Marriage practices in Early Modern Italy have been the subject of numerous studies, among them Anthony Molho’s *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence*, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber’s *Women, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, and Stanley Chojnacki’s *Dowries and Kinsmen in Early Renaissance Venice*, to name a few. The focus, as these works indicate, has been mainly on Florence and Venice, while marital strategies in some other important cities on the Italian peninsula have been virtually ignored. Rome is one of those cities. In spite of the fact that marriage practices here differed considerably from those in other Italian regions, to date only a handful of studies on the subject have been published, most recently Irene Fosi and Maria Antonietta Visceglia’s article, “Marriage and Politics at the Papal Court in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.”

Not only are the studies on Rome scattered and few, but they have provided only cursory surveys on the marital practices particular to the region. More detailed accounts of specific marital alliances are needed. This paper provides one such detailed account: the marriage of Giovanni Francesco Sacchetti (1595–1637) and Beatrice Tassoni Estense, (1613–33) which took place on 19 February 1631. Giovanni Francesco was the son of a Florentine banker who moved to Rome at the end of the sixteenth century. Beatrice was the daughter of Marchese Ercole and Caterina Forni Tassoni Estense of Ferrarese nobility. Archival documentation on this alliance has survived, including letters between the bride’s mother, Caterina Forni, and the groom’s older brother, Cardinal Giulio Sacchetti. The examination
of these documents will help illustrate the complexities involved in such negotiations, the benefits to the negotiating families as a result of the marital union, and the socio-political implications of such alliances.

**MARRIAGE STRATEGIES IN EARLY MODERN ROME**

In most parts of Early Modern Italy, exogamous marital alliances were avoided as a preventive measure against the tainting of the nobility, and its loss of economic and political preeminence. In Venice, for example, noble marriages were recorded along with noble births in the *Golden Book* to preserve the purity of the Venetian patriciate and its monopoly on city government. In Florence, nobles intermarried to guarantee the eventual return of dowries to the families from which they originated, to protect the patrimonies of the families involved, and to ensure their transmission from one generation to the next (Molho 3, 15). In Rome, on the other hand, exogamy was not only welcomed but encouraged. Rome's international character, which it adopted at the end of the *Great Schism* (1378–1417), provided a unique situation where exogamous practices could serve families as a form of social, financial, and political advancement. In the early fifteenth century, Marco Antonio Altieri wrote *Li Nuptiali*, a marriage treatise in honor of the wedding of Gabriello Cesarini and Giulia Colonna, a member of the old Roman patriciate. In it, Altieri lamented the increased number of exogamous alliances in Rome and blamed immigrant bankers employed by the curia for this increase. In his view, exogamy was causing the extinction of whole lineages and disrupting the cohesive character of the Roman patriciate (Altieri 4, 15, 26–28).4

Altieri's concerns seem justified. When Martin V (1417–31) was elected pope and the seat of the papacy permanently returned to Roman soil, Rome became a bustling city offering many financial opportunities.5 Bankers came from all over Italy hoping to obtain employment as managers of the Church's funds. Soon papal finances came to completely rely upon these foreign bankers as they functioned