

THE EARLY ISSUES
OF THE *FIORINO PICCOLO* OR *DENARO*
OF FLORENCE (c. 1255–1303)*

Introduction

The so-called *Libro della Zecca* ('book of the mint') of Florence is an extraordinary source of information about mint activity and the denominations struck from the beginning of the 14th century onwards. For the period before the second semester of 1303, widely known as that of the unknown mint masters, it nevertheless contains only an incomplete list of the privy marks used on gold florins and lacks any data whatsoever on the silver and petty coinage. From the beginning of mint activity in Florence (c. 1235) until the first semester 1303, in other words, the identification and classification of the Florentine coinage is obviously more difficult, particularly in the case of the petty coinage. Intrinsically less valuable and often badly preserved due to the composition of the alloy, the petty coinage has generally aroused far less interest among collectors and museums than the finer coins of silver and gold. The scarcity of this coinage in major public collections effectively inhibits its study.

Earlier research on the gold and silver coinages of Florence has made it possible to identify most issues of the 13th century, but scholars

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have only recently identified Florentine *denari* of this period. The two standard references for the coinage of medieval Florence list only *denari* struck from 1315 onwards, based on the clear registrations in the *Libro della Zecca*¹, though the *fiorino piccolo* is documented from at least 1256. Among the materials recovered during archaeological excavations at the fortified settlement of Rocca San Silvestro in Tuscany, archaeologists have identified a *fiorino piccolo* datable on stylistic grounds to the second half of the 13th century². A very similar coin has turned up in a hoard datable to soon after the middle of the century³. These finds have characteristics consistent with the earliest issues of the mint and were previously classified among the *denari* struck from 1315 because of their similarities to the early 14th-century coins. The publication of these finds, moreover, has stimulated further research on the early *denari* that has brought to light other examples in public and private collections that show characteristics compatible with silver *grossi* from the third quarter of the 13th century⁴.

This article presents a new classification of these early *fiorini piccoli*, based on lettering and style, and identifies an additional issue never before published. It also argues that another group of *denari*, heretofore classified among the issues of 1315–1321, has distinctive characteristics and is datable to before 1303 based on analysis of lettering and style, comparison with other early *denari* and archaeological evidence. Examination of specimens in public and private collections and in trade has made it possible to identify numerous different privy marks on the coins and present a classification of them.

1. *The fiorino piccolo or florenus parvus*

The *fiorino piccolo* is attested in Florentine documents from 15 March 1256 (1255 in the Florentine style) onwards. A reference to the

¹ CNI XII, CNF.

² CICALI 2005. The settlement was built in the 11th century and abandoned during the 15th century.

³ SACCOCCI 2012, p. 71.

⁴ CICALI *et al.* 2006.

denaro in an earlier document of 1253 might have alluded to a notional *denaro* based on the value of the gold florin introduced in November 1252⁵, though the possibility that the mint of in Florence began to produce its petty coins at the same time as the introduction of the gold florin or very soon thereafter, cannot be discarded. In any case, the Florentine system of coinage assumed its tri-denominational character no later than March 1256, with the value of the gold florin originally fixed at twenty *soldi* or 240 *denari*, the silver *grosso* (already in circulation from c. 1235) valued at one *soldo* of twelve *denari* and the *fiorino piccolo* valued at one *denaro*. The Florentine system derived from the one that Charlemagne introduced with his reform of the Carolingian coinage in the later eighth century; in Charlemagne's system, the two higher denominations were units of account but were represented by actual coins in the new Florentine system⁶.

The mint in Florence introduced the *fiorino piccolo* in response to changes in monetary conditions throughout Central Italy that also compelled other cities to initiate the production of petty coins, even if less remunerative to the state and/or its mint than the manufacture of gold and silver coins⁷. In the 12th century, the Florentines satisfied local demand for coined money by making use first of the *denari* of Lucca and then, from the 1170s onwards, those of Pisa⁸. In the 13th century, however, the supply of petty coins gradually contracted in the face of increased demand. The likely cause of this was that, as the silver mines in Tuscany became exhausted and output declined, mints in Pisa and Lucca diverted new silver from the production of petty coins to the manufacture of silver *grossi*, which were more important for commerce, and struck only enough *denari* to satisfy local needs. As the supply of petty coins

⁵ DAY 2017, p. 468 note 83.

⁶ As in other cities and states, Florence passed from the Carolingian *libra* to its own system of weights. The Florentine system for gold, silver and money was the following: 1 *libra* = 12 ounces = 288 *denari* = 6912 grains, equivalent to 339.542 grams. BERNOCCHI III, p. 133.

⁷ BERNOCCHI III, p. 144.

⁸ The use of Pisan *denari* as unit of account is documented in the Florentine territory since 1166, while the circulation of the Pisan petty coinage in this territory is clearly attested from 1175 onwards. For a resume of the circulation of the Pisan *denaro* in Tuscany, see BALDASSARRI 2010, pp. 50–51.

diminished, other cities with mints or the right of coinage began to produce their own *denari* to shore up supply. It was in this context that Florence introduced its *fiorino piccolo* by 1256, with Arezzo following by 1258 and other new mints opening in Central Italy from 1256⁹.

The *Libro della Zecca* contains entries only from the second semester 1303 onwards and therefore provides no guidance whatsoever for the classification of the earliest *denari* of Florence. From the second semester 1303 until 1315, the entries in the *Libro* suggest that the mint of Florence struck no petty coinage; they report the production of *denari* for the first time only from the first semester of 1315, when Gherardo di Baroncello was master of the mint for silver and billon coinage¹⁰. For the first sixty years in the lifespan of the *fiorino piccolo*, in other words, numismatic research must turn to other written evidence to understand the characteristics of the early issues.

Some of the most important written sources are coin lists of the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries that refer to several different early issues of *fiorini piccoli*¹¹ (see *Table 1*).

The earliest coin list to mention Florentine petty coins is the Columbia list of about 1280¹². It refers to *fiorinelli piccioli sechundi* with fineness of 14.58%, which suggests that an earlier issue had already entered into circulation, probably the *fiorentino vecchio* mentioned in several later coin lists from before 1315, with a higher silver content of 15.62% (or 15.27% in one case). The same sources describe *fiorentini* or *fioranelli piccoli fatti in Firenze*, also called *nuovi*, with a lower fineness of 12.50% (or 12.15% in one case), providing evidence of another change occurred in the silver content of the Florentine *denaro* during the second half of the 13th century. One recent study has dated this change in the fineness of the *denaro* to the 1270s or 1280s¹³.

⁹ DAY 2017, p. 474. See also FINETTI 1997, p. 34; 1999, p. 71. On the earliest evidence for the *denaro* of Arezzo, see STAHL 1988.

¹⁰ 'Item, eorum tempore, coniat fuerunt, in dicta moneta, denarii videlicet floreni parvi de ramine allegato', *LdZ* p. 21.

¹¹ For a comprehensive study on these coin lists see TRAVAINI 2003.

¹² According to Travaini, internal evidence suggests that the list was compiled after 1278 but before 1284, i.e. c. 1280. See TRAVAINI 2003, p. 92.

¹³ DAY 2017, p. 479.

Table 1. Descriptions of *fiorini piccoli* in early coin lists (c. 1280–c. 1315).

| Date | Columbia (c. 1280) | Pegolotti (c. 1290) | Datiniana (c. 1300) | Marciana (c. 1305) | Acciaiuoli (c. 1306) | Lippo di Fede (c. 1315) |
|-------------------|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| Before c. 1280 | – | Pisani, sanesi, fiorentini, lucchesi vecchi, a onc. 1 den. 21 (15,62%) | Fiorentini vecchi onc. 1 den. 20 di fine (15,27%) | – | Pisani, Fiorini, Lucchesi nuovi onc. I, d. XXI (15,62%) | – |
| Before c. 1280 | Fiorinelli piccioli secundi so a onc. 2 meno ¼ (14,58%) | – | – | – | – | – |
| (?) | – | Fiorentini di 1/2 conio, onc. 1 den. 8 (11,11%) | – | – | Fiorini di mezo conio onc. I d. XVIII (14,58%) | – |
| After c. 1280 | – | Pisani, lucchesi, fiorentini nuovi, a onc. 1 den. 12 (12,50%) | Pisani e fiorentini onc. 1 den. 11 di fine (12,15%) | Fiorentini fatti in Firenze picoli den. I grani XII (12,50%) | – | Fioranelli piccoli fatti in Firenze 1 onc. 12 den. (12,50%) |
| From 1315 | – | – | – | – | – | Piccioli nuovi fatti in Firenze 1 onc. per novero s. XLVII ilibra (8,33%) |

The coin lists thus attest to at least two different issues of *fiorini piccoli* circulating in the second half of the 13th century, together with what might have been an unknown issue of a half-*denaro*¹⁴. The latest coin list was that of Lippo di Fede, which also describes *piccioli nuovi fatti in Firenze 1 onc. per novero s. XLVII ilibra*, identifiable with the *floreni parvi de ramine allegato* described in the *Libro della Zecca* for the

¹⁴ The reference to *fiorinelli secundi* in the Columbia list perhaps alluded to coins described in later coin lists as *fiorini di mezzo conio* (i.e half *denari*). DAY 2017, p. 479.

first semester of 1315¹⁵. The list suggests that the new *fiorini piccoli* struck at that time contained only 8.33% silver. Further investigation of the numismatic evidence has made it possible to identify two different series on the basis of style and lettering that can be dated before 1303, as confirmed by the archaeological evidence.

2. *The early fiorini piccoli (with the saint in the archaic style)*

That the *fiorino piccolo* of Florence entered into circulation early in the second half of the 13th century is an established fact, but the earliest examples have been identified only recently. Archaeological excavations at Rocca San Silvestro in Tuscany yielded numerous Florentine *denari*, among which was one datable to the second half of the 13th century¹⁶. This coin shows the same typology as the *denari* struck in 1315, with the fleur-de-lis with two stamina in the obverse field and the bust of St John the Baptist in the reverse field. The apparent typological congruence between the 13th-century examples and those of 1315 explains why numismatists previously identified earlier specimens as belonging to the issue of 1315¹⁷.

Further research has made possible to identify other specimens with the saint depicted in what may be described as the archaic style and to propose a classification based on comparison with silver *grossi da 12 denari*¹⁸. More recently, the publication of a hoard of 13th-century petty coins found at Castelfranco di Sotto in Tuscany has provided additional evidence of the earliest Florentine *denari*¹⁹. A clearly identifiable fragment of a Florentine *denaro* from the hoard has a double-barred H, with two thin horizontal cross-strokes between the two broad vertical strokes, as in most of the issues of the early gold florins (1252–c. 1265) and silver *grossi ghibellini da 20 denari* (1260–1267). The dating of the

¹⁵ The first semester of 1315 began in the middle May and ran for the next six months. See *LdZ*, p. 21.

¹⁶ CICALI 2005.

¹⁷ *CNF* p. 123; see also BERNOCCHI III, tav. LII.

¹⁸ CICALI *et al.* 2006; MONTAGANO–SOZZI 2008; MIR: FIRENZE, pp. 251–254.

¹⁹ SACCOCCI 2012, p. 71.

other coins of the hoard to the 1250s and 1260s confirms the chronology of this Florentine *denaro*, probably one of the first issues of the denomination.

The distinguishing feature on these early *denari* is the archaic style of the saint. It is very similar and is sometimes identical to the representation of the saint on early gold florins (from after 1252 to c. 1267), the *later grossi da 12 denari* and on *grossi ghibellini da 20 denari* (until 1267). Another distinguishing feature on the early *denari* is the peculiar abbreviation mark on the letter S of the reverse legend (for saint). There are two different kinds of abbreviation mark: a longer one that resembles a tilde across the middle of the letter between two pellets to the immediate left and right of the S () and a shorter one on the right side only ()

Previous research has sought to link different issues of the *fiorino piccolo* to the issues of the *grosso da 12 denari*, based on similarities in style and sometimes the use of identical privy marks on the two denominations. The resulting classification of the *denari* therefore closely mirrors that of the *grossi* in terms of taxonomy and chronology²⁰. This article presents an alternative classification based on a different approach, taking into account other features to categorise these early *denari* in two main groups, based on style and epigraphy. The first group of *fiorini piccoli* with the saint in the archaic style is characterised by the reverse legend S IOHANNE B with the short abbreviation mark on the letter S; the second bears the slightly longer reverse legend S IOHANNES B with the long abbreviation mark on the letter S. For the coins of the second group, the die-sinker ligatured the NN, which helped to create the additional space necessary to add the additional letter to the saint's name. This distinction opens the way for a more detailed assessment of the characteristics of the coins from these two groups.

²⁰ Scholars have described the early *denari* of Florence as the *fiorino piccolo vecchio* (1250–1258), the *fiorino piccolo di stella* (ante 1260) and the *fiorino piccolo nuovo*, with the latter comprehending three different issues (1260–1278). See CICALI *et al.* 2006; MONTAGANO–SOZZI 2008. For the updated classification, see MIR FIRENZE, pp. 251–254.

Group 1 (reverse legend S IOHANNE B; S with short abbreviation mark)

There are two different issues of early *denari* from this group. Coins of the first issue have no privy mark but according to the best preserved examples of this issue show thin, double-barred cross-strokes on the letters A, H and N²¹. This feature is also attested on some issues of the early gold florins (1252–c. 1267) and silver *grossi ghibellini da 20 denari* (1260–1267). Silver *grossi da 12 denari*, on the other hand, always show single-barred letters. Another detail on the best preserved *denari* is a short horizontal stroke that bisects the vertical petal of the fleur-de-lis, which appears mainly on *ghibellini* and also on some *grossi da 12 denari*. *Denari* of the second issue from this first group have a star as privy mark at the end of the reverse legend and single-barred cross-strokes on the A, H and N. Scholars have generally described this type of *denaro* as the *fiorino piccolo di stella*, associating it with the silver *fiorino grosso di stella da 12 denari* because of the star, but characteristics of the petty coin are more consistent with those of the silver *ghibellino* which likewise carries a star as privy mark²². Both the *denaro* of this issue and the *ghibellino* not only have the same eponymous privy mark at the end of the reverse legend but also show the S with the short abbreviation mark. On the *fiorino grosso di stella*, by contrast, the privy mark appears after the obverse legend rather than the reverse and the S has the long abbreviation mark. The best preserved specimens of these *denari* show a thorn above the vertical petal of the fleur-de-lis, which is also characteristic of some early issues of the gold florins.

These early *denari* are 15–17 mm and the best preserved specimens weigh over 0.70g, reaching a maximum of 0.75–0.77g. The archaeological evidence for the issue with no privy marks is fundamental for determining the chronology of not only this issue but also that of other contemporary issues of other Tuscan *denari*. The Castelfranco di Sotto

²¹ These details are often obscured on surviving specimens, especially those from excavation finds, due to their typically poor state of preservation.

²² For an example of *ghibellino* with a star as privy mark, see BERNOCCHI III, tav. XL.

hoard included a *fiorino piccolo* of the first issue alongside *denari* of Lucca and Pisa with an annulet at the centre of the reverse field instead of a pellet, which are dated from 1216/17 to after 1252²³. The hoard provides a glimpse into the circulation of petty coinage in Tuscany around the time that the Florentine *denaro* joined the two main currencies of the region, the *pisani et luchesi vecchi* of the coin lists. The Florentine coin, which is first attested in the documentary record in 1256, establishes the chronology of the hoard, which also fits perfectly with the proposed chronologies for the *denari* of Lucca and Pisa represented in the hoard. The *fiorino piccolo* unearthed during archaeological excavations at Rocca San Silvestro yields no further information in so far as regards chronology because it was a single find and therefore is not so precisely datable²⁴.

Group 2 (reverse legend S IOHANNES B; S with long abbreviation mark; NN ligatured)

The second group of *fiorini piccoli* has distinctive characteristics. The reverse legend shows the S with the long abbreviation mark, as found on the latest issues of silver *grossi da 12 denari*, and the NN ligatured, a detail that does not appear on any other denomination. The ligatured letters helped to provide the space in the margin of the small flan for the terminal letter of the saint's name, which also distinguishes the coins of this group. There are three different issues in the group, identifiable on the basis of a small privy mark after the obverse legend. Coins of the first issue have no privy mark apart from the single pellet after the legend on the obverse and the letter B between double pellets on the reverse. The second has an annulet after the obverse legend and

²³ The coins of Lucca have the obverse legend +IMPERATOR around a large H in the field and the reverse legend +ENRICVS with L V C A in the field around an annulet. They are dated from 1216/17 to after 1252. The coins of Pisa have the obverse legend +IMPERATOR around a large F in the field and the reverse legend +FREDERICVS with P I S A in the field around an annulet. They are dated to the first half of the thirteenth century with variants dated to the mid-thirteenth century and later. See SACCOCCI 2012. For the Pisan types, see BALDASSARRI 2010, nn. FIV.1, FIV.2, FIV.3.

²⁴ CICALI 2005, p. 205, from US 3868.

the same letter B between double pellets on the reverse. These two types of *fiorino piccolo* have characteristics similar to those of the two last issues of *fiorino grosso da 12 denari*, except on the reverse; the *piccolo* has the ligatured NN and the S at the end of the saint's name.

In addition, there is another *fiorino piccolo* from this group, with the long abbreviation mark through the initial S, the ligatured NN and the S at the end of the saint's name. This particular issue has a triangular cluster of three pellets after the obverse legend and the letter B between single pellets at the end of the reverse legend. Only one specimen with this mark has ever been recorded²⁵.

Unfortunately, there is no archaeological evidence for these three issues of *piccoli*, but they are known in a greater numbers than those of the first group, with the exception of the one with the mark of three pellets. Recorded specimens are 15–17 mm in diameter and weigh 0.50–0.74g., with an average weight of c. 0.70g. for the best preserved specimens. These data are almost identical to those for the previous group. The *Table 2* summarises the classification of the issues of both groups.

The precise sequence of issues (and privy marks) for the gold and silver coinage during the 1250s and 1260s is still unclear, but more exact reconstruction will require further evidence from coin finds in hoards and archaeological excavations. The available data nevertheless suggests that there was a clear change in the way that the saint was depicted on gold florins during the 1260s. The stylistic change hinged on the use of new punches to prepare the coin dies, which affected not only the gold florins but also the fine silver and petty coinage, since many of the same punches were used in the preparation of dies for different denominations, as attested in the early 14th century between the gold florins and the silver *popolini*²⁶.

Two hoards discovered during the last century provide the evidence for stylistic change in the gold and silver coinage; unfortunately, both hoards were dispersed soon after their discovery and only partially documented. For the gold coinage, the Logge dei Banci hoard from Pisa, probably closed before 1270, contained examples of the earliest florins

²⁵ Museo Bottacin in Padua, Italy (inv. Firenze n. 5).

²⁶ DAY–DE BENETTI 2018, p. 63.

Table 2. Classification of the early *fiorini piccoli* with the saint in archaic style (c. 1255–late 1260s)²⁷

| Group | Privy mark | Inscriptions | | Diam. (mm) | Wt (g) |
|--|---------------|---|--|------------|-----------|
| | | Obverse | Reverse | | |
| <i>Reverse legend with S IOHANNE B, short abbreviation mark on S</i> | | | | | |
| 1.1 | None | +FLORENTIA• {double barred A and N} | +S IOHANNE•B• {short abbreviation mark on S, double barred A, H and N} | 14.9–15.1 | 0.65–0.77 |
| 1.2 | Star | +FLORENTIA• | +S IOHANNE B* or +SIOHANNE•B* {short abbreviation mark on S} | 15.9–17 | 0.57–0.76 |
| <i>Reverse legend with S IOHANNES B, long abbreviation mark on S, ligatured NN</i> | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Two pellets | +•FLORENTIA•, +FLORENTIA• or +FLORENTIA | +S IOHANNES:B: {long abbreviation mark on initial S, ligatured NN} | 16,2 | 0.52–0.69 |
| 2.2 | Annulet | +FLORENTIA◦ | +S IOHANNES:B: {long abbreviation mark on initial S, ligatured NN} | 17 | 0.50–0.74 |
| 2.3 | Three pellets | +FLORENTIA·· | +S IOHANNES•B• {long abbreviation mark on initial S, ligatured NN} | 15 | 0.61 |

²⁷ Except for the issues of group 2.3, only published examples are referenced in Table 2; the total numbers examined for each issue, either directly or through good-quality digital photographs are as follows: 1.1 (5), 1.2 (3), 2.1 (12), 2.2 (7), 2.3 (1). References are as follows:

1.1. CNF, p. 123 n. 1143 (listed among the coins of 1315/I, with no privy marks); CICALI 2005 n. 284; MONTAGANO–SOZZI 2008, tav. I n. 4 (described as *fiorino piccolo nuovo I serie*); SACCOCCI 2012, n. 1; GUASTI 2007, p. 11 n. 2 (described as *denaro* of 1250–1269). – 1.2. CNF, p. 123 n. 1152 (listed among the coins of 1315/I, with no privy marks and photograph of the specimen in BERNOCCHI III, tav. XLVI); BARGELLO, tav. 65, n. 369 (described as a *grosso da 6 denari* among the coins of 1316/II with privy mark of a star); the same specimen is published in CICALI *et al.* 2006 p. 549 fig. 5, MONTAGANO–SOZZI 2008 tav. I fig. 6 and MIR FIRENZE p. 252 n. 76 as a *fiorino piccolo di stella*; VANNI 2003, n. 5 and tav.1.5 (described as *piccolo da denari uno o denaro of 1315/I–1321/I* with privy mark *rosellina*; about the low recorded weight of 0.57 grams of this specimen, it must be noted that the coin is clipped). – 2.1. MONTAGANO–SOZZI 2008, tav. I fig. 7 (described as *fiorino piccolo nuovo, II serie*); MIR Firenze, pp. 253–254 nn. 78/1–2 (described as *fiorino piccolo nuovo, II serie*); BARGELLO, tav. 64 nn. 359–360 (corresponding to CNF, p. 123 nn. 1148–1149; the latter also published in CICALI *et al.* 2006, p. 549 fig. 6.2 as *fiorino piccolo nuovo, II serie*). For the variant in the obverse legend with no punctuation (+FLORENTIA), see MIR FIRENZE, p. 254 n. 78/2. – 2.2. BARGELLO, p. 32 n. 358 (corresponding to CNF, p. 123 n. 1147, listed among the coins of 1315/I); CICALI *et al.* 2006, p. 549 fig. 7.2 (described as *fiorino piccolo nuovo, II serie*); GUASTI 2007, p. 12 n. 2. – 2.3. Previously unpublished. The specimen referred to here, from the Museo Bottacin in Padua, Italy (inv. Firenze n. 5), is published by kind permission (*fig. 1, n. 2.3*).

*Fig. 1. Fiorini piccoli with the saint in archaic style (c. 1255–late 1260s)*²⁸

Group 1: reverse legend +S IOHANNE B (with short abbreviation mark on S)



1.1. No privy marks

1.2. Star

Group 2: reverse legend +S IOHANNES B
{with long abbreviation mark on S, NN ligatured}



2.1. No privy marks (two pellets)

2.2. Annulet



2.3. Three pellets

²⁸ References for these examples are as follows:

1.1. Private collection = CNF p. 123, n. 1143.

1.2. Private collection = CNF p. 123, n. 1151.

2.1. Ranieri sale 4 (26/10/2012) lot 127.

2.2. Felsinea sale 2 (30/06/2015), lot 1643.

2.3. Museum Bottacin, Padua (inv. Florence n. 5).

with the saint depicted in the more evolved style, thus suggesting that the change occurred immediately beforehand, between 1265 and 1270, probably about 1267²⁹. For the silver coinage, the Orte hoard included a sample of Tuscan silver *grossi* circulating around the middle of 13th century, including at least two different issues of Florentine *grossi da 12 denari*³⁰. One of them belongs to the series of *grossi nuovi* that Bernocchi dated to the period 1267–1279, but the chronology for this issue fits poorly with the other coins in the hoard, none of which are clearly dateable after 1260. The depiction of the saint in the archaic style and other similarities with early gold florins and silver *ghibellini* suggest an earlier chronology. Even if the punches for the depiction of the saint in the archaic style remained in use for longer in the case of the silver and petty coinage, or perhaps were taken back into service after the Ghibelline interlude to re-introduce the *grosso da 12 denari* as suggested in the *CNF*, it is very unlikely that they remained in use for long. It is therefore reasonable to date the beginning of Florentine silver and petty coins with the saint in the more evolved style to the later 1260s or about 1270.

3. Fiorini piccoli *with the saint in the more evolved style (before 1303)*

Florentine *denari* traditionally dated to the period 1315–1321 have the same obverse and reverse types as the earlier *denari*, but show the saint depicted in a more evolved style. Some of these coins nevertheless have peculiar characteristics, namely the obverse legend +FLORENTIA with no punctuation and the reverse legend +•S•IOHANNES•B, often followed by a privy mark, with the NN ligatured. The reverse legend matches that of the earlier *denari* with the saint depicted in the archaic style. There are also a few examples of this type with no privy mark after the reverse legend, that have the initial S with a long abbreviation mark (S) instead of between two pellets. These specimens were probably the first struck with the saint in the more evolved style, with no privy marks

²⁹ LENZI 1978. The numismatic literature on the hoard is summarised in DE BENETTI 2015, pp. 64–67.

³⁰ STAHL 2000.

and the initial S of the reverse legend that was soon modified in the S within two pellets. Later issues bear a privy mark after the reverse legend that identified the master of the mint in charge during the semester (see *Table 3*).

The lettering on this group is similar to that of the earlier issues of the 1260s, but the letter S is more sinuous and the diagonal strokes of the letter A are larger at their base. Elsewhere in Central Italy, changes in the representation of these two letters likewise vividly illustrate the stylistic evolution of coinage in the 13th century³¹. In the case of the Florentine coinage, analogous changes in the lettering on the gold florins helps to distinguish the possible sequence of issues during the period of unknown mint masters (1252–1303), especially in regard to the introduction of those with the representation of the saint in the more evolved style around 1267³². The *denari* of this style, from the transitional issue discussed above, are similar to gold florins datable roughly from the later 1260s to the 1290s. This is especially evident not only in the representation of the letters A and S but also in the small diagonal leg of the R, which becomes thinner and longer on gold florins struck from the beginning of the 14th century. The condition of many *fiorini piccoli* makes it difficult to appreciate the intricate details in the representation of the saint, but the best preserved specimens show a more refined fabric, similar to that of gold florins struck before the end of the 13th century.

From this issue, the *fiorino piccolo* carried its privy marks only after the reverse legend, as on gold florins struck from the later 1260s onwards³³. It has been possible to identify nine different privy marks on the *denari* from this group, including one with no privy mark³⁴ (see *Table 3*). The number of extant coins from this group and the variety of privy marks attest to voluminous output; they are among the most well–

³¹ FINETTI 1997, p. 50.

³² DE BENETTI 2015, p. 117; DE BENETTI 2017. The Author is currently preparing a detailed study of the early gold florins of Florence.

³³ The last issue of the gold florin with the privy mark in a different position was the one that had a pellet between the saint's feet, with the saint already represented in a more evolved style. Based on evidence from the Logge dei Banchi of Pisa hoard, it is datable to before 1270. The Alberese hoard also included an example of this type. See DE BENETTI 2015, n. 13.

³⁴ Specimens with no privy mark have a pellet after the reverse legend.

represented in coin finds from archaeological excavations of medieval settlements in Tuscany.

The numismatic data from Rocca San Silvestro, for example, have been the subject of a very detailed, comprehensive study. It provides a clear picture of the circulation of petty coinage in the Maremma of western Tuscany during the 12th–14th centuries³⁵. Out of more than 500 coins from the site, eighty–five were from the group of *fiorini piccoli* traditionally dated to 1315–1321, including several from the series presented here, which are identifiable on the basis of the ligatured NN in the reverse legend. Interestingly, examples of this type of Florentine *denaro* were often found in close association above all with *denari* of Pisa and Lucca datable to the period from 1216/17 to after 1252 and, to a lesser extent, with *denari* of Arezzo and Siena datable to the third quarter of the 13th century, which lends support to the notion that the Florentine coins belong to the period before 1303³⁶. The table below lists the privy marks represented in this group, together with bibliographical references of published specimens (*Table 3*).

Most of the privy marks represented on the *fiorini piccoli* of this issue of *denari* also appear on gold florins struck from the later 1260s to about 1290³⁷. This does not mean that the different denominations were struck simultaneously, on the contrary, but it is interesting to note that the same privy marks used on the gold coins often reappeared on the silver coins some years later. Most of the privy marks on the silver *popolini* of 1305–1312, for example, were already used on gold florins struck during the previous 3–5 years, if not earlier³⁸.

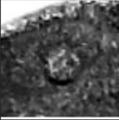
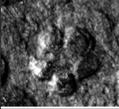
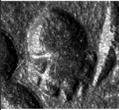
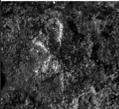
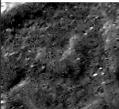
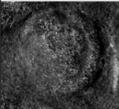
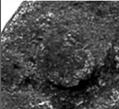
³⁵ CICALI 2005.

³⁶ E.g. in the following unified strata: 8501, 8502, 8515, 8532 and 8539. See CICALI 2005, pp. 260–267.

³⁷ E.g. the rose, vine leaf, acorn, star and crescent, some of which are represented on gold florins from the Alberese hoard. See DE BENETTI 2015, nn. 22 (rose), 24 (star), 30 (vine leaf), 73–76 (acorn).

³⁸ The privy marks used on silver coins of Florence some years after they had been used on gold coins include the fish (gold, before c. 1290; silver, 1308/II), key (gold, before c. 1290; silver, 1309/I), palm (gold, 1304/I; silver, 1311/II), sickle (gold, 1305/I; silver, 1308/I) and ladder (gold, 1306/I; silver, 1310/I). Where the mint–masters are known, however, the gold and silver coins produced some years apart with the same privy mark were not struck under the supervision of the same master.

Table 3. Classification of the later 13th-century *fiorini piccoli* with the saint in the more evolved style (late 1260s–before 1303)³⁹

| Group | Privy mark | | Inscriptions | |
|---|----------------------|---|--------------|---|
| | | | Obverse | Reverse |
| 3.1 | None (one pellet) |  | +FLORENTIA | +•S•IOHANNES•B• {NN ligatured} |
| 3.1 var. | | | +FLORENTIA | +S IOHANNES•B• {long abbreviation mark on S, NN ligatured} |
| 3.2 | Rosette |  | +FLORENTIA | +•S•IOHANNES•B (<i>rosette</i>) {NN ligatured} |
| 3.3 | Vine leaf |  | +FLORENTIA | +•S•IOHANNES•B (<i>vine leaf</i>) {NN ligatured} |
| 3.4 | Acorn |  | +FLORENTIA | +•S•IOHANNES•B (<i>acorn</i>) {NN ligatured} |
| 3.5 | Star |  | +FLORENTIA | +•S•IOHANNES•B (<i>star</i>) {NN ligatured} |
| 3.6 | Crescent |  | +FLORENTIA | +•S•IOHANNES•B (<i>crescent</i>) {NN ligatured} |
| 3.7 | Circle |  | +FLORENTIA | +•S•IOHANNES•B (<i>circle</i>) {NN ligatured} |
| Uncertain privy marks (not clearly legible on the specimens examined) | | | | |
| (3.8) | (Fruit?) |  | +FLORENTIA | +•S•IOHANNES•B (<i>fruit?</i>) {NN ligatured} |
| (3.9) | (Pear?) |  | +FLORENTIA | +•S•IOHANNES•B (<i>pear?</i>) {NN ligatured} |

³⁹ References for published examples are as follows:

3.1. CNF, p. 123 n. 1144.

3.1. var. CICALI *et al.* 2006, p. 550 fig. 8 (described as a *fiorino piccolo tardo duecentesco*). See also MONTAGANO–SOZZI 2008, tav. I.9.

These *denari* are 15–16.5 mm in diameter and normally weigh 0.59–0.68g, which is less than the *denari* with the saint in archaic style but greater than the coins from the issue of 1315. Several other details distinguish this issue from the later one.

Fig. 2. Examples of *fiorini piccoli* with the saint in the more evolved style, with reverse legend +•S•IOHANNES•B with ligature on NN (late 1260s–before 1303)⁴⁰



3.1 var. No privy marks, variant with long abbreviation mark on the initial S

3.5. Star

3.2. *CNF*, p. 132 nn. 1220, 1220bis, 1221 (described as a *picciolo da denari 1 o denaro*, listed among the coins of 1318/I with *rosa a cinque petali* as privy mark); CICALI 2005, nn. 343, 359, 362, 377 (listed among the coins of 1315–1321, with *rosa a sei petali* as privy mark).

3.3. *CNF*, p. 57 n. 593; CICALI 2005, n. 398 (listed among the coins of 1315–1321).

3.4. *CNF*, p. 176 nn. 1483–1485 (described as a *picciolo da denari 1 o denaro*, listed among the coins of 1340/II); CICALI 2005, nn. 344, 388 (listed among the coins of 1315–1321).

3.5. *CNF*, p. 127 nn. 1179–1180 (described as a *bargellino da 6 denari*, listed among the coins of 1316/II, with a star as privy mark); for the latter, see also BERNOCCHI III tav. LII; CICALI 2005, nn. 492, 494 (listed among the coins of 1320/II, with a *stella a sei raggi* as privy mark); GUASTI 2007, p. 17 (listed among the coins of 1315–1325).

3.6. CICALI 2005, n. 484 (listed among the coins of 1319/II, with *luna* as privy mark).

3.7. GUASTI 2007, p. 17 (listed among the coins of 1315–1325).

3.8. CICALI 2005, cat. 363, 369, 373, 383, 386 (listed among the coins of 1315–1321, with a privy mark described as a *foglia?*, i.e. leaf).

3.9. Unpublished.

⁴⁰ References for these examples are as follows:

3.1 var. Private collection.

3.5. Varesi sale 61 (22/11/2012) lot 446.

4. *Comparison between the late 13th-century fiorino piccolo and that of 1315/I*

The *fiorini piccoli* struck during the first semester of 1315 are smaller in diameter (between 14.0–15.5 mm.) and lighter in weight (0.50–0.57g). They have the obverse legend +•FLORENTIA• with single pellet punctuation both before and after the legend, and the reverse legend +•S•IOHANNES•B (followed by a pellet or privy mark) with the NN not ligatured (*Fig. 3*). The lettering is also smaller and in a more evolved style, with an elongated diagonal leg on the letter R, the horizontal cross-stroke on the letter A often absent and the diagonals extended at their base, and a round O probably derived from a single-letter punch instead of the more oval one of the later 13th-century issues derived from crescent-shaped punches. Visual comparison of the legends on the coins of the two groups better illustrates the differences between them (see *Table 4*).

Fig. 3. Fiorino piccolo struck from 1315/I, with pellet before and after obverse legend, evolved lettering and no ligature on NN⁴¹



Crescent (1319/II)

The lettering and style of the coins from the later series are compatible with those on other Florentine denominations of the early 14th century. These *fiorini piccoli* are identifiable with the *floreni parvi de ramine allegato*, which are registered in the *Libro della Zecca* for the first time during the first semester 1315⁴²; they are also identifiable with

⁴¹ Specimen from a private collection.

⁴² During the first semester of 1315, the master of the mint for silver and billon coinage was Gherardo di Baroncello. See *LdZ*, p. 21.

the *piccioli nuovi fatti in Firenze 1 onc. per novero s. XLVII iibra* in the coin list of Lippo di Fede, which indicates that they were only 8.33% fine⁴³. The *denari* of this series indeed appear to have a lower silver content than the coins of the preceding issue, but compositional analyses are needed to confirm the data from the coin lists.

Table 4. Comparison of the lettering between the two series of *fiorini piccoli*, both with the saint in the more evolved style, one from before 1303 with the other from 1315 onwards.

| Date | Obverse | Reverse |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Before 1303 | ✠ FLORENTIA | ✠ S IOHANNES B |
| From 1315 | ✠ FLORENTIA | ✠ S IOHANNES B |

Fiorini piccoli of the later series are known with different privy marks, some of which are clearly registered in the *Libro della Zecca*. For both the later series and the one from before 1303, there are issues with no privy marks, probably the first of each series to indicate coins struck at a different standard⁴⁴. It is not the aim of this article to give a complete classification and description of the privy marks on the issues struck from 1315, but it is interesting to note that the marks on the coins of this series were similar to those of the preceding series⁴⁵. Close comparison of the coins in the two series with the same or very similar privy makes it easier to recognise their differences and to distinguish between them. On the coins of the later series, the privy marks are always larger and show a slightly different shape, while the Saint is simplified and the fabric

⁴³ LA RONCIÈRE 1973, p. 258; TRAVAINI 2003, p. 154.

⁴⁴ In Florence, the first issue of any new coinage typically did not bear any privy mark; only subsequent issues in the same series carried privy marks, presumably to distinguish them from the first.

⁴⁵ The star, crescent and rosette, for example, were common to both series, though the rosette differed slightly from the earlier series to the later one. Coins with the rosette from before 1303 carried a five-petal rosette while those from 1315 onwards had six petals.

generally less refined; the margin is also narrower, the legend therefore smaller and the field about 1 mm larger. These details may help to distinguish the *fiorini piccoli* of the later series from those of the one from before 1303, even when the distinctive characteristics of the obverse and reverse legends are difficult or impossible to read (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. Comparison of privy marks between the issues dated before 1303 and from 1315.



Conclusions

The earliest issues of the Florentine *fiorino piccolo*, which are attested in documents from March 1256, have only recently been identified in the numismatic evidence. Because the obverse and reverse types of this denomination remained unchanged for several decades, these early *denari* were previously listed among those struck from 1315 onwards, mainly because this was the first issue clearly documented in the *Libro della Zecca*. References to Florentine *denari* in early coin lists (c.1280–c.1315), nevertheless indicates that this denomination underwent progressive debasement during the second half of the 13th century. The lists often distinguish, moreover, between older *fiorini piccoli* (i.e. *vecchi*) and newer ones (i.e. *nuovi*) with differing standards of fineness. If the merchants who compiled these lists were able to describe the coins in such a way, they must have been able to identify them on the basis of objective features, even though the coins had immobilised types.

The earliest *fiorini piccoli* are identifiable on the basis of the representation of the saint in the archaic style, a characteristic that the

petty coins have in common with early issues of the gold florins (1252–c. 1267), the silver *grosso ghibellino da 20 denari* (1260–1267) and the latest issues of the *silver grosso da 12 denari* with the S before IOHANNE in the reverse legend; the chronology of the latter is still debated but it probably does not reach the 1270s. Five different issues of *fiorini piccoli* show the saint in the archaic style, one of which was heretofore unrecorded. On the basis of the reverse legend (S IOHANNE B or S IOHANNES B) and the distinctive abbreviation mark of the S, these *denari* can be grouped in one of two series. Their probable chronology, according to style, weight and a unique find in a hoard, is from about 1255 to the later 1260s. The number of recorded specimens remains limited and additional data are needed to support further investigation in pursuit of the sequence of issues.

In addition to these early *denari*, there was a later series with the saint in a more evolved style, similar to that on gold florins struck from about 1267 onwards, and the NN in the reverse legend ligatured, as on coins of the second group in the preceding series. *Fiorini piccoli* of the later series are more common but they have always been classified with the *denari* struck from 1315. They are nevertheless lighter than coins of the preceding series and heavier than those of 1315. The coins of this intermediate series were struck after the later 1260s and before 1303. Compositional analysis may help to determine whether these coins are the *fioranelli* or *picoli nuovi* cited in coin lists with a silver content of about 12.5%. The number of recorded privy marks on coins of the series suggests significant output, though probably intermittent. The dating of this series to before 1303 provides a better understanding of coin circulation in Tuscany during the second half of the 13th century. A thorough re-examination of excavation finds in order to identify these *denari* among those previously classified as issued after 1315, will probably also yield a clearer picture of the circulation of other contemporary *denari*, such as those of Pisa, Lucca and Arezzo, whose prolonged use in the first quarter of 14th century has been based upon their association in archaeological finds with the Florentine *denari*.

In addition, the classification of this intermediate series of *denari* has made it possible to delineate the characteristics of the series struck from the first semester 1315 with greater precision. The *fiorini piccoli* of

the 14th-century series were struck to a lighter standard of weight and were distinguished by the addition of a pellet before and after the obverse legend (i.e. +•FLORENTIA• around the large fleur-de-lis). The NN of the reverse legend, moreover, is no longer ligatured. The appearance of privy marks very similar to those used on *denari* of the intermediate series sometimes makes it more difficult to differentiate between coins of the two series, but the marks are appreciably distinct in terms of shape and size, being somewhat larger in the later issue. Compositional analyses will establish whether the fineness of coins of the issue struck from 1315 match the data in the contemporaneous coin list of Lippo di Fede, which suggests that the coins were about 8.33% fine.

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Riassunto

La circolazione del fiorino piccolo è chiaramente documentata dal 1256, però solo dal primo semestre 1315 troviamo testimonianza della sua coniazione nel Libro della Zecca, che contiene registrazioni relative agli anni successivi al 1303. Le liste di monete presenti in alcune pratiche di mercatura e trattati di aritmetica redatti tra il 1280 circa ed il 1315 indicano, comunque, che durante la seconda metà del Duecento questo nominale fu soggetto ad una serie di svalutazioni che dettero probabilmente luogo ad emissioni distinte. Questo articolo presenta una proposta di classificazione dei fiorini piccoli duecenteschi basata sui dati archeologici disponibili e sull'analisi delle caratteristiche stilistiche, epigrafiche e pondometriche, con la distinzione in tre gruppi distinti di emissioni. Ne emerge un quadro piuttosto completo, con le prime emissioni appartenenti agli anni '50 e '60 caratterizzate dal busto del santo in stile arcaico, e con la identificazione di una nuova serie coniata con numerosi segni di zecca e databile tra la fine degli anni '60 ed il 1303. Il confronto tra quest'ultima ed i fiorini piccoli conati a partire dal 1315 rivela, infine, caratteristiche e differenze utili per la loro classificazione.

Zecca di Firenze, monetazione medioevale, fiorino, liste monetarie di XIII secolo, Toscana