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Fighting Corruption in the Italian City-State
Perugian Officers’ End of Term Audit (sindacato)
in the Fourteenth Century

G. Geltner

If Italian city-states could be said to have stumbled into autonomy, they certainly
worked hard to retain it.¹ Political elites sought stability externally by increasing the
volume of trade, expanding diplomatic relations and building up military capacity,
while internally they began fostering practices of office rotation, regular elections,
isolating officials and upholding strict criteria of eligibility. To present-day eyes
some of the latter procedures in particular may appear to be proto-democratic and
progressive, placing these nascent polities on a fast track to modern statehood. Yet,
putting teleological interpretations aside, most scholars would now agree that, in
their immediate context, these measures were mostly products of distrust, designed
to break away from cities’ internecine pasts and obviate power grabbing by a single
family-clan or interest group. Indeed, the most emblematic office of the communal
era—namely the (mostly foreign) podestà—was appropriated as a creative solution
to power sharing among new and distrustful elites. That these checks and balances
would not survive the test of time is a historical fact, a process traced on numerous
levels, both locally and regionally, “from commune to signoria.”² Renaissance Human­
ism, it is often forgotten, flourished not only during repeated bouts of plague, but also
under more or less benign forms of despotism, not republicanism.

 Nonetheless, and as political historians and scientists have long noted, some
paradigmatic aspects of good government that crystalized in the communal era
accompanied cities’ transition into territorial states, maritime republics and au­
thoritarian signorie. It is one aspect of this legacy, namely the relation between
accountability of office and political legitimacy, which this paper seeks to highlight.
Specifically, it proposes to explore the institution of sindacato, or the audit of urban
officials at the end of their term, and how it defined and reflected contemporary
approaches to increasing transparency and fighting corruption. From a legal and
institutional perspective, sindacato was a direct and well-documented mechanism
for defining accountability and curbing corruption in and beyond the Italian city­
state.³ This hardly amounts to arguing that it was the only, or even the most
efficient, way to safeguard what was perceived as good government, be it in theory
or practice.⁴ Yet the regulations governing its execution and the records left by its
practitioners provide a unique opportunity to explicate the historical relations between thinking about, and acting to protect, the public good in an era often associated with ambivalence between the private and public spheres.

The first two parts of this chapter examine the nexus of auditing and anticorruption from a comparative peninsular perspective, and how it fits into normative discourses at the time about accountability, the role of government and the *bene commune* (common good). The third and central part of this paper analyses a rich and still untapped set of records from one city, Perugia, covering most of the fourteenth century. It is a first attempt to begin filling an enormous lacuna in this field—namely the execution of *sindacato*. With the partial exception of Florence, and to an even lesser extent Genoa, audit procedures have been studied almost entirely on the basis of normative texts such as guides for rulers and urban statutes. These certainly provide insights about best practices in medieval urban government, but they cannot be, and given the available records need not be, viewed in isolation from documents of practice. Perugia therefore presents a rich case study, one that can provide a stepping-stone to further explorations in the field, including an important comparative perspective in and beyond Italy. The conclusion, finally, will propose what this joint perspective can tell us about the relations between fighting corruption and state-building, and whether historicizing this nexus can throw fresh light on the pre/modern divide.

**ANTICORRUPTION POLICY IN THE ITALIAN PENINSULA**

Notwithstanding its well-preserved *sindacato* records, Perugia is hardly unique in peninsular terms. A survey of one hundred discrete collections of Italian urban statutes, in and out of print and covering the period 1250–1500, yielded forty-six pertinent texts representing forty different cities (see the appendix at the end of the chapter). With great consistency, these passages deal directly with audit procedures undergone by commune officials, especially, but not exclusively, the podestà and his *famiglia* or professional entourage, and later to the capitano del popolo, a second major urban executive. Broadly speaking, these rubrics prescribe the procedure’s schedule and goals, the officers and private individuals falling under its jurisdiction and the range of punishments that could be meted out. What actually constitutes good conduct among officials tends to be defined in other statutes, which deal with specific offices. This division allows *sindacato*-related texts to focus on who is eligible to oversee the audit and their remuneration, who may lodge complaints against officials (how and when) and what consequences convictions might entail. The texts vary in detail, at times with significant implications, and governments revised them continuously, in some cases well beyond the communal period. But to what extent did these prescriptions explicitly situate the office and its procedure as a means to fight corruption?

Although forty-six statute collections in our sample prescribe auditing procedures, merely six invoke the term *corruptio* (corruption). These instances moreover...
...since many in the city of Florence are accustomed to engage in corruption, by bribing judges, vicars and the podestà of the city of Florence and members of their entourage with money or gifts, it is ordained that no one from the city or region of Florence or any other person of whatever condition, may dare or presume to seduce, by himself or through an intermediary, the lord podestà, anyone from his entourage,
a sergeant or any official of the commune of Florence with money or fraudulent gifts or in any other way, or attempt to give or donate something to those officials so they would do or commit something against the honor of the lord podestà and the commune of Florence. And should anyone act to the contrary, he is to be fined one hundred lire, more or less according to the wish of the lord podestà, considering the facts of the case and the status of the persons involved in committing the deed and those of whom they wished to corrupt.

The Florentine text is the most expansive yet, especially in terms of potential objects and means of corruption. Here we can find echoes of the Pisan statutes’ allusion to the city's common good, as the text puts any official or non-official in a position to engage in corrupt acts, broadly (circularly?) defined as anything harming the podestà’s and city’s honor. A similarly inclusive approach emerges from a law promulgated by the commune of Montepulciano. In 1337 it too threatened anyone attempting to corrupt a podestà, judge, or any other official with a fifty-lire fine. A double fine applies to any of the aforementioned officials for allowing themselves to be corrupted, albeit without defining what that meant.

A final example, from fourteenth-century Rieti, sets much clearer boundaries for what can be considered a corrupt act—a contrast with the Florentine rubric that is further underscored when considering the Florentine focus on the corruptor to the exclusion of the corrupted. In Rieti:

Should anyone corrupt or attempt to corrupt, by means of money or gift, any official or judge regarding any legal procedure or quarrel brought before him, be it civil or criminal, he is not to be punished. And the corrupted official will be fined one hundred lire and be removed from his duty immediately.

Despite its focus on corrupted judges, the text is less limiting than it would seem at first sight. To recall, diverse officials could arbitrate in legal matters, and the clear indication that corruption charges apply to both civil and criminal cases underscores just such practices. Still, the scope is a narrowly judicial and professional one, ignoring the kind of venality that other office holders could engage in. And it is the failed professional who is eliminated from the judicial roster, while the agent of corruption is ostensibly left unscathed. One way to explain the asymmetry—which echoes observations made in this volume by John Watts and André Steiner—is that the statute sought to protect the existing system by giving the public good a very technocratic face, whose occasional blemish could be almost surgically removed.

Far from being conclusive or exhaustive, the foregone survey merely sought to underscore the breadth and diversity of approaches that various communes took at different times to define and fight against corruption. Such diversity was thus hardly limited to the Islamicate world, as discussed by Maaike van Berkel in Chapter 4 of this volume. In both contexts, however, the variety of approaches does not detract from the shared view of corrupt practices as undermining the public good, and the idea that procedures for bringing officials to account were a common means developed to protect it.
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Other aspects of the statutes examined above are thus put to this volume by John Watts and

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protecting the value of the office is to Latini an end in and of itself, and to accomplish this the worthy podestà must be scrupulous about his conduct and standing. Accordingly he must:

See to it that justice is not sold for money, for the law says that he who does this should be condemned like a thief. He should also be careful not to be intimate with his subjects, for through this he falls into scorn and suspicion. Similarly he should avoid receiving presents from anybody within his jurisdiction, because all men who receive gifts or services have sold their freedom and are obligated, as they would be for a debt. Also, let him avoid taking private counsel from anyone in the city, or going riding with him, or going to his house to eat or drink or to do anything else, because this gives rise to suspicion of him and envy of his citizens.

Although Latini may appear here to be striving more for a semblance of incorruptibility than its practice, it is nonetheless clear than certain kinds of associations were seen as corrupting because they threatened to compromise a podestà's autonomy. As a pillar of good government in this period, the ruler's independence and social isolation participated in ensuring public trust and wellbeing, and keeping the floodgates of narrow political interests closed.

De regimine civitatum's treatment of sindacato specifically is brief and telling, for it tends to construe the procedure as an opportunity to demonstrate the podestà's worth (for instance, by coming forth to declare a misstep), rather than as a fail-safe mechanism to detect or curb corruption. Accordingly, it stresses that holding an official accountable for his actions is not so much a barrier to success as the ultimate proof of one's virtue. This somewhat forced emphasis on showcasing virtue can be read as a response to what must have been widespread concerns among acting podestà regarding the sindacato procedure's vulnerability to politicization and its potentially dire consequences for outgoing officials. It is small wonder therefore that Da Viterbo stresses the importance of swift transitions between podestà, not over-extending sindacato (LIV) or withholding the exiting entourage's salary unduly (LXIV). Each of these interventions was evidently legal, but could nonetheless cast a shadow over officials' reputation and threaten their employability while simultaneously undermining a city's chances to attract high-quality officials in the future.

These two widely circulating texts join numerous urban statutes to attest the role corruption played in defining the pitfalls of good government generally and designing the practice of sindacato in particular. It remains to be seen what documents of practice can tell us about the application of sindacato and the degree to which its executors were interested in curbing what contemporaries defined as corruption.

AUDIT PRACTICES IN PERUGIA

The state archive of Perugia, a major Umbrian commune from the twelfth century onwards, allows us to reconstruct audit procedures on a concrete basis by juxtaposing legal and administrative records. Between 1250 and 1350 in particular, Perugia was
In 1250 and 1350 in particular, Perugia's contemporaries defined corruption as immoral, not just illegal. It remains to be seen what documentation on the concrete basis for procedures on a concrete basis by juxtaposing the 1279 statutes and their vernacular redaction of 1342 contain elaborate instructions on end-of-term audits, as distinct from those regulating officials' conduct generally, very much in line with the statute collections we have examined above. As a rule, the statutes state that, within eight days of stepping down, the podesta and capitano are to be scrutinized. Responsible for the procedure is a sindaco (sindicus and later maggior sindicus), a Perugian citizen elected by the city's maggior consiglio and representatives of each of the city's five neighborhoods (or porte) for the duration of a podesta's term (normally a twelve-month period). An eligible Sindaco must own property or goods adding up to at least two hundred lire and he must wait (just like the podesta and capitano) at least ten years between stints, during which time he cannot have held an office subject to auditing. One notary and a judge share the sindaco's workload, and all three may not be closely related to the city's ranking chamberlain or stewards. A sindaco's salary amounts to twenty-five lire—equal to that of his judge—while their notary is to earn fifteen lire. They may accept nothing further from anyone during their term under a fine of fifty lire and condemnation of their office. Their decisions may not be contested and their sentences are final. Anyone summoned by this office must report at the appointed time or else be declared contumacious.

In theory, once the podesta steps down, the sindaco has three days to announce any charges he wishes to raise against the outgoing officer, his entourage or anyone employed in an official—public—capacity during his term. This declaration (technically known as a litis contestatio) is done in the first instance on the basis of existing records regarding any official or private citizen exercising public power (balsi) anywhere in the city and throughout the Perugian contado or subject countryside. An important exception to this rule are previous auditors, who “must not be examined or audited in any way” (examinari vel sindicari non debeant ullo modo). The relatively brief period of three days and the privileging of official records in the preliminary investigation suggest the limited access and thus transparency of such procedures from beyond officialdom.

Moreover, the sterile zone in which the sindaco operates appears to have been more apparent than real. A subsequent rubric already delivers the actual prosecution of the podesta and capitano from his hands to those of a committee of six judges. And while the latter must consult with the sindaco or his judge, the extension of the case into the next administrative term meant the process is in practice handled by a later podesta, not an independent auditor and, at any rate, not the one who brought forward the original charges. Once the sindaco announces whom he intends to prosecute and why, the process enters a very public phase, during which evidence for and against the plaintiffs and potentially new allegations—presumably also regarding officials not yet named by the sindaco—would begin to surface. Indeed, it is hard to imagine injured and interested parties holding their tongue even that long.
The statutes outline that the *sindaco* must notify defendants personally within two days if they are in the city or three days if they reside in the countryside. They in turn are to present themselves before the *sindaco* or his judge and swear an oath that they are ready to be examined. Both steps are important from a legal point of view since the announcement of a *litis contestatio* and a defendant’s initial response to it greatly limit both parties’ options, rendering contumacy for instance (all but an admission of guilt). A failure to respond while under examination is to be fined: fifty lire in the case of a *podestà* and *capitano*, forty lire for other officers and twenty-five lire for stewards. If convicted and fined, officials must pay within eight days.

The statutes establish *sindacato* as an integral duty of the city’s officers, lasting fifteen days after a *podestà* steps down and at least thirty days from the end of a capitano’s tenure. Accordingly they insist that the *podestà*, *capitano* and their *famigliari* may not seek pre-emptive absolution, but, rather, must wait in Perugia until the audit is completed, under pain of a one hundred lire fine. Failure to pay this fine should result in the amputation of the *podestà*’s or the *capitano*’s tongue. By extricating themselves from their offices in this illicit way, they will have lost—both symbolically and physically—any right to respond to their charges, let alone pronounce any more judgments. Under less extreme circumstances, they are to prepare guarantors who are responsible to pay any fine announced by the *sindaco* within three days.

Last but not least from this study’s perspective, the 1279 statutes underscore the illegality of offering officers or entourage members any form of payment beyond their stated salary, under pain of fifty lire or the severing of a tongue. Any layperson or clergyman, local or foreign, attempting to influence an officer’s action or judgment by offering or promising sexual or material favors (*rufiananza vel trame-carie*) will pay quadruple the regular fine, while the *podestà* and *capitano* are to be fined one hundred lire for failing to uphold the law. This rubric is immediately and likely intentionally followed by another strict prohibition against the *podestà*’s or *capitano*’s seeking special permission to punish beyond the remit of the statutes or in any way that is at odds with them.

Two points can be stressed regarding the relevant rubrics in the statutes’ 1342 redaction, as compared to the previous text. First, they widely expand the (*maggior*) *sindaco*’s jurisdiction, which now covers a variety of criminal and civic offenses well beyond that of officials’ misconduct. Second and perhaps relatedly, they emphasize how crucial the social isolation of the commune’s officials must be on the grounds of impartiality and corruptibility. Assuming the *sindaco*’s broader remit does not reflect a diminishing concern for official misconduct, the new emphasis can be explained as a prophylactic measure meant to reduce the pressure officials were under from local stakeholders, especially now that the *sindaco* had more to do without more help.

These and other hypotheses can be tested against the office’s documents of practice, which have left solid traces in Perugia’s state archive. The *maggior sindaco*’s surviving records comprise seventeen registers, intermittently covering the years 1332–1390. Statistically, this is a modest part of what would have been the original series. Assuming one register was produced for each administrative term of six
Fighting Corruption in the Italian City-State

It notify defendants personally within if they reside in the countryside. They sindaco or his judge and swear an oath if an hile under examination is to be fined: forty lire for other officers and twenty officials must pay within eight days. Equal duty of the city's officers, lasting at least thirty days from the end of a that the podestà, capitano and their ation, but, rather, must wait in Perugia a hundred lire fine. Failure to pay the podestà's or the capitano's tongue. By his illicit way, they will have lost-both to respond to their charges, let alone less extreme circumstances, they are to pay any fine announced by the sindaco,ective, the 1279 statutes underscore the members any form of payment beyond the severing of a tongue. Any layperson ng to influence an officer's action or material favors (rafianance vel frame-while the podestà and capitano are to be by the law. This rubric is immediately and trict prohibition against the podestà's or mish beyond the remit of the statutes or the relevant rubrics in the statutes' 1342. First, they widely expand the (maggior variety of criminal and civic offenses well and perhaps relatedly, they emphasize amune's officials must be on the grounds ing the sindaco's broader remit does not l misconduct, the new emphasis can be ant to reduce the pressure officials were y now that the sindaco had more to do tested against the office's documents of Perugia's state archive. The maggior sindaco's gisters, intermittently covering the years: part of what would have been the original used for each administrative term of six months (as seems to have been standard practice in and beyond Perugia), a complete run for this period would have amounted to 116 registers—nearly seven times more than the extant series. Moreover, some of the registers are rather fragmentary, consisting of several folia, while others are more or less completely preserved. In total there are 575 folia or an average of nearly sixty-eight sides per register (see Figure 7.1). If the average length of the fullest three registers (n = 82) is used as an index, around six percent of what would have been the entire original series (9,512 folia) is currently at our disposal. Nonetheless, the Perugian series is likely the largest of its kind for anywhere in Italy before the sixteenth century, and a rather legible one at that. The earliest record of a Perugian sindaco dates to 1332, when a certain Lando de Pellatis of Montecatino oversaw the proceedings. It contains the sentencing of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Register and year</th>
<th>fols.</th>
<th>Total cases¹</th>
<th>Charges² (% of cases)</th>
<th>Acquittals ( % of charges)</th>
<th>Convictions ( % of charges)</th>
<th>Unclear outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 (1332)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 (1335)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 (1335)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30 (79%)</td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 (1336)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6 (86%)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 (1346)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (1347)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>2 (66.6%)</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 (frag.)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 (1348)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16 (57%)</td>
<td>7 (43%)</td>
<td>8 (50%)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>12 (1357)</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 (1358)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 (1377)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 (1377)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 I (1386)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>2 (0.3%)</td>
<td>2 (100%)</td>
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<td>16 II (1386)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>17 (3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>17 (89%)</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 (1388)</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>67 (18%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>66 (98%)</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 (1390)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 (1390)</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 17</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>2429</td>
<td>151 (6%)</td>
<td>49 (32%)</td>
<td>99 (66%)</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Excluding general and group inquests of officials, which invariably result in absolution. Only what appear to be developed, non-generic allegations were counted. Individuals accused in the same case were counted separately.
² Individuals accused in the same case were counted separately.
³ Includes fifty-five aggregate cases (in four groups) against rural communes for neglect of duty, which could act as a proxy for but is not necessarily an allegation of corruption.

Figure 7.1. Prosecution of Officials' Malpractice by the Perugian Sindaco, 1332–1390.
Abatengo Angeli of porta santa Croce, who acted as tax collector on behalf of the commune during the previous year. His records, scrutinized by the sindaco notary during an inquest (inquisitio), indicate that just over 480 lire he had collected never found its way into the city’s coffers. Abatengo is summoned to respond to the charges but never appears. On 27 April, after rather considerately deducting Abatengo’s and his notary’s salary of twelve lire each, the sindaco sentences the contumacious tax collector in absentia to a roughly quintuple fine of 2,282 lire, nineteen soldi and three denarii. Nothing in this register suggests the fine was ever paid or the culprit absolved, a constant frustration accompanying the study of court records, and the bane of historians of crime and punishment in premodern Europe.

By contrast, the next available register, dating to 1335, documents numerous charges brought to the attention of and then pursued by the maggior sindaco Pietro ser Franceschino Pantiaticis of Pistoia. The allegations concern a broad range of commune officials, lay and religious, operating in the city and its hinterland. A long list of stewards, builders, tax collectors, prison custodians, guild priors, their aides and numerous other sopristanti are individually and collectively accused of having “dolose et fraudulenter”—abused, neglected and variously acted against the statutes. The document then relates more specifically when and in what capacity these men worked for the city, but as yet without articulating what the actual infraction/s might have been. Finally, the judge announces that:

We proceed against each and every one of them ex officio, [that is, by an inquisitorial procedure, on the grounds that they had committed] theft, embezzlement, simony and made illicit gains; that they had done what they should not have and neglected what they should have done… did not distribute what they should have distributed or returned what they should have returned… and many other things.

Here we finally encounter an unequivocal if still general statement about official misconduct, including offenses easy to identify as mismanagement or outright private appropriation of public resources—the classic modern definition of corruption. Given the length of the list, which names many dozens of officials, we are likely dealing with a legal formality that required the sindaco to be comprehensive, if not exhaustive at the outset. To recall, a licit prosecution depended on the official’s timely naming of anyone he intended to proceed against and the production of a litis contestatio. The hypothesis is largely confirmed by the second half of the same paragraph, which swiftly absolves all those just named:

Wherefore a solemn inquest was conducted against each and all of them [i.e., the officials named in the previous list] and an interrogation of witnesses. And they were not found guilty of anything comprising this inquest. The accounts of each and all were reviewed and calculated by the commune accountant, [etc.].

In other words, this is a record of compliance meant to reassure the public of the sindaco’s due diligence and recapitulate the commune’s notion of what its officers’ accountability amounts to. But whether this also attests to the local officials’ clean hands is quite another question.

Each of the extant registers contains the same comprehensive lists followed by the same blanket acquittals. In order to trace if and when the sindaco actually
who acted as tax collector on behalf of the commune, scrutinized by the sindacato notary, that just over 480 lire he had collected never went uninvestigated. Atabego is summoned to respond to the queries, after rather considerably deducting twelve lire each, the sindaco sentences him to a roughly quintuple fine of 2,282 lire. Selecting in this register suggests the fine was ever frustration accompanying the study of court me and punishment in premodern Europe, and, dating to 1335, documents numerous cases that have remained pursued by the maggior sindaco Pietro Torpinuccio Taducci, a lay friar from porta Sole, hired by the commune to supervise some public works, was likewise charged with and later acquitted of embezzlement and technical mismanagement. The same happened to Pellolo Andrucci of porta sant'Angelo, charged by a previous sindaco of having embezzled unused funds and absolved in the present sindacato. None of these cases, incidentally, and despite the statutes' insistence, were fully processed by their original sindaco. Bringing officials to account could evidently be a slow process.

As the table above also relates, however, for every acquittal there were, on average, two convictions. Almost regardless of the caseload, a high conviction rate is normal, which contrasts sharply with the outcomes of other legal procedures in Perugia and elsewhere across Italy. For our purposes this underscores either the relative vulnerability of officials brought up on such charges, how seriously these specific charges were taken or both. As authors of didactic literature on the topic duly noted, serving communal regimes certainly had its risks, a structural problem also underscored by other chapters in this section of the book.

As for the offenses themselves, the sindaco's focus was almost uniquely on embezzlement. Allegations framed in more specific terms than dereliction of duty, deal with failure to pay or pay back public money, misuse of funds or disappearing revenue collected under official capacity, a restum et residuum ranging from several lire to several hundred lire. Of course, peculation hardly exhausted contemporaries' notions of what constituted a violation of public office or corruption. For instance, as David Chambers and Trevor Dean have shown for fifteenth-century Ferrara, at least four kinds of deviance were named as "explicitly corrupt behaviour" among public officials: namely, fiscal and material profiteering by officials; deliberate abuse of the judicial apparatus for private gain; the exploitative use of courts by people outside it; and "customs" perpetuated by bribery that helped create loopholes in the justice system through which acquittals became very common. Podestà also violated prohibitions by informally networking with local elites (often through their wives), by marriage or by embarking on various business ventures, activities which were strongly condemned in both the didactic literature and urban statutes, as we have already seen. In Perugia, however, all of these behaviors except the first were either absent, went undetected or simply did not concern the maggior sindaco for the better part of a century. Some political historians and scientists may find this a surprising fact, given that we are dealing with a more rather than less participatory regime than in Ferrara. Others, of course, would not assume or strive to demonstrate such a correlation in the first place.
A few observations before moving to situate Perugia in a broader context. First, all those charged by the sindaco are men, be they religious or lay. This may seem obvious given that officialdom in this period was predominantly a male domain. But women too could have strong private interests and there remains the possibility of women acting as corrupting agents. Normative sources certainly mention sexual as well as material favors as forms of corruption, and numerous women were in a position to offer either or both, directly or as intermediaries. And yet women remain completely absent from Perugian records of practice—a state of affairs cutting across virtually all the case studies discussed in this volume. Second and perhaps least expected given sindaco's modern reputation, cases could drag on (or be ignored) for many years rather than swiftly conclude within the allotted fifteen or thirty days. And by that point the investigation was mostly out of the accusing sindaco's control, exposing the flaws of an intensive audit process as opposed to an ongoing one. Finally, there is a striking absence from these records of podestà themselves, as well as other (especially foreign) entourage members. Most of those charged are either low-ranking officers or tax collectors from Perugia. Is it possible that Perugia was so consistently blessed with upright top officials? Or are the sources and the mechanisms they purport to document engaged in covering as well as uncovering official misbehavior?

At any rate, these observations collectively chime in with the statutes' emphasis on financial responsibility as a regime's key concern, and presumably that of the population at large. What the sources certainly seek to stress is that auditors' main task was to ensure taxes were duly paid, collected and deposited. As such they lend greater credence to Victor Crescenzi’s understanding of the procedure as mainly driven by good accounting, not political strife. And although the two impetuses are hard to tell apart, it seems that as long as this basic need was met, auditors could, and likely did, turn a blind eye to deviancy at the margins they defined, especially as their resources came under increasing pressure from around the middle of the fourteenth century.

CONCLUSIONS

Moritz Isenmann, the foremost student of sindaco, hailed it as "doubtless the most widespread form of public monitoring [Amtskontrolle] in late-medieval and early-modern Europe." After being introduced among the Italian communes in the late-twelfth century, the practice spread to France, the Holy Roman Empire, Iberia and the Papal States, and by the early-sixteenth century similar procedures were implemented in the Americas. Yet taken from the collective perspective developed in this section of our volume, sindaco augmented rather than replaced traditional forms of accountability, be they top-down, horizontal or bottom-up. Among the former two in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, one can list visitations, commonly practiced within the monastic/clerical world and provincial and regional chapters of religious orders. Among the latter category, meanwhile, one can include ad-hoc procedures such as petitions and supplications, which continued
In the Italian context, modern scholars’ efforts have collectively established that sindacato cannot be coupled historically with one type of political system, including republicanism: auditing could support, in form if not in substance, far more authoritarian regimes, which also employed such practices to buttress their claims to legitimate rule. In other words, audits neither typify transparent and participatory politics, nor do they necessarily clash with and undermine despotism. This is supported by the stability of the audit in the transition from commune to signoria undergone by numerous Italian city-states in the fourteenth century. Clearly, the deeper roots of this procedure presented it as a significant enough emblem of legitimate rule.

More importantly in the context of our larger project (see the Introduction to this volume), the existence of documented audits does not in itself guarantee a high degree of transparency or act as an efficient buffer against corruption at the meso- and macro levels. Indeed, mechanisms to promote transparency and visibility—be they ancient, medieval or modern—never lack ambiguity in the sense that the documents and activities belying them conceal as well as reveal. It is difficult therefore to assess a government’s relative degree of corruption merely on the basis of documentary practices. As John Sabapathy aptly puts it, “[b]etter documented government does not mean better government”—a maxim easily applicable to the present-day’s compliance culture. Moreover, as Maurizio Viroli and others have argued, the rise of despotism in early Renaissance Italy can be seen as epitomizing a process of corruption, that is, it served as the utmost manifestation of harnessing an entire state apparatus to the needs of an individual family, corporation or party.

In such contexts, the implementation of sindacato communicates a relative increase in centralized patrimonial power rather than imposes limits on it. Yet it remains a valid question whether, even under such regimes, the procedure helped reduce corruption, that is, it served as the utmost manifestation of harnessing an entire state apparatus to the needs of an individual family, corporation or party.

In summary, while a patent concern for accountability of office can certainly be documented for Italian city-states and later despotic regimes, it offers a weak or at least very partial signal of embarking on a path to modern, Euro-American state-building, let alone of a participatory democracy. As Sabapathy illustrates, statism—or a particular Weberian paradigm tying bureaucratization and the modern nation-state—has done much to skew historians’ views on how to gather evidence for political centralization. To some extent, the link encourages premodern historians such as myself to question the historical validity of Weber’s (and his followers’) observations, while perhaps unwittingly accepting his (or to be fair, a certain Weberian) paradigm of the state. Either way, the importance of accountability of office can wax and wane independently of political centralization, rendering corruption in turn a problematic litmus test for the broadening or narrowing of power bases.
Anticorruption in History

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APPENDIX: SINDACATO REGULATIONS IN ITALIAN CITY-STATE STATUTES, 1250–1500

Ordered alphabetically by city

AMELIA


BADIA TEDALDA

2. Gli statuti quattrocenteschi di Badia Tedalda e di Pratieghi, ed. Myriam Laurenti and Paola Mariani Biagini (Florence: All’Insegna del Giglio, 1992), Badia Tedalda, LVII (53–4).

BERGAMO


BOLOGNA


from the insights of John Sabapathy, Mihaly from the Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy, and of course the Anticorrp and the anonymous reviewers for this volume.

**LEGULATIONS IN ITALIAN TUTES, 1250–1500**

**ELIA**
Laura Andreani, Renzo Civili and Rita Nanni, Enrico Menestò et al. (Spoleto: Centro italiano di storia i di, X–XV (38–42).

**TELDA**
Badia Tedalda, LVII

**GAMO**
Gina Fasoli and Pietro Sella, 2 vols. (Vatican Vaticana, 1937–39), II, II (1:43–5); VI, XIV

**OGNA**
Gina Fasoli and Pietro Sella, 2 vols. (Vatican Vaticana, 1937–39), II, II (1:43–5); V, CLI

**DERUTA**

**EMPOLI**
Empoli: Statuti e riforme, ed. Fausto Berti and Mauro Guerrini (Empoli: Comune di Empoli, 1980), Statutes of the popolo of Sant’Andrea (1416–41), XXXIII (80–1); Statutes of Empoli (1428), XXII (173–4).

**FIGLINE**
Statuti di Figline, ed. Fausto Berti and Mario Mantovani (Figline: Blanche Grafica Edizioni, 1985), 1408 statutes, CXXXIII (81).


PADUA


PERUGIA


PIANCASTAGNAIO


PISTOIA


PONTE A SIEVE


RAVENNA


RIETI

ROCCANTICA

ROME

SALUZZI

SANTA MARIA A MONTE

SCARPERIA

SETTIMO

TREQUANDA

TREVIISO

VALGRANA
Fighting Corruption in the Italian City-State

VERONA

VILLANOVA D’ASTI

VITERBO

VOLterra