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a cura di

MARCO MERLO, ANTONIO MUSARRA, FABIO ROMANONI e PETER SPOSATO



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Romain des Ursines, Testiera equestre del Delfino di Francia, futuro Enrico II
Circa 1490-1500. Decorata 1539. Metropolitan Museum's collection (acc. no. 04.3.253)
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Toward an Understanding of Florentine Infantry in the Age of the Companies of Adventure¹

by WILLIAM CAFERRO

ABSTRACT. Through close reading of extant documentary material in the State Archives of Florence, this essay examines the Florentine infantry during the era of the Companies of Adventure. It offers a preliminary assessment of the nature and makeup of the contingents (including below the level of captains) and argues, against the entrenched scholarly tradition, that the Florentine infantry contained professionalized, skilled soldiers, chosen with care by city officials.

KEYWORD. COMPANIES OF ADVENTURE, FLORENTINE INFANTRY, FLORENCE, TUSCANY, CAMERA DEL COMUNE.

It was a measure of Nerio da Montegarullo's reputation that when he was killed in Florentine service defending the town of Pietrabuona in June 1362, he received praise from all sides. The Florentine chronicler Matteo Villani lauded Nerio as an "old, valued and faithful warrior."² The anonymous Pisan chronicler, whose city had attacked Pietrabuona, described Nerio as "a much prized" soldier. And Donato di Neri, the chronicler of Siena, which was nominally allied to Florence, praised Nero as a "brave man."³

Such laudatory remarks for a soldier from friend, foe and ally are unusual in

1 I would like to thank Peter Sposato for his indispensable help with this essay.

2 "Neiri di Montegerulli antico e pregiato masnadiere, il quale arrenduto alla fede vi fu morto". *Cronica di Matteo e Filippo Villani*, Firenze, Magheri, 1826 (reprint, Rome, Multigrafica, 1980), vol 5, p. 135

3 "molto pregiato fante e generale uomo, lo quale era capo di quelli dentro". "Chronica di Pisa" in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, MURATORI, Ludovico Antonio (ed.), 15, Mediolani, ex typographia Societatis Palatinae in Regia Curia, 1729, cols. 1038. "Fuvi morto Neri da Monte Carullo, era gagliardo e era gentil uomo e capitano di tutti quelli che verano dentro. "Cronaca senese" in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, LISINI, Alessandro, and IACOMETTI, Fabio, n.s., vol. 15, part 4, Bologna, 1931-1937, p. 596.

Italian sources, even for the most well-known military captains. The attention to Nerio is still more noteworthy because he was captain of a band of infantrymen, a species of soldier that is poorly understood by scholars. Military historians established long ago that infantry played a minor role in fourteenth century Italian warfare.⁴ Giuseppe Canestrini described them as an “unorganized” mass of men, while F. L. Taylor argued that they were “universally despised” and of little worth.⁵ Piero Pieri provided the most influential and lasting assessment, arguing for the “tramonto” of Italian infantry after the battle of Altopascio (1325), which augured the “age of the companies of adventure” (*compagnie di ventura*), when bands of mercenary cavalrymen dominated the Italian scene. The companies were depicted as the antithesis of a well-ordered infantry.⁶

The schema remains a basic part of the historiography, which has also portrayed mercenary companies as precursors to the foreign domination of the Italian peninsula in the nineteenth century.⁷ The archivally based work of Aldo Settia and his students have moved beyond polemics and presuppositions to meaningful analysis of the tangible realities of war, particularly for the communal period.⁸ But the state of knowledge of the infantry for the subsequent “age of the companies” remains largely unstudied, particularly in the Anglophone academy. The English scholar Michael Mallett argued that the haphazard role of infantry in the *trecento*

4 RICOTTI, Ercole, *Storia delle compagnie di ventura in Italia*, 4 vols, Turin, Pomba, 1844–1845; CANESTRINI, Giuseppe, “Documenti per servire alla storia della milizia italiana dal XIII secolo al XVI”, *Archivio storico italiano* 15 (1851).

5 CANESTRINI, “Documenti,” p. cvii; TAYLOR, Frederick L., *The Art of War in Italy, 1494–1529*, Westport, CT, 1921, p. 5; CONTAMINE, Philippe, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones, Oxford, University Press, 1980, p. 170

6 PIERI, Piero “Alcune questioni sopra la fanterie in Italia nel periodo comunale”, in *Rivista Storica Italiana* 50, 1933, pp. 607-608

7 For an important recent revision, see CAFERRO, William, *Petrarch's War: Florence and the Black Death in Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, 60ff. See also ANSANI, Fabrizio, “Oltre i signori, dopo i mercenari. Per una rilettura del rapporto tra istituzioni militari e Stato rinascimentale”, in *Annali dell'istituto italiano per gli studi storici* 33, 2021, pp. 29-100 for a discussion of related themes in the fifteenth century context.

8 SETTIA, Aldo A., *Comuni in guerra: Armi ed eserciti nell'Italia delle città*, Bologna, Clueb, 1993, and *Rapine, assedi, battaglie. La guerra nel Medioevo*, Rome, Viella, 2009, and *Tecniche e spazi della guerra medievale*, Viella, 2011; GRILLO, Paolo, *Cavalieri e popoli in armi. Le istituzioni militari nell'Italia medievale*, Roma Bari, Laterza, 2008; Grillo, Paolo, and SETTIA, Aldo A. (ed.), *Guerre ed eserciti nel Medioevo*, Bologna, Mulino, 2018.

was followed by a reemergence and restructuring in the *quattrocento* that coincided with the development of more permanent armies in Europe. Mallett emphasized a shift to more continuous service by infantry captains, who remained in communal employ for long periods of time. He highlighted the careers of such infantry captains as Diotisalvi Lupi, who worked for Venetian Republic for thirty years (1430-1460) and Matteo Griffoni, who served Florence (1453-1473).⁹

The current essay argues that the “tramonto” of the fourteenth-century Italian infantry has, like the “evolutionary” nature of armies more generally, been overstated.¹⁰ Nerio’s career serves as entrée into a closer examination of Florentine infantry that reveals that Florence chose the men with great care and, as Mallett has noted for the later period, employed the same infantry captains over extended periods of time. Indeed, close archival study suggests that the Florentine infantry was more professionalized than supposed, crossed social boundaries and, most importantly, the famous gap between infantry and cavalry in this “era of the horse,” as Philippe Contamine has called it, has been overstated by an earlier generation of military historians.¹¹

II

It need be emphasized from the outset of our discussion that Nerio da Montegarelli’s service to Florence was for a siege. Siege warfare was common throughout Italy at this time, and particularly so for Florence, which was located near the Apennines at its northern border, through which lay key commercial roads; and the Chianti hills to the south, on the road to its traditional rival Siena. The terrain made sieges of fortified towns inevitable, especially in the north

9 MALLETT, Michael, *Mercenaries and Their Masters*, Totowa, Rowman and Littlefield, 1974, pp. 154-155; MALLETT, Michael, and HALE, John, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State: Venice, 1400–1617*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 76.

10 The evolutionary aspect of Italian forces is in my opinion more generally is overstated, as elements associated with later development existed already in the fourteenth century. See the views presented in Caferro, *Petrarch’s War* cit., 65-73 and GRILLO, Paolo, “Premessa”, in *Connestabili. Eserciti e guerre a prima trecento*, GRILLO, Paolo (ed.), Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2018, p. 5-13.

11 CONTAMINE, Philippe, *War in the Middle Ages*, Oxford and Cambridge, Blackwell, 1999.

where contentious Ghibelline magnate families such as the Ubaldini resided.¹² Infantrymen were critical to sieges, thus geography alone rendered the men a necessary part of local forces.¹³

If infantrymen were a common feature of communal armies, it has remained difficult to uncover the details of their careers. Chroniclers frequently single out notable mercenary cavalry captains and give precise (if sometimes suspect) estimates of the number of horsemen employed. But the same chroniclers typically refer to infantrymen in more vague terms as “many men,” “a mass of men,” or, as Gregorio Dati wrote prior to Florence’s war with Milan in 1390, “an infinite number of men.”¹⁴ The different descriptions have been attributed to issues of class and/or visibility of the one sector with respect to the other. The discrepancy nevertheless makes the reference to Nerio da Montegarullo in 1362 all the more noteworthy. Indeed, Florence’s war against Pisa in 1362-1364 is best known for the use on both sides to renowned foreign mercenary captains.¹⁵ The Pisans hired John Hawkwood and the famed English White Company, the most feared captain and band of the day, in the summer of 1363. The band’s prodigious military skill occasioned a long description by the Florentine chronicler Matteo Villani, who compared it favorably to the armies of Hannibal in antiquity.¹⁶ The Florentines countered by hiring prominent southern German nobles, including Graf Heinrich von Montfort-Tettnang and Rudolf von Hapsburg-Laufenburg with their large *comitive* of troops.¹⁷

Nevertheless, there has survived in the Florentine state archive a great deal of documentary evidence to facilitate a closer examination of the Florentine infan-

12 For the Florentine war with the Ubaldini, see William Caferro, *Petrarch’s War* cit. See also the discussion in COHN, Samuel Jr., *Creating the Florentine State: Peasants and Rebellion, 1348-1434*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 159-160 and 174-177.

13 CAFERRO, William, *John Hawkwood: An English Mercenary in Fourteenth Century Italy*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 2006, pp. 84-85 and 89; idem, *Petrarch’s War* cit., 52-57.

14 CAFERRO, *John Hawkwood cit.*, pp. 89-91; Dati names all the cavalry captains. DATI, Gregorio, *L’istoria di Firenze*, PRATESI, Luigi (ed.), Norcia, Tonti, 1904, pp. 48-49

15 CAFERRO, *John Hawkwood*, 97-115.

16 CAFERRO, William, “The Fox and the Lion: The White Company and the Hundred Years War in Italy”, in *The Hundred Years War: A Wider Focus*, VILLALON, L. J. Andrew, and KAGAY, Donald J. (ed.), Leiden, Brill Press, 2005, pp. 179-205.

17 ASF, Provisionsi, registri 51 fol. 125r

try. The sources for this period include the budgets of the *camera del comune*, the chief fiscal organ of the city, which provide the names and provenience of the captains in Florentine service, diplomatic dispatches which relay the details of war and negotiations related to them, and the much-neglected *Miscellanea Repubblicana* registers, a species of archival wild card that contain a wide array of inadequately catalogued documents, many of which pertain to war.¹⁸

It is from the diplomatic dispatches of the *Signori Missive I Cancelleria 10* that we first find Nerio, who was hired by Florence in 1350. City officials in fact sent him a letter, dated 3 April 1350, requesting that he provide one hundred infantrymen for Florence's war against the Ghibelline Ubaldini clan in the Apennines. Florence specifically sought help for the siege of the key Ubaldini fortress at Montegemoli.¹⁹ A precise identification of this Nerio is muddled by confusion regarding other family members who bore the same name—a common problem in medieval Italian history. Scholars have outlined the career of a Nerio, son of Antonio, lord of Montegarullo, who later became bishop of Siena and is frequently cited in the documentary sources.²⁰ But Nerio's career as bishop occurred between 1444 and 1450, a century later than our Nerio. There are also references in the sources to a "Nerio" who served Florence as podestà of the town of Barga in 1343 and as vicar of the Garfagnana. This Nerio died, however, in Siennese service in 1355.²¹ Our Nerio appears as Nerio Giucherini in the letter

18 The sources are abundant, but nevertheless fragmentary. The budgets of the *camera del comune* are bi-monthly and contains income and expenditure of the city. On the nature of the Florentine *camera del comune*, see DAVIDSOHN, Robert, *Storia di Firenze, I primordi della civiltà fiorentina. Impulsi interni, influssi esterni e cultura politica*, Florence, Sansoni, 1977, vol 5 pp. 200-204; GHERARDI, Alessandro, "L'antica camera del comune di Firenze e un quaderno d'uscita de' suoi camarlinghi dell'anno 1303," *Archivio storico italiano*, XVI, 1885.

19 Florence sought 100 "pedites" under the command of 4 constables for four months. ASF Signori Missive I Cancelleria 10 # 145. For the siege, see Caferro, *Petrarch's War* cit., 53-57.

20 The bishop was born in the late *trecento*: a student in Siena in 1435 and bishop in 1444. LIBERATI, Alfredo "Neri da Montegarullo, vescovo di Siena 1444-1450", in *Bullettino senese di storia patria* 45, 1938, pp. 253-259; PERTICI, Petra, "Neri da Montegarullo," *Dizionario Biografico Italiano* 78, 2013. CALAMARI, G., "Obizzo da Montegarullo e Neri vescovo di Siena", in *L'archiginnasio: Bulletin della Biblioteca Comunale di Bologna* XXV, nos. 4-6 (July-December).

21 AMMIRATO, Scipione, *Istorie Fiorentine*, Scarabelli, Luciano (ed.), Torino, Pomba, 1853, p. 120.

of 1350 and was most certainly related to Obizzo Giucherini of Montegarullo (1345-1417), who was grandfather of the Sienese bishop, who was himself a distinguished soldier and aristocrat who sold his services for war.²² Obizzo served as captain general of Florentine forces against the Ubaldini family in 1373, inflicting a devastating defeat on the clan, for which he was rewarded by Florence with a pension of 500 florins for five years.²³ The family base at Montegarullo, nowadays Roccapelago, lay northeast of Florence, near Fignano in the Garfagnana region, close to the Pelago valley on the border between Tuscany and Emilia Romagna. Montegarullo was a bastion of resistance in the fourteenth century against the Este lords of Rimini and the Ubaldini clan. The Florentine dispatch to Nerio in 1350 suggests that he was a man of status, a member of the lordly family that controlled Montegarullo—indeed a “gentiluomo” as the Sienese chronicler described him-- who brought with him a large infantry unit.

The budgets of the *camera del comune* reveal that Nerio da Montegarullo in fact joined the Florentine army after he received the letter from Florence and participated in the successful siege at Montegemoli in the Appenines against the Ubaldini in 1350. He was rehired for the subsequent war against Milan (1351-1353). The *camera del comune* budgets list Nerio da Montegarullo as captain of shield bearer contingents ranging from 36 to 46 men during the war.²⁴

The documentary evidence also makes clear that Nerio and his infantrymen distinguished themselves in Florentine service against Milan. After the successful service at the siege at Montegemoli, Nerio and his men took part in the defense of the town of Scarperia in 1351, when the very fate of Florence appeared in doubt. A large Milanese army, led by Giovanni Oleggio Visconti, with an estimated 13,000 men, lay siege to Scarperia in the summer of 1351 as a prelude to an invasion of Florence itself.²⁵ Scarperia was a “new town,” built in the early *trecento* in

22 MUCCI, Paolo, MORDINI, Aurelio, *L'epoca di Obizzo da Montegarullo: apogeo e tramonto di una signora Frignanese*, Roccapelago, Archivio di Stato di Modena Associazione volontaria “Pro Rocca”, 1999; DEAN, Trevor, “Lords, vassals and clients in Renaissance Ferrara”, in *The English Historical Review* vol 100 (1985), pp. 106-119.

23 ASF, Provvisioni registri 62 fol. 156v

24 ASF, Camera del Comune, Camarlinghi uscita 90 fol. 104r-v; Camarlinghi uscita 96 fol 64v; Camarlinghi uscita 97 fol 83r; scrivano di camera uscita duplicato 3 fol. 14v

25 SORBELLI, Albano, *La Signoria di Giovanni Visconti a Bologna e le sue relazioni con la Toscana*, Bologna, 1901, p. 121; BALDASSERONI, Francesco, “La Guerra tra Firenze e Giovanni Visconti”, in *Studi storici*, 11, 1902. In summer 1351, the *balia* in was

the middle of Ubaldini lands to blunt their aggression and protect Florence from invasion by enemies from the north. The Milanese staged three forceful attacks on the town in the middle of the night. Florence's spirited defense of the town, which lacked a completed circuit of walls, was lauded by the Florentine humanist writer Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444) in his *History of the Florentine People*, who depicted the battle as nothing less than the salvation of the state and a precocious instance of "liberty over tyranny."²⁶ Bruni also praised the role of native Florentine soldiers in the battle, especially Giovanni Conte dei Medici, who was knighted for his bravery and received 500 florins as a financial bonus from the city.²⁷ The extant documents reveal, however, that Nerio da Montagarullo, identified by his full name Nerio Giuncharini da Montegarullo, was among those in Scarperia defending the town and received, along with his band a bonus of 341 lire/7 soldi/4 denari for their bravery.²⁸

Clearly, Nerio was already a well-known and successful soldier before he took up service at the town Pietrabuona in 1362, during Florence's next inter-city war in which he was killed. He had proved his worth in a prior siege of the greatest importance. It is important, however, to underline the fact that his service was as the captain of infantrymen, who stood at the core of the defense of Scarperia in 1351. Lost amid the polemical discussions of relative merits of native and mercenary soldiers is the reality that Scarperia was held on account of an effective infantry force. Indeed, the Florentine chronicler Marchione di Coppo Stefani in his description of the siege, made pointed and laudatory reference to the service of the infantry. "And truly," he wrote, "Florence had among the best infantrymen in the world. . . . prized at this time and honored as horsemen with golden spurs."²⁹

Stefani then referred to the heroism of specific infantrymen including "Francesco Malamamma, Giovanni Visdomini, Sandro del Corso, Mazinella, Prete Fortino, Prete Galicorsi, Boschereggio" and "altri sufficienti fanti masnadieri." Stefani's use of the term *masnadieri* is noteworthy because it was used

paying for arms to Scarperia. ASF, Balie 10 fol. 38v

26 BRUNI, Leonardo, *History of the Florentine People*, Hankins, James (cur.), vol 2, Cambridge, Harvard Press, 2004, p. 339

27 Sorbelli, *La signoria de Giovanni Visconti* cit., p. 132

28 ASF, Provvisione registri 39 fol. 45r

29 MARCHIONNE DI COPPO STEFANI, "Cronaca fiorentina" in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, RIDOLICO, Niccolò (ed.), n.s. 30., no. 1. Città di Castello, 1903, pp. 238-239

also by Matteo Villani in his description of the battle, but had, according to the modern day scholar Daniel Waley, been replaced by the term “conestabile.” Waley took this as evidence, particularly with regard to cavalry, of the evolution of Florentine force whereby the “conestabile” (captain/corporal) gained greater authority, which spurred the development of a mercenary system of more independent soldiers, whose loyalties were to the captains.³⁰

The soldiers mentioned by Stefani were not, in any case, random infantrymen. They were skilled soldiers, whose names appear consistently in archival documents. The Florentine *cameral* budgets for 1351 list Sandro del Corso at the head of an infantry unit consisting of 24 men; Francesco “Malamamma” appears under his full name, Francesco “Malamamma” Bartoli, with 18 shield bearers; Prete Fortini is listed as Francesco “Prete” Fortini from Pistoia with 13 shield bearers and 12 crossbowmen; and Martino “Boschereggio” Dandi is listed with 19 shield bearers.³¹

Interestingly, the men were accompanied in the ranks of the infantry by Giovanni Visdomini, scion of the old distinguished Florentine magnate clan, who led a force of 30 infantrymen and is not mentioned in the *cameral* budgets, but rather in the surviving registers of the *balia*, the *ad hoc* committee in charge of the war effort, as well as by Matteo Villani and Leonardo Bruni³². Visdomini is an intriguing figure who, like Nerio, came from the aristocracy. Nevertheless, Visdomini fought beside captains from seemingly humble backgrounds. And like the others, Visdomini provided meritorious service at Scarperia, for which, in his case, the reward involved being named a “popolano,” a distinction that allowed him greater participation in communal political affairs.³³

30 VILLANI, *Cronica*, 5 cit., pp. 155-157; WALEY, Daniel, “The Army of the Florentine Republic from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century” in *Florentine Studies*, RUBINSTEIN, Nicolai (ed.), Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1968, pp. 80-82

31 ASF, Balie 6, 14v-15v; Camera del Comune, Scrivano di camera di uscita 6 fols. 17r-41v; Scrivano di uscita 7 fols. 26v-45v; Scrivano di camera uscita 9, fols. 17r-45r; Scrivano di camera uscita 10, 19r-37r; Camarlenghi Uscita 90 fol. 128r, Camarlenghi Uscita 96 fol. 39v Balie 6, fols. 14v-15v

32 VILLANI, *Cronica*, cit., p. 119; Bruni, *Florentine History* cit., pp. 357-358

33 ASF, Provvisioni, registri, 40 fols. 35r-37r



Paolo Uccello, John Hawkwood, Firenze, Duomo

III

The service of Francesco “Malamamma” Bartoli and Martino “Boschereggio” Dandi provides important additional insight into the organization of the Florentine infantry. Both captains were hired by Florence just prior to the employ of Nerio da Montegarullo in February 1350 for war against the Ubaldini and were re-hired for the Visconti war in 1351.³⁴ The surviving *balia* records for 1350 show that Florence employed Bartoli and Dandi as part of a larger infantry force that consisted of 137 men, and included also the captains “Ser Mestola” Chessi, Bartolomeo Cenni, Piero of Collodi, Guidalotto Rigucci and Giovanni Bartolini. Each captain led a “banner” unit of infantrymen consisting of between 23 to 26 men.³⁵ The men were, according to the language of the *balia*, “*probos pedites*,” “virtuous infantrymen,” who were also “*in armis expertis*,” “expert in arms.”³⁶ The requisites suggest that they were more than a “mass of men” and narrows the gap with cavalrymen, whose contracts required similar qualities.

Moreover, the *cameral* budgets make clear that the captains came from diverse parts of the Florentine state and beyond. Francesco Bartoli was from Florence, Martino Dandi from San Casciano, Jacopo Chessi from Passignano, Bartolomeo Cennis from Montecarelli, Piero da Collodi from Pescia and Guidalotto Rigucci from Montificalli.³⁷ Montacarelli lay northeast of Florence in the Mugello region, beyond Barberino and its lords generally sided against Florence in local wars. San Casciano and Passignano were Florentine towns that lay due south of the city in the Valdipesa, while the town of Collodi is northwest of Florence near Pescia in the Valdinievole and Montificalli is southeast of Florence near the town of Greve in the Chianti region. There would seem little rationale behind grouping the men together apart from consideration of their skill as fighters. Indeed, the band proved its worth in 1350, earning bonus pay for distinguished service in the

34 ASF, Balie 6 fol. 39r-v. Florence also hired separately a captain named Bartolomeo Cennis of Montegarullo with 25 infantrymen in February. It is unclear if he was connected to Nerio. Montegarullo was, as noted, an outpost of opposition to the Ubaldini clan.

35 ASF, Camera del comune, Scrivano di camera di uscita 6 fols. 17r–41v; Scrivano di camera uscita 7 fols. 26v–45v; Scrivano di camera uscita 9 fols. 17r–45r; Scrivano di camera uscita 10 fols. 19r–37r

36 ASF, Balie 6 fol 38v

37 ASF, Balie 6, fols. 8r, 14v–15v, 36r, 39v; Camera del comune, Scrivano di camera uscita 10 fols. 24v, 58v.

Apennines from Florentine officials.³⁸ They formed in short a cohesive infantry unit that stands at odds with dated Anglophone notions of *ad hoc* combinations of men, if that thesis ever made sense.³⁹

The rehire of the men in 1351 for service at Scarperia, along with the additional captains mentioned by the chronicler Stefani, is thus best viewed as careful planning by Florentine officials, who attempted to deploy the most experienced and successful infantry troops available, those who were already tested in the region where the fighting took place and skilled at the species of fighting needed there. Florence's broad recruitment efforts included nearby lords, who brought their own infantrymen with them, members of Florentine magnate clans (Visdomini), who brought their men, and individual cavalry captains, whose social rank is unclear, but who similarly sold their services in a manner not unlike their mercenary cavalry captain counterparts.

Unlike with mercenary cavalry captains, however, there have not survived contracts for service (*condotte*) for shield bearers and thus it is difficult to ascertain the details of their service. In this regard, however, the careers of Martino "Boschereggio" Dandi and Francesco "Malamamma Baroli are particularly instructive. Bartoli worked for Florence for at least fifteen years, from 1348 to 1369, during which he fought in the wars against Milan (1351-1353), Pisa (1362-1364), and Milan and Pisa again in 1369.⁴⁰ Michael Mallet's notion of continuous service as a key feature of the *quattrocento* infantry clearly occurred earlier.⁴¹ Martino Dandi also worked for Florence over the long run, appearing in *cameral* budgets already in 1345 and continuing until at least 1367.⁴² And like Nerio, Florentine officials sent the captains to reinforce important castles that were un-

38 ASF, Camera del commune, Scrivano di camera uscita 10 fol. 28r.

39 See the discussion in CAFERRO, *Petrarch's War* cit.

40 CAFERRO, William, "Continuity, Long-Term Service and Permanent Forces" in *The Journal of Modern History*, 80, no. 2 (June 2008), pp. 229-230. Malamamma's name also appears on the payroll for the year 1380 with 25 pedites. ASF, Camera del commune, Camarlinghi Uscita 243 fol. 23v

41 Caferro, *Petrarch's War* cit., 65-73.

42 ASF, Camera del comune, Camarlinghi Uscita 14 fol. 515v; Balie 6 fols. 37v-39r; Provvisioni, registri 50 25r; Camera del commune, Camarlinghi Uscita 80 fol. 246r, Camarlinghi Uscita 82 bis fol. 9r, Camarlinghi Uscita 90, fol. 128r; Camarlinghi Uscita 96 39v; Camarlinghi Uscita 112 fol. 510r Camarlinghi Uscita 140 fol. 266r; Scrivano di camera uscita 30 fols. 23r-24r

der attack. Malamamma took up defense of the Florentine castle at Ghizzano in 1363, which, like Pietrabuona, was a point of contention with Pisa.⁴³ He commanded a force of 25 infantrymen, alongside the castellan of the town and his retinue, and a German mercenary cavalryman/knight “Stanichino” and his men.⁴⁴ Florence routinely placed infantrymen in castles to reinforce them, and further archival research will undoubtedly reveal the presence of infantrymen, who were not randomly chosen, but carefully selected, according to reputation and ability. The stakes were simply too high to rely on an infantry consisting of inferior men.

And as we evaluate the infantry in terms of the mercenary cavalry, it is worthwhile to point out that, like Malamama and Boschereggio, many of the infantrymen in Florentine service were known by nicknames. In these years, the army had foot soldiers named Jacopo “Ser Mestola” (“half-wit”) Chesis, a sobriquet familiar from Boccaccio’s *Decameron*; Giuntino “Sostegno” (support) Giuntini; “Prete” (priest) Fortini, as Stefani notes; Francesco “Cordescho” (cordial) Tendacci; Tommaso “Poeta” (poet) Pazzino; Pulcianello “Legno” (wood) Andree; Jacobo “Prete” (priest) Vanucci; Francesco “Tasserillo” (tile) Puccini; Piero “Pazzo” (crazy) Ducci and Giovanni “Topo” (mouse) Lippi, among many others.⁴⁵ The use of nicknames was common in medieval Italy, but in terms of military history it has been associated with famous mercenary cavalry captains such as Malerba or Acuto or Gattamelata—nicknames, like those of famous Renaissance artists, that for some scholars evoke a Burckhardtian species of Renaissance individualism. The diffusion of the practice to the more “humble” captains helps once again shorten the distance between the infantry and their more famous mounted counterparts.

43 ASF, Provvioni registri 50 fol 17v. He appears in *cameral* budgets from at least 1345, as captain of a shield bearer unit with Simone Lapi of Prato consisting of 15 shieldbearer.

44 ASF, Provvioni registri 50 fol 24r; ASF, Provvioni registri 50 fol. 17v; Camera del comune, Scrivano di camera scita, 27 fol. 6r.

45 ASF, Camera del Comune, Scrivano di Camera Uscita 9 fol. 20v; Scrivano di Camera Uscita 10 fol. 30r; Scrivano di Camera Uscita 24 fol. 12v 14r; Camarlenghi Uscita, 97, fol. 85r; Camarlenghi Uscita, 110, fol. 45v; Camarlenghi Uscita, 139 fol. 255r; Camarlenghi Uscita, 201 fol. 14r, 14v; Camarlenghi Uscita 243 fol. 15r

IV

If Florentine infantry captains were not merely a “mass” of men, it remains an open question who served below the level of the captains, a question that indeed also applies to the mercenary cavalry.⁴⁶ A full answer requires much more research. But the chance survival of a complete list of the members of the infantry units captained by Borschereggi and Malamamma in 1354 among the *Miscellanea Repubblicana* registers offers an unprecedented look.

Miscellanea Repubblicana 120 contains several *buste* relating to military hires and organization for the years 1347 to 1379. The first *busta* contains a full list of the members of Bochereggi and Malamamma’s bands, as well as several other infantry units.⁴⁷ The men, as the document makes clear, were hired through the office of *condotta*, in charge of hiring troops. The month and day are not given; it is possible, or perhaps likely, that the hires, given that peace was made with the Visconti in 1353, occurred as a result of the advent in Tuscany and central Italy of the Great Company, a mercenary band of great renown led by the Provençal captain Montreal d’Albarno and German captain Konrad Landau. The Florentine chronicler Matteo Villani described the band as large and formidable, comparable more to a moving city-state than an army. Florence, as was the practice at the time, joined with its neighbors Perugia and Siena in February 1354 to form of city-league for mutual defense, with each participant contributing to an army of 2,000 cavalrymen, of which 1040 were supplied by Florence.⁴⁸ The league did not include infantrymen. *Miscellanea Repubblicana* 120 shows, however, that the city in this year hired large infantry units, ranging from 34 to 80 men.⁴⁹ The hires were made in the town of Montevarchi by two *commisari*, Andrea Gualtieri di Bardi and Berto Ridolfi di Peruzzi, who worked for the Florentine *condotta*

46 SPOSATO, Peter, *Forged in the Shadow of Mars: Chivalry and Violence in Late Medieval Florence*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2022, pp. 143-188 highlights the continued participation of elite Florentine men at this level in the city’s army during the fourteenth century.

47 ASF, *Miscellanea Repubblicana* 120 #1 fols. 2r-16r. The first pages of the document (1r-1v) relate to September 1347.

48 ASF, *Capitoli* 27 fols. 70r-72r. For the city leagues, see CAFERRO, William “Comparative Economy and Martial Corporatism: Toward an Understanding of Florentine City Leagues, 1332-1392”, in *Speculum* 97.4 (2022): 1073-1100.

49 ASF, *Miscellanea Repubblicana* 120 #1 fols. 2v-3v

office.⁵⁰

Martinus “vocatus Boschereggio” Dandi of San Casciano and Francesco “vocatus Malamamma” Bartoli of Florence appear first on the list, as captains of units of 38 men that included both shield bearers and crossbowmen.⁵¹ The bands each had a flag bearer or *banderio* and a tambourine player. The number of crossbowmen, the striking force of the infantry, was less in both bands than the number of shield bearers. Thus there is little evidence that Florence sought to integrate the two as it had effectively been done at the battle of Altopascio in 1325, where shield bearers protected crossbowmen as the latter shot their bolts. The units of Boschereggio and Malamamma were linked together insofar as they served as financial surety for each other with regard to pay, creating an economic tie of the sort that existed among cavalrymen units at the time.⁵²

The flag bearer of Boschereggio’s unit was Nanni Guidicci, who, like Boschereggio, came from the town of San Casciano. The rest of the unit was surprisingly diverse, providing further evidence of the existence of professionalized infantrymen. The document lists one apprentice or *ragazzino*, then nine crossbowmen, followed by the shield bearers. The proveniences of the crossbowmen include the towns of Lucca, Genoa, Meldola in the Romagna (near Forli), Florence, Perugia, Gubbio and Ancona (Table 1). If the hires were related to the city league of 1354, Florence clearly recruited men from beyond the borders of its stated alliances. More striking still is the provenience of the “humble” shield bearers, who came from within the Florentine state and city, but also from a wide range of places, including Ferrara, Imola, Ravenna, Bologna, Cesena, Orvieto, Lucca, Ancona and even Bergamo (2 men) up north. Shield bearers also came from Campora in southern Italy (near Salerno), Cingoli in the Marche near Macerata and Camporeggiano in Umbria near Gubbio. Overall, Boschereggio’s contingent had five men (including himself and his flag bearer) from San Casciano, his home, and four men from Florence, one of whom, Pulicciano Guigliemi, was a crossbowman; the others were shield bearers.⁵³

50 ASF, Miscellanea Repubblicana 120 #1 fol 2r

51 ASF, Miscellanea Repubblicana 120 #1 fols. 1v-5v

52 ASF, Miscellanea Repubblicana 120 #1 fols. 5v-6r

53 ASF, Miscellanea Repubblicana 120 #1 fols. 2v-3r

Table 1. Provenience of infantrymen in Martino “Boschereggio” Dandi’s unit

Florence (4 men)	Bologna (2 men)	Campora (2 men)
Ferrara	Cesena (2 men)	Cingoli (2 men)
Genoa	Orvieto	Camporeggiano
Perugia	Bergamo (2 men)	Bagnoro
Imola	Lucca (2 men)	Meldola
Ravenna	Ancona	-
Gubbio	San Casciano (3 men)	-

Source: ASF, *Miscellanea Repubblicana* 120 #1 fols. 2r-3r

Francesco “Malamamma” Bartoli’s contingent was similar to that of Boschereggio. It was predominantly composed of shield bearers, with five crossbowmen, one apprentice or *ragazzino*, a tambourine player and a flag bearer, *banderio*, named Bonifazio Andrea Minuti, who, as in Malamamma’s band, was from Florence.⁵⁴ Thus both infantry units had flag bearers from the same place as the captain. But the rest of Malamamma’s unit was, like Boschereggio’s, diverse. It contained crossbowmen from Sarzana, a frequent recruiting ground in Liguria for such men, and from Bologna and Borgo San Sepolcro (near Arezzo). The shield bearers came from Prato, Montevarchi, Volterra, Perugia, Arezzo, Scarperia, Montecchio, Coreglia, Pisa, Todi, Siena, San Fabiano and Bologna, among others (Table 2). The range is not as broad as in Boschereggio’s contingent. A full 13 of the 38 members of Malamamma’s unit, 34 percent, came from Florence—noteworthy given the deeply entrenched view that Florence lacked native martial spirit in these years. More generally, the shield bearers in Malamamma’s unit appear to have come mostly from areas within or just beyond the Florentine state. Prato, Scarperia, Montevarchi, Doccia (Valdarno near Sesto Fiorentino), Monsummano (Valdinievole near Pistoia), Magna (Valdisieve near Barberino) and Mangona were part of the Florentine state. San Fabiano was part of the Sienese state; Montecchio lay beyond the Appenines, north in the Romagna; Coreglia, a former base for the Castracani clan that had opposed Florence decades earlier, stood in the southern Garfagnana region not far from the strategic town of Barga.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ ASF, *Miscellanea Repubblicana* 120 #1 fol. 4r. The tambourine player, Barnabo Matten, was from Bologna. ASF, *Miscellanea Repubblicana* 120 #1 fols. 4r-5v

⁵⁵ REPETTI, Emanuele *Dizionario geografico fisico storico della Toscana*, vol 1, Floren-

Table 2. Provenience of men in Francesco “Malamamma” Bartoli’s unit

Florence (13 men)	Volterra (3 men)	Montecchio
Sarzana (2 men)	Perugia	San Fabiano
Mangona	Arezzo	Magna
Bologna (3 men)	Scarperia	S. Miniato al Tedesco (2 men)
Siena	Borgo San Sepolcro	Coreglia
Montevarchi	Monsummano	Todi
Prato	Doccia	Pisa

Source: ASF, *Miscellanea Repubblicana* 120 N. 1 fols. 3v-5r

Although we know the provenience of the members of the units, the answers to strictly military historical questions such as how the infantry units were deployed in the field or how they fit together with the rest of the army remain elusive. The lists of members of Boschereggio and Malamamma’s bands do, however, offer insight into aspects of cooperation and coordination among units. Close scrutiny of Boschereggio’s band reveals that one of its shield bearers, Giovanni Bartolini of Florence, had in the summer of 1350 captained his own shield bearer unit of 14 men during Florence’s struggle with the Ubaldini, and then joined together with both Malamamma and Boschereggio in 1354 (see above).⁵⁶ Giovanni Bartolini was a known entity and that he was willing to serve under Boschereggio’s command several years later suggests perhaps even a hierarchy. Similarly, Bindo Mini of Siena, a shield bearer in Malamamma’s contingent in 1354, fought for Florence independently in its war against Milan in 1351 as captain of his own band of 23 shield bearers.⁵⁷ Further research will uncover more examples.

IV

Taken as a whole, our evidence, from Nerio da Montegarullo to Malamamma and Boschereggio, suggests several things about *trecento* Florentine infantry. First, it was more professionalized than supposed, and included infantry captains from beyond Florence’s borders, who hired themselves out for service. Some of

ce, Tofani, 1833, p. 797; vol 3, Florence, Tofani, 1839, pp. 42-47; 258-261

⁵⁶ ASF, Camera del Comune, Scrivano di camera uscita 10 fol. 27v

⁵⁷ ASF, Camera del Comune, Scrivano di camera uscita duplicato 2 fol. 19r

the infantry units, particularly the large ones, were led by men from aristocratic stock like Nerio Guincherini of Montegarullo, with whom we started this essay; some came from more ambiguous and likely more humble backgrounds such as Malamamma and Boschereggio, with whom we have concluded. The recruitment of the troops must in any case have been challenging for Florence amid the concurrent effects of plague that reduced overall population.⁵⁸ Indeed, the traditional market forces associated with plague—decline in the value of land, lower rents and higher incomes for the laboring classes—would seem to favor the involvement of aristocratic cavalymen, mercenaries, for whom war was part of their self-definition and offered potential earnings that were otherwise disappearing. The incentive for infantry captains of “humble” background is less clear in this regard. Rural folk often stood most directly in the path of armies, thus the opportunity to take up arms became perhaps an appealing entrepreneurial alternative. Or perhaps the seemingly “humble” infantry men were more than that; minor landholders who sought income and prestige attendant the profession of arms, not unlike the cavalry.

In any case, our evidence remains at this point insufficient to argue for a well-ordered Florence infantry in this “era of the companies.” The composition of armies was always contingent on the movements of free companies, and of soldiers involved in wars near Florence, who traversed the region and made attempts to regularize forces difficult. At the same time, however, Florence clearly tried to create order from chaos, both with regard to cavalry hires and infantry hires. And while this may indeed have been the age of the horse, the difference between the two parts of the Florentine army has been overstated. Florence devoted a great deal of attention to infantry, which was a crucial part of army.

58 ROMANONI, Fabio, “Da Luchino a Giovanni: gli eserciti della grande espansione viscontea (1339-1354)”, in *Nuova antologia militare: Rivista interdisciplinare della società italiana di storia militare* 3, 2022, pp. 355-408 examines how the Visconti of Milan negotiated similar challenges.

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Échiquier dit de Charlemagne,
cavalier, ivoire d'éléphant, XIe siècle,
Italie méridionale, trace de peinture,
d'un ensemble de 16 pièces conservées
dans le trésor de Saint-Denis - Hauteur
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