve *pugnori*.

The *carrata* or cartload was a measure used for marble at Carrara, equal to twenty-five cubic *palmi* or approximately a thousand kilograms in weight.