Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici, 1400 -1434

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The Medici Family

Cosimo de' Medici

"Cosimo had goals tied to specific roles – to make money as a banker, to increase family prestige through marriage, to maintain power as leader of Florence" (1264)

Cosimo de' Medici

"Cosimo de' Medici was legally enshrined on his death as the father of this country." (1262)

Cosimo de' Medici

"He was multiply embedded in complicated and sprawling Florentine marriage, economic, and patronage elite networks." (1262)

Cosimo de' Medici

"He consolidated a Europe-wide banking network that helped induce both international trade and state making elsewhere." (1262)

"he oversaw and sponsored the Florentine intellectual and artistic efflorescence that we now call "the Renaissance". (1262)

Robust Action

The authors describe this style as "robust action" or "multivocality" which is "the fact that single action can be interpreted coherently from multiple perspectives simultaneously, the fact that single actions can be moves in many games at once, and the fact that public and private motivations cannot be parsed." (p. 1263)

Introduction

Analyze the centralization of political parties and elite networks that underlay the birth of the Renaissance state in Florence.

Analyzing the structure and the sequential emergence of the marriage, economic, and patronage networks that constituted the Medicean political party, used by Cosimo in 1434 to take over the budding Florentine Renaissance state.

Network Structure

3 types of partisans families (1269):

- Medici partisan families

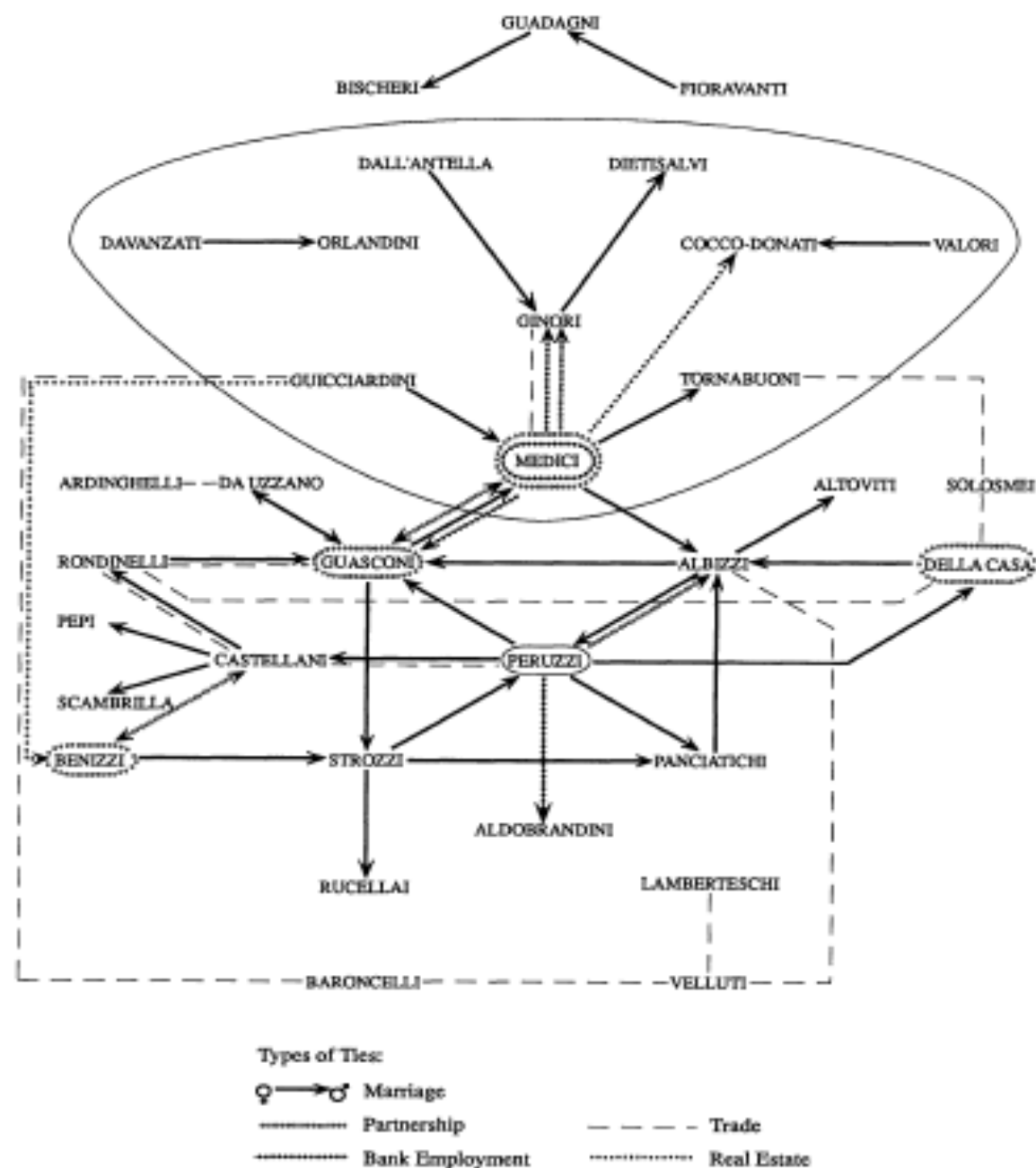- Oligarchic partisan families

- neutral families

Fig. 2a.—Marriage and economic blockmodel structure (92 elite families)

"Medici partisans were connected to other Medici partisans almost solely through the Medici themselves."(1278)

"conversely, the oligarch side was densely interconnected, especially through marriage. Dense structural interconnection, however, did not lead to cohesive collective action. The oligarchs were composed of too many status equals, each with plausible network claims to leadership. In dense networks in times of crisis, cacophony ensued, as each family conspired privately with other families to which they were tied about the proper course of action. Simultaneous and contradictory conversations redounded through private network channels, generating cross-pressure on each family instead of collective convergence."(1279)

Medici's Marriage Strategy

Medici believed that "to control follower politically, segregate one's social relations with them. On the whole, multiplex ties (across marriage and economics) were discouraged. Thus, structural isolation operated in two ways: the marriage and economic isolation of partisans from all others (including other partisans), and the segregation of types of ties with the Medici themselves." (1280)

"Cross-sectional estimates are also consistent: for both 15th-century periods, the higher the position in the elite hierarchy, the higher the rate of marriage outside neighborhood" (1289)

More specifically, 93% of the families within the triangulated circle were mobilized actively into the Medici party. 59% of all other families, were organized actively into the oligarch party" (1276)

TABLE A2

Goodness of Fit of Blockmodel Partitions to Party Membership

No. of Families	Medici Blocks	All Other Blocks	Elite Blocks	Nonelite Blocks
Mediceans............................	26	4	2	2
Split loyalty...........................	2	10	6	4
Oligarchs...............................	0	31	8	23
Neutrals.................................	1	18	2	16
Proportion mobilized*	.966	.714	.889	.644
Proportion own party†..............	.958	.823	.737	.871

* % Mobilized measures relative recruitment of blocked families into any party; i.e., proportion mobilized = (no. of families − no. of neutral families)/(no. of families).

† % Own party measures relative partisanship of activists; i.e., proportion own party = (no. of families in own party)/(no. of families − no. of neutral families), with split families allocated proportionately.

Summary

This article uses social network methods to analyze the birth of the renaissance state in Florence. The article successfully illustrates how social networks provide a good explanation for party alliance.