

15 Tuscany

Demography, Economy, and Society: Interdisciplinary Research on the Granduchy of Tuscany in the mid-19th Century

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Nature, Aims and Methods

For the past few years a group of scholars and technicians from the three Tuscan universities have been working together on a research project to investigate the interdependence of demographic and socio-economic phenomena. Specifically, the group is engaged in a broad and interdisciplinary study of mid-nineteenth-century Tuscany. The departments involved are Statistics and History at the University of Florence; Modern and Contemporary History at the University of Pisa; and History at the University of Siena. Since 1998, as a result of specific interest gained from basic research, the Departments of Linguistics and of Italian Studies of the Universities of Florence and Pisa have joined the original group.

Tuscany has been chosen for several reasons. To begin with, it is the region in which all the groups work. Second, its many archives - national, local, and other - are rich in the kind of documentation necessary for a study of this sort. And finally, Tuscany is well-defined both for its hydrogeological identity and for its language and dialects; it also demonstrates an

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extraordinary continuity of parochial, political, and administrative organization over time. Our focus on the nineteenth century in turn finds its justification in the fact that there exists valuable and truly "statistical" documentation for that period, documentation that the researcher can use with confidence for research, analysis and even the application of innovative methodologies.

The 1841 Tuscan Census and Other Population Data

The backbone of this study is the Tuscan census of 1841, found in its entirety in the State Archive at Florence; it is also available on microfilm. The data included in the census is substantial: marital status, sex, age, occupation, literacy, nationality, religion, poverty and disabilities. Each individual is placed in a "strategic" order according to his/her relationship to the family head, and each family is placed in a progressive order according to address, by parish and community. In the data base, the information for each member of each family has been recorded exactly as it appears in the original document, without change. Even as it stands then, the census lends itself to ample and detailed analyses in terms of both specific geographical areas and socio-demographic groups.

To the census data—which refers to 1.5 million of inhabitants—other demographic and socio-economic information has been added. The major source of supplementary information consists of birth, death, and marriage certificates for 1840, 1841, and 1842 (about 350,000 records). All the information provided by these documents has been entered into the data base, again, just as it appears in the original document.

When automatically linked with the census data, this additional source facilitates analysis of the fundamental elements of demographic change—nuptiality, fertility, and mortality—as well as socio-economic characteristics based on

the profession or occupation listed in both the census and on the population registry document. For example, this comparison allows one to chart changes and continuity in profession or occupation for individuals listed in the census who marry or have children during the three years 1840-42 or who die in the period after the census. It is then also possible to study differential social conditions of general and infant mortality, of fertility, and of nuptiality, in addition to demographic characteristics of geographic and social mobility.

For example, we can analyze the structure of the marriage market and its influence on nuptiality by connecting: (1) data from marriage certificates preceding the census with information from the census in those cases where the couple appears as a family and (2) the census information for the families of the bride and the groom with the information listed on a marriage certificate for weddings celebrated after the census date. This two-pronged approach facilitates a study of the different socio-economic combinations for bride and groom and their relative family backgrounds as well as the different "forms of residence" chosen by the newlyweds, whether neolocal or patrilocal. We shall also be able to measure the "matrimonial attraction" between social groups, to analyze the order of entry into marriage of all the marriageable members of a family, and so on.

In addition to the population registry data, we have also included data on infant abandonment kept at the Tuscan foundling homes, again for the period 1840-42. Therefore we are able to study the nature of infant abandonment by reconstructing the demographic conditions of this "sub-population" (for example, in terms of differential survival rates). For the case of legitimate foundlings or foundlings falsely abandoned as illegitimate (and then subsequently reclaimed as legitimate by their parents), the process of linkage by name to the information from the birth, marriage, and death certificates and to the census data constitutes an invaluable source for analyzing the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of families that abandon their children and so the factors that "determine" abandonment.

These factors might include, for example, the birth order of the foundling, the number of other living children in the families of parents who gave up a child to the foundling home, the result of infant abandonment on birth intervals for the abandoning mother, and the type of family and its economic and social condition at the time of abandonment. In addition, the "wet-nurse industry" can be studied by linking data about women who worked as wet nurses during 1840-42, listed in the foundling home records, to the census and population registry data. Analysis of this sort can reveal the geography of wet-nursing as well as its demographic and social aspects, including the type and economic situation of the wet nurse's family; the birth order of the child in relation to whom the foundling was taken in; and the influence of the length of paid nursing on birth intervals for the wet nurse.

Clearly the combination of these several archival sources, if carefully exploited, offers a broad and valuable opportunity for research into questions of social history and demographic micro-analysis (including in the latter case important methodological explorations, as for example by the use of the event history analysis).

The Leopoldian Cadastre

Detailed surveys undertaken for the Tuscan cadastre provide us with a particularly useful set of documents for better understanding the complexity of Tuscan society in the period under investigation. For several years now groups at the Universities of Pisa and Siena have been working with these sources. Specifically, the Pisan group has checked and recorded all the nominative information from the cadastre registers for a large area concerning 16 Pisan communities, while the Sienese group has done the same for two Sienese ones. In addition, the Sienese group has recorded all the information from the General Index relative to the 147,011 firms of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany for 1841. For instance, from the Index we know that 66 percent of all Tuscan property owners had incomes of less than 100 Tuscan lire, corresponding to a proportion of just 6 percent of the total income of Tuscany. Conversely, a mere 1225 owners (0.9 percent) possessed 39 percent of the income, a proportion

which corresponded to 41.4 percent of the total land area of the Grand Duchy.

The cadastre is an extremely interesting document and serves as an invaluable source for the study not only of the agrarian landscape but especially of the distribution of real estate and wealth. By nominative linkage with the census we can not only reconstruct the social hierarchy, but also, thanks to the precise kinship information, the nature of family relationships among the wide and diverse group of property owners in 1841 Tuscany. We can, for example, identify the nature of endogamous barriers to marriage. The combination of cadastre, census, and marriage records even allows us to scrutinize the structure of nuptiality in new and original ways, clarifying the role played by the various components of the "marriage market" (in particular, structure by sex, age and social class of the marriageable population; and kinship grid), precisely because this linkage allows us to reconstruct the limitations - in terms of endogamy - on the free choice of one's spouse.

Linkage and Complementarity of Sources

It is important to remember that only through the process of linking the names which appear in the various archival sources is it possible to measure and interpret, even in comparative terms, the complexity of those phenomena that lie at the heart of this study.

Combination of the various sources described above will allow us not only to measure demographic events (by means of mortality tables as well as both cohort and period fertility and nuptiality indices and ratios) and to analyze population structure and dynamics (for example, family typologies understood in socio-economic terms), but also to bring out in detail territorial and social differences.

In order to achieve a more complete and nuanced understanding of the data collected in the study we have also begun working with the Accademia della Crusca, the Linguistics Departments of the University of Florence and the University of

Pisa, and the Department of Italian Studies at the University of Florence.

The nominative and integrative approach we have applied to all the available data allows the construction of at least two “tools” which are wholly original in both their substance and application. The first is a glossary of professions and occupations for the entire region which allows us to capture the complexity of occupational and professional categories as well as their territorial distribution. As of the end of March 1998, more than 5000 different job, trade, and professional titles had already been compiled for the communities involved in this study.

Knowledge of the territorial distribution of Tuscan professions and trades opens the way to valuable and unprecedented insights, especially since the data are complete for an entire region during a precise time period. This tool constitutes then a true census of all the trades, crafts, and professions practiced at the time. It will allow us to compile a comprehensive technical-professional glossary of all the trades and professions practiced in the region during the nineteenth century, identifying the precise meaning of each job title. And it is exactly this understanding (that is, of the social value of the job title) which permits us to construct a social hierarchy upon which to rank the single professions.

The second “tool” derived from our study is a glossary of the first and family names of all the inhabitants of Tuscany in the mid-nineteenth century. Because the list is complete, we are able, among other things, to “read” the distribution of characteristic names and surnames for a given area, to collect information on the diffusion of surnames connected to place names, professions and so on.

Moreover, since a surname can essentially be considered a genetic characteristic transmitted from father to son, this data ultimately forms a base from which to draw a map of the genetic structure of the Tuscan population of the time and to measure its subsequent transformations using lists of surnames for successive time periods. This specific application of the collected data will be carried out with the help of a group of geneticists

from the Department of Evolutionary Biology at the University of Parma.

In conclusion, we naturally hope to make the various fruits of our research available to the largest possible number of scholars in order that the project take on the scope and nature of a truly inter- and multidisciplinary one. Only in this way can full advantage be taken of all the information gathered.

Availability of the Basic Research Data

In order to make our research available to scholars outside the main group (that is, the various departments at the three Tuscan universities) we shall proceed as follows:

1. To begin with, based on an agreement with the Region of Tuscany (which together with Murst funds has provided support for this project to date), a partial database will be made available at the State Archive in Florence. This will include: given names, surnames, sex and age, parish and community for all individuals appearing in the 1841 census. It will allow rapid nominative and biographical research by individual scholars using the census files.
2. Once the project has been completed and the minimal requirements of priority satisfied (which is to say the "author's rights" to which any researcher is entitled before making available the results of his or her labors, in our case the original data bases combined into a single computer archive), the entire database will be made available to the public and so will serve as a substitute for the original paper documents in the archive.

Ultimately this database will be an unparalleled and wholly original source of research material.

Organization of the Study

It should be clear by now that the research project as a whole has ramifications which extend far beyond the specific contents and ends discussed above; it will constitute a database

to be enriched by the collaboration of experts in various fields: historians, demographers, statisticians, anthropologists, linguists, geneticists, programmers, computer experts, relational analysts, and so on. The results then will be of a general sort and serve as the foundation for research that will contribute to a more thorough understanding of the history of Tuscany in its many aspects. It should also be clear that this study can serve as a model for other regions or areas as well, and it is our hope not only to make the actual data collected available, but also to offer the experience gained in terms of research methodology for other projects.

To review the technical organization of the study, it consists of a collection of interrelated and interactive archives. As can be judged from their interdependence, the fundamental data constitute a complex and articulated relational database.

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